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Hugh Cortazzi and Mike Sullivan

(Image: Imari Kakiemon porcelain bowl, Imari, Japan, circa 1640.
Photo: World Imaging, taken at the Sevres Museum)

Obtaining Images: Art Production and Display in Edo Japan

by Timon Screech

Redaktion Books (2012)

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Review by
Hugh Cortazzi

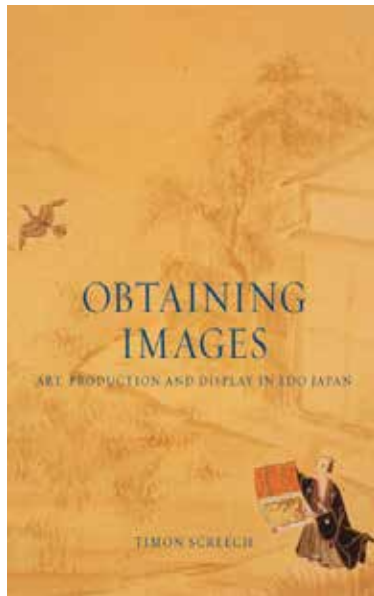
Professor Timon Screech is Professor in the History of Art at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, and is a Japanese art expert who has made a particular study of the art of Tokugawa Japan.

Obtaining Images is a scholarly study of painting in the Edo or Tokugawa period. During the two and a half centuries between the beginning of the seventeenth century and the re-opening of Japan to the West shortly after the middle of the nineteenth century Japanese artists produced paintings which are among the finest anywhere in the world. Screech's book not only analyses the factors which influenced Japanese artists but also provides a historical survey of the large number of different styles and schools of Japanese painting. It is full of fascinating insights and will be invaluable to all who want to know more about and understand Japanese art at its apogee.

In his introduction Screech reminds his readers that paintings were not only important for their visual impact. They also reflected the status of their owners and of the painters themselves. Screech accordingly devotes the first part of his book to a discussion of 'the mechanisms of artistic production and display.'

His first chapter is entitled 'Legends of the Artists' in which, among other legends, he exposes the myth of the 'Superlative Painter.' Chapter Two entitled 'Auspicious Images' reviews the traditional themes so often found in Japanese paintings such as dragons, *kara-shishi* (唐獅子, Chinese lions), *kirin* (麒麟, horse dragon) and the *hōō* (鳳凰, phoenix). Leopards and tigers were not found in Japan but were depicted for instance in a famous screen by Sanraku Kano (狩野山楽), where Screech explains that the two animals were regarded as 'he and she tigers.'

He explains various conceits used by Japanese painters such as those reflected in figures 1 and 2:



The next chapter on buying and selling begins by describing the six standard painting formats – hand scrolls, albums, hanging scrolls (*kakemono*, 掛物) which included diptyches and triptychs, screens which might be single leaf or folding, sliding screens (*fusuma*, 襖) and fans (*sensu* and *uchiwa*, 扇). Screech goes on to give some fascinating insights into social mores in Tokugawa Japan. He points out that status carried with it obligations when it came to buying and giving away pictures. Some painters e.g. of the Kano school received official salaries and were regarded as the elite. Their 'ateliers would not entertain commissions from commoners' (page 82). 'Especially



Figure 1. *Mōkari* (culling reeds) is a pun on the word *mōkaru* (儲かる, make money) in this early 19th century painting by Ippō Mori (森一鳳)



Figure 2. Pines (*shō* [松]) is the *on* reading of *matsu* (pine) and carp (*ri* [鯉]) is the *on* reading of *koi* (carp). The two combined would read *shōri* (松鯉) which written with different characters means 'victory' (勝利). Painting by Ōkyo Maruyama (円山応挙).

prickly were the gentlemen amateurs like Taiga and Buson' who saw themselves as samurai. As such they could not demean themselves to become involved in commercial transactions.

