

Strand 4. Research and Doctoral Thesis in Progress

Promoting Art Nouveau in Modern Tokyo - Mitsukoshi and the “Contemporary Kimono”

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Abstract

This research focuses on the development of Tokyo’s image into a modern city during the early 1900s. Against this background of modernization, the developments of the Art Nouveau movement will be considered, focusing specifically on Tokyo’s fashion scene. More concretely, it will look into how newly developed department store trend promotion made use of the Art Nouveau movement to reflect the narrative of modernity that Tokyo endeavored to establish. In this framework, Mitsukoshi, Tokyo’s first and foremost trendsetter of “the contemporary kimono,” will be presented as a case study. The main questions are: How did Mitsukoshi as an active agent interpret and use Art Nouveau for the development of the “contemporary kimono?” Through applying the method of discourse analysis, Art Nouveau’s role and Mitsukoshi’s activities linked to the promotion of the “contemporary kimono” will be clarified, and will be used as a metaphor to illustrate Tokyo’s developing modern image.

Keywords: Art Nouveau, Mitsukoshi, Tokyo, Modernization, Kimono, Promotion, Discourse Analysis, Agency, Cultural Hybridity, Legitimization

1. Introduction

Japan's Meiji period (1868-1912) and Taishō period (1912-1926) represent the time frame of the country's development into a modern nation. It is during these periods that the government undertook major structural reforms under the slogan *bunmei kaika* (civilization and enlightenment) in order to release Japan from its pre-modern state. The perception that Japan lagged behind in modernization prompted the country to put intense efforts into the development of new modern social and industrial infrastructures. Furthermore, it aimed to legitimize its authority both domestically and internationally through the development and promotion of art and architecture.¹ In this effort, the Meiji leaders invested heavily in referencing, importing and adopting Western technology and expertise, which was seen as *the* example and source of inspiration at the time. However, the Western example was not merely referenced and taken over. As will become clear from this study, Japan was an active agent in this process and selectively adopted what was necessary to modernize, and adapted these elements in order for them to fit into the country's existing social and industrial structures.

The transformation of the city of Tokyo into a modern metropolis was at the backbone of many of the above-mentioned developments. Tokyo would develop into the face of modernity and modern evolution, as it was the center from which social, industrial and cultural progress emerged. The Meiji and Taishō governments came to perceive the city as a showcase:² they hoped to impress the foreign states with Tokyo's modern infrastructure reflecting the country's evolution into a modern state, a backdrop for the spectacle of *bunmei kaika*. The view on Tokyo developed from a view of the city as symbol of culture to a view of the city as symbol of Japan's imperial power.³

In modernizing the city, the Meiji officials experimented with foreign planning concepts from Paris, and other cities in England, Germany and the United States.⁴ However, as Hein (2010) argues, even though government officials actively referenced foreign city planning, the in the end established practices were different from those of their foreign counterparts, even

¹ Christine M. E. GUTH: "Japan 1868–1945," *Art Journal*, 55 (3), 1996: 17.

² Henry D. SMITH: "Tokyo as an Idea: An Exploration of Japanese Urban Thought until 1945," *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, 4 (1), 1978, p. 45-80: 55.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.63.

though Tokyo faced similar city development situations.⁵ These regulations were the result of comprehensive planning and adaptation to local needs: while respecting existing regulations and structures such as old land divisions, particularities in landownership, development needs, urban planning techniques, and design preferences, foreign techniques were selectively appropriated.⁶ At the same time, the government allowed both public and private sector to promote a speedy urban transformation of selected areas while leaving other spaces mainly unchanged. The areas that were transformed, resulted in a mixture of Western and traditional forms, as these were rearranged to answer to the city's new needs. Foreign practices that had equivalents in Japan were adopted into the Japanese urban planning system, while others, having no roots in Japanese tradition and therefore difficult to adapt, failed to be adopted in the long run.⁷ This shows that in Tokyo's modernization process, the Meiji and Taishō urban planners carefully attempted to fuse Western and Japanese practices through adapting Western regulations to the Japanese context. It is this adaptation and interplay of Western and Eastern elements that we see returning in different levels and aspects of Japan's modernization.

