

The European encounters with Japanese art: Germany as a case study.

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Introduction:

The Japanese art is a frequent topic in discussions of European encounters with Japanese culture. Under its influence, new aesthetic values flourished in the European art as well as arts and crafts. It concerns a lot of countries within West and East Europe, for example Holland, Great Britain, France, Russia, Poland etc. One of them is Germany. It belongs to such countries where this phenomenon has been seen very well for many centuries and in a lot of fields. Some of the features of Japanese art are reflected in the elegant porcelain from Meissen the other ones in handicrafts or modern painting. The spectrum of influence is very wide. The Japanese culture, art and aesthetics became a new source of inspiration for German artists and shaped not only the technical development of their works, but also stimulated the understanding of new aesthetic values.

The European encounters with Japanese art can be divided into three periods: the second one from the middle of 19th till the beginning of 20th century and the third one in the modern times from about 1950s till the present days. In every of these three periods there are different key areas of Japanese art in which the European were especially interested in. In the first period particularly lacquer wares and porcelain evoked a deep admiration. In the second one the Japanese arts and crafts as well as graphics respectively ukiyo-e became the source of artistic inspiration. In the third one the continuity of interests in areas of the second period was visible, but there was a new strong factor, which influenced European art namely the interest on Zen Buddhism. Named above tendencies distinguished also German developments. The aim of my speech is to describe the encounter of Japanese art in Europe especially in Germany and answer the question of how the encounter with Japanese culture influenced German developments.

Based on mentioned above periods I will divide my speech into three parts which are entitled as follows: part 1 "Discovering of Japan", part 2 "Learning from Japan" and part 3 "Living with Japan".

Part 1: Discovering of Japan

The first step of the encounter between European and Japanese art lasted from the end of 16th till the middle of 18th century. I said at the beginning that I would like to speak especially about Germany but in the first period of cultural encounter the border between countries, nationality etc. were

irrelevant. A lot of master craftsman moved from one place to another leaving their works there and on the other hand there are not many objects of art of good quality preserved from the 16th century so I would like to speak mostly in a wider context without the political borders showing examples, which were representative for trends in all Europe.

The first known report about Japan in Europe is that one of Marco Polo (ca.1254-1324) which had been written during he was jailed after the war between Venice and Genoa. This report had been probably dictated by Marco Polo and put down to paper by his fellow prisoner Rustichello da Pisa. There are many versions of this report in different languages known, but the most known one is the French version under the title *Le Livre des merveilles du monde* as well as its Italian version *Il Milione*. (PHOTO 1) On the photo there is its German translation.

In the report of Marco Polo Japan was mentioned by the name Zipangu, which was described as an extremely beautiful country, whose inhabitants are very gentle and as an extremely rich country "where even roofs of houses were covered with gold". Marco Polo himself has never been to Japan and there is no evidence if Rustichello's book is exactly the same like Marco Polo's spoken report. However, even if he has never been to Japan and his report was based on his own image about this country which was formed after listening to the journey reports of other travelers and even if it could be a fake, his book had got a very big impact on European image about Japan long before first direct encounter.

Although the Polo's contemporaries had many doubts about the truthfulness of his report, the coevals of the next century - which can be called "the century of discoverers" - were deeply interested in his report and regarded it highly as kind of scientific report. It has been the only report about Japan for many decades. For European, Japan became a place equal to the paradise for which they were looking for. Of course one of the factors for this image was a hope for high commercial trade profits, a hope that was based on Marco Polo's words about omnipresent gold of Zipangu. On the basis of this very positive image and high expectations emerged the European wish of the direct encounter with Japan that had been lasting for over two hundred years till it could be finally realized.

You are probably wondering why I am speaking so much

about Marco Polo's report after I have said that this report deviated strongly from the reality. The reason is that it didn't make any difference whether it was true or not, whether Marco Polo has visited Zipangu or not. The most important was not the reality but the image about this reality created in Europe after this report had been published. It was a very positive image, which had existed till the second part of 18th century and based on a matter of fact that Europeans chosen only these information which they wanted regardless the reality. Process, which is characteristic for all three periods of the encounter between Europe and Japan.

On the base of Marco Polo's report from the beginning of 14th century Zipangu was described in encyclopedias, showed on the world maps etc. Before the first direct encounter the most important was the encyclopedia of Domenico Silvestri aus Florenz *De insulis et earum proprietatibus* (*About islands and their particularities*) written between 1385 and 1406, a world map of Fra Mauro from Murano near Venice from 1459, *Insularium iilustratum* of Henricus Martellus (FOTO), terrestrial globe of Martin Behaim from Numberg and world map of Martin Waldseemüller from 1507 (PHOTO 2). Even if a shape of Japanese Island of that time or the place on a world map was not correct, Japan started to exist in European awareness not only as a dream, but as a real figure, as a real place. It was very important for the future direct encounter, which took place however first in the year 1543. In that year three Portuguese arrived to Japan to Tanegashima in Kyushu by a ship-accident. On the basis of the European strong wish to get know Japan, after this accident the process of discovering Japan began. Already six years later the first missionary Jesuit Francisco de Xavier arrived to Japan. The other missionaries like Luis Frois or João Rodrigues followed later. They wrote a lot of reports and sent them to Europe. These reports like for example *Jahrbriff* of Luis Frois (PHOTO 3) were of course closer to reality than earlier ones and they were very important because they had changed the European image about the world and way of thinking in Europe. Until that time Europeans were convinced that the cultural and religious center of the world was Europe. But the Jesuits' reports shown that except European culture, which has developed in connection with Christianity, there were some different cultures in the world which were probably more cultivated and higher than the European one. The evidences were among others the material artifacts including Japanese art and handicrafts, which caused great admiration in Europe. The first Europeans who introduced Japanese art in Europe were the Jesuits. They ordered in Japan many objects of art especially lacquer wares, which were used during their missionary work in Japan or were sent to Europe. These

