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Daphne Lange Rosenzweig

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JAPANESE CERAMICS AT THE HENRY B. PLANT MUSEUM

By DR. DAPHNE LANGE ROSENZWEIG



VISITING ON THE VERANDA OF THE TAMPA BAY

This rare Rafael Tuck & Sons "Oilette " post card, issued early this century shows guests enjoying the unique veranda at the Tampa Bay Hotel. Caption on back reads: "The Veranda of the Tampa Bay Hotel is like a bit of old Granada. The graceful pillars of the great porch support picturesque Moorish arches. Swinging in a hammock in a corner of this quaint veranda, with half-closed eyes, one can imagine the place Old Spain. " Si!

-Photo from the HAMPTON DUNN COLLECTION

THE SETTING

The Henry B. Plant Museum collections abound in examples of Japanese and Chinese furniture, ceramics, and metal

objects. The Japanese pieces are datable to the Meiji Era, 1868-1912 a.d.



**MRS. MARGARET PLANT IN HER OFFICE, ROOM 149,
IN THE TAMPA BAY HOTEL, MARCH 1899.**

-Photo Courtesy The Henry B. Plant Museum

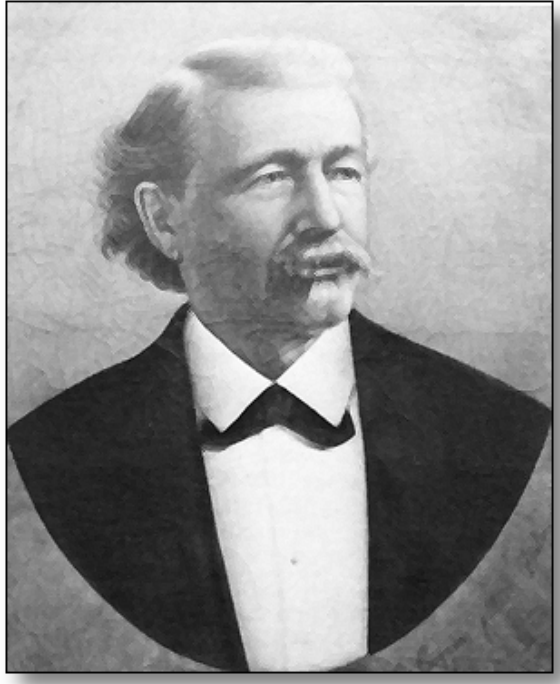
During this interesting period, many fundamental concepts of Western life were introduced into Japan at the behest of the modern-minded Meiji Emperor and his aides. These concepts affected such diverse aspects of national life as education, architecture, legislative systems, even dance forms and dress styles, food, and the manner in which food was served.¹

The aesthetic principles and prejudices of Western art, as introduced by Italian art professors to art school students in Tokyo, became the standard by which art would be judged. The Western distinctions between fine arts and decorative arts (or crafts) were

accepted by the Japanese art world, as was the concept of a museum to house the arts.²

A MAJOR IMPACT

While the West was directly affecting Japanese life, including its art, Japan was also having a major impact on Western life and art. The subject matter and designs associated with Japanese art appeared repeatedly in later 19th century European and American art, due in large part to the movement called "Japonisme" and to the Post-Impressionist artists. Kimonos and fans adorned famous beauties and aesthetes of



HENRY BRADLEY PLANT

This portrait hangs in the Henry B. Plant Museum at the University of Tampa.

-Photo from the HAMPTON DUNN COLLECTION

the period; their walls were hung with Japanese prints imported on a lavish scale.³

The dealer Siegfried Bing, working in Paris from the 1870s through the 1890s, built up a vast collection of Japanese art for sale to the avid Paris public; his chief source was his brother-in-law, the German consul in Tokyo. He himself spent one year in Japan, and said "I ... let it be known everywhere that a wild man had come ashore to buy up everything". Bing also published *Le Japon artistique*, 1888-1890, which introduced the styles and subjects of Japanese art to a wide audience. Van Gogh, Degas, Lautrec and Mary Cassatt were among his customers, and that they were particularly enchanted by the thousands of Ukiyo-e prints he stocked in his shop.⁴

The widespread knowledge of things Japanese was enhanced by the many

international expositions held in America and Europe during the latter half of the 19th century. Japan participated with great success in many of these, and the art products offered by the Japanese participants made their way into many sympathetic Western collections.⁵

THE PLANTS' PURCHASES

From 1873-1910, Japan participated in at least 25 foreign expositions. The 1873 Vienna exposition revived Japan's moribund metal craft industry, and led to metal workers becoming government sponsored. A highly successful section of the 1885 Nuremberg Metal Work Exposition was the exhibit of 492 works by 99 Japanese metal artists.

