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How Japanese Artists Narrated the War through Western Methods

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References :: Ikeda Asato, Andrew Gordon, Mayu Tsuruya, Kamon Yasuo, Michael Lucken., Bert Winther-Tamaki, Ming Tiampo, Louisa McDonald, Naoji Kimura, Yasuko Furuichi, Mark H. Sandler, Kaneko Maki, Annika A. Culver, John Clark,

Translated Title :: リクルートされた創造性。
日本の芸術家はいかにして西洋の手法で戦争を語ることができたか

Abstract :: 日本では全体主義が徐々に確立され、市民社会が衰退し、保守的な文化風潮が強まる中、1920年代から1930年代にかけて国際的に進歩的なスタイルに親しんだ芸術家は、国家のプロパガンダを支える具象画に転向していったのです。

多くの芸術家は、軍情報局が芸術家の組織的な動員を開始したことを積極的に歓迎し、戦時文化の積極的な担い手となった。ある者は兵士としての徴兵を避けるために、またある者は戦時中の支配的なイデオロギーを信念を持って真摯に内面化した。

この新しい政策に呼応して、軍と政治の指導者たちは、芸術界を政権の目標に歩調を合わせるために、その統合を模索した。彼らは重要な文化改革に着手し、国主催の美術展を活性化させた。また、「戦争記録画」は日本人の闘争心を鼓舞し、美術界の著名な画家の協力を得て、戦争を記録した。陸軍美術協会が中心となって、必要な画家、写真家、監督を集め、理想的で写実的な戦争記録画の基本原則を3つ発表しました。(1)写実、(2)人物の集団構成、(3)デッサンの巧みさ。

軍国情報局では、新しい人材に事欠くことはなかったが、特殊な技術が必要とするため、最も多くの戦没画家がヨーロッパで修行した人たちであった。

本文では、制度的な構造を説明し、取材の芸術的な実施に携わった最も重要な主人公たちについて解説している。

かつて非常に批判的だった芸術家のうち、かなりの人数が国家宣伝のために働き、国民に戦争支持を鼓舞することに積極的に貢献した。

日本美術史のこの時期は、しばしば忘れ去られてきたが、この記事はそれを思い出す一助となることを意図している。

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Recruited Creativity

How Japanese Artists Narrated the War through Western Methods

10 2020

First official cultural relations with a fascist Italy started as early as 1930, when artist TAIKAN Yokoyama (1868-1958), a former companion of OKAKURA Tenshin (1862-1913), presented contemporary Japanese-style paintings in Rome.¹ Long before most major Japanese artists were embroiled in supporting Japan's foreign policy, to varying degrees, Taikan became a representative for Japan's cultural policy when evidently enthusiastic travelling to Rome for the occasion.² Stating that exhibiting Japanese art in Rome was more meaningful than it would be in London or Paris, he showed then Prime Minister Mussolini around on opening day.

The exhibition was sponsored by Baron Ōtani Kikuzō (1856-1923), showing 177 pieces of Japanese-style nihonga paintings by 79 artists, and attracted 166,500 visitors. Despite the wartime privations, the government released vast resources to pervade public life with cultural events to promote an ad-

equated patriotic image of Japan's history, integrating Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany into these performances. When the Hitler Youth visited Japan in September 1938, Taikan Yokoyama, welcomed the delegation with a banquet lecture titled: *Nihon bijutsu no seishin* 'The Spirit of Japanese Art.'

Trained with Okakura early in his career, using nihonga as an emblem of Japanese ethnic identity, he, in 1931 was appointed as artist to the imperial household, and produced numerous works that drew upon Japanese historical and literary themes.

Taikan in fact joined a number of other prominent artists, who demonstrated their patriotism by contributing the profits from the sale of their works. As for example he used the revenues (¥500,000) of his specially produced 'Ten Sea Scenes' and 'Ten Mountain Scenes', in 1940 to support the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy. To honour his engagement, several fighter planes were named 'patriotic Taikan planes' *aikoku Taikan gō*, after him.³

To prove his strong ties with Nazi Germany he even offered a painting of Mt. Fuji as a gift to Hitler to celebrate the eleventh National-socialist Nuremberg Congress in 1939.⁴

1 Taikan (original name Sakai Hidemaro) rebuilt The Japan Art Institute which had fallen into decline, and brought in new, young artists, including Misei Kosugi (1881-1964) and Usen Ogawa, (1869-1938) who frequently combined Western and Chinese approaches to augment modern Japanese painting.

In contrast to Germany and Japan, in Fascist Italy was a large measure of convergence between the technological modernism of the state and its art policy. The regime hosted various currents of modern art in painting, graphic design, photography and architecture. These included 'second futurism,' abstraction, and movements such as *Novecento* '20th Century' and *Stracittà* 'hypercity,' all of which instead of regarding aesthetic modernism as decadent, celebrated the break away from classical precepts and traditional forms of culture.

2 In 1931 Taikan took part in the exhibition of Japanese painting in Berlin. In the same year he became an artist at the imperial court, a member of the Academy of Arts in 1935, and in 1937 he was one of the first to receive the newly established cultural order. He created the exhibition poster for the exhibition of Old Japanese Art in Berlin 1939.

3 Taikan dono ni hōkoku 'Report to Taikan', Asahi shinbun, April 13, 1941, in

Ikeda Asato: *Envisioning Fascist Space, Time, And Body: Japanese Painting During the Fifteen-Year War (1931-1945)*, The University of British Columbia, 2012

4 *Bijutsu no gogo* 'Art in the Afternoon,' Asahi shinbun, September 28, 1938, in Ikeda Asato: *Envisioning Fascist Space, Time, And Body: Ja-*

Actually, he made hundreds of paintings of Mt. Fuji, which were occasionally reproduced as a poster and distributed with newspapers to commit the collective body of *kokutai*, the national polity of the time.

With titles such as 'Japan of the Rising Sun' (1940, 234x 449cm), 'The Sacred Mountain, Spring/ Summer/ Autumn /Winter' (1941 four seasonal paintings of Mt. Fuji 52.5 x 65.8cm), or 'Japan the Radiant' (1941, a scroll 47x 2,925cm) he emphasized the connection of the mystical energy of the mountain and the holy spirit of the nation.⁵ The refusal of literal war scenography in his nihonga paintings was compensated by a powerful aesthetic sublimation of the ideology under which war was waged. On the contrary, the aesthetic distance of his paintings from the war was widely praised, as *nihonga* in general was used to build up spiritual inner strength and national consciousness, rather than to support the imagination about real events.

Taikan was only one beyond many artists who positively hailed the involvement of the Military Information Bureau to embark on the systematic mobilisation of artists. A lot of artists became active agents in wartime culture, some to avoid inscription as soldiers and others internalized the dominant wartime ideology with true belief. Artists who had been encountered as sophisticated cosmopolitans of the avant-garde, staying in Europe were forced to return home, and almost all responded to the call.

With the increasingly conservative cultural climate, artists familiar with international progressive styles in the 1920s and 1930s in lieu of opposing the totalitarian government, turned to figurative painting supporting national propaganda. The gradually evolving establishment of totalitarianism in Japan enforced the decline of the nation's civil society, an achievement of the preceding Taishō period, until being completely eliminated.

It began with the Manchurian Incident of 1931, when the civilian government lost control of the Ja-

panese Painting During the Fifteen-Year War (1931-1945), The University of British Columbia, 2012, p.241

5 Many of his paintings are today part of the Imperial collection and on display at Sannomaru Shozokan in Tokyo. In order to elaborate his intention, in 1942 Yokoyama wrote a newspaper article entitled 'The Spirit of Fuji' in which he explained his intention to combine Mount Fuji, the imperial system and war. Actually Yokoyama would become the most prolific painter of Mt. Fuji during the war, but intriguingly never painted the mountain from firsthand observation, feeling that the technique would disrupt his ultimate goal of spirituality.

Yokoyama Taikan, *Fuji no Tamashii* 'The Spirit of Mt. Fuji,' *Yomiuri shinbun*, February 15, 1942 in Ikeda Asato: *Envisioning Fascist Space, Time, And Body: Japanese Painting During the Fifteen-Year War (1931-1945)*, The University of British Columbia, 2012, p.241

panese army, then accelerated with the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, and was completed in 1940, when KONOE Fumimaro (1891-1945) proclaimed the New Order and introduced one-party politics. Accordingly the repression of free speech and artistic expression, accompanied by arrests of leading figures made any form of political opposition virtually impossible. With the Election Purification Movement *Senkyo shukusei undō* in 1935, the government transformed its role of a political mediator, representing the peoples will, to a political mobilizer in service to an emperor.⁶

At the same time, the Minister of Education, MATSUDA Genji (1875-1936) initiated an important cultural reform to revitalize the state-sponsored art exhibition, the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts Exhibition *teikoku bijutsu tenrankai* or *Teiten*.