objects had often a European form or decor and got known later as a Nanban-art. At that time the Europeans were called in Japan Nanbanjin and Nanban-art was a mix of influences of European and Japanese cultures.

(PHOTO 4) Today I would like to show you one example of nanban-art. There are some such objects in European collections but I decided to show one from Japanese museum because it is easier for you to see it, if you wish to. This winged altar with Madonna portrait belongs to the collection of Suntory Museum in Tokyo. It consists of two parts: Madonna's portrait, which has been painted in Europe, probably in Spain or Portugal and the frame, which has been made in Japan on demand of Jesuits. The shape of a frame is European one but a décor has got the Japanese elements like camellia (tsubaki), Bambusgrass (sasa) or autumn grass (aki no nanakusa) partly with mother-of-pearl inlay. The lacquer technique is of Japanese origin. A part of décor is symmetric, with geometrical elements based on European ornament from the renaissance era and fulfills the whole surface of a frame. This kind of décor matches the European aesthetics very well so it is sure that the Jesuits making an order in Japan had got a big influence not only on form but also on décor.

(PHOTO 5) However, the lacquer wares had been admired and high regarded not only by Jesuits. Extremely elegant shapes, colors and décor, evoked a deep admiration and interest by wealthy Europeans mostly aristocracy. This kind of luxury wares suited excellent the gorgeous lifestyle of the high nobility class in Europe during baroque and rococo eras. At the beginning lacquer wares were brought to Europe sporadic, mostly as a presents and were considered together with other objects from the East like ostrich eggs, seashells etc. as exotic, rare and curious. They found their place in European collections in Cabinets of Curiosities. In German language such cabinets were called *Wunderkammer* and included quite many objects from Japan. The biggest known collection was that one carried together by Archduke Albrecht V of Bavaria in Munich. In such Cabinets of Curiosities there was no difference between artifacts from Japan, China or India. All of them were exotic and were called "Indian" wares. Even samurai armour (yoroi) was described as 'Indian armour'.

The systematic trade with lacquer wares according to Oliver Impey - which is the best researcher in Europe due with lacquer and porcelain wares at that time - began at the end of 16th century and ended at the last decade of 17th century. Furniture as chests, cabinets, coffers with convex lids but also small dishes or even *jubako* or *suzuribako* belonged to the imported goods, which could be found in all nobility houses within Europe. An important role in this trade played

the Dutch East India Company VOC (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie) buying in Japan mostly silver and copper but on demand also lacquer wares and porcelain.

On the photo you can see one of such examples. Unfortunately not many Japanese lacquer furniture from the German palaces are well-preserved, so I will show you one from the Royal Danish Collections at Rosenborg Palace in Copenhagen. Similar kind of furniture was used within all Europe also in Germany.

This kind of furniture is called cabinet in German language *Kabinettschrank*, This one was made in Japan around 1660. Its parameters are 150 cm height, (80 cm without stand) 90 cm width and 50 cm depth. It was manufactured in Japan but for European market and it has no similarity to any Japanese furniture. Its shape developed on Portuguese or Spain furniture called *vargueno*. After this cabinet was imported to Europe a stand with a very rich ornament in gilded wood was produced and a cabinet was put on it. According to Barbara Geißler this stand was decorated with a crest of the King of Denmark Christian V and his wife Charlotte Amalie. For outside décor the *takamaki-e* technique in gold and silver on black background has been used. In my opinion the ornament is quite inconvenient for European taste because although it was made on European demand a décor is clearly displaced to the right side what caused the strong impression of asymmetry. Asymmetry is one of the features of Japanese aesthetics but it didn't suit the European ideals of beauty of that time. Maybe a reason of such ornament was the existence of the second cabinet, which was decorated mirror-inverted. It was a common practice at that time to order pair of furniture as a set and place them in a near distance or right and left of other object like a door, window etc. to build a symmetrical figure. But in case of this cabinet there is no evidence about it so it is only a hypothesis.

The ornament of this cabinet is different than that one of winged-altar. According to Impey there were three periods during lacquer wares were imported to Europe and in each of them different objects were ordered based on changes of taste in Europe. The lacquer wares from the first period from the end of 16th century till the 1620s were extremely rich decorated with floral motifs and mother-of-pearl inlay like the winged-altar that we had seen before. After the Europeans little by little became acquainted with the Japanese aesthetics, they began to admire not only flamboyant rich décor, but also plain surface of black lacquer with partly ornament (yohaku 余白??). These kinds of lacquer wares were decorated with landscape, animals and plants and were imported to Europe in the second and third period of trade, it means according to Impey from 1620s till 1630s and from 1650s till the end of 17th century. European orders were more and more complicated, so in the second

period they required an ornament *hiramakimaki-e* technique, but in the third period, in which a cabinet on the photo was produced, *takamaki-e* was preferred.

