The mainstream has never run clean, perhaps never can. Part of mainstream education involves learning to ignore this absolutely, with a sanctioned ignorance.
—Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

Introduction

In the first month of the twentieth century, doors opened in Vienna on a massive retrospective exhibition of Japanese art. More than seven hundred historical objects from the private collection of Adolf and Frieda Fischer filled three rooms of the iconic Secession Building.[1] A photograph included in the exhibition catalogue reveals an odd, tightly spaced mise-en-scène: a large seated Buddhist icon, flanking topiaries, an array of framed woodblock prints, and a folding screen—splayed and hung high, looming over the gallery like an ersatz canvas (fig. 1). In light of the building's famous epigraph, *Der Zeit ihre Kunst; Der Kunst ihre Freiheit* (To the era its art; to the art, its freedom), something seems, at first, amiss. Yet if one takes a more nuanced approach to understanding the relationship of art to history, or of modernity to time, the dissonance resolves. Premodern Japanese art was an integral part of the art of the era—and the absence of context, implying an absence of history, was a bizarre type of freedom.

As the Viennese scholar Aloïs Riegl (1858–1905) cautioned as early as 1903, the Secession epigraph was indeed misleading since it failed to account for the continued relevance of "premodern" art within the modern.[2] In a foreword to the catalogue, Fischer explains how the Secession had initially approached him asking for a comprehensive exhibition on the history of Japanese woodblock printing; from this idea, however, the larger show grew, which displayed instead "all the branches" of the arts that "in the Far East have been brought to such high perfection."[3] Scrapped, to some

Fig.1 Exhibition view of the large hall during the sixth Secession exhibition in Vienna, January 1900. ÖNB/Wien 214.992-E (6. Secessionsausstellung).

contemporary critics' dismay, was the troublesome history bit.[4] Given the inexhaustible zeal for Japanese art in fin de siècle Europe, the occurrence of the exhibition itself is not surprising. In fact, the organizers registered reservation that the recent mania for things Japanese (*Japanismus*) risked making the exhibition passé. Yet they persisted undeterred since it was in "the primordial culture of the East, in the art of the Japanese," that contemporary artists might find a way out of the nineteenth century.[5] Thus a revolutionary group of artists, in the first days of the new century, filled their "white cube" gallery with objects spanning more than a millennium of Japanese history, all for the sake of the advancement of modern (European) art.[6] While paradoxical, this approach was far from an anomaly since the exhibition was exemplary of the way in which premodern Japanese art entered modern art history. The consequences of this aporia are, in part, the subject of this book.

Needless to say, other non-Western and nonmodern archives shared similar fates. Yet I will argue that Japanese art history is distinctly well positioned as an archive from which to critique the Eurocentric master narrative of art history. East Asia, of course, possessed its own highly developed discourse on art history long before the proliferation of the early modern discipline. But I am less interested in precedence than prolepsis. In the case of Japan, it is the singular intensity, timing, and duration of Japan's interface with North Atlantic modernity that proves most critical. For instance, Japan was the first nation outside Euro-America to appropriate the Euro-American episteme to a degree that would make its art recognizable as such. Thereafter, Japan's status as "subaltern imperialists" revealed the inadequacy of the Eurocentric West/rest binary while highlighting the need to avoid treating Eurocentrism, imperialism, and modernity as if they were coterminous phenomena.[7] Premodern Japanese art has now operated as a part of modernity for more than a century, hence complicating the teleology that once prevailed in modern art history. Last is the prominent role Japanese artifacts and agents played in the construction of our contemporary mediascape itself. These factors together make the field of Japanese art history an important counter-discourse to the Eurocentric biases that the discipline has long struggled to shed. Hence the ultimate task of this book is to demonstrate the power of Japanese "premodern" and "non-Western" objects to decolonize modern art history.

Marked Terms

Two terms in particular, *non-Western* and *premodern*, bracket the vast majority of the human archive from contemporary critical relevance.[8] The thesis offered here, however, is that Japanese art has long transgressed these reductive temporal and chronological frameworks. Accordingly, this book's focus is neither premodern nor modern; it is instead written with the belief that one can be faithful to the dignity and difference of a given historical context and simultaneously aware of the enduring presence of radically distant artifacts. Motivating this approach is the conviction that scholarship progresses through retrospection, that the premodern archive reveals dormant epistemologies of vision that remain not only historically but also critically germane. In the chapters that follow, I aim to construct a discourse that simultaneously does justice to the historical context and alterity of nonmodern artifacts while also acknowledging their enduring agency and presence.

