

Paper prepared for

The 6th Euroacademia International Conference

Identities and Identifications: Politicized Uses of Collective Identities

Florence, Italy

22 – 23 June 2017

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Cross-cultural Dialogue and Search of Identity by Léonard Foujita

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Abstract

Recent studies of different multi-cultural networks highlight that the artists' circulation generated a great impact on several avant-gardist movements. The 'passage' of artists to big European cities, such as Paris, Walter Benjamin's 'City of Lights', is a good example of this phenomena. A huge number of artistes from different horizons coming to settle in Paris, the world capital of art at that time, constituted 'École de Paris' during the three first decades of the 20th century. They were largely non-French artists, including Japanese artists who came from not 'somewhere else' of the West but Far-East. The Western modern world was highly challenging for Japanese artists who suffered from confrontation with the duality between cultural identity and universal artistic values, fundamentally imposed Eurocentric aesthetics. Japanese modern era - Meiji, Taisho and Showa periods – and who knew the struggle regarding a dilemma, the complex situation with perpetuation of Japanese traditional artistic values initiated by Fenollosa and Okakura contrasted with the principal governmental goal for rapid catching up to Western technology and knowledge.

My paper attempts to examine Japanese painters' awakening of Far-Eastern identity while searching for assimilation to European aesthetics with "Ideal" through their encounter of European art and spiritual dialogues with past masters works. They found their another-self in this mirror city Paris. The analysis will particularly be interested in Léonard Foujita (1886-1968) who changed his style with contact of European art and became an emblematical painter of the Ecole de Paris. What was the process of his awakening of cultural identity, through temptation of the West, while trying to pursue the universal in his art? The analysis of the awakening process of this Japanese artist after an intense dialogue with the human creative adventures, finally reveals complex artistic identity which affirmed hybrid style, fusion of the West and East, a synergy of two complementary entities, which produce a new vital spirit

Key words: Japanese modern art, Cross-cultural identity, Universal, École de Paris, Léonard Foujita

1. Introduction

The role played by the transnational circulation of artists and intellectuals in the modern artistic development has become a specific research field for early 20th century Art History¹. Interdisciplinary research works reveal multiple trans-geographic developments of modern artistic movements through migrations, displacements, and diaspora. In fact, in Europe and beyond Europe, the artists' circulation and relocation constituting cosmopolitan social networks generated a great impact on not only elaboration of avant-garde art movements but also individual affirmation of cultural identity.

The "Passage" of artists to big European cities, such as Paris, the capital of art at that time, is a good example of this phenomenon. In Paris foreign artists of different origins, dominantly European, especially East European,

and American, constituted the *École de Paris* in the early 20th century. Among these foreign artists were several hundreds of young and ambitious Japanese who left Japan for Paris to study Western art. Some endeavored to be integrated into the highly competitive Parisian art scene, but in vain, except for a few strong-willed, talented and genuine artists. For Japanese artists coming from the Far East, the Western modern world was already challenging, since they were confronted with the duality of cultural identity and universal art. Western experiences were ended by approving disillusionment and disappointment.

This paper² examines Japanese painters who encountered European art in the Post-Meiji period of Japan and succeeded in finding their own style of painting and affirmed their individual cultural identity during their “Passage” to Paris in the first half of the 20th century. Particular focus will be on Léonard Foujita, who is considered as an emblematic artist of the *École de Paris*. The analysis will be in comparison with another Japanese artist, his contemporary, Koichiro Kondo who is an ink painter, an unknown and almost forgotten artist, however immortalized as the model of Kama of *La condition humaine* (*Man's Fate*, 1933) by French novelist André Malraux.

What was the process of their awakening of cultural identity or cross-cultural identity, while pursuing the universal in their art, fundamentally imposed by Eurocentric aesthetics? Through the analysis of Japanese painters' quest for identity, this paper will attempt to isolate the most salient characteristics of Japanese artists' quest, quests which led to the achievement of the invention of the fusional style of East and West, and its complexity of the case of Léonard Foujita.

