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*The Transnational Creation of  
National Arts and Crafts  
in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Europe*<sup>1</sup>

The nesting doll is famous the world over as a traditional object from Russia. We imagine it to be an ancient tradition, passed down through the centuries among the Russian peasantry. But in fact, the *matryoshka* is an invented tradition originating from the very end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first one was created by a painter, Sergei Maliutin, and a sculptor, Vasily Zvyodochkin, in an artist colony patronised by a rich industrialist who wanted to encourage the creation of “Russian Art” for a country entering modernity. Presented at the World’s Fair in Paris in 1900, the nesting doll won a bronze medal and was a great success with the public, eliciting numerous commissions and triggering the development of a new large-scale arts and crafts productivity.

The birth of the *matryoshka* illustrates how folks arts and traditions, such as we know them today, are tied up in modern nation-formation in the context of

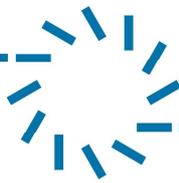
- industrial modernity
- the promotion and transformation of “folk” craftsmanship by artists and connoisseurs
- the intensification of international cultural transfers concerning artistic theories and practices.

Cultural and art history have often interpreted the promotion of folk arts and traditions as a defensive reaction against transnational artistic modernity, as a “return” to native, ancestral, and autarchic traditions<sup>2</sup>. This conception of a “return to national origins” in fact reproduces, in simplified form, the very discourse of the theorists and promoters of these “national arts and crafts”. In doing so it ignores the complexity of the modernity that determines the process at work in the formation of national identities.

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<sup>1</sup> SPIN lecture 2012; translation by John Rogove.

<sup>2</sup> “During the second half of the nineteenth century, many Russian artists, feeling moved to develop a national art, rejected or questioned the Western models taught in the Saint Petersburg and Moscow academies. The resurgence in interest in Slavic sources, myths, history and folk art, and the specifics of contemporary social and political conditions, all lent themselves to the emergence of an identifiably ‘Russian’ art.” Cf. [www.musee-orsay.fr/en/events/exhibitions/archives/archives/browse/7/article/lart-russe-dans-la-seconde-moitie-du-xixe-siecle-en-quete-didentite-4234.html?tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=252&cHash=d572d56e68](http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/events/exhibitions/archives/archives/browse/7/article/lart-russe-dans-la-seconde-moitie-du-xixe-siecle-en-quete-didentite-4234.html?tx_ttnews[backPid]=252&cHash=d572d56e68)



### *The Spirit of the “Imagined Community”*

The modern nation, as numerous studies have pointed out, is not merely a political matter, but a very emotional and aesthetic one as well. The notion of collective heritage, of specific culture, is primordial for the existence of the “imagined community” and for its members' feeling of belonging. The modern nation is conceived as secular and sovereign: its members are unified by a bond that is neither divinely ordained, nor the common submission to a common temporal power. The modern nation is self-determined: it is conceived and imagined as a collective being inscribed in space and time. And to this collective being is therefore ascribed a specific “character”, “spirit”, and “sensibility” infusing the nation's every expression, be it political, social or cultural. Each element of each national heritage constituted at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was presented as the expression of a particular national “spirit”. Over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, then, the expansion and transformation of intellectual and cultural production went hand in hand with its “nationalisation”: literature, painting, music, architecture, history, etc., were from now on defined in national terms. The productions of earlier periods were “nationalised” *a posteriori*, which allowed for the association of the notions of “French literature”, “German music”, or “Italian painting” with centuries-old corpuses. These artistic nationalisations were related to the nationalisation of time and space produced at the same time by national historiographies and the national codification of landscapes. The nationalisation of the past, of nature, of culture was, then, performed systematically. These new conceptions were very intensively relayed by education (both within and outside the school system) and through social practices involving new forms of urban design, naming of streets, leisure activities, etc.

And yet, these operations of nationalisation were effective to the degree to which they were carried out in the framework of cultural transfers, of the transnational exchange of knowledge and of know-how concerning nationalisation. Personal relationships between the artistic creators, entrepreneurs and institutions of various nations as well as deliberate imitations of foreign models were of the utmost importance. They allowed for the gradual and transnational definition of what was “properly national” in terms of artistic and cultural production. The major artistic and intellectual capitals like Paris, London or Vienna were places of learning and apprenticeship for native and foreign artistic creators. It was often in these cities that artists and intellectuals from elsewhere discovered the desire and the means to work in favour of their national identity. These metropolitan centres also functioned as places of evaluation and even of a sort of “stock exchange” for the valorization of national cultures.

