Journal of Journalism, Media Science and Creative Arts
ISSN (Print): 2790-9700 ISSN (Online): 2790-9719

World Art; what can we learn about some unique structures of the Japanese artworld experienced by four Japanese entrepreneurial visual artists and one curator?

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Received: 01.08.2025; **Accepted:** 30.06.2025; **Available online: Published:** 30.06.2025.

Cite this article *Savage, B. (2025). World Art; What can we learn about some unique structures of the Japanese artworld experienced by four Japanese entrepreneurial visual artists and one curator?* Journal of Journalism Media Science, 5*(1),*

ABSTRACT

Japan is a country which appears to have unique aspects to its 'artworld' in regard to that of the cultural imperialism. proposed by Danto and Dickie who focussed on the key history and elements of the European and US artworld. Even with the globalisation of art and the growth of international biennials, Japan appears to have a distinctly parochial outlook on the fine-art world.This article explores some of the underlying differences in this specific artworld through interviews with four Japanese fine artists who are dealing with the inherent Provincialism of their location and are seeking to build an international reputation through their distinct practice. An art curator was also interviewed and has some interesting insights. It proposes that Japanese fine artists work in a cultural environment that appears to have little in common with its western Euro-centric equivalence. It also makes suggestions as to how western artists can learn from those artists experiences of sustaining a creative practice within an environment of austerity through outwardly focussed transnational collaborations and entrepreneurial creativity. There is often a focus on the use of art as a tool to serve the corporate world. Issues of misogyny & sexism in the Japanese art world are also touched upon

Keywords:*World Art, Artworld, Japanese Art, Fine art, contemporary artists, Japanese Calligraphy*

Introduction

The Japanese artworld sits 10,000 Km from New York, the metropolitan centre of the global art market. As with many provincial cultures holding wildly differing definitions and appreciations of aesthetics and historic art production in comparison to western Euro-centric art, Japan has its own unique properties, (Anderson R.L. 1990). What can Western artists learn from their Japanese counterparts, who have their own history, culture and dynamics, in supporting and sustaining their art practices and visual arts-based careers. Within the highly dynamic global art market, what creative opportunities can be learned from the lifestyles and business strategies of these contemporary Japanese artists today? Japan is a country which appears to have a dramatically different 'artworld' to that explored by Danto (1964) and Dickie's (1976) focus on the US and European art worlds. The Japanese fine artists work in a cultural environment that under the surface appears to have little in common with its western peers. As in many 'provincial ' artworld's, their hierarchical structures may appear to conform to metropolitan ideals of fine art production, but strong differences lie under the surface (McLean, 2011).

> *"Danto's Artworld is the dark side of globalization – a cultural imperialism dressed up in the reified atmospherics of philosophy" (McLean, 2011).*

The provincial artist sits within competing historic narratives to that of that promulgated by the metropolitan centre (Smith, 1974). Japan sits on the fringe of the global art market and the growth of international biennialsFor example, due to natural disasters such as earthquakes and frequent typhoons, historically Japanese homes were small and built of wood as that flexibility of material made them more stable. There was a simplicity to structural designs and appreciation of the natural materials utilised and the aesthetic they embodied. Internally delicate wooden or bamboo 'shoji' screens were used to subdivide rooms. This meant that paintings and wall hangings were not really part of their cultural mix in comparison to European

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collectors and lovers of art who had a history of hanging portraits, still-life and landscape scenes on walls, particularly in large country houses. These were often purchased by aristocrats on educational 'Grand Tours' of Italy and through patronage of celebrated artists. (Hornsby C. 2000, Sweet R. 2012)

The cultural capital associated with artworks and the value attached to them is also culturally different in Japan in comparison to the West, as historically their artworks have been mass-produced using woodblock prints and were cheap to buy. The inherent value of the artwork was also tied into a unique context and cultural perspective which is quite different to the US metropolitan centre of production.

Currently, there appears to be little political and cultural interest in supporting young native visual artists by the Japanese Government, art patrons or collectors, although recent developments to capitalise on successes of young successful Japanese fine artists have been introduced. The sole interest of patrons and collectors appears to be in the acquisition of proven international artists' creative work which is used primarily as part of an investment portfolio.

The majority of art galleries in Tokyo are businesses who offer rental space for artists to exhibit their work. Very few Japanese gallerists are invested in supporting and developing artists' careers, particularly those early career artists. Artists usually keep all of the sales of their work in that context, whereas in the UK gallerists often take a percentage of revenue generated. Young artists are often taken under the wing of UK gallerists who partner with them and seek to promote their work.

