

**RECIPROCAL MODERNISMS:  
ARTISTIC INTERACTION AND UNDERLYING STRATEGY  
BETWEEN CHINA AND EUROPE IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH  
CENTURY**

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## Introduction

In the early twentieth century, especially in the period before World War II, Europe was considered the center of modern art. Three cities – Paris, Berlin, and Vienna – formed the axis of modernism. This narrative has been largely accepted in academic circles, yet this consensus needs to be rethought. This narrative seems to be founded on two linked arguments: 1. modernism was an invention of Europeans; and 2. modernism spread from its birthplace in Europe to the rest of the world. These ideas, which we can name “Eurocentrism,” have been the mainstream interpretation in academic circles for many years. Scholars in Asia have found their studies on this view and thus framed their narratives of Asian modern art accordingly.<sup>1</sup> In a recent article “Several Frameworks of Chinese Modern Art History Research” (*Zhongguo jindai meishushi yanjiu de jizhong sikao jiagou* 中國近代美術史研究的幾種思考架構), Shih Shou-ch'ien 石守謙 summarized the three main trends in the past several decades in researching Chinese modern art: “Impact-Response Mode,” “Diverse Modernism,” and “Returning to the Axis of China.”<sup>2</sup> These narrative strategies are largely influenced by the political situation in twentieth-century China and are built on the historical narrative that since the May Fourth Movement, Chinese scholars were busy dealing with how to

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<sup>1</sup> Eurocentrism is normally defined as a cultural phenomenon that views the histories and cultures of non-Western societies from an European perspective. It posits those European values and history as norm and superior to others. The term Eurocentrism as the term for an ideology was coined by Samir Amin in his book *Eurocentrism* (1989).

<sup>2</sup> Shih Shou-ch'ien 石守謙, “Zhongguo jindai meishushi yanjiu de jizhong sikao jiagou” 中國近代美術史研究的幾種思考架構 [Several Frameworks of Chinese Modern Art History Research], in *Dongya meishu de jindai yu jindaixing* 東亞美術的近代和近代性 [Modern and Modernity of East Asian Art], ed. Hong Shanshao 洪善杓 (Seoul: Xuegu Zhai, 2009), 251-272.

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respond to Western theories and systems. This responsive culture led to the denial of classic Chinese culture and an over-appreciation of Western culture.<sup>3</sup> In recent years, while some Chinese scholars such as Pan Gongkai 潘公凯 recognized the narrative problem in writing Chinese modern art history and have endeavoured to raise the status of Chinese modern art and culture, yet their analyses have never escaped the framework of European modern art. In *Zhongguo xiandai meishu zhilu* 中国现代美术之路 [Road of Modern Chinese Art], Pan tries to emphasize the spontaneity of Chinese artists in the development of modern art and distinguishes its development from European modern art.<sup>4</sup> Yet his assumption is still built upon the existence of the European modern art system. As twentieth-century Chinese modern art never quite escapes its fate as derivative of European modern art, the standards of Chinese modern art rely heavily on whether styles or thoughts recognize the work of European modern artists.

Moreover, research on modern art tends to be confined to geographical concepts. For example, scholars focus on Chinese artists and artistic issues in China, but they rarely look at Chinese art held outside of China. Some works that are held in European and American institutions have never been seriously investigated or researched. And, vice versa, European scholars rarely focus on the activities of European artists who were active in Asia. Although some successful examples have been repeatedly

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<sup>3</sup> The May Fourth Movement was an intellectual revolution and sociopolitical reform movement that occurred in China between 1917-1921. The movement was directed toward national independence, emancipation of the individual, and rebuilding society and culture.

<sup>4</sup> See Pan Gongkai 潘公凯, *Zhongguo xiandai meishu zhilu* 中国现代美术之路 [Road of Modern Chinese Art] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2010).

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discussed, scholars have been unwilling to explore new materials and documents, and thus, some are always artists excluded from the research field.

The questions I propose try to break free from these modes. I put European modern art and Chinese modern art on an equal footing and in an interchangeable position and try to make new exploration. This dissertation aims to discover the interactive relationship between diverse cultures and tracks how in the early twentieth century different cultures encounter, inspire and shape each other and, ultimately, absorb foreign cultures into their systems.

In past research on European art history, art historians hardly paid attention to this theme. On the one hand, as I said, Eurocentrism occupied the mainstream for many years. The impact of Asian art on European art sometimes is mentioned in some essays but was not taken into serious consideration. Recently, the term “Global Art history” has been proposed, and circumstances started to change. Monica Juneja argues, “today we speak from a position where, in the wake of the radical political, cultural and economic shifts that have occurred following the end of the cold war, cultural geographies are being gradually redefined, not with a view to simply reversing the alignment of centers and peripheries, but rather to define new cartographies founded on commonalities, reciprocal ties and diversity.”<sup>5</sup> The challenge is to find an adequate methodological framework to integrate modernist initiatives from locations outside the West by going beyond the simple addition of unknown artists to an existing canon, or

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<sup>5</sup> Monica Juneja, “Alternative, Peripheral or Cosmopolitan? Modernism as a Global Process,” in *Global Art History: Transkulturelle Verortungen Von Kunst Und Kunstwissenschaft*, eds. Julia Allerstorfer and Monika Leisch-Kiesl (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2017), 82.

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alternatively, by relegating regional articulations of the modern to isolated area studies.<sup>6</sup> Juneja has argued that scholars need to rethink the framework of modernism in a global context. It is very hard to find a general model, which can apply in the global context. Yet terms she used such as commonalities and reciprocal ties are solutions, and she offers an equal and interchangeable perspective for dealing with the encounter of different cultures, which I think it is useful for answering my research questions. In the modern period, European artists and Asian artists could share commons on some special artistic issues. Furthermore, they also got inspirations from other cultural visual materials.

The same concern can be found in Stephen Greenblatt's perspective. Greenblatt states that "there is an urgent need to rethink fundamental assumptions about the fate of culture in an age of global mobility, a need to formulate, both for scholar and for the larger public, new ways to understand the vitally important dialectic of cultural persistence and change."<sup>7</sup> He criticizes earlier scholarly perspectives, stating that "although in the past twenty years or so many academic disciplines have formally embraced ideas of 'cultural mobility,' they have for the most part operated with tunnel vision; the times and places in which they see significant mobility occurring remain strictly limited; in all other contexts, they remain focused on fixity." He continues, "the problem is that the established analytical tools have taken for granted the stability of

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<sup>6</sup> Monica Juneja, "Alternative, Peripheral or Cosmopolitan? Modernism as a Global Process," in *Global Art History: Transkulturelle Verortungen Von Kunst Und Kunstwissenschaft*, eds. Julia Allerstorfer and Monika Leisch-Kiesl (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2017), 80.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, "Cultural Mobility: An Introduction," In *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto*, et al. Stephen Greenblatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1-2.



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cultures, or at least have assumed that in their original or natural state, before they are disrupted or contaminated, cultures are properly rooted in the rich soil of blood and land and they are virtually motionless. Particular cultures are routinely celebrated for their depth, authenticity, and wholeness, while others are criticized for shallowness, disorientation, and incoherence. A sense of ‘at-homeness’ is often claimed to be the necessary condition for a robust cultural identity.”<sup>8</sup> Greenblatt questions how cultural studies is restricted by geographical definition. In a word, he queries the validity of “cultural centrism,” and thus proposes the new term “cultural mobility” to respond to this serious problem. In the early twentieth century, a large number of artists began to stay and study abroad, and cultural exchange becomes a phenomenon. Yet art historians seem to be interested in a small part of successful examples and ignore their existence as a group. Due to the shortage of materials, the experience and stories of many Europeans who visited Asian countries are not well-explored. When we pay more attention to the cultural mobilities in this period, we find some new threads to frame a global modern art network and rethink the absence of Chinese art and artists in the history of modern period.

In my research, I don’t intend to prove the greatness of Chinese art is or the important role that Chinese art played in Euro-American modernism. Rather, I will consider each of them equally and analyze some specific issues to trace out how art circulated in the twentieth century. When the discussion arrives in the modern period, things become complex. As I have said, existed methodologies or structure does not

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<sup>8</sup> Greenblatt, “Cultural Mobility: An Introduction,” 3.

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suit my research. I will rely on the materials and evidence that I found is useful to frame my thread of my argument and analyze my questions. Therefore, I try to explain my ideas by analyzing some specific artistic issues that occurred between Europe and China in the early twentieth century. Through these issues, I want to reconstruct the network that demonstrates European and Chinese encounters in the modern period and artistic strategies behind artworks and creations.

Some recent exhibitions in the United States have explored this theme seriously. In 2009, the Guggenheim Museum in New York organized the exhibition *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860 -1989*. In the show, the curator tries to answer the question: how does America generate modernism? The curatorial idea traces how the art, literature and philosophical system of “the East” became known, reconstructed, and transformed within American cultural and intellectual currents, influencing the articulation of new visual and conceptual languages.<sup>9</sup> It illuminates the Asian influences that shaped such major movements as Abstract art, Conceptual art, Minimalism and the neo-avant-garde as they unfolded in New York and on the West Coast. The exhibit also deals with select developments in poetry, music, and dance-theater. What emerges is a history of how artists working in America selectively adapted Eastern ideas and art forms to create not only new styles of art, but more importantly, a new theoretical definition of the contemplative experience and self-transformative role of art itself.<sup>10</sup> The exhibition not only tries to see East and West

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<sup>9</sup> Alexandra Munroe, “The Third Mind: An Introduction,” in *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860-1989*, eds. Alexandra Munroe and Ikuyo Nakagawa (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2009), 21.

<sup>10</sup> Munroe, “The Third Mind: An Introduction,” 22.

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equally, but also to identify how Asian culture shaped the major art movements in America.

In this catalogue, J. Thomas Rimer indicates that, “an increasing sensitivity to a whole range of previously unfamiliar cultures was characteristic of a period mutual discovery on both sides of the twentieth century. Just as American and Europeans were discovering the arts and philosophies of China, Japan, and India, a generation of artists, writers, and dramatists from the Far East and India were seeking to grasp the principles and achievements represented by the arts and ideas of the West. There remains one central and striking difference, however. In the majority of cases, artists and writers in the East were anxious to find out about *contemporary* culture in the West.... American and other Western artists and writers, on the other hand, were largely interested during this period in Asian culture of the pre-modern era.”<sup>11</sup> Rimer concludes that the atmosphere that occurred in the early twentieth century was one of modernism in circulation. East and West both studied and borrowed from each other, but they had different aims when they sought resources from other cultures. This atmosphere resembles what Monica Juneja has referred to as “commonalities” and “reciprocal ties.”

This show’s narrative and curatorial strategy accords with the approach I have adopted for this dissertation. I use my archival findings to prove that art in modern time existed in circulation. Even though their focuses were different, artists found inspiration in both Western and Eastern culture that allowed them to create modern styles in

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<sup>11</sup> J. Thomas Rimer, “Ezra Pound, Modern Poetry, and Dance Theater,” in *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860-1989*, eds. Alexandra Munroe and Ikuyo Nakagawa (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2009), 22.

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different cultural contexts. Some artists found commonalities between the two cultures. There is no supreme modernism as the modernism of the West and the East are parallel and reciprocal.

Yet artistic exchange between Europe and China appeared not at every artistic subject. As individuals, artists tend to concentrate on their own concerns. For French artists and Chinese artists, they shared the same thoughts on understanding drawings. At the same time, Viennese artists care about the application of Chinese decorative art and interpreting them by modern artistic forms. It is difficult to include them into a general theoretical framework. Yet through these examples we are able to identify a closer interaction rather a one-way influence between two cultures. Drawings and decorations are more technical in the scope of art history, artists make use of these techniques to discuss and explore the problems that how to respond to issues of modernisms. Europeans and Chinese have different views on “classic” and “modern.” For Europeans, Chinese classic art and decorations served as sources of inspiration that promoted artists to create new art forms and ideas. They find new meanings in these traditional materials. Conversely, Chinese artists preferred to follow trends in European modern art, which they viewed as “authentic modernism.” Yet when they choose to accept Western modernism, their subjective judgment is still affected by their own cultural background. For instance, those western-oriented modern art are often more difficult to be understood and accepted, and less welcomed by Chinese modern artists.

In order to explain these issues in detail, I separate my dissertation into two parts. In part one, I focus on the interaction between France and China and analyze how

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Chinese art joined in shaping the formation of European modern drawing. When we refer to modern drawing, Henri Matisse (1869-1954) is likely the first name that comes to mind. In my own research, this kind of drawing does not begin with Henri Matisse. The earlier idea to create this style of drawing can be traced back to Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), who started to make this sort of drawing around 1890. Rodin was inspired by the movement of dance, including some styles from Cambodia and Japan. His method was followed by his students, assistants and admirers, and might even have affected artists in Vienna. Matisse was one of Rodin's followers, and he incorporated Rodin's thoughts, methods and form into his own style. At the same time, the critic Roger Fry (1866-1934) borrowed some ideas from Chinese art to defend Matisse's drawings. Therefore, we see that Asian art was involved in European modernism. The popularity of modern drawing reached its peak in the 1930s, when many Asian artists studying in Paris accepted this modern drawing style and eventually brought it back to Asia. Modern drawing, which Asian artists considered to be "European modernism," was partly inspired by Asian art. One reason why this style was readily accepted by Asian artists is that modern drawing shared a common sense with their own cultures.

In the second part of my dissertation, I will focus on how Viennese artists applied Chinese ornaments and cultural symbols to their art and also how Viennese came to China in the early twentieth century to teach Chinese artists. From 1910 to 1930, a special atmosphere appeared in Viennese artistic circles. A large number of modern visual artists from the Vienna Secession and the Vienna Workshop, such as painters, designers, and performers, tried to apply Chinese elements to their artwork and designs.

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The long list of artists includes Gustav Klimt (1862-1918), Egon Schiele (1890-1918), Hans Böhler (1884-1961), Emil Orlik (1870-1932), Julius Zimpel (1896-1925), Eleonore Zuckermandl (1898-?), Mathilde Flögl (1893-1958), Josef Wimmer-Wisgrill (1882-1961), Richard Teschner (1879-1948), and so on. In the late nineteenth century, French artists firstly recognized the value of East Asian art, especially Japanese art. It raised a movement for researching Japanese art and design. French critic Philippe Burty (1830-1890) named this unique phenomenon – Japonisme. French modern art such as impressionism was profoundly affected by Japanese woodblock prints. The use of the principle of Japanese art could also be seen in the uprising movement of the art of design, like Art Nouveau. Later, this tendency also expanded to other European countries, such as Germany and Austria. Due to the overwhelming influence of Japanese art, scholars often neglect the contribution of Chinese art, or Some Chinese artistic forms were mistakenly categorized into Japanese art. Through my research, I want to illustrate that Chinese art played a role in framing Viennese modernism. We can, for example, recognize a large number of Chinese patterns directly from the artworks and design samples, which were produced by modern artists and designers in Vienna. Yet, few scholars have discussed the issues. At the same time, Viennese artists and collectors came into China and taught and cooperated with Chinese artists. They guided some Chinese to design illustrations for German publications and at the same time tried to indigenize Christian art in China. These works feature a sense of decoration, which indicated that the influence might be coming from Vienna.

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To conclude, it existed an interactive relationship on art between Europe and China in the later nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Chinese were keen on learning ideas and methods of Europeans' understanding of modernism, at the same time, Europeans jumped out of their tradition to seek inspiration from the Far East. Europeans jumped out of their tradition to seek inspiration from the culture of the Far East. During this process, we could see multiplied cultural encounters, exchange and integration.

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## Part I Chinese Art in Paris and Parisian Modern Art in China

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines Drawing as “a picture or diagram made with a pencil, pen, crayon rather than paint.”<sup>12</sup> On the same page, Draughtsmen or Draughtswomen are explained as “an artist skilled in drawing.”<sup>13</sup> In specific contexts, drawing is generally recognized as a particular artistic object. In the twenty-first century, drawing is discussed more frequently, and many catalogues, exhibitions and art history books contain the term “drawing” in their title. Drawing has emerged as a new direction of research in the field of art history.

Normally, drawings are read as examples to research the techniques of the masters and their preparation for making oil paintings and murals. Some exhibitions that try to explain the Renaissance masters analyze drawings, such as *Raphael: The Drawings* (Ashmolean Museum, 2017) and *Leonardo Da Vinci: A Life in Drawing* (Royal Collection Trust, 2019). Yet the revolutionary meaning of drawings is frequently referred to when we discuss the works of modern artists. The exploration of drawings in the modern period is related to the core idea of modernism, which is connected with many other subjects and concepts such as psychology, anti-tradition, eroticism and so on. Christopher Lloyd noticed that Jean-François Millet (1814-1975) had consciously produced a large number of finished drawings especially for exhibition or sale, which are apart from drawings made in preparation for paintings. These are tenebrist in style,

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<sup>12</sup> Angus Stevenson ed., *Oxford Dictionary of English (Third Edition)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 532.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*



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depending on subtle gradations of tone, which create a mood of reflection or reverie with forms dissolved in the dying light. This style was widespread in mid-nineteenth-century France and Britain. Societies were formed to cultivate the taste for this type of drawing and many artists practised it, including Gustav Courbet (1819-1877), François Bonvin (1817-1887), Léon Lhermitte (1844-1925) and Henri Fantin-Latour (1836-1904). The younger generation artists such as Georges Seurat (1859-1891), Odilon Redon (1840-1916) and Eugène Carrière (1849-1906) also benefited from Millet's successful advocacy of tenebrism.<sup>14</sup> Based on this ground, exploration of drawings extended on most impressionists and post impressionists' creations. Thus, drawing as a synthetic entity deserves to be re-excavated.

As representatives of early twentieth-century French and Viennese modernism, artists including Auguste Rodin, Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele all made thousands of drawings in the course of their lives, and especially in their later periods. Considering Schiele's short life and his death at 28, the number of drawings he made is astonishing. In the introduction to *Egon Schiele: Drawings & Watercolours*, Ivan Vartanian raised some questions about Schiele that are worth thinking about:

Even from a purely technical standpoint, the flowering of Schiele's genius was as rapid as it was dramatic. His rate of progression is mind-boggling. How does child who likes to draw trains attain so quickly this mastery of line, color, human form, human expression? How does a young art student, producing impressive (though rather lackluster) academic studies, move on to achieve such emotive charge in his figures? How does early, cumbersome experimentation with oil paint turn in a matter of months into such uncanny skill with gouache and watercolor? The energy, speed, and confidence with which Schiele

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<sup>14</sup> Christopher Lloyd, *Impressionist & Post-Impressionist Drawings* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2019), 27.

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advanced stylistically and technically are like those of a young boy bounding up a flight of stairs.<sup>15</sup>

Ivan Vartanian curiosity about Schiele's drawings can be summarized in three common perspectives:

1. Most drawings were created in the artists' later periods.
2. These drawings represent a transformation of the artists' ideas.
3. They were inspired by other cultures and art forms.

These features are close to some artists I will discuss in the following chapters. In the meantime, they relate to Asian art and artists. In early twentieth-century Paris, nude drawings that featured several continuous lines and bold, brushful colours were considered avant-garde in modern art circles. Artists, including Europeans including like Rodin, Antoine Bourdelle (1861-1929), Matisse, but also Chinese artists such as Sanyu 常玉 (1895-1966), Pang Xunqin 庞薰琹 (1906-1985) and Zhang Xian 张弦 (1898-1936) among others, all worked in this style. Compared with the style of drawing established by Millet, this style obviously explored a new vision of drawings.

With the appearance of photography and cinematography, modern artists moved away from representing the natural world mechanistically towards exploring objects filtered through individual experience. Thus, instead of drawing nudes in an objective manner, artists aimed to capture the continuous movement and spiritual characteristics of the figures. Some of their inspirations included Asian art. For instance, Rodin claimed that his drawings were partly inspired by Cambodian and Japanese dancers, and Matisse said he agreed with Chinese painterly methods. At the same time, Roger Fry

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<sup>15</sup> Jane Kallir, *Egon Schiele: Drawings & Watercolours* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2003), 8.

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analyzed Matisse's art from a Chinese perspective, and the terms he used, such as *linear rhythm* and *calligraphic*, came from Pre-Tang and Tang texts on Chinese paintings. As a supporter of Asian art, Fry's comments on Matisse also reappear in his other essays analyzing Chinese art. Chinese art played a critical role in shaping modern art and art theory in the early twentieth century.

Meanwhile, Chinese artists who lived in Paris were most impressed by nude drawings. Many studied drawing methods in the atelier Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Montparnasse. The mentor of this studio was Bourdelle, who was also believed to be the earliest interpreter of Rodin's drawings. Matisse, Picasso and Modigliani were also active in Montparnasse. The Chinese considered modern drawing as the avant-garde Bible, and created a new term, *suxie* 速写, for this style. As a manner of promoting modern art, imitations of these drawings were extensively published in art journals and newspapers in China. The difference is that they tended to use ink and brush rather than charcoal. Chinese artists were able to achieve resonance in their reading and imitation of modernist drawing because its visual elements and method were consonant with their cultural tradition and background. Compared to other "Western-oriented" art movements, such as cubism and surrealism, modernist drawing was easier to accept.

This Part illustrates that either Europeans or Chinese, all shared the same goal: to revolutionize outdated art forms in the early twentieth century. Thus, they all seek to find inspiration from each other's cultures. For Europeans, Asian art was a source of creating modernism, while for the Chinese, the Parisian avant-garde was modernism.

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In the end, based on European modernists' strategies and Chinese modernists cultural traditions, these two groups of artists achieved a consensus on understanding and developing modern drawings. At the same time, drawings, as media, offer an underlying thread to clarify how various artistic ideas from different cultures circulate, transfer and influence artists in a transcultural context.

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## Chapter 1. Rodin and Matisse's Drawings in China

In the 1920s and 1930s, European modern art began to spread widely in China. Among the most popular artists were Rodin and Matisse, whose forms were studied by many artists. Further the earliest advocates of their styles were those who had studied in Paris and Tokyo. This chapter introduces how Rodin's and Matisse's art, especially drawings, were diffused in China and how Chinese painters absorbed their work. Matisse's style and works were well introduced and imitated by many Chinese artists. Like Matisse, most works these Chinese artists made have linear contours and brush colours. It is easier for the Chinese to accept this style based on their cultural training, which also pursues lines and uses brushes in creating classic ink paintings.

### The Early Introduction of Rodin to China in the 1930s

The introduction of Rodin drawings to China started in 1930. The scholar Zeng Juezhi 曾觉之 (1901-1982) translated the book *Auguste Rodin: L'Art, entretiens réunis par Paul Gsell* (Rodin on Art and Artists, Conversations with Paul Gsell) into Chinese.<sup>16</sup> Chapter V illustrates how Rodin explains his drawings and reviews the development of drawing in art history. Two years later, Fu Lei 傅雷 (1908-1966), an eminent Chinese critic and translator, translated this book again. In China, Fu's version is the more well-known. Fu had studied literature and art history in Paris between 1928

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<sup>16</sup> Zeng Juezhi studied literature at the Institut Franco-Chinois de Lyon from 1921-1929. *Auguste Rodin: L'Art, entretiens réunis par Paul Gsell* was translated by him in 1930 and published by Kaiming shudian 开明书店 (Enlightenment Bookstore) in Shanghai.

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and 1931, returning to teach art history at the Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts 上海美术专科学校 from 1932 to 1934.<sup>17</sup> He used the book as a handout in his aesthetics class in the first semester of 1932. In the preface, he wrote, “before we learn Aesthetics from pure philosophy, we should at first get to know and discuss some actual questions in Fine Arts such as the debate about form and spirit.”<sup>18</sup>

Fu Lei had a very close relationship with Pang Xunqin and other modern artists active in Shanghai, and he was a critic and spokesperson for some modern Chinese societies such as the Storm Society (*Juelanshe* 决澜社). Interestingly, it seems that he was also familiar with Bourdelle, as he referred to Bourdelle twice, once in a review of Pang Xunqin’s art, “Xunqin’s Dream” (*Xunqin de meng* 薰栳的梦). He wrote: “Pang Xunqin is playing the piano, at the same time he is watching Bourdelle’s *Bust of Ludwig van Beethoven*. He is thinking in notes and giving emotion to the melody. This is his Music dream.”<sup>19</sup> Another example that accounts for their connection is that when he heard

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<sup>17</sup> The Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts was established in 1912 and was the earliest fine art academy in China. The initial name was *Shanghai tuhua meishuyuan* 上海图画美术院 (Shanghai Pictorial Art Institute). Afterwards, the name of this academy was changed several times: *Shanghai meishu xuexiao* 上海美术学校 (1920), *Shanghai meishu zhuanmen xuexiao* 上海美术专门学校 (1921-1929), *Shanghai meishu zhuanke xuexiao* 上海美术专科学校 (1930-1952). Since 1920, the English translations of these Chinese names are same. See Xu Zhihao 许志浩, *Zhongguo meishu qikan guoyanlu* 中国美术期刊过眼录 (1911-1949) [A Chronicle of China Art Journals (1911-1949)] (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1992), 5.

<sup>18</sup> Auguste Rodin, “Luodan Yishu Lun” 罗丹艺术论 [Rodin on Art and Artists, Conversations with Paul Gsell], trans. Fu Lei 傅雷, In *Fu Lei quanji 14* 傅雷全集 14 [The Complete Work of Fulei, Volume 14] (Shenyang: Liaoning jiaoyu chubanshe, 2002), 7.

<sup>19</sup> Fu lei 傅雷, “Xunqin de meng” 薰栳的梦 [The Dream of Xunqin], *Yishu xunkan* 艺术旬刊 1, no. 3 (1932): 15-6.

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that Bourdelle had died, Pang went to Bourdelle's home to mourn his passing with two Chinese artists, Liu Haisu 刘海粟 (1896-1994) and Liu Kang 刘抗 (1911-2004).<sup>20</sup>

These materials could indirectly prove that modern artistic circles in Shanghai were familiar with French artistic circles related to Rodin and Matisse and some were even friends with him.

### Matisse's Works in Chinese art Journals

Compared with Rodin's drawings, Matisse's paintings and drawings have received extensive attention in his contemporaneous artistic circles, which helped to set up his reputation starting in the first decade of the twentieth century. As some ambitious Chinese artists sought to keep pace with the trend in the avant-garde in the late 1920s, Matisse became one of their targets.

Liu Haisu was one of the artists and artistic educators who first noticed the significance of European modern art. As headmaster of the Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts, he tried to promote European modern art in his school, including Impressionism, Vincent van Gogh, Paul Cézanne, Henri Matisse, and so on.<sup>21</sup> Liu wrote an essay to introduce Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso.<sup>22</sup> In the school's journal, they introduced Henri Matisse in 1921, including the painting *La Danse* (1910) and an article, a Chinese

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<sup>20</sup> Fu Min 傅敏 and Luo Xinzhang 罗新璋, "Fu Lei nianpu" 傅雷年谱 [Chronology of Fu Lei], in *Fu Lei wenji(wenyi juan)* 傅雷文集 (文艺卷) [Fu lei's Collected Works: Volume of Literature and Art], Fu Lei 傅雷 (Beijing: Dangdai shijie chubanshe, 2006), 683.

<sup>21</sup> Fu Lei 傅雷, "Xiandai Zhongguo yishu zhi konghuang" 现代中国艺术之恐慌 [The Panic of Chinese Modern Art], *Yishu xunkan* 艺术旬刊, (Oct. 1932): 2-4.

<sup>22</sup> Liu Haisu 刘海粟, "Xinpai huajia Matisse yu Picasso" 新派画家玛蒂斯与毕伽沙 [The New-stylized Artists: Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso], *Minzu* 民族 1, no. 3 (1933): 453-6.

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version of “Notes of a Painter” (1908), which mainly focused on Matisse’s thoughts about painting (**fig. 1**).<sup>23</sup> It indicated that Matisse’s earliest theoretical statement was introduced to the art school in China no later than 1921. The strategy behind the school’s journal was to influence the younger generation to create art in a revolutionary way. Furthermore, there were many statements and articles that the Chinese editors could pick up at that time, but they mostly targeted Matisse, which suggested that Matisse’s statement accorded with these editors’ understanding modernism. This article by Matisse expressed a lot of ideas that reflected commonalities with Chinese art, which could be a reason for why the article was selected.

Since more Chinese artists came to study in Paris, a large number of translations and introductions of Matisse appeared after 1930. Some young artists claimed that they admired Henri Matisse and followed his style. Since art societies in China normally published their own journals or magazines, they spent significant time promoting their ideas and the artists they loved through the media. In such accounts, Matisse was the most welcomed figure. In the 1930s, there were approximately 40 pieces introducing Matisse published in China that contained drawings, paintings, and other theoretical essays. Almost all of these pieces expressed positive opinions about Matisse. Among them, the artists in the Storm Society and the Chinese Independent Fine Art Association (*Zhonghua duli meishuhui* 中华独立美术会) were the best known artistic societies that introduced and disseminated Henri Matisse’s art and ideas in China.

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<sup>23</sup> Henri Matisse 玛提斯, “Wuta” 舞蹈 [La Danse], *Meishu* 美术 3, no. 1 (1921): 1. And Henri Matisse 玛提斯, “Lunhua” 论画 [The Notes of the Painter], trans. Jing Bing 景冰, *Meishu* 美术 3, no. 1 (1921): 71-81.



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The Storm Society was established in Shanghai in 1931 and its leading figures were Pang Xunqin and Ni Yide 倪貽德 (1901-1970). The name Storm Society expressed the idea of a stormy wave, something strong and progressive. They claimed to “develop new things and be innovative, have an independent, artistic spirit.... Bring out the spirit of the modern era.”<sup>24</sup> It was considered the most influential modern art group in 1930s China. Drawings by their memberships, including Wang Jiyuan 王济远 (1893-1975), Zhou Duo 周多 (Ca. 1905-?) and Zhang Xian, which were published in the 1930s, shared a style similar to Rodin’s and Matisse’s (**figs.2 and 3**).

In Ni Yide’s article, which appraised the art made by members of the Storm Society, he compared Pang Xunqin’s drawings to the Parisian modernists. He argued that “Croquis by Pang Xunqin attracted my attention, this kind of Croquis is different from preparation sketches for oil paintings. It is similar to Chinese ink paintings. His drawings are able to render the artist’s instinct with just a few lines. The value of these drawings lies in the pure lines and the creativity of shapes, not in the objects he rendered. In Paris, the most famous artists, such as Picasso, Matisse, and Derain and so on, all prefer to make efforts to create a unique style based on forms and lines. Pang Xunqin, who got involved in this trend in Paris, has rich experience on this Croquis, which is apparently understandable.”<sup>25</sup> Although these comments on Pang Xunqin are brief, yet it included extensive information. First, he named Pang Xunqin’s drawings a total new

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<sup>24</sup> Yang Taiyang, “The Storm Society,” in *Shanghai Modern 1919 -1945*, eds. Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker, Ken Lum and Zheng Shengtian (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2004), 242.

<sup>25</sup> Ni Yide 倪貽德, *Yiyuan jiaoyou ji* 艺苑交游记 [Notes on the Art Garden/Exchange and Travel] (Shanghai: Shanghai liangyou tushu yinshua gongsi, 1936), 5.

