

## Parallels in Fashion

To what extent did Japanese aesthetics and fashion have an influence on contemporary Danish fashion?

Due to copyright restrictions this image cannot be displayed

Look from Henrik Vibskov Fall Winter 2017<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Look from Henrik Vibskov Fall Winter 2017. Digital image. Henrik Vibskov. Accessed January 21, 2018. [http://www.henrikvibskov.com/files/gimms/240\\_umb6109.jpg](http://www.henrikvibskov.com/files/gimms/240_umb6109.jpg).

# Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Denmark The Fashion Nation	3
Japonisme in Denmark	7
Japanese Wabi-Sabi and Scandinavian Minimalism	9
Influence from Japanese Fashion	12
Final Analysis	15
Conclusion	17
Bibliography	18

## Introduction

The research essay will determine whether the similarity between Japanese and Danish fashion is a product of direct influence, or a coincidence derived from a set of common cultural values that resulted in similar design cultures and philosophies.

In my four years in Copenhagen, I have become enthralled with the understated beauty of Danish design that seems to cover all aspects of daily life. Following World War II, post-war Denmark put an emphasis on basic industrial design in order to ration materials which became more scarce due to economic constraints. However, when influential designers such as Finn Juhl, Arne Jacobsen and Poul Kjærholm paved the way for an internationally renowned wave of Danish architecture, furniture and interior design, minimalism became an intrinsic part of the Danish design DNA. *“Here an evolution of elements from early art movements suffused each area with a heightened emphasis on clean lines, palatable colors and raw, unpretentious ingredients to create the recipe for modern Danish design which chimed with the sentiments of the masses.”*<sup>1</sup> The Danish government today places great emphasis on supporting the country’s creative sector as well. In fact, Denmark was a pioneer in incorporating a national design policy in 1997. The creative sector now accounts for 10% of the country’s exports, most of these businesses are recorded as smaller companies and shops<sup>2</sup>.

But the question still remains to be asked: “Why Japan?” The strong link between Japanese and Danish art, architecture, interior and industrial design has been recognised by researchers of Danish art history, who have written numerous books on the topic. Though these links are well discussed and investigated, fashion has often

<sup>1</sup> "Fact Sheet: Creative industries in Denmark." Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. Accessed September 10, 2017. <http://www.legco.gov.hk/research-publications/english/1314fsc45-creative-industries-of-denmark-20140902-e.pdf>.

been left out of the discussion and drawn few comments over the years, even since the burst of the Danish fashion design sector in the early 2000's. This led me to my research question: "To what extent did Japanese aesthetics and fashion have an influence on contemporary Danish fashion?" Having an interest in fashion and being especially infatuated with the style sensibilities of my adopted home, this essay provided a chance to explore whether and how Japanese culture influenced Danish fashion as much as it has other aspects of Danish design. Having noticed apparent similarities between Japanese fashion and Danish fashion, I still find it difficult to determine the extent of this influence for a couple of reasons. The first is that the global nature of fashion means that trends can now spread worldwide without their adopters having any knowledge of the origin. Secondly, to provide concrete evidence of influence from Japan to Denmark, or vice versa, one must choose one of the many Danish or Japanese designers' fashion collections, shows or pieces to represent the whole of a country's fashion design in order to complete an individual analysis and comparison of the two selected designers.

## Denmark The Fashion Nation

Denmark, a small Nordic country just five million strong, was recognized early in the 20th century for its "*distinct organic functionalism*"—an approach that coloured the nation's pursuits in industrial design and architecture after World War II. However, surprisingly, for all the buzz Denmark's other design-based pursuits created, fashion design didn't receive the same attention until after the millennium. It was only in 2009 that The Organization of Danish Textiles and Clothing (*Dansk Textil og Beklædning*) was

