

Judge's Commentary

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Cover Image Modifications of *Le Japon artistique*: The Reception of Ukiyo-e in France around 1890

This article focuses on the cover images used on *Le Japon artistique*, a trilingual (French, English & German) monthly art magazine published by the Paris art dealer Siegfried Bing from 1888 to 1891. This painstakingly executed study identifies the sources for the cover images, and then provides a detailed examination of how the imagery changed. *Le Japon artistique* is an important resource for the study of Japonisme, and as such has been investigated by scholars both in Japan and overseas. Conversely, there has yet to be a full survey of the Japanese artworks recorded in the magazine. Nakamura's essay is deeply meaningful, fundamental research that fills that gap.

First, the article clarifies the image sources via a careful and broad-based survey of catalogues and databases. Of the total 36 cover images, Nakamura was able to identify sources for 27 issues, a noteworthy achievement of this article. Most of the identified sources are works by ukiyo-e artists, and the selection of cover image clearly reflects the interest in Hokusai and Utamaro who were renowned in France at the time this magazine was published. Nakamura further indicates that the selection of image subjects differed from the tastes seen in Edo, with bird and flower pictures used on more than half of the 36 issues, and where figure prints were used, full-length images were chosen over bust portraits.

This source identification further clarifies that the source work imagery was modified for use on most of the covers. In this article Nakamura made a detailed examination of the various aspects of this modification, categorized these changes into "combined," "omitted," "reversed," and "revised" groups, and provided an explanation of the overall process. She further analyzed the covers of the No. 10 and No. 5 issues, which had been strikingly altered from their source imagery. Particularly in the case of the No. 5 issue, she explained how the lack of understanding of the source work's parody elements led to specific changes and the meaning of those changes.

Nakamura explicated Bing's texts collected in *Le Japon Artistique* and thus discerned that more so than a simple introduction to Japanese art, he actively offered an explanation of ukiyo-e. These modified cover images then "made the round trip" back to Japan, and Nakamura introduced how they were used in Japan for picture postcard imagery from the Meiji period onwards, a process that is richly suggestive.

This essay focuses on *Le Japon Artistique*'s cover images, and it goes without saying that source image identification and categorization of the other images published in the magazine is desirable. In terms of the significance of the source image modification, a broader examination is probably essential, not just Bing's *Le Japon Artistique* prefatory essays, but also his activities pre and post the publication of the journal, along with his connections with the industrial arts and decorative arts of the period. Examples also exist of the modification and change of ukiyo-e works in France that predate *Le Japon Artistique*, and we can also anticipate further studies on the connections between this issue and the subject of France's overall reception of ukiyo-e. This essay stands as a groundbreaking work, which will further deepen future discussion and advance research, while also providing materials for research on Japonisme and the history of artistic exchange.

For these reasons, we hereby award the Bijutsushi Prize to Nakamura Minori for her achievements in this article.