In Tokyo, in the National Art Centre there are massive temporary exhibition spaces for amateur Japanese arts organisations creating western metropolitan inspired art. They also exhibit visiting high profile international American and European artists' work. There are lots of local art organisations and associations in Japan, but there appears to be little in support of up-and-coming visual contemporary artists. There is until recently also very little support for visual artists in their pursuit of international success abroad.

Although The Japan Government appears to have a similar creative and cultural infrastructure to Scottish and UK governments cultural organisations with an Arts Council and local authority support for contemporary artists, this is not the case. The Japanese Arts Council set up in 1990 is the reorganised National Theatre organisation and is primarily focusses on funding of the performing arts and its mandate is to fund the creative work of those specific artists and artistic groups in the promotion of regional culture and the work of cultural groups in that field. Its Arts and Cultural agencies' financial support is primarily focussed on the historically important performing arts such as Kabuki, Bunraku, Noh and Kyogen. There is very little support that is apparent for contemporary arts in Japan (The Japan Arts Council 2023, culture360, 2011). Local authority funding for the arts has very specific political and cultural requirements.

The four Japanese artists interviewed were only aware of limited routes to access any funding support that could be available to them. Those that applied had been unsuccessful.

Since the interviews with the artists in 2023, The Japanese Cultural Affairs Agency has announced the allocation of a new ¥6 billion supplementary budget which would be administered through the Japan Arts Council in supporting innovative young manga creators, artists and musicians who have established an international reputation. This is an important improvement in supporting young creatives who had been limited in the past to only access subsidies in individual creative programs and applying for travel expenses to attend overseas training programs. The new funding is intended to support worthy artists over a three-year period, in developing their exhibition profile in Japan before developing connections in overseas art fairs and events.

They also saw the need for artists to develop their language skills to allow them to more easily interact with foreign markets (The Japanese News, 2024). English is not a common language in Japan even with the American influence on its culture after WW2. Japanese collectors often do not have English language skills.

Methodology

A primarily online literature review focussing on the Japanese Arts Council and aspects of Japanese Government cultural policy was carried out

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combined with qualitative research developed in Japan During May/June 2023.

Interviews of approximately two hours long were made with eight Japanese artists and one curator in the summer of 2023 looking at how artists fund their art practice and what networks and governmental support was available to help them.

Interviews with Japanese visual artists utilised an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach. This is a qualitative interview method which is a phenomenological and hermeneutic means of enquiry, working with a small number of chosen interviewees who can supply deep reflections of collective experience around the chosen research area (Smith 1996, Smith et al, 2009, Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011). Since the production of art is a socially constructed experience, those interview participants are offering their personalised accounts located within their own cultural setting. They offer a homogeneous sampling of common reference points and a shared perspective.

> "The participant's 'lived experience' is coupled with a subjective and reflective process of interpretation, in which the analyst explicitly enters into the research process." (Reid K, Flowers P, Larkins 2005)

Such is the small sample size, it is not possible to draw any firm conclusions regarding the overall Japanese arts support network, but nevertheless this paper seeks to capture and map some initial key themes that could be valuable as a starting point in understanding aspects of the creative landscape of Japan. This research gives the opportunity to look in detail into a small diverse group of Japanese artists and gives an insight into the issues they have had to negotiate over their careers and in their daily lives. The research also seeks

to identify any supporting arts institutions and organisations that could have given a sense of support and community around the often isolating, creative environment.

These Japanese artists were interviewed as part of a broader research project looking at the creative environmental differences and similarities in the lives of Scottish and Japanese artists who both live on the fringes of continents: Europe and Asia, and how they both sustain their creative practice at a time of fiscal austerity and diminishing government support (Savage 2022).

A number of questions were posed around the understanding of similarities and differences in the Scottish and Japanese art scenes and looked to identify what Scottish artists can learn from the broader world art market and another cultural perspective on art production with its own artworld located halfway around the globe. This included exploring the differences between Japanese and Scottish cultural engagement with the arts regarding their respective artworlds sitting within world art, artists, gallerists and collectors. Do the artist's respective art worlds and governments cultural activities in both countries support and develop their creative arts practice and again, what were the similarities and differences? What can Scottish artists learn from the experiences of their Japanese counterparts that will help support their developing creative practice?

Translation services were required for four of the artists interviewed.

Research process

The researcher stayed for a month in Tokyo. Prior to the visit twenty Japanese arts organisations were contacted – out of this group only one replied and through this a meeting took place which resulted in an introduction to one Japanese artist.

Galleries primarily in the Roppongi district of Tokyo were visited to try and build connections with gallerists and artists and through this, two artists were contacted and interviewed.

Several Tokyo universities were contacted but no one was available to discuss the project.