renamed The Organization of Danish Fashion and Textile (*Dansk Mode og Textil*)<sup>3</sup>. In the past fashion was seen as something for the upper classes of Danish society; for example, in the 1950's the rich would go to fashion salons (*modesaloner*), which had made agreements with the luxury fashion houses of France and Italy, like Dior and Balmain, through which they could reproduce their cuts and patterns for their local clientele<sup>4</sup>. But the 1960's brought a massive change in the way fashion was viewed and consumed; it no longer existed solely for a class of privileged, knowledgeable creatives, but became accessible to a greater range of consumers and manufacturers<sup>5</sup>. However, following recession after the oil crisis of 1973<sup>6</sup>, clothing manufacturing within Denmark took a downturn. By the 1990's the rise of cheap labor in Southeast Asia had forced the majority of Danish clothing companies to drop the production of clothing in Denmark almost completely, making them no longer manufacturers, but wholesalers<sup>7</sup>. It was out of these depths that Danish-designed fashion was born.

*"Uncomplicated and easy to wear [...] functional, wearable, and fashionable"*: all of these words have been used to describe the "Danish" style. Yet still, putting a finger on what makes fashion "Danish" is a bit complicated. Danish runway fashion has generally followed international trends, reflective of the contemporary democratic fashion scene. Another factor that continually makes Danish fashion hard to pin down or study is the fact that it has little basis in its traditional dress: *"interestingly enough, in the*

<sup>3</sup> "Dansk Mode & Textil - Virksomhed Data." datacvr.virk. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 May 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Melchior, Marie Riegel, Lise Skov, and Fabian Faurholt Csaba. "Translating Fashion into Danish." *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research* 3 (2011): 209-28. Web. 27 May 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Lipovetsky, Gilles, and Richard Sennett. *The Empire of Fashion Dressing Modern Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002. Print.

<sup>6</sup> "Oil Embargo, 1973–1974." United States Office of the Historian. United States Department of State, n.d. Web. 29 May 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Melchior, Marie Riegel, Lise Skov, and Fabian Faurholt Csaba. "Translating Fashion into Danish." *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research* 3 (2011): 209-28. Web. 27 May 2017.



*perception of Danish fashion there were no direct references to any Danish dress traditions or the use of any specific Danish crafting techniques. Connecting Danish fashion to Danish history or the image of Denmark was not an integral part of the design.*<sup>8</sup> And yet smaller Danish brands and designers have gained recognition for their practical, simple design sensibilities, said to reflect and respond to Denmark's notoriously unpredictable weather conditions. Brands like Norse Projects, Han Kjøbenhavn, and Wood Wood have earned praised for their quality basics. A Danish fashion writer, Marie Jedig, suggested that the Danish design philosophy is: "...about quality rather than quantity – we like simple items that last forever". The simplicity and utility that once colored the modern aesthetic of Danish furniture designers have now

Due to copyright restrictions these images cannot be displayed

Figure 1: Images from Han Kjøbenhavn spring/summer 2016 collection.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Melchior, Marie Riegel S. "Doing Danish Fashion: On National Identity and Design Practices of a Small Danish Fashion Company." *Fashion Practice: The Journal of Design* 2.1 (2010): 13-40. Web. 29 May 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Han Kjøbenhavn Spring/Summer 2016. Digital image. Hypebeast. April 30, 2016. Accessed January 21, 2018.

found their way into the overcoats, sweaters and shoes that pace the runways of Paris, Milan and, of course, Copenhagen.<sup>10</sup>

Due to copyright restrictions these images cannot be displayed

Figure 2: Images from Norse Projects women's spring/summer 2016<sup>10</sup>

With the endorsement of the Danish government, the fashion community of Copenhagen has worked to establish itself as the “fifth global fashion center of the world”. The idea was born in the mid 2000’s amid the emergence of Copenhagen’s distinct “user-friendly” and “simple” design that was praised by the international fashion community<sup>11</sup>. However it has been noted that “*Denmark is rarely what comes to mind as*

---

<sup>10</sup> Norse Projects women's Spring/Summer 2016. Digital image. Norse Projects. Accessed January 21, 2018. [https://dnohqo1t8a7s.cloudfront.net/client/dynamic/articles/norse-projects-womens-ss16-lookbook-fullscreen-17\\_8222.jpg](https://dnohqo1t8a7s.cloudfront.net/client/dynamic/articles/norse-projects-womens-ss16-lookbook-fullscreen-17_8222.jpg).

