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delle  
Culture  
Lugano

Cinque secoli di pittura giapponese

# KAKEMONO

La Collezione Perino

## PRESS KIT

**Museo delle Culture**  
Villa Malpensata, Lugano  
**17.07.2020 – 21.02.2021**



Con il sostegno di



In collaborazione con





LUGANO (SWITZERLAND)  
MUSEC | MUSEO DELLE CULTURE  
JULY 17<sup>th</sup> 2020 - FEBRUARY 21<sup>st</sup> 2021  
KAKEMONO

The largest exhibition ever dedicated to Japanese painting

In the new location of Villa Malpensata, the exhibition presents 90 paintings which cover five centuries of Japanese art, from the 16th to the 20th century.

From July 17<sup>th</sup> 2020 to 21<sup>st</sup> February 2021, MUSEC | Museo delle Culture di Lugano hosts KAKEMONO, the largest exhibition ever dedicated to Japanese painting.

After the twentieth century's art, read through the lens of primitivist sculpture, and after the Borneo's masterpieces of ethnic art, MUSEC proposes an in-depth examination of Oriental art. Since 2005, Oriental art is one of the Museum's research and development hubs.

The exhibition, curated by Matthi Forrer, explores **five centuries of Japanese figurative tradition, between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries, through 90 kakemonos** organized following a thematic path. The subdivision of the exposition allows to explore in depth the substance of kakemono's pictorial languages coming from the unpublished collection, philologically collected by doctor Claudio Perino (Turin).

The Kakemono, a very common style in East Asia, involves a precious roll of fabric or paper, painted or calligraphed, hung on walls during special occasions or used as decoration based on the seasons of the year. The Kakemono, a very common style in East Asia, involves a precious roll of fabric or paper, painted or calligraphed, hung on walls during special occasions or used as decoration based on the seasons of the year. In contrast to western canvases or boards, kakemonos are softly structured and designed for a chronologically limited use, inasmuch they participate in time and movement. Usually, kakemonos are exhibited in the alcove of Japanese houses or left swinging outdoor during the tea ceremony. The variety of subjects represented, describes the intangible beauty and the passing of time, reflecting a purely oriental aesthetic and philosophical conception.

«Kakemono – states Francesco Paolo Campione, director of MUSEC – is a project born with a clear idea: to narrate five centuries of Japanese art history, by taking

the public in an emotional journey of forms and subjects. A journey able to convey the uniqueness of visual representation in Japanese civilization».

«The exhibition at Villa Malpensata – continues Campione – is a new chapter in the study of Japanese creativity and cultural traditions. MUSEC started the research started fifteen years ago through the exhibition dedicated to the submarine photographs of Hèkura fisherwomen, realized by Fosco Maraini in 1954. It continued with several other chapters, such as the one on erotic prints (shunga) and the one nineteenth century hand-colored photography; masterpieces of which MUSEC possess by far the largest collection in the world, composed by over 16'000 pieces».

«As Japan – Matthi Forrer writes in his catalogue essay – started to recognize the Chinese as their superior, their big brothers, so to say, in many fields, such as the arts, crafts, and technology, they also came to recognize the importance of the Chinese literary and theoretical sources on painting. [...] As Chinese painting was mostly in ink, and either on paper or in silk – their rules even warning against the use of colors, unless really necessary – Japanese painting traditions under Chinese influence are also mostly ink on paper, the so called *suibokuga*. This style of painting, starting from the fourteenth century, would rather be formalized in the oftentimes quite academic Kanō tradition».

Among the subjects most commonly represented, there were ferocious animals such as dragons and tigers, or plants, flowers and birds; all loaded with symbolic meanings that contributed to establish and consolidate the social status of the piece's owners.

The Kanō school exponents founded a widespread network of painting academies throughout Japan, which from the fifteenth century to the end of nineteenth century enjoyed the support of the ruling classes. The samurai, the Buddhist clergy and the wealthy relied on them to produce kakemono, according to the fashion of the period.

From the 17th century onwards, an emerging urban class of craftsmen and merchants encouraged the development diversified pictorial interpretations that focused on naturalistic subjects and real-life scenes.

Further painters emerged from the rigidity of these traditional patterns, supporting the innovation and development of personal styles.

The exhibition itinerary is divided into five thematic sections (Flowers and birds; Anthropomorphic figures; Animals; Plants and various flowers; Landscapes) and proposes a selection of works of the major artists of that time, such as Yamamoto

Baiitsu (1783-1856), Tani Bunchō (1763-1840), Kishi Ganku (1749-1838), Ogata Kōrin (1658-1716).

The exhibition begins with paintings of flowers and birds (*kachō-ga*) playing on an allegorical association taken from haiku poems, and continues with the representation of anthropomorphic figures, at first limited to certain Buddhist divinities, to followers or disciples of the Buddha, to portraits of Shintoist figures, or even to characters borrowed from the Chinese tradition. It was only in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries that ordinary people started to be represented.

From the analysis of the iconography of animals which, unlike the one of birds, are represented in a meagre way, we come to the section of paintings that propose plants and flowers, which are related to months and seasons.

Among plants, bamboo has an important symbolic meaning that conveys a sense of flexibility, resistance and security. For many scholars and literates, the pictorial representation of bamboo was a very important exercise, closely linked in technical characteristics to calligraphy, so much so that some artists dedicated their whole life to it.

The exhibition ends with landscape paintings that convey an idealized concept of nature. These artworks often depict rivers, lakes, watercourses, ponds or streams in the foreground and mountain peaks in the background and, on a smaller scale, bridges, temples, pavilions, buildings and small human figures. It is interesting to note that this genre is almost always realized with just ink, along with occasional notes of color.