(PHOTO 6) Such furniture was of course very expensive and the owners wanted to use them as long as possible. However the fashion in Europe also for furniture had changed very quickly. Nobody from the high-class society wanted to have old-fashioned furniture but they were too expensive to make a new order in Japan. What did they do then? Please look at the picture. We have here one of examples for a very problematic method of renewal of old-fashioned furniture. Really beautiful Japanese lacquer wares were cut and partly use for new piece of furniture. It is very difficult for me to accept such a barbarian method but it was the reality in baroque and rococo palaces.

(PHOTO 7) Besides furniture there were imported to Europe other lacquer wares, which kept their Japanese original shape like byobu or dishes. But this kind of products especially dishes had to be adjust to European life style like for example these lacquer bowls with lid (蓋付きお碗) which became potpourri-vessels after mounting in silver frame.

(PHOTO 8) From the end of 16th till the end of 17th centuries a lot lacquer wares were imported to Europe. This kind of products became in England a name 'japan' and the process of putting lacquer on wood was called 'japanning'. After lacquer wares became well known and enjoyed more and more popularity in Europe, grew a wish not to import but to produce them on own account. The first small factories arose in 17th century in Paris (Etienne Sager), in London (William Smith) and in Amsterdam (William Kick). In Germany Gerard Dagly in Berlin, Martin Schnell and Christian Reinow in Dresden became very high regarded. The European lacquer is not a true lacquer from *Rhus vennicifera* tree, but so called 'shellac' that is a kind of gummy substance produced by an insect *Coccus lacca* or 'varnish' that is a transparent film produced from oil and resin. The name 'varnish' comes from name 'Varnis Martin' derived from a name of famous French lacquers family Martin. The first lacquer products manufactured in Europe were imitations of Japanese or Chinese ornaments on European items like for example music instruments. These imitations however based not on an original ornament but quite frequently on European image about them. The next step in a reception of Japanese art in Europe was the adaptation of these ornaments to European taste like for example fulfilling of empty surfaces with décor, addition of linear perspective to asymmetrical composition or shadows to a flat surface of a décor to match it to the composition

rules of European painting. One of methods was also borrowing of colours and motifs from porcelain like it can be seen in case of Dagly's lacquered cabinet in blue-and-white colours in Schloss Oranienburg.

A *Schreibschrank* (bureau-cabinet) that we can see at the photo was made by Martin Schnell about 1730. In comparison with other objects from that time décor, this cabinet is quite inconvenient. Its bright, shiny red colour was very exceptionally and appeared for the first time in European lacquer technique. This colour suited very well the baroque palaces. However an ornament didn't correspond to baroque style at all. Martin Schnell has consciously chosen such ornament following the Japanese art of composition and his image about it. He let a big part of wood without any ornament basing on Japanese furniture in palace of Augustus the Strong. He used some Japanese motifs like landscapes, birds or plants and gave them the same significance as human motifs. In European painting birds or plants were always secondary décor in comparison to human décor. It was the influence from Japanese art but sometimes he used also drawings of Christoph Weigel. But even if Martin Schnell was quite far away from European style of painting he couldn't abandon symmetry. His décor is well-balanced almost mirror-inverted, what suited the European taste very well.

(PHOTO 9) 'Japanning' became very fashionable all around Europe. The impulse for further development of this technique was a book of John Stalker and George Parker *A Treatise of Japanning and Varnishing* published in London in 1688. There were a lot of instructions there, which made 'japanning' possible even for producing at home. Of course quality of such products was very low. Japanning was used not only on wood but also on porcelain, tinwares (so called Pontypool Japanware) or even papier mache. In Germany especially papier mache was a favourite technique. It was used in Braunschweig by Georg Siegmund Stobwasser and his son Johann.

Lacquer wares and their European imitations were very popular in Europe. They were shown in special rooms within palaces, which except lacquered furniture were also decorated with lacquered wall panels. I will not speak about them in detail but I will give their names. The most important in Germany were so called *Holländische Kabinett* in Munich, *Japanische Kabinett* in Dresden, *Lackkabinett* in palace Rastatt and *Japanische Kabinett* in Alten Eremitage in Bayreuth.

(PHOTO 10) The other objects of art, which caused a great admiration in Europa were porcelain wares. Porcelain

was called 'white gold' and had an extremely great impact on European porcelain. Similar to lacquer wares special rooms within palaces were built only for displaying porcelain. Besides European imitations these rooms were decorated with white-and-blue Chinese and Japanese porcelain as well as Kakiemon and Imari. These kinds of rooms were called in Germany *Porzellankabinett* or *Porzellanzimmer* (Porcelain room) and reflected exactly the taste of a baroque era. The most famous *Porzellanzimmer* in Germany were rooms at *Oranienburg* near Berlin designed by Andreas Schlüter, at *Charlottenburg* in Berlin designed by Johann Friedrich Eosander and at *Holländische Palais* in Dresden designed for a collection of Augustus the Strong.

