

KINSEY AND THE COLLECTORS: SIR JOSEPH KINSEY AND COLLECTING *UKIYO-E* IN NEW ZEALAND

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Figure 1. Portrait of J. J. Kinsey seated. (Canterbury Museum, Christchurch.)

Joseph Kinsey (1852–1936) was a successful entrepreneur and a generous contributor to the social and cultural engagements of his day. He was also a prolific collector of books, curios, and art objects. Kinsey's passion for collecting was shared by many of his contemporaries. It reflected a contemporary awareness of the place of learning, aesthetic experience, and intellectual exchange in New Zealand's engagements with a world in flux. The recent, and vigorous, rise of Japan as a significant player in international affairs attracted the close attention of Kinsey and his contemporaries. For them, collecting art objects and curios from Japan contributed both to their aesthetic enjoyment and to their construction of relations between Japan and New Zealand in this changing world.

Kinsey the Collector

Joseph J. Kinsey was born in Plumstead, Kent, in England in 1852. He was educated at the Royal Naval School in Greenwich. He taught at Dulwich College for eight years before immigrating to New Zealand in 1880. There he established the firm of Kinsey and Co. Ltd, Shipping Agents and Insurance Brokers in Christchurch. He was a most successful businessman and maintained roles in the public domain, including contributing to the South Seas Exhibition at Dunedin and the governance of Canterbury College between 1889 and 1890. He maintained a high social profile in the Christchurch Golf Club, the Canterbury Club, the Christchurch Liedertafel, and the Christchurch Savage Club.¹

Today Kinsey is perhaps best known for his contributions to Antarctic exploration. His firm managed the affairs for the expeditions of Sir Ernest Shackleton (1874–1922) and Captain Robert Falcon Scott (1868–1912). Kinsey himself held power of attorney for both men during their journeys. His commitment to their projects was substantial. He personally managed preparations for the journeys, including closely supervising the six-month fit-out of Shackleton's *Aurora* in Dunedin, and firmly managed personnel, arranging, for example, the change of captaincy for the *Nimrod*. Kinsey maintained close personal associations with these men. In his journals Scott recorded his gratitude when he and his wife were the personal guests of then Mr and Mrs Kinsey at "Te Han," their residence at Clifton (Sumner), during the lengthy preparation for the 1910 voyage.² Later, on 24 March 1912, shortly before his expedition came to its tragic end, Scott was to address one of the last letters he wrote to Kinsey, expressing his thanks for the professional and personal kindness he had received, and entrusting his family to Kinsey's care.³ Kinsey's close interest in and substantial services to events in the Antarctic were eventually recognized in his receipt of a knighthood in 1917 and in his appointment to the New Zealand Institute's Polar Year Committee in 1930.⁴ His commitment is reflected in the substantial accumulations of Antarctic material held in his collections that included his personal and business correspondence with both Scott and Shackleton, and other documents, photograph albums, and an assortment of objects, many of which were later to be included in the gifts from his collections to the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington.

Kinsey's preoccupations extended much more broadly than this very topical interest however. The documentation and memorabilia of the Antarctic expeditions form part of an extensive and diverse collection of other papers and objects. Kinsey was an avid and eclectic bibliophile. His book collection was amassed in a personal library of over 15,000

1 Geraldine Lummis, "Ukiyo-e in the Canterbury Museum," in *Pleasure and Play in Edo Period Japan*, ed. Richard Bullen (Christchurch: Canterbury Museum and Department of Art History and Theory, University of Canterbury, 2009), 10–11.

2 Robert Falcon Scott, *Scott's Last Expedition: The Personal Journals of Captain R. F. Scott, CV., RN., on His Journey to the South Pole* (London: John Murray, 1913), 4.

3 *Ibid.*, 474.

4 Les B. Quartermain, *New Zealand and the Antarctic* (Wellington: Government Printer, 1971), 72.

volumes at “Warrimoo,” his home in Papanui in Christchurch.⁵ It included extensive art reference collections, with a large compilation of texts on Japanese art. Documents in his collections included company papers and correspondence generated through his various contributions to life and letters in Canterbury and beyond. Kinsey appears to have been an avid amateur photographer, and many of his own essays in the medium recorded personal and family climbing expeditions in the Southern Alps of New Zealand.

Kinsey died in 1936. His entire estate was left to his wife, Lady Sarah Kinsey. Substantial parts of his papers and manuscripts and photographic, art, decorative arts, including porcelain and furniture, and library collections were deposited by Lady Kinsey in 1936 in the Alexander Turnbull Library to be catalogued as “The Kinsey Library.” A further collection of over 250 prints, paintings, and decorative arts was later gifted progressively between 1938 and 1941 to the Canterbury Museum by Lady Sarah and her daughter Mrs W.A. (May) Moore with the request that they should be known as “The Joseph Kinsey Collection.”⁶ The Canterbury Museum computer database today records around 1,800 items gifted from the Kinsey family collections.⁷ These were significant gifts. In Canterbury Dr R.A. Falla (1901–79), in his Museum Director’s Report of 12 October 1938, drew

Special attention to the donation of material from Mrs W. A. Moore, under dates September 28th and October 10th. The Japanese collection [is] probably one of the best of its kind in New Zealand, not only containing a fine range of rare and valuable items collected by the late Sir Joseph Kinsey, but also accompanied by full descriptive lists and comments on the articles by various authorities including Japanese.⁸

The rationale for the division of the collections between the Wellington and Canterbury institutions seems unclear, though it has been suggested that the bibliographic and archival collections sat more readily within those of the Alexander Turnbull Library, and the pictorial works might have found a more sympathetic home in Christchurch.⁹ Certainly, this arrangement seems consistent with the distinctly different status the two groups of works had at that time. The miscellany of unattributed art works, small albums of minor subjects, Meiji-period documentary reportage prints, and published materials at that time attracted less critical, academic, or aesthetic attention than the highly decorative and dynamic compositions of *ukiyo-e* (“floating-world pictures” of Edo-period Japan). They sat well with the bibliographic and manuscript collections, curios, and lesser artefacts that were chosen for the Alexander Turnbull

5 Lummis, “*Ukiyo-e* in the Canterbury Museum,” 11.

6 Jennifer Quérée, email message to author, 23 November 2009.

7 Jennifer Quérée, email message to author, 16 December 2009.

8 Lummis, “*Ukiyo-e* in the Canterbury Museum,” 10.

9 Jennifer Quérée, email message to author, 23 November 2009.

collection. Parochial favour seems to have motivated the retention of the more extensive collections of highly regarded single-sheet works by well-known *ukiyo-e* artists in the Canterbury collections.

