Gender and Power in the Japanese Visual Field represents the results of a group research project that critically examines the representations of gender and sexuality in Japanese visual cultures. We include not only examinations of representations from Japan’s medieval, early modern, and modern periods, but also interventions in the study and re-presentation of such visual artifacts in contemporary scholarship. In other words, essays in this volume not only reexamine artifacts from the past, but also examine the historiography that surround the objects, that is, their reception history. In all cases, our concern is how the cultural constructions of gender and sexuality serve the purposes of power, especially as it is organized under state and interstate regimes.

Feminist Art History Outside Japan

Feminist art history is a relatively new development both within Japan and without. In North America its inception is often dated to the publication of Linda Nochlin’s 1971 essay “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” It took about a decade before critical mass had been generated to publish Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany, edited by Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, and advertised as “the first collection of feminist art historical essays to appear in the United States.” That volume contained seventeen essays “arranged chronologically and cover[ing] every major period from the ancient Egyptian to the present.” A decade later the same editors published a second volume, The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History (1992). As they note in their preface, this second time their “task was entirely different [from that in the 1982 volume]. We were confronted by a rich harvest of scholarship in art history, nourished by new theoretical and critical perspectives and by the new interdisciplinary fields of ‘women’s studies’ and ‘gender studies.’ The problem now was what to select from
that wealth of publications that might best represent its abundance, diversity, and main conceptual threads.” Despite this call for “diversity” and the very title of the volume, however, the editors decided at the beginning of their work “to limit the scope of this volume to the period from the Renaissance to the present.”

In their first volume the essays on Egypt and Crete fulfilled an important theoretical function. In their introduction, subtitled “Feminism and Art History,” Broude and Garrard claimed that knowledge of “Goddess worshipping culture[s]” created a “new historical perspective [that] has permitted for the first time a clear vision of the controlling part that sexual attitudes and assumptions have played both in the creation and naming of ‘Art’ and in the writing of art history.”

Just as Renaissance humanists were able to define the “Dark” or Middle Ages for the first time as a separate transitional age, bounded at either end by differing cultures, and could therefore understand it as a distinct period with cultural characteristics that were unique to it rather than universal, so feminist have named as “patriarchal” that period of more than five thousand years which reaches down to the present, and which began with the gradual replacement of a long-standing Goddess-worshipping culture by patrilineal and God-worshipping civilizations.

In other words, the authors seem to be suggesting that it is owing to some new knowledge of the existence of prepatriarchal cultures that feminist scholars have been able to contemplate the possibility of postpatriarchal perspectives. While this version of events does not reflect the development or the theoretical underpinnings of feminist art history or feminist critical thinking as a whole, it did at least affirm the necessity of including ancient and Near Eastern art in the discussion. In the 1992 volume, however, the editors have restricted, rather than “expanded,” the focus and range of the collection, and not one of the twenty-nine essays addresses non-European or ancient art. To paraphrase the Chinese art historian Craig Clunas: a historian of Asia cannot but be baffled by the powerful assumption throughout much of these volumes that there is no need to take into consideration any place other than certain parts of northwestern Europe or north-eastern America in order to explain what is supposedly distinctive about them. If these places are not seen as distinctive, then the exclusive focus on the modern West can only be interpreted as cultural myopia at best and cultural imperialism at worst.

In their 1982 introduction Broude and Garrard noted that “the most basic
and, to date, the most visible result of the influence of feminism on art history had been “the rediscovery and reevaluation of women artists.” At the same time, however, they claimed that their book was not “about women artists.” Nonetheless, five of the seventeen essays do concern themselves with women artists. The biographical approach was also the starting point for the entry of feminist criticism into the field of Asian art history as practiced in North America. In 1988 two exhibitions devoted to Asian female artists were mounted: *Japanese Women Artists, 1600–1900*, curated by Patricia Fister for the Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas; and *Views from Jade Terrace: Chinese Women Artists, 1300–1912*, organized by James Robinson, Ellen Lang, and Marsha Weidner at the Indianapolis Museum of Art. Catalogs were published for each show, and in 1990 a complementary collection of essays appeared: *Flowering in the Shadows: Women in the History of Chinese and Japanese Painting*, edited by Weidner.