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name, a French term, “Croquis,” and he tried to distinguish them from the general understanding of drawings as a pre-stage for preparing an oil painting. Second, he suggested that the lines have emotions. Third, he delivered a message that Pang Xunqin’s style reflected trends in Paris. It proved that Pang studied this style in Paris and that Ni and his contemporaries apparently felt the style shared commonalities with Chinese ink painting.

Another active group is the Chinese Independent Fine Art Association, established in Guangzhou in 1935 and was organized by three artists: Liang Xihong 梁锡鸿 (1912-1982), Li Dongping 李东平 (Act. 1930s) and Zeng Ming 曾鸣 (Act. 1930s). The journals that the group of artists edited mainly publicized Surrealism, Fauvism and other new modern art movements, which contributed to the dissemination of European modern art in China. These artists extensively commented on Matisse through their writings.

For example, in the series “Modern Famous Artists in the World”, edited by Liang Xihong, he put Henri Matisse in the first position.<sup>26</sup> Liang had a lot of paintings that indicated that he probably imitated Matisse’s style. For instance, Liang’s painting *Girl with Yellow Shirt* (*Huangyi shaonü* 黄衣少女) and *Portrait of A Woman* (*Nüxiang youhua* 女像油画) can be compared to Matisse’s *Girl with a Black Cat* (**fig. 4, 5, and**

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<sup>26</sup> Liang Xihong 梁锡鸿, “Xiandai shijie minghuaia: yi madisi:yeshou zhuyi zuojia” 现代世界名画家; 一、马蒂斯: 野兽主义作家 (附图) [Modern Famous Artists in the World : 1. Henri Matisse], *Yifeng* 艺风 3 ,no. 3 (1935): 27.

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6).<sup>27</sup> Li Dongping and Zeng Ming edited an interview with Henri Matisse. In it, Matisse commented that “painters should often practice drawings, everything can become objects, just practice, when you have leisure time!”<sup>28</sup> Viewing Li’s drawings from the 1930s reminds one of Rodin’s and Matisse’s style as well.<sup>29</sup>

In another essay, “Modern Nude Paintings” written by Zeng Ming, he proposed that “nudes is a genre of modern art.... Modern nude painting is not the representational accuracy of objects, it emphasizes line, color and texture that arises from a sense of beauty.... Matisse borrowed the line from Oriental art, rendering contours freely with concise colors based on primitive features, which created a new sense.”<sup>30</sup> His understanding of drawing nudes shared ideas with other artists that I have discussed, and he also took Matisse as an example to prove his argument. Interestingly, he already knew that Matisse had borrowed ideas from Oriental art. Obviously, their works and thoughts were impacted by the modern art movement in Paris. Matisse and Fauvism provided a lot of inspiration and Matisse’s modern drawings interested them the most.

### ***Suxie* 速写, *Sumiao* 素描 and Their Translations in English and French**

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<sup>27</sup> Liang, Xihong 梁锡鸿, “Huangyi shaonu” 黄衣少女 [Girl with Yellow Shirt], *Yifeng* 艺风 2, no. 10 (1934): 52. And Liang, Xihong 梁锡鸿, “Nuxiang youhua” 女像油画 [Portrait of A Woman], *Xinshiji* 新世纪, no. 2 (1935): 17.

<sup>28</sup> “画家应时时练习速写，什么也不妨写，只要空暇时练习就好了。” See Zeng Ming 曾鸣 and Li Dongping 李东平, eds. “Zuojia yan: Henri Matisse” 作家言: Henri Matisse [Artist’s Talk: Henri Matisse], *Zhongli* 众力 1, no. 5 (1936): 24.

<sup>29</sup> Li Dongping 李东平, “Suxie” 速写 [Drawing], *Yifeng* 艺风 3, no. 10 (1935): 47.

<sup>30</sup> Zeng Ming 曾鸣, “Xiandai meishu lun” 现代裸体美术论 [Modern Nude Paintings], *Zhongli* 众力 1, no. 2 (1936): 21.

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The Chinese artists carried out a change in the academic terms of art history. The English term drawing is not enough to distinguish classical drawing from their drawing. In this case, the term drawing was modified to include all kinds of drawing styles. Yet, it does not generate a new term to define the unique style of drawing made by these Chinese artists. Whereas in the 1930s the term is used in a critical sense in artistic circles, both Chinese and French artists were cautious about using terms to name their “drawings”, because the correct term would express their meaning and help them to distinguish their ideas from others.

In Chinese, *suxie* 速写 is seen as the term best suited to describe the drawings that Rodin, Matisse and other Chinese artists made, and was frequently used by painters in the 1930s. Prior to 1930, the term was mainly used in the literary field, referring to a style in which things were described in order to quickly report to readers. Pang Xunqin was probably the first artist who used *suxie* consciously to describe his artwork, in which it indicates that they were drawn in a very quick way. His aim was to distinguish *suxie* from *sumiao* 素描, which we can translated into the classical drawing or academic drawing. In the early twentieth century, artists rarely used this term *suxie* to describe their works. Normally, they used *sumiao*, because *sumiao* was a general term to describe all kinds of black-and-white drawings. Generally, people thought *sumiao* was not a genre, it was just training or a draft used in the preparations for a painting, but Pang Xunqin named his drawings *suxie* in his publications. He seems to claim *suxie* as a type of artistic style in its own right, directly related to the style he studied in Paris.

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In French, *dessin* always used as a term to describe black and white drawings. Yet there was another term, which was popularly used in the early twentieth century instead of *dessin*. In Jean Émile-Bayard's book published in 1927, the author used *croquis* to define the drawings that were made in the drawing class at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. Before this period, people tended to use the term *dessin* to entitle their drawn work in French. *Croquis* was used by artists active in Montparnasse to describe their unique nude drawing style. In English, people borrow *croquis* from French to describe this special type of drawings. In the Collins dictionary, *croquis* means a rough sketch of a live model.<sup>31</sup> This interpretation corresponds exactly to Pang Xunqin's nude drawings. We can find evidence from Ni Yide's article, where he used *croquis*, which he translated into Chinese as *pure drawing* (*chuncui sumiao* 纯粹素描), to describe Pang Xunqin's drawings. In this situation, *croquis* can be translated directly into Chinese as *suxie* and mainly refers to the style created by artists in Montparnasse. After Pang, *suxie* as a term was used by other members of the Storm Society for their artworks' titles.

At present there is no accurate counterpart in English that can explain *suxie*. Drawing and sketch are synonyms, but they approach the meaning of *sumiao*, not *suxie*. In Chinese-English translation, *suxie* and *sumiao* are often confused. People haven't defined these two words accurately.

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<sup>31</sup> "Croquis," Collins Dictionary, accessed August 14, 2020, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/croquis>

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Hence, the transmission of modern drawings is a complicated process. Rodin's artistic style was carried out by some Chinese artists in Montparnasse and brought back to China. The publications and catalogues of Matisse in China also offer a similar vision and understanding of modern drawing for the young Chinese artists unable to study abroad. This modern nude drawing, which has a sense of ink painting, was far easier to accept for the Chinese.

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## **Chapter 2. Nude Drawings between the European and the Chinese**

Chinese artists first encountered Rodin's and Matisse's drawing methods in Paris, not in China. Rodin's assistant Bourdelle played a critical role in introducing this type of style and thought to the young generation of artists. It includes Matisse, Sanyu and Pang Xunqin. With the promotion of Bourdelle, either Europeans or Chinese reached the consensus of understanding and accepting Rodin's style. It promoted Rodin's drawing method to become an international style in the 1920s and 1930s.

### **Bourdelle's Teaching Experience at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière**

The idea and method of Rodin's drawings were inherited intact by Bourdelle. Some of his own drawings, when compared with Rodin's, display important similarities. Also, the same interest in dance can be seen in Bourdelle's works, for example, the poster he made for Isadora Duncan (**fig. 7**). Bourdelle also contributed to the spread of Rodin's ideas and methods. Owing to his experience in teaching art, Bourdelle became the link between Rodin and young artists, including some international students. The latter promoted a type of drawing that became a global modern style.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, artists from different countries around the world came to Paris. As the center of the art world at that time, Paris offered important artistic resources and geographic advantages over other cities. For example, Impressionist art, which was exhibited internationally, inspired young artists to head to Paris to see what had led to this new art form. A wide range of venues to exhibit their

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art provided further appeal. The Exposition Universelle of 1900 put Paris in the international spotlight and underscored its role as the leading modern city.<sup>32</sup>

From 1910 to the start of World War II, Parisian artistic circles migrated to Montparnasse as alternative to the Montmartre district, which belonged to the previous generation of artists. Artists around world were attracted by the creative atmosphere and cheap rents in that area. Cafes and bars like the Café du Dôme and the Café de la Rotonde served as the centers of nightlife and become the important spaces for artists to meet and exchange their ideas. Compared to enrolling at the Academy of Fine Arts, these young artists preferred to stay in Montparnasse where there were many private ateliers that did not have stringent requirements for enrollment and did not restrict individual expression in art.

Bourdelle was active in the 1910s and 1920s in Montparnasse, the district where he taught and where his own studio located. From 1909 to 1929, he taught at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, a private art school that still exists today. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, this school attracted many foreigner students from America, England, northern Europe and China. Bourdelle and other artists helped students to develop their sculptures, paintings, and drawings here (**fig. 8**). There were six drawing ateliers that students could attend in the mornings, afternoons and evenings.<sup>33</sup> Especially, this school has a unique meaning for Chinese modern artists. Some eminent Chinese artists like Pang Xunqin, Sanyu, and others considered as

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<sup>32</sup> Kenneth Wayne, *Modigliani & The Artists of Montparnasse* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2002), 18.

<sup>33</sup> Jean Émile-Bayard, *Montparnasse, hier et aujourd'hui : ses artistes et écrivains, étrangers et français, les plus célèbres* (Paris : Jouve, 1927), 396-7.



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pioneers of the Chinese avant-garde studied in this studio in the 1920s, and many Chinese artists who traveled to Paris mentioned Bourdelle in their memoirs, as I discussed above.

Among Bourdelle's students, Henri Matisse is the most famous. He studied with Bourdelle for a few months in 1900 (**fig. 9**).<sup>34</sup> Perhaps around this time, Matisse also brought some of his drawings when he met Rodin and hoped the latter would give him some suggestions. Yet Rodin's response was less than enthusiastic, and he asked him to come back when he had learned to put more detail into his drawings. Matisse, however, never called on Rodin again.<sup>35</sup> Instead, he turned to Bourdelle and attended the latter's evening sculpture classes, which were held in a studio block at 132 Boulevard du Montparnasse.<sup>36</sup> Bourdelle could have informed him of Rodin's methods and views of sculpture and also his own misgivings and desire to find a new way of rendering the figure.<sup>37</sup>

### **Matisse's Drawings and his Written Interpretation**

Henri Matisse was known as the principal protagonist of Fauvism, the first avant-garde movement at the turn of the century. He went on to develop a monumental

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<sup>34</sup> Albert E. Elsen, *The Sculpture of Henri Matisse* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1972), 41-3.

<sup>35</sup> Matisse claimed, "for my part, I could only envisage a generalized architectural way of working, replacing descriptive detail by a living and suggestive synthesis. Here we come, in fact, to the antipodean opposite of the Rodinian creed." See Hilary Spurling, *The Unknown Matisse: A Life of Henri Matisse: The Early Years, 1869-1908* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 216. The encounter between Rodin and Matisse happened around 1900, and it was the same year that Rodin had started to think about his transformation of drawings. He probably didn't deliver his fresh ideas of new drawings to Matisse. In many Rodin's statements, his ideas resembled Matisse's.

<sup>36</sup> Spurling, *The Unknown Matisse: A Life of Henri Matisse: The Early Years, 1869-1908*, 216-7.

<sup>37</sup> Elsen, *The Sculpture of Henri Matisse*, 41-2.

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decorative art, which was innovative both in its treatment of the human figure and in the constructive and expressive role accorded to colour. His long career culminated in a highly original series of works made from paper cut-outs that confirmed his reputation, alongside Picasso, as one of the major artists of the twentieth century.<sup>38</sup>

Some of Matisse's most daringly proportioned and foreshortened figures were the unintentional result of some contour drawings he made in 1908, presumably without taking his eyes away from the model to look at the paper on which he was drawing (**fig. 10**). It is possible that he saw Rodin's drawings done in the same manner, and Matisse kept some of these drawings all of his life.... Perhaps looking at the early drawings, with their distorted proportions, Matisse may have felt that if the contours were true to his feelings and still gave the sense of the body, they were right. The distortions did not provide Matisse with a system but with a new insight into what was possible in art.<sup>39</sup>

Coincidentally, in an article written in 1908, Matisse shared nearly the same views as Rodin's, quoting Rodin's words to prove his ideas. In this essay, the explanation of "expression" is the core argument that Matisse repeatedly discussed. In addition, he also laid out some other views, such as his understanding of "movement," "colors," "composition" and so on.

Matisse claimed, "what I am after, above all, is expression.... the thought of a painter must not be considered as separate from his pictorial means, for the thought is

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<sup>38</sup> "Matisse, Henri," Getty Research Institute, accessed August 1, 2020, <http://vocab.getty.edu/page/ulan/500017300>.

<sup>39</sup> Elsen, *The Sculpture of Henri Matisse*, 93.

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worth no more than its expression by the means, which must be more complete the deeper is his thought. I am unable to distinguish between the feeling I have about life and my way of translating it....” Continually, he used composition and color as two examples to explain his ideas. “Composition is the art of arranging in a decorative manner the diverse elements at the painter’s command to express his feelings....” “Composition, the aim of which should be expression, is modified according to the surface to be covered.” “The expressive aspect of color imposes itself on me in a purely instinctive way.” “The expressive aspect of colours imposes itself on me in a purely instinctive way. To paint an autumn landscape, I will not try to remember what colours suit this season, I will be inspired only by the sensation that the season arouses in me: the icy purity of the sour blue sky will express the season just as well as the nuances of foliage. My sensation itself may vary, the autumn may be soft and warm like a continuation of summer, or quite cool with a cold sky and lemon-yellow trees that give a chilly impression and already announce winter.”<sup>40</sup>

In order to help people to better understand what he discussed, he quoted some artists’ whose ideas he approved. “The simplest means are those which best enable an artist to express himself. If he fears the banal, he cannot avoid it by appearing strange, or going in for bizarre drawing and eccentric colour. His means of expression must derive almost of necessity from his temperament. He must have the humility of mind to believe that he has painted only what he has seen. I like Chardin’s way of expressing

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<sup>40</sup> See Henri Matisse, “Notes of a Painter, 1908,” in *Matisse on Art*, ed. Jack D. Flam (Oxford: Phaidon Press Limited, 1973), 35-8.

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it: 'I apply colour until there is a resemblance.' Or Cézanne's: 'I want to secure a likeness', or Rodin's: 'Copy nature!' Leonardo said: 'He who can copy can create.' Those who work in a preconceived style, deliberately turning their backs on nature, miss the truth. An artist must recognize, when he is reasoning, that his picture is an artifice; but when he is painting, he should feel that he has copied nature. And even when he departs from nature, he must do it with the conviction that it is only to interpret her more fully."<sup>41</sup>

What Matisse here wanted to certify is that when he created art, he depended on his own instinct and feeling to represent nature. This argument is clearer in his interpretation of colors, "my choice of colors does not rest on any scientific theory; it is based on observation, on sensitivity, on felt experiences."<sup>42</sup>

His experimental ideas also reflected his definition of "movement." With beginning of explaining this question, he traced back to the tradition of modern art. The arguments started with discussing Impressionism. "The impressionist painters, especially Monet and Sisley, had delicate sensations, quite close to each other: as a result, their canvases all look alike. The word 'impressionism' perfectly characterizes their style, for they register fleeting impressions. It is not an appropriate designation for certain more recent painters who avoid the first impression and consider it almost dishonest. A rapid rendering of a landscape represents only one moment of its existence

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<sup>41</sup> Matisse, "Notes of a Painter, 1908," 39.

<sup>42</sup> Matisse, "Notes of a Painter, 1908," 38.

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[durée]. I prefer, by insisting upon its essential character, to risk losing charm in order to obtain greater stability.”<sup>43</sup>

Matisse doubts the rationality of Impressionism in artistic expression. He thought that presenting the first impression or one moment of existence doesn't approach the essential character. Thus, he continued to discuss,

Underlying this succession of moments which constitutes the superficial existence of beings and things, and which is continually modifying and transforming them, one can search for a truer, more essential character, which the artist will seize so that he may give to reality a more lasting interpretation. When we go into the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sculpture rooms in the Louvre and look, for example, at a Puget, we can see that the expression is forced and exaggerated to the point of being disquieting. It is quite a different matter if we go to the Luxembourg; the attitude in which the sculptors catch their models is always the one in which the development of the members and tensions of the muscles will be shown the greatest advantage. And yet movement thus understood corresponds to nothing in nature: when we capture it by surprise in a snapshot, the resulting image reminds us of nothing that we have seen. Movement seized while it is going on is meaningful to us only if we do not isolate the present sensation either from that which precedes it or that which follows it.<sup>44</sup>

In the last sentence of this paragraph, he raised his points about movement. In his eyes, presenting movement is not like a snapshot that only captures a moment. Rather, artists need to capture continuous movement. Rodin also compared distinctions between the movement captured by photography and the feelings of artists, which he shared in common with Matisse. He said, “in fact, in instantaneous photographs, the figures, though taken while moving, seems suddenly fixed in mid-air, it is because all parts of the body being reproduced exactly at the same twentieth or fortieth of a second, there

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<sup>43</sup> Matisse, “Notes of a Painter, 1908,” 36-7.

<sup>44</sup> Matisse, “Notes of a Painter, 1908,” 37.

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is no progressive development of movement as there is in art.” “It is the artist who is truthful and it is photography which lies, for in reality time does not stop, and if the artist succeeds in producing the impression of a movement which takes several movements for accomplishment, his work is certainly much less conventional than the scientific image, where time is abruptly suspended.”<sup>45</sup>

he direct explanation of drawings was reflected in Matisse’s 1939 article, “Notes of a Painter on His Drawing.” He wrote,

My line drawing is the purest and most direct translation of my emotion (**fig. 11**). The simplification of the medium allows that. At the same time, these drawings are more complete than they may appear to some people who confuse them with a sketch. They generate light; seen on a dull day or in indirect light they contain, in addition to the quality and sensitivity of line, light and value differences which quite clearly correspond to colour. These qualities are also evident to many in full light. They derive from the fact that the drawings are always preceded by studies made in a less rigorous medium than pure line, such as charcoal or stump drawing, which enables me to consider simultaneously the character of the model, the human expression, the quality of surrounding light, atmosphere and all that can only be expressed by drawing. And only when I feel drained by the effort, which may go on for several sessions, can I with a clear mind and without hesitation, give free rein to my pen. Then I feel clearly that my emotion is expressed in plastic writing. Once my emotive line has modelled the light of my white paper without destroying its precious whiteness, I can neither add nor take anything away. The page is written; no correction is possible. If it is not adequate, there is no alternative than to begin again, as if it were an acrobatic feat. It contains, amalgamated according to my possibilities of synthesis, the different points of view that I could more or less assimilate by my preliminary study.

The jewels or the arabesques never overwhelm my drawings from the model, because these jewels and arabesques form part of my orchestration. Well placed, they suggest the form or the value accents necessary to the composition of the drawing. Here I recall a doctor who

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<sup>45</sup> Rodin, *Rodin on Art and Artists, Conversations with Paul Gsell*, 33-4.

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said to me: ‘when one looks at your drawings, one is astonished to see how well you know anatomy.’ For him, my drawings, in which movement was expressed by a logical rhythm of lines, suggested the play of muscles in action.

It is in order to liberate grace and character that I study so intently before making a pen drawing. I never impose violence on myself; to the contrary, I am like the dancer or tightrope walker who begins his day with several hours of different limbering exercises so that every part of his body obeys him, when in front of his public he wants to give expression to his emotions by a succession of slow or fast dance movement, or by an elegant pirouette.<sup>46</sup>

Matisse tried to express how he transferred his emotion into his works and how to grasp the motion of human bodies. Interestingly, he described that during the process of drawing he is like a dancer, in parallel to Rodin’s inspiration from dancing.

### **Chinese Artists at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière**

Some leading Chinese modern artists in the first three decades studied at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. This art school became one of the earliest places that Chinese artists could learn directly the methods of European modern artists and the atmosphere of Montparnasse also helped these Chinese artists to know modern life in Paris.

Sanyu was among the first group of Chinese artists who traveled to Europe in the early 1920s to study art. Unlike many of his contemporaries who pursued training in

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<sup>46</sup> Henri Matisse. “Notes of a Painter on his Drawing,” in *Matisse on Art*, ed. Jack D. Flam (Oxford: Phaidon Press Limited, 1973), 81.

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academic realism, he attended classes at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière.<sup>47</sup> Sanyu was the one of the most successful Chinese artists and was admitted into European artistic circles as early as the 1930s. In the 1920s, Sanyu created over two thousand drawings and watercolors, mostly nudes and figures (**figs. 12 and 13**).<sup>48</sup> Some of them were published in Chinese magazines and newspapers in the late 1920s and 1930s. Sanyu preferred to use concise lines and then used several strokes to brush the body in pink colors. Either in styles or in methods, Sanyu, Rodin and Matisse shared ideas in common.

What is unique about Sanyu is that he created these drawings with ink brushes, a typical Chinese artistic material. Rita Wong elaborates on how Sanyu made his drawings: “understanding the attributes of *shuimo* ink and water, Sanyu executed his ink drawings swiftly, in single strokes, to capture the energy, or *qi* 气,<sup>49</sup> of the subject, with secondary regard for details. Intent on improving his drawing skills and expanding his sketching vocabulary, Sanyu started to apply the ‘dry brush’ technique, commonly used in traditional Chinese landscape paintings, to shade and highlight his nudes, imparting a stronger sense of mass and volume.”<sup>50</sup> In my view, *qi* for Sanyu was exactly *qiyun*, or rhythm, which was also Fry and Binyon’s explanation of Chinese art and of Matisse.

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<sup>47</sup> Since 1923, Sanyu began to study drawings at L'Académie de la Grande Chaumière but when he left the studio cannot be clarified. See Rita Wong, *Sanyu Catalogue Raisonné: Drawings and Watercolors* (Taipei: The Li Ching Cultural and Educational Foundation, 2014), 14 -8.

<sup>48</sup> Wong, *Sanyu Catalogue Raisonné: Drawings and Watercolors*, 18.

<sup>49</sup> Qi 气, in her context, could be also translated into rhythm.

<sup>50</sup> Wong, *Sanyu Catalogue Raisonné: Drawings and Watercolors*, 35.



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The Chinese critic Shao Xunmei 邵洵美 (1906-1968) wrote several essays that complimented Sanyu and his drawings. “All the lines of his nudes can speak, and they cry out the anguish of sex!.... Look at the composition! The lines! The shade! The strength! The flesh! Simplicity affirmed by complexity! Complexity embraced by simplicity!”<sup>51</sup> In the same essay, in an extremely vital insight, he wrote “people can feel the warmth of the flesh though Sanyu’s concise lines, as if it were Rodin sculpture come alive!”<sup>52</sup> Although Shao did not connect Rodin’s drawings to Sanyu’s, the strong similarities between these two artists can indeed be felt by Shao.

Another Chinese artist who was fond of drawings is Pang Xunqin, a renowned Chinese painter who later in his career was an arts and crafts educator. In 1921, he studied medicine at Aurora University in Shanghai but later dropped out and decided to study art in France. He attended classes at the Académie Jullian and the Académie de la Grande Chaumière before he returned to China in 1930.

In Pang Xunqin’s memoirs, his experience at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière left a deep impression, especially the drawing method the school taught that shaped him and his early works. He mentioned that Bourdelle had taught him how to make sculptures, but for most of his discussion he remembered the drawing classes in the studio.

He remembered,

I came here, before I got sick. I was sitting on the second row or third row and drew with pen. According to rules, the first hour I made one

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<sup>51</sup> Shao Xunmei 邵洵美, “Jindai yishujie zhong de baobei” 近代艺术界中的宝贝 [A Treasure in the World of Modern Art], in *Jinwu yuekan* 金屋月刊 1, no.3 (March 1929): 85.

<sup>52</sup> Shao, “Jindai yishujie zhong de baobei,” 84.

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drawing, during the second hour I made four, afterwards, every few minutes I made one.... After illness, I tried to draw with ink brush. Each drawing was finished in five minutes in order to practice lines. Sometimes I rapidly add watercolor.<sup>53</sup>

This description approached how Bourdelle recorded Rodin's process of making drawings. Moreover, Pang Xunqin named many of his drawings *suxie* 速写, which in Chinese means drawing swiftly, as distinguished from the typical drawing *sumiao* 素描, which was used to indicate Classical painters in China (**fig. 14**).<sup>54</sup> The process of *sumiao* is much slower and more careful and is a tag that belongs to academic painters. On this point, Pang endeavored to explain the drawing he studied in Paris in a distinguished way, and also sought to establish this method as an expression of the modernists. Pang Xunqin's drawings were published in magazines and newspapers in the 1930s in China.

Drawing using Matisse's and Rodin's techniques were welcomed by Chinese artists who studied in Paris. For instance, Li Jinfa 李金发 (1900-1976), also a sculptor, had studied in Paris in the early twentieth century. He recalled that he went to the Académie de la Grande Chaumière to draw nudes every afternoon.<sup>55</sup> And some others, such as Zhang Xian and Wang Linyi 王临乙 (1908-1997) adopted a similar style. For some Chinese modern artists, they considered this drawing technique to be avant-garde (**figs. 15 and 16**). Thus, when some of them returned to China, this drawing style was

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<sup>53</sup> Pang Xunqin 庞薰琴, *Jiushi zheyang zouguolai de* 就是这样走过来的 [Coming in This Way] (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1988), 100-1.

<sup>54</sup> Pang had published two drawings in *Xingqi wenyi* 星期文艺 in 1931 and named these as *Suxie* 速写. See Pang Xunqin 庞薰琴, "Suxie" 速写 [Drawing], *Xingqi wenyi* 星期文艺, August 15, 1931, Page 2, and Pang Xunqin 庞薰琴, "Suxie" 速写 [Drawing], *Xingqi wenyi* 星期文艺, August 22, 1931, Page 2.

<sup>55</sup> Chen Houcheng 陈厚诚, ed. *Li Jinfa huiyi lu* 李金发回忆录 [The Memoir of Li Jinfa] (Shanghai: Dongfang chubanshe, 1998), 53.

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introduced into artistic circles and it helped to form how the Chinese understood modernism. Although the information about Rodin in Chinese publications was primarily related to his sculptures, the drawings of Henri Matisse were introduced and circulated in the 1930s.

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### Chapter 3. Auguste Rodin's Later Works

The drawings of Bourdelle, Matisse, or other modern Chinese artists can be traced back to an earlier source: Rodin's later drawings. In Rodin's later period, he transformed his praxis from sculpture to drawing. His later drawings are not only the extension of his sculptural creation but also be considered new innovations. He got inspiration from dancers, especially Asian dancers. His exploration of self-expression, the human body and movement were delivered through his works. Furthermore, his later works exerted influence on artists who were in his orbit.

#### From Sculpture to Drawing: Rodin's Transition

Art historical analysis of Rodin's work and thinking about art has been internationally studied since the late nineteenth century. Yet his drawings, also an important part of his artistic production, are not as famous as his sculptures, despite the fact that there are over nine thousand drawings attributed to him. They comprise some one thousand early drawings and black drawings, some two thousand architectural sketches – which he did throughout his life – and some six thousand drawings made between 1896 and 1917, from age fifty-six until his death.<sup>56</sup> Kirk Varnedoe classified

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<sup>56</sup> The early drawings mainly made by pencil, pen and ink from classical sculpture show his study of the body submitted to the rhetoric of the ancients, from which he derived his taste for a healthy and graceful body capable of clarity of expression. See Albert Elsen, "Rodin's Drawings and the Mastery of Abundance," in *The Drawings of Rodin*, eds. Albert Elsen and J.Kirk T. Varnedoe (London: Elek Books Ltd, 1972), 20.

Black drawings made with basically charcoal, ink and gouache between the late 1870's and 1880's, predominantly male, and often gray and black in aesthetic and psychological tone, manifest his urgency to make the language of the body more expressive than beautiful. See Albert Elsen, "Rodin's Drawings and the Mastery of Abundance," 21.

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the vast majority of Rodin's drawings into two basic modes: the imaginative drawings that preoccupied him from his earliest years through the 1880s and the life drawings to which he devoted himself from the mid-1890s until his death.<sup>57</sup> The latter "life drawings" are commonly recognized as his artistic transition. In these drawings, Rodin depicted the contours of nudes using several fluent lines and brushed bodies with flesh color (**fig. 17**). They are elaborated as "de-idealized, removed from academic conventions of beauty and decorum in order to be a vehicle for the study of more natural, truthful movement."<sup>58</sup>

What led Rodin to focus on drawings rather than sculptures was related to his achievements in creating sculpture. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Rodin was gradually accepted by French intellectuals and frequently participated in art and literary circles. Some of his representative sculptures were finished in this time period, including *L'Âge d'Airain* (1877), *Saint Jean-Baptiste* (1880), *La Porte de l'Enfer* (1880-ca.1890), *Le Baiser* (ca.1882), *Les Bourgeois de Calais* (1889), *Monument à Victor Hugo* (1890), and *Monument à Balzac* (1898) (**fig. 18 and fig.19**). Rodin established his reputation through sculpture, yet most of his works were actually commercial bronzes and plasters for which he was contracted and some of them, such as bronze casts, enlargements and reductions were made by his skilled assistants. Drawing was Rodin working for Rodin, not for a sculpture editor, a Victorian client, or

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Also see Christina Buley-Urbe, "The Work in Its Ultimate Term," in *Auguste Rodin: Drawing & Watercolours*, eds. Antoinette Le Normand-Romain and Christina Buley-Urbe (London: Thames & Hudson, 2006), 65.

<sup>57</sup> Kirk Varnedoe, "Rodin's Drawings. The Continuous Line: Modes and Meanings of Rodin's Draftsmanship," in *Rodin: Rediscovered*, ed. Albert E. Elsen (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1981), 153.

<sup>58</sup> Varnedoe, "Rodin's Drawings: The Continuous Line: Modes and Meanings of Rodin's Draftsmanship," 180.

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the state. It was the expression of his aesthetic thought as he sought to understand life and make it understood.<sup>59</sup>

Meanwhile, Rodin began to detect a number of problems in his sculptures and found a particular flaw in his sculpture in the way that amplifying sculptures to a certain degree was detrimental to the whole structure of the objects.<sup>60</sup> Varnedoe thought that the conception of Rodin's life drawing was directly tied to Rodin's rethinking of sculptural principles in the context of his work on Balzac, which was an outgrowth of the same energies that produced his most innovative major sculpture and a new approach to the act of drawing.<sup>61</sup>

### **The Complicated Synthesis: Asia, Dance and Movement**

The majority of Rodin's life drawings deliver a strong sense of movement. Some of his repeated lines on paper remind audiences of a continuous action, which appeared frequently in dance performance and in the new medium of film. His transformation in art paralleled contemporary reforms in dance and in the development of cinematography.

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<sup>59</sup> Albert Elsen, "Drawing and the True Rodin," *Artforum* (February 1972): 66.

<sup>60</sup> Elisabeth Chase Geissbuhler, *Rodin: Later Drawings* (London: Peter Owen limited, 1964), 18.