The itinerary is enriched by two original Samurai armor and a selection of nineteenth century Japanese photographs lacquer albums, from the MUSEC collections.

The exhibition is accompanied by a Skira catalogue available both in the Italian edition and in English edition, edited by Matthi Forrer.

The exhibition, developed by the Fondazione Culture e Musei of Lugano and the Fondazione Torino Musei, is supported by the City of Lugano, the Republic of Canton Ticino, SWISSLOS Fund and the Fondazione Ada Ceschin and Rosanna Pilone.

After Lugano, the exhibition will be held at the Museum of Oriental Art in Turin.

Lugano, July 16<sup>th</sup> 2020

**KAKEMONO. Five centuries of Japanese painting.**

**The Perino Collection.**

Lugano (Switzerland), MUSEC | Museo delle Culture (Villa Malpensata, Riva Caccia  
5 – park entrance)

**July 17th 2020 – February 21st 2021**

**Opening hours:**

From 11 am to 6 pm. Closed on Tuesday.

**Info:**

Tel. +41.58.8666960; [info@musec.ch](mailto:info@musec.ch); [www.musec.ch](http://www.musec.ch)



MUSEC Museo Culture Lugano



@museclugano

**Ticket:**

Single ticket (from 16 years): CHF 15.00

Reduced ticket (AVS-AI; University Students; FAI Swiss): CHF 10.00

Children and Teenagers (6-15 years): CHF 5.00

Schools: CHF 3.00/student + group leader

*The ticket allows you to visit the Kakemono exhibition, and the access to the other two temporary exhibitions hosted by MUSEC and the visit of the highlights of the permanent collection.*

*In addition to Swiss francs, cash payment is also permitted in Euro (only banknotes) with change in Swiss Francs and credit card.*

Reductions (non-cumulative)

Lugano Holidaycard: - 20%

Groups: -10%

Free

Children (0-5 years)

ICOM; Ass. Musei svizzeri (VSM-AMS)

Swiss Museumpass

Raiffeisen Member

Swiss Travel Pass

Guided tours

CHF 150

CHF 120 for school groups



For the Anti-Covid2019 protection plan see the information on [www.musec.ch](http://www.musec.ch)

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**Press Exhibition**

**CLP Relazioni Pubbliche**

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**FRANCESCO PAOLO CAMPIONE**  
**Director of Museo delle Culture Lugano**

*Pro captu lectoris habent sua fata libelli*, wrote Terenzianus Maurus almost 1,900 years ago, to underline how the destiny of a book – today we would say, of a cultural project – is entrusted in part to the sensitivity of those who read it, and in part to a series of other, often unpredictable conditions.

Today, temporary exhibitions are the result par excellence of projects that seek their own destiny and whose success depends not only on the value of the research they present. They depend above all on the cultural context in which they are presented, on their ability to satisfy tastes and fashions, on the celebrity of the authors of the works proposed to the public, on the intelligence and pervasiveness of the communication that sustains them and, at times, perhaps more than anything else, on the intuition of those who boldly tent the fate.

“Kakemono” is a project born with a clear aim: to recount five centuries of Japanese painting, accompanying the public – regardless of the different levels of interpretation – in an exciting journey of forms and subjects; a journey capable of conveying the distinctiveness not only of Japanese painting but, more broadly, of visual representation in Japanese civilisation.

On the one hand, Kakemono is a very ambitious project, insofar as it would appear to presume the ability to phenomenologically condense a vast universe; on the other hand, it is fully aware of its own strengths, as it is the result of sensibilities and skills so profound that it confidently distills the most compelling atmospheres, poetic languages and emotionally moving narratives. It offers to our eyes a collection of paintings that, as a whole, represent the quintessence of a research that transports us into the middle of an artistic domain where everything is intertwined.

Sensibility and skill, I would like to underline here, was brought to the project by its two main creators: Claudio Perino, who for decades collected these works as part of a parallel path that led him into the world of Japanese religion, literature, art and material culture; and Matthi Forrer, who has dedicated his entire professional life to exploring Japanese civilisation through the artefacts it has left to us in the form of paintings and prints, digging deep to reveal to us the contours and substance of a world that had long been clouded by the mist of japonaiserie and the facile consonances of *ukiyo-e* with the figurative culture of the West.

My thanks go to both of them, as well as to Moira Luraschi and Roberta Vergagni, who were able to collaborate fruitfully in the spirit of a productive partnership between the Museo delle Culture in Lugano and the Museo d’Arte Orientale in Turin. Cultural organizations which, in a genuinely international dimension, have brought to life a project capable, we hope, of invoking a benevolent destiny.

Lugano, July 16<sup>th</sup> 2020

**MATTHI FORRER**  
**Exhibition curator**

**Japanese painting\***

It is probably too long ago – and I cannot exactly remember why – when I first got fascinated with East-Asian paintings. What struck me for sure, at the age of nine, was that there was nothing more enchanting than paintings from the Chinese Song, Yuan and Ming Dynasties.

What I felt about Japanese painting at the time, I don't recall, but for many years, the catalogue of an exhibition of Chinese paintings was one of my favourite books. Again and again I looked in amazement at the pictures of bamboo leaves and rocks in the *zhen-xing-cao* (*shin-gyō-sō*) styles, that is handling them like formal, cursive or running-script. The book discussed the principles of Chinese painting, and told me that a painter's training started by endlessly drawing straight lines of even thickness and making dots of equal size with a brush. And that a line in *mo*-ink (*sumi*-ink), once drawn, couldn't possibly be erased, so no room for any correction once it is drawn.

