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“ART IS JOY!”

With these simple yet profound words, Privy Councillor Dr Carl Duisberg (1861–1935) expressed a guiding principle that would shape both his life and his legacy. For Duisberg, art was never merely a matter of possession; it was a source of deep and enduring delight – a way of seeing and experiencing the world that brought beauty, clarity, and harmony into everyday life. Known above all as a pioneering industrialist and long serving chairman of the Bayer chemical company, Duisberg played a decisive role in shaping both the scientific and economic landscape of early 20th-century Germany. Yet beyond his achievements in industry, he cultivated a deep personal commitment to the arts and to the harmonisation of science, culture, and nature. This philosophy found its most intimate expression in the garden he created after moving from Elberfeld to Leverkusen in 1912 – a move closely tied to Bayer’s expansion and the development of the company’s headquarters. Situated within a pre-existing landscape, Duisberg transformed the grounds surrounding his new residence into a visionary fusion of art and nature. A conventional redesign of the pond into a lawn was soon abandoned in favour of a more ambitious and poetic concept: a garden inspired by Japanese aesthetics. Yet his aim was not imitation. Instead, Duisberg developed a personal interpretation of the Japanese garden, one that reflected his sensitivity to the changing seasons, the poetics of natural form, and the contemplative dialogue between object and environment. Every piece within this garden – from animal bronzes to stone sculptures – was handpicked by Duisberg. Each was chosen not only for its artistic merit but for its ability to converse with its surroundings: the trees, the water, the shifting light of spring and autumn. The result was a living collection, in which artworks did not dominate the landscape but became part of its breath and rhythm.

This catalogue presents a selection of works from that remarkable collection – objects that once animated a garden designed to awaken the senses and stir the spirit. They remain vivid echoes of Duisberg’s vision, testaments to a man for whom art was not confined to galleries or salons but rooted in the living world. It is also a reflection of the broader cultural ambitions of a figure who, while leading one of the most influential industrial enterprises of his time, never lost sight of the humanising power of beauty.



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DR CARL DUISBERG'S LETTER FROM JAPAN - A GARDEN VISION FOR LEVERKUSEN

A letter by Dr Carl Duisberg, dated 23 May 1926, was written aboard the Empress of Canada during his return voyage from East Asia. It documents with remarkable precision and detail the design plans for a Japanese-inspired garden intended for the grounds of the Bayer works in Leverkusen. Drawing upon his impressions from Shanghai, California and, most notably, Japan, Duisberg outlines a vision that transposes Far Eastern design principles into a Western industrial context. At the heart of the letter are concrete proposals for implementation: Duisberg describes an entrance framed by a torii, flanked by bronze temple guardians, followed by a pagoda or small Buddhist temple, a wisteria-covered archway, and a pond island adorned with symbolic bronze animal figures. He also details the integration of bridges, water features, stone lanterns and garden ornaments to be sourced specifically in Tokyo.

Repeatedly, he emphasizes the value of natural, irregular forms – “gnarled” trees in particular – as admired in Japanese horticulture. The letter also demonstrates how Duisberg translates his observations into practical instructions. He considers pathways, courtyards, the factory casino, and designated spots for plant containers, fountain vessels and sculptures. Specific procurement suggestions – including departmental responsibilities and named colleagues – are also included. Altogether, the letter stands as an impressive planning document. © Bayer AG, Bayer Archives Leverkusen It forms the conceptual foundation of the garden from which the objects in this catalogue originate – nearly a century later. These artefacts serve as material witnesses to an ambitious exercise in cultural design: a dialogue between East Asia and the Rhineland in the 1920s.



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1
A TOKYO SCHOOL BRONZE
OKIMONO OF A STANDING
BIJIN, SIGNED: NIHON TOKYO
UDAGAWA SEI, MEIJI PERIOD



Standing barefoot, elegantly clad in a yukata tied at the back, holding an Ikebana vase with both hands. Her face is characterised by grace with almond-shaped eyes, a fine nose and full lips, her coiffure elaborately arranged in a chignon at the back. The viewer in front of her is immediately captivated by her beauty. Dark patinated bronze, mounted on a hexagonal sandstone pillar partially engraved with Japanese letters and stylized dragons. Dark patinated bronze, signed on the back: Nihon Tokyo Udagawa sei / Made by Udagawa Kazuo in Tokyo.

Provenance:

Carl Duisberg received this bronze as a gift from Major Rütger von Brüning (1875 -1936) in 1932, as confirmed by a metal plaque mounted on the base.

Condition report:

Partial age damage and surface change due to many years of presentation in the park.

Literature:

Udagawa Kazuo was recorded as a member of the Tokyo Chōkōkai (Tokyo Sculptors' Society). An artist of the second generation of the Tokyo School. Initially working under the name Udagawa Sutejiro, he participated in the Naikoku Kangyō Hakurankai (Domestic Industrial Exhibitions) in 1890 and 1903, as well as in the Third National Industrial Exhibition. Later adopting the name Kazuo, he continued to achieve recognition, exhibiting in the award-winning sections of major international expositions, including the Exposition Universelle in Paris (1900), the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis (1904), and the Japan-British Exhibition in London (1910). For examples of his work see the bronze 'Farmer's wife feeding a baby on the bench' in the collection of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, exhibition catalogue 'Japanese Decorative Arts of the Meiji period' by O.Impey & J. Seaman 2005, no. 32 pg. 68.

