

Work in an Italian Museum of oriental art

Marta Boscolo Marchi*

ABOUT MYSELF

I am an art historian and, since 2012, I have been working for the Oriental Art Museum in Venice. The Museum is one of the most important in Europe for the Edo period Japanese art: more than 60% of the collection is composed by Japanese artworks. For this reason, since I started to work there, in 2012, I have been interested in Japanese art and culture despite linguistic difficulties. As you can understand, my love story with Japanese started quite late in my career.

Before 2012 I studied Italian art history. I graduated in 1998 at Bologna University with a thesis about a 10th century manuscript.

In 2006 I received my postgraduate degree in medieval art history at Padua University, Postgraduate school in history of art and applied art with a dissertation *Ferrara Cathedral during the Middle Ages*, now published.

Before working for the Oriental art Museum of Venice, I catalogued paintings, sculptures, textiles and metalwork, for the Italian Catholic Church.

In 2005 I catalogued historical archives related to restoration projects for the Italian Ministry for Cultural Heritage and, the following year, I catalogued historical photographs too. This professional experience allowed me to deal with issues regarding the preservation and cataloguing of documentary material.

After, winning the public contest I worked as a cultural heritage civil servant from 2012 to 2015. I was the supervisor of restoration activities in a section of Venice's metropolitan area and I was the curator-in-

charge at the Oriental Art Museum, which is one of the museums managed by the Veneto Museum Authority (Polo museale del Veneto).

The Veneto Museum Authority

The Veneto museum Authority is a regional department of the Ministry for Cultural Activities and Heritage that runs eleven national museums in the Veneto region. It manages the budget of these museums and provides them with a range of services such as administration, I.T. and marketing. It also oversees cataloguing, library and archival facilities as well as restoration laboratories, which serve all eleven museums. The Veneto Museum Authority has a staff consisting of one director, three architects, thirteen administrators, three restorers, and one photographer.

Since February 2015 I have been the director of the Oriental Art Museum and I have also been in charge of the historical archives and the cataloguing facilities of the Veneto Museum Authority

Work in the cataloguing office of the Veneto Museum Authority

The cataloguing office manages the cataloguing projects of the entire Veneto Museum Authority in accordance with the criteria of the Central Institute for Cataloguing and Documentation of the Ministry for Cultural Activities and Heritage. It uses the online system created by the Ministry itself.

Until the reform of the Ministry in 2015, the office promoted cataloguing projects throughout the city of Venice, as an

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instrument for the protection of the cultural heritage.

The database of the office includes nearly 90.000 files. Among these, 52.000 are related to the collections of the national museums in Venice:

- Academy Gallery: 5.533;
- Giorgio Franchetti Gallery at Ca' d'Oro: 22.167
- Oriental Art Museum: 12.500
- Archaeological National Museum in Venice: 11.385.

The office is open to the public by appointment.

The work in the historical archive of the Museum Pole.

[Work in] The historical archives of the Veneto Museum Authority.

The historical archives of the Museum Authority include documentary materials related to the museum collections and restorations, since the XIX century. While the Oriental Art Museum and the Academy Gallery already have inventories of their archives, we are in the process of producing inventories for the other museums.

As for the restoration archives, we have more than 9500 digital files encompassing historical photographs and scientific documentation, and 6000 files for the more recent restoration projects (1590 related to the Academy Gallery, 1000 related to the Giorgio Franchetti Gallery at Ca' d'Oro, 1301 related to the Oriental Art Museum, 2359 related to heritage in the churches).

The archive is open to the public once a week.

A key asset of the Veneto Museum Authority: the Oriental Art Museum in Venice

The Museum of Oriental Art is located on the third floor of a historic Venetian building known as the Pesaro palace.

The museum's staff comprises myself and 14 members of staff security officers.

The collection was assembled by prince Henry of Bourbon, . From 1887 to 1889, during a long journey around the world together with his wife Adelgonda (daughter of the king of Portugal) and a small group of travelling companions, he visited South-East Asia, China and Japan. He spent nine months in Japan and bought over thirty thousand objects: *byōbu*, *kakemono*, prints, books, lacquerware and textiles from the best Japanese antique dealers. Henry was well advised by Japanese and European experts, among whom Siebold, Takashimaya, Iamamura, Colomb, Beretta, in choosing the best objects on sale, which were artworks belonging to the most important *daimyō* families, such as the Tokugawa family. We know a great deal about this journey from the letters of Henry and his wife, now in the archives of the city of Parma, and from a diary kept day by day by Alessandro Zileri dal Verme, one of their companions, that we are now transcribing.