Of the extant Oriental art purchases of the Plants, it is the Japanese ceramics which are most striking and interesting. It might be noted that ceramics for export purposes became an extremely important part of the Japanese ceramic industry in the latter half of the 19th century. At the same Vienna Exposition of 1873 mentioned previously, Japanese ceramics achieved great success. Western markets for Japanese ceramics mushroomed. Between 1872-81, Japanese production increased 100 times. Exports rose from 12% to 59% of the total ceramics produced in Japan during this period.

Because of the success of the overseas expositions, the Japanese government sponsored a number of domestic industrial expositions which established new sources of support for artists. Since it was the more exuberantly colored and outsized works highly decorated with views of an idealized Japan which sold in the international expositions (as opposed to simple Japanese-taste items), it was this mood of



SOCIALIZING AT THE TAMPA BAY HOTEL

The caption on this early post card, probably in the 1920s, says of the Tea Garden and Jewel Box in Plant Park: "During the warm days of summer and winter this is an excellent place to spend an afternoon and evening. It is beautifully decorated and entirely surrounded with masses of natural foliage."

-Photo from the HAMPTON DUNN COLLECTION

'romantic exoticism' (typical of the Japonisme movement) which prevailed in contemporary Japanese ceramic decorating workshops.

PLANTS IN JAPAN

When searching for furnishings for their new hotel, Henry Plant and Mrs. Plant visited Japan; although there are no known extant purchase slips from their visit, the Plants probably visited the large warehouses in Yokohama.⁶ The Meiji-era works in the present museum represent the typical offerings of such warehouses, works which were produced to suit contemporary (and let us not forget, Victorian) Western taste. These pieces are brightly decorated with

charming motifs, executed on a lavish scale. The ceramics and metal pieces often come in matched pairs. There are few unique items; even in the current Plant Museum collections, which undoubtedly represent only a fraction of the total collection of Oriental objects found in the original Tampa Bay Hotel, many of the objects appear in duplicate, triplicate or even larger matched sets.

THE BACKGROUND OF IMARI AND SATSUMA CERAMICS

From as early as the eighth century a.d., many Japanese ceramic workshops routinely turned to Chinese ceramics for their inspiration. Both designs and color palettes

were borrowed from the mainland, the Chinese celadon, blue and white, and polychrome enamel wares proving the most popular in Japan.

Japanese-produced blue and whites (of particular interest to us because of the Plant Museum's collection) are broadly termed 'sometsume' which means 'dyed' or 'printed'. The cobalt blue is applied directly to the biscuit, then the work is glazed and fired. The first extensive use of blue and white decor came in the early 1600's, at Arita kilns in ancient Hizen Province [Saga Prefecture]. Such kilns as Kirado, Imari, Nabeshima, Arita, etc. produced wares of this variety.⁷

Prior to the early 1600s, the Japanese were applying the typical Chinese porcelain designs to the finest material available to them, which was a stoneware clay. It is traditionally stated that a source of the desirable porcelain clay (available in quantity in China from a relatively early period on), was first discovered in Japan in the year 1616 a.d. by an immigrant Korean potter in Kyushu. Among the highly desirable qualities of porcelain are that it may be high-fired and thin-walled, due to the great tensile strength of the clay recipe; it rings when struck; and it may be translucent. Once a Japanese source of porcelain was discovered and became available, the Chinese-style designs with which potters had been working were applied to the new porcelains.⁸

With the exception of Kutani on Honshu, the leading manufacturers of porcelain were located on Arita on the island of Kyushu, in an area 15 miles square. Most pieces were produced in the numerous small factories, which typically employed fewer than 10 people. Similar wares were produced by various kilns independently, and for ease in designating the variety of wares with similar

appearance, they all came to be termed 'Imari' after the seaport from which these wares were shipped to Honshu.

IMARI

'Imari' is the most recognized name in the West for Japanese porcelain; it has become a generic name applied to Arita porcelain made for domestic use or export. There were, however, other distinct types of Arita porcelains, such as Kakiemon and Nabeshima.

The name 'Imari' is misleading in yet another way. 'Imari' is, certainly, the name of a seaport from which Arita wares (Hizen area) were exported, but the wares shipped from Imari port were the wares exported to Honshu for Japanese use. The export wares, with which we in the West are most familiar and which we call 'Imari' were really shipped from Nagasaki, not Imari. Their most reasonably correct designation is 'Arita' wares.

