

## Material Japonisme in American Art, 1876–1925

### ABSTRACT

Much has been written about *Japonisme* in America and Europe in terms of aesthetics, but comparatively little has been written about the use of actual Japanese materials by Western artists. The author examines works on paper by artists such as Arthur Wesley Dow, Arthur B. Davies, Bertha Lum, and John La Farge who all used Japanese materials such as papers, brushes, and media. Several different avenues of research are brought together, including analytical research on the materials themselves (as examined or sampled from the works on paper or historical samples), an examination of artists' techniques and their attitudes toward the use of these materials, and a discussion of the history and availability of Japanese art supplies to American artists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

### JAPONISME AND THE "JAPAN CRAZE": ARTS AND CRAFTS AND COMMERCE

For all that has been written about the influence of Japanese art on Western artists, material concerns have largely been overlooked in discussions of the era of *Japonisme* in America, and *Japonisme* tends to be observed as a singly aesthetic or stylistic concept. In examining the materials that artists actually used, and the way that these materials were obtained, marketed, and handled we will arrive a better picture what Japanese art meant to Americans and why it was so influential around the turn of the twentieth century.

The phenomenon of American *Japonisme* was as much a movement of mass-consumption of everyday objects as it was one of artistic influence within the realm of fine art. At the same time, the rise of *Japonisme* in American art largely complemented the growth of the Arts and Crafts movement of the 1890s and first decade of the 1900s, with its emphasis on the honesty of simple, natural materials and quality of

craftsmanship in all types of objects. One might suppose that these two fetishized roles of Japanese goods, that of the status item for mass-consumption and that of a symbol of purity and high quality, were at odds with each other, and particularly towards the waning stages of "the Japan Craze," as the phenomenon was sometimes called, they were indeed.

Although Japan was opened to foreign trade in 1854, it was not until the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876 that the arts of Japan truly captured the attention of the American public, long after Europeans had begun to embrace and emulate Japanese culture. The Exhibition showcased a Japanese-style "dwelling" and a bazaar, which presented and sold the types of Japanese wares that would soon become necessities in middle-class homes as displays of cultural refinement. Americans' desire for the kinds of goods presented at the Centennial, many made specifically with an American market in mind, would soon be fanned into a full-fledged "craze" through the growing influence of women's magazines filled with advice on homemaking for the aspirational middle-class wife. Although this study's main focus is on the cultural and overseas-trade centers of New York and Boston, mail-order catalogs made the acquisition of the requisite Japanese fans and umbrellas available across the country.

At the same time, Japanese works on paper were capturing the attention of the highest cultural influencers and most well-known artists. In the years following the Centennial, collectors such as Edward Sylvester Morse, William Sturgis Bigelow, and Ernest Fenollosa began traveling to Japan and amassing great collections of pottery, paintings, and woodblock prints. Woodblock prints were popular in America in part because they were quite accessible through print dealers as well as reproductions in publications like Sigfried Bing's *Artistic Japan*.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the concept of an art for the masses that was beautifully and thoughtfully designed resonated with the ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement. As we will see, it was the woodblock print that engendered the association in the American mind between Japan and high color, which had implications for the types of art supplies sold at this time.

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## PURVEYORS OF JAPANESE ARTISTS' SUPPLIES

While Japanese art supplies may have been available through American retailers, at least sporadically, from 1854 on, it was not until the late nineteenth century that interest in Japanese art warranted a steady supply in America. Papers, brushes, and inks were likely to be found in general Japanese-goods stores, as well as through general artist supply catalogs. Often, catalog entries for alleged Japanese products are very vague, such as an entry for "Japan ink" from the 1878 F. W. Devoe & Co. mail-order catalog. The composition or origin of said ink is unknown, but clearly its association with Japan had some perceived benefit to the supplier whether or not the item was authentic. The majority of the examples of Japanese art supplies that can be found in trade catalogs are from the first two decades of the twentieth century, such as a "Japanese watercolor brush" from the 1914 F.W. Devoe & Co. catalog. It seems likely that American artists who used Japanese products before around 1885 purchased them personally in Japan or in Europe.