(PHOTO 11)

Let us see a photo. Porcelain from the Far East was highly praised in Europe and was imported in big quantities. It was very expensive so only the upper nobility class could afford it. To enhance its value it was mounted in in ormolu or silver and gilded, because gold was a kind of symbol for wealthiness. On the other hand however mounting gave a protection from the breaking. Through mounting, as he could already see in case of lacquer wares the original function could be change and match the European lifestyle. A candelabrum on the photo from the *Residenzmuseum* in Munich is such an example. The *Shishi* lion was produced in Arita and the mounts probably in France.

The same reception process like in case of lacquer wares took place also within porcelain. The first step was the import of Japanese porcelain to Europe, the second step was the wish to produce porcelain and the third one was an establishment of porcelain manufactures in Europe and starting own production. According to Impey the import began in 1659 and ended about 1740. The main import wares were Kakiemon and Imari because of their beautiful, shiny colours, which were unknown and technical unachievable within European ceramics (PHOTO 12). The same like lacquer wares, Kakiemon and Imari suited very well the luxurious lifestyle in baroque and rococo eras. They were new and exotic so they were perfect for the taste of that times.

(PHOTO 12a and 12b) In 1708 in Meissen after long research Wather von Tschirnhaus and Johann Böttger on behalf of Augustus the Strong invented the porcelain paste and the production could begin some years later. Unfortunately the secret of porcelain from Meissen became known and porcelain started to be manufactured also in France, England and later in Hungary.

At the very beginning the Meissen manufacture copied the Japanese models without any knowledge about meaning of

Japanese symbols, their connection to seasons like a motif of “Three friends of winter” pine, bamboo and prunus (*sho-chiku-bai*) or a ‘quail pattern’ (*uzura*). One of such examples can be seen on a photo. On the left is an original Kakiemon bowl, on the right Meissen bowl in Kakiemon-style. Both show so-called Shiba Onko story, which was very popular in Japan in 17th century, but unknown in Europe. The motif was just copied without any changes and knowledge about the content of a story.

(PHOTO 13) The next step in European encounter with Japanese art was a transformation of composition following the European style of painting or re-interpretation of Japanese motifs. It is the same process like in case of lacquer wares. On the photo we can see a well-known motif from Japanese porcelain with a tiger twined round a bamboo and the old prunus tree. The composition has been changed in such way, that an effect of symmetry occurs. The other change is the form of plants. Please look at the bamboo. Is it similar to the bamboo, you know from Japan? I don’t think so. It is the European image about a bamboo. The leaves of this bamboo look like flowers in different colours. They fall down at the end of blooming time. Also the roots of bamboo have different shape like their natural one. These ‘roots’ together with ‘bamboo flowers’ imitate earth level and built a base for a tiger. In Japanese original model a tiger or other animals or persons hover in the air, but a base is necessary in a painting composition in European style.

(PHOTO 14) One more example of re-interpretation of Japanese motifs is a plate on a next photo. This plate has an European shape, the décor however is a composition from Imari- and Kakiemon-styles. The upper one is famous Kakiemon motif, but a ‘banded hedge’, ‘red fox’ and ‘squirrel’ is European image about the Japanese original. The lower part emerged from Imari décor. The interesting thing about this plate is, that models of its ornament were plates from a collection of Augustus the Strong (PHOTO 15). The ornament of these plates based on two overlapping leaves, which gave the idea of a split-pattern design of a plate from Meissen.

(PHOTO 15) The last example, which I want to show, is porcelain from *Königliche Porzellan Manufaktur* in Berlin. The last step in a reception of eastern porcelain in Europe was a production of own shapes and ornaments, which had almost no connection with their original models. In this case we can recognize Kakiemon colours but other elements reflected the European taste of that time. Such kind of process connecting with an introduction of Japanese art in Europe can be called ‘productive reception’ in opposition to

‘re-productive reception’ that was characteristic for the beginning of intercultural exchange.

Part 2: Learning from Japan

In the middle of 19 century after Japan had been opened for the West by force, European interest on Japanese culture increased rapidly and the next step of the encounter with Japanese art began. Within three periods, which I talk about the second one was the most intensive period of cultural exchange also for German art.

In opposition to the first period it was easier to get in touch with Japanese culture in Europe. One of places where it was possible, were the World Expositions. The first one with a separate section dedicated to Japanese objects was The World Exposition in London in 1862, where a collection of Sir Rutherford Alcock – the first British consul in Japan was presented. The second World Exposition, where Japanese objects were displayed, took place in Paris in 1867 and was the official government entry. The third one in 1873 in Vienna, when even rare masterpieces lent from temples and members of the aristocracy were on display had the biggest impact on European art. Hitherto exotic and little known artworks from Japan became very popular and highly praised. Very soon Europeans could notice that their own art and handicrafts, which were at that time in a deep crisis, cannot rivalled with Japanese ones but on the contrary they can learn a lot from Japanese art. It was a similar process that we have heard about in the first part of this speech. Europeans realized that there is something different in the world as the European art and handicrafts and it is much better in artistic as well in technical aspects. This awareness resulted in a sudden and rapid increasing of Western interests in Japanese art and even the establishments of museums of arts and crafts which collections should be a source of artistic inspiration and models for learning technical skills for European artists. ‘Japonisme’ was a name that Philipp Burty – an art collector and art critic - used for this wave of interest on Japan in his articles entitled “Japonisme” in a periodical *La Renaissance littéraire et artistique* in May 1872. In Germany Woldemar von Seidlitz created its equivalent ‘Japanismus’ but shortly after it was changed into ‘Japonismus’, a word that is in use until now.

