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Shogun's Painted Culture: Fear and Creativity in the Japanese States, 1760-1829 (Reaktion Books - Envisioning Asia)

Timon Screech

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In this penetrating analysis of a little-explored area of Japanese cultural history, Timon Screech reassesses the career of the chief minister Matsudaira Sadanobu, who played a key role in defining what we think of as Japanese culture today. Aware of how visual representations could support or undermine regimes, Sadanobu promoted painting to advance his own political aims and improve the shogunate's image. As an antidote to the hedonistic *ukiyo-e*, or floating world, tradition, which he opposed, Sadanobu supported attempts to construct a new approach to painting modern life. At the same time, he sought to revive historical and literary painting, favouring such artists as the flamboyant, innovative Maruyama Okyo. After the city of Kyoto was destroyed by fire in 1788, its reconstruction provided the stage for the renewal of Japan's iconography of power, the consummation of the 'shogun's painted culture'.

“Screech’s ideas are fascinating, often brilliant, and well grounded. . . . [*Shogun’s Painted* Culture] presents a thorough analysis of aspects of the early modern Japanese world rarely observed in such detail and never before treated to such an eloquent handling in the English language.”—*CAA Reviews*

“[A] stylishly written and provocative cultural history.”—*Monumenta Nipponica*

“As in his admirable *Sex and the Floating World: Erotic Images in Japan 1700-1820*, Screech lavishes learning and scholarly precision, but remains colloquial in thought and eminently readable.”—*Japan Times*

Timon Screech is Senior Lecturer in the history of Japanese art at SOAS, University of London, and Senior Research Associate at the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures. He is the author of several books on Japanese history and culture, including *Sex and the Floating World: Erotic Images in Japan 1700–1820* (Reaktion, 1999).

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