

*Review Article*

**THE SOURCE AND THE PERIOD EYE:  
NEW PERSPECTIVES ON JAPANESE VISUAL CULTURE**

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Julie Nelson Davis, *Utamaro and the Spectacle of Beauty*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007, 296 pp., 114 illustrations, 66 in colour, ISBN 978-0-8248-3199-8, CL.

Patricia J. Graham, *Faith and Power in Japanese Buddhist Art, 1600–2005*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007, 353 pp., 113 illustrations, 39 in colour, ISBN 978-0-8248-3126-4, CL.

Following the Meiji Restoration explanations for Japanese arts were framed largely through Western eyes and minds. Broad survey accounts like Ernest Fenollosa's *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art* (Fenollosa, 1912) employed linear sequenced developmental or genealogical paradigms. Others, like Fenollosa's earlier catalogue text *The Masters of Ukiyoye* (sic) (Fenollosa, 1896) focused entirely on the 'floating world pictures' of Edo that had such an immediate appeal to Western audiences. The genealogical paradigm and the Edo focus set precedent patterns for accounts throughout the following century. Though repackaged in different formats, from monograph to coffee table picture book, these forms have conditioned the ways Western and Japanese audiences have understood Japanese art.

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During recent years different approaches have generated more diverse and more satisfactory understandings. Reconstructions of socio-cultural contexts in which the arts were produced and consumed have illuminated the ways their own audiences may have engaged with them. Close examination of contemporary literature or documentary evidence like theatre playbills have informed more comprehensively and accurately informed analysis and interpretation of art works. Finely targeted studies have re-evaluated domains of aesthetic engagement previously marginalized or unexplored. The common characteristic of these studies is a re-examination and re-evaluation of Japanese arts on the basis of contemporary evidence, and a reconstructive evaluation of the experience of that engagement consistent with those contemporary audiences may have enjoyed.

One outcome of these studies has been the development of a more diverse range of investigations, each of which has made its own carefully framed contribution to the larger picture. Each of the volumes under review here makes such a contribution. Julie Nelson Davis' close re-examination of Kitagawa Utamaro reconstructs his persona, as *ukiyo-e* artist and Yoshiwara habitu , in relation to the documents of his own time and public to inform a re-evaluation that challenges the judgements that underlie orthodox accounts. Patricia Graham's examination of Buddhist art during the pre-modern and modern periods seeks '...to reassess the canon of Japanese art history to allow for the inclusion of art sites, images and objects previously marginalised or excluded '(Graham, 2007, 9). Each volume, in its very different way, makes a new contribution to its respective field.

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He who this living portrait wrought,  
 Outlasting time's control,  
 A dark and bitter nectar sought  
 Welling from poisoned streams that roll  
 Through deserts of the soul. (Ficke, 1915, 280)

Arthur Davison Ficke's damning judgement of the *ukiyo-e* artist Kitagawa Utamaro may seem surprising to modern audiences, but it was consistent with evaluations from other European observers from the later nineteenth and early twentieth century. It corresponded quite closely to the first Anglophone genealogy for *ukiyo-e* constructed by Ernest Fenollosa for example, in its consistency with the final stage of Fenollosa's primitive through classical to decadent sequence for the evolutionary development of the 'floating world pictures' of Edo. More recent accounts have been far more tolerant. Where Ficke described Utamaro's representations of women as 'curious' and 'perverted', 'visions of a feverish mind' (Ficke 282), Ichitaro

Kondo argued they ‘were usually tall, healthy-looking women (who) had considerable appeal in themselves’ (Kondo, 1956, unpaginated). Subsequent evaluations have however maintained their focus, as Julie Nelson Davis acknowledges Utamaro himself did, on his extraordinary preoccupation with women, and in particular with women within the context of Edo brothel culture.

Here the identity or persona of Utamaro is described as a construct, a bankable commodity within the fiercely competitive world of Edo publishing culture and the broader institutional networks of the Yoshiwara pleasure quarters. This persona was a necessary construction for facilitating Utamaro’s passage into the art world, and into the contractual world of the publishing industry. In more complex ways it was one whose credibility was dependent on the ability of Utamaro and his promoters to sustain the reputation of a ‘connoisseur of brush and women’ (David, 2007, 58). Conversely, the women and institutions of the pleasure quarters were equally dependent on Utamaro’s contribution to the constructions they presented to the Edo public for their own survival within an equally competitive world. It is the construction of this persona, the subtly interwoven complex of socio-cultural forces that conditioned it, and its impact on its co-existent worlds that are the subject of this new perspective on Utamaro’s life and work.

Though Utamaro was also known to his contemporaries as a painter, it is his printed oeuvre that occupies Davis here, and in particular the ways in which word and image conjoin in print and acquire the force necessary to condition, secure, or even drive social values, manners and practices. To explain the mechanisms at work, Davis establishes a socio-cultural context for *ukiyo-e* and for Utamaro’s project in particular. She develops her explanation of his engagement in woodblock print design in relation to the development of the Edo print and publishing trade and its *chōnin* audiences, and the governmental infrastructures that monitored their activities. The closely regulated control of print production through guilds and censors had become fully organized by the 1790s—the period of Utamaro’s professional maturity. The publishing industry itself had become highly organized and quite diverse. Davis makes it clear that woodblock prints and illustrations were, like books, market commodities, and the survival of publishers and artists alike depended on fast and high sales.

Pictorial compositions were able to present the Edo public both with a particular world view, and with a view of Utamaro himself. His own credibility, and that of his principal publisher Tsutaya Jūzaburō (1750–1797), were dependent on the maintenance of the construct of Utamaro as an urbane participant member of the world he represented in his art. To reconstruct the complex forces at work here, Davis has drawn together ‘methodological and theoretical precedents employed in literature, art history, area studies and gender studies’ (18–19). She employs these resources to argue that the

identity ‘Utamaro’, and the world view he created, was developed through the complicity of text, pictorial subject and the characteristics of the medium, and Utamaro’s stylistic engagement with them, together with the projection of Utamaro as an urbane and sophisticated participant member of the pleasure quarter demi-monde. Thus, within his own world, Utamaro might be understood to be an associate of Tsutaya Jūzaburō, publisher of brothel district guides (*sairen*) and critical texts (*hyōbanki*); an *eshi*, or master artist; a *tsū*, or urbane, knowledgeable sophisticate, connoisseur of women and the pleasure quarters; and as a man able to push the envelope, in his artistic invention, and, as things turned out, with the forces of the law.

The fundamental understanding of Utamaro was as an artist—a ‘possessor of particular talents’ (25). It is difficult to reconstruct how Utamaro gained his early knowledge and reputation—documentary evidence is scarce. What has survived, in texts like *Ukiyo-kōshō* (Studies on *Ukiyo-e*), initiated by Ōta Nanpo from about 1790, was itself contrived to promote a particular view. In a similar way the laudatory tone of Utamaro’s early teacher Sekien’s introduction to the early volume *Ehon mushi erami* is openly promotional. These sorts of documents served publicity rather than documentary functions—and indeed, figures like Ōta Nanpo himself were participant observers, writers and artists working within the same publishing world that nurtured Utamaro himself. With this caution however, Davis’ application of these sources to the reconstruction of the Utamaro persona does lend an insight into the ways in which he was presented and apprehended within his own milieu. In the same way, and with the same cautions, Utamaro’s representations of the activities and especially the personalities of the Yoshiwara quarters can be more properly understood not as real-life representations, but as promotional and imaginatively fictionalized constructs of the kinds of figures that might be encountered there.