Most of the artifacts at the core of the book date to Japan's long twelfth century, a period characterized as the late Heian (794–1192) or, alternatively, the Insei era. In the structure of Japanese art history, this is a particularly sensitive era, customarily cast as a halcyon, classical epoch wherein an autochthonous aesthetic first

emerged. To this day, Heian objects are treated as emblematic of a definitively Japanese sensibility, one that might be contrasted with any number of foreign imports or encounters thereafter. The era came to its end with the internecine Genpei War (1180–85), which saw the imperial family cede political power to the first of a series of military governments that would rule until the Meiji restoration in 1868. Anachronism notwithstanding, the history of the twelfth century is often tinged with an elegiac nostalgia for an ideal premartial order. Moreover, this mythos of a classical past would play a key role in nativist and nationalistic discourse in early modern and modern Japan—so much so that one cannot tell the history of the twentieth century without the twelfth since the two are, as Thomas Lamarre puts it, "mutually contingent."[9] Hence the critical importance of twelfth-century artifacts.

The argument here begins by interrogating the problem of chronology and temporality in Japanese art history in order to reveal the odd place of premodern Japanese art within the discipline at present. It turns thereafter to the term *interface* as both a historiographical paradigm and a means by which to understand the connections between past and present mediascapes (namely, the various media that were available or prevalent at any historical juncture and that made up the horizon of possibility for depiction, notation, and representation).[10] In my use of the term *interface*, each historical and present encounter with an artifact represents an interfacing relationship; to understand an artifact is to excavate the aspects and layers of its various subjective interfaces. As such, I am not interested in exploring the singular, incipient meaning of an artifact so much as its openness and contingency. An advantage of this framework is that it allows one to focus more rigorously on the ways in which visual artifacts *transit* contexts without treating images as if they are texts to be translated. Interface theory is, thus, especially apt for describing the flow of images constative of visuality, especially in the context of "global modernity." At the material level, moreover, *interface* foregrounds the fact that it is not pictures and photographs but screens that have now become the primary means by which visual material—text included—are mediated.

With this framework in place, the book then undertakes a suite of analyses of three seemingly anomalous or problematic manuscripts: the *Eyeless Sutras* (*Menashikyō*), *The Significance of the Character "A"* (*Ajigi*), and the Nishi-Honganji recension of the *Anthology of the Thirty-Six Poets* (*Nishi-Honganji-bon Sanjūrokuninkashū*). Part of the challenge of these manuscripts is that they all engage purportedly modern themes and processes, such as montage, collage, metanarrative, superimposition, assemblage, fragmentation, and semiotic theory. As a consequence, they have long resisted prevailing art-historical taxonomies and methodologies. Such recalcitrance, I argue, is precisely what lends them their critical import.

At stake, as well, is a more rigorous understanding of the period beliefs concerning the embodiment of vision. The key artifacts in that regard relate to a contemplative ritual known as Ajikan, which has one imagine writing and manipulating a grapheme within one's embodied heart-mind (the organ, in East Asian antomy, that contained the mental faculties). This discussion of embodied visuality (and embodied text) naturally leads to the larger themes of bodily interiority, physiology, and anatomy. Hence the challenge thereafter is to scrutinize the visceral materiality of vision itself through a look at prosthetic representations of the heart-mind. Whereas scholars like Michael Camille have provided trenchant insight into the competing theories of vision in medieval Europe, Japanese art history is still wanting in this regard.[11] In contrast to Euro-American art history, which often foregrounds the legacies of ancient optics, the physiology of seeing, and the epistemology of vision, such concerns have not been mainstream issues in Japanese art history.[12] One contributing factor is that theories of vision, such as one finds in the Yogācāra tradition, were both more complex and less readily diagrammable. Beyond physiology, as Beate Fricke argues, art historians of the nonmodern still need a "prehistory of aesthetics" and a more historicized understanding of materiality's role therein.[13] In an attempt to remedy this situation, chapters 4 and 5 will address the aesthetic and physiological frameworks of vision. Thereafter, the book will come full circle through an extended test case concerning the multiple origins of montage—the sequencing and assemblage of disparate images—in modernity. Between the chapters, small interludes will provide glimpses into provocative bridging concepts.