In 1905, when Henry died, Adelgonda sold the collection to the Austrian dealer Franz Trau, who sold nearly 10.000 items. When the First World War started, the remaining collection (approximately 20000 items) was confiscated by the Italian State, because Trau was an Austrian citizen and therefore treated as an enemy of the Italian State. This led to the creation of the Oriental Art Museum in 1928.

The Museum's Japanese section is very rich: it includes 423 *kakemono* and 35 *emakimono*, 712 drawings, 84 *byōbu*, 53 armours, 311 swords, 319 *tsuba*, 1376 pieces of lacquerware, 49 *kesa*, and 67 *kimono*.

As far as *ukiyoe* prints and books are concerned, we have 727 single sheets and 276 books comprising 12.200 pages, making it the most important collection in Italy.

As for woodcuts, we have 681 *yakushae*, 680 *mushae*, 664 *meishoe*, 531 *bijinga*, 306 images of Genji's saga, 24 *chirimen*, 4 *surimono*. The best represented authors are Kunisada (Toyokuni III) (771 sheets),

Hiroshige (442 sheets), Kuniyoshi, Eizan, Yoshitoshi, Kunichika, and Hokusai. The collection includes above all woodcuts produced after the Tenpō period (after 1830). Various cataloguing campaigns of the Museum holdings have been carried out since the 1990s by Eiko Kondo, Giancarlo Calza, and other scholars. An important work of digitalization was done by the Art Research Centre of Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto. Professor Akama came to the Museum in 2009 and in 2012 to photograph all the books and the prints. Photographs are now available in the digital archive of Ritsumeikan University.

The majority of books are albums of *ukiyo-e*, travel guides and books of models for *tsuba*, swords, and kimono.

70% of the artworks are catalogued, which amounts to 12.000 files.

At present we are cataloguing other kakemonos and south eastern Asian textiles. In order to keep our catalogue entries updated we are also revising the files related to the kimonos, and the files related to Indonesian kris.

An important part of the work in the Museum is the didactic activity, that is the dissemination of Japanese culture among non-specialist audiences.

The Museum has a multimedia guide that one can access through the site www.tour.veasyt.com or by QRCode. This instrument shows various aspects of the life of the museum that the public would not commonly know, such as storage and restoration. It is available in three versions: Italian, English and Italian sign language, to address the needs of hearing-impaired people.

We work also with children: we organize practical laboratories and we offer a number of free guided tours for schools. Since 2015, we have also had a very friendly app for children, to make them play games revolving around the objects of the museum. One of these games asks them to guess ten

mysterious objects (from details of exhibited artworks), another one to make use of *kai awase* shells like in a memory game, another one to play traditional Japanese music with digital reproductions of the instruments on display. Through this app, children can also explore the storage rooms, where a cute monkey looks for Hokusai's manga. There is also a special website dedicated to children, with a simplified videoguide, many images of the objects exposed and tales told in Italian, French, English and Italian sign language.

The enhancement of the museum experience for audiences with disabilities is an important goal for us. We have also produced five books for visually impaired children with braille writing, enlarged black words and special texture, and we have developed a tactile memory game that they can play with other children.

All these materials come in addition to the pieces of the collection that we allow visually impaired visitors to touch, and to the materials given by the Japanese National Institute of Special Needs Education (**NISE**). In 2016 we offered 34 guided tours for 760 participants. They are not general tours of the collection but thematic ones on specific aspects of the collection, often with artworks taken out of storage for these occasions.

For the celebration of the 150 years of the diplomatic relationships between Italy and Japan, the museum organized a cycle of 16 lectures about different subjects: manga, Japanese animation, nature in Japan, Noh theatre, *kyōgen*, literature, restoration. We intend to publish the corresponding papers in the forthcoming e-journal of the Museum next year.

In terms of restoration activity, a *byōbu* of the late Edo period has been restored this year, thanks to the support of the Japanese Committee for the Safeguard of Venice Venezia AvVenire .