It seems paradoxical that arts and folk traditions as we know them today were determined by cultural transfers between nations entering into modernity. Indeed, the promotion of popular,



folk culture, which begins only in the national era, rests mostly upon the “authentically national” value of this culture.<sup>3</sup> I would therefore like to demonstrate, on the basis of a few examples, how transnational exchanges were decisive for the creation of an “authentically national popular culture” appropriated by modernity.

### *National Heritage and Popular Culture*

The modern nation was conceived as a trans-social community. This implied a change in the status of the People, both politically and culturally. The People, until then, were thought of as devoid of culture. But with the beginning of the national era, popular culture was abundantly celebrated as the basis of “truly national” culture. It was from then on presented on the one hand as a relic of the original culture of the ancestors of the nation and on the other hand as the natural expression of the intimate relationships between the nation and the space that properly belongs to it. As a result, the double anchorage of the nation in its history and its territory passed through popular folk culture. This implied not only a new interest in popular traditions on the part of the upper classes, but also an intense reconfiguration of popular practices in order to promote them as the foundation of a modern national culture.

The first collections of popular folk culture, begun at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Europe, were explicitly presented as patriotic enterprises on behalf of the national identity. Up until the 1830s, they were primarily concerned with popular songs and tales. These verbal forms of popular culture were interpreted as the authentic material allowing for the constitution of the languages and literatures of modern nations. From the 1830s on, interest in popular culture expanded to its more material objects, especially clothing and jewellery. Draughtsmen and painters represented popular costumes, which were rather different from the ones seen in paintings from previous centuries.

The folklorists regularly insisted on the urgent necessity of describing these traditions. Traditional culture, such as it was then described, had a double particularity: it had been passed down without much alteration from time immemorial over the centuries and across wars, but it

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<sup>3</sup> “Some twenty or thirty years ago the whole of the large territory of the Ukraine, every corner of it, was still rich in peasant art. [...] While the upper classes of the “Little Russian” community, forgetting whatever they possessed of their own in the province of applied art, lived in surroundings borrowed from the West, the peasant folk clung to their own national art.” N. Bilachevsky, “The Peasant Art of Little Russia (The Ukraine)”, in *Peasant Art In Russia*, ed. Charles Holme (London, Paris, New York: The Studio, 1912), 15-35 (15).



was destined inevitably to disappear rapidly.<sup>4</sup> Anxiety over the loss of a centuries-old tradition has been a *leitmotiv* of folklorists and ethnologists since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. And yet the corpus of traditions and traditional objects collected over two centuries has not diminished, and, indeed, has continually increased. The Hobsbawm/Ranger “invention of traditions” (which in many cases should be read to mean: the improvement and revival of traditions), has been highly fruitful.

From the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century on, folklore studies began to extend to popular domestic objects: furniture, dish-ware, carpets, as well as to rural architecture. Indeed, these popular arts and crafts products were facing more and more competition from industrial production. Craft-work production, because it was, by economic necessity, less and less the object of popular consumption, progressively changed in status. It became, rather, an aesthetically valued consumer commodity for the more comfortable social classes. This social transfer was founded on the attribution of new values to popular arts and crafts, namely, originality and rarity. While industrial production was associated with mechanical work and the uniformity of the products, the value of handcraft production, on the other hand, was emphasized as the fruit of human skillfulness and of individual creation. Crafts were invested with the values characteristic of art.

