



Vieuusseux-Asia

Fosco Maraini's wish that Florence resume the path of acquaintance and familiarization with East Asia, which had been such an important part of the city's cultural life right up to the 1930's, has come true -- thanks to the commitment shown by the Gabinetto Vieuusseux, to the crucial backing of the Ente Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze, and to the support shown by the Tuscan Regional Authority and the Municipality of Florence -- with the establishment of a common heritage collection that is to be safeguarded in its entirety and placed at the disposal of the city and its people.

The 8,000 plus volumes that Maraini collected, in particular on Japan and its culture, and the 70,000 or so photographs that he himself took, are to become a part of Florence's cultural heritage thanks to the Gabinetto Vieuusseux, which acquired them in 1997. The "Vieuusseux-Asia" program, as Maraini christened it (and scientific responsibility for which, he wished to be entrusted to Adriana Boscaro), is operated by the Centro Romantico (a section of the Gabinetto Vieuusseux, under the direction of Maurizio Bossi, that devotes its energies to the study of different cultural strains in Florence from the 19th century to the present day). The "Vieuusseux-Asia" program links Maraini's work to the vision that Giovan Pietro Vieuusseux had when he first set up his Scientific and Literary Cabinet in Florence in 1819 to foster contact between Italian and other cultures.

Thus Florence and Tuscany have the benefit today of a valuable tool for familiarization with East Asian culture and civilization, which the Gabinetto Vieuusseux's promotional activities can now offer not only to scholars but to a far broader public, with special attention being paid to the younger generation.

The "Vieuusseux-Asia" program's most outstanding initiatives to date (devised and produced in conjunction with the Japan Foundation, with the Toshiba International Foundation, and with the Fondazione Romualdo Del Bianco) include a splendid anthological exhibition entitled *The Worldwatcher. Fosco Maraini, 60 Years of Photographs*, held at the Marino Marini Museum in 1999 and then displayed on tour in Rome, in Tokyo and in Palermo; an international conference on *Florence, Japan and East Asia* (Gabinetto Vieuusseux, 25-27 March 1999) and the proceedings that it spawned, published by Leo Olschki in 2001; and an international conference on *The Relationship Between Science and Literature in the East and in the West* (Gabinetto Vieuusseux, 28-29 March 2003). Other exhibitions were promoted by the "Vieuusseux-Asia" program to mark the 40th anniversary of Florence's twinning with Kyoto, and the 50th anniversary of the cultural exchange agreement between Italy and Japan. The exhibitions were: *Florence and Kyoto, Parallel Cities*, with photographs and text by Fosco Maraini, held in the Sala Ferri in Palazzo Strozzi (4 March – 31 May 2005; subsequently shown in Kyoto from 24 to 31 October 2005); and *Infantàsia: The Wonder of Daily Life in Italian and Japanese Children's Drawings 1938-2004*, at the Accademia delle Arti del Disegno in Piazza San Marco (4 -30 March 2005). In spring 2008 it held a seminar entitled *Buddhism in the Tang Era: Tradition and Legacy*, while to coincide with the exhibition on *China: at the Court of the Emperors. Previously Unseen Masterpieces from the Han Tradition to Tang Elegance (25-907)*, held in Palazzo Strozzi in May of the same year, Maurizio Bossi and Enrico Sartoni produced a book entitled *Encounters: The Chinese in Florence Since the 'Thirties*. Working in conjunction with Japanese cultural associations Tokaghe and Mirai, Vieuusseux-Asia, promoted a retrospective of contemporary Japanese films under the title *Arts, Techniques and Traditional Crafts in Japan Today*, designed to go hand in hand with the Festa della Toscana devoted to "Arts, Cultures and the Future" in November 2009. December 2009 saw the publication of a book entitled *Our South by Fosco Maraini. An Uncompleted Photographic Project on the Italian South* (Florence, Alinari 2009), promoted by the Gabinetto Vieuusseux and by the Sicilian Regional Authority's Centro per il

catalogo e la documentazione, and edited by Cosimo Chiarelli and Elisa Ciani under the scientific supervision of Maurizio Bossi and Francesco Vergara Caffarelli.

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