<sup>11</sup> Melchior, Marie. "From Design Nations to Fashion Nations? Unpacking Contemporary Scandinavian Fashion Dreams." *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* 15.2 (2011): 177-200. Web. 27 May 2017.

a key [fashion] destination, except to those who are somewhat knowledgeable about the fashion industry" (Marie Riegels Melchior). Since the birth of the Danish fashion industry in the late 90's, the government has taken notice of the both cultural and economic benefits of nurturing its newfound creative sector. In 2009, Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen made an appearance at Copenhagen Fashion Week, showing support for the industry in the midst of a financial crisis<sup>12</sup> while symbolizing the economic importance and legitimacy of the Danish fashion sector. The state's economic involvement is crucial to the growth of the relatively young fashion culture within Denmark.

## Japonisme in Denmark

In 1867 Denmark and Japan exchanged a "Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation"<sup>13</sup>. Soon after the opening of Japan's borders, Denmark became one of the first European countries to incorporate more basic elements of Japanese art and design into their own in the new wave of Japonisme. This movement is often cited as a major catalyst across a broad range of Danish art and design, and the momentum provided by Japonisme may even have continued to push Denmark's creative sector into the 20th century. As art historian Mirjam Gelfer-Jørgensen says in her book, *Influences from Japan in Danish Art and Design: 1870-2010*: "The encounter with Japanese art provided Danish art with stimuli, which were implemented practically in several areas of applied art. For Danish art, Japonism [sic] was a catalyst with a long-range and long-lasting effect. The trend was a major precondition for the modernism, which, in the course of

<sup>12</sup> "Statsministeren Ser På Mode." Nordjyske.dk. N.p., 03 Feb. 2009. Web. 29 May 2017. Prime Minister Looks at Fashion

<sup>13</sup> "Japan-Denmark Relations." Embassy of Japan in Denmark. 2014. Accessed September 08, 2017. [http://www.dk.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr\\_en/bilateral.html](http://www.dk.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/bilateral.html).



*the 20th century, turned Denmark into a design nation.*"<sup>14</sup> Japonisme arose as scholars and artisans rushed to collect and investigate the art, philosophy and literature of an exotic, highly refined and newly explorable culture. Japanese ports quickly and steadily began exporting the country's wares to multiple European nations. One of the first industries where the wide incorporation of new motifs and practices created a fusion of European and Japanese was ceramics; Japanese techniques were applied to the European form<sup>15</sup>; the oriental merged with the occidental.

Shipments of Japanese art, whether fresh off the boat, in private collections and public exhibitions, fueled successive waves of European Japonisme until the 1950's, when artists and scholars began visiting Japan to study firsthand. Japonisme prior to this time is often described as a purely frantic obsession with exoticism and a fetishization of Japanese art and culture, and earlier Danish industrial design was too rooted in classicism to see any true progression into the modernism of the 50's that we know as Danish design. Despite Japan's role in the Second World War, many Danish craftsmen and artists looked to post-war Japan for inspiration, and it became one of the most popular foreign lands for visit for study. Japanese art again saw a resurgence in influence and popularity in Denmark not seen since the initial opening of Japan's borders<sup>16</sup>.

Because Japonisme had such an impact on Danish art and design in the 19th and 20th century, these originally Japanese techniques and styles of art came to be seen as Danish, as art historian Mirjam Gelfer-Jørgensen explains in an interview:

<sup>14</sup>Gelfer-Jørgensen, Mirjam. *Influences from Japan in Danish Art and Design: 1870-2010*. København: Arkitektens Forlag, 2013.

<sup>15</sup>"When Japonism Bewitched Europe." Nippon.com. July 13, 2015. Accessed September 10, 2017. <http://www.nippon.com/en/column/g00284/>.

<sup>16</sup> Gelfer-Jørgensen, Mirjam. *Influences from Japan in Danish Art and Design: 1870-2010*. København: Arkitektens Forlag, 2013.