The pieces on display are nearly 4,000, while the remaining 13,000 are in storage and

another 3000 are on deposit at other institutions such as Padua University, where an anthropological museum is being planned. Artworks in storage are protected from light and dust; the level of humidity of storage rooms is under constant control.

Books and prints are usually not exhibited. They are preserved in acid-free boxes and paper in the storage rooms.

The Museum is now waiting for its new seat, which will probably be the old church of Saint Gregory, located near other important Venetian museum and monuments. The church is a 15th- century Gothic building that will be adapted for its new function.



Ministero
dei beni e delle
attività culturali
e del turismo
DIREZIONE GENERALE MUSEI


Tokyo, 5th December r 2016

**Japan in Venice.
The work at the Oriental art
museum**


Marta Boscolo Marchi



1



Oriental art Museum in Venice



2



**Bamberg
Stiftsbibliothek,
Apocalypse, ms.
n. 140, folio 31 v,
1000 AD**

3



ADRIATIC ROMANESQUE SCULPTURES
Ravenna, National Museum, Evangelists, XII century
Coming from a portal of Saint Vitale church

4



Ferrara cathedral

5




San Domenico church, Silver chalice, XVIII century; Virgin Mary altar

6



RESTORATION ACTIVITY IN THE VENETIAN AREA

Saint Nicholas, painted wood, XV century; Chioggia, Cathedral Museum

Below: sample of colour to be analysed before restoration

7

Venice, Oriental art Museum, Hokusai exhibition, September-November 2013



8

Venice, Palazzo Grimani, Hiroshige exhibition September 2014-January 2015



9

The Veneto museums center



Department of the Ministry for Cultural Activities and Heritage in the Veneto region


Staff shared by the 11 museums:

- 1 general director
- 1 architects
- 4 technical assistants
- 14 administratives
- 3 restorers
- 1 photographer


Five of the 11 museums have a director. Only one has also a curator.

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Work in the catalog office of the Veneto Museums center



11



Cataloguing activity for the Veneto Museums center: Page of Sigecweb, the cataloguing system created by the Central Institute for Catalogue and Documentation (ICCD) of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Activities and Tourism

12



90.000 cataloguing files in the digital historical archive of the Polo museale del Veneto in the whole

52.000 files related to museum collections:

Academy Gallery: 5.533 files

Giorgio Franchetti Gallery at Ca' d'Oro: 22.167

Oriental art museum: 12.500

Archaeological National Museum in Venice: 11.385

14

Work in the historical archive of the Veneto museums center



15



An handwritten inventory of the collection

Documents folders



635 inventoried folders, 10 - 12 files each

16

Restoration archive: 15.500 files

(historical photographs and scientific documentation)

Digitalized:

1590 files
Academy Gallery restoration activity

1000 files
Franchetti Gallery at Ca' d'Oro

1301 files
Oriental art Museum

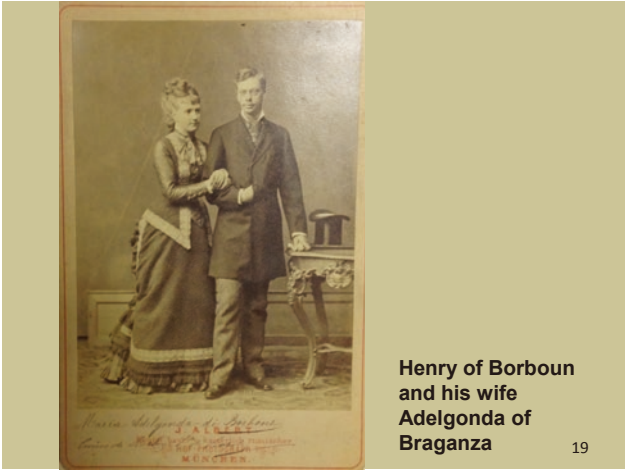
2359 artworks of Venetian area

17

ACTIVITY IN THE ORIENTAL ART MUSEUM

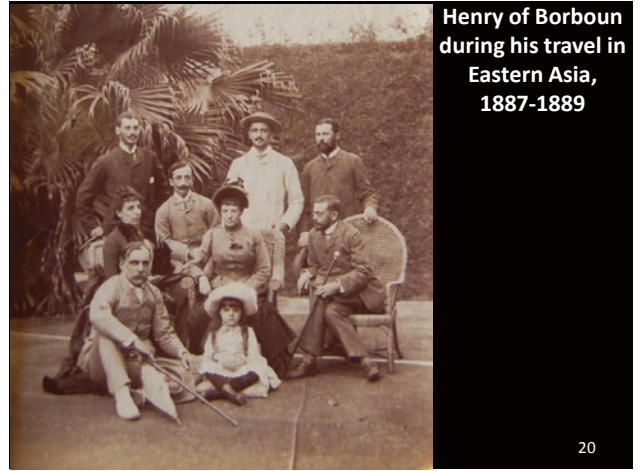


18



Henry of Borboun and his wife Adelgonda of Braganza

19



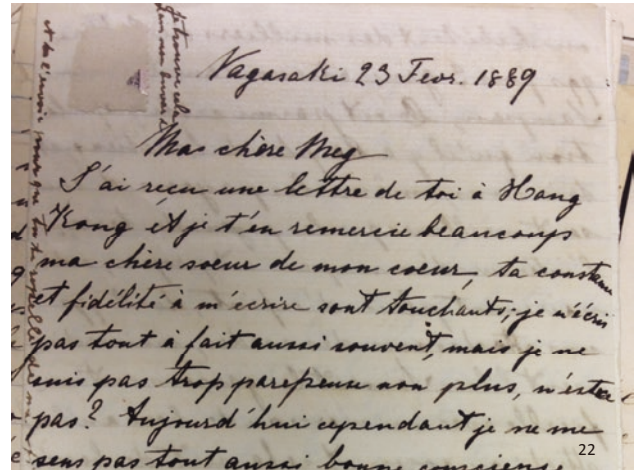
Henry of Borboun during his travel in Eastern Asia, 1887-1889

20

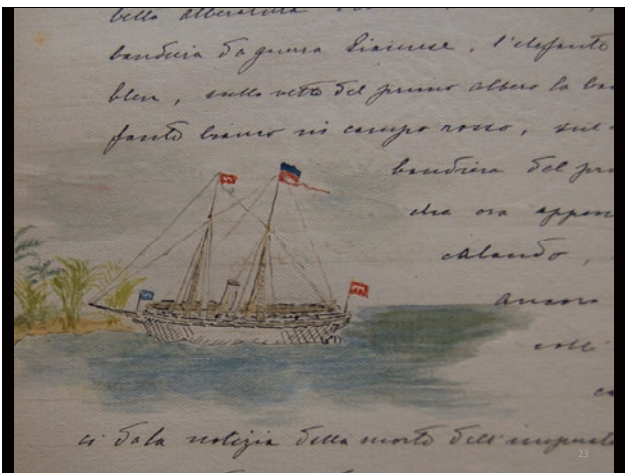


Oriental Art Museum, Venice. Containers for go game pieces.

21

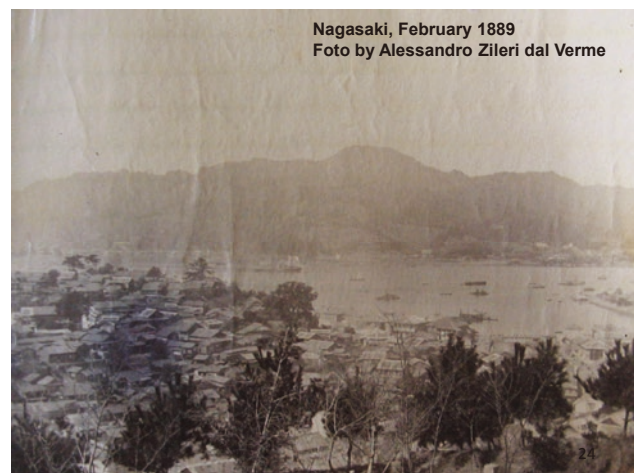


22



bella illustrazione
bandiera Da guerra bianca, l'elefante
bleu, sulla vela del primo albero la be
fante bianco in campo rosso, sul
bandiera del pr
due ora appa
calando,
ancora
coll
ca
si sola notizia della morte dell'imp
23