The reform of the official Salon marked the beginning of a long process of centralization and control, by applying the politics of 'state control' to the art world. By compelling selection juries to include high officials and ensuring that all significant groups participated in the Salon, the limitation of all signs of the hedonism and excessive liberalism that characterized many artworks of the preceding period, paved the way for the system of official war art production of later years. This reform was a turning point through its state consolidation of the art communities and started a widely discussion about the reform which was described as a coup against the arts by the *Asahi shinbun* newspaper.

Negotiations proliferated and hundreds of articles on the subject appeared in the press until a consensus had been reached, when, in the autumn of 1937 some months after the beginning of the war with China, the first Nouveau Salon *Shin Bunten* opened. By infiltrating the juries and attracting some important figures from the independent movements, such as UMEHARA Ryozauro (1888-1986), the government managed to exert a significant influence on most of the artists, who then began to establish close links with the official, state organisations.

In response to the new policy, the military also sought the consolidation of the art community to keep it in step with the regime's militarist objectives. To underscore that ambition, art works were com-

6 Andrew Gordon: *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan*, Berkeley University of California Press, 1992, p.320

missioned and exhibited that emulated Kamakura-period paintings, depicting medieval scenes, and celebrating Japan's imperial family. Cultural activities that did not support the patriotic propaganda of the military-oriented government were suppressed. Artists suffered from the lack of art materials and daily needs or were sent to the front or to munitions factories if necessary.

Artists on the frontline

The official war documentary painting program *Sensō kirokuga*, which began in 1937 after the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese War and lasted until 1945, was intended to foster a fighting spirit among the Japanese people, as well as document the war with the help of renowned painters of the art community.⁷ Commissioned by the Imperial Army and Navy, these painters were designated as *jūgun-gaka* military-service painters or *hōdōhan'in* war correspondents dispatched to study and depict the war. Although they were sent to the front to observe the war, as they were not trained for military duties, they were not embedded in battles or otherwise exposed to the dangers of combat to create the paintings.⁸

7 The Army Art Association *Rikugun Bijutsu Kyōkai* formed in 1939 (initially established as the Association of War Artists of Imperial Japan, *Dai Nihon Jūgun Gaka Kyōkai* in April 1938 by a group of *yōga* painters who had returned from China together with the newspaper unit *Shinbunhan* of the army, which was the predecessor of the Press Division, which would become the central operator of the war painting program); the Navy Military-Service Artists Club founded in December 1940; the Greater Japan Marine Art Association *Dai-Nihon Kaiyō Bijutsu Kyōkai* in February 1941 (the former Association of Marine Art or *Kaiyō Bijutsukai* established in 1937) and the Greater Japan Aviation Art Association *Dai-Nihon Kōkū Bijutsu Kyōkai* in 1941. The same names conspicuously reappeared in the different associations, like Fujita, who collaborated with all three organizations. In March 1942, some *nihonga* artists founded the Nihonga Painters Patriotic Society *Nihongaka hōkokukai*, and following their example, the *yōga* painters group, Artists Federation *Bijutsuka renmei*, convened likewise in May 1942 to vote unanimously in favour of using their work to raise funds.

8 According to Kuroda Senkichiro, a member of the Army Press Division of the Imperial Headquarters, war documentary paintings can be divided into the following categories:

1. Works by painters dispatched by the Army Press Division of the Imperial Headquarters and the Press Division of the Army Ministry to Manchuria and China in the fall of 1940, and to Southeast Asia in the summer of 1942. The work was intended as an offering to the Kenchufu Hall in the Imperial Palace.
2. Works by painters dispatched by the army's Central China Division from 1937 to 1938.
3. Works by war correspondent painters organized by the army and navy in the southern Pacific.
4. Works by painters dispatched by the Army Press Division of the Imperial Headquarters to meet the needs of their campaigns. Also included is the work by unmustered painters who strongly desired to be dispatched.
5. Works by painters assisted by military units originating in their home prefectures.

Museum Collection Catalog: Watercolor, Calligraphy, Sculpture, Documentation, War Painting -Tokyo National Museum of Modern Art, 1992

For many their engagement compliant to the official ideology was rather a matter of survival to secure a place to work and a livelihood than to pursue new artistic possibilities. Whether they actively supported militarist ideology or not, many artists joined state sanctioned patriotic art organizations, and most pre-war leftist artists renounced their beliefs, a process known as conversion *tenkō*, to be allowed to earn a living with their talents. With the support of private corporations, notably the mass media, these works, which visualized the bravery and sacrifice of Japanese troops for the Emperor and the vision of Pan-Asianism, became a new kind of public art for the Japanese people. On canvases of monumental dimensions, both battles and military routines were depicted as icons of Japanese identity in a primarily figurative manner of Western realism. Bolstered by such slogans as 'Serving the Nation through Art' *saikan hōkoku*, over the course of the war, an increasingly large number of artists worked with and for the Imperial Army and Navy, the Government Information Bureau, and the Ministry of Education, to serve the nation by producing 'War Record Paintings' *sensō sakusen kirokuga*.

Prior, in June 1937 six *yōga* painters organized themselves as the 'Marine Art Group' *Kaiyō bijutsukai* and headed to China with the support of the Military Supply Division to document some of the oversea activities since the invasion in Manchuria.⁹

With the full outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, the military soon was overwhelmed by the rush of the large number of ambitious, patriotic painters who voluntarily began to travel to China, spurred on by the media coverage of the first Japanese military victories after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident on July 7, 1937.¹⁰

Seeking for some creative artistic opportunities abroad and with only minimal official support most of

9 The Japanese invasion of Manchuria began on 19 September 1931, when the Kwantung Army of the Empire of Japan invaded Manchuria immediately following the Mukden Incident on 18 September. After the war, the Japanese established the puppet state of Manchukuo. Their occupation lasted until the Soviet Union and Mongolia launched the Manchurian Strategic Offensive Operation in 1945.

10 Tsuruya identified further eight dispatches of artists in the war documentary painting program: May 1938 Army - 10 painters to China, September 1938 Navy - 6 painters to China, April 1940 Army - 12 painters to China, March-April 1942 Army - 16 painters to the South Pacific and Southeast Asia, May 1942 Navy -15 painters and 1 sculptor to the South Pacific, May 1943 Navy - 22 painters and 3 sculptors to the South Pacific, May 1943 Army - 25 painters and 1 sculptor to the South Pacific and Burma, 1944 Army - some of 30 to the South Pacific. Mayu Tsuruya: *Sensō Sakusen Kirokuga (War Campaign Documentary Painting): Japan's National Imagery of the 'Holy War,' 1937-1945*, University of Pittsburgh 2005, p.67 & p.80

them relied on their private financial resources or were granted assistance from some media publisher. At this time, by April 1939, as the *Asahi shinbun* reported, approximately two hundred artists had left for the battlefield in the spirit of 'Serving the Nation by Art' *saikan hōkoku*. The second dispatch of six painters bound for China by the Navy in September 1939, consisted of some of the most prolific artists of the day. FUJISHIMA Takeji (1867-1943), ISHII Hakutei (1882-1958), TORAJI Ishikawa (1875-1964), TANABE Itaru (1875-1964), FOUJITA Tsuguharu (1886-1968) and NAKAMURA Ken'ichi (1895-1967), described as doyen of the art community were sent to create some commemorative paintings of the 'China Incident.'¹¹

Also artists who would not travel, started to promote the slogan *saikan hōkoku* 'Serve the nation through art' at their exhibitions to raise funds for the military, which became a popular expression of patriotism routinely made on an individual or group basis. In order to gain control of this process, the military decided to channel this artistic enthusiasm for war by centralizing command to direct human and material resources more effectively toward the production of war art. Patriotic artists collectives were formulated with the army, the navy, and the air force, to manage the increasing number of artist volunteers and the popularity of privately organized war art exhibitions.