Through personal networks, five artists were contacted, and they supplied additional names to follow up. Of the artists contacted, the stories of four young artists and a curator had fascinating stories to tell of novel approaches to sustaining their art practices.

This paper focuses on these four young Japanese artists & one curator

1. Yuki Matsuoka – Artist, fashion designer musician and curator

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2. Shinosuke Uchida - Manga artist and performance artist
3. Tatsuya Sato - Calligrapher & teacher
4. Riko Shuri Monma - Artist collaborating with Ryusei Iriki, curator – Looking to educate the Japanese ar worldthrough the development of an online auction site selling primarily 2nd market fine art sales.

Case study 1. Yuki Matsuoka



Fig 1. Artist: Yuki Matsuoke, Medium: unknown, Dimensions: unknown, Date: unknown

One prime example of Japanese entrepreneurial spirit is Yuki Matsuoka, an artist and designer. Not only is he an artist, but he also owns a gallery and manages his own fashion brand, "Himejien." He believes that art, particularly contemporary art, is not highly valued in Japan and is dedicated to promoting his work internationally. His art is not constrained by style, and he views it as natural for people's thoughts and philosophies to change through encounters, environments, and experiences, leading to changes in artistic expression.

He is also significantly influenced by other artists and creators, and he believes that "if my emotions become richer, my art will also become richer, and it will have a substantial impact on society" (Matsuoka, 2023).He began creating art in 2020, prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and his first piece was sold for 100,000 yen just two days after its creation. He places great importance on building relationships with his customers.

In Japan, the cultural budget is very limited, and during the pandemic, he applied for a grant but was not accepted. The approval rate was very low, with many conditions, such as requiring a five-year history of activities.

He abandoned seeking government support and turned to crowdfunding to finance his activities and create his gallery space. He has conducted two rounds of crowdfunding, raising 3.6 million yen in the first round and 13 million yen in the second, achieving significant success. He offers artworks priced at 500,000 yen and 1 million yen, as well as digital data NFT works priced at 300,000 yen.

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Journal of Journalism, Media Science and Creative Arts
ISSN (Print): 2790-9700 ISSN (Online): 2790-9719

His apparel store and art gallery are located in Himeji City, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan, where the famous World Heritage Himeji Castle attracts many tourists and notable visitors. He has also created an original character called 'Zungerabokko,' a legendary 'yokai' ghost in Japan that kindly eats people's sorrows.

He presents his works at his art gallery and also supports exhibitions for other artists, aiming to make the space a place where Japanese art can be showcased to the world. Despite having an art career of only four years, he has exhibited internationally in Dubai, Paris, London, and Florence, with the majority of his clients being foreign.

As an artist, Yuki Matsuoka does not sell his works directly to customers. Instead, customers come to him, set their own prices, and often pay more than he would expect. People and customers recognize his dedication to his work, and this passion motivates their support.