Many years later, I read Van Gulik's *Chinese Pictorial Art*, and learned more about the processes involved: how ink is made, the making of brushes, of various kinds and for various purposes, how the painters made and used their seals, the papers and silks used in painting, and the principles of mounting.

I also read Osvald Sirén's fascinating account of how Chinese painters viewed and formulated their principles of painting, from Xie He (c. 500) to Shi Tao (1641-after 1710) in the Qing Dynasty. Although this all makes painting some kind of a microcosmic exercise, provided it meets certain criteria, there are also many paintings that just come down to nothing more than a laborious effort with brush and ink.

However, from the beginning there was a strong notion that verisimilitude is not important, and it only matters whether we can recognize what the painter wanted to paint, and above all whether the result demonstrates strength and skill in handling brush and ink. This is most important, when we either just want to appreciate a painting, or maybe make a judgement whether we are looking at a good painting or not.

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Having adopted the characters that the Chinese used in writing, their treatises on painting would from then exert a lasting influence, both in the original classical Chinese as well as in Japanese translations.

As Chinese painting was mostly in ink, and either on paper or on silk – their rules even warning against the use of colours, unless really necessary – Japanese painting traditions under Chinese influence are also mostly in ink on paper, the so-called *suibokuga*. This style of painting, starting from the fourteenth century, would later be formalized in the oftentimes quite academic Kanō tradition, starting with Kanō Motonobu (1476-1559) in Kyoto. This soon developed into many local branches, such as the Kajibashi, the Nakabashi, and the Kobikichō Kanō workshops in Edo, present-day Tokyo. As long as China remained an important inspiration for Japan, the Kanō tradition would continue to flourish and survive, until well into the nineteenth century.

We should add that this was also due to its being selected as the house painters of the Tokugawa government, thus enjoying nationwide support of the feudal lords (*daimyō*) and the *samurai* nobility.

Whatever their artistic merits, this was the major guarantee for their success, just as any other case of patronage by magistrates, cities or states anywhere in the world – consider for example the role of the Florentine Medici family and later the Medici popes. The fact that the Kanō schools had a longer duration than most other examples of patronage, is due to the Tokugawa remaining in power from the days of Tokugawa Iyasu (1543-1616), until 1868.

Interestingly – and quite typical for Japan – the Chinese-influenced Kanō tradition developed and coexisted alongside the traditional Japanese painting tradition of the so-called *yamato-e*, first developed to illuminate classical texts written on long handscrolls, *emakimono*, flourishing from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries. Their style of illustration would, from the fifteenth century, be institutionalized as traditional Japanese painting, known as the Tosa tradition, and mostly favoured by the imperial court and the various traditional noble families swarming around it.

In this way, various different painting traditions coexisted, each catering to its own audience, in much the same way as Shintōism, Buddhism, and Confucianism lived together peacefully in Japan, most of the time.

Lugano, July 16<sup>th</sup> 2020

\* Extract from the Skira catalogue.



## MUSEC– Museo delle Culture Lugano

### ***A short history***

The history of MUSEC - Museo delle Culture Lugano - began in 1989 with the inauguration of the former Museo delle Culture Extraeuropee. The Museum was founded following the donation of a large part of the extraordinary South Sea masterpieces collection, of Serge Brignoni (1903-2002) to the City of Lugano. The artist Serge Brignoni, a fine connoisseur of ethnic art, had built up his collection between 1930 and mid-1980s.

The City of Lugano turned the Heleneum Villa, a wonderful neoclassic villa on the lake shore, into the seat of the Museum; surrounded by a suggestive botanical park with tropical and sub-tropical species.

In 2007, the Museum was renamed Museo delle Culture (Museum of Cultures), name that fully expresses the heritage variety preserved by the Museum. Nonetheless, its vocation to deal with different forms of ethnic and oriental arts – ancients and modern – along with current themes of anthropology of art (such as Exoticism and Primitivism) and, more generally, about cultural anthropology.

### ***Exhibition activities***

Since its relaunch in 2005, with the designation of Francesco Paolo Campione as director, the MUSEC has completely renewed its exhibition activities. It has been structured in different series dedicated to the photography of exoticism (Esovisioni); to the multifocal vision of ethnic artwork (Altrarti); to the relationship between contemporary art from Asia, Oceania and Africa with its traditional sources of inspiration (OrientArt); to childhood creativity (Dèibambini); and to the exploration of ethnic, oriental and popular sources in the art of the Twentieth Century Avant-garde (Ethnopassion). Nowadays, MUSEC has held over 100 exhibitions in Switzerland, Italy, France, Denmark and Japan.

### ***Villa Malpensata***

Since 2017, MUSEC moved to Villa Malpensata, a mid-eighteenth-century villa on the lakeside promenade of Lugano. Its style characterizes the monumental and scenic redevelopment of the shores of the great pre-alpine lakes.

Since 1893, the Villa has been used for museum activities, but in 1973 it became the permanent seat of the Museum of Modern Art in Lugano. Likewise, it became a highly appreciated site for acclaimed temporary exhibitions.

Nowadays, the architectural complex of Villa Malpensata is completely renovated. The renovation work, started in 2015 and completed in early 2019, involved along with the main edifice, the two flanking buildings and the garden. The two flanked buildings, to the North of the main one, were destined for the offices and the new library (under construction). To the South, the terraced garden was reorganized to introduce the new main entrance of the museum and the cafeteria.

