**Charles Wirgman (1832-1891)**

Charles Wirgman was an English reporter and artist, who arrived in Japan in 1861 during a period of turmoil, which resulted in the overthrow of the Tokugawa regime and the establishment of a modern government with the Meiji Emperor as its figurehead in 1868. Wirgman, who was born in London to a family of Swedish origin, was sent to Japan by the *Illustrated London News* and sent back extensive reports accompanied by vivid drawings. He also published *The Japan Punch* (1862-1987) for the expatriate community. This satirical periodical spawned similar Japanese cartoons, which in their turn led to political *manga* cartoons created by proletarian avant-garde artists, such as Masamu Yanase (柳瀬正夢1900-1945). However, Wirgman’s significance for modern Japanese painting was in his role as the most important early mentor for the Japanese artists who tried to tackle Western oil painting, such as Yuichi Takahashi (高橋由一1828-1894).

**References and further reading**

John Clark, (1991), ‘Charles Wirgman (1835-1891)’, in Sir Hugh Cortazzi and Gordon Daniels (eds.), *Britain and Japan 1859-1991: Themes and Personalities*, London and New York: Routledge, 54-63 (Best short overview of his life and work.)

Kanagawa Prefectural Museum of Cultural History, ed., (2011), *Charles Wirgman and the Artists who bound East and West*, Yokohama: Kanagawa Prefectural Museum of Cultural History (exhibition catalogue with extensive illustrations and documentary material. In Japanese and English.)