Radu Leca

The Media Trajectory of Kano Naganobu's *Merrymaking under Cherry and Aronia Blossoms*

1 Introduction

The standard analysis of the relationship between manuscript and print media is based on the history of the book in Europe, where movable type printing predominated and the processes of typesetting and of producing illustrations were strictly delimited. In East Asia, however, the predominance of woodblock printing, the visual character of calligraphy, and the merging of visual and textual formats meant that print often retained manuscript characteristics, meaning that the distinction between the two media was much less strict.[1] Given such differences, how can we still talk holistically of manuscript and print cultures while integrating cultural variations? To address this initial question, I propose to reframe the relationship between manuscript and print as a particular instance of a larger phenomenon: that of the relationship between an initial original artifact and its reproduction. For this purpose, I use the term 'manuscript' in a broad sense, to include hand-written as well as hand-painted artifacts[2] and focus on an original artifact—an early 17th-century painted folding screen—and its reproductions in various media, both in an art historical and in a philatelic context (Fig. 1).[3]

The remediations of the initial artifact can be visualized as a chronological chain (Fig. 2). However, instead of a diachronic pedigree starting from a hallowed original and decreasing in value and importance as it is reproduced in various ways, this study focuses on the trajectory of a given artifact through a horizontal media ecosystem.[4] How does this trajectory intersect with the historiography of Japanese art, with the

1 Cf. Kornicki 2001, 26–29; Chance/Davis 2016.

2 Unlike studies such as Kogman-Appel 2001, where 'manuscript painting' refers to paintings included in manuscripts, my understanding of 'manuscript' considers paintings as a type of manuscript, even when no textual element is present.

3 A preliminary form of this paper was presented at the AAS conference in 2021. I thank Drisana Misra, Federico dal Bo, Emura Tomoko, and Marimi Tateno for inspired feedback on earlier drafts.

4 In this I adapt the discussion of the trajectory of a work of art and its consequences for the concept of the original and of the copy in Latour/Lowe 2011.

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Fig. 1: Kanō Naganobu, *Merrymaking under Cherry and Aronia Blossoms*, 1600–1610, pair of six-fold screens, Tokyo National Museum.

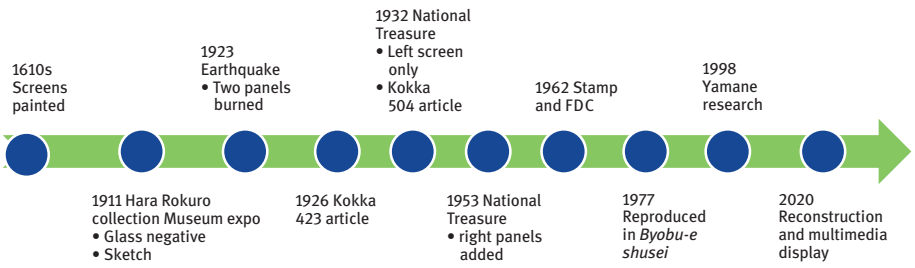


Fig. 2: Diachronical visualization of the media trajectory of *Merrymaking under Cherry and Aronia Blossoms*.

postwar mythography of the Japanese nation as well as with the history of stamp collecting? How do the various reproductions contribute to our understandings of the interactions between manuscript, printed as well as digital media? And, more broadly, how do these media interactions modify our very notions of original and reproduction?

In order to answer these questions, it is helpful to integrate the work of media theorists. While the very definition of a medium can be elusive, Bolter and Grusin define a medium as "that which remediates".[5] Graulund develops this idea further when discussing the original as gaining meaning "only through its mediation".[6] This perspective parallels Walter Benjamin's argument that the reproduction of an original work serves to enhance its 'aura'.[7] This means that, for instance, manuscript and print cultures never exist in isolation but rather are mutually coemergent. Furthermore, this process is bidirectional: When a new medium remediates its predecessor, that preexisting medium will in turn incorporate elements from the new medium.[8] This configures a media ecosystem characterized by intermediality, i. e., a simultaneous, entangled relationship between older and newer media.

Rajewsky, however, makes a distinction between an inherent intermediality and specific intermedial strategies, constitutional elements, or conditions of a given media product or configuration.[9] Focusing on the latter aspect, in this case applied to the multiple reproductions of the painted screen, enables a critical approach more sensitive to the characteristics of each medium and the shifting configurations of the media ecosystem. More specifically, this study case sheds light on the characteristics of one of the subcategories of intermediality identified by Rajewsky: that of medial transposition, in which the content of a media product is actively transformed in the process of its reinscription into another medium.[10]

While the discussion of remediation and intermediality has been focused on the transition from print and audiovisual media to digital forms, I argue that it can be enriched by two additions. The first is a consideration of a wider media ecosystem, both in terms of media diversity as well as of different cultural practices. This case study will demonstrate how the practices of art historiography and of stamp collecting involve complex processes of reproducing manuscripts that complicate the ideas of copy and original. Indeed, alternative cultural practices of copying have the potential to complement the concept of remediation. This issue is particularly relevant in the context of the East Asian tradition of manuscript copying.[11] This was true of the

5 Bolter/Grusin 2000, 65.

6 Graulund 2017, 115.

7 Cf. Benjamin 2007.

8 This parallels Graulund's characterization of the original and the copy "as being engaged in an interlinked and always transformative process that is never quite at rest". Graulund 2017, 123.

9 Cf. Rajewsky 2005, 47.

10 Cf. Rajewsky 2005, 51.

11 For copying in Chinese painting and calligraphy see Cahill 1994, 95–112, 134–136; Ledderose 1998, 194–213; Hay 2014. For copying in Japan see Meehan 2014, 264–66.

