“TOURIST JAPAN”

Joanne Bernardi
Art and Material Culture in Asian Studies Colloquium
Beloit College, September 25, 2009
CONCEPTUAL FABRIC

• Exploration of Japan’s image as a foreign destination in visual and material culture, late 19th c. to present

  ✓ Organizational logic: a “coherent topic in the world” as opposed to a specified discipline
  ✓ Study of a continuous, dynamic cultural transition in a specific context
  ✓ Modernization as a formative drive in the process of constructing national identity
  ✓ How have concepts of “Modern,” “Early Modern,” and “Postmodern” been applied to the study of Japan?
  ✓ How are they useful?
TEACHING & LEARNING APPROACH

close observation of tangible, visible material

1. active experimental investigation
   ✓ weekly film screenings, class/online discussions
   ✓ 1 Field trip - c.1855 daguerrotype at GEH
   ✓ 1 CRITICAL ANALYSIS essay on object of choice (drafts required, rewrites encouraged)
   ✓ 1 take home FINAL in essay form

2. guided processes of critical analysis
   ✓ objects, images, short films (in addition to weekly screenings) viewed and discussed in class
   ✓ Considering material culture/film as historical acts continuing in the present; cultural manifestations of modernization processes
   ✓ Shifting, layered, interactive framework
COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. A critical awareness of how Tourism (both “corporeal” and “imaginative/virtual”) and its sustaining artifacts construct national and cultural identity in 20th century Japan → how has Japan defined itself, and been defined by others?

2. A critical and historical consciousness of Japan through visual and material culture (understanding the complex relationship between images/objects and people)

3. Comprehensive understanding of how material culture can be used in historical research (applications and significance)
Cultural objects discussed in class (films screened in class and additional weekly screenings) include:

- Tourist/Tourism ephemera (e.g., pamphlets, brochures, maps, cruise ship ephemera, postcards, glass slides, photographs, stereoviews, scrapbooks, home movies, viewmaster reels)
- Promotional items (e.g., trade cards, commercial brochures)
- Educational material
- Books and magazines
- Propaganda, newsreels
- US Occupation forces publications
- Feature films
- Documentaries
- Souvenir films, travel films
- Cartoons
General Introduction: popular media border crossings

Japan, 1955 (original Tetsuwan Atomu manga)  
USA, 1960 (Astro Boy, Key Comics)
Topical postcards as visual record of place, particularly urban landscapes, e.g.

**Tokyo and Yokohama**

Asakusa

Benten-dori
Dear Mr David R Wightman – I know following fact now and I hope you will excuse our disrespect. The other day about twenty days ago, a postman brought me some pictorial cards from foreign country which written correspondence on surface of cards. New servant of our house refused to receive those cards for delinquent postage and sent back, when I was absent. You will forgive me I am sure when I explain the reason. -

Yoshi Takakubo”
Global circulation of personal experiences, objects, images, cultures
“Today we chin with China, and faraway Japan. . . .”
(1917)

“Japan’s mission . . . to harmonize . . . East and West”
USA (n.d.)
Exposition Universelle 1900
Paris

St. Louis World’s Fair 1904

Japan-British Exhibition 1910

Panama-California Exposition 1915 San Diego
Ontario Beach Park Rochester NY
(Postmark 1911)

Panama-Pacific International Exposition
San Francisco 1915
Images, objects not of Japanese origin

Singer Co. promotional item: Popular consumption—product and edification

Sheetmusic: Orientalist fantasy and entertainment
Stereoviews & tourist brochures

Board of Tourist Industry
Japanese Government Railways

Nippon Yusen Kaisha
(N.Y. K. Shipping Line)
Magazines, assorted publications
Tourism and bumps in the road circa 1931
US OCCUPATION MATERIAL

“Guide to Japan” for U.S. Occupation Forces (published one month after the surrender (note “Restricted”)
1950s-1960s

Normalized tourism (or, Tourist “open season”)

... Also popular, “Japan from Your Car Window”
Continuities . . .

Tokyo Motor Bus Co., Ltd. (c. 1930s)

Hato bus tour (commemorative course. 2004)
Fissures . . .

18 March 2004 “Letter from Tokyo”

1913

2004
Film as Object . . .
When Flowerland Awakens in Japan (1917)
35mm nitrate print
When Flowerland Awakens in Japan (1917)
(images reproduced here with permission of George Eastman House, Rochester NY)
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COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS WELCOME!