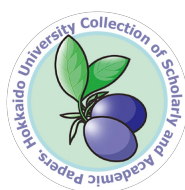




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Cultural Exchange Through Soviet–Japanese Trade: A Case of the Soviet Art Business by Yoko Nakamura in the 1970s

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INTRODUCTION

Cultural exchange between Japan and the Soviet Union, which was active from the time of the Soviet–Japanese Joint Declaration in 1956 until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, has been often examined in previous studies, which focused mainly on the diplomatic and political background. This paper aims to identify an instance of cultural exchange in fine art not on the background, but within a business framework, specifically exploring the link between the introduction of Russian–Soviet paintings in Japan and Soviet–Japanese trade. It highlights the case of Tokyo's art gallery owner Yoko Nakamura, during the 1970s.

Previous studies have reasonably connected cultural exchange with diplomacy and politics. As David Caute indicated in *The Dancer Defects*, a voluminous work on the cultural competition between the US and the USSR in five artistic fields, that cultural exchange during the Cold War period was the scene of diplomatic struggles between two polities with conflicting ideologies.¹ On the Soviet side, cultural exchange was viewed as an appeal to capitalist countries, highlighting the perceived superiority of communist ideology. Starting soon after WWII, until the 1950s, the tension between the two camps remained high; therefore, *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945–60*, edited by Hans Krabbendam and Giles Scott-Smith, shows that the United States attempted to unite the countries of Western Europe against communism, sometimes using the CIA for cultural programs like the International Student Conference.² Shiro Hanya informs us of the political contest between the Soviet Union and the US in Japan at the moment of the restoration of Soviet–Japanese diplomatic relationships. He clarified that the successive visits of highly excellent Soviet artistic programs to Japan in 1954–1961 accompanied Soviet efforts at intervention in the revision of the US–Japan Security Treaty.³

1 David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

2 Hans Krabbendam and Giles Scott-Smith, eds., *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945–60* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

3 HANYA Shiro 半谷史郎, “Kokkô kaifuku zengo no nisso bunka kôryû—1954–61 nen: Borishoi barê to kabuki 国交回復前後の日ソ文化交流—1954–61年: ボリショイ・バレエと歌舞伎 [Japan–Soviet Cultural Exchange before and after the Restoration of the Diplomatic Relationships: Bolshoi Ballet and Kabuki, 1954–61],” *Shisô* 思想 987 (2006), pp. 32–51.

After the Thaw Period, the tension gradually eased. *Music, Art and Diplomacy*, edited by Simo Mikkonen and Pekka Suutari, which mainly focused on cultural exchange in the 1960s–1980s, quite positively assessed the Cold War as facilitating cultural exchange, promoting mutual influence among the participants in several artistic fields beyond the two polities.⁴ The work echoes Joseph Nye’s argument about “cultural diplomacy” in *Soft Power*.⁵ Growing interests in “cultural diplomacy” produced further works whose titles contain the term, such as Cadra McDaniel’s *American–Soviet Cultural Diplomacy*, which placed the Bolshoi Ballet’s tours in diplomatic and political concerns as well.⁶ Exceptionally, Roann Barris’ *Reclaiming and Redefining American Exhibitions of Russian Art*, explores the process of the formation of Russian-Soviet fine art as a specific genre in the US, touches upon the commercial role of dealers.⁷ The most significant work is Michael David-Fox’s *Showcasing the Great Experiment*,⁸ which argues that the acquisition of hard currency was essential for the Soviet side, as it analyses the operations of VOKS and Intourist during the interwar period.

It would be inaccurate to overlook the fact that business interests became a major driver of cultural exchange during the Cold War. Although the embargo policy against the communist bloc led by the US reached its peak during the Korean War, it had relaxed in the middle of the 1950s. This led Western countries to seek commercial opportunities in East-West trade, and Japan established a commercial relationship with the Soviet Union in 1957. Indeed, the business strategies were intertwined with political and diplomatic efforts. Concurrently, however, the expansion of Soviet–Japanese trade during the period of rapid economic growth gave rise to an autonomous sector in which private companies pursued profit. From there, some business owners with connections to Russian art emerged: those who acted like patrons, as Thomas R. H. Havens described in *Artist and Patron in Postwar Japan*,⁹ or otherwise, those who were traders. Yoko Nakamura serves as an example of the latter category.

4 Simo Mikkonen and Pekka Suutari, eds., *Music, Art and Diplomacy: East–West Cultural Interactions and the Cold War* (London: Ashgate, 2016).

5 Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

6 Cadra Peterson McDaniel, *American–Soviet Cultural Diplomacy: The Bolshoi Ballet’s American Premiere* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014).

7 Roann Barris, *Reclaiming and Redefining American Exhibitions of Russian Art* (New York: Routledge, 2024), p. 4.

8 Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921–1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

9 Thomas R. H. Havens, *Artist and Patron in Postwar Japan: Dance, Music, Theater, and the Visual Arts, 1955–1980* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

In this context, Viktor Belozerov's article focusing on Yoko Nakamura and her gallery is of considerable interest.¹⁰ This pioneering work on the introduction of Soviet art into Japan during the period from the 1960s to the 1980s persuasively demonstrated that her business with the department store Mitsukoshi successfully led to the de-ideologization of Social Realist paintings and their adaptation to the Japanese market, drawing upon abundant resources available from the Russian archives. We also have Marina Poliakova's work, which discusses the trade of paintings between the Soviet Ukraine and Nakamura's gallery.¹¹

While generally agreeing with Belozerov's conclusion, this paper aims to situate Nakamura's enterprise in the broader context of this period when the Soviet–Japanese trade stimulated new business with the Soviet Union. By demonstrating that private companies organizing cultural exchange programs were motivated by profit and that the Soviet authorities also deemed it advantageous, this case study will conclude that business interests can be a significant driver of cultural diplomacy.

The remainder of this paper has three sections. The initial section outlines the official programs of Soviet–Japanese cultural exchange in the field of fine art that started in the 1960s. In the second section, we examine the Soviet–Japanese trade process, concentrating on how Nakamura sought to establish a personal network within this context. Finally, we examine the art business facilitated by Nakamura in collaboration with Mitsukoshi, one of Japan's leading department stores. We also considered audiences' responses and the Soviet authorities' attitudes. Our analysis is based on Japanese sources, including exhibition catalogs, Nakamura's Gallery "Gekkoso" publications, journals and newspapers, and memoirs.

