

Native to Japan and a great traveler of the western world, Yoshio Markino marked the London art and literature scene with his unique Japanese-English blend of techniques and perspectives. Born to a samurai family that had fallen on hard times, Markino was greatly influenced by the protestant missionaries near his hometown and through them developed a desire to make a life for himself abroad (Rodner 2004). First, he traveled to the United States and settled in California, changing his name from “Makino” to “Markino” so that it could be more easily pronounced by English speakers (Ono 2013). After experiencing employment difficulties due to the racially prejudiced culture of the time, he left for England. He arrived in London in 1902 where he received irregular art training from a variety of English schools (Rodner 2004). Though the beginning of his art career was humble (doing illustrations for newspapers) he eventually gained great notoriety for his “silk veil” technique, becoming a popular illustrator and painter. He was especially fascinated with painting the London fog, one admirer noting that “his coloring is chaste and so refined that, like Nature herself, it does not render up all her secrets at first glance” (Defries 1928). He also gained admiration in the world of writing, and was largely known for his autobiographical works which contained a unique sense of humor often derived from his perspective as a foreigner trying to understand Anglo society. One such book is Markino’s *My Idealed John Bullesses*, a piece which demonstrates his deep-seated admiration of English society, especially its women. The book is a series of descriptions of the many different English women (or John Bullesses as he likes to call them) he has met over his time in England, demonstrating their beauty, kindness, strength, and intelligence which to him signifies all the reasons he supports women’s suffrage. But women’s suffrage, painting, and writing are only a few of Markino’s interests. In addition to all those other activities, Markino wrote essays and newspaper columns, lectured, traveled to France and Italy, and consulted on various theatrical productions. He was a perpetual learner and had an undying desire to interact with and to understand English society.

Markino’s rise and fall of popularity coincides with England’s interest in Japan. During World War I, British society viewed the Japanese as allies and so Japanese art became highly prized and even influenced European styles; however, as World War II approached, Japan was viewed as a rival in many ways, including commercially (Ono 2013). It was Markino’s authenticity that drew many of his readers and his down-to-earth style of writing, but as diplomacy between the two countries soured, he lost more and more of his popularity. When England declared war on Japan in World War II, Markino returned to Japan where he eventually died. Today, many of his surviving original paintings are stored in a museum in his hometown of Toyota (Ono 2013). His works now represent a fascinating blend of cultural exchange.

References

Defries, Amelia. 1928. “The Water Colors of Yoshio Markino.” *The American Magazine of Art* 19, no. 8: 436–40. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23930379>.

Watercolor painting did not arrive in England in its defined speciality until the early 18th century, but Yoshio Markino, in his time, was the master. His art style combined both Japanese and European techniques, creating images that capture the very heart of London, especially its mists. Even H. G. Wells said that taking one of Markino’s paintings to his Paris flat was like bringing the essence of London with him.

Ono, Ayako. 2013. *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 39, no. 2: 410–14.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24243140>.

A good historical overview of the European art scene and social atmosphere which led or allowed Markino's success as a painter in London. The article also offers important information about how Yoshio Markino is remembered in modern times both in England and his hometown in Japan.

Ponting, H. G. 1923. "Lotus-Land Japan." *The Geographical Journal* 62, no. 2: 158–60.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1781360>.

Correspondence of H. G. Ponting addressing a translation critique in his book *In Lotus Land: Japan* in which he mentions Yoshio Markino's work as a translator. While this is not directly about Markino himself, it does give important insight on his views of translation and how the exchange of words from one language to another should be handled and viewed in the written form.

Rodner, William S. 2004. "The Making of a London Samurai: Yoshio Markino and the Illustrated Press in Edwardian Britain." *The British Art Journal* 5, no. 2: 43–52.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41615291>.

Over the course of Markino's stay in England, he developed an artistic style that was a hybrid of Japanese and English art and Rodner details how this transformation took place and the social atmosphere that encouraged Markin's prosperity. His down to earth style and focus of common daily life, displayed in not only his paintings but written works, caught the attention of the British public.

Vande Walle, W. F. 2014. "Edwardian London through Japanese Eyes: The Art and Writings of Yoshio Markino, 1897–1915. By William S. Rodner. Japanese Visual Culture 4. Leiden: Brill, 2012. Pp. 240. ISBN 10: 9004220399; ISBN 13: 978-9004220393." *International Journal of Asian Studies* 11 (1). Cambridge University Press: 114–15.
doi:10.1017/S1479591413000296.

Vande Walle reviews Rodner's bibliography of Yoshio Markino, questioning the artist's true importance to the art scene and the balancing act Markino maintained between Japanese and English culture during his career. Through this he offers an interesting analysis of cultural exchange and its effects on people of the time period.