*“Danish artists, in the late 19th Century, transformed Japanese subjects [...] into a style that today we consider very Danish. A few decades later, this transformation evolved to include simple forms and surfaces without decoration.”*<sup>17</sup> Knowing this, the current state of Danish fashion may reflect more indirect influences from Japan. Perhaps, when the *“impact of Japonisme was so extensive it became an essential element for the founding of Danish Modernism in the 20th century”*<sup>18</sup>, certain aesthetic features crept into Danish fashion that were originally Japanese. Likewise, Japanese fashion may itself not have had a less than direct effect on fashion in Denmark today. In other words, while the Japanese culture, aesthetics and other artistic elements may have imprinted themselves on the Danish design philosophy over time and with the advent of European Japonisme, Japanese style and fashion seems not to have had a direct effect on today’s generation of designers.

## Japanese Wabi-Sabi and Scandinavian Minimalism

Some similarities can be drawn between Danish Design philosophy and the idea of *Wabi-Sabi*, a principle of traditional Japanese aesthetics, which was introduced in Denmark and elsewhere abroad following the opening of Japan’s borders in 1854<sup>19</sup>. *Wabi-Sabi*, a Japanese concept of beauty that had since come into its modern form in the late fourteenth century, is commonly found in traditional Japanese art. Travelling to Denmark after the 1850’s, this concept would have found fertile ground in Denmark’s art

<sup>17</sup> “The Danish Japanese Connection, Japan’s Impact on Danish Design.” Skagen. Accessed January 22, 2018. <http://www.skagen.com/gb/en/journal/danish-design-style/architecture---home-decor/japanese-impact-danish-design-japonisme.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> “THE OPENING OF JAPAN TO THE WEST.” Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library. 1997. Accessed September 06, 2017. <http://brbl-archive.library.yale.edu/exhibitions/orient/japan.htm>.

and design community for an age of minimalism and a nordic interpretation of Wabi-Sabi.

Wabi-Sabi is often described as something that is hard to translate, as it is a word and concept specific to the Japanese culture and language. Wabi-Sabi in zen philosophy is broken down into seven basic principles: the first is Kanso, the *simplicity or elimination of clutter* things are simple and to the point. Next comes Enso Fukinsei, *asymmetry or irregularity*. Shibui or Shibumi, is the beauty of the understated, minimalist; *elegant simplicity*. Shibui literally translates to “bitter tasting” in Japanese . Shizen is being of nature, organic. Zen scholar Garr Reynolds describes Shizen as a reminder that “*design is not an accident, even when we are trying to create a natural-feeling environment. It is not a raw nature as such but one with more purpose and intention*” (see figures 3 and 4).

Due to copyright restrictions these images cannot be displayed

Figure 3: "Haro" Japanese tea cup<sup>20</sup>

Figure 4: "Slurp" cup by Arhoj Studio, based in Copenhagen<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> "Green Tea Cup." Digital image. Sous Chef. Accessed January 21, 2018. <https://www.souschef.co.uk/media/catalog/product/cache/1/image/9df78eab33525d08d6e5fb8d27136e95/k/u/kusa-green-tea-cup-2.jpg>. A ceramic tea cup made in Japan

<sup>21</sup> "Slurp Cup." Digital image. Studio Arhoj. Accessed January 21, 2018. [https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0512/9689/products/slurp\\_darkforest2\\_1\\_grande.jpg?v=1513010669](https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0512/9689/products/slurp_darkforest2_1_grande.jpg?v=1513010669). A danish designed and produced tea cup

The following on the list is Yugen, a concept that is a bit more extreme than the others, a subliminal hint to divinity, something so graceful or profoundly beautiful it suggests existence of other possibly heavenly worlds. Datsuzoku is a concept that represents a freedom from convention or rules.