SOVIET–JAPANESE CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN THE FIELD OF FINE ART IN THE 1960s

Diplomatic relations between Russia and Japan were established as early as the mid-nineteenth century. The Japanese got acquainted with their political ideologies, including populism (Narodnichestvo), anarchism, socialism, and literary works by Russian authors such as Ivan Turgenev, Mikhail Dostoevsky, and Lev Tolstoy throughout the early twentieth century. The dissemination of these ideas occurred through the communication of nonstate intellectuals from

10 Viktor V. Belozerov, "«Gekkoso» i Nakamura Yoko. Blesk monety pod lunoi: o deiatel'nosti galerei inn rynke sovetskovo iskusstva v Iaponii," *Ezhegodnik Iaponiia* 52, no. 1 (2023), pp. 251–275.

11 Marina Poliakova, "Institutional Aspects of the Export of Ukrainian art during the Stagnation Era: The Activity of Y. Nakamura and the Gekkoso Gallery (Japan)," *Artistic Culture. Topical Issues* 18, no. 1 (2022), pp. 132–139.

both countries, as well as via publications and translations from Europe and America. Russian thought absorbed Japanese intellectuals and students who felt the dilemma of westernised individualist modernization, and stimulated some Christians, socialists, and men of letters to engage in cooperative social activities in the pre-war period.¹²

In 1945, near the end of WWII, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan and subsequently occupied Manchuria, Inner Mongolia, North Korea, Karafuto, and the Kuril Islands. Throughout the war, numerous Japanese soldiers and civilians were killed and wounded, and some were forcibly relocated to internment camps in Siberia. The relationship between the two countries continued to be tense even after WWII ended. The diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Japan were restored only in 1956, and political negotiations on the peace treaty and borders between the two countries ensued. In parallel with the negotiations, various cultural exchange programs, such as concerts of classical music and tours of the Bolshoi Ballet, Moscow Art Theatre, and Bolshoi Circus, were delivered because each country regarded culture as a tool for cultivating friendly public opinion in the society of the other country.

A large scale of Soviet art exhibitions in Japan began in the middle of the 1960s.¹³ The Soviet Union had headquarters to promote international cultural contact with the aim of disturbing American influence on other Western countries, such as VOKS (the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries; 1925–1958) and its successor, SSOD (the Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Contacts; 1958–1992). However, in Japan, no analogous organization existed; thus, several participants undertook the initiative. The first type was governmental institutions, including local embassies and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Subsequently, the Japan Foundation, an independent administrative institution under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, participated in several programs.

The second category comprised individuals directly involved in exhibitions, including staffs of museums in both countries, along with their supporters and sponsors, particularly journalism organizations. Reflecting its political nature, various semi-official liaison organizations also joined the Soviet–Japanese cultural exchange. The major ones included *Taibunkyô* (the Japan Cultural Association), led by Matsumae Shigeyoshi, a politician and founder of Tokai University; *Nisso Kyôkai* (the Japan–Soviet Society), originally under the strong influence of the Japanese Communist Party but reorganized and represented by Prime Minister Ichiro Hatoyama; *Nisso Yûkô Giin Renmei* (Japan–Soviet Friendship Parliamentary League), headed by a politician, later the Minister of Labor, Hirohide Ishida; and *Nisso Koryu Kyokai* (Japan–Soviet

12 Sho Konishi, *Anarchist Modernity: Cooperatism and Japanese–Russian Intellectual Relations in Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

13 Although exhibitions of Japanese art were held in the Soviet Union, this paper focuses on the analysis of the introduction of Russian–Soviet art to Japan.

Exchange Association). A Buddhist organization, *Sôka Gakkai*, headed by Dai-saku Ikeda, also built strong connections with Soviet representatives.¹⁴

Of these two types of actors, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy of the USSR in Japan provided patronage, while the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, or *Nikkei* (Japan Economics Newspaper), sponsored three significant Russian fine art exhibitions in the mid-1960s. The first was the “Exhibition of Old Russian Art,” held in 1964 at the Tokyo National Museum and at the Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art, which displayed ancient Scythian, Sarmatian, and Altaic artworks; Icons of the Russian Orthodox tradition; applied arts; embroidery; borrowed from the Hermitage, the Tretyakov Gallery, the Kremlin Armoury Museum, the Historical Museum in Moscow, the Russian Museum, the Pskov Museum, and the Zagorsk Museum.¹⁵ This was followed by the second, larger-scale exhibition, “Masterpieces of Modern Painting from the USSR,” between 1966 and 1967 at the National Museum of Western Art and the Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art, which exhibited old European masterpieces from the Hermitage, Impressionist works from the Pushkin Museum, and modern realist paintings from the Tretyakov Gallery and Russian Museum.¹⁶ The third exhibition, “Fifty Years of Painting USSR,” held in 1967 at the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution, exhibited works by Soviet painters, such as Pavel Korin, Mikhail Nesterov, Nikolai Kuznetsov, and Aleksandr Deineka in the 1930s–1950s and Vladimir Stojarov, Semen Chuikov, Tahir Salahov, Leonid Kabachek, Tengiz Mirzashvili, Boris Domashnikov, Genrikh Klebakh, Igor Popov, and others in the 1960s.¹⁷ Exhibitions showcasing Russian fine art took place in national museums throughout the subsequent decades.

14 IKEI Masaru 池井優, “Sengo nisso kankei no ichi kôsetsu: Nippon taigai bunka kyôkai no katsudô wo chûshin toshite 戦後日ソ関係の一考察: 日本対外文化協会の活動を中心として [A Study of Postwar Japan–Soviet Relations: Focusing on the Activities of the Japan Cultural Association],” *Hôgaku kenkyû* 法學研究 63, no. 2 (1990), pp. 45–64; *Nichiro kankei no 40 nen: Nisso kokkô kaifuku kara “Tokyo sengen” made* 日露関係の40年: 日ソ国交回復から「東京宣言」まで [Japan–Russo Relations in 40 years: from the Restoration of the Diplomatic Relations to Tokyo Declaration] (Tokyo: Nihon Roshia Kyokai 日本・ロシア協会, 1996), pp. 148–151; Kyokutô jijô kenkyûkai 極東事情研究会, ed., *Nisso kôryû no haikai: Seiji, bôeki, bunka kôryû no jitsujô* 日ソ交流の背景: 政治, 貿易, 文化交流の実情 [Background of Japan–Soviet Exchange: The Reality of Politics, Trade and Cultural Exchange] (Tokyo: Kyokuto shuppansha 極東出版社, 1958), pp. 27–35.

15 *Roshia hihoten* ロシア秘宝展 [Exhibition of Old Russian Art] (Tokyo: Nihon keizai shimbunsha 日本経済新聞社, 1964).

16 *Soren kokuritsu bijutsukan kindai meigaten* ソ連国立美術館近代名画展 [Masterpieces of Modern Painting from USSR] (Tokyo: Nihon keizai shimbunsha 日本経済新聞社, 1966).

17 *Soren kaiga 50 nenten* ソ連絵画50年展 [Fifty Years of Painting USSR.] (Tokyo: Nihon keizai shimbunsha 日本経済新聞社, 1967).