'Ko-Imari' is, literally, 'old Imari', and dates as early as the beginning of the 17th century. It is technically naive, the bodies laden with black dots (resulting from iron impurities in the clay), and often warped in the kiln because the clay was not highly refined. Its clear glazes also were unrefined, and tend to be greenish or yellowish, with a crackle. It is possible to discern fingernail marks in the glaze. Chinese motifs dominate the rather simply decorated works.

SECRETS OUT

About 1643 a.d., an Arita potter learned the secrets of overglaze enamel decoration from refugee Chinese ceramicists who had

established their new home at Nagasaki. Within the era 1650-60 a.d., a red-painting quarter was established in Arita to house artists specializing in enamelling. At first, they painted without preliminary outline.

After mid-century, that is, in the post-1650 period, casual roughness was no longer highly characteristic of the production. Bodies become more uniform, glazes clearer, shapes more stable, profiles crisp, and the foot clean. The florescence of Ko-Imari came in the period from 1650 to 1750 a.d. To give an idea of the quantities produced and sold, it is said that in 1664, one Dutch ship carried 45,000 Imari pieces to Holland. These works were executed in the brocade or 'nishiki-e' style, combining Chinese and Japanese elements.

Following the famous Genroku period, 1688-1703, during which Ko-Imari as well as many other arts achieved their finest moments, there is a definite switch to more purely Japanese motifs, often based on contemporary book illustration. Charming drawings of Dutch ships and Europeans also are featured as designs.

MEIJI RESTORATION

The Meiji Restoration began in the year 1868 a.d. The Meiji Emperor and his household moved from Kyoto to Edo, renaming Edo "Tokyo" or "Eastern Capital". Arita kilns continued their active role in export and domestic life. 'Nagasaki wares' and wares in European shapes decorated in generally poor quality of the typical Imari palette of overglaze reds and golds were routinely exported.

A German chemist named Dr. Gottfried Wagner came to the Arita area in 1870 and wrought an enormous change, a change not necessarily for the better in terms of

aesthetic sensibility, but revolutionary in terms of production techniques. He introduced modern Western factory techniques, converted the traditional wood-burning kilns to coal, and did away with the traditional clay molds, replacing them with plastic. Wagner also was responsible for the introduction of European enamel colors and glaze methods. All of these new methods led to the commercialization of the product, easily reproducible effects, and - it is said - contempt of the Japanese potters for foreign taste.⁹

Among the characteristics of Meiji-era Imari are its bold and elaborately organized decor, its palette of underglaze blue combined with overglaze enamels, and the touches of gold added to define blue areas which often are blurred.

SATSUMA

Satsuma, an historically important old area in Kyushu, is now modern Kagoshima Prefecture. The kilns were established by Korean potters in the late 16th century, the Lord of Satsuma, on a raid of Korea - a land long recognized in Asia for its outstanding ceramics - having brought back 22 potter families from that country.¹⁰ The potters built a kiln Korean-style, that is, a vault-shape single structure set up against a slope, running 150-200 feet long. This style kiln is fuel-efficient, and also provides a range of kiln atmospheres for wares.

The Korean potter families, incidentally, were kept separate from the local Japanese population, and it was not until the Meiji Restoration that a change in the social pattern was allowed by the government.

Satsuma ware is pottery, not porcelain, although it is sometimes called 'se mi-p orce lain', one of a series of ambiguous words used by Western authors to describe the type of high-fired stoneware typical of many major ceramic types of Asia.

'Old Satsuma' ware, or 'Ko Satsuma', was stoneware covered by a thick dark glaze, and was made for the tea ceremony. However, the name 'Satsuma' has become synonymous with finely crackled, cream-colored faience.

SURFACE PICTORIAL

Satsuma produced after 1787 was ornamented with varying colored enamels and gold, in the 'brocade' or 'nishiki' style; the pieces are enriched further by their thin glaze and network of crackles. The period 1787-1800 saw the introduction of the type of decor with which we are most familiar. About 1850 a.d., human figures were incorporated and the surface became very pictorial. By 1871, 'Satsuma' was produced in many localities in Japan, so that the term 'Satsuma', like 'Imari', can be misleading. Many late 19th-early 20th century wares are properly identified "Satsuma-style" rather than "Satsuma".