These extensive and diverse collections appear to have been well organized before Kinsey's death. Many carry handwritten pencil inscriptions including catalogue numbers and indications of artist and subject. Since these inscriptions do not appear to be in Kinsey's own hand, they were presumably added by dealers, assistants, or advisors, such as the Mr Naganuma in Kobe whose advice Kinsey received on attributions, dates, and titles.¹⁰ The *ukiyo-e* works in the Canterbury collections suggest some collecting patterns or areas of particular interest for Kinsey. The collection of approximately 250 single-sheet prints consists of a diverse range of works by top *ukiyo-e* artists, including prints and paintings by Nishikawa Sukenobu (1671–1751), Utagawa Kunisada I (1786–1864), fifty works by Andō Hiroshige (1797–1858), Utagawa Toyokuni I (1769–1825), Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849), Keisai Eisen (1790–1848), Isoda Koryūsai (active c.1764–88), and Chōbunsai Eishi (1756–1829). Within this varied collection are identifiable subject subgroups—of genre scenes, landscapes, or *kabuki* scenes. In Canterbury, for example, Dr Rachel Payne has been able to reconstruct one coherent group of representations of *kabuki* theatre actors from the Iwai Hanshirō line, embracing images of all members from Iwai Hanshirō I through Iwai Hanshirō VI.¹¹ A coherent group of *sensō-e* “war pictures” is included in the Wellington collections.

The patterns or coherence of groups like these reflect early Japanese collecting interests, of favourite actors, *kabuki* themes, or genre subjects, rather than Kinsey's personal interests. Many bear marginal punctures from stitch binding that indicate their original collation into bound albums. This was very much the practice of the Japanese enthusiast, and suggests that many of these groups of works had been compiled by the works' original collectors, and the albums subsequently were broken up for resale by European dealers as single-sheet prints—the form in which most were originally published. In selecting these works from dealer stocks in England, Kinsey was hardly replicating the highly informed activity of his Japanese predecessors, but he was, at the least, perceiving domains of specific interest within the otherwise very broad subject field of *ukiyo-e* woodblock print artists.

The scale and diversity of Kinsey's collections are reflected in the substantial number of items deposited in the Alexander Turnbull Library. The catholic range of his collecting interests is revealed through the variety of documents recorded in the catalogue entries there. These include many manuscript items, including personal and business correspondence and records, and diverse other papers. Pictorial works range from significant collections of family and news documentary photographs, maps, lithographs, chromolithographs, engravings, and paintings, including an album

10 Jennifer Harris, email message to author, 18 November 2009.

11 Rachel Payne, “*Yakusha-e*: Interpreting the Iconography of Kabuki's Stars,” in *Pleasure and Play in Edo Period Japan*, ed. Richard Bullen (Christchurch: Canterbury Museum and Department of Art History and Theory, Canterbury University, 2009), 24–32.

containing seventy-four water-colours, as well as collections of book plates and cartoons. Curios range from furniture pieces and mounted boomerangs to Chinese death masks, incense burners, and bronze stirrups, and a variety of busts and figurines. Decorative arts works include crystal and ceramic wares, including a number of Royal Doulton and Korean *chosŏn*-period (1392–1897) pieces. A significant number of items reflect the Kinsey family's engagement in mountaineering, and many others, Kinsey's interest and involvement in Antarctic exploration, especially the expeditions of Shackleton and Scott. The Kinsey collections also include a significant number of books from the substantial library at "Warrimoo." Though these carry plates indicating that they are a part of the Kinsey collections, this is not currently recorded in their catalogue entry data.



Figure 2. Andō Hiroshige (1797–1858), *Awa, Naruto no fūha* (Awa, Naruto Whirlpools), Series *Rokujūyoshū meisho zu-e* (Illustrations of Famous Places in the Sixty-Odd Provinces), *ōban* woodblock print, 9/1855. (Kinsey Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.)

The Japanese Collections

This very large and diverse collection forms the broader context within which the specifically Japanese works now held in the Alexander Turnbull Library can be located. These works include a porcelain statuette of the Taoist Queen of Heaven and Holy Mother Māzū, a late-nineteenth-century ceramic vase, and a pair of bronze incense burners with the figure of Jofuku riding on the back of a crane (Curios-029-047; 029-049; 028-057). A small group of seven miscellaneous single-sheet prints (cat. A-055-001/007) contains several twentieth-century *shin-hanga* (“new print”) and *fukei-ga* landscape views with genre scenes. These include two views by Yamamoto Shōun (1870–1965), an unidentified night river scene, and an unusual *kakemono-e* hanging scroll format composition by the little-known artist Hiroaki Takashi (Takashi Shotei, 1871–1945). For Kinsey, these were all contemporary works. This group also includes beautifully printed *surimono* (lit. “rubbed thing”—exclusive limited edition prints) and an impression of the well-known view of *Awa, Naruto Whirlpools* (Figure 2) by Andō Hiroshige (1797–1858). The Wellington gift included rich bibliographic collections, seventy-two photolithographic prints, and reproductions gleaned from volume V of Samuel Bing’s *Le Japon Artistique* (the journal *Le Japon Artistique* was published monthly between 1888 and 1891 by the dealer Siegfried “Samuel” Bing [1838–1905]).