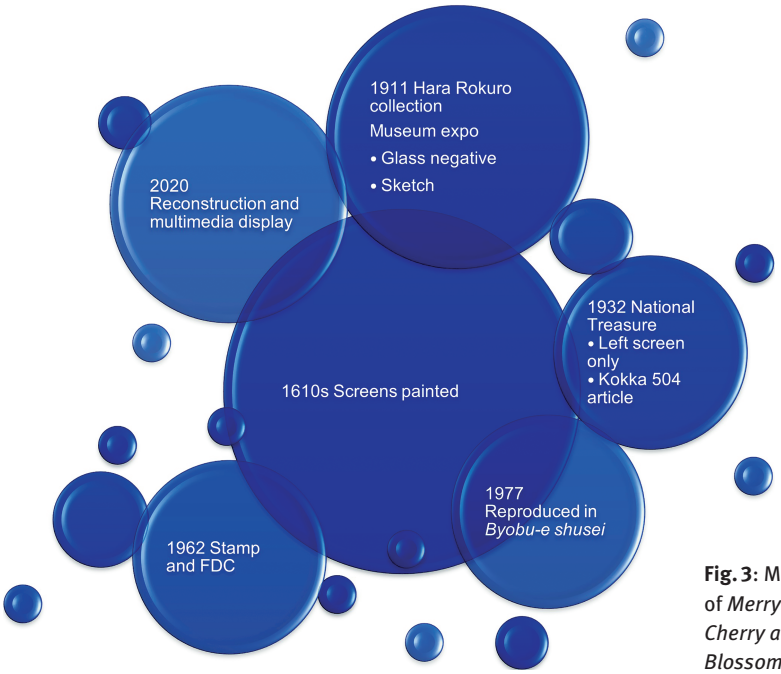


Fig. 3: Media ecosystem of *Merrymaking under Cherry and Aronia Blossoms*.

Buddhist cultural environment, where copying sutras was a form of accruing merit, of writing practices that included manuscript copying with an educational, mnemonic, and archival purpose, as well as to painting practice, where copying was a form of instruction and advancement of technique that allowed forms of creativity.[12] It has even been argued that "there may be a compulsive character to the concept of replication in Japan".[13] This reliance on transpositions of the initial artifact into another media form characterizes the history of literature as well as the history of art in Japan.[14] In an aesthetic and cultural medium that did not relegate reproductions to an inferior status to that of their original, it becomes possible to conceptualize a non-hierarchical media ecosystem, characterized by a democracy of copies, or what Lamarre calls a "distributed field".[15] The side view of the chronological iterations of an artifact can thus be reimagined as an 'exploded view' capturing a synchronic slice of the horizontal relationship of these reproductions (Fig. 3).[16]

12 For sutra copying see Kornicki 2001, 78–111; Lowe 2012; O'Neal 2019. For writing practices see Carpenter 2008; Marquet 2014, 323–327. For copying in painting practice see Jordan/Watson 2003; Marquet 2014; Kameda-Madar 2014.

13 Cox 2008, 11.

14 A media studies approach to a parallel phenomenon is at work in what Emmerich calls 'bibliographic translation', meaning the rendering of the calligraphic nature of woodblock-printed text into movable type in 19th-century Japan. Cf. Emmerich 2014.

15 Cf. Lamarre 2009, 306–309.

16 Cf. Lamarre 2009, 306–309.

This intermedial ecosystem is reconfigured by recurring cycles of reproduction spurred by the artifact's public appearances. This reconfiguration is inflected by the material characteristics of each medium, and this is my second addition to the discussion of intermediality: the deployment of a material culture approach combined with a consideration of the possibilities for action, or affordances, of an artifact and its reproductions in their social contexts.[17]

2 Screen Painting History

The three-pronged approach outlined above—the media trajectory of an artifact, a culturally-inflected media ecosystem, and the importance of materiality and affordance—makes more sense once we start examining the initial artifact under consideration: a pair of folding screens showing "Merrymaking under Cherry and Aronia Blossoms", painted by Kano Naganobu (1577–1654) (Fig. 1).[18] The right screen depicts a group of aristocratic women enjoying a picnic with music and song, while the left screen features women performing a fashionable dance while being watched by aristocratic figures on the veranda of an octagonal pavilion. The realism of the renderings has encouraged theories that it represents an actual outing in Kyōto around 1597 and features Yodogimi, the wife of the ruler Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and their son Hideyori.[19] Regardless of its relationship to real events, it is one of the most skillfully executed examples of outdoor entertainment from this period by one of the leading painters of the prominent Kano school.[20] The dancing figures, for example, are brimming with movement, which is compounded by the sharply hooked brush strokes depicting the grass under the dancers' feet.

Such folding screens would have been primarily designed for indoor viewing, and therein lies their first intermedial feature: They transport an outdoor setting and social occasion into an indoor viewing experience. The fact that the depicted space is spread across two screens facilitates the immersive quality of that remediated experience.

17 Cf. Peltzer 2019, 2–3. In its original formulation by ecological psychologist James Gibson, the term 'affordance' referred to the interdependent relationship between an environment and its users (Cf. Gibson 1979, 127–143). Design theorist Donald Norman then redefined the term with an emphasis on an object's possibilities of action as perceived by the user according to their physical capabilities, objectives and past experiences (Norman 1988). Recent scholarship on affordance calls for an analysis not of what objects afford, but rather how, for whom, and under what circumstances they afford it. Cf. Davis 2020, 8–11.

18 The screens are not titled, and their 20th-century title has been customarily translated as "Merrymaking under Cherry Blossoms"; however, this is only accurate for the right screen, since the left screen features a blossoming *kaidō* (海棠 aronia) tree.

19 Cf. Noma 1953, 13–14.

20 Naganobu was the youngest brother of Kano Eitoku (1543–1590), and started a studio in Edo while being employed by the ruling Tokugawa family with the title *goyō eshi*. See Gerhart 2003, 15.

Fig. 4: Kanō Naganobu, detail of the central two panels of the left screen from *Merrymaking under Cherry and Aronia Blossoms*, 1600–1610, pair of six-fold screens, Tokyo National Museum.

