DNP ATENEUM

Ateneum Art Museum/Finnish National Gallery
×
DNP Museum Lab

Seminar

Two Art Projects from Japan and Finland: The Power of Art

Proceedings

Dai Nippon Printing Co., Ltd.
DNP Museum Lab

Ateneum Art Museum/Finnish National Gallery × DNP Museum Lab Seminar related symposium "Two Art Projects from Japan and Finland: The Power of Art" – Report

Ateneum Art Museum/Finnish National Gallery × DNP Museum Lab Seminar

"Two Art Projects from Japan and Finland: The Power of Art"

■Organized by: Dai Nippon Printing Co., Ltd. DNP Museum Lab
Ateneum Art Museum/Finnish National Gallery

■Supported by: Embassy of Finland, Tokyo
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Embassy of Finland
Tokyo

Finnish Institute in Japan
フィンランドセンター

Introduction

Motoharu Kitajima, Managing Director, Dai Nippon Printing Co., Ltd.

I would like to open this seminar as a sequel to the "Museum and Well-being" symposium that marked the start of the joint project between DNP and Ateneum Art Museum in 2016.

Dai Nippon Printing commenced cultural activities with the DNP Museum Lab in 2006. Through our partnerships with several museums, libraries etc. in Japan and abroad, including the Louvre Museum and the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), we have developed and made widely available various methods for all kinds of people to familiarize with art and culture by way of digital technology.

Based on the initial question how art museums are supposed to address social mega trends, including especially also aspects of "well-being," in the project with Ateneum we aim to work out art viewing programs that actively harness the positive effects that the appreciation of art has on our hearts and minds. For us at DNP, there are three main objectives that we pursue in this project.

The first one is to highlight the positive effects of appreciating art from a scientific viewpoint. We believe that taking a side view at how works of art touch us, and at the things they bring to our hearts and minds, can introduce new aspects to the way we are viewing art. This may ultimately create situations in which visitors that are not so familiar with art suddenly find themselves in unexpected contexts, and begin to tell lively stories about artworks. So our first objective is to utilize our networks and known-how for the creation of such new occasions for appreciating art.

The second one is the challenge to facilitate dialogues between senior citizens and art from a scientific point of view. With the culture-related activities of DNP – be it in the form of business or patronage – we are aiming to enhance our function as an interface with art and culture, and as such introduce the society to new values.

Both the Japanese and Finnish societies are characterized by an exceptional longevity, and as it surely is the desire of all of us to be part of a society that enables us to spend the prolonged time of our life in independence and spiritual affluence, this project focuses especially on the cognitive functions of the brain related to "communication" and "memory," with the ultimate goal to work out concrete forms of art appreciation that promise to be helpful in the maintenance and reinforcement of such functions. We believe that linking the results of this project to the various activities of DNP related to the super-aging society in terms of technology, services and social infrastructure will result in an even greater impact on society. The fact that Finland enjoys a worldwide reputation as a leading nation when it comes to welfare and education is a factor that gives us additional confidence in our own advancements in these fields.

The third objective is to broaden people's horizons in order to familiarize with art and culture. We hope that the appreciation methods that we aim to develop in this project will rouse public interest, and ultimately create and increase opportunities for getting in touch with art and culture. To make art and culture familiar parts of daily life, and discuss the meaning of appreciating art with a positive mindset also outside the professional art world, is one of the ideal forms of what we at DNP are envisioning as a goal of our activities related to art and culture in general.

Fortunately, the preliminary research that has been carried out in Japan and Finland since last year is leading us to very interesting theories. I am very happy to be here today for this interim report together with the Ateneum Art Museum's director Susanna Pettersson and Satu Itkonen, and I would also like to thank Dr. Hideaki Kawabata from Keio University for his significant suggestions as an associate researcher regarding the project's scientific approach.

This project focusing on art appreciation methods is scheduled to conclude in 2019, the year that also marks the 100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Finland.

As announced, the second part of this seminar will focus on another art project that the Ateneum Art Museum is planning for 2019, the exhibition "Nordic Japanomania II 1900-1970." We would be happy if, through these two projects, today's seminar inspired you to think about the power and the meaning of art from your own individual points of view.

We are looking forward to your various continued support also in future projects of the DNP Museum Lab.

Ambassador's Speech

Jukka Siukosaari, Ambassador of Finland

Whether we want it or not, we shall all grow old. As societies both Japan and Finland are globally at the forefront of aging. Understanding better the physiology and the functioning of the brain can help us improve the quality of life of the elderly. And we will all be part of the elderly one day.

Even if we cannot reverse time, we can still mitigate the effects it has on us and the world that we live in. I think it is therefore extremely important that we have such a vibrant Finnish-Japanese cooperation in this field.

The power of art cannot be underestimated. And when that power is combined with cutting-edge technology and science, it will result in innovations that will benefit the wellbeing of humanity as a whole. And this is what this project is about.

I wish to warmly congratulate the Ateneum Art Museum and the DNP Museum Lab, as well as the Japan Folk Craft Museum and the Hayama Museum of Modern Art, for the programs that will be presented here today. And I wish to extend, through managing director Kitajima, my very special thanks to the DNP Group for making this joint experiment possible.

As already mentioned, this program will extend into 2019, and as ambassador of Finland to Japan, I am extremely pleased to officially declare both projects to be part of next year's celebrations of the 100th anniversary of our diplomatic relations. The relationship has always been good, but it has never been as many-sided and vibrant as it is today. Next year, in 2019 we will see the biggest number of Finland-related events organized in Japan, and I hope also the biggest ever number of Japan-related events in Finland. So we can look with a very positive and optimistic mind to the future, and with these projects we can be hopeful that our brain will function even in fifty years time, when we will celebrate the next anniversary.

Thank you very much for your attention, and have a very good day. I am sorry I cannot stay until the end, but my colleagues will be here, so if anyone of you wants to talk your own project related to Finland, please don't hesitate to get in touch. The Embassy is at your full disposal, and it is our task to enhance the cooperation even further. Thank you very much.

Program

Opening speech (10:35 -)

Motoharu Kitajima, Managing Director, Dai Nippon Printing Co., Ltd.

Ambassador's Speech (10:40 -)

Jukka Siukosaari, Ambassador of Finland in Japan

Keynote Lecture (10:45 -)

"Meaning of Art"

by Susanna Pettersson, Director, Ateneum Art Museum/Finnish National Gallery

[Project 1] (11:15 - 12:45)

Ateneum Art Museum + DNP Museum Lab art appreciation program

- Lecture:
  "Art Appreciation Effects on the 'Mind' of the Beholder"
  by Hideaki Kawabata, Associate Professor at Keio University
- Presentations:
  "Workshops in Japan and Finland"
  by Satu Itkonen, Head of public programs at Ateneum Art Museum/Finnish National Gallery,
  Mina Tanaka, Dai Nippon Printing Co., Ltd.
- Q&A

[Project 2] (13:45 - 15:30)

Ateneum Art Museum exhibition project

- Lecture:
  "Nordic *Japonisme* and Modernism in Finland and Sweden 1900-1970"
  by Anne-Maria Pennonen, Curator at Ateneum Art Museum/Finnish National Gallery
- Panel discussion:
  Anne-Maria Pennonen, Curator at Ateneum Art Museum/Finnish National Gallery
  Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff, Chief Curator, Ateneum Art Museum/Finnish National Gallery,
  Takashi Sugiyama, General Manger Curator's Department, The Folk Crafts Museum "Nihon Mingeikan"
  *Moderator: Susanna Pettersson, Director, Ateneum Art Museum/Finnish National Gallery
- Q&A

Seminar Summary

This seminar was divided into two parts. The morning program focused on interim reports in the form of lectures and presentations about art appreciation workshops for elderly persons conducted in Japan and Finland. The afternoon program was dedicated to a presentation of the Ateneum Art Museum's upcoming exhibition "Nordic Japanomania II – 1900-1970," and a panel discussion related to the phenomenon of Japonisme in Nordic countries.

Keynote Lecture: "Meaning of Art"

Ateneum Art Museum director Susanna Pettersson's presentation revolved around the three questions, "Why does art matter?" "What are the key drivers that make us appreciate the arts?" and "What is the potential of museums as platforms of mediating the arts?"

She began by reflecting on the meaning of art also from a historical point of view, and, based on her own childhood experience, pointed out the positive things that art and culture have on humans. Her historical account focused on art museums that opened one after another in 19th century Europe, and how they became places for education and enlightenment, and eventually came to define a nation's identity. While defining identities and historical moments, art and culture can at once become a soft target for those opposing it. As an example, Pettersson mentioned the Buddhist sculptures in the Bamiyan Valley in Afghanistan that were destroyed by the Taliban, and a public sculpture in Helsinki that was recently burned down. Then she pointed out how the freedom of expression is often restricted, as exemplified by state propaganda and the oppression of art during the second world war, and recent imprisonments of artist Ai Weiwei and the band Pussy Riot. She concluded that artists should be protected by society, and that "we need artists to discuss also the most disturbing and difficult issues, and not just show beautiful things."

Then she moved on to the topic of the role of the museum as a place for appreciating art, and introduced studies of museum visitors' experiences by American scholars John Falke and Lynn Dierking, to highlight the various demands that art museums today have to meet – the well-being effect of art, the museum's potential as a new learning environment, accessibility and responsiveness, and contemporary concepts among others. What is also required is an enhancement of visitors' experience both at the museum itself and via the Internet. Pettersson further referred to the need to do pioneering work in the digital realm, and stressed the importance of the joint research with DNP in this respect. The meaning of art is directly connected to people's private feeling of happiness. The lecture closed with the supposition that museums are responsible for creating opportunities for touching people through the appreciation of art.

[Project 1] Ateneum Art Museum × DNP Museum Lab art appreciation program

Lecture: "Art Appreciation Effects on the 'Mind' of the Beholder"

The next item in the program was a lecture by Hideaki Kawabata, who has been researching into the mechanisms of perception in the appreciation of art, together with the Ateneum Art Museum and DNP Museum Lab.

Various studies have shown that the appreciation of art generally has a beneficial effect on people's feeling of happiness. Next to his own research into the brain's mechanisms and how we feel happy when we perceive something as beautiful, Kawabata introduced further insights gained in previous studies, including the way how aesthetic value can help decrease pain; how the feeling of life satisfaction and the condition of health can improve through contact with artworks; and how art appreciation at a museum can reduce anxiety and increase the feeling of happiness. However he also pointed out that science has yet to carry out sufficient quantitative measurements in order to determine "to what extent" such effects can be achieved.

Next was an explanation of the effectiveness of viewer-interactive art appreciation. While it has been understood that viewer-interactive art appreciation involving verbal communication among viewers helps improve working memory and concentration, which is elemental for memory and cognitive functions, little is known regarding the mechanisms of such improvement at this point. Kawabata emphasized the necessity of explorative efforts in a field where quantitative studies are rather difficult to conduct.

These workshops were conducted by facilitators applying three viewer-interactive art appreciation styles – "educational," "external dialogue" and "emotion focusing" respectively – and the evaluation methods of "n-back" and "stroop" tasks that are often used in cognitive disorder tests.

Even though still on a hypothetical level, especially the workshops focusing on inner emotions yielded positive results in the form of better marks in the 1-back task, and shorter reaction times. Kawabata announced that this joint research will continue to focus on appreciation methods that improve viewers' cognition and thereby ultimately increase their feeling of happiness.

Presentations: "Workshops in Japan and Finland"

Mina Tanaka from DNP, and Satu Itkonen from the Ateneum Art Museum then reviewed the workshops in detail. Participants aged between 65 and 75 each were divided into three groups of four persons each, which did three sessions each of the aforementioned educational/external dialogue/emotion focusing style workshops. Also conducted in connection with the workshops were interviews and tests of the participants' cognitive functions. While the Japanese participators included persons unfamiliar with art, the museum in Finland recruited via social media mainly participants with an interest in art. The workshops in Japan were conducted in company showrooms, those in Finland at the Ateneum Art Museum, so generally conditions were somewhat different in both countries. In each session, participants were shown one painting each from the

four categories Portrait, Landscape, Story-telling and Abstract. In Japan, paintings were selected from the collections of The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, and The National Museum of Western Art, while in Finland works were selected from the Ateneum Art Museum's collection. Both speakers stressed that the selection of works was an important aspect, whereas their own choices were made in consideration of such qualities as "facilitating conversation," "allowing for different interpretations," "containing elements that capture/puzzle viewers" and "being inspirational," as well as an accumulation of participants' experiences. Compared to the rather reserved Japanese participants, those in Finland exchanged their thoughts and ideas very actively, but regardless of such differences, participants in both countries obviously enjoyed the workshops very much.

Another result observed in the course of the workshop was that "positive words" from participants increased with each session, and that they were obviously happy about doing better in the cognitive test each time. Some participants reportedly visited art exhibitions after that. Tanaka's and Itkonen's presentations closed with the conclusion that this time's results were useful in the development of art appreciation methods with regard to the increasingly aging societies in both countries.

[Project 2] Ateneum Art Museum exhibition project

Lecture: "Nordic *Japonisme* and Modernism in Finland and Sweden 1900-1970"

After the lunch break, the afternoon session focused on the second project, the exhibition "Nordic Japanomania II – 1900-1970" (tentative title) that is currently in preparation at the Ateneum Art Museum. Highly popular also in Japan, Scandinavian design is generally characterized by the practicality of products, simple geometric forms and colors, and patterns inspired by nature. The project leader, Ateneum curator Anne-Maria Pennonen first introduced the "Nordic Japanomania, 1875-1918" exhibition that was held in 2016 as a joint project by national galleries in Finland, Norway and Denmark. Realized after a 4-year period of research, it was a great success as the first exhibition that exhaustively introduced works from the first period of Japonisme in Nordic countries. "Nordic Japanomania II – 1900-1970", the conceptual successor, focuses on the time after that first wave of Japonisme, between 1900 and 1970. In addition, the exhibits of Nordic art and design include also references to the Mingei movement in Japan, and developments in other East Asian countries.

While taking a historical look at the influence that Japanese and other Asian cultures had on Western styles in the 19th and 20th century, Pennonen dedicated a large part of her lecture to Soetsu Yanagi and the Mingei movement that served as a major source of inspiration for the concept behind this exhibition. The time when Yanagi initiated the Mingei movement in Japan was a time when important arts and crafts movement were occurring around the world, including the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain, and Bauhaus in Germany. Pennonen referred to the dynamic exchange that took place between East and West, using Yanagi and Bernard Leach as examples.

The exhibition is scheduled for 2019. Splitting the time between 1918 and 1970 into two periods, the exhibition showcases the "beauty of everyday life" in works of art, design and architecture, divided into the four categories "Space," "Light," "Silence" and "Materiality." Pennonen also introduced other keywords that apply to all featured works regardless of creator or genre.

Panel Discussion

The panel discussion featured next to Pennonen also Ateneum chief curator Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff, and Takashi Sugiyama from The Mingeikan, from whose collection numerous works will be borrowed for this exhibition. The discussion was moderated by Ateneum director Pettersson, who first asked Sugiyama from The Mingeikan about the essence and meaning of "mingei."

Sugiyama responded by pointing out the similarities between mingei as proposed by Soetsu Yanagi, and Nordic design with its characteristic aspects of "nature," simple design, functional forms, and the "beauty of everyday life." He explained that the beauty of folk crafts that the Mingei movement advocated was the "beauty of everyday life," and referred to functional simplicity as the essence of industrial arts. He further introduced pottery and textile products from the Edo period, the heyday of Japanese arts and crafts, from The Mingeikan's own collection.