The more substantial collections of woodblock prints are incorporated in two groups. The first (cat. E-274-1/11) comprises eleven volumes of woodcuts by late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century artists. Though it comprises only eleven albums, it is the most substantial group of pictorial works. Each volume contains up to fifty full-sheet or double-page plates—several hundred individual pictorial compositions in total. The collection is significant because in two instances the multi-volume publications comprise complete sets. These include *Seitei kachō gafu* (Seitei’s Drawing Book of Flowers and Birds) published by Watanabe Seitei (1851–1918) in 1890, an album of fifty-six plates by Ichiryūsai Shigenobu (aka Utagawa Hiroshige II, 1826/9–69) from 1854 (Figure 3), volume XI of the *Hokusai manga* (Random Sketches by Hokusai) c.1833, and a complete volume of *Santei gafu* (Drawing According to Three Methods) by Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849) 1815–18. Five further volumes feature natural history scenes by or after the Maruyama-Shijō School *kachō-e* bird and flower picture specialist Kōno Bairai (1844–93), including the 1881 collection *Bairei hyaku-chō gafu* (Bairei’s Drawing Book of One Hundred Birds) and *Kusabana hyakushū-shiki* (One Hundred Kinds of Flowers) published between 1891 and 1896. Though commonplace in their original Edo context, volumes like these were less popular for New Zealand collectors whose taste focused mainly on the highly decorative single-sheet or composite compositions. Their presence in Kinsey’s collections is consistent with his own passion for the printed book, evident in his vast library accumulations. In this he did find company, in the collecting habits of Alexander Turnbull (1868–1918) and Dr Thomas Morland Hocken (1836–1910), for example, and in the precedent collections of Sir George Grey (1812–98), whose own library had included a number of *ukiyo-e* volumes. One volume of the Seitei albums, a school prize awarded to Dorothy Theomin (1888–1966) in Dunedin, is now in the Special Collections of the University of Otago.



Figure 3. Ichiryūsai Shigenobu (1826/9–69), *Tōkaidō gojūsan-tsugi no uchi* (Fifty-Three Stations of the Tōkaidō) (upper scene a simplified version of Hiroshige I's *Nihonbashi Sekkei no Zu* [*Nihonbashi in the Morning after Snow*] from the series *Shinpan Edo Meishō*), woodblock print album, 1854. (Kinsey Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.)

Perhaps the most unusual group in the Wellington collections is a set of fifteen polychrome woodblock *sensō-e* prints in varying sizes of scenes of the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–5 (C-062-001/015). These works depict engagements between the Japanese and Russians on land and at sea, around the Manchuria Lao-Tung (Liaodong; Liaotung) Peninsula. Amongst these are three triple-*ōban* triptych polychrome prints by the artist known as Getsuzō (active 1904–5): *Battle Scene from Russo-Japanese War* (1904 [Meiji 37]); *A Fight at the Yalu River* (*Ōryōkkōjō no Shōtotsu*): *Battle Scene from Russo-Japanese War* (published 1 June 1904 [Meiji 37]); and *Japanese Attack on Temporary Bridge during the Battle of the Yalu River* (1904 [Meiji 37]). Each work carries the signature *Getsuzō*, his seal *Ensei*, and the mark of his wartime publisher Matsuki Heikichi (Daikokuya Matsuki Heikichi).

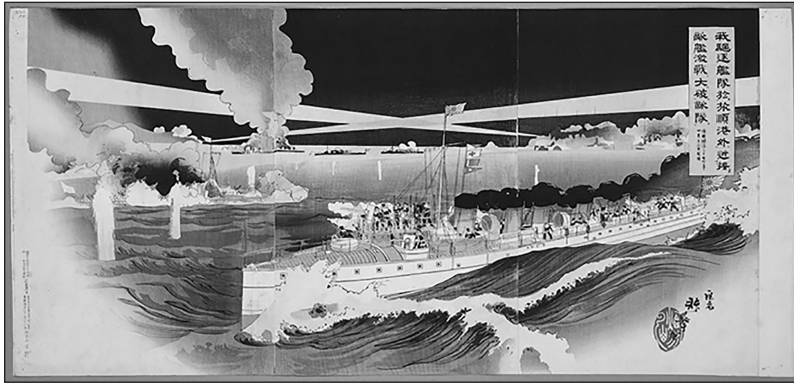


Figure 4. Kōkyō Taniguchi (1864–1915), *The Surprise Japanese Attack on the Pacific Squadron of the Imperial Russian Navy at Port Arthur (Lüshun) on the Liaodong Peninsula, on the Night of 8th February 1904*, triple *ōban* woodblock print, 1904 (Meiji 37), signed Kōkyō, publisher Matsuki Heikichi. (Kinsey Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.)

A single *ōban* triptych composition by Chinshu Rosetsu (active 1904) depicts an expansive view of a battle scene. A fragmented group of five unsigned *ōban* sheets combine to present a dramatic composite view over a coastal battle scene with officers on horseback and foot forces scurrying amongst rocky outcrops and burning buildings, with warships moving in from the distance. Two triptych views by Utagawa Kokunimasa (1874–1944) depict dynamic battle scenes on land and sea (these works are signed Ryūa, an abbreviation of Ryūkei, under which name his Russo-Japanese War prints were published—his Sino-Japanese War prints had been signed Kokunimasa). A 1904 (Meiji 37) work by Ohara Koson (1877/8–1945) is titled *Teikoku gundan Ryojunkō kaimen jōriku senryō no zu* (Picture of the Imperial Army Landing from the Rear and Capturing Port Arthur). Koson is today better remembered for his more delicate *kachō-e* bird and flower compositions published under the name Ohara Shōson from 1912. One by Ōkura Kōtō (active 1894–1905) depicts a view of a battle scene, and a 1904 work by Migita Toshihide (1863–1925) carries the narrative title *Sea Battle at Port Arthur: Japanese Ships in Foreground Attacking Sinking Russian Ships*. The remaining three triptych views by Kōkyō Taniguchi (1864–1915; active 1877–1904) depict one land battle view and two sea battle scenes. In one a Russian battle ship, identifiable by the distinctive Russian Naval Ensign of blue cross on a white ground, sinks dramatically amidst huge explosions of fire and water. Another (Figure 4) shows the Japanese surprise night attack on the Russian squadron at Port Arthur (Lüshun) in February 1904 that was later to earn the attack the soubriquet “the first Pearl Harbour.”

