Japonisme in Britain: a source of inspiration; J. McN. Whistler, Mortimer Menpes, George Henry, E.A. Hornell and nineteenth century Japan


Abstract

This thesis explores Japanese influences on British Art and will focus on four artists working in Britain: the American James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), the Australian Mortimer Menpes (1855-1938), and two artists from the group known as the Glasgow Boys, George Henry (1858-1934) and Edward Atkinson Hornel (1864-1933). Whistler was one of the earliest figures who incorporated Japanese elements in his art but never visited Japan; Menpes visited the country and learned Japanese artistic methods from a Japanese artist; Henry and Hornel visited Japan and responded to Japanese photography mass-produced for foreign market. The purpose of this thesis is to consider how Western artists understood and accepted Japanese art as a source of inspiration. To emphasise and support my view that Japanese art was one of the sources of inspiration for the creation of European art, I will also discuss western influences on Japanese art in the second half of the nineteenth century since this movement, supported by the Japanese government, is a good comparison with Japonisme. The historical background of Japonisme will be discussed in chapter one with a variety of examples taken from decorative art, paintings and cartoons. These examples have been chosen from the works of artists who were associated with the Aesthetic Movement and interested in the improvement of Design, since the early stages Japonisme in Britain was developed by leading figures of these movements. The breadth of the phenomenon is too wide to be included in any one thesis so theatre, music, architecture, sculpture or photography are not included. I will examine the essence of Japonisme by making comparisons between Whistler, Menpes, and Henry and Hornel. For the sake of consistency in these comparisons, I am going to concentrate pictorial art. However, Menpes' studio-house with its Japanese decoration is also going to be discussed since despite his wish to recreate an authentic Japanese inte did not understand the fundamental basis of Japanese architecture, so that the result was superficial. The artists have been chosen and discussed as follows.
Japan held a profound fascination for western artists in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the influence of Japonisme on western art was pervasive. Paradoxically, just as western artists were beginning to find inspiration in Japan and Japanese art, Japan was opening to the western world and beginning a process of thorough modernisation, some have said westernisation. The mastery of western art was included in the programme. Try to make book Japonisme in Britain: Whistler, Menpes, Henry, Hornel and nineteenth-century Japan as your good friend. It means that it can to be your friend when you truly feel alone and beside that course make you smarter than ever. Yeah, it is very fortuned in your case.