Then Pennonen suggested that the simple, functional forms and materials that emerged in Finland in the 20th century represented a counter movement against the gorgeously decorative designs that had existed at the time. The focus had shifted to natural materials and a functional kind of beauty. Pettersson added that is was also highly interesting that the new idea of "form following function," the "Gesamtkunstwerk" of elements such as windows and natural illumination, furniture, patterns curtains and lighting fixtures in the realm of architecture for example, appeared simultaneously in visual arts, crafts and architecture alike. Von Bonsdorff then explained about the upcoming "Japanomania II" exhibition that it was going to interpret the effects of Japonisme from a different viewpoint than the previous "Japanomania I," considering that the first exhibition focused on the second half of the 19th century, when the ideas and inspiration of Japanese culture were mainly transported through literature, while in 20th century, people actually traveled and experienced art first-hand, which resulted in the influences and transformations that are highlighted in the second exhibition.

Mingei, which was born in a time before arts and crafts got separated according to modernist thinking, did not separate beauty from function. Sugiyama suggested that Yanagi's Mingei movement was a movement of modernism within the realm of Japanese crafts, and praised the exhibition's novel approach to the effects of Japonisme in the 20th century, with regard to the role of the Mingei movement and the pioneering work of Soetsu Yanagi, who had observed the situation in Japan from both Eastern and Western perspectives.

Director Pettersson finally addressed the essence of design philosophies in Japan and Finland, referring to similarities between the design philosophies in both countries. Sugiyama mentioned Sori Yanagi's design principle of creating things "from the viewpoint of the user" as an idea that is rooted in folk crafts, to which Pennonen replied that Finnish design philosophy also placed importance on the user's point of view, whereas multiple ideas were added to the basic principle of functionalism in the 1950s-60s, when companies like Iittala contributed to bringing inexpensive design also to common households.

There will also be a large number of paintings on display at this exhibition. Von Bonsdorff referred to the influence of Japanese culture that can be observed in the paintings of Helene Schjerfbeck, whose works were showcased in Japan two years ago, and stated that such influence of Japanese culture in the 19th century inspired Western artists – who were mainly doing oil paintings – to try and experiment with various new materials such as watercolor and ink. Using the example of Bernard Leach's encounter with *Ontayaki* pottery, Sugiyama stressed that experimentation takes place also in the realm of folk craft, where tradition is constantly being updated in accordance with lifestyles and eras.

The symposium closed with the panelists exchanging expectations toward the exhibition as a result of an ambitious project.

Profile

*Names are listed in the order of appearance.

Susanna Pettersson (Director, Ateneum Art Museum)

Dr. Susanna Pettersson is an art historian specialising in museum history, collection studies and history of art history. She is currently Director of the Ateneum Art Museum, which is part of the Finnish National Gallery. Her previous post was Director of the Finnish Institute in London. Dr. Pettersson is a keen museum thinker. For more than twenty years she has worked in various museum fields, where her posts have included Director of the Alvar Aalto Foundation and Museum and Director of Development at the Finnish National Gallery. She is also Adjunct Professor in Museology at the University of Jyväskylä and Associate Professor at the Reinwardt Academy in Amsterdam. Dr Pettersson's positions of trust include Board Member of Aalto University and President of the Board of the Finnish Institute in Japan.

[Project 1]

Hideaki Kawabata (Associate professor at Keio University)

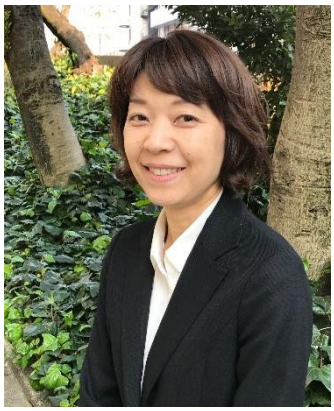
Dr. Hideaki Kawabata received his MA and PhD in Psychology after completing graduate school of Human-Environmental Studies at Kyushu University. Following a research fellow program at the laboratory of neurobiology of University College London (UCL) and a position of associate professor at Kagoshima University, he became associate professor at the Department of Psychology of Keio University in 2009, his current position. His field of expertise is emotional psychology and cognitive neuroscience. Presently, he investigates the brain mechanisms trigerring the psychology behind experienced value and human subjectivity, like the aesthetic process in art appreciation and the attractiveness perception of interpersonal communication.

Satu Itkonen

(Person in charge of public programs at Ateneum Art Museum)

Ms. Satu Itkonen, MA (Art History), is Head of Public Programmes at the Ateneum Art Museum, which is part of the Finnish National Gallery. Ms Itkonen has extensive professional experience in the art world, in particular the work she has done since 1996 in museum education at the Ateneum. Until 2014 she worked part-time as a freelance art educator, writer and art critic. As an educator, Ms. Itkonen specialises in the application of various methods in art viewing, plain language and Visual Thinking Strategies, both in the art museum context and in social work.

Mina Tanaka (Dai Nippon Printing)



Ms. Mina Tanaka is the Leader of Interactive System Group of Business Planning and Development Department, Archive Business Promotion Unit, Marketing Division, Advanced Business Center, at Dai Nippon Printing Co., Ltd. (DNP). After working in different areas at DNP including space design, new media businesses, and technology research, she worked as a project manager for interactive media and space design for the Louvre-DNP Museum Lab project, and was engaged in other projects for client companies. She previously worked on business design for digital archive, and is currently the leader of Interactive System Group of Business Planning and Development Department.

[Project 2]

Anne-Maria Pennonen (Curator at Ateneum Art Museum)

Ms. Anne-Maria Pennonen (MA in Art History, BA in Translation studies) works currently as Curator for Exhibitions at the Ateneum Art Museum. She has researched Greek and Roman antiquity and nineteenth-century art specializing in Nordic and German landscape painting. She has curated and co-curated several exhibitions.

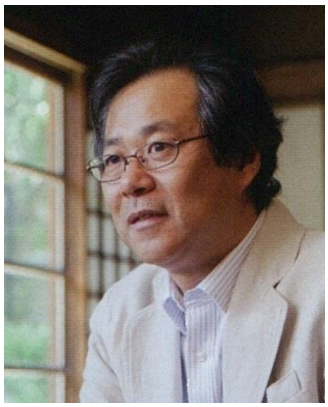
Ms. Pennonen has also worked as a lecturer for art history and classical archaeology at Helsinki University for several years, and she is finalizing her Ph.D. in art history. It discusses the relationship between art and natural sciences in the artworks of Finnish artists who studied landscape painting in Düsseldorf, Germany.

Before entering the university and museum sector, she used to work as a translator, interpreter and teacher for several years in the private sector.

Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff (Chief curator at Ateneum Art Museum)

Dr. Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff is a Chief Curator in Ateneum Art Museum, Finnish National Gallery in Helsinki. She has produced international scholarly publications and curated extensively on Finnish and international modern art and design in Europe and Japan. Dr. von Bonsdorff's most recent works include her 2016 publication and exhibition Japanomania in the Nordic Countries 1875-1918 (2016-17) and has curated exhibitions on Helene Schjerfbeck in Frankfurt (2014) and Japan (2015) and Van Gogh to Kandinsky: Symbolist Landscape in Europe 1880-1910 (2012-13), a collaboration between the National Galleries of Scotland, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam and the Finnish National Gallery. She holds a Visiting Professorship in the Coventry University in the faculty of Art and Design History and Curation. She received her PhD in 2012 from the University of Helsinki and is a specialist of modern colour theory and painting in late 19th century European art. Dr von Bonsdorff has worked on visual cultures of landscape and space; identities of 'nation' in art, design and transnational capitals of art.

Takashi Sugiyama



(General Manger Curator's Department, The Japan Folk Crafts Museum "Nihon Mingeikan")

Mr. Takashi Sugiyama has worked for The Japan Folk Crafts Museum as a curator since 1982 and became the Chief Curator in 2008. He specialises in the history and theories of folk crafts with a focus on the Mingei Movement, as well as museology. At the museum, Mr. Sugiyama has been involved in museum management, the organising of exhibitions, and educational activities. He also leads courses in museology as a part-time teacher at Musashino Art University and Tama Art University among others. Some of the recent exhibitions organised by Mr. Sugiyama include "The Beauty of Korean Folk Crafts – from the Museum Collection: Commemorating the 80th Anniversary of the Foundation" (2016), "The Golden-Age of Mingei – Life and Beauty in Edo Period" (2017), and "Japan through Folk Crafts – Visiting Japanese Craftsmanship with Soetsu Yanagi: Commemorating the 80th Anniversary of the Foundation" (Co-hosted by NHK and NHK Promotion, 2017).

*The profile details were correct at the time of the seminar.

Keynote Lecture "Meaning of Art"

Dr. Susanna Pettersson, Director, Ateneum Art Museum/Finnish National Gallery

Why does art matter?

The topic of my presentation is both philosophical and concrete. I will talk about the meaning of art, and I have formulated three main questions that will guide us through the presentation:

- Why does art matter? This is a question that addresses the society level.
- What are the key drivers that make us appreciate the arts? This concerns the individual level.
- What is the potential of museums as platforms for mediating the arts? This is of course related to the institutional level.

All these questions are more or less relevant when thinking about the topics of today's conference.

The first question is why art matters, why art is important.

I'm sure that all of us in this room have a recollection of an experience that has genuinely touched your heart and soul. Perhaps an experience that has been stronger than anything else; an experience that can be described with words such as delightful, beautiful, touching, emotional. It could have been caused by an art object, a piece of music, theater, or literature. For sure it made you look at the word with different eyes. It made you learn something new, or deepen your thoughts on a specific issue. Art experience is something that can also make it easier to encounter something very difficult or tricky, and this is why art matters – on an individual level, as well as from the point of view of entire communities and societies. Art can make us think clearer, and art can even solve problems.

I will start my presentation by telling you a story of my personal experience.

As a child I loved to draw, and I was encouraged to do so. Last week, when I was going through my archive, I found these drawings. These I made when I was a very small child, encouraged by my grandmother. She had stored these drawings. She took me also to the biggest museum in the country, the Ateneum. We looked at works for sure, but I remember being overwhelmed mostly by the huge staircase. I also remember the ventilation grids in the floor.

This work, Akseli Gallen-Kallela's *Aino Myth*, is one of those that I remember. **[fig.01]** But I didn't care about the story behind the work, and frankly speaking, I don't remember if I was told

about the painter and the motif. I learned later that the painter was one of the best in the country, and the story was from our national epos, "Kalevala", first published in 1835.

Fig. 01 Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *Aino Myth* 1891. Ateneum Art Museum/Finnish National Gallery. Photo: Hannu Aaltonen

What I admired was the wonderful long hair or the heroine of the story, Aino (seen in the middle panel). As a little girl with short hair, I really wanted to have hair like her. Little did I know then that decades later I'd be director of the same museum, ensuring that hundreds of thousands of visitors a year can experience something similar – encounter something unseen, be inspired, and enjoy. The journey can start from admiring the staircase, the ventilation grids, or the wonderful hair of a person in a painting.

The majority of art museums in Europe were built and opened to the public in the 19th century, following the opening of the Louvre in Paris. Countries started competing with one another by showing off their treasures. Collections of the crown and wealthy collectors were introduced to growing audiences encompassing all classes.

More museums were built where people worked, the most famous examples including the Glyptothek in Munich, Altes Museum in Berlin, South Kensington Museum in London, and the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, just to mention some of the key destinations in Europe.

Art was seen as a tool for enlightenment, the trend of the philosophers of the time such as René Descartes, who laid the foundation for the thinking. "Sapere Aude! (Dare to know!)" was one of his key phrases, and knowledge was literally there for everyone.

Education, life quality and happiness went hand in hand, and art was regarded as a gateway to universal learning experiences and better living.

To simplify this message, the idea was that fit and happy people would be able to work more, and produce more for the nation. But of course it was not only that. Art and culture was seen as a manifestation of a nation, and according to the German philosopher Hegel, art represented the development of the nation and its civilization. Any country was evaluated and ranked based on its achievements in art and culture. Art and culture formed and still form building blocks for our identity, telling about who we are, and where we belong to.

Now let's have a short look at what all of this means in practice, how the meaning of art and culture is manifested in society.

My first example relates to celebrating special moments in history. Memory organizations such as museum libraries and archives play a crucial role whenever nations celebrate. Exhibitions and special events are organized, and people come together to celebrate – something that we are sure to see in 2019 in Japan and Finland, when we celebrate our diplomatic relations.

The second example tells about another aspect of the role of culture, in moments when culture becomes a target of hostile attacks, and when the common identity of a nation, or the shared global values, are questioned. Monuments and artworks become soft and easy targets. One of the most striking examples from the past years was the destruction of two large Buddha sculptures in Bamiyan, Afghanistan. In March 2001, the Taliban dynamited away a part of history that can't be brought back. This destruction has been described as one of the worst archeological tragedies in the world. The sculptures, originally dating from the 4th and 5th century, belonged to UNESCO's World Heritage list.

After the destruction, the UNESCO expert working group on Afghan culture projects has listed 39 recommendations for safeguarding the Bamiyan site.

Artworks, monuments and key sites of architecture can become targets of individual anger, unhappiness and frustration. Vandalism and arsons are manifestations of this. The harm done varies from graffiti to burning down churches and destroying public sculptures.

As a very current and topical example from Helsinki, two weeks ago the Gorilla sculpture made in 2009 by an artist called Villu Jaanisoo was burned down. It was a soft target, very easy to access. Here you can see what happened to the poor gorilla. What is interesting here is that, after this very violent action, people in the community reacted very strongly. They shared their sorrow in social media, posting pictures of the gorilla, and sending messages to the artist. Media reported of children crying of loss and sorrow.

Such deeds shake and shatter of course our feeling of security and ownership. Counter-actions tell about the emotional reaction and relationship that we develop to important sites, monuments, artworks and buildings. Art and culture is regarded as our common right, and it certainly belongs to us all.

When talking about art and its relation to society, one should also look at it from the point of view of freedom of art and culture as representation of human creativity. This right is normally celebrated, but it can also be questioned, regulated, and even censored. This has happened of course in the past, and it happens in some countries as we speak. Art and culture can be regarded as a threat for a nation, resulting in restricting the freedom of expression, which is of course one of the core human rights.

I'll mention briefly a couple of examples. One of the biggest tragedies in the Western world took place when the Nazis burned books and destroyed Entartete Kunst – Degenerate Art – that didn't respond to the Nazi canon, meaning that it was anti-German, Jewish, or communist in nature. And according to the idea of the Nazis, they could define what was valuable, appropriate and good art.

This image refers to another example from the time of the Soviet regime, which advised artists to produce works that support the society, and the aims and objectives of the system; works that celebrate the leaders, and picture the nation at its best. In other words, art was used as propaganda.

These two examples are from the 20th century, but the same issues are valid still today. Freedom in art and culture is not to be taken for granted. Let me mention two current examples.

The first one is the world-famous Chinese contemporary artist and activist, Ai Weiwei. He has been criticizing the political system of the country. He has investigated corruption and cover-ups, and hence he has been also imprisoned.

Another example is a punk rock band called Pussy Riots, who have been jailed because of their unauthorized guerilla performances in Moscow. The reason for their imprisonment was that the lyrics of their songs included opinions about LGBT rights, feminism, and they also claimed that Vladimir Putin was a dictator, which was something that the officials did not like.