2. Aspiration and Dilemma of Artistic Japan in Modern Times

After 250 years of isolationism in the Edo period, Japan officially opened its doors to the exterior in 1858, and the imperial power was repaired in 1868. Japan was transformed from a traditional society to a modern state during the Meiji era (1868-1912). The reorganization of the state with the West, and its different culture and advanced technology, imposed all the domains. As for Japanese art, all the contributions of the West modernized it. A great number of innovative painters tried to make rapid assimilation of some aspects of Western modern art. This mode is the painting of Western-style called *Yoga* in Japanese (oil painting), as opposed to the painting of Japanese-style called *Nihonga* in Japanese (water-based painting), more conservative, respecting its traditional techniques, media and aesthetics. This parallelism and the coexistence of two trends in Japan have been characteristic of Japanese pictorial art since the second half of the 19th century until the present day.

However in the Meiji period the Japanese art controlled by the government suffered from the dilemma between rapid catching up with Western technology and knowledge, and preservation of Japanese heritage. In fact, Japanese traditional painting fell into disgrace juxtaposed with the phenomenal success of Western-style painting. Under this circumstance Kakuzo Okakura (1862-1913) and Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908) tried to revive Japanese-style “true painting” not only by rediscovering and preserving Japanese authentic traditions but also by innovating through the introduction of Western techniques and even Western iconography. Traditional Japanese-style painters also needed Western stimuli.

This revival of traditionalists receiving Western stimuli obscured Japan's *yoga* artists until 1893 when Seiki Kuroda, who after having learned western style oil painting in France, returned to Japan. Kuroda took up a position as teacher of Western painting at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts where his teaching had a great impact

on development of Western style painting in Japan. His teaching was beyond technical level: he tried to propagate the artistic principles that European academism acclaimed.

Thus under the influences of Kuroda's teaching, aspiring to the knowledge of true Western art, several hundreds of Japanese artists went to France, notably in the Taisho (1912-1926), post-Meiji period, and they settled in Paris. By then Paris was the center of the cultural world, cosmopolitan and universal capital of the arts

3. Paris : “mirror of self”

Paris absorbed an enormous influx of foreign artists from 1900 until around 1940. These non-French and French artists living and working in Paris during the period are referred to as the *École de Paris*. The period from 1900 to 1920 is called the first period of the *École de Paris*, and the second period covers the period between the two world wars. In this magnetic city, qualified as the “City of Lights” by Walter Benjamin in his *Einbahnstrasse*³, a multinational community was constituted, united by the creators' common interests, but also by a bohemian lifestyle. Through this multicultural network in Paris, the part of the *other*⁴ was absorbed by the artists as the complementary part of their culture of origin. Thus Paris became “*the big Androgynous [...]* who fertilizes itself fertilizing the world”⁵ where each one had to affirm oneself. Transplanted, the foreign artists identified themselves as androgynous. For the Far East painters, the complementary part would be the Great West represented by Western techniques and ideals. They came from the other end of the world, not as exiles, neither refugees, but independent in intellectual and artistic pursuits. Ambitious with their dreams, they were all fascinated by the West. As insinuated in *La Tentation de l'Occident (The Temptation of the West, 1926)* of André Malraux, it was the temptation of the West that attracted them.

The Far East artist, Tsuguharu Léonard Foujita, is the most famous Japanese painter from the 20th century in Europe: Foujita succeeded to impose himself in France as one of the major artists of the *École de Paris*. In comparison, another demonstrative Japanese artist, Koichiro Kondo, an ink painter and contemporary of Foujita gained some recognition. His name is little known, and he has almost been forgotten today, yet he was immortalized as the model of Kama, the Japanese ink painter in *the* French novelist André Malraux's *La Condition Humaine (Man's Fate, 1933)*. These two Far Easterners succeeded to find their “other-self” or “androgynous-self” in their direct contact with the West, but each artist in a different way. The comparative analysis of the awakening process of Far East artistic identity follows.

4. Foujita

4.1 An emblematic artist of the *École de Paris*

Pioneer of this movement of the Japanese young artists, and the only Japanese who obtained a true success in France, the painter Tsuguharu (Léonard) Foujita (1886-1968) arrived in Paris in 1913 just one year before the First World War. He stayed in France until the end of his life except for several years' absence around the Second World War. After the war he returned to France and obtained French citizenship in 1955. He was baptized a catholic with the name Léonard in 1958 at the Cathedral of Reims.