The foundation argument here is that of the important role the publication of printed materials—especially *saiken* guides to the brothel quarters, *hyōbanki* critiques, *yūjo* portraits—played in promoting and maintaining Yoshiwara activities, in explaining the hierarchies and rankings within the quarters, and informing *tsū* participants and less favoured visitors to facilitate their engagements in the Yoshiwara world. Davis describes the quite specific roles Tsutaya Jūzaburō played in the promotion of Utamaro’s interests and in the development of the construct. She explains how Utamaro was adopted into the Jūzaburō stable of writers and artists, how the *saiken* format established his pictorial preoccupations, and the matter of Utamaro’s introduction into the poetry circle of Ōta Nanpo—essential experience for the development of Utamaro’s status as *tsū* sophisticate. By 1781 Utamaro’s status in knowledge, manners, habits and wit seemed fully established. His illustrations of that year to a *kibyōshi* by Shimizu Enjū were accompanied by

the annotation ‘Shinobugaoka Suchō yūjin Utamaro jo’—‘written by Utamaro, the playboy of Shinobugaoka Suchō’ (45).

By 1784 Utamaro’s status within the publishing world milieu of *kyōka* poets, writers and artists was confirmed in his inclusion as one of the top five artists in the industry in a listing published in the *sharebon Kyōkin iki honi*. His engagement as an illustrator of anthologies of *kyōka* had provided further confirmation of Utamaro’s *tsū* status as an artist whose light, quick mind, knowledge and aesthetic refinement perfectly complemented those same qualities in the words of the finest contemporary poets. His urbane status as a ‘master of the arts of the brush and of sex’ (58), conversant with every facet of life in the pleasure quarters was realized in the title, pictorial subject and anonymous preface of his pictorial album *Ehon Utamakura*—Erotic Book: Poem of the Pillow: ‘Ah! More than one who is unskilled in drawing pictures, he who has skill in the art of love, without pressing too hard, moves the hearts of everyone’ (58). Utamaro’s complicity in this process is confirmed in the final diptych scene from his 1794/95 *Chūshingura mitate*, or parody, series (142–143). Here he has depicted a raucous brothel party scene in which, surrounded by a host of drunken revelers, he has depicted himself, fully immersed in the pleasures of the evening. His own identity is confirmed in the accompanying inscription: ‘By request Utamaro has traced his own ravishing features’. The irony would not have been lost on audiences. Far from the idealised image reproduced here, Utamaro seems generally to have been considered an unattractive man. Here he is as handsome as the *yūjo* are beautiful!

Davis acknowledges the importance of the professional relationship between Utamaro and his publisher Tsutaya Jūzaburō for the promotion of this persona. Her reconstruction of a pragmatic commercial contract provides a rational antidote to the more romanticized view of Jūzaburō as a ‘guardian angel for struggling print designers’ (Kondo, 1956). The description of the circumstantial factors that contributed to the development of Utamaro’s career as a specialist in *bijinga* ‘beautiful women’ pictures is convincing. Her argument that his specialization in this genre enhanced his credibility as an urbane *tsū* sophisticate and ‘a connoisseur of women’ rings true (69). It certainly seems quite consistent with the character of his oeuvre and with the little we know of his life and temperamental disposition. It doesn’t acknowledge though that these subjects did also offer Utamaro readily identifiable pictorial problems. The representational potentials of the *okubi-e* ‘big-head pictures’ and *egao-e* ‘big-face portraits’ offered ample scope for new developments in portrait composition, and the challenge of developing graphic equivalents for the languorous, sensual and provocative dispositions of his subjects must have really appealed to Utamaro the artist.

Davis’ reconstruction of the development of the Utamaro persona is amply supported by the contextual explanations she develops here.

Contextual knowledge also provides an explanatory foundation for Utamaro's preoccupation with the development of types or idealized categories of portrait rather than with individuated likenesses. This is particularly clear here in the description of the artist's preoccupation with the representation of physiognomic types or 'aspects' (73). The discussion here of the interpretation of character through physiognomic analysis in Japan and China is detailed and constructive. Importantly though, Davis does acknowledge the clear distinction between physiognomic knowledge and pictorial convention (91). She acknowledges also, beyond the construction of types or categories of subjects, a more subtle understanding of Utamaro's pictures as representations of the fleeting, transitory moment:

It is this very specificity of an apparent moment that entraps the imagination, seducing the viewer to believe that the picture replicates a real observation (90).

This subtle relation between commitments to conventional ideals or types on the one hand, and the pretence of apparently naturalistic records of moments in real time on the other, explains a key underlying tension in Utamaro's mature work. It also provides an explanation of how his pictures maintain such a convincing accord with the underlying ethos of *ukiyo*, the 'floating world', both in its earliest Buddhist understandings of a 'fleeting, sorrowful world' and in the more urbane sensibilities of his own Edo milieu.

What Davis might usefully have done here is to build on this glimpse into the deeper sensibilities that informed the floating world, and especially Yoshiwara engagements, through a discussion of the ways Utamaro's types or 'aspects' were able to illustrate the distinctive, if elusive, sensibility of *iki* that suffused Yoshiwara manners, habits and style. Certainly her descriptive analyses do embrace elements of *iki* behaviour and fashion. In one instance she describes a woman 'as though she is relaxing after her bath'. 'Her open garment and casual hairstyle' (102) carry something of the provocative languor described as the natural expression of *iki* in Kuki Shūzō's *Iki no kōzō* (Kuki, 1930). The description is more comprehensive in her account of:

#### THE ODORIKO

Appears on her way from the bath. She appears wearing a tea-coloured *kosode* with an obi with a greenish-brown weave. Her hair is tied up with a paper cord in the hairstyle of the *kushimaki* type. She goes out wearing low wooden *geta*, holding something like a double hand towel, and does things like chat and so on while standing in front of a teahouse. When she goes out a little ways she takes small quick steps (94).

It is this appreciation of the aesthetic dimension of Yoshiwara experience that is fundamental to explaining the artistic expression of *iki* described by Kuki Shūzō that underpins Utamaro's project so closely.

Davis clearly distinguishes Utamaro's types from the broader phenomenon of physiognomic divination, and acknowledges their much earthier and more pragmatic function of describing the socio-sexual categories associated with the hierarchical institutions of the brothel quarter. Where individuals were the subjects of these pictures they were more obviously identifiable by emblematic or coded means like *mon* or attribute, or occasionally devices like the rebus. These strategies allowed Utamaro to sustain the detached impersonality cultivated by the women of the quarters in his pictorial constructions. The distance this generated did little to compromise the promotional functions of portraits of women whose services were unattainable for most Edo men.

The idealization of status and allure of high ranking *yūjo* seemed quite inconsistent with the harsh realities of life in this environment. Davis' close examination of selected sets of pictures frankly acknowledges the voyeuristic functions they performed for their predominantly male audiences. For these viewers the tantalizing (though by today's standards modest) glimpse of thigh or ankle, and the associations with or allusions to the Yoshiwara could generate considerable sexual charge. Their more sophisticated literary allusions appeared to the informed sensibilities of *tsū* viewers and conversely helped contribute to their sense of their own exclusive sophistication. Davis uses her explanations of compositions from the 1794/95 series *Seirō jūni toki tsuzuki* (Twelve Hours in the Yoshiwara) to reconstruct subtle allusions made through pictorial subject and decorative character to the invitation of the Yoshiwara. She explains how subtle interactions of gesture and glance generate the sense of elegant detachment and urbane resignation that informed Yoshiwara sensibilities and explains also some of the pictorial devices that invite the viewer's engagement with the images.