Case Study 2 :Shinosuke Uchida

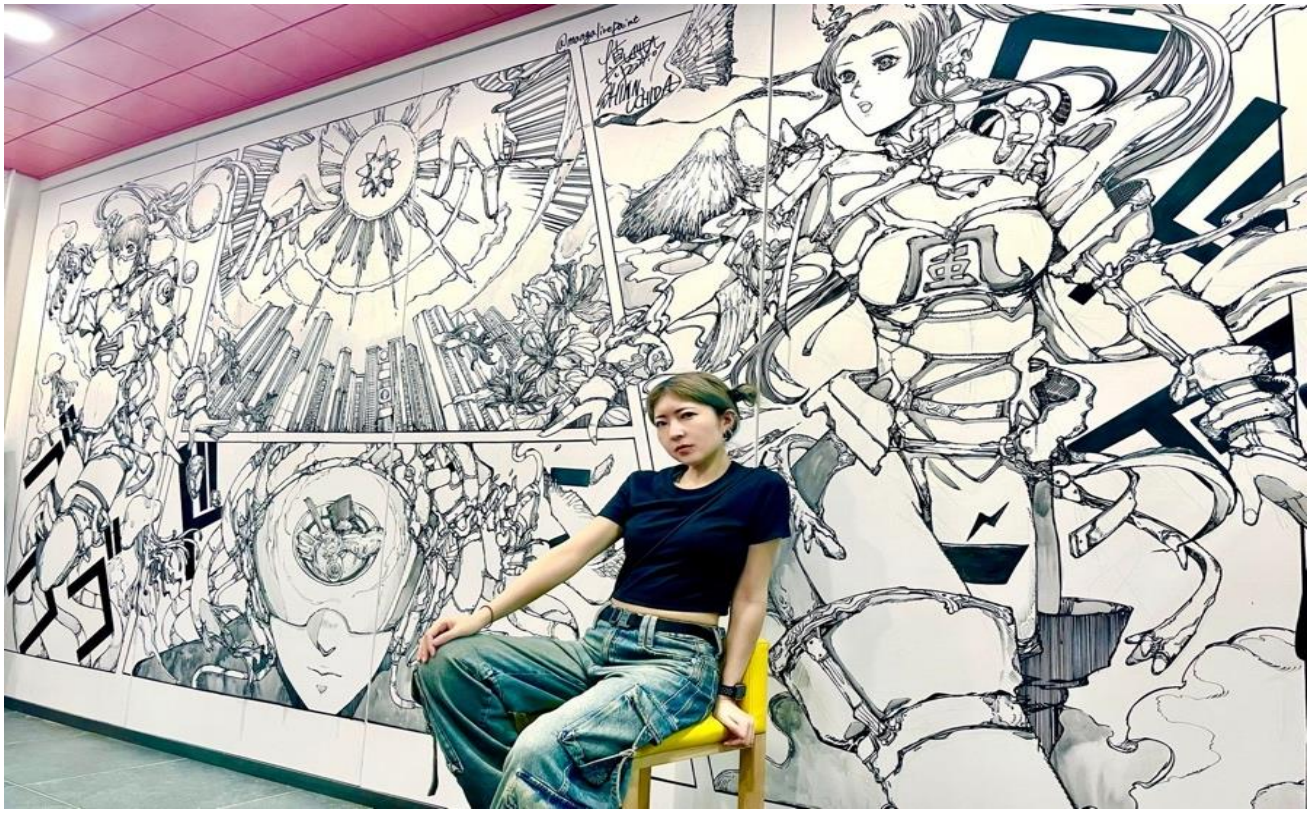


Fig 2. Artist: Shinn Uchida, Medium: unknown, Dimensions: unknown, Date: unknown

Shinn Uchida is a cosplayer, manga artist and live painter. She trained to be a secondary school teacher but after encountering the artwork of artist Katsuhiro Otomo's Akira she changed her career path. Getting an honourable mention in an Ultra Jump magazine competition gave her the confidence to try and develop a career as a Manga artist, but opportunities to be published were limited, particularly as it's a genre with mainly male readers, so she decided to use a male name.

She took part in the event in Tokyo, Design Festa, and one of the customers was interested in in her unique large paintings of manga characters. This was the beginning of a career with that unusual approach to her performatively painting of large Manga murals.

She has been working as a Manga live painter since 2015 and has performed in countries such as Japan, USA, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and in the UK. Since many good manga artists are active in Japan, she made international work her goal. Outside Japan, there are hardly any artists who draw in the cyberpunk style of the 80s like her. That demand allows her to obtain higher prices compared to Japan for her work being sold internationally.

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She participates in a comic con, anime or manga events where she creates Manga artwork over the several days it is running. After her performance at the events, if it's overseas, it then is auctioned where the highest bid offered is successful. Currently not many Manga artists are doing this kind of performance art abroad. The international event organisers cover her travel expenses and accommodation which gives her the chance to sell her work at the conclusion of the event which pays for her time there.

She has performed at art events in Japan but there are very few pop culture events for her to attend there, so usually it's the corporations who hire her to perform.She doesn't paint artworks and sell directly to clients and she doesn't have her own gallerist to promote her.

Online she has over 350,000 followers on social media. She's not focusing on her community right now, but is just focusing on being a performer.

Nowadays, through the publisher, it is difficult to make a lot of money and you don't get the chance. There is also a site called 'Sombox', where members subscribe to her work and if you get the higher points within this service you can get higher returns. Although she hasn't got started yet. She prefers to make a living the hard way, not through crowdfunding.

She attends events initially just held twice a year, but now it is very active for her with maybe ten events waiting for her. On average she has attended events three times in Japan and two times abroad each year. This year is very busy post covid as there are many events. No event happened during Covid where she made a living with part-time jobs in restaurants, and sometimes at events. During Covid, she received a funding grant from the government plus lived off her savings.
As a performer, there was only support from government if she was performing during Covid. If she had been a professional Manga artist she would not have survived, although Manga artists could continue to work during Covid and sell books. The Japanese Government granted some money for artists, who did some online events during Covid. Quite a lot of people buy online without seeing the work.She promotes herself online and organisers message her directly. The biggest issue she has is the language barrier, as she doesn't speak English and needs to hire a personal manager and translator who has a lot of connections in Germany. Her first event as a performer was sponsored by Adidas Watch, promoting one of their new watches whilst she was performing in a shop window designing and illustrating her Manga poster. She just focused on her work and didn't care about the audience. The organiser of that event was looking for a novel performer and she was contacted via social media. Then a Converse Tokyo marketing person saw her at the first event and that company invited her to their anniversary event and opening of a branch to work there too. Somebody found her online and asked her to perform at an event in Tokyo Haneda airport.
Currently she doesn't promote herself. People find her and contact her directly. Most of her work in Japan comes through direct contact after companies have seen her work on social media. Also, for international work, the enquiry usually comes from the organisers via social media or her manager finds new work.