In order to make the remediation effective, the composition is structured along 'single field of vision scenes'[21] that cater to the process of physical interaction with the screen in an indoor setting under candlelight. Unlike other Kano school paintings featuring a gold leaf background and designed to serve as a backdrop for social occasions, these screens are full of details meant to be appreciated from a close distance.[22] In this context, the viewers' field of vision would have been restricted to two or three panels at most. The audience would alternate between sitting on rice straw mats (Jp. *tatami*) with their legs folded and changing location to be able to appreciate one scene at a time.

The two central panels of the left screen form together one such scene that encapsulates the narrative of the entire composition (Fig. 4). At the very center is a female dancer, her body divided by the screen partition. The significance of this design choice, extremely rare among extant screen paintings of the period, has not been considered in previous research. While modern museographical practices favor the

21 'Single field of vision scene' is my translation of Ōta Shōko's term *ichi shiya no gamen*, as discussed in Ota 1995, 86–95.

22 On Kano paintings as backdrops see chapter 1 in Gerhart 1999.

display of the screens as flat surfaces, they were originally designed to be displayed in a folded state. This conferred spatial dynamics to the entire composition. The body of the dancing woman was effectively folded in the angle of the two panels, imbuing it with three-dimensionality and kinetic energy. The painter was therefore maximizing the affordance of the screen medium for expressive purposes.

The above discussion shows how such painted folding screens participated in an intermedial ecosystem beginning at the time of their creation. That ecosystem changed radically in 1911, when the painting was rediscovered in the collection of the industrialist Hara Rokurō and displayed at the Tokyo Imperial Household Museum (the predecessor of the Tokyo National Museum) as part of the exhibition *Paintings, Costumes and Accessories of Women in the Tokugawa Period*.[23] Implicit in this display choice was the painting's classification as a *fūzoku-ga* ('genre scene'), assumed to be a faithful rendition of the 'reality' of the time.[24] Furthermore, as indicated by the title of the exhibition catalogue—*Ukiyo-e Painting Collection*—such genre scenes were considered to be the precursors of the *ukiyo-e* ('floating world picture') genre and thus an important chapter in the history of Japanese art.[25] In the catalogue, the screens were reproduced one panel at a time, severing the body of the dancer and thus obscuring the dynamism of the cross-panel depiction (Fig. 5).[26]

In this complex way, the painting entered an institutional and hermeneutical framework that from its inception had shaped the historiography and the canon of Japanese art.[27] Part of this inclusion, equivalent to an initiation rite, was the making of two forms of archival reproductions, one auxiliary to print technology and the other in manuscript: a photographic glass negative and a sketch by the curator Mizoguchi Teijirō of the central figure of the right half.[28] The painting then narrowly escaped destruction in the 1923 Kanto earthquake.[29] The central two panels of its right half were lost, making its two reproductions the only source for understanding the initial state of the artifact. However, the preservation of its two reproductions could not compensate for the incomplete status of the right half. When the screens were introduced to the academic world with a short article in the prominent journal *Kokka* in 1926, only

23 Tōkyō Teishitsu Hakubutsukan 1911, 6 (cat. 64).

24 As shown in Princess Akiko of Mikasa 2009, the term *fūzoku-ga* itself is a late 19th-century Japanese construct imitating the European art historical category of 'genre scenes'. For an extensive analysis of *fūzoku-ga* historiography, see Lee 2003, 19–38.

25 Cf. Tanaka 1911.

26 This parallels the process of fragmenting images of handscrolls in reproductive media discussed in Wang/Trede 2021.

27 Cf. Tseng 2008.

28 This dual use of reproduction technologies coincides with a transition period from archival sketches to archival photography, paralleled for example by the activity of Wilhelm Weimar at the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg ('The Museum of Arts and Crafts Hamburg') around 1900. See Kreiseler 2018.

29 Cf. Schencking 2015; Weisenfeld 2012.

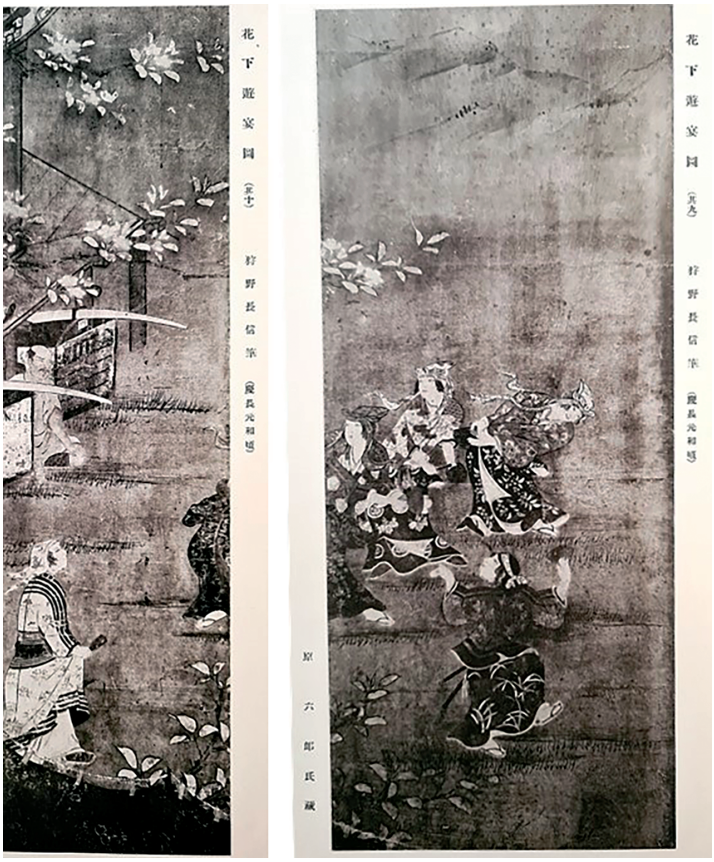


Fig. 5: Kanō Naganobu, detail of the central two panels of the left screen from *Merrymaking under Cherry and Aronia Blossoms*, photographic print, Tanaka 1911, cats. 1–9, 1–10.

the left half was reproduced in a collotype at an approximately 1:7 scale.[30] This was larger than the customary size, requiring the use of a fold-out that provided a partial parallel to the folding of the reproduced artifact. This article along with its prominent reproduction undoubtedly contributed to the designation, five years later, of only the left half as a National Treasure, consecrating the work's status within the art historical canon in Japan.[31] The surviving panels of the right half were included in the National Treasure designation only in 1953.

