

***Japanese Contemporary Quilts and Quilters: The Story of an American Import.*
Teresa Duryea Wong. Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 2015. 144 pp.***

Reviewed by Amanda Grace Sikarskie

Teresa Duryea Wong's *Japanese Contemporary Quilts and Quilters: The Story of an American Import* is a lavishly illustrated introduction to the art of Japanese quilts that will undoubtedly appeal to quilt scholars and novices alike.

As Wong notes in the first chapter of this book, the United States and Japan have a long and complicated diplomatic history, beginning with Commodore Perry's forced "opening" of Japan in the 1850s. Since then, trade—not just in products but also in arts and ideas—has been a key element in the relationship between the two countries. While Americans have developed appetites for Japanese traditions from calligraphy and *ikebana* to anime and manga, so too have the Japanese cultivated passions for American traditions such as quilting.

Part One explores quilting in Japan, past and present. Wong illustrates how a variety of cultural influences from major museum exhibitions such as *Abstract Design in American Quilts* (a selection of quilts from the Jonathan Holstein collection which debuted at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York in 1971 and travelled to the Shiseido Art Gallery in Tokyo in 1975) to television programs like *Little House on the Prairie* inspired Japanese women to take up quilting in the 1970s, with Japanese women even travelling to the United States just to visit quilt shops. A marker of this cross-cultural exchange was the presentation of a handmade quilt to Queen Elizabeth II on her official visit to Japan in 1975.

A two-page spread presenting a timeline of American influence on Japan's quilt history from the 1950s to the 2000s is very helpful in orienting the reader who may not be familiar with the history and trajectory of Japanese quilting.

Historians of American quilt traditions will recognize in the pages of this book the many American idioms that influenced Japanese quilting, from Baltimore Album quilts to vintage African American quilts. According to Wong, the bold, colorful, graphic nature of African Americans quilts was particularly influential in Japan beginning in the 1990s, with many Japanese quilters and collectors travelling to the U.S. to see the *Quilt's of Gee's Bend* exhibition which was organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston in 2002. The Corrine Riley collection of African American quilts was also wildly popular when it came to Shiseido Gallery in 2007.

After laying the background of the history of quilts coming to Japan, the rest of Part One explores the rise of quilt instruction (including the inclusion of quilting in the *iemoto* system—the system emphasizing preservation and standardization under which other traditional arts, such as tea ceremony, are taught), quilt shops, the tension between sewing machine use and hand quilting in Japan, and cutting up kimonos for quilts. A discussion of the pivotal years of the

* This editorially reviewed contribution was accepted for publication in *Museum Anthropology Review* on February 25, 2016. The work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

late 1980s—the formation of the quilt section of the Japanese Handicraft Instructor’s Association (JHIA) in 1986, the publication of the first Japanese art quilt book in English in 1988, and the declaration of the year 1990 as the “Year of Japan” by the International Quilt Festival in Houston, Texas—sets the stage for in depth profiles of individual quilt artists.

Part Two profiles eight artists representing eight different styles in quilting in Japan today: Yoko Saito, Yoshiko Katagiri, Noriko Endo, Chiaki Dosho, Yoko Sekita, Yasuko Saito, Yoshiko Kurihara, and Keiko Goke. (Names are written Western-style, with given name first and family name second, throughout the book.)

My only complaint about the book is a minor one, and is something that will likely only bother “quilt people.” Wong indicates that the Japanese translation of the word “quilt” is “patchwork,” and thus she has used the terms fairly interchangeably in this book. Those used to the more specific Western meaning of the word (a quilt or other textile object actually made of patches—as opposed to, say, a wholecloth appliqué) may find the use of the word “patchwork” somewhat confusing. Apart from this quite minor issue, the book was thoroughly enjoyable.

Japanese Contemporary Quilts and Quilters is a visually stunning introduction to the past, present, and future of Japanese quilting that should appeal to both quilt and textile historians and collectors and those new to the subject.

Amanda Grace Sikarskie is Visiting Assistant Professor of Design History at Kendall College of Art and Design of Ferris State University and a Research Associate with the Quilt Index, <http://www.quiltindex.org>. Her first book is Textile Collections: Preservation, Access, Curation, and Interpretation in a Digital Age (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.14434/mar.v10i2.21773>