Together, the artistic wealth of the Canterbury depositions of single-sheet prints and the diverse interests evident in the Wellington groups reveal much about Kinsey’s collecting habits; but how did he acquire his Japanese collections? He seems never to have visited Japan. By the early twentieth century however, there was

ample opportunity to collect *ukiyo-e* within New Zealand. Prints were available from local galleries and were gifted and exchanged between collectors, such as Sir Erima Northcroft (1884–1953) and Leo Bensemann (1912–86).¹² Most seem to have been purchased abroad however. Certainly, Kinsey is known to have dealt extensively with the London art dealer J.K. Miura.¹³ Papers in the Canterbury Museum collection suggest that many works may have been purchased during his visit back to England in 1914–16, apparently bought in substantial quantities from a few selected dealers like Miura as “ready-made collections.”¹⁴ This kind of collecting habit seems to have been relatively indiscriminate. The result was the accumulation of a huge, sprawling collection that embraced a wide variety of artists, subjects, themes, and formats, and included modern prints like the *shin-hanga* and twentieth-century *sensō-e* that fall outside the broader purview of *ukiyo-e*. This diversity, however, tells us much about the interest these works held for Kinsey and his family and the engagements of taste that occupied them.

The single-sheet prints in the Canterbury collection illustrate the catholic nature of Kinsey’s collecting habits. Alongside highly collectable artists, such as Hiroshige, Toyokuni I, or Kunisada, sit more unusual prints by Sukenobu and Koryūsai. Subject matter ranges from mundane daily life genre scenes through *fukei-ga* landscape views, *kabuki-e* theatre prints, *meisho-e* pictures of famous places, *yakusha-e* actor pictures, and *bijin-ga* images of beautiful women through historical themes and images of natural history subjects. The range of subjects alone in the Turnbull gifts demonstrates the breadth of these interests. One preoccupation was with natural history subjects. The albums of *kachō-e* bird and flower woodblock prints by the Shijō School artists Watanabe Seitei and Kōno Bairai contain over 200 finely articulated representations of Japanese flora and fauna. The tour de force technical achievement of a *surimono* of fireflies at night offered the most intimate engagement with the natural world of rural Japan. Works like these reflect an intense interest shared by many New Zealanders, including Kinsey’s contemporaries Lady Isabella and Sir Frederic Truby King (1858–1938), in Japan as both a distant and exotic world, and as a natural environment geographically similar to New Zealand. The finely delineated pictorial detail and subtly modulated effects of naturalistic colour in the prints, and the precise textual annotations and colophons in many, suggest pretensions to botanical authority that would have informed this function for New Zealand and Japanese viewers. Beyond this practical interest however, both domestic and western audiences could have appreciated a deeper significance in images of these themes. These fine works are redolent with the sensibilities of delicacy and fragility of beauty and of life that ran like a thread through Japanese arts, crystallized during the Heian period (AD 794–1185) and sustained to the present day, that informed deeper aesthetic sensibilities like *mono no aware*, the delicate sense of the paths of things. These works were objects of beauty that held the potential to generate pleasure for audiences in both countries.

12 Peter Simpson, email messages to author, 7 February, 24 and 25 April 2009.

13 Jennifer Harris, email message to author, 29 October 2009.

14 Jennifer Quéréé, email message to author, 29 November 2009.



Figure 5. Ichiryusei Shigenobu (1826/9–69), *Nihonbashi* (Bridge of Japan) from the series *Tōkaidō gojusan-tsugi no uchi* (From the Fifty-Three Stations of the Tōkaidō), 1854. (Kinsey Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.)

Similar insights could be generated by the genre scenes of daily life in Japan that feature in both the Canterbury and Wellington collections. Some compositions, like Hiroshige's view of the *Naruto Whirlpools at Awa*, are key works by perhaps the best known of all Japanese artists, and were very popular at the time. They conveyed, using stylistic conventions familiar to Western viewers, recognizable views of famous places with an appealing sense of immediacy and authenticity. Together with fine art compositions like the Hiroshige and the intimate views of the natural history pictures, the incidence of many less distinguished genre and landscape scenes in both collections reflects a keen curiosity about life in other places.