**Gender and Art History in Japan**

What of the situation in Japan itself? While the art historian Richard Barnhart observes that “the inevitable trend of [the Chinese] patriarchal tradition has been to obliterate the origins of [women’s] essential contributions” to the development of art,7 Weidner herself notes that “the majority of famous women of Japan’s past are well regarded, usually for their political or literary roles.”8 Nonetheless, with one important exception, the role of women in Japanese art was not a topic of much interest to Japanese art historians before the 1980s.

This important exception is the tradition of research on the term “onna-e” (literally, “women-pictures”), a word that appears in documents from Japan’s Heian period (794–1185). The expression seemed to function as some sort of contrast or in relationship to “otoko-e,” that is, “men-pictures,” and these binary terms encouraged Japanese scholars to hypothesize two distinct pictorial styles, modes, or repertoires intended for viewers of different genders and/or designed or executed by those of different genders. The words seem to have become a topic of interest in twentieth-century scholarship for the first time in 1933, in an article by the male scholar Tanaka Ichimatsu.9 However, the first sustained research on this topic was conducted by Shirahata Yoshi, who published articles on it in 1943 and 1958.10 The first date is significant, as it was chiefly because of the Second World War that women such as Shirahata were able to take up positions in the national museums that had been left vacant by men who had gone off to fight. This historical fact is a reminder that—both in Japan and outside it—the rise of femi-
nist art history has been largely initiated by the presence of an increasing number of female scholars in the field.

In the immediate postwar period there was a decline in the number of women involved in Japanese art history in the context of museums and universities. It was instead a man, Akiyama Terukazu, who published the most exhaustive studies on the topic of onna-e, now defined as one of the two fundamental modes of yamato-e, or “Japanese painting.” It is perhaps no accident that Akiyama’s most important students were also women or that many of the contributors to this volume studied with either Akiyama, his students, or both.

Work on onna-e proceeded along largely formalist lines, in accordance with the entrenched emphasis on style in the field of Japanese art history. Then, in 1976, came the completion of the first dissertation in English on onna-e, Louisa McDonald Read’s The Masculine and Feminine Modes of Heian Secular Painting and Their Relationship to Chinese Painting—A Redefinition of Yamato-e, and the Japanese translation of Linda Nochlin’s “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” It would take another fifteen years before these two vectors would merge.

This convergence was preceded by both more translation and the application of feminist concerns to Western art by Japanese art historians. A little less than ten years after the translation of Nochlin, Western art historian Wakakuwa Midori published Lives of Female Painters (Josei gaka retsuden), a book of biographies of female artists in European and American history. In 1990 Hagiwara Hiroko published The Tempest in This Breast: English Black Women Artists Speak (Kono mune no arashi: Eikoku burakku josei aquisuto wa katara). But the watershed year appears to have been 1992, when translations of such works as Joan W. Scott’s Gender and the Politics of History, and Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock’s Old Mistresses: Women, Art, and Ideology, were appearing along with original essays such as Suzuki Tokiko’s “Feminist Art History” (“Feminisuto no bijutsushi”), and Chino Kaori’s “Toward Rethinking of Japanese Art” (“Nihon bijutsu o kangae-naosu tame ni”).

The present volume was not simply born out of a desire to bring together a number of writings in Japanese feminist art history now that a critical mass of writings has been achieved. Rather, the creation of this volume had a specific motivation, which may explain some of the focal points and emphases in the collection as a whole.

The original impetus for this volume came during the 1994 Kyoto Conference on Japanese Studies, or “Kyōto Kaigi,” as it was called in Japanese. This three-day international conference was held to mark the tenth anniversary of the Interna-
tional Research Center for Japanese Studies, or Nichibunken. The program included sessions during all three days of the conference on *shunga*, or early modern Japanese erotica. These back-to-back panels were the first culmination of a multiyear project conducted jointly by Haga Tōru of Nichibunken, and Sumie Jones of Indiana University. Before the Kyōto Kaigi, members of the research team had met at the British Museum, Gakushūin University, and elsewhere. This research project was part of the “*shunga* boom” of the 1990s. This boom was in turn related to a larger “Edo boom” that started in the 1980s, and to the emergence of a kind of photograph with the curious name “hair nude” (*heanudo*).