Japanese general-goods stores, also called Japanese novelty stores or fancy-goods stores, often stocked an assortment of kakemonos, woodblock prints, and other art objects in addition to household goods. Many of these stores were founded by native Japanese and Chinese entrepreneurs, especially after immigration from Japan to the U.S. was legalized by the Japanese government in 1885. First Japan Manufacturing and Trading Company proprietor Hiromichi Shugio was a distinguished Japanese aristocrat, a prominent historian of Japanese art, print collector, and organizer of New York's influential first exhibition of Japanese ukiyo-e at the Grolier Club in 1889. His influence among prominent New Yorkers served to increase appreciation for Japanese art, which in turn, of course, benefited his business.


Another Japanese entrepreneur, E. T. Shima, advertised a variety of Japanese products sold in his New York store, including Japanese prints, pottery, and art supplies including brushes, ink sticks, ink stones, watercolors, woodblock tools, drawing and design books, and drawing paper (fig. 1). Like many contemporary art supply vendors, Shima geared his marketing largely towards schools, advertising in magazines like *School Arts*, and stressing the suitability of his products for use in the classroom.

In addition to Japanese novelty stores, there were companies who imported Japanese art and craft supplies exclusively, and often these stores had a wider selection of materials. One such concern was the Japan Paper Company, which was established in New York in 1901 and eventually became the now-defunct retailer Andrews/Nelson/Whitehead. I examined a large collection of their sample books dated around 1907, which are in the library collection of the Brooklyn Museum. The accompanying literature claims that the papers would be advantageous for use in advertising, musing that "It

**MANY SUPERVISORS SELECT**

**Japanese Prints for Schoolroom Decoration**

**BEST IN COLOR  
AND QUALITY**



**REASONABLE  
IN PRICE**

Prints especially adapted for Schoolroom Decoration or for exhibition purposes will be sent on approval to responsible parties who furnish references or state position and their special interest.

**BOOKS AND STUDIES**

Japanese Crest Books . . . \$0.40, \$0.75	Flower Studies, Vols. 1 and 2, 100 subjects, \$2.50
Flower Studies, Vol. 1, 50 subjects . . . \$1.50	Bird Studies, 75c., \$1.00, \$1.25, \$1.50, \$1.75, \$2.00

**FOR KINDERGARTEN AND PRIMARY TEACHERS**

48 Studies in Brush Work. 4 Volumes . . . . .	Per Set \$1.25
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Many other Design Books, Flower Studies, Bird Studies, etc., in color, and black and white.

**OTHER JAPANESE SPECIALTIES**

Color Prints, Pottery Models, Stencils, Stencil Outfits, Stencil Paper, Brushes, Ink Sticks, Ink Stones, Drawing Paper, Fine Tracing Paper, Towels, Table Cloths, etc.

**BOOKS**—Beside these standard publications we have bought a large quantity of Design Books from a friend who has failed in business. On this lot we will make a great reduction sale of about one-half to one-third of the regular prices. They are excellent for color studies.

Try Japanese Brushes and Papers in your schoolroom. They are of good quality and give good results.

Further particulars will be explained fully on request

**E. T. SHIMA**

IMPORTER OF JAPANESE ARTS  
20 EAST 33D STREET NEW YORK CITY

Fig. 1. Advertisement for E.T. Shima, from *School Arts Magazine*, November, 1914, p. xii

is important that the high class commodity be advertised in a high class, distinctive manner." At this time Japanese paper was also used for printing deluxe editions of publications.

The leader in the business of importing Japanese artists' supplies was undoubtedly Bunkio Matsuki, whose store in Boston and mail-order catalog offered a wide selection of items such as brushes of various types, papers, ink sticks, patterns and stencils, design books, and silks. Matsuki's early employer, Almy's Department Store in Salem, Massachusetts, touted his personal supervision of the Japanese department as a guarantee of the products' quality and authenticity, stating in 1891, "The national pride is strong in him and there is no sturdier enemy of the Chinese-imitated Japanese wares which flood the market." In 1897, Matsuki's reputation allowed him to open his own store, ensuring customers in his catalog that:

every article offered for sale in my store is carefully selected by myself in Japan, and I am the only dealer in art objects from the Far East in Boston who makes an annual trip to Japan at great expense to select my own goods, not having confidence in anyone to select goods for me.