It is of course also worth mentioning that artists are in growing numbers among asylum-seekers from countries like Afghanistan, Syria and Iran. So the issue of censorship and regulation is something that we have to be aware of in connection with the freedom of expression. The reason why I'm including these examples in my presentation today is that the society surely needs artists to be on guard, to express, to be analytical and critical, to bring up issues that are important. We

need artists to discuss also the most disturbing and difficult issues, and not just show beautiful things.

So art matters. It is a manifestation of the nation, the backbone of our identity. It certainly represents freedom of expression, and it's a provider of unique experiences for all individuals. We have to defend a society where the freedom of expression is not limited.

What are the key drivers that make us appreciate arts?

The second part of this presentation asks, "What are the key drivers that make us appreciate arts" in our busy society. I have chosen three aspects that can be regarded as most relevant.

The first one is related to our individual needs and different identities. The second has to do with the wellbeing effect of the arts, and the third one goes hand in hand with future work. All these points of view are of course related to one another.

When visiting a museum, one feels elevated, somehow like a better person, but our needs vary depending on the situation. Visiting museums can impact the quality of our lives, but we should be more aware of this. Museums can certainly provide meaningful contents, but at the same time, museums must update their offer to answer the needs of different audiences.

First, about the individual needs. According to American scholars John Falke and Lynn Dierking, we have different needs and identities that change depending on the place we visit, and on the social situation. They have analysed different identities for museum visitors. They have come up with differ categories that are listed here. So whenever we go somewhere, we could be explorers, facilitators, professionals or hobbyists, experience seekers, or even rechargers, all depending on the site, the day, and the company. All of us can carry these different needs and different identities that vary according to the situation.

Falke and Dierking have also talked about contexts that apply in any museum visit, categorized into personal, physical, and social.

Personal context includes one's motivations and expectations; prior knowledge and experience; interests and believes; and choice and control. Social context is all about relationships and communication. Physical context is about advance information, orientation, architecture and design solutions. They all need to work.

Last week in Paris, I tried to get to this building here, Grand Palais, to see a Gauguin exhibition with a colleague of mine. So we thought we'd go through the main entrance, but it turned out it was not the main entrance at all. The entrance was somewhere on the back side of the building,

and there happened to be construction work and lots of puzzling signage. When we finally found the right door, it turned out that on that very day the exhibition was closed. That was a very good example of the challenges of the physical context.

Now I move on to the wellbeing effect of the arts. According to the Nordic surveys by scholars such as Markku T. Hyyppä, people who consume arts and culture live longer and happier than a peer group without such activities. Visiting art exhibitions, reading novels, and listening to music work for the benefit of better memory, and boost the life quality in general. This dramatic finding is also one of the keys to our joint project between the Ateneum Art Museum and DNP, because experiencing and appreciating art can certainly make one's life a lot better.

Finally, a notion regarding future work. We all know that technology is already changing many traditional fields of labour. Robots, artificial intelligence, etc. will take over. Cars won't need drivers, and medical diagnoses can be done utilising artificial intelligence instead of a family doctor who has known you since the days of your youth. Many could loose their traditional jobs, and people might need to re-educate themselves. The reason why I'm mentioning this here is because this results in a situation where people will have more free time, and they need to do something with that. And that's exactly why there is such a huge potential for memory organisations such as museums.
This brings us to the last chapter of my presentation today: the potential of museums as platforms for mediating the arts.

The potential of museums as platforms for mediating the arts

First we talked about why art matters on the society level. Then we discussed what are the key drivers that make us appreciate the arts on an individual level. This is now about what the museums can do.

Museums today face several challenges. At the same time, they may have bigger potential than ever before. Museums are built everywhere from Dubai to China and beyond, and they certainly need good quality contents, strong professionals, and contemporary concepts to work with.

Factors to pay attention to are the following:

- 24/7 society

- digital presence
- accessibility
- customer experience
- being relevant

This means that our society is more demanding and faster than ever before – 24/7 indeed. Traditional organisations are expected to be more accessible, more responsive, and more present. Organisations have become media in their own right, and people working for them, such as myself and my colleagues, are expected to have a strong presence in social media, and of course in traditional media as well. Accessibility of online materials is one of the keys, but the digital presence must be developed even further. Therefore, again, the collaboration between DNP and Ateneum Art Museum is absolutely vital. Museums should be regarded as digital forerunners, not on the contrary.

Therefore, museums must focus more and more on the customer experience both on the physical premises of buildings and online. Different customers have different needs, and they need to be taken into consideration.

One of the most important issues, however, is how to be relevant in the society and people's lives; how to touch people's hearts and souls. Museums can make a difference as defenders of important values. They can have an active role leading discussion, and highlighting even the most difficult issues through art and artists. I also want to emphasize that museums are forerunners of new research-based knowledge and information. This is something we are going to discuss in the afternoon panel. First and foremost, museums need to be there for the arts and culture, and for the people. They must defend the freedom of expression and people's right to encounter new, uplifting, inspiring things. Every single day.

Now we come to the conclusion of my presentation – why art matters, what is the meaning of art.

It surely is a manifestation of the nation. But it's also a backbone of our identity, and represents the freedom of expression. It's a provider of unique experiences for all individuals of all ages, and a source of wellbeing.

Museums carry a big responsibility in developing opportunities for encounters, both in digital and physical environments. Such encounters need to be relevant and inspiring.

Art Appreciation Effects on the "Mind" of the Beholder

Hideaki Kawabata

Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Keio University

Art Appreciation in the Super-Aging Society

In contemporary society, the phenomenon of aging is currently accelerating on a global scale. In Japan, the aging is progressing at a particularly high speed. While the percentage of citizens over 65 in 2015 was 20% of the total population in Sweden, it was about 30% in Japan. According to estimates, by 2060 the percentage will increase to 30% in Sweden and 40% in Japan. **[fig.01]**

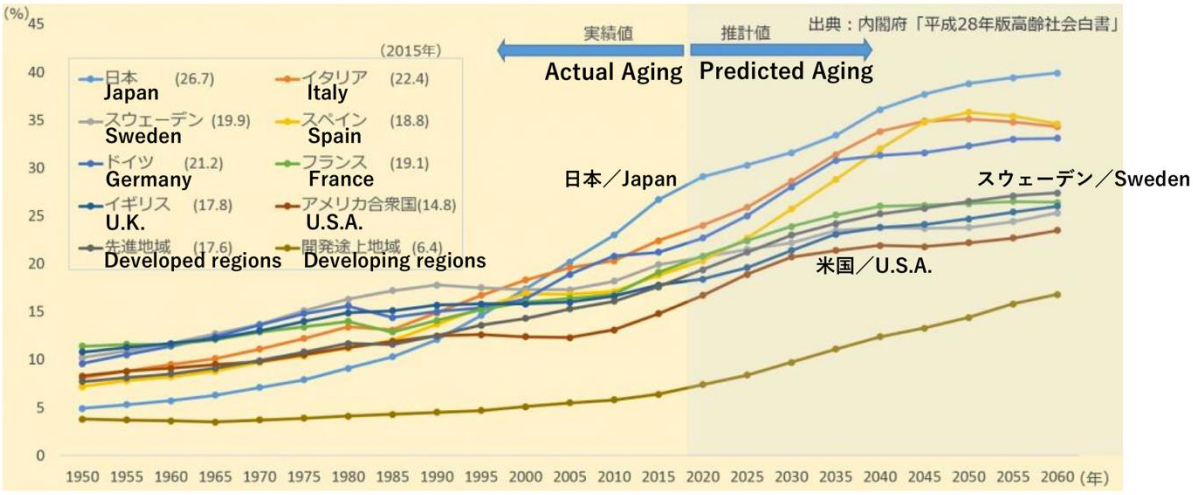


Fig.01 Percentage of population aged 65 or over

Regarding the life-span of a human being, we distinguish between "average life span" and "health expectancy." As you will know, the average life span is the duration of our life from birth to death, while health expectancy refers to the period of time during which we can live in good health. The average life span of Japanese males is about 80 years, while health expectancy is about 70 years, which means that the remaining ten years are spent with diseases or illnesses. The numbers for

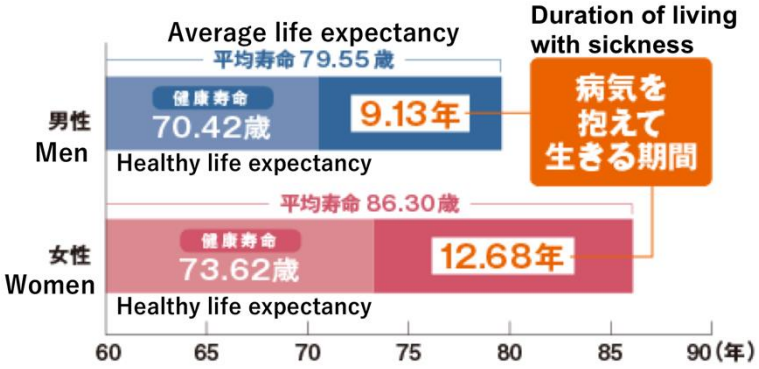


Fig.02 The gap between average and healthy life expectancy in Japan

females in Japan are 86 years and 73 years respectively, so Japanese women live an average of 12 to 13 years with illness. **[fig.02]**

In the aging society, closing this gap between average life span and health expectancy will be increasingly important. In addition to medical treatment and preventive measures, approaches to train the body and mind will be elemental in order to maintain our health both physically and mentally. This is the kind of age that we are about to enter.

The question for us is how art appreciation can be helpful in the aging society in the future. This is the subject that the Ateneum Art Museum and the DNP Museum Lab have been addressing in their joint project, while we from the Keio University's Kawabata Lab are involved as associate researchers.

Based on the idea of the art museum as a place that is open and brings happiness to all kinds of people, the Ateneum Art Museum aims to link the museum to public programs especially for senior citizens. DNP's Museum Lab focuses on the development of art appreciation systems and interactive design, and conducts scientific studies to measure the degree of interest and behavior of the users of such art appreciation systems. Kawabata Lab adopts psychological and neuroscientific approaches from such new research fields as neuroaesthetics and experimental aesthetics. Through so-called functional MRI (fMRI), electroencephalography, and various other psychological experiments, we carry out studies on how the brain reacts to art and beauty. Next to such studies in the realm of art, we also do research into psychological and neuroscientific approaches to the formation of impressions in inter-human communication.

In this joint project, we conducted workshops and trials, and examined their effects in order to work out new art appreciation methods for the aging society. In concrete terms, we explore methods of viewer-interactive art appreciation, and how this affects the cognitive functions of elderly people. Our collaboration revolves around basic research with the aim to prove and spread the effects of art appreciation in society.

The brain's mechanism of sensing "beauty"

Why is art appreciation necessary? Artworks as such may not necessarily be essential for human life, but many people in the world believe that artworks are not quite useless. The great effects that the appreciation of art has on us have been highlighted in recent psychological studies and research in the realm of health science. However, there is not much progress regarding precise examinations as to how exactly this can be helpful.

My own field of specialization is mainly the relationship between art and the human soul, body and mind, but together with researchers around the world, I am also conducting philosophical studies. From a philosophical point of view, one may say that, rather than art itself, it is the

sensation of beauty in artworks that can enhance our everyday life. In Plato's *Hippias*, Socrates and Hippias engage in a dialogue about beauty. In a discussion that starts with the question, "How do you know, Socrates, what sort of things are beautiful and ugly? Could you tell me what the beautiful is?" Plato comes to the conclusion that beauty or art is something beneficial, pleasant and comfortable. So how is it beneficial, and in what way does it make us feel comfortable? It has become important to pursue these matters through scientific studies.

Our previous research focused on the transformations that occur inside the brain when we view art or listen to music. Studies published more than ten years ago revealed through fMRI the different cerebral activities of participants in an experiment, depending of their judgment of artworks as "beautiful," "ugly" or "neither of both."

We have found out that the activity of the lower area of the so-called orbitofrontal cortex, a part of our brain just behind the forehead, increases when we perceive something as beautiful. When we perceive something as ugly, an area in the parietal lobe that controls our behavior becomes increasingly active. **[fig.03]**

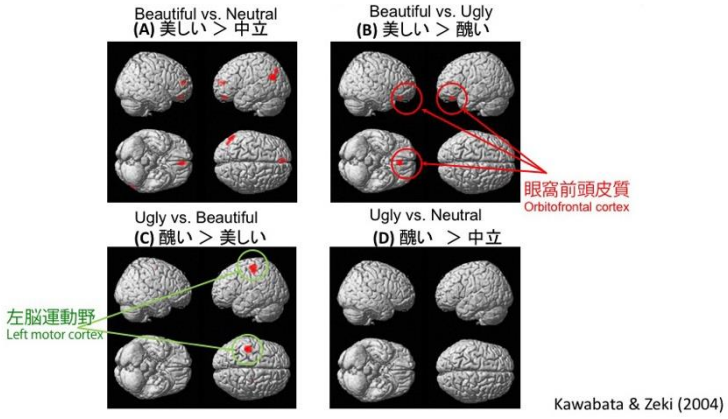


Fig.03 Brain areas that are activated upon the perception of beauty

Regarding the relationship between ugly things and our behavior, when we perceive an artwork as being ugly, just like in communication when we sense that someone we talk to is upset for example, this triggers a reaction in the brain in the form of signals that are translated into a physical action as if trying to run away and escape from that unpleasant scene.

The laboratory in London, where I worked as well, proved that the activities of this part of the orbitofrontal cortex increased not only in reaction to visual arts, but also in auditory arts such as music. **[fig.04]**

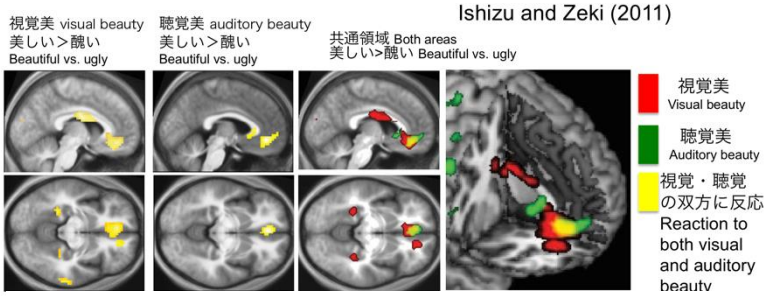


Fig.04 "Beauty" beyond the sensory modalities

This is how we perceive and evaluate in our daily life all kinds of things through various senses – the sense of vision in the case of visual arts, the sense of hearing in the case of music, and the sense of touch in the case of sculpture. Such sensory information is transmitted to the circuit of our desires, and a substance in the brain called dopamine is projected from the depth of the brain to the frontal cortex. That circuit of desires then triggers the circuit of tastes – or in other words, the judgment whether we “like” something, or something “tastes good” – before ultimately reaching the circuit of happiness. This means that, when we view or listen to a work of art or music, and perceive it as beautiful, one may understand that perception of beauty as a source of happiness.

In more recent studies, we have understood that controlling the activity of the prefrontal area by applying electric currents via the scalp with a tDCS device decreases our perception of something as beautiful. **[fig.05]** Test persons were shown artworks, and asked to evaluate their beauty or ugliness. What we proved in this experiment was that only when the functions of the prefrontal area are controlled by way of electricity, the number “beautiful” ratings decreased.