Foujita (his Japanese given name is Tsuguharu or Tsuguji Fujita) was born in 1886 in Tokyo. He graduated from the Tokyo Fine Arts School, Western-style Painting section, in 1910. The method and aesthetics of the formation at that period were based on French academic art, under a certain influence of painting “*en plein air*” (painting outside as in the impressionist manner), introduced by Seiki Kuroda (1866-1924) previously mentioned. The

latter is a pupil of Raphaël Collin⁶ (1850-1916) who was an academic painter of the 3rd Republic of France. While introducing French then modern impressionist techniques for suggesting the play of light through the use of bright colors, Kuroda taught rather an official art with the concepts underlying the long tradition of Western academism. In western academic tradition, the purpose of painting is to express the universal and ideal through the depiction of instructive episodes from classical or biblical history. However in Paris during the first decade the avant-gardists rejected this *ut picture poesis* aesthetic, declaring history paintings were dying⁷. In fact Foujita learned in Japan the Western academic tradition when this tradition was in its last agonal respiration in Europe.

After having mastered in Japan all Western techniques and grasped the Western concept of classicism, thus upon his arrival in Paris, for his deception, Foujita found that all teaching of Kuroda, his Japanese mentor, had been based on an old-fashioned art, in front of the subjective currents, avant-gardist tendencies of modern art since the 1900s. In Europe, the “cult of me” replaced that of the unique truth of the Rational West. Multiple avant-gardist currents were flowering at that time. For example, Foujita encountered Picasso, radical cubist painter who was much inspired by the basic geometric forms of Cézanne: The latter was a post-impressionist painter of whom Foujita did not even know the name at that time; at Picasso’s atelier, Foujita discovered the paintings in a naïve and primitive manner of Douanier Rousseau. Foujita was strongly impressed by Rousseau’s paintings, surprisingly, even more than the cubist paintings by Picasso. Foujita also became acquainted with Braque, Max Jacob, Salomon, Modigliani, Pascin, Soutine, Kisling, Rivera, Zadkine, Lipchitz, Archipenko, and Marcoussis. Foujita finally gave up the teaching of the Western-style that he had received from Kuroda in Japan. He realized that in the Parisian contemporary art scene more attention was paid to the individual which led to highly modern and liberal developments.

It was at the same time the period of the Return to Order in western artistic scene. So in the 1910s he tried to seek roots of the authentic and pure western art in ancient Greek art, while copying Greek vases every day at the Louvre museum. However he desired to become true to himself in Paris. And he finally invented his original style famous for its “off-white background” and fine black lines, being inspired by Japanese traditional art, especially from feminine figures represented in Japanese woodblock prints. He realized a series of nudes where the purity of lines allies with the economy of chromatic range. Kiki, icon of the Montparnasse quarter, became his model in 1920⁸.

His key artwork: *Reclining Nude with the Toile of Jouy* was achieved in 1922. This outstanding oil painting which was glorified at the Salon d’Automne in 1922 is now housed in the Musée de l’Art Moderne de la ville de Paris, as a donation from the artist in 1961. His predilection for the reclining position of feminine nudes is stylistically aligned with western tradition for nudes in grand manner of Titian, Goya, even Manet, while the quality of simplicity, serenity, purity of his graphic lines betrays his affinity with Clouet, Dürer, Holbein, and especially Ingres. The apparent affinity with Ingres might be justified by the quasi absence of the western style traditional modelling in this painting characterized by its flatness. Thiébault Scisson, contemporary French art critic wrote: “It is the modeling without shades of Mr. Ingres –with whom, besides, Foujita seems to have an affinity as much as with his ancestors of Nippon”⁹. While Foujita absorbed all pictorial techniques of a grand manner, including the French neo-classical master Ingres’ original style, firmly contoured and faintly modelled, it is the sensibility of his Japanese origin which allowed him to make dialogue with Ingre’s quasi oriental or Japanese flatness with refined neoclassical lines, for achieving this unique hieratic masterpiece.