In his 1904 catalog (fig. 2) Matsuki offered explanations for how to properly use the materials, and also made suggestions for which items should be used in schools. He also published and sold instructional and design books such as a study book of Japanese brush motifs, *First lessons in free-hand ink drawing (as used in Japanese schools)*. This book of lithographs on Japanese paper appears to have been made in Japan circa 1900–1910, with Japanese descriptions of the subject on each page. Presumably, Matsuki simply adapted a pre-existing book used in Japanese schools with his own title page for Americans.

Matsuki also published a magazine about Japanese art called *Lotus*, which was contributed to by members of

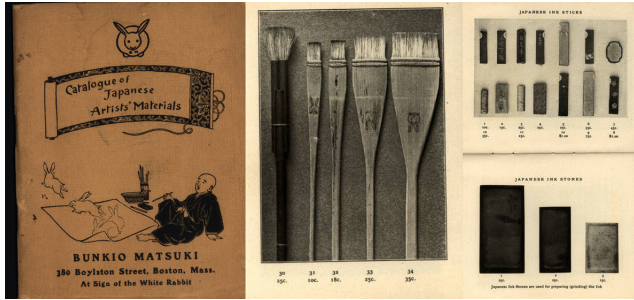


Fig. 2. Cover of catalog, Bunkio Matsuki, c. 1904, and catalog pages depicting hake brushes (stamped with Matsuki's logo), ink sticks, and ink stones

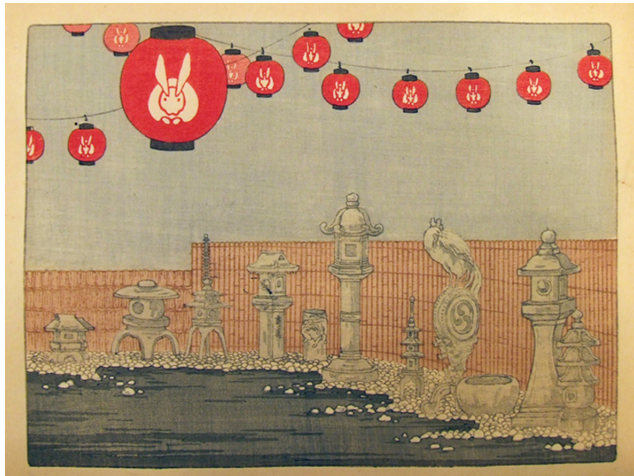


Fig. 3. Advertisement for Bunkio Matsuki, Japanese Fine Arts, c. 1904. Color woodblock print



Fig. 4. Bertha Lum, *Bamboo Road*, 1913. Color woodblock on Japanese paper. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1924 (24.58.15). © The Metropolitan Museum of Art

the Boston circle of *Japonisme*-enthusiasts, such as Ernest Fenollosa, curator of Oriental Art at the Boston MFA, and Matsuki himself. Some of the articles, such as a 1903 piece about Japanese stone garden sculptures, were directly related to imported items sold in his store. In this woodblock-printed advertisement, small stone monuments are displayed exactly as in the photographs illustrating Matsuki's article (fig. 3), and one can also see an example of a modern business technique that Matsuki mastered: the logo, in his case that of the white rabbit. For Matsuki and many other Japanese entrepreneurs, commerce, society, and fine art existed within the same sphere.

#### ARTISTS' EDUCATION IN JAPAN AND AT HOME

By the turn of the century, a trip to Japan was becoming *de rigueur* for a class of Americans, particularly those with an interest in Japanese culture. John La Farge made his own trip to Japan in 1886, documented in the travel journal *An Artist's Letters from Japan*; he may have bought some supplies then, but he had also been using Japanese papers and brushes at home before that point, and it has not been documented whether he obtained them in the United States or in Europe.