<sup>61</sup> Rodin's aim was less Balzac's physical likeness than an idea or spirit of the man and a sense of his creative vitality. See "Auguste Rodin: Monument to Balzac," Museum of Modern Art, accessed August 10, 2020, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/80862>. And Kirk Varnedoe, "Rodin's Drawings: The Continuous Line: Modes and Meanings of Rodin's Draftsmanship," 179. Also see Kirk Varnedoe, "Rodin as a Draftsman – A Chronological Perspective," in *The Drawings of Rodin*, eds. Albert Elsen and J.Kirk T. Varnedoe (London: Elek Books Ltd, 1972), 69.

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Juliet Bellow has noticed that in the final twenty-five years of Rodin's career, he frequently praised dance in interviews and articles published in the mass media, waxing eloquently on the way it capitalized on the human body's expressive possibilities.<sup>62</sup> At the same time, she noted that between the 1890s and 1910s, Parisian audiences witnessed a veritable explosion of different types of dance, which can be divided into two phases. In the first phase, new forms of solo art dance by a group of female performers born in North America – including Loïe Fuller, Ruth St. Denis, and Isadora Duncan – arrived in Paris. These women's techniques appeared more simple and more natural than ballet and their vocabularies derived from everyday movements. In the same years, dances from South and South-East Asia, the Middle East and Africa appeared in Paris at temporary expositions as part of France's display and celebration of its colonial empire. The second phase exploded in the 1910s as choreographers across Europe began to experiment with new forms of group dance, either by reforming ballet practice or by inventing alternatives to ballet. While the techniques employed by these dancers and choreographers varied widely, each of the different strands of dance that emerged in Paris around 1900 shaped Rodin's interest in the medium.<sup>63</sup>

Rodin's aesthetic transformation almost exactly paralleled the timeline of the appearance of these dances in Paris. Many of his drawings directly record dancers that were the fountain of his inspiration. In the Rodin Museum's collection, many drawings contain labels that name modern and Asian dancers, and so on. The coincidence in the

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<sup>62</sup> Juliet Bellow, "Beyond Movement: Auguste Rodin and the Dancers of His Time," in *Rodin and Dance: The Essence of Movement*, ed. Alexandra Gerstein (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2016), 41.

<sup>63</sup> Bellow, "Beyond Movement: Auguste Rodin and the Dancers of His Time," 44-5.

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expressions of some the dances' artistic ideas resemble, at some points, Rodin's drawings (**fig. 20**).

As Ann Daly draws from Isadora Duncan's many statements, dancing must be successive, consisting of constantly evolving movements, and dance should be the natural language of the "soul." The source of dance is "nature."<sup>64</sup> Duncan emphasized freedom in dance and combined dance performance with personalities. Her conceptions were clearly distinct from the requirements of classical ballet. Her core ideas are quite similar to how Rodin elaborated his thought about drawing.

In an interview with Paul Gsell, Rodin said,

It is a false idea that drawing in itself can be beautiful. It is only beautiful through the truths and the feelings that it translates. The crowd admires artists, who, strong in subject, elegantly pen contours destitute of significance, and who plant their figures in pretentious poses. One is ecstatic about poses that one never notices in nature and that one judges artistic because they recall those wiggles in which Italian models indulge when they ask for sessions. That is what is generally called beautiful drawing. It is really only sleight of hand, good to astonish the onlookers/gawkers.<sup>65</sup>

In this passage, Rodin criticized the stylized techniques that deviate from the truthful understanding of nature, the objective world. Thus, Rodin said "it is only beautiful through the truths and the feelings that it translates." Up until Duncan, in theatrical dance the only alternative to technical mastery was, at best, amateurism and, at worst, incompetence. Duncan challenged the paradigm of technique with the "Natural." It

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<sup>64</sup> Ann Daly, "Isadora Duncan's Dance Theory," *Dance Research Journal* 26, no. 2 (Autumn, 1994): 27-8.

<sup>65</sup> Auguste Rodin, *Rodin on Art and Artists, Conversations with Paul Gsell* (New York: Dover Publications, 1983), 44.



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meant dancers would engage a universal rhythm that embraced the entire cosmos.<sup>66</sup>

Like Rodin, Duncan also emphasizes an “artless” aesthetic.

In other segments, including his discussion of drawing, Rodin argues:

For my work of modelling, I have not only to possess a very complete *knowledge* of the human form, but also a deep *feeling* for every aspect of it? I have, as it were, to *incorporate* the lines of the human body, and they must become part of myself, deeply seated in my instincts. I must become permeated with the secrets of all its contours, all the masses that it presents to the eye. I must feel them at the end of my finger. All this must flow naturally from my eye to my hand. Only then can I be certain that I understand. Now look! What is this drawing? Not once in describing the shape of that mass did I shift my eyes from the model. Why? Because I wanted to be sure that nothing evaded my grasp of it. Not a thought about the technical problem of representing it on paper could be allowed to arrest the flow of my feelings about it, from my eye to my hand. The moment I drop my eyes that flow stops. That is why my drawings are only my way of testing myself. They are my way of proving to myself how far this incorporation of the subtle secrets of the human form has taken place within me. I try to see the figure as a mass, as volume. It is this voluminousness that I try to understand. This is why, as you see, I sometimes wash a tint over my drawings. This completes the impression of massiveness, and helps me to ascertain how far I have succeeded in grasping the movement as a mass .... My object is to test to what extent my hands already feel what my eyes see.<sup>67</sup>

Rodin tries to express that his drawings are a direct reflection of his instinct and parts of himself. This is exactly what Duncan said about her dancing: “dance should be the natural language of the ‘soul’.” Moreover, Rodin’s idea of “grasping the movement as a mass”, in my understanding, means to record continuous movements as a mass, not just a moment of static gesture. It is basically identical to Duncan’s “dancing must be successive, consisting of constantly evolving movements.” Their thoughts on

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<sup>66</sup> Daly, “Isadora Duncan’s Dance Theory.” 27.

<sup>67</sup> Anthony M. Ludovici, *Personal Reminiscences of Auguste Rodin* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, W., 1926), 138-9.

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movement might reflect artists' general consideration about how art can respond to changes in the world. Tom Gunning thinks that the emergence and transformation of cinema that took place in its first two decades of the twentieth century not only introduced new technologies and modes of representation, but also inspired people to think broadly about how motion pictures created new ways of conceiving the world and intersected with new ways of making art.<sup>68</sup>

Rodin's ideas of representing movement were perhaps provoked by the creation of cinematography because the camera could precisely and accurately represent objects. One of Rodin's friend, Loïe Fuller, might have inspired Rodin (**fig. 21**). She was a revolutionary dancer who made use of new technologies. Fuller was one of the first of many American modern dancers who traveled to Europe to seek recognition in the 1890s. One of her most successful dances was "the Serpentine Dance." Fuller discovered, by accident, the effects that stage lights cast from different angles on the gauze fabric of a costume she had assembled for her performance in the play *Quack M.D.* and developed the new form in response to the audience's reaction. During the dance, she held her skirt in her hands and waved it around revealing her from the inside. The Serpentine Dance was a frequent subject in early motion pictures. The Lumière Brothers filmed Fuller's performance in 1896.<sup>69</sup> The performance was dynamic and showed an endless rhythmic movement. Thus, the interpretation on Fuller's dances by

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<sup>68</sup> Tom Gunning, "Loïe Fuller and the Art of Motion: Body, Light, Electricity, and the Origins of Cinema," in *Camera Obscura, Camera Lucida*, eds. Richard Allen and Malcolm Turvey (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), 75.

<sup>69</sup> Natasha Moura, "The Serpentine Dance and Loïe Fuller," accessed August 1, 2020, <https://womennart.com/2017/07/05/the-serpentine-dance-and-loie-fuller/>.

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the Symbolists emphasized its role as a new art of motion, in which no form remained solid or static but rather dissolved into a continually changing spectacle of metamorphosis that unfolded before the audience.<sup>70</sup> Technology pushed artists to seek new forms and ideas that had not been excavated. In some of Rodin's drawings, Rodin drew repeated lines to trace the contours of a figure in motion and brushed the bodies with bright colors that resembled stage lighting and the whole picture conveys a strong sense of movement, reminiscent of Fuller's dancing (**fig. 22**).

In the first decade of the twentieth century, Rodin's search for new forms of motion led him to Asian art. Since 1900, he was interested in foreign cultures, especially Asian culture. In 1900, Rodin placed four modern casts of a monumental Buddha from a temple on the island of Java in a prominent location in the garden and outside his home in Meudon in the southwestern suburbs of Paris, which was part of the Exposition Universelle of 1900. And in 1906, he drew a large body of drawings of Cambodian dancers, based on the seventy-seven musicians and court dancers who had arrived in France with the King of Cambodia and his daughter the Princess for the Colonial Exposition in Marseille (**fig. 23**). Rodin was attracted by them, and said: "The fine, small gestures of their graceful limbs had a strange and marvelous beauty."<sup>71</sup> "I contemplated them in ecstasy. What emptiness they left in me! When they were gone I was in cold and darkness, I thought they had carried away the beauty of the world."<sup>72</sup> At roughly the same time, Rodin made a group of about 20 nude movement studies in

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<sup>70</sup> Gunning, "Loïe Fuller and the Art of Motion: Body, Light, Electricity, and the Origins of Cinema," 80.

<sup>71</sup> Rodin, *Rodin on Art and Artists, Conversations with Paul Gsell*, 48.

<sup>72</sup> Geissbuhler, *Rodin: Later Drawings*, 37.

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pencil of the Japanese actress Hanako, whom he had seen in a performance of the play *Jingoro Hidari* (La poupée de Tokyo; Tokyo doll) (**fig. 24**).<sup>73</sup> Rodin said, “her muscles stand out as prominently as those of a fox terrier; her sinews are so developed that the joints to which they are attached have a thickness equal to the members themselves. She is so strong that she can rest as long as she pleases on one leg, the other raised at right angles in front of her. She looks as if rooted in the ground like a tree. Her anatomy is quite different from that of a European, but, nevertheless, very beautiful in its singular power.”<sup>74</sup> In 1911, the French archaeologist Victor Goloubev (1878-1945) sent him a small series of photographs of two eleventh-century Chola bronzes from Southern India that represented the Dancing Shiva. Rodin focused especially on Asian dance and he tried to absorb some inspiration from these dancers in order to create new forms of expressing motion in his drawings.

In summary, Rodin’s ambition was to explore the essence of movement. In his later period, he consciously propagandized his fresh thoughts on how to present motion on paper. His assistant and friend Bourdelle was one of his most important witnesses to Rodin’s later creation and recorded a lot of first hand material.

### **Rodin’s Method**

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<sup>73</sup> Alexandra Gerstein, ed., *Rodin and Dance: The Essence of Movement* (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2016), 104.

<sup>74</sup> In today’s context, the comparison of Japanese women and fox terrier is inappropriate. Rodin, *Rodin on Art and Artists, Conversations with Paul Gsell*, 48.

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Antoine Bourdelle was French sculptor and in 1893, Rodin hired him as a "praticien" (sculptor's assistant) to help Rodin meet a flood of commissions. The good relationship between the two can be found in their letters, which they wrote to each other from 1893 to 1913 and in which they recorded their ideas about art and life.

Bourdelle was the first disciple chosen by Rodin to interpret his intentions in these drawings. In 1907, Rodin had his first drawing exhibition at the Bernheim Jeune Gallery. Following Rodin's request, Bourdelle wrote the essay "Les dessins du sculpteur Rodin" (The Drawings of the Sculptor Rodin), which was published in *La Grande Revue* in January 1908. This essay is a comprehensive inquiry into Rodin's drawings. In order to compose an accurate account, Bourdelle made careful preparations before he started to write. He studied the drawings in Rodin's house, "La Goulette," and looked at numerous drawings, composing three long pages of notes.<sup>75</sup>

Bourdelle made a very detailed description of Rodin's drawing method, and he wrote:

Rodin's hand begins only when the mind has grasped the whole. A pause precedes his first drawing gesture. Then, holding his long pencil lightly and with his gaze still focused on the model, Rodin made his famous outline in on almost continuous stroke; and immediately he let the page fall to begin another. The pages he let fall now were no practice sheets but real drawings on paper, usually ten by twelve inches. Drawings fell to the ground like autumn leaves from an ancient tree and were left in a trail on the grass when Rodin came into the studio, bearing perhaps only two. Such chosen drawings Rodin often covered with an empty page and held against the windowpane while he retraced his outline. And sometimes, either as the first or final gesture of his drawing, he expressed the massiveness by passing a brushful of flesh watercolor over the whole figure.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Geissbuhler, *Rodin: Later Drawings*, 52-3.

<sup>76</sup> Geissbuhler, *Rodin: Later Drawings*, 29.

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Albert Elsen points out that this drawing method departed from the conventions of academic drawing.

The condition of drawing inherited by Rodin which he transformed was not just that of the artist's reliance upon imagination enriched by a cultivated memory, but memory itself. In Rodin's time, as well as in that of Giacometti, when the artists drew from a live model, memory functioned on several levels. As he looked away from the subject and to his paper, the artists had to hold some detail or passage in mind. Academically trained artists had to remember to improve upon nature and how to impose on the figure past styles, a corrected aplomb, and other notions of perfection and beauty. Problems of technique could further break concentration of the subject.

Rodin's invention, his new premise for drawing, was that the artist could work without breaking visual contact with the model. He could draw *continuously* rather than in an interrupted fashion. To bring his art into greater conformity with nature, Rodin evolved a natural way to draw.<sup>77</sup>

In another essay, Elsen commented that "good drawing showed the results of patient labor and conveyed to Rodin truth, simplicity and the essential. Truth meant expressing not only the character of the model but also the artist's feeling, as well as the accord of the contours with each other and nature. Simplicity meant the mastery but not the elimination of details, so that one could judge quickly the rightness of the total effect. The essential included the establishment of the main figural masses and their relationships, and of the pivotal points of movement and balance, and capturing the right gesture that evoked the whole attitude."<sup>78</sup>

This new perception can also be seen through comments by some avant-garde artists in the first three decades of the twentieth century. Bourdelle played a critical role in introducing this new method to the younger generation.

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<sup>77</sup> Elsen, "Drawing and the True Rodin," 67.

<sup>78</sup> Elsen, "Rodin's Drawings and the Mastery of Abundance," 22.



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## **Chapter 4: Roger Fry's Comments on Drawings and Chinese Art**

In the early twentieth century, Roger Fry was inspired by Chinese art in process of generating his system of modern art. This work mainly reflected on his interpretations of Matisse's paintings and drawings, and incorporated critical ideas from theories of Chinese art. It is not a coincidence, and his action was related to his artistic circles. In the same period, British academic circles were fascinated by Asian art. This phenomenon guided Fry to learn knowledge about Asian art and applied some East-Asian ideas into his analysis of modern art.

### **Fry's Articles on Matisse's Drawings**

The British critic Roger Fry was probably the first person to write articles to advocate for modern drawing in the early twentieth century. Fry was best known as the champion of the movement termed post-Impressionism. He first came into contact with the work of the French painter Paul Cézanne in 1906, and the experience changed the course of his life. He began to publish articles on the works of Cézanne, Paul Gauguin, Henri Matisse, and Vincent van Gogh. In these painters he saw the merging of the structural understanding of the classical artists with the colour explorations of the Impressionists. Upon his return to London, Fry associated with the Bloomsbury group and in November 1910 he organized the first of two painting exhibitions that were to revolutionize aesthetics in England for the Grafton Galleries. The uproar over "Manet and the Post-impressionists" was considerable; it removed Fry from the ranks of



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traditional and academic critics and propelled him into the vanguard of art criticism. A second exhibition of a similar nature opened in October 1912.

In 1913, following a precedent that had been set by William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement, Fry organized a group of young artists into a collective called the Omega Workshops. The goal of the collective was to infuse the innovative aesthetics of Post-Impressionism into the design of everyday functional objects (such as drapery, furniture, and china). The bright colours and ornamental patterns used by these artists marked a fresh departure from the more restrained design of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Omega remained in operation until 1919.

Fry continued to lecture, travel, and paint throughout his life. His legacy is a body of art criticism and theory that includes *Vision and Design* (1920), *Transformations* (1926), *Cézanne* (1927), *Henri Matisse* (1930), and several other collections of lectures. In 1933 he was appointed Slade Professor of Fine Art at Cambridge.<sup>79</sup>

In the first two decades, Fry spoke up for broadening the territory of modern drawing in the art world. His earliest polemic in favor of the drawings of Matisse can be found in his 1918 article, “Line as a Means of Expression in Modern Art.” The contribution of this article is that Fry tried to create a system that can distinguish modern drawings from classic academic drawing.

In the following paragraph, Fry summarized that classic drawing followed principles, such as “anatomical facts” and “representational accuracy,” whereas, his

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<sup>79</sup> See Britannica Academic, s.v. "Roger Fry," accessed August 1, 2020, <https://academic-eb-com.ubproxy.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/levels/collegiate/article/Roger-Fry/35531>.

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contemporaries obviously pursued a totally opposite approach that was against these principles.

He argued,

I ventured to suggest that, since the Renaissance had established a certain norm of representation drawing had ceased to be possible as a complete means of expression, and that even great linear designers like Ingres, men whose supreme expression lay precisely in linear rhythm and balance – had only attained to full expression in painted pictures which allowed of a long process of elimination and restatement. I suggested that this was due to the assumption that in every drawing of the figure certain anatomical facts were held sacred, that at whatever cost to rhythmical expression, or even constructional solidity, due reference must be made to these facts. It also seemed to me likely that the revolution in art which our century has witnessed would, precisely because it has released the artists from this particular bond of representational accuracy, enable the artists to find fuller expression in line drawing than has been the case since the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>80</sup>

Continually, Fry discussed that his contemporaries used drawing in “an entirely new manner prompted by the new conception of what is implied in the artist’s vision. It is in the work of Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso that we find these principles dominating their linear designs, and both of them use drawing as an independent and complete statement of an artistic idea.”<sup>81</sup> And Matisse’s drawing had “a tremulous intensity of life and a rhythmic harmony.”<sup>82</sup>

Fry analyzed Matisse elaborately, and proposed that Matisse had two modes of drawing that can be called *calligraphic* and *structural* (**figs.25 and 26**).<sup>83</sup> In explaining

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<sup>80</sup> Roger Fry, “Line as a Means of Expression in Modern Art,” *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 33, no. 189 (Dec 1918): 201-2.

<sup>81</sup> Fry, “Line as a Means of Expression in Modern Art,” *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 33, no. 189 (Dec 1918): 202.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *The Glass of Flowers* represents *calligraphic*. *The Portrait* represents *Structural*.

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the *calligraphic*, Fry said that, “for the purely ideal, intelligible and logical drawing would be a mere mathematical diagram of straight lines and known curves and on the other hand the purely literal accurate drawing would be exactly as chaotic and unintelligible as nature,” whereas, “the great draughtsman does obtain a lucid and recognizable order without losing the fullness, the compactness, and infinity of life.<sup>84</sup> The quality of line which, while having an intelligible rhythm, does not become mechanical is called its sensitiveness. And here the most obvious thing is clear that the line is capable of infinite variation, of adapting itself to form at every point of its course.”<sup>85</sup> In further discussion, he linked Matisse’s calligraphic drawing to Asian art.

We have never held calligraphy in the esteem that the Chinese and Persians did, we think at once of the vulgar flourishes of the old-fashioned writing master. But, in fact, there is a possibility of expression in pure line, and its rhythm may be of infinite different kinds expressive of infinite varieties of mood and condition. We call any line in which the quality aimed at is attained with complete assurance calligraphic, but this omits the really important point of what kind of quality is so attained, whether it is fine and sensitive or brutal and self-assertive. So that in calling this drawing calligraphic I have not really damned it, since it happens that the quality of Matisse’s line is so hypersensitive, so discreet, so contrary to all bravura or display, that, as we have seen, it actually deceives that innocent into supposing that it is simply incompetent.<sup>86</sup>

Considering the “structural drawings,” he wrote that,

If we turn to Matisse’s other drawings we find a quite different treatment – here the line is much more deliberate, much slower in *tempo*, less exhilarating and attractive in itself. Sensitive it remains, but in this case we are much more concerned with the position of the lines, their power of evoking the idea of volume and mass than with the qualities of the lines in themselves. It is a more definitely plastic and constructive design.

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<sup>84</sup> The purely ideal, intelligible and logical drawing here directs to academic drawing.

<sup>85</sup> Fry, “Line as a Means of Expression in Modern Art,” 202. What Fry here wanted to certify is “Matisse’s calligraphic drawing.”

<sup>86</sup> Fry, “Line as a Means of Expression in Modern Art,” 202-6.

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It is typical of the kind of synthesis which has become possible to the modern artist who regarded no particular facts of nature as sacred, and who is free therefore to aim at the elimination of all but the essential forms, not of description but of plastic construction. Such a design coheres not by the description of those forms which we know to be anatomically functional, but by the discovery of those ultimate elements which give to the whole vision its plastic validity, those lines, in fact, which are plastically, not anatomically functional. It is for this reason that such a drawing seems to me more complete as an expression of the passion for form than almost any drawing that one could name by the master who followed the tradition of the Renaissance.<sup>87</sup>

In the end, he summarized that,

The results of the modern attempts at linear design. First, a more closely knit synthetic construction of form – a unity more vigorous, precisely because the artist is not at the mercy of any particular facts of nature, but must determine afresh in each instance what is essential and what is accidental. Secondly, this constructive design is expressed in terms of a rhythm which is freer, more subtle, more elastic and more adaptable than any of the rhythms that have obtained for some centuries. This change in the general quality of rhythm in modern drawing might perhaps be compared to the change from regular verse to free verse or to poetical prose.<sup>88</sup>

Fry explained his ideas further in a follow up article in 1919. He clearly elaborated on the two aesthetic elements, *calligraphic* and *structural*, and argued that “the calligraphic line is the record of a gesture, and is, in fact, so pure and complete a record of the gesture that we can follow it with the same kind of pleasure as we follow the movements of a dancer. It tends more than any other quality of design to express the temperamental and subjective aspect of the idea, whereas in structural line the artist shows himself as more or less completely absorbed in the objective realization of form.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Fry, “Line as a Means of Expression in Modern Art,” 206.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Roger Fry, “Lines as a Means of Expression in Modern Art (Continued),” *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseur* 34, no. 191 (Feb. 1919) : 62.

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He suggests that “modern developments of art had given a new impetus to drawing both by setting up a freer, more elastic idea of calligraphy and a more logical conception of the nature of plastic unity.”<sup>90</sup>

For Asian artists, his views are not unfamiliar. Many concepts that he raised were applied to analyze drawings that are similar with the essence of Asian aesthetics. Was Fry inspired by Asian art?

### **Fry’s Theory and Inspiration from Chinese Art**

While Fry created his critical system of drawings, he actually borrowed ideas from Chinese art. This is tightly connected to his activities in the first two decades of the twentieth century. In 1903, Fry, with a group of art historians and connoisseurs including Bernard Berenson and Herbert Horne, founded the *Burlington Magazine*. Their aim was to cover all aspects of the fine and decorative arts, to combine rigorous scholarship with critical insight, and to treat the art of the present with the same seriousness as the art of the past.<sup>91</sup> From the first issue in March 1903 until his death in 1934, he was an especially active member of its consultative committee, and also served as the co-editor from 1909 to 1919.<sup>92</sup>

In the *Burlington Magazine*, Fry particularly provided a much-needed and much-desired forum for forming new conceptions of Chinese art. The simple fact that Chinese

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> “About the Magazine,” *The Burlington Magazine*, accessed August 16, <https://www.burlington.org.uk/about-us/about-the-magazine>.

<sup>92</sup> Caroline Elam, “‘A More and More Important Work’: Roger Fry and The Burlington Magazine,” *The Burlington Magazine* 145, no. 1200, centenary issue (March 2003) : 142.

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art appeared in the magazine regularly, issue in and issue out, made Chinese art an essential part of the magazine. Many of the editors, editorial consultants, and contributors to the magazine were prominent experts on Chinese art, which was quite unusual in this period, and the magazine published from its start many articles on Chinese art by almost all the up-and-coming Western scholars of Chinese art. Contributors included eminent names such as R.L. Hobson, Laurence Binyon (1869 - 1943), Arthur Waley, S.W. Bushell, Friedrich Hirth, Edward Dillon, E. Alfred Jones, W. Perceval Yetts, Arthur Morrison, Friedrich Perzynski, R. Petrucci, Kimpei Takeuchi, Lewis Einstein, Frederick W. Coburn, Orvar Karlbeck, and Berthold Laufer. These sinologists' writings were published alongside leading art scholars Bernard Berenson, Osvald Sirén and Erwin Panofsky.<sup>93</sup>

In April 1910, the editorial article was titled "Oriental Art."<sup>94</sup> In it, the editor claimed:

There are signs that the present rapidly increasing preoccupation with Oriental art will be more intense, and produce a profounder impression on our own views, than any previous phase of Orientalism. For one thing, we are more disillusioned, more tired with our own tradition, which seems to have landed us at length in a too frequent representation of the obvious or the sensational. To us the art of the East presents the hope of discovering a more spiritual, more expressive idea of design.

Certainly, the signs of this Oriental renaissance are numerous. The British Museum, already so fortunate in the possession of the earliest known masterpiece of Chinese painting, has just acquired the collection made by Frau Wegener in Peking. It is of very varied interest and quality, with examples of many periods from the eighth to the eighteenth centuries; and it undoubtedly contains some very remarkable works of art. Among the most interesting is a painting of the Tang Dynasty, which

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<sup>93</sup> Hsiu-Ling Lin, "Reconceptualizing British Modernism: The Modernist Encounter with Chinese Art" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1999), 115-6.

<sup>94</sup> Fry at that time was the co-editor.

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hitherto has only been known here by report and by copies. We shall hope before long to devote some articles to this important acquisition. In the meantime we must express our gratification that, through the energy of Mr. Sidney Colvin and Mr. Laurence Binyon, the national collection has been so notably enriched in this great classic art of pictorial design. It is rash to prophesy what China may still have in store for us, but everything indicates the probability that such masterpieces will in the near future command prices comparable with those of the greatest European painting.”<sup>95</sup>

The essay not only lays out the growing interest in Oriental art in the early twentieth century but also proposed an idea: an Oriental renaissance. “Oriental renaissance” is indeed an ambitious suggestion. It shows the strategy of editorial group of the *Burlington Magazine* and their concerns about Asian art.

Fry’s writings on Chinese art also appeared in the same period. For example, in a book introducing Chinese art published in 1925, some of his core ideas shared commons his views on Matisse’s drawings. He repeatedly used terms like *rhythm*, *linear rhythm*, and *plastic forms* to advance his arguments. The book *Chinese Art* is an introductory review of painting, ceramics, textiles, bronzes, sculpture and jade and so on. Fry was responsible for writing the introduction. In it, his debate was built upon the question of the relationship of Chinese and European art, thus, he summarized three principles of Chinese art:

The first thing, I think that strikes one is the immense part played in Chinese art by linear rhythm. The contour is always the most important feature of the form.

Next we note that that rhythm is almost always of a flowing, continuous character.

Finally, I would note a peculiarity in their plastic feeling which it is difficult to describe clearly. It is not that they are lacking in the imaginative grasp of three-dimensional forms, but that the mental

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<sup>95</sup> Editorial article, “Oriental Art,” *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 17, no. 85 (April 1910): 3.

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schema on which they are constructed differs from the characteristic mental schema of European workers in the round.<sup>96</sup>

In his later explanation of these three core points, some arguments are splendid: “now a Chinese picture, even of the later and more highly sophisticated periods – and by the way Chinese art seems to have been sophisticated from the remotest antiquity – never loses the evidence of the linear rhythm as the main method of expression,” “a painting was always conceived as the visible record of a rhythmic gesture. It was the graph of a dance executed by the hand,” and “When we Europeans refer to plasticity we talk, naturally, in term of planes, but I doubt if the Chinese artist has ever conceived of this method of handling plastic forms. I do not know what language he uses, but I suspect he would even in speaking, refer shapes to cylinders, spheres and ellipsoids.”<sup>97</sup>

Coincidentally, these paragraphs include some of the same expressions that we can find in his statements on Matisse’s modern drawings. Although the article was published later than his pieces about drawing, the inspiration of Chinese art might have occurred earlier than what he put to paper.

The scholar Laurence Binyon, an English poet, dramatist, and art historian, and a pioneer in the European study of Far Eastern Painting, deserves additional attention. In 1893, he began to work at the British Museum, where he eventually became the director of Oriental prints and drawings. His first book on Oriental art was *Painting in the Far East* (1908), which is considered a classic in East Asian art history.

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<sup>96</sup> Roger Fry, “Chinese Art,” in *Chinese Art: An Introductory Review of Painting, Ceramics, Textiles, Bronzes, Sculpture, Jade, Etc.*, ed. R.R. Tatlock (London: Burlington Magazine, 1925), 2.

<sup>97</sup> Roger Fry, “Chinese Art,” 2-3.



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In the chapters that introduce 4<sup>th</sup> century Chinese paintings in this book, he particularly analyses Gu Kaizhi 顾恺之 (Ca.345-406) and his work, *Admonitions of the Instructress to the Court Ladies* (*Nüshi zhen tu* 女史箴图) (fig. 27). Binyon probably encountered the work as part of his job, because in 1903 the British Museum acquired this critical masterpiece, considered as one of the most important treasures of the museum.<sup>98</sup> It perhaps led Binyon to spend significant time researching art theory and style from the period between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century in Chinese art. In subsequent chapters, he elaborated a criterion for the Chinese painting, *six canons* (*liufa* 六法), produced by the painter Xie He 谢赫 (Active ca.500 -535?) in the sixth century. He wrote:

The Six Canons of Hsieh Ho crystallise the conceptions of art which had already long pervaded the minds of his countrymen in a less definite form, and have been unanimously accepted by posterity. First, then, comes rhythmic vitality, or, as Mr. Okakura translates it, “the life-movement of the spirit through the rhythm of things.” Next comes organic structure. The creative spirit incarnates itself in a pictorial conception, which thereby takes on the organic structure of life. Third comes the law of conformity with nature; fourth, appropriate colouring; fifth, arrangement; sixth, finish.<sup>99</sup>

The first canon, *qiyunshengdong* 气韵生动, is translated here as “Rhythmic vitality” or “the life-movement of the spirit through the rhythm of things.”

Coincidentally, Fry reviewed Binyon’s 1910 book, “Oriental Art.” Martin Powers thought that in this essay, Fry’s remarks on Asian art could be construed as an early

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<sup>98</sup> This work was believed to be a 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> century copy version of the original work attributed to Gu Kaizhi. It is a handscroll painting in nine scenes (originally twelve) illustrating the *Nüshi zhen* (*Admonitions of the Instructress to the Court Ladies*), a text composed by Zhang Hua (c. CE 232-300).

<sup>99</sup> Laurence Binyon, *Painting in the Far East* (London: Edward Arnold, 1908), 66.

