

Akita Ranga and its international dimensions

The exhibition proposes to explore Akita Ranga through multi-disciplinary perspective of Visual Culture in Global History. Akita Ranga is the first Japanese painting in a European style produced during the late 18th century. This art is considered as a by-product of Dutch learning by Japanese scholars thanks to the trades with the Dutch East India Company, despite of the isolationist policy of Edo era (1603-1868). The series of Akita Ranga artworks has been treated rather just as a local / national visual cultural heritage showing the East meets West anecdotal evidence. However it should not be perceived merely peripheral and ephemeral art (art group), since this visual culture was connected with the contemporary vital development of natural science during the 17th-18th centuries, the Age of Great exploration, which is the second broad globalization time after the Silk Road. Akita Ranga is in fact connecting through a broader horizon with different European sites and cultures in time and space: Leonardo da Vinci's design for the double helical staircase of the Chambord castle in France, the reliefs of the Marble Gallery of the Frederiksborg Castle in Denmark, Yan Brueghel's engraving: *Good Samaritan*, Japonisme, etc. Incorporated into a broader context of world art history, a new art historical discourse of the Akita Ranga is proposed: A small young elite group of Samurai from Akita domain – a lord and his retainers – challenged to integrate Western art techniques and idioms into the Japanese traditional painting, together with Chinese influence of realism such as birds and flowers. With a mixture of naturalistic details and Western illusionistic methods, applied to traditional subjects, this new type of dynamic painting was produced through Akita's samurai-painters' strong pioneering spirit. Akita Ranga deserves to be considered as one of the Japanese prestigious cultural and artistic icons, with its highly sophisticated techniques and aesthetic quality, artistic value, historical meaning.

Panel titles:

- 1/ What is Akita Ranga?
- 2/ Visual wonders in the Edo Era and Akita Ranga Historical Context
- 3/ Odano Naotake: *Kaitai shinsho* (New Anatomy Book)
- 4/ Sataka Shozan *Pine tree and parrot*
- 5/ Odano Naotake *Hawk*
- 6/ Sataka Shozan *Lakeside scene*
- 7/ Odano Naotake *Mitsumata*
- 8/ Odano Naotake *Shinobazu Pond / Peony in a Basket*
- 9/ Development of Akita Ranga Theoretical essays and western books
- 10/ Akita Ranga Sketch books
- 11/ Sataka Shozan: *Double spiral staircase*
- 12/ Akita Ranga School Light and Shadow