Woodblock artist Bertha Lum traveled to Japan on her honeymoon in 1903, and after unsuccessfully searching for someone to teach her about the technique, on the last day of her trip she finally found a store that sold woodblock carving tools. Lum recounted to *Vogue* magazine in 1914 that on that occasion she bought thirteen tools for twenty dollars, only to find out later that she had overpaid for inferior tools and on her next trip bought fifty of the best tools for five dollars. Clearly there was a market for unsuspecting Westerners who were willing to pay exorbitant prices for "genuine" Japanese artists' supplies. During her next trip to Japan in 1907, Lum studied for fourteen weeks, first in the studio of a block cutter and then in a printer's workshop, where she gained enough mastery of the process to continue printmaking at home in Minneapolis (fig. 4). For Lum, her first naïve foray into the reclusive *mileu* of Japanese printmaking was taken as a kind of initiation, an obstacle which, when overcome, contributed to the impression of her authenticity as a practitioner of this traditional craft.

While Lum had the opportunity to gain training in Japan, artists such as Arthur Wesley Dow (fig. 5), who learned to print using Japanese materials and techniques in the United States, were likely indebted to the 1892 published report from the U.S. National Museum detailing the traditional methods of woodblock printing as described by T. Tokuno, a Japanese government official. Dow did study printmaking in Japan in 1905, but this was after he had already been using the technique for over a decade. For artists who were not able to study Japanese art in Japan, reports such as this in the service of cul-





Fig. 5. Arthur Wesley Dow, *Above the Old Bridge, Ipswich*, c. 1893–1895, part of the series *Along the Ipswich River*. Color woodblock print on Japanese paper. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs W. L. Putnam, 1942 (42.54.2). © The Metropolitan Museum of Art

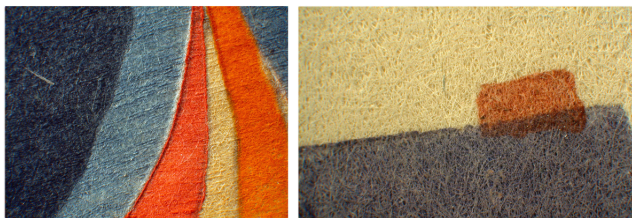


Fig. 6. Photomicrograph of Bertha Lum, *Bamboo Road* (left). Photomicrograph of Arthur Wesley Dow, *Above the Old Bridge, Ipswich* (right)

tural and anthropological education helped encourage the use of traditional materials.

#### VARIATIONS ON JAPANESE TECHNIQUE

Despite the affinities that the Arts and Crafts viewpoint had with Japanese art, the two were not always compatible. Bertha Lum chose the traditional Japanese division of labor between designer and printer over the Arts and Crafts anti-industrial ideal of the hand of the artist being present at every stage of production. In her memoirs, Lum's daughter recounted how she and her mother supervised their four Japanese printers all day long in the studio.

Dow, however, wholeheartedly embraced the Arts and Crafts ethos, and mitigated the laborious process of carving and printing himself by using small blocks of pine wood (switching later to a harder maple) measuring only around seven by four inches. Lum's employment of presumably experienced printers resulted in a striking difference in appearance between her prints and Dow's (fig. 6). While both printers employed the technique of hand printing, where the Japanese *baren* is rubbed over the paper applied to the inked block, Lum's printers used much greater pressure (and possibly a more dampened paper) and imparted the texture of the wood onto the printed ink. This high level of technique produces a beautiful textural contrast between the printed areas and the fluffy reserve, resulting in an almost sculptural effect. In Dow's *Ipswich Series* prints, there is almost no difference in the surface of printed areas versus reserve areas, and the focus is more on layered planes of transparent color.

#### THE AVAILABILITY AND VARIETY OF JAPANESE ARTISTS' MATERIALS: PAPER

The material that was probably most widely used with the most variety of types available was paper. There was an immense amount of variation in Japanese papers from this time with respect to fiber composition, color, and texture, both due to the use of modern Western methods of production, and one supposes, a demand for colorful and decorative papers from the American market.