Screech in the final chapter of part 1 entitled 'The Power of the Image' deals with religious art, which in the Edo period meant Buddhist paintings and images. This enables him to discuss such significant Edo era sculptors as Enku. He notes that a great deal of secular painting was preserved in temples which tended to be better preserved than secular buildings, Some of the finest Kano school screen paintings are indeed to be

found today in Kyoto temples such as the Chionin (知恩院) and Nishi Honganji (西本願寺) in Kyoto.

In part two Screech provides an informative survey of the different schools of painting in the Edo period. He starts with an account of the Kano school. He notes that Tan'yū Kano (狩野探幽) who arrived in Edo in 1622 was given formal military rank and 'they ran their ateliers with the punctiliousness of all other shogunal officers' (page 138). The Kano school was 'part of the government.' They had their own secret text book setting out 'their ideologies and values, its categories of subject matter, its historical lore and its protocols and pedigrees' (page 139).

The Kano school did not change with the times. They were forbidden to adapt.

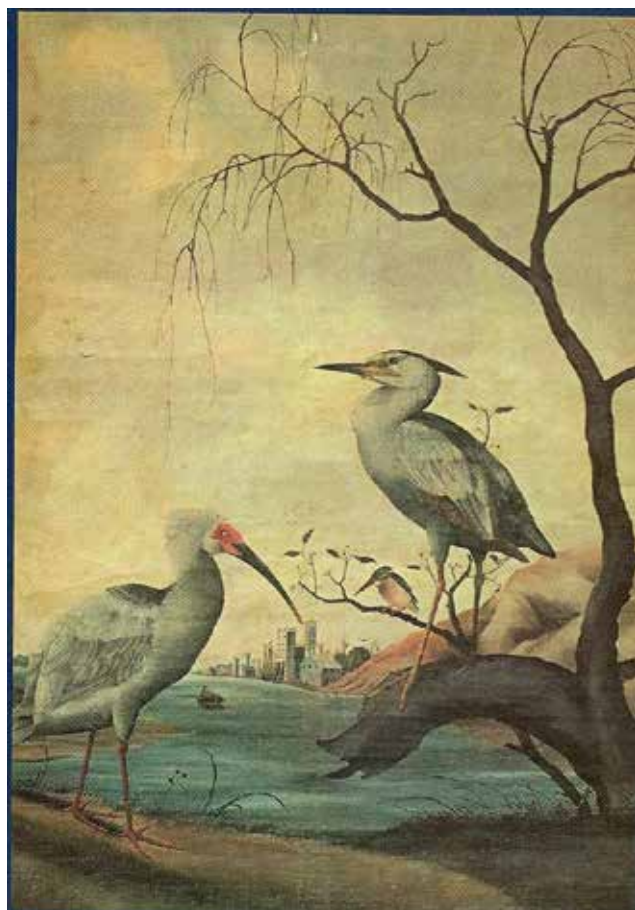


Screech deals next with portraiture where the Japanese approach differed greatly from the European. There was 'no thirst for portraits of people to whom one was not in some way connected' (page 167). In Tokugawa Japan visitors to the shogun did not look at him but kept their eyes down to the floor. Portraits tended to be commissioned when an individual was approaching death. They generally showed the sitter 'looking to the left, that is, their right. The most honoured position was facing south, looking towards the sun and important people routinely sat that way. Since a portrait should be treated like the person, respect demanded it be hung on a north wall.' It was rare for a portrait to show the sitter other than in a formal posture. Bunchō Tani's (谷文晁) posthumous

portrait below of Kenkadō Kimura (木村兼葭堂) which shows him smiling and in the act of talking is an exception to the general practise.

The next chapter is entitled perhaps rather oddly 'Japanese Painting'. It deals firstly with the Tosa school which was associated with the court and 'concentrated on Heian poems and tales, and the birds and flowers that appear in them.' Kōetsu, Sōtsu, Kōrin Ogata (尾形光琳) and Hōitsu, often considered members of a separate Rimpa school are covered in separate subsections of this chapter.

Chapter Eight is entitled 'Painting within the Heart'. This covers the literati painters and explains what is meant by *nanga* (南画, southern paintings). This style had no geographical connotations, but rather denoted the way in which the painter depicted his subjects. Landscapes and even flowers and trees were not depictions of real scenes but were imaginary from 'within the breast.' Within this chapter Screech also covers the Ōkyo Maruyama (円山 応挙) and Shijō schools and Jakuchū Itō (伊藤 若冲).