Though Davis does include Utamaro portraits of prostitutes of the lower orders, including the more vulgar '*kashi*' 'moatside' and '*teppō*' 'gun' prostitutes, the weight of the examples reproduced here reflects Utamaro's tendency to the representation of decorum rather than vulgarity. The theme is developed in particular through the series *Kyōkun oya no megane*—The Parents' Moralising Spectacles. Here she builds an argument from contemporary neo-Confucian ethical guidelines for morally correct feminine behaviour. Decorous conduct had long been the subject of moralizing didactic texts. Surprisingly, given the orthodox construction of Utamaro as decadent habitué of the pleasure quarters, Davis introduces the new dimension of Utamaro the expert on domestic affairs:

Themes of proper female behaviour were reproduced in Utamaro prints and reiterated in a manner that constituted his artistic identity as an expert on the women from the domestic sphere (173).

Here, as elsewhere, Davis' comprehensive contextual knowledge informs a detailed exploration of the subtly layered threads of allusion and suggestion founded in subjects, decorative patterns, motifs, titles, inscriptions and poems.

Davis argues that the combination of images of socially or morally inappropriate behaviour and mediating text in these works effectively promoted the propriety of neo-Confucian ideology and contributed to the maintenance of 'the basic structures of hierarchical power, patriarchal order, household duty and filial piety' (194). While she does effectively tie the textual content to these compositions to the moralizing injunctions of *Onna daigaku* and other contemporary publications, and does acknowledge that the models for these pictures were figural types from the pleasure quarter contexts, she does overlook a dual direction in these works, one bringing them a little closer to Utamaro's own world. However valid the understanding of the works as admonitions to domestic propriety, their moralising targets were also the women of Yoshiwara themselves. Their vulgar *yabō* tone encouraged—not without a sense of irony—the maintenance of decorum in the department of Yoshiwara women that was absolutely fundamental to the maintenance of their professional standing. As Cecilia Segawa Seigle has argued, Yoshiwara reputations were heavily dependent not on women's reputations for licentiousness, but for their sophistication, elegance and rectitude (Seigle, 2005). This profile is confirmed here by the more positive injunction in the print *Kane-tsuke* (Blackening the Teeth) from the 1802–03 series *Fujin sōgaku juttai*—Ten Types in the Physiognomic Study of Women:

Speaking of this type, she is sympathetic, deeply compassionate, attentive to everything, and sincerely modest in all her habits (197)

One advantage of the pragmatic, thoroughly contextualised explanations Davis develops here is the avoidance of earlier liberal views on the representation of sexuality in *ukiyo-e*. She clearly distinguishes Utamaro's pictorial constructs from any notions of real engagement: 'such images were designed as part of a fantasy of sexual practice, not as a documentation of actual life' (198). In doing so Davis acknowledges the *yabō* character of these works, the boorish vulgarity that distinguishes them from the more sophisticated and informed preoccupations of Utamaro's brush.



A number of ideas about Utamaro's representation promoted here are consistent with orthodox representations. The specificity of many of Utamaro's titles, and the apparent individuality of the portraits themselves, have prompted some to understand them as individuated and naturalistic portraits. Here Davis focuses instead on the notion of the representation of idealized images of types, rather than of individuals. The approach is consistent with that implicit in Ficke's early assertions to decadent types in his own critique of Utamaro's project. This approach was clearly framed by Ichitaro Kondo by 1956:

One important thing about Utamaro's women is that they represent not particular individuals, but the artist's ideal of feminine beauty. They vary to some extent in age and social status, but whether middle-aged housewife or youthful prostitute, they have the same voluptuous bodies and beautiful faces (Kondo, 1956).

In these and in Davis' case, the approach seems entirely consistent with Utamaro's own interest in classificatory tools of physiognomy, or the hierarchical classifications of the brothel quarter rankings.

Despite its adoption of some orthodox paradigms, this study does make new contributions to the literature on Utamaro. Firstly, while many texts on *ukiyo-e* are image-focused, making a significant, and nowadays high quality, contribution to the range of images for study, the fewer more academic texts seek to expand our knowledge about the artist, artistic procedure, and the cultural contexts within which artists and their audiences operated. This book does expand our knowledge base in this way, bringing contemporary readers closer to the cultural stock that Utamaro's own audiences might have brought to their apprehension of the works.

Davis reconstructs this context, explaining Utamaro as a participant member of floating world society, but avoiding the trap of constructing a simplistic causal explanation like Ficke's, in which the Yoshiwara associations required or caused Utamaro to live and work in particular ways, these determining the nature of pictorial outcomes, and inevitably generating the decadence evident in his work. Davis describes Utamaro as an artist, as a *tsū* sophisticate, as an active member of poetry and publishing circles, as a habitué of the brothels, and most importantly, as a connoisseur of women. The relationship is a complicit one, a symbiotic, rather than causal, relation in which Utamaro's social relations directed him towards his artistic engagements, and these in turn generated and conditioned his institutional relations. Most importantly it was an arrangement in which he held much of the decision making power, in pictorial terms at least. By explaining the nature of these associative arrangements in some detail Davis is able to inform more satisfactorily our understandings of the works. In doing so she

adopts Michael Baxandall's notion of the 'period eye', in reconstructing the ways contemporary audiences might have understood Utamaro and his images (Baxandall, 1988, § II).

A key strength of this volume is the dependence of its arguments on evidence, and most particularly on evidence from the Edo context itself. Much of this has been gleaned from contemporary published matter. Davis has included readable English translations of passages of textual content in the pictorial compositions, and of explanatory documents and contemporary texts. These make significant contributions to richer and more replete understandings of the works that can accord more closely with those of their original audiences, for whom, in pictorial terms at least, the distance between pictorial line and calligraphy was less rigid than in the West or in Japanese printed formats today.

One benefit of this reliance on original sources is the use of Japanese, rather than Anglophone, terms to describe the context and the figures of the world within which Utamaro lived and worked. A key example is the adoption of the non-specific *yūjo*—'woman for play' or 'woman who plays'—as a generic term for the women of the quarters. This term is used together with the more finely nuanced hierarchical classifications—*tayu*, *tsubone* and so forth. Using *yūjo* avoids the more euphemistic and Eurocentric sense of 'courtesan', or the judgemental misunderstandings that might be provoked by 'prostitute'.

Less satisfactory is the application of the non-Japanese term 'icon'. Here it is used in at least seven different ways: 'the cultural icon Ariwara no Narihira' (33); 'iconic arrangement' (96); 'less iconic manner of grouping' (99); 'iconic resemblance' (106); the 'almost iconic' letter reading scene in *Chūshingura* (144); readily recognizable 'icons of their types' (152); and 'the iconic in its assertions to portraiture' (163). All seem to attribute quite different functions to the word that may accord with common usage today, but which are all quite inconsistent with its established meanings for art historical study as spiritually charged images, or in broader art usage as iconography and as iconology.