Before continuing, the reader should be aware of the extreme confusion that can be encountered regarding nomenclature of papers from Asia from this period. While papers from Japan are relatively consistently named (as opposed to the term "Japan paper" which is occasionally used for a simulacrum of Japanese papers), other names are sometimes used interchangeably, even by the native cultures themselves. Take for example this explanation from the Japanese delegation's *Official Guide to the Japanese Section at the Philadelphia Centennial* on page 84: "The paper called *Chikushi*, notwithstanding that the translation of this word is bamboo paper, is not made of bamboo; the name only has been borrowed from China."

When dealing with Asian papers, especially from this time of early industry, one must consider whether the name of the paper is descriptive of the region that it is from, its appearance, composition or handling properties, or none of the above.

Decades earlier than many artists, John la Farge regularly used white Japanese paper for finished drawings and sketches dating from the 1860s up until his death in 1910. He used thin translucent Japanese tissue as tracing paper in his many window designs in which he constantly re-used photographs of models. La Farge's drawings with charcoal on thicker, soft and wooly Japanese paper took advantage of the ability of the long-fibered soft surface to hold the charcoal to create deep shadows with rich blacks, such as in his sketch of a horse's head (fig. 7). Examination under magnification shows the charcoal particles deep in the interstices of the paper sur-

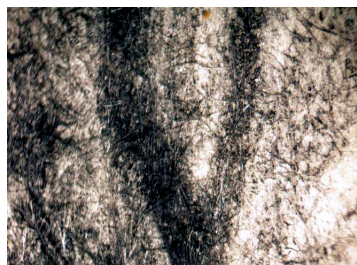


Fig. 7. Detail of John La Farge, *Horse's head and two riders*, undated (above). Charcoal on Japanese paper. © Columbia University, Avery Drawings and Archives Department. Photomicrograph of *Horse's head and two riders* (left)

face, and also the characteristic furring of the surface from La Farge's rubbing the charcoal over it.

Around the turn of the century, the variety of Japanese papers available in the United States increased to match a greater demand for colorful, unique papers. A representative collection of sample papers from the Japan Paper Company in the Brooklyn Museum's library collection, dated to around 1907, exhibit an array of colors and textures that are quite delightful. Many of the papers have large inclusions of bits of leaf or straw to create random patterning. Some sheets are dusted with mica flakes, creating a shimmery sparkly surface; Bertha Lum used a similar paper to emphasize the mystical quality of a print, titled *Procession* from 1916. Included in the sample books are also papers called "Chinese colored papers" which are dyed incredibly bright colors, and are thinner, finer, and smoother than the Japanese papers.

Japanese art and consumer products were often associated with bright colors, especially those objects made from paper such as fans, paper lanterns, umbrellas, and prints. In 1903, arts education advocate and *Japonisme*-enthusiast Henry Turner Bailey wrote that the greatest impact of *Japonisme* on American education was that of color, recalling that before the introduction of Japanese concepts, "Not only were the walls untinted, and pictures unknown, flowers never thought of, and ornaments of every kind non-existent, but every means of expression was colorless." (Bailey 1908, 35) At the same time that colorful Japanese papers became popular, a number of companies such as Milton Bradley began producing brightly colored Western papers for educational use in schools.

Arthur B. Davies was an artist who made good use of the new availability of colored Japanese papers. Davies is best known for his enigmatic painted landscapes with figures, but he also made many works on paper, rarely exhibited in his lifetime; the Metropolitan Museum has a collection of over seventy pastel drawings on mostly colored paper, the subject matter mainly landscapes or figure studies. The drawings are undated, but most are thought to be from the 1890s through the first decade of the twentieth century. Unlike some contemporary artists working in pastel (especially those working a decade or two earlier), Davies did not treat his drawings as paintings, working on canvas or paper mounted to stretched canvas, but instead preferred to work on a small scale, using the bright pure colors to create intimate, ethereal, and harmonious landscape and figure studies.