Formed in 1939, the 'Army Art Association' *Rikugun Bijutsu Kyōkai* became the main grouping, coordinating the very much needed artists, photographers, and directors, in part as a conduit for propaganda, in part to produce potentially commemorative work as *sensōga* war paintings.¹² Under the chairmanship of General MATSUI Iwane (1878-1948) and painter FUJISHIMA Takeji (1867 – 1943) as vice chairman, the association was formally independent, but in practice had to operate under the direct control of the 'Army Information Division' *Rikugunsho jōhabu*, which provided its financial support and determined its ideological orientation.¹³

11 *Asahi shinbun* September 28, 1938

12 In April 1939, the Great Japan Army Military-Service Painters Association shrank its membership from one hundred to seventy to improve artistic quality, and renamed itself the Army Art Association Rikugun bijutsu kyōkai.

13 Matsui was the commanding officer of the Japanese troops responsible for the 1937 Nanjing massacre. In 1948, during the Tokyo trials for the war crimes committed in Nanjing, he was charged, found guilty and finally executed in Sugamo Prison.

In part, the regulations are based on the art organisation of the Nazi regime, as the 'Handbook of the Reich Chamber of Culture' *Handbuch der Reichskulturkammer*, by Hans Hinkel (1901-1960). This was translated and discussed by art-critics KAMON Yasuo (1913-2007) and TOMINAGA Sōichirō (later Director of The National Museum of Western Art).¹⁴

Starting in 1940, the control of the artist groups fell largely to the office of Arts and Letters *bungei-ka* in the Cabinet Information Bureau *Naikaku jōhō-kyoku*, which oversaw officials from a number of ministries of the Interior, Army, and Navy. Furthermore, the bureau was central to the control of propaganda as to articulate their messages the government was initially much more interested in the mass media of the printed press, radio broadcasting, and films for their far-reaching effects than the visual medium of painting. To fulfil this task, the bureau as a whole supervised the membership of journalists, writers, artists and filmmakers to ensure that they acted in alignment with the specified nationalist ideology.

Composed of five divisions, the war art program was put in the culture division called *bunkabu*, resembling fine art, literature, music, and their activities. Within their task to steer artists towards war-related activities, and as artists belonging to these military affiliated groups had a greater access to resources that were controlled by the same, the culture division was able to attract renowned artists considered to be the luminaries of their generation. For those who got commissioned by the armed forces, it certainly offered a number of advantages. From risk-free travels in occupied territories, receiving supplies, participating in exhibitions that attracted hundreds of thousands of people, and disseminating their work widely through magazines or in the form of postcards. While such as the Army Art Association were not intended to function as an exhibition society, but an agency for propaganda production, several touring war art exhibitions with members of

Japan's military leaders and nationalist intellectuals certainly admired Nazi Germany's enforcement of a centralized policy that included the arts, but little on the subject of how Germany's war art program might have influenced Japan's has been revealed or studied.

14 Kamon Yasuo: *Natsu no bijutsu kikō - The Art Organization of the Nazi Regime*, Arusu Tokyo, 1941. The book discusses organizational charts and regulations concerning disciplines in the arts, based on Hans Hinkel: *Handbuch der Reichskulturkammer*. Tominaga Sōichirō, who provided source materials to Kamon for preparation of his book, also published a shorter article on the subject earlier, *Natsu Doitsu no bijutsu kikō 'The Art Organization of Nazi Germany'*, Mizue 1942.

military art organizations serving as jurors were organized similar to the ministry's salon.

On display not only in Japan, the campaign record paintings were displayed as exhibition 'highlights' all over in the colonies like Manchuko, Taiwan, and the Northern part of China, to promote the imperial idea. Supported by extensive media coverage, as the direct sponsorship by the Asahi newspaper company, the published and reproduced paintings in articles generated large audiences and interest for the artists, respectively.

This would ensure a relative secured life for some of the established artist, who were primarily *yōga* painters, such as Nakamura Ken'ichi, KOISO Ryōhei (1903-1988), as well as Fujita Tsuguharu, Ishii Hakutei, IHARA Usaburō (1894-1976), and Miyamoto Saburō (1905-1974). But also many *nihonga* painters like YOSHIOKA Kenji (1906-1990) and Taikan Yokoyama collaborated with the Army Art Association, demonstrating that both disciplines were directly mobilized. Although a few Japanese-style painters such as DŌMOTO Inshō (1891-1975) and KAWABATA Ryūshi (1885-1966) painted contemporary battles and soldiers, most focused on historical figures, religious icons, or natural landscapes that were associated with Japan's national identity.¹⁵

For selected modern artists those advantages abounded economically, including safe passage through Japanese occupied territory, participation in the well-attended war exhibitions, and wide reproduction of their work through mass media. Talented artists such as Fujita Tsuguharu, who agreed to document the war, were able to reap the profits of selling also their not war-related works for high prices due to their newfound Japanese-state-supported fame.

15 Compared with the 1929 edition of the Index of Contemporary Painters, when less than four fifth artists would be counted as *Yoga* Western painters, at the end of the war the list consisted of 1,020 names, with only 295 Japanese-style painters, 494 oil painters, 89 sculptors, and 142 categorized as applied arts.

From the 1946 Japan Art Year Book, cited in: Michael Lucken: Total Unity in the Mirror of Art, in Ikeda, McDonald, Tiampo: Art and War and its Empire 1931-1960, Brill, 2012, p.83

On the other hand, most younger artists and art students suffered art rationing, and by 1944, about 75% of the students at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts had been conscripted into the Japanese military not to be artists, but soldiers.

Tokyo Fine Arts during the War, Geijutsu shichō Tokyo, 1997. p.50 in Michael Lucken: Total Unity in the Mirror of Art, in Ikeda, McDonald, Tiampo: Art and War and its Empire 1931-1960, Brill, 2012, p.82

Traveling with combat troops, some three hundred artists, only a fraction of the total number of artists in Japan, worked for the military during this time, and only a relatively small number of them benefitted from military commissions. Obviously, it was the traditional style artists who suffered the most, while painters who were trained in Western technique and willing to work with the Japanese military were given advantages. But although the governmental Cabinet Information Bureau played a significant role, a large number of activities and projects were initiated by various local activists. Especially in the countryside, even some of the most resistant artists ended up participating in the war effort, such as Matsumoto Shunsuke, who engaged in projects to make propaganda posters, and YOSHIHARA Jirō (1905-1972) who created a number of anti-air-craft tarpaulins in 1943.¹⁶

Modern art in general faced a multiple paradox, being of central use for the means of war propaganda, and at the same time facing national promoted refusal against Western influence. Despite being exempt under the 'Ban on Production and Sale of Luxury Articles' issued in 1940, the shortage of art supply applied to a much greater number to traditional *nihonga* painters, which was based on the fact that *nihonga* was because of its lack of realism and its artistic tradition less likely to be a medium of illustrating the war.

With the introduction of the New Order in 1940 and an evolving Pacific War, the military established a new system along the lines of National Socialist Germany, in which the state would control almost every aspect of Japanese life, and art especially through its cultural associations.¹⁷ In the domain of art, with the endorsements of the Ministry of Education and the Cabinet Information Bureau, associations like the Patriotic Association of Japanese-Style Painters *Nihon gaka hōkokukai* and the Patriotic Association of Japanese Artists *Nihon bijutsu hōkokukai*, were

16 Bert Winther-Tamaki: Embodiment/Disembodiment: Japanese Painting During the Fifteen-Year War, Monumenta Nipponica Vol. 52 No. 2, Sophia University, Summer 1997, pp. 145-180

17 Under the New Order policy, the 'Imperial Rule Assistance Association' *Taisei yokusankai* was formed in October 1940, to organize all civilian patriotic groups, and extended its control networks throughout the system of neighbourhood units called *tonarigumi*, throughout all Japanese towns and villages. In December 1941 the government issued further regulations to limit freedom of speech, tighten official control over the media, and restrict the civilian right of assembly. The art press was accordingly reorganized, and thirty-eight magazines published in the capital of Tokyo were all dissolved, and eight new magazines were established.

founded in 1941 and 1943 respectively, to support the state.¹⁸ Almost everyone in their respective fields became a member of such organizations as art materials could only be obtained through these state-sanctioned organizations, and thereby those who did not obey state authorities were not able to access them. Faced with these serious shortages, participation in the war effort and demonstrating a pro-war stance through organizing patriotic exhibitions and donating works to military facilities became the most promising means to acquire materials.