It was only after the Russo-Japanese war in 1904 that Tokyo's population had reached the same numbers as during the preceding Edo period, and it was from this period onward that major changes were conducted in the city. The year 1904 coincides with the beginning of Art Nouveau's influence in Japan, and the movement's presence in many newly created architectural buildings in Tokyo was unmistakable. However, the changing social and cultural urban landscape of the city offered a platform for the movement to extend its influence further than only the visual level. Within Tokyo's fashion scene, Japan's first department store Mitsukoshi, which will be the case study of this research, actively integrated the movement's visual elements together with its ideology to re-evaluate the image of its kimono into a fashion item that could be identified as "the contemporary kimono." Therefore, the main questions of this research are: ① How did Mitsukoshi develop a new contemporary view on kimono through discourse for its customers to perceive ② how did Mitsukoshi use Art Nouveau in the promotion for its so-called new "contemporary kimono?" In order to answer

⁵ Carola HEIN: "Shaping Tokyo: Land Development and Planning Practice in the Early Modern Japanese Metropolis," *Journal of Urban History*, 36 (4), 2010, p. 447-484: 449.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., p. 480.

these questions, this paper will take on the methodology of content-based discourse analysis to discuss Mitsukoshi's promotion of Art Nouveau and the contemporary kimono.⁸ The theoretical framework for this research consists of Giddens' (1984) theory on Agency, and Burke's (2009) theory on Cultural Hybridization.⁹

2. Theory and methodology

In this paper, reality is interpreted as something that is constructed through language.¹⁰ According to Fairclough, discourse stands in an active relation to reality, and therefore contributes to "the production, transformation, and reproduction of social life."¹¹ Furthermore, discourse contributes to processes of social change.¹² Therefore, through using discourse analysis and other forms of textual analyses, one aims not to understand social reality as it, but as how it is produced and maintained.¹³ Through the usage of the method of content analysis in this research, the author aims to contribute to the development of more interdisciplinary research within the fields of Art and Design History and Fashion Studies.

One theoretical concept used for the analysis was the idea of agency, which is closely related to the field of discourse studies. Agentic power, as proposed by Giddens (1984), lies in the ability to reflect one's context and to act upon one's surrounding power structures in order to make a difference and to recreate one's context.¹⁴ Studies making use of the viewpoint of agency therefore propose to focus on actors and their actions, and to present

⁸ A part of this research was published in the *Journal of the Society for the Aesthetics of Costume* vol. 64, 2018, pp. 55-74. As this paper was published in entirely in Japanese, this presentation paper aims to provide not only an English version for the global research community, but also aims to connect the researched topics to the broader societal framework of Tokyo's modernization, along with providing some updates on the data used for the analyses.

⁹ Anthony GIDDENS, *The Constitution of Society*, Cambridge/Malden, Polity Press, 1984; Peter BURKE, *Cultural Hybridity*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2009.

¹⁰ Peter BERGER and Thomas LUCKMANN, *The Social Construction of Reality*, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1967.

¹¹ Normann FAIRCLOUGH, *Discourse and Social Change*, London, Polity press, 1992, p. 42. Fairclough's ideas are heavily based on: Michel FOUCAULT, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, London, Routledge, 1972.

¹² FAIRCLOUGH, *Discourse...*, p. 137.

¹³ Nelson PHILLIPS and Cynthia HARDY, *Discourse Analysis, Investigating Processes of Social Construction*, Thousand Oaks, London, Sage, 2002, p. 15-31: 21.