This shows how our perception of “beauty” is prone to influence from a variety of things. It

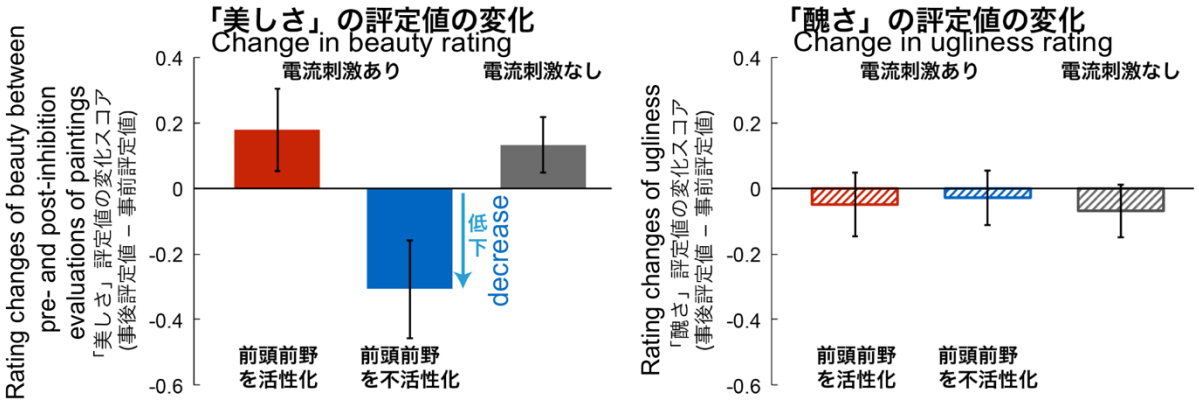


Fig. 05 Changes in our perception of “beauty” caused by controlling the activity of the prefrontal area

even changes when the activity of the brain is externally manipulated, and may also change depending on contexts and various other factors. This is something that I would like to discuss at another occasion.

Various research on the relationship between art appreciation and the human mind

How can art appreciation be beneficial for the human mind? Let me introduce a few things we have found out in the past.

First of all, we conducted research about how aesthetic value can reduce pain. At hospitals one can often hear classical music playing from speakers, and see beautiful paintings on the walls. In this chart, the vertical axis represents the level of pain, and from this we understood that the

pain levels decrease when patients sense beauty in something. **[fig.06]** When measuring brain waves at the same time, brain waves related to the sensation of pain decrease, and it is understood from the relationship between the brain and the mind that the sensation of pain is reduced through the perception of something beautiful.

Apart from such studies of the brain, there are studies according to which the contact with works of art results in an increased feeling of life satisfaction and health. What is important is the sensation of such contact with works of art or music. Even without actual contact, heightening the sensation of being engrossed in art, or the awareness of viewing art alone is considered to help increase one's feelings of life satisfaction and health as well. It has been observed in tests that participants' feelings of life satisfaction and health after repeated sessions of art appreciation were in all cases higher than prior to their contact with artworks.

Other studies focus on the reduction of anxiety and the increase of happiness through art appreciation at museums. It is understood that viewing works of art at a museum improves the quality of emotions of elderly persons.

What is not sufficiently covered in such research, however, is the degree, the question to what extent these things work. There is more research focusing on quality than on quantitative factors, and from a scientific point of view, I would say it is necessary also to determine also quantitatively to what extent and in what kind of process something is improved or increased.

The importance of viewer-interactive art appreciation

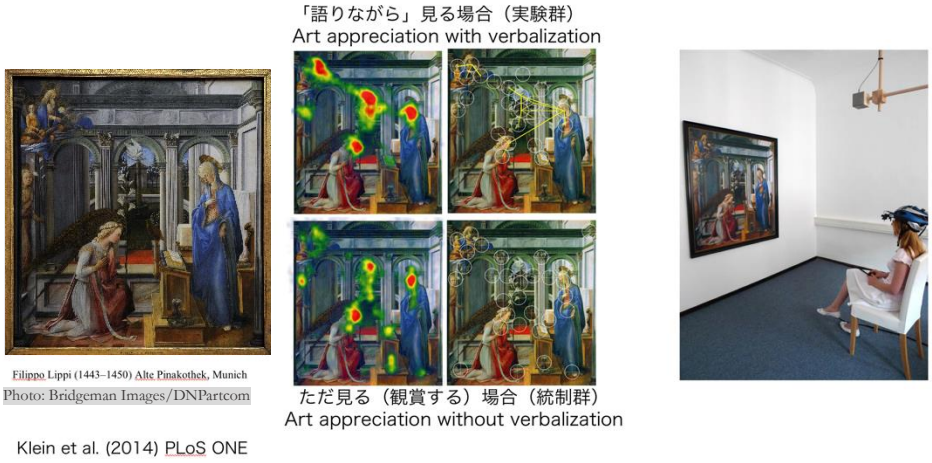


Fig.06 The effects of verbalization in art appreciation on our viewing behavior

In their joint workshops, the Ateneum and DNP presently conduct trials with viewer-interactive art appreciation methods aimed to improve the cognitive functions of elderly persons. But why exactly is interactive appreciation necessary? When visiting an art museum, one may as well view

the works on display silently by oneself. However the meaning of the interactive appreciation style has become obvious through various studies.

This is the result of an experiment conducted by my colleagues from the University of Vienna’s research team. **[Fig.06]** The slides on the bottom represent the pattern of just viewing, while the upper two slides show the pattern of viewing while verbalizing one’s thoughts on the paintings. In this next example, the one at the top is viewing while talking, while the lower one is just viewing. **[Fig.07]** This shows how appreciating art while verbalizing one’s thoughts enables the viewer to look at paintings while connecting the “objects” and “events” expressed in them. It is further considered to enable viewers to develop a stronger awareness of the way they look at artworks, and a better understanding of their own awareness. In addition, especially for understanding abstract paintings, giving verbal instructions is also considered to be efficient.

Photo: Bridgeman Images/DNPartcom

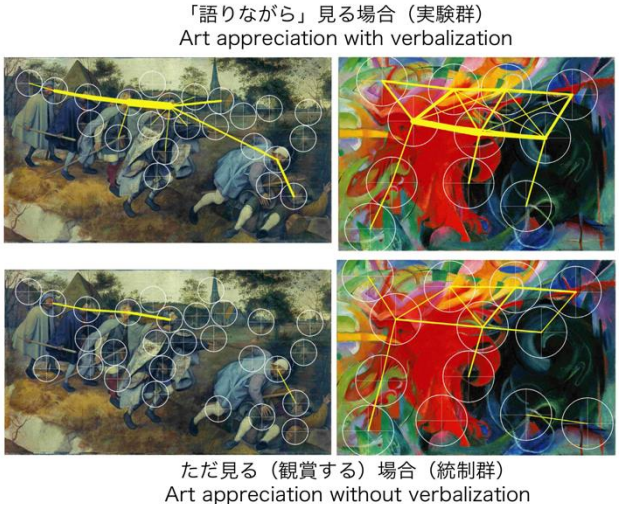


Fig.07 The effects of verbalization in art appreciation on our viewing behavior（Klein et al. 2014）

As has been found out in recent studies, not only interaction but also the position of displayed artworks plays a role, whereas the aesthetic value and sense of comprehension especially of abstract paintings is higher when the paintings are positioned above eye level than when they are below eye level.

These are examples of the various research that is being conducted about the importance of interaction in the appreciation of art, whereas it has been shown how art appreciation that involves verbal interaction enables us to combine our perception, recognition and emotion when looking at works of art, explain the improvement of participants’ working memory, and develop problem solving skills and critical thinking. In other words, the verbalization of art appreciation is considered to be stimulating improvements of various cognitive functions and better understanding. Recent studies have shown that this also leads to an improvement of our attention ability, which again possibly results in an improvement of various cognitive and memory functions. The “training” of viewing art can thus influence various other cognition processes in positive ways. There are also studies that suggest the importance of attention based on examinations of the influence that the training of musical, dance or other performance has on memory. Some studies focusing on the improvement of the cognitive abilities of patients with such cognitive disorders as

dementia or Alzheimer's disease have shown that art appreciation can in some cases contribute to the improvement of cognitive functions. I will come back to this later, however at this point the mechanisms of such improvement are largely unknown.

Quantitive problems

To what extent the interposition of art appreciation can contribute to the improvement of cognitive functions in quantitative terms is yet to be fully clarified. The quantitative level is the central question. Regarding the measurement of dementia, depression or anxiety, there do exist quantitative values, but at this point there are no measurements that indicate in quantitative terms how those patients have changed.

Even if quantitative data have been collected, previous studies have yielded little result in terms of such things as significant statistical differences before and after the interposition. In the investigation of art appreciation programs, the concrete measurement of approaches is difficult, and requires exploratory effort. In the realm of music, there seems to be increasing research about "interactive" tools for facilitating active participation, fun, empowerment and creativity in music.

In such experiments, it is important to bear in mind that there exist differences between observing works of art in a laboratory and viewing art at a museum. When comparing the behavior of viewing art in a laboratory and at a museum by measuring the time people spend looking at the artworks and reading the accompanying explanatory labels in each setting, and adding both values to determine the total duration of the appreciation process in each case, previous results have shown that people look at works of art in a laboratory for a shorter period of time than they do in a museum. Furthermore, the higher people rate a piece of art, the longer they tend to look at it, whereas it has turned out that, in the laboratory, people spend more time reading the explanatory notes.

As we see, we may have to be careful as to how to handle data collected in such different situations as being shown artworks in a laboratory, and viewing works in an appropriate museum setting.

Ways and meaning of artistic approaches to cognitive disorders

Up to this point I talked mainly about the appreciation of art, but there are in fact quite a lot of creative approaches to dementia and other cognitive disorders that focus on making artworks. Here the creation of artworks contributes in different ways to the social and mental happiness of patients with cognitive disorders, giving them passion, self-confidence and joy. Social contacts are increased, and depressive disorders reduced. It is also known that such activities help rouse the

attention of dementia patients who usually have difficulties paying attention for a longer period of time. We have come to know that the appreciation of art is also effective in cases of cognitive disorders.

Also regarding art appreciation, museums around the world are implementing programs for patients with cognitive disorders, whereas especially the program of New York's MoMA has been receiving a lot of attention. The program is based on the so-called VTS (Visual Thinking Strategy). This interactive appreciation method is built around the following three questions.

1. **What's going on in this picture?**
2. **What do you see that makes you say that?**
3. **What more can you find?**

Based on these three questions, facilitators and patients engage in dialogues while looking at artworks. The VTS method is currently applied in more than 60 countries around the world, and also here in Japan it is gradually becoming popular.

Improving the "cognitive functions" of elderly persons through viewer-interactive art appreciation

In our approach targeting elderly persons, we did not apply this VTS method, but three other elements that are part of viewer-interactive art appreciation. The first is an educational style, in which the facilitator unilaterally explains works of art. The second is a dialogue style in which we asked questions similar to those in VTS, such as "What is depicted?" and "Why do you think so?" In this dialogue the facilitator and participants focus on external aspects. The third element is an original style we call "Emotion Focusing." Asking participants how a work makes them feel, and why it does so, the focus in this introspective dialogue with the facilitator is on what happens in the viewers' minds. In each of these three different approaches – educational, external dialogue and emotion focusing – participants in our project looked at artworks together with a facilitator.

These workshops were targeting senior citizens over 60. various neurocognitive domains that form criteria for dementia, Alzheimer's or other neurological disorders have recently become known, whereas the so-called executive functions are especially important for maintaining our mental and cerebral health in life. These executive functions reflect especially the activity of the frontal lobe functions, and are absolutely necessary for our social activity.

We conducted the workshops three times with the same participants, and before, during and after each session we examined how their executive functions changed in the course of the workshop. For this we applied the two major evaluation methods of "n-back tasks" and "stroop tasks." These help us understand how such things as the functions of memory and attention, as well as mental flexibility change.

What we understood through n-back and stroop tasks

There are various types of n-back tasks, and here I will explain the n-back task we applied in our studies.

On the display, the Japanese *hiragana* character "え" appears first, followed by "0." After that, every time "0" comes up, participants must answer what *hiragana* character appeared on the display along with it, so in this case, when "0" appears, participants press the "え" button. The computer then gives the evaluation "good." Next is the pair "お" and "1." This time, whenever "1" comes up, participants must answer what character came before that, which in this case was "え." In short, in the 0-back task participants answer what they see in that round, while in the 1-back task they remember what they saw in the previous round. Accordingly, the 2-back task goes two steps back, the 3-back task three steps, and so on, so in each case participants must pay careful attention and

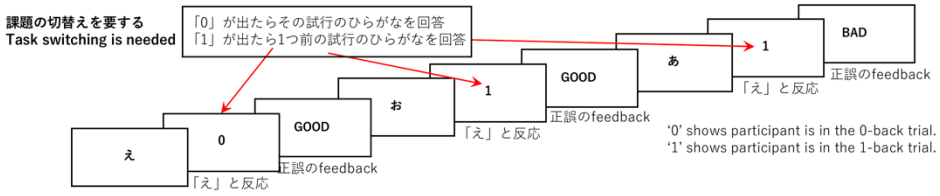


Fig.08 The n-back task in our studies

judge whether they have to answer what they see at the moment, or what they saw in one of the previous rounds. This is the n-back task method. **[Fig.08]** The bigger the "n" number gets, the harder it is for the participants to answer correctly, so along with a decline of the rate of correct answers, reaction times increase.

The various data we temporarily store in our memory we refer to as working memory, and the n-back task method is frequently applied in order to measure the capacity of this working memory. For example, it happens that we want to buy something and go to the supermarket, but once we get there, we don't remember what we wanted to buy. In our daily life activities we are required to constantly monitor whether something is stored in that buffer in our brain, and it often happens that things slip from our memory. One of the purposes of the n-back task is to shed light on such functions of our brain.

When comparing Parkinsons' patients and healthy persons, Parkinson patients clearly need more time, and their rate of correct answers declines. Studies with Alzheimer's and general dementia patients have shown that also in their cases the working memory function is lower compared to that of healthy test persons.

In the cases of elderly persons and dementia patients, the cerebral activity that governs the memory is weakened, the activated area of the brain is smaller than in the case of young people, and the amount of activity decreases, which is considered to be impairing the memory. The test

results of elderly persons are in fact worse than those of younger people, which becomes more notable the bigger the “n” number gets.

In our experiment, we applied the 0-back and 1-back tasks in each of the three workshop sessions. When comparing the results, we found that the outcomes of the emotion focusing sessions suggested a possible improvement of participants’ performances in the 1-back task.
The other evaluation method we applied is that of the stroop task. **[Fig.09]** This is a test that focuses on the colors of displayed characters, whereas the character for “red” for example can be red or blue, so the question here is whether or not meanings and colors are identical. In our three workshop sessions, we applied this stroop task method to observe how reaction times and the rate of correct answers change in either case. As a result, we saw that reaction times increase in cases where the colors of characters did not match their meanings.

This stroop task is one reference method that has been frequently applied in studies with dementia and Alzheimer’s patients. The differences in reaction times between matching and non-matching cases were again different when comparing the results of young and elderly persons. In cases of patients with moderate cognitive disorders and patients with Alzheimer’s disease, reaction times were yet longer, so as a result of this experiment we understood that they need additional time for the attention switchover.

The area from the frontal lobe to the parietal lobe of the brain is considered to play a role here, and studies have shown that the range of activity of this area gets narrower with increasing age. In other words, the function of our brain changes as we get older, which is reflected in the times that test persons needed for the stroop task.