### *A Design for the Industrial Era*

New forms of production and consumption raised a new series of aesthetic, social and political issues, which explain the important function of popular folk art in nation-building. Industrial development very soon brought aesthetic and ethical uncertainties to the surface. How to reconcile beauty and mechanical production? How to educate the taste of a public that was becoming a consumer of industrial goods? The question of taste had exclusively concerned a small elite in the pre-national era, but this changed drastically in the national era. Because the

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<sup>4</sup>“However, from the second half of the nineteenth century, when the feudal system was abolished, a change came over the social and especially the economic conditions of the country, and the old traditions of peasant life began to give way. This process was reflected in the peasant art, as it was in everything else. The demand for objects of adornment began to be satisfied now, not with the creations of the peasants' own artistic fancy, as was the case hitherto, but with factory-made articles which were quickly adapted to the roughly formulated requirements of the peasant. The decline of taste and the flooding of the villages with factory-made goods gradually caused at first a change for the worse in the productions of the people's art, and then the total disappearance of that art. This process is not, however, yet completed, and the life of the Ukrainian peasant is still preserving much of what is very individual, highly artistic, and strongly characteristic of the spiritual personality of the Ukrainian race.” (*ibid.*)



national community was from now on “imagined” through a common heritage, which had to be loved, protected and transmitted, it was now necessary that the members of the nation, whatever their social class, share a single basic conception of the Beautiful. It also became necessary to train “designers” for industrial mass production.

These concerns were at the hearts of the first International Exhibition held in London in 1851, when the United Kingdom was the most advanced country of the industrial revolution. Among the key personalities in these enterprises of aesthetic education one must mention the civil servant Henry Cole (1808-1882). Deeply involved in the new forms of public life, he was in charge of the organization and management of the archives and of postal reform with the creation of the first postage stamp in 1840. As an artist, he himself created all sorts of objects destined for industrial production. He wrote books under pseudonyms on cultural pedagogy for children and in 1843 he invented a British tradition destined for global success: the greeting card. After visiting the 1849 Quinquennial Exhibition in Paris, he obtained a government mandate to organise an international exhibition in London. The “Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations” was held in the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park in 1851. Cole played a decisive role afterwards in the creation of an institution intended “to improve standards of art and design education in Britain with reference to their applicability to industry”. This was the South Kensington museum, of which Cole was the first director from 1857 to 1873, and which in 1899 became the Victoria and Albert Museum. With its mission was to present objects from all over the world for the improvement of applied arts among producers and the public, this museum itself became the benchmark for numerous other museums of applied or industrial art that afterwards proliferated on the European continent.<sup>5</sup> In every case, the project was to train creators of applied art for the industrial age and to make an aesthetic pedagogy possible.

The great international exhibitions organised after 1851 also had, temporarily, the same function, but for a very large public. Technological innovation, the great machine halls, obviously took pride of place. Nations also came to showcase their identity and traditions in an attractive form.

In 1867, the section X of the International Exhibition held in Paris was devoted to objects allowing for the “improvement of the physical and moral condition of the population”. Classe 91 was concerned with “furniture, clothing, and food of all origins, distinguished by their useful

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<sup>5</sup> *Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie*, today *Museum für angewandte Kunst*, opened in Vienna in 1864, *Deutsches Gewerbemuseum*, today *Kunstgewerbemuseum*, opened in Berlin in 1867, *Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe* opened in Hamburg in 1874, *Museum für Angewandte Kunst* in Budapest in 1872, in a Jugendstil building by Ödön Lechner und Gyula Pártos in 1896, etc.



qualities, and cheap”, intended for a popular clientèle. But artists had been commissioned to show “the last vestiges of ancient manners and customs”: they presented costumes of peasants from France and from other countries. The Swedish part, which was classed first, was hugely successful: inspired by theatrical staging, it presented models dressed in traditional costumes. The Swedish presentation was enriched at the International Exhibition of 1878 in Paris: the models in costume were placed in interior domestic recreations, among objects of daily life.

It was precisely a Swedish institution which became the model of European ethnographic museums. The Swedish philologist Artur Immanuel Hazelius (1833-1901) undertook the creation of a museum for Swedish ethnography in 1872, today called the *Nordiska museet*. The national ethnographic museums which in the following years opened in the major European capitals<sup>6</sup> were all conceived along the same principles of exhibition. As a complement to this first form of ethnographic institutionalisation, specialised associations were founded: they published journals and curatorial instructions. The prototype was that of the British *Folklore Society* founded in 1878. From 1891 on, international conferences, often organised on the occasion of international exhibitions, enabled the exchange of knowledge and experiences.