4.2 Praise of artistic tradition

This reclining nude by Foujita would be rather an unconscious self-portrait of the glorious artistic heritage of Japan. Indeed, he found his Japanese artistic identity in Paris, rediscovering the quality of the Japanese traditional painting. For the eyes of the Japanese, the painting of Foujita unrolls all the glorious past of the Japanese painting, represented by such as the Nara era's mural paintings: four Buddhist paradises from Horyu-ji, the Edo era's decorative paintings of the Kano school and Rin school on the sliding doors and screens as well as woodblock prints of Utamaro and Hokusai. His artistic affinity with Hokusai, this talented painter crazy about drawing, is confirmed with the numerous drawings Foujita left - 6000 drawings of nudes¹⁰! To form his style, Foujita finally managed to obtain Chinese black ink, the blood of the Far-Easterners¹¹, and Japanese fine brushes. He sought the sensuality of the texture of Japanese paper, fine, subtle, delicate, tender, rustic, and mystic. As to the lines of trait he said: it is necessary to invent stronger lines, more rigorous, more subtle and more exact than old masters'. In him, there is a love for the "exact and beautiful" lines¹². Foujita drew inspiration from several masterpieces of Japanese art for their technique and media.

The first example is the mural painting of Horyu-ji temple, Nara, Japan, with four paradises of Buddha, dated to the end of the 7th century, considered as one of the highlights of the pictorial art in the Far-East, though damaged in the 1940s. One of the most famous and brilliant paintings from this mural is Avalokitesvara in paradise. The red lines of the trace are worthy of the name "iron lines" for their tension and clearness. They produce very vivid, clear and, serene effects. The second example is Kichijoten, Yakushiji, Nara. This image of the Goddess Kichijoten represents more clearly the sensibility and the delicacy of Japanese art. This painting is characterized by its very fine black lines of the trait of the face and the hair, as well as the nobleness and the elegance of attitude of the goddess. The third example is the woodblock prints of Kitagawa Utamaro, excellent physiognomist and psychologist. Utamaro is an uncontested portraitist of feminine charm, especially known for his women of the "*maisons vertes*" (courtesans) – according to the words of Edmond de Goncourt. In the *Melancholic Love (mono-omou-koi)*, the silhouette of a lady lost in her dreams, is seen cut on a clear back which symbolizes the faint light of the oil lamp. The last example is the *Portrait of Fujiwara no Takanobu*, supposedly executed by the painter Taira no Shigemori, in the mid-12th century, praised by André Malraux for its accurate description of rigorous Kamakura warrior spirit, especially felt from its facial expression with retained tension.

The characteristics of Foujita are the flexibility of lines and the serenity of the physiognomy which qualify the originality of Japanese paintings as shown in above-mentioned examples. Another characteristic of Foujita is his fetishism revealed through his delicate depiction of each different texture. During his long research for rendering sensuality through texture Foujita rediscovered the aesthetic aspect of the texture of the Japanese paper of which Utamaro took advantage for his nudes in woodblock prints. Thus velvet-like soft whiteness of Foujita's nude is accompanied by a decorative *Toile de Jouy* fabric consisting of an off-white background, of which the motifs are minutely drawn with very fine Japanese brushes in Chinese ink. This work shows up his technical virtuosity and the Far-East chromatic sensibility on a black background. The combination of clarity of refined graphic lines and sensuality of tactile values of milk-skin texture in oil painting is unusual in western art. He successfully juxtaposed Western aesthetics and Eastern aesthetics, through Western and Eastern techniques and media: oil pigments and oriental ink, while searching for the universal of the art and his cultural identity. Here resides his originality.

5. Kondo

5.1 - Eternal oriental traveler and poet-painter

In comparison with Foujita, here is another Japanese painter, named Koichiro Kondo (1884-1962) who graduated from the section Western-style painting of the Tokyo Fine Arts School in 1910, like his classmate Foujita. His mentor was Japanese gifted painter Eisaku Wada (1874-1959) who had studied in France from 1899 to 1903 with Raphaël Collin, the same French teacher as for Kuroda who is Foujita's mentor, and was influenced by Millet and Corot. Kondo mastered Western oil painting techniques such as *chiaroscuro* (light and shadow), perspective, *masse*, and values of colors. He acquired the luminous style of the impressionist and post-impressionist in Japan. However he decisively changed the painting material through his direct contact with the West.