Meanwhile, for art historians, the glass negative photographic reproduction of the right screen remained crucial for the study of the painting. For example, in a 1932

30 Taki 1926. The sheet measures 51.3 by 21.1 cm, approximately one seventh the size of the screen, 148.8 by 356.8 cm.

31 On the history and significance of the National Treasure System see Guth 1997. It is also perhaps not coincidental that Mizoguchi Teijirō 溝口禎次郎, who had sketched the central figure of the right half of the screen in 1911, was by this time both head of the Fine Arts division of Tokyo National Museum and member of the *Kokuhō Hozonkai* ('National Treasure Preservation Bureau'). See Tōkyō Bunkazai Kenkyūjo 2014.

article in the same journal, *Kokka*, the art historian Fujikake Shizuya describes the reproduction process:

> The remaining panels are now mounted on a four-fold screen. I took new photos of these and added an old photo of the lost panels in order to make the restorative image presented here. It is regrettable that the facsimile of the old photo of the lost panels decreases the sharpness of the restorative image, I urge the reader to take it into consideration.[32]

And in a 1953 article that includes both forms of archival reproductions of the screens mentioned above, the curator and art historian Noma Seiroku declares his intention to "restore the work to the pages of this magazine and remember it in its entirety as it once was".[33]

Therefore, from the very start of its 20th-century rediscovery, its appreciation was mediated by cycles of reproductions. The latest cycle dates to the beginning of the 21st century, when the two initial reproductions of the right panel enabled the digital recoloring of the lost panels. The glass negative provided grayscale color values superior to those of a regular photograph.[34] Digital scans of the surviving panels were then converted to grayscale to correlate the values with those from the glass negative.[35] The sketch by Mizoguchi provided further color information. However, not all color values were able to be reconstructed, and it was decided to leave those areas blank in the resulting digital image. This resulted in a transmedial reconstruction of the initial surface of the folding screen. That final image was subsequently laser-printed onto blank Japanese-style washi paper sheets, then mounted as a pair of folding screens. This analogue-digital-analogue reconstruction was the centerpiece of an intermedial display at the Tokyo National Museum.[36] This included digital projections of clouds and cherry blossoms across the screens' surface, as well as motion sensors triggered by visitors' footsteps that animated the projection of cherry blossoms on the floor. The text included in the presentation video rehashes the ethnocentric appropriation of the artifact's meaning inherited from *fūzoku-ga*: 'One could say this is a work that beautifully captures the spirit of the Japanese people, who love the seasons and celebrate spring'.[37] This media assemblage referenced the initial manuscript artifact, though within a much more complex ecosystem of reproductions. Although the materiality

32 Shisaian 1932, quoted in Yamane 1998, 379–380: 今は四曲屏風に装せられてるので、新たに之が写真を取り、それに加ふるに焼失せる部分の古き写真を以てして、原始復帰の図を作りて、是を此所に提出した。焼失部の古き写真よりの複写は、図より鮮明を欠くの遺憾あれど、読者は幸に諒とせられたい. Translation by the author.

33 Noma 1953, 12.

34 Cf. Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku 2001, 133.

35 Cf. Matsushima, quoted in Mori 2020.

36 Cf. Tsuzuri Project in the Primary Sources section of the Bibliography.

37 Original text: 季節を愛で、春を謳歌する日本人の心を見事にとらえた作品と言えるでしょう. Bunkazai katsuyō sentā 2020. Translation by the author.

of the screen format was reproduced, its surface was flat: The texture and thickness of the initial surface could not be replicated. Nevertheless, the presentation video claims that the installation 'revived the original form of the screens'.[38] The intention was to reproduce with digital means the 'aura' of the artifact or the immersive quality of its viewing experience.[39] Thus, in the media ecosystem of this artifact, reproductive media interrelate by referring to an original but without requiring its direct involvement. This process is part of a larger trend towards animation and interactivity in practices of displaying and appreciating artifacts in contemporary Japan, as exemplified by the pixel art folding screens of Shigeta Yusuke or the immersive installations by TeamLab.[40] Thus, digital forms of reproduction are not only the latest addition to the media ecosystem of 'Merrymaking under Cherry Blossoms' but also introduce their own developments, as discussed in the final section of this paper.

3 Philatelic Reproductions

This analysis so far has focused exclusively on reproductions of the source image within an art historical context. However, printed reproductions of the screen painting were also produced in the context of postwar philately. To exemplify this alternative mode of remediation, I focus on an artifact from my own collection: a First Day Cover envelope issued by the Japan Post in 1962 on the occasion of the printing of a stamp featuring a detail from Naganobu's screens (Fig. 6).[41] It is part of a material assembly that exemplifies Japan's 'wrapping culture': It is housed in an envelope marked Airmail, sent by a stamp collector in Tokyo.[42] Inside, in a custom plastic bag, originally thermal-sealed, is a hand-signed printed paper with the stamp collector's information, pressed against a cardboard cutout the exact size of the smaller envelope attached to it, of a standard size in 1962. The envelope features three printed reproductions of a detail of a female dancer: the stamp featuring the dancer, a printed reproduction of a photograph of the corresponding area from the original screen, and a cancellation mark impressed on the stamp in red ink with a custom seal showing the outline of the same dancer.

