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Introduction

The so-called “Eastern aesthetics” exerted a strong and deep influence in Europe, at least since the “Japonisme” fashion in the 1870s and 1880s. After World War II, the increasing number of travels and exchanges, and the opening of artistic borders, made it easier to look at each other. Above all the other countries, China and Japan were the two countries in the spotlight: since the 1950s, painters, sculptors, writers, and film-makers between East and West borrowed artistic intuitions, styles, fashions, or techniques and contributed to a mix of aesthetical languages. Nonetheless, some concepts that are deeply rooted in the European philosophical tradition are not so immediately universal as they pretend to be. The very notion of “aesthetics”, for instance, was coined in Japanese – and only later used in China – only in the 1880s, by the effort of Nakae Chōmin (1847-1901), who in 1884 translated from French Eugène Véron’s *L’esthétique* (1878). Previous translations were attempted by Nishi Amane (1829-1897), such as the compound *kashuron* 佳趣論, “study of (good) taste”, or *bimyōgaku* 美妙学, “study of the beautiful and wonderful”. Finally, Nakae’s choice fell on *bigaku* 美学, simple combination of “beauty” and “study”. It is interesting enough, however, that the notion of beauty never had a central role in the artistic appreciation, in pre-modern Japan or China, where the quality of “naturalness” or “spontaneity” were used in order to judge a painting or a poem. So, applying with no mediation Western aesthetical adjectives to some experiences that represent the core of what we could still call “Eastern art” or “Eastern aesthetics” is not obvious at all. “Aesthetics” indeed, as a peculiar discipline, is a product of modernity in Europe, too; therefore, when we speak of “Japanese feeling for beauty”, or “Chinese taste”, we have to be conscious that we are pointing at a sort of projection – a modern construct that Japanese people themselves began to use approximately one century ago to

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describe their own practices. In the history of intellectual exchanges between these cultures, the main notions of Western aesthetics have been globalized, in a process of hermeneutical negotiation and creation of “images of the Other”. Of course, if we give up on the claim of universality that the aesthetical judgement implies, we risk to make its field collapse; but if we apply in an indiscriminate way “our” categories to all the world’s cultures, we risk to undertake a sort of philosophical colonialism. Thus, we must try to build up a dialogue among different languages, frames of mind, patterns of thought – noticing that thinking and writing in different idioms already displays different perspectives and show off a diversity of sights.

In this issue of “Studi di estetica”, we try to deal with a feedback in the crossings and exchanges between “East and West”. While until the first half of the 20th century it was the Eastern intellectual *milieu* to grasp ideas and concepts from the Western tradition, lately also the European and American scholars began to read, interpret and use in a creative way some Chinese or Japanese notions to reflect and describe artistic practices. Also, some of the most important Chinese and Japanese art practices have played a major role for the Western reflection on artistic creation or aesthetic experience. The present researches mainly deal with the manifold relationships that European thinkers or art critics maintained with Japanese and partly Chinese culture: they intertwine aesthetics with art history and critics, in order to underline some blowbacks that arose in the last century by the encounter of different worlds. Ryōsuke Ōhashi provides an insightful interpretation of the contemporary artistic and cultural worldview(s) starting from Heidegger’s notion of *Weltbild*, and putting in context two famous works of art by Hiroshige and van Gogh. Also Giovanni Gurisatti uses Heidegger’s thought as a prism to focus on the creative interpretation of language, poetry, and art in the meeting between Japanese, Chinese, and German thoughts, while in his essay Alberto Giacomelli traces back to Nietzsche’s philosophy a possible path to stress the fertile tension among aesthetic worldviews. Through the lens of two Western art critics and a Japanese philosopher, Raquel Bouso shows how fruitful can be reconsidering some aesthetic experiences in Western history by an outer eye; in a similar way, I tried to analyze and enhance the value of a “deconstruction from the outside” provided by François Jullien’s meticulous approach to Chinese aesthetics. Tackling with different codes of expression, Roberto Pasini reflects on a wide variety of artistic culture, from India to China, Korea and Japan, in order to emphasize those

cultures' contribution to the artistic debate in the latest decades. Giovanni Ferrario concentrates his attention on a significant artist, Kishio Suga, whose work appears to be deeply rooted in both European and Japanese artistic tradition. An important scholar who devoted his studies to aesthetics is Ōnishi Yoshinori, and Lorenzo Marinucci focuses on two notions, *sabi* and irony, in order to show the cross-cultural character of Ōnishi's work. After a clever review of some milestones or symbolic crossings in the Japanese-European encounter about aesthetics and philosophy, Laura Ricca emphasizes the double movement of continuity and discontinuity among those cultural realities, particularly dealing with architecture. Finally, Rolf Elberfeld opens an original inquiry on an "aesthetics of breathing", summoning one of the key-notions in Chinese and Japanese traditions such as that of *qi* ("breath", "atmosphere"), thus developing an intercultural meditation on this aesthetic phenomenon between East and West. The challenge of all these contributions is that an intercultural dialogue can be fostered and enhanced: disputing the old forms of Eastern exoticism or, on the contrary, of European ethnocentrism, and far from getting bogged down into a mere comparative exercise, the auspice of this issue is that new paths of thought can be lifted from the reflective character of a cross-cultural aesthetics.

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