This is a handsome volume, clearly edited, and attractively presented, with a restraint consistent with that of the works it discusses. Using the endnote convention allows the text to flow coherently, and allows the commentary and evidence to meld smoothly. The book is thoroughly illustrated, with 114 illustrations, 66 of them in colour. Most of the monochrome illustrations reflect the same quality in the original works, mainly book illustrations. Many of the colour reproductions are full page in size, and while many of the *ehon* illustrations are reproduced on a very small scale, the thoroughly descriptive text clarifies issues of pictorial content, if not of stylistic idiom.

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Davis' study of Utamaro is a finely focused one. Though it draws on a range of floating world contextual sources to explain its subject, its particular emphasis on the social construction of the one artist and his oeuvre are quite precisely defined. In *Faith and Power in Japanese Buddhist Art, 1600–2005*, Patricia Graham necessarily casts her net more expansively. Graham's aim is to re-evaluate Buddhist arts from the seventeenth to the twenty-first centuries, challenging the presumption of the aesthetic superiority of earlier Japanese Buddhist cultural artifacts (2). She establishes three clearly defined goals:

- (1) to reassess the canon of Japanese art history to allow for the inclusion of later Buddhist imagery and architecture; (2) to define the social history of recent Japanese Buddhist art and architecture; and (3) to identify Buddhism as an important source of inspiration for artists and architects whose work is generally not associated with institutional Buddhism and its canonical visual requirements (3).

The scope of her work spans two eras of Japanese history: the pre-modern Edo period (1603–1868) and the modern period extending from the Meiji Restoration through to 2005. These two periods form the foundation for the two sections within which the text is arranged. Even within these broadly framed sections, the scope is wide. Where most introductions to Edo period art, for example, focus closely on the art of the Eastern Capital, and even more so on the distinctive art practice of *ukiyo*—the 'floating world' subculture milieu of Edo—Graham immediately reminds us that life in Tokugawa Japan extended well beyond the rapidly expanded urban world of the centre of government to embrace also the old capital, other urban centres, and the provincial domains throughout the country. Accordingly the coverage embraces, beyond the interests of displaced samurai or par-venue *chōnin*, those surviving interests of the imperial family, provincial *daimyo* and their domains, and the increasingly complex institutions of Buddhist, Tao, Confucian and Shinto traditions. This breadth of scope engenders an entirely different kind of investigation and text, one that is less able to focus so closely on the artistic enterprise itself. Nevertheless it does succeed in its aim of explaining the cultural climate throughout these two periods in ways that explain the subtle complexities of its institutional interactions, and illustrate the ways in which those institutions may themselves have perceived the values and functions of their artistic engagements. In these ways Graham is able to develop, as Davis has done, explanations for the nature and function of the art works she has described through something of a 'period eye'—a

reconstruction of the ways artists and their original audiences might have engaged in the art experiences at source, in their own world.

Graham draws out a construction of diverse interests and forces contributing to the generation and character of art works. She describes the syncretic convergence of the range of apparently incompatible religious interests described above; differing and changing sources of patronage, imperial, *daimyo*, shogunate or commoner; divergent artist projects; and widely ranging iconographic and stylistic outcomes. Simultaneously however she sensitively reconstructs the tensions that developed between these areas of difference and the counterbalancing pressures for conformity in Buddhist art. Iconographic conformity was necessary for maintaining doctrinal consistency that meant audiences could share common understandings of the motifs and symbols they encountered. This was especially so since artists were being required to develop convincing pictorial representations of intangible subjects things they could not see at first hand. In Ananda Coomaraswamy's terms: 'Despite the term "visual art," all art represents invisible things' (Coomaraswamy, 1934, 37). In this sense Tokugawa period manuals like Gizan's *Butsuzō zui* (The Illustrated Compendium of Buddhist Images, 1690) or Tosa Hidenobu's *Zōho shoshū butsuzō zui* (Enlarged Edition Encompassing Various Sects of the Illustrated Compendium of Buddhist Images, 1868–1912) provided copybook examples that allowed artists and monk-craftsmen to maintain consistent representations of religious iconographic schema. Similar pressure for conformity in artistic practice inevitably accompanied the requirements of studio-based learning contexts and artistic practice, and interestingly, besides authoritarian studio direction and copyist learning practices, copybook manuals also informed the training of artists within schools. The result is a discussion of art that recognizes the fundamental differences between artist projects that contribute to diverse, rather than conventional and conformist, outcomes, and to a corresponding understanding of the diversity of contextual forces that shape or condition the nature of art enterprises.

Graham argues the development of relationships of reciprocal benefit between monastic and Tokugawa interests from the beginnings of the seventeenth century. Tokugawa Ieyasu found it expedient:

To harness the power of Buddhist institutions to help implement his political agendas. To accomplish this he and his immediate successors brought Buddhist institutions under Tokugawa domination in a series of far-reaching judicial policies (23).

For the first five Tokugawa rulers regulatory control of Buddhist institutions had been required to enhance their control of their people, and consequently they supported the expansion of temple networks. Establishing mortuary

shrines at Nikko also legitimised a religious base for Tokugawa authority (25). Financial support for the restoration of Yoshiminedera Temple in Kyoto and its enhancement with gifts of sutras, bells, architectural extensions or gardens helped promote Tokugawa Tsunayoshi's ideological commitments to a less violent, more enlightened and better educated society (27). Funding the temple enhanced Tsunayoshi's control of Buddhism while simultaneously offering tangible evidence of Tokugawa authority (32). Within the city support for Zōjōji and Sensōji:

Helped ensure the city's prosperity by containing any bad karma that might emanate from the defilement of neighbourhoods in their vicinity: red-light entertainment zones, the residential district for outcasts, and the shogun's executing ground (34).

Elsewhere supporting the development of sites like Kan'eiji promoted a status and religious authority for Tokugawa authority to rival that of the old imperial rule of Kyoto.

One characteristic of Buddhist art from the seventeenth century onwards was the development of increasing diversity in the nature and appearance of its religious sites and objects. One key reason traced here by Graham is the changes in patronage that occurred throughout the period. She describes the growth of patronage of high-ranking samurai '[w]hose status and financial resources enabled them to create significant Buddhist architectural monuments throughout the country' (45). Political advantage, personal religious belief, mortuary practices, or the tangible demonstration of cultural erudition all generated aristocratic support for Buddhist institutions (46).

The symbiotic interests of aristocratic and clerical institutions were verified by the Chinese Zen monk Kōsen Shōton (1633–1695) in *Record of [a Journey to] the Eastern Mountains*:

So if a large temple in a legendary mountain lacks a virtuous master and if a virtuous master is without a great temple at the renowned mountain, then the people cannot be contented. Now, this temple possesses both these things. So the Imperial Kingdom and Buddhist Law will last for a thousand and ten thousand years without any unexpected tragedies. Isn't this deserving of a great celebration and praise for the country? (52).

The improvement in fortunes of merchant classes encouraged their contributions to temple development, and increasingly rural *daimyo* erected temples within their own provincial domains. The result was the development of a heterogeneous donor base. Differing interests engendered different

expectations of temple design and the visual appearance of art works. Bourgeois taste favoured recognizable images, and this expectation was realised in the individuated representations of the Five Hundred Rakan carved by Shōun Genkei (1648–1710) (57–59). Regional independence of provincial *daimyo* encouraged the development of local variations in temple appearance that reinforced a sense of independent or distinctive identity. The result was, from the beginning of the Edo period, the development of diversity of interest and aesthetic outcome in Buddhist art in Japan rather than the commitment to iconographic or stylistic conformity.