What is the significance of the philatelic reproduction of the screen painting's detail? First of all, our frame of analysis needs to expand to a broader concept of visual and material culture. Indeed, stamps have been acknowledged as a specific

38 Original text: 本来のの姿によみがえった. Bunkazai katsuyō sentā 2020. Translation by the author.

39 This resonates with a recent trend of acknowledging the potential of "environmental reproductions". See Gissen 2018.

40 Cf. https://culture-gate.jp/exhibition/motion (accessed 17/10/2022).

41 Cf. Collecticus 2006, 6–7.

42 For wrapping culture see Hendry 1993.

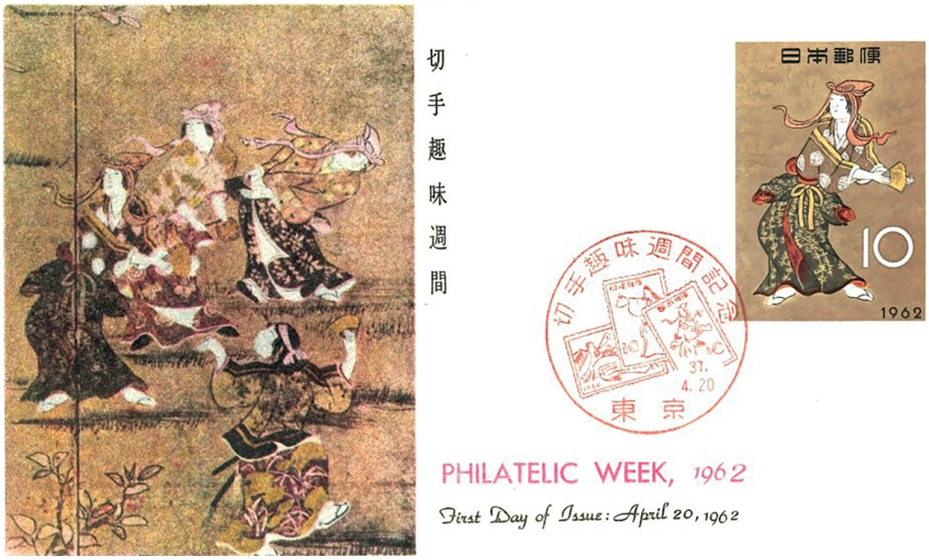


Fig. 6: Watanabe Saburō (designer), First Day Cover for 10 Yen stamp with design of *Dancing Girl* from *Merrymaking* screen, 1962.

form of visual culture, one that is government-issued and therefore closely tied to the agenda of nation building.[43] The First Day Cover also invites us to explore an under-researched connection between art historiography and philatelic culture, although, as discussed below, their history intersected from early on.

Before proceeding to a close analysis of the philatelic reproduction, it is worth briefly reviewing the history of art-themed stamps in Japan. Prior to World War II, the iconographic range of postal stamps in Japan was limited to imperial symbols, classical buildings, and Buddhist statuary. In 1945, the Allied Occupation offices issued a set of guidelines for the promotion of stamp collecting.[44] This was followed by the establishment of the Japan Philatelic Society in 1946, of Philately Week in 1947, as well as of nationwide stamp exhibitions. Furthermore, commemorative stamps were introduced in 1947 featuring reproductions of early modern artworks: The first two, for example, reproduced a woodblock print by Utagawa Hiroshige and a painting by Hishikawa Moronobu (the latter from the collection of the Tokyo National Museum).[45] These commemorative stamps instantly became collector's items, contributing to a quick rise in the popularity of stamp collecting. Overall, these developments point to a deliberate attempt to form the 'taste' of philatelists, encoding stamps as a form of cultural capital by simulating connoisseurship and other social practices associated with artworks. The burgeoning social practice of stamp collecting was thus legit-

43 Cf. Frewer 2002, 6–7.
44 Cf. Dobson 2002.
45 Cf. Tanabe 2014b.

imized by remediating tropes of prewar Japanese visuality, such as the art historical canon and touristic sites. Emblematic in this sense is the inclusion of artworks, including 'National Treasures', in the definitive issue series from 1951 to 1966. For instance, when a stamp reproducing a detail of the Nyoirin Kannon Boddhisatva statue of Chūgūji temple in Nara was released on May 1, 1951, the information card for its First Day Cover mentioned that 'one cannot overstate the artists' praise of its superlative technique and sense of beauty'.[46]

The 1962 stamp of the female dancer from the screen is another example of the close relationship between philately and art historiography. Its design was chosen from among a group of designs from paintings by Noma Seiroku, who was then the head of the Curatorial Department at Tokyo National Museum and had published an article on the screens.[47] By the 1960s, the number and variety of such art-themed stamps and First Day Covers had increased. At least three versions of the First Day Cover of the stamp of the female dancer were issued, each featuring a different additional rendition of the painting detail. One of these versions is illustrated in Fig. 7. It includes three examples of diverse printing techniques. On the left is a printed reproduction of an analogue photograph of a section of the screen painting's left half. The photograph had to be sifted into a restricted set of color attributes as preparation for rotogravure printing. Next to it is a text printed vertically in the manner of the premodern Japanese writing mode, spelling out the occasion of the production of this object, a bi-annual week of events promoting the hobby of stamp collecting. Below, text in English records the exact date of release. Off-center is an impression in red ink of a seal produced for the same occasion. It features the outline of the dancers in the painting along with those of two other stamps featuring images of women from premodern Japanese art, intended perhaps as an incentive for the collector to pursue this theme. The seal's red ink is carefully superimposed on what could be considered the 'original' object of this material assembly, a stamp remediating that same dancer.