¹⁴ Anthony GIDDENS, *Profiles of Critiques in Social Theory*, London, Macmillan, 1982.

them as active participants, rather than passive spectators of change. As Japan has often been represented as passively undergoing modernization that was imposed by the West, this research aims to break through this negative discourse through taking up the viewpoint of agency.

Cultural Hybridity (as according to Burke (2009)), on the other hand, stands for the hybridization of cultures and the development of hybrid objects through the processes of acceptance, rejection, segregation and adaptation.¹⁵ Based on Burke's writings, this research defines cultural hybridity as follows: Cultural hybridity is the encounter between cultures in which elements of these cultures are exchanged, adapted and integrated. Through this process creativity is stimulated, and new forms are created. Cultural hybrids form the results of these interactions, and can in their turn act as intermediates, catalysts or stimuli for further hybridization in new fields.

Methodologically, this research has taken up the approach of a visual analysis, combined with a content-based discourse analysis. In this analysis the author applies a communication studies-based perspective, in which a focus lies on how words influence the general meaning of texts and how they construct and influences our perceptions of reality. The data used for this study consists of excerpts derived from Mitsukoshi's magazine articles presenting trend promotion. As this study focuses on Mitsukoshi's promotion of Art Nouveau in kimono, magazines and articles were selected based on this criterion. The author's previous study revealed that Art Nouveau promotion returned in the following magazines: *Jikō* (1903 (Meiji 36, vol. 1), 1904 (Meiji 37, vol. 1, 3, 4, 7, 9, 12)), *Mitsukoshi Times* (1908 (Meiji 41, vol. 4-12, *jūgatsu no kan, jūichigatsu no kan*), 1909 (Meiji 42, vol.7 no.1-2, 4, 6-7, 9-12), 1910 (Meiji 43, vol. 8 no.1)) *Mitsukoshi* (1915 (Taishō 4, vol. 5 no. 1-12)), and therefore only these were taken into consideration.

3. *Mitsukoshi and the contemporary kimono*

Before looking into how Mitsukoshi used and interpreted the Art Nouveau movement in kimono, it is necessary to look into how Mitsukoshi as an active agent made use of

¹⁵ P. BURKE, *Cultural Hybridity...*, 2009.

promotional discourse to develop the image of the kimono into what the author has named the “contemporary kimono.” Previous studies have looked into Mitsukoshi’s development of trends and taste, while other researchers have looked into the modern image of the kimono and the influence of Western art movements during the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁶ However, these studies did not consider Mitsukoshi’s position as an active agent reacting against the influence the Western fashion system exerted over the Japanese fashion system at the time. Furthermore, research conducted from the viewpoint of Art Nouveau, focusing on discourse has not been preceded, and therefore the author aims to tackle these subjects in this paper.

The promotion of Mitsukoshi’s contemporary kimono is closely related to Mitsukoshi’s development from a dry goods store to a department store. In this development process, Mitsukoshi aimed to create a new image for the store as the purveyor of trends, and started to publish catalogs and promotional magazines to present and stress this image to its customers. Furthermore, Mitsukoshi established in-house design departments and promotional departments to enforce the idea that all trends originated at the department store. These trends were not only limited to Japanese trends but also included Western trends leading to the establishment of eclectic trend promotion.¹⁷ Above-mentioned developments were discussed by Jinno (1994). However, as she did not consider the concrete process that lead up to the promotion of eclectic trends in kimono, this research will clarify this process, making use of excerpts from Mitsukoshi’s promotional discourse.