The first country where the interest on Japan developed very quickly was France. An important role in this process had art collectors Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, as well Samuel Bing, whose collections were available for artists and art collectors within Europe. It was very important because through direct contact it became possible to confront the image about Japanese art with a reality.

French painters were the first who were fascinated by Japanese art especially in ukiyo-e and crafts but shortly after also artists from other European countries discovered it. The most important of them were Edouard Manet, Edgar Degas, Claude Monet, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and Pierre Bonnard. In Germany a director of Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe (Museum of arts and crafts) in Hamburg - Justus Brinckmann - was the first one who highly regarded Japanese artworks. He carried together a big collection of Japanese art with help of his assistant Shinichi Ohara and art collectors Samuel Bing and Hayashi Tadamasu, including ceramics, textile, lacquer, ukiyo-e, tsuba, katagami, bamboo baskets. This collection was to be not only for display but it was to be used as samples for learning technical skills and as a source of artistic inspiration. The establishment of this kind of collection was the result of realizing of superiority of Japanese art and handicrafts over the European ones. This collection was indeed very popular and used very often for studies.

(PHOTO 16) However not only objects were a source of inspiration for the German artists. The first book concerning Japanese art, which has been published in Germany and had a big impact on them, was *Kunst und Handwerk in Japan (Art and Handicrafts in Japan)* written by Brinckmann in 1889. Another book, written by Brinckmann's assistant Friedrich Deneken in 1896 entitled *Japanische Motive für Flächenverzierung. Ein Formenschatz für das Kunstgewerbe (Japanese motifs for surface-ornaments. Diversity of forms for handicrafts)* became also very popular. Within art periodicals *Japanischer Formenschatz* - German translation of French periodical "Le Japon Artistique" editing by Samuel Bing played the crucial role in spreading of information and illustrations of Japanese art and handicrafts. The newest developments of artistic movements of that time based on the influence of Japanese art were discussed in two German art periodicals *Jugend* and *Pan*. The source of information and inspiration was also the Austrian periodical available in Germany *Ver Sacrum*.

The art style and artistic movement, which emerged in Germany on the wave of Japonisme was called Jugendstil. For the artists represented this style - similar to their French colleagues - ukiyo-e was the first encounter with Japanese art. German graphic artists and painter became strongly influenced by them. They absorbed features of ukiyo-e and adapted them into own works. The next step was the encounter with Japanese handicrafts. German artists admired the technical skills and artistic expression of them and tried to learn from the objects, which they could see directly or just only as an illustration. In this process, the same like in

the first period, we can see the passive reception, re-productive reception and productive reception.

Now I would like to show some examples of them.

(PHOTO 17) The earliest known German artworks, which emerged under the influence of Japanese art are painting and graphics. It is a canvas painted by Walter Leistikow (one of founders of *Berliner Sezession*) the "*Abendstimmung am Schlachtensee*" (*Evening mood on the see Schlachtensee*) painted about 1895. This painting shows the first stage of the influence of ukiyo-e in German art. The features adopted from ukiyo-e are: the foregoing (giving up?) of realistic way of painting through reduction of details and using a schematic rendering of a landscape, a composition of clearly defined fields with minimal shading, dark-hell contrast, cutting of parts of elements - in this case the upper part of the trees, and so called 'Vergitterung' - a word created by German specialist of Japonisme Sigfried Wichmann - which means 'grading' in reference to the trees, which can be seen in the front.

(PHOTO 18) The next example is a woodblock print (hanga) created by Praquer artist Emil Orlik. He is not a German artist per nationality but for me not the nationality but the place of artistic activity was a criterion by a choice of artists for this speech. Orlik as an artist was connected with Munich and Berlin. This woodblock print is entitled "*Der Windstoß*" (*The blast of the wind*) and was printed in 1901. It was made in a technique of Japanese woodblock prints, which Orlik learned during his ten-month stay in Japan. Theme, a composition of picture, colours demonstrate his interest on Japanese woodblock prints. The tree on the wind became a main sujet of that print, that was influenced by Japanese art, where plants, trees and animals are often use as a main sujet (theme). The branches of a tree are moving on the wind making this print very dynamic. It remains on Hiroshige's *ukiyo-e* with an illustration of rain and wind, dynamics and vitality which were new in German art. Lack of shading, clear defined surfaces, clear outlines of all elements of this print were also taken from the Japanese woodblock prints.

(PHOTO 19) Not only *ukiyo-e*, but also calligraphy and ink painting were sources of inspiration for German artists. The photo shows a drawing created by Walter Ophey with black chalkstone on paper. Ophey belonged to the group of painter called *Expressionists*. For him the expressive, abstract line of Japanese calligraphy and ink painting as well the integration of 'unpainted' surfaces, of 'emptiness' (yohaku) into the composition of a picture were sources of inspiration. The drawing "*Angler an der Seine*" (Fisherman on the Seine) has

got a meditative character, spreading silence through the reduction of all elements to the minimum. These are features, which we will see also in modern painting, which seems to be influenced through Zen-Buddhism.

