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**Transcultural Intertwinements in
East Asian Art and Culture,
1920s–1950s**

Edited by

Jeong-hee Lee-Kalisch
Annegret Bergmann

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Introduction

Entanglement of Art and Culture

Jeong-hee Lee-Kalisch, Annegret Bergmann

This publication is based on papers presented at two joint workshops by faculty of the Faculty of Intercultural Studies, Kobe University, Japan, and the Institute of Art History, Freie Universitaet Berlin, Germany. The workshops took place at the Freie Universitaet Berlin in February 2014, and at Kobe University in November 2015, respectively. The volume explores transcultural intertwinements in East Asian art and culture from the 1920s through the 1950s, relying on the premise that “Cultures today are extremely interconnected and entangled with each other. Lifestyles no longer end at the borders of national cultures, but go beyond these, and are found in the same way in other cultures.”¹

According to the concept of transculturality, the notion that culture is ethnically bound and contained within a territorial framework is considered to be obsolete and, moreover, rooted in nation building of the late nineteenth century. Sebastian Conrad and Shalini Randeria rendered the idea of history as “entanglement” or “connected histories,”² an approach that also applies to cultural and art history research, underpinning the concept of transcultural investigations with regard to the exchange between two regions or continents, in this case, Asia and Europe. As Wolfgang Welsch states, “Transculturality is, in the first place, a consequence of the inner differentiation and complexity of modern cultures. These encompass ... a number of ways of life and cultures, which also interpenetrate or emerge from one another.”³ It is precisely these transcultural interpenetrations and new or altered manifestations resulting from the entanglement of art and culture that this volume examines.

The authors of this volume explore the entanglement of modern phenomena in the art and cultures of Asia and Europe as well as among the Asian countries of China, Korea, Japan, and Taiwan, within the fields of graphics, design, painting, calligraphy, performing arts, music, photography, and film. Local case studies deal with the influences of modernization within frameworks of the first half of the twentieth century. This approach assumes that flows of symbolic meaning, visibility, performativity, and aesthetic experience in the course of modernization in Asia, Western Europe, and North America require

1 Welsch 1999: 196.

2 Conrad/Randeria 2002: 17.

3 Welsch 1999: 196.

consideration not only in the local cultural context, but also in the context of global interaction. Transculturality is not automatically a global phenomenon; it also stands for the presence of different cultural practices, evolving from shared experience and ideas of modernity, as shown in the essays that follow.

Given the wide range of topics, the articles are grouped into four sections according to their subject matter, and in chronological order. The first section deals with graphics and design. In her article “The Reception of George Grosz in Japan during the 1920s and 1930s,” **KEIKO ISHIDA** examines the reception of George Grosz’s art in Japan and the considerable popularity of his works as cartoons (*manga*) by focusing on the close relationship between *manga* and the proletarian art movement in Japan. The article concludes that the German artist was one of the important driving forces behind the transition of the Japanese art world and the emergence of a proletarian art movement itself. In “Intertwining Manifestations of Modernity: Images of the ‘Modern Girl and New Woman’ in Korean Caricatures from the 1920s to 1930s,” **JEONG-HEE LEE-KALISCH** elucidates the extent to which the emergence of the “modern woman” image manifests itself as a transcultural phenomenon, and how the new medium of caricature is related, stylistically and aesthetically, to traditional art forms. The contribution “Japanese Modern: Bruno Taut as Advisor and Designer in Japan” by **ANTJE PAPIST-MATSUO** looks at the impact of the German architect Bruno Taut on modern Japanese industrial craft and interior design, tracing his activities during three years of exile in Japan. In particular, his contribution to the interior design of the Hyūga Villa in Atami reflects Taut’s perception of Japanese crafts as a modern hybrid.

