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# Edo Print Art and Its Western Interpretations



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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the disparity between the published definitions and interpretations of the artistic and cultural value of Edo prints to Japanese culture by nineteenth-century French and Americans. It outlines the complexities that arise when one culture defines another, and also contrasts stylistic and cultural methods in the field of art history. Louis Gonse, S. Bing and other nineteenth-century European writers and artists were impressed by the cultural and intellectual achievements of the Tokugawa government during the Edo period, from 1615-1868. Contemporary Americans perceived Edo as a rough and immoral city. Edward S.

Morse and Ernest Fenollosa expressed this American intellectual disregard for the print art of the Edo period. After 1868, the new Japanese government, the Meiji Restoration, as well as the newly empowered imperial court had little interest in the art of the failed military government of Edo. They considered Edo's legacy to be Japan's technological naïveté.

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