(PHOTO 20) German painting and graphics were influenced by Japanese art, but not only these two disciplines of art. Also a lot of pieces of German handicrafts of *Jugendstil* had got their roots in Japanese culture. It concerns textile, ceramics, glass, jewellery, metal-works, wood-works. All elements of Japanese art, which were to find in German painting of that time, can be seen also in handicrafts. These are for example waves, rocks, animals like cat, mouse, crane, fish, plants like iris, bamboo, maple (momiji), chrysanthemum or even insects. These ornaments were new in German art.

I will show only two examples of handicrafts from that time but there are really a lot in private collections and in museums within Germany.

(PHOTO 21) This is a hair comb created by Georg Kleemann from Pforzheim. About 1900 the centre of jewellery production was there. He was employed as a professor for design at the Kunstgewerbeschule (School for arts and crafts) in Pforzheim and was one of the most influential jewellery designer of that time. Similar to Japanese art he used elements from the nature like plants, animals or insects and made them to the main theme of his work, equally to the human beings. He liked a dynamic line, which he knew from in Europe the most famous woodblock print of Katsuhika Hokusai *The wave of Kanagawa*. Kleeman used plants and animals not only as plain ornaments but also as symbols. It is very similar process like in Japanese art but he didn't use the symbolic meaning of them based on Japanese art but on European mythology and beliefs. Even if he was spoken about directly influences from Japanese art, in my opinion there are visible strong influences from the most famous jewellery artist of that time Rene Lalique.

(PHOTO 22) One more example for the reception of Japanese art in Germany is a vessel from the manufacture of Hermann and Richard Mutz, father and a son. In the first period of the European encounter with Japanese art the polychrom porcelain stood in the centre of Western interest. At the end of 19th century it was a monochrom porcelain like Tenmoku or celadon (seiji) but on the other hand also earthenwares with glazes put on the vessel one after another were admired. The effect of such kind of glazing is similar to *suminagashi* 墨流し that is why they are called *yunagashi* 釉流し. From the technical point of view it is very difficult

to produce such glazes so there are not so many ceramists in Europe who could do it. For Hermann and Richard Mutz it was a big challenge to produce such glazes and after many mistakes they could do it. They were also interesting in shapes, which based on Japanese art that is why they used a gourd (hyotan) or eggplants (nasu) in their works, like this one on the photo.

This period of European encounters with Japanese art is very distinguished and there are a lot of artists and a lot of works, which could be discussed here. But it is also one of the most popular subject of research concerning intercultural exchange. Because there are a lot of books also in Japanese, which deal with this subject, I will not introduce more artworks from this period. Instead I would like to recommend a book of Claudia Delank "*Japanbilder" vom Jugendstil bis zum Bauhaus* that has been translated into Japanese 『ドイツにおける「日本=像」：ユーゲントシュティールからバウハウスまで』(思文閣出版、2004年) .

Part 3: Living with Japan

In my opinion in the modern times the reception of Japanese art is quite strong connected not only with so called 'high arts' like for example painting but also with a culture of everyday life. Especially Japanese handicrafts are well known, admired and used in Europe. However it is difficult to judge how deep Japanese culture exists in awareness of people living in Germany. I will try to show some examples but the research has not been fulfilled yet and the process of the reception of Japanese art and handicrafts in Germany still lasts and is a subject of dynamic changes.

(PHOTO 23) According to Helen Westgeest, the author of a book concentrated on modern painting *Zen in the fifties - interaction in art between east and west*, the starting point for European interest on Japanese culture was Zen-Buddhism. She mentions that the European artists were looking for something new, what was not connected with Christianity – a base of European tradition. Zen-Buddhismus, which became known in the West through Suzuki Daisetsu, seemed to be a perfect solution. Whether the European artists could understand what Zen is, will be not discussed here. In my opinion it was at least partly European image about Zen and it attended not only art, but also the life of artists, who were especially interested in calligraphy and ink painting. To German artists, who were deeply interested in both of them, belong amongst others Julius Bissier, Ruprecht Geiger from the group Zen 49, Karl Otto Götz from the group *Quadrige*, Günther Uecker and Gerhard Fietz. All of them are different

so we had to discuss a lot of works here to understand the quintessence of their art. Because of lack of time it is impossible, so today we can see only one object of such kind of art, which I chose. This painting shows quite well what kind of elements of Japanese Zen-art affected the German artists. On the photo you can see a painting of Rupprecht Geiger from 1950. The elements, which he adopted from Japanese art are: simplicity, meditative character, emanation of silence, reduction to the most essential elements, empty fields, spontaneity, respect for material. In case of Geiger there is one other aspect of it. Westgeest writes:

“The artists belonging to Zen 49 were primarily interested in the singular role played by emptiness and nothingness in Zen. For them it meant ‘a zero base after the war’ and ‘a fresh start for art’ (...).” p. 164

(PHOTO 24) One of the symbols of Japanese culture in the West is a kimono. In Europe also in Germany it became a very popular in interior design, in fashion and as object of art. The kimonos are hanging on the wall of German dwellings as an interior decoration, the old kimonos are cut and used for tablecloths, table napkins etc. But Kimono is also a source of inspiration for artists. The photo, that we can see now, shows the object from an exhibition held in Hamburg in Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe in 1996. This object is a combination of two Japanese sources of inspiration: Kimono and Origami. These both exist in European awareness very deep and are used in many ways, especially in fashion.