As *daimyo* funds dried up and the clergy turned to commoner funding to support the development and enhancement of temples, this trend to richness and variety increased. Quantity, scale, structure and style of temples varied according to the demands for space for commoner worship, positioning in urban or village sites or on pilgrimage routes, or diversity of Buddhist beliefs.

As Graham develops her explanation of trends to diversity, an underlying tension becomes apparent. On the one hand, Buddhist artists were expected to be producers of devotional and didactic imagery. Temple and shrine mandalas for example needed to conform to conventional iconographic models. On the other hand, often for very pragmatic reasons, local or regional variations became necessary. Accommodating pilgrims required the development of distinctive architectural characteristics. The Main Hall at Zenkōji, for example, needed to be large enough to accommodate large numbers of visitors, and to include spaces for exhibiting the temple's treasures for viewing by the wider public, while simultaneously containing private spaces for the secure storage of 'hidden icons' and treasures. Diversity of function determined the form and appearance of the building. Thus in Zenkōji, completed in 1707, the:

Main Hall became, and remains, the largest thatched-roof building in Japan. It contains an outer, middle, and inner sanctuary, used as prayer halls for worshippers, as well as an off-limits sanctum sanctorum that houses the main icon no-one ever sees (81).

Graham provides a succinct explanation of the development of printed media in relation to temple situation on pilgrimage routes. *Meisho zue* (illustrated guidebooks) and *meisho-ki* (pictures of famous places) depicting temples or temple village scenes, together with printed sutra sheets, brought art to popular audiences. This development was to have important ramifications contributing to the development of landscape as a legitimate pictorial focus for *ukiyo-e* 'floating world pictures', and the close connection with pilgrimage sites helps explain the special popularity of these scenes in the later works of artists like Hokusai and Hiroshige.

Though these kinds of subjects became popular, the core production of Buddhist art continued to focus on the representation of popular deities. Graham describes the complex ways in which religious objects functioned—not simply as objects of worship or religious transmission, but as vehicles or means towards salvation. In the statue of the popular bodhisattva Jizō constructed by the Jōdo monk Shingan (1647–1706) for example, the face, neck and hands have been fashioned from the crushed bones of the deceased destitute of Kanazawa. In doing this Shingan sanctified the fragments as objects of veneration, helping the deceased persons achieve salvation (98–99).

A key theme in the development of art objects associated with religious worship and learning was the diversity of personages or deities that appealed to popular audiences. The complex pantheon of subjects required the development of iconographic compendia to service the needs of painters and sculptors as they developed portrayals of their religious subjects that were consistent with doctrinal convention. The documents could also inform the development of individually different portrayals of their religious subjects. The variety of subjects alone generated diversity of iconography and individuation of representation, but it was in the representation of one specific theme, the devout Buddhist monks known as Rakan, or ‘Worthy Ones’ that the individuated naturalistic portrait really developed.

The Rakan subject appealed to diverse audiences, and for differing, but complementary, reasons. The increasingly syncretic nature of popular belief favoured subjects that served the principles of differing institutional interests. Thus Buddhist representations of the Rakan could represent also Confucian virtues of morality and piety. More importantly for the nature of their representation as art objects, the belief that the Rakan dwelt among the living, resembling actual people, explains the realism and the clearly individuated character of their sculptural representations. This contributes in its turn to the increasing popularity of naturalistic representation as a mainstream pictorial mode amongst the artists of the Edo period. Interestingly, these more convincing appearances seemed to enhance rather than compromise the spiritual effectiveness of the images, their power to sanctify, or to act as talismans, or as intermediaries between human and divine realms.

Graham traces a similar diversity in the roles of artists themselves, working from both religious and secular workshops, and servicing the needs of increasingly diverse religious and secular interests, drawing patronage in the latter case from both *daimyo* and commoner sources. As the activities of lay workshop *busshi* makers of Buddhist sculpture began to vary in quality and decline in status, other groups became increasingly active. Graham describes the development from the early sixteenth century of independent groups of lay Buddhist *machi busshi*—‘town sculptors’—who worked for

commoner patrons. *Ebusshi*, Buddhist icon painters who had enjoyed court patronage from the eighth century, were now replaced by secular professional painters, artists who worked in a more decorative and colourful *yamato-e* style.

Besides providing an expanded description of the scope of Edo period Buddhist art production Graham enhances our understanding of the broader fabric of Edo art interests. Her discussion of the *machi eshi* ‘town painters’ explains the development of their interests beyond their Tosa school allegiances to embrace Kano school conventions as well as *yamato-e* and Chinese and Western modes. The result is a description of increasingly cosmopolitan painting modes that embraces the diverse projects of *nanga* (southern painting), *bunjinga* (literati painting), and the distinctive naturalism of Maruyama Ōkyo and his followers, as well as Buddhist painting. The explanation enhances our appreciation of the rich and diverse climate of artistic production in Edo beyond the more orthodox *ukiyo-e* focused paradigms.

Similarly the description of the diverse range of lay or cleric, aristocratic or commoner, trained or untrained, professional or amateur artists engaged in the production of Buddhist images through this period challenges the view of the dominating presence of school or studio-based lineages of carefully trained professional artists whose work conformed closely to prescribed conventions or house styles. The anonymity of many of the artists may account for their omission from other accounts, but their presence is represented here by a range of distinctive projects.

Some of these projects seem oddly esoteric in the extreme. The nun Daitō Bunchi (1619–1697), the eldest daughter of the Emperor Gomizunoo, seems to have employed the most unusual media in her works, producing ‘characters from sacred sutras “written” with her father’s discarded fingernail clippings and sacred characters written in ink on small pieces of her own mutilated skin’ for example (152). Others conformed to more orthodox formats for calligraphy and painted image, hanging scroll, decorated books or wooden sculpture. Differing artistic outcomes seemed also to have been generated by various expectations or requirements of patrons or customers. Daitō Bunchi also worked in more conventional embroidery and painting formats. The artist Wada Gozan (aka Gesshin, 1800–1870) could produce highly refined paintings for temple commissions, or the freer *Zenga* brush style works for personal consumption of individuals (160–161).

The diversity of these approaches was necessarily tempered by doctrinal requirements for iconographic consistency in sacred imagery. Similarly certain threads of aesthetic sensibility infiltrate many of these works: a taste for asymmetry of composition for example, or refined linear quality or austere economical brushwork that shared common ground with trends in calligraphy, crafts like ceramics, or the refined aesthetic experience



of *chanoyu*. These qualities were distilled most finely in the cursive calligraphic scripts of Hon'ami Kōetsu (1558–1637) (167–169). The variety of artists, patrons and projects represented here confirms the pervasive power of religious faith in Edo and expands on accepted patterns of a changing climate of production and consumption of arts during the Edo period.