During international events, the manager will offer his service as an interpreter, so she pays per day plus a percentage of sale of work which usually lasts one to three days. On one occasion she was involved in an event in Munich, sponsored by Ricoh Copy Machine company and another sponsored a Japanese cultural event which was held in Frankfurt. She has no manager in Japan to support her. Shinn is a complete loner and doesn't collaborate with any other artists or is a member of any groups or societies. She is looking to streaming and education as a future area for creative opportunities, which might open up her chances to establish her line of work

Case Study 3: Tatsuya Sato

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Journal of Journalism, Media Science and Creative Arts
ISSN (Print): 2790-9700 ISSN (Online): 2790-9719



Fig 3 Artist: Tatsuya Sato, Work 1: 「兜率天」"Tosotsuten" (Tusita Heaven)

Intent: Buddhist term. I interpreted this work as a longing for a boundless world of freedom. 300 x 720 cm, 2023

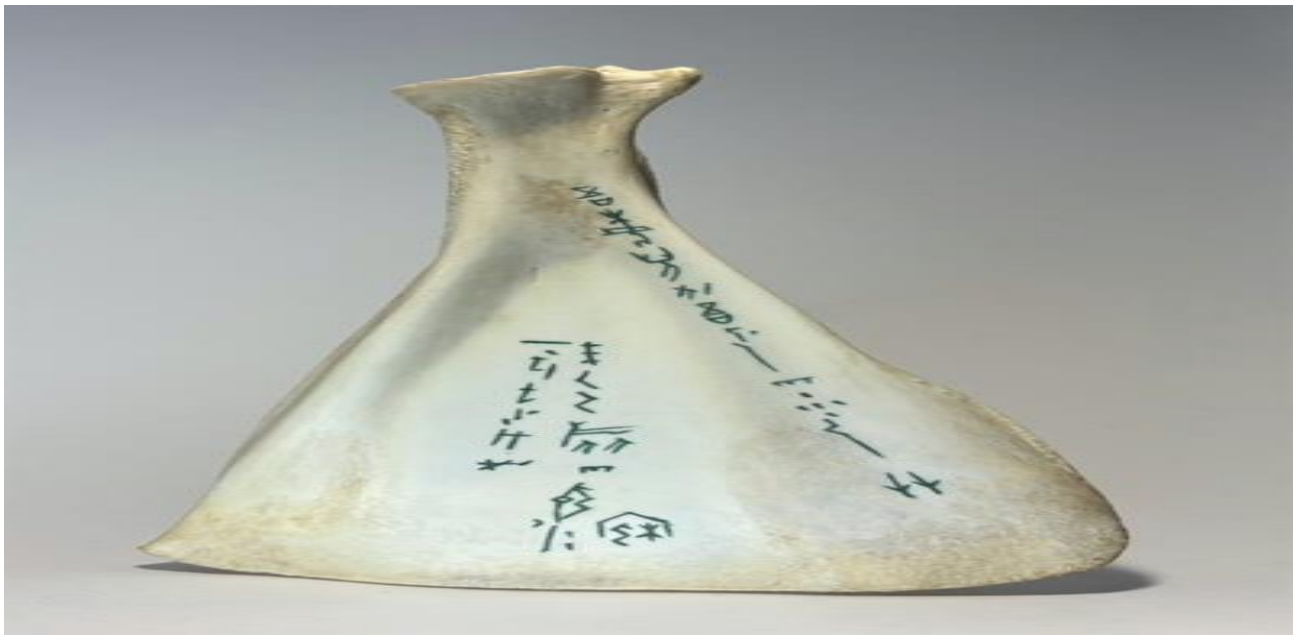


Fig 4. Artist: Tatsuya Sato, Work 2: 「甲骨文の再演」

Reenactment of Oracle Bone Script"

Intent: The origin of Oriental Chinese characters was the act of carving them into oracle bones, and this reenactment was done using a deer's shoulder blade. I also intended to emphasize the importance of "reenactment" in contemporary art. 2024.