**Pushing the Censorship Envelope**

Pornography is rarely debated in Japan in terms of freedom of speech. The rules seem generally understood between the police and the publishers, with the latter slowly and usually cautiously chipping away at restrictions, a process tolerated by the police until some “line” is crossed, whereupon one publisher is arrested, his goods confiscated, the remaining publishers back down, and the process of gradual erosion is resumed—a kind of pornographic Sisyphean struggle. Well into the 1980s depictions of genitals were either covered with a white box or erased. However, an anticensorship battle was also being fought on the photographic front. For many years the photography sections of Japanese bookstores have been dominated by large glossy albums of nude young women. Here too the no-pubic-hair rule applied. This ban was finally defeated in 1991 by Shiroyama Kishin and the photos that came to be called “hair nudes,” allowing the public exposure of pubic hair for the first time since the Second World War.

The victory against visual censorship created a bonanza for Japanese publishers. Now every *shunga* that had ever been published could be republished in unexpurgated form. In fact, reproduction of *shunga* took over the field in the 1990s, reducing analysis or explanation to almost nil. By the late 1990s the *ukiyo-e* section of any major Japanese bookstore was 80 percent filled with *shunga*.

The academic art history community was entirely supportive of this development, as scholars of *ukiyo-e* had long been frustrated in their attempt to discuss the oeuvre of important artists, such as Utamaro, whose artistic production included a large percentage of pornography. The *Complete Ukiyo-e Shunga (Ukiyo-e *shunga* meihin shūsei)* series has testimonials from a number of scholars, such as the Tokyo University art historian Tsuji Nobuo. In fact, even Japan’s best-known feminist, Ueno Chizuko, applauded the publication: “Unless one sees *shunga*, one
cannot understand the charm of its expressive richness. One can only rejoice over the announcement that the barbarian age that smeared them with black is at last over. With this the research of Japan’s early modern and modern sexuality will no doubt at last become real.” There is a decided whiff of xenophobia in Ueno’s phrasing, which leaves little doubt that the “barbarian age” (yaban-na jidai) was that of Victorian morality, brought by the Black Ships of the American Commodore Perry. Indeed, the Japanese scholar Haga Tôru looks to shunga as the record of the erotic paradise that was Japan before foreign intervention. As Andrew Gerstle notes, Haga tries “to extrapolate abstract norms of sexual life among the Edo populace” from shunga.22

Such was the context for the Kyôto Kaigi in 1994. What was presented, by and large, was a combination of standard Japanese “celebratory” art history and pornographic explicitness. Paper after paper extolled the virtues of both shunga and early modern Japanese culture as evidenced by shunga. With one notable exception, no panelist even mentioned the subject of rape or thought to consider Edo-period shunga in the context of pornographic production in modern Japan. The approach, in other words, was entirely uncritical. It is this approach to shunga that the editors of the present volume sought to contest.

The writings in this volume are critical interventions in the standard art historical discourse on Japan both in Japan and in the Anglo-European tradition. In Japan, the art of the early modern period has over the last decade been offered by various art historians as accurate records of an age now past and as keys to a realm of sexual and aesthetic pleasure untainted by the foreign, religiously inspired pathologies of the nineteenth century. In response to such scholarship, two of the early chapters of the present collection (Pollack and Mostow) examine the ideological foundations of the erotic art of early modern Japan, both heterosexual and homosexual. Pollack situates such visual production in the larger frame of commodity advertising, while Mostow examines the misogynistic structure that underlies the discourse of male-male eroticism in seventeenth-century Edo (modern-day Tokyo).

Since the conception of this volume, Tim Screech has published the first critical study of shunga in any language, Sex and the Floating World: Erotic Images in Japan, 1700–1820.23 Screech’s study is a strong attack on the formalist approach to shunga favored by many ukiyo-e specialists in Japan. Japanese ukiyo-e researchers tend to concentrate on connoisseurship and style, ignoring the actual subject matter of the images. Screech insists that shunga was first and foremost an aid in masturbation, and he suggests that this was true not only of shunga but of other
ukiyo-e, such as bijinga (pictures of beautiful young people), as well. As a polemical focus, this argument is long overdue, but it also risks being reductive: clearly there was more happening in shunga than simple arousal.24 But the question of shunga’s position in the larger economy of ukiyo-e and the whole market economy of Edo is well taken and is pursued by David Pollack in the present volume. Pollack persuasively argues that shunga must be seen as one commodity among many, and one must recognize how it was intersected by other commodities, in the fashion of modern “product placement.” More important, Pollack demonstrates the high level achieved in Japan’s urban centers in the very commodification of desire by the eighteenth century, a ubiquitous marketing that paid little respect to any putative distinction between what might be seen as “high” and “low” art. The careful display of the economic base of Japanese early modern popular culture works successfully against the aestheticization of ukiyo-e or Japanese women so promoted by mainstream art historians in Japan.

