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| **Japonisme** |
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| The term Japonisme refers to the reception of Japanese art products and stylistic forms in Europe and the United States occurring in the second half of the 19th century through to the early 20th century. Japonisme involves the collecting of Japanese products by Western artists and art lovers, as well as the adaptation of East Asian motifs and forms for the invention of pictures and objects. Paris was the centre of early Japonisme; the first collectors were art critics such as Ernest Chesneau and Philippe Burty. Early enthusiasts of Japanese arts and crafts were painters Edouard Manet and James Abbott McNeill Whistler. The opening up of new possibilities for the representation of reality mediated by Japanese colour woodcuts from artists such as Utagawa (Andō) Hiroshige had a profound effect on artistic schools ranging from Impressionism to Expressionism. Not only the means of Japanese design, but also the egality of the represented subjects, the equal treatment of nature (animals and man), of high art and handicraft, helped Western artists to overcome their academic traditions. Japonisme as an artistic and visual movement underwent a trans-cultural appropriation of the Japanese stylistic language, which contributed to the breakthrough of modern art in the West.  After a rigorous restriction on overseas trade that existed since the end of the 16th century, Japan re-opened itself to the Western market in 1854, and began exporting its own products. Japanese woodcuts by artists such as Katsushika Hokusai, Hiroshige, Kitagawa Utamaro, Suzuki Harunobu or Hishikawa Moronobu drew great interest in France, where they initially arrived as packing material for export goods such as tea or ceramics. The prints — also referred to as *ukiyo-e*, meaning images of a serene, evanescent world — were received with great enthusiasm by writers and art critics as there were the brothers Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, Burty or Chesneau. Burty 1872 coined the term Japonisme in the journal *La Renaissance littéraire et artistique*.  Early Japonisme enthusiasts — including Manet, Whistler, and Edgar Degas — were supplied with various Asian products by Parisian stores like the *Jonque Chinoise* or the *Porte Chinoise*. The colour woodcuts, in particular, served as a source of inspiration for the development of enthusiasts’ own artistic work. The abstraction of basic shapes, displacements, rotations, foreshortening and variable enlargements of motifs, the different scales in one and the same depiction and the plane pictorial space occurring in the prints opened a way out of the stylistic crises many European artists found themselves in. Edmond de Goncourt noted in his diary in 1884: ‘No more and no less than a revolution in the seeing of the European people, this is the Japonisme.’  From the selectively occurring enthusiasm in the 1850s and 1860s, a broad movement developed in Europe and North America in the following decades. The import of handcrafted goods from Japan was systematized and improved. The most successful trader of East Asian art was the merchant Samuel (Siegfried) Bing, who founded the journal *Le Japon artistiqu*e in 1888. The importance of Japonisme for modern art can be traced even beyond the turn of the century in works of artists such as Claude Monet, Vincent Van Gogh, Gustav Klimt, Franz Marc and Pablo Picasso. |
| Further reading:  Irvine, G. *Japonisme and the rise of the modern art movement: the arts of the Meiji period, The Khalili Collection*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2013.  Weisberg, G. P., ed. *The Orient expressed: Japan’s influence on Western art, 1854-1918*. Seattle: Washington UP, 2011.  Wichmann, S. *Japonisme, The Japanese influence on Western art since 1858*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2007.  Ono, A. *Japonisme in Britain: Whistler, Menepes, Henry, Hornel and the nineteenth-century Japan*. London: Routledge Curzon, 2003.  Berger, K. *Japonismus in der westlichen Malerei, 1860-1920*, Munich: Prestel, 1980. |