23



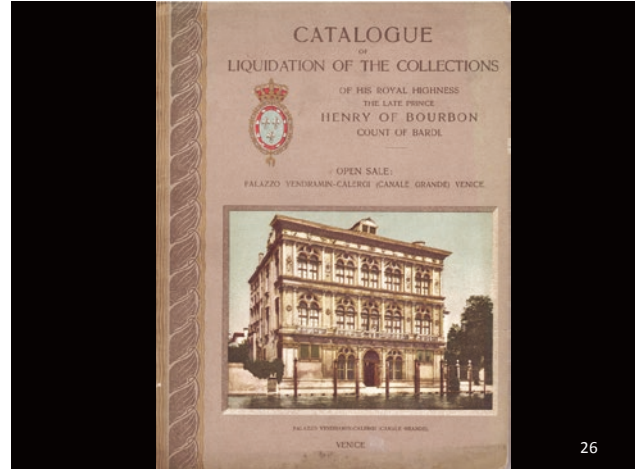
Nagasaki, February 1889
Foto by Alessandro Zileri dal Verme

24



Henry of Bourbon collection in his house (Vendramin Calergi palace until 1905)

25



26



423 kakemono

Katsushika Hokusai, *Oiran and maiko under a cherry blossom*, 1808 ca. Mao Ve, inv. 441/12051



27



35 emakimono

Gosannen war chronicle, emakimono, XVIII century. Oriental art museum, inv. n. 4410

28



84 byōbu

29



53 armours

30



311 swords

31



319 tsuba



32



1376 laquerware objects

33



34



49 kesa

35

67 kimono



727 single sheets
276 books
12,200 pages
(datas by Ryō Akama 2013)



37

681 yakushae

Kunisada, Ichikawa Danjūrō
VII as Watonai in The battles
of Coxinga



38

680 mushae

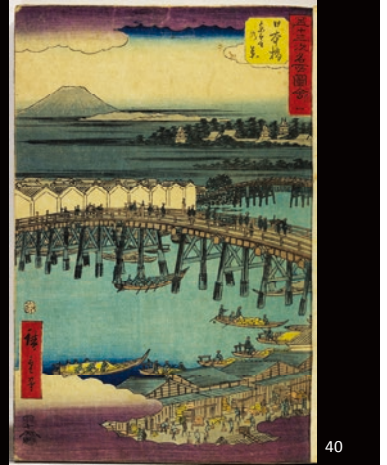
Utagawa Hiroshige, Soga monogatari
zue, Gorō fighting with Yasahina (inv. n.
3220)



39

664 meishoe

Gojūsanji meisho zu e (tate-e
Tōkaidō)
1. Nihonbashi
editore Tsutaya Kichizō, 1855
Libro 2691



40

531 bijinga

Kikugawa Eizan, 1814, inv.
n. 3592



41

306 images of Genji's saga

Kunisada, Nise Murasaki Genji, inv. 2721



42



24
chirimen

43

4 surimono

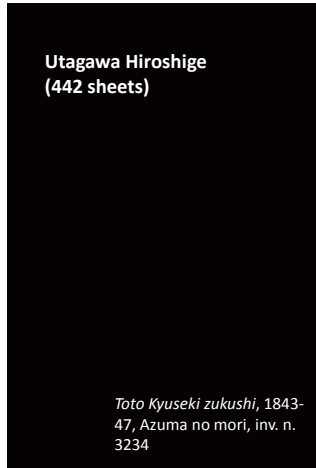
Katsushika Hokusai, Women working at silk, Oriental art Museum



Kunisada (Toyokuni III)
771 sheets

Kunisada, The night they meet
under the light of the moon, 1827-
1842, inv. 3324.

45



Utagawa Hiroshige
(442 sheets)