Under the supervision of the Propaganda Department at the *Taisei Yokusankai* Imperial Rule Assistance Association, led by Germanist TAKAHASHI Kenji (1902-1998), numerous art associations were founded from January 1943 onwards, modelled on the various professional groups in Germany. This was done to better meet the demands of propaganda by linking individuals in certain cases.¹⁹

Unlike Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, where artist communities were organized early into state controlled syndicates, the Japanese government did not systematically force professionals into their ranks, and it was still possible for artists not to collaborate directly without retaliation and demonstrate their pro-war stance within the field of conventional exhibition societies. This started to change when the *Nihon bijutsu hōkokukai* 'Patriotic Society of Japanese Art', founded on May 18, 1943 under the chairmanship of *Nihonga* painter Taikan Yokoyama was established and accordingly to the consolidation of the society the members agreed to set up an administrative division, the *Nihon bijutsu oyobi kōgei tōsei kyōkai* 'Japan Regulatory Association of Art and Crafts.' Known as *Bitō*, it was meant to oversee the distribution of art supplies.

Participation in the patriotic artists' collectives was not compulsory, but with the exclusive control of the supply of art materials in 1944, the introduction of a

certification system for artists and artisans, and the establishment of guidelines for the grading and pricing of their works, most artists had no choice but to join this new form of relationship between artist and state.²⁰ On September 28, 1944 the *Bijutsu tenrankai toriatsukai yōkō* 'Guidelines of the Management of Art Exhibitions' were issued by the Cabinet Information Bureau. The Patriotic Society of Japanese Art took over the control of all exhibition activity, which led to closure of most other activities than those sponsored by the state.

The government also suspended the annual Ministry of Education Art Exhibition, which had kept its doors open to artists throughout the war years, replacing the *Bunten* with a special wartime version of the exhibition to show war documentary paintings.

Bringing the consolidation of the art world to near completion, almost all private activities finally ended with the creation of the 'Corps of Volunteer Combatants' *Kokumin giyū-tai* in the spring of 1945, when all citizens were casted in an equal role of serving the remaining war effort.

How to paint Heroic

After the outbreak of the Pacific War, however, the military, which was not equipped with any consistent artistic preference or sophisticated aesthetic theory, began to express more definite artistic preferences. Based on what they perceived effective for propaganda visuals, members of war artists collectives were required to depict conflicts accurately and to convey a sense of reality in the finished works.

The military also wanted a lasting record, in terms of both, transcendent artistic values and durability of art materials. In the 'Illustrated Journal of the Great East Asia War: Southern Campaign,' published by the Army Art Association for the general public on September 15, 1942, three fundamentals for an ideal war documentary painting *sensōga* were listed: (1) realism *shajitsu*, (2) group composition of figures, and (3) facility with drawing. The 'realistic' treatment of war themes was considered preferable to abstract or surreal representations, and furthermore war imagery should embrace martial ideology and offer engrossing content.

²⁰ With the 'Army Information Division' *Rikugunsho johabu* in charge of cultural matters from 1939 onwards, in a way artists were forced to register in order to receive any kind of art supplies and accordingly money if creating works that supported the war.

¹⁸ Yokoyama Taikan became president of the association.

The Navy Military-Service Artists Club was founded in December 1940, the Marine Art Group expanded to become the Great Japan Marine Art Association with a larger membership in February 1941.

¹⁹ He was renowned Germanist and translator especially of the works of Hermann Hesse and Erich Kästner. When Takahashi headed the propaganda department of Taisei Yokusankai, as part of his work for the society he also made Nazi literature known in Japan by publishing various writings, such as literature and culture reviews and essays.

Naoji Kimura: Der ost-westliche Goethe: deutsche Sprachkultur in Japan. In: Deutsch Ostasiatische Studien zur interkulturellen Literaturwissenschaft. Band 2. Peter Lang AG, 2006

Because of these requirements, Western style painting *yōga*, a term that was replaced by the more neutral *abura-e* (oil painting), of all things was considered particularly suitable for delivering convincing images of a war, as to the technical possibilities of oil on canvas painting, which makes it possible to depict bodies plastically and even simulate haptic surface textures down to the last detail.

Despite ideological reservations during a war that was fought to remove the Western powers from Asia, oil was for pragmatical reasons the given material for natural representations and was accepted as such. In the need for accuracy of details such as the weaponry used in the battle, the troops visible in the scene, and the geographical features, for military reasons the documentary quality was emphasized over the artistic one. Which was contradicted by art-critics, who thought that it would be a shame for painters to have their work simply compared with photographic representation.

In addition to sheer documentation, raising the morale of the Japanese people was another aim of the army, for exposing the public to war pictures. Technically, the representation of the military strength, promoted at several exhibitions, required monumentality accordingly to the propagated actions and spirit. Therefore the military requested campaign record paintings to measure around two meters square, which was an unusually large size for Japanese oil paintings in the first half of the twentieth century, and not easy to handle.

In fact, French painting from the early nineteenth century served as an important model for many of the Japanese war painters. For example, one of the most challenging parts of interpreting the classical Western heroic war paintings was the method of creating multi-figure compositions perspectively correct. A genre rarely produced in Japan before that time. With the need to choose a concrete theme as subject of matter to educate people about the ongoing war, the formerly tendencies of anti-realism and stylization that also characterized the modern Japanese prewar art-world became now irrelevant and instead Western templates from the early nineteenth century assumed great significance.

In Japanese exhibitions, the actual privation of war in terms of the front-line soldiers themselves and

their brave fight was emphasized in paintings.

Unlike in Nazi Germany's war paintings, with depicting soldierly courage in the focus of attention, the Japanese army expected that the representation of military service hardships would intensify homeland civilians' gratitude and strengthen their sense of public duty. Other than generating a sense of pity and guilt, the display of war paintings became a ritual that promoted state Shinto and validated their existence as spiritual artwork. In presentations such as the 'Holy War Art Exhibitions' the works were marketed as being viewed and inspected by the emperor, empress, or other imperial family members prior to public display.²¹ This promotion increased not only the importance of these paintings but also viewing the works in person became a great honour and an act of worshipping. More than serving as monuments of soldiers sacrifice, the paintings became a kind of iconography of Japanese militarism, less due their stylistic technique but rather due the method of display as auratic objects.

Being utilized to further the pro-militarist and pro-emperor narrative of the war, works of art with a different attitude were used by the army to emphasize a lofty image of the imperial forces to its Asian neighbours. Opposing the depiction of hardships, paintings which described the defeat of Western powers became an important mechanism for indoctrinating the colonial audience.

Unlike the Western fascist ideal, leaning on Greco-Roman classical art with perfectly proportioned, muscular, idealized body the Japanese War Campaign Record Paintings displayed a certain paradox. In spite of all reservations against Western methods of representation, the medium of oil painting was considered appropriate for battle paintings because its obvious advantages in creating an image of certain intention to bias the observer.

This view of Western art in Japan dates back to the 17th century, when the illustrations of Dutch sciences were presented as spectacles at fairs.

²¹ The first *Dainikai Seisen Bijutsu Tenrankai* was in July 1939, the second in July 1941. The Fifth Great Japan Marine Art Exhibition in June 1941, the First Great East Asia War Art Exhibition in December 1942, the Seventh Great Japan Marine Art Exhibition in May 1943, the National Total War Art Exhibition in September 1943, the Second Great East Asia War Art Exhibition in December 1943, the Second Army Art Exhibition in March 1944, the War Time Special Ministry of Education Art Exhibition in November 1944 and the War Documentary Painting Exhibition in March 1945, featuring not less than 20 army sponsored *yōga* and 3 *nihonga* paintings.

And later in the end of the 20th century when oil-painting was used in panorama battle scenes to perplex and impress the public, Western art became the 'fake media' of the day.

The Japanese propaganda paintings, other than their Western counterparts, mostly undervalued the individual bodies, avoiding a particularly strong, masculine, or virile physicality. Instead of idealizing the bodies of Japanese soldiers, they create in the disembodiment of individuality the idea of the *koku-tai*, of Japan's collective, national body.

As far as the paintings were intended to record the military accomplishments of the Imperial troops overseas, they never depicted the Commander in Chief, the emperor as the embodiment of the nation. Being the sovereign of Japan and the direct descendent of the goddess, the distribution of his images was severely limited by government regulation since the middle of the Meiji era.

Rather than being visualized in a modern painting, the concept of the emperor at the center and the accompanying moral codes had been integrated in the minds of the Japanese people since the constitution of modern Japan. The nation was modelled as one big family, with the emperor transcending above spiritually and symbolically ubiquitous as the supreme protector. The paintings featured therefore the soldiers as loyal subjects, portrayed as faithfully engaged in their duties and representing the consensual social scheme.