In the first phase of Mitsukoshi’s development of the contemporary kimono, the department store actively referenced and adopted elements from the Western fashion system in its existing kimono fashion system. From 1900, we see that Mitsukoshi started to develop a discourse stating that kimono was a contemporary fashion item with trends that change

¹⁶ JINNO Yuki, *The Birth of Style, the Taste the Department Stores Created*, Tokyo, Keishōbō, 1994; TAMAMUSHI Satoko: “The meaning of the Sales Strategy of Kōrin at Mitsukoshi,” In: The National Museum of History and Folklore, IWABUCHI Reiji, *The Discovery and Sale of Edo. The Consumption Culture and Production of Trends at Mitsukoshi During the Taishō Period*, Tokyo, Iwata Shoin, March 2014, pp. 79-107; Terry Satsuki MILHAUPT, *Kimono – A Modern History*, London, Reaktion Books, 2014; Sheila CLIFFE, *The Social Life of Kimono*, London, Bloomsbury, 2017; AOKI Mihoko: “The Influence of European Art Movements in Taishō • Early Showa Kimono Designs,” *Bulletin of the Kōbe Fashion Design University*, 33, 2009, pp. 1-15; HARADA Junko, “On the Secession Motives in Japanese Clothing During the Taishō Period,” *The Magazine of the Society of Clothing Studies*, 19, 2000, pp. 47-53; HIRAMITSU Chikako, “Activities and Ideas of the Kyōtōzuankai -Textile Designs in the Meiji Era. Kyoto-,” *The Journal of Costume and Textile*, 12, 2011, pp. 71-80.

¹⁷ JINNO Y. *The Birth of Style...*, pp. 39, 59-60, 209-123.

frequently just as in the Western fashion system. Mitsukoshi aimed to change the image of kimono from ‘something that one would keep and pass down to younger generations’, to ‘something that follows trends and therefore should be bought frequently’. In doing so, it seemed like Mitsukoshi almost denied the fact that it had been creating periodical fashion trends in kimono up until 1900.

“Thanks to the existence of Mitsukoshi new motifs exist in kimono. [...] The ones who have evoked a major revolution in the old motifs are we, Mitsukoshi. [...] It wouldn’t be wrong to say that a few years ago there were no motif-like motifs. [...] There were no trends like the ones we have in the present, in the same way as there were no motifs. Only the extremely dull hem motifs that were existing already were produced, and most of the dry good stores played it safe through using the motif books from dyeing ateliers.”

In this excerpt from *Jikō* (vol. 36, 1903, p.5) we see that Mitsukoshi states that they were the ones who revolutionized the kimono motifs, and did so differently from other dry good stores. Yet at the same time they suggest that kimono (even the kimono that they promoted up until then) were in need to be revolutionarized to fit a new fashion ideal, and that they were the ones who took up the role to do so.

During the period of Art Nouveau’s visual introduction in kimono (1903-1905), we see that Mitsukoshi actively reported in its promotional magazines that it had integrated design elements from the Western fashion system. According to articles published in *Miyakoburi* and *Jikō*, Mitsukoshi’s designers started to artificially create fashion trends as it was done in the West¹⁸ through the following techniques: Designers would go on the street to observe new trends.¹⁹ Then, they would use references going from old *maki-e* to Western books in the development of their trends, turning these into samples for large-scale production.²⁰ Furthermore, an in-house design department was established in order to prompt a more frequent and periodical creation of trends.²¹

¹⁸ Mitsukoshi, *Harumoyō*, 1900, pp. 76-77.

¹⁹ Mitsukoshi, *Miyakoburi*, 1903, p. 4; *Jikō*, 3 (4), 1905, p. 30.

²⁰ Mitsukoshi, *Jikō*, 3 (4), 1905, p. 56.

²¹ Mitsukoshi, *Miyakoburi*, 1903, pp. 11-12; *Jikō*, 3 (4), 1905, p. 5.

