**Fenollosa, Ernest Francisco (February 18, 1853 – September 21, 1908)**

Ernest Fenollosa was an art historian and Orientalist. He was chiefly concerned with promoting an understanding of Asian artistic and intellectual traditions in the attempt to bring about a ‘higher’ global civilization. On graduating from Harvard, he was appointed Chair of Philosophy at the University of Tokyo in 1878. His enthusiasm for Japan’s native cultural inheritance, which the Japanese themselves looked down upon as inferior, earned him the position of Director of Tokyo’s Imperial Museum. In 1890 Fenollosa returned to the States as Curator of the Oriental Department at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. In the 1890s, his promotion of Eastern civilizations as the equivalent of those in the West set him apart from exclusionist discourses operating in the United States and Britain. Fenollosa was an early champion of JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER as an artist of modern centrality because of Whistler’s ability to synthesise the characteristic beauties of Eastern and Western art. These assertions were reiterated in his posthumous *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art: An Outline History of East Asiatic Design* (1912). Fenollosa’s utopian dream was for Great Britain and the United States to befriend Japan, and for China to recognize Japan as an ally in the splendid future of the East. While hindsight puts paid to Fenollosa’s rosy view of Japanese munificence, his belief in the integration of Eastern philosophy and Western science that would reverse the trajectory of Social Darwinist discourse for the global good achieved a dynamic synthesis in Japan’s Meiji restoration. Back in Japan in 1897, he turned his attention to Chinese poetry and the NOH drama. His unpublished notes including drafts for an essay, ‘The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry,’ were given by his widow to EZRA POUND who used them to underpin his modernist poetic practice of IMAGISM, a major influence on the development of modernist poetry.

**List of works**

Fenollosa, Ernest and Ezra Pound (2008) *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry: A Critical Edition,* ed. Haun Saussy, Jonathan Stalling and Lucas Klein, New York: Fordham University Press.

Fenollosa, Ernest (1912) *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art: An Outline History of East Asiatic Design*, New York: Frederick A. Stokes CompanY.

**Further Reading**

Chisholm, Lawrence W. (1963) *Fenollosa: The Far East and American Culture*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

Brooks, Van Wyck (1962) *Fenollosa and His Circle*, New York: Dutton.

Burns, Sarah (1996) *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

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