Unlike Foujita who lived in France spending substantial periods of time for studying and working, Kondo never stayed in Paris for more than six months. Kondo esteemed himself an eternal traveler like Basho, Japanese poet of Haiku, whom he venerated. Thus Kondo's "Passage" to Paris was very short, rather as a poet-traveler and poet-painter, but he came to Paris twice. He visited Europe first in 1922 and was enchanted particularly by European old masters' artworks. His second visit was in 1931 at a stage when he was already a mature artist and he could organize a modest, though significant, solo exhibition helped by his disciples and friends, and also André Malraux, French novelist. Malraux was highly inspired by the painter Kondo for creating Kama, Japanese ink painter, a character of his novel: *La Condition Humaine (Man's Fate)*, 1933) for which the author was awarded the Prix Goncourt, France's top literary prize.

Kondo found in Europe, especially in Paris, his identity of the Far East. He discovered that the Japanese are a very particular people by their sensibility and their relationship with the world (nature). In particular the Japanese perception of nature, tinted with the desire for some sort of religious consciousness, is fairly different from Westerners' point of view. Kondo was convinced that there were fundamental differences between Japanese and Western traditions of conceptualizing artwork themselves. He felt the essential Japanese spirit in himself while regarding artworks of European contemporary artists from the *École de Paris*, who advertised themselves revealing a desire to compete commercially instead of showing principles of art. Encounters with the West led him to deeply understand the essence of his own Asian heritage.

He decided then to pursue the ideals in his original way with materials and subjects purely Japanese, instead of attempting Western-style painting. He finally abandoned oil painting and became definitively a traditionalist ink painter. He renounced colors. According to European contemporary orientalist Ernst Grosse and Serge Elisséev, or the art historian Henri Focillon, ink painting is considered as the most difficult to understand for Westerners¹³, since it is the most spiritualized of the Far East. For an ink painter, his relationship with nature is almost religious. For example, the painters find in the elements and forms of the landscape the best ways of artistic expression of their conception of the world and their cosmic sentiment¹⁴. Thus, the contemporary German orientalist Gross stated: "the essential in the landscapes of ink is not what they represent but what they signify"¹⁵. In *La Condition Humaine (Man's Fate)*, the French novelist André Malraux makes Kama, Japanese ink painter, of whom the model is supposed to be Koichiro Kondo, state: "When I went to Europe I saw museums. The more your paintings show apples, and even the lines which do not represent things, the more they speak about them. For me, it is the world which is important"¹⁶. In this novel of 1933, Malraux puts in value the spirituality of the subjective painting by the intentions of Kama: "All is sign. Go from the sign to a signified thing, it is to deepen the world, it is to go toward the God"¹⁷. This spirituality is demonstrated also in *La Tentation de l'Occident (The Temptation of the West)*, 1926) by Malraux: "our painting does not imitate, nor represent: it signifies"¹⁸. Thus Far East ink painting reveals the artist's own cosmic sense, keenness and purity like in Zen ink painting, and sense of melancholy.

5.2 The awakening of “Ideals of the East”

The awakening of the identity of the Far East in Kondo is, in a sense, relevant to the awakening of the “Ideals of the East” in Kakuzo Okakura¹⁹. The latter, ancient director of the School of Art of Tokyo until 1898, being conscious about Japan’s aesthetic heritage, played a decisively important role with Ernest Fenollosa for the protection of the traditional Japanese Art and its promotion for both Japanese and Westerners, as previously mentioned. Okakura appraised for the national painting, the philosophical, religious, and aesthetic ideals²⁰ proper to the Japanese culture. In 1902 he went to India to be convinced through his interaction with Bengali intellectuals that “Asia is One”: Japan and India particularly share, other than Buddhist iconography among others, a common artistic heritage which is based on the notion of non-dualism (a non-dual whole)²¹. Not entirely satisfied with ancient examples, Okakura recommended for young artists to adapt themselves to the present, to renew the past heritage by adopting certain procedures of Western painting. He did not reject Western art. Okakura esteemed through cross-cultural aesthetic encounters that Japanese art would be revived to bear a new modern art.