However, through integrating and adapting Western elements, Mitsukoshi inevitably developed its kimono fashion system into a hybrid system, and from 1905, the department store started to actively promote the hybrid character of kimono in its promotional magazines through the active usage of the term “East-West eclecticism” to describe and promote kimono. Furthermore, eclecticism became the goal of Mitsukoshi’s in-house design department, as the following quote illustrates: “*We have succeeded in the development of East-West eclectic designs.*”²² Also, Mitsukoshi’s trend advising organ called the *Ryūkoku*, was established for the same reason namely: “*To research trends from the past and present and East and West, and to give advice to the store.*”²³

Through this process of re-evaluation by Mitsukoshi on one hand, and through industry-related mechanical improvements and improvements in the dyeing process introduced from the West on the other, the kimono developed into a cultural hybrid of East-West and traditional-modern elements. Art Nouveau, on the other hand, can also be defined as a cultural hybrid. When the movement spread across Europe and America, it brought about unique expressions of indigenous traditional revived styles mixed with the aesthetics of Japanese art (one of the major inspirational sources of the movement). Therefore, the Art Nouveau movement was at the same time Western and Eastern, but also traditional and modern, as it was also a design movement bridging tradition and modernity. Thus, as the image that Mitsukoshi aimed to create for the contemporary kimono was similar to Art Nouveau’s characteristics as a movement, we can hypothesize that Mitsukoshi decided to actively use the movement to promote and legitimize its contemporary kimono.

Analyzing above-mentioned process from the framework of Agency, one can state the following: Mitsukoshi did not adopt the Western fashion system passively, but actively selected what was needed to develop a new image for its contemporary kimono. Through actively showing their entrepreneurship, Mitsukoshi enforced its legitimacy as leader in the fashion world, and this contributed again to the legitimacy of their promotional discourse of the contemporary kimono. The fact that Mitsukoshi did this individually, shows that the department store was not a mere passive spectator, but actively aimed to modernize its own

²² Mitsukoshi, *Mitsukoshi Times*, 7 (1), 1909, p. 28.

²³ JINNO Y., *The Birth of Style...*, 1994, p. 152.

fashion related activities and through doing so provide an impetus for the modernization of Tokyo's fashion scene, as a response to the modernization of the metropolis itself.

4. *Mitsukoshi and Art Nouveau*

As mentioned above, in the period between 1903 and 1905 Mitsukoshi decided to integrate Western art movement expressions in kimono in order to emphasize the Western and modern image of the garment. The first movement that Mitsukoshi integrated was the at that time globally established Art Nouveau movement.

Kobayakawa and Aikawa mention in their research that Art Nouveau was promoted at Mitsukoshi only to a limited extent during the period from 1903 to 1905. However, this research proposes that Art Nouveau was not only more influential, its influence also extended beyond the proposed period, concretely until around 1915. Even though Art Nouveau's expression was not introduced very frequently in kimono between 1903 and 1905, the movement's ideology continued to have a strong influence within Art Nouveau related styles such as the Meiji Kōrin and New Kōrin styles. In what follows, the author will focus on Art Nouveau's visual and textual representation in Mitsukoshi's magazines, and will clarify Art Nouveau's visual and ideological influence in the development of the contemporary kimono.

Art Nouveau's promotion in kimono occurred in two phases: one in 1903-5, followed by a revival of the Kōrin style called the Meiji Kōrin style in 1908-9; and one in 1912-13 with the promotion of Secession, followed by the New Kōrin style in 1915. During this period of promotion, Mitsukoshi interpreted Art Nouveau in three different ways, and used three different categories of jargon to describe and promote the movement. As mentioned above, Art Nouveau was first visually introduced into Mitsukoshi's kimono as an art movement from the West, to provide the kimono with a new and modern Western image. A black obi published in *Miyakoburi* in 1903 showing a resemblance to the Glasgow school (fig. 1) with the caption "Art Nouveau," as first jargon category represents Mitsukoshi's initial literal adoption of Art Nouveau's style at the time.

The year 1904 represented a peak in visual Art Nouveau introduction in kimono, and it is clear that from this time onwards Mitsukoshi's interpretation and promotion changed from

Art Nouveau as a purely Western art movement to an eclectic and hybrid Japanese expression and interpretation of the Art Nouveau movement. The kimono in fig. 2 with caption “Nouveau style” as jargon category two, is representative of this eclectic style. Looking at these designs, the difference from the interpretation reflected in the black obi of fig. 1 becomes clear. This time, a focus on Art Nouveau’s expression as an eclectic dialogue between East and West is accentuated through the curving lines reminiscent of Kōrin combined with the Western depiction of the lily flower.