All spaces have been renovated according to the international climatic and museum-technical standards, and provided with state-of-the-art safety conditions.

### ***The heritage of MUSEC***

In addition to the main collection represented by the Brignoni Collection (art from South-East Asia and Oceania), other significant pieces have expanded the Museum



heritage. New acquisition mainly came from donations and deposits from private collectors. These include: the Ceschin-Pilone Collection (late 19<sup>th</sup> century Japanese hand-painted photographs); the Pilone Collection (Chinese theatre); the Pepler Collection (Burmese art); the Antonini Collection (European and Oriental applied art and African art); the Morigi Collection (samurai armors); the Nodari Collection (African art); the Cottier Collection (pre-Columbian ceramics).

The MUSEC's heritage currently consists of over 10'000 works of art; over 20'000 photographs and about 15'000 books.

***La Fondazione culture e musei***

Since January 1<sup>st</sup> 2019, the management of MUSEC has been entrusted to the Fondazione culture e musei (FCM), which ensures a proper functioning and enhancement, by maintaining the Museum's identity, autonomy and image.

## INTERVIEW WITH CLAUDIO PERINO\*

Edited by *Moira Luraschi*

**Moira Luraschi** - *How and when did your interest in Japan begin?*

**Claudio Perino** - It started in the late 1980s and early '90s. I began reading novels by 20th-century Japanese authors like Tanizaki and Akutagawa, but also the older stories from the Edo period, like those of Saikaku. From literature I then moved on to non-fiction works on the theme of Buddhism, but also on the material aspects of life, such as artisanal and artistic production. It was a journey from literature towards more historical and artistic enquiry. Without having had a precise plan, my passion for objects grew little by little. The more I saw, the more passionate I became, because I understood that they were the expression of a refined culture which showed a great technical and aesthetic ability in the production of works of art as well as more common everyday objects.

**ML** - *Do you remember what the first piece you bought was?*

**CP** - It was probably an *inrō*. There was an auction in London. I made a mail-order bid and it worked out well. Then I started with illustrated books. The objects available in Italy at that time were mainly books and prints of *ukiyo-e*, especially here in Turin, a city with a great tradition with regard to the graphic arts. I remember that the first illustrated book I bought was a *manga* by Hokusai that I found in a bookshop. At that time, I bought Japanese objects in German or British auction houses.

**ML** - *You are an eclectic collector, which is a bit unusual in the field of Japanese art collecting.*

**CP** - I've gone through a number of phases. One was illustrated books with woodcut prints, some of which are in the MAO. Then there was the lacquer phase, but these were more difficult to find and had higher costs. Then there were the polychrome woodcut prints, which require a bit of experience because they are not unique objects, but made in multiple copies, so you have to know how to evaluate them well. Then there were Japanese ceramics and porcelain. Then came hand-coloured glass plates for the magic lantern (*gentō-ban*). And finally, my greatest and most numerically significant passion was painting. This, however, was made possible by a number of circumstances determined by developments in the Japanese art market. Events from the pre-war period and the war itself caused the destruction of a large quantity of artworks in various regions of Japan, both in Kantō and in the south. The only area that was spared from the wartime destruction was Kansai, where the influence of the Meiji Restoration was not as strongly felt. Many works were in fact saved in this area, which still conserved the old traditional houses and *kura*, the fireproof warehouses where artisans stored their product inventories and families kept everyday objects and works of art. The *kura* remained closed for a long time, until after the Second World War. After the Meiji period, traditional objects were considered old and outdated and then, in the immediate post-war period, there were plenty of other problems to worry about. The *kura* probably remained closed from the Meiji period until the end of World War II, and when they

began to open in the 1980s, the works were sold in lots at auction in Kyoto in sessions called *kai*. In the *kai*, the objects were shown very quickly and the buyers didn't have the chance to evaluate them well. In those years the buyers were only Japanese; the *kai* were very closed contexts. At the end of the '90s, however, with the advent of the internet, the works began to be sold online, and for me this was an opportunity to have direct access to the works without intermediaries. With this new digital commerce, the works are sold individually and have a global market. The golden age of the opening of the *kura* is perhaps now ending, but every now and then you can still find interesting pieces. However, for the most part the works are no longer sold in lots but are sold individually.

**ML** - *And your collection of kakemono dates from this period?*

**CP** - Yes, it started around 2002-2003 and has been going on since then, ever since the works that left the *kura* were no longer sold exclusively in *kai*, but on the internet as well. These works, which remained silent in the warehouses for decades, are called *ubu* in Kyoto, meaning 'newborns.' All the works in Richard Lane's collection are *ubu* because he bought them in the post-war years when he came to Japan with the American army. They are particular works, in that their history has been lost, they were consigned to oblivion for decades. Analysing the materials, studying the pigments, signatures and seals, one must do all of this to identify and attribute them. They are new, as if reborn for a second time at the moment they left the *kura*, because opening a *kura* is like birth by caesarean section. Sometimes the works are in poor condition and restoration ends up costing more than the purchase itself. In my opinion, however, *ubu* are unique to the Japanese art market in the last two decades: in no other sector of the art world has there been a similar phenomenon. Here in the West we rarely find a work by a famous painter, and if we do it makes headlines. In Japan, the ancient works of the past are common experiences of everyday life, but the Japanese don't care about them because they have burned their bridges to the past. The younger generation no longer cares.