The president of the *Nikkei*, Yorozu Naoji, and the Minister of Culture of the Soviet Union, Ekaterina Furtseva,¹⁸ expressed their hope for the promotion of mutual understanding in the official greetings for “Fifty Years of Painting USSR” in 1967, referring to the development of Soviet art after the Great Revolution and Socialist Realism.

The exhibition “Fifty Years of Soviet Painting” is held at the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo. Modern Russian painting had developed on the basis of the powerful realism of Ilya Repin. At the beginning of the revolution, abstract art also appeared for a short time as a new expression against established art and had a fundamental influence on avant-garde trends around the world. However, after the success of the revolution ... Socialist Realism flourished and became the central style of Soviet art and has remained consistent ever since. ... We invite you to appreciate the bright and powerful Soviet art, which appears in easily understandable figurative expressions of vast nature. (Yorozu: The catalog of *Fifty Years of Painting USSR* [1967].)¹⁹

The opening of the exhibition “Fifty Years of Soviet Painting” in Tokyo to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Great Socialist Revolution ... gives me great pleasure. ... I believe that the Japanese people will be able to learn how Soviet culture and art have developed in the fifty years since the Soviet Union came to power. (Furtseva: The catalog of *Fifty Years of Painting USSR* [1967].)²⁰

One of the venues for these exhibitions, the National Museum of Western Art in Japan, had opened in Ueno Park in 1959. The foundation of this museum was the realization of a long-cherished dream to exhibit genuine European

18 The Ministry of Culture of the Soviet Union was established in 1953 following the death of Stalin, integrating several previously distinct departments, including the Ministries of Higher Education, Cinematography, and Labor Reserves; and the Committees of Arts, Radio Information, as well as the General Directorate for the Printing Industry, Publishing, and Book Trade. One of the ministry's primary responsibilities was to engage in propaganda activities aimed at undermining Western ideologies. About Furtseva's career, see: Leonid Mlechin, *Ekaterina Furtseva* (M: Moladaia Gvardiia, 2022), pp. 288–292.

19 *Soren kaiga 50 nenten*, p. 3. The Soviet authority forbade exhibiting the abstract and the avant-garde works in museums both in Russia and abroad. Hiroshi Kimura stated what he heard at the museum in Moscow: “Chagall and Malevich fell outside the authority of bureaucrats, and this always depended on the “political consideration” of the Minister of Culture, Furtseva.” KIMURA Hiroshi 木村浩, “Soren bijutsukai no ‘yukidoke’ to ‘itetsuki’ ヲ連美術界の<雪どけ>と<凍てつき> [Thaw and Freezing in the Soviet Art World],” *Geijutsu shinchô* 藝術新潮 25, no. 4 (1974), pp. 86. An article in *Bijutsu techô* 美術手帖 also criticised Soviet museums for hiding the avant-garde art. See *Bijutsu techô* 31 no. 451 (1979), pp. 104–105. However, “Fifty Years of Painting USSR” included the works of Wassily Kandinsky from the Tretyakov Gallery and of Kazimir Malevich from the Russian Museum, presumably due to strong demands from the Japanese side.

20 *Soren kaiga 50 nenten*, p. 4.

art for the Japanese people.²¹ The Ministry of Education aimed to restore the cultural standards destroyed by the war, while intellectuals considered the introduction of Western masterpieces to the Japanese people, who were prohibited from travelling abroad, a significant step towards edification.²² This indicates that when these exhibitions of Russian fine art were organized in the 1960s, the Japanese audience was perceived as relatively immature.

However, it should be noted that the third type of actors, quite distinct from the previous types, appeared in the field of Soviet-Japanese art exchange: businesspeople engaged in the rising Soviet-Japanese trade.

SOVIET-JAPANESE TRADE IN THE COLD WAR

The tension between the Eastern and Western blocs loosened in the mid-1950s, and the possibility of trade with communist countries appeared in Western Europe and Japan. For Western companies, the expansion of markets and the considerable economic strength of socialist countries represented an appealing opportunity, prompting a drive to supply the sophisticated machinery, equipment, and technology that these nations sought. Regulations by COCOM (Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls) were eased in 1954, and the Export Control Act of 1970 allowed for an even wider range of items. The growth rate of East-West trade was significantly elevated during the expansion of global trade: in 1956, while world trade increased by 11 percent year-on-year, East-West trade increased by 20 percent; in 1957, world trade increased by 8 percent, East-West trade by 16 percent, and in particular that from the West to the East increased by 25 percent; in 1958, world trade decreased by 3 percent, while East-West trade increased by 10 percent. The share of East-West trade in world trade rose from 3.5 percent in 1953 to 6.0 percent in 1958.²³

The Japanese government responded to this tendency. Prime Minister Ichiro Hatoyama, who sought to alter the pro-American stance of his predecessor Shigeru Yoshida and to confirm the conclusion of the Second World War

21 The museum was founded on the basis of the collections of the Western paintings accumulated by Kojiro Matsukata. He was a prominent entrepreneur and a distinguished collector of the works by Rodin, Gauguin, Cezanne, and Van Gogh. Matsukata aspired to establish a private museum in Tokyo, but WWII prevented this from happening. JINGAOKA Megumi 陣岡めぐみ, "Matsukata korekushon hyakunen no ruten 松方コレクション 百年の流転 [The Matsukata Collection: A One-hundred-year Odyssey]," in *Matsukata korekushonten 松方コレクション展 [The Matsukata Collection]* (Tokyo: National Museum of Western Art 国立西洋美術館, 2019), pp. 11–26.

22 SHIGA Kenjiro 志賀健二郎, *Hyakkaten no tenrankai 百貨店の展覧会 [Exhibitions at Department Stores]* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobô 筑摩書房, 2018), pp. 17–18.