After 1904, Art Nouveau’s graphic and visual popularity faded in Mitsukoshi’s kimono, only to return shortly in the form of Secession in 1912-13. This coincided with a shift in Mitsukoshi’s approach in which the department store moved from the promotion of a modern and Western image for its kimono to a modern and East-West eclectic image. Therefore, from 1908 onwards, instead of adopting Art Nouveau’s style, Mitsukoshi adopted Art Nouveau’s ideology of art in everyday life and the re-evaluation of indigenous and traditional crafts and expressions. The department store did so in order to re-evaluate the traditional but old-fashioned style of Kōrin into the so-called Meiji Kōrin and the New Kōrin styles (fig. 3 and 4) as new decorative styles for the contemporary kimono. Therefore, Mitsukoshi’s third and final group of Art Nouveau jargon consists of the terms “Meiji Kōrin style” and “New Kōrin style.” The re-evaluation of Kōrin happened through the promotional discourse that Mitsukoshi created in its magazines. Through using Art Nouveau’s internationally accepted status and through linking the movement explicitly to Kōrin’s style (which was an influential source for the development of Art Nouveau itself), Mitsukoshi stated that its newly developed kimono trends –namely the Meiji Kōrin style and New Kōrin style– were not merely reflections of the old traditional Kōrin style.

“A modern way of thinking has been added to Kōrin’s picturesqueness, turning it into the Meiji Kōrin style expressing vitality, thus making it into a style belonging to the newest trends. [...] Kōrin’s descriptive style has been favored by many, but through applying transcriptions of insects and shells to the flowers’ descriptive style, and letting it merge with Kōrin’s motifs, [...] the style is overwhelming the world of trends in both an evolutionary and a conservative way.” (Mitsukoshi Times, October issue, 1908, p. 1)

This description of the Meiji Kōrin style shares characteristics with the Art Nouveau movement: a modern way of thinking, a style expressing vitality, natural elements, and a combination of modernity and tradition. It seems that with the Meiji Kōrin style, a Japanese equivalent of Art Nouveau was created. Furthermore, in order to legitimize the re-evaluation of Kōrin, a constant reference to the popularity of the artist in the West was made. Also, through equating the artist with the at that time internationally accepted Art Nouveau, the movement turned into a catalyst, guaranteeing the newfound popularity of Kōrin and the Meiji Kōrin style. Examples of these references are as followed:

“I believe that we need to let Kōrin evolve gradually. [...] You could call my design the second-order evolved Kōrin style, while I believe that the first-order evolved Kōrin style are the styles like the Art Nouveau and Secession styles that were popular in Europe last year and are still popular now. [...] With the naming “first-order style” I mean a style in which Kōrin is wrapped with one layer of paper. On the other hand, the second-order style has wrapped fragments of Kōrin in two, three layers and is further developed, in which popular shapes are covered slightly and hinted at.”

This quote is derived from an interview that was published in *Mitsukoshi Times* (vol. 7 no. 6, 1908, pp. 27-29), to honor the winners of the Meiji Kōrin style *nagajuban* design contest. In the interview one of the winning designers Sakatani Ryōnoshin links Kōrin’s evolved style explicitly with the European Art Nouveau and Secession style.

Another example illustrating the link between the New Kōrin style and Art Nouveau becomes clear in following quote:

“[...] The design that could easily fit into a Western design evolved away from the [traditional] Kōrin style in a most splendid way [...] Elegantly drawn not at all ordinary, and therefore the design committee recommends it as the representative of the Taishō New Kōrin Style.”