In the same way, while looking back to traditional Japanese art with a new eye, especially fascinated by Tokugawa literati painters such as Uragami Gyokudo (1745-1820)²², Kondo maintained the Western painting techniques he acquired. As opposed to the Japanese habit that the drawing is all, like in Foujita, the *chiaroscuro* plays in Kondo such a big role as for drawing: the mass and the value exist. The sense of depth is perceived. In this sense Kondo’s ink painting is highly westernized. However, the ink painting of the Far East is opposed to the oil painting of Europe by its extreme reduction of the material matters. Kondo is attached particularly to the monochrome of Chinese ink, which is only black and white. But he consciously plays between the infinitely white and the infinitely black of ink. It must be said that his painting is rich with poetry in his description of the light and the water expressed always in black and white, but suggesting colors. The monochrome gives to all represented objects an intense depth. Detaching these objects from their material life, he put art over reality²³.

The painter Kondo used to be particularly attracted to night, darkness, shadows, especially in the early 1920s. After his first visit to Europe in 1922, influenced by the engravings of Goya, notably the *Toromachia*, Kondo created a series of six ink paintings of a large horizontal format: ***Cormorant Fishing***²⁴. This series, housed now in the National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo, is composed of six chronological sequences of night scenes of cormorant fishing on the Nagara river in Japan: *Baths; Twilight; Rapids; Abyss; Freshness; Last Fires*. During night fishing, which usually takes place in October, the fire is attached to the front of the boat to attract the fish. Kondo has recourse to contrasts of light and shadows in order to intensify the night scenes. However in his chromatic effect the light is always soft, with a *sfumato* effect. His first important work was born in 1923²⁵.

The ink paintings of Kondo are rich with impressionist poetry in his description of the light and water. It was his encounter with European art that brought him a decisive awakening of Far East artistic identity. Maintaining Western pictorial techniques he studied, using Far East media, he aspired to achieve the universal of the art. In his spiritual monochromatic world with infinite shades, he integrated Western principles into his Eastern ideals. The painter finally succeeded in attaining the transcendental through this intense dialogue.

6. Accomplishing oneself wherever one resides

The analysis of the awakening process of Japanese painters revealed a complex artistic identity affirming a hybrid style which was more or less, a fusion of East and West. Foujita’s “awakening of the ideals of the East” was mainly his discovery of the sensuality of Eastern tactile values, hardly far beyond material or technical

matters, since Foujita's focus was on typical Western classical subjects, the heritage of Renaissance, that he took on during the period covered by the present analytical studies. Kondo's "awakening" reached the Eastern (Daoist and Zen Buddhist) conceptualization of the universe, and its cosmic vision, while his technique was highly westernized even if the media used by Kondo are ancestral Eastern materials as used in calligraphy: ink and brushes.

Kondo was active only in Japan like other Japanese artists who encountered Western masterpieces. The reality is that even talented Japanese western style painters "a career in any country other than Japan would have probably been unthinkable".

Few Japanese painters from the period are known in France. Foujita is the only Japanese painter who became cosmopolitan in France. It is very interesting what the French art critic André Salmon wrote while finding again his Japanese friend in Paris during the Second World War in 1940: "He comes back here. More Parisian, more universal and more Japanese than ever"²⁶; "Foujita, a Japanese of Paris, a Parisian of Tokyo, venerates France, French culture, and art, but he understands to obey the French tradition and to stay Japanese in his heart"²⁷. It is certain that Foujita tried to assimilate his sensitivity into the French tradition and French art. Yet he stated: "staying as a foreigner in Paris gives me a distance I need for understanding me"²⁸. Finally instead of completely assimilating himself to French artistic tradition, he stayed himself keeping a foreigner's eye, and found himself, his own artistic tradition, the traditional refined esthetics²⁹ in Paris, the city of mirrors. He confirmed to continuously endeavor to accomplish himself as a Japanese in France, and in any place in the world, as he stated clearly in his essays of 1934³⁰.

7. Conclusion

European cosmopolitan cities like Paris attracts and supports men of talent like Foujita who became an emblematic artist of the Ecole de Paris. However Foujita was often regarded for Japanese as a kind of artistic opportunist who appropriated techniques from the traditional Japanese arts: flat surfaces, black outlines, juxtaposed textures, instead of challenging the radical avant-gardist creation that flourished during the early 20th century in Europe. Indeed Foujita was not an avant-gardist. It was not his goal.