Works such as Ichiryūsai Shigenobu's 1854 album *Tōkaidō gojusan-tsugi no uchi* (From the Fifty-Three Stations of the Tōkaidō) offered intimate glimpses into the daily life of Japanese people situated in their own world. Thus the opening composition of this album provided viewers with an immediate introduction to the city of Edo. The view across the capital told viewers much about the city. As inscribed in pencil on this example, this is a view of the "Bridge at Nihonbashi in Edo." This was the first stage or starting-point on the journey from the "Eastern Capital" of Edo (today's Tōkyō) to the old imperial capital of Heian-kyō, or Kyōtō. The *Nihonbashi* (Bridge of Japan) in the foreground was a major thoroughfare over the Sumida River below. The row of white plastered warehouses beyond confirmed the distinctive commercial character of the capital. Edo Castle to the right beyond this provided an emblem of authority, and beyond this to the left the symmetrical profile of the ubiquitous Fuji provided a clear

symbol of national identity recognizable to audiences all over the world. The intimate foreground scene of a porter and a geisha and her attendant crossing the bridge told Japanese and western viewers alike much about daily life in and around the capital. The immediate appeal of these images was enhanced by their pictorial sources in precedent works by Shigenobu's teacher Andō Hiroshige. His adoption of the western-style perspective and scale devices perfected by his master lend the composition a degree of representational verity that must have enhanced both its accessibility and its documentary authority for western viewers like Kinsey. Views like these abound in the diverse landscape compositions of Hiroshige and Hokusai and their contemporaries in the Canterbury collections. Similar subjects in the rural *fukei-ga* scenes by Yamamoto Shōun (1870–1965) in Wellington had the additional cachet for Kinsey afforded by their status as contemporary representations of the Japanese world.

Other works in the Wellington gifts provide more intimate glimpses of Japanese life. Albums like the *Hokusai manga* and *Santei-gafu* are crammed full of images that reflect the sheer diversity of Hokusai's own pictorial attention. They include insights into the lives of figures from every walk of life, from *hinin* (lit. "non-person") beggars, through craftsmen, travellers, performers, and workers to figures from foreign—and in some cases mythical—lands. They offer insights into cultural engagements through representations of deities, shrines, and distinctive scenes of Japanese life. Interestingly, they also provide ample evidence of early contact with the west, even during this period of supposed isolation, in illustrations of western art conventions and technological achievements from optics to firearms that had been established by Hokusai's time. Images like these did more than satisfy casual curiosity about Japan: they informed the foundation of knowledge that facilitated social, diplomatic, and most importantly commercial intercourse between New Zealand and Japanese interests as both countries moved through the first decades of the twentieth century. They satisfied transcultural curiosities, but they also demonstrated an increasing awareness, both before and after the First World War, of Japan's place in the modern world.

The *Sensō-e*

The importance of this kind of knowledge, both for Kinsey the naval man and shipping agent and for broader New Zealand interests, is demonstrated in one single cohesive and distinctively themed group of works in the Wellington collections. These are the fifteen large multiple *ōban* sheet print compositions depicting scenes from the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5). These *sensō-e* war pictures are of exceptional interest. They are highly unusual works. They are quite rare today, partly because their closely focused topicality would have limited their appeal to international art audiences at any time, and because any interest they held was eclipsed in Kinsey's day by the decorative appeal of *ukiyo-e* and even *shin hanga* representations of women, natural history, and landscape subjects. Awareness of current international events was of real practical significance for a man of business during this period; especially so for a man whose business interests were closely involved in commerce and shipping. For someone like Kinsey, events such as the Russo-Japanese War had immediate, tangible implications.

The Russo-Japanese War had begun late on the evening of 8 February 1904. Japanese forces staged a surprise torpedo boat attack on the Pacific Squadron of the Imperial Russian Navy at Port Arthur, the Chinese naval base of Lüshun on Kwantung Peninsula, at the extremity of Liaodong Peninsula on the north-east China coast. The Japanese position was secured early the following morning when a naval convoy landed 2,500 troops at the Korean port of Chemulpo (Inchon).¹⁵ The subsequent sequence of events culminated in the victory of a completely overhauled and refitted Japanese fleet over a strained Russian Second Pacific Squadron in the great sea Battle of Tsushima Straits (Battle of the Japan Sea) south of Fusan in Korea 27–28 May 1905.¹⁶

These were internationally significant events. Port Arthur had long been recognized as a site of exceptional strategic importance, which gave Japan effective control over access to the Northern seas.¹⁷ The victory provided a clear and dramatic demonstration of Japan's rapid rise to international power:

The Battle of Tsushima represented a turning point in the course of history that went far beyond the complete annihilation of Rozhdestvenskii's fleet. When the Russian and Japanese delegations arrived in the United States, the rest of the world, particularly the Western powers, could no longer ignore the rising power of Japan. Over a very short period of time the Japanese had undergone dramatic military modernisation, and they had demonstrated that they might use the products of the process to create their own version of a modern nation in arms. The victories of the Japanese armed forces sent shock waves not only to the West but also to the colonial world, where people of color now understood that their own might defeat the Great Powers on a modern battlefield ... The Russo-Japanese War, "World War Zero," set the stage for future conflicts of the twentieth century.¹⁸

Intense international scrutiny ensured extensive world awareness of the events of the war—over one hundred military observers and a large press corps provided first-hand reports of events like the Battle of the Yalu River¹⁹—and clearly demonstrated the reality of Japan's status as an international naval power. International perceptions of Japanese victories over a huge power like Russia, and previously China, were not without some irony. As Donald Keene recorded, "Okakura Kakuzō wryly commented

15 John Steinberg, "The Operational Overview," in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero*, ed. John Steinberg, Bruce Menning, David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, David Wolff, and Shinji Yokoto (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 107.

16 *Ibid.*, 127.

17 David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, "The Immediate Origins of the War," in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective*, ed. John Steinberg, Bruce Menning, David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, David Wolff, and Shinji Yokoto (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 23–26.

18 Steinberg, "Operational Overview," 128.

19 *Ibid.*, 111.

that as long as Japan indulged in the gentle arts of peace she had been regarded as barbarous, but victory in war had induced the foreigners to call Japan civilized.”²⁰

For their original Japanese audiences, pictures such as those in the Kinsey collection had performed important roles. Together with populist war songs, *nishiki-e* (polychrome “brocade-picture”) decorative prints played an active role in “rousing feelings of hatred” against the enemy forces amongst the Japanese population.²¹ Their juxtaposition of reportage of actual events with dramatic theatricality generated patriotism, nationalism, and national pride.