This evaluation of the winning design by Hiraoka Ihei was published in *Mitsukoshi* (vol. 5 no. 4, 1915, p. 6). The usage of the wording “fit into a Western design” hints at the link between the New Kōrin style and Art Nouveau.

As a final example, a speech held by the diplomat and art lover Kaneko Kentarō at *Mitsukoshi* (*Mitsukoshi Times*, October issue, 1908, pp. 1-15) on the development of a new art style fitted to the Meiji period refers clearly to Art Nouveau’s ideologies:

“If I would describe this [Meiji] Kōrin style with a word used in Europe at the moment, I would call it Art Nouveau. Kōrin’s way of drawing really resembles this Art Nouveau style. [...] The art of Europe and Japan are approaching; will they merge and create a new Meiji art? [...] Just like Kōrin did we need to spread the Meiji style across Japan today. Facing Kōrin’s name, working towards Kōrin’s skill we have to proceed on this long road ahead of us, and this is my greatest hope.”

In his speech Kaneko explicitly stated that Kōrin’s style and Art Nouveau are the same. Furthermore, he stressed that he wanted a Meiji art style similar to Kōrin’s style to spread across the art world. This Meiji style that Kaneko wanted to achieve was in fact an indigenous decorative style based on the ideologies of the Art Nouveau movement.²⁴ The fact that *Mitsukoshi* published Kaneko’s speech in its promotional magazines, shows that the department store shared the same opinion. However, at the same time, *Mitsukoshi* was influenced by Kaneko’s statements, as later the store started to explicitly promote the Meiji Kōrin style and New Kōrin style as representatives of *Mitsukoshi*’s unique Meiji and Taishō’s art expression. We see that *Mitsukoshi* actively referenced Art Nouveau’s ideologies as a catalyst for the development of contemporary styles for the contemporary kimono in its fashion discourse. For example in the following ways: “*Our country’s indigenous motifs [...] I want designers to research how to add the so-called modern motifs to them.*” (*Mitsukoshi Times* vol. 7 no. 11, 1908, p. 18) or “*Please gentlemen, I want you to not study Kōrin’s style, but I want you to study his design spirit [...] I want you to let it evolve into a New Taishō Kōrin style.*” (*Mitsukoshi* vol. 5 no. 8, 1915, p. 55). From these quotes we can see that Art

²⁴ HIRAMITSU C., “Activities and ideas...” 2011, p. 78.

Nouveau's ideology was continuously adopted and therefore played an important role in the re-evaluation of Kōrin and the development of the kimono's contemporary image.

From the above-mentioned examples it became clear that the link between Kōrin and Art Nouveau was explicitly stressed within the promotional discourse for the Meiji Kōrin style and the New Kōrin style. Mitsukoshi as an agent explicitly presented this relationship and thus stressed that Kōrin's new styles were not just a reflection of the old but were novel hybrids that were re-evaluated through Art Nouveau's ideology. Therefore, within the third jargon category Mitsukoshi did no longer perceive Art Nouveau just a passing trend and style from the West, but as a catalyst for the re-evaluation of Kōrin's and other traditional styles into contemporary styles fitted to the contemporary kimono's image. Bearing the same hybrid characteristics as the contemporary kimono, Mitsukoshi actively used the re-evaluated Meiji Kōrin style and New Kōrin style and made them into the main representative styles reflecting the contemporary kimono's modern and eclectic image.

Looking at all the jargon categories that Mitsukoshi used to describe and promote Art Nouveau, it becomes clear that the third category appeared most frequently in Mitsukoshi's promotional discourse. Furthermore, the following excerpt shows that Mitsukoshi did not only use the Art Nouveau movement's ideology limited to the promotion of Kōrin, but went even further and used it to promote design reform in general, in the same way as Kaneko proposed. Through this, we can see that Mitsukoshi was connecting to the Art Nouveau related thought and discourse that had manifested itself in the global design world at the time.