Toto Kyuseki zukushi, 1843-
47, Azuma no mori, inv. n.
3234



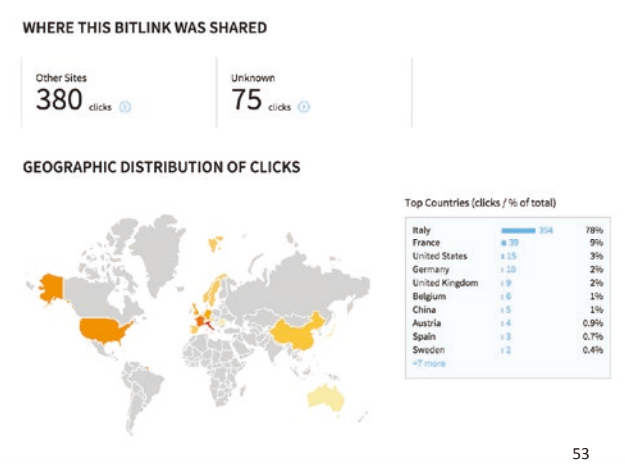
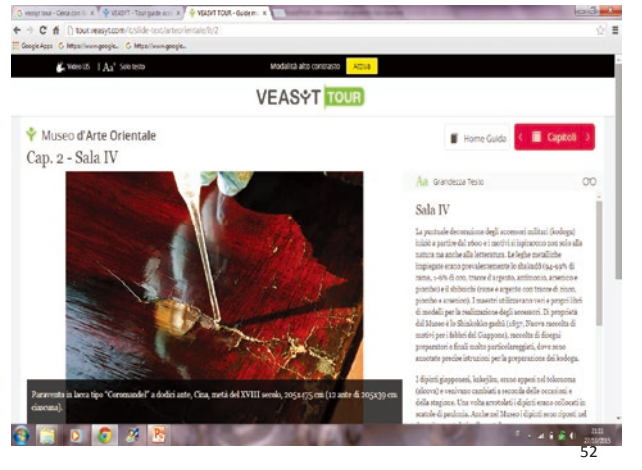
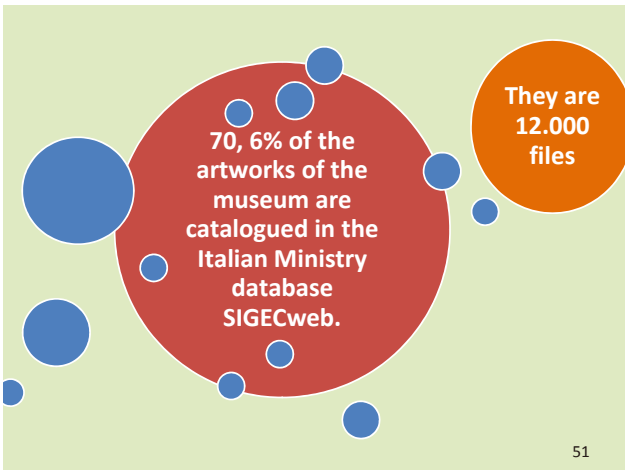
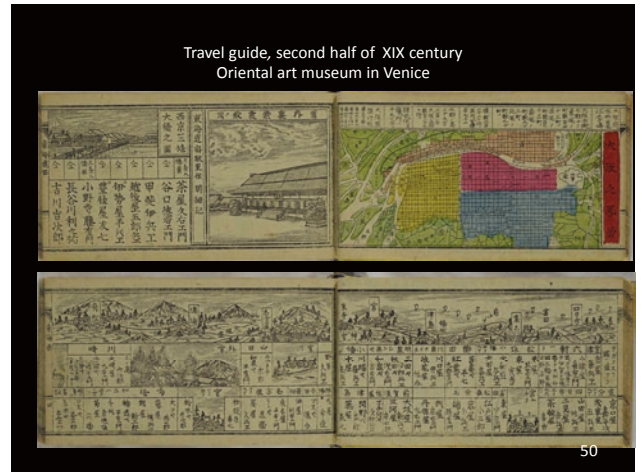
Kuniyoshi, Honchū san'yūshi, MAO Ve, inv. 2717