Tatsuya believes that calligraphy is not taken seriously by the West, even though it is as culturally valuable as other artwork and paintings. He is looking for calligraphy's importance to be acknowledged as in other traditional arts. In Japan, the art universities established in the Meiji period didn't have calligraphy as a subject which means it's not considered to be part of the arts. Calligraphy is either taught in the education or literature departments. He feels the type of calligraphy produced, is uniquely Japanese, which might be quite difficult for foreigners to understand

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as they would need specialist interpreters of calligraphy, and also philosophy. He believes it's even different in comparison to other eastern countries and feels the most important thing is how to convey the message in the work. He believes calligraphers don't get any support from the Japanese government.

In addition to his personal activities, Tatsuya is also part of a group of calligraphers who organise their events together. They compete with fine artists for gallery space. Curators are interested in whoever has an authentic creative concept, and these are the ones that get are accepted and collected. There is a higher chance of being successful by collaborating with the curators. The only way for artist to survive is to do exhibitions in the lower art galleries and hope that someone higher in the artworld will find them. It is very rare for the calligraphers to sell their artworks as they can be huge, up to ten metres long. His group published a ten-year history of the activities of their collective. He thinks that calligraphy can give a new perspective to people and thinks that the spirit of pioneering your own way is what matters.

He has exhibited internationally in New York, and in Vienna at Japanese cultural events. Often it is accidental connections that generate exhibitions. An acquaintance of his knew the ambassador of Japan in Vienna. He exhibited there in a library and in a supermarket on the edge of the city where he did a live performance and workshop. He brought his own materials including an eight-foot roll of paper on the flight over from Japan.

In the lower class it is difficult for all the artists to survive in full time careers. That is why people need different jobs at the same time. In his case he is also a high school teacher and teaches calligraphy to make a living. He is very good at balancing his full-time work and his art practice, using his summertime and holidays. If he was employed in any other type of career, he wouldn't be able to do both. Tatsuya has a mentor and teacher who is 83 years old, his name is Bokkan Kakisita. He is a valuable person who makes a living solely through his calligraphic activities. Tatsuya respects him deeply.

The performance, exhibitions and the selling of calligraphy are quite difficult online because you miss the subtle textures of the ink on paper and even the shades of black. He does have a movie created by a videographer with thirteen thousand views on Youtube, but the dialogue is only in Japanese.

In Japan, in the calligraphy world, artist belonging to a bigger group, such as the Nitten, which is one of the traditional arts organisations in Japan have a connection with the government and get more work and funds that are not available to other artists. They are therefore more likely to be successful, as those artists have a much greater chance of being exhibited in a Japanese museum.

Case Study 3:Riko Shuri Monma

Riko started her career as a chemical engineer, in a cosmetics company, but after three years she looked to do something else with her life. She began to develop her self-brand and found people in New Zealand were very supportive. She came back to Tokyo because that's where she had the bigger personal network and then Covid Hit. She had quite a solid network of personally contacts as opposed to going through a gallery or a dealer.

Developing self-branding and word of mouth involves just really meeting with like-minded people who introduce and refer you to other likeable people. So, she has not travelled the traditional career path.

She has been really lucky in her time in Tokyo, as really gifted brands have connected with her. Even though she doesn't really use Instagram, her commission work and most of her jobs, and even the promotion opportunities, like magazine interviews and brand collaborations, all come from that account. She has made a conscious decision to only work with brands that really fit in ethically with her own personal values.

So initially at the very beginning of her artistic career, she combined the expertise she already had in utilising pigments, out of different plants, clay and materials using her knowledge in chemistry and in cosmetics of binders. She utilises found objects discovered on little trips to the mountains and the coast that could be pigmented. She has been offered interviews as a sustainable artist and is infatuated with archaeology and the study of shapes in nature.

She came to notice that as contemporary artists it is our responsibility to reflect contemporary society and also develop ideas ideally which would give back and reflect a social cost. Japan is becoming

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definitely cool. As far as social causes, it's a really positive thing. They had their first feminist acclaimed exhibition, in 2020. This is really late.

Her new collaborative project involves managing the development of an art auction site ArtXAuction, partnering with Yuki Hariguchi, a tech innovator, entrepreneur and avid art collector and Ryusei Iriki, a former gallery director and independent curator. It is hoped the ArtXAuction site will host and build a diverse and knowledgeable community of art collectors where art's cultural and societal significance is as valued as its investment potential. Her involvement was under the condition that she could curate the artworks around social causes, or create narratives around the context into why certain works can be invested in. So, she gathered a large team of people, which was very exciting, visiting museums, interviewing curators and artists who are exemplars their field.

She wanted to create a more inclusive and enlightening art collecting experience, curating art across all civilizations and epochs. Her plan was to underscore the universal themes that humanity has revisited throughout history, showcasing the timeless and borderless nature of artistic expression. The collaborators wish to develop an educational bridge between the artworks and potential collectors, highlighting the rich narratives behind each piece of works aesthetic appeal.