**ML** - *What are the criteria for choosing to acquire a kakemono?*

**CP** - You might choose one because you get the impression that it's very important, perhaps because it is made by an artist who is famous, or whose works are rare. However, the problem of copies remains, especially for the most important painters. Oftentimes they are not deliberate fakes, but coeval copies, and in this case not even an analysis of the materials can clarify their provenance, however useful it may otherwise be. Moreover, painters ran workshops, so it is difficult to know whether a piece was produced by a master or his pupil. On the other hand, few paintings have a documented history, which is why I speak of an 'impression' of importance. Sometimes you can find a minimal history of the origins of the *kakemono* in the boxes that contain them, where each owner certifies the name of the previous owner and sometimes authenticates it. Other times the pupils of the school or the relatives of the master will do this. Sometimes there are little sheets of paper inserted in the box, other times these certifications are written on the box itself.

**ML** - *Which are your favourite kakemono in the collection?*

**CP** - Hard to say. The collection has works from every school, and every school has its best moments. Then, within each school there are painters more gifted than others, and individual works that are better than others. Some traditions are better represented than others in the collection, for example the Kishi and Maruyama schools of Kyoto and the Kaōn tradition, consisting of four main schools and sixteen secondary schools, which in the Meiji period had fallen into disgrace because it was supported by the Tokugawa and therefore considered of little importance after the Restoration. Currently, there's a fashion among collectors for the Rinpa school, whose production was typically intended for the *chōnin*, or merchant class. Hoitsu and Kiitsu, with their colourful and strongly naturalistic style, far from the tastes of both the court and the *samurai*, are still very popular today. Ito Jakuchū, who was an eccentric painter unaffiliated with any particular school, is also very sought after. The collection includes several of his works, difficult to find today as there is a growing demand.

**ML** - *What is it that fascinates you about kakemono?*

**CP** - The techniques are very interesting and demanding, for they cannot be corrected. The contours of the figures are defined by the brushstroke alone, there's no preparatory drawing beneath. It takes great painterly skill. Another fascinating aspect is the dilution of the ink or paint, which might start out dark and finish light. The painter's skill lies in playing on the exhaustion of the ink collected by the bristles of the brush to create figures and shading.

**ML** - *What about the subject matter?*

**CP** - They may appear to be stereotypes, but they're not. The animals, Mount Fuji, even the calligraphy, written in characters that are now incomprehensible to contemporary Japanese, represent symbols that we don't always know how to read. Knowing what lies behind the images gives a fuller meaning to the understanding of the works.

**ML** - *Is your interest in Japanese painting limited to kakemono?*

**CP** - No, it covers everything. There are also screens (*bōybu*), which were considered the height of luxury. Then there are *fusuma*, sliding doors, which were painted both for private homes and temples. There are fans, which had to be changed according to the season. Then there are drawings and preparator studies, especially as a form of preliminary practise for making *kakemono*, or the horizontal scrolls (*emakimono*) used by painting schools to copy the subjects of study. And finally, illustrated books.

**ML** - *Do you consider your collection of kakemonos completed?*

**CP** - For practical reasons, I'd say yes. But if an interesting opportunity comes along, one doesn't say no.

**ML** - *What will be the future of the collection? And what does your daughter think about it? (Luisa Perino, his only daughter, 'born together with the collection, because the collection started when I was six months old,' as reported by Luisa herself)*

**CP** - I think she is aesthetically fascinated. She knows the works, in part because she has always lived among them. I can easily let go of my works: they're objects,



they're temporary, they won't always be with me. More than the objects themselves, I would like the history of the collection to remain over time, to let people know that it once existed.

Lugano, July 16<sup>th</sup> 2020

**\* Extract from the Skira catalogue.**

**MATTHI FORRER**  
**Exhibition curator**

**Japanese painting\***

It is probably too long ago – and I cannot exactly remember why – when I first got fascinated with East-Asian paintings. What struck me for sure, at the age of nine, was that there was nothing more enchanting than paintings from the Chinese Song, Yuan and Ming Dynasties.

What I felt about Japanese painting at the time, I don't recall, but for many years, the catalogue of an exhibition of Chinese paintings was one of my favourite books. Again and again I looked in amazement at the pictures of bamboo leaves and rocks in the *zhen-xing-cao* (*shin-gyō-sō*) styles, that is handling them like formal, cursive or running-script. The book discussed the principles of Chinese painting, and told me that a painter's training started by endlessly drawing straight lines of even thickness and making dots of equal size with a brush. And that a line in *mo-ink* (*sumi-ink*), once drawn, couldn't possibly be erased, so no room for any correction once it is drawn.

Many years later, I read Van Gulik's *Chinese Pictorial Art*, and learned more about the processes involved: how ink is made, the making of brushes, of various kinds and for various purposes, how the painters made and used their seals, the papers and silks used in painting, and the principles of mounting.

I also read Osvald Sirén's fascinating account of how Chinese painters viewed and formulated their principles of painting, from Xie He (c. 500) to Shi Tao (1641-after 1710) in the Qing Dynasty. Although this all makes painting some kind of a microcosmic exercise, provided it meets certain criteria, there are also many paintings that just come down to nothing more than a laborious effort with brush and ink.

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As Japan started to recognize the Chinese as their superiors, their big brothers, so to say, in many fields, such as the arts, crafts, and technology, they also came to recognize the importance of the Chinese literary and theoretical sources on painting.

Having adopted the characters that the Chinese used in writing, their treatises on painting would from then exert a lasting influence, both in the original classical Chinese as well as in Japanese translations.