In terms of method, no single approach prevails. Classical critical theory, image science, anthropology, media theory, orthodox iconography, semiotics, and even paleographic connoisseurship all have a role to play. The engagement with transdisciplinarity becomes, in some respects, a method itself, as I am interested in bringing disparate fields of knowledge to bear on one another. My use of theory, however, is not in opposition to contextualism. Instead, it is only through a more rigorous accounting of the presuppositions and methodological habits of the modern discipline that one is able to approach more closely the context of the original moment. Rather than project theory onto these objects, the goal is to let the original context—to the extent to which this chimera is ever attainable—push back against the primacy of the modern frame. Likewise, I am interested throughout in highlighting instances where Japanese nonmodern objects resist theory, provide exception, counter false universalisms, and disrupt the policed borders within which certain critical tropes are often confined. Accordingly, if the following chapters oscillate between present theoretical concerns and premodern contexts, it is only in order to afford these non-Western and nonmodern artifacts their contemporary critical purchase.

As my choice of vocabulary will reveal, my understanding of vision is partially informed by what German-language scholarship terms *Bildwissenschaft* (lit. image science) and what Anglophone scholars alternatively term *visual anthropology* or *image theory*. A key assertion therein is that the discipline of art history must find a way to account for the interpenetration, interaction, and interdependence of one's visual experience of a pictorial artifact (a *picture*) and the somatically mediated *images* such artifacts engender.[14] According to this sort of *image anthropology*, the human body is itself a living medium, and no image exists without a material body to mediate it.[15] A limiting factor in this field of scholarship, however, is its deeply Eurocentric episteme. As one of its most prominent proponents, Hans Belting, once put it: "The question of what an image is remains a rather narrow inquiry so long as it does not explore the notion of images in cultures other than our own."[16] Hence an ancillary motivation for the present study: to reveal the essential role that nonmodern and non-Western works must play if one hopes to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of what images are, mean, and do.

Along a similar vein, recent decades have seen the purview of art history expand to include all the artifacts of all cultures or—even more broadly—to include all species of images, from petroglyphs to radiographs. Indeed, I prefer the term *artifact* throughout since it evokes all material traces of human making, not only those circumscribed by the fraught concept of "art," a word that, despite its gravitas and aura, more often excludes or impedes inquiry into the non-Western and premodern. Among the impulses fueling this diversification are decolonizing imperatives for more global histories, the economic ramifications of digital reproduction, the decentering of the Western canon, and the brute redistribution of capital. Yet the place of extra-Western artifacts within mainstream art history remains, at best, unquiet. For despite the good intentions of humanistic deimperialization, such disciplinary inclusivity sometimes risks the wholesale projection of a modern North Atlantic framework onto networks of objects and agents where such conceptions may obscure more than they illuminate. Artifactual diversity must entail epistemological diversity. This is especially problematic in the context of artifacts because, unlike foreign languages, they can readily be seen, even if what one sees and how one sees have little to do with the historical intent, context, or reception of the object. Hence, in broadening the canon, one risks having the artifact but not the means to see it—or, to reframe the metaphor from the Other's perspective, a seat at the table but not the right to speak.

To that end, in the chapters that follow, I reconstruct modes of seeing, species of images, and frameworks of mediation that resist the familiar ways in which we approach such objects. It is an attempt to rethink not only the ways in which historians approach nonmodern, non-Western material but also the importance of nonmodern, non-Western notions of vision as productive sites of critique for the future of the

discipline. Likewise, where consonance arises in unexpected places, the exclusivity and primacy of the European exemplar is called into question. Whereas comparative work is sometimes maligned as surface level, lacking the depth of engagement that one finds in a context-specific history of art, I would argue just the opposite is true. It is only through decentering Eurocentric modernity that any contemporary theory might hope to advance.[17] Thus I work in two directions: I attend both to historical context and contemporary theoretical importance, thus allowing premodern artifacts to critique a discipline whose theoretical work is often hemmed in by its application to a myopic corpus.

Japanese Art in Modernity

All art is potentially contemporary, yet in a past life, the most fundamental of art history's aims was to assign every artifact a spatiotemporal point according to a European and teleological understanding of formal change.[18] The framework privileged innovation, genius, origin, and creation, leaving little space for reuse, spoliation, appropriation, or any other subsequent processes whereby artifacts interface with living viewers. Yet as scholars in the lineages of Aloïs Riegl or Aby Warburg delight in noting, problems soon arise. Take, for instance, the simple fact that objects move. They sometimes spend the vast majority of their *active lives*—the time span during which they are seen, affect viewers, and exert agency on contemporary artifact production—in locations far removed from their reconstructed contexts. Even more basic is the sheer fact that objects *survive*, to use Warburg's preferred English term.[19] This situation, as Georges Didi-Huberman aptly puts it, "*complexifies* history."[20] By this logic, the subset of the artifactual archive that is actively living within a given visual culture is prima facie contemporary, regardless of how the living supplement, frame, or distance it with taxonomies, labels, and scholarship.[21] In fact, it is only through deeply ingrained disciplinary habits (what Didi-Huberman calls "euchronic bias") that we learn to bracket past things so instinctively from the present, to disregard their particular power to continue to exert agency.[22] Hence extant artifacts have a heterochronic historical stance, split as they are between their present and past lives.[23]