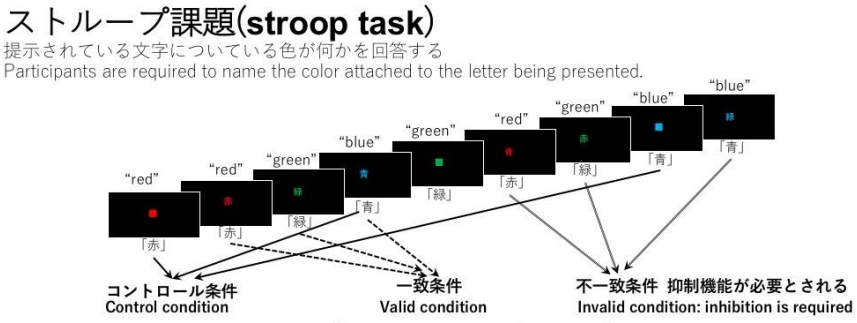


Fig. 09 The stroop task

Conclusion

What kinds of things do we place importance on in daily life, and in life in general? We spend time and money on various forms of capital, which can roughly be divided into the following four types. Economic capital accumulated through economic power and savings; social capital built through personal relationships and trust; cultural assets based on cultural grounding and consumption; and

finally, aesthetic capital for making ourselves appear attractive. Among these, art museums fall in the category of cultural assets. In my current studies, I have come to understand that people that commit themselves especially to the acquisition of cultural and social capital tend to have greater mental resilience.

The aim of this joint project focusing on art appreciation in the aging society is to research and develop appreciation methods that stimulate the viewers' feelings of happiness by improving their cognitive functions. In the future, I would also like to investigate how different ways of appreciating art reflect different individual characteristics.

Workshops in Japan and Finland

Ms. Satu Itkonen, Head of public programs, Ateneum Art Museum/Finnish National Gallery

Ms. Mina Tanaka, Dai Nippon Printing Co., Ltd.

Workshops for elderly persons

Tanaka:

I work at Dai Nippon Printing, and I am one of those who participated in the joint research activities with Dr. Kawabata and the staff of the Ateneum Art Museum.

I was in charge of the workshop in Japan, and together with Satu Itkonen from the Ateneum in Finland, we spent a total of about one year from the planning stage to the implementation and analysis of results.

Itkonen:

I work at Ateneum Art Museum as head of public programs.

We have been doing this work for one year, and my team is n charge of organizing workshops at Ateneum.

Tanaka:

Today I would like to talk especially about how the respective workshops in Japan and Finland were conducted in concrete terms.

The aim of these workshops was to find out what kinds of appreciation methods are most effective for elderly participants.

Participants were divided into three groups of four participants each. As Dr. Kawabata just explained, there were three kinds of workshops – Educational Style, External Dialogue Style and Emotion Focusing Style, whereas the first group did three sessions of the Educational Style, the second one three sessions of the External Dialogue Style, and the third group three sessions of the Emotion Focusing Style workshop.

The same workshops were done in Japan and Finland. The Japanese venue was a showroom in the DNP building, while the workshop in Finland was held at Ateneum Art Museum, so the environments were slightly different.

In addition to these art appreciation workshops, we also conducted interviews and a cognitive test before and after the first and the third session of each workshop.

In the interviews we asked the participants various questions related to their feeling of happiness, their degree of satisfaction in life, and their social relationships.

We did three different types of cognitive tests using tablet PCs.

As we heard from Dr. Kawabata, the Education Style workshops were mainly the facilitator's explanations of artworks, with only a short Q&A section at the end.

The External Dialogue Style workshop revolved around on art appreciation in a more interactive way, as the facilitator encouraged participants to talk about what they were seeing in the artworks.

The Emotion Focusing Style workshop was conducted in an interactive style as well the focus here was on the thoughts and feelings the artworks shown aroused in the participants.

In both the External Dialogue Style and the Emotion Focusing Style workshops, the participants were given very short general information regarding titles, artists and backgrounds at the end.

The three types of workshops were basically conducted in the same manner in Japan and Finland. In the following account we will review the sessions in Japan and Finland respectively.

Similarities and differences between Japan and Finland

Tanaka:

The participants are healthy persons between 65-75 years old. In Japan we recruited through market research participants from the general public that didn't need any particular knowledge about art.

Itkonen:

In Finland we hand-picked some people, but most came to us via the Ateneum Facebook page. So I think those people were already interested in art, and they knew about Ateneum Art Museum.

Tanaka:

So there were slightly different types of participants in Japan and Finland.

Regarding artworks, we selected four paintings from four categories – Portrait, Landscape, Story-telling and Abstract – for each workshop. All paintings were selected from the realm of modern art, whereas we tried to choose works that easily elicit conversation.

Itkonen:

It was very hard work to choose the paintings of course, but we tried to have paintings that would be also displayed in our collection exhibition, so that people could see the real artworks after the workshops if they wanted.

Tanaka:

In Japan we conducted the workshops at a different venue so we didn't have the real artworks. We selected the works from the National Museum of Western Art and the National Museum of Modern Art Tokyo. We felt that the Japanese participants were not familiar with any of the selected paintings. In Finland I believe all works were selected from the Ateneum Art Museum, and I think the Finnish participants were very familiar with many of them.

Itkonen:

That is true. Some of the works were very iconic Finnish paintings, and some of them the participants already knew since they were children.

Tanaka:

We'd like to introduce some of the paintings we used in the third workshop.

The one on the left is the workshop in Japan, the right one the workshop in Finland. These two are from the "Portrait" category. The first one is a painting titled *Digitales* by Paul Ranson. Because this was the third workshop, we selected a slightly different style of portrait compared to the first and second workshops.

We thought this decorative work with plants reflected Japanese styles as observed in the West at the end of the 19th century.

Itkonen:

On the right is a painting titled *Artist Fahle Basilier* by Antti Favén. We chose this picture because we thought that this might be rather "classic with a twist," as one of our slogans says. His gesture is very strong, and we thought that might evoke many readings from people. This was very famous, people were talking a lot about this painting, so we thought that this would raise conversation.

Tanaka:

These are from the second category, "Story-telling." The left one is *On The Boat* by Claude Monet. Impressionist painters are really popular in Japan, so we thought the participants might be familiar with this one. It depicts a scene from a boating party, and we thought it might be easy to imagine the story before and after this scene, and maybe feel the time and the season.

Itkonen:

On the right side you see Hugo Simberg's painting *The Wounded Angel*. How many of you know this painting? Can you raise your hands? Yes, all Finnish people do actually. It's the most famous Finnish painting I guess. It has been selected to be one of the most blunt paintings in Finland, and it was also a challenge to take it with us. We wanted to do it because the artist didn't ever

want to explain the painting, so it has a mysterious thing going on. People see it very differently, and it was familiar to everybody. I think there was a good conversation about this painting.

Tanaka:

These are from the "Landscape" category. This work is called *Bridge in Y-City* by Shunsuke Matsumoto. One can see a river, a bridge, and a factory – everyone will know this kind of scenery, so we thought it might look familiar and evoke some conversation.

Itkonen:

The artist of the painting on the right side is Fanny Churberg, a very early, kind of modern painter in Finland. It is not so clear to see what is happening here, but when you go closer you can see it. It's not very big. It's nice that there is something that you can recognize. There is also something where you begin to wonder. It's a good artwork when it makes you wonder and gives you a challenge.

Tanaka:

These are from the fourth category, "Abstract." The work used in Japan is *Fawn* by Shinsen Tokuoka. This is one of the signature paintings of modern art in Japan. It is in textbooks of art, and we thought it would inspire people to imagine freely because of its simple structure, with a simplified fawn on a simple background.

Itkonen:

On the right side is a painting by Sam Vanni, it's called *Polydimensional Space*. I remember you were with us in the workshop, and you said, "Are they going to talk about it?" There was in fact a huge and lively discussion, people were wondering, what is this space, what is happening there? It was great to begin with because it inspired some conversation.

Tanaka:

When I first saw this picture I didn't understand what was drawn there.

To wrap up the matter of artworks, we think that selecting the right works for a workshop is very important. Some works are better in this sense than others. Why do you think this is so?

Itkonen:

Of course these paintings we chose, we have been working with a lot in the museum, so we have the experience that some artworks just evoke conversation. So it's about experience, but I also think that there has to be something familiar, some small things where you can say "This looks familiar to me, this is something that I can understand." And also some challenge. Those kinds of pictures work better.

Tanaka:

The second point is, I thought that many of the Japanese participants were not so familiar with any of the selected paintings, so they were pleased to have the opportunity to encounter new paintings. I heard that the Finnish participants in all groups commented that the last workshop had the most interesting artworks.

Itkonen:

Yes, that is interesting. The paintings were the most interesting of course, but also the participants had been meeting each other two times, so the third time we were talking together they were already familiar with the space and everything, and used to the situation. So the participants had "warmed up" for this third meeting.

Facilitators

Fig.01

Tanaka:

The pictures in the top row show the facilitators in Japan [Fig.01 (upper)]. On the left is Ms. Inoue, who facilitated the Educational Style workshop. She is actively working as a volunteer guide at the National Museum of Western Art and National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo. In the center is Dr. Kawabata. He facilitated the Emotion Focusing Style group. On the right is Ms. Terashima, who is working at the National Museum of Western Art as head of the education section. She facilitated the External Dialogue Style workshop.

Itkonen:

I facilitated the External Dialogue group in Finland. The other two were lead by our very experienced guide and visual artist Ms Marjo Levlin, who works in our museum as a part time workshop leader [Fig.01 (bottom)] .

Tanaka:

I think that the facilitators all did very well in the workshops. We used large display monitors to show images of the paintings.

Project 1

In the workshops in Japan, the participants were a little stiff in the beginning, but they gradually got used to the workshop, and were much more relaxed in the second and third session. The participants in Finland seemed to be quite familiar with workshops in general.

Itkonen:

They came to the workshop via our Facebook page, so I think they were already into art, some of them being artists themselves. So it was more natural for them to talk about art because they were already our "friends."

Tanaka:

In Japan, the participants were thinking carefully, but often had a hard time articulating their thoughts. We had to help them express their impressions, especially in the Emotion Focusing group, but they became much more fluent eventually. It seemed that the Finnish participants talked very well, what do you think?

Itkonen:

Yes, I think so. They were already friends to the museum, friends of art, and they all enjoyed going to museums in the first place. There was a lot of talking from the beginning.

Tanaka:

In Japan, the participants found it especially hard to discuss the abstract paintings at the first workshop. How was it in Finland?

Itkonen:

Yes, they talked also about abstract paintings from the very beginning.

Tanaka:

In the Educational Style workshop we didn't expect much talk from the participants, and it was in fact only Q&A, but in Finland, once the Q&A started, the participants made their remarks really actively.

Itkonen:

They did, that's true.

Tanaka:

In Japan, we found that the participants were trying to answer the facilitators' questions seriously.

Itkonen:

In Finland I think they were talking, commenting and referring a lot also to each other.

Tanaka:

So even if they didn't know the correct answer, they tried to talk…

Itkonen:

Yes, they were kind of "thinking aloud," so they often said things like "I don't know, but I think…"

Tanaka:

As we heard, the participants in Finland also talked to each other, whereas in Japan the conversations tended to take place only between the facilitators and the paticipants.

Workshop results

Tanaka:

Basically the number of Positive Words in the participants' comments depended on the artworks. As a general trend in both countries, Positive Words from participants increased gradually in the course of the three workshop sessions.

So we talked about differences, but there were also common points between both countries. I think the participants were affected by other participants' comments, and they showed empathy toward other participants. By using phrases like "as you said…" or "me too," they often expressed that they liked other participants' opinions.

Itkonen:

Yes, and often it is not only the things that they speak, but also the body language that was very telling.

Tanaka:

Through the interviews we conducted about the level of happiness, all participants were found to be economically, physically and mentally happy. The participants from Finland were particularly happy with their relationships with their families and friends. At the end of the last workshop, many participants told us they felt sad that the workshop was over, so we think they were very happy and enjoyed the workshop.

Itkonen:

Yes, we saw it from the beginning that those people were very committed. They were very eager to come, and they were always there. I think they really did enjoy it.

Tanaka:

As Dr. Kawabata mentioned, we conducted a cognitive test. This test was for some participants a big challenge in the beginning. But once they got used to it, and they saw they did better than last time, they looked very pleased. Some of them happily reported that they did better than the first time.

Itkonen:

Yes, we did something after the workshops and the research was over. We asked our three groups whether they would like to come to the museum for a private viewing with only their group and our director, Susanna Pettersson, for one hour before the museum opened. Many of them came, and we just looked at the actual paintings that we have in the museum. So they saw the real artworks, and were sometimes surprised how big they were in reality. It was a "volunteer" kind of thing for them, and they actually received some kind of "prize" for their volunteer work and doing the workshops.

Tanaka:

To wrap up the reports, the participants enjoyed all styles of workshops and artworks. We think the selection of artworks is very important, and we saw that the participants found it interesting to listen to other people's opinions and impressions.

We heard that the guide in Finland told you something?

Itkonen:

Yes. She is very experienced in her work, and she told us that in the Emotion Focusing Style workshop she felt that she was learning something – that she could trust people more and ask them about their feelings. It was a new method for her, and a learning experience for us as a museum also, so it was a nice comment from her.

Tanaka:

What I found most impressive was that people take pleasure in improving themselves at any age. Some of the participants looked very happy when they did better compared to their previous results in the cognitive test.

So we have to work hard to brush up our methods of running workshops in order to help more people enjoy their extended life.

Itkonen:

I'm just so eager to see where this goes from here, because we still have lots of work to do. So to see what happens next is going to be very exciting.

[Project 1] Q&A

Question 1:

I would like to ask a question to Dr. Kawabata related to these tests. When talking about the effects of looking at a painting for example, how are you seeing the possible time spans, such as the time spent looking at the painting, or the time after which effects could be observed – immediately or at a later point for example?

Kawabata:

The results in this test of the participants' memory that was done one month after the workshop were better than in the previous one.

In the interviews after the end of the workshop, I remember that some participants talked about how they have come to pay attention to this and that when looking at artworks, so the way they look at art while trying out different approaches for themselves has definitely changed. Even though it's still only at a preliminary stage, I think we can say that these results possibly reflect some kind of transformation in the way people look at art, especially toward a style focusing on their own feelings. However, we don't know how such things will show another half or one year later, and at this point we cannot assess the immediacy of these effects, so we are aware that will have to make further examinations in this respect.

Question 2:

I think my question will go to Dr. Kawabata as well. The target group of this project are senior citizens, but considering that it is generally about the function of the brain, I think the target group could also include also children and other younger people with handicaps or otherwise limited brain functions. Are you planning to expand the target group of your project in the future?

Kawabata:

I imagine that the same method could indeed work also with children or handicapped people, but for now the idea is to start by developing art appreciation programs that work properly with elderly people in particular. However the program will unmistakably function in the same way also with elementary school or even preschool students, so I do see a possibility that we team up with some other department of DNP for such projects in the future.

Question 3:

Regarding the way people view art in Finland and Japan, it appears to me that there are significant differences in terms of both education and definition between both countries. According to your presentation, many of the participants (in Finland) had been familiar with art from an early age, and many of them were art fans that often visit museums in the first place, but the question is how this works in Japan. To what extent people come in contact with art while they are children certainly is a crucial point in this respect. You talked about cognitive tests, but I think that, rather than the function of the brain when looking at art, the question to what extent one manages to connect to the unconscious realm of depth psychology is quite essential, and it seems that people who have been watching art from an early age can easily access this domain. I would like to hear Ms. Itkonen's thoughts in this respect.