As Chinese painting was mostly in ink, and either on paper or on silk – their rules even warning against the use of colours, unless really necessary – Japanese painting traditions under Chinese influence are also mostly in ink on paper, the so-called *suibokuga*. This style of painting, starting from the fourteenth century, would later be formalized in the oftentimes quite academic Kanō tradition, starting with Kanō Motonobu (1476-1559) in Kyoto. This soon developed into many local branches, such as the Kajibashi, the Nakabashi, and the Kobikichō Kanō workshops in Edo, present-day Tokyo. As long as China remained an important inspiration for Japan, the Kanō tradition would continue to flourish and survive, until well into the nineteenth century.

We should add that this was also due to its being selected as the house painters of the Tokugawa government, thus enjoying nationwide support of the feudal lords (*daimyō*) and the *samurai* nobility.

Whatever their artistic merits, this was the major guarantee for their success, just as any other case of patronage by magistrates, cities or states anywhere in the world – consider for example the role of the Florentine Medici family and later the Medici popes. The fact that the Kanō schools had a longer duration than most other examples of patronage, is due to the Tokugawa remaining in power from the days of Tokugawa Iyasu (1543-1616), until 1868.

Interestingly – and quite typical for Japan – the Chinese-influenced Kanō tradition developed and coexisted alongside the traditional Japanese painting tradition of the so-called *yamato-e*, first developed to illuminate classical texts written on long handscrolls, *emakimono*, flourishing from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries. Their style of illustration would, from the fifteenth century, be institutionalized as traditional Japanese painting, known as the Tosa tradition, and mostly favoured by the imperial court and the various traditional noble families swarming around it.

In this way, various different painting traditions coexisted, each catering to its own audience, in much the same way as Shintōism, Buddhism, and Confucianism lived together peacefully in Japan, most of the time.

Lugano, July 16<sup>th</sup> 2020

\* Extract from the Skira catalogue.

*Kakemono*  
*Five centuries of Japanese painting. The Perino Collection*

**Media images selection**

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**01**

Sakai Hōitsu, 1761-1829

A male pheasant on a branch of a flowering cherry tree.

Early 19th century.

Painting in ink and colours on silk

99,1×41,5 cm

The Perino Collection



**02**

Itō Jakuchū, 1716-1800

A cock and a hen by a rock overgrown with pink peonies and blue and white hydrangea.

Painted in the year 1800.

Painting in ink and colours on silk

114,7×48,1 cm

The Perino Collection



**03**

Komai Ki, also known as Genki, 1747-1797  
A lone crane by the waterside under a pine,  
with the rising sun in the sky.

1760-1769.

Painting in ink and colour on silk

112,4×41 cm

The Perino Collection



**04**

Watanabe Seitei (Tokyo, 1852-1918)

A bush warbler on a branch of a flowering  
plum, as a very traditional subject for the  
beginning of spring.

1910-19.

Painting in ink and colours on silk

118,8×41,2 cm

The Perino Collection



**05**

Watanabe Seitei, (Tokyo, 1852-1918)

A bush warbler on a branch of a flowering  
plum, as a very traditional subject for the  
beginning of spring (detail).

1910-1919.

Painting in ink and colours on silk

The Perino Collection



**06**

Fukuda Taika, 1795-1854

Two mynah birds in a snow-laden plum tree with some open blossoms, while others are still in bud.

1830-1839.

Painting in ink on paper

116×50,2 cm

The Perino Collection



**07**

Uemura Shōkō, 1902-2001

A white eagle on the branch of an oak in autumn colours.

First half of the 20th century.

Painting in ink and colours on silk

105,3×34,9 cm

The Perino Collection



**08**

Kaburagi Kiyokata, 1878-1972

A *geisha* holding a parasol under a maple tree.

1920-1939.

Painting in ink and colours

45,7×50,9 cm

The Perino Collection



**09**

Gako, 1737-1805

The inseparable monks Kanzan and Jittoku, communicating in a lingo only they understood, and often insulting visitors.

Second half of the 18th century.

Painting in ink on paper

96×25 cm

The Perino Collection



**10**

Mori Sosen, 1747-1821

A family of monkeys by a stream.

Early 19th century.

Painting in ink and some colour on silk

121,5×51,1 cm

The Perino Collection



**11**

Kiyosei or Shōsei

An angry looking tiger, apparently disturbed by some intrusion in its territory.

Late 19th century.

Painting in ink and colours on silk

116,2 x 35,4 cm

The Perino Collection



**12**

Mori Kansai, 1814-1894

Some irises blowing in the wind.

1850-1869.

Painting in ink and colours on paper

29,5×39,9 cm

The Perino Collection



**13**

Tani Bunchō, (Edo, 1763-1841)

A self-portrait of the artist, with a brush in his hand and an inkstone at his side, working on a painting of a landscape. 1832

Painting in ink on paper

27×49,2 cm

The Perino Collection



**14**

Parade armor with two-part breastplate and light blue silk webbing.

Early 17th century helmet and shank;

remnants of the armor late 18th century

MUSEC, Morigi Collection



**15**

Bound album: on the lacquered deck a couple of cranes flying in front of Mount Fuji. Made of gold and pigments realized with *maki-e* technique.

1880-1890

27,2 × 36 × 5,9 cm

MUSEC, Ceschin Pilone-Fagioli Collection

## **MUSEC– Museo delle Culture Lugano**

### ***A short history***

The history of MUSEC - Museo delle Culture Lugano - began in 1989 with the inauguration of the former Museo delle Culture Extraeuropee. The Museum was founded following the donation of a large part of the extraordinary South Sea masterpieces collection, of Serge Brignoni (1903-2002) to the City of Lugano. The artist Serge Brignoni, a fine connoisseur of ethnic art, had built up his collection between 1930 and mid-1980s.