With its collation of printed reproductions, the First Day Cover is hypermedial; it is an "isomorphic layering of two or more orders of observing".[48] At the same time, the stamp itself appears to display the other characteristic of remediation identified by Bolter and Grusin: the promise of immediacy, of delivering a faithful image of the initial painting, and in this process disappearing as a medium. However, a close comparison between the source painting detail and the stamp design reveals a series of visual interventions on the part of the stamp designer. First, there is a conscious choice to single out only one figure from a group of women that perform a collective dance. The dancer immediately behind, as well as brushstrokes signifying outdoor vegetation, have been erased and replaced by a non-descript background. This process followed a logic of frag-

46 Original text: その勝れた技巧と美観とは美術家の推賞描く能わざるところである. Translation by the author.

47 Cf. Tanabe 2014a; Noma 1953.

48 Hay 2014, 330. For hypermediacy see Grusin/Bolter 2000, 5–14.

mentation, relying on a process of metonymy by which the part stands in for the whole. The other major visual intervention is the erasure of the visual caesura of the screen fold. This suturing of the image of the dancer's body is understandable as an attempt to present a more distinctive image of the dancer. At the same time, this has the effect of muting the animation effect of the initial image. What had been a dynamic, almost three-dimensional rendition is now flattened, its kinetic energy frozen into a snapshot.

The two above interventions are also part of an overall effort to restore an 'original' painted image as it would have looked at the time of its initial production. The faded or oxidized areas of the lower garment, for example, are filled in. This restoration process is an invasive one: In the initial painting, the ventral area of the dancer's garment, though damaged by the folding of the screen, still reveals two chrysanthemum designs, originally painted with *gofun* white. In the stamp design, these have been supplanted by a single peony design (Fig. 7). Additionally, while the image of bamboo leaves on the fan held by the dancer in the original painting is barely discernible, the stamp designers boldly rendered what they considered to be its initial appearance (Fig. 8). This is a more radical approach compared to the digital reconstruction of the lost panels of the right screen, where uncertain areas were left in monochrome.

However, the interventions of the stamp designers can also be understood as a creative response to the constraints of the rotogravure printing technology. For example, printing brown pigment inside the black outline of the fan and then overprinting with yellow pigment resulted in an intermediary hue (Fig. 9). Moreover, the initial white hue of the support paper was integrated into the stamp design by leaving some areas unprinted—an effective parallel to the 'reserved white' technique used traditionally in East Asian brush painting.[49] These remediation techniques yielded a cleaner base image more appropriate for high-density rotogravure printing.[50]

The information card that accompanies this First Day Cover mentions the printing technique and the name of the designer but glosses over the interventions made to the initial image (Fig. 10). Instead, the descriptive text is similar to art historiographical writing in its emphasis on the characteristics of the reproduced artifact. It even misidentifies the cross-dressing female dancers in the screen as "men and women". This perpetuates the misinterpretation introduced in the 1926 *Kokka* article that was included in the entry of the screen in the National Treasure category.[51] The dancers, however, are all women who are crossdressing while performing dances usually associated with men.[52] The National Treasure entry for the work, and its philatelic

49 Cf. Croizier 1988, 53.

50 The accompanying information card in Fig. 8 translates the Japanese term *gurabia* as photogravure, but this actually refers to rotogravure, the most common printing process for stamps in postwar Japan ever since the importation of rotogravure printing presses from the German maker Koenig & Bauer in 1954. Cf. Sano 1960, 86.

51 Cf. Taki 1926, 37; Yamane 1998, 386.

52 Cf. Yamane 1998.

Fig. 7: Detail of the central two panels of the left screen of *Merrymaking under Cherry and Aronia Blossoms* (left) and detail of corresponding area of 1962 stamp (right).

Fig. 8: Detail of the third panel (from the right) of the left screen of *Merrymaking under Cherry and Aronia Blossoms* and detail of corresponding area of 1962 stamp.

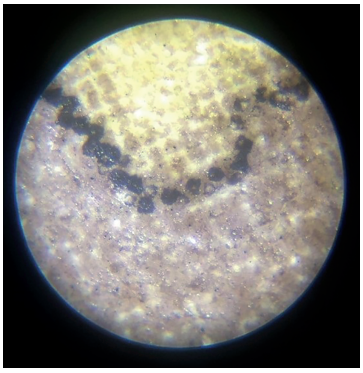
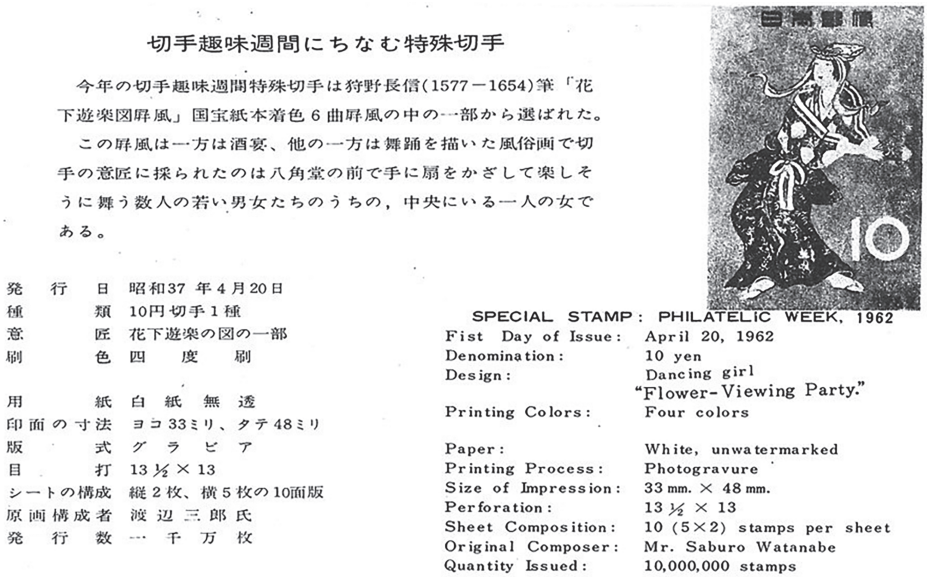


Fig. 9: Detail of fan edge on 1962 stamp, 100 × magnified.