Costumes and material objects were the first items presented in the exhibitions and museums because they were the hand-crafted products that were facing the most direct competition from industrial production. The first central museum of folklore in Germany, founded in 1889 under the directorship of Rudolf Virchow, was named *Museum für deutsche Volkstrachten und Erzeugnisse des Hausgewerbes* (“Museum of German Folkloric Costumes and Domestically Produced Objects”).

In 1891 Hazelius established an open-air museum in Skansen, near Stockholm, which became the universal model for other open-air museums. For “Skansen” he collected entire buildings and farms. Rural architecture was thereafter regularly presented in the ethnographic villages of the international exhibitions and in open air museums, also presenting visitors with peasant work and celebrations.

National ethnographic museums had a triple function, which was regularly repeated by organisers:

— a patriotic function in favour of national identity. The members of the nation were supposed to visit these museums in order to familiarise themselves, and identify, with the national

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<sup>6</sup> Museum for Swedish Ethnography, Stockholm, 1872; *Salle de France, Musée d’Ethnographie*, Paris, 1884; Danish Museum of Ethnography, *Dansk Folkemuseum*, Copenhagen, 1885; *Museum für deutsche Volkstrachten und Erzeugnisse des Hausgewerbes*, Berlin, 1889; *Norsk folke museum*, Oslo, 1894; *Museum für Volkskunde*, Vienna, 1894; Museum of Czechoslovak Ethnology, Prague, 1895; National museum in Budapest with large ethnographic exhibition, 1896.



traditions, spirit and lifestyle.

- a scientific function: they were meant to conserve and protect the materials of traditional culture, “collected just before their extinction”.
- a function for the applied arts: they were meant to provide artists and artisans with models and motifs to feed modern creativity.

### *From Crafts to Arts*

The “Arts and Crafts Movement”, which developed in the United Kingdom during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was the theoretical and practical crystallisation of reflections and practices concerning the new relations between modernity, industry, aesthetics, society and the nation. One of its dominant figures was the designer William Morris (1834-1896). The son of a London stockbroker, he became friends with Edward Burne-Jones during his studies at Oxford. He also became close to Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the artists of the “Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood”. A writer, poet, and translator of Icelandic sagas, he became deeply involved in the nascent socialist movement in Britain; he was among the founders of the *Socialist League* in December 1884. Highly influenced by his reading of John Ruskin, whom he popularised, Morris gave countless lectures calling for the improvement of the living conditions of manual labourers. To this end it was above all necessary, he felt, to develop education and leisure activities, to democratise art and every type of skill associated with it, so that the worker might become an artisan and an artist. He advocated the teaching of applied arts, since for him the creation of beautiful and useful domestic items was indispensable for the full realisation of a human being. He thus called for an aesthetisation of daily life and for a democratisation of the aesthetic:

To give people pleasure in the things they must perforce use, that is one great office of decoration; to give people pleasure in the things they must perforce make, that is the other use of it. [...] I do not want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few.<sup>7</sup>

As an experiment to put his principles into action, Morris designed for his own use the “Red House” in Upton (1859): he and his artist friends saw to the construction and decoration themselves. In 1861 he established, with Charles Faulkner and Peter Paul Marshall, the firm

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<sup>7</sup> William Morris, *The Decorative Arts, Their Relation To Modern Life And Progress: An Address Delivered Before the Trades' Guild of Learning (Dec. 4, 1877)* (London: Ellis & White, 1878).



“Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.”, with Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Ford Madox Brown and Philip Webb as partners. The firm produced furniture, jewelery, stained glass, embroideries, wall paper-hangings, carpets, etc. The work shown by the firm was presented at International Exhibitions..

The Arts and Crafts Movement was a major theoretical and practical point of reference in Europe and on other continents. William Morris was to Arts and Crafts what the brothers Grimm had been to philology: the model for the creators of that artistic movement that principally manifested itself under the names of *Art nouveau* and National Art. Whereas its *Art nouveau* version clearly presented itself as an aesthetic avant-garde, often grounded in “primitivism” and cosmopolitanism, the “National Art” side was predicated on its connection to national identities and on its rootedness in national and rustic references. The “National Art” version seems to have been more active in emerging nations, but it was also developed in artistic regionalisms of older nations such as Brittany and Catalonia. In fact *Art nouveau* and National Art are closely connected, with the work of numerous artists straddling both.