Foujita stayed true to himself. While struggling with search of identity when pursuing European art through multi-cultural dialogues, he found and confirmed his mirrored-self through kaleidoscopic images of distinctive Japanese art elements crossing over to Europe on the wave of Japonisme. He understood that Western style art firstly introduced in Japan at the beginning of the 20th century that he consequently learned in Japan with Kuroda, his mentor, was paradoxically the re-importation of Japanese art elements into Japan. Thus Foujita could absorb the dialogues of Japanese art and Western art, not only with old great masters' works but also with the individualist modern artworks of the École de Paris.

The 20th century is considered to be the period in which the East and the West were able to come together in all their plenitude in order to enter a new creative era. During the first half of the 20th century new art movements especially those originating in Paris, capital of arts, drew out immediate reactions from aspiring artists, not only in Europe but also in any place in the world, and incited dynamic developments of modern painting. Especially the distance between West and East had shrunk to the point where stylistic interchanges and mutual influences via Paris were possible. Around 1960, painting finally freed itself from Western academic aesthetic and technical constraints, and turned its focus towards the Far East, particularly Japan, for Zen spirit and Japanese ink

calligraphy. It was the turn of the West that was enriched with the contact of the East. Art itself becoming more divergent, the boundary of the differences between the West and the East tended to be more fusional through cross cultural dialogue.

It was this synergy of two complementary entities, Western and Eastern ideals, which generated a new and dynamic spirit which made Foujita's art original.