The three essays that follow, addressing painting and calligraphy, deal with art developments in connection with modernity discourses in China and Japan. In “Transnational Alignments of Modern Art: Discourses on Abstract Art in Japan in the 1930s,” **TOMOKO MAMINE** examines the transcultural discursive shifts that shaped the formation of discourses and the reception of ideas of modern abstract art in Japan in the 1930s by exploring transnational artist networks during that decade. In her essay “Huang Binhong’s (1865–1955) Clerical-Script Painting as a Response to the ‘Harmonious Uniting of Red-and-Green and Ink,’” **SHAO-LAN HERTEL** takes a closer look at Chinese brush-and-ink artist Huang Binhong’s work and localizes entanglements of political, ideological, and art-discursive issues present in the Chinese art world during the first decades of the twentieth century. These interconnections encompass the modernization of the arts and the renewal of cultural customs and beliefs through

a “progressive traditionalist” promotion of national essence (*guocui*), as well as the influx of increasingly western-based art practices and concepts. In “Coming Closer and Coming Apart: Avant-Garde Calligraphy and Abstract Painting in Postwar Japan—Through the Analysis of Morita Shiryū’s Theory and Practice,” **MUKAI AKIKO** reveals the chasm between art and calligraphy, and shows how the latter is an important part of modern art in Japan. She concludes that avant-garde artists in general, and Morita in particular, had to operate within frameworks that were considered neither art nor calligraphy due to the institutional organization of art, which saw a separation between painting and calligraphy in the course of modernization as early as the late nineteenth century.

The third section of this volume, on performing arts, explores western impacts on Japanese theater and dance, and the transfer of western music education to Taiwan via Japan. In “Impacts of Modernity: Ichikawa Sadanji II Between Eastern Tradition and Western Innovation,” **ANNEGRET BERGMANN** traces the kabuki actor’s involvement with European theater, and his attempts to modernize this classical genre, as well as his engagement with the new theater genre in Japan. She concludes that commercial interests both dominated and limited the transcultural aspirations of the actor. In his contribution “Umemoto Rikuhei: Japanese Classical Dance in Transnational Context,” **KAZUO FUJINO** examines the transcultural intertwinement of Japanese and German modern dance in the 1930s, exploring the encounters of the traditional Japanese dance professional Umemoto Rikuhei with avant-garde dance in Vienna and Berlin, and the new dance form in Japan that resulted from these encounters. The essay “The Absorption and the Creation of Contemporary Music in Taiwan under Japanese Rule: A Case Study of Contemporary Composers Who Have Studied in Japan” by **YI JU CHEN** describes how classical music was spread from Japan and introduced to Taiwan, subsequently merging with Taiwanese traditional elements that still continue to develop today.

The final section on film and photography focuses on early talkies in Japan, transcultural manifestations in Korean photography, and the re-evaluation of a Japanese female photographer’s oeuvre. In “Spontaneity in Acting in Japanese films of the 1930s: An Analysis of *Our Neighbor Miss Yae* (1934),” **FUMIAKI ITAKURA** explores the influence of western films on Japanese cinema by illuminating the importance of spontaneous behavior, which served to intensify the “naturalness” of acting in films, a creative criterion introduced to Japan through

foreign films. In “Transmedia and Transcultural Practice: The World of Jeong Haechang’s (1907–1968) Pictorial Photography from the 1930s Onwards,” **JEONG-HEE LEE-KALISCH** elucidates transmedia practices between painting and photography, demonstrating how the reception of Dutch and Flemish paintings and Japanese photographs influenced the world of Jeong Haechang’s photography. The article also shows the ways in which European art tradition is translated on a visual aesthetical level via Japan to Korea. In “Visions of Freedom and Liberation: Okanoué Toshiko’s Photo Collages from the 1950s,” **HIROKO IKEGAMI** offers a formal analysis of the photo collages of female artist Okanoué Toshiko and examines the significance of Okanoué’s work in the context of women’s social status in 1950s Japan, claiming that this long-overlooked photographer opened a new horizon in international Surrealism. This argument is further substantiated by the inclusion of an oral history interview with Okanoué Toshiko titled “An Age Full of Dreams,” conducted by the author.

