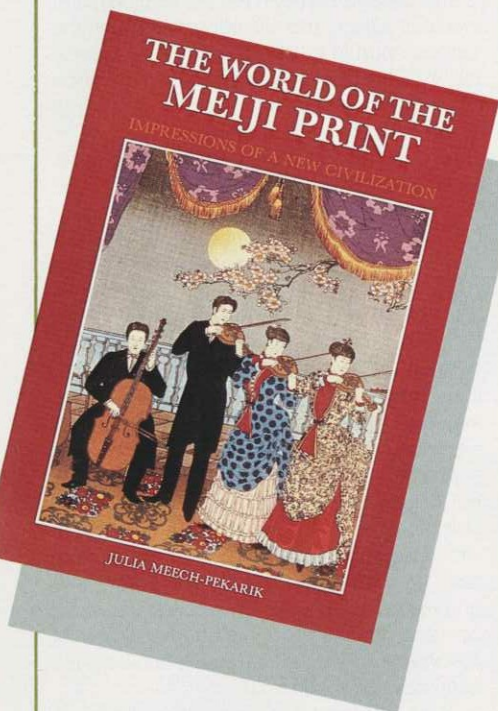


The World of the Meiji Print: Impressions of a New Civilization

By Julia Meech-Pekarik
Published by John Weatherhill, Inc.
1986, Tokyo
259 pages; ¥5,000/\$60

I can't find a proper term in my lexicon for *déjà vu* in reverse but Pekarik handles this particular historical era in just such a manner in her book on Meiji woodblocks. One reads her words relating the imagery of these little-appreciated artworks to historical facts concerning the "Westernization" of Japan and senses that time has either stood still or certainly gone full circle and is in replay mode.



The only negative thing one can say about the book is with regard to the chosen publishing house—Weatherhill, an over-the-hill remnant of far more lucrative and innovative publishing days following the Pacific War. Weatherhill's last print book supposedly covering the full sweep of Japan's printmaking history was by Munsterberg, whose out-of-touch authorship was very much in keeping with the firm's out-of-step management.

But looking past the printing house to the book itself, I found it exceptionally informative. One is taken back to the momentous events of the restoration in Japan, when the oligarchy of the Tokugawa shogunate was replaced by Imperial rule tempered by democratic reforms. It was foreign intrusion into these sequestered islands that helped foment those changes and thus it was on both the now-visible Emperor's person and role and the activities of the foreign enclaves that interest was focused.

Every action of the foreign community was a

topic for artistic interpretation. Many times such interpretations were far removed from reality as they were often based on second- and third-hand accounts, ending up as fanciful renditions much resembling confectioner's delights. Since travel was still proscribed, most scenes purporting to be of overseas sites were based on foreign illustrated newspapers, making the final mix both highly imaginative and amusing. Pekarik pulls from historical archives of the era examples of such European and American gravure art as surely served as basic models for several of the illustrated Meiji woodblocks shown. This comparison is a perspective that one needs for full appreciation of this genre of art.

Color—strong, vibrant and occasionally strident in its brash contrast to the more subtle colors of earlier woodblock prints—is an important aspect of Meiji print art. Imported aniline dyes used in preference to the natural base hues of ukiyo-e were responsible for the rather unusual color palette that dominates Meiji prints. A regal purple and a brilliant Chinese red were modified somewhat by an extravagant use of pinkish tones in many prints. So often is springtime invoked that one wonders whether or not the other seasons had ceased to be observed!

The way in which Pekarik ties into her well-researched text the words of many published observers from the period is a charming plus. There were (and in new reprints still are) many such accounts of the restoration era of the Emperor Meiji and his changing court. The adoption of Western-style dress by the Emperor was soon followed by his entire family from the Empress down. Their persons and personalities are well-documented in both word and woodblock. The visuals serve well the unrestricted commentaries of such diarists as Clara Whitney and Sir Rutherford Alcock. By working these era-bound reminiscences into her text, Pekarik conjures up a view of a changing society that includes both Japan's viewpoint and that of her often-bemused foreign guests. Their written notes on the oddities of the Japanese are equaled by visuals in many early Meiji prints on the seemingly incomprehensible oddities of Westerners as seen and reproduced via woodblock artistry.