With no individuality to stand out, which was equated to Western culture and noted as a threat to advance a united nation, soldiers rarely showed exaggerated facial expressions of empathic or dramatic action. Those personal qualities of inconspicuousness and unobtrusiveness root deep in Confucian values for submission where even legendary heroes and beloved historic figures ought to be rewarded enough by the fulfilment of duty alone.

On the other hand a less pathetic and simple explanation even for metropolitan standards of modern Japan was, the sheer lack of the training that *yōga* painters received at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts. For most artists, still at a mediocre level of skills necessary for composing a complex picture with multiple figures, the depiction of vigorous movements was not possible to create sufficiently.

Prolific Painters of War

Although the Military Information Bureau never had a shortage of new talent to work with, because of the specific techniques required, the most prolific war painters were those, such as Miyamoto Saburō and Fujita Tsuguharu, who were trained in Europe.²²

Forced to leave due to the outbreak of World War II in 1939, Miyamoto and Fujita who came back to Japan, shared a long-standing interest in the classical academic paintings that they had experienced in Europe. Confronted with the new restrictive working situation, both perceived the military's guidelines to create rather old-fashioned realism paired with the demand for monumental-sized painting as something of an artistic opportunity to establish themselves at home.

Soon after his arrival in Japan, Miyamoto was sent to north China in 1940 to produce a campaign record painting which was accordingly entitled 'Attack on Nanyuan, Beijing.' Documenting the friction between Chinese and Japanese soldiers in the painting, it clearly referred in its composition to Delacroix's 'Liberty Leading the People,' of 1830.²³ Depicting one soldier in the center, proudly carrying the Japanese flag into battle, Miyamoto used in the painting (176.7 x 255 cm) intense facial expressions to the Japanese soldiers that he portrayed as noble sacrifices.

However, it was displayed in the Second Holy War Art Exhibition in 1941, and was such a success that Miyamoto was further commissioned to produce another painting. 'Meeting of General Yamashita and General Percival,' became his landmark campaign record painting when displayed at the First Greater East Asian War Art Exhibition of 1942.²⁴ On the theme of the surrender of Singapore, it depicts the conference between the Japanese and British milit-

22 Koiso Ryōhei (1903-1988) studied at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière de Paris, Ihara studied in Paris between 1925 and 1929 and discussed cubism as a leading voice in Japan until 1937. T. Omuka: The Reputation of Cubism in 1930s Japan, Modernism, Academism and America, In: Yasuko Furuichi eds.: Cubism in Asia; Unbounded Dialogues, International Symposium Report. Tokyo, 2006

23 Miyamoto Saburo, called himself a 'fanatic of classicism' when in Paris during 1938-1939, and expressed little interest in contemporary work. Instead he spent his time copying Renaissance and neoclassical paintings such as those of Jacques-Louis David and Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres in the Louvre, until forced to leave Europe at the outbreak of World War II.

24 Miyamoto Saburo: The Meeting of General Yamashita and General Percival. 1942. Oil on canvas. 180.7 cm x 225.5 cm. Collection of The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo

Nihon bijutsu zenshu. Tokyo : Kodansha, 1990, v.23 color plate 61. N7350 .N47 1990 v.23

ary leaders that led to the surrender of over 100,000 British and Empire troops. In a quite propagandistic manner, the room in the painting is tilted to symbolically elevate the line of Japanese officers high above their British counterparts, who appear to cower on the other side of the conference table.

Fujita Tsuguharu traveled to Manchuria in 1940 to the site of the battle between the Japanese and the Soviet armies that had taken place the previous summer, but also sketched modelling soldiers in the garden of his Tokyo studio for his paintings.

In general, as far as these and other investigations legitimized the paintings as historical records, most painters would not witness directly the depicted scenes. Useful as propaganda, but as documentary evidence their pictorial impressions often contradict accounts supplied by war historians.²⁵

Like Fujita's large oil-on-canvas war scene of 'Battle on the Bank of the Haluha, Nomonhan,' 1941 (140 x 448 cm), actually a defeat for the Japanese army, which was composed as a tableau vivant evoking the image and cultural memory of a celebrated victory of centuries past.

Choosing a perspective that put viewers in the seat of an airplane with the pilot and looking down on, Fujita created the painting 'Pearl Harbor on 8 December 1941' (161 x 260 cm), that embodied a persuasively vivid image of imperial superiority within the aesthetic and ideological stipulation.

Produced by consulting news photographs or films, the painting depicted in its naturalistic rendering a spectacle of destruction that gained great admiration when it appeared in 1942 at the Great East Asia War Art Exhibition.

In 1943, Fujita painted within two weeks in August his wartime masterpiece, 'Final Fighting on Attu' (193.5 x 259.5 cm), one of the rare documentations when imperial and enemy soldiers were shown in close combat. The battle over the remote Aleutian Island took place in May 1943, when the outnumbered Japanese soldiers threw their bare bodies in the first recorded mass suicide against the attacking Americans. Out of roughly 2,900 Japanese soldiers only a little fraction was taken hostage, which became the first national tragedy of several horrific losses called *gyokusai* 'shattered jewels.'

Fujita portrayed this desperate fight of profound spiritual significance in a most violent scene by filling the canvas with the mingling bodies of soldiers from both sides, dead and alive. A chaotic brown mass of mingling bodies of soldiers barely distinguishable, and slashing each other, emerge out of the mound in the foreground and form an abstract pattern like a mountain landscape. The faces of the Japanese soldiers reflect in a wide variety of theatrical gestures determination and fierceness and dominate the scene against notably vacuous Americans, in a form of realism that veers toward expressionistic exaggeration.²⁶

With Nakamura Ken'ichi's 'Kota Baru,' 1942 and Miyamoto Saburō's 'Fierce Fighting near Nicholson, Hong Kong' *Honkon nikoruson fukin no gekisen*, 1942, it was the first, of others to follow, that would present the countenances of imperial troops, frontally at close range with some clarity in facial expression.²⁷ Also it broke with the explicit lack of showing the enemy, which remained largely impersonal or absent from most propaganda paintings and film documentations featuring combat.²⁸

However, the glorification of martyrdom in oil on canvas clearly agreed with the rhetoric that sacrificing a life for Japan and the emperor would be acknowledged as a worthy dead. Painted in a rush of approximately fourteen days, the work was presented at the 'Art exhibition of the Decisive Battle of the Nation' *Kokumin sōryoku kessen bijutsu-ten*, in September. With its technical method of dense composition, borrowed from the European war paintings

26 Fujita repeated this form of combat composition in works like 'Desperate Struggle of a Unit in New Guinea' *Aru butai no sitō-Nyūginia sensen*, 1943 and 'Fierce Fighting on Guadalcanal' *Kessen Gadarukanaru*, 1944.

The process in which Western-style norms of appearance increasingly penetrated Japanese visual conventions started with some *yōga* artists returning from Europe in the early twentieth century. The popularization of these Westernised Japanese figures meant that the representative images of Japanese bodies in *yōga* painting increasingly deviated from actual Japanese bodies, who lacked any flavour of ancient Greece models. One example of overcoming this sense of incongruence is the painting South Wind *Nanpu*, 1907 (151.5 x 182.4 cm) by Wada Sanzō (1883-1967), one of Kuroda Seiki's students. In the first Ministry of Education Fine Arts Exhibition *Monbusho bijutsu tenrankai*, or *Buntan* in 1907, he won a prize with his depiction of a Japanese fisherman both realistically and modelled as though a statue of Laocoon. National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo

27 Others are *Deadly Battle in New Guinea*, 1943 by Satō Kei (1906-1978), and *Desperate Fighting of Ōtsu Unit*, 1944 on Saipan by Hashimoto Yaoji (1903-1979).

28 Other than Nazi Germany, the invasion of foreign territories was also a unifying mission under the Japanese umbrella. This made it difficult for the artists and the public to despise the enemy or legitimize the Japanese soldiers' sacrifice. At least until the US Americans would be visualized as the hostile Other.

25 Bert Winther-Tamaki: Embodiment/Disembodiment: Japanese Painting During the Fifteen-Year War, *Monumenta Nipponica* Vol. 52 No. 2, Sophia University, Summer 1997, p.152

some centuries ago, which may have had the same enlightening effect at the people of those times, the sacral force of the compelling scene depicted by the effective use of foreshortening, made the spectator feel of being involved in the combat, rather than simply observing the scene.