The last concept, Seijaku is one that I believe resonates not only with that of Danish design but that of the Danish lifestyle, a sense of tranquility, *active calm*. I believe there is some argument to be made for the connection between this concept and that of *Hygge*, a concept of Danish culture that celebrates the sense of coziness and calmness found during time spent relaxing with friends and family. A quick google search for “hygge wabi sabi” brings up a plethora of think pieces by lifestyle blogs questioning whether Wabi-Sabi is the new Hygge (though I believe this in reference to the two as philosophical ideas to be commodified by the middle class of the cultural behemoth that is the UK and North America). Hygge comes from the old Norse word *hygga*, meaning “to comfort”<sup>22</sup>. Hygge as we know it now began as a concept in the 19th century, though, possibly before the arrival of Japanese philosophy in Denmark.

To begin breaking down the idea of Wabi-Sabi, we must first begin with the first half of the compound, Wabi, sometimes translated as loneliness: *“In physical objects you can expect the use of natural materials in a rustic style. Imperfections are not from sloppiness but the nature of the materials and process, or the use of the object itself. Objects will be personal, humble, and functional. As a worldview, attention is paid to transience, harmony with nature, and attention to the tiniest of details”* (Jack

---

<sup>22</sup> Wiking, Meik. *The Little Book of Hygge: The Danish Way to Live Well*. New York, NY: William Morrow, an imprint of Harpercollins Publishers, 2017.



Richardson). Already connections can be made to Danish fashion design, of which both functional and natural materials are used: wool, leather and cotton.

The second half of the phrase, Sabi, can be interpreted as representing the mortality of an object, and its subjection to wear<sup>23</sup>. Sabi in Japanese shares the pronunciation of the Japanese word for rust, though it is represented with a different character in the the Japanese language's Kanji logographic writing system. Shozo Kato, a master of Japanese sword fighting, or Kendo, describes Western beauty as *"...radiance, majesty, grandness and broadness. In comparison, Eastern beauty is desolateness (wabi-sabi). Humility. Hidden beauty."* (translated from Japanese)<sup>24</sup>. If we take this description of western beauty as seen from a Japanese perspective, Danish fashion and design do not match: *"Danish designers and architects are known for treasuring the concepts of minimalism and functionality"*<sup>25</sup>. In other words, Danish design qualities and concepts do not necessarily align with an outside view of overarching Western Beauty concepts, as Danish design and art is generally recognized to represent something more muted and minimalist.

## Influence from Japanese Fashion

Paris is widely considered to be the fashion capital of the world, and over the past century, Japanese designers have gained high status in the Parisian fashion scene, and by extentions, the whole European fashion scene, Denmark included.

<sup>23</sup> Richardson, Jack. "Wabi-Sabi and Understanding Japan." Tofugu. April 10, 2016. Accessed September 10, 2017. <https://www.tofugu.com/japan/wabi-sabi/>.

<sup>24</sup> Vimeo. September 10, 2017. Accessed September 10, 2017. <https://vimeo.com/86960593>.

<sup>25</sup> Lavinia. "Scandinavian Simplicity: The Influence of Danish Design." Freshome. October 11, 2015. Accessed September 10, 2017. <http://freshome.com/scandinavian-fascination-influence-of-danish-design/>.



*“Readers unfamiliar with contemporary Japanese media might be puzzled by the appearance of men in fashion magazines. This is particularly the case for images of Japanese young men whose strong concerns over their appearance and slender physicality seem to enhance their (hetero) sexual desirability. These publications suggest to their male readers that crafting fashionable looks through selection of the right clothes, cosmetics, fragrances, and maintaining a balanced diet is necessary to self-assurance and a successful life.”* -The Importance of Looking Pleasant: Reading Japanese Men's Fashion Magazines<sup>26</sup>

Japanese fashion and style has garnered attention in Europe and beyond since the nation opened its borders in the mid-19th century, however it wasn't until the 1970's that the modern phenomenon of Japanese fashion began. In her 2004 book, *The Japanese Fashion Revolution in Paris Fashion*, Yuniya Kawamura tells us that: *“the Japanese fashion phenomenon in Paris began with Kenzo when he first showed his collection in his small store in 1970. It was not the first time that clothes with Oriental inspirations appeared in the West.”* The passage refers to Japanese designer Kenzo Takada<sup>27</sup>, whose first collection of *“ethnic-inspired looks and vibrant use of colour”*<sup>28</sup> earned *“immediate and sensational [reception]”*<sup>29</sup>. While consensus is lacking over who started the boom of Japanese designers in Paris, some (like Kawamura) cite Kenzo Takada as the main influencer of interest in ‘Japanese Designers’; others attribute its

<sup>26</sup> Monden, Masafumi. "The Importance of Looking Pleasant: Reading Japanese Men's Fashion Magazines." *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress* 16, no. 3 (2012): 297-316.

