

Art and architecture: japanese art research paper

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History and culture have always been going hand in hand creating rich material for the unique art. A three thousand year old Japanese history of development gave its birth to various types of arts, starting from ancient pottery, sculpture, painting and carving and ending with contemporary Japanese cartoons, anime and manga, which gained millions of admirers. But let's start if not from the very beginning, but at least from the first distinctly outlined period in the history of Japanese art - the Muromachi period (1392-1573).

The beginning of the art era is marked by the Ashikaga family having occupied the position of shogun, one of the highest positions in the governmental system after the Emperor. Despite having stretched their power for nearly 200 years, the Ashikaga family did not have the opportunity to experience it in full extent. In the second half of the 15th century a war, known as the Age of the Country at war, burst out, and the art practically had been developing in the conditions of constant battles. However, the upheaval in social and political life did not prevent this age to become an innovative age. The epoch witnessed the formation of the first urban establishments, the rudiments of commercial and life and transportation systems.

The resumed contacts with China resulted in the enrichment of Japanese conscience. The ideas of Zen-Buddhism deeply penetrated in the life of different social classes, especially the military one. Enriched culture and education changed the way of thinking. At Muromachi period the basic principles of the tea ceremony were developed. The tea ceremony, also known as chanoyu is considered to be the whole art, which comprised and

still comprises the features of garden design, special arrangement of flowers, architectural styles, painting and calligraphy. Besides, the sophisticated manner of preparing and servicing food made the ceremony completed. The enthusiastic patrons, who guided the process, assisted to the development of dramatic and literal art. The linked-verse poetry called renga, and dance-drama, with slow movements, masked performances, and actors in elaborately adorned costumes were an imprescriptible part of the ceremony (Heilbronn timeline of art history).

Time of no particular bright creations after the Muromachi period ended with the rise and development of Art of the Edo period (1615-1868). The Tokugawa descendants gained a firm control over the country in 1603 and having brought peace and stability to the country, they became the initiators of the huge cultural rise to Japanese people. The Tokugawa were the last shoguns, who survived till 1867, and then the shogunate came to its downfall, mainly because of the Western influences carried through the trading with foreign countries.

The early Edo painting was represented by the Rimpa school, which bore the traces of the Tokugawa influences. ' Many of the techniques used by Tokugawa shoguns were borrowed from the Neo-Confucian ideas, developed in China and were newly current in Japan' (Stephen Adiss) Later the most remarkable style was created by Sotatsu, which comprised the decorative style and the motifs from the world of nature. The style was amplified with the individual manner of creation of the painter Korin.

The architecture of Edo period is represented by such buildings as Katsura Detached Palace and a circuit style Japanese garden, which both had

contained the elements of classic Japanese architecture and some innovative solutions.

The sculpture at that period was not considered to be the best way to express one's ideas and personality, and its use was popular only among Buddhist monks, restricted to the religious monuments.

Visual arts gave rise to the so-called woodblock prints, which found their popularity in the Western culture. Woodblock prints are also known as ukiyoe paintings. This technique began its development in the late 17th century and spread fast throughout the whole Japan. The painters created their masterpieces, reflecting all social classes, starting from the daily situations and ending with the stories about lives of famous people. Hiroshige - an outstanding painter of the 19th century drew attention to the beauty of landscapes. The emphasis was put on distinct outlines and odd shapes. His works had a turned out to have a great impact on the Western famous artists like Vincent van Gogh and Edgar Degas.

Bunjinga was another contemporary school, coexisting with Ukiyo-e. The paintings were based on the ideas of Chinese craftsmen. Though the Bunjin artists were oriented to the Chinese culture, they depicted the scenes from life of the Tokugawa shogunate. (Nicolas Pioch).

In spite of leading a rather secluded life throughout the history of development, Japan was yet open to the new tendencies, coming from the Western world, on the one hand and China on the other. So today's Japanese contemporary art comprises the features of various cultures, but at the same time keeps its authentic view. New architectural forms, weird sculptures, futuristic pictures, manga pictures, anime films this is how modern Japanese

art is expressed. Some artists stick to the classical, traditional forms, others try to create something multicultural and thus unique.

The most outstanding creator of the modern period is considered to be Takashi Murakami. ' Best known for his cartoon-like style ' superflat' Murakami produces works in a variety of media, creating painting and sculpture that both embody and critique contemporary Japanese pop culture. His style is heavily influenced by anime (animation) and manga (comics) and is characterized by the use of flat areas of solid colour and thick, black outline' (Gabriel Ritter). He creates his works combining high and low culture, making them appealing to the diverse audiences. Born in 1962, Murakami grew up in the USA, because his father worked in a naval base. It was a time of cultural prominence, of developing of new styles, especially reflected in music. One may think that due to such strong influence of American culture, Murakami's works may seem to be deprived the unique traditional Japanese element. However, it is a deep delusion. Murakami was brought up in a family, where the roots of his ancestors were never forgotten. His mother kept repeating the young boy, that the only reason he was alive is that the bomb had not fallen at the native city of his mother. The artist is aware of two things, and these things rise somehow or another in his every work. These are his own heritage and the World War II. He believes that ' Japan's obsession with fantasy worlds has to do with Japan's sense of incompetence due to their military humiliation in World War II and the rise of female figures in situations of power in corporations' (Infantile capitalism; Japanese contemporary art). In other words, the artist explores the social and anthropological origins of his culture, by following the modern Japanese

techniques bearing a shade of American pop culture. As he once said: ' I express hopelessness' (Ritter).

Art is a social phenomenon and was never hidden. In all cultures the policy is directed to integration of art into all spheres of the social life, and two mentioned cultures are not an exception. Such specific characteristics as asymmetrical balance, bright outlines and vivid colours are also in common. Japanese and western cultures share the permanence of ideas, and both have the tendency to mix various styles and techniques. Nevertheless, the reasons mentioned above promoted the strong difference in the expressing of such important matters like humanity, which in Japanese culture is humiliated, and which is subordinate to the nature, whereas in Western culture the power of humanity is declared – nature is subdued to the human being, and it is only in his power to change something. The whole Japanese art is not centered on a person, is not anthropocentric, when Western culture developed the opposite ideas. And, finally, the whole Japanese art strives for simplicity of forms, whereas western culture has the tendency to constant complexity.

Japanese art is reflection of the history of the whole nation, and being able to keep its authentic features, is the thing that makes it unique. The process of globalization is directed to eliminate the distinction between cultures, but it would never be able to destroy originality.

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