While this might all seem straightforward enough, when one turns to artifacts from outside the European tradition, the complexity increases. For instance, to the Euro-American eye in the late nineteenth century, all Japanese art was contemporary in the sense that it was freshly available for appropriation and replication. That is not to say that modern eyes were not interested in understanding the history of Japanese art—some certainly were—but in the context of Orientalism, novelty (and chauvinism) trumped history. Not only was history sometimes denied, but contemporaneity was as well (once modernity went from a chronological to a spatial concept).[24] Japanese

artifacts hence became enmeshed in two competing historiographical paradigms, the domestic and the Euro-American. In some respects, this situation continues to this day; there is discord between the image of Japanese art within Japan and the image of Japanese art abroad.

A similar divide exists between Japanese modern art and what might be called Japanese art in modernity. Modern Japanese art is art made during the modern period, no matter how contested. These works, however, are but a part of the larger category of Japanese art in modernity, a designation that would include the vast archive of preexisting objects in circulation, on view, and in print. Prominent examples of the latter category include tea bowls, Buddhist icons, early modern lacquerware, and medieval ink paintings—objects that have exerted a powerful influence on the image of Japanese art in modernity. The two categories, moreover, were deeply intertwined since the premodern archive served as a crucial reference point for the creation of Japanese modern art.[25] A firebrand might argue that in some twentieth-century contexts, Japanese art in modernity played a more prominent role than Japanese modern art. To this day, a significant portion of the Japanese art that seems modern/contemporary on the global stage was made centuries earlier. There is, thus, a tension between the competing contemporaneity of nonmodern objects and objects made in modernity. Whereas modern Japanese artists sought to achieve contemporaneity with their Euro-American peers, nonmodern objects were not subjected to such disenfranchising politics in the same way.[26] I would even argue that much premodern Japanese art actually *transited* modernity itself, surviving in the twenty-first century as a part of a seemingly timeless image of contemporary Japanese art.

Such timelessness loops back to Vienna. As the example of the Secession exhibition reveals, even at the turn of the twentieth century, Japanese art was framed as both the antediluvian archive of artisanal immediacy and the guiding light of the future. In the postwar era, this stance would find an analogue in the "always already modern" trope, whereby elements of contemporary practice (such as aleatory aesthetics, action painting, assemblage, abstraction, minimalism, time-based media, or performance art) would all seem to have been already present in premodern Japan.[27] Like clockwork, come the advent of postmodernism, different aspects of Japanese art (reuse, *mitate*, *détourenement*, and the admixture of old and new) would allow for Japanese art to evince postmodernity avant la letter, as well.[28] Differing contemporary aesthetic investments thus privileged differing moments in the archive. Art nouveau prized *Rinpa*; abstract expressionism prized the calligraphy of Zen monastics (*bokuseki*); minimalism saw itself prefigured in *wabi-cha* tea culture; anime sometimes claimed lineage from *emaki*. And so the fantastical and problematic cycle continues to this day.

This is not, however, reducible to the familiar problem of modern cultural appropriation. At a temporal level, something more complex is happening. For instance, the

archival investments of the contemporary art worlds of Japan and Euro-America are radically distinct in that one finds far less of a focus on the modern/contemporary in Japan. For someone accustomed to the presentism of much of the Euro-American art world, the magnitude of this contrast can be difficult to fathom. One clear way to measure this, as Satō Dōshin demonstrates, is by exhibition attendance.[29] For example, one of the most highly attended exhibitions in the world is the annual exhibition of the eighth-century Shōsōin Treasury. Each autumn, vast crowds journey to the city of Nara to see just a few dozen objects: musical instruments, glassware, metalwork, rugs, screens, inventories, raw materials, even tax documents. The extraordinary Shōsōin exhibition notwithstanding, other premodern exhibitions in Japan garner similar crowds. According to Satō's accounting, of the top twenty best-attended exhibitions in Japan between 1945 and 1990, six were of European art, six were of premodern Japanese art, three were of ancient Egyptian art, and only five were of modern Japanese art.[30]