The war was reported through modern engraved, photographic, lithographic, chromolithographic, and cartoon representations. The woodblock print medium enjoyed some advantages however. The familiarity of its print format enhanced its authority;²² the broad panoramic view of triptych format compositions conveyed something of the breadth of an immediate view over the theatre of battle, encompassing the scale of events, the range of forces, the geographic setting, and the complexities of strategic deployment. The polychrome woodblock medium provided detail in uniforms and insignia, and lent representational credibility to realistic looking settings. The graphic artist could exploit the inventive potentials of drawn media to exaggerate, modify, or completely reinvent their subjects in the service of propaganda for both Japanese and western audiences.

Nishiki-e artists developed an aesthetic sensibility consistent with the propagandist requirements of the war effort. Rich colour and atmospheric effects generated a sense of immediacy and high drama in depictions of exploding shells, soaring waves, and highly exaggerated speed and dynamics.²³ While often assuming a pseudo-photographic realism, the caricature-like representation of stock figures—tweed coated intelligence men, smartly dressed Japanese forces, Russian forces in disarray—created a construct, a compromised reality of the events of the war. The conflation of naturalistic representation, narrative drama, and the theatricality of *kabuki*-sourced figure poses provided an effective medium for conditioning Japanese understandings of the events of the war and of the heroic roles Japanese individuals played in it. The actions of soldiers could be associated with those of *samurai* warriors of earlier eras, implicitly maintaining their values of duty and honour in new world conflicts. Leading figures—war heroes, such as General Nogi, Admiral Tōgō, and Commander Hirose—were all lionized in popular prints just as the heroes of the past had been celebrated in the *ukiyo-e* of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.²⁴

20 Donald Keene, *Landscapes and Portraits: Appreciations of Japanese Culture* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1972), 295.

21 *Ibid.*, 267.

22 James T. Ulak, “Battling Blocks: Representations of the War in Japanese Woodblock Art,” in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective*, ed. John Steinberg, Bruce Menning, David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, David Wolff, and Shinji Yokoto (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 385.

23 Keene, *Landscapes and Portraits*, 288.

24 *Ibid.*, 274.

Despite their energy and immediacy, these prints tend to be of much lower technical quality than later *ukiyo-e* prints. They were produced at high speed, partly for immediacy of reportage, but also because news images didn't require the same decorative refinement as those produced within the highly ornamental contexts of the floating world: "truth" was more important than elegance. Though some prints were popular, selling as many as 100,000 copies each, these works often failed to appeal to contemporary Japanese audiences—"during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05 many prints were executed, but sales were far smaller than for the Sino-Japanese War and the prints themselves were of slight artistic importance."²⁵ The artists themselves are less well known than those of *ukiyo-e*. Some, such as Getsuzō, are known only by a single name or for representations only of Russo-Japanese War scenes. By the first years of the twentieth century, photography, chromolithography, and intaglio printing had inevitably taken the place of *nishiki-e* as the principal media of reportage. Kinsey's collection is unusual and consequently of some importance today.

The *sensō-e* prints of the Russo-Japanese War provide one clue to the motives that drove Kinsey's collecting interests. Though they fall outside the *ukiyo-e* themes that inform the rest of his Japanese collections, it is easy to appreciate the importance their subjects would have had for him at the time. Kinsey's business interests were founded on shipping, and an international naval conflict on this scale had direct implications for merchant shipping and commerce, both with Japan—this was a period of substantial trade between New Zealand and east Asia, especially in goods such as textiles—and with the northern hemisphere in general. Kinsey was a pragmatic, well-informed, and "thoroughly shrewd business man."²⁶ As both a navy man and a businessman actively involved in and dependent on the successful management of international shipping transactions, he naturally took a keen interest in events, and their representation in the media, that could have a tangible impact on his business dealings.

Kinsey was not alone in this. His recognition of the implications of Japan's political, military, and economic force within international and Asia-Pacific spheres was shared by others. In May 1905, in an immediate response to the Japanese victory at the Battle of Tsushima, for example, Dr Thomas Morland Hocken and twenty-two other signatories, including Sir Claude MacDonald (1852–1915), James Allen (1855–1942), George Fenwick (1847–1929), David Theomin (1852–1933), and Sir Frederic Truby King, sent a silver casket, ornately decorated with motifs of Māori warriors, *whare*, and *waka*, together with a six-page signed, illustrated pamphlet, with a cover decorated with the image of the Rising Sun. The gift is inscribed with "His Excellency Admiral Heihachiro Tōgō, Commander in Chief of His Imperial Majesty's Combined Naval Squadron as a memento of the Battle of Tsushima" (Hocken MS-0451-022/001).²⁷ It conveys a message of approval of the Japanese victory over Russia. Tōgō responded to each of the signatories in a three-page letter dated 25 February 1907 (Hocken VAR-Vol 24, No. 07).

25 *Ibid.*, 286.

26 Scott, *Personal Journals*, 4.

27 Donald Kerr, email message to author, 23 December 2009.

The approbation of these men is perhaps less surprising when seen in relation to New Zealand attitudes towards Russia. Fears of a Russian naval attack on New Zealand had generated significant defence measures during the late-nineteenth century. In Otago these fears had provoked the installation of the Armstrong “disappearing gun” at the “Fort Taiaroa” defences in around 1889. Their attitude presumably explains the ease with which they could overlook Japan’s breach of protocol in launching its initial attack at Port Arthur without prior warning. Their response to these events reveals a consciousness of New Zealand’s place, and potential vulnerability, in world affairs and their awareness of the need to forge judicious international relationships within the Pacific region. Their position was as much commercially driven as strategic. These people were familiar with Japan. They moved in international circles. The soldier/diplomat MacDonald was British envoy in Tōkyō between 1900 and 1905. Hocken and King had both visited Japan in 1904. Allen was a politician, diplomat, and soldier and, for a time, parliamentary opposition spokesman for defence. The dealings of Dunedin businessmen like David Theomin and the de Beer/Hallenstein families were dependent on maintaining successful trading relationships built on sound knowledge of world affairs. Maintaining positive relations with Japan made prudent economic and diplomatic sense.