> *"Ultimately, our goal is to enhance art literacy and contribute to society through the transformative power of art." (Yuu Watari, 2024)*

The people that she initially acquired works from were more European due to her already having a network there. And also, it was nice to bring them in, especially when it involves social causes. But, on the other hand, if she deals with more timeless concepts, she's hoping to mix Japanese traditional mediums of art rather than just contemporary European investor's art collections.

For the primary market, she would develop a charity auction similarly to bigger mega galleries, looking for up and coming artists to promote their work which would be good for the artists, as well as the charities. The whole online environment doesn't have any relationship to reality whatsoever which is such an interesting thing that would probably not flow in the financial world. Auctions are where artists' value gets a little muddled due to price fluctuations. So, if you put up your artist work for sale and it doesn't sell as valued then it could start to lose its popularity.

In terms of art literacy within Japan she thinks it'd be nice as an alternative platform, working not just from the primary gallery but also from the secondary field, making the right investment as a reflecting society. There are opportunities to most definitely talk about various fields like environmentalism, a comfortable ecology and these things are often taken up by a lot of big name artists abroad, so she could bring that over to Japan. And also, maybe like in the LGBTQ community, there's an archetype for what an LGBTQ person should be in Japan, and it's this flamboyant super party performative image. She knows a lot of friends in Tokyo, belonging to the community who don't think that fits at all with what their representation should be. So that kind of glorification of the image of somebody belonging to the community having to present themselves in such a way, that's also a topic she can offer some different perspectives on.

She also thinks it will help bring people together, get work through networking in parties or social context, and it also helped bring similarly wealthy people together too.

Culturally, Japanese people generally tend to be more reserved. So, in Japan, you don't need to be as outspoken or have a more aggressive style towards promoting yourself as in other countries. Japanese galleries know that, so if you walk into any commercial gallery, she thinks eighty percent or maybe more of the artists represented don't need to oversell. People if they like you, they like you. That's good, she thinks that's something that's been around for quite a long time. Because Japan is all about the subtlety from thousands of years ago, one thing that a number of artists have identified is that they have been 'discovered' by somebody important. You need to be discovered to be elevated. Especially in Japan, because it is still very hierarchical. Whereas in say, a country like New Zealand, in America, you can now find brands to represent you. They are artists, who are like a brand, but they almost work like a gallery. And they represent various other artists that are more lifestyle derived. The artists see opportunities to align themselves to a support network that sustains them.

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It is definitely an opportunity to showcase various strands of art. In any academic subject, there's research and there is the value of it which lies in its historical significance. And brands run with trends, so these artists get valued and then the valuation process of art will then become a very confusing.

That is why contemporary art is so interesting because it's a space where the artists can make money, by starting to run gigs and big events. And that's where money can be made to fund creative stuff.

Case Study 4 Ryusei Iriki

Ryusei Iriki is a curator working in partnership with Riko Shuri Monma. He is a a former gallery director, independent curator and editor, who contributes valuable expertise to the ArtXAuction team.

He really appreciates Japanese art, but there isn't a domestic art ecosystem, and it doesn't have many collectors in it. He sees the project as one which will look to inspire and educate Japanese collectors. In Japanese culture, it takes time to make changes, and to accept cultural change.

Currently Hong Kong is the epicentre of the contemporary art world at the moment because of the Art Basel art fair which highlights global art trends and provides an in-depth focus on Asian-Pacific modern and contemporary artworks. The other reason is because the Chinese understand the English language, which is not as common in Japan, particularly where wealthy people there are not so familiar with that language.

He believes that maybe in Japan they're not so interested in what's happening in other countries as it has a history of being very isolated and they have a very basic, subtle way of communication, that's very different from other Asian countries.

Chinese and Korean collectors are passionate and eager to learn about art and they're trying to buy artwork from established galleries. The Chinese and Koreans sometimes build a museum of status … that elevates them to be allowed to access the really, exclusive high-end artworks, because if they did not have the status and just came as collectors, they would probably not be allowed to buy into that world. Major international stars like Jeff Kuhn wants their work to be collected by the top collectors and galleries because it elevates their artworks and is mutually beneficial to both parties. Having the money to buy artworks is not enough, you also need to have prestige within the art world which adds to the cache of the artist's cultural status. Japanese public museums are risk adverse and they cannot try new things because of financial reasons which is not good for the artworld.

One challenge for the collectors is, what to do with performance art, or with installation pieces? It's geared to the big museums, who maybe have a facility to manage this. The gallerists quite often don't have this space to work very well for installations which need very special resourcing.