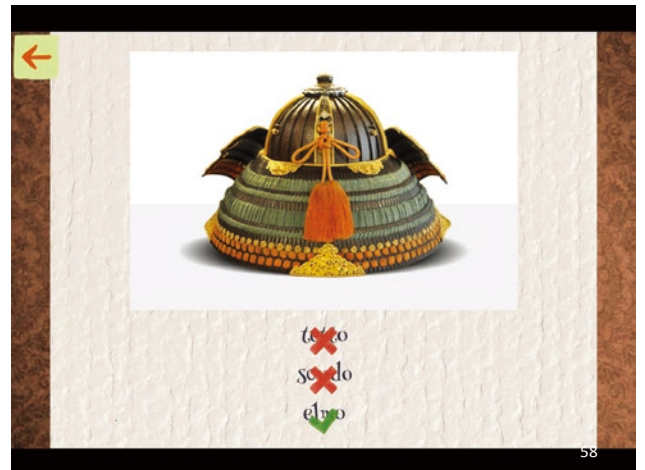
47

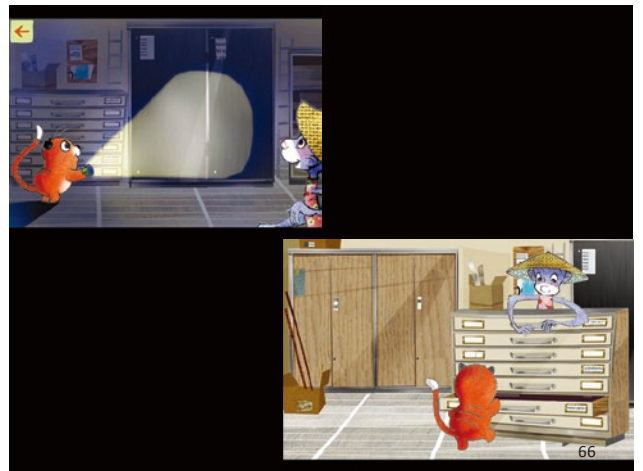


Hokusai, Yomihon Suikogaden, 1856, MaoVe, inv. 2876

48









67



68



orientalevenezia.it

69



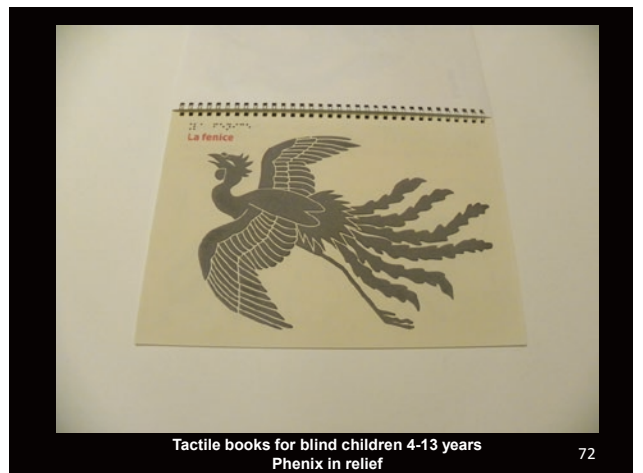
Website for children: tale translated in Italian Signs Language (LIS)

70



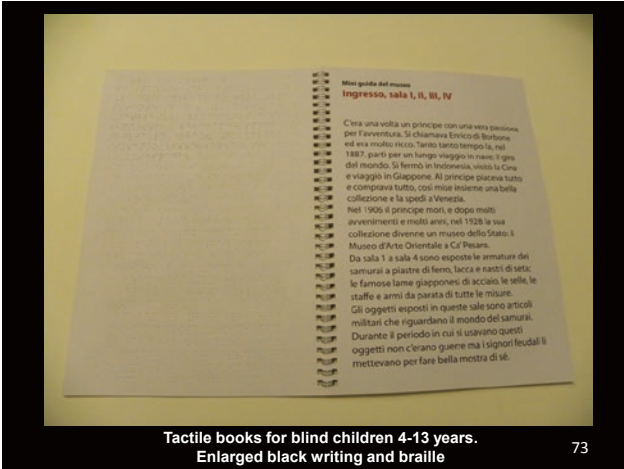
Tactile books for blind children 4-13 years