Kōkan Shiba: Birds in a Winter Landscape
late 18th century

Chapter nine is entitled 'Floating World (ukiyo)'. Screech explains that in the Yoshiwara (red light district) and the theatre, which were central to the 'floating world,' the rigid class distinctions of Edo Japan became blurred and the classes mixed. This

chapter covers aspects of *ukiyo-e*, but is not intended as a history of the art of the Japanese print which impressed western observers and artists so much in the nineteenth century. Even so it seems a little odd that such an outstanding artist as Sharaku (Tōshūsai) (東洲斎 写楽) is not mentioned.

The final chapter is devoted to a discussion of artistic contacts with the West where perhaps the most well known Japanese artist who reflected western influences was Kōkan Shiba (司馬 江漢). His picture of birds in a winter landscape with a western city in the background is shown on the back cover of this volume.

Western influences also had an impact on *ukiyo-e* as can be seen in this charming print by Harunobu Suzuki (鈴木 春信) showing a girl looking surprised to see the shadow cast by her umbrella:



In such a lavishly produced book I was surprised that no Japanese characters were included. In the past when type had to be set by hand it was understandable that Japanese characters were eschewed, but there is no difficulty these days in introducing characters into books in English. I would have particularly welcomed the printing of the names of Japanese artists in Japanese characters. They could also have been used beneficially for students with some knowledge of the Japanese language when Japanese poems are quoted.

Screech excuses the fact that his book does not cover calligraphy, but it would in my view have added to the value of this work if it had included even a brief chapter on the great calligraphers of Edo Japan.

Calligraphy was such an important feature of Japanese ink painting.

Screech refers briefly to such popular pictures as *Otsu-e*, but his book is primarily about 'high art' and he has not been able to devote space to picture books which became so popular in Edo Japan.

The book does not claim to be a history of Edo art but only of images produced in the Edo period, but the frontiers of art especially in Japan merge so easily that imagery becomes important not merely for lacquer ware, briefly mentioned in the context of Kōrin Ogata (page 223), but also for the hugely important field of Japanese ceramics.

This book is already a lengthy one and it would be wrong to make too much of what it does not cover and indeed does not claim to cover. Every serious student of Japanese art will want to read and to possess a copy of this important and informative book, if only in order to be able to consult it as necessary. §

Vessels of Influence: China and the Birth of Porcelain in Medieval and Early Modern Japan

by Nicole Coolidge Rousmaniere

Bristol Classical Press (2012)

One Peace Books (2015)

ISBN: 9780715634639

Review by Hugh Cortazzi

Professor Rousmaniere, research director at the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures (SISJAC) in Norwich, has specialized in the study of Japanese ceramics. She has recently completed a new and comprehensive catalogue of Japanese porcelain in the British Museum which is likely to be published early in 2013. This will not only describe the Museum's Japanese porcelain, but also provide an overview of Japanese porcelain and its history. Nicole Rousmaniere gave the Toshiba lectures in London and Norwich on Japanese porcelain in November 2012. These were copiously illustrated with some rare and fascinating slides. I hope that in due course these lectures and the illustrations which accompanied them will be published.

Vessels of Influence is a scholarly study based on Professor Rousmaniere's experiences in Japan working with Japanese scholars of ceramics and on a careful study of the relevant literature in Japanese and

English. It is informative and will be a valuable source for all who are interested in Japanese ceramics.

The terminology used in describing Japanese ceramics is often confusing. Professor Rousmaniere explains that the English classification system of dividing ceramics into three types – earthenware, stoneware and porcelain – does not translate easily into comparable terms in Japanese. 'Stoneware is used to refer to a ceramic that has a semi-vitrified body (non-porous) and is fired at the high temperature of at least 1200 degrees centigrade.' Japanese refer to these wares as *tōki* or *sekki*. 'Porcelain is a fully vitrified ware with a whitish body that is transparent after firing when thinly potted' at temperatures of between 1250 and 1400 degrees centigrade. In Japanese these wares are termed *jiki*, but confusingly Japanese often use the term *tōjiki* (陶磁器) when speaking of vitrified wares.