The shift from the pre-modern period to that of modern Japan following the Meiji Restoration was as abrupt as that of the removal of the Tokugawa capital to Edo. It introduced a period of headlong change that was to have profound effects on almost every dimension of life in Japan. Although Buddhist monuments and images from this period seem very different from those of earlier eras and although they seemed to attract the attentions of new audiences, Graham does acknowledge also moments of continuity through the modern era, in the sustained diversity of sacred art, in the power of its images, and in the derivation of these works from traditional Buddhist values that are consistent with those of earlier ages. The tension between tradition and change is maintained.

The effects of post-Restoration valorization of Shinto on Buddhism were immediate and profound. Graham weaves an engaging account of the struggle of Buddhist institutions to survive and reconstruct their position. The narrative is one of increasing politicization, the strategic engagement of clerical interests with powers of government, and an impetus towards Westernisation and modernization—the climate of *bunmei kaika*, or 'civilisation and enlightenment'. Their engagements with political institutions and international contexts for Buddhist faith reveal a degree of savoir faire within clerical circles that belied any notion of a cloistered status of practice or belief. The result of the carefully wrought strategies of Buddhist institutions was the development of an increasingly active governmental role in, firstly the preservation of Buddhist institutions and relics, and subsequently the reconstruction of temples and shrines. Government recognized the peculiar significance of art sites—temples, shrines, and now museums—and art works not only for the practice and observation of faith, but also as contributory factors in the interactive forces of religious and political institutional engagements. The relation is one which recognizes the power of art in the construction of socio-cultural engagement and the peculiar nature of its contribution to the forces of change.

This period of reconstructive development of Buddhist institutions saw the emergence of an interesting tension between differing architectural stylistic directions. This divergence between traditional and modern forms was to challenge the whole canon of Japanese architecture. Again this tension developed between the need for maintaining traditional structural and stylistic idioms on the one hand and the trends towards adoption of newer Western style modes on the other. In earlier eras the architectural canon had been conditioned and shaped by the constraints of the principal building

medium: timber. The use of timber dictated the scale and dimensions, structure and construction methods possible in large scale buildings. These had been codified since early times in documents like the twelfth century Chinese manual *Yingzao fashi* (Building Standards) that established precedents for structural and stylistic character that had endured for centuries. The material and structural innovations of the early twentieth century encouraged inventive departures from conventional practices and empowered artists to work in more diverse ways. The engagement with international modernist contexts also reflected the reality of life in new urban populations—especially in Tokyo. It reflected also the notion of a pan-Asian aesthetic sensibility that had been advocated by Okakura Kakuzō (1862–1913) (Kakuzō, 1904). These heterogeneous threads could be combined in complex combination in buildings like Itō Chūto's (1867–1954) 1934 design for the Main Hall of Tsukiji Honganji in Tokyo.

Similar tensions underpinning the maintenance of Buddhist carving traditions led, ironically, given the impetus to Western-style modernisation following the Restoration, to the establishment of Tokyo Bijutsu Gakkō, The Tokyo School of Fine Arts, in 1887. Its emphasis on the retention of traditional cultural identity that reflects the ideals of Okakura Kakuzō, became one force for the preservation of traditional iconographies in Buddhist sculpture through this time. Again however this impetus contributed to the development of the difficult tensions for artists between doctrinal insistence on adherence to iconographic traditions on the one hand and an emphasis on imaginative invention or originality on the other. The determination of the fortunes of Buddhism and its art by the interactive relations of clerical and political interests and the implicit tensions between tradition and modernization becomes the underlying theme of this section of Graham's narrative.

Graham's reconstruction of the fortunes of Buddhist art through the period to 1945 is situated within a further shift from religious to secular context. She describes, for example, the collection of Buddhist artifacts from the 1870s as historically important treasures, and later as art objects rather than as religious icons. This development is inextricably interwoven with the development of the modern museum in Japan, and with the guiding leadership of figures like Machida Hisanari (1838–1897) who saw Buddhist artifacts as historical treasures, or Kuki Ryūichi (1852–1931) who accepted them as art works, objects of aesthetic engagement.

The removal of the experience of Buddhist works from devotional contexts to the secular settings of museum or private collection caused a significant change in the kinds of engagement viewers had with them. The shift from the controlled viewing angle and darkened environment of the temple alcove to more flexible and sometimes all-round viewpoint and carefully controlled lighting changed the ways the objects actually looked.

The shift from location in a relational arrangement beside other objects, including the temple or shrine itself, to one in which they were displayed as discrete objects, separated physically even from those displayed nearby, changed the ways in which they could be understood. Most importantly of all, the changes in the viewers themselves, from those who could claim common knowledge and belief within the doctrinal context they experienced the works, to those as far away as London or Boston whose responses were informed by quite different intellectual or aesthetic interests, irreversibly changed the ways these works were to be appreciated.

A similar shift from religious value to historical or aesthetic occurred as these works became fashionable for collectors in Paris or Boston. Their acquisition in these worlds was hardly provoked by religious belief, or by any necessary knowledge of the art worlds from which the works originated; indeed, in some instances their real lack of knowledge or appreciation of Japanese sensibility led to the collection of works of doubtful worth or authenticity. Even the development of a revival in interest in Buddhist images and sculptures encouraged by figures like Okakura Kakuzō, though it appreciated the religious dimension of these works, was primarily motivated by opportunities to display them to newer, increasingly international, audiences and in secular, rather than religious settings.

Graham's explanation of the shifting circumstance of the art works themselves is enhanced by her description of the genesis, through changing art school training programmes and increasing independence in the conception and production of these works, of a generation of secular rather than monastic artists whose work is still characterized by a preoccupation with Buddhist themes. She explores the intellectual motivations, together with deeply personal ones, or those of the refined engagement with the affordances of craft and medium, of artists like Dōmoto Inshō (1891–1975), Hada Teruo (1887–1945), Murakami Kagaku (1888–1939) and Munakata Shikō (1903–1975) in relation to the shifting nature of public expectation, especially those articulated by middle-class intellectuals like Sōetsu Yanagi (alt. Muneyoshi, 1889–1961).

Through the second half of the twentieth century architects continued to be confronted with constraints, in the forms of the practical requirements of access, space and movement, or the affordances and limitations of modern technologies, or the pressure to conformity to international trends. Equally though, this mix of conditional factors offered architects choices, and they responded to these, as earlier, in diverse ways. Some engaged in completely new and quite unusual projects. The sculptor Yamazaki Chōun (1867–1954) designed the 1960 Ōfuna Kannonji building in the form of the figure of Kannon herself, constructed on a massive scale, in which visitors could enter and circulate before entering the Main Hall of the temple. Other projects, like the restorative extensions at Yakushiji, conformed to traditional modes, their

designers going to considerable length to reconstruct the ‘original state’ (*fukugen*) and ethos of the original complex (234). Others, like the highly decorative and ornate construction of Kōsanji on Ikuchi Island melded old and new, in aesthetically incompatible and kitsch, albeit novel and entertainingly inventive, ways.

Architects through this period seemed acutely aware of the fact that they were operating primarily in the domain of aesthetic, rather than, or in addition to, utilitarian activity. This awareness and one dimension of understanding of the exceptional cultural significance of major architectural landmarks, was voiced by the architect Takamatsu Shin (b. 1948) in describing himself as:

An older style architect who is always dreaming of architecture as a monument or as something with a symbolic presence. A piece of architecture to me stops simply being a building and becomes a monument when it converses with its surroundings and takes on the guise of a living thing, breathing and functioning as a vital part of a city (Takamatsu, 2006, Graham, 242).