About one-fifth of the drawings are on Japanese paper; this however, is an estimate, as not all of the papers were able to be sampled, and some, like this soft navy paper, are not immediately identifiable as Japanese paper (fig. 8). Unlike watercolor, which relies on the transparency of the medium for its luminosity, pastels form an opaque light-scattering layer. They therefore are appropriate for use on colored papers, either in a more traditional method where the toned paper is used as the midtone for a drawing, or more experimentally, as





Fig. 8. Arthur B. Davies, *Mountains in Moonlight*, c. 1890–1910. Pastel on blue Japanese paper. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of A. W. Bahr, 1958 (58.21.30). © The Metropolitan Museum of Art

used by Davies, where the tone and texture adds to the overall harmony of the color relationship and composition. Textured papers at this time were also popular with artists working in pastel, both for the aesthetic effect and the increased ability to hold the applied pastel. The Japanese papers with shives and large fiber inclusions may have appealed to Davies as a more organic variety of textured papers.

Some of the colored papers that Davies used were found to be comprised solely of softwood fibers and these papers can be hard to distinguish visually from those containing Japanese fibers. Additionally, some papers that appear plainly to be Japanese (or East-Asian) actually were found to contain no Japanese papermaking fibers, only linen and wood.

The main conclusion that was reached, based on fiber analysis using polarized light microscopy and Graff's C-stain, of eighteen Japanese (or Japanese-like) papers from the 1890s through the 1910s, is that one should never assume what the fiber composition is; the results were quite diverse in terms of fiber origin and processing. Findings roughly paralleled those reported by Antoinette Dwan in her 1993 article, where she determined that three out of eight papers sold by the Japan Paper Company in 1910 contained around 15% woodpulp (Dwan 1993, 113). Six papers were found to contain either hardwood or softwood fibers. Four papers were found to have cotton fibers in addition to Japanese fibers. Nine papers had kozo fibers, and three had mitsumata fibers. The paper used for a print by Arthur Wesley Dow, which today appears somewhat yellowed and embrittled, contained all kozo fibers, but the fibers were extremely macerated, evidence of Western methods of production being used at this time by the Japanese. The paper in the poorest condition that was examined came from the aforementioned Japanese book of brush designs published and sold by Matsuki. The pages were yellowed and cracking at the gutter, as one would expect of a high lignin-containing paper;



Fig. 9. Detail, showing paper surface, John La Farge, *The Wheel of Fortune*, 1900. Watercolor and graphite on bamboo paper. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Susan Dwight Bliss, 1966 (67.55.170). © The Metropolitan Museum of Art



Fig. 10. “Peerless Japanese Transparent Watercolors” sample book and advertising literature, c. 1897

however, under polarized light magnification the fibers were identified as very macerated kozo, mixed with a comparatively large amount of chalky filler.

A number of samples of a particular paper used by John La Farge in his watercolors dating from 1887 to 1900 were also examined, and the majority of the fibers were determined to be bamboo (fig. 9). The use of bamboo was advocated by some western papermakers such as English mill-owner Thomas Routledge, partly due to fear of an impending pulp-wood famine, but the fiber never became widely used in the West. Like Japanese paper, the surface is smooth but very absorbent, which allowed La Farge to apply layer upon layer of color without pooling.

#### COLORED MEDIA: WATERCOLORS AND DYES

Another example of the influence of Japanese art on American concepts of color is this product, “Peerless Japanese Transparent Watercolors” made by the Japanese Water Color Company (fig. 10). This sample book dates to around 1897, but the company itself was founded in 1885,

and interestingly, still exists today, selling very much the same product, although with “Japanese” dropped from its name. The product is a booklet of paper strips coated with a film of transparent watercolor, off of which, according to the instructions in the booklet, one would snip a piece and place it in a shallow dish of water, thereby easily achieving a transparent wash for coloring photographs or other purposes.

What is more interesting than the actual item is the erroneous association of this product with Japan. The Japanese inscriptions found in the margins of the booklet pages are meaningless, derived at some point from an example of Japanese writing but certainly not by someone who spoke Japanese.<sup>2</sup> The English text explains the “Japanese” quality of the watercolor this way, perhaps referring to the subtle tonal gradations of woodblock prints: “The art of transparent tinting had its origin in Japan and the wonderful skill of the Japanese artists in this line of work has excited universal admiration.” Thus, in this case, the idea of *Japonisme* is used merely as a marketing strategy, cautioning us to carefully consider the veracity of such claims regarding other materials.