“If we don't connect Japan's industry closely to art and crafts, even today, we won't be able to create valuable expressions, I think. In other words, if artists don't have interest in objects of everyday life, and if designers of goods of everyday life don't get closer to artists, we won't be able to create a valid movement.” (Mitsukoshi, May 1915 (Taishō 4), vol. 5 no. 5, p. 55)

Mitsukoshi used Art Nouveau's ideology and used its reference to legitimize its design process in general as a necessary means to increase the legitimacy of its contemporary

kimono. This also confirms Mitsukoshi's main interpretation of Art Nouveau as a hybrid catalyst for the creation of the contemporary kimono.

5. Conclusion

Mitsukoshi's promotion and interpretation of the Art Nouveau movement can be summarized as follows. When Art Nouveau was introduced into kimono design in 1903, the movement was first perceived as a Western style, and integrated to provide the kimono with a Western and modern image. After that, instead of promoting a Western image, Mitsukoshi concluded that an East-West eclectic image was more suitable for its contemporary kimono, as customers at that time would be more willing to accept an eclectic image over a completely new and foreign Western image. At the same time, Mitsukoshi's designers turned their attention back to traditional motifs of design, under the influence of Art Nouveau and the Japanese design elements that were at the origin of the movement. Especially in the case of the Kōrin styles revived between 1908 and 1915, Mitsukoshi actively presented the link between these styles and the Art Nouveau movement, and emphasized it to fit the hybrid image of its newly created contemporary kimono. Furthermore, Mitsukoshi used the international popularity of Art Nouveau's style and its link with Kōrin directly for the promotion of the Meiji Kōrin and New Kōrin styles. On the other hand, Art Nouveau's ideology of design and craft re-evaluation was used indirectly as a catalyst for the re-evaluation of Kōrin's style into the Meiji Kōrin and New Kōrin styles. Therefore, even though Art Nouveau's style was only integrated in kimono for a limited period of time, the movement's ideology played an important role in the re-evaluation of kimono and even design in general at the department store for an extended period (even until after 1915). Art Nouveau did not only provide an East-West eclectic and contemporary image for the kimono, it also led the process of traditional style re-evaluation fitted to the contemporary kimono's image. Therefore, even though from a visual level Art Nouveau's influence in kimono was limited at the time, the movement's influence within the realm of promotional discourse and design thought was undeniably important.

The aim of this study was to clarify the development process of Mitsukoshi's contemporary kimono, and to shed light on the role the Art Nouveau movement played within this process. This study made use of a content-based discourse analysis, differing from the general art historical approach to textual analyses. Through this method, this study was able to present different results from those mentioned in the existing field. The author believes that in doing so this research was able to contribute to the field in a new and original way, and hopes that this research will provide an impetus for a more interdisciplinary approach within the art, design and fashion historical fields.

Based on this research, the author will continue to look into the discursive strategies that Mitsukoshi used to legitimize its contemporary kimono and its image as a department store. The author will be looking at Mitsukoshi's position within the international fashion scene's promotional discourse. Comparing Mitsukoshi's promotional magazines with other fashion magazines and department store catalogues, the author will aim to clarify a network of discourse (both international and indigenous) that Mitsukoshi could have referenced in the development of its own discursive strategies. In doing so the author aims to give an insight into how the department store as an agent actively integrated -or resisted- existing transatlantic and indigenous fashion discourse.

Curriculum Vitae

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Saskia Thoelen is a fashion art historian with a background in Japanese studies. She specializes in research concerning the link between Art Nouveau and Japan. After obtaining a Masters' degree in Japanese studies with an Art Historical minor, focusing on the Japanese influences in the works of Belgian Art Nouveau artist Privat Livemont, she decided to further pursue her research interests in the field of Fashion. Currently, she is a PhD student at Bunka Gakuen University. Her current interests lie in the role Art Nouveau played within Japan's department stores and their development of the "contemporary kimono" and its promotion.