Our deep gratitude goes to the authors of this book who shared their research and knowledge, first during the course of the workshops, and then in the context of this publication. We thank the Gerda Henkel Foundation for financing the workshops, and our colleagues from Kobe University for their generous financial support. We also convey our special thanks to Shao-Lan Hertel and especially to Sarah Wilson-Reißmann for editing the English-language texts as well as to Hubert Graml (Freie Universität Berlin), who provided substantial professional help with the images. Finally we would like to express our deepest gratitude to the publishing house VDG Weimar, especially Cathrin Rollberg, for their professional as well as patient support for this publication.

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Graphics and Design

The Reception of George Grosz in Japan During the 1920s and 1930s

Ishida Keiko

Introduction

George Grosz (1893–1959), an artist who drew numerous stinging caricatures from German society after World War I, was introduced to Japan in the early 1920s when Japanese artists began paying attention to German art movements. Before that period, most of their attention had been on French art movements. However, around the 1920s, when Munich and Berlin became known as the capitals of art, German avant-garde art such as Expressionism, DADA Berlin, constructionism, and *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) was introduced to Japan within quite a short period.

Many Japanese avant-garde artists welcomed George Grosz's works, and the sensation that his work caused was perhaps much greater than it seems today. His impact can be inferred from what Murayama Tomoyoshi 村山知義 (1901–1977)—one of the earliest and most eager contemporaries to introduce Grosz to Japan as well as a leader of the avant-garde art group *Mavo* マヴォ¹ in the Taishō period (1912–1926)—said about Grosz: “George Grosz is one of the artists I admire the most; he seems to me equal to even the greatest artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Dürer, Cranach, Cézanne, and van Gogh. He has a great impact on me.”² Moreover, many Japanese caricaturists and illustrators were also greatly influenced by his art following his introduction by caricaturist and cartoonist Yanase Masamu 柳瀬正夢 (1900–1945), Grosz's most ardent admirer in those days. In addition, Matsuyama Fumio 松山文雄 (1902–1982), a caricaturist of the Taishō avant-garde movement who wrote a history of *manga* 漫画 from this period in 1956, supported Murayama's aforementioned statement, saying, “Grosz's satiric works caused great amazement among avant-garde artists at that time. They attracted young artists and had considerable influence on their works for a long time. He was admired like a god, especially by caricaturists.”³

These statements demonstrate the seriousness of Grosz's impact on the Japanese art world in the 1920s. Why did Grosz's art win such popularity in Japan? What is the background of this acceptance, and how was his work re-

1 *Mavo*, an artists' group organized by Murayama and his friends, was one of the earliest avant-garde art movements in Japan. This movement was greatly inspired by DADA Berlin.

2 Murayama 1949: 1.

3 Matsuyama 1956: 28.

ceived? Although several researchers have been interested in the significance of George Grosz in Japan,⁴ little study has been undertaken to provide a comprehensive explanation of the reception of Grosz's work in those days.⁵ The present study was undertaken to elucidate the process by which he was accepted in Japan and to clarify the reasons for this by focusing on the development of *manga* in Japan in line with the internationalization of western cartoons, the relationship between *manga* and art, and the close relationship between *manga* and the proletarian art movement in Japan during that period.

4 Mizusawa/Fujimaki 2000: 190–227.

5 Adachi's works (Adachi 2011, 2012) are exceptions. However, his works focus only on the relation between Grosz and the Japanese proletarian art movement in those days.

Introduction of Grosz to Japan and reaction to his art

Several documents imply that Grosz was already known in Japan in the early 1920s. In 1922, in a translation of an essay by the German art critic Willi Wolfradt (1892–1988), which included four illustrations by Grosz, the artist was introduced as “a rising caricaturist in Germany.”⁶ In these illustrations, we can see Grosz's typical motifs—the vulgarity of the bourgeoisie and the cruel oppression of the proletariat by the government. Moreover, in this essay, Grosz was introduced as a proletarian artist as well as an activist pornographer, who attempted to expose the injustice of the oppression of socialism and the cruelty of militarism.