The City of Lugano turned the Heleneum Villa, a wonderful neoclassic villa on the lake shore, into the seat of the Museum; surrounded by a suggestive botanical park with tropical and sub-tropical species.

In 2007, the Museum was renamed Museo delle Culture (Museum of Cultures), name that fully expresses the heritage variety preserved by the Museum. Nonetheless, its vocation to deal with different forms of ethnic and oriental arts – ancients and modern – along with current themes of anthropology of art (such as Exoticism and Primitivism) and, more generally, about cultural anthropology.

### ***Exhibition activities***

Since its relaunch in 2005, with the designation of Francesco Paolo Campione as director, the MUSEC has completely renewed its exhibition activities. It has been structured in different series dedicated to the photography of exoticism (Esovisioni); to the multifocal vision of ethnic artwork (Altrarti); to the relationship between contemporary art from Asia, Oceania and Africa with its traditional sources of inspiration (OrientArt); to childhood creativity (Dèibambini); and to the exploration of ethnic, oriental and popular sources in the art of the Twentieth Century Avant-garde (Ethnopassion). Nowadays, MUSEC has held over 100 exhibitions in Switzerland, Italy, France, Denmark and Japan.

### ***Villa Malpensata***

Since 2017, MUSEC moved to Villa Malpensata, a mid-eighteenth-century villa on the lakeside promenade of Lugano. Its style characterizes the monumental and scenic redevelopment of the shores of the great pre-alpine lakes.

Since 1893, the Villa has been used for museum activities, but in 1973 it became the permanent seat of the Museum of Modern Art in Lugano. Likewise, it became a highly appreciated site for acclaimed temporary exhibitions.

Nowadays, the architectural complex of Villa Malpensata is completely renovated. The renovation work, started in 2015 and completed in early 2019, involved along with the main edifice, the two flanking buildings and the garden. The two flanked buildings, to the North of the main one, were destined for the offices and the new library (under construction). To the South, the terraced garden was reorganized to introduce the new main entrance of the museum and the cafeteria.

All spaces have been renovated according to the international climatic and museum-technical standards, and provided with state-of-the-art safety conditions.

### ***The heritage of MUSEC***

In addition to the main collection represented by the Brignoni Collection (art from South-East Asia and Oceania), other significant pieces have expanded the Museum



heritage. New acquisition mainly came from donations and deposits from private collectors. These include: the Ceschin-Pilone Collection (late 19<sup>th</sup> century Japanese hand-painted photographs); the Pilone Collection (Chinese theatre); the Pepler Collection (Burmese art); the Antonini Collection (European and Oriental applied art and African art); the Morigi Collection (samurai armors); the Nodari Collection (African art); the Cottier Collection (pre-Columbian ceramics).

The MUSEC's heritage currently consists of over 10'000 works of art; over 20'000 photographs and about 15'000 books.

***La Fondazione culture e musei***

Since January 1<sup>st</sup> 2019, the management of MUSEC has been entrusted to the Fondazione culture e musei (FCM), which ensures a proper functioning and enhancement, by maintaining the Museum's identity, autonomy and image.



## INTERVIEW WITH CLAUDIO PERINO\*

Edited by *Moira Luraschi*

**Moira Luraschi** - *How and when did your interest in Japan begin?*

**Claudio Perino** - It started in the late 1980s and early '90s. I began reading novels by 20th-century Japanese authors like Tanizaki and Akutagawa, but also the older stories from the Edo period, like those of Saikaku. From literature I then moved on to non-fiction works on the theme of Buddhism, but also on the material aspects of life, such as artisanal and artistic production. It was a journey from literature towards more historical and artistic enquiry. Without having had a precise plan, my passion for objects grew little by little. The more I saw, the more passionate I became, because I understood that they were the expression of a refined culture which showed a great technical and aesthetic ability in the production of works of art as well as more common everyday objects.

**ML** - *Do you remember what the first piece you bought was?*

**CP** - It was probably an *inrō*. There was an auction in London. I made a mail-order bid and it worked out well. Then I started with illustrated books. The objects available in Italy at that time were mainly books and prints of *ukiyo-e*, especially here in Turin, a city with a great tradition with regard to the graphic arts. I remember that the first illustrated book I bought was a *manga* by Hokusai that I found in a bookshop. At that time, I bought Japanese objects in German or British auction houses.

**ML** - *You are an eclectic collector, which is a bit unusual in the field of Japanese art collecting.*

**CP** - I've gone through a number of phases. One was illustrated books with woodcut prints, some of which are in the MAO. Then there was the lacquer phase, but these were more difficult to find and had higher costs. Then there were the polychrome woodcut prints, which require a bit of experience because they are not unique objects, but made in multiple copies, so you have to know how to evaluate them well. Then there were Japanese ceramics and porcelain. Then came hand-coloured glass plates for the magic lantern (*gentō-ban*). And finally, my greatest and most numerically significant passion was painting. This, however, was made possible by a number of circumstances determined by developments in the Japanese art market. Events from the pre-war period and the war itself caused the destruction of a large quantity of artworks in various regions of Japan, both in Kantō and in the south. The only area that was spared from the wartime destruction was Kansai, where the influence of the Meiji Restoration was not as strongly felt. Many works were in fact saved in this area, which still conserved the old traditional houses and *kura*, the fireproof warehouses where artisans stored their product inventories and families kept everyday objects and works of art. The *kura* remained closed for a long time, until after the Second World War. After the Meiji period, traditional objects were considered old and outdated and then, in the immediate post-war period, there were plenty of other problems to worry about. The *kura* probably remained closed from the Meiji period until the end of World War II, and when they

began to open in the 1980s, the works were sold in lots at auction in Kyoto in sessions called *kai*. In the *kai*, the objects were shown very quickly and the buyers didn't have the chance to evaluate them well. In those years the buyers were only Japanese; the *kai* were very closed contexts. At the end of the '90s, however, with the advent of the internet, the works began to be sold online, and for me this was an opportunity to have direct access to the works without intermediaries. With this new digital commerce, the works are sold individually and have a global market. The golden age of the opening of the *kura* is perhaps now ending, but every now and then you can still find interesting pieces. However, for the most part the works are no longer sold in lots but are sold individually.