Takamatsu is articulating his understanding of architecture, here Buddhist architecture, as art, as a site for aesthetic experience, something beyond the purely functional. This articulation of qualities beyond the facilitation of practice alone forms a conceptual continuum in Buddhist architecture that extends from the geomantic ideals of the Nara period through to the present day.

Takamatsu himself realized his ideals in his designs for the extensive underground chamber at Higashi Honganji in Kyoto, and in the distinctive towering structure of the Seirei (Star Peak) Hall at Myōkenzan. The distinctive star/arrow form of the latter structure embraces aspects of both Shinto and Buddhist belief, of the identity of the Pole Star bodhisattva Myōken, of a significant passage from the Lotus Sutra, and of the sacred site of the mountain on which it stands. The structure embodies these supra-utilitarian qualities to achieve the aesthetic and cultural significance of monumental art.

In a similar way Yamaguchi Takashi (b. 1953) has designed the stark minimalist interior of the Glass Temple at Zuisenji at Sonobe-chō to enhance a contemplative sense of stillness and emptiness. In his own words:

In such a place, we feel inspired to look beyond mundane concerns toward the world of spirit. It is my hope that this space will help people enter a mood of dialogue with the souls of their ancestors, while reminding them of the preciousness of life (Yamaguchi, 2006, Graham, 244–245).

The tensions between convention and inventive practice that conditioned the projects of the modern generation of architects may well have favoured diversity of outcome, but these kinds of sensibilities, tendencies to ‘tranquility, order and dignity’ (the architect Taniguchi Yoshio, 2001, Graham 248) seem equally consistent with the very qualities that inform the aesthetic, as well as spiritual, contemplation provoked by these sites.

The broad trajectory of Buddhist art described throughout this survey is one from conformity to invention, orthodoxy to heterogeneity in the artist project. The tendency becomes most fully realized during the last fifty years as Japanese artists, Buddhist or non-denominational, became fully interactive members of the international art world community. As before, they continued to be required to respond to diverse demands. These included those of producing devotional imagery for orthodox Buddhist practitioners to serve the needs of their traditional adherents, as well as for lay audiences for nondenominational art works. They included also members of organized pilgrimage groups who wanted pre-made portable devotional objects, especially talismans or talismanic deity prints and prayer sheets.

Similarly a diverse range of artists thrived throughout this period. The old *bussho*, or Buddhist workshops like the Matsuhisa *bussho* in Kyoto survived, and nurtured a new generation of their own trainees, and now also art school trained graduates who had chosen to join them after the end of their professional training. Some like the *bussho* of Eri Kōkei (b. 1943) and Eri Sayoko (b. 1945) continued to specialize in the production of Buddhist sculpture. They provided works for temples and private patrons, and especially for the booming pilgrimage practice. Other artists included amateur Buddhist devotees, untrained and working outside workshop or temple contexts, who contributed works to temple complexes like those in the large collection at the Tendai sect temple at Otagi Nenbutsuji. Other artists were inspired by transnational, non-denominational Buddhism. They worked independently of formal Buddhist organizations, working and exhibiting in international centres or pan-Asian contexts. Their works seemed largely to find relevance with much broader audiences:

Many postwar artists inspired by Buddhism use their non-denominational Buddhist art as a means to reach diverse audiences in order to promote their advocacy of world peace or universal Buddhist ideals (259).

In reaching beyond the specific requirements of temple or even sect patronage these artists were able to more fully realize their potential as individual inventive practitioner rather than being constrained by the conventional requirements of school, studio, or temple workshop

requirements. Graham's recognition of the centrality of individual invention in the creative process, and the works she chooses to use to exemplify the shifts, provoke subtle changes in the kinds of language she draws upon to discuss the outcomes of the artists she describes here. In describing a work by Sawada Seikō (1894–1988), she notes, 'critics regard it as one of his masterpieces' (260). In doing so she demonstrates her recognition of the importance in the individual art project of the demonstration of individual mastery, skill and invention over the observance of convention. This is made even more explicit when she describes his sculpture as 'endowed with his personal style, characterized by a sensitivity to the delineation of facial features and delicate, muted appreciation of colours, which he considered an essential element of successful sculpture' (262). In earlier contexts these are observations one might expect of Western critical appraisal of Western artist oeuvres, but here they acknowledge a significant shift to individual decision-making and personal sensibility over-riding conformity to conventional practice and stock iconographical motifs.

What is really interesting about the art from the final phase in this account is that, although now so clearly independent of contractual or functional interdependence on individual temple or formal Buddhist organizations, these individual artists seem so successfully to realize the underlying sensibilities or attitudes of Buddhist belief in their works. Despite the eclectic or internationalist formal languages or motifs their artists adopt, their works seem as successful as those of their predecessors in expressing 'a recognizably Buddhist aura of peace and serenity' (261); in portraying 'the magnificent beauty of the Buddhist paradise' (268); or in 'expressing the enlightened state of nothingness that constitutes the Buddha Mind' (259).

In this final phase artists seem to be able to find some accord between the two sensibilities that have resurfaced throughout—those of Buddhist contemplative absorption and aesthetic contemplative pleasure. This melding of sensibility is explicitly evident in the 1964 work *ΨCorpseΨ* (*Pusai no shitai itai*) by Matsuzawa Yutaka (1922–2006). The work is made in the form of 'a large handbill with a geometric diagram in the form of the Shingon sect's Diamond World mandala' (271). While the grid-like mandala format and the mode of instructional text refer back to the orthodox role of image as instructional or devotional text, the words themselves project forward to states of non-material, non-being sensibility of both spiritual and aesthetic contemplation:

Nonsensory painting surrounds you, saturates you, enters into you. You are being invaded by it. Soon, you won't be able to stand, to move. You will soon feel that you cannot stand it anymore, that you will die. You will close your eyes and experience nirvana. You will

precipitately see the future of the universe and human beings. (Matsuzawa Yutaka, 1964, Graham, 271)

Perhaps one of the most provocative aspects of Graham's account is her discussion of :

How the conversion of Buddhist imagery from icon to object of aesthetic contemplation contributed to separating the faith from its institutional roots and led to Buddhism becoming an integral component of Modern Japanese secular culture (199).

Though Graham's account here is one of the removal of the sponsoring, production and engagement with Buddhist art from religious contexts to secular ones, it raises a number of issues about the ways these works were apprehended throughout both periods, and indeed, in earlier Japanese contexts. The orthodox understanding of Buddhist art works within the contexts of Buddhist belief and religious practice assumes their status both as texts, iconographic or even literal calligraphy representations of doctrinal frameworks, personas, deities or mantras, and as objects of religious or spiritual contemplation. But Graham's discussion of a shift in status, from religious function to aesthetic, provokes an important question: precisely what might be the difference between religious and aesthetic contemplation of these works, or within these sites?

If these objects have always attracted a contemplative response, was it not always one of aesthetic absorption? Did the intrinsic splendour, spare economy, ornate decoration, refinement or beauty that were, by the later nineteenth century, to become recognized as aesthetic values provoke in their own audiences responses that were as much aesthetic in their nature as devout or spiritual? Was the finesse of craft that was a key factor in their planning and commissioning, manufacture and value within their own eras an indication of aesthetic value? When the director of the national museum Kuki Ryūichi initiated a survey in 1888 to identify objects classed as art objects—'artifacts that demonstrated an ideal, universal aesthetic' (202)—what kind of aesthetic quality was he describing? Was the elevation of the functional status of these objects above the necessary and practical requirements of daily life evidence of the service of a culturally significant function of the aesthetic object rather than the simply utilitarian? And perhaps the most important question: in what ways might the states of contemplative absorption provoked by these artifacts as aesthetic objects be the same as, different, or divisible from those of religious absorption?