Itkonen:

Yes, absolutely. It's so important that people have the possibility to familiarize with art from a very early age. But knowing terribly little about education in Japan, I cannot compare. We try to bring children very early to the museums, and I have seen this happen in Japan, too. I have made wonderful experiences at Japanese museums.

Question 4:

Depending on the definition of education, the facilitators' questions to the participants must have been completely different as well. I would like to ask Ms. Tanaka how this matter – different education resulting in different ways of interrogation – played a role in the way you approached this project.

Tanaka:

The project was an experiment, so the level of the participants' education in art was not an issue this time. The idea was to observe what kind of response we get from different types of participants when asking them the same questions in the same settings and styles. The participants' ability to answer the question was different depending on their art education, but that's a different story. Generally speaking, our focus was on the fact that they engaged in lively discussions and conversations, so we didn't pay much attention to whether some of them exhibited their knowledge or talked a lot because they had been familiar with paintings for a long time.

Itkonen:

Yes, and we told those people in Finland from the beginning that they didn't have to know anything about art. So it was important that you would just come in and be yourself without any other requirements.

Question 5:

My question goes again to Dr. Kawabata. As you have been pointing out, verbalization makes the appreciation of art much more efficient, and I think the workshops actually proved that. So far it has only been about the effect of expressing one's thoughts in words and discussing them with others, but I would like to know if the scope of your research includes also verbalization through text, by writing one's feelings down. And if it does, I would like to know whether you have come to any conclusion regarding if and how speaking and writing down one's thoughts and feelings is different, and which is better in terms of enhancing the effect of art appreciation.

Kawabata:

As this was a program aimed to improve people's cognitive ability, we chose an interactive form of art appreciation. The viewer-interactive art appreciation this time was carried out between one facilitator and four participants each, divided into Educational, External Dialogue and Emotion Focusing style workshops.

For each of these workshops, we had questions prepared beforehand, so we knew what we were going to ask, and then it was all about what the participants would reply, and how they would express their thoughts and feelings in words. Conversations gradually developed in that process, as the participants listened to what the others said, compared those statements with their own ideas, and eventually formulate their thoughts in words again.

It's a process in which the participants are required to store the things they want to express in their minds, and have that working memory ready when it's their turn to speak. Our idea is that this is supposed to be a process in which people's working memory is trained and improved.

To have them write their thoughts down may be another valuable method, whereas this would mean that they express their own feelings first and foremost, so this method may result in a greater variety of expressed emotions. In this sense, having participants view artworks and write their feeling down by themselves may yield positive results as well, albeit this would probably work in a different direction than the interactive style we applied in our project.

We are currently in the middle of examining in various ways the statements that came up in the workshops, but it would be good if we had the opportunity to come back to this subject in the future.

(From the left side) Dr.Kawabata, Ms.Itkonen, Ms.Tanaka

[Project 2]

Nordic *Japonisme* and Modernism in Finland and Sweden 1900-1970

Anne-Maria Pennonen, **Curator at Ateneum Art Museum/Finnish Natonal Gallery**

My name is Anne-Maria Pennonen. I work as a curator for exhibitions at the Ateneum Art Museum, and I am also the project leader for our new exhibition project that I am going to tell you about.

I am very happy to be here today and talk to you about this new exhibition project we have. Our exhibition team includes also our museum director, Susanna Pettersson, and my colleague Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff, who is chief curator for exhibitions.

First of all I want to point out that the title of my presentation and the new exhibition we are planning, "Nordic *Japonisme* and Modernism in Finland and Sweden 1900-1970," is only a temporary working title.

Nordic design and lifestyle are very popular today. If we think of such a company as Ikea, selling interior decoration and furniture, which is designed in Sweden but sold worldwide, what is considered typical of Nordic design? What are Nordic aesthetic values?

Here we usually talk about the practicality of products, and the simplicity of form and color. More precisely, everyday life and simple, geometric forms are words used to describe Nordic design. Moreover, nature often serves as a source of inspiration. Very often these values and ideas apply to fine arts as well. But where do these ideas come from? When were they found? Why did artists choose them?

In my presentation today I will discuss the following topics, and at the same time try to answer some of these questions.

First I will talk about our previous exhibition, "Japanomania in the Nordic Countries 1875-1918," to give some background information.

Secondly, I will tell you how the Mingei movement, the Japan Folk Craft Museum, and one if its founders, Soetsu Yanagi, inspired us while developing the concept for this new exhibition.

And finally, I will discuss some of the themes we would like to include both in the exhibition catalogue and in the actual exhibition itself, and I will also introduce some of the Finnish artists.

On the "Japanomania in the Nordic Countries 1875-1918" exhibition

In 2016, we arranged the exhibition "Japanomania in the Nordic Countries 1875-1918" at the Ateneum Art Museum. It explored the first wave of Japanese influence on Western art and design, especially in the Nordic countries.

The exhibition revolved, to a great extent, around the idea of the phenomenon of Japonisme, and how Japanese arts and crafts – woodcuts in particular – impacted Western art, and in this case, especially Nordic art and design.

It displayed a large variety of objects ranging from woodcuts, *kat*a*gami*, oil paintings, pottery and textiles, to mass-produced postcards.

This exhibition was in fact the first to shed light on the development of the early stages of Japonisme in the Nordic countries to such a large extent. It was based on research work carried out during about four years as a cooperative project between national galleries in Finland, Norway and Denmark. In the beginning, the Swedish National Museum was also involved, but they dropped out after some time.

Inspired by its success, we started to redevelop the idea, since we realized that the Japanese influence and the Japonisme phenomenon in the West did not stop there, but it has actually continued until today.

The exhibition was a great success in Helsinki, Oslo and Copenhagen, where it was on display. This new exhibition continues where the previous one ended. To our mind, however, new aspects and points of view have to be discovered and invented for this new exhibition. Thus, we extended its scope, and this time aim to show how East Asian art and design – including of course Japanese – continued to influence Nordic art and design until 1970.

Soetsu Yanagi and the Mingei movement

I will continue with the second topic, and talk about the Mingei movement and how it has inspired us to develop the concept for the new exhibition.

As a result of the first wave of Japonisme after 1900, European artists' knowledge and understanding of Japanese culture grew. Consequently, many artists became more interested in Eastern cultures in general, and some of them travelled to Japan, China and Korea. This was also the case in Finland.

On their travels, European artists made acquaintance with the aesthetic values of Japan, China and Korea, and started to appreciate the beauty of daily life and common everyday objects. In addition, they started to take interest in Buddhist thought as well.

These influences, nonetheless, did not work only in one direction – meaning that European artists were travelling to the East and bringing the influences to the West.

Japanese artists and craftsmen started to travel to Europe, and brought influences from the West to the East. Here the founder of the Japanese Mingei movement, art critic and philosopher, Soetsu Yanagi plays an important role.

In this context, as for the concept of the new exhibition, I would like to point out a few things concerning Yanagi that have been important sources of inspiration for us.

Yanagi founded the Japan Folk Crafts Association together with the potters Shoji Hamada and Kanjiro Kawai in 1926, in order to protect and promote traditional crafts. The guiding spirit of the movement, Yanagi coined in 1925 the term *mingei* to refer to the "art of the common class." For him, it included such objects of daily life as clothes, furniture, tableware and writing implements, and represented rural handicrafts as opposed to the "arts of aristocracy."

Yanagi's interest in *mingei* is understood to have started on his trip to Korea in 1916, where Korean artefacts and handicrafts attracted his attention.

According to Dr. Yuko Kikuchi, a researcher on Yanagi and the Mingei movement, Yanagi himself emphasized the originality of his Mingei theory and its independence from any precedents, such as Japanese tea masters or the English Arts and Crafts movement – the ideas of John Ruskin and William Morris – as well as European Modernists. William Morris is known for promoting the reunification of the roles of a craftsman and an artist. He also thought about how the craftsman, artist and apprentice should make products together.

Nevertheless, we can say that Yanagi was the guiding spirit of the movement very much in the same way as William Morris had been for the Arts and Crafts movement in England at the end of the 19th century.

At the same time, the ideas of the Belgian architect, designer and artist Henry van de Velde, who was related to Belgian Art Nouveau, inspired another Belgian designer and artist, Alfred William Finch, who moved to Finland in 1897 to establish the Iris pottery factory together with the Swedish artist, architect and designer, Louis Sparre. However the factory operated only for about 5 years, 1897-1902.

Interestingly enough, when Yanagi was developing his ideas on the Japanese craftspeople and their position, the German architect Walter Gropius was outlining his ideas on craftsmanship for the

Bauhaus proclamation. Its aim was to remove the division between fine and applied arts. In addition, it was essential to learn by doing. Bauhaus – here we have a picture of the building in Dessau, Germany – was also active in Weimar, and all in all it operated from 1919 until 1933.

Now back to Yanagi. He studied Zen Buddhism, and he constantly talked about the spontaneous and the anonymous. Thus, he also stressed that, if a craftsman was comfortable with his medium, he made things freely and spontaneously.

As for the anonymous, Yanagi emphasized how Japanese craftspeople traditionally did not sign their work.

Based on his skills, a craftsman was able to make simple, useful and beautiful objects effortlessly. Nonetheless, according to the researcher Elisabeth Frolet, Yanagi's ideas may have both Western and Asian origins, and this is important as well.

Bilateral cultural dialogue

Now I would like to address what is really interesting for our exhibition project.

In 1929, Yanagi travelled to Europe, and on that trip he visited the Nordic Museum in Stockholm, Sweden. The Nordic Museum is the largest cultural museum in Sweden, founded by Artur Hazelius, who started collecting items already in 1872.

For Yanagi, it was the world's finest museum of rural line that paid tribute to woodworking, metalworking, dyeing and weaving, as well as pottery.

Therefore, Yanagi and his travel companion decided to model their museum in the same way. It was a question of quality and refinement rather than quantity.

What is important here is the fact that the ideals of craftsmanship and simple life were shared by both Japanese and Nordic artists.

I would also like to point out how Yanagi's visit to the Nordic Museum in Sweden can be seen as an early example of the interplay between the East and the West, which took place in both directions. As I mentioned before, this is one of the core ideas of our exhibition.

In this context, however, it is also important to mention the connections between the Mingei movement and England. Moreover, it is the role of Bernard Leach, who was not only a potter, but also a painter, printmaker, writer, designer and collector, that is important. During his early years, Leach lived in different places in East Asia, and learned to make pottery in Japan. He took special interest in the Japanese tea ceremony and *raku* pottery. Leach was a friend of Yanagi, and the potter Shoji Hamada was his soul mate.

In 1920, Leach and Hamada moved to St. Ives in England, where they founded a pottery studio. This studio is considered the birthplace of British studio pottery, but this is a topic that needs to be studied further.

The concept of the exhibition

Finally, I will discuss the individual themes of the exhibition more closely, and introduce some of the Finnish artists we intend to include.

The concept of the future exhibition explores the beauty of everyday life as depicted in art, design and architecture 1900-1970. This is a long period of time, but it seems to be split into the periods before and after World War II. The four main categories of the exhibition are Space, Light, Silence and Materiality.

Other themes related to these main categories are sensitivity toward nature, nature experience, informalism, ink painting, minimalistic simplification of form and color, geometric forms, fragile/robust, and Buddhism. These themes can be found in both art and design.

Some other themes which could be covered are seasons (winter, spring, things like thaw and snow), Lapland, remote areas, extreme conditions, bare landscape, depictions of modest plants and vegetation, textiles in general, interiors (views of simple spaces and rooms) and simple interior decoration.

Here we have an earlier poster from an exhibition that promoted this idea of beauty of everyday life, which became a real concept actually during the 1920s and after that.

We know that several Finnish artists, designers and architects either visited or were inspired by Japan in the aftermath of the first wave of Japonisme, including such internationally well-known names as the architect Alvar Aalto and the designer Kai Franck. In our exhibition we would like to extend this list much further, and include the following Finnish artists, designers and architects. They did not all travel to Japan or East Asia, but in their art and design they are related to the different themes mentioned before.

- **Painter Helene Schjerfbeck: Silence, sensitivity toward nature, simplification of form and color**
- **Painter Aimo Kanerva: Silence, sensitivity toward nature, nature experience, ink painting**
- **Potter Heidi Blomstedt: Materiality, simplification of form and color**
- **Architect Aulis Blomstedt: Space, simplification of form and color**

- **Potter Kyllikki Salmenhaara, Materiality, fragile/robust**
- **Painter Jaakko Sievänen: Informalism, light, ink painting, calligraphy, spontaneity**
- **Painter Esko Tirronen, Materiality, spontaneity**
- **Painter Ahti Lavonen: Materiality, minimalistic simplification of form and color**

In the same manner as in our earlier exhibition, we intend to display Nordic fine arts and design alongside East Asian artifacts.

We would also like to include Swedish artists and designers in this exhibition, and not only Japanese, but also Korean and Chinese art and artifacts. Therefore, we intend to include about 80 to 100 objects from the collections of the Japan Folk Craft Museum.

At the time, we are looking for a partner museum in Sweden, and wish to include a museum in Britain as well if possible.

Now let me conclude.

With this new exhibition, we would like to emphasize that Japonisme did NOT end in the year 1918, as mentioned in the timeline of our previous exhibition. It has had an impact on Western art and design after that as well, but meanwhile it has just adopted new forms. Moreover, this Eastern influence was not limited to Japan only, but also Korea and China attracted artists' and designers' attention.

One thing we should not forget: Japanese artists and designers started to travel to Europe and the Nordic countries as well. Thus, the interaction took place in both directions.

To finish this presentation, I must say that I am really looking forward to the collaboration with our Japanese partners concerning the exhibition project.

Panel Discussion

Anne-Maria Pennonen, Curator at Ateneum Art Museum/Finnish Natonal Gallery

Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff, Chief Curator at Ateneum Art Museum/Finnish Natonal Gallery

Takashi Sugiyama, General Manger Curator's Department, The Japan Folk Crafts Museum

*Moderator: Susanna Pettersson, Director at Ateneum Art Museum/Finnish Natonal Gallery

What is Mingei?

Moderator:

Now let us move on to the panel discussion on the topic of "Nordic Japanomania II 1900-1970." Next to Ms. Pennonen, our three other panelists in this discussion are Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff, chief curator at the Ateneum Art Museum; Ateneum director Susanna Pettersson, whose lecture we heard in the morning; and Takashi Sugiyama, deputy director of The Japan Folk Crafts Museum (Nihon Mingeikan seq. Mingeikan).

From here I would like to hand the moderation over to Ms. Pettersson.

Pettersson:

I will present the panelists a bit more in detail, and talk a little bit about our aims and objectives as to what we want to achieve while we are discussing. I will tell you about the structure, and then I will give the word to our panelists.

I would like to start with presentations from Mr. Sugiyama, the deputy director of The Mingeikan, and specialist in the history of art and craft – studies on the relationship between modern applied art and the Mingei movement in particular – and museology.

Then we have Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff, chief curator at the Ateneum, and also visiting professor at Coventry University in the UK. Dr. von Bonsdorff is a leading specialist in 19th century Finnish and European art, and has published widely on the subject. Dr. von Bonsdorff curated the first "Japanomania" exhibition, which we had at the Ateneum and was shown also in Oslo and Copenhagen. I'd like to mention that, in the context of this "Japanomania" exhibition, we had the great honor to have professor Akiko Mabuchi, director of the National Museum of Western Art, as our senior advisor, as well as Professor Gabriel Weisberg from the US. That was a wonderful example of global collaboration in terms of expertise.