The prominence of premodern Japanese art has only increased in the ensuing decades. For instance, in the first half of 2019, only a single exhibition of contemporary art—a blockbuster group show—ranked in the top ten of the best-attended domestic shows. It had fewer than half as many attendees as an exhibition on the ninth-century sculptures of the Tōji monastic complex.[31] On the international stage, the contrast becomes even more pronounced. Some six times between 2008 and 2020, the best-attended exhibition in the world has been a special exhibition on premodern Japanese art in Japan.[32] For Satō, the lack of foreign interest in modern Japanese art is indicative of a "serious gulf" that "calls into question the success of the 'modernization' of modern Japanese art."[33] Yet Satō's exclusive focus on *modern* Japanese art overlooks the foreign and domestic prevalence of premodern Japanese art in modernity. To borrow his phrasing, it would seem that premodern Japanese art modernized more successfully than much modern Japanese art. As these statistics indicate, the prominence and dual temporal stance of premodern Japanese art in modernity is not a historiographical fluke of the nineteenth or twentieth centuries; it is an integral aspect of its existence. Far from an exception, the Secession exhibition might even be cast as prescient for it seems to prefigure, in many ways, the enduring contemporaneity of premodern Japanese art.

Nonmodernity

In the context of Japan, the rhetoric of modernization is customarily keyed to the Meiji era (1868–1912): the young Meiji emperor is enthroned, the isolationist government deposed, and so the lightning modernization begins. As Alexandra Munroe noted some three decades ago, this delusive schism is especially pronounced in the field of art history.[34] The divide between premodern art and modern art is sometimes treated as a singular watershed, with the present elided with the modern. Yet from

a twenty-first-century perspective, modernity is itself historical, thus it is far more accurate to conceive of modern Japan as an intervening era that present scholars of earlier art must excavate, in a Foucauldian sense.

Moreover, the common narrative of Japan's nineteenth-century emergence into modernity from isolation—the modernization paradigm—obscures the much earlier presence of Japan in the European imaginary. The paradigm further presupposes a one-way transfer of knowledge, yet just as Japan was in the process of appropriating Euro-American technologies and conceptual frameworks of art, Euro-Americans were reciprocally fascinated with attempting to appropriate Japanese visual culture. For instance, from an art-historical perspective, the Secession show was *modernizing* art via premodern Japan, just as Japan was *modernizing* art by looking at European works. Rarely, however, is the role of Japan described in such terms since the Euro-American appropriation of Japanese visuality is too often immured in the Francocentric framework of *Japonisme*, a term that belies the geographical expanse, magnitude, and duration of the interface of Japanese visual and material culture with various other modernities. Thus the following two chapters will present an alternative to the frameworks of modernization and Japonisme.

The idiosyncratic phrase *North Atlantic modernity* also deserves some explanation. Its purpose is to resist the myth of "the West," a dangerous monolith that enervates critical research.[35] For instance, nineteenth-century Japan was not in a binary relationship with a "modern West" but triangulated with the United States and only a small handful of European nations, each with its own dialect of modernity.[36] (North) Atlantic modernity also has the advantage of foregrounding the liminal space of the Atlantic across which enslaved bodies, immigrants, commodities, diseases, and ideologies transited.[37] In the case of Japan, the key European players were limited to the Low Countries, France, the United Kingdom, and, to a lesser extent, the German states, Italy, and Russia. When one considers the role played by Russia, and especially the prominence of the United States in modern Japanese history, "the West" is just as much a Pacific entity. Moreover, the existence of the Japanese Empire itself alerts one to the error of treating modernity, technology, and colonization as if they were exclusively European phenomena.[38] To decolonize the history of art, one needs to resist reifying "the West" as a monolithic term.

It is for similar reasons that I will avoid the term *modernization* in the context of art history, when modernization, westernization, Americanization, and industrialization seem best considered as overlapping but distinct processes. Whereas some, such as Paul Ricoeur, see technology as progressing on a unidirectional and globalizing telos, visual culture lacks such linearity; visuality, unlike technology, operates according to recursive, anachronic, and polytemporal mechanisms.[39] Images are mercurial, fluid, and fugitive. These reservations motivate my decision to employ the term

nonmodern rather than *premodern* art; the term has the further advantage of escaping the teleological error of thinking that the value of the premodern is only as a prelude.[40] It further stresses that modernity is not an end point so much as an interlude, one increasingly removed from the present. Nonmodernity is thus an attempt to decenter and decolonize the discourse on modernity itself.

