

東亞藝術史

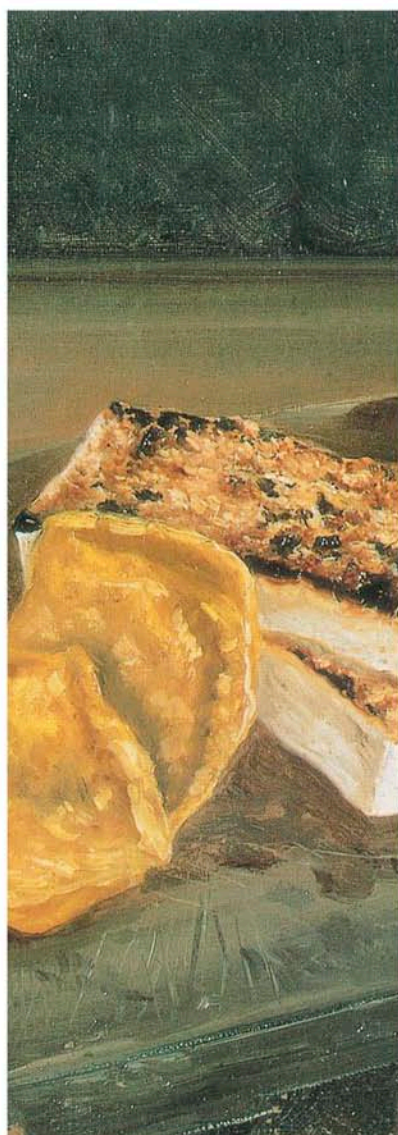
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Lecture on Thursday, June 25, 2009, 6:15 pm

Yukio Lippit, Harvard University

Takahashi Yuichi:

Towards a World History of Oil Painting



Abstract:

This paper addresses the highly innovative painting techniques and aesthetic texts of Takahashi Yuichi (1828-94), Japan's first significant oil painter. Although Yuichi's status as the "founding father of oil painting" has generated a large commentarial literature in Japanese, recent conservation studies have led to new and surprising insights into how early Japanese oil painters understood their medium, technical repertoire, and the representational possibilities of pigments suspended in oil. Mapping this new understanding of Yuichi's facture against his discursive texts highlights the degree to which oil was associated in a Japanese context not so much with Western compositional techniques, but primarily a viscous and paste-like painting medium with a unique ability to convey "the idea of things." Indeed, this fascination with the unctuous qualities of oil-based pigments extends back many centuries in East Asia, where in earlier eras a variety of local materials -- most prominently lacquer -- were used to approximate them. Takahashi carefully chose his painting subjects to foreground these qualities of oil painting, and many works were intended to complement his discursive advocacy of the medium. In arguing robustly for the advantages of oil-based pictorial representation during the Meiji period, Yuichi's artworks and writings provide an important window onto the contingencies of the rapidly changing landscape for visual media in nineteenth-century Japan. At the same time, they greatly enrich an evolving world history of oil painting that has all too often under-appreciated developments in East Asia.

Yukio Lippit is the Harris K. Weston Associate Professor in the Humanities, Department of History of Art and Architecture, Harvard University, where he teaches since 2003. His research and publication activities include a wide range of issues regarding the history and historiography of Japanese art, such as ink painting, pictorial narratives, zen and painting, the Kano house of painters (on which he wrote his dissertation, and a monograph is forthcoming). His most recent co-authored and co-edited book with Gregory Levine is "Awakenings: Zen Figure Painting in Medieval Japan," accompanying the much-acclaimed exhibition of the same title at the Japan Society, 2007.

Prof. Lippit has been a fellow at the most renowned institutions of art history, such as the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, The National Gallery, Washington, D.C., and the J. Paul Getty Research Institute, and has received numerous grants and awards.

Seminar room, ground floor, Institute of European Art History and Institute of East Asian Art History, Seminarstr. 4, 69117 Heidelberg.

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