Our third panelist is Anne-Maria Pennonen, curator of exhibitions at the Ateneum, specializes in 19th century and modern Finnish art. She already worked on the first "Japanomania" show together with Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff.

Now, as you have heard, she is in charge of the forthcoming exhibition project "Nordic Japanomania II" and that will of course be one of the topics of our discussion today.

As for my background, in a nutshell, I am specialized in museum history and collection studies, museology, something that is of common interest. I am also visiting professor at the Reinwardt Academy in the Netherlands, and adjunct professor at one university in Finland.

Now, without further explanation, I would like to say some words about the themes. The starting points, let's say the key words, are connected to the themes of Space, Light, Materiality and Silence that Anne-Maria Pennonen mentioned in her presentation.

What you are witnessing here is a work in progress. We are conducting research for the exhibition in terms of selecting works for the core list. We are working on a publication – Dr. von Bonsdorff is in charge of that – and we are collaborating with Japanese museums. We are very honored to work together with The Mingeikan and Mr. Sugiyama, and also with the Hayama Museum of Modern Art. Their expertise is very important in terms of selecting pieces that represent modern Japanese art for this exhibition. So thank you for your help to both organizations.

We are going to discuss what is especially significant and noteworthy in the respective countries; what we could learn from one another in terms of appreciating everyday aesthetics. We are talking about inspiration, about finding out new things, and we are certainly talking about influences.

This discussion is more or less divided into three parts. We start with materials and forms. Then we move on to design philosophy, and if time allows, talk about design related to the future.

After this introduction, my first question would go to Mr. Takashi Sugiyama as deputy director of The Mingeikan. I would like you to tell us a bit more about the museum's collection that celebrates the best of Japanese folk craft, including especially ceramics and textiles. Mr. Sugiyama would you please tell the audience about the essence and meaning of *mingei* culture?

Sugiyama:

First of all, it is a great pleasure for us at the Mingeikan to be involved in the "Nordic Japanomania II 1900-1970" exhibition. At the same time, we feel a big responsibility.

Let me try to respond to Ms. Pettersson's request by giving a brief explanation of the idea and concept behind *mingei* (folk crafts); who The Mingeikan's founder Soetsu Yanagi was; what kind of museum The Mingeikan is, and what kind of collection it holds.

In recent years there seems to be a boom of Nordic design also here in Japan, where it has been met with great sympathy. When reflecting on the reasons for the popularity of Nordic design in Japan, it must be the simplicity and natural feel, as well as the forms combining beauty and functionality, that strike a chord with the Japanese people.

The general idea seems to be to make articles of daily use more beautiful and enhance the quality of life through design, and this idea is in fact very similar to the Mingei movement's

philosophy of "beauty in everyday life" as proposed by Soetsu Yanagi. To highlight the beauty of everyday life was exactly the goal of the Mingei movement.

Now let me briefly introduce Soetsu Yanagi, and what kind of person he was. Yanagi was born in 1889, and he was active until 1961. Against the backdrop of rapid modernization of the Japanese society in the latter half of the Meiji period, the thinker Soetsu Yanagi proposed his *mingei* concept connecting beauty and everyday life in 1925. He collected and studied numerous craft products in Japan and abroad, discovered through them the world of beauty within the common people's daily life and commodities, and devoted himself to the introduction, preservation and promotion of arts and crafts.

Now if you ask what exactly the beauty of mingei is, Yanagi, having studied various collections, proposed that mingei was about the beauty of the plain and normal, and about natural beauty. It was also about the beauty of good health, the beauty of intimacy, the beauty of anonymity, and the beauty of innocence.

Yanagi considered folkcraft goods to be products of a good heart, and therefore representing true industrial arts – realized through proficient skills, while harnessing the blessings of nature. He further claimed that their extremely plain and functional simplicity was the characteristic feature of folkcraft goods.

Yanagi's Mingei movement was a life culture movement that aimed to highlight the beauty of everyday life, for which Yanagi himself formulated the following three requests.

1. Find true artists – artists that are firmly aware of, and able to realize, the aforementioned "true industrial arts." Concretely speaking, these were artists like Shoji Hamada and Kanjiro Kawai, who were mentioned earlier.

2. Introduce traditional folkcraft articles that are faithfully made in regions across Japan still today. Yanagi defined his own work in the promotion and preservation of such products.

3. Establish a new creative Mingei movement that goes with the times.

Yanagi's work always revolved around these three mottos, whereas the base of his work was The Mingeikan that opened in 1936, 82 years ago, built with great attention to the design of the building itself as a facility that introduces *mingei* and showcases its beauty. It's a small museum, and compared to the scale of the Ateneum Art Museum it may look like an ant next to an elephant, but we hope that visitors appreciate it as a unique and charming little museum.

The Japan Folk Crafts Museum (Nihon Mingeikan)

The Mingeikan's collection is centering around Japanese craft products from the Edo period, collecting mainly items from the time between the late 19th and early 20th century. In regard to *mingei*, the Edo period in Japan was an important time defined by the Edo Shogunate's policy of national seclusion. It was an era of peace that lasted about 250 years, and considering that there were no wars during this period, it certainly was an exceptional period in the course of history of the world at large. As a result, each part of Japan developed its own regional culture and lifestyle. Mingei is the traditional wisdom of life, and the heart and soul of different regions cast in tangible shapes, dwelling in each of which is a unique sense of beauty and design.

Yanagi regarded the Edo period as the golden age of *mingei*, and I would like to introduce some items from The Mingeikan's collection that will show you what the Edo culture was all about.

This is a Mugiwarade rice bowl made in Seto. **[Fig.01]** It's a perfectly ordinary rice bowl that the common people used for their daily meals.

This is an Imari ware soba cup (*choko*). **[Fig.02]** It's a versatile item the was used for eating soba (buckwheat)

Fig. 01

Fig. 02

noodles, or for *mukozuke* side dishes. It is stackable, and therefore also very functional. Soba *choko* are still being used today.

This is a Shigaraki ware tea jar, one of Yanagi's own favorite items. **[Fig.03]** It's an item for storing tea leaves, and it has a very abstract pattern. It's not an intentional design, but this is how the pattern happened to come out.

This is a piece of Tanba cloth woven in Tanba in the Saji region in Hyogo Prefecture. **[Fig.04]** Tanba cloth was used for the common people's everyday clothing, but also for making futons. It's a very beautiful fabric with a splashed pattern.

The next one is called *kaizukushi*, a pattern made up of pictures of all kinds of shells. **[Fig.05]** This pattern was probably used for festive dresses of fishermen celebrating big catches in Chiba Prefecture.

This is a leather *haori* as worn by the leader of the local fire brigade in Edo (the present-day Tokyo). **[Fig.06]** It's a coat made of deerskin, with a graphic pattern using the character "纏" (*matoi*: fireman's standard), and around that, something that looks like bricks piled up, which is probably supposed to show a stairway. I think this is one exquisitely designed item that expresses artisan spirit and Edo style.

Fig. 03

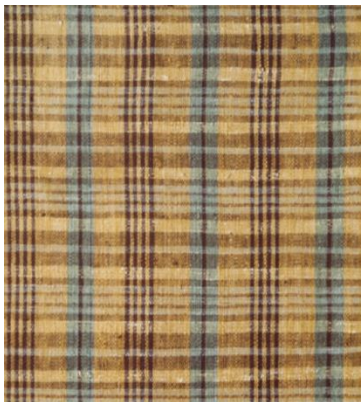


Fig. 04

Fig. 05

Fig. 06

Fig. 07

Fig. 08

This is a *jizaigake*, a hook that was used for suspending (tea) kettles from the ceiling over fireplaces. **[Fig.07]** It's an item that is made by carving a piece of wood, so it combines a very functional beauty and the natural taste and beauty of wood.

This is a cake box that was used in the late Edo period by a confectioner in Kyoto called Kagizen. **[Fig.08]** It's a box decorated with mother-of-pearl that was used for cakes – very beautiful to look at, and convenient to use, and in this sense, I think it's a masterful work that exactly embodies what *mingei* is all about.

These were items from the collection of The Mingeikan, and I hope this introduction serves as a springboard for further discussion.

Pettersson:

Thank you very much, this was a very good introduction to the *mingei* culture. I really love what you said about people's wisdom of living. That's such a nice way to put all of this in one line. I also completely agree that, although the museum is so small, it is really charming, and it is a pleasure to visit your museum every time we are here in Tokyo.

The meanings of simple forms

Pettersson:

Now we move on to the second question, and this would go to Anne-Maria Pennonen. We are discussing the simplicity of forms and the importance of materials. This is something that was really important through the first decades of the 20th century in Finland. We are thinking now of glass, ceramics, etc. Building on your presentation that we just heard, I would like you to explain why that was so, and where the influences really came from. And perhaps if you can also tell something about the most important features.

Pennonen:

Quite a big question… Yes, as I said, the synthesis of art was important here, but if we think of the simple forms, it was a kind of counter act against the decorative arts that had prevailed earlier. So this is perhaps one of the reasons why these artists and designers started to look for inspiration, and for rather simplified forms. Then of course, if we think of the materials, the thing that was very important was that they wanted to use natural and local materials. Potters, for example, wanted to use local clay, and they wanted to find it as close as possible. Local wood was also important, not imported wood.

The simplification of form also served the purpose of making things stackable, as Mr. Sugiyama said. This is of course something that became one of the cornerstones of functionalism. So the functionality of these objects was very important.

I'm now talking about design, because my colleague will talk more about fine arts.

Von Bonsdorff:

Yes, and actually I would like to go back a bit to the end of the 19th century, because it was a movement that came via knowing Japanese art and crafts. It was started by the artists, the painters, and coincides with the idea of the Gesamtkunstwerk, the total work of art. So all these new influences and ideologies came together, for Nordic artists especially. This is why so many painters started to do pottery, design their own houses, and this is how making objects led to a revolution of building a whole life and lifestyle – a new kind of lifestyle that actually took ideas of the old tradition of Nordic peasant life. It's really interesting that they started appreciating that via the Japanese way of living and the role of the Japanese artists. Now I have to emphasize that Nordic artists did not actually travel to Japan at the end of the 19th century. They read manuals, they were highly interested and had that image of Japan in their minds. They thought that would be enough. This is why it did change a bit later on, when they really traveled, and got to know and actually practice art in East Asian countries. This is why the first "Japanomania" was one kind of a project, and the second part is different. Here we have the difference between these two projects.

It really were the painters who wanted to start doing these things. For example, Akseli Gallen-Kallela, the artist Susanna showed here, first started making frames for his paintings, then he went on to make furniture, ceramics, and especially he wanted to learn the woodblock printing technique. He eventually started making woodblock prints as early as in 1895, and the big phenomena of both collecting and making woodblock prints became very popular among all the Nordic artists.

Pettersson:

What you just said about the image, Japan as an "imagined land," is very interesting, because if you think about the time of the "iron curtain" and the Soviet Union, and what happened to all the eastern European countries, they had exactly the same kind of relationship with the western part of the world – through publications, and they had that sort of image of the West that was reproduced in the artworks they made during the night, when they were not doing the propaganda part of the story.

Another thing about the Gesamtkunstwerk was that it was very important for architects. I want to say something about that, because architecture is very much related to the themes of our forthcoming exhibition in terms of space and understanding space.

Thinking about where Finnish artists – and this applies also to Swedish ones – were at the end of the 19th century, they had built their tradition on classical architecture, looking into antique order so to say, and then started utilizing Neo-Gothic and Neo-Renaissance elements –

very decorative styles of earlier centuries. At the very end of the 19th century, the wave of national romanticism swept over, meaning that architects – exactly as you said about artists – became really interested in all art forms. Applied to architects, it meant that they were not only designing buildings, but they also wanted to make sure that for example light fittings would fit to the building. They designed pieces of furniture, textiles, and even pottery. That was very, very interesting as a time of creation, whether we look at if from the perspective of visual artists, craftsmen or architects, because they were all heading for the same goal.

Then, something that Ms. Pennonen already referred to in her presentation was of course functionalism, and what happened in the entire world really, thanks to the new way of thinking that can be pinned down to the sentence, "Form follows function." This means that all decorative elements were stripped off, until only the essence of the form was left, no matter if it was a lamp, a glass, a plate or a building, table, etc.

Then we talk about simplification, we talk about materials, and regarding buildings for instance, how light came into the buildings became very important, especially in a country like Finland, where half a year it is dark. So architects were really forced to think about where to place windows so they can maximize the amount of light in a building. Another factor related to designing buildings was of course that one had to take into consideration that the buildings needed to be warm, because it can be very cold. Minus 20 is normal, minus 35, and it can be even minus 40 up in Lapland. And therefore one has to guarantee double windows, etc.

Now I would like to ask you, Mr. Sugiyama. Having heard what our colleagues just said about Finnish ceramics, glass design, paintings, and architecture – does this resonate with what you explained to us earlier? What kinds of thoughts does this bring to your mind?

Sugiyama:

I talked about The Mingeikan earlier, and I find it highly interesting that, as we just heard about the situation in Finland and other Nordic countries, such kind of movements occurring against the background of the times with the aim to introduce culture and beauty into everyday life, were taking place more or less concurrently with movements such as *Mingei* in Japan.

In Japan, in the time between 1900 and the 1970s – exactly the period covered in this exhibition – the cultural magazine *Shirakaba* was launched in 1910. As a core member, Yanagi was involved in all sorts of cultural movements, and considering that the Mingei movement initially derived from those Shirakaba activities, one can say that it all started in 1910, and became a more serious movement when the term "*mingei*" was coined in 1925. The movement continues until this day, which means that it has been going on for almost one hundred years now.

These 100 years were an age of major upheaval also in the Japanese society, as the wave of the western civilization had reached Japan, and the Japanese native culture has gradually been lost in the process of westernization, which is what "modernization" basically meant in Japan.

Against this backdrop, Yanagi suggested that true intrinsic values were in fact to be found in the Japanese native traditional culture that the Japanese people were abandoning as outdated or inconvenient in that modernization process, and that's what he went on to rediscover. Such activities are what represented one policy of Yanagi's work, and that's where he felt that in Japan, arts and crafts became two different concepts also in the Modern age. Nevertheless, the *mingei* that Yanagi discovered was something that was born in an age when there was no differentiation and separation between beauty and usefulness. Things created in the Edo period emerged out of a state of close connection between beauty and use. One of the harmful effects of modernization was the separation between beauty and use, art and artifact. I think it was a sort of antithesis to this that Yanagi was having in mind.

While there exist several different views, one thing that is often suggested is that *Mingei* was an anti-modern kind of movement, a form of criticism toward modernization. To some extent this is certainly true, but considering that *Mingei* was a cultural movement that emerged from within the current of modernization, it was in fact one of the movements of the modern age. It was *Mingei* that was pursuing modernism in the realm of folk craft.

The Mingei movement is something that emerged exactly from such kind of historical background, and according to Yanagi's perception and position, Western culture was not just something that should be imitated. It was not about seeing things from a borrowed Western perspective, but Yanagi's aim was the acquisition of a new Japanese perspective, a new sensibility that was based on a correct understanding of Western culture.

This is how I think Yanagi had developed an eye that allowed him to continuously examine at culture from both directions. The same certainly also applies to Hamada, and curiously, Bernard Leach as well was someone who was able to look at Eastern culture from a Western point of view, and review Western culture from an Eastern perspective. So also in this sense, I think we can say that the Mingei movement was the movement of modernism in the realm of industrial arts.