23 NAKAE Goki 中江剛毅, *Tozai boeki: Hokai suru taikyosanken yushutsu kisei 東西貿易: 崩壊する対共産圏輸出規制 [The East-West trade: Collapse of Restrictions on Exports to the Communist Bloc]* (Tokyo: Kyôikusha 教育社, 1978), pp. 38, 40–44, 54–55, 77.

with the Soviet Union, initiated the organization of the legal aspects of Soviet-Japanese trade shortly after the Soviet-Japanese Joint Declaration in 1956. Consequently, the Treaty of Commerce was concluded in 1957, followed by the agreement between the Japanese and Soviet shipping organizations in 1958, which established regular services between Yokohama and Nakhodka and between Yokohama and Odessa. In 1967, Japan and the Soviet Union signed an Air Service Agreement, and Japan Airlines and Aeroflot began regular flights between Tokyo and Moscow.²⁴ Some politicians, such as Hirohide Ishida, also supported the promotion of business partnerships with the Soviet Union to ensure national security.²⁵

The Soviet Union was eager to foster trade relations with Japan, with the intention of acquiring hard currency and new technologies. For this purpose, the first Deputy Premier Anastas Mikoyan, called “a red salesman,” visited Japan, coinciding with the USSR Trade Fair of Commerce and Industry in 1961. Although the Japanese mainstream business community insisted on viewing the US as a partner country, Yoshinari Kawai, President of Komatsu Ltd., led a fifty-three-person business delegation to the Soviet Union in 1962. Welcoming the Japanese delegation, the Soviet authorities allowed members to visit many cities such as Moscow, Leningrad, Irkutsk, Bratsk, Novosibirsk, and Sverdlovsk, and finally Nikita Khrushchev invited them to his villa in Yalta. They reached a consensus over the export plan for vessels and the long-term import plan for timber from Sakhalin.²⁶

In 1964, the second visit of the first Deputy Premier, Anastas Mikoyan, spurred Japanese companies’ interest in the exploitation of Siberia. At this moment, Shigeo Nagano, one of the mainstream entrepreneurs in Japan, took over the passion of Kawai. He was the President of Fuji Iron and Steel Company and later served as head of the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (*Keizai*

24 Tokusuke Kitagawa, “Legal Aspects of Soviet-Japanese Trade,” *Law and Contemporary Problems* 37, no. 4 (Fall 1972), pp. 567–569; MASUDA Hiroshi 増田弘, ed., *Sengo nihon shushô no gaikô shisô: YOSHIDA Shigeru kara KOIZUMI Junichiro made* 戦後日本首相の外交思想: 吉田茂から小泉純一郎まで [Diplomatic Philosophies of Post-war Japanese Prime Ministers] (Tokyo: Minerva Shobo ミネルヴァ書房, 2016), pp. 89, 92–93; TAKAYAMA Satoshi 高山智, *Nisso kankei: Ryôdo gaikô to keizai kyôryoku* 日ソ関係: 領土外交と経済協力 [Soviet-Japanese Relations: Territorial Diplomacy and Economic Cooperation] (Tokyo: Kyoikusha 教育社, 1978), pp. 142–143.

25 ISHIDA Hirohide 石田博英, *Watashino seikai shôwashi* 私の政界昭和史 [My Showa History in Political World] (Tokyo: Tôyô kiezai shinpôsha 東洋経済新報社, 1986), p. 155. Ishida fell from power due to the Levchenko scandal in 1982, when he was suspected of cooperating with Soviet intelligence agencies.

26 KIMURA Masato 木村昌人, “Nippon no taiso minkan keizai gaikou: Houso keizai shisetsudan (1962 nen) wo chûshin toshite 日本対ソ民間経済外交: 訪ソ経済使節団 (1962年) を中心として [Japanese Non-governmental Economic Diplomacy toward the Soviet Union],” *Hôgaku kenkyû* 法學研究 63, no. 2 (1990), pp. 215–237; SHIRAI Hisaya 白井久也, *Atarashi shiberia* 新しいシベリア [New Siberia] (Tokyo: Saimaru shuppankai サイマル出版会, 1976), pp. 125–133; Ikei, “Sengo nisso kankeino ichi kôsetsu,” p. 49.

Dôyukai), who became a new leader in Soviet-Japanese trade.²⁷ He and Kogoro Uemura, subsequently the Japan Business Federation (*Keidanren*)'s chairman, undertook extensive research on trading with the communist bloc, emphasizing that their line is "without any discussion of idealistic and abstract ideology."²⁸ Nagano's policy of de-ideologization was apparent in an interview published in the monthly general magazine *Chûô Kôron* in 1967, in which he insisted on the significance of collaboration with the Soviet Union:

As long as we are based on a liberal economy, we will continue to flourish alongside those with whom we share similar values. However, as communism has changed over the past fifty years since the revolution, I believe that we need to assess it by considering its content. Two years ago, I spoke to Kosygin [the Premier at the time–Tatsumi] alone for about an hour, and he said, "Whether in a liberal or communist state, the ultimate goal of politics is to enrich people and make them happy. If the majority of the people prefer the course and method based on liberalism, then that is the way to go; if they prefer communism, then that is the way to get closer to the final goal. Therefore, we have no desire to impose our way on other countries. If so, it will open the way to mutual provision of goods and prosperity. Why not have an exchange between the two sides?" ... If the country contributes to Japan's economic development, we had better go along with it.²⁹

Nagano and Uemura organized the Joint Japanese–Soviet Economic Committee (*Nisso Keizai Gôdô inkai*) and decided to cooperate with the Soviet Union on three projects: exploitation of Far Eastern forest resources, new port construction in Nakhodka, and development of Far Eastern pulp materials.³⁰ The Nagano group of Japanese businesspeople and Ishida sought to strengthen ties with the Soviet government, even presenting a Japanese automobile to the newly appointed General Secretary, Leonid Brezhnev.³¹ Although trade between Japan and the Soviet Union was by no means large, sales grew rapidly to 296.7 million dollars in 1962, more than five times the amount in 1958.³² The other statistics demonstrate that the value of Japan's exports to the Communist bloc increased from 47.77 billion yen in 1965 to 469.03 billion yen in 1975, while imports increased from 52.71 billion yen in 1965 to 300.41 billion yen in 1975.³³

27 *Nisso nichiro keizai kôryûshi: Roshia bijinesu ni kaketa hitobito no monogatari* 日ソ・日ロ経済交流史: ロシア・ビジネスに賭けた人々の物語 [History of Japan-Soviet and Japan-Russia Exchanges in the Economic Sphere: The Story of People Challenging Russian Business] (Tokyo: Toyo shoten 東洋書店, 2008), pp. 57–58, 60–61.

28 *Kyôsan ken bôeki* 共産圏貿易 [Trade with the Communist Bloc] (Tokyo: Keizaioiraisha 経済往来社, 1963), p. 1.

29 NAGANO Shigeo 永野重雄, "Beiso shin jidai to nihon keizai no shinro 米ソ新時代と日本経済の進路 (対談) [Dialogue: The New Era of the US/USSR and the Path of the Japanese Economy]," *Chûô kôron* 中央公論 82, no. 10 (1967), pp. 207–208.

30 Shirai, *Atarashi shiberia*, pp. 140–147.

31 Ishida, *Watashino seikai shôwashi*, p. 161.

32 *Nisso nichiro keizai kôryûshi*, p. 50.

33 Nakae, *Tôzai bôeki*, p. 105.

Nevertheless, the process of trade with the Soviet Union proved onerous for Japanese companies. Nagano touched on this issue in the aforementioned interview.

