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## Pre-Raphaelite Collections in Japan

European artworks were exhibited in Japan as early as 1890.<sup>1</sup> The Japanese had to wait, however, until around 1921 for them to be shown with any regularity, and even then only a few times a year. This was half a century after painting with oil had become established in Japan.<sup>2</sup> Almost every exhibition was intended mainly to show contemporary French art as reflecting European trends, and there were few opportunities to see Pre-Raphaelite works. Although Pre-Raphaelite art and artists were discussed enthusiastically in both literary and art journals from the 1890s to the early 1900s, beginning with articles on Dante Gabriel Rossetti's literary works, such writings rarely appeared after the 1910s. After this period, it was more by accident that Pre-Raphaelite works were exhibited, rather than out of any public interest. These works were contained in a vast collection owned by Matsukata Kôjiro, the earliest reference to which appeared in a journal of 1920. Matsukata gathered his collection with a view to setting up Japan's first museum of Western art, but he never realized his dream.

Information is insufficient to trace adequately the history of Pre-Raphaelite collections in Japan. The Japanese lost their interest in the PRB school after the turn of the century. It is also difficult to obtain information concerning private collections in Japan, and public museums own only a few Pre-Raphaelite pictures. I am therefore obliged to restrict myself to (1) Pre-Raphaelite works once contained in Matsukata's collection, which has not yet been fully examined; and (2) the Pre-Raphaelite collection recently acquired by a certain municipal museum. I have added a list of Pre-Raphaelite works now possessed in Japan, though it does not cover every item.

Before discussing the Pre-Raphaelite pieces in Matsukata's collection, it is pertinent to explain his museum project. Matsukata Kôjiro (1865-1950) was a businessman who, during the First World War, exercised his management skills supplying war materials. As president of the Kawasaki Shipbuild-

ing Company, he made business trips several times to Europe, and while staying in London (1916 - 1918) he started to collect European fine art.

The collection was intended for exhibition in a museum which he thought of building for himself. He also bought many artistic items while he was in Europe, mainly in London and Paris during 1921-1922. His purchases were on as large a scale as those of Shchukin and Albert C. Barnes, who also built up their collections during that time. These two contemporary collectors relied on their own taste, and as a result their superb collections are now firmly associated with their names. Matsukata, however, used to say that he himself could not appreciate art, and so he left the selection of almost all pieces to others, primarily Frank Brangwyn, R. A., and M. Léonce Benedite, Director of the Luxemburg Museum and the Rodin Museum. Brangwyn was also asked to design Matsukata's museum, a commission which was completed by 1922.

An enormous range of works, covering many countries and periods, was put together in this way. However, though the museum premises were being prepared in Tokyo, the project collapsed, because Matsukata's company was severely affected by the Washington Conference on armament reduction, the Great Kanto Earthquake, which came in the wake of a decline in the domestic economy, and the Depression. Some of the collection had already been sent to Japan; some was left in the Pantechnicon, a warehouse in London; and those pieces Matsukata had bought in Paris were left there. Sadly, the works which remained in London were destroyed when the warehouse accidentally caught fire in 1939; this was not the result of bombing, as was commonly supposed. The works in Paris were confiscated by the French government as enemy property, but most of these were subsequently returned to Japan in 1959, after the signing of the peace treaty in San Francisco, on the condition that Japan prepare a proper museum to house them. This is now our National Museum of