With regard to pigments and dyes, research was restricted mainly to determining colorants present in the blue papers examined. Three types of analysis were used in pursuit of this question: polarized light microscopy, XRF spectroscopy<sup>3</sup> and RAMAN spectroscopy<sup>4</sup>. Even though the range of blue hues was broad, the results were similar, all the papers being colored with Prussian blue rather than traditional indigo. The RAMAN analysis of a sample of a bright blue “*Kojio*” paper from the Japan Paper Company sample book determined the dye to be Prussian blue, although it has not yet been determined whether an aniline dye had been used in addition, as was often the case at this time. Purple dye was observed under polarized light magnification in addition to blue dye in the *Kojio* fibers.

XRF was used to analyze two papers used by Arthur B. Davies. The first was the navy-blue paper, and the second was a thin turquoise laid paper which closely resembled the Chinese Colored Papers from the Japan Paper Company. Similar results were obtained for both sheets: both contained iron, chrome, and lead, which seems to indicate a mixture of lead chromate and Prussian blue. Both pulp dyes were common for paper in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as was the mixture of them, called chrome green, as explained in 1901 by Julius Erfurt in his comprehensive book *Dyeing of Paper Pulp*.

#### JAPONISME AND THE ARTS EDUCATION REFORM MOVEMENT

As has been touched upon somewhat peripherally, both the explosion of *Japonisme* and the rise of the Arts and Crafts aesthetic were hugely influential on a reformulation of the concept of arts education across the country. The movement

was grounded not only in artistic theory, but in a belief in the benefit of an aesthetic education for future generations of Americans, both for the development of a more harmonious, moral, and cultivated society, and for a stronger industrial economy.

Arthur Wesley Dow was an art teacher himself at the Pratt Institute (1895–1903), and other institutions, as well as a teacher of teachers at Columbia University (1904–1922). Dow synthesized the new approach to teaching art by emphasizing creativity, thoughtfulness, and craft with an understanding, foremost among his contemporaries, of Japanese art and materials as conducive to those values. Dow recommended that students use a Japanese brush and papers, largely because he believed that the Japanese artist was closer in his approach to this full appreciation of beauty and nature than the Western artist (fig. 11). Dow explains in his influential book, *Composition*, first published in 1899, that the Japanese brush “responds most readily, gives the widest range of quality, and tends soonest to make the hand obey the will...” (Dow 1903, 8). We see here a value, in addition to artistic capability, applied to the brush: a value of honesty, insofar as the Japanese brush is the most able to authentically and simply represent the artist’s thoughts.

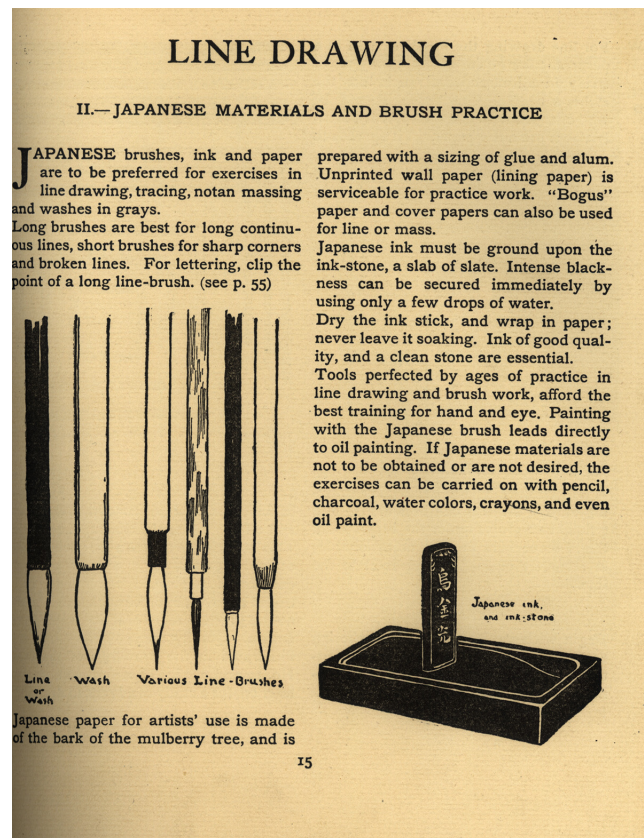


Fig. 11. Arthur Wesley Dow, *Composition*, 1913 ed., p. 15, illustrating the use of Japanese brushes and ink