The appropriation of early modern Japanese culture for the promotion of a particular political agenda is not limited to the Japanese themselves. Early modern Japanese homoerotic practices, known as nanshoku (male-male sex), have been labeled “gay” by some scholars and publishers in North America, asserting an equivalence between the widely accepted practice of male-male sex in Tokugawa-period Japan with practices found in the late twentieth century.25 This understanding of Tokugawa sexual practices is criticized in the chapter by Joshua Mostow. Using one self-proclaimed nanshoku text and extrapolating from it the “grammar of desire” as represented in late-seventeenth-century Edo, Mostow postulates not two but at least four distinct genders to account for all the various rules of combination both promoted and prohibited by the text visually and verbally. The resulting structure has little in common with that of sexuality as conceived in late-twentieth-century North America, and it is difficult to describe any of the participants as “gay.” The recognition of a more complex sex-gender system in turn helps us break out of binary constructions—a result that can then be applied to other overdetermined binaries, such as “Orient/Occident,” “modern/premodern,” or “Japan/world.”

The present volume, however, has developed far beyond its original critique of shunga celebration. It soon became apparent that focusing exclusively on shunga created its own kind of cultural and intellectual sakoku, or isolationism. The editors decided that we needed to consider shunga in the context of other visual representations of women and in a period broader than just the Tokugawa period. With this fact in mind, we have included a range of essays that give some idea of
the state of gender-oriented Japanese art historical research at the present time. We believe that what has resulted is the first volume devoted exclusively to feminist art history on Japan to be published in English.

This volume is not simply a Japanese “Broude and Garrard,” for a simple comparison of the rise in feminist-inspired art historical studies within Japan to those outside is almost entirely inadequate, as it does not take into account the “feminizing” effects of Euro-American imperialism on Japan’s emergence as a modern nation-state or the concomitant role of the concept of Japan as an “aesthetic nation,” a concept embraced by thinkers on both sides of the Pacific. The present volume starts with what may be seen as the inception point of the critical examination of this discourse, that is, the consideration of “Japanese art” within the context not only of gender but as interpellated by colonialism, imperialism, and nationalism. Chino Kaori was, until her untimely death at the end of 2001, Japan’s foremost feminist historian of Japanese art. Her essay “Gender in Japanese Art” has challenged Japanese art historians’ conception of themselves and their enterprise, while at the same time showing the essentially gendered nature of power in Japanese cultural self-definition throughout Japan’s history. Chino’s piece demonstrates that, in the quasi-colonial context in which Japan has often found itself, the “feminine,” as appropriated by male elites, fulfills an important function in the masking of power. The present essay was originally presented at the Eastern Regional Conference of the Art History Association of Japan (Bijutsushi Gakkai) in 1993. It is a measure of the novelty of the approach within mainstream art historical practice that the author was first required to explain to her audience the very concept of “gender.” This essay, then, was originally written with a very specific audience in mind—one quite different from any that is likely to read it in English translation. It seems appropriate to clarify here a few points that may be subject to misinterpretation.

Some of the assumptions Chino is contesting are presented at the beginning of her essay. They include the belief that critical theory has no relevance to the study of Japanese art; that a purely aesthetic approach, unrelated to political issues of either the present or the past, is the only valid enterprise for an art historian; and that Japanese art is the physical expression of a transhistorical, unchanging ethnic Japanese identity. Chino suggests in contrast an art history that recognizes the political use of art both in the past when a given work was produced as well as in the present when that work is interpreted. This approach means considering Japan not in isolation but in comparison with other countries and cultures. While in the present essay Chino confines herself largely to a con-
trast between Japan and “the West”—an approach that is easily confused with Japanese exceptionalism, or Nihonjin-ron—in fact, as is apparent in a later article, “Japanese Art History and Feminism” (“Nihon bijutsushi to feminizumu”), she is calling for consideration of Japan within an Asian context. On one hand, this means viewing Japan’s premodern culture as sharing characteristics with other cultures that found themselves on the margins of the Chinese cultural sphere. On the other hand, and more controversial, is her insistence on seeing Japan’s modern self-definition as intimately connected to its attempted subjugation of its Asian neighbors. Here again, in contrast to the predominantly aesthetic and stylistic approach of her colleagues—one analogous to the “pure literature,” or jun-bungaku, approach in the literary realm—Chino argues for a Japanese art history that will examine the political and ideological program behind modern canonization.