In the US, businesspeople are connected to the rest of the world through their regions. The Soviet Union, however, is a so-called totalitarian economy, a different structure, with nationwide “Corporations” handling trade for each product. Japanese trading companies have to engage with dozens of such “Corporations.” This one-to-many ratio remains a difficult aspect to work with, and the delivery conditions are somewhat one-sided.³⁴

As stated above, the Soviet Union operated about fifty All-Union Export-Import Corporations (*Vsesoiuznye eksportno-importnye ob'edineniia*, called *Kôdan* in Japanese) for each product within the country and along with trade representations abroad. The single Corporation often fostered an environment of excessive competition among Japanese companies and sought to achieve one-sided profits.³⁵ Due to the unique customs and difficulties involved in dealing with the Soviet bureaucracy, Japanese businesspeople formed personal connections to exchange information and expertise. They assisted one another outside of companies in Moscow and other Russian cities.

In this context Yoko Nakamura emerged as an ambitious vice president of a private gallery, “Gekkoso,” located in Ginza, who was interested in bringing Russian-Soviet paintings to Japan. Nakamura, well known as the mother of internationally renowned pianist Hiroko Nakamura, had been an owner of the printing company *Taitô Insatsu* since 1958. She met entrepreneurs from various companies through her daughter’s schoolmates at Keiô Gijuku Elementary and Junior High School, which led to her position at Gekkoso. She founded “Salon de Claire,” a private club on the gallery’s premises, and hosted important people in politics and industry, including Yasuhiro Nakasone, later Prime Minister, and Taro Takemi, President of the Japan Medical Association.³⁶

“Salon de Claire” afforded her the chance to forge her most significant relationship with Soviet-Japanese trade: friendship with Shigeo Nagano, a leading figure in this realm, as indicated above. He admired Nakamura, complimenting her by saying, “She mentors me as an entrepreneur.” Nagano occasionally fulfilled her business requests, letting her join the Soviet-Japanese trade circle and even inviting her to the official business delegation to the Soviet Union.³⁷ Her acquaintance with Hirohide Ishida and Shigeyoshi Matsumae, politicians who promoted the Soviet-Japanese relationship, also affected the

34 Nagano, “Beiso shin jidai to nihon keizai no shinro,” p. 204.

35 *Kyôsanzen bôeki*, p. 178; Shirai, *Atarashî shiberia*, pp. 147–149.

36 MIZOGUCHI Atsushi 溝口敦, *Kieta meiga: Da Vinci shûsaku giwaku wo Ou* 消えた名画「ダ・ヴィンチ習作」疑惑を追う [A Vanished Masterpiece: Investigating the Scandal of Da Vinci’s étude] (Tokyo: Kodansha 講談社, 1993), pp. 234–235, 243, 245.

37 Mizoguchi, *Kieta meiga*, pp. 233, 245.

directions of her business interests. She entered Matsumae's *Taibunkyô* in 1972 and became vice-president in 1975.³⁸ These connections with key figures in Soviet-Japanese trade led her to do business with the Soviet Union.

YOKO NAKAMURA INTRODUCES RUSSIAN-SOVIET PAINTINGS

Organization of Exhibitions

When dealing with the communist bloc in 1969, President Yasuhiro Tani of Maruichi Shoji informed Nakamura that the Soviet state authorities desired to export Russian paintings to Japan. She flew to Moscow soon and succeeded in forming a friendship with the Minister of Culture Furtseva.³⁹ Two years later, in 1971, Nakamura began to organize the exhibition of Soviet art at her gallery by showing landscape paintings, genre paintings, still-life paintings, and portraits by forty-three painters belonging to the Artists' Union of the USSR, including Vladimir Stojarov, Nikolai Kormashov, Genrikh Klebakh, Igor Popov, Ivan Godlevsky, Tetiana Yablonska, Albert Papikian, and Yakov Romas. The organizer explained the novelty and significance of their exhibition in the catalog.

When thinking about trends and the future of the international world of art, we, as the creators of a new "art business," noticed that we were ignoring the Soviet Union, a mighty country which has national power stretching across half of the globe, which has a modern history of art consisting of a mixture of the tradition of Byzantine culture and Western art, which has nationalities with great artistic qualities, and, moreover, which has a national policy providing full support and protection to nurture art and artists. I noticed that we were ignoring the Soviet Union with such possibilities. This is, I believe, a significant problem.⁴⁰ (The catalog of *Modern Soviet Paintings* [1971].)

She and the staff of the gallery visited the Soviet Union twenty-four times during 1970–1973, visiting the Artists' Union of the USSR in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Odessa, Minsk, Riga, and Erevan.⁴¹ According to Nakamura's article about the process of receiving pictures in an exhibition catalog of 1973, three people from the gallery visited the Soviet Union with commercial visas and itineraries arranged by Intourist. The Artists' Union welcomed them with receptions and guided them to about eight painters' studios daily.⁴² Given these arrangements, it can be presumed that the Soviet side played a key role in the selecting the

38 Belozarov, "«Gekkoso» i Nakamura Yoko," p. 262.

39 Mizoguchi, *Kieta meiga*, pp. 246–247.

40 '71 *gendai sobieto kaiga* '71ソビエト絵画 [71 Modern Soviet Paintings] (Tokyo: Gekkoso 月光荘, 1971), no page number.

41 Belozarov, "«Gekkoso» i Nakamura Yoko," p. 259.

42 '73 *gendai sobieto kaiga* '73現代ソビエト絵画 [73 Modern Soviet Paintings] (Tokyo: Gekkoso 月光荘, 1973), p. 9.

paintings.⁴³ Maruichi Shoji cooperated with the earliest exhibitions of Nakamura's Gallery, presumably in the field of transport.⁴⁴

By 1974 Nakamura's gallery had organized several exhibitions, and the total print run for catalogs reached 170,000 copies.⁴⁵ The Russian Embassy in Japan and the Soviet Ministry of Culture supported almost all exhibitions. Minister Furtseva contributed messages to the catalogs and even visited Nakamura's gallery in Ginza. Nakamura appealed to Japanese politicians by donating modern Soviet paintings to the chambers of ministers, including Ishida and Nakasone.⁴⁶

Since 1972, Shigeru Okada, the president of Mitsukoshi, who also had a strong relationship with Nakamura at "Salon de Claire," offered venues for the exhibitions at the department store's main shop and local branches. Okada had a career in advertising at Mitsukoshi, with a strategy of bringing people into the store through cultural events. He was very successful in organizing exhibitions on "Napoleon" and "Great Britain" in the department, allowing customers to feel the atmosphere of European countries.⁴⁷ Russia became the next target, taking full advantage of Okada's close ties with Nakamura. Okada himself visited the Soviet Union with her in 1974.⁴⁸

For Mitsukoshi, Nakamura organized exhibitions roughly equivalent in magnitude to those of public museums: three blockbuster exhibitions featuring nineteenth-century masterpieces, Ilya Repin's *Barge Haulers on the Volga* in 1975, Ivan Kramskoi's *Portrait of an Unknown Woman* in 1976, and Ivan Aivazovsky's *The Ninth Wave* in 1977. Despite their apparent similarity to exhibitions of Russian art in the 1960s in national museums, they were organized by private galleries and shown in a department store. A strong connection with the Soviet authorities enabled a private business owner to bring nineteenth-century masterpieces to Japan. The organizers expected people interested in the masterpieces to also see the Soviet paintings in the neighbouring room.