6 Wolfradt 1922.

In the same period, Okamoto Ippei 岡本一平 (1886–1948), a very famous and successful cartoonist during the Taishō and the early Shōwa eras (1926–1989), also commented on Grosz works, as he seemed to be acquainted with them from magazines sent from Germany. In an essay written in 1923, Okamoto referred to Grosz's art as “an effective tool for radical socialists in Germany” while complaining about the deplorable quality and meaninglessness of Japanese *manga* at that time.⁷

7 Okamoto 1923.

On the other hand, several Japanese artists encountered Grosz's art in Berlin during the same period. Wadachi Tomoo 和達和男 (1900–1925), who came to Berlin during that time, is believed to have had his first contact with Grosz's work in 1921. Murayama, who later became an important promoter of Grosz to Japan, also studied Berlin from 1922 to 1923. Wadachi had arrived there six months prior to Murayama and introduced him to Grosz's work. According to Murayama, three days after his arrival in Berlin, Wadachi showed him Grosz's book of drawings, in which he found people suffering from illness and poverty and the undisguised, ugly figures of the bourgeoisie in Berlin, who enjoyed comfortable carefree lives,

taking no interest in the misery in their society. In his memoir written in 1949, Murayama recollects the shock that the drawings gave him on that day: “His drawings, with a unique and extraordinary style ... pierced [him] like a flash of lightning.” That is why he went to Herwarth Walden’s (1878–1941) gallery *Der Sturm* to buy as many of Grosz’s published drawing books as he could.⁸

After returning to Japan in 1923, Murayama presented them to his acquaintances. Presumably a considerable number of young artists and authors saw them, for Murayama played a very active role in various artistic fields, not only in fine art but also in architecture, theater, and other areas. In fact, many artists were influenced by, and became admirers of Grosz, for example, painters such as Nagano Yoshimitsu 永野芳光 (1886–1948) and Shibuya Osamu 渋谷於寒 (1900–1963), the caricaturist Yanase Masamu, the art critic Nakata Sadanosuke 仲田定之助 (1888–1970), and the actor Yamanouchi Hikaru 山内光 (1903–1983). Grosz’s book *Ecce Homo*, published in Germany in 1923, circulated among them and gained great popularity.⁹

Grosz’s impact on Yanase was especially remarkable. Yanase, who had a close relationship with Murayama and joined his avant-garde art movement, called *Mavo*, had become an ardent admirer as well as the greatest follower of Grosz since Murayama had shown him the book of drawings by the German artist. One reason for his fascination with Grosz was that he was a socialist, sympathizing deeply with the workers’ miserable situation. Yanase’s works, produced in 1925 and 1926 (**Figs. 1 and 2**), show striking evidence of his scrutiny of Grosz’s art, as the characteristics of Grosz can be easily recognized in the motifs and satirical style. In one drawing the words “*Ecce Homo*,” the title of Grosz’s book of drawings, also appear. The other drawing depicts a love affair between a rich man caricatured as a machine and a modern girl who seems only interested in his money. Moreover, the fact that Yanase published the book entitled, *Musan kaikyū no gaka · Georuge Gurossu* 無産階級の画家 ゲオルゲ・グロツス (George Grosz: An Artist of the Proletariat) in 1929¹⁰ indicates his devotion to Grosz’s art.

In addition, it is worth noting that even a special edition of the art magazine *AS* featuring Grosz was published in 1925¹¹ (**Fig. 3**). The publication of this magazine indicates the keen interest in Grosz in Japan in those days. This magazine provided abundant information about Grosz’s art, including several drawings, even a few color illustrations, an introduction to his career and art, and several critical essays about him. In these essays, the authors, who were artists, cartoonists, and art crit-

8 Murayama 1949: 11–13; Murayama 1969: 6–7.

9 Shibuya 1928.

10 Yanase 1929. This book includes sixty-one drawings by Grosz, with text written by Yanase.

11 *Bijutsu Zasshi Asu*, no.1, Tokyo, 1925.