(PHOTO 25) The next example is an object which stands on the border between so called “high art” and handicrafts. This kimono-object belongs to the series of kimono created by living in Hamburg textile-artist Ulrike Isensee. Using a kimono shape in her work it is quite clear that she was inspired by Japanese culture. But I have chosen this object because of other attribute, which reflected the influence of Japanese crafts, namely the way, how Ulrike Isensee works with material. This handmade kimono has been made in a sewn-woven technique developed by Isensee for her trademark - scarves. She makes transparent pieces with asymmetrical design and thread with quite rough texture. She accentuates the natural features of thread and show a big respect for a raw material. He tries to emphasise the natural features of material instead of changing it through different industrial techniques. This kind of handling with material is new in Germany.

(PHOTO 26) The same awareness of natural features of material is characteristic for artists, who work in wood. There are quite many German artists working in wood but only one of them Manfred Schmid aus Bremen acquainted himself to work with Japanese lacquer *urushi*. He started to

do it in 1997 and two years later went to Spain to learn Japanese technique at escola Massana in Barcelona. Simple elegance, reduction of décor to the minimum, respect for material, emphasis of “empty” surface are attributes of his lacquer art. He admires Japanese aesthetics and all these attributes have their source there. Also the aesthetics of Zen plays a role. A vessel shown on the photo recalls Japanese *chaire*, but it has no such function. Schmid adapts Japanese technique and forms on European realities banding together very subtle Japanese and German cultures.

(PHOTO 27) One more example for a reception of Japanese art in Germany, which I want to show now is extraordinary exceptional. Ralf Hoffman and Sabine Piper are the only artists in Germany, who band together the art of netsuke and sword. They create knives with a blade similar to Damascus steel and a handle based on netsuke shape. For them not only form but also material is very important. They produce a blade in a way, which based on Japanese technique but the ornament of a blade, which is similar to *suminagashi* originates in Syrian Damascus steel. Every blade is handmade, has got a name like for example swords of Teabowls (*chawan*) in Japan and a signature of an artist. The place of a signature however is different than in Japanese swords. The artistic awareness in Germany is very strong so a signature must be visible. Piper said in an interview that it is also a part of composition like in case of Japanese stamps on ink painting. A shape of a handle based on Netsuke. For both artists not only the visual effects are important, but also the haptic qualities of their works. In case of netsuke and other Japanese crafts it is a very important feature.

(PHOTO 28) Piper and Hoffmann enjoy creating their works and sometimes play with their shapes, like for example this one. It is for all who likes Gojira very much, like I do. かわいいいでしょう！！

(PHOTO 29) The other branch of German art and crafts, which shows influences of Japanese culture are ceramic vessels. The forms of Japanese ceramics used for tea ceremony and Ikebana vessels have become models for ceramists in Germany. Especially the reception of Momoyama aesthetics in contemporary ceramics is visible and foremostly concerned with form, forming procedures, firing methods, and the clay.

The following photo shows a tea bowl made by Mathias Stein from Hamburg. The raku tea bowls and their aesthetic features became models for him. However even if his tea bowls are somewhat similar to Japanese ones, the form and the forming procedures used by him are quite innovative within the field of German ceramics. Stein learned from their Japanese colleagues a new way of dealing with form,

increasing thereby their awareness of new aesthetic values. He was less interested in established German aesthetics, which stress formal perfection, but rather, he endeavored to search for beauty in vessels with seeming imperfections. His tea bowls, based on the wabi aesthetics of the Momoyama period, are not fully glazed, the finger- and trimming-traces are left intentionally, the body is irregular and gently asymmetric. In order to attain such features, different methods, other than established traditional ones used in German ceramic handicrafts, are necessary. These include: avoiding an electric potter's wheel, using soft wooden trimming tools, different trimming methods (for instance no direct contact between the lip of a tea bowl with a wheel) and the creation of their own clay-mixtures. By using these methods, Stein created bowls, which, were not intended to be used for the tea ceremony, but rather for the consumption of black tea, denying thereby the more traditional cup with a handle. His aim was to give users the possibility of a new perception of a drinking vessel, namely not only in a visual but also a tactile (haptic) sense. A process, which has been influenced by Japanese culture.

(PHOTO 30) The seeming imperfection of Momoyama aesthetics was also a groundbreaking force behind the work of the ceramist Eva Koj from Kiel. Based on the beauty of wabi-aesthetics and using *Iga* or *Shigaraki* ceramics as a model, she found her own way to express venerated aesthetic values. Let us take a look at one of her vessels. This particular one was thrown on the wheel, cut, assembled from two parts, dried, and then fired in a gas-kiln. When we compare this vessel to more traditional German ceramics, certain shortcomings of appearance spring instantly to mind. The upper part of it is cut, it is not perfectly round, the surface is rough, and there are some traces of melted glass. The form is very dynamic; it is based on Momoyama forms and has little semblance to traditional German ceramic vessels. It is a representative of hitherto unknown aesthetics.