Findings

Access to government funding

Japanese contemporary artists face a challenging supportive environment with minimal governmental support particularly for those at early developmental phase of their careers. Ongoing relationships with gallerists, curators and critics are crucial to accessing exhibition spaces and need to be developed. (Tatsuya Sato, 2023)

Novel entrepreneurship

Japanese artists need to be entrepreneurial to access financial resources. Shinosuke Uchida and Riko Shuri Monma have worked collaboratively with corporations. Yuki Matsuoka created a gallery performative working space to sell his artworks directly to his customers. Crowdfunding helped realise his goals of creating his own art gallery.

Outward facing focus

As provincial artists, Japan fine artists have to look internationally, particularly to America and Europe for creative opportunities as the Japan art world is unlikely to appreciate their talents unless they have already achieved success elsewhere and returned, offering good investment opportunities. Collectors are interested in investing in recognised established artists who are financially worth collecting and rarely have interest in finding and supporting new Japanese artists. It was felt that there was a unique cultural difference in in the structure of the Japanese artworld with few gallerists supporting up and coming artists and there being little interest in

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collectors purchasing and investing in early career artworks.

Japanese artists and issues around language barriers

Western artists exhibiting in Japan and outward facing Japanese artists exhibiting abroad can have language issues around communicating using English in Japan. The Japanese government have recognised the issues around language barriers and seek to resolve this.

Novel Value of work - Payments for artworks in Japan

Two of the Japanese artists sell their work utilising novel payment methods. Shinosuke Uchida, the Manga artist produces an on-site artwork over several days at manga and comic-conventions and organisers auction off the wall sized artwork at the end of the event. Yuki Matsuoka engages with his customers collaboratively. On completion they pay what they think the work is worth to them … and they usually pay more than he would have asked for if he had priced the artwork.

Tatsuya Sato knows that due to the large size and length of his calligraphy works that there is no likely sales or market for the work he produces. At the moment he needs another career as a teacher to fund his practice.

Brand development

Riko Shuri Monma sees branding as an important aspect of developing her a career as an artist. She connects and partners with like-minded partners and brands in collaborative projects. In addition to expanding her personal network she also utilises an online Instagram account. She believes running gigs and big events can generate money which can be made to fund the production of creative stuff. She has partnered in developing an online art auction site to fund her ethical art practice.

Experiences of misogyny & sexism in the Japan art world

Shinosuke Uchida felt that Japan has issues around misogynism and sexism, so she took on a male persona knowing that she would be disadvantaged as a woman in the production of Manga comics. Recently she has considered changing back and using her real name. However, due to the current sexual identity & LGTBX politics she feels she now has no need to change her pronoun as it no longer matters. This change in LGTBX cultural dynamics in Japan has also been noticed by Riko Shuri Monma.

Conclusion

Due to unique cultural issues and lack of government funding support, Japanese artists like many other provincial artists have to seek external validation of their artworks out with Japan. Only then can they look to Japanese collectors and their artworld to appreciate and support their creative practice.

Opportunities to develop global networks abroad should be taken by Western artists in pursuit of artworld success and funding support at a time of austerity and shrinking resources at home.

Challenges around working with corporate partners is a bigger challenge to western artists relative to Japanese artist experiences with the risks of being seen to be ‘selling out’ or suffering reputational damage through partnering with organisations with problematic brands.

International networking appears to be a necessary pathway to access new funding opportunities and resources for creative projects. Artists should look globally for collaborative ventures and also to access new sales pathways and opportunities. The Japanese artists interviewed have taken that route (Savage 2020). Personal branding developed through personal contacts and online presence could also be an important route to developing collaborative opportunities.

There are potential language barriers for English speaking international artists in Japan due to there being a lack of English language skills.

Summary

The Japanese artworld appears to function in quite a different way to Western artworlds. Historically art has not been collected and valued there as in the West.

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It was felt by the interviewees that the Japanese Government offered limited support to assist young visual artists in developing their creative practice. There has been some recent movement in the last year through targeted funding to financially support visual artists in certain areas who have a proven international profile.

For several interviewees, entrepreneurial relationships have been built with the private sector where the use of art is used as a tool to serve the corporate world, for example in supplying a cultural edge to the promotion of their products in the cases of Shinosuke Uchida and Riko Shuri Monma. Art is expected to be utilised as part of a greater good.

Outward facing young Japanese artists look to America, Europe, the Middle East and China for career building creative opportunities as the Japanese artworld is unlikely to appreciate their talents unless they have achieved success elsewhere in the world. Japanese dealers and collectors are interested in investing in recognised established artists who are financially worth collecting and rarely have interest in finding and supporting those new up and coming artists in Japan. It was felt that there was a unique cultural difference in the structure of the Japanese artworld with few gallerists supporting those artists and there being little interest in collectors purchasing and investing in early career artworks.

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