<sup>27</sup> "Kenzo." LVMH. Accessed October 29, 2017. <https://www.lvmh.com/houses/fashion-leather-goods/kenzo/>. Page from Kenzo's parent company, LVMH, gives a brief description of the brand's history.

<sup>28</sup> Alexander, Ella. "Kenzo's New Era." *Vogue*. August 23, 2017. Accessed October 29, 2017. <http://www.vogue.co.uk/gallery/kenzo-interview-humberto-leon-and-carol-lim>.

<sup>29</sup> Kawamura, Yuniya. *The Japanese revolution in Paris fashion*. Oxford: Berg, 2006.

Due to copyright restrictions  
this image cannot be displayed

Figure 5: Issey Miyake's Spring 1995 ready-to-wear show<sup>31</sup>

fashion world. <sup>31</sup>

There are also cases in which Danish designers have taken inspiration from what seems to be Japanese reference points, such as this look from Henrik Vibskov's Autumn Winter 2016 show *The Jaw Nuts Piece* (figure 6), which looks to have taken inspiration from traditional Japanese dress (figure 7).

origins to Issey Miyake<sup>30</sup>. Kawamura tells the story that Japanese fashion designers brought a new understanding of fashion to Paris. Oriental themes had been used in Western fashion since orientalisme first took hold in Europe. However, Asian designers had little direct influence on European fashion until the 1970's, when the emergence of designers like Kenzo Takada, Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons gain attention and praise from within the Paris

<sup>30</sup> English, Bonnie. *Japanese Fashion Designers, the Work and Influence of Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo*. English ed. London: Berg, 2011

<sup>31</sup> Issey Miyake Spring 1995 Ready to Wear. Digital image. Vogue. October 14, 1994. Accessed January 21, 2018. <https://assets.vogue.com/photos/5723bf552f0e83c40e59f69c/master/pass/ISSEY-MIYAKE-SPRING-1995-RTW-044.jpg>.

Due to copyright restrictions these images cannot be displayed

Figure 6: Image from Henrik Vibskov's autumn winter 2016 collection titled: "The Jaw Nuts Piece" reminiscent of a Kimono (see figure figure 2)<sup>32</sup>

Figure 7: Woman in traditional Japanese dress, a *Kimono*<sup>33</sup>

## Final Analysis

Now comes time to answer the question: *was Danish fashion influenced by Japanese aesthetics and/or design?* For the short answer: yes. But that still fails to describe and understand the vast amount of factors that go into creating the individual fashion culture and market of a single nation. Japanese art and design has definitely

---

<sup>32</sup> Image from Henrik Vibskov's autumn/winter 2016 "The Jaw Nuts Piece" collection. Digital image. Henrik Vibskov. Accessed January 21, 2018. [http://www.henrikvibskov.com/files/gimngs/227\\_8.jpg](http://www.henrikvibskov.com/files/gimngs/227_8.jpg).

<sup>33</sup> Knott, Franklin Price. A Geisha girl poses in her Kimono in Kyoto, June 1927. Digital image. Wikimedia Commons. Accessed January 21, 2018. [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/bb/A\\_Geisha\\_girl\\_poses\\_in\\_her\\_Kimono\\_in\\_Kyoto%2C\\_June\\_1927.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/bb/A_Geisha_girl_poses_in_her_Kimono_in_Kyoto%2C_June_1927.jpg).

had some lasting and obvious effects on Denmark's creative industries since the arrival of Japonisme on its shores in the 19th century. But this effect was seen at the time throughout Europe: what's to separate Denmark from the rest of Europe in that sense, or even Scandinavia, for that matter? The same argument could be made for the effect Japanese fashion designers of the 20th century had on contemporary Danish fashion; though evidence of influence and inspiration on the Danes exists, the same could be said for most fashion industries within Europe and around the world. Globalization has led to the democratization of fashion, leading art and design from around the world to mix and intermingle. But at the same time, this hybridization has led (ironically) to a somewhat globally homogenous fashion industry.