### *Artist Colonies and Arts and Crafts Workshops*

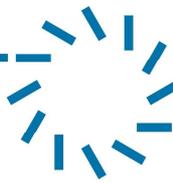
National Art corresponded to a new form of craft-work, practised by artists or else executed by manual workers under the guidance of artists. It was a matter of producing traditional, hand-crafted objects, yet adapted to consumption by an urban, more or less affluent public. In many European countries at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, artists set themselves up in villages that folklorists had described for the beauty of their traditions. They encouraged artisans to develop and transform original production, which they gave codified standards in order to facilitate its marketing and to guarantee its “authenticity”. Artists took it upon themselves to create sales circuits and to promote this production through publications and presentations in national or international fairs. Design journals, such as the great English journal *The Studio*, established in London in 1893, distributed advertisements and articles about this new national art throughout the world. Often, ladies from high society patronised these new workshops to charitable ends. The workshops were supposed to encourage peasants to stay in their villages and avoid emigration to the dangerous cities, where young girls risked prostitution. In some cases, rich patrons having made their fortunes in industry or banking, encouraged, for the sake of the creation of a national art, the meeting of artists and hand-craft artisans.

The Abramtsevo domain, near Moscow, was a very active centre of creation of Russian National Art. It was purchased in 1870 by Savva Mamontov, whose family had made its fortune



in the rail-roads and the Baku oilfields. An art devotee, he went on a Grand Tour to Italy where he connected with numerous young Russian artists. He set about bringing together writers, musicians, painters, sculptors, dramatic artists, whom he invited to stay and work at Abramtsevo in order to foster a high-quality national art. On the estate, the artists Vasily Polenov and Viktor Vasnetsov, Ilya Repin, etc. designed a tiny church, inspired by medieval Novgorod, which is considered to be the first example of Art nouveau in Russia. Drama and opera on Russian folklore themes (for example Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Snow Maiden*) were staged in Abramtsevo. The amateur performances in Abramtsevo contributed to the creation of the Russian Private Opera in Moscow (1885–1891, 1896–1899) owned by Savva Mamontov. Initiated by Yelizaveta Mamontova a collection of folk art was started in 1881. The objects presented were intended to inspire the work of the artists at Abramtsevo. The director of the workshop, Elena Polenova, created dozens of “hand-crafted” objects in this spirit; they won prizes at prestigious exhibitions. When, in 1899, Savva Mamontov was accused of financial malversations and his business came to ruin, artistic workshops based on the Abramtsevo model had been founded on the Solomenki estate, owned by Maria Yakunchikova, and on the Talashkino estate owned by princess Maria Tenisheva.

Another art colony famous for its creation of National Art that was inspired by the principles of the Arts and Crafts Movement, was founded in Kalostazeg. It functioned under the patronage of another rich couple of sponsors, the banker Zsimund Gyarmathy and his wife, the writer Etelka Gyarmathy. Kolatoszeg is a region in Transylvania (today in Romania) comprising around 40 villages with a mixed Hungarian and Romanian speaking population. Here, Etelka Gyarmathy hosted Habsburg archduchesses as well as renowned Hungarian and foreign artists. Béla Bartók collected folk music in Kalotaszeg. The Gyarmathys created the Kalotaszeg cottage industry, providing work for men and women in the villages. The production was presented at national and international exhibitions. One of the principal figures of Hungarian *Art nouveau*, the painter and sculptor Aladar Kriesch (1863-1920; he had trained in Munich, Rome and the Parisian *Académie Julian*) stayed in the Kalostazeg region at the turn of the century. In 1907, he even added to his name that of a village in the region, Körösfoi. He was also the founder of the Gödöllő artist colony, in the small town near Budapest. In this artist colony, for which he invoked the auspices of Ruskin, Morris and Tolstoy, he ran a workshop of textile crafts. The Hungarian Ethnographical Society was formed in 1889 and the Society's journal, *Ethnographia*, was launched in 1890. “In the following years Antal Herrmann, one of the leading organizers of the Society, leased the Jegenyé Spa in Kalotaszeg and tried to make it a summer resort of



intellectuals and artists, and even to develop it into an «ethnographers' colony»<sup>8</sup>. At the Exhibition of the Millennium (1896) where Hungary, largely autonomous within the Habsburg Empire, but not yet independent, presented its identity with fervor, the objects from Kalotaszeg were particularly emphasized. They constituted the essential elements of the Museum of Ethnography opened in Budapest in 1896.