The question is complicated by the issue of the change of contexts in which these objects were experienced. How did the change in audience, from Japanese Buddhist to Western or Japanese art collector change their status?

How did their removal from temple context—in which the most highly valued of these objects may not have been seen by anyone at all for periods of several hundred years at a time—to the value-loaded sites of museum or art gallery change their status? How did the shift of making context that developed gradually through the time-span covered in this volume, from monastic through studio school through school of art, from monk or scholar-artist to professional secular artist, change both the status and the form of the works they produced? One answer may be that, although as the status of older works changed, the objects did not change in themselves. The viewing contexts did, the audiences did, and the manner of their apprehension did.

Though all of these issues may not be answered here—and need not, since they lie outside the subject addressed directly by its scope and focus—the complex webs of context, dynamic and change are woven, and a foundation is established for the introduction of a broader question of importance for the appreciation of the nature and function of Buddhist art from these or any eras. What, precisely, was the nature of the apprehension, experience and response to of art works in Buddhist contexts?

It is this focus on the evolution of Buddhist rather than secular art throughout the premodern and modern periods of Japanese history that distinguishes Graham's project from so many earlier accounts for the arts of these periods. Critical attention through the last century on Edo art in particular has been focused so much on the urbane art of *ukiyo-e* that it has been easy to forget that Edo's own audiences would have been just as familiar with the religious iconography of the Buddhist arts that survived throughout the same period. Given the immediacy of *ukiyo-e* image and style, its portability and accessibility, it is certainly easy to see why nineteenth century European audiences might have overlooked the less obvious treasures of temples and storehouses. During the twentieth century also, the museum or art gallery collection and exhibition viewing contexts for Japanese arts for both domestic and international audiences certainly facilitated wider access to Japanese art works, but inevitably also defined or even constrained understandings of the arts of these eras. Graham expands our understandings of art in the capital—Edo and latterly Tokyo—but she also enriches her account by explaining its relations to corresponding art practices in the provinces, in village stations on pilgrimage routes, and in precedent locations from earlier periods—Nara, Kyoto and Osaka. Her focus on the functional relations between religious practice and art production, and between patron and artist, production and use, and most importantly to the ever present tension between competing forces to conformity and invention, provide the explanatory fabric for an account of great diversity in practice and employment in the arts through these periods.

Like Davis' work, Patricia Graham's *Faith and Power* is an attractively presented and substantial text. It is clearly laid out, both in the



practical sectional arrangement of its content and in the presentation of typeface and images. The photographic images, though small and largely monochromatic, were in very many instances taken by Graham herself, and have not been published previously. The text is enhanced by additional notes on translation, language and usage, a map of Japan with indications of sites referred to in the text, an appendix list of Tokyo-area temples, and a character glossary in romanised and *kanji* forms. Extensive notes and bibliographic references and comprehensive index are included.

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Much ground lies between these investigations and the earliest Anglophone accounts of Japanese arts. Those early histories, by Ernest Fenollosa, Lawrence Binyon, Ananda Coomaraswamy or Okakura Kakuzō for example, were ‘big picture’ explanations, broadly framed constructs for East Asian arts. They were developed, largely for Anglophone audiences, and founded on assumptions of some underlying fabric of homogeneity or similarity in the purpose and character of the visual arts in China or Japan.<sup>2</sup>

Both of these accounts however are more finely focused, the one on the art project of one artist, the other specifically on Buddhist art, albeit that of many individual artists of several generations spread through two extended historical periods. Each in its different way is founded on a very different understanding of what artists do, and how writers can write about what they do, than that informing the early accounts. They recognize that diversity of the individual artists’ inventions, rather than common ground or sameness, underpins artistic practice. Here the diversity is made evident in two quite different ways. Julie Nelson Davis focuses on the explanation of a single construct of the figure Utamaro in which his value and success within his milieu was quite dependent on the public recognition of the ways in which he and his art works differed from his contemporaries and predecessors and their art works. The strength of the individuality of that construct is all the stronger in its relational tension with expectations of consistency in his art with the expectations of his publisher, his subjects in Yoshiwara, and the broader Edo public.

Though Patricia Graham embraces works by an very large number of artists, many anonymous, working in quite different contexts—profoundly different as their projects developed from those of temple sponsorship to civic, to individually motivated engagements—similar tensions are

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<sup>2</sup> Nancy S. Steinhardt introduces this discussion around the activities of a central institution, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in her discussion of recent understandings of a canonical construct for East Asian architecture (Steinhardt, 2007, 15). The broader scope of her paper extends to embrace contemporary thinking in museum locales in London (The British Museum) and Tokyo (the Imperial Museum) and their respective preoccupations with defining the territory and character of Japanese art during these years.

established between audience expectations of consistency with orthodox models inherent in their function of objects of religious practice and the impetus to individual invention. The evidence of the persistence of the latter force is present in the distinctive individuality of each of their works. Though these are both accounts that depend very much on their evidential presentations of broader socio-cultural, political or economic data, it is this understanding of art that informs each author's understanding of their own projects as art text rather than simply as socio-cultural history.

Though in so many ways both Davis and Graham have adopted different approaches, focus and scope in their examinations of their subjects, their accounts are similar in one essential way. Both writers accept that artists are made, not born. They are the products of their training and of their experience in the world. Artists work with knowledge and skill, applying their trade in relation to and in the service of the interests, demands, experiences and expectations of the other participants in the art engagement: the viewers and users of their art works. Davis' reconstruction of the Utamaro persona falls very much on the 'nurture' side of the eco-biological debate: Utamaro the artist was a carefully fashioned commodity. He developed out of the complex tensions of social, economic, literary and artistic forces within the narrowly framed environment of Edo floating world society. Similarly Graham's argument is one in which the incidence of art works, and subsequently their character, is the product of the constantly changing interface of social, religious, political, geographical and economic interests or expectations.

These are institutional accounts for art. As such they depart from more conventional art book formats of the stylistic genealogy, the biographical monograph or the annotated picture book. And as such their scope does not facilitate a critically evaluative response to the works they discuss. This is a task for different kinds of investigation. What they are able to do however, is make substantial contributions to our understandings of their art subjects in relation to the complexities of contextual relation that shaped and informed the projects of their artists and the responses of their original audiences. It is in this sense that these texts are constructed on evidence founded at source, evidence drawn from knowledge of the worlds of the artists they have chosen to discuss. In the case of Davis' study this draws on analysis of contemporary documents from Utamaro's own world; in Graham's account the explanations are developed from knowledge of the contemporary circumstances, functional requirements and expectations of art works from the various parties involved. In these ways each text brings us one step closer to developing valid tools for appraising these art worlds in the same ways—closer to the reconstruction of how artists saw and engaged with their world, and how their own audiences understood their material and spiritual worlds through their art. By doing so they bring today's viewers closer to seeing the

works through the eyes and minds of their original audiences: to a reconstruction of the period eye.

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