At its first presentation, civilians and veterans alike were moved in an unprecedented response, weeping, kneeling and praying in front of the painting as it became a secular icon, with a box mounted aside to collect money for the military efforts. Buttressed by the plaudits, the painting morphed into a modern version of an antique sacred object that provides a physical dwelling place and allows the spirits of the deified war dead to literally reside in the painting.

Despite its display of excessive violence, this memorable portrayal of soldiers was absolute in line with the ideology that came to prominence in the end of the war. A propaganda that actively promoted the image of Japanese people's suffering and a military strategy that birthed the Kamikaze and Kaiten pilots.

Therefore the army distributed to its commissioned painters a definition about the true conditions of war in terms of 'how the front-line soldiers were enduring hardships and privations, and how bravely they were fighting.'²⁹

In the course of the war, with increasing defeats, propaganda veered from the idealized representation of war participants to a focus on physical exertion and bodily harm. Artists like Fujita were convinced that their paintings would go hand in hand with the principles of war propaganda and express the divine destiny of the imperial army.

The sacrifices were considered as compliant with a general ideology of purification and spiritualisation, while disembodiment became an exit strategy to the pursuit of a mere metaphysical triumph, when an actual victory was more and more unlikely.

The fierce fighting and death depicted in Fujita's painting was not intended to have a demoralizing effect but instead echoed the mass media reports about the cruel nature of the Americans, and therefore legitimized Japan's violence against them and called for revenge.

Other than Fujita, a kind of bohemian, KAWABATA Ryūshi (1885-1966), was a reformist and founder of the Blue Dragon Society *Seiryūsha* in 1929, who had a clear vision of social art for a larger audience. Inspired by his studies and his residence in Boston, Massachusetts, he focused on the importance of the public masses as an actor in civil society.

His concept of exhibition-hall art focused on large size art works to be presented in accordingly large spaces and an audience largely drawn from the working class. On the pivot where Marxist notions of class ownership meets, he promoted a philosophy of 'art for the common run,' that also fits the aperture of fascism as it was framed among intellectuals in Japan of the 1930s. However, he opposed the kind of art that had been exclusively sponsored and owned by the elite, and being one of the few *nihonga* artists who engaged in large scale wartime paintings, Kawabata argued on behalf of the public display of artworks in large spaces as manifestation of modernity for the great mass of common people.

For most of his colleagues his populist art of the type he championed was simply inconceivable within *nihonga*. Uncompromising by nature, he was a close friend to Taikan Yokoyama, with whom he was on a par with in terms of nationalist sympathies, but would not unilateral support his politics of cultural unification for national purity.

Nevertheless, his yearly Blue Dragon shows, where he presented his spectacle like large scale paintings, remained independent of Academy and government control due his engagement for the military art program. Between 1934 and 1942 he traveled six times to war zones, more than any other *nihonga* painter. 1942 he was selected as one of seven that were sent to the Pacific to cover the war front, together with Fujita Tsuguharu, Nakamura Ken'ichi, Miyamoto Saburo, and Koiso Ryōhei, who represented the yoga category of artists, and *nihonga* painters YASUDA Yukihiko (1884-1974) and FUKUDA Toyoshirō (1904-1970). Their works were later exhibited at Hirohito's palace and then at the Tokyo Ueno Museum in a show entitled 'Art and the Greater East Asia War.'

Between 1937 and 1945 Kawabata painted and exhibited eight 'spectacles' about the war, prepared in two sets of four paintings each, and never showed a battle scene, no war records, not even a soldier. Al-

29 Sasaki: 'Daitōa sensō kirokuga, p.182 in Mayu Tsuruya: Socialist Realism in the War Art of Imperial Japan, in Ikeda, McDonald, Tiampo: Art and War and its Empire 1931-1960, Brill, 2012, p.74

legories of war, the paintings still related to his trips to different war zones and entrenched a symbology of Japan as imperium.³⁰ Without respite, he painted even as the bombs fell on Tokyo in March 1945, and exhibited as sole nihonga painter until the summer of Japan's surrender. His wartime works, which despite his non-conformist ambitions and popularity with art critics are best described as spectacles due to his unusual blending of elements from the vocabulary of the Nihonga and the Yōga, ended up as conformist representations, offering viewers pleasurable images to which they could consent.

In this interplay of war and fascism his art work landed in an utilitarian impasse that came short of his original agenda, but was successful by helping to make civilians to active agents of wartime ideology.

Promoting the War to the People

In summer of 1939 *Daiikkai seisen bijutsu tenrankai* 'The First Holy War Art Exhibition' in the Tokyo Prefecture Museum, sponsored by the Army Art Association and the *Asahi* newspaper, opened. The first major war art exhibition presented the output of the project undertaken by the local office of the Army Information Bureau in Shanghai one year earlier. Organized by the army, they recruited ten painters, including Nakamura Ken'ichi and Koiso Ryōhei, with most of whom had already been to the war-zone to record the Japanese military campaigns in Shanghai and nearby areas.

The artists had the opportunity to sketch for six weeks in May and June of 1938 on location, and later turned the works into formal paintings to be displayed with around 300 other paintings at the most prestigious public exhibition space in Tokyo between July 6 and 23.³¹ Attracting a public curious about the war, some of the paintings, as produced by amateurs and soldiers from the front-line, lacked quality and therefore at the upcoming exhibitions the quantity was decreased and artistic quality increased.

30 A former painting *Conquerors of the Sea Kaiyō wo seisuru mono*, 1936 (189 x 454 cm) endorsed Japan's ambition to become a greater naval power by portraying factory workers building a battleship. Ryūshi Memorial Museum, Tokyo

31 Kawabata Ryūshi and Tsuruta Gorō went to Northern China with the army in the same month, and other artists including Fujishima Takeji and Fujita Tsuguharu followed the Navy in September. *Shōwa no bijutsu - Art of the Showa Period*, Niigata, Japan: Niigata Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, 2005, p.188-189 in Asato Ikeda: *Envisioning Fascist Space, Time, and Body: Japanese Painting During the Fifteen-Year War (1931-1945)*, The University of British Columbia, 2012

One of these exhibitions, sponsored jointly by the army and navy, was the celebration of the first anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack in the end of 1942. The 'First Great East Asia War Art Exhibition' *Dai'ikkai daitōa sensō bijutsu tenrankai* featured twenty-three paintings by army-commissioned artists and sixteen works by navy-dispatched painters, with the works widely reproduced and published in mass media, such as newspapers and postcards.

Totalling 314 works, the largest exhibition of such paintings to appear together travelled later to Osaka and Nagoya accompanied by excessive media coverage. With an approximate experience of twenty years in promoting and organizing exhibitions, the nationally circulated daily *Asahi* newspaper, was a perfect media partner of these military war art presentations. Japanese people were welcoming with enthusiasm the news of imperial victories in Southeast Asia and the Military war-art shows serviced the visual imagination of such large audiences, as a total of some 3.85 million visitors for this one in 1942. As an early proponent of modernism, the newspaper, like all major media, exerted a far-reaching influence on society, absorbing the artistic community into the army of war supporters by regularly providing enlightening information about the works and artists. The description of a community close together behind the emperor and one common goal was the main propaganda parole in the media and in the embodiment of the art works.

With the excessive crowds of visitors to the multiple exhibitions, the *sensōga* 'war-paintings' managed to funnel the peoples resistance and willingness to sacrifice by victimising themselves and embody an ideological scenography for the war. In this way, the exhibition of war-paintings was intended to inform people about the ongoing war and improve their understanding of the experiences of their fellow citizens on the front to further strengthen the people's sense of duty. The paradox of *sensōga* war-paintings, unfolded not only in its use of oil on canvas and Western style technique, although it was meant to give expression to patriotic sentiment in its support of a war fought to remove Western powers and influences.³²

32 The educational value of history painting impressed Japanese intellectuals and politicians at first site early as encountering European museums at the Iwakura mission 1871-1873.

With this new genre, somehow a form of educational history painting in a broader sense, the methods of Western fine art started to overlap with modern mass media, becoming in the also Western derivative of public exhibitions a spectacle and advertisement to promote traditional Japanese values.

Furthermore the utilitarian use of art as a tool to communicate certain visions to large audiences was implemented in Japanese society in the late 1920s with the rise of the short lived proletarian art movement. Japanese artists, internationally connected, strove to use art as a means of uniting workers by depicting them in large formatted group figure composition, showing their daily struggles at work and on strike. At a time when the international trend of modernism poured toward abstraction, proletarian artists rediscovered the usefulness of pictorial realism as a simpler visual language accessible to the masses. They believed that art had to be clear and comprehensible to ordinary people in order to unfold its potential in propaganda and agitation.