切手趣味週間にちなむ特殊切手

今年の切手趣味週間特殊切手は狩野長信(1577－1654)筆「花下遊楽図屏風」国宝紙本着色６曲屏風の中の一部から選ばれた。

この屏風は一方は酒宴、他の一方は舞踊を描いた風俗画で切手の意匠に採られたのは八角堂の前で手に扇をかざして楽しそうに舞う数人の若い男女たちのうちの，中央にいる一人の女である。

発行日	昭和37年4月20日
種類	10円切手1種
意匠	花下遊楽の図の一部
刷色	四度刷
用紙	白紙無透
印面の寸法	ヨコ33ミリ、タテ48ミリ
版式	グラビア
目打	13½×13
シートの構成	縦2枚、横5枚の10面版
原画構成者	渡辺三郎氏
発行数	一千万枚

SPECIAL STAMP: PHILATELIC WEEK, 1962

Fist Day of Issue:	April 20, 1962
Denomination:	10 yen
Design:	Dancing girl "Flower-Viewing Party."
Printing Colors:	Four colors
Paper:	White, unwatermarked
Printing Process:	Photogravure
Size of Impression:	33 mm. × 48 mm.
Perforation:	13½ × 13
Sheet Composition:	10 (5×2) stamps per sheet
Original Composer:	Mr. Saburo Watanabe
Quantity Issued:	10,000,000 stamps

Fig. 10: Information card accompanying the First Day Cover of the 1962 stamp.

counterpart, thus flatten the complex gender dynamics of the painting into a gender-conforming binary, more appropriate to modern postwar Japan.

The three above remediation techniques—fragmentation, flattening, and restoration—are also characteristic of reproductions of artifacts in art history publications. Indeed, the deployment of these intermedial strategies goes back to the beginnings of modern art historiography.[53] In Japan, these strategies were grafted with a strong nationalistic tone. For example, the *fūzoku-ga* ('genre scenes') volume from the sumptuous 1970s series *Nihon Byobu-e Shusei* ('Crestomacy of Japanese Screen Paintings') includes, besides a reproduction of the painted screens, an extensive section with monochrome reproductions of details of paintings, grouped according to quasi-ethnographic iconographic categories 'for the study of the cultural history of Japan'.[54] Paintings of the period are here assumed to be faithful renderings of an 'original' reality, and the hypermedial accumulation of printed reproductions provides material anchors for the analysis of events and artefacts of the past.[55]

The scientific study of artifacts as well as the practice of stamp collecting developed in the late 19th and 20th centuries by integrating the increasing accessibility of printed reproductions. Both the art historian Aby Warburg and the media theorist Walter Benjamin collected and wrote about stamps.[56] It is not surprising, therefore, that

53 Cf. Keller 2001.
54 Cf. Takeda 1977, 149–180.
55 Cf. Takeda 1977, 172.
56 Cf. Zöllner 2020.

the hypermedial character of the First Day Cover and its accompanying information card would be influenced by art historical practices of reproduction. But stamps are not just smaller cousins of paintings or artistic prints in the genealogical tree of visual culture. They are also a medium associated with specific intermedial strategies and hermeneutical techniques that can illuminate broader aspects of visuality as well as materiality. Just like miniature books, stamps and other philatelic items are "a celebration of a new technology, yet a nostalgic creation endowed with the significance the manuscript formerly possessed."[57]

Philately is comprised of a set of social practices that employ techniques of optical investigation of printed reproductions of originals which are comparable to those of art historiography. However, the fact that philately's originals are printed and designed for postal circulation makes both their further reproduction problematic and their appreciation more forgiving to damage. Stamp catalogues often print an additional line over the stamp image to discourage falsification, and many stamps are collected after they have been cancelled with a visually intrusive stamp. Their size and accessibility also make visual examination with a loupe more casual and intimate than that of a painting. These characteristics enabled me to effectively upgrade examination by loupe, instead using a 100x portable microscope that requires close proximity to the examined surface—not a recommended practice for the original painting (fig. 9).

The flat, shiny, and slightly slippery illustrations of art history publications discourage analyses of their materiality, both in terms of the tactile and of the volumetric properties of the initial artifact. The role of materiality and tactility in the appreciation of artifacts is increasingly acknowledged both in a historical and contemporary context.[58] On the other hand, in comparison to art historical reproductions, stamps are more amenable to being handled, although one of the basic recommendations for beginners is to use tweezers instead of their fingers.[59] Close optical examination, however, encourages the recovery of tactile and volumetric information at the level of paper and pigment, a feature shared with high-resolution digital scans. Paradoxically, the practice of handling stamps is closer to practices of appreciating artifacts in early modernity; in the so-called 'textural mode' of early modern painting, the surface would have also been perceived through tactile contact or cues of texture and depth enhanced by candlelight.[60]

A material culture approach to visual sources such as stamps—mediated through optical devices—would allow increased understanding of the processes of remediation at work in appreciating artworks, objects, and images. Although stamp reproductions involve much more intrusive and non-transparent remediation techniques characterized by "translational violence", implicit in these techniques is a critique

57 Stewart 1993, 39.
58 Cf. Ganz 2012; Christidou/Pierroux 2018.
59 Cf. Melville 1920, 141–142.
60 For the textural mode see Berger 1998, 41–44.

of the initial artifact, the proposition of another way of thinking about handling and understanding that artifact.[61] This feature is particularly obvious in the case of art-themed stamps. At the same time that their remediation drifts away from a literal rendition of its initial artifact, it reproduces its collection value by relying on a quasi-art historical discourse.

4 Remarks on Intermediality

What is different when viewing the painted folding screen directly or in a reproduction? Along with the material characteristics of each reproductive medium, the distinct understandings of different observers lead to divergent processes of mediation. When exhibited now, the screens are often framed both by glass cases and by the discourse of the curator (fig. 11). The observers' own reflection, in both senses of the term, appears in the glass cases. The task of the art historian used to be defined by the ability to cut through these layers of mediation and recover the artifact's presence

Fig. 11: West German President Heinrich Luebke and his wife Wilhelmine visit the Tokyo National Museum on November 7, 1963 in Tokyo, Japan.