"Human Realism" Instead of "Socialist Realism"

Nakamura exhibited Soviet paintings in the Socialist Realist style, which included landscapes, villages and towns, people, and still life. "Fifty Years of

43 Poliakova pointed out that the Ministry of Culture interfered the selection of paintings in Ukrainian cases. Poliakova, "Institutional Aspects of the Export of Ukrainian art," pp. 134–135.

44 The company's name appears on one of the catalogs. '71 *gendai sobieto kaiga*, no page number.

45 '74 *gendai sobieto kaiga* '74現代ソビエト絵画 [74 Modern Soviet Paintings] (Tokyo: Gekkoso 月光荘, 1974), p. 110.

46 '74 *gendai sobieto kaiga*, p. 110.

47 Mizoguchi, *Kieta meiga*, p. 245. As for Shigeru Okada's career, see KATSUTA Ken 勝田健, *Dokumento mitsukoshi: Ryûtsû gyôkai wo sawagaseru 'karei'na syôhō* ドキュメント三越: 流通業界を騒がせる「華麗」な商法 [Documents Mitsukoshi: Splendid Sales Methods Amazing the Distribution Industry] (Tokyo: Daiyamondosha ダイヤモンド社, 1980), pp. 150–152.

48 Belozarov, "«Gekkoso» i Nakamura Yoko," p. 260.

Painting USSR" at the National Museum of Modern Art Tokyo in 1967 was the exhibition of Socialist Realist paintings, as the president of *Nikkei Yorozu* mentioned in his greeting message. However, Nakamura avoided the term and began to use "Human Realism" at the exhibitions of Mitsukoshi since 1972. In the exhibition catalogs, she, or possibly her ghostwriter, linked the Soviet paintings to the tradition of realism and the populist intellectuals who aimed to serve the people of nineteenth-century Russia.⁴⁹ While they acknowledged socialism and the Russian Revolution, the term "Socialist Realism" was notably absent.

One potential explanation for this could be the lack of popularity of the style within the Japanese art world. Despite its varied aspects, Socialist Realism was viewed as the official doctrine that required artists to depict reality accurately, concretely, and historically in relation to revolutionary developments, and its rigidity was often criticized. To illustrate, *Asahi Journal*, a weekly magazine, published a critique of Otsuro Sakazaki's critical commentary on "Fifty Years of Painting USSR," the abovementioned exhibition at the National Museum of Modern Art Tokyo.⁵⁰ In 1974, *Shûkan Yomiuri*, another weekly, published a critical report entitled "This is Socialist Realism," which detailed the so-called "Bulldozer Incident," the violent removal of an open-air unofficial exhibition of avant-garde painters by the police in Moscow. To ensure the success of exhibitions, Nakamura felt compelled to distinguish Soviet paintings from the pejorative connotations attached to the term "Socialist Realism."

This raises another question of why Nakamura chose to rename it "human" realism. One interpretation of this phenomenon may be found in the introductory articles on the Union of Artists, which were published repeatedly in the exhibition catalogs and *Kartina*, a gallery's magazine. The Union of Artists founded in 1932 under Stalin's rule, was the official organization of the Soviet artists and art critics, and praised positively in the gallery's publications.

Soviet painters formed an association called the Union of Artists to ensure that their creative activities were carried out to the full. ... The Union of Artists is entirely self-governed by its member artists without any outside pressure or interference, but by their decency and mutual appreciation of each other's artistic and human qualities⁵¹ (The catalog of *Modern Soviet Paintings*, 1973).

The introductory articles featured an interview conducted by Nakamura with the secretaries of the Union in 1972. Surprised at generous pension and welfare programs for 14,000 Union members, Nakamura asked, "If they are given too much preferential treatment, wouldn't they want to be lazy?" The secretary

49 '73 *gendai sobieto kaiga*, p. 5.

50 SAKAZAKI Otsuro, "Yunîku na hyôgenryoku ユニークな表現力 [Unique Expressions]," *Asahi Journal* 朝日ジャーナル, December 10, 1967, p. 26.

51 '73 *gendai sobieto kaiga*, p. 272.

replied, “People who are lazy will be lazy whether they are given preferential treat or not” and added the severity of the path to become a professional painter.⁵²

The idea of a fully spontaneous association for mutual aid for artists might evoke socialist politics for readers. However, it also might be possible to see the image as evoking Tolstoyan humanism. Lev Tolstoy tried to create an ideal cooperative commune with stoicism, humility, harmony, and spirituality to counter Western individualism and materialism. The Tolstoyan movement impressed the Japanese, and Saneatsu Mushanokōji, a leading writer of the “Shirakaba” group during the Taisho and early Showa periods, built “Atarashiki Mura” (New Village).⁵³ One can find an example that seems to be an echo of this current in a work by Hiroyuki Itsuki from the post-war period. His debut novel, *Goodbye to Moscow Hoodlums*, found success in 1965, and he published several essays on Russia based on his experiences of traveling in the Soviet Union. He sums up the image of Russia as an intertwining of socialism and stoicism in the following way:

Is power consumption a cultural barometer? Is the production of automobiles an expression of a country’s intelligence? Does it mean that mass society has matured if all workers are able to eat foie gras? I do not think so. Even if there are just a few dishes on the table, people who have modest meals with their families are culturally mature. Some authors can write only low-quality stories in their luxurious studies, while others write excellent works on apple boxes instead of desks. In my heart, I treasured a socialist state with such an ideal.⁵⁴

While this remains speculative, the hypothesis that Nakamura created the term “human” realism in the image of Tolstoy and his activity that had been well-known in Japan cannot be disregarded. Socialism itself still interested Japanese intellectuals and students, but her primary focus was on the common people, particularly those who frequented department stores for shopping.

In any case, Nakamura’s avoidance of the concept “Socialist Realism” was in line with those involved in the Soviet–Japanese trade, as was the case with the policy of Nagano and Uemura in their research on trade with the communist bloc—“without any discussion of idealistic and abstract ideology.” In this context, Nakamura’s approach to de-ideologizing of Russian–Soviet paintings can be understood within the framework of Soviet–Japanese trade.

52 ‘73 *gendai sobieto kaiga*, p. 273.