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manifesto of modernism and the term rhythm that Fry applied in his comments is a Binyonesque inflection.<sup>100</sup>

Fry argued:

No one could look even at the reproduction given in Mr. Binyon's book of a painting of a dancing girl without feeling the greatness and originality of Matabei,<sup>101</sup> without recognizing the spontaneity and force of the imaginative pulse which here realizes so intensely the vital unity of rhythmic movement and presents it in forms so austere and nobly restrained.<sup>102</sup>

Thus, Powers thought, "rhythmic movement" here refers to the "rhythm" of Binyon's book, a term implying spontaneous, evocative, bodily motion.<sup>103</sup>

To conclude, in Fry's comments on Matisse's drawings in the 1910s and 1920s, he directly borrows early Chinese art theories to interpret modern drawings. His efforts were apparently built on the translation and introduction of East Asian art in his circle, and especially Binyon's thought. From Fry's point of view, Chinese art itself has the charisma of the modern. Fry's theory appeared parallelly with some thoughts from the most famous artists in Paris, and they shared commons. These thoughts encountered with Chinese art theory in the context of the early twentieth century.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, drawing gradually emerged from its status as a pre-stage in the creation of oil paintings and came to be considered an independent genre. A large number of modern artists tried to use drawings to express their artistic ideas, and the female nude drawing was the most popular theme for artists.

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<sup>100</sup> Martin Powers, "The Cultural Politics of the Brushstroke," *The Art Bulletin* 95, no. 2 (June 2013): 319.

<sup>101</sup> Iwasa Matabei (1578-1650) was a Japanese artist who specialized in genre scenes of historical events and illustrations of classical Chinese and Japanese literature, as well as portraits.

<sup>102</sup> Roger Fry, "Oriental Art," *Quarterly Review* 212, no. 422 (January 1910): 232-3.

<sup>103</sup> Powers, "The Cultural Politics of the Brushstroke," 320.

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Compared to the classic artists, these modern artists focused on body movement and self-expression. This movement should be dated to Auguste Rodin, who thrived in Paris and even disseminated his work to Vienna. Current research trends have not focused on this phenomenon, but nevertheless discussion of individual artists such as Auguste Rodin, Henri Matisse, Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele and their drawings has become more common in art history. Yet there is no study that tries to connect their drawing work into a single frame, to discuss their relationship and connections and to try to discover their intentions in making drawings. At the same time, most Asian Modernists who came to Europe, especially Chinese modernists, welcomed this kind of drawing when they arrived to study in Paris, especially the work of Henri Matisse who was seen as an artistic model for most of the Chinese modernists in Paris. When I map together these artists, who normally are discussed as parts of different groups, I find a clear thread in the early twentieth century: the exploration of modern drawing not only existed in the France-Austria axis but also covered the Japan-China axis. At the same time, the consensus that Modernism was generated in Europe, in this case, does not seem to work anymore. It circulated in the early twentieth century, when Europeans were inspired by East Asian art and, at the same time, Asian artists were also enlightened by European art.

European artists were apparently partially inspired by Asian art, and they borrowed pictorial resources or philosophical ideas from Asia. From the reverse angle, this is also the reason why modern drawing was readily accepted by Asian modern artists rather than other modern styles or genres. Those artists could find their own

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modern cultural identities and show empathy through studying Matisse's drawings. Thus, there was apparently a circulated modernism in the early twentieth century, and European artists picked up ideas and art forms from Asian art and adapted them into a modern aesthetic, which was eventually received by Asian artists and brought back to Asia. In this situation, whether European modernism or Asian modernism, both shared a common cultural reception, which I think led to the encounter of modernists in the early twentieth century.

In Rodin's later period, he spent most of his time creating drawings rather than sculptures. His motivation might have come from two aspects: the first is his own pursuit of exploring expression in art, the second was the appearance of photography and film, leading to the sense that the position of art needed to be re-defined. Rodin also sought some changes. In order to accomplish his transformation from sculpture to drawing, Rodin sought inspiration from dance and the human body. Among them, Asian dancers were one of the most important references for his creation. After 20 years of experiment, his style became mature in the early twentieth century and was learnt by some French artists such as Antonie Bourdelle and Henri Matisse. Henri Matisse is known as his lines. Although he denied he followed Rodin, the truth is that he tried to approach to Rodin in his early period, and Rodin and Matisse shared a lot of similarities in drawing styles. Antonie Bourdelle, as the first interpreter of Rodin's drawings, brought Rodin's method to Montparnasse, which was the center of modern art in the early twentieth century, and where Matisse, Picasso and Modigliani were active. Bourdelle, as a tutor in his studio in Montparnasse, instructed and influenced many

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artists around the world who came to Paris to study in the early twentieth century, especially East Asian artists, and many Chinese artists memorized the teaching method of his studio. His technique was similar to how Rodin made drawings, and from a visual analysis, their styles share similarities.

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## **Part II: Chinese Decorative Art in Vienna and Viennese Painter in China**

Between 1910 and 1930, a singular atmosphere appeared in Viennese artistic circles. A large number of modern visual artists from the Vienna Secession and the Vienna Workshop, such as painters, designers, and performers, applied Chinese elements to their artworks and designs. The long list of such artists includes Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele, Hans Böhler, Emil Orlik, Julius Zimpel, Eleonore Zuckerkandl, Mathilde Flögl, Josef Wimmer-Wisgrill, and Richard Teschner, among others. This atmosphere Vienna was extraordinary. First, art historians have not noticed it before. Second, the Chinese objects they applied, such as woodblock prints, porcelain, and textiles, which are not fine arts but applied arts, became the core materials to create modern artworks and designs.

In aiming to compete with France and Great Britain in the European market in the second half of the nineteenth century, Austrians wished to industrialize and produce advanced modern crafts. This led them to build an applied arts school and museum. In order to enrich their collections, the Austrian government organized at least two expeditions to explore and collect objects from East Asia. At the same time, Austrian upper-class and intellectual circles retained their interest in Chinese culture and continually extended their private Chinese art collection via art dealers and individual trips. With their efforts and enthusiasm for Chinese culture, Chinese literature and poetry were translated into German. This helped artists and designers to understand Chinese culture and art and properly apply Chinese elements. This atmosphere

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appeared in the same period when some Parisians started to be interested in Chinese culture and art.

The enormous contribution that Chinese art made had a revolutionary effect in prompting the Vienna Secession and the Vienna Workshop to shape their styles. Compared to European ornament, Chinese ornaments always have flat colours, simple forms, and bold outlines. These elements inspired Viennese artists to develop a new artistic discourse that helped them to separate from European classic art. The evidence can be found in the flatness of Klimt's paintings and the contours he used to draw bodies. Emil Orlik learned perspective and techniques from Chinese landscape paintings. Other members in the Vienna Workshop simplified their patterns by referring to Chinese patterns from Chinese porcelain and embroidery. At the same time, Viennese also visited China and trained Chinese artists. They tried to integrate European art into Chinese culture and make it more acceptable to Chinese people. Many stories with Western motifs are embedded in the themes of Chinese painting. At the same time, these paintings are also quite decorative and are fundamentally different from traditional Chinese literati paintings, which may have also been impacted by the artistic atmosphere in Vienna at that time. Therefore, as the second-largest modern art center outside Paris in the early twentieth century, Vienna is also inextricably linked with China. The artists on both sides are looking for inspiration from each other's culture based on their own artistic strategies, and creating their modern art. This is another typical case of cultural interaction between Europe and China in the early twentieth century.

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## **Chapter 5. Chinese Decorative Art in Vienna, 1860-1890**

This chapter introduces museum and individual collection of Chinese decorative art in Vienna in the late nineteenth century. Viennese museum and personal collection targeted on Chinese art crafts rather than fine arts. It is parts of their national strategy, which focused on developing their industry. At the same time, these collections became the visual resource for the Viennese artists and designers who applied Chinese elements in their works and designs.

### **The Early Chinese Collection in the Applied Art Museum and Oriental Museum**

Since the Industrial Revolution began in Great Britain in the mid-eighteenth century, Britain emerged as the world's leading commercial nation, controlling a global trading empire with colonies in North America and Africa, and with political influence on the Indian subcontinent through the activities of the East India Company. With the progress of technology, it accelerated the transformation of the Great Britain into a modern society.

Around the mid- nineteenth century, in order to establish and show its leadership position in the international industrial system, Britain hosted the first Universal Exposition in London in 1851, organized by Prince Albert, Henry Cole, Francis Henry, George Wallis, Charles Dilke and other members of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce as a celebration of modern industrial technology and design. After, a selection of objects from this exhibition was purchased to form the core of a new Museum of Manufactures, which opened its doors



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in 1852. This museum was named the South Kensington Museum, which was the origin of the Victoria & Albert Museum. The museum served as the model for modern art and crafts museums. Its mission is to educate the public and inspire British designers and manufacturers. The success of the first Universal Exposition stimulated competitors in Europe, such as France and Austria-Hungary Empire, and they prepared to catch up with Great Britain.

Compared to Great Britain, the Austrian Empire, in the hinterland of the European continent, was relatively conservative in its trade policy. The isolation of the domestic market from the international market for luxury goods had been practiced for centuries by means of strict import restrictions and the inflexibility of the domestic crafts industry due to a protectionist guild system and precluded any national or international competition, which led to products that were overpriced and out of date artistically. At the same time, in a clearly subdivided market, individual artisans had no immediate need to stand out by creating products. In comparison to France and England, therefore, eighteenth-century Vienna lacked a highly developed, diversified, and individual culture of products and hence lacked marketing as well.<sup>104</sup>

After a decline in the fine and applied arts that lasted nearly thirty years, the freedom of the trades in 1859, the associated elimination of guilds and the beginnings of liberalism in Austria, the early phase of industrialization led to a new flourishing in the local culture of Viennese products from the 1860s onward in order to compete on the international market. The Austrians considered the French their biggest competitors

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<sup>104</sup> Jill Lloyd, *Birth of the Modern: Style and Identity in Vienna* (Munich: Hirmer, 2011), 61-2.

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and on the occasion of the 1855 Exposition Universelle in Paris, it became clear that Austria's products were not competitive internationally with respect to form or craft. This awareness set ideas in motion that ultimately led in 1864, in the wake of reforms to the applied arts modeled on London's South Kensington Museum, to the founding of the first state museum in Austria, the k. k. Österreichischen Museums für Kunst und Industrie (the Imperial Royal Museum of Art and Industry).<sup>105</sup>

In 1863, Emperor Franz Joseph consented to establish the museum. The mission of this museum was to serve as an example for artists, industrialists, and the public, and as a center for the training and continuing education of designers as well as craftsman. Starting in 1865, it published the museum Bulletin, *Mittheilungen des k. k. Österreichischen Museums für Kunst und Industrie* (Report of the Imperial Royal Austrian Museum of Art and Industry), which was a platform to introduce new research and record the museum's affairs. As a so-called model collection, the museum selected material as the criterion for classification. The declared, concrete objective of collecting was to display the great diversity of ornament. Textiles and ceramic tiles seemed particularly suitable and were supplemented with works on paper and prints illustrating ornamented objects and garments. A perspective towards the East was an essential part of the program, because the history of porcelain cannot be treated without including East Asia and to present the diversity of surface design and ornament would have been impossible without Asia.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Lloyd, *Birth of the Modern: Style and Identity in Vienna*, 62.

<sup>106</sup> Johannes Wieninger, "The MAK Asia Collection 1864-2014," in *MAK/Guide Asien/Asia China-Japan-Korea*, eds. Christoph Thun-Hohenstein and Johannes Wieninger (Munich-London-New York: Prestel Verlag, 2014), 40.

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Later, in 1867, the Wiener Kunstgewerbeschule (School of Arts and Crafts in Vienna) was established. At first, the school was housed in the Imperial Royal Austrian Museum of Art and Industry, and theoretical and practical training were united with the museum. In 1871, the new building for the museum on the Stubenring was finished, and the school also moved into the same building. In 1877, the school went to a new building, adjacent to the museum at Stubenring 3. The applied art school was always connected with the museum, and the museum offered academic and visual resources for professors and students.<sup>107</sup> This school was an incubator of Viennese modernism. It cultivated generations of Viennese designers who were active in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Especially, from 1876 to 1882, the leading Viennese modernist figure Gustav Klimt studied architectural painting at the Kunstgewerbeschule and many of his peers in the Vienna Secession studied there as well.

The Austrians recognized the importance of Chinese crafts. The earliest research on Chinese art can be traced to 1870 in the museum's journal, *Mitteilungen des k. k. Österreichischen Museums für Kunst und Industrie*. Friedrich Lippmann (1838-1903), an art historian, published the article "Eine Studie über chinesische Email-Vasen" (A Study about Chinese Enamel Vases).<sup>108</sup> The author used 8 pages to explain the periods, styles and materials of Chinese enamel vases. A valuable and deep-researched essay on Chinese porcelains, it was probably directed at the collection of the museum. In a book published in 1873, which introduced the framework of the Imperial Royal Austrian

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<sup>107</sup> Stubenring is part of the Ringstraße between Parkring and Franz-Josefs-Kai.

<sup>108</sup> Friedrich Lippmann, "Eine Studie über chinesische Email-Vasen," *Mitteilungen des k. k. Österreichischen Museums für Kunst und Industrie*, no. 60 (Sept. 1870): 213-220.

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Museum of Art and Industry, it wrote, “the organizer divided their collection into 24 different parts based upon different materials. Orient and China were mentioned many times in different categories.”<sup>109</sup> Further, the permanent exhibitions of the museum, including Hall 1 and Hall 2, included Asian art: Hall 1 hosted Goldsmithing Art, Cabinet 4, Chinese and Japanese Cloisonné works and Imitation of Cloisonné works; Hall 2 featured (Ceramic) Cabinet 21 and 22, Chinese, Japanese, Siamese porcelain and stoneware.<sup>110</sup> In both the collection and in research, they mostly focused on porcelains from the Ming and Qing dynasties, particularly introducing famille rose and famille verte porcelains.

At nearly the same period, an oriental museum had also existed in Vienna for a short period. According to Johannes Wieninger’s research, the Oriental Museum was established in 1874 and the premiere of the display room happened in 1875. Reasons for establishing an oriental museum are complex. Around 1870, some important activities were organized by Austrians. The k.k. Ostasienexpedition nach China, Siam und Japan von 1869 (The Imperial Royal East-Asian Expedition to China, Siam and Japan) was seen as a signal, and Austrians focused on their relationship with Asia, which formed the pre-stage for establishing the museum.<sup>111</sup> At the same time, the

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<sup>109</sup> Kaiserlich-Königliche Österreichische Museum und die Kunstgewerbeschule, *Das Österreichische Museum und die Kunstgewerbeschule Vienna Österreichischen Museum 1873* (Vienna: Verlag des Österreichischen Museums, 1873), 19-23.

<sup>110</sup> Saal I (Goldschmiedekunst), Kasten IV. Chinesische und japanische Zellenschmelzarbeiten und Nachahmungen derselben; Saal II (Keramik), Kasten XX und XXI. Chinesisches, japanisches und siamesisches Porzellan und Steingut. See Kaiserlich-Königliche Österreichische Museum und die Kunstgewerbeschule, *Das Österreichische Museum und die Kunstgewerbeschule Vienna Österreichischen Museum 1873*, 31-2.

<sup>111</sup> Siam is the former name for Thailand and is used to refer to the historical region of Central Thailand, usually including Southern Thailand.

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Imperial Royal Austrian Museum of Art and Industry showed its interest in Asia but its artistic holdings were insufficient. The textile engineer Arthur von Scala (1845-1909), who worked at this museum at that time, was commissioned to take care of and guide the Circle Oriental at the Wiener Weltausstellung 1873 (World Exhibition in 1873). It allowed him the opportunity to build up contacts with foreign delegations.<sup>112</sup> After the World Exhibition, Vienna aimed to get the collection from the oriental department. Based on this goal, the oriental museum was established with the starting program to support commercial interest in the orient.<sup>113</sup> The display room was set on 3 May 1875 under the lead of Scala in the Palais Alfred Windischgrätz and it was moved to the new address at Schottenring 1 in 1879. The journal of the museum, launched in 1875, was named *Österreichische Monatsschrift für den Orient* (*Austrian Monthly Journal for the Orient*).<sup>114</sup> In 1884, the museum organized a successful exhibition, “Orientalisch-keramische Ausstellung” (Oriental Ceramics Exhibition) that exhibited over 2700 objects and about 2300 items from China and Japan. These objects were from Viennese private collection. Bruno Bucher reported on this exhibition in an essay entitled “Orientalisch-keramische Ausstellung in Wien” (Oriental Ceramics Exhibition in Vienna). He introduced the current collection in the oriental museum and also discussed some items in the exhibition, which focused on interpreting *familie verte*, *familie rose* and some types of Japanese ceramics.<sup>115</sup> After 1886, the oriental museum changed its

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<sup>112</sup> Johannes Wieninger, “Das Orientalische Museum in Wien, 1874-1906,” *Austriaca* 74, (Jun. 2012): 143-4.

<sup>113</sup> Wieninger, “Das Orientalische Museum in Wien, 1874-1906,” 146.

<sup>114</sup> Wieninger, “Das Orientalische Museum in Wien, 1874-1906,” 147.

<sup>115</sup> Bruno Bucher, “Orientalisch-keramische Ausstellung in Wien,” *Kunstgewerbeblatt*, no. 2 (1885): 25-30.

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name to the Handelsmuseum (The Trade Museum) and at the same time a second journal was released with the title, *Das Handelsmuseum* (The Trade Museum). Following these reforms, the interest in Asian art crafts started to decline, compared to the rising interest in European art and antiques. Further, the museum tried to acquire private collections, including Hermann Mandl's (1856-1922) Chinese collection<sup>116</sup> and Heinrich Siebold's (1852-1908) Japanese collection. In 1890, a private collection from Karl Lanckoroński (1848-1933) was shown in this room. It included his general collection (approx. one thousand objects), which he collected during his global travels<sup>117</sup>. In 1891, Scala organized a large exhibition, "die Orientteppichausstellung" (The Oriental Carpets Exhibition) that presented four-hundred and twenty-nine carpets, a third of which were antiques. The publication for this exhibition set the ground for future branches of Viennese art history. Scala gathered international scholars to contribute the introduction and texts including Alois Riegel of the Imperial Royal Museum of Art and Industry, who conducted extensive and time-consuming research on textiles and worked hard to develop terminology in order to create an understandable description. The volume was published in 1890 as *Altorientalische Teppiche* (Old Oriental Carpet), and in it carpets were not only considered to be a special subject of art but also a part of ornamental history since Classical Antiquity.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Hermann Mandl was an Austrian Jewish businessman. He travelled to China in the 1870s due to learning Chinese customs and becoming fluent in the language, which helped him to become successful with European and American companies in China.

<sup>117</sup> Wieninger, "Das Orientalische Museum in Wien, 1874-1906," 151.

<sup>118</sup> Wieninger, "Das Orientalische Museum in Wien, 1874-1906," 153-4.

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## The Chinese Pavilion at the 1873 Universal Exposition of Vienna

In 1873, Vienna hosted the Universal Exposition. The Exposition not only showed the Austro-Hungarian Empire's achievements in industry, but also offered opportunities to showcase the development of other countries' arts and crafts. China had attended the Universal Expositions since 1851, but the Exhibition in Vienna was the first time they had sent their crafts to Europe with the permission of the Chinese emperor. Furthermore, students from the Vienna School of Arts and Crafts were required to visit the exposition and report what they learned there. This was a good opportunity to get to know Chinese crafts, as presented by the Chinese.

The original Chinese official document *Official Document of the Chinese Pavilion in Austria-Hungary (1872)* (*Aoguo gongtang wenjian Tongzhi shiyi nian* 奥国公堂文件同治十一年) is now in the collections of the MAK museum (**fig. 28**).<sup>119</sup> The document not only shows that *Emperor Tongzhi* 同治皇帝 (1856-1875) commended Chinese officials to present Chinese crafts in Vienna but also to explain why they wanted to attend this exposition. The text recorded that “the aim of joining in this exposition is to see the various countries art crafts, products, agricultural techniques and so on. Through comparison, we could find, which is better, and which is worse, in the end it would encourage us to make efforts in the future.”<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Xia Shi 夏士 trans., *Aoguo gongtang wenjian tongzhi shiyi nian* 奥国公堂文件同治十一年 [The Official Document of Chinese Pavilion in Austria-Hungary (1872)], The MAK Museum Collection.

<sup>120</sup> The original text is “皇上御勅恩典保护于同治十二年设立其意为使看现在各国如何熟悉谙练之法及治各国之道按此公会原为天下各国之人将各国造作各项物件或工匠所造之器具或商人运贩之货物或农桑种植之类或文事中书籍等具令各国歌持精丽奇巧之件送在公会所会集一处排列众观比较优劣精奇胜人者既可货以重利不胜者亦自愧奋思勉创造日精以是特寓鼓舞之法。” See Xia Shi 夏士 trans., *Aoguo gongtang wenjian*

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The exhibition in Chinese pavilion was presented from early April to early September. Objects were divided into 26 categories, which covered nearly every aspect of work and life in China and were presented in a decorative Chinese Hall. In the list from the document, arts and crafts occupied a large proportion of the whole exhibit that also included horticulture, glassware, porcelains, sculpture, antiques, lacquer wares, and etc. From photographs in the MAK museum and the Austrian National Library, we can see numerous porcelains, textiles and other crafts that were shown in the hall. Owing to the tight space, some of the porcelain was heaped up like a hill (**figs. 29 and 30**). The numerous objects gave Austrians the opportunity to get to know Chinese crafts. Some experts started to research these “famous” but “unknown” objects. For example, Jacob von Falke (1825-1897), who worked as a researcher and director’s representative at the Imperial Royal Museum of Art and Industry from 1864 to 1871, introduced the crafts and arts from China and Japan in his book *Die Kunstindustrie auf der Wiener Weltausstellung 1873* (Art Industries of the Vienna Universal Exposition in 1873). From then on, more and more art historians who specialized in European art published essays about Chinese crafts. For instance, Arthur Pabst introduced Chinese glassworks in “Chinesische Glasarbeiten” (Chinese Glasswork).<sup>121</sup> The Universal Exposition promoted the evolution of research into Asian art in the German speaking regions. Some art historians, who were active in Berlin, were involved in the 1873 Exposition and also started to focus on Asian arts, such as Julius Lessing (1843-1908).

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*Tongzhi shiyi nian* 奥国公堂文件同治十一年[The Official Document of Chinese Pavilion in Austria-Hungary (1872) ], The MAK Museum Collection.

<sup>121</sup> Arthur Pabst, “Chinesische Glasarbeiten,” *Kunstgewerbeblatt*, no. 3 (1885): 40-5.



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## Excursions to East Asia and Some Individual Activities

The Austro-Hungarian Empire also showed its ambition to project its power on the world. Two landmark scientific expeditions were arranged in the second half of the nineteenth century and East Asian countries including China were their main destinations. At the same time, the official activities also motivated upper-class subjects of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to travel in East Asia.

The Novara Expedition from 30 April 1857 until 30 August 1859 was the first large-scale scientific, global mission of the Austrian Imperial Navy, and was authorized by Archduke Maximilian. The expedition was accomplished by the frigate *Novara* under the command of Commodore Bernhard von Wüllerstorff-Urbair, with 345 officers and crew plus seven scientists aboard. Preparations for the research journey were made by the Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien (Imperial Academy of Sciences in Vienna) and by specialized scholars under the direction of the geologist Ferdinand von Hochstetter and the zoologist Georg von Frauenfeld. The collections of botanic, zoologic and cultural material they brought back enriched the Austrian museums, especially the natural history museum. The results of the research journey were compiled into a twenty-one-binder report of the Akademie Der Wissenschaften (the Viennese Academy of Sciences), entitled *Reise der österreichischen Fregatte Novara um die Erde (1861–1876)* (Journey of the Austrian

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frigate *Novara* around the earth (1861-1876)). It was also published with many woodcuts prints under the same title (in 3 volumes, by K. Scherzer 1864–1866).<sup>122</sup>

The *Novara-Expedition* report included a drawing of the frigate *SMS Novara* surrounded by an oval border with the names of the locations it visited: Gibraltar, Madeira, Rio de Janeiro, Cape Town, St. Paul island, Ceylon, Madras, Nicobar Islands, Singapore, Batavia, Manila, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Puynipet Island, Stewart Island (or Stuart Island), Sydney, Auckland, Tahiti, Valparaíso, Gravosa, and Trieste.

As part of the expedition team, the painter Joseph Selleny (1824-1875) was employed as “Naturforscher” (naturalist). All naturalists in this team were described as scientific participants, and Selleny took responsibility for the department of art.<sup>123</sup> Selleny’s artistic talent was evident at an early age and beginning in 1838 he received systematic training at die Manufakturzeichenschule der Technischen Hochschule (The Manufacture Drawing School of Technology Academy) in Vienna, where he studied the flower drawing class with Franz Xaver Gruber. Starting in 1842, he studied at die Akademie der bildenden Künste (Academy of Fine Arts) in Vienna. Here he spent three semesters in the Landscape department and in 1846 transferred to the painting school organized by Leopold Kupelwieser.<sup>124</sup> During the expedition, Selleny drew a large number of local people and landscapes in the different countries the expedition visited,

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<sup>122</sup> “Novara-Expedition,” Austria-Forum, accessed August 31, 2020. <https://austria-forum.org/af/AEIOU/Novara-Expedition>.

<sup>123</sup> Günther Wimmer, *Joseph Selleny* (Vienna: Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kunst, 1996), 4.

<sup>124</sup> Wimmer, *Joseph Selleny*, 2-3.

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and China occupied a considerable part of his total work. These paintings are probably the earliest proofs that Austrian painters had been to China.

In the late nineteenth century, it was difficult for European academic artists to handle exotic Asian motifs because the training that the artists received was classical, and they never encountered foreign people and landscapes, especially people from East Asia, who have different facial and physical structures. Yet it was a challenge for artists to portray Chinese people. For Joseph Selleny, he didn't have much time to do an investigation because the Expedition team didn't allow him to stay in one city for too long. Yet, Selleny was a hard-working artist, and he made many drawings in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Macao. When we look back to the paintings that Joseph Selleny made, his work concentrated mainly on recording (**fig. 31**). For example, several of his watercolor drawings of Chinese people concentrated on presenting Chinese people in an ethnological manner. On one piece of paper, he drew profiles of figures using different perspectives (**fig. 32**). The landscapes made during this expedition show differences in technique when compared to his early-period landscape paintings. The depth of the space seems to be less pronounced and this feature became stronger when the expedition team arrived in China. Perhaps the new geographical experience from encountering the cities of Asia prompted him to make some changes.

During 1868-1869, the Austro-Hungarian Empire appointed a group of scientists and scholars to organize an expedition to East Asia specifically. In October 1868, the two warships *S.M. Donau* and *S.M. Erzherzog Ferdinand* left the port of Trieste under the guidance of Contre Admiral Anton Freiherr von Petz (1819-1885) and set off on

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the Imperial and Royal Expedition to East Asia. The main goal of the expedition was to conclude trade and shipping agreements, but it also raised several scientific issues. During this expedition, the cultural activities were much more formalized than the Novara Expedition. In this team, a promising twenty-three-year-old photographer, Wilhelm Burger (1844-1920), famous for his extraordinary knowledge of the tannin-dry process (Tannin-Trockenverfahren) and outstanding landscape photographs, was hired as a photographer. The route led the expedition to the ports of Messina, Algiers and Tenerife from where it reached Cape Town in January 1869. After a three-week stay, the crew headed for Singapore, where from it had to travel to Bangkok overland. The stay allowed Burger to make extensive photographic documentation of the Kings of Siam and their Royal Households as well as Siam's everyday life and the architectural miracles of its temples. Having concluded the required agreements in May 1869, the expedition continued on to Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing. Burger used the time to photograph numerous precious Chinese artefacts from the fourteenth century onwards. In August 1869, the expedition traveled to the last stop on its journey, Japan. Concluding agreements in Tokyo quickly, the East Asian Mission was successfully closed in October 1869. Burger was ordered to stay in Japan and finish his photographic documentation, while the *S.M. Donau* continued her circumnavigation of the globe to South America. After his return home, Wilhelm Burger was awarded the

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title “Imperial and Royal Court Photographer” for his extraordinary achievements during the voyage.<sup>125</sup>

The photograph taken by Wilhelm Burger included people, landscape and antiques. The most interesting part were the antiques (**figs. 33 and 34**). He not only took photos of these most outstanding and precious Chinese art objects from the fourteenth century to nineteenth century, but also noteworthy new art crafts, which he found in Shanghai.<sup>126</sup> These photos seem to be made as samples for museums, and on the backsides of the photos Burger recorded the name, material, style, time, price and collector. The method he used to record these antiques was similar to how museums manage their collections. The antiques he recorded were mainly porcelains, but also included cabinet, jade and bronze. From these photos, we can clearly see which kinds of antiques Austrians were interested in by the mid-nineteenth century and the type of collecting system they wanted to build for the Viennese museums.

Besides the large expeditions, some celebrities and famous collectors also visited China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Among them was Franz Ferdinand von Österreich-Este (1863-1914) who, accompanied by a group of people, traveled from Trieste to India, Indonesia, Australia, East Asia, Canada and North America in 1892 and 1893. The trip was recorded in his diary, *Tagebuch meiner Reise*

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<sup>125</sup> “The Austro-Hungarian Mission to East-Asia (1868-1869),” Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, accessed August 31, 2020.

[http://www.bildarchivaustria.at/Pages/Themen.aspx?p\\_iCollectionID=10769555&p\\_iKlassifikationID=11355192&p\\_iSubKlassifikationID=11398920](http://www.bildarchivaustria.at/Pages/Themen.aspx?p_iCollectionID=10769555&p_iKlassifikationID=11355192&p_iSubKlassifikationID=11398920).

<sup>126</sup> Gert Rosenberg, *Wilhelm Burger Ein Welt- und Forschungsreisender mit der Kamera, 1844-1920* (Vienna: Christian Brandstätter Verlag & Edition, 1984), 22.

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*um die Erde 1892-1893* (Diary of My Trip around the World 1892-1893). He was in Hong Kong and Kanton between the 21 June and 25 June where he took a photo with his entourage in front of a Chinese temple in Guangzhou. After his trip, he brought nearly fourteen thousand ethnological objects back to Vienna, which are now collected in the Weltmuseum Wien (The World Museum, Vienna) (**fig. 35**).<sup>127</sup>

Josef Troll was appointed as an investigator by the k.k. Naturhistorische Hofmuseum (The Imperial Royal Natural Historical Hofmuseum) in Vienna and some other institutions and patrons in the German-speaking countries. During 1888 and 1889, Josef Troll traveled from Vienna through Central Asia (Russian- and Chinese-Turkestan) and via British-India back to Vienna. He called himself a “Globetrotter” and collected numerous ethnographic and archeological objects as well as photographs. In the Weltmuseum Wien, some objects that he found in Xinjiang, China are in the collection.

Karol Lanckoroński, a Polish writer, art collector, patron, historian, and traveler was active in Vienna. In 1888-1889, he went to East-Asia with the landscape painter Ludwig Hans Fischer. When he came back, he brought numerous objects back to Vienna and organized an exhibition of Oriental art in 1890 at the Trade Museum. (**fig. 36**). One thousand and twenty-seven items were listed in the catalogue.<sup>128</sup> Further, in

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<sup>127</sup> Frank Gerbert, *Franz Ferdinand von Österreich-Este “Die Eingeborenen machten keinen besonders günstigen Eindruck” Tagebuch meiner Reise um die Erde 1892-1893* (Vienna: Verlag Kremayr & Scheriau KG, 2013), 180-201.