At this point, it's difficult even to say that Denmark's fashion market has any characteristics that truly sets it apart from other Scandinavian nations. All of the adjectives that have been attributed to Danish fashion can and often are just as easily applied to the well-established Swedish fashion houses like Filippa K. and Acne Studios. Though individual designers and brands can bring of course their own work to the table, it's difficult to put into words anything that truly separates and distinguishes fashion as Danish, because Danish fashion has always followed and continues to follow European couture trends as a whole.

There is however still a well documented and researched tie between Japanese and Danish industrial design and traditional visual art. So much so that in 2016, the Danish design museum (Design Museum Denmark) opened a two year exhibition titled "*Learning from Japan*" to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the trade agreement between Denmark and Japan in 1867. The museum's exhibit website stated that "*The*

*exhibit is wide-ranging and touches on themes like nature motifs in Japanese art, processes and materials, architecture and interior design, fashion and lighting, furniture and tableware, all inspired by the meeting with Japanese art and handicrafts, but now integrated into Danish design.”*

## Conclusion

From my research I've been able to answer my research question: Danish fashion design was influenced by Japanese aesthetics and design. This occurred in two ways that I have been able to identify. The first is that, as a variety of Japanese goods introduced to Denmark following the opening of Japan's borders in 1854 sparked the ensuing craze of Japonisme, some aspects of Japanese aesthetics were then absorbed into the Danish design paradigm. However, the lasting impact of Japonisme in Denmark lingered long enough for the source material to be forgotten. These design paradigms and aesthetic principles became an intrinsic part of Danish Design (though they did not retain their original Japanese names) and were incorporated into the nation's fashion designs by designers who drew inspiration from their homeland's design principles. Secondly, the influx of Japanese designers in Paris following the 1970's whose influence and imitation can be seen throughout the European fashion world today, including Danish designers.



## Bibliography

Alexander, Ella. "Kenzo's New Era." *Vogue*. August 23, 2017. Accessed October 29, 2017. <http://www.vogue.co.uk/gallery/kenzo-interview-humberto-leon-and-carol-lim>.

"Dansk Mode & Textil - Virksomhed Data." *datacvr.virk*. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 May 2017.

English, Bonnie. *Japanese Fashion Designers, the Work and Influence of Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo*. English ed. London: Berg, 2011

"Fact Sheet: Creative industries in Denmark." Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. Accessed September 10, 2017. <http://www.legco.gov.hk/research-publications/english/1314fsc45-creative-industries-of-denmark-20140902-e.pdf>.

Gelfer-Jørgensen, Mirjam. *Influences from Japan in Danish Art and Design: 1870-2010*. København: Arkitektens Forlag, 2013.

"Green Tea Cup." Digital image. *Sous Chef*. Accessed January 21, 2018. <https://www.souschef.co.uk/media/catalog/product/cache/1/image/9df78eab33525d08d6e5fb8d27136e95/k/u/kusa-green-tea-cup-2.jpg>.  
A ceramic tea cup made in Japan.

Han Kjøbenhavn Spring/Summer 2016. Digital image. *Hypebeast*. April 30, 2016. Accessed January 21, 2018.

Image from Henrik Vibskov's autumn/winter 2016 "The Jaw Nuts Piece" collection. Digital image. Henrik Vibskov. Accessed January 21, 2018. [http://www.henrikvibskov.com/files/gimms/227\\_8.jpg](http://www.henrikvibskov.com/files/gimms/227_8.jpg).

Issey Miyake Spring 1995 Ready to Wear. Digital image. *Vogue*. October 14, 1994. Accessed January 21, 2018. <https://assets.vogue.com/photos/5723bf552f0e83c40e59f69c/master/pass/ISSEY-MIYAKE-SPRING-1995-RTW-044.jpg>.