Within this discussion, Chino asserts no essential Japanese nature. In contrast to the theory of cultural change offered by the literary critic Katô Shūichi, Chino does not believe in an unchanging Japanese cultural core that endures and then transforms successive waves of foreign influence. Instead, it is the core itself that changes—the very definition of “Japanese”—as each previously “foreign” element is absorbed and displaced into the interior by a subsequent importation. Her distinction between the “public” (kô [ôyake]) and the “private” (shi [watakushi]), then, is not one of the “true,” or the “personal,” in contrast to the “false” or “official,” but rather, like the so-called private chambers of the shogun, simply a distinction between two culturally constructed and mutually dependent spaces. Put in other terms, honne, or so-called true intent, is simply one more kind of tatemae, or “front,” but one that bears the function of “being the truth.”

The theoretical concept around which all these arguments are woven is the familiar one of the distinction between biologically determined sex and culturally defined gender. While aware of the work of Judith Butler and other scholars who problematize such a distinction, Chino makes a strategic choice, since she can rely on her audience’s acceptance of certain periods of Japanese art, especially the Heian period, as “feminine” (an interpretation that can be traced back to the Nativist scholar Motoori Norinaga [1730–1801] but was institutionalized in the Meiji period), despite the obvious fact that power was largely in the hands of men. By exploiting this apparent contradiction, the author argues for the usefulness of a theoretical approach that draws a distinction between sex and gender, and at the same time demonstrates the utility of contemporary critical theory in a field where it has rarely been applied. By arguing that Japanese men in positions
of power at some historical moments chose to define themselves as “feminine,” Chino reintroduces the whole issue of choice, that is, purpose and design, which leads inevitably back to a consideration of the political and ideological messages of art and its interpretation. Ultimately, the theoretical flaw inherent in viewing “sex” as prediscursive and in contrast to a culturally constructed “gender” is analogous to that between a transhistorical Japanese identity and foreign “influence.”

Representations of Women: Medieval and Modern

Moving to Japan’s early feudal period (1185–1333), Ikeda Shinobu explores the pornography of representation in Japan’s earliest surviving painting of a battle scene. This chapter is especially important for introducing the issue of class, which is less explicitly treated in Mostow’s chapter. The formalist tradition in Japanese art history (and perhaps its situating of itself in contrast to the dominance of Marxist historiography in most Japanese history departments) has made the application of the concept of class to the analysis of visual works almost as infrequent as the application of the concept of gender. This tendency may be influenced by the housing of most art historians in Japan in departments of philosophy—art history being thought of as a discipline related to aesthetics—rather than in fine arts or history departments. (A concomitant result of its cohabitation with the universalizing discourse of aesthetics has been the search for uniqueness in a distinctive Japanese “aesthetic consciousness,” or bi-ishiki.)

Ikeda makes the surprising discovery that, within the image of what has long been thought of as one of Japan’s most famous painted battle scenes, in fact very little fighting is actually happening. More important, in contrast to a mere three male victims, the scene shows the bodies of over twenty women being crushed or trampled to death. By carefully comparing the painted image to all the surviving textual versions of this event, Ikeda is able to demonstrate that the painting is not a simple illustration of a prior written text but has its own message, independent of any preexisting account. Understanding this message allows Ikeda to hypothesize the patron or ultimate recipient of the painting through the message he wished to receive. Ikeda cogently demonstrates how women, as women, are made to function as a contrast to the barbarous, hypermasculine warriors who are responsible for their deaths. This neat pairing allows the warriors’ real antagonist, the males of the aristocracy, to absent themselves and remain ideologically invisible.