The larger notion scrutinized here is the tendency to treat global modernity as if it were merely an advanced stage of the imperialist proliferation of modernity's North Atlantic idiolect, when it is instead a phenomenon that arose through the interface of diverse temporal and artifactual worlds. Within this more inclusive and diverse historical narrative, Japan played a key role since the interface with Japanese artifacts ruptured the doxa of North Atlantic modernity and destabilized the specious universalism of its art history. One might even proffer that it was the interface with Japan's art that first cleaved open the possibility of a modern non-Western art history that might be seen as an equal. As such, the Japan interface played a role in paving the way for the contemporary recognition of multiple modernities. As we will see in chapter 2, moreover, Japan's interface with North Atlantic modernity presented a model for other industrializing *European* nations. Most concrete of all, perhaps, is the fact that Japan eventually came to develop, manufacture, and popularize the very technological apparatuses (namely, cameras, computers, screens, and so on) that would give rise to something resembling a global interface. Hence the need in the following chapters to reframe Japan's artistic relationship to North Atlantic modernity writ large.

Facing Images

As this book's title reveals, faces play a prominent role in this study. At the most immediate level, *Facing Images* evokes the binary format of the codex—a fundamental structure of art history that is intimately tied to juxtaposed lantern slides and the formalism of Heinrich Wölfflin (1864–1945). One must bear in mind that Wölfflin's purportedly objective polarities intersected with a strong desire to demonstrate national stylistic essences (hence the alterity at the core of traditional art-historical methodologies). Along those same lines, *Facing Images* speaks to the way in which two different ways of seeing—two different historical ways of understanding vision—might interface: two different images of what art is, how it operates, and how it transits its agents.

Yet the metaphor cannot help but run much deeper, as faces have long been a topic of a rich art-historical and theoretical literature, from the ethics of Martin Buber (1878–1965) and Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995) to the deterritorializing *visagéité* of Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995) and Félix Guattari (1930–1992).[41] Here again, faciality and alterity are ineluctably bound; and as the most sensitive locus of subjectivity, the

literature is vast.[42] Arguably no discipline other than art history accords such extreme primacy to this "cynosure of all images."[43] Faciality figures prominently in scholarship on twelfth-century Japan, in particular, since it was during this era that verisimilar physiognomic delineation, so-called likeness images (*nise-e*), emerged. This novelty destabilized the prevailing conventions for facial depiction and challenged the primacy of the calligraphic trace as a bearer of identity. Faces figured as never before.

In Euro-American scholarship, it is possible to draw various etymological and conceptual links between *faces* and *sur/faces*.[44] Regardless of how much one wishes to make of this, such etymological arguments are often limited to certain linguistic spheres. Quite ironically, these originally European theoretical concerns are perhaps better suited to the Japanese language than European ones.[45] Etymological analysis is complicated in the Japanese context since phonetic and inscriptive etymologies operate somewhat independently. A variety of characters might be used to write the same word, just as the same character might signify a variety of separate words. In the twelfth century, the germane character would be 面, used from at least the early Heian period to signify the human countenance, the front of the head, the surface of an object, a complexion, or even an attitude.[46] Throughout the Insei period, when pronounced *omo*, it had a semantic field that encompassed the human countenance, a scene or spectacle, a surface, an outer appearance, or even a trace. During the same era, when pronounced *omote*, it brought with it a stronger link to human physiognomy as well as the metaphorical sense of honor (saving face). When pronounced *tsura*, the term evoked yet another semantic field, signifying the bottom half of the human face, the profile, or the aspectivity of an object. By the early thirteenth century, the character might be pronounced as *men* to signify a mask or even to describe a face-to-face encounter. Most arresting of all is the term *omokage*, a binome that combines the aforementioned 面 with 影, the latter character signifying a wide array of meanings such as shadow, silhouette, figure, image, form, or a visual phenomenon that was not before one's eyes. Its secondary meaning was, once again, the human face. By the thirteenth century, it would take on a broader valence to evoke illusions as well. It is easy to get carried away with such philological exercises, especially in the digital age, when the digital humanities has made short order of what used to take years of philological toil. Moreover, as with all etymological approaches, there is a degree of legerdemain as one wonders how seriously these graphical or phonetic connections were ever taken. Be that as it may, it seems clear that the strong degree of semantic overlap between faces, surfaces, images, and pages is a characteristic of period discourse on visuality worth more than passing reflection. This is my title's most far-reaching meaning.