A short bio-note on the author

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- ¹ The International Conference exploring the links between the modern art and artist passage to Paris : ” *Passage à Paris: artistes étrangers à Paris de la fin du XIXe siècle à nos jours*” was held at the Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art, Paris, France, November 6-8, 2013.
- ² This paper is based on my previous research paper “The Passage to Paris and Far East Artistic Awakening through Japanese Painters” in *Akita International University Global Review* (Japan, 2015), and stems from my oral presentation “Awakening of Far East Identity through the artworks of Japanese painters in the 1920s: Léonard Foujita and Koichiro Kondo” at the International Conference of Art History on “L’Oeuvre d’art entre ambition identitaire et aspiration à l’universel” at The Paris Catholic University, April 5-6, 2013.
- ³ Walter Benjamin, *Einbahnstrasse* (Berlin : Rowohlt, 1928).
- ⁴ *L’Ecole de Paris 1904-1929 La part de l’autre*, Exhibition catalogue, Paris : Musée de l’art moderne de la ville de Paris, 2000.
- ⁵ Riciotto Canudo, *Les Transplantés* (Paris : Editions Eugène Fasquelles, 1913), quoted by Gladys Fabre : “Qu’est-ce que l’Ecole de Paris”, *L’Ecole de Paris*, catalogue of exhibition, (Paris : Musée de la ville de Paris, 2000), 27.
- ⁶ Regarding the influence of Raphaël Collin on Kuroda and other Japanese painters, see Shuji Takashina, “Eastern and Western Dynamics in the Development of Western-style Oil Painting during the Meiji Era”, *Paris in Japan*, 1987, 21-31.
- ⁷ Shuji Takashina, “Eastern and Western Dynamics in the Development of Western-Style Oil Painting During the Meiji Era”, in *Paris in Japan The Japanese Encounter With European Painting*, The Washington University, 1987, 21-31.
- ⁸ Biographical note of Foujita in the exhibition catalogue : *L’Ecole de Paris*, 2000, 338.
- ⁹ Thiébauld Scisson, *Le Temps*, May 1st, 1923. The French writer Paul Morand mentioned : « The East and the West are merged in Foujita », Jean Seltz, *FOUJITA* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980), 61.
- ¹⁰ E.R. (Elie Richard), “La vie à Montparnasse”, *France-Japon*, no. 46, January 1940, 9.
- ¹¹ Foujita wrote : “Black was the color to which we Japanese and Chinese are most sensitive. Why shouldn’t we use it in oil paintings”, *Some Frank Advice to The Young*, 1936. See *Paris in Japan: The Japanese Encounter with European Painting*, 1987, 276.
- ¹² Kenneth E. Silver, “Made in Paris”, *L’Ecole de Paris*, exhibition catalogue, 2000, 42.
- ¹³ See especially Ernst Grosse, *Le Lavis de l’Extrême-Orient* (Paris : Cres, 1924); Serge Elisséev, “Sur le paysage à l’encre de Chine du Japon (étude sur Sesshu et son école)”, *Revue des arts asiatiques*, March 1925, 30-38.
- ¹⁴ See R. Petrucci, *La philosophie de la nature dans l’art d’Extrême-Orient* (Paris :H. Laurens, 1910); *Encyclopédie de la peinture chinoise : les renseignements de la peinture du jardin grand comme un grain de moutarde / traduction et commentaires par Raphaël Petrucci* (Paris :H. Laurens, 1918).
- ¹⁵ E. Grosse, *op. cit.*, 13.
- ¹⁶ André Malraux, *La Condition Humaine* (1933), Œuvre Complètes, Pléiade, (Paris : Gallimard), 649 : “*Quand je suis allé en Europe j’ai vu les musées. Plus vos peintres font des pommes, et même des lignes qui ne représentent pas des choses, plus ils parlent d’eux ; pour moi, c’est le monde qui compte*”. Far East perception on the individualism of the Western Art is explicitly shown in the later writings of Malraux : “*Un peintre japonais bouddhiste me disait à Nagoya, devant des Cézanne: He drew the apples instead of figures, in order to talk more about himself*” (André Malraux, préface, *Exposition Fautrier*, février 1933) ; “*Un de mes amis asiatiques m’a dit: Vous voulez être dans le tableau, alors que nous voulons être dehors. La peinture européenne a toujours voulu attraper les papillons, manger les fleurs et baiser les danseuses.*” (André Malraux, *La Tête d’obsidienne*)”.
- ¹⁷ André Malraux, *La Condition Humaine* (1933), in *André Malraux, Œuvre Complètes*, Pléiade, (Paris : Gallimard), 649-650 : “*Tout est signe. Aller du signe à la chose signifiée, c’est approfondir le monde ; c’est aller vers Dieu.*”
- ¹⁸ André Malraux, *La Tentation de l’Occident* (1926), in *André Malraux Œuvre Complètes*, Pléiade, (Paris : Gallimard), 90 : “*Notre peinture n’imite pas, ne représente pas : elle signifie.*”
- ¹⁹ Kakuzo Okakura, *The Ideals of the East with Special Reference to the Art of Japan* (London: J. Murray, 1903),
- ²⁰ According to Serge Elisséev, Okakura should have undergone the influence from John Ruskin. See S. Elisséev, *La Peinture contemporaine au Japon* (Paris :E. de Boccard, 1923), 47.
- ²¹ See Masako N. Racel, “Okakura Kakuzo’s Art History: Cross-Cultural Encounters, Hegelian Dialectics and Darwinian Evolution, in *Asian Review of World Histories*, 2:1, January 2015, 17-45.
On this painter see Stephen Addiss, *The Arts of Uragami Gyokudō* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987).
- ²³ See E. Grosse, *Le Lavis de l’Extrême-Orient, op. cit.*, 15.
- ²⁴ Sachiko Wada, “Koichiro Kondo and the Western World – from the relationship with André Malraux”, *Bulletin of Yamanashi prefectural museum of art*, no.21, 2007, 15-16.
- ²⁵ A preparatory work of Koichiro Kondo for this masterpiece, *Cormorant Fishing n°1 Rapids*, 1923, is housed in Yamanashi prefectural Museum, Japan, together with other important ink paintings of Kondo.
- ²⁶ André Salmon, “Le retour de Foujita” (Return of Foujita), in *France-Japon*, no.46, January 1940, 7-8.
- ²⁷ Jean Seltz, *FOUJITA* (Paris:Flammarion, 1980), 61.
- ²⁸ Jean Seltz, *FOUJITA*, (Paris:Flammarion, 1980), 85.
- ²⁹ Tsuguharu Foujita, « *Dento Raisan* (Praise of the tradition) » (September 1935), *Chi o Oyogu* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1984), 173-178.
- ³⁰ Tsuguharu, Foujita « *Atorie Mango* (About the Atelier) » (April 1934), in *Chi o Oyogu* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1984), 161-169.