The large format of these paintings and the mural form of public presentation was regarded as an ideal format both visually and ideologically in contrast to the tradition of framed pictures, which had historically served the privileged mercantile capitalists and as a personal pleasure for the bourgeoisie.

Nevertheless, the large format group compositions challenged the skills of Japanese oil painters, which was not only a shortage of training and education but also one of working opportunity, as common residential architecture did not provide such studio space easily. Many of the works were criticized due a deficiency of expression and technical expertise and would not achieve recognizable artistic value.³³

Many artists who enforced the movement came under scrutiny when the political climate changed after the Manchurian incident in 1931.³⁴ Nevertheless, the public effect of mural painting did not pass unnoticed, and with economically demand the public display of commercial spaces such as cafés and department stores became a new working environment for painters.

33 Tsuda Seifū: The pros and cons of the proletarian art movement and the universality of arts, Atelier 7, No 9, September 1930, p.104 in Mayu Tsuruya: Socialist Realism in the War Art of Imperial Japan, in Ikeda, McDonald, Tiampo: Art and War and its Empire 1931-1960, Brill, 2012, p.63

34 The Special Higher Police *Tokubetsu Kōtō Keisatsu*, known as *Tokkō* and referred to as the 'Thought Police' raided in mass arrests thousand of suspects from the late 1920a to the early 1930s.

Fujita became a central figure in mural painting, despite he never joined the proletarian movement, when he returned to Japan in 1933.³⁵

Other than the *sensōga* war-paintings, that were exhibited at large salons and attended by the emperor or his family members and in combination with extensive media coverage attracted large numbers of visitors, also non-state funded exhibitions presented artworks to support the military and imperial household. In no less a patriotic gesture, but without an educational approach of the military actions abroad, paintings of mostly traditional styles functioned as *Kennōga-te* 'donated art', to raise funds.

Both, Japanese-style *nihonga* as well as Western-style *yōga* painters organized *kennō-ga ten* 'offering-painting expositions' at department stores like Matsuzakaya and Matsuya, and donated the revenues to the military. Only a very small group of artist would avoid to get involved in any form of war supportive art production, or could afford such move.

For young artists it was a simple choice of being enlisted as soldier or artist and for most of the alumni who wanted to continue their artistic work, especially in the later years, it was no question of talent, rather than of military need. Those for whom recruitment was out of the question could not even easily organise basic working materials, as distribution was strictly regulated. Some of the resistant artists, who were not arrested for some reason, and to old to join the military, choose a form of internal emigration.

In his 1938 speech to the Hitler Youth group, Taikan Yokoyama referred to *shin taisei* 'New Order' as a essential principles of art in a more strictly controlled body politic. As part of the centralised cultural policy, his activism demanded that all painters submit equally to wartime authority, regardless of the style or subject of their painting. This call for a 'New Embodiment' by Taikan, was again subject of a symposium and published in the well-known art magazine *Mizue* in 1941.

35 He composed his first mural works in Paris in 1929 and later encountered some works of Diego Rivera (1886-1957) and others when travelling South and Middle America. He served as advisor to the Japan Mural Association *Nihon hekiga kyōkai*, established in October 1936.

Mayu Tsuruya: Socialist Realism in the War Art of Imperial Japan, in Ikeda, McDonald, Tiampo: Art and War and its Empire 1931-1960, Brill, 2012, p.63

Titled 'The National Defence State and Art, What Should the Painter Do?', the participants discussed how, until then, artists worked within the capitalist commercial system and were unaware of their own ethnicity.³⁶ They concurred, that Japanese art had become a colony of French art, producing works with 'triangles and circles' that even the mentally ill could draw. Major SUZUKI Kurazō (1894-1964) from the Cabinet Information Bureau, invoked the necessity of a tightly unified art to render the individual bodies into the scheme of *shin taisei* and *kokutai*.

In his mind, the uniforming process should configure individuals from all sides, communism and liberalism along, into the totalitarian system in which all the people are the emperor's children. Even more explicitly, he threatened artists that the state would not provide art supplies to those who did not comply, and otherwise should leave the country.

Only a month later, in a February essay appearing in the same magazine, surrealist TAKIGUCHI Shūzō (1903-1979) responded to the comments by discussing a kind of dissatisfaction over the 'immaturity' of the new art-world structure and governmental purpose of establishing a spirit of national defence.

He negated the claim that modern art was entirely informed by developments in France, instead implied an international flow of ideas, which also would connect the efforts of the Japanese avant-garde to a greater European movement.

The same magazine, *Mizue* published in April an open protest against the militarist views of art by MATSUMOTO Shunsuke (1912-1948), one of the group's leaders and great admirer of George Rouault (1871-1958) and Georg Grosz (1893-1959).

In the rebuttal *Ikiteiru gaka* 'The Living Artist' joining the panel discussion, Matsumoto, one of the

very few artists who found themselves at odds with the military regime, took exception to General Suzuki's call to threaten artists' self-expression and creative freedom and to submit to imposed ideology. Conform with his nationalist tendencies, Matsumoto in contrast demanded to become an active part of the nation's current situation.³⁷

Against the demanded conformism he argued for artistic freedom, what he called a Japanese ideal and also defended the modern tradition of Japanese oil-painting from charges of being a 'French colony.' Being deaf from the age of thirteen, which exempted him from conscription and on a sideline position in society, his disability may have allowed him to maintain his critical distance unharmed from the mainstream militant ideology and culture.³⁸

Published at a time when the military was tightening its grip on society, the statement enhanced the appearance of protest in Matsumoto's self-portrait as the assertive presentation of his body can be interpreted as a defiant gesture. Painting a large number of self-portraits and cityscapes during the war, in 1943 despite all the hardship, he formed the 'New People's Painting Association' *Shinjin Gakai* with seven yoga painters starting with Ai Mitsu (1907-1946), Aso Saburo (1913-2000), and Terada Masaaki (1912-1989). Open resistance against the state was rare, but in a subversive way the group concentrated on self-portraits depicting solitary young men peering slightly elevated out of their framed canvas, avoiding eye-contact and symbolizing that the artist should remain passive to imposed ideology by getting out of harm's way.³⁹

They ventured during the war in considerable persistence against institutional disfavour and continued to work independently in an oppressive environment. The group even organized three exhibitions until this ended in September 1944, when the Army Information Office completely banned unauthorized exhibitions unless they were organized or directed by the Patriotic Society for Japanese Art.

36 It is interesting to note how, even in art magazines like *Mizue*, members of the military were now becoming increasingly engaged in cultural debates about the role of artists during wartime. The participants included three officials from the Army Information Bureau, Akiyama Kunio, Suzuki Kurazō (1894-1964), and Kuroda Senkichirō, art critic Araki Sueo, and magazine editor Kamigōri Suguru. During the discussion, Major Akiyama Kunio defined War Campaign Record Paintings as significant historical for the purpose of recording and preserving the military's war campaign forever. Art critic Araki Sueo (b.1894) maintained that philosophy could be used to support the nation, but believed that when culture became ideology, it ultimately harmed artists. Major Suzuki Kurazō argued that culture and art were necessary for the development of the nation, especially for national defence. p.129ff *Kokubō kokka to bijutsu: shoka wa nani o subekika* [National Defense State and the Fine Arts: What Should Artists Do Now?, *Mizue*, January 1941, p.130

Annika A. Culver: *Glorify the Empire: Japanese Avant-Garde Propaganda in Manchukuo*, UBC Press, 2013, p.91ff

37 Mark H. Sandler: *The Living Artist: Matsumoto Shunsuke's Reply to the State*, *Art Journal* 55.3 Autumn, 1996

38 Kaneko Maki: *Mirroring the Japanese Empire*, Brill Japanese Visual Culture, Band: 14, 2016, p.91

39 Bert Winther-Tamaki: *Embodiment/Disembodiment: Japanese Painting During the Fifteen-Year War*, *Monumenta Nipponica* Vol. 52 No. 2, Sophia University, Summer 1997, p.167

Despite the state imposed a high degree of control over artistic activities, some independent art groups continued to exist during the war. As for example, the surrealist groups *Bijutsu Bunka Kyōkai* and *Shinjin Gakai*, founded in 1939 and 1943 respectively.