<sup>128</sup> Jerzy Miziolek, “The Lanckoronski Collection in Poland,” *Antichità viva* 34, no. 3 (1995): 28.

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the Green Cabinet (Grünes Cabinet) of the Palais Lanckoroński, an old Chinese panel richly decorated with figures from the imperial summer palace in Beijing was present.<sup>129</sup>

To conclude, in aiming to compete with France and Great Britain in the European market in the second half of the mid-nineteenth century, Austrians aimed to industrialize and produce advanced modern crafts. Thus, researching the patterns and technology of arts and crafts become critical and essential. Chinese ornament, both pattern and technology suited their requirements. This led Austrians to build an applied arts school and museums in which young artists studied and gained visual experience. In order to enrich their collections, the Austrian government organized expeditions to explore and search objects from East Asia and brought a lot of Chinese artworks back to Vienna. At the same time, Austrian upper-class and intellectual circles retained their interest in Chinese culture and continually extended their private Chinese art collection via art dealers and individual trips. It accumulated abundant cultural resource in the late nineteenth century, and circles of collecting Chinese applied art has formulated in the same period. This helped artists and designers to understand Chinese culture and art and raised their interest in East Asian art and eventually properly apply Chinese elements in their works.

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<sup>129</sup> Karl Lanckoroński, *Palais Lanckoroński: Jacquingasse 18* (Vienna: Adolf Holzhausen, 1903), 5.

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## Chapter 6. Gustav Klimt and Chinese Patterns

Gustav Klimt was an iconic and leading artist in early twentieth century Vienna. He is seen as an example in modern art history of artists who were inspired by Japanese art, at a time when Japanese influence was entering the mainstream in Europe. Yet, in recent years, scholars like Johannes Wieninger and Verena Traeger have claimed in their research that Klimt was inspired not only by Japanese styles but also applied Chinese elements in his paintings. In his later period, he used an extraordinary strategy that applied Chinese patterns to decorate his figure paintings. This chapter will clarify the pictorial sources and meanings of the Chinese patterns that Klimt referenced in his later paintings and trace how he was able to access these Chinese objects. In the end, I analyze how Chinese patterns accorded with Klimt's artistic pursuit and their significance to the paintings' owners.

### Chinese Patterns on Klimt's Later Female Paintings

After Klimt moved his Atelier to Feldmühlgasse 11 in Vienna in 1911, where he stayed until his death, he made a series of female portraits that featured Chinese patterns as background decoration.<sup>130</sup> These masterpieces include *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer II* (1912), *Portrait of Paula Zuckerkandl* (1912), *Portrait of Eugenia (Mäda)*

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<sup>130</sup> The same conclusion was also raised by Johannes Wieninger and Verena Traeger. They think that after 1912, Klimt mainly used Chinese motifs to decorate backgrounds in his later portraits of women. See Johannes Wieninger, "Ostasiatisches im Spätwerk von Gustav Klimt," in *Gustav Klimt. Atelier Feldmühlgasse 1911-1918*, eds. Sandra Tretter, Peter Weinhäupl, Felizitas Schreier and Georg Becker (Vienna: Christian Brandstätter Verlag, 2015), 54; Verena Traeger, "Klimt as a Collector," in *Klimt: Up Close and Personal Painting-Letters-Insights*, eds. Tobias G. Natter, Franz Smola and Peter Weinhäupl (Vienna: Christian Brandstätter Verlag, 2012), 123.



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*Primavesi* (1913-1914), *Portrait of Elisabeth Lederer* (1914-1916), *Portrait of Friederike Maria Beer* (1916), *The Fur Collar* (ca. 1916), *Wally* (1916), *Friends II* (1916-1917), *Dancer* (1916-1917), *Lady with a Muff* (1916-1917), *The Polecat Fur (unfinished)* (1916-1918), *Portrait of Ria Munk III (unfinished)* (1917) and *Lady with a Fan* (1917). Besides these works, Chinese motifs can also be found in two other larger oil paintings, *Baby* (1917-1918) and *The Bride (unfinished)* (1917-1918).<sup>131</sup> Klimt created most of these paintings in a similar way, namely by depicting Western women using Chinese motifs, which he seemingly picked up from decorations from the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. The concrete images that inspired him still can be found in some museum collections.

The Chinese motifs that Klimt applied included flowers, auspicious animals, immortals, opera characters, architecture and some geometrical ornaments. Klimt utilized these patterns proficiently and properly. His superior understanding of what these patterns meant almost reached the same level as the original Chinese artists.

The earliest painting in which he used Chinese patterns to ornament the background was *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer II* (**fig. 37**). In the upper part of the background, he used motifs that included warriors riding on horseback and a gate tower, which describe a scene in which riders drove towards the gate tower and a man, dressed like an official, sat at the top of the tower, similar to a Chinese historical allusion, the

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<sup>131</sup> My thanks for Sandra Tretter for offering me the information that the painting *The Bride* also includes a Chinese pattern.

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*Empty Fort Strategy*.<sup>132</sup> Compared to the painting he made of Adele in 1907, which is considered the iconic symbol of Klimt's golden period, the artist adopted a very different method to deal with the colors and figural gestures (**fig. 38**). In the same year, Klimt used a similar approach to draw Paula Zuckerkandl: a cloud pattern repeated in the background, comparable to a Chinese rank badge decorated with a silver pheasant. In addition, a Chinese phoenix is described behind the subject's head (**figs. 39 and 40**). For the *Portrait of Eugenia (Mäda) Primavesi*, the background motifs resemble a famille verte vase (**figs. 41 and 42**).<sup>133</sup> The image of a Phoenix is the central motif of the vase and some floral patterns decorate its bottom and neck. Klimt reframed these motifs and arranged them at different positions. The Phoenix was set in the upper right corner and floral patterns were drawn behind the figure's head. In the *Portrait of Elisabeth Lederer*, the protagonist stands in front of a re-designed Chinese screen and the decorative pattern bands on both sides form a triangular structure. In this example, Klimt borrowed elements from Chinese embroidery to reframe their positions and in the end created a new composition. Running from the bottom to the top, the same two groups of patterns are stacked in symmetrical form, including clouds, waves, lions, bats

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<sup>132</sup> *Empty Fort Strategy* is a story centred on Zhuge Liang, a chancellor and regent of the state of Shu Han during the Three Kingdoms period (220-280). In the plot, Zhuge Liang had to defend the enemy's (General Sima Yi's army from the state of Cao Wei) attack on a city called Xi Cheng. The opponent had about 150,000 soldiers, whereas, Zhuge Liang only had a few. In order to confront this situation, Zhuge Liang asked his men to dress in civilian clothes and sweep the streets of the city. He had the gates thrown open and sat conspicuously above them, playing his *guqin* (a kind of zither). When Sima Yi saw his rival perched atop the gates, nonchalantly plucking at his instrument, Sima Yi assumed this had to be some sort of ambush and finally marched away. This story appears in the novel, *Romances of the Three Kingdoms*, by 14th-century novelist Luo Guanzhong. The scene was also applied frequently as surface decoration for porcelain in the Qing dynasty (1644-1911).

<sup>133</sup> The French name for a style of imported Chinese porcelain. The predominant color of the design or ground color is green.

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and flowers (morning glory) (**fig. 43**). The original pictorial source might be a rank badge from a Chinese robe (**fig. 44**). On the left and right corners of the picture, two groups of people stand facing the portrait subject. These people seem to be historical characters and Opera characters from Chinese famille rose or famille verte porcelain.<sup>134</sup> In *Friends II*, a peony, a phoenix and a crane are visible, which also corresponds to famille rose (**figs. 45 and 46**). In *Wally*, in addition to a pavilion, Klimt also selected three characters from a typical Chinese motif, *Eight Immortals of Taoism*, to decorate the background (**fig. 47**). In *Lady with a Fan*, the female figure is dressed in a dark-blue Chinese robe with dragon patterns and holds a fan, which is decorated with Chinese figures against a red ground (**fig. 48**). In the background, a phoenix, a golden pheasant and some lotuses are present.

In these examples, Klimt used some same patterns repeatedly. For example, the phoenix appears in at least three portraits including *Portrait of Paula Zuckerkandl*, *Portrait of Eugenia (Mäda) Primavesi* and *Friends II*. A lion pattern was used in *Portrait of Elisabeth Lederer* and *The Bride* (**fig. 49**). Cloud patterns are found in *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer II*, *Portrait of Paula Zuckerkandl*, and *Portrait of Elisabeth Lederer*. Warriors were applied to *Portrait of Friederike Maria Beer*, *The Fur Collar*, and *Portrait of Elisabeth Lederer*. A Chinese dramatic troupe is present in *The Polecat Fur*, *Dancer* and *Lady with a Muff*. Animals and birds or warriors and

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<sup>134</sup> The French name for a style of imported Chinese porcelain. The predominant color of the design or ground color is pink.

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opera characters, drawn into different paintings, are close in style and shape and may come from the same pictorial sources.

These pictorial sources were mainly from surface decorations on Chinese porcelains and textiles. These art forms were distinguished by technological method; thus, their styles were totally different from the process of making oil paintings. The patterns on the objects' surfaces were mainly painted or embroidered to present two-dimensional motifs embodying features of flatness. When Klimt adopted these patterns, he naturally learnt their styles. His strokes on clouds, waves and lions, show clearly the texture of embroideries. Some other techniques he used when drawing contours of figures resemble Chinese boneless paintings<sup>135</sup>. The outlines of women seem to be blended into the backgrounds and these contour lines are hard to distinguish. These methods allowed Klimt to eliminate a sense of space in his paintings and to reach the aim of integrating figures with the background decoration. The complete images express a sense of flatness. The method he used to describe space and composition was close to the mechanism that Chinese artists used to make portraits in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, especially the official portraits for emperors and queens. The kind of effort Klimt made to handle the relationship between lines and space was what he pursued throughout most of his artistic career. In addition, the unique colors that porcelains and textiles feature also dominated in Klimt's colors such as pink from famille rose, light green and copper green from famille verte, and golden and dark blue from embroidery. These five colors, and color combinations, were seldom selected by

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<sup>135</sup> A technique of drawing in Chinese paintings means painting without outline, especially in color.

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painters in the early twentieth century. To some extent, these colors enhanced a sense of exoticism and the unique colors and styles helped distinguish him from other artists. But where did Klimt view or obtain these objects? To answer this question, we need to look at Klimt's collection because many of his pictorial sources were likely borrowed from his Chinese collection.

### **Klimt's Chinese Collection in his Atelier**

Klimt's interest in East-Asian art was directly reflected in his own collection. A photograph taken by Moriz Nähr shows that in the reception room of Klimt's atelier, a large Chinese woodblock print hung on the wall, surrounded by some small Japanese Ukiyo-e, while Klimt's treasures and art books about Japanese, Chinese and Egyptian art stood in a black cabinet (**fig. 50**).<sup>136</sup>

Klimt had a small but diverse East Asian collection.<sup>137</sup> Among them, the Chinese woodblock print from the atelier photograph is extraordinarily attractive (**fig. 51**). It shows three historical Chinese figures, Guan Yu, Guan Ping, and Zhou Cang, famed as characters from the Chinese novel, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. The central figure, Guan Yu, represented wealth and loyalty in Chinese culture. On the opposite wall hangs another print, and three figures are shown. The large figure is Tian Guan, God of

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<sup>136</sup> Verena Traeger, "Die ethnografische Sammlung In Klimts Atelier," in *Gustav Klimt. Atelier Feldmühlgasse 1911-1918*, eds. Sandra Tretter et al. (Vienna: Christian Brandstätter Verlag, 2015), 59.

<sup>137</sup> For Klimt's complete ethnographic collection, see: Verena Traeger, "Gustav Klimt's Ethnographic Collection," *Belvedere Special Edition Klimt*, (2007): 270-298.

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Blessing (**fig. 52**). Two children respectively hold a vase with a peony and a zun.<sup>138</sup> The image means the God of Blessing bestows happiness.

Klimt also owned three pieces of porcelain: a pair of porcelain figures of He-He Erxian, the symbol of harmony and union, and a vase with a landscape motif (**figs. 53 and 54**). Both items came from China and were made in the nineteenth century. They are typical examples of the Chinese famille verte porcelains, which could be found in some European collections of Chinese porcelains in the same period. Famille verte porcelains were mainly made in the Kang-Xi period (1661-1722) during the Qing dynasty, but some porcelain factories in China still produced these kinds of items for the domestic and foreign market up through the nineteenth century. Evidence for their wide distribution can be found in European museum collections.

Klimt also owned other prints, which included a garden view of a palace complex, a depiction of a Chinese rack filled with precious items, and a series of six hand-colored woodcuts that presumably dated from about 1900 (**figs. 55, 56 and 57**). Five of the prints depict scenes from the home of a wealthy Chinese man, while the sixth print features a pair of lovers.<sup>139</sup>

He also possessed a Chinese seal made from pink soapstone, whose top featured three lions as a decoration (**fig. 58**). The seal was inscribed with four Chinese characters: *the Seal of Longevity (changshou yinxin 长寿 印信)* (**fig. 59**).<sup>140</sup> Another small bronze

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<sup>138</sup> A beaker-shaped rectangular vessel with a flaring lip.

<sup>139</sup> Traeger, "Klimt as a Collector", 110-1.

<sup>140</sup> The seal was in Klimt's cabinet in his reception room. In the cabinet, there was a silver biscuit tin by Eduard Josef Wimmer-Wisgrill from the Vienna Workshop, a present for Klimt's fiftieth birthday. Therefore, this seal was also probably a gift for Klimt's fiftieth birthday. For information about "a silver biscuit," see Verena Traeger,

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seal with a human-shaped knob shows the two Chinese characters, *the White Islet* (*bai zhou* 白州).<sup>141</sup> In addition, he also owned some smaller items such as a theatrical box, a Genius of longevity, Monkey on a water buffalo, and so on (**fig. 60**).

His collection of Chinese and Japanese embroideries represented the largest part of his collection but unfortunately, these exquisite textiles have not been preserved.<sup>142</sup> Nonetheless, his patrons and friends testified to Klimt's textile collection and drawing from their memoirs we can partly restore his textile collection to his atelier.

When Egon Schiele referred to Klimt's atelier, he remembered that:

When entering (his atelier), you first came into the foyer, at the left side of it is reception room. In the middle (of the reception room) stood a square table, and around it Japanese woodcuts and two larger Chinese paintings hung together, on the floor laid some African sculptures, and close to the window stood a red and black set of Japanese armour. This room connected to two other rooms from which one could view rosebushes. To the right side of the foyer one could step into another room, in which two skeletons were presented, followed by a room in which only a large closet filled with the most beautiful Chinese and Japanese clothes was set leaning against a wide wall.<sup>143</sup>

Similar descriptions appear in accounts composed by other visitors and by Klimt's patrons. An anonymous visitor recalled that Klimt's cabinet featured fantastically colorful Indian and Chinese silks with which he loved to clothe his models.<sup>144</sup> The Japanese painter Kijiro Ohta visited Klimt's atelier in 1913 and recalled that, "in the

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"Gustav Klimt's Ethnographic Collection: Chinese Fashion, Japonism and the Ashanti Craze in Vienna around 1900," in *Gustav Klimt: Artist of the Century*, eds. Hans-Peter Wipplinger and Sandra Tretter (Vienna: Leopold Museum, 2018), 141.

<sup>141</sup> My thanks to Prof. Tao Xu, who helped me to recognize these Chinese characters.

<sup>142</sup> Traeger, "Die Ethnografische Sammlung in Klimts Atelier," 62.

<sup>143</sup> Arthur Roessler, *Erinnerungen an Egon Schiele* (Vienna: Wiener Volksbuchverlag, 1948), 48-9.

<sup>144</sup> See "Anonymus in einer Wiener Tageszeitung, nach 1918," in *Gustav Klimt: Dokumentation*, ed. Christian M. Nebehay (Vienna: Verlag der Galerie Christian M. Nebehay, 1969), 466.

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room next to the (Klimt's) studio there was a wardrobe with a glass door. It contained many Japanese and Chinese gowns. Klimt presumably derived the strange patterns in his pictures from these gowns. He took out some of them and remarked, 'This is a good combination'."<sup>145</sup> Mäda, the only child who sat for Klimt for a commissioned portrait, recalled the many long visits she made to his studio during which he made drawings and remembered that when she was bored she was excused to play with and dress up in the painter's Chinese textiles and costumes.<sup>146</sup> Friederike Maria Beer also recalled that when she first went to Klimt's atelier, Klimt made her try on Chinese and Japanese robes from his large collection.<sup>147</sup>

After Klimt's death, his muse Emilie Flöge took great care of the painter's textile treasures. Herta Wanke, an apprentice at the "Schwestern Flöge" fashion salon, reported that she "had the privilege.... of being taken regularly (by Flöge) into her holiest of holies, the Klimt room, and being permitted to dust there, tidy up and so on. While I did that, she opened the cases and shook out and aired the beautiful Chinese and Japanese silk garments. I was allowed to dust the folders of drawings."<sup>148</sup> Currently

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<sup>145</sup> Kijiro Ohta, "A Visit to Klimt in Vienna: A Report by the Japanese Painter Kijiro Ohta," in *Zu Besuch bei Klimt: Das Atelier in Unter-St.Veit in Wien*, ed. Verein Gedenkstätte Gustav Klimt (Weitra: Verlag Bibliothek der Provinz, 2005), 109.

<sup>146</sup> Klimt made *Portrait of Mäda Primavesi* in 1912. See Katharine Baetjer, "About Mäda," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 40 (2005): 141.

<sup>147</sup> Alessandra Comini, "Remembering Friederike Maria Beer-Monti (1891-1980)." An unpublished document kindly shared by Felizitas Schreier.

<sup>148</sup> Emilie Flöge was Klimt's "life's companion", muse, confidante and model. See: Fischer, "'Dear Emilie!' Klimt writes to Emilie Flöge," in *Klimt: Up Close and Personal Painting-Letters-Insights*, eds. Tobias G. Natter et al. (Vienna: Christian Brandstätter Verlag, 2012), 16. And Wolfgang G. Fischer, *Gustav Klimt & Emilie Flöge: An Artist and His Muse* (London: Lund Humphries, 1992), 171; and Traeger, "Klimt as a Collector," 117.



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only a small part of his textile objects have been preserved including a girl's cap embroidered with silk and a pair of lotus shoes.

Klimt's book collection contained numerous books on Chinese and East Asian art such as Ernest F. Fenollosa's *Ursprung und Entwicklung der chinesischen und japanischen Kunst* (Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art) and Oskar Münsterberg's *Chinesische Kunstgeschichte* (Chinese art history).<sup>149</sup> He might have used these books as guidebooks for artistic inspiration in his painting.

From Klimt's Chinese collection, we can find that the main objects he collected were textiles, prints and porcelains. As I discussed in the first part, the patterns Klimt applied came from these types of objects. Some patterns he used came directly from textiles that were destroyed after his death. Chinese textiles and wood-block prints were of minor interest for most of East Asian collectors; Did someone in Vienna help him to build up his connection with Chinese culture? Or was there a special trend of collecting Chinese textiles?

### **The interests of Chinese Art and Culture in Klimt's Circle**

In Europe, the first three decades of the twentieth century saw a fashion for Chinoiserie and for objects from China, which peaked in the 1920s.<sup>150</sup> Vienna was not

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<sup>149</sup> The English version of *Ursprung und Entwicklung der chinesischen und japanischen Kunst* was published in 1907 and the German version in 1913. Band I and Band II of *Chinesische Kunstgeschichte* were published in 1910 and 1912 separately.

<sup>150</sup> Sarah Cheang, "Chinese Robes in Western Interiors: Transitionality and Transformation," in *Fashion, Interior Design and the Contours of Modern Identity*, eds. Alla Myzelev and John Potvin (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010), 125.

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an exception and Klimt shared the same pursuit of Chinese antiquity and culture with his friends and patrons. His circle included musicians, artists, intellectuals and upper-class families.

For women, the Chinese trend included wearing dresses, robes, coats and capes that incorporated traditional Chinese garment shapes, Chinese motifs and actual pieces of Chinese embroidery. At the same time, domestic spaces were decorated in Chinese textiles: furniture was draped with Chinese robes, while cushions were created from Chinese garments and their associated sleeve bands. It was a general fashion in Europe in the first three decades of the twentieth century.<sup>151</sup>

These features were reflected in Emilie Flöge's activities. An iconic photo shows her wearing a dark-red Chinese robe with dragon patterns. In it, she seems to behave like a Chinese lady (**fig. 61**). A wall decoration that hung in the fashion salon "Schwestern Flöge" with a magnificent Chinese dragon embroidered with gold brocade is another piece of evidence (**fig. 62**).<sup>152</sup>

Berta Zuckerkandl, a journalist and a salon organizer in Vienna, as well as promoter for Klimt's art, was another important figure. Her salon attracted notable figures of Viennese modernism such as Hermann Bahr, Otto Wagner, Gustav Klimt, Josef Hoffmann, Arthur Schnitzler, Gustav Mahler, Oskar Kokoschka, Peter Altenberg,

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<sup>151</sup> Cheang, "Chinese Robes in Western Interiors: Transitionality and Transformation," 125.

<sup>152</sup> Emilie founded the women's fashion salon "Schwestern Flöge" in 1905 in the building of the café "Casa Piccola" in the Mariahilferstrasse 1b, which she managed with her two sisters until the Anschluss in 1938. See Fischer, "'Dear Emilie!' Klimt writes to Emilie Flöge," 16. And Fischer, "'Dear Emilie!' Klimt writes to Emilie Flöge," 26.

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Hugo von Hofmannsthal, and others.<sup>153</sup> A photograph depicts Berta Zuckermandl wearing a dress with re-designed East Asian motifs and her husband also owned a large “China collection” (**fig. 63**).<sup>154</sup> Therefore, these photos suggest that Chinese textiles were in vogue in Klimt’s circles, especially for women. No wonder that Klimt collected textiles and applied them to his female paintings.

Some of his friends were well-versed in Chinese culture and even travelled to China. In music, Klimt’s friend Gustav Mahler wrote his *Das Lied von der Erde* (The Song of the Earth) in 1909, inspired by the poems from the Tang dynasty (618-907). After he read a publication of Hans Bethge’s *Die chinesische Flöte* (The Chinese Flute), a volume of classic poems translated into German, he was touched by the rhythms and tones in these poems. From this collection of eighty-three paraphrases from thirty-eight poets, Mahler selected seven verses that he gradually retouched to serve his own expressive purposes, and which he shaped into an allegory of transitory existence merging into eternity.<sup>155</sup> As Klimt always attended the same salon as Mahler and also went to Mahler's concerts, he must absorb some ideas from Mahler.

Interest in China was more pronounced in Klimt’s artistic contemporaries. Hans Böhler was a painter and graphic designer. Born into a rich industrial family in Austria,

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<sup>153</sup> Werner Hanak, Astrid Peterle, and Danielle Spera, eds., *The Place to be: Salons -Places of Emancipation* (Vienna: Amalthea Signum, 2018), 116.

<sup>154</sup> In 1916, Berta Zuckermandl moved to a four-room apartment designed for her by Josef Hoffmann in Palais Lieben-Auspitz at Oppolzergasse 6, next to the Burgtheater. There she invited people to her salon and received up to two hundred guests. The Chinese collection, to which her husband dedicated so much love, lent an extraordinary magical color to the reading room. See Hanak, *The Place to be: Salons -Places of Emancipation*, 128; and Bertha Zuckermandl, *Österreich intim Erinnerungen 1892 – 1942* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1988), 193.

<sup>155</sup> Stephen E. Hefling, *Mahler: Das Lied von der Erde (The Song of the Earth)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 37.

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his father was a chemist and successful entrepreneur in the iron and steel industry and the family were important patrons of music.<sup>156</sup> He maintained a close relationship with Viennese artists including Gustav Klimt, Josef Hoffmann and Egon Schiele. For example, in 1909 Hoffmann helped him set up his studio and Böhler also joined Egon Schiele as a member of the “*Neukunstgruppe*” (New art group). He also owned three of Klimt’s works: *Death and Life* (1910-1911, revised in 1915-1916), *Italian Garden Landscape* (1913), and *Forsthaus in Weissenbach II* (1914).<sup>157</sup> Uniquely, he also traveled through East-Asia for nearly 2 years. He started his journey in 1910 on the Trans-Siberian railway from Moscow via Mukden (Shenyang, China) to Beijing. The next year he went to Japan to meet his elder brother but returned to Beijing in the same year and stayed there until 1912.<sup>158</sup> This trip not only reshaped his artistic career but also impacted other artists in his circle.

During his trip, he spent most of his time in Beijing and produced a large number of sketches and oil paintings of Chinese people and landscapes. At the same time, he extensively collected Chinese antiques. He was also permitted to paint at least one member of the Chinese royal family, which was extremely rare at that time. A photo taken in 1911 shows Böhler drawing a sketch of a Chinese lady in a room that was well-decorated with Chinese porcelains and calligraphy panels (**fig. 64**). In 1929, Böhler finished *Chinese Princess*, which also highlights his interest in Chinese subjects (**fig. 65**). Probably with the help of the Austrian ambassador in Beijing, Böhler was able to

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<sup>156</sup> Martin Suppan, *Hans Böhler: Leben und Werke* (Vienna: Edition M. Suppan, 1990), 34.

<sup>157</sup> Marion Krammer and Niko Wahl, *Klimt Lost* (Vienna: Czernin Verlag, 2018), 38.

<sup>158</sup> Suppan, *Hans Böhler: Leben und Werke*, 35.

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enter Chinese society. During his trip, he stayed in the ambassador's house in Beijing and was introduced to the aristocratic society of the imperial metropole.<sup>159</sup> From 1910 to 1912, there were two ambassadors who managed affairs for the Austrian government, Eugen Ritter von Kuczynski (1909-1911) and Arthur von Rosthorn (1911-1917). Arthur von Rosthorn was a Sinologist before he became ambassador in Beijing, and the von Rosthorns were very familiar with China and Chinese affairs. In a memoir written by the ambassador's wife, Paula von Rosthorn, she describes how she and Arthur had the opportunity to get in touch with the most powerful people in China, even the emperor's widow Ci Xi.<sup>160</sup>

Paula von Rosthorn's memoir also contains some information about Chinese antiques and which places the Austrians found them. She wrote, "Everyone who came to China was astonished and attracted by the different and beautiful Chinese products. They would like to collect some objects, such as paintings, embroideries, wood-cut prints, ivory handicrafts, Jade and bronze, etc." In particular, she referred to her embroidery collection. "In these years, I bought many things, especially luxuriant embroideries, which Chinese people do not produce any longer, these objects have become very rare."<sup>161</sup> A photo taken in Beijing shows Paula von Rosthorn negotiating with antique dealers who wanted to sell her Chinese embroidery and clothes (**fig. 66**).

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<sup>159</sup> Suppan, *Hans Böhler: Leben und Werke*, 35.

<sup>160</sup> Renate Erhart and Gerd Kaminski, *PAIZHAO: Das alte China in der Linse österreichischer Fotografen* (Vienna: ÖGCF, 2008), 16.

<sup>161</sup> Erhart and Kaminski, *PAIZHAO*, 14-5.

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When Böhler finished his East Asia trip and returned to Vienna, he brought back a considerable collection of T'ang figures and Ming vases, a collection of Netsuke, choice crockery, and an important collection of Japanese woodcuts, among other items.<sup>162</sup> In the same year, some paintings that he had made during his trip were published in the magazine, *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* (German Art and Decoration).<sup>163</sup> His art collection was housed in Friederike Maria Beer's flat at No. 4 Laimgrubengasse in Vienna.<sup>164</sup> One of his China paintings and some Chinese vases can be seen in photos taken in her apartment. One shows Miss Beer posing in a dress with a light blue top and a dark blue skirt, which was designed by the Vienna Workshop (**fig. 67**). In the photograph's top right corner, a painting made by Böhler, *Im Hofe eines Hauses in Peking* (In the Yard of a House in Beijing), can be seen (**fig. 68**). Beer possessed similar taste with other upper-class ladies in Vienna and seems to have decorated her room in an East Asian style. Beer was a core figure in Viennese visual culture, and she was painted by Egon Schiele, Gustav Klimt and Hans Böhler.

The *Portrait of Friederike Maria Beer* has, more many years, been discussed by scholars as evidence for the connection between Klimt and East Asian art. Yet this painting has a much more complex background (**fig. 69**). The painting was made in November 1915 and Spring 1916, when Hans Böhler and Miss Beer were in a relationship.<sup>165</sup> Böhler offered Miss Beer a choice of two gifts: a pearl necklace or a

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<sup>162</sup> Suppan, *Hans Böhler: Leben und Werke*, 35.

<sup>163</sup> Hans Thoma, "Zu einigen Blättern aus Hans Böhlers ostasiatischer Studienmappe," *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* 29 (October 1911-March 1912): 438-444.

<sup>164</sup> Suppan, *Hans Böhler: Leben und Werke*, 36.

<sup>165</sup> My thanks to Margret Greiner who offered me the information.

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Klimt portrait.<sup>166</sup> Further, from what Böhler recalled, the motifs in the background were from a Chinese vase, which he brought back to Vienna from China.<sup>167</sup> Although the original vase is unfortunately lost, this type of vase with warrior motifs can frequently be found in antique markets and museums.

The painting is an important illustration that shows how Klimt's commissions worked. The painting was requested by Böhler, and he obviously exerted influence on Klimt, such as offering antiques to Klimt or suggesting to Klimt to paint patterns from the antiques as background. In response, Klimt also needed to meet his client's requirements. The same principle also can be applied to his works for other patrons.

Klimt too benefitted from Böhler's China trip. The year he started to paint Chinese patterns in his backgrounds was the same year Böhler finished his East Asian trip and returned to Vienna. Although there is little information about where Klimt obtained his East Asian antiques, it is possible Böhler possibly sent him some objects.

Another artist, Emil Orlik, who was a core member of the Vienna Secession, twice travelled to East Asia, first to Japan around 1900. In 1911 Orlik took another trip via Egypt, the Sudan and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) to the Far East, crossing China and Korea to arrive in Japan. We do not know exactly which cities Orlik stayed in, but we can draw some inferences from his artworks. It seems that during his second trip he spent most of his trip in China and that he was active in the region around Shanghai. He made plenty of paintings and drawings here, which are very attractive and interesting, for

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<sup>166</sup> Christian M. Nebehay, *Gustav Klimt: Dokumentation* (Vienna: Verlag der Galerie Christian M. Nebehay, 1969), 433.

<sup>167</sup> Suppan, *Hans Böhler: Leben und Werke*, 17.

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example a series of landscape drawings and prints of the West Lake in Hangzhou. Max Osborn appraised Orlik's works, stating that they "look like they were made by a Japanese or Chinese artist."<sup>168</sup> He also showed an interest in Chinese theatre and opera. Some of his drawings depict Chinese people were watching the opera. As early as 1906 he designed a title page for the score of Ferruccio Busoni's *Turandot Suite*, which reflected a strong Chinese style since both the illustration's architecture and figural style borrowed elements from Chinese art. Illustrations that he made for the book, *Chinesische Abende: Novellen und Geschichten* (Chinese Evening: Novels and Histories), also show a strong inspiration from Chinese opera, in particular the characters' clothes, which show similarities with Chinese opera costumes (**fig. 70**).