A final way in which this book engages the theme of the face is through the concept of interface itself. Whereas the term might at first sound suspiciously contemporary,

I employ it as a way to foreground the embodied and interactive nature of vision. As a variety of scholars have argued, objects possess their own gaze and "stare back" at their viewers.[47] Interface also highlights the mirrorlike "facingness" of the screen-centered mediascape itself.[48] The term likewise operates as a historiographical metaphor to describe the encounter of two visualities, serving, in that regard, as an alternative to the frameworks of appropriation and translation. Whereas one cannot translate a visuality the way one can a language, one can interface with it. Moreover, the link between alterity and faciality allows one to speak of the meeting of two fields of discourse or visualities as a dialogic relationship. Hence this metaphor will be important in describing the *interface theory of modernity* for which the second chapter advocates.

Beyond Binaries

This book is written in a language and situated in an episteme that diverge sharply from those of the artifacts at its core. As such, I would like to caution against certain present analytic binaries—some emic, most etic—that risk obscuring the historical reality of nonmodern Japanese artifacts. This is a complex question since the period itself embraced binary paradigms so wholeheartedly. As Lamarre puts it: "Doubles—in agonist pairs—fairly overwhelm the Heian court."[49] This makes scholarship on premodern Japan especially vulnerable to structuralist and post-structuralist frameworks since these etic analytic modes have preexisting emic categories that appear to lend them salience.

The first is the paradigm of text and image, a binary that operates as a mainstay of analysis in Japanese art history due to the prominence of the written word. Scholars of East Asian art (myself included) often evoke this binary in order to make clear how tightly interwoven writing and pictures are. Yet this heuristic can be misleading. Whereas I embrace *image* wholeheartedly, I am wary of *text* since its use is often linked to the (post-)structuralist enterprise that attempted to transform visual experience into a "language of art."[50] To pursue that angle is especially dangerous for art historians since it capitulates to modern European logocentrism and anxieties of the visual that are absent in the archive.[51] Moreover, even when dealing with inscribed artifacts, such as manuscripts, it predisposes one to disattend to the materiality and figurality of the written word, as these are only "secondary signals" or cosmetic supplements to the more important hermeneutic meaning.[52] Such "desensualization of language" in favor of linguistic analysis risks misconstruing the ontology of the written word.[53] It is akin to treating a stage play as if it were only important for the script or to studying the history of music with only scores. Counterintuitively, this ahistorical embrace of notational abstractions is orthodox. In literary studies, for instance, a schism persists between philological textualists and the paleographical materialists.[54]

As such, this book responds to the call to restore figurality to Heian manuscripts, to escape the "anti-figural modernizing impulse," and to foreground the agency of materiality, indexicality, and ornament.[55]

The textualist paradigm is enmeshed in the printed, alphabetic, and digital world of the past century, which is quite different from the inscribed, figural, material, and holographic world of twelfth-century manuscripts. This contrast is especially sharp in the history of Japan, since manuscript and print survived side by side until the twentieth century. Even in Japanese printed texts before the twentieth century, the writing was no different than the image, both being brush traces carved into the very same cherrywood blocks.[56] In that regard, the inutility of moveable type in Japan was a tremendous boon since it saved Japan from succumbing to the word/image illusion that arose in early modern Europe. Then again, even in the Euro-American case, this distinction was never terribly cogent.[57] Following the pictorial and material turns of the past half century, few would now dispute that the material embodiment of a word is intrinsic to its meaning. Hence once one abandons the text/image binary, the written word is revealed to be but a specialized genre of mark making: all written texts are images, but not all images are texts. When analyzing medieval manuscripts, it is therefore essential to differentiate between the abstract "text" and the material "text artifact," the former being a linguistic sequence, irrespective of its material notation (if any), while the latter is the actual material form that a text has taken.[58]