In the end, despite his criticism of the authorities views of art, Matsumoto produced in line of the military propaganda a painting of soldiers and several propaganda posters.⁴⁰ The same applies in the case of Fukuzawa Ichirō who was one of the leaders of Japanese surrealism. Together with writer Takiguchi Shūzō, both leaders of the Art and Culture Association *Bifiasu bunko kokai*, he was sent to prison in April 1941, and finished the War Campaign Record Painting 'Special Unit Ship Leaves the Base,' in 1945, which is now stored in the war art collection at the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo.⁴¹

Collective Productivity

From *nihonga* to *yoga*, rather Taikan's paintings of Mt. Fuji or Fujita's *gyokusai* 'Shattered Jewels' paintings of suicide attacks, both, using materialised corpses or iconographic symbols, jointly abstracted Japanese individuals and visualized the collective body of *kokutai*. Different than that, but still fresh from the fascism/ proletarian playbook, the formation of the final artists collective of the wartime period, the *Gunju Seisan Bijutsu Suishintai* 'Art Unit for Promoting the Munitions Industry', secured a working place for a couple artists, without exhibiting art as such. Allying with the authorities, the Art Unit formed itself in April 1944 and remained due its close relationship to the Army Art Association as one of the very few collectives active until Japan's surrender on August 15, 1945. In an article, published in 1943, leader of the group TSURUTA Gorō (1890—1969) set the framework of 'art for productivity,' as he called his concept.⁴² Arguing that already great progress in collaboration with the military had been made in the production of documentary and propaganda war-art, he urged for artistic activities that specifically contributed to increase the productivity of heavy industry and agriculture. The idea of art for

40 For that reason, Japanese art historian Kozawa Setsuko argues against treating him as a 'heroic' artist who opposed the state. Kozawa Setsuko: *Avant-garde no sensō taiken*, *War-time Experiences of Avant-Garde Artists*, Tokyo Aoki Shoten, 2004, p.154f

41 John Clark: *Artistic Subjectivity in the Taisho and Early Showa Avant-Garde*, Japanese Art After 1945, in Alexandra Munroe ed.: *Scream Against the Sky*, New York Harry N. Abrams, 1994, p.48.

productivity demanded in its support for the workers to be on location, not in the studio, and spend time with them, produce, teach and display art at the working places. Supported by the Ministry of Munitions, he started in the beginning of 1944 to call upon fellow artists, who were eager to avoid urban centers struck by air raids and joined his project.⁴³

The active organisation of workers culture and that of rural communities was already a common wartime issue, supported both by military officials and bureaucrats. To increase the production as commercial value and equitable distribute art to resolve the class struggle as a matter of harmonisation, was a thesis well known through such as the Nazi state-operated leisure organization 'Strength through Joy' *Kraft durch Freude*, and was carried out by the *Nihon Kōsei Kyōkai* 'Japanese Recreation Association', founded in 1938.⁴⁴

The participating artist gained a lot of advantages through the program, as food, rail travel tickets, allotments of art materials, regularly payments, and an escape from conscription or avoidance from hard labour. Tsuruta's ambitious commitment for the arts was at least a shelter for some of his colleagues who imagined themselves as socially conscious who engaged with society and yet conducted a wide range of activities with all works produced, which were later donated to local residents, factories and workers.

Not limited in their production even at the end of war, members of the Art Unit organized *Kessen seisan bijutsuten* a large 'Final Battle Production Art Exhibition' in January 1945. The show took place at the Nihonbashi branch of the Mitsukoshi department store in central Tokyo, using money that the Ministry of Munitions supported.⁴⁵

42 He was in official relationship with the Army Art Association and in 1942 Tsuruta documented the aerial attack on Palembang by Army paratroopers with his war painting 'Divine Soldiers Descend on Palembang' *Shinpei parenban ni koukasu*.

43 Yōga artists such as Junkichi Mukai (1901-1995), Shōgū Enokura (1901-1977), Nihonga artist Naondo Nakamura (1905-1981), and manga artist Ryūichi Yokoyama (1909-2001) were among them.

44 Influenced by the European models as the German KdF *Kraft durch Freude* (1933) and the Italian OND *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro* (1927), but corresponding to the Japanese spirit, the Japanese Recreation Association *Nihon Kōsei Kyōkai* was founded in early 1938.

45 Yoshihara Yoshihiko: 'Kessen Gunju Seisan Bijutsu Tenrankai 'The Final Battle Exhibition of Art for Productivity', *Bijutsu (Art)* 2, no. 3, 1945, p.24f in Maki Kaneko: *New Art Collectives in the Service of the War: the Formation of Art Organizations during the Asia-Pacific War*, in *positions asia critique*, Duke University Press, Volume 21 Issue 2, Spring 2013, p.337

Despite the numerous works they produced for the exhibition as well as in each region they visited, only five public sculptures and one oil painting are known today. What they have in common is the representation of male workers, as a single-standing figure or in a group, with idealised bodies and equipped with suggestive gestures of hands. A style that was also common in other fascism and communism representations of the average men, heroes of the people with according title supplements like 'saviour of the country' or 'furious fighting spirit' to characterize mining workers.⁴⁶

However, the method of Western painting, used as a pseudo-documentary, propaganda tool, represented the entirety of the Japanese imperialism, a trend seen among both the Axis and Allied powers during World War II.

Art, represented in Japanese oil painting came to be mobilized to promote ideals of the state, a tool ideologically used for the Japanese national identity *kokutai*. Finally, wartime *sensōga* paintings gained a double metaphor by representing the bodies of Japanese soldiers as a heroic iconography of military actions and as a tribute to the immaterial conception of the national body due their suicidal sacrifice.

The paintings decisively helped to portray the propensity to make sacrifices as a heroic ideal, not only in order to demonize the Other as the culprit of the situation, but also to strengthen internal cohesion.

Being on par with modern Western art tendencies in the late 1920s and early 1930s, in vivid cross-cultural exchange with the most distinguished international artists of different professions, schools and fluxes, Japanese Avant-garde, Surrealism, etc., that was so engaged in prewar times, might have been placed in the service of nobler ends. But stripped of its individual potential Japan's creative elite promoted fascism, imperialism and militarism.

However, regardless of some exceptions, the Japanese art world experienced no great public outrage over any of the national philosophy of increased collectivization and cultural imperialism from 1941 onwards.

Painters to a great number joined forces with their commissioning parties as they were thus less successful at resisting to enforce the 'just cause' narrative than their photographer counterparts who chose to capture social reality rather than staged propaganda images. Nevertheless, artists familiar with modern methods of design, cultural visual communication and other forms useful for propaganda had a fair share to constitute a well hegemonized, regimented society of conformist values.

Despite the intense cultural exchange with their Axis partner Italy and Germany, Japanese Western-style paintings, especially War Campaign Record Paintings were never introduced to Europe, although they were displayed in Japan's colonies.

In fact, the collection of 153 war paintings, which was ultimately confiscated by the United States, resided in Korea when the war ended in August, 1945. In 1970, the United States returned the war pictures to Japan as a 'permanent loan' on condition that they be shown to the public.

For 1977, the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, planned an exhibition that would show fifty of the *sensō-ga* paintings. Due to the major political controversy in Japan and the formerly colonized Asian nations, the museum abruptly cancelled the exhibition. Thus, as far as today the idea of the release of the entire *sensō-ga* collection seems to be out of question.⁴⁷

46 Art Unit for Promoting the Munitions Industry, Statue of Coal Miner, the Savior of Country, 1944. Concrete, height 363 cm. Courtesy Yubari City, Hokkaido

Idani Kenzō: Furious Fighting Spirit: Staring at the Southern Sea, 1944. Oil on board, 116 x 90.5 cm. Courtesy Tottori Prefectural Museum

in Maki Kaneko: New Art Collectives in the Service of the War: the Formation of Art Organizations during the Asia-Pacific War, in *positions asia critique*, Duke University Press, Volume 21 Issue 2, Spring 2013, p.338

47 Asato Ikeda: Japan's Haunting War Art: Contested War Memories and Art Museums, *disClosure: A Journal of Social Theory*, Volume 18 War, 4-2009 citing "Henkan no senso-ga, totsuzen kokai chiishi" (The Exhibition of Repatriated War Paintings, Suddenly Cancelled), *Asahi Newspaper*, March 8, 1977

Nevertheless some paintings are to be seen at various exhibitions, as in the 'Momat Collection', December 22, 2015–February 28, 2016 at The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo.