



**Christina Olszewski**

University of Melbourne

[cmm.olszewski@gmail.com](mailto:cmm.olszewski@gmail.com)

+ 61 433 599 068

I have a BA with Honours, having majored in French, (2019) and am currently completing a Master of Art Curatorship at the University of Melbourne (2023). My field of interest is art history, Eurasian cross-cultural influence and the relationship between art and language. I intend to undertake further research at a PhD level.

**Tranquil Home Under the Rising Sun:  
Aesthetic Environments in the Works of Two Japoniste Artists**

**Christina Olszewski**

Berthe Morisot and Violet Teague are two artists who painted the natural world and the *nature* of the world they live in. Morisot's perspective focuses on the home in 19<sup>th</sup> century France, while Violet Teague's representations of the Australian landscape returns primacy to the land and testifies to her freedom. Both artists were *Japonistes* and the Japanese influence in their work manifests in *yūgen*: an ancient aesthetic referring to hidden profundity and the tranquil loneliness of life amidst nature. Through *yūgen* both artists explore the inhabited world and the vast expanse of nature.

The inhabited world encapsulates the cloistered life of woman and the obligations she has to the home in "A Woman Sitting by a Window." Cage-like details in the wall and view of the architecture suggest the way that nature is tamed and contained. *Yūgen* thus manifests through a reconciling of tranquil life within the domestic realm. In contrast, Teague explores the inhabited world in her book, "Nightfall in the Ti-Tree." Teague's minimalistic prints express a sensitivity towards the creatures of the forest. As the viewer we look upon the rabbits as hunters, calling into question our role in their suffering. However, despite the threat of man, Teague evokes the contentment of being "safe in one's burrow", or home, in the manner of Morisot.

*Yūgen* is likewise captured in the act of en-plein-air painting the vast expanse of nature. The watercolours created from Violet Teague's trip to the Hermannsburg mission in central Australia form an example. Teague, led through the land by Albert Namatjira, conveys the sublimity of the landscape in the sparest of washes. Teague exhibited the watercolours with the work of other Australian artists to raise money for a pipeline to supply the Hermannsburg community with running water. The project was successful, and the arid colours of the desert are reconciled with the medium of water, capturing Teague's own impact on the lands in which she travelled, evocative of *yūgen*.

The shimmering water in the lake in the Bois de Bologne is one of the few paintings Morisot completed en-plein-air. We take Morisot's place as painter of this image through our

perspective, but the brush strokes are finished to capture the personal intensity and vitality of not only her female subjects, but the vast expanse of nature, preserving its peacefulness for posterity.

In a contrast of the urbane and the wild, the cloistered and the free, these *Japoniste* artists demonstrate how *yūgen* is key to understanding their expression of concern and sensibility to the environment.