Klimt and Orlik were friends and part of similar circles. They both participated in the 14<sup>th</sup> exhibition of the Vienna Secession in 1902, a major group show dedicated to Ludwig van Beethoven for which Klimt created his *Beethoven Frieze*. In a postcard from 1910, Klimt wrote to Emilie Flöge that "he, Josef Hoffmann, Otto Prutscher and Emil Orlik had supper together at the Restaurant Waldschnepf."<sup>169</sup> In Klimt's backgrounds, Chinese opera characters were a dominant decorative pattern. Some of these images shared characteristics with illustrations from Orlik's designs. Perhaps Klimt learned more about the Chinese opera from Orlik.

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<sup>168</sup> Max Osborn, "Zum Thema Orlik," *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* 45 (1919/1920): 208.

<sup>169</sup> Sandra Tretter and Birgit Summerauer, "Correspondence written by Klimt to Emilie Flöge 1897-1917," in *Klimt: Up Close and Personal Painting-Letters-Insights*, eds. Tobias G. Natter et al. (Vienna: Christian Brandstätter Verlag, 2012), 372.



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In addition, some of Klimt's patrons were fond of Chinese art, and most of the works Klimt made for them included Chinese elements. Adolphe Stoclet (1871-1949) was an engineer, industrialist and collector, and his wife Suzanne Stoclet (1874-1949) was the daughter of the art critic and dealer Arthur Stevens. Klimt took responsibility for designing the wall decorations for the dining room in the Stoclets' palais in Brussels, the well-known *Stoclet Frieze*, which embodied Egyptian and East Asian styles. Klimt met Adolphe and Suzanne Stoclet in May 1906, during a trip to survey the building site and discuss the commission.<sup>170</sup> The Stoclets' collection included Persian and Armenian miniatures, ivories, enamels, Chinese art, Egyptian sculptures, Byzantine jewels, and paintings by the Italian "primitives". The collection was displayed near the dining room where the *Stoclet Frieze* was to be mounted.<sup>171</sup> Klimt thus had to work within the Stoclets' interests. Their collection of Chinese art included bronzes, sculptures, and paintings from the sixteenth century BCE up to the eighteenth-century CE. Their bronzes are regarded as the best part of their Chinese collection. Stoclet formed his collection with taste and discrimination at a time when few collectors paid little attention to these extraordinary objects. He was a pioneer in this respect and in the West ranked among the leaders in the domain of Chinese art. Some pieces in his collection were well-known since the early twenties.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Alice Strobl, *Gustav Klimt: Die Zeichnungen 1904-1912 Band II* (Salzburg: Verlag Galerie Welz, 1982), 139.

<sup>171</sup> M.E. Warlick, "Mythic Rebirth in Gustav Klimt's Stoclet Frieze: New Considerations of Its Egyptianizing Form and Content," *The Art Bulletin* 74, no. 1 (March 1992): 119.

<sup>172</sup> Giuseppe Eskenazi, *Ancient Chinese Bronzes from the Stoclet and Wessén Collections 11 June - 12 July 1975* (Uxbridge: The Hillingdon Press, 1975), 5.

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Paula and Viktor Zuckerkandl also had a considerable East Asian collection. Viktor is a wealthy steel magnate and art collector, the Zuckerkandls were major patrons of Klimt.<sup>173</sup> Besides *Portrait of Paula Zuckerkandl*, which included cloud patterns and a phoenix on canvas, the couple also commissioned landscape paintings.<sup>174</sup> In 1916, Viktor Zuckerkandl contributed a part of his East Asian collection to the museum in Breslau.<sup>175</sup> Some of his Chinese Collection were sold at auction in 1928 and most were Chinese porcelains.<sup>176</sup> In order to satisfy their interest, Klimt used East Asian styles and elements, or directly painted Chinese patterns, into the works he made for them. In the last part I will analyse how Klimt dealt with these paintings for his patrons.

In summary, fascination in Chinese art was not Klimt's individual activity, but was part of the cultural and artistic milieu of upper-class Viennese circles. The circles' collective strategies probably influenced Klimt to focus on Chinese art.

### **Symbolism and Flatness: Klimt's methods**

The above evidences suggest that Klimt had access to Chinese artistic resources, whereas, the question of what was his logic for applying these elements to his paintings is a more complicated question. Did he have some particular strategies? In the materials he picked up, Klimt paid much more attention to decoration rather than to so-called fine

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<sup>173</sup> Sophie Lillie, "The Golden Age of Klimt: The Artist's Great Patrons: Lederer, Zuckerkandl, and Bloch-Bauer," in *Gustav Klimt: the Ronald S. Lauder and Serge Sabarsky Collections*, ed. Renée Price (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 2007), 69.

<sup>174</sup> See Krammer and Wahl, *Klimt Lost*, 43.

<sup>175</sup> C.J. Wawra, ed., *Sammlung Generaldirektor Viktor Zuckerkandl* (Vienna: C.J.Wawra, 1916), 1.

<sup>176</sup> C.J. Wawra, ed., *Nachlass Generaldirektor Dr. Victor und Paula Zuckerkandl* (Vienna: C.J.Wawra, 1928), 35-49.

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arts, for example, Chinese ink paintings. In actual fact, he maintained his interest in ornaments throughout his whole career. At a young age, he studied at the Kunstgewerbeschule (School of Arts and Crafts) in Vienna between 1876 and 1883 where he received an education different from the traditional Fine Arts School. Klimt attended the compulsory preparation class, where his teachers were Michael Rieser, Ludwig Minnigerode and Karl Hrachowina. He practiced drawing plastic and flat ornaments, as well as figure drawing, plaster casts and masterpieces.<sup>177</sup> A study drawing of a plaster model of an acanthus vine made in 1877 and 1878 by Klimt reflects the method the school used to teach students to draw ornaments (**fig. 71**). In his school years, he had already formed the Künstler-Compagnie (Artists' Company) with fellow students Franz Matsch and Ernst Klimt, which lasted into the 1890s.<sup>178</sup> Klimt, individually or with Matsch and Klimt, was hired for several commissions for interior decoration. The Künstler-Compagnie worked with architects Ferdinand Fellner and Hermann Helmer on a number of new buildings

From 1876 to 1890, Klimt's major work was on various interior decoration projects. These activities should be distinguished from a typical painter, who normally completed the whole process in the studio. At the same time, interior decoration is not only about painting, as artists need to consider the relationship between architecture and decoration. The allegorical contexts of decorations have to accord with the overarching architectural style.

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<sup>177</sup> Gottfried Fliedl, *Gustav Klimt (1862-1918): Die Welt in weiblicher Gestalt* (Cologne: Benedikt Taschen Verlag, 1989), 30-1.

<sup>178</sup> Ernst Klimt is Gustav Klimt's younger brother.

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Around 1890, Klimt developed a method of combining two-dimensional ornaments and fully modeled human figures.<sup>179</sup> His endeavor was well-reflected in the commission for the Kunsthistorisches Museum in 1890. These paintings were designed to fill the main stairway's spandrels and intercolumniations with figures and ornamental motifs borrowed from each of the major historical periods represented in the museum's collections. Klimt took responsibility for the northern side which included four major sections: Roman and Venetian Quattrocento, Ancient Greece, Egypt and Old Italian art.<sup>180</sup>

For example, *The Girl from Tanagra* is on the north side of the intercolumniation, and the painting's shallow space is filled with several works of Greek art: a small statuette of Aphrodite and a larger-than-life black-figure amphora (**fig. 72**).<sup>181</sup> The amphora's disproportionately large scale seems to indicate that its message is intended as a comment on the girl from Tanagra as well.<sup>182</sup> Moreover, there are two Egyptian paintings on a spandrel and an intercolumniation on the north side and the same method was applied. The painting on the spandrel shows a beautiful naked woman adorned with jewels in combination with a still-life of a variety of Egyptian objects (**fig. 73**).<sup>183</sup> The standing figure wears a wig in the style of an Egyptian sarcophagus, which seems to be mirrored in the wooden coffin at the other side of the column. In one hand she holds an

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<sup>179</sup> Lisa Florman, "Klimt and the Precedent of Ancient Greece," *The Art Bulletin* 72, no. 2 (Jan. 1990): 319.

<sup>180</sup> Sabine Haag ed., *Gustav Klimt in the Kunsthistorisches Museum* (Vienna: KHM- Museumsverband, 2018), 13.

<sup>181</sup> Florman, "Klimt and the Precedent of Ancient Greece," 317-8.

<sup>182</sup> Florman, "Klimt and the Precedent of Ancient Greece," 318.

<sup>183</sup> Ernst Czerny, "Gustav Klimt and Egyptian Art. The Paintings in the Staircase of the Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien and Their Prototypes," in *Egypt and Austria VII Representations*, eds. Konrad Antonicek, Regina Hölzl and Libor Jůn, (Prague: AMU and FAMU, 2012), 58.

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ankh, in the other hand a strange object which has sometimes been interpreted as a sistrum. Behind her is a red wall covered with paintings and hieroglyphs, crowned by a so-called cornice, on which a vulture's broad wings are fixed, the animal symbolizing the goddess Nekhbet.<sup>184</sup> In Ernst Czerny's essay, he argues that Klimt used books and other publications that supplied him with good illustrations and photographs, either in colour or black and white. Klimt not only assembled a variety of Egyptian objects to make the decorative picture, but already early in his career he was deeply interested in Ancient Egyptian culture.<sup>185</sup>

This working method continued to be used for some portrait paintings he made during the same period. For example, in *Portrait of Joseph Pembaur*, Klimt did not only paint the musician, but he also added some symbolic icons that represented the identity of the musician (**fig. 74**). Klimt extracted individual figures and motifs from at least three different Archaic vases and added them to the painted gold frame of his portrait. The painting achieves a separation in two modes: a descriptively detailed, seemingly photo-realistic portrait, and a flat, gold-colored, largely Greek-inspired ornamental mode, in which each serves as commentary on and complement to the other.<sup>186</sup>

From these examples, made around 1890, we can assert that Klimt did not use images at random and every pattern he applied was well-researched and used with intention.

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<sup>184</sup> Czerny, "Gustav Klimt and Egyptian Art. The Paintings in the Staircase of the Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien and Their Prototypes," 58.

<sup>185</sup> Czerny, "Gustav Klimt and Egyptian Art. The Paintings in the Staircase of the Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien and Their Prototypes," 57-67.

<sup>186</sup> Florman, "Klimt and the Precedent of Ancient Greece," 320.

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In order to paint patterns in both the right shape and with the correct meaning, Klimt must have referenced a large number of books to study culture and context. At the same time, these patterns from different culture had to serve for the main figures in his artworks, as they are symbols of his figures' characteristics, nationalities, professions, and so on.

This established method for producing portraits was repeatedly used in many other works in his career, especially his later female paintings. In addition, Klimt tended to draw and apply patterns that emphasized flatness. This was his essential distinction from typical painters. This strategy benefitted from his experience in the applied arts and he continued to explore and develop flatness in his artworks from his early career until the end of his life.

His works made in the first decade of the twentieth century emphasized flatness clearly. This view was considered taboo for most salon or classical painters. Klimt decided to separate from them. The Vienna Secession, an artistic society that Klimt led and was established on 25 May 1897, was in direct opposition to the artistic establishment represented by Genossenschaft bildender Künstler Wien (the Society of Vienna Artists), generally known by its headquarters, Künstlerhaus (the House of Artists). Secessionists broke with the past and proposed a new style and mode of expression commensurate with the realities of the industrial age and modern life in an aspiring metropolis.<sup>187</sup> In the first issue of the Secession's official magazine, *Ver*

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<sup>187</sup> Christoph Grunenberg, "'Sacred Spring' and the Dawn of a New Era: the Vienna Secession," in *Gustav Klimt: Drawings & Paintings*, ed. Tobias G. Natter (Cologne: Taschen GmbH, 2012), 73.

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*Sacrum* (Sacred Spring), the editors claimed that “ we appeal to all of you regardless of social standing or wealth. We do not recognize any difference between ‘high art’ and ‘minor art’, between art for the rich and art for the poor. Art is a common property.”<sup>188</sup> This manifesto indicated that Klimt would seek inspiration from all art forms as weapons against outdated art. As Chinese art was not part of the academic mainstream, Klimt used it to break with artistic convention.

The Vienna Secession aspired to create *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or total works of art, inspired by Richard Wagner’s writing in his *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* (The artwork of the future). “The great Gesamtkunstwerk concludes all genres of art. In some sense, each genre as means is used and destroyed in order to reach the general purpose of all.”<sup>189</sup> In Vienna around 1900, the idea of the Gesamtkunstwerk initially gained currency through the musical theatre and from there permeated other artistic circles through the campaigns of Jugendstil architects and designers who developed a radical programme of totally unified living environments, in which every aspect was to be subject to strict principles of design and style.<sup>190</sup>

For Klimt, his implementation of some his principles from his Vienna Secession manifestos can be seen through the previously discussed *Stoclet Frieze* in the Palais Stoclet in Brüssel (**fig. 75**). It was a three-part frieze made from marble inlay and a masterpiece of applied art. In this series of works, Klimt created artwork from multiple materials to accomplish characteristics of flatness. He would rather use marble, mosaic

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<sup>188</sup> “Weshalb wir eine Zeitschrift herausgeben?” *Ver Sacrum* 1, no. 1 (1898): 6.

<sup>189</sup> Richard Wagner, *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* (Leipzig: Verlag von Otto Wigand, 1850), 32.

<sup>190</sup> Grunenberg, “‘Sacred Spring’ and the Dawn of a New Era: the Vienna Secession,” 88.

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tesserae, glass, ceramic, and hammered metal than more general materials such as oil and tempera. The series was believed to draw its inspiration from ornaments in Egyptian and East Asian art, which own features flatness. It can be seen as the practice of the Gesamtkunstwerk. The success of this work encouraged him to explore other subjects of art.

In the same period, he continued to explore further flatness on canvases and to integrate painting and ornaments, which were reflected in his paintings presented at the the *Kunstschau Wien 1908* exhibition that was presented between 1 June and 15 November 1908 by the so-called Klimt Group. The group was a loose society of artists who, owing to both artistic and financial disputes, left the Vienna Secession under Klimt's leadership. At the *Kunstschau*, the artists presented works from all the fields of art and their general outlook on art (*Kunstüberschau*) – following what Klimt himself mentioned in an interview in 1907. Klimt's work had developed in openness in the previous three years.<sup>191</sup> Karl M. Kuzmany reported that, “in sixteen paintings (that Klimt presented in *Kunstschau*), he proved that the way he has taken, his art was always refined, one unshakable goal in his eyes is to develop the decorative murals as a colorful mosaic having precisely flat features.”<sup>192</sup> Some iconic artworks such as *The Kiss* (1907/1908) and *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I* were presented in this exhibition. Compared to his early works in the 1890s, in which figures were painted in a three-dimensional way, these pieces for the *Kunstschau*, both figures and backgrounds, are

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<sup>191</sup> Markus Kristan, *Kunstschau Wien 1908* (Weitra: Verlag Bibliothek der Provinz, 2016), 9.

<sup>192</sup> Karl M. Kuzmany, “Kunstschau Wien 1908,” in *Dekorative Kunst* Band XVI, ed. H. Bruckmann (Munich: F. Bruckmann A.G.,1908), 518.



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flat, and he aimed to achieve flatness across the whole picture. This radical experiments on paintings ultimately succeeded, and *The Kiss* became his best-known work.

To summarize, in the first decade of the twentieth century, Klimt went further in his artistic explorations. He kept his working methods from the 1890s, which emphasized the symbolic meanings of the patterns he applied. Further, he continued to discover flatness in artworks and he thus referenced other regional artistic forms, especially from Egypt and East Asia. These two sources, which he applied from the 1890s onwards appear in his late female paintings and were used with much more proficiency.

### **Auspiciousness, Social Status and Feminine**

In the 1910s, Klimt 's pursuit of openness in art became more pioneering and was reflected in searching for ornaments that featured flatness to add to his artistic lexicon. Chinese decorative art was not only outside of the artistic system of Europe, but also has features of flatness, which contributed to Klimt's pictorial strategies. Among them, Chinese textiles most interested Klimt. Young Yang Chung and Sarah Cheang both argue that compared to Western clothing, which is conceived three-dimensionally and conforms to the shape of the human body in cut and construction, Chinese garments are flat and unstructured and their broad expanses of fabric are as suited for artistic

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embellishment as a canvas or screen. It is also practical to apply to the decoration of the home.<sup>193</sup>

These patterns are applied following strict rules in the Chinese cultural system. Every pattern or motif has its own pictorial implications, with positive meanings, such as richness, longevity, happiness and power. Thus, they fit Klimt's methods for drawing figures: combining two-dimensional ornaments and fully modeled human figures and using ornaments to symbolize figures. As most of his later works were commissioned by upper-class and rich families from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, these motifs were easy to use to imply the social status and wealth of his subjects.

Klimt's work with these patterns was also based on Klimt's past experience, and he drew on books like Oskar Münsterberg's *Chinese Art History* to secure the correct use of cultural symbols. By comparing his paintings to this book, extensive evidence can be gleaned about Klimt's pictorial strategy. In Klimt's paintings, flowers, animals and birds are motifs that were most frequently used as decoration, and the meanings of these images were discussed in Münsterberg's book. Münsterberg stated that, "every season and every plant (in Chinese culture) has its particular formation, and any deviation from the rule would be condemned as unfinished and un-artistic. Everything is forced into fixed rules of convention. Plum blossom, peony, lotus and

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<sup>193</sup> Young Yang Chung poses her argument by analyzing Japanese kimonos and Sarah Cheang developed her argument by analyzing Chinese robes. See Young Yang Chung, *Silken Thread: A History of Embroidery in China, Korea, Japan and Vietnam* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2005), 394; and Cheang, "Chinese Robes in Western Interiors: Transitionality and Transformation," 136.

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Chrysanthemum symbolize winter, spring, summer and autumn, respectively.”<sup>194</sup> In Klimt’s paintings, the figures in *Friends II* and *Lady with a Fan* both are young women, and the peony and lotus in the backgrounds symbolize spring and summer respectively. As spring and summer normally signify youth and vitality in Chinese culture, the metaphors for these patterns fit with the characteristics of these young women. Münsterberg also noted that Chinese painters used the crane motif, and in Chinese art, “birds, butterflies and insects sometimes appear alone, sometimes appear together with flowers.”<sup>195</sup> Klimt seemed to borrow this method of combination to arrange the compositions of some of his paintings.

The explanations of patterns on textiles can be also found in some paragraphs of Münsterberg’s book, which can make comparisons with Klimt’s paintings. In the second volume of his book, he focused on Chinese crafts, including bronze, porcelains and textiles. In the chapter on *Stoffe* (Fabrics), he elaborated on the development, technologies, styles, and meanings of textiles.<sup>196</sup> Some of the illustrations he included in this chapter resembled Klimt’s textile collection and the patterns he used. In one illustration, Münsterberg explained that “on the court dress, we see the classic wave patterns on the lower part, which are modern, animated and colorful. A rocky island is in the middle, where the surf splashes (**fig. 76**). A dragon rises from the water at the

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<sup>194</sup> Oskar Münsterberg, *Chinesische Kunstgeschichte Band I*, (Esslingen a.N.: Paul Neff Verlag (Max Schreiber), 1910), 321.

<sup>195</sup> Münsterberg, *Chinesische Kunstgeschichte Band I*, 294-320.

<sup>196</sup> See Oskar Münsterberg, *Chinesische Kunstgeschichte Band II* (Esslingen a.N.: Paul Neff Verlag (Max Schreiber), 1924), repinted unchangeable version from 1912, 377-412.

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center of the dress. The whole flat is filled with various motifs and happiness(Fu 福).”<sup>197</sup>

The Chinese phoenix was a popular image for Klimt, which he used three times. Münsterberg also pointed out that the “dragon and phoenix are the symbol of power and luck, just like lion and eagle in Europe.”<sup>198</sup> Images of the phoenix appear largely as a sort of decoration of imperial feminine life, especially on clothing. For Klimt, the phoenix probably alluded to the status of women on canvases.

For instance, Eugenia Primavesi and her husband Otto Primavesi were the most significant new patrons in Klimt’s last years. They commissioned Klimt to paint Eugenia Primavesi (1913-1914) and her daughter Mäda (1912). They also purchased Klimt’s *Baby* (1917) and his nine cartoons for the Palais Stoclet mosaics.<sup>199</sup> The Primavesis married in 1895 and Otto Primavesi was the owner and executive director of the Primavesi Bank, located in Olmütz (modern Olomouc, Czech Republic). He had long occupied a leading position in the financial, economic and political life of the city and the region.<sup>200</sup>

*Friends II* belonged to the Lederer family. The industrialist August Lederer and his wife Serena Lederer owned the largest and most important private collection of Klimt’s works. August Lederer owned a spirits factory in Győr, which he had taken

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<sup>197</sup> Oskar Münsterberg, *Chinesische Kunstgeschichte Band II* (Esslingen a.N.: Paul NFFF Verlag (Max Schreiber), 1924), 406. The reprinted version from 1912.

<sup>198</sup> Münsterberg, *Chinesische Kunstgeschichte Band II*, 398.

<sup>199</sup> These cartoons were preparation work for *The Stoclet Frieze*.

<sup>200</sup> See Tobias G. Natter and Christoph Grunenberg, eds., *Gustav Klimt: Painting, Design and Modern Life* (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), 182; and Katharine Baetjer, “About Mäda,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 40 (2005): 131.

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over from a state monopoly and remodeled into a prosperous modern business. He was also the owner of a factory for industrial starch products in Jungbunzlau (Mladá Boleslav).<sup>201</sup> He and his wife began to collect art soon after their marriage in 1892 and their collection included some of the most significant Klimt paintings, such as *The Beethoven Frieze*, two of the three Faculty paintings, landscape paintings, female paintings, and portraits of three generations of the Lederer family.<sup>202</sup> Four paintings in their collections featured Chinese elements, including *Friends II*, *Wally*, and the *Portrait of Elisabeth Lederer*. These paintings were exhibited at the Lederer apartment.<sup>203</sup> Two photographs taken in 1930 show Serena Lederer standing in her salon with *Portrait of Elisabeth Lederer* and *Wally* mounted on different walls and in harmony with other decorations and furniture. On the far-left side of the photo, a Chinoiserie Meissen porcelain stands atop the fireplace, placed near *Wally*, which is full of Chinese elements. Clearly, the Lederer family was fond of Chinese art. As a salon was the place for meeting guests, the inner space revealed the artistic interest and tastes of the owner. Klimt was a regular guest in the Lederer home (**figs. 77 and 78**).

<sup>204</sup> As many of his portraits were commissions, his works not only expressed his own

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<sup>201</sup> Lillie, "The Golden Age of Klimt," 58.

<sup>202</sup> For the Lederers' acquisition in 1915 of the *Beethoven Frieze* (*Beethovenfries*, 1902), see: Lillie, "The Golden Age of Klimt," 59. The Faculty Paintings were the series of monumental murals for the Great Hall of the University of Vienna. Klimt created allegories of the faculties of Medicine, Philosophy and Jurisprudence. The commission was received in 1894, but after a series of scandals and vicious attacks, Klimt resigned from the commission in 1905 and they were finally finished in 1907. See: Lillie, "The Golden Age of Klimt," 59; and Grunenberg, "'Sacred Spring' and the Dawn of a New Era: the Vienna Secession," 82-4.

<sup>203</sup> Lillie, "The Golden Age of Klimt: The Artist's Great Patrons: Lederer, Zuckerkandl, and Bloch-Bauer," 60.

<sup>204</sup> Renée Price, ed., *Gustav Klimt: the Ronald S. Lauder and Serge Sabarsky Collections* (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 2007), 275.

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ambitions also the needs and demands from his patrons. Two other figure paintings, *Portrait of Ria Munk III* and *Dancer*, which also contain Chinese elements, were commissioned by Serena Lederer's older sister, Aranka and her husband, Alexander Munk, for their daughter Ria, who had committed suicide in 1911 at 24 following her unhappy love affair with the writer Hanns Heinz Ewers.<sup>205</sup> Both Klimt and the Lederer family shared an interest in Chinese patterns and antiquities.

Relying on his earlier method of creating figure paintings, Klimt developed a new mechanism using Chinese patterns to symbolize characters; he applied them to implicate social status, wealth, and power in addition to signal auspicious connotations to the viewer. The unique art form helps Klimt to execute his experiment on dealing with the issue of flatness in his canvases, which aims to reject the convention of hyperrealism and linear perspective since Renaissance. This series of works is also the record of the increasing interest on Chinese art in Vienna in the first two decades of twentieth century. With help of cultural activities from Klimt's circle, including East Asian travel, collecting antiques and creating other artistic subjects, it promoted Klimt to create his paintings.

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<sup>205</sup> This painting, intended to be a second portrait for Ria, which her parents rejected, was later reworked by Klimt and renamed *Dancer*. See: Lillie, "The Golden Age of Klimt," 67.

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## **Chapter 7. Viennese Visual Art with Chinese Motifs and Patterns**

This chapter introduces that how Viennese modernists describe Chinese figures and objects depending on their individual experience. Furthermore, I also analyses how some designers borrowed from Chinese patterns and cultural elements to recreate some new textile patterns. Their styles and the way of thinking stayed in step with the artistic movement that happened in Vienna. Some of these works absorbed stylistic elements from the Chinese design.

### **A Modernist in China: Hans Böhler and His Works**

Hans Böhler was born into a rich industrial family in Austria. His father Dr. Otto Böhler was a chemist and successful entrepreneur in the iron and steel industry and his family were important patrons of music, which helped to him to meet some famous musicians in artistic circles in Vienna. For instance, when Böhler was a young man, he sketched the composer Gustav Mahler while he was conducting.

From 1905 to 1909, he started to present his artworks in different exhibitions, including the Secession's exhibition, Kunstschau, Kunstsalon Pisko, 1. Internationale Jagdausstellung, and so on. In the 1910s, he traveled around the world, which changed his artistic life. He traveled to East Asia during 1910 and 1912 and visited China, Japan and Korea, among other countries. In 1913 he visited South America.<sup>206</sup> His trip to

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<sup>206</sup> For more information about Böhler, please see Böhler's biography in Martin Suppan, *Hans Böhler: Leben und Werke* (Vienna: Edition Martin Suppan, 1990), 34-42. And Otto Breicha, *Hans Böhler. Gemälde und Graphik* (Salzburg: Verlag Galerie Welz Salzburg, 1981), 13-5.

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China was especially impressive. During his stay, he made a considerable number of oil paintings and sketches. When we take an overview of his entire artistic career, the works he made in East Asia occupy the main part of his entire oeuvre.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, few Western artists visited China. Böhler was probably the first modernist came to make the journey. Also, he explored Mukden (now Shenyang), a less known city in the Northern part of China. On the one hand, his artwork offered realistic views of the situation in Northern China in the early twentieth century. He drew and painted portraits, cityscapes, and everyday scenes such as *Häuserzeile in Peking* (Row of Houses in Beijing), *Straßenszene in Peking* (Street Scene in Beijing) and *Gruppe von Chinesen* (Group of Chinese), all made in 1910 (**figs. 79, 80 and 81**). On the other hand, as a Western artist, his works express a strong sense of the Vienna Secession. For example, *Hockender chinesischer Mädchenakt, mit verschränkten Armen* (Squatting Chinese Nude Girl with Crossed Arms) is a drawing that shares similarities with Rodin's and Egon Schiele's drawings (**fig. 82**). Two crucial issues are that he had opportunities to paint both the Chinese royal family members and nude models. In fact, when Böhler was in China, the country was experiencing tremendous political turbulence. The Qing Dynasty was collapsing, and a new republic established in 1912. It was a time when conservatism and radicalism were twisted together. The Chinese royal family, which was considered the most secret and untouchable family, was drawn by Hans Böhler and his paintings are undoubtedly important historical documents of the early twentieth century.



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Hans Böhler also drew some pieces of nude Chinese women. In the Chinese cultural tradition, nude women were taboo, a symbol of degradation and immorality. Böhler stated that it was difficult for him to find a nude model in China because people with social status were forbidden from doing so. Thus, Böhler asked prostitutes, among the lowest-class, who he paid in return. For example, *Akt, nach rechts liegender Chinesin* (Chinese Nude Female Reclining to the Right), *Zwei Freudenmädchen aus Peking* (Two Prostitutes from Beijing), *Chinese Nude. Akt, nach rechts liegende Chinesin* (Chinese Nude Female Reclining to the Right), and so on. Some drawings were obviously influenced by Klimt and Rodin (**figs. 83, 84 and 85**). Böhler used concise lines to sketch the contours of the women and the gestures he depicted can also frequently be found in Rodin's drawings.

In *Chinese Nude*, the woman was put into a scene in which she stands rigidly in front of the entrance to a Chinese house. Behind her, there are red fensters, two lanterns and a well-painted screen (**fig. 86**). In the inner space of the house, a Chinese man turns back to peep on the woman. We hardly see any expression from the woman's face, and she stands here like a commodity in a showcase, waiting for men to gaze at her. It reminds of Édouard Manet's metaphorical painting, *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (**fig. 87**). In this image, Böhler probably described a Chinese prostitute in front of a brothel.

In a book introducing Böhler published in 1929, the critic Arthur Roessler compliments him on his China trip and the works he made there.

A small voice of skepticism warned him that he already knew about art through books, catalogues and exhibitions. He would be disappointed about the reality here because he got to know East Asia through art. In the Far East, it doesn't match what he expected, the abundance of

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artistic appearances of exceptional beauty and grace or grotesque fantasies. There is only the same ordinary and weary reality. But it seemed to be wonderful for Hans Böhler, who never painted an invented form, because the natural visibility of the real world in his endless variability fulfilled him with great astonishment and with a nearly panic-driven terror.<sup>207</sup>

Hans Böhler saw what he already knew from artworks: the narrow alleys of Chinese cities with small dainty houses in gold, green, black and some red. He recognized the strangely bent gables, the fantastically curved towers with hanging bells, the small and swift yellow skinned people in their simple and comfortable robes made out of blue and black silk. He was astonished with his views, because he saw them in reality, and they moved him in a different way than he expected it.<sup>208</sup>

Once he visited Japan, but he didn't stay there long. He felt that he didn't like this country and its people as much as China. The biggest part of his artworks, which he brought back home from his Asian trip, was formed by the ones he made in China, the country which he as a man and an artist preferred over Japan. Even today, nearly after 20 years, he spoke in thankful memory of the dignified, ancient, aristocratic, refined and artistically incomparable high-quality Chinese culture and their peculiar, often incomprehensible beautiful women.<sup>209</sup>

One would understand Böhler wrong if they would consider his watercolor, pen, pencil and ink drawings from China, only as skillful depiction of ethnographical curiosities and interesting exotic occurrence, instead of mainly as a manifestation of his artistic impression.<sup>210</sup>

Even when Böhler came back to Vienna, he continued to make work related to China, for example, some postcards with Chinese and Japanese images for the Vienna Workshop (**figs. 88 and 89**).

Although he made a large number of Chinese images, he never absorbed Chinese artistic techniques into his work. His images mainly featured a European modern style, especially the Viennese modern style. Yet, based on the understanding of Chinese

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<sup>207</sup> Arthur Roessler, *Der Maler Hans Böhler* (Vienna-Leipzig-Zürich: Amalthea -Verlag, 1929), 32-3.

<sup>208</sup> Roessler, *Der Maler Hans Böhler*, 34-5.

<sup>209</sup> Roessler, *Der Maler Hans Böhler*, 38.