Fig. 1 Yanase Masamu, *Kono hito o miyo!*, 1925, ink on paper, 33.3 x 25.2 cm, Musashino Art University, Tokyo [Yanase 2013: 162, cat. no. 2-2-50].



Fig. 2 Yanase Masamu, *Kare to modan gāru to no rabushiin*, 1926, ink on paper, 22.0 x 16.7 cm, Musashino Art University, Tokyo [Yanase 2013: 162, cat.no. 2-2-53].



Fig. 3 *Bijutsu Zasshi Asu*, no. 1, 1925, magazine, 25.8 x 19.3 cm, Manga Shiryōshitsu MORI [Yanase 2013: 163, cat.no. 2-2-57].

ics, analyzed Grosz's art from various angles, such as his biography, characteristics, and political engagement.

Moreover, it should be noted that diverse opinions on Grosz's art could be recognized in this magazine. For instance, the art critic Nakata evaluated Grosz highly, describing him as "the greatest caricaturist, who pointed out and exposed the disease and the cancer in our society."¹² On the other hand, Okamoto, a leading cartoonist at that time, called him "a perverted erotic illustrator,"¹³ and avant-garde artist Nakahara Minoru 中原実 (1893–1990) was skeptical about the effectiveness of Grosz as proletarian artist when he asked: "Can the real proletariat be moved by Grosz's art?"¹⁴ Such contradictory views of Grosz's art are significant in that they anticipate the later controversy about him in the proletarian art movement in Japan.

12 Nakata 1925: 9.

13 Okamoto 1925: 9.

14 Nakahara 1925:13.

Grosz and Japanese manga

When reflecting on the process by which Grosz was introduced to Japan, it is important to focus on the introduction of his drawings as *manga* in Japanese (in most cases). Critics of Grosz were sometimes cartoonists, or *mangaka* 漫画家, such as Okamoto Ippei and Yanase Masamu. This fact seems rather strange, because nowadays in Japan Grosz is considered an artist, not a *mangaka*. Needless to say, Grosz's works are regarded as satirical drawings or even caricatures; however, they are not regarded as *manga*. This section explains why Grosz's art was accepted as *manga* in terms of the following three points: the change in the meaning of *manga*, the development of *manga* in modern Japan, and the relationship between *manga* and fine art.

One reason for the acceptance of Grosz's work as *manga* can be explained rather easily: there is a difference between the meaning of *manga* during the 1920s and its meaning today, where the word refers to comic stories. However, this usage of the word is relatively contemporary. The meaning of the term was unstable and unclear for a long time and it was not until the post-World War II period that the current usage of *manga* became common in Japan.¹⁵

Initially, the word *manga* in Japanese meant only a cartoon or caricature without many frames or a sequence of pictures. This can be understood instantly when one considers the *manga* of the nineteenth century artist Katsushika Hokusai 葛飾北斎 (1760–1849, **Fig. 4**), for instance. Before World War II, however, the word *manga* was not typically used in Japan. The most common words were *tobae* 鳥羽絵 and *ponchi* ポンチ.

15 On the change in meaning of *manga*, see Ishiko 1979; Shimizu 1991; Shimizu 2007.



Fig. 4 Katsushika Hokusai, *Hokusai Manga*, 1814, woodblock printed book, 22.8 x 15.8 cm, Mitsuru Uragami, Tokyo [Nagata, 1986: 32, 33].

Ponchi was derived from the satirical magazine *Japan Punch* (**Fig. 5**), published by English illustrator Charles Wirgman (1832–1892) during the Meiji era (1868–1912). The word *ponchi* began to spread and to be used to refer to satirical drawings or caricatures during this period. After that, during the Taishō era, *manga* replaced *tobae* and *ponchi* as it gradually spread into the publishing community. Therefore, it seems quite understandable that Grosz's satirical work depicting figures and



Fig. 5 Charles Wirgman, *Students of the French tongue*, *The Japan Punch*, February 1866, 25 x 35 cm, British Museum, London [Wirgmann, 1975: 169].