53 Erin Schoneveld, “The Russia of the Shirakaba Group: Tolstoy in a Japanese Vision of Social Modernism,” in Olga Solovieva and Sho Konishi, eds., *Japan’s Russia: Changing the East–West Paradigm* (New York: Cambria Press, 2021), pp. 141–176; YANAGI Tomiko 柳富子, *Tolstoi to nihon* トルストイと日本 [Tolstoy and Japan] (Tokyo: Waseda daigaku shuppanbu 早稲田大学出版部, 1998).

54 IRSUKI Hiroyuki 五木寛之, *Harukanaru roshia* 遥かなるロシア [Distant Russia] (Tokyo: Tokyo shoseki 東京書籍, 2002), pp. 97–99, 158–161.

Visitors' Reactions

The exhibitions of “Human Realism” paintings gathered a large audience. Belozarov showed the number of exhibitions and visitors during 1970–1973 from Soviet materials: one exhibition and 2,400 people in 1970; eight exhibitions and 24,000 people in 1971; eight exhibitions and 99,000 people in 1972; and 15,600 people in 1973.⁵⁵ It is likely that a notable percentage attended the exhibitions of Imperial Russian masterpieces in 1974–1976 as well. The Soviet side recorded the visit of Komaki Kurihara, a Japanese actress who had appeared in Soviet films.⁵⁶ Visitors were directed to the subsequent chamber to view the Soviet paintings after exploring the Russian masterpieces.

Some articles in newspapers and exhibition catalogs inform us about the visitors to the blockbuster exhibitions. They were ordinary people who responded to the artwork simply and sincerely.

While Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique Symphony* played, nature in the Soviet Union was great, and Repin's affection was warm—although I am an amateur when it comes to paintings, I was very moved (Stated by a nineteen-year-old female student in *Modern Soviet Paintings*, 1976).⁵⁷

[The painter] is very good at using colors, and I can see what the person [painted in the picture] is like. It is very beautiful. I also want to draw such a picture. I would like to use this picture as a model (A seven-year-old boy, a primary school student in *Modern Soviet Paintings*, 1976).

Anyway, everything is exciting, I must say. I am happy to be able to show them to my children. I thank all the people who worked on this exhibition (A forty-nine-year-old male builder in *Modern Soviet Paintings*, 1976).

As I was born on the continent [i.e., in China], I was reminded of the majestic beauty of the land; I was attracted to and gazed at every piece with emotion. Impressed by the background music, Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 5*, I am very eager to understand the minds of Soviet artists who are proud of their motherland (A forty-one-year-old homemaker in *Modern Soviet Paintings*, 1976).

“Looking at it [Aivazovsky's *The Ninth Wave*], I am sucked into the picture.” “It looks like a photo, but it has a depth not found in a photo.” “My impression was that it would be dark, but I am surprised at how bright it is.” (No personal information: *Asahi Shimbun* July 9, 1977).⁵⁸

55 Belozarov, “«Gekkoso» i Nakamura Yoko,” p. 262.

56 Belozarov, “«Gekkoso» i Nakamura Yoko,” p. 264.

57 All four comments below are quoted from ‘76 *gendai sobieto kaiga* ‘76 現代ソビエト名画 [‘76 Modern Soviet Paintings] (Tokyo: Gekkoso 月光荘, 1976), supplemented materials.

58 An article of *Asahi Shimbun*, July 9, 1977. Cited in *Kono 10 nenkan ni nihon de shōkai sareta soren bijutsukan yorino shuppin kaiga 1966–1977* この10年間に日本で紹介されたソ連美術館よりの出品絵画1966–1977 [Masterpieces of Soviet Museums Exhibited in Japan for these 10 years, 1966–1977] (Tokyo: Gekkoso 月光荘, 1977).

Those who viewed the Soviet paintings expressed similar reactions.

Faced with Soviet paintings filled with naive humaneness, all Japanese enthusiasts are simply impressed and say, "I instinctively want to put it close to me" (No personal information: *Modern Soviet Paintings*, 1974).⁵⁹

At the venue, I stopped in front of the painting "Wildflowers." This was a drawing with wildflowers in a jar with a simple table and a humble curtain in a tiny farmhouse. When I look at Soviet paintings, I am absorbed into the natural appearance, which, I feel, becomes food for my mind⁶⁰ (A male dentist in Kiryu, Gunma prefecture, in *Modern Soviet Paintings*, 1974).

The visitors reacted positively to the Soviet paintings, equating them with stoicism, humility, spirituality, and aestheticism. Nakamura's enterprise of labeling them "Human Realism" successfully captured the Japanese's typical images of Russia.

Soviet Paintings as Trade Goods

Already mentioned, Nakamura described herself as one of "the creators of a new art business" in the catalog of the first exhibition in 1971. Consequently, the Soviet paintings displayed in Mitsukoshi were not museum exhibits but items for sale. Visitors could buy the Soviet paintings if they really "want[ed] to put it close to them." A pamphlet issued by Nakamura's gallery provided a detailed account of the arrival of Soviet paintings from Haneda Airport to customers' houses who purchased them.⁶¹

Nakamura acquired paintings in the Soviet Union, with prices determined by the price review committee of the Artists' Union.⁶² This time, the Japanese vendors set prices based on painting size and exhibition location to maximize profit. The price lists issued by Mitsukoshi indicate, for example, that at the "Big Sale" of Soviet paintings at Mitsukoshi Sapporo in March 1973, prices ranged from 140,000 yen for Stili's small-size "A Path to Dnipro" to 2,400,000 yen for Papikian's middle-size "Still Life."⁶³ Meanwhile "Special Private Viewing" of Soviet paintings held at Mitsukoshi Tokyo in May and June 1973 had prices ranging from 160,000 yen for Vlasov's small-size "Midnight in Ukraine" to a maximum of 9,500,000 yen for Kabachek's large-size picture "New and Old."⁶⁴ According to Soviet records uncovered by Belozerov, the total number of paintings sold in the stores of Mitsukoshi (Sapporo, Sendai, Niigata, Nagoya, Tokyo,

59 '74 *gendai sobieto kaiga*, p. 109.

60 *Kartina* カルティナー, no. 4, 1974, p. 47.

61 '74 *gendai sobieto kaiga*, pp. 106–109.

62 '73 *gendai sobieto kaiga*, p. 273.

63 '73 *gendai sobieto kaiga daisokubaikai sakuin risuto* '73 現代ソビエト絵画 大即売会 作品リスト [73 Modern Soviet Paintings: Spot Sale, List of Works] (Sapporo: Mitsukoshi 三越, 1973).

64 '73 *gendai sobieto kaiga sakuin risuto* '73 現代ソビエト絵画 作品リスト [73 Modern Soviet Paintings: List of Works] (Tokyo, Nihonbashi: Mitsukoshi 三越, 1973).