Ikeda’s linking of the images of women under duress to pornographic grati-
ification may seem something of a jump to some readers, especially her reading (following that of Kasuya Makoto) of rokudō-e, which depict the stages of decomposition of a woman’s corpse, as pornography. Yet this is a reading well attested in at least contemporary Japanese culture, as evidenced by the prize-winning story “Maggot” (“Uji”) by Fujisawa Shū and its accompanying illustration (Figure 1.1).

The remaining chapters in the collection take account of the even more complicated context of modern Japan. Norman Bryson explores the introduction of Western painting methods to Japan in the late nineteenth century and the central role of the image of women in the transition to modernity. Bryson explores how women function as a crucial object of the gaze—and desire—of both Western and Japanese men, serving as a quasi-available sexual object that allows each side “to assimilate the other through the milieu of sexuality.” “The circulation of women,” Bryson writes, “accompanied and stimulated the general traffic of goods and ideas that made up the larger context of modernization.” In other words, commodification and advertising are no longer simply domestic concerns, as examined by David Pollack, butbearers of the very process of modernization. Japanese men attain modern subjectivity by sharing with their European and American counterparts the same objects of desire. These objects were not just women on the dance floor of diplomatic balls, but also the representation of women in the media of oil painting, newly introduced to Japan and called yōga, or “Western painting.” Bryson shows how portraits of European women by Japanese male painters demonstrated their intimacy with European culture as a whole. More important, Bryson shows how Japanese artists such as Kuroda Seiki (1866–1924) were able to step into the masculinist construct of “bohemian life”: “Japanese artists joined ranks with European artists over the subordinated figure of woman.” As Bryson stresses, however, this mode of vision is not simply a matter of voyeurism or “the male gaze”—it also involved a process of cultural assimilation that seemed an essential element of Japan’s modernization.

Reimposing the supposed binarism that existed between onna-e and otoko-e, twentieth-century Japanese painters have created a distinction between Western-derived oil painting, or yōga, and a putatively national tradition, labeled nihonga, or “Japanese painting.” Doris Croissant in her chapter explores how Tsuchida Bakusen (1887–1936), one of the recognized masters of nihonga in the early twentieth century, positioned his production to serve as a national response to Western painting. In particular, Croissant explores Bakusen’s appropriation of the “primitive” and his recycling of ukiyo-e imagery. While the former is well known.
and much commented on by previous art historians, Bakusen’s reliance on the eminently urban and even decadent vocabulary of Edo’s floating world has been elided, if not suppressed. Yet, most obviously, the world of nihonga becomes a world peopled almost exclusively by women, who serve as the repositories of a national and “traditional” beauty, while their men compete in the modern West, in a move anticipated by Kuroda Seiki and the early yōga painters, as described by Bryson. Nonetheless, this near exclusive focus on women is an essentially self-feminizing move, not unlike some of the aspects discussed earlier by Chino Kaori.

In contrast to the robust or bucolic depictions of the rural and the “premodern” set in the Japanese countryside, Kim Hyeshin shows how these kinds of images were adapted to the representation of Japan’s colonial conquest, Korea. Kim notes a preponderance of images of women in the works exhibited at Sōn-jōn, the annual state-sponsored juried exhibition created under Japanese supervision. Landscape images tend toward the lonely and impoverished, reflecting the so-called Stagnation Theory of Korean development, which authorized Japanese seizure of an “undeveloped” land. While within the Japanese domestic sphere artists represented women either as a kind of internal primitive or as the repository of premodern culture, both the “primitive” and “tradition” took on a decidedly different valence when encouraged in Korean artists depicting their colonized homeland. Kim’s chapter highlights Japan’s role as a colonizer but also the situation of countries such as Korea, whose “modernity” came to them as a handmaid of imperialism. Japan’s “Cultural Rule” policy makes explicit the political and ideological uses of art by the state—an operation that seems obscured on the domestic front, where artistic production is often glossed by the romantic myths of creative genius, as seen, for example, in 2002 in the major retrospective of the painter Yokoyama Taikan (1868–1958) at the Tokyo National Museum.

Gender Discourse in Contemporary Japanese Visual Regimes

The final section of the collection engages contemporary visual representations of Japan. Within the discipline of Japanese art history, cinema is rarely considered as part of the same visual field as painting. Even within painting, there is a near total divide between the “modern” (kindai) and the “contemporary” (genzai). In this volume we challenge this compartmentalization.