Nicole Rousmaniere describes the way in which Chinese wares came, largely through the tea ceremony, to hold such an important place in Japanese eyes and thus inspired the development of a Japanese porcelain industry. She notes that Japanese made pots many thousands of years ago and that Japan had plentiful supplies of clay suitable for the making of ceramics including porcelain. Yet porcelain making in Japan really only began some four hundred years ago.

She also reviews the various arguments about the extent to which the development of Japanese porcelain can be attributed to the import of Korean potters into Japan following the Japanese invasion of Korea in the late sixteenth century in what have been called the 'pottery wars.' She concludes that while Korean potters played a significant part in the development there were other important factors. With the establishment of the Tokugawa Shogunate the country was largely at peace and with improved prosperity and better communications there was an increased demand for luxury goods including porcelain from China (China ware as we in the west still often call porcelain). Trade with China, which had continued for centuries although with interruptions, expanded. A major Japanese export was silver and Chinese ceramics were a significant Japanese import. But as the Ming Empire began to collapse Chinese ceramic production declined and exports were interrupted. This created an important incentive for Japanese production of porcelain. Initially Japanese porcelain wares followed closely Chinese designs and for some years often carried Chinese reign marks. As Professor Rousmaniere points out 'early Japanese porcelain was initially import substitution' but by the latter part of

the seventeenth century it had developed Japanese characteristics and a life of its own.

Japanese porcelain seems to have originated in the Saga area of Kyushu and to have derived from wares produced in Karatsu. It was first fired in the Arita area of Saga in the 1610s and became known as Hizen domain porcelain (Hizen *jiki*, 肥前磁器), but such wares are termed *imari* (伊万里) by the Tokyo National Museum and *arita* (有田) by the Idemitsu Museum. Kakiemon (柿右衛門) is regarded as a sub-group.

Other domains tried to emulate Saga, but 'the immensely costly and natural-resource-depleting industry proved difficult to sustain' and it was not until well into the eighteenth century that porcelain producing kilns developed in other parts of Japan.

Kutani ware (九谷焼), which came to be produced in the Kaga fief around Kanazawa, was produced initially in the Hizen area of Kyushu.

Arita was part of the Nabeshima fief, which attempted in the first part of the seventeenth century to establish a monopoly of porcelain production in thirteen kilns. These were enclosed by two guardhouses and encircled by three mountains. They benefitted from access to supplies of suitable clay in the neighbourhood. The Nabeshima daimyo, who had obligations to the Tokugawa, found that porcelain wares produced in their domain were welcome presents which helped to cement their relations with their feudal overlords. Porcelain produced for presents and other uses by the Nabeshima family form a distinct type of *imari*.

Porcelain was an important Japanese export through the Dutch factory at Deshima in Nagasaki bay during the Tokugawa era and remained a significant element in Japanese exports after the 're-opening' of Japan to the West in the middle of the nineteenth century. The differences between Japanese porcelain made for the home market and wares produced for export led to some acrimonious arguments between western experts.

The title *Vessels of Influence* is justified by the importance given to Chinese ceramics in the development of Japanese ceramic aesthetics, but it does not fully convey the wider purport of this book.

I hope that this interesting and valuable study will be followed not only by illustrated texts of her three lectures and her account of Japanese ceramics inspired by the British museum collection of some 3,500 pieces, but will also lead to another copiously illustrated volume depicting the different types of Japanese porcelain thus helping western collectors to appreciate the differences between *ko-imari* and (古伊万里) *ko-kutani* (古九谷), recognize typical *kakiemon* designs and styles, and appreciate the wares produced for use by the Nabeshima daimyo. It would also be helpful in such a book to reproduce examples of the copies which were made in Europe in the eighteenth century of Japanese porcelain. I recall in this context the fine 'Porcelain for Palaces' exhibition at the British Museum in the late 1980s in which for instance an original early piece of Kakiemon was shown alongside a piece made in the short-lived Chelsea factory. §

Throne of Blood

directed by Akira Kurosawa

1957, 110 minutes

Shown as part of the Film4 Summer Screen 2013 at Somerset House on a rare 35mm version of this classic movie.