During this same period the Zakopane style was launched in the Polish Carpathians. Stanislaw Witkiewicz, an art critic, artist and architect, created a style inspired by local traditions for rich residents in this new tourist region.

The 1900 World's Fair, whose principal attractions had to do with the new uses of electricity, also marked the triumph of National Art, which was also the occasion for an entire series of ambitious presentations intended to ornament the public buildings of Nation-States.

#### *The Universalisation of the Model for the Creation of National Arts and Crafts*

This international model of creation of a national art for modernity channelling popular tradition spread not only across Europe but also to numerous other countries. The undertakings for the creation of a Jewish national art in Palestine appeared right at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The *Verband Jüdischer Frauen für Kulturarbeit in Palästina*, founded in Hamburg in 1907, supported the opening of lace-making workshops in this way. The artist Boris Schatz, born in Lithuania in 1867, founded an art school in 1906 in Jerusalem inspired by the principles of Arts and Crafts. After studying painting at Vilnius and Warsaw, he joined the Atelier Cormon in Paris in 1889. In 1895 he was recruited as official artist of the newly established court of Bulgaria and created a Royal Arts Academy in Sofia. In 1903, after meeting Theodor Hertzl, he became a Zionist activist and chose to move to Palestine. There he opened the “Bezalel school”, named after the Biblical artisan who made the Tabernacle. The work of his students, who were generally Zionist activists, was presented in international exhibitions and was decisive for the creation of a Jewish art in Palestine. Inspiration was taken from the Arts and Crafts movement and combined with Biblical references and craft-work traditions from the Middle East. Closed in 1929 for financial reasons, Bezalel was reopened in 1935 as the New Bezalel School for Arts and Crafts. Today it is the main Israeli institution for fine arts training.

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<sup>8</sup> Tamas Hofer & Éva Szacsvey (trl. E. Antalffy), “The Discovery of Kalotaszeg and the Beginnings of Hungarian Ethnography” (1998), online at the website of the Museum Of Ethnography, Budapest, <http://www.neprajz.hu/kalotaszeg/angol.htm>.



The British Empire was itself, from very early on, a place of active experimentation with new aesthetic and political theories concerning folk arts. Having discovered a very rich creative production in India, and worried about its possible disappearance in the face of “Manchester products”, British elites rapidly went about emphasizing the value of, and protecting and developing the Indian hand-craft industry, which also happened to be well represented at the South Kensington museum.<sup>9</sup> The “Calcutta Mechanics’ Institution and School of Art” was founded as early as 1839, replaced in 1854 by the “Society of Promotion of Industrial Art”. In 1850, an Art school was founded in Madras. The Mayo School of Art was established in Punjab in 1875. John Lockwood Kipling (1837-1911; father of the famous novelist) was the secretary of the provincial Committee responsible for collecting specimens for the “Punjab Court” at the Calcutta International Exhibition (1883-1884). In 1870, commissioned by the government to tour the North-West Provinces, he made a series of sketches of Indian craftsmen. In 1875, Kipling was appointed the Principal of the Mayo School of Arts, Lahore. Kipling was also editor of the *Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, which carried drawings of works by the students of the Mayo School.

In Japan, the Arts and Crafts movement met with great success from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the country was going through its accelerated modernisation process. A few decades later, the *Mingei* movement was launched. - the name being an abbreviation for *Minshûteki Kôgei*, which means “crafts of the people”. The philosopher Yanagi Sôetsu (1889-1961) developed the *Mingei* theory in the 1920s. Yanagi created a concept of the supreme beauty of handmade folk-crafts for ordinary use, made by unknown craftsmen. The *Mingei* movement undertook a nationwide campaign for the revival of folk-crafts from the 1930s onwards. Yanagi, who came from a rich Tokyo family, was deeply immersed in Western culture and was a careful reader of *The Studio*. He too was to create an artist colony, in Abiko, invoking the auspices of Ruskin, Morris and Tolstoy. He was interested in the folk art of Korea, then a Japanese colony. Yanagi organised the first Japanese folk-crafts exhibition in Tokyo in 1927. In the same year he launched a guild of craftsmen which was similar to the firm Morris & Co. Yanagi founded the Association of Japanese Folk-Crafts in 1934 and published a new magazine, *Kôgei* (“Crafts”). He carried out field research on the Japanese islands. In 1936, Yanagi established the Japan Folk-Crafts Museum in Tokyo; the model was Hazelius’s *Nordiska Museet*.

