

Images of Japan through non-Japanese potters living in the country

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1. Aim

This presentation is the result of a preliminary fieldwork conducted in Mashiko (Tochigi prefecture) in 2013 and theme of my current PhD project. The aim is to understand the social and historical aspects involved in the global circulation of images about Japanese traditional culture and aesthetics through pottery and how these images are presented in the discourse and work of foreign potters living in Japan.

2. Data & Methods

For this purpose, I conducted semi-qualitative interviews with seven non-Japanese potters of different nationalities (American, British, Australian, Brazilian and Spanish), who have been living and working with ceramics in Japan for the past 20 years. I followed the ethno-sociological method of life-story (Bertaux, 1997) in order to understand the potters' motivations to leave their homeland and practice ceramics in Japan, their images of Japanese culture and the way Japanese styles, concepts and techniques have affected their work.

3. Results

I found that the representations of Japanese traditional culture and aesthetics constructed and reorganized during Japan's affirmation as a modern nation from the Meiji period onwards in dialogue with Western Orientalist discourse, still populate the imaginary of Japan and are present in the discourse of foreigner potters living and working with ceramics in Japan. These images focus mainly on Zen Buddhist aesthetics, the tea ceremony and Japanese connection with nature and have been appropriated by the Japanese folk crafts movement (*mingei*) disseminated in the West by Yanagi Soetsu, Shoji Hamada and Bernard Leach.

4. Conclusion

The traits of Japanese pottery presented in the potters' discourse and influential in their work, often condensed in the concept of *wabi-sabi* (simplicity, imperfection, naturalness), have long been seen as unique aspects of Japanese culture, especially in the *nihonjinron* (theories about the Japanese). However, I will argue that they are a result of specific historical trajectories, political constructions and sociability nets and propose that they might reflect ethical and universal concerns that transcend emic values and national boundaries.

References

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Close contact with non-Japanese people in Japan, while increasing, remains a rarity for a majority of the Japanese population despite a rise in tourists from overseas (their numbers reached 31 million last year). That means most Japanese people's knowledge of non-Japanese has been left almost entirely in the hands of the mass media and the results have not been good. Life as a panda. Although he is fluent, Ologun has made a living through his persona, acting the confused foreigner. A similar show on NHK titled "Cool Japan," named after the ongoing government initiative to promote Japan since 2005, gathers non-Japanese in a panel to discuss what is great about the country. Thus, non-Japanese in Japan are either depicted as silly (Ologun) or eternally fascinated. The modern potters upending Japan's ancient ceramics tradition. Published 29th July 2019. Credit: Claire Dorn / Perrotin. The modern potters upending Japan's ancient ceramics tradition. Share. Potters in the Japanese town of Shigaraki have been producing sturdy earthenware for more than 700 years -- reddish pots, bowls and vessels made from the high-quality, iron-rich clay found in the region. Nestled in verdant mountains east of Kyoto, the town is recognized as being home to one of the country's "Six Ancient Kilns." The appreciation of Japanese ceramics extended beyond practicality and into the realm of fine art. "We don't need utilitarian forms anymore, because our lifestyles have changed," he said on the phone from Kyoto, where he runs a ceramics gallery. Local artists in Japan's ancient capital of Kyoto reveal the mystery behind their craft, from silk-weaving to manga cartoons. Sunlight shines through the paper in the sliding doors, casting latticework shadows on the tatami mat floor in the room where Hiroko Harada arranges the tools of her art: paper, brush, ink and inkstone. These were known as the "four treasures" by scholars, in the centuries when calligraphy was held to be the highest of the arts. Emptiness has a value of its own, not least in a country where many people must live without the luxury of space. Hiroko's formal-looking kimono looks ill-suited at first to working with brush and ink, but posture is everything in calligraphy, and the long sleeves are thought to instil a feminine style of calligraphy. The main aim is to investigate how images of Japan are embodied, appropriated, negotiated and resignified through the subjects' bodily practices and experiences in the country. Western images of Japan have long focused on the exotic and unique features of the people and their culture. Along with Japanese writings on Zen Buddhism, traditional aesthetics and folk crafts, specific historical, political and social trajectories marked by the ideologies of Orientalism and Japanese cultural nationalism have contributed to the creation of an aestheticized image of Japan, focused on the ideas of craftsmanship and spirituality. See more ideas about Japan, Breathtaking places, Bamboo forest japan. Amazing Images of Classic Japanese Fart Battles. A beautiful scroll from 19th century Japan depicts an epic battle of flatulence. Theresa Rawlings Bewick. Although he lived in Ostend until his death, he regularly stayed in Brussels and actively participated in the artistic life of the capital c. The Avengers Thomas William Hiddleston Tom Hiddleston Loki Benedict Cumberbatch Hulk Gorgeous Men Beautiful People Beautiful Beautiful Pretty Men. You've been Loki'd.