Yokohama, Kawasaki, Osaka, Kobe, Hiroshima, Matsuyama, and Fukuoka) were 34 in 1970, 203 in 1971, 851 in 1972, 1,400 in 1973, 1,600 in 1974, and 2,000 in 1975.⁶⁵

On the Soviet side, Socialist Realist paintings were considered commodities in the Soviet-Japanese trade as well. *The Guidebook for International Trade*, issued by JETRO (the Japan External Trade Organization) in 1977, indicates that Soviet paintings were brought into Japan entirely through business channels, not through cultural partnerships. As noted above, the Soviet Union handled international trade for each product through "Corporations." *Novoeksport*, a counterpart of Nakamura's Gallery, was one of these organizations, responsible for dealing in "Soviet paintings" along with other prosaic items, as follows:

wooden, metal, bone, and stone folk crafts; hand-woven carpets; antiques; Soviet paintings [underlined by Tatsumi]; line paintings; sculptures; semi-precious stones and craft stones; ceramics; household wood products; fishing gear and hunting supplies; plastic models; extremely small motors; craft sets; railway equipment and public urban transportation services; commemorative batches and medals; deer horns; various bones for gelatin production; whale whiskers; tanned leather; deer hair; small pieces of leather; and peat.⁶⁶

While the art gallery that collaborated with the department store profited from the trade of Soviet paintings, the Soviet authorities succeeded not only in spreading favourable image of the Soviet Union in Japan but also in gaining foreign currency. Furtseva and other Soviet officials did not mention Socialist Realism in their greetings for the exhibition catalogs, and Soviet ambassador Oleg Troyanovsky used the word "Human Realism" instead.⁶⁷ It may be assumed that the avoidance of the terminology of the official art did not pose as a problem for them; rather, Nakamura was the individual who was capable of producing images of the Soviet Union suitable for the common Japanese customers. Ivan Kovalenko, Chief of the Japan Section in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, mentioned her in his memoirs as a person who promoted cultural exchange between the two countries.⁶⁸

Nakamura expanded her business with the Soviet Union as an entrepreneur involved in Soviet-Japanese trade. She founded the Luna Trading Company to import Soviet lumber and coal to Japan and the travel agency Luna Mechta

65 Belozerov's data based on GARF, f. 9576, op. 20, d. 252, l. 71. See "«Gekkoso» i Nakamura Yoko," p. 264–265.

66 Nihon bōeki shinkōkai 日本貿易振興会, ed., *Kaigai bijines gaido bukku USSR 海外ビジネスガイドブック・ソ連* [Guide Book for Foreign Trade: USSR] (Tokyo: JETRO, 1977), p. 170.

67 O. Troyanovsky トロヤノフスキー, "Goaisatsu ご挨拶 [Greetings]," in '73 *gendai sobieto kaiga daisokubaikai*, no page number.

68 Ivan Kovalenko イワン・コワレンコ, *Tainichi kōsaku no kaisō 対日工作の回想* [M memoir of Maneuvers in Japan] (Tokyo: Bungei shunjū 文藝春秋, 1996), p. 289.

Express, which organized Volga River cruises for Japanese tourists.⁶⁹ Moreover, Nakamura's gallery helped official art institutions: it supported the Russian art exhibitions planned by the National Museum of Modern Art in Kyoto and prefectural museums in Fukuoka and Aichi in 1977.⁷⁰

CONCLUSION

This study sought to evaluate the impact of business operations on cultural exchange examining a case involving Yoko Nakamura's enterprise. In the 1960s, Russian-Soviet art was brought to Japan through diplomatic and political channels and Japanese industry sought to profit from commerce with the Communist bloc in this period. Nakamura, the vice president of an art gallery, emerged from the latter context.

Her business tactics, coupled with personal connections to the Japanese and Soviet authorities, enabled a series of exhibitions of Russian-Soviet paintings, including nineteenth-century blockbusters, to be held in the outlets of a major Japanese department store across the country. The terminology "Human Realism" instead of "Socialist Realism" worked and attracted a large audience to the exhibitions. The Soviet-Japanese trade agreement facilitated the importation of Soviet paintings, resulting in considerable profits for Nakamura, which helped her expand business and assist public museum exhibitions.

From the perspective of the Soviet authorities, cultural diplomacy had achieved a certain degree of success. The sanitized image of Russia, which adhered closely to the official art doctrine, remained a stereotype among the non-professional Japanese, even though they avoided mentioning "Socialist Realism." They also succeeded in earning hard currency, which was a driving force for trade with Japan.

Thus, this case study reveals that business facilitated cultural exchange between the Soviet Union and Japan. Commercial activity became a driver of cultural exchange as well as political and diplomatic issues. It is possible that there remain instances of cultural diplomacy which can be revisited through the perspective of business interests.

At the end of the 1970s the circumstances around the Soviet-Japanese relationship changed: the Soviet-Afghan War, which broke out in 1979, provoked a backlash against the Soviet Union in Western society. The Seventh Soviet-Japanese Joint Economic Committee found only small projects and

⁶⁹ Mizoguchi, *Kieta meiga*, pp. 248–249.

⁷⁰ The National Art Center Tokyo, *Database: Japanese art exhibition records 1945–2005* [<https://www.nact.jp/exhibitions1945-2005/exhibitions.php?title=%E3%83%AD%E3%82%B7%E3%82%A2%E7%BE%8E%E8%A1%93%E9%A4%A8%E5%90%8D%E4%BD%9C%E5%B1%95&op=AND>] (The latest access on the 9th of July, 2024).

business expectations had diminished.⁷¹ The preferences of the art-loving public were no longer towards “Human Realist” art, and customers returned the paintings to Nakamura’s gallery, sometimes even asking for a refund, which finally led to the bankruptcy of Nakamura’s business.

Japanese art professionals distanced themselves from Nakamura as their interest was early twentieth-century Russian abstract paintings and avant-garde artworks, which had been introduced in Japan for a short time in the late 1920s,⁷² but the Soviet state prohibited. Their aspiration came to fruition when Seiji Tsutsumi arranged the exhibition “Art and Revolution” in 1982 at the museum of his department store, Seibu. However, despite the new enthusiasm for the different style of Russian-Soviet art, the stereotypical images of Russia inherited from the period of modernization and reinforced by the “human realism” business have not necessarily disappeared. The cultural interaction that flourished during the heyday of Soviet–Japanese trade possibly has a legacy that endures now and has influenced our collective imagination of Russia.

71 Takayama, *Nisso kankei*, pp. 94–96.

72 OMIKA Toshiharu 五十殿利治, *Nihon no avan-gyarudo geijutsu: “Mavo” to sono jidai* 日本のアヴァンギャルド芸術:「マヴォ」とその時代 [The Japanese Avant-Garde Art: “Mavo” and the Era] (Tokyo: Seidosha 青土社, 2001).