From records of the Philadelphia Exposition, it is known that in 1880 there were over 1,450 potters producing so-called 'Satsuma' ware, much of it for foreign consumption. Indeed, in 1880, a massive order for 100,000 cups and saucers came in from the West, with the directive "Put in all the red and green you can". It is said that this order gave rise to contempt of the potters for foreign taste, and that boys of ten were assigned to slap on the designs, since the foreigners would not know the difference between high-quality and puerile decor. Wares of the Meiji period were generally intricately

patterned and colorfully painted, with splashes of gold and raised designs.

Events of World War I halted production of much European hard-paste porcelain, and the supply of European-manufactured porcelains on hand in America dwindled. The Japanese market responded to the demand for traditional Western-taste porcelains, and during the period 1914-18 a.d., Japanese porcelain, mostly in European style, was exported in large quantities to the United States. From 1918 to 1928 a.d., undecorated blanks were exported from Japan to America, most of these then being 'home decorated' (except for one commercial Pickard China pattern called 'Bouquet Satsuma'). Decoration on the blanks generally follows Art Nouveau and Art Deco styles, using black outlines with gold enamel; these wares are considered highly collectible.¹¹

CONCLUSION

The Henry Plant Museum is very much a product of Victorian, Western taste, with its predilection for the exotic - not only for Japanese and Chinese styles, but those of Moorish Spain and India as well. The Chinese and Japanese works in the Museum functioned as part of the overall decor of the Tampa Bay Hotel. Scale, palette, and usefulness were all considerations; small, delicately-hued objects would be lost in the vast halls of the Hotel, and therefore the Plants chose boldly scaled and painted works. They were very practical in their selection, as well as typically "Victorian" in their taste.

FOOTNOTES

¹ The Museum of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg owns a set of Meiji-era triptychs which depict the new

mores' of late 19th century Japanese society. Several of these prints, and others from a large private collection are illustrated in a 1986 Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition catalogue entitled *The World of Meiji Prints: Impressions of a New Civilization* by Julia Meech-Pekarik.

² There is a vast literature which treats the introduction of Western experts and Western art Meiji Japan. For an overview of this aspect of Meiji Life, see the series *Japanese Culture in the Meiji 'Era* published in the 1950's in Tokyo, in English; or Frederick Baekeland's exhibition catalogue *Imperial Japan: The Art of the Meiji Era (1868-1912)* [Ithaca: Cornell University, 1980].

³ See Elisa Evett's recently-published *The Critical Reception of Japanese Art in Late Nineteenth Century Europe* [Ann Arbor: UMI Press, Series Number 36].

⁴ See Julia Meech-Pekarik, "Early Collectors of Japanese Prints and The Metropolitan Museum of Art," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 17, pp. 93-188, from which I have just quoted; and Yamada Chisaboroh, *Dialogue in Art: Japan and the West* [Tokyo, 1976].

⁵ Iriye, Akira, *Mutual Images* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

⁶ The "Yokohama Port and Warehouse" prints are a very appealing sub-category in the field of Japanese prints. Several American Museums, including Philadelphia, Honolulu, and the University of Oregon, have major collections of this type of print.

⁷ For information, see T. Volker, *The Japanese Porcelain Trade of the Dutch East India Company after 1683* [Leiden: 1959]; and Nagatake Takeshi, *Imari, "Famous Ceramics of Japan series #6* [Tokyo, and New York: Harper and Row, 1982].

⁸ A summer, 1986 Japan House (Japan Society, New York) exhibition titled *Porcelains of the Burghley Collection* features an unprecedented discovery of documented early Japanese porcelain lodged for centuries in an English country house. There is an extensive catalogue accompanying this exhibition, with the latest information about early Japanese porcelains.

⁹ Irene Stiitt, *Japanese Ceramics of the Last 100 Years* [New York, 1974], p. 12 1.

¹⁰ Daimyos, the powerful territorial lords, were active patrons of the arts in the Momoyama and Edo periods. For political reasons, they built new castles and palaces, and commissioned numerous artists to complete the decor of these buildings. The daimyos of Satsuma traditionally sponsored ceramic workshops and took a keen personal interest in the products turned out by their potters. See L. Ferenczy, "The Patronage of Decorative Arts in the Momoyama and Tokugawa Period", in William Watson, ed., *Artistic Personality and Decorative Style in Japanese Art* [London: University of London, Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, *Colloquies on Art and Archeology of Asia* #6, 1976].

¹¹ Sandra Andacht, "Satsuma Decorated Blanks", *Hobbles* [Sept., 1984], pp. 34-38.