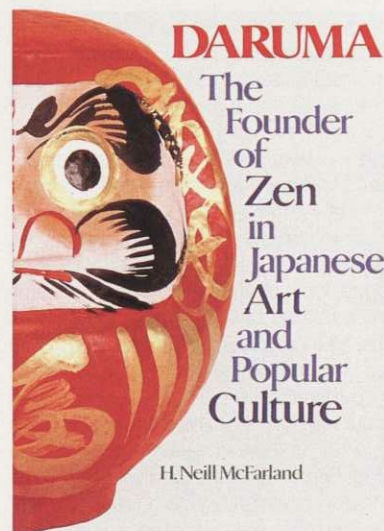
One comes away from the book with a thoroughly pleased understanding of a rather important but little-understood era in the nationhood of Japan. That the medium for this understanding is a penny-format art in no way lessens its impact or readability. One would wish for Pekarik to undertake a similar appreciation of the art and times of the short-lived Taisho reign and the early (prewar) portion of Showa. It would surely be as engrossing a subject which, handled with her sense of even-handed editorial scholarship, could certainly provide the material for a most suitable companion volume to this finely turned account of the Meiji era.

Amaury Saint-Gilles
Japan-based art critic

DARUMA: The Founder of Zen in Japanese Art and Popular Culture

By H. Neill McFarland
Published by Kodansha International Ltd.
1987, Tokyo
124 pages; ¥3,200

If as a visitor to or a resident of Japan you have ever wondered about the significance of the ubiquitous Daruma images that abound in the country, then this is the book for you. From his initial trip to Japan over three decades ago, the author of this invaluable study—H. Neill McFarland, professor of religion at Southern Methodist University—was fascinated by the



representation, seemingly everywhere, of the pot-bellied, hairy monk with the huge glowering eyes. Over the ensuing years, McFarland amassed a treasure trove of Daruma material which he has lovingly arranged and presented in *Daruma: The Founder of Zen in Japanese Art and Popular Culture*.

Daruma, in his original incarnation, is the First Zen Patriarch Bodhidharma. Legend maintains that the future founder of Zen was born into a royal family in India in the 5th century but renounced the world as a youth to become a Buddhist monk. Rejecting all external religious aids, Bodhidharma practiced meditation pure and simple. Appalled that the pseudo-Buddhists in China were attempting to bribe their way to salvation by giving alms, constructing temples and spending fortunes on lavish ceremonies, Bodhidharma journeyed to the Middle Kingdom with this direct message: "Look into your heart and become Buddha!" Disgusted with the materialism of the age, Bodhidharma secluded himself in a cave at Shaolin Temple where he "contemplated the Absolute" for nine straight years. Later, it is said, Bodhidharma mysteriously disappeared,

perhaps returning home to India or perhaps crossing the sea to Japan.

In Japan, Bodhidharma became "Daruma," eventually turning into the most widely used symbol in the culture. McFarland describes this remarkable acculturation, providing the reader with over a 150 delightful illustrations (including 26 color plates), most of the photographs being of pieces in his own impressive collection of Darumabilia.

The book is divided into two parts. The first discusses "Daruma Daishi: Daruma in Zen Buddhism." Daruma was naturally the most common theme of Zen art and portraits of the Grand Patriarch—ranging from the stiffly formal to the wildest caricature—were a primary teaching vehicle in Zen Buddhism. Although McFarland's discussion of the role of Daruma in Zen art and philosophy is easy to follow for the general reader, here I must strike a sour note: specialists will likely be disappointed in the author's rehashing of old material—nearly all of the illustrations he uses have been widely published and commented on before. The real value of the book lies in Part II, "Daruma-san: Daruma in Japanese Folklore and Popular Culture." McFarland relates in detail the manner in which Daruma was appropriated by the Japanese to serve as tumbler doll, child's toy, cigar-store Indian, symbol of perseverance and good luck charm, and further explains Daruma's role as patron saint of martial arts and the patriarch's amazing transformation from an ultra-masculine Buddhist monk into a lovely courtesan!

The author shows that the Daruma cult is as strong today as ever—illustration No. 45 has a beaming Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone painting in the eye of a big Daruma doll to celebrate a landslide election victory. Foreigners too are enamored of Daruma—as I write this review a lively portrait of Bodhidharma hangs in my alcove looking down at me. For such Daruma fans, the author has included a "Map of all the Daruma Festivals and Markets in Japan" and a "Calendar of Major Daruma Festivals and Markets."

Daruma is an excellent study of an important subject and I highly recommend it to anyone interested in Japanese culture, past and present.