61 For 'translational violence' see Hay 2014, 325.

and initial meaning. But the very practice of art history has been shaped by the use of printed, and now digital, reproductions. Each new medium brings its own material and epistemological inflections that reconfigure the preexisting network of reproductions into which it comes into being. Thus, rather than striving for the recovery of an 'original' meaning of the artifact, it is more productive to understand the specific configurations of reproductive media through which its meaning has been shaped.

To the dyad of manuscript and print in an art historical context, I added reproductions in a philatelic context along with digital reproductions, thereby showing their intermedial couplings. Artistic manuscripts and print are therefore only two of many media configurations in a complex media ecosystem. As discussed above, the First Day Cover reproduces a manuscript in print in ways that precede processes of digital reproduction, thus offering a multifaceted example of the media trajectory of a specific artifact. The material assembly of the First Day Cover envelope illustrates the mechanisms of art canon formation and perpetuation as they intersected with the Japan Post's institutional objectives at a time of enhanced national sentiment. Such collector's items encapsulate the overlapping materiality of printed media in contemporary Japan, instigate fresh views on the initial materiality of the source image in early modern Japan, and prefigure the interplay between authenticity and simulation in the digital age. Philately, and in particular art-themed philatelic reproduction, is a hitherto unexplored form of historiography that also offers a methodological model for evaluating and appreciating images based on tactility and optical investigation.

While unpacking the complex and thought-provoking intermedial character of philatelic reproductions of work of art such as that illustrated in Fig. 7, it should be acknowledged that digital reproductions have the potential to reinstate the sense of touch and the perception of the artifact's presence. On the one hand, the digital medium can facilitate the painted reproduction of a work of art, such as the digital printing of pigments on gesso-coated canvas, or the 'Super Clone Cultural Property' intermedial technology used to reproduce Bamiyan Buddhist wall paintings at a recent exhibition at Tokyo University of the Arts.[62] Indeed, the display of the reconstructed Naganobu screens' lost panels blurs the categories of 'visual replicas', 'present-state copies', and 'reproduction copies' defined by literature on conservation in Japan.[63] Despite concerns of a 'dematerialization' effected by the digital, the embodied interactions afforded by these installations help recover the corporeal experience of an artifact whose loss with the advent of writing is decried by Walter Ong.[64]

The digital is only the latest addition to the repertoire of representational media. The horizontal nature of the digital media ecosystem is structured according to a 'database logic', in which all forms of previous media are equally accessible and repro-

62 For the former see Latour/Lowe 2017, for the latter Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku 2021.

63 Cf. Kyūshū Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan 2011, 159, 281.

64 Cf. Ong 2002, which is critiqued for its simplistic binary between body and mind in Bleeker 2010, 40.

ducible.[65] At the same time, "what happened in a predigital world now occurs with exponentially greater speed and scope".[66] This process of acceleration exposes the intermedial nature of the manuscript and print media network which preceded digital media. Taking a wider side view that visualizes a democracy of images can thus offer a way forward from genealogical and hierarchical evaluations of the trajectory of an artifact (Fig. 3). The interrelationality of the digital medium helps reconceptualize the artifact as "a distributed existence, with strong and weak reenactments."[67] Instead of a binary between the original and the copy, thinking of reproductions as intermedial reproductions and qualifying them in terms of their 'strength', or their epistemological impact, enables a more nuanced perspective on the mechanisms by which a given text or image accrues and reinvents meaning in its trajectory through an ever shifting media ecosystem.

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65 Cf. Manovich 2000, 176.

66 Jenkins/Ford/Green 2013, 12.

67 Hay 2014, 329.

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Figure Credits

Fig. 1: Kanō Naganobu, *Merrymaking under Cherry and Aronia Blossoms*, 1600–1610, pair of six-fold screens, 148.8 by 356.8 cm each, ink and color on paper, Tokyo National Museum, public domain.
Fig. 2: Diachronical visualization of the media trajectory of *Merrymaking under Cherry and Aronia Blossoms*, illustration produced by author.
Fig. 3: Media ecosystem of 'Merrymaking under Cherry and Aronia Blossoms', illustration produced by author.
Fig. 4: Kanō Naganobu, *Merrymaking under Cherry and Aronia Blossoms*, 1600–1610, pair of six-fold screens, 148.8 by 356.8 cm, ink and color on washi paper, Tokyo National Museum, detail of central two panels of left screen, public domain.
Fig. 5: Kanō Naganobu, *Merrymaking under Cherry and Aronia Blossoms*, details of central two panels of left screen, photographic print, from Tanaka 1911, cats. 1–9, 1–10, public domain.
Fig. 6: Watanabe Saburō (designer), First Day Cover for 10 Yen stamp with design of *Dancing girl* from *Merrymaking* screen, 1962, 16.5 by 9.65 cm (envelope), 3.3 by 4.8 cm (stamp), color offset

print with red ink seal (envelope), 4-color rotogravure (stamp), author's collection, author's collection.

Fig. 7: Detail of central two panels of left screen of *Merrymaking under Cherry and Aronia Blossoms* (left), and detail of corresponding area of 1962 stamp (right).

Fig. 8: Detail of the third panel (from the right) of left screen of *Merrymaking under Cherry and Aronia Blossoms*, and corresponding detail of corresponding area of 1962 stamp.

Fig. 9: Detail of fan edge on 1962 stamp, 100x magnified.

Fig. 10: Information card accompanying the First Day Cover of the 1962 stamp, author's collection.

Fig. 11: *West Germany President Heinrich Luebke and his wife Wilhelmine visit the Tokyo National Museum on November 7*, 1963 in Tokyo, Japan. (Photo by The Asahi Shimbun via Getty Images).