(PHOTO 31) Let us now look at some examples of ceramic pieces where not only a ceramist but also the natural forces such as wind, air, and fire are involved in the formation of the vessels – such as those used in the Momoyama tradition. This piece is created in the wood-fired kiln called anagama, which is built according to Japanese specifications and where fire is not only used to increase temperature. The anagama is a one-chamber kiln that does not have a dividing wall between the firing chamber and the space where pots are placed. It allows fire to fly through the whole interior space of the kiln, with only the pots to stop it, creating thereby a unique surface on and form of the fired object. This procedure creates an expressive ornament and a

naturally deformed shape that are seen in the vessels of the Momoyama tradition. Let us look into the anagama-kiln after firing. We can notice a thick layer of ash that has formed on the vessels. A form of a vessel was created by a ceramist, but its surface is a result of the creative forces of the flames.

All of German ceramists, for whom Momoyama aesthetics has an extraordinary appeal, developed a consciousness for the value of clay as an artistic medium. Jan Kollwitz from Cismar can be included among these ceramists. It is through this encounter with Momoyama aesthetics that the worth of a shard without glaze has come to the attention of a wider audience. In German ceramic culture the shard has served only as foundation for glazes. But this has now changed. The elegant roughness of fired clay fascinates contemporary German ceramists. It is through this development that the expression *tsuchiaji* “the appeal of clay” became better known. Unfortunately, the nature of common Westerwälder-clay used by German ceramists does not allow for the same texture of Japanese clay. For this reason, some German ceramists who wish to try and create something similar have resorted to mixing their own clays. For example Kollwitz used as his model the Shigaraki clay, as seen in the vessel from the Momoyama period. Kollwitz mixed quartz and feldspar with the unrefined Westerwälder clay. During firing, particles within the mixture “explode” into small white stones and create the so-called “*ishihaze*”-effect characteristic of Shigaraki ceramics. Kollwitz built an anagama kiln based on a Japanese model and tried to explore its possibilities by creating Japanese influenced ceramics using local clay and wood as well as utilizing methods that are a mixture of German and Japanese tradition.

Why did so many contemporary German ceramists suddenly develop an interest in Momoyama aesthetics? Especially given the fact that glazes are of particular importance to the German ceramics tradition, and where attention is focused on the pursuit of harmonized forms. Many ceramists after the Second World War continued to work in accordance with these traditions. But a few of them started to look for new sources of inspiration in other cultures. It was during this period that they discovered English studio pottery at the end of 1960s and with it the ceramics of Bernard Leach. As many of you probably already know, Leach, who was fascinated by Japanese culture, started to produce ceramics based on traditional Japanese techniques, and then teach his skills and spread his knowledge and fascination in Europe and United States.

Nonetheless, it was not only the changes that occurred in the world of ceramics which were relevant for the reception of Japanese culture in Germany. Certain changes within

German society happened at almost the same time. The heightened consciousness of pursuing a natural style of life within a natural environment became more popular. This brought about considerable interest in handcrafted products, among them ceramic products. During this period the ceramics of Leach and the arts and crafts movement were met with considerable enthusiasm. Ceramics in Germany started to change, and ceramic vessels with a more unique character started to emerge. In this process of Japanese ceramics, mostly in accordance with the traditions of the Momoyama period, where a very unique, sculpture-like form prevailed, the creative forces is not just human power. Indeed, the power of nature became a focal point of interest for a certain group of German ceramists. The result could be seen in a growing number of contemporary ceramists who were particularly interested in Momoyama aesthetics.

Where has this encounter with Japanese culture led contemporary German ceramists today?

At first sight, a noticeable influence can be seen in the innovation of forms, which became very dynamic, expressive and similar to sculpture with the technology of ceramic production. It does not end in the mere reproduction of these forms. The German ceramists seek to understand the development of Japanese ceramics and how they are appreciated in Japan, which developed during the Momoyama period in connection with the tea ceremony. It opens the possibility to see the ceramic vessels in German culture with new criteria than before, namely criteria using in Japanese ceramics. In our culture the ceramic vessel has been regarded as a functional object, or, in the case of exquisite porcelain, as a decorative object. In Japan both of these cases exist, but the vessel, or stone- or earthenware, can be appreciated as an art object, too. This consciousness has increased in Germany as well, which has resulted in the shifting of rigidly established borders between craft, applied art and art, and which in turn has created a new perspective for the development of contemporary German ceramics.

(PHOTO 32a and 32b) The encounter between different cultures concerns always both directions. In the first period European encounter with Japanese art on the one hand the Europeans being fascinated by Japanese art adapted it for objects using by them. But on the other hand the Japanese art absorbed such objects. We can see it in a tea culture very well like these examples with a cross as a form in case of *mizusashi* and décor on the Kuro-Seto tea-bowl, that show strong influence of Jesuits' presence in Japan. They are examples of co called Nanban-boom. It is not a subject of my speech so I will not speak longer about it but maybe it can be an interesting research topic for some of you. Nanban Bunkakan in Osaka is a very good place for such research.