"Japan-Denmark Relations." Embassy of Japan in Denmark. 2014. Accessed September 08, 2017. [http://www.dk.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr\\_en/bilateral.html](http://www.dk.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/bilateral.html).

Kawamura, Yuniya. *The Japanese revolution in Paris fashion*. Oxford: Berg, 2006.

Lavinia. "Scandinavian Simplicity: The Influence of Danish Design." *Freshome*. October 11, 2015. Accessed September 10, 2017. <http://freshome.com/scandinavian-fascination-influence-of-danish-design/>.

Lipovetsky, Gilles, and Richard Sennett. *The Empire of Fashion Dressing Modern Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002. Print.

Look from Henrik Vibskov Fall Winter 2017. Digital image. Henrik Vibskov. Accessed January 21, 2018. [http://www.henrikvibskov.com/files/gimngs/240\\_umb6109.jpg](http://www.henrikvibskov.com/files/gimngs/240_umb6109.jpg).

Norse Projects women's Spring/Summer 2016. Digital image. Norse Projects. Accessed January 21, 2018. [https://dnochoqo1t8a7s.cloudfront.net/client/dynamic/articles/norse-projects-womens-ss16-lookbook-fullscreen-17\\_8222.jpg](https://dnochoqo1t8a7s.cloudfront.net/client/dynamic/articles/norse-projects-womens-ss16-lookbook-fullscreen-17_8222.jpg).

Melchior, Marie Riegel, Lise Skov, and Fabian Faurholt Csaba. "Translating Fashion into Danish." *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research* 3 (2011): 209-28. Web. 27 May 2017.

Melchior, Marie Riegel S. "Doing Danish Fashion: On National Identity and Design Practices of a Small Danish Fashion Company." *Fashion Practice: The Journal of Design* 2.1 (2010): 13-40. Web. 29 May 2017.

Melchior, Marie. "From Design Nations to Fashion Nations? Unpacking Contemporary Scandinavian Fashion Dreams." *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* 15.2 (2011): 177-200. Web. 27 May 2017.

Monden, Masafumi. "The Importance of Looking Pleasant: Reading Japanese Men's Fashion Magazines." *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress* 16, no. 3 (2012): 297-316.

"Oil Embargo, 1973–1974." United States Office of the Historian. United States Department of State, n.d. Web. 29 May 2017.

Richardson, Jack. "Wabi-Sabi and Understanding Japan." Tofugu. April 10, 2016. Accessed September 10, 2017. <https://www.tofugu.com/japan/wabi-sabi/>.

"Slurp Cup." Digital image. Studio Arhoj. Accessed January 21, 2018. [https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0512/9689/products/slurp\\_darkforest2\\_1\\_grande.jpg?v=1513010669](https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0512/9689/products/slurp_darkforest2_1_grande.jpg?v=1513010669).

A danish designed and produced tea cup.

"Statsministeren Ser På Mode." Nordjyske.dk. N.p., 03 Feb. 2009. Web. 29 May 2017.

"The Danish Japanese Connection, Japan's Impact on Danish Design." Skagen. Accessed January 22, 2018. <http://www.skagen.com/gb/en/journal/danish-design-style/architecture---home-decor/japanese-impact-danish-design-japanisme.html>.

"THE OPENING OF JAPAN TO THE WEST." Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library. 1997. Accessed September 06, 2017. <http://brbl-archive.library.yale.edu/exhibitions/orient/japan.htm>.

Vimeo. September 10, 2017. Accessed September 10, 2017. <https://vimeo.com/86960593>.

"When Japonism Bewitched Europe." Nippon.com. July 13, 2015. Accessed September 10, 2017. <http://www.nippon.com/en/column/g00284/>.

Wiking, Meik. *The Little Book of Hygge: The Danish Way to Live Well*. New York, NY: William Morrow, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2017.

"Kenzo." LVMH. Accessed October 29, 2017. <https://www.lvmh.com/houses/fashion-leather-goods/kenzo/>.

Page from Kenzo's parent company, LVMH, gives a brief description of the brand's history.