Chigusa Kimura-Steven analyzes the figure of the woman in both Abe Kōbō’s novel Woman in the Dunes (Suna no onna) and the film of the same title by director
Teshigawara Hiroshi. Using largely psychoanalytical theory—which has been strongly resisted by Japanese critics themselves—Kimura-Steven provides an illuminating reading of Abe’s work, exposing the phallogocentrism of its plot. She then relates this plot to the interest of several artists, including Abe, in Surrealism and draws compelling analogies between the Europe of the Surrealism era and Japan during its postwar economic boom to explain the misogynistic tendency to be found in the art of both. This chapter is important not only for bringing cinema into the discussion but for linking Japanese art to an international context and such international artistic movements as Surrealism.

Gunhild Borggreen examines the very problematization of gender issues in the Japanese art world today and shows how a concept of “feminine-style art” has been created by the critics, despite strong stylistic commonalities in the art produced by both women and men. Borggreen reviews the art of the period to discover whether some peculiarly feminine style is evident. This examination leads in turn to a reflection on how stereotypical images of women and femininity are both imposed on and manipulated by female artists. Like Kimura-Steven, Borggreen situates the new promotion of female artists in the economic environment of the day. Likewise, “modern” (kindai) art and “contemporary” (gendai) art are hardly ever discussed in the same context or by the same people—the former being the province of “scholars” and the latter, that of “critics.” Here again, it is our intention to challenge these categories—these exclusions—which serve an ideological function. Contemporary art in Japan often highlights and critiques the country’s consumer society. Allowing such work to occupy the same space as “art” makes many scholars uncomfortable. And by insisting on the historical uniqueness of shunga, some scholars feel justified in discussing it without reference to modern pornography.

Finally, Sharalyn Orbaugh in her chapter argues that the “hybridity” of contemporary popular culture undoes many closely held identifications. Orbaugh shows how anime (animated films) and manga (comic books) are generically hybrid, moving from one medium to another; culturally hybrid, in that the distinction between what is inside and outside of “Japan” or “Japanese” is increasingly blurred; and, most significantly, sexually hybrid, allowing and encouraging cross-gender identification (or, as Orbaugh calls it, “cognitive transvestism”) at the same time that the category “feminine” or “female” is simultaneously exaggerated and negated. The sh†jo, or “girl,” remains partly a liminal figure but has also been reified into a distinct gender. Yet while permeable gender boundaries would seem to represent an advance over compulsory heterosexuality, Orbaugh’s con-
clusion resembles the situation described by Chino at the beginning of the volume: hypersexualized cyborg female bodies allow the male appropriation of certain “feminine” subject positions, in the process “reinscrib[ing] sex/gender ideologies [and] obviating any promise of resistance or social transformation.”

In short, this volume examines issues of heterosexuality and homosexuality, pornography, modernization, colonialism, and nationalism, all in relation to the issue of gender and in the context of Asia and the postcolonial world. *Gender and Power in the Japanese Visual Field* refuses to be confined by standard periodization: it represents a forceful rejection of those periodizing schemes that would isolate Japan’s early modern period (1600–1868) from its later emergence as a modern nation-state, and one of the issues that receives particular attention is the reception history of various artifacts through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The authors have approached their subjects through a range of different disciplines and specializations within the fields of art and literary history. The volume does not pretend to treat all visual genres or all time periods of Japanese culture, and there is no desire to be either comprehensive or doctrinaire. It will be apparent, for instance, that the concept of “gender” as used by Chino and by Mostow is not the same. We hope that the result not only will be of use to specialists in Japanese, or Asian, cultural studies, but that the collection will go some way toward demonstrating to those outside our fields the importance of considering histories beyond Europe or North America. For Asia and the non-European continue to be the mirror through which “the West” (mis)recognizes itself, in true Lacanian fashion. We hope that this volume will encourage many to question the eurocentric litany as well.

As the preparation of the manuscript of this volume reached its final stages, Chino Kaori died of heart failure on New Year’s Eve 2001. All three of the editors were close friends of Kaori and are greatly indebted to the scholarly and personal support she gave us over the years. *Gender and Power* was to be the first in what we foresaw as a series of publications applying feminist and postcolonial theory to Japanese art. It is tragic that while such work will go on, Professor Chino will not be an active part of it. We dedicate this volume to her memory.