71



Tactile books for blind children 4-13 years
Phenix in relief

72



Tactile books for blind children 4-13 years.
Enlarged black writing and braille

73

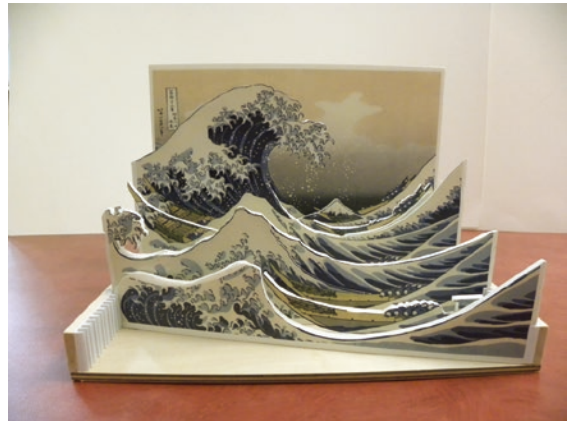


74



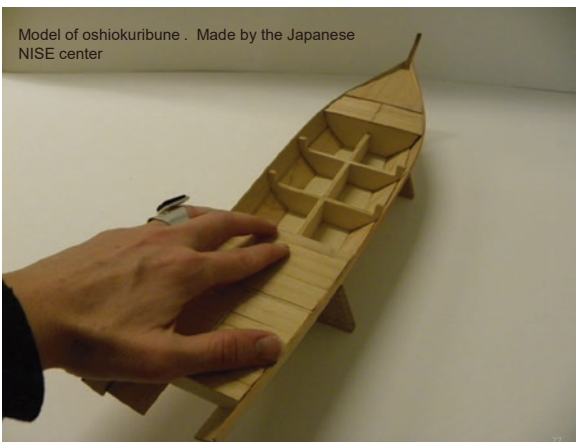
Oriental art museum: some objects of the collection we allow to touch

75



3D Wave by Hokusai. Made by Japanese NISE center

76



Model of oshioyuri . Made by the Japanese NISE center

77



34 thematic guided visits in 2016, 760 visitors in

78



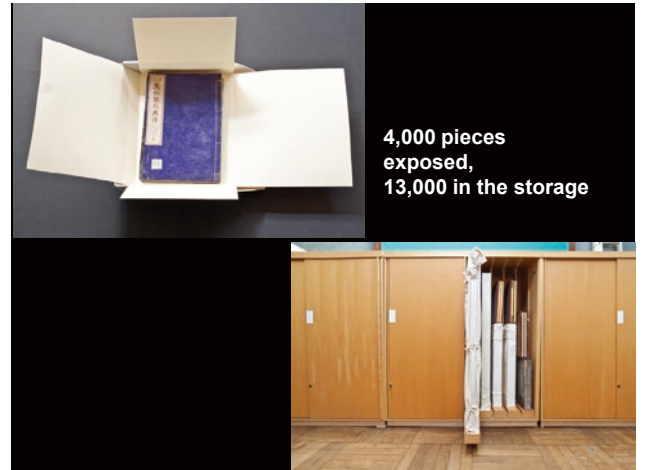
16 conferences in 2016 about Japanese culture in 2016, 437 people get involved 79



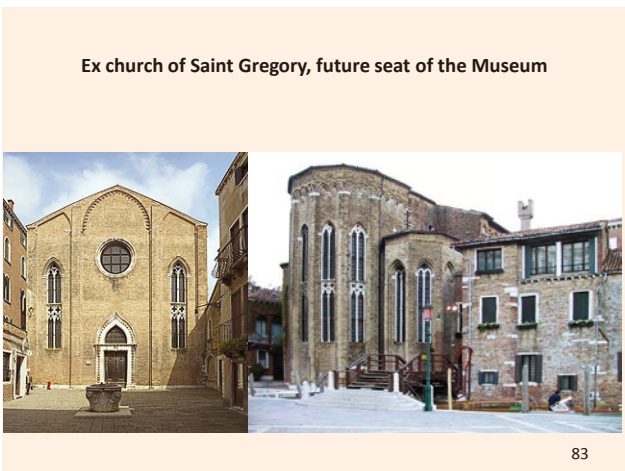
Presentation of the restoration of a byōbu



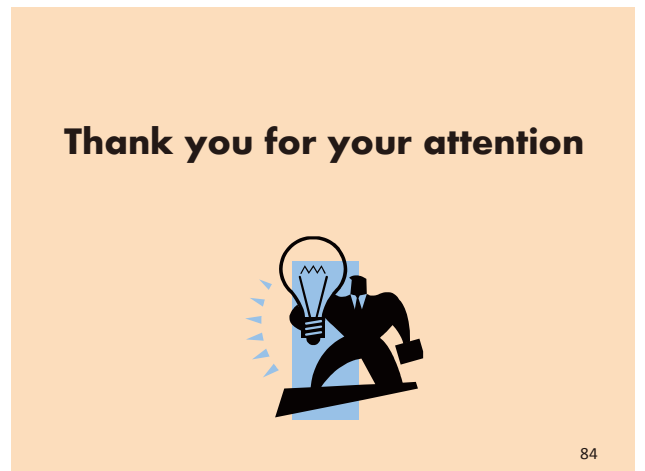
Storage: boxes for kimono; drawers for kakemono



4,000 pieces exposed, 13,000 in the storage



Ex church of Saint Gregory, future seat of the Museum



Thank you for your attention