<sup>210</sup> Roessler, *Der Maler Hans Böhler*, 37.

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culture, he expressed motifs in appropriate ways. Böhler's contribution was also reflected in his impact in his artistic circles. Returning to Vienna, his knowledge of China transmitted Asian art to many interested artists.

### **Viennese Vogue with Chinese Imageries**

In the early twentieth century, the Vienna Workshop built up a worldwide reputation. Established in 1903 as a combined design, production and commercial enterprise, and financed by the Jewish textile magnate Fritz Wärndorfer (1868-1939), it was registered as a manufacturing guild of craftsmen. Its creation was a recognition of Vienna's leading designers' awareness of the need for a closer integration of all forms of art production. Most of the group which consisted of graduates from the Vienna Applied Arts School.<sup>211</sup> From 1903 until the 1930s, the designs of the Vienna Workshop were ubiquitous in almost every aspect of Viennese artistic and daily life. Although less famous than the Vienna Secession, its impact in shaping Viennese modern life was much more important than the latter.

The emergence of the Vienna Workshop was part of the Art Nouveau movement in Europe in the late nineteenth century. In many books, the Vienna Workshop was considered to be a branch of Art Nouveau, which is normally introduced with the Vienna Secession. Yet the existence of the Vienna Workshop lasted for nearly 20 years, and the group was inspired by various art movements including Art Nouveau, the avant-

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<sup>211</sup> Jeremy Howard, *Art Nouveau: International and National Styles in Europe*. (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1996), 74.

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garde and Art Deco. The style of the Vienna Workshop marked the transition from Art Nouveau to Art Deco. These transformations are evident in their textile designs.

Out of all the fields, textile design played an important role in the development of the Vienna Workshop. Its scope was wide and included printed silk ribbons, silk shawls, embroidery and lace, some twenty-thousand fabric samples in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. About a hundred artists were responsible for designing over eighteen-thousand patterns, which came in a wide variety of color schemes.<sup>212</sup> Whether in the techniques or motifs, these patterns were influenced in part by oriental textiles. A strong oriental sense exists in some of their designs. Among them, many textile designs were named after Chinese cities, auspicious animals and historical celebrities.<sup>213</sup>

The examples include: Mathilde Flögl's *Peking* (1928) and *Tientsin* (1928); Lotte Frömel-Fochler's (1884-1972) *Goldfasan* (Golden Pheasant) (1910) and *Peking* (1910); Wilhelm Martens's *Kranich* (Crane) (1910); Clara Posnanski's *Kanton* (1928); Felice Rix-Ueno's (1893-1967) *China* (1920), *Mandarin* (1924), and *Nanking* (1924);<sup>214</sup> Maria Lucia Stadel-Mayer's *Hongkong* (1928); Julius Zimpel's (1896-1925) *Litaipo* (1919), *Buddha* (1919), and *Kanton* (Canton) (1927); Ugo Zovetti's (1879-1974) *Pfingstrose* (Peony) (1910); Eleonore Zuckerkandl's *Konfuzius* (Confucius) (1918); and Maria Likarz-Strauss's (1893-1971) *Hongkong* (1928).<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Angela Völker, *Textiles of the Wiener Werkstätte (1910-1932)* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 1994), 9-10.

<sup>213</sup> The Vienna Workshop intended to organize some special series of designs. Samples with Chinese cities' names were included in a series of international cities.

<sup>214</sup> After becoming a member of the Wiener Werkstätte, Felice Rix-Ueno visited Japan several times, and eventually settled in Kyoto in 1935. See Angela Völker, *Textiles of the Wiener Werkstätte (1910-1932)*, 247.

<sup>215</sup> These items are checked out from "Catalogue of Artists and Patterns," in Angela Völker's *Textiles of the Wiener Werkstätte (1910-1932)* from 208 to 245. And MAK-Sammlung Online <https://sammlung.mak.at/>.

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Most of their works don't reflect naturalism, yet, the designers tried to simplify the patterns and create an oriental sense rather than a recognized image. The method that they used retained the basic elements, which can be recognized as cultural icons, but simplified them into geometrical forms. Angela Völker raised the point that the Art Nouveau style had been abandoned by the Vienna Workshop in both the fine and applied arts by around 1910. The textile designs featured frugality of ornament, bareness of form, an individual aesthetic language, and a superlatively disciplined colour awareness. Also, the abstract tendencies of Cubist, Futurist and Constructivist painting played a part in forming the patterns and colour combinations. But this trend was also distinct from later Bauhaus fabrics, which relied on the principle of plainness and suitability of material, and not on reduction.<sup>216</sup> In my view, I consider the Vienna Workshop to be an intermediate phase between Art Nouveau and Bauhaus. It formed the bridge at the turn of twentieth century, which originated in Art Nouveau but also led to the appearance of Bauhaus.

Some examples that demonstrated an interest in Chinese art and culture, and embodied these tendencies, include Julius Zimpel's textile design *Li-Tai-Po*, named for one of the most famous Chinese poets of the Tang dynasty, Li-Tai-Po 李太白 (701-762), known for his romantic views of life in his verse. He was also one of the most famous wine drinkers in China's long tradition of imbibers, and frequently celebrated

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<sup>216</sup> Völker, *Textiles of the Wiener Werkstätte (1910-1932)*, 51.

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the joy of drinking (**fig. 90**). He also wrote of friendship, solitude, the passage of time, and the joys of nature with brilliance and great freshness of imagination.

Reading this pattern, it doesn't present any readable images related to the person Li-Tai-Po. Yet the inspirational image seems to be from patterns of French and English Chinoiserie. In Zimpel's design, we find a group of geometrical flowers and pavilions. The artist delivers a sense of East Asian style successfully. But how do we connect it to Li-Tai-Po? It might be not connected to the poet himself, but with the imagery in his poems. Selecting Li-Tai-Po as the title for his design probably also derived from Gustav Mahler's 1908 symphony, inspired by Hans Bethge's *Die chinesische Flöte* (The Chinese Flute), a volume of classical Chinese poetry from the Tang dynasty up through the late 1800s and translated into German. Mahler selected seven poems from this book to set as a composition, *Das lied von der Erde* (The Song of the Earth). Four of the seven songs come from Li-Tai-Po's poems: *Das Trinklied vom Jammer der Erde* (The Drinking Song of Earth's Sorrow), *Von der Jugend* (Youth), *Von der Schönheit* (Beauty), and *Der Trunkene im Frühling* (The Drunkard in Spring). In these poems, Li-Tai-Po repeatedly used lotuses and pavilions as imagery. Like Gustav Mahler, Julius Zimpel tried to construct a sense of Li-Tai-Po as expressed through his poems. Zimpel was also Klimt's nephew and Klimt urged him to seek artistic training.<sup>217</sup> He might have been influenced by Klimt's interest in East Asia.

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<sup>217</sup> "Julius Zimpel," Wien Geschichte Wiki, accessed September 17, 2020, [https://www.geschichtewiki.wien.gv.at/Julius\\_Zimpel](https://www.geschichtewiki.wien.gv.at/Julius_Zimpel).

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Eleonore Zuckerkandl's *Confucius* reflects the same ideas (**fig. 91**). Through the pattern, we can hardly visualize a picture of Confucius and the only information is found in some concise lines and a little bit of accessory, probably from classic Chinese robes. When we compare this pattern with an European book introducing Chinese history, the answer becomes clear.

The French Sinologist Jean-Baptiste Du Halde's (1674-1743) book, *The General History of China. Containing a Geographical, Historical, Chronological, Political and Physical Description of the Empire of China* (1736) is essential for answering these questions. The publisher selected Confucius as the image on the cover page and afterwards, this image becomes the visual icon of Confucius in Europe (**fig. 92**). In contrast, Zuckerkandl's *Confucius* focuses on abstracting the image and symbolizing the subject with some readable elements, which represent the identities of figures.

Other designs also delivered similar strategies. Felice Rix's *Mandarin* selected the dragon, a typical oriental symbol as the content for this design (**fig. 93**). This image is much more abstract than general images of dragons. At the same time, Maria Likarz-Strauss's *Peking* seems to embody the Chinese imagery of *Peach Blossom Spring* (*Taohuayuan* 桃花源), a theme that frequently appears in Chinese literature and artistic creations (**fig. 94**). A fable written by Tao Yuanming 陶渊明 (365-427), *The Peach Blossom Spring* was about a chance discovery of an ethereal utopia where the people led an ideal existence in harmony with nature, unaware of the outside world for centuries. The story describes how a fisherman haphazardly sailed into a stream in a forest made up entirely of blossoming peach trees, where even the ground was covered

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by peach petals. When he reached the end of the stream, he found a grotto. Though narrow at first, he was able to squeeze through and the passage eventually reached a hidden village. The villagers were surprised to see him but were kind and friendly. They explained that their ancestors escaped to this place during the civil unrest of the Qin Dynasty (221 B.C.E. - 206 B.C.E.) and they themselves had not left or had contact with anyone from the outside since. As a result, they heard nothing of subsequent changes in political regimes. The fisherman was warmly received by the hospitable villagers and stayed for over a week. Leaving, he was informed that it was worthless to reveal this experience to the outside world. However, he marked his route on his way out with signs and later shared the existence of this idyllic haven to others. Many repeatedly tried to find it, but in vain. Since its composition, *The Peach Blossom Spring* became a popular symbol of the ideal world in the mind of the Chinese people. Themes related to the stories were developed in the following dynasties and many later poems, paintings and music compositions reflected the ideas from this theme.

Strauss's *Peking* featured imagery such as fishermen, blossoming trees, ponds and cheerful and contented people, which can be found in Tao Yuanming's descriptions. The visual origin that Strauss referenced might have originated from some Chinese paintings. For example, some Southern Song (1127-1279) paintings featured fishermen, and in the paintings of the Ming painter Qiu Ying 仇英 (1494-1552), we frequently find these motifs in these compositions (**figs.95 and 96**).

Some of these Viennese designs might be connected with radical art experiments in other fields from the same period. For example, Mathild Flögl's *Tientsin* (1928) was



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named after a Chinese city and also might be related to the Adolf Loos's architectural designs (**fig. 97**). Loos had a commission in Tientsin in 1925 to design an exhibition hall (**fig. 98**). From the architectural sketches, the building adopted a concise design style with no other decoration on the facade and appeared very geometric. When we compare Loos' architecture with Flögl's pattern, we find that Flögl repeatedly used a right-angled pattern and that the sense of the geometric is quietly similar to Loos' sketch. As the name of this pattern is also *Tientsin* and it appeared less than three years after Loos finished his design, we could infer that Flögl might have been inspired by Loos' architectural sketches.

Looking at these designs, these artists emphasized the conscious use of "ornament". To some extent, making use of ornament helped Viennese artists and designers to develop their own style. What are the theories behind their artistic activities? In the late nineteenth century, some art historians transferred their focus to the study of ornament. At that time ornamental study was not seen as an independent field. Alois Riegl was the first art historian to challenge this consensus. In the introduction to his book *Stilfragen: Grundlegungen zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik* (Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament), Riegl discussed how people thought of the ornamental study at that time.<sup>218</sup>

The subtitle of this book announces its theme: "Foundations for a History of Ornament." How many of you are now shrugging your shoulders in disbelief merely in response to the title? Why, you ask, does ornament also have a history? Even in an era such as ours, marked by a passion for historical research, this question still awaits a positive, unqualified answer.

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<sup>218</sup> Alois Riegl's *Stilfragen: Grundlegungen zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik* was first published in 1893.

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The reason that causes people to shape this kind of idea is “the materialist interpretation of the origin of art developed in the 1860s,” and “the theory of the technical, materialist origin of the earliest ornaments and art forms is usually attributed to Gottfried Semper.” Semper thinks that “the Semperians jumped to the conclusion that all art forms were always the direct products of materials and techniques. ‘technique’ quickly emerged as a popular buzzword; in common usage, it soon became interchangeable with ‘art’ itself and eventually began to replace it. Only the naive talked about ‘art’; expert spoke in terms of ‘technique’.”<sup>219</sup>

Riegl was devoted to challenging the validity of the technical-materialist theory of the origin of art. He argued that “it will become evident, namely, that the human desire to adorn the body is far more elementary than the desire to cover it with woven garments, and that the decorative motifs that satisfy the simple desire for adornment, such as linear, geometric configurations, surely existed long before textiles were used for physical protection.”<sup>220</sup> As he continued, “surface decoration becomes the larger unit within which woven ornament is but a subset, equivalent to any other category of surface decoration.”<sup>221</sup> In other words, “surface decoration” takes priority over “woven ornament.” Riegl’s most significant contribution is that he established “ornament” as an independent subject of research. His work guided Viennese artists to consider ornament much more seriously in their own creative works.

Beyond Riegl’s theoretical discussion, many art historians tried to collect and interpret historical patterns visually. In the mid- nineteenth century, Owen Jones (1809-1874), a Victorian architect, designer and decorator, realized the need for a theory of researching decorative art. He published *The Grammar of Ornament* in 1856, which

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<sup>219</sup> Riegl, *Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament*, 4.

<sup>220</sup> Riegl, *Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament*, 4-5.

<sup>221</sup> Riegl, *Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament*, 6.

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established the basis of researching decorative art. He selected 112 color plates from different countries and historical periods. The book had an impact on the whole Europe because it was published not only in English, but also in German, *Grammatik der Ornamente*,<sup>222</sup> which appeared the same year. In the preface, Owen Jones wrote:

I have proposed to myself in forming the collection which I have ventured to call the *Grammar of Ornament*, to select a few of the most prominent types on certain styles closely connected with each other, and in which certain general laws appeared to reign independently of the individual peculiarities of each. I have ventured to hope that, in thus bringing into immediate juxtaposition the many forms of beauty which every style of ornament presents, I might aid in arresting that unfortunate tendency of our time to be content with copying, whilst the fashion lasts, the forms peculiar to any bygone age, without attempting to ascertain, generally completely ignoring, the peculiar circumstance which rendered an ornament beautiful, because it was appropriate, and which, as expressive of other wants when thus transplanted, as entirely fails.<sup>223</sup>

He listed thirty-seven general principles describing the arrangement of form and color in architecture and the decorative arts. There is also an analysis of every style and country's decorative art. In the mid- nineteenth century, the book was a reference book for art professionals, a virtual bible for decorative art research. For a century, almost every architect's office had a copy of the *Grammar*. Its practical influence on William Morris, Dr Christopher Dresser, Art Nouveau, Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier was profound because the *Grammar* is a repository of ornaments, a source book for myriad design problems. Its ultimate purpose was the practical decoration of objects of utility.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Owen Jones, *Grammatik der Ornamente* (Leipzig: Ludwig Denicke, 1856).

<sup>223</sup> Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1910), 1.

<sup>224</sup> John Kresten Jespersen, "Originality and Jones' 'The Grammar of Ornament' of 1856," *Journal of Design History*. 21, no. 2 (2008): 151.

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In the book, Jones placed Chinese art into a crucial position. Chinese art was not only discussed in *the Grammar of Ornament*, but Jones also published an 1867 book entirely devoted to Chinese art, *Examples of Chinese Ornament Selected from Objects in the South Kensington Museum and Other Collections*, in order to introduce Chinese decorative art systematically (**figs. 99 and 100**). In the preface to *Examples of Chinese Ornament*, he first explains how viewing Chinese art in Europe became possible and the importance of Chinese ornaments. He wrote, “the late war in China, and the Ti-ping rebellion, by the destruction and sacking of many public buildings, has caused the introduction to Europe of great number of truly magnificent works of Ornamental Art, of a character which had been rarely seen before that period, and which are remarkable, not only for the perfection and skill shown in the technical processes, but also for the beauty and harmony of the colorings, and general perfection of the ornamentation.”<sup>225</sup> In the end, he pointed out the significance of Chinese ornament for the present time. “I venture to hope that the publication of these types of a style of Ornament hitherto little known will be found, by all those in the practice of Ornamental Art, a valuable and instructive aid in building up what we all seek, — the progressive development of the forms of the past, founded on the eternal principles which all good forms of art display.”<sup>226</sup>

### **Graphic Designs by Emil Orlik**

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<sup>225</sup> Owen Jones, *Examples of Chinese Ornament Selected from Objects in the South Kensington Museum and Other Collections* (London: S&T. Gilbert, 1867), 3.

<sup>226</sup> Jones, *Examples of Chinese Ornament Selected from Objects in the South Kensington Museum and Other Collections*, 4.

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Emil Orlik was born in Prague but was active in Prague, Vienna and Berlin in the first two decades of the twentieth century. He made works including paintings, drawings, prints, cover designs, posters and bookplates, even photographs. His genius was reflected in every aspect of the art field. When he was young, he received his father's permission to study art in Munich in 1889. At the start, he was rejected by Academy, but he didn't give up on his dream and enrolled at the private school of art headed by the painter Heinrich Knirr (1862-1944), an institute chosen by students as an alternative to the Academy. Franz von Bayros (1866-1924) and Paul Klee (1879-1940) also studied there. In 1891, he finally was accepted by the Academy of Fine Art in Munich, where he joined the class of Wilhelm von Lindenschmit der Jüngere (1829-1895). At the same time, he copied Rembrandt and many other old Masters in the Munich Pinakothek and tried some experiments with printing techniques as well, attending the class headed by Johann Leonhard Raab (1825-1899), a specialist in copper engravings. His study at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich ended in 1893. Owing to his dislike of the conservative academy system, he started to study the Munich Naturalists in the circle around Wilhelm Leibl (1844-1900). After, he returned to Prague in 1894 and Munich in 1896. During this year, together with his friend Bernhard Pankok (1872-1943) he worked on the development of new printing techniques, especially xylography. In the process, he grew interested in Japanese Ukiyo-e, which led him to travel to Japan in 1900. Although he was able to view a large number of imported artworks and crafts in Europe, he did not want to rely solely on these imports. In Japan, he was able to study the original techniques and process for making Japanese

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woodcuts and built up personal relationship with Japanese artists. After he returned to Europe in 1901, he frequently participated in the Vienna Secession's activities. The most important was the 14<sup>th</sup> exhibition of the Secession, a major group show dedicated to Ludwig van Beethoven that took place in 1902 and for which Klimt created his Beethoven Frieze. In 1904, Orlik was part of the unrest in the arts community of Vienna after artists around Gustav Klimt split from the Viennese Secession to form their own independent arts movement. In 1905 Orlik was offered an assignment in Berlin to become the successor to Prof. Otto Eckmann (1865-1902) and to teach a class on graphic arts and book illustration at the Museum of Decorative Arts. From 1906 to 1913, he made four trips to Italy and several visits to Paris, where he found the best opportunities to inform himself about the new trends in European printed art. He also met Henri Matisse and Auguste Rodin, and acquired paintings by Cézanne, van Dongen and Matisse for his own collection.<sup>227</sup>

In his friendship with the poet Gerhart Hauptmann (1862-1946) and the art director Max Reinhardt (1873-1943), he established inroads into theatre life and designed stage settings, posters, and made numerous drawings of theatre rehearsals, backstage life and performances.

The extraordinary trip that Orlik made in 1911 and 1912 requires further discussion. He visited Egypt, the Sudan and Ceylon and continued on to the East Asia, crossing China and Korea to arrive in Japan. According to past research on Emil Orlik,

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<sup>227</sup> "Emil Orlik - His Life" See Heinrich R. Scheffer ed., *Die Exlibris des Emil Orlik* (Wiesbaden: Verlag Claus Wittal, 1992), 128-130.

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scholars focused extensively on his artwork and activities around 1900 because 1900 is considered the golden age of Viennese art, and second because Orlik left to study in Japan in 1900 and in his works from the 1900s conveyed a strong sense of Japanese art. Academics have paid less attention to his second trip to East Asia . Yet, it was not only as important as his first trip but also had a significant impact on modern Chinese art history. Like Böhler, he was one of the earliest Western modernists to visit China and he created a large number of paintings with Chinese motifs.

There is no precise evidence for which cities Emil Orlik visited, but we can infer his itinerary from his artwork. Much of his time was spent in the region around Shanghai. He made several paintings and drawings here, which are very attractive and interesting. Hans Wolff has analyzed some of the works Orlik made in Shanghai.

The artist (Orlik) knows how to extract the valuable, general and applicable part from foreign culture and recreated it in his own way. The painting owning splendid influence both in colors and forms is the one about street views of Shanghai made in 1912 (**fig. 101**). We feel the pulse of Chinese life, and we feel that the un-similarity of the totally different life meanings, people, clothes and houses. The painting is not foreign, yet, it is the expression of our times and art. The special beauty is feeling of colors in this picture. The door appears as a rich dark-red hall, which is illustrated tremendously vividly by strong Valeurs in the grey-green house wall. The large Chinese words and skillfully well-arranged figures make the picture spatial and interesting.<sup>228</sup>

In addition, he made a series of landscape drawings about West Lake in Hangzhou (**fig. 102**). As a cultural landmark in China, this series is enlightening because hardly any European artists had described West Lake in their work. Orlik was probably the first artist that tried to describe Chinese landscape with a modern artistic method. Thus, the

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<sup>228</sup> Hans Wolff, "Emil Orlik," *Die Kunst für Alle* 32, no. 5 (1916/1917): 84.

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significance is that we can compare his works to Chinese artists' works and see the diverse views and different cultural backgrounds.

Obviously, Orlik's West Lake series is not a typical series that uses European landscape techniques. Rather it is more of a compromise between the techniques of the West and the East. Although he still conserved some Western perspectives and techniques, typical of a European landscape, it also shows the clear assimilation of elements from Chinese art.

In Chinese art, *West Lake* or *Ten Scenes of West Lake* constituted a particular theme, and was painted by many Chinese artists. As early as the Song Dynasty, the painter Li Song 李嵩 (Ca.1190 – 1230) had portrayed this theme. *West Lake* remains a popular theme for Chinese artists. Emil Orlik's *West Lake* series could be compared with Dong Bangda's 董邦达 (1696–1769) *Ten Scenes of West Lake (Xihu shijing 西湖十景)* (**fig. 103**). Orlik's paintings do not seem to follow the rules of perspective, an exploration of space that he tried to borrow from Chinese ink paintings. Both Dong Bangda and Emil Orlik were trying to show the wonderful panoramic view of West Lake, which appears frequently in traditional Chinese landscape paintings.

Regarding his figure paintings, he paid much more attention to women. For example, the theme of mother and child was painted several times (**fig. 104**). Furthermore, women's daily life was another key point he focused on, such as *Morning Toilet*. He also repeatedly drew people in theatres, and he sketched audiences watching dramas, reminiscent of his working experience in the theatres of Europe (**figs. 105 and 106**).



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Like all European artists, Orlik also confronted the issues brought by exotic objects. For example, Asian peoples' facial and body structure differed from Europeans. It was a challenge for him to learn how to represent these subjects. He seems to have accomplished it very successfully. Max Osborn appraised Orlik's work:

While he used to bring paintings, graphic works and decorative works that look like they were made by a Japanese or Chinese artist after his East Asian journey, he has now gained full freedom to manage with the resources of the East Asia.<sup>229</sup>

After he returned to Europe, he maintained his interest in East Asian culture, especially China, which was reflected in his correspondence. In his letter to Marie v. Gomperz, he drew a Chinese figure and said, "This Chinese sage, not only because it's made of porcelain (**fig. 107**)! Every day standing in front of me on the table shows the very same smile: as an oracle, I ask whether I have already written to you, whether I thank you for the telegram? I feel like if - and then like if not! How everything is today: living and working in an uncertain state."<sup>230</sup>

Orlik made a great contribution to the visualization of knowledge in Sinology and Japanology in the early twentieth century German-speaking regions. As the fascination for East Asian knowledge grew, numerous books and other publications pertaining to East Asia were published in the early twentieth century. Orlik directed the design of some book covers, illustrations and bookplates. For example, Orlik took charge of a

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<sup>229</sup> Max Osborn, "Zum Thema Orlik," 208.

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<sup>230</sup> Maria von Gomperz is industrialist Max von Gomperz's niece. The Gomperz family was very helpful to Orlik in getting to know other influential people. Between 1902 and 1913 Orlik was invited to the Gomperz castle at Oslavan near Brno in Moravia every summer. Orlik stayed in friendly correspondence with Mrs. Gomperz for a long time. See Heinrich R. Scheffer ed., *Die Exlibris des Emil Orlik* (Wiesbaden: Verlag Claus Wittal, 1992), 132. And See Emil Orlik an Marie v. Gomperz, 5. März 1917 (aus Berlin). *Emil Orlik an Marie v. Gomperz, Briefe 1902-1932*. ed. Otmar Rychlik (Vienna: Sonderzahl Verlag, 1997), 119.

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series of books written by the traveler and folklorist Lafcadio Hearn, all of which bore a consistent style.<sup>231</sup> It included *Kokoro*<sup>232</sup> (Kokoro: Hints and Echoes of Japanese Inner Life), *Lotos. Blicke in das unbekannte Japan*<sup>233</sup> (Lotus. Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan), *Izumo. Blicke in das unbekannte Japan*<sup>234</sup> (Izumo. Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan), *Kyūshū. Träume und Studien aus dem neuen Japan*<sup>235</sup> (Out of the East: Reveries and Studies in New Japan), *Kwaidan: Seltsame Geschichten und Studien aus Japan*<sup>236</sup> (Kwaidan: Stories and Studies of Strange Things), *Buddha. Neue Geschichten und Studien aus Japan*<sup>237</sup> (Buddha. New Histories and Studies from Japan), and *Japan. Ein Deutungsversuch*<sup>238</sup> (Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation). Orlik's designs combined Japanese style and the Vienna Secession. For example, in the cover page that he designed for this series, some colorful flowers are elaborately arranged together, and surround the title of the book, a pattern that resembles both kimonos and Ukiyo-e (**fig. 108**). Yet, he obviously managed these oriental patterns in a manner consistent with the

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<sup>231</sup> Lafcadio Hearn (1895-1850), also called Koizumi Yakumo, was a writer, translator, and teacher who introduced the culture and literature of Japan to the West.

<sup>232</sup> Lafcadio Hearn, *Kokoro*, trans. Berta Francos (Frankfurt a. Main: Rütten & Loening, 1912). The original English version was published in 1896.

<sup>233</sup> Lafcadio Hearn, *Lotos. Blicke in das unbekannte Japan*, trans. Berta Francos (Frankfurt a. Main: Rütten & Loening, 1906).

<sup>234</sup> Lafcadio Hearn, *Izumo. Blicke in das unbekannte Japan*, trans. Berta Francos (Frankfurt a. Main: Rütten & Loening, 1919). The original English version including two volumes first appeared in 1894. The German versions *Lotos* and *Izumo* are volume 1 and 2 respectively.

<sup>235</sup> Lafcadio Hearn, *Kyūshū. Träume und Studien aus dem neuen Japan*, trans. Berta Francos (Frankfurt a. Main: Rütten & Loening, 1906). The first English version was published in 1895.

<sup>236</sup> Lafcadio Hearn, *Kwaidan: Seltsame Geschichten und Studien aus Japan*, trans. Berta Francos (Frankfurt a. Main: Rütten & Loening, 1908). The original English version was published in 1904.

<sup>237</sup> Lafcadio Hearn, *Buddha. Neue Geschichten und Studien aus Japan*, trans. Berta Francos (Frankfurt a. Main: Rütten & Loening, 1920).

<sup>238</sup> Lafcadio Hearn, *Japan. Ein Deutungsversuch*, trans. Berta Francos (Frankfurt a. Main, Rütten & Loening, 1912). The first English version was published in 1904.

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Secession. A bit more abstract and flatter than Japanese patterns, they remind us of Klimt's *The Stoclet Frieze*, a series in which Klimt also applied similar flat ornaments. Furthermore, Orlik tried to match some of his designs with the contents of each chapter. For example, in "der Traum eines Sommertags" (The dream of a Summer Day), he drew a village next to the harbor (**fig. 109**).<sup>239</sup> The inspiration obviously came from Japanese woodblock prints. For *Kwaidan*, he obviously did research about the context of the book. In the last several chapters, Hearn lists some Chinese and Japanese superstitions and his personal thoughts on various members of the insect world. In "Schmetterlinge" (Butterflies) he used a distinct Chinese motif – a Chinese beauty to decorate the chapter cover (**fig. 110**). Compared to the English version, the German version's design is much closer to the context of the chapter.

He also designed books that studied China. Due to a complicated historical background, not all of the books presented a positive image of China. For example, Alexander Ular's *Die gelbe Flut* is related to the Yellow Peril, a racist color metaphor that misrepresented the peoples of East Asia as an existential danger to the Western world.<sup>240</sup> Two other books he designed represented positive understanding of China: Tsou Ping Shou's *Chinesische Abende. Novellen und Geschichten* (Chinese Evening: Novels and Histories) and H.M. Weiss's *Li. Chinesische Erzählungen* (Li. Chinese Short Stories).

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<sup>239</sup> The first chapter of *Kyūshū. Träume und Studien aus dem neuen Japan*.

<sup>240</sup> Alexander Ular, *Die gelbe Flut* (Frankfurt a. Main: Rütten & Loening, 1907).

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In the illustrations he made for *Chinesische Abende. Novellen und Geschichten*, a book that collects some fairy tales and miracle stories from the Ming (1368-1628) and Qing Dynasties, especially from the Kang Xi period (1662-1728), the inspiration from Chinese art can be clearly seen. Emil Orlik probably got inspiration from *Manual of the Mustard Seed Garden* (*Jieziyuan huapu* 芥子园画谱), which was a major element in the training of artists following the collapse of the Qing. Some Ming and Qing painters might also have been exemplars for Orlik. For example, Gai Qi 改琦 (1773-1828) was an artist active in Shanghai, mostly concerned about plants, beauty and figures. His works were collected as catalogues to publish, especially paintings he made about beauties. Some of his beauty paintings share commonalities with Orlik's illustration (**figs. 111 and 112**).

Orlik also cooperated musicians. For example, the cover page sketched by Orlik in 1906 for the orchestral suite by Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924), *Turandot*, a setting to music of a Chinese mythical play that Carlo Gozzi (1720-1806) published with Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig (**fig. 113**). Busoni wrote this suite in 1906 and applied it later to a 1918 two-actor opera with the same title. Gozzi's version first ran on October 27, 1911 under the direction of Max Reinhardt on the stage in Berlin, and again on November 13, 1911. Busoni was in charge of the musical direction. A tutor at the academy in Berlin from 1894 to 1914 and from 1920 to 1924, Busoni managed for

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musical figures and plot, and thus Orlik was responsible for the ornamental and illustrative design of the main features of the play.<sup>241</sup>

To conclude, Chinese art had a revolutionary effect in prompting the Vienna Secession and the Vienna Workshop to shape their styles. Compared to European ornament, Chinese ornaments always have flat colours, simple forms, and bold outlines. These elements inspired Viennese artists to develop a new artistic discourse that helped them to separate from European classic art. The evidence can be found in the flatness of Klimt's paintings and the contours he used to draw bodies. Emil Orlik learned perspective and techniques from Chinese landscape paintings. Other members in the Vienna Workshop simplified their patterns by referring to Chinese patterns from Chinese porcelain and embroidery.

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<sup>241</sup> Birgit Ahrens, "*Denn die Bühne ist der Spiegel der Zeit*" *Emil Orlik (1870-1932) und das Theater* (Kiel:Verlag Ludwig, 2001), 324.