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<sup>9</sup> The East India Company's Museum was founded in 1791 at the Company's headquarters in Leadenhall Street. It contained a substantial number of textiles. The Company took responsibility for Indian displays at the international exhibitions in London (1851) and Paris (1855) and many objects were then acquired for the South Kensington Museum. In 1875, the India Museum was moved to a site in South Kensington. Four years later, after much debate, the ownership of most of the India Museum collections was transferred to the South Kensington Museum.



One final, more contemporary example shows the application of this process to the population we now call “first nations”. “Inuit art”, such as we know it today, was launched by a Canadian artist. In 1948, the painter James Archibald Houston (1921-2005, trained in Paris and Japan), originally from Toronto, discovered the soapstone sculptures of the Inoucdjouac. The Canadian Guild of Crafts had already made several ethnologically motivated attempts before the war to stimulate “Eskimo” crafts. It lent its support to Houston, who encouraged the Eskimos to exploit their artistic talents and to market them. In 1949, a thousand or so objects were sold in Montreal, during the first major commercial exhibition of Inuit art. Under the aegis of the Canadian authorities, artists and craftsmen were sent into the communities in order to guide the Inuit in their artistic production, and cooperatives were created. Catholic missionaries undertook to create craft-work cooperatives. By the late 1950s, the Government had sponsored tours of Inuit art throughout Eastern and Western Europe, South America, and the Middle East.<sup>10</sup>

The first collectors of popular Arts and Crafts explained the urgency of their work by claiming to save objects that faced extinction in the advent of modernity. In fact, what disappeared were the original uses of these objects as new practices emerged. A new status was conferred on these objects: that of “relics” in an almost religious sense, appropriate to the new “secular religion” of modernity. National Art was supposed to attest to the eternity of the “national spirit”, rooted in the soil and in changeless time. Through this function, modern national art completed and reinforced the “historical” version of the master narrative that placed the nation in a teleological continuity through events. National art was also supposed to attest that the People, in the socio-economic sense, did not form a specific class, but were in fact the foundation of the People in the national sense, i.e., a unity with no real divisions.

But those “relics”, destined to be preserved in museums, were also given a new life – a revival – under the effects of aesthetic change. The main criterion by which Modernity assigns artistic value is innovation. This neither excludes nor undervalues tradition; on the contrary. To the extent to which tradition can itself be appropriated and transformed through innovative creation, it becomes itself a key element in the process of innovation; this is borne out by the constant usage of primitivism and archaism by the artistic avant-garde. National Arts and Crafts, for this reason, are just as cosmopolitan in their elaboration and in their evaluation as artistic goods, since they belong to the same networks. The major capitals, with their museums, galleries, art boutiques – as well as those temporary, movable capitals which consisted in the

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.immigrer-contact.com/main.php?action=tribune&option=lecture&mpseudo=lucanne&tid=8&t=1%27art\\_Inuit\\_-\\_Pour\\_se\\_souvenir\\_et\\_survivre](http://www.immigrer-contact.com/main.php?action=tribune&option=lecture&mpseudo=lucanne&tid=8&t=1%27art_Inuit_-_Pour_se_souvenir_et_survivre)



various international exhibitions hosted successively in different locations – were the places where new forms of Arts and Crafts were determined, where the objects received their value “quotation”. Which is not in contradiction with Arts and Crafts' function relative to national identity, as the internal and external representation of the nation. Mass tourism, moreover, drives the emergence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century of a new product of mass consumption: craft-work objects representing a national identity exclusively for the use of foreigners, and which often takes the form of industrially produced kitsch versions of the national identity. In a globalised world, its production is more and more concentrated in the new “Asian Manchesters”, eliciting in reaction newly-designed “truly manual” productions and labels for more “hand-crafted”, “truly authentic” hand-craft products. . .