The very pragmatic responses of these men reflect a broader atmosphere of interest in forging social and intellectual engagements with Japan during the later-nineteenth and first thirty years of the twentieth century. Their taste for the arts of China and Japan was satisfied through Australasian cultural events, such as the Melbourne International Exhibition (1880–81), the International Exhibition in Sydney (1889), the Japan-British Exhibition of 1910, and later the “blockbuster” travelling *Exhibition of Chinese Art* in 1937.²⁸ These interests were realized through first-hand engagements with these cultures that generated knowledge and cultural enrichment. During his visits to Japan in 1901 and 1904, for example, Hocken had collected diverse manuscript materials; thirty-six published volumes, including dictionaries, transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan and the Japan Society, and other texts; and apparently a collection of *shunga-e* woodblock prints.²⁹

Interest in the aesthetic engagements of Japan manifested tangibly also in the development of impressive Japanese gardens in New Zealand. When Lady Bella and Sir Frederic Truby King visited Japan in 1904, one of their motivations was to collect a huge quantity of plants and seeds to establish their own Japanese-style garden at their home at “Kingscliff,” in Karitane, north of Dunedin. They realized their Japanese vision again later in the much more ambitious garden project at their hilltop home at Melrose in Wellington.³⁰ King found much to admire in the healthy physical and mental outlook of the Japanese people, and saw in their culture exemplary models for his own ideas

28 Captain George Humphreys-Davies, *An Exhibition of Chinese Art* (Auckland: The War Memorial Museum, 1937).

29 David Bell, “*Ukiyo-e* in New Zealand,” *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 10 (1) (2008): 36.

30 James Beattie, Jasper M. Heinzen, and John P. Adam, “Japanese Gardens in New Zealand, 1850–1950: Transculturation and Transmission,” *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* 28 (2) (2008): 219–36.

about health, describing Japan as a “nursery of strong, able-bodied men and women.”³¹ Kinsey’s Canterbury associates also saw the potential of relations with Japan. John Macmillan Brown, Professor at Canterbury College (now University of Canterbury), visited Japan twice, in 1908 and 1926. Like King, Brown found much to admire in the Japanese, and his estimate of the potential of relations between New Zealand and Japan extended to a radical proposition of the potential for the “hybridization” of Japanese and NZ races and cultures.³²

Kinsey and the Collectors

Most importantly, the thirst for intellectual and aesthetic engagement with Japan was realized through the development of other substantial collections of Japanese art objects in New Zealand. In collecting Japanese art Kinsey was not unique or eccentric; he was an active member of a community of collectors. An early precedent had been established for the collection of *ukiyo-e* prints from overseas sources. Sir George Grey had imported a collection of thirty *ukiyo-e* albums and *ehon* books, now in the Auckland Public Library, from San Francisco in 1881.³³ During Kinsey’s time Captain George Humphreys-Davies (n.d.) accumulated a large collection of Japanese prints and other works. Many of these were displayed together with prints from Kinsey’s collections in the 1935 *Loan Exhibition of Oriental Art* in Christchurch and a subsequent exhibition of Chinese arts treasures in Auckland during 1937.³⁴

These early-twentieth-century collections drew on both international and local resources. The substantial compilation of oriental decorative arts, including bronzes, porcelain, textiles, paintings, and especially jade objects, developed by Frances May Bailey (c.1891–1967) and her husband Captain Geoffrey Bailey (c.1880–1945) now in the Canterbury Museum seems to have been accumulated largely in London. Other collections, such as those of Christchurch archaeologist Ronald Jack Scarlett (1911–2002), were gathered locally.³⁵ Other substantial Christchurch collections include that gifted to the Canterbury Museum in 1975 by Gregory Joseph Kane (1921–74) and those of Leo Bensemann (1912–86), whose own collections included generous gifts from Sir Erima Harvey Northcroft (1884–1953).³⁶

Local collections of *ukiyo-e* flourished during the later 1940s: “Allan Swinton, who became Director of the John Leech Gallery in Auckland in 1948, recalls that after the war public demand for Japanese woodcuts was so great that he found it difficult to

31 “Agriculture in Japan,” *Otago Witness*, 26 July 1905.

32 John Macmillan Brown, “The East and the West,” *Press*, 24 May 1913.

33 Bell, “*Ukiyo-e* in New Zealand,” 29.

34 Humphreys-Davies, *Exhibition of Chinese Art*.

35 Lummis, “*Ukiyo-e* in the Canterbury Museum,” 12.

36 Peter Simpson, email message to author, 24 April 2009.

interest customers in New Zealand prints.³⁷ One reason for this was the opportunities afforded by the presence of a number of New Zealanders in Japan in the years immediately after the war. Lieutenant-Colonel J.A. Worsnop (1909–57) was posted to Japan in 1947 as chief administrative officer with the Dominion forces. Subsequently, Worsnop served at Burnham, south of Christchurch, and he and his wife sold *ukiyo-e* prints from their art shop in Cathedral Square.³⁸ Works from their extensive collections of Japanese ceramics were included in the 1952 exhibition. Justice Sir Erima Harvey Northcroft was a central figure in Kinsey's Canterbury art-collecting circles. Northcroft served in Japan between 1946 and 1948 as a judge on the International Military Tribunal for the Far East. He built his own extensive collection of *ukiyo-e*, and subsequently curated the Christchurch exhibition of *Chinese and Japanese Art* in 1952.³⁹ Keith Mosheim (n.d.), serving as an education officer with J-Force, was also able to collect huge numbers of prints. A substantial number of these were subsequently sold in Christchurch and entered the collections of artists Francis Shurrock (1887–1977) and Fred Staub (n.d.) now held on loan in the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Others formed the core of Mosheim's own extensive Auckland collection, and many were included in the touring exhibition he organized in 1949.⁴⁰