John Stevens
Associate Professor
Tohoku Fukushi University

Roberts' Guide to Japanese Museums of Art and Archaeology

By Laurance P. Roberts
Published by Simul Press, Tokyo, under the auspices of the International House of Japan
1987 revised and updated
383 pages; ¥3,500

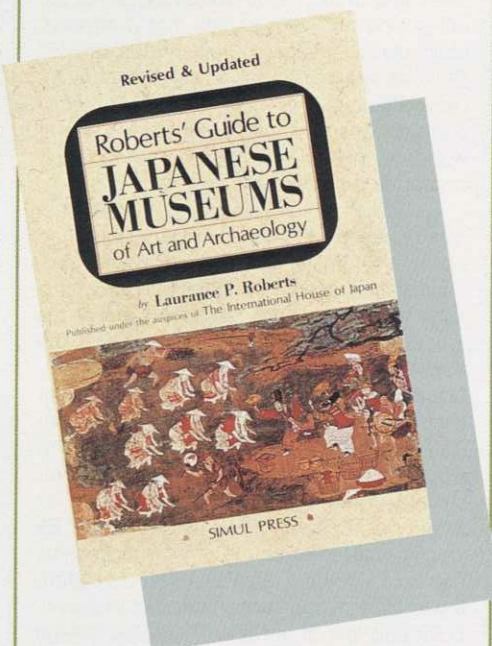
This newly revised edition of *Roberts' Guide* is both a pleasure and a disappointment.

It is a pleasure because many new and important museums have opened since the

previous edition was published in 1978, and a disappointment because the same old drawbacks present in the first and second editions have been carried over into this third edition.

The major problem with this book is that it is not easy to use. The *sine qua non* of any book that purports to be a guide is that the information in the book should be readily accessible to the traveler. Unfortunately, such is not the case with *Roberts' Guide*. A person who tries to use this book on a trip around Japan is doomed to unnecessary frustration.

Suppose your trip is going to take you to Nagano Prefecture and you would like to know what museums are in the cities you will be visiting. You look in the index under Nagano and not one city is mentioned. All you see are page numbers—13 of them. You must turn to each one of these 13 different pages scattered throughout the book to find out which cities in Nagano have museums.



A tedious exercise such as this is just what a busy traveler doesn't need—and all travelers are busy. Anyone who has paid ¥3,500 for this book has the right to be justifiably annoyed.

After you have done the work that the book's editor(s) should have done for you, and you are standing in a small town in Nagano holding this book in your hand, things begin to get better. If you are standing in Hotaka and open the book to page 263 (which is listed as "261" in the geographical index, because museums are listed not by their page number but by the order in which they appear in this book) you will find the Rokuzan Art Museum.

Roberts writes that this is "a small ivy-covered building designed as a church..." "From the station, take the first left, then the second left and cross the railroad tracks." Terrific; no one could possibly miss it. Roberts also tells what's in it, when it's open, and how much it

costs. He gives the name and address in *kanji* as well as in *romaji* (roman letters), and he includes the telephone number.

The author's descriptions of the contents of museums are as good as his instructions on how to find them. He not only describes what's in them, he says what's worth seeing and which you should see only if you happen to be in the town already.

On the Chishaku-in Storehouse in Kyoto: "There is no better place in which to see the powerful and decorative painting of the Momoyama period." On the Konjiki-do in Hiraizumi: "A loudspeaker unfortunately interrupts one's contemplation of this unique and dazzling example of Fujiwara sculpture and decoration." On the Hirosaki Municipal Museum: "Only a specialist would wish to seek out the permanent collection."

The decade between the publication of the previous edition and this edition has seen the biggest spurt in museum building in Japan's history. Obviously, it wasn't possible to include all the new museums in this edition, but some of the omissions are surprising.

Why no mention of the splendid National Museum of History Ethnology in Sakura, Chiba Prefecture, not far from Tokyo? Both the building and its contents are prime examples of the fine efforts that have been put forth during the 1980s to build more and better museums in Japan. And why is the equally appealing National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka not in this book? It was included in the previous edition. Strangely, this edition has fewer entries than did its predecessor, although Japan now has many more museums.

Among the other excellent new museums not included in this guide are the Tobacco and Salt Museum in Tokyo, the Izu-no-Chohachi Art Museum in Matsuzaki, Shizuoka Prefecture, the Tasaki Museum of Art in Karuizawa, and the Yokohama Archives of History, which contains Paul Blum's superb collection of *Yokohama-e* (woodblock prints showing the early days of Yokohama).

At the very least, if space could not be found to include all of the noteworthy new museums that have been opened in the past decade, at least there could have been a listing of them in the back of the book. Instead, the "Simul Press Ideal," which I question appearing even once, appears twice—in precisely the same words and format each time—taking up two precious pages that could and should have been devoted to museums.

The other weakness of this book is that the author more often than not fails to mention the architect of a museum, even when he cites the architecture as being exceptional. The Kumamoto Prefectural Art Museum, we are told, is worth visiting for its architecture, but Kunio Maekawa, the architect, is not mentioned by name. Nor is Maekawa, one of Japan's foremost museum designers, mentioned in connection with the Tochigi Prefectural Museum, although we are told that this museum should be seen by anyone interested in contemporary architecture; furthermore, Maekawa is not