Review by Mike Sullivan

Throne of Blood, a 1957 classic by Akira Kurosawa, was shot on and around Mt Fuji, some scenes including the castle courtyard was shot in a Tokyo studio while the scenes in Washizu's mansion were shot in the Izu peninsula. For Washizu's famous death scene actual



archers fired real arrows around him, this is in stark contrast to the fake special effects that we are used to seeing in movies today.

Throne of Blood is an interpretation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the story is focused around Washizu who is a general for the lord of spider web castle. After hearing a prophecy that he would become master of a mansion, and later lord of spider web castle, a series of events are set off, this would result in the prophecies becoming true, but through blood and death. The movie brings together forest spirits, traitors, deceit and war into a powerful conclusion.

Washizu and his best friend Miki are commanders for the lord of spider web castle, Tsuzuki. During a rebellion against Tsuzuki they successfully turn the tide of war and bring victory for Tsuzuki who then summons them to the castle. As they pass through spider

web forest they lose their way and encounter a forest spirit. Taking the form of an old lady the spirit foretells that Washizu will become master of a mansion and eventually lord of spider web castle, while Miki will become commander of Fort One but that his son will one day become lord of the castle.

As per the prophecies both men move up in rank, however amidst the peace of living in their new mansion Washizu is manipulated by his wife Asaji who fills his head with fear that Miki will tell lord Tsuzuki of the prophecy and they will die. By chance Tsuzuki visits them while on a hunting trip, as he is being guarded by a different lord's guards Asaji persuades Washizu that this is the perfect moment to kill their lord, blame it on someone else and take control of spider web castle. The previous master of the mansion had committed suicide and as Tsuzuki is staying in their bedroom at this point in the story they are staying in the room where the previous lord had died. The blood stains couldn't be washed off and as they speak the blood in the background adds to the tension of the moment. Asaji drugs the guards with a drink and then pushes on a reluctant Washizu to murder his lord. Upon returning to his room, bloody spear in hand, he slumps to the ground in shock. His wife quickly takes the spear and

places it in the hands of an unconscious guard before screaming murder.

The framed lord Noriyasu along with Tsuzuki's son Kunimaru raise up an army to fight Washizu who they both suspect of murdering Tsuzuki, however, they are unsuccessful and when they retreat to spider web castle, which at this point is under the control of Miki, they are turned away and have to flee for their lives. Miki opens the gates to Washizu under the pretence that he is bringing the murdered lord's body home, however in actual fact both know who killed Tsuzuki and who will now be lord of spider web castle.

As events, as well as his own traitorous actions, bear down on Washizu he starts to become unstable, the continued manipulation by his wife starts an internal struggle within him as she gradually turns him against his best friend Miki. He begins to be haunted by ghosts and gradually turns against all of his supporters until his castle becomes deserted apart from his own troops. When a new rebellion begins it becomes clear that he is very much alone.

It is a very well woven story which is punctuated by a stunning performance by Toshiro Mifune (三船敏郎), who plays Washizu, part of the brilliance of this movie is its timelessness as it continues to appeal to audiences across the world. §

Interview with Yuriri Naka

by Mike Sullivan

The film *All That Remains*, featuring the true story of Dr Takashi Nagai, survivor of the Nagasaki nuclear bombing, was originally scheduled for release in August 2014. After a two-year delay, the film will be released in spring 2016 and we would like to take this chance to publish this interview conducted with one of its stars back in June 2014.



When did you first know you wanted to become an actress?

For as long as I remember, I'd always wanted to become an actress. Maybe I was inspired by some theatre productions that my mother used to take me to when I was little. Also I was in a local choir where we did lots of musicals, and I was always given a pretty good role, which I enjoyed very much.

How do you prepare for an audition?