**ML** - *And your collection of kakemono dates from this period?*

**CP** - Yes, it started around 2002-2003 and has been going on since then, ever since the works that left the *kura* were no longer sold exclusively in *kai*, but on the internet as well. These works, which remained silent in the warehouses for decades, are called *ubu* in Kyoto, meaning 'newborns.' All the works in Richard Lane's collection are *ubu* because he bought them in the post-war years when he came to Japan with the American army. They are particular works, in that their history has been lost, they were consigned to oblivion for decades. Analysing the materials, studying the pigments, signatures and seals, one must do all of this to identify and attribute them. They are new, as if reborn for a second time at the moment they left the *kura*, because opening a *kura* is like birth by caesarean section. Sometimes the works are in poor condition and restoration ends up costing more than the purchase itself. In my opinion, however, *ubu* are unique to the Japanese art market in the last two decades: in no other sector of the art world has there been a similar phenomenon. Here in the West we rarely find a work by a famous painter, and if we do it makes headlines. In Japan, the ancient works of the past are common experiences of everyday life, but the Japanese don't care about them because they have burned their bridges to the past. The younger generation no longer cares.

**ML** - *What are the criteria for choosing to acquire a kakemono?*

**CP** - You might choose one because you get the impression that it's very important, perhaps because it is made by an artist who is famous, or whose works are rare. However, the problem of copies remains, especially for the most important painters. Oftentimes they are not deliberate fakes, but coeval copies, and in this case not even an analysis of the materials can clarify their provenance, however useful it may otherwise be. Moreover, painters ran workshops, so it is difficult to know whether a piece was produced by a master or his pupil. On the other hand, few paintings have a documented history, which is why I speak of an 'impression' of importance. Sometimes you can find a minimal history of the origins of the *kakemono* in the boxes that contain them, where each owner certifies the name of the previous owner and sometimes authenticates it. Other times the pupils of the school or the relatives of the master will do this. Sometimes there are little sheets of paper inserted in the box, other times these certifications are written on the box itself.

**ML** - *Which are your favourite kakemono in the collection?*

**CP** - Hard to say. The collection has works from every school, and every school has its best moments. Then, within each school there are painters more gifted than others, and individual works that are better than others. Some traditions are better represented than others in the collection, for example the Kishi and Maruyama schools of Kyoto and the Kaōn tradition, consisting of four main schools and sixteen secondary schools, which in the Meiji period had fallen into disgrace because it was supported by the Tokugawa and therefore considered of little importance after the Restoration. Currently, there's a fashion among collectors for the Rinpa school, whose production was typically intended for the *chōnin*, or merchant class. Hoitsu and Kiitsu, with their colourful and strongly naturalistic style, far from the tastes of both the court and the *samurai*, are still very popular today. Ito Jakuchū, who was an eccentric painter unaffiliated with any particular school, is also very sought after. The collection includes several of his works, difficult to find today as there is a growing demand.

**ML** - *What is it that fascinates you about kakemono?*

**CP** - The techniques are very interesting and demanding, for they cannot be corrected. The contours of the figures are defined by the brushstroke alone, there's no preparatory drawing beneath. It takes great painterly skill. Another fascinating aspect is the dilution of the ink or paint, which might start out dark and finish light. The painter's skill lies in playing on the exhaustion of the ink collected by the bristles of the brush to create figures and shading.

**ML** - *What about the subject matter?*

**CP** - They may appear to be stereotypes, but they're not. The animals, Mount Fuji, even the calligraphy, written in characters that are now incomprehensible to contemporary Japanese, represent symbols that we don't always know how to read. Knowing what lies behind the images gives a fuller meaning to the understanding of the works.

**ML** - *Is your interest in Japanese painting limited to kakemono?*

**CP** - No, it covers everything. There are also screens (*bōybu*), which were considered the height of luxury. Then there are *fusuma*, sliding doors, which were painted both for private homes and temples. There are fans, which had to be changed according to the season. Then there are drawings and preparator studies, especially as a form of preliminary practise for making *kakemono*, or the horizontal scrolls (*emakimono*) used by painting schools to copy the subjects of study. And finally, illustrated books.

**ML** - *Do you consider your collection of kakemonos completed?*

**CP** - For practical reasons, I'd say yes. But if an interesting opportunity comes along, one doesn't say no.

**ML** - *What will be the future of the collection? And what does your daughter think about it? (Luisa Perino, his only daughter, 'born together with the collection, because the collection started when I was six months old,' as reported by Luisa herself)*

**CP** - I think she is aesthetically fascinated. She knows the works, in part because she has always lived among them. I can easily let go of my works: they're objects,



they're temporary, they won't always be with me. More than the objects themselves, I would like the history of the collection to remain over time, to let people know that it once existed.

Lugano, July 16<sup>th</sup> 2020

**\* Extract from the Skira catalogue.**