A second presumption scrutinized here is the concept that writing and pictures must be somehow discrete, that each demands its own spatiality, and that the presence of the two in the same figural space should be taken as remarkable.[59] As Jean-François Lyotard averred in his monumental study *Discourse, Figure*, the "space of text" and the "space of the figure," seem divided—at least in European thought—by an "ontological rift."[60] Yet this way of thinking likewise stems from a Eurocentric notion of "text and image" that is foreign to East Asia.[61] For example, roughly speaking, with prominent exceptions, one often assumes that inscriptive marks are *on* a surface, whereas depictive marks are behind the surface. One writes on paper but sees into a painted canvas. Like text/image, this surface/depth binary has been a conceptual mainstay of modern art history, widely presumed to be a universal feature of all mark-making traditions. Thus to have writing on an image seems somehow amiss—it must be an accident, a palimpsest, or an error. Indeed, writing on any patterned surface whatsoever will seem problematic so long as one assumes that the easy extraction of "text" from the "text artifact" is the effective measure of writing. Yet, as chapter 3 demonstrates, nothing could be further from the case in medieval Japanese manuscript culture, where the most highly esteemed contexts of inscription would seem to almost demand an ornamented surround into which one might manifest the lines of the calligraphic complement. Rarely was the "paperscape," as Lamarre terms it, a "neutral" surface;

instead, the manuscript interface was an arena in which one encounters "microaesthetic intersections" between the "layers of expression."[62] When twelfth-century agents did use print, it was not for the "text" but for the creation of elaborately ornamented textile-like grounds that would serve as trellises for inscription. Reading and writing were thus stratigraphic processes that took advantage of all three spatial dimensions of the page. Thus I argue that the layering common to Japanese manuscripts is evidence of a sophisticated engagement with what one might term *stratigraphic aesthetics*.

One of the greatest ironies of text and image debates is that they are a moot point in the twenty-first century. Just as humanistic scholarship began to embrace the visual, material, and physical nature of manuscript culture, writing "transcended humanity itself," becoming coded text communicated via programming languages.[63] Now one is in the curious situation where the visual figuration of inscriptive and depictive marks on a graphical user interface—the heralded dominance of the digital imagescape—is actually subtended by a metalanguage of textual notation.[64] In the twenty-first century, many images are indeed texts, but not at all as the post-structuralists imagined. Likewise, Japanese scholars write in a language that has a more nuanced and ramified vocabulary for the phenomena of inscription and depiction, hence the obsession with this binary can sometimes seem a peculiarity of Euro-American scholarship.

Space permits only passing reference to the numerous other binaries at play. Most prominent would be the emic *Wa-Kan* dialectic, a topical and later stylistic polarity that characterizes cultural forms according to a reductive domestic/foreign spectrum. A binary conception of gender also frequently appears, in reference to both bodies and scripts.[65] There is also the modern notion of a secular/sacred binary.[66] Yet the secular was not a neatly partitioned field of experience, nor was "religion" a meaningful concept in the modern sense. Even within Buddhism (not to mention Shintō, Onmyōdō, Shugendō, and so forth), twelfth-century subjects partook of a variety of sects and schools with contrasting visualities and competing approaches to soteriology, phenomenology, and even ontology.

The final binary concerns vision itself. Historians of the nonmodern often speak of recovering a sense of how those living in a given historical moment saw differently, their "way of seeing," "period eye," "scopic regime," or, more commonly, their "visuality."[67] While I will attempt to be as faithful to the visuality of this period as possible, it is worth noting that this is, to some extent, an impossibility in the case of twelfth-century Japan since there is no singular visuality to recover. Visual experiences, systems of perspective, pictorial styles, and visual forms were simply too diverse for anyone to speak of a singular way of seeing. Such diversity suggests that the medieval Japanese agents who produced these artifacts were in possession of a visual literacy that was far more multifarious and fluent than the photographically inculcated contemporary eye. In fact, the diversity of visualities operative throughout Japanese art history

seems to be one of the most powerful sites of resistance against the totalizing habits of stylistic progression.

The reader of *Facing Images* is about to undertake an unusual journey: from Vienna in 1900, back to twelfth-century Japan, and ending in the sculpture garden of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) following the occupation of Japan. Yet this particular itinerary is a function of my belief that before one can understand the relationship of twelfth-century Japanese artifacts to the present discipline of art history, it is first necessary to reveal how much the discipline owes to Japanese visualities, media, and technologies of vision. Thus this book is about neither "modern art" nor "historical art" so much as the need to remove these blinkered concepts altogether. In other words, one must decolonize the narrative of Japanese art history's place in Euro-American modernity before one can attempt to write any history of Japanese art that will engage more than a highly specialist audience. Ultimately, *Facing Images* is guided by three interlinked goals: to dissolve the firewall between the nonmodern and the modern, to explore the visceral aspects of vision in medieval Japan, and to demonstrate how non-Western and nonmodern work is of critical relevance to the future of the discipline.