

Abstracts

What makes my face pale...

-Maurice Denis' La Belle au crépuscule (Marthe Symboliste), 1892-

Namiko Sasaki

Maurice Denis' La Belle au crépuscule (Marthe Symboliste) was exhibited at the 8th Salon des Indépendants in 1892. This painting is not only of extreme importance as an example of Denis' earliest work but it is also filled with unique characteristics not found in any other of the artist's paintings and is a wondrous work of art. The original frame is decorated with a leaf pattern; the signature is purposefully obscured, and in its place the image of a human figure has been drawn in the shape of a flower pot. Above all, a greenish tone has been applied to the entire canvas.

The model for the painting was Marthe Meurier who was not only an acquaintance of the artist but had been engaged to him before he started the work. In the first half of the 1890s, Marthe appears in many of Denis' works, however, the greenish pallor of her skin can hardly be accounted for in other works and is truly a rarity.

Denis was baptized into "Symbolisme" which was in vogue at the time and in 1892 was without doubt fascinated by the movement. He kept company with many symbolist writers and from time to time illustrated their books or designed sets and costumes for their theatre productions. The plays of Maurice Maeterlinck were particular favorites of Denis and he often chose to design the covers of the theatre programmes or the musical scores which originated in the dramas of this great Belgian. We shall see the women with the pale face in the works by Denis, like the princesses of the distant country, forever proceeding towards death, in the dramas by Maeterlinck.

The word "pale" is also recorded in Denis' diary and was used to depict Marthe reading Maeterlinck's Princess Malaine at midnight. In fact, it is possible that Marthe was called "the young girl with the pale

face" by her close friends. To continue making associations from the Nabist perspective, it was believed that Marthe had some connection to the women represented in Maeterlinck's plays.

Following the analogical interpretation of another similar work (a painting whose frame bears the initials M.M.), it has been said that the hands that had decorated the original frame of Marthe Symboliste were those of Marthe. Further evidence that suggests that the two may have collaborated on this work is found in the strange flowerpot in the lower left of the painting. The pot itself contains a face and human figure and whose handles hold another face. Latter is said resemble the face of Denis. This is perhaps a hint that the couple portrayed in the flower pot are Marthe and Denis. A similar occurrence can be found in "Fiancée's fan (Marthe's fan)" of the previous year. In Marthe Symboliste, Denis' signature is written vertically in the upper right-hand corner of the painting as if it were to be hidden. The coupling of these two facts make this an increasingly mysterious figure.

In the early 1890s, Marthe's figure appears repeatedly and becomes decommonized; time, place and context are all peeled away and infinite possibilities are unveiled. Marthe offers herself as a form. She lends her hands for the completion of the work and at the same time, she is manipulated as a symbol. Marthe's stance as both a model and a collaborator may reflect the state of Denis and Marthe's relationship at that time and it might be said that this is a commemorative painting of their engagement. The 8th Salon des Indépendants in 1892 was perhaps an opportunity to display Marthe Symboliste as a testimony of the couple's love along side the other works installed at the exposition.

Sohgen Eguchi's Works of Non-Characters: The artist's analysis of Sho(書)in the early 1950s and his subsequent development

Kuninori Matsuya

Sohgen Eguchi(1919-)is an artist of Sho(書). After World War II, in the early 1950s, Eguchi created works of non-characters which were closely related to the abstract arts of both Japan and the West. His purpose in creation was to confirm the structure and independence of Sho. Abandoning traditional characters and brushwork, Eguchi engaged in analytical experimentation in an attempt to uncover the difference between Sho and abstract art. Despite repeated searches, he was unable to discover any true distinction.

In 1955, after much effort, he was finally able to comprehend the unique nature of Sho. This realization came when he appeared in Pierre Alechinsky's film, *Calligraphie Japonaise*. Eguchi's experiences in the 1950's provided the impetus for his future creations.

This study focuses on Eguchi's non-character works in the 1950s, offers an analysis of these works and his criticisms, brings in examples of other artists' work for comparative purposes and finally explores the sources of his subsequent works.

The Appreciation of Children's Eyes

Toshihide Miyazaki

In recent years, art museums throughout Japan have established museum educational programs geared towards children. Museums hold exhibitions and workshops for children, provide questionnaires to fill out to deepen understanding and teach children using direct approaches, such as gallery talks.

The Niigata Prefectural Museum of Modern Art has been conducting educational activities since its opening. In the summer of 1995, "The Art Exhibition for Children '95" was held. Following this exhibition, concerns were raised that we were controlling children's viewpoints through adult analysis as opposed to allowing children to create their own interpretations. Schools now offer courses in art appreciation with new curriculums that are specifically designed for children.

Children study not only at school but throughout their daily lives. Art museums should serve as institutions which help children learn to appreciate art. Our educational programs have been thoroughly reviewed in order to assess whether or not they help cultivate children's talents and abilities. Discussion guide currently provided by many museums is designed to help children expand their awareness and understanding. Gallery talks have proven to be a positive method for elevating children's awareness. However, creating a fixed storyline in advance has proven not to be an effective teaching method.

We believe that the following two points are important in cultivating children's independent appreciation of art:

1. Experimental activities must be included.
Not simply "seeing", but "touching", "holding" and "doing" must be incorporated into the cultivation of art appreciation.
2. The process of experience is valued.
In the process of learning to appreciate art,