Positioning the Mingei movement within the second wave of Japonisme (or Japanomania), this time's exhibition suggests a viewpoint that seems entirely new to myself, for which I am truly thankful.

Design philosophies in Japan and Finland

Pettersson:

What you just said, first of all about the Western influence, and modernization versus traditional Japanese culture, made me think how many of the artists in general have revisited the traditional ways of making, whether it's building houses, or doing crafts, etc. So that's kind of a constant time travel in that sense. We are traveling back and forth in time. Another aspect of traveling

that is so much related to the exhibition projects of ours, is of course the influences in both ways, as we have discussed. So there is lots to digest there, and good possibilities to bring to light new information and new knowledge.

Now I'd like to move on to our second theme, which is related to design philosophy.

Perhaps even a bigger question than that we started the discussion with, but nevertheless I'd like to challenge all of us by thinking aloud what would be the essentials of design philosophy.

Sugiyama:

This is a very big and difficult question, but one example would be the design philosophy of the third director of The Mingeikan, industrial designer Sori Yanagi,. He was the museum's director for about thirty years, and as someone who was working under him for a long time, I have often witnessed Sori Yanagi at work, and I think I have seen the basics of the design he was pursuing.

First of all, it must not be design for designers. It must not be a simple means of self-expression. It has to be design that was conceived from the position of the user. I think this is the primary and fundamental idea. It's also about not chasing after fashions. This is another essential aspect: to create long-lived design with lasting universal value regardless of trends. In order to do so, it has to win the sympathy of many people, and this is in my view the direction that design is supposed to pursue.

Usability is of course important as well. The pursuit of usability I think requires various different opinions, and prototypes need to be made and actually tested by users.

To me, Sori Yanagi's work looked extremely conscientious. First of all, he doesn't just design something on paper. He first created forms by working plaster, modeling objects with his own hands, and didn't transfer the design onto paper before the balance, weight and size all felt right in his hands. Once he'd made a prototype – cutlery used for cooking, for example – he gave it to all kinds of people who tested it. After hearing their opinions and various advice on how he could possibly improve the item's usability, he would apply those comments back on his design, and only after improving it, he would finalize his designed product. The craftsmanship, the spirit of creating things that he channeled into this process was in my view the most important ingredient. So it's not just the superficial aspects – the form, the color, and the pattern – but it's the underlying conscience as a designer, the heart and soul of the creative human being, that I think was essential for him. Sori Yanagi said that he had learned these things from *mingei*, which he referred to as the origin of all design. I think this plays a very important role.

Pettersson:

That was a very good example about the design process and philosophy together. And I guess it all sort of comes back to the idea that this is for the people. I really like the idea of using and testing prototypes, and getting feedback.

Thinking about the Finnish design philosophy, how would you describe that?

Pennonen:

When I listen to Mr. Sugiyama, I think – because this is something we have actually discussed earlier – we have many things in common if we think about design thinking and so on, between Finland and Japan, and I think this is the reason why we are here actually. If I think of the time span of this new exhibition – we're talking about 1900 'til 1970 – I said earlier that the Second World War is a sort of a divider there. If we think of the time before the war, then of course the 1920s are in that sense important. It was the time when Yanagi visited Stockholm, and in Sweden they developed this idea also further – of the beauty of everyday life, and the beauty in everyday objects also further. This was also spread to Finland, and this was the idea that gained a lot of popularity during functionalism, starting in the 1930s, but then especially also after the war. I think this goes on until today. What was important here was that these objects were meant for users. This is the idea that was already behind the Arts and Crafts movement in the 19th century, but the problem with that was that they just made too expensive objects, so it died out. Here it was important of course to test whether objects fit their purposes. The basis of course was good craftsmanship, but also experimentation and new materials, and combinations of these, and then also multiplication, so that these objects wouldn't be too expensive, so that they really would be for everyday usage. This is something that happened little by little after the Second World War, starting in the 1950s and '60s. If we think of Finnish companies like Iittala, we can really see that it's not so exclusive, unlike what happened with William Morris first, and later with Iris pottery and the Iris factory in Finland.

Pettersson:

Yes, and now I'd actually like you, Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff, to continue that. When thinking about visual arts – painters especially – simplification and let's say courage and freedom could be perhaps characterizing words for the early 20th century artists. Now if you can re-visualize in front of your eyes that painting that Anne-Maria Pennonen showed in the very beginning of her presentation, and that was also the last image of the presentation. A painting by Helene Schjerfbeck, the master of simplification, courage and freedom. I know you have lots to say about that, but you might want to pick some of the most important ingredients. Because I think the issue is related to materiality for instance – very essential in this context.

Von Bonsdorff:

The exhibition and the whole idea of doing this project is to combine fine arts with design. After 1900s we are more or less talking about design, but all these topics, themes and ideas were also present in fine arts. One of the major artists who started this process of simplification was the Finnish female artist Helene Schjerfbeck, whose works were shown two years ago when touring here in Japan. She became fascinated about Japanese art, and woodblock prints, but she wanted

to present something with oil painting, the same kind of surfaces, while simplifying the forms and colors. She was also really interested in combining timelessness, but also some references to Japanese art. Many of her models wear for example kimonos, not Western clothes, and sometimes she even incorporate the face of an Utamaro woodblock print into her painting. The trend was really going toward simplification, and continuing later on in the 20th century, toward abstraction of course, but it has a deeper meaning as well. For Nordic artists, simplification was also a sign of a more spiritualized attitude toward an image. One had to concentrate, one wanted to meditate, and it wasn't supposed to be a busy, imposing, or kind of moving image. It had to be very calm, so this is why these were goals for the visual artists and for painters.

One other thing that really changed the way of making fine arts is that, at the end of the 19th century, because of the introduction of Japanese art, artists wanted to move away from the oil-on-canvas process. So they started to use watercolors, ink, and all these different new techniques. These new techniques were emphasized by using for example different materials for the surface – paper, and different woven materials. The old tradition of Western painting, when in Europe you couldn't present anything else than oil on canvas in art exhibitions – that changed at the end of the 19th century. Around 1900, there were a lot of different mediums and materials that could be presented as artworks. So this is one thing that also happened.

Pennonen:

As a short comment, this is something that shows also in art after the war, in other words how artists treated the surface of the canvas. They put sawdust, they used sand, and we can also see that they went for simplified forms and mystic forms, but they experimented with different materials. This is where we can also see a connection with craftwork, if we think of pottery for example.

Pettersson:

Now a very quick question to Mr. Sugiyama. Anna-Maria mentioned new techniques. How did this show in *minget*? Were there new experiments, or was it more like following traditional ways of working?

Sugiyama:

Products that are actually used are "living" at the same time as those who use them, so as the times change, products change with as well. But there are at once things that shouldn't be changed at all, and I guess the important thing is to adapt products to the times while at the same time preserving those essential parts.

To give you one example, there is a pottery called *Ontayaki* in Oita Prefecture in Kyushu. It has a long history of 300 years from the Edo period on. Bernard Leach was introduced to *Ontayaki* by Yanagi, and actually went there shortly after the end of the war. He was in fact so

fascinated by the *Ontayaki* ware that he ended up staying in the region for three weeks to study the *Ontayaki* technique. At the same time, Leach himself taught the people at the pottery how to make Western style pitchers with handles. Traditionally, ceramic ware fired complete with handles wasn't very common in Japan, but Leach suggested that the Japanese people's daily life would require pitchers with handles in the future, and only returned home after teaching the potters ways of attaching the most beautifully shaped handles to their pitchers. Around 1955, the Leach style pitcher eventually became a new item in the 300-year-old *Ontayaki* tradition.

This is one example of how tradition is continuously updated. Leach studied pottery in Japan, and returned to England, where he became a successful ceramic artist. He later came back to Japan, where his work significantly influenced Japanese pottery. As Anne-Maria Pennonen pointed out, I believe that true cultural exchange only works with bilateral dialogue. Like in the case of *Ontayaki*, tradition is gradually updated and adapted to the times and lifestyles as well.

What to expect from "Japanomania II" from the point of view of research

Pettersson:

Thank you. Then I will have a last question to each of you. This is related to the future. As I mentioned in the very beginning of the panel discussion, one of the key ingredients of the whole project is research. So what would you expect from this exhibition project, from the point of view of research? What kinds of outcomes and ideas – if you should mention let's say one wish or one thing, what would that be? Anna-Maria, would you begin?

Von Bonsdorff:

Well, of course I'm more interested in painting, color and different techniques, so that would be something that I already find very interesting. Even though we are talking about ceramics, or what Anne showed in the slides, you could see so many visual similarities! Also, how the making of art really changed. And I would love to see that people – the audience – experience and realize that all these subtle and wonderful things that happened in art really come up with all these different art forms. Because that was actually the goal of the artists themselves.

Pennonen:

My wish is to convince our audience, but also the art critics of the idea of having this movement both ways, this interplay between East and West. And also the connection between artefacts like pottery and textiles with paintings. And that they find these themes as clear as we think they are.

Sugiyama:

I am really looking forward to this exhibition, especially as Nordic design is right now immensely popular especialy among young people in Japan. They believe that Nordic design is having a major impact on Japanese design, and this does of course apply in many ways. There are quite a few aspects in things made by Japanese designers that have a lot in common with the Nordic style, so it's only natural that people see that influence, however it is my desire to convey to these people with a special interest in design that it was the Japanese culture that inspired Nordic design in the first place.

One more thing would be that, as the Japanomania exhibition also aims to communicate, the phenomenon of Japonisme did not end in the 19th century. Contexts may have changed, but the second wave of Japonisme came along after 1900, so it continued even in the 20th century, only in different form. In this sense, assessing through this exhibition the Mingei movement in the context of the second wave of Japonisme is a matter that I consider to be my own mission. At the same time, I would also like to reflect a bit more systematically and thoroughly on the relationship between the Mingei movement and the currents of modernism.

Pettersson:

As we can hear from these comments, this is a strong wish list. If we can succeed to achieve and fulfill all these wishes, then we do have to work hard, but that's why we are here.

I might add one more to the wish list, which is of course the connection between Japanese modern art and Finnish and Swedish modern art. That is something where there is a huge adventure going to take place also in that field. Therefore we are really thankful for the cooperation with the Hayama Museum of Modern Art in that context.

Now it's time to wrap the discussion up.

I really have the great pleasure of thanking all three panelists, so thank you Mr. Sugiyama, Dr. von Bonsdorff, Anne-Maria Pennonen! And thank you to the audience for coming and listening! I guess if the time allows, there might be some room for questions from the audience. Thank you so much.

(From the left side)Ms.Von Bonsdorff, Ms.Pennonen, Mr.Sugiyama

[Project 2] Q&A

Question 1:

Regarding the 1920s and '30s only, the focus has been on Japonisme and *mingei* as highlighting a very healthy kind of beauty, but at the same time there were such trends of highly decorative, artificial kinds of industrial arts as Art Deco for example. Didn't these have any impact on Nordic design? And if there was, why didn't such design become the mainstream there?

Von Bonsdorff:

Well actually Art Deco played a bigger role in architecture and design, but of course it had impact on fine arts as well. But here, in the whole 20th century, we have many influences going on in Nordic art and design. In our project, we want to find new things and focuses, so this is why we are concentrating on these themes. All in all, Art Deco was not a major movement, as it was in Europe, so in the Nordic countries, as almost always, that movement was more a simplified version in the Nordic countries.

Pennonen:

There were several movements going on, but our idea with this exhibition is to focus on something, and we are following just one line, so we are not telling the whole history of all the movements that were going on. We have this certain focus because we can see the connection between Japan and the Nordic countries. And it is something new. Only the Japanese influence on Western art has been discussed so far, but to our mind, we haven't found anything in Finland that would discuss this influence going both ways, and telling about Japanese artists coming to Europe. We are not talking about design only, so Art Deco doesn't apply here. Of course it existed also in Finland, but it is too decorative. Like I said, also if we think of the Mingei movement, there was a certain kind of counter-action against this decorative style, and at least this is something we focus on.

Von Bonsdorff:

One more little thing that came to mind is that Art Deco was really elitist. It was gold and all these fine things, and the artists who promoted everyday life and simplification, and going back to the materials of nature, were against that. So maybe that's the ideological difference.

Pennonen:

It made these objects available for the common people.

Question 2:

Nordic Japonisme came about as a new movement, and the Mingei movement also emerged as something new. So what exactly were those obstacles to overcome, those old values that had to be broken, for the respective movements at that time? I would like to know what exactly it was that the Mingei movement battled against.

Sugiyama:

One of the obstacles that the Mingei movement aimed to surmount was certainly the homogenization of the industrialized society – something that may be understood as a global trend after the industrial revolution. I think what Yanagi and the Mingei movement considered to be worthy of preservation was the native culture that had been maintained in each region. And that wasn't limited to the Japanese mainland alone. After the Meiji Restoration, in an age that was dominated by Imperialism, state power gradually began to exert a great influence also on the realm of culture. Against this backdrop, I think it was Yanagi's strong wish that the values of the native local cultures in different regions – Ainu culture, Okinawan culture, the cultures of the Korean Peninsula, and of the indigenous people of Taiwan – had to be preserved. While preserving such native cultures, I think Yanagi was at once very open to the idea that there might be even better elements in terms of universal, cultural essence in Western culture for example, which should be incorporated in the establishment of new cultural values.

In 1929, Yanagi and Hamada traveled to Europe, from where they brought Windsor chairs and slipware, and various other examples of Western industrial arts back to Japan, and eventually held the first exhibition of Western industrial arts in Japan. One item that Yanagi particularly liked was the Windsor chair, a functional chair for ordinary people. It eventually came to be used also in the Japanese people's daily life, and based on this, Yanagi, in cooperation with Japanese carpenters, ultimately created a new piece of Western style furniture, made by a Japanese for the Japanese people. This was the Matsumoto Mingei Furniture, started in Matsumoto, Nagano, in the 1950s. Here we see again that it wasn't mere imitation of Western furniture, but it was a matter of reexamining the West from a Japanese point of view, and filtering out the essential elements to create from that a new Japanese culture. I think that was the aim of the Mingei movement, and one of the things it actually achieved.

Von Bonsdorff:

Again we find something in common. What it was against is really a generic, unified European – maybe French-led – art and culture that was manufactured and had a lot to do with industrialization. We have to remind ourselves also that the artists themselves were heavily involved, also to protect nature. It was not only the design and the materials of nature, but they

really wanted to make a point for the authentic use of materials in art. Of course now we are talking about the 20th century. Finland became independent in 1917, so it was a long project toward independence, and what happened after that. It also has a big emphasis on the idea of the nation, and the authentic Finnish way of life in contrast to other nations; to find something original.

Pettersson:

To find something original – that's a wonderful way to close the discussion.

Two things I would like all of us to take with us from this panel discussion: First of all, "people's wisdom of living." That is such a wonderful expression, let's all remember that. Another one is the balance between new influences and tradition. I think these two main ideas might help us further with the secrets of *mingei* and the themes of the forthcoming exhibition.

From my part I would like to once again thank all the panelists, thank you to the audience, and especially, thank you so much DNP and Mr. Kitajima for hosting us today. It's been a wonderful day, and it's a great honor for us to be on the stage, discussing these matters with you.

End of Seminar

Ateneum Art Museum/Finnish National Gallery × DNP Museum Lab
related Seminar

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The Power of Art

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