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## **Chapter 8. Viennese Encountered and Trained Chinese Artists in Beijing**

In the 1920s and 1930s, some Viennese artists and collectors stayed in China for a long time, instead of a short journey. It gave time enough time to meet with local artists and do other activities. In this chapter, I analyze how Viennese collectors and artists started to focus on Chinese modern art, and how they brought some new artistic ideas to China and impacted the system of art education in the Chinese art academy.

### **The Exner Family and Chinese Artists**

The collection of the Exner family is probably the most important East Asian collection in Austria. The Museum für angewandte Kunst (Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna) currently owns around 3,700 items from the Exner Collection, which is its largest part and includes many very valuable objects. Additionally, the Weltmuseum (World Museum, Vienna) holds another 177 items that the Exners once owned. Also, the Uhrenmuseum der Stadt Wien received some items from Anton Exner as gifts.<sup>242</sup>

While the name may be unfamiliar to most Chinese, the contributions of the Exners to East Asian art in Vienna is inestimable. In 1982, the Museum für angewandte Kunst in Wien a retrospective exhibition in order to memorialize the donations of Sir Anton Exner. In the article, “die Sammlung Exner’ im Österreichischen Museum für

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<sup>242</sup> Gabriele Anderl, “‘Nicht einmal abschätzbarer Wert...’ Anton und Walter Exner – Kunsthändler, Stifter, Nationalsozialisten-und ihre Sammlung asiatischer Kunst in Wien,” In *Die Praxis des Sammelns: Personen und Institutionen im Fokus der Provenienzforschung*, eds. Eva Blimlinger and Heinz Schödl (Vienna:Böhlau Verlag,2014), 339.

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angewandte Kunst,” which evaluated the contributions of Anton Exner, Herbert Fux wrote, “he gave new dimensions and a new higher rank for the department of East Asia.”<sup>243</sup> Obviously, the Exner family’s antiques imply multiple collection stories and their legendary experiences in East Asia.

The Exner family collection of can be traced back to Anton Exner (1882-1952), an outstanding East Asian art dealer and collector who was active from the 1910s to the 1930s in Vienna. As early as 1911, he had already opened a business based on East Asian arts and art crafts at Lerchenfelderstrasse 66 in Vienna.<sup>244</sup> Anton Exner was interested in travelling, including trips to East Asia and to other global locations. Gerd Kaminski and Else Unterrieder recorded that Anton Exner travelled around the world 5 times, visited China 25 times, including a stop during the World War I, and also visited Japan 17 times.<sup>245</sup> Looking at Anton Exner’s passport, his son Walter Exner (1911-2003) inferred that Anton Exner visited East Asia 15 times and travelled around the world 30 times, including a global trip from 1908 to 1910 and shorter trips in 1910, 1911, 1913, 1914, 1922, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1935 and 1937.<sup>246</sup> To acquire items for his business, Anton Exner travelled frequently, especially to East Asia, basically every year starting in 1912.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Herbert Fux, “ ‘Die Sammlung Exner’ im Österreichischen Museum für angewandte Kunst,” *Alte und Moderne Kunst* XXVII, no.184/185 (1982): 8.

<sup>244</sup> Hartmut Walravens. *Br.Berchmans Brückner SVD und die Ars Sacra Pekinensis. Briefwechsel mit dem Kunsthändler Walter Exner (1911-2003)* (Norderstedt: BoD,2018), 20.

<sup>245</sup> Gerd Kaminski and Else Unterrieder. *Von Österreichern und Chinesen* (Wien: Europaverlag, 1980), 664.

<sup>246</sup> Walravens, *Br.Berchmans Brückner SVD und die Ars Sacra Pekinensis. Briefwechsel mit dem Kunsthändler Walter Exner (1911-2003)*, 20.

<sup>247</sup> Walravens, *Br.Berchmans Brückner SVD und die Ars Sacra Pekinensis. Briefwechsel mit dem Kunsthändler Walter Exner (1911-2003)*, 20. In a later description, Walter Exner said that “his father traveled East Asia 5 times

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His son Walter Exner also travelled to China. In March 1935, he joined his father on a collecting trip and afterwards, in order to understand and more about the Far East, he decided to stay on in Beijing for a year.<sup>248</sup> Thus, with his father's permission Walter Exner left Vienna for Beijing in 1936 accompanied by two friends, Jörg Netolitzki and Peter Szongott. In Beijing he learned Chinese, Mongol and Manchu. At the same time, he also frequently visited Liulichang 琉璃厂, as his aim was not only to improve their business but also supplement and enrich their own collections.<sup>249</sup> A similar trip was undertaken in 1938, his last trip to China.<sup>250</sup>

Additionally, Walter Exner also set up a publishing house *Siebenberg-Verlag* 北平七峰发行 in Beijing in 1936 (**fig. 114**). It was the only German language publishing house in China before the Second World War.<sup>251</sup> Dedicated to introducing East Asian culture and art in Europe, the first catalogue they published in 1937 was *Die Westlichen Kaisergräber bei Peking* (West Imperial Tombs of the Qing Dynasty), which Walter Exner worked on with Karl Gruber, a leader of the German School in Beijing. Its illustrations were painted by the Chinese artist Lu Hongnian, or Lu Hung Nien 陆鸿年 (1919-1989). Additional books appeared aimed at travelers and collectors,

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before the First World War I, and 12 times from 1922 to 1937. See, page 38. It was totally 17 times, which is inconsistent with his former description.

<sup>248</sup> Walravens, *Br.Berchmans Brückner SVD und die Ars Sacra Pekinensis. Briefwechsel mit dem Kunsthändler Walter Exner (1911-2003)*, 44.

<sup>249</sup> Walravens, *Br.Berchmans Brückner SVD und die Ars Sacra Pekinensis. Briefwechsel mit dem Kunsthändler Walter Exner (1911-2003)*, 43

<sup>250</sup> Walravens, *Br.Berchmans Brückner SVD und die Ars Sacra Pekinensis. Briefwechsel mit dem Kunsthändler Walter Exner (1911-2003)*, 44.

<sup>251</sup> Walravens, *Br.Berchmans Brückner SVD und die Ars Sacra Pekinensis. Briefwechsel mit dem Kunsthändler Walter Exner (1911-2003)*, 40-3.



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including Fritz Emme's *Die ersten 111 chinesischen Zeichen. Eine praktische Einführung in die chinesische Sprache und Schrift* (The First 111 Chinese Characters: A Practical Introduction in Chinese Speaking and Writing) and Walter Exner and T. Zweiauer's *111 chinesische Zeichen des Kunstkenner's. Ein Taschenbuch für den Käufer von Gegenständen des Kunsthandels* (111 Chinese Characters for the Art Connoisseur: A Handbook for Buyers on Objects of Art Dealing), among others (**fig. 115**).<sup>252</sup> Due to the Sino-Japanese war, they had to stop their activities in Beijing and return to Europe, but the publishing house remained active until 1996, when it was taken over by Felicita Hübner and the original name was also changed.<sup>253</sup>

After the Second World War its publishing activities were tightly connected with researching East Asian art. Walter Exner was active in the small city of Frankenau in northern Hesse in Germany. In 1954, he organized the first East Asian Conference in Germany with Prof. Werner Speiser (1908-1965). After two years, Exner built a private museum in Frankenau and the first exhibition was "2500 Years of Buddha and Buddhism." The museum opened every summer for four months and changed its topic every year. The museum moved to Bad Wildungen in 1964 with the name Museum für ostasiatische Kunst (Museum of East Asian Art). Due to space restrictions, only permanent collection was displayed. A cafe named China Stuben (China Room) was

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<sup>252</sup> Walter Exner, "Siebenberg-Verlag Peiping (Peking) 1936-1939," *Mitteilungsblatt von der Deutsche China-Gesellschaft E.V.*, no. 4 (December 1996): 10-2.

<sup>253</sup>"Über uns," Felicitas Hübner Verlag&Versandhandel, accessed September 3, 2020, <https://huebner-books.de/ueber-uns>

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part of the museum. Due to the cancellation of the lease, he closed the museum in 1970 and sold his objects to diverse museums.<sup>254</sup>

The Exners' activities aimed not only to acquire antiques but also to socialize in Pekingese artistic circles. Perhaps their most important relationship was with Qi Baishi 齐白石 (1864-1957).

On 5 April 1931, Anton Exner visited Qi Baishi's atelier in Beijing. Many precious photos were taken, including a group photo of Qi Baishi and Anton Exner, two photos of Qi's Atelier, and Qi Standing at the entrance of his atelier (**figs. 116, 117, and 118**). The last photo was added to the cover of an envelope, which was used to protect Qi Baishi's painting, *Bamboo-Grove and Fishing Village* (1934). In addition, some information was also recorded on the cover, "(Qi Baishi is) the most famous Chinese painter at present and for the last two centuries," and that the painting was drawn in the Western district, Beijing (perhaps in Qi Baishi's atelier). Today the painting is housed, along with several other of Qi's works, in the MAK Museum, part of a donation of the Exner family.

According to this information, it also shows that Anton Exner met with Qi twice and received paintings directly from the artist. The actual meetings might have comprised more than that as reflected in Exner's promotion of Qi Baishi in Europe. For instance, Walter Exner organized the exhibition "der Ausstellung von Original-Holzschnitten nach Malereien von Tji Bai-schi" (Exhibition of Original Woodcut Printings from Qi Baishi) at the Pergamon Museum in 1963. In the brochure for this

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<sup>254</sup> The information was provided by Walter Exner's daughter Uta Exner-Horlacher.

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exhibition, 80 items were listed.<sup>255</sup> As a supplement, some Qing porcelains and figures were presented together with the paintings.<sup>256</sup>

The Exners' fondness for Qi's art is an important proof that Chinese modern art was already accepted by European elites. They recognized that Qi's art was an essential part of Chinese art in the framework of both Chinese and global art history, which is why he received an individual exhibition in Berlin. Not many East Asian modern artists have received similar treatment. The Exner family played a critical role in promoting Qi's art in Europe. Their experiences with Qi in the 1930s helped them to understand this Chinese master and interpret his art for European viewers.

### **Br. Berchmans Brückner SVD Trained Chinese Artists in Fu Jen Catholic University**

The Exners were not the only Austrians who had a close relationship with Beijing. The Viennese missionary and art historian Franz Brückner (1891-1985, Chinese Name: Bai Linai 白立釅) played an important role in shaping Chinese-styled Christian art in Beijing fine arts circles (**fig. 119**).<sup>257</sup> Walter Exner met Br. Berchmans in Beijing and described him as a talented and charming man.<sup>258</sup> They maintained a regular

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<sup>255</sup> Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Ostasiatische Sammlung und Deutsche Akademie der Künste, *Malereien von Tji Bai-schi 1864-1957*(Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Ostasiatische Sammlung und Deutsche Akademie der Künste,1963),1-8.

<sup>256</sup> The information was provided by Walter Exner's daughter Uta Exner-Horlacher.

<sup>257</sup> Franz Brückner's complete title is Burder Berschmans Brückner Societas Verbi Divini.

<sup>258</sup> Walravens, *Br.Berchmans Brückner SVD und die Ars Sacra Pekinensis. Briefwechsel mit dem Kunsthändler Walter Exner (1911-2003)*, 41.

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correspondence from 1946 to 1974. These letters reveal that they were not only close but also shared friendships with a number of Pekingese artists.

In 1919, Brückner entered the *Societas Verbi Divini* as a Postulant with the religious name Berchmans.<sup>259</sup> He arrived in China at the end of 1923 and taught school in Shandong. In 1933, he moved to Fu Jen Catholic University, where he was responsible for German Language and art, and later was appointed the dean of the department of Western painting. Through his teaching, Brückner played a critical role in the Sinicization of Christian art. Some works of his students show a style which mixture European modern art with Chinese literati painting together.

The Catholic University of Beijing (Beijing gongjiao daxue 北京公教大学) was founded by the American Cassinese Congregation of Benedictines in 1925 and in 1927, the Ministry of Education recognized it under the Chinese name Fu Jen 辅仁. In 1933 the school's management was taken over by the Society of the Divine Word. During World War II, it was one of the few institutions in Northeast China not controlled by the Japanese. The Communists took over its administration in 1950 and shortly after it ceased to exist, with the transfer of its faculty to other institutions.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> The Society of the Divine Word, sometimes Steyler Missionaries (*Societas Verbi Divini*), a Roman Catholic religious organization, composed of priests and brothers, founded in 1875 at Steyl, Netherlands by a German priest Arnold Janssen to work in the foreign missions. Its members are engaged in all phases of missionary activity, from teaching in universities, colleges, and secondary schools to working among primitive peoples. The training of a native clergy has been a major work of the society in all its missions. Divine Word Missionaries have traditionally been active in publishing and disseminating Catholic literature. See Britannica Academic, s.v. "Divine Word Missionary," accessed September 14, 2020, <https://academic-eb-com.ubproxy.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/levels/collegiate/article/Divine-Word-Missionary/30681>.

<sup>260</sup> Mary S. Lawton, "A Unique Style in China: Chinese Christian Painting in Beijing," *Monumenta Serica* 43, (1995): 473.

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In 1930, Fu Jen Catholic University opened a new Art Academy, which basically recruited Chinese painters. Students took four classes including calligraphy, Chinese painting, curving Chinese seal, and European art history. The graduates found jobs as art and drawing teachers at many schools in big cities with stable income. After 1933, the leader of the academy was Prince Pu Chin 溥忻 (1893-1966), a notable calligrapher and landscape painter. In 1943, the academy was divided into two departments, one with seven teachers for Chinese painting, and another with five teachers for European painting.<sup>261</sup>

This art academy provided impetus to a creative Chinese Christian art due to the promotion of several Europeans. Before Br. Berchmans' arrival, Celso Benigne-Louis Costantini (1876-1958), the Apostolic Delegate to China from 1922 to 1933, consciously promoted the formulation of a Chinese-stylized Christian art. Msgr. Costantini had been interested in art throughout his distinguished career. In 1908 he wrote a *Manual of Christian Art* for the use of the clergy and this book served as a textbook in many seminaries in Italy. The following year he wrote *Athena*, a manual for the history of art for use in Italian colleges. Both these manuals went through several editions. His next work was *The Crucifixion in Art*, which appeared in 1910. In 1913 he founded the "Society of the Review," known as *Arte Christiana*, in Italy, which he edited until his posting to China.<sup>262</sup> Msgr. Costantini's principles for spreading

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<sup>261</sup> Fritz Bornemann SVD, *Die chinesisch-christliche Malerei an der katholischen Universität (Fu Jen) in Peking* (Mödling bei Wien: Missionsdruckerei St. Gabriel, 1950), 5.

<sup>262</sup> See "Our Contributors and Their Offerings," *Fu Jen Magazine* 1, no. 3 (July-August, 1932): 2.

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Christian art to China emphasized “adaptation” over “assimilation.”<sup>263</sup> When the Chinese Catholics offered him a permanent residence in Beijing and asked him what style of building he desired, for example, he did not hesitate in his reply: “its architectural and decorative features must be absolutely Chinese (**fig. 120**). There are two reasons why. First, every people has its own peculiar architecture, so that to import foreign architectonic features is an error in style. Second, the Church is Catholic, that is, universal also in her art and in all countries has made use of the art of the place to render to God the homage of universal beauty.”<sup>264</sup>

It was also directly recorded in his article, “Chinese Christian Art,” published in *Fu Jen Magazine*.<sup>265</sup> He said, “for us missionaries architecture is not only a question of aesthetics; it is also a means of the apostolate. The adoption of Chinese art constitutes an homage of respect and of sympathy to the culture, the nature, and whom we bring the Gospel of Truth. The adoption of Chinese art also confirms the catholic character of our Religion. The adoption of Chinese art helps to dissipate the deadly prejudice which regards the Church as a foreign cult.”<sup>266</sup>

In architectural style of Fu Jen Catholic University, the idea of Msgr. Costantini was launched well. It shows an integration of European modern architectures and

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<sup>263</sup> Lawton, “A Unique Style in China: Chinese Christian Painting in Beijing,” 472.

<sup>264</sup> D.A.M.H., “Archbishop Celso Costantini, Apostolic Delegate to China,” *Fu Jen Magazine* 1, no. 3 (July-August, 1932): 5.

<sup>265</sup> “Chinese Christian Art,” are translated from “L’Art Chretien Chinois,” which appeared originally in a special number, edited by Msgr. Costantini, of the DOSSIERS DE LA COMMISSION SYNODALE (University Press, Peking, May 1932). See Celso Costantini, “Chinese Christian Art,” *Fu Jen Magazine* 1, no. 3 (July-August, 1932): 6-7.

<sup>266</sup> Costantini, “Chinese Christian Art,” 7.

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Chinese decoration. Chinese decoration is always seen as a media which helped people to easily understand and accept Foreign cultures. This method was utilized in many artistic subjects, including architectures, paintings, prints, sculptures and graphic design. Initially, this art academy was not to train students to only paint. They emphasized that students should apply decorative patterns in their works in order to reach the aim that the context could be accepted and welcomed by local people. This strategy has a large impact on artists' styles who studied at this academy. A lot of artworks feature a sense of integrating paintings with decorative art.

These principles were also reflected in his guidance of the Chinese artist Chen Yuandu 陈缘督 (1903-1967). The two met at an exhibition in 1928 where some of Chen's paintings, including of female figures and one described as Guanyin 观音, attracted Msgr. Costantini's attention. Later on, Msgr. Costantini encouraged and commissioned Chen to draw a sitting Madonna, and then a series of other Christian paintings, built on his constant study of religious masterpiece from Europe, especially the Italian Renaissance. When the art academy opened in 1930, Chen joined as the fourth and final teacher. He continued to make paintings for Msgr. Costantini, mostly Bible scenes. In 1932, on the Feast of Pentecost, he joined the Catholic Church, taking the name Lukas. His paintings were reproduced in color in Italy in 1933 and in 1934 he was present with some of his paintings in Rome for the Third International Exhibition for Religious Art. His 33 paintings were entered into the Franciscan missionary exhibition during the Eucharistic Congress in Budapest in 1938.<sup>267</sup> His painting created

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<sup>267</sup> Bornemann, *Die chinesisch-christliche Malerei an der katholischen Universität (Fu Jen) in Peking*, 24.

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a new style that incorporated Western motifs into the Chinese context. Chen studied with Jin Cheng 金城 (1878-1926), a famous classic Chinese painter before he met with Msgr. Costantini, through whom he was well-trained in the different techniques of Chinese painting. This training made his paintings, though describing Western content, appear harmonious and he adopted the method of inserting bible stories into typical Chinese landscapes and scenes with figures that had a Chinese look. He seemed to follow Msgr. Costantini's principle that emphasized *adaptation* not *assimilation*. Aside from the content, there was no significant difference in technique between his paintings and classic Chinese paintings. Owing to Chen's extraordinary techniques, these paintings have a high aesthetic value.

Since Msgr. Costantini had returned to Europe, Br. Berchmans continued to implement his ideas and played an important role in teaching students. Br. Berchmans's influence was profound because he spent so many years teaching at this academy. Some students under his guidance who became famous in their later careers included Wang Suda 王肃达 (1911-1963) and Lu Hongnian. As Br. Berchmans originally came from Vienna, some educational principles in his teaching experience reflect the *Zeitgeist* of the early twentieth century. Some works from Lu Hongnian embodied a strong sense of incorporating patterns into his paintings.

Wang Suda began to study at Fu Jen in 1933. With encouragement from Br. Berchmans, he painted his first Christian painting for the 1934 Christmas Eve Exhibition. He finished his studies in 1936 and became a drawing teacher at the Catholic middle school. Christmas Eve 1937 he joined the Catholic Church and took



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the name “Georg.” From that point onwards, he painted mainly Christian art. In 1939, he accepted the invitation of Msgr. Thomas Megans SVD and drew 35 Christian paintings for the Bishop’s house in Xinxiang 新乡, Henan 河南. Three years later, he returned to Fu Jen and had a scholarship for Chinese Christian art.<sup>268</sup>

Lu Hongnian enrolled at Fu Jen in 1933. The next year, also with encouragement from Br. Berchmans, he painted his first Christian painting for Christmas Eve Exhibition. In 1936 he graduated from the university with the first prize. He later became a drawing teacher at the Catholic middle school, led by the Steyler Missionaries, and was also a member of the Research Institute for Chinese Paintings at the National Museum. In 1944 he accepted a position as a professor in the department of art at Fu Jen. At the same time, he founded an Institute of Art and Painting for Pekingese artists.<sup>269</sup>

Br. Berchmans also had close relationships with some other Chinese artists, including Qi Baishi, Zhang Qiyi 张其翼 (1915-1968), Guan Guangzhi 关广志 (1896-1958), Zheng Zongyun 郑宗鋆 (1917-1995), and Cui Xinglian 崔兴廉 (1924- ).<sup>270</sup> Some were also teachers at Fu Jen Catholic University.<sup>271</sup> He also helped the young artist Fu Xingbo 傅星伯 (1910-1994) and introduced him to Qi Baishi.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Bornemann, *Die chinesisch-christliche Malerei an der katholischen Universität (Fu Jen) in Peking*, 88.

<sup>269</sup> Bornemann, *Die chinesisch-christliche Malerei an der katholischen Universität (Fu Jen) in Peking*, 150.

<sup>270</sup> Leo Leeb, *Biele, Beiping* 别了, 北平[Say Goodbye to Beiping](Beijing: New Star Press, 2017), 25.

<sup>271</sup> Guan Guangzhi, Zheng Zongyun and Cui Xinglian had taught in Fu Jen Catholic University. See Xiang Fei 向飞 ed. *Beijing Furen daxue xiaoshi* 北京辅仁大学校史 [History of Fu Jen Catholic University in Beijing] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui chubanshe, 2005), 242.

<sup>272</sup> Leeb, *Biele, Beiping* 别了, 北平[Say Goodbye to Beiping], 25.

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Br. Berchmans had a close relationship with the Exner family, especially Walter Exner, which is reflected in the correspondence they maintained throughout their lives. Reading their correspondence, it seems that they shared a similar artistic circle in Beijing, including Qi Baishi, Lu Hongnian and so on.<sup>273</sup> In a letter, which was a new year greeting in 1970, Br. Berchmans wrote to Exner, “Our first meeting in the palace museum comes to my mind. You and Mr. Szongotts and Mr. Netolitzkis had lunch at our Catholic University. Especially, it reminds me of our last talk after the closure of the exhibition ‘Chinese Christian Art.’ I think, it will be never forgotten by me.”<sup>274</sup> It implied that they visited some cultural sites in Beijing together and Br. Berchmans introduced his current work at the university to Exner. Perhaps at this time Br. Berchmans introduced Lu Hongnian to Exner and helped him to finish his book about the West Imperial Tombs of the Qing Dynasty.

Another postcard written in 1965 delivered more information about their relationship with Qi Baishi. In a postcard printed with a picture of Qi Baishi’s motifs that he sent to Exner in 1964 from Rome, Br. Berchmans wrote, “this postcard, which I wrote here, came from Buchheim Company. On the other side, it is the picture “Coincidence again,” which is from the father of my student, the 90-year-old painter Baishi, who is probably one of the most famous and popular artists in our time, either

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<sup>273</sup> See Walravens, *Br. Berchmans Brückner SVD und die Ars Sacra Pekinensis. Briefwechsel mit dem Kunsthändler Walter Exner (1911-2003)*, 75-98. In it, the author recorded the correspondence between Br. Berchmans and Walter Exner between 1946 and 1974.

<sup>274</sup> Walravens, *Br. Berchmans Brückner SVD und die Ars Sacra Pekinensis. Briefwechsel mit dem Kunsthändler Walter Exner (1911-2003)*, 94.

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in or out of China. I know him very well.”<sup>275</sup> Since the Exner family met and collected Qi’s work, Qi obviously was their mutual friend.

After returning to Europe, Br. Berchmans expressed in a letter to Exner his willingness to publish a new book that introduced Chinese Christian art. Owing to financial problems, unfortunately, the book never appeared.

Br. Berchmans introduced a lot of knowledge about European art to this Chinese academy. Furthermore, his teaching principles received the influence from his contemporary artists in Vienna. For example, in many of his students’ works, we could view a strong integration of painting and decoration. Some of his students were not encouraged to paint in a European style. Whereas he promoted his students to paint religious context in a Chinese way, at the same time, these paintings are not the typical Chinese literati paintings. They feature a strong sense of decoration, and some of them are full of ornaments in their backgrounds. These artistic principles let me remind of manifestos from Vienna Secession, as Br. Berchmans was original from Vienna. He possibly learnt some artistic ideas from modern art in Vienna and absorbed them into his own teaching experience.

### **Lu Hongnian’s Illustration and Christian Decorative Painting**

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<sup>275</sup> The original German term of coincidence again is *wieder zufällig*. In my point of view, it is identical to Chinese term *yuanfen* 缘分.

He probably indicated the student Qi Liangchi 齐良迟(1921-2003), the fourth son of Qi Baishi. He had studied art at Fu Jen Catholic University.

See Walravens, *Br. Berchmans Brückner SVD und die Ars Sacra Pekinensis. Briefwechsel mit dem Kunsthändler Walter Exner (1911-2003)*, 91.

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Lu Hongnian is a great example, which shows that how this Chinese artist cooperated with Viennese collector and painter. The training he learned from Br. Berchmans directly reflected in his paintings. His artistic style is very decorative. Therefore, he may get impacted by the art movement in Vienna through learning from Br. Berchmans and Walter Exner because he is the only person who kept a close relationship with both of them. Walter Exner had worked with Lu together to design some illustrations for his books about Chinese culture and art. he was satisfied with these works by Lu because he put Lu's illustrations in his later books again. There are two examples which show details of architectural decorations of imperial palace in Beijing (**figs. 121 and 122**). In classic Chinese paintings, painters would like to describe architecture in a panoramic view and insert it into some special situations, such as enthronement, ceremony, etc. They barely described parts of a pavilion in paintings because architecture is always a symbol of power and auspiciousness and it cannot randomly use in paintings. Whereas in Lu's works, he concentrated on the decoration of these architectures, and it is also suitable to be illustrations of books. Lu focused on its decoration rather than delivering an implication that architecture is a signal of power.

Moreover, Klimt also painted parts of a Chinese pavilion in his painting *Wally*. These illustrations also remind us of Emil Orlik's works for some books which are related to Chinese culture. They shared similarities. In Walter Exner's memoir of Beijing published in 1996, he selected a series of illustrations from Lu's works as decorations again, which probably made in the 1930s. These works feature a strong and precise style of integrating European art with Chinese art. Probably, Lu cooperated with

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Exner together to work these illustrations out. As these books targeted German readers, they must accord with the interests and tastes in Vienna at the 1930s. Exner might send some examples to Lu, which were made by Viennese artists to guide him how on painting artworks in the Viennese taste. Lu can learn their styles to create illustrations for Exner's books. Compared to the illustrations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries made by Chinese artists, Lu's style is much more simplified and suitable for decoration of German books. These images look very modern.

Most of Lu other works we could find now is his Chinese Christian paintings. They also show a unique style, which emphasizes decoration. For instance, in his works, many have similar characteristics in composition and style. Therefore, it is not easy to recognize them by themes. At the same time, the decorative patterns in the background of his works often occupy much space. He likes to use cloud patterns to decorate his paintings, reminding us of some Klimt's paintings about Viennese women which also used Chinese patterns as decoration. Some of his works are extraordinary, they are actually cannot be defined as painting because they were inlaid into tablets. Around his paintings, there are many decorative elements, such as flowers and immortals, which indicated a sense of auspiciousness (**figs. 123 and 124**). The inspiration for creating this kind of works might be from traditional Chinese Spirit Tablet (*paiwei* 牌位), which has a similar function as altar shrine. Lu connected figures and ornaments consciously, which is very rare in the tradition of Chinese ink painting. His works about *the Madonna* borrowed styles and elements from a Buddhist theme *Guanyin* 观音. The theme *Guanyin* is not always the subject of literati paintings, but it is repeatedly used

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in applied art, such as porcelains and wood-block prints. Br. Berchmans probably told Lu the artistic movement in Vienna and encourage him to paint in a modern way.

These examples prove how the Chinese and the European cooperated closely and showed how European artists wanted to promote their values and beliefs in China and integrate them with traditional Chinese values in the early-twentieth-century background. Due to the reason that they are interested in Chinese culture, they visited this country and stayed for many years. Yet they brought their artistic thoughts, methods to the Chinese academy and eventually formulated a movement of combining decoration with painting. Therefore, European modern art could launch in China and blend in the local culture with a revised style. Many interesting works appeared and formulated a special cultural atmosphere in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in China. Those artists, who were students at that time, became very active in the twentieth century in China. They taught some of these ideas from Europe to the next generation. Both cultures gained benefits from each other by learning and absorbed useful thoughts and materials.

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## Conclusion

My dissertation project is centered on artistic interaction between China, Paris and Vienna in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Academic studies have generally agreed that Asian modernism was affiliated with European modernism. Based in this consensus, scholars have cast Asian artists as the recipients of modern European art. My project challenges this argument by studying the interplay of spatial orders, communication systems and the dynamic mobility of art and artists in this time period. In my research I found an interactive relationship between Europe and Asia in which it was not only Europeans who influenced Asians, but Asians also inspired Europeans. Each learnt equally from the other, and the formation of modernism was built up on this cultural exchange. Through tracing the circulation of various artworks and artistic ideas between China, Paris and Vienna, this research seeks to clarify artists' underlying strategies of applying exotic cultures, the strong interaction of artistic languages, and the coexistence of values of understanding modern art. According to the instability and complexity of culture, the dissertation's structure follows two artistic threads *drawings* and *decorative art* in order to analyze from a micro perspective. In the end, this research intends to demonstrate that the invention of modernism was an entangled and complex process based on cultural mobility. My dissertation contributes new thematic and methodological horizons for understanding interzone modernism and the visual arts in a global context.

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In the first part, we see that Parisian modernism played a very important role in shaping Chinese modernism. At the same time, Parisian modernism assimilated important ideas from Asian art, including Chinese art. Through analyzing these examples, we saw how modernists sought out and selected art forms and ideas to fit to their own strategies. This part also followed the influence of other elements such as artistic subject, technology and media. For instance, the development of the camera and modern dance were essential for promoting the transformation of modernist art in Paris. With the convenience of journals and magazines, Chinese modernists could keep pace with the development of modern art in Paris. The circulation of antiques clearly helped art critics to think about modern art in the opposite direction.

The second part shows that how the circulation of antiques shaped Viennese modernism. Since the strategies of museums in Vienna focused on collecting and researching ornaments, this curatorial mission led them to collect Chinese porcelain, textiles and other decorative arts. It supplied resources for modernists to reference and apply these Asian art forms. Behind these movements and activities, we clearly see that their artistic strategies determined which directions they should go and what kind of art they picked up. The last chapter also shows how Viennese artist trained Chinese artist. Although they created paintings of religious art, they were still influenced by the movement in Vienna. Some paintings are very decorative, and they also attempted these paintings to fit it into the Chinese context.

To summary, artistic interaction existed in a more complicated situation in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It played a critical role in enlightening modernists and shaping



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modernism. At the same time, based on underlying European strategies, Chinese art was an essential inspiration for European modern art. Likewise, the Chinese also absorbed experience from Europe. There was reciprocal co-existence in modernism rather than isolated regional modernisms and each of them gathered useful ideas and materials, which accord with their understanding of *being modern*, to invent new styles and art theories.

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