This fascination with the aesthetic engagements of Japan was not confined to New Zealand. Parallel practices developed in Australia. The first exhibition in Adelaide had been held as early as 1861. The development of a rich programme of diplomatic, educational, and commercial intercourse during the Meiji period generated numerous small collections of fine arts and curios. Subsequently, substantial collections of high-quality objects were accumulated by figures like Sir Samuel Way (1836–1916).⁴¹ Their legacy has recently been demonstrated in the major exhibition *The Golden Journey: Japanese Art from Australian Collections*.⁴²

These collectors were highly informed. Frances May Bailey, for example, had received a diploma in Chinese Archaeology from the Courtauld Institute of Art, London, and was a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society and member of the Oriental Ceramic Society.⁴³ From Grey onwards collections as diverse as those of the de Beers, Kings,

37 Gail Ross, "New Zealand Prints 1900–1950: An Unseen Heritage" (PhD diss., University of Canterbury, 2006), 201.

38 Lummis, "Ukiyo-e in the Canterbury Museum," 10.

39 Justice Sir Erima Northcroft, *Chinese and Japanese Art: Exhibition at the Durham Street Art Gallery Christchurch* (Christchurch: Canterbury Museum, 1952).

40 Ross, "New Zealand Prints," 201.

41 Jennifer Harris, "The Early Development of the Japanese Art Collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia," in *The Golden Journey: Japanese Art from Australian Collections*, ed. James Bennett and Amy Reigle Newland (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia, 2009), 289–94.

42 James Bennett and Amy Reigle Newland, eds., *The Golden Journey: Japanese Art from Australian Collections* (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia, 2009).

43 Lummis, "Ukiyo-e in the Canterbury Museum," 13.

Shurrock, and Staub had been supported and informed by extensive reading in the field. The Shurrock/Staub library is now held in the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. The libraries of men such as Sir George Grey, Kinsey, Alexander Turnbull, Hocken, and Esmond de Beer (1895–1990) contribute to the rich public domain archives that inform much wider scholarship on Japanese culture in the visual sphere today. Active engagement in international events and transcultural exchange nurtured the cultivation of a remarkably well-informed connoisseur taste in the New Zealand context. Kinsey's own collecting habits and deep understanding of the works he owned were highly informed by his bibliographic collections and the plates from near contemporary sources, such as "Samuel" Bing's *Le Japon Artistique*.

Kinsey's collections, as they exist today in the Alexander Turnbull Library and the Canterbury Museum, tell us much of the catholic interests, literary and intellectual engagements, and aesthetic tastes of the man and of his era. Together with the *chosōn* and some Chinese objects, the Japanese collections represent a singular interest in Asian domains. This was an interest and practice shared by his predecessors and contemporaries. Men such as Hocken, King, and Kinsey were actively interested both in contemporary events in the east and in the broader patterns and traditions of the cultural fabric from which they evolved. In one sense Kinsey's preoccupation with the arts and cultures of the Far East was consistent with those of his contemporaries. In other ways however, his collections reflect more specific and individual interests.

Collections like these reveal an unusual meeting of different sensibilities. They juxtapose Victorian and Edwardian tastes for the ornate and decorative with contemporary transitional developments into modernist sensibilities. They reflect international trends in European and North American collectors and a healthily pragmatic self-interest in New Zealand world-views. They reveal much about the aesthetic sensibilities of their original "floating world" audiences in Edo Japan—preoccupations with rural pasts and an urban (and urbane) present, and an acute sensitivity to the beauty and ephemerality of nature. In doing so they reveal two threads in the floating world psyche: the pragmatics of the here and now, and an awareness of the inevitable passage of time embraced in the sensibility of *mono no aware*. In picturing the major shift—quite contemporary with Kinsey's actual collecting of the works—in pictorial function from the representation of floating world sensibilities through the development of *shin-hanga* and *sensō-e* into notions of art as documentary, it shows the tensions between issues of representation, truth, and contrivance so poignantly illustrated in the war pictures.

Conclusion

Kinsey's legacy has been significant. The substantial collections in Wellington and Canterbury, combined with those of so many other benefactors—de Beer, Dorothy Theomin, Staub, and Ronald Munro in Dunedin; Scarlett, Kane, Bailey, Bensemenn, and Northcroft in Canterbury; and Grey and others in Auckland—have contributed to an archive rich enough to inform comprehensive understanding of Japanese and especially Edo-period art in the New Zealand context for a century now. In their day

they contributed to the construction of a New Zealand world-view during a period of rapid change in international affairs. Subsequently, they have provided resources for a rich history of exhibitions in diverse New Zealand museum and gallery contexts beyond the impressive achievements of their own eras. These exhibitions have included *The Face of Iki* (2003), *Miyabi* (2007), and *Hail Falls Noisily on Bamboo Leaves* (2008–9) at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. In Christchurch they have most recently been drawn together in the Canterbury Museum exhibition *Pleasure and Play in Edo Japan* (2009–10). They provide resources for a range of academic engagements, including the catalogue publication for *Pleasure and Play in Edo Japan* and postgraduate and post-doctoral research at the Universities of Canterbury and Otago. Projects like these are as much an acknowledgement of the taste and benevolent generosity of the donors of the works as they are representations of the art works themselves. They have provided sensitive insight into the attitudes, knowledge, and practices of New Zealanders of past times, and are especially evidence of the high value placed on transcultural exchange during this period. But beyond this they provide a deeper and even more privileged insight: an intimate window on the cultural practices and tastes of both New Zealand and Japanese audiences of other times and worlds.

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