I learn my lines until I don't have to think about it. I imagine the character's life and create some episodes that may be relevant to the scenes that I am working on. Sometimes I think of someone I know that I feel is similar to the character. After I have worked through this process, I try not to think too much about it and hope that the character comes across naturally in my performance.

What was the first theatre show or film that you ever did?

It was a sight specific performance for Future Cinema and I played a Japanese schoolgirl from *Kill Bill*. My friend who also did the show recently found a photo from the production and put it up on Facebook. I was actually quite impressed by how great and perfect we looked!

Do you prefer acting on the stage or in films?

At the moment, I am probably more interested in films, though I will always have a big love for stage as my fascination for acting began with the stage. Also my

training in drama school was mainly in theatre, so I feel more at home on stage.

What is your most memorable experience so far of a role you have had?

This would probably be the small role (Japanese Announcer) I had in *Speed Racer* (2008) because it was one of the very first acting jobs that I had, and it was also a big budget Hollywood film. Sharing a make-up trailer with film stars was surreal, and the amount of people working on the set was overwhelming. I just remember thinking, 'This is definitely something that I would like to come back and do again and again and hopefully each time with a bigger role'.

This spring your next movie, *All That Remains* a story about Dr Takashi Nagai a scientific pioneer and a survivor of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, will be released. Can you tell us more about your role and about the movie?

The film is about Dr Takashi Nagai who devoted his life to helping others often at his own sacrifice. He played a huge role in rebuilding Nagasaki after the atomic bomb attack. My role, Tatsue, is a cousin of Dr Nagai's wife. She is a little beauty and a bit coquettish but later gets severely affected by the bomb both physically and emotionally.

Please tell us about your role in the movie *47 Ronin*, and how it felt to be part of a big production featuring so many Japanese actors/actresses as well as Keanu Reeves.

My role, Iku, was a widow and a leader of the survivors of the village that was attacked by Kira's army. It was great to see so many fellow Japanese actors working on such a big scale production. It was very encouraging and fun at the same time. I was also touched by the fact that people had a great respect for Japan and its culture. Even Keanu Reeves was learning Japanese!

What do you think is the biggest challenge to being a Japanese actress in the UK?

I think getting cast as an interesting and strong character rather than just filling a stereotype. Even though it's apparently getting better, there are still far fewer opportunities for East Asian actors in comparison to other ethnic minorities. I hope there will be more opportunities in the future for everyone regardless of their race and cultural background.

Your short movie last year, *Konnichiwa Brick Lane*, was really fascinating as it brought together Japan and the UK with its cast, crew, story and location. Do you think we can expect more productions like this in the future?

I hope so. The film was great because it represents London now, how multi-cultural London is and how people interact with each other in their own unique ways. People's feelings are universal especially for love and friendship, which is why I think the film can reach anyone's heart.

Have you acted in anything in Japan? What do you think are the differences between being an actress in Japan and in the UK?

I haven't worked as an actress in Japan professionally (yet!) so I can't really say much on this. However, I do feel that actors are much more appreciated and respected in UK even if you are not a movie star. People recognise that actors are needed in society, which is probably thanks to Shakespeare!

After *All That Remains* what can we expect to see you in next?

The audio drama, *Pathfinder Legends – Rise of the Runelords: The Skinsaw Murders*, in which I play Ameiko, is due out in May from Big Finish. (<http://www.bigfinish.com/releases/v/rise-of-the-runelords-the-skinsaw-murders-966>)

What are your favourite things about Japan, and your favourite things about the UK?

I love Japanese food. Not just traditional food but also modern food. Every time I go back to Japan, I am busy eating as much Japanese food as possible! Though recently there are more Japanese restaurants in London that serve more than just sushi, which I am very excited about. I especially appreciate ramen restaurants as ramen is one of my favourite foods and hard to cook at home.

I like UK's love for traditions and old things, people are good at blending old with new to make something unique. I love looking at super modern glass buildings right next to a huge stone classically ornate building next to a Tudor building with a wonky roof. Pubs are also great. They are a perfect example of tradition that still works in modern life. They make socialising so easy and very casual. You don't need to book a table, just go in, grab a seat and get your drink. It's just brilliant! **S**