



Ivory and the Aesthetics of Modernity in Meiji Japan

Martha Chaiklin

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When is a statue not a statue? When it is made of ivory. Then it is called an *okimono*, a term that suggests it is a curio but not art. The international interest in Japanese craft production after the opening of the ports in 1859 led to an explosion of ivory carving, everything from netsuke to entire tusks. Arguing that purchase by tourists does not inherently define the quality of an object, this book examines the efforts of the retailers and artisans to elevate the standard of the craft. Ivory carvers were not just bystanders to the changing demands of the art world, they were leaders in shaping the development of sculpture in Meiji Japan.

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