The Prang Educational Company, founded in 1882, allied itself with the methods of *Composition* and also sold Japanese art materials through its catalog for teachers. The Prang art teacher's manual recommends (using a common misnomer for *sumi* ink), in its section on materials for drawing, that "India ink of excellent quality can be obtained in sticks directly from Japanese dealers." In the section on brushes, the manual recommends a "Japanese pointed brush", and notes that:

The constant and laborious drill which Japanese children are obliged to go through in order to learn to write their peculiar characters with ease and freedom and correctness is undoubtedly a great means in developing their mastery of the pencil and brush in their characteristic art (Clark et al. 1900, 59).

Bunkio Matsuki also directed much of his marketing effort towards teachers, and at the end of his catalog, he reveals the closeness of the relationship between education policy-makers, art institutions, and advocates and merchants of *Japonisme*, collaborators with the belief that the values of *Japonisme* would hold tangible benefits for American society. In his catalog, Matsuki quotes a letter he received from the aforementioned Henry Turner Bailey, Massachusetts state supervisor of drawing:

It gives me pleasure to bear testimony to the great service you have rendered Art Instruction in the public schools, by making it possible to supply the pupils with reference material and objects of beauty for study at reasonable prices. Every school building in the Commonwealth ought to be furnished with a miniature art museum, containing just such beautiful things as you can supply.

#### JAPONISME AND THE MORAL COMMODITY

While Japanese artists' materials do have unique characteristics that make them well-suited to particular artistic pursuits, we have also seen how they were considered by Americans in relation to many other Japanese consumer products available at the time. From the perspective of a study of material culture, as opposed to an art-historical or biographical basis, the values that we have seen associated with these products mainly relate to their origin—supposedly outside the realm of the American early-industrial economy—with attendant assumptions of quality and honesty.

However, once the desire for such objects becomes common to the general public, the objects become *déclassé*, tacky, and perceived as dishonest and unauthentic, which was the case as the "Japan Craze" gradually became fodder for cultural satire, as it was by 1885 in England in Gilbert and Sullivan's libretto *The Mikado*. One of the early signs of this condition is the set of warnings we see, such as inferior-quality Chinese imitations of Japanese goods, with the implication that there

were two classes of consumers of *Japonisme*: the informed connoisseur and the hopeless aspirant. Such changing perceptions of consumer goods speak to a society's tendency to imbue objects with morals and values, maintaining all the while the belief that the objects themselves confer these morals and values upon individuals.

#### NOTES

1. Bing published 36 issues of *Artistic Japan (Le Japon Artistique)* monthly between mid-1888 and mid 1891 in French, German, and English.
2. Many thanks to my colleague and native Japanese-speaker Akiko Yamazaki-Kleps for her assistance in this determination.
3. XRF spectroscopy performed by the author using Bruker ARTAX open-beam ED-XRF, at a kVof 50 and  $\mu$ A of 500 through air, using no filter, with a live time of 100 seconds.
4. Raman spectroscopy analyses were carried out by Silvia A. Centeno with a Renishaw System 1000 configured with a Leica DM LM microscope, notch filters and a thermoelectrically cooled charged-coupled device (CCD) detector. A 785 nm laser line was used for excitation and was focused on the different areas of the sample using the 50x objective lens of the microscope attached to the spectrometer, achieving a lateral resolution of  $\sim 2\mu$ m. In order to avoid changes of the sample materials due to overheating, neutral density filters were used to set the laser power at the sample to .0 mW. A 1200 lines/mm grating was used and integration times were set at 30 seconds.

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