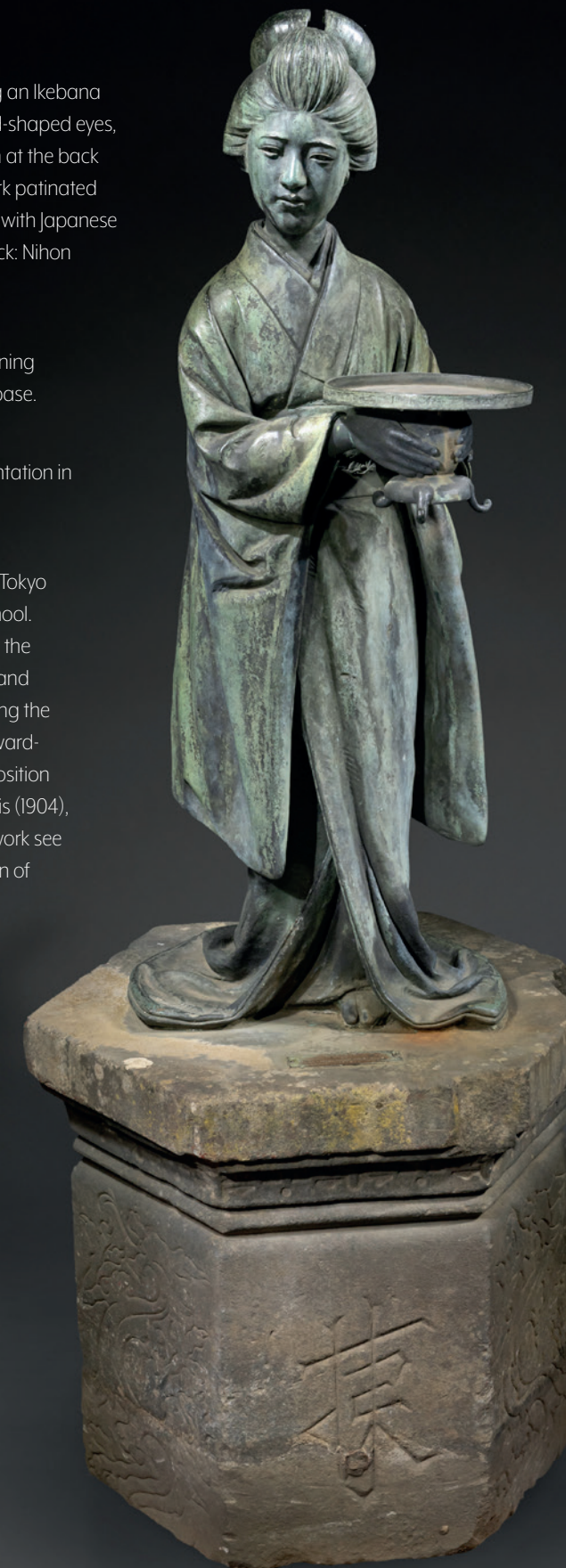
A bijin is a term used in Japan to describe a beautiful woman, admired not only for physical attractiveness but also for grace, elegance, and refinement. Historically, the concept of Bijin emphasized both outer beauty and cultured behaviour, including qualities like good manners and intelligence. In art, particularly Bijin-ga woodblock prints, Bijin were depicted in graceful poses, often engaged in cultural activities, embodying the ideal of feminine beauty. This aesthetic influence also extended to bronze sculptures, where the elegant, refined portrayal of women influenced their appearance and style.

Approximate sizes:

Height: 36 1/4" 92 cm (bronze only)

Height: 55 1/2" 141 cm (overall)

POA





2

A LARGE BRONZE OKIMONO OF A BEAR WITH A CUB (KUMA)

Naturalistically cast, the large bear, presumably the mother bear, stands on a rock-like pedestal and leans down towards the smaller bear, which lies on its back and playfully raises a paw. The depiction appears very lively and captures a loving or protective interaction between the two animals. Mounted to heavy stone base.

Provenance:

Acquired by Bayer from Bernheimer by Carl Duisberg prior to 1930.

Condition report:

Partial age damage and surface change due to many years of presentation in the park. Mounted to heavy stone base.

Literature:

The word for bear in Japanese is (kuma). Two species of bear are native to Japan: The Asiatic black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*) and the Hokkaido brown bear (*Ursus arctos yesoensis*). While the bear does not play a major symbolic role in mainstream Japanese culture and is rarely a central motif in fine or applied arts, it holds deep significance in the folklore and traditions of the Ainu, the Indigenous people of northern Japan. In Ainu culture, the bear was revered as a sacred creature and often associated with mountain deities. It was believed to possess spiritual power and was honoured through ritual hunts and the iomante ceremony, in which a bear cub was raised with care and then ceremonially sent back to the spirit world. This practice reflected both the Ainu's dependence on the bear for survival and their spiritual reverence for it. Although bears are not commonly represented in classical Japanese art, their presence in Ainu tradition highlights the regional diversity of symbolic animal meanings within Japan. In modern contexts, the bear may sometimes symbolize strength or wilderness, but its cultural weight remains strongest in the northern regions and among Ainu heritage.

Approximate sizes:

Height: 21 1/4" 54 cm

Width: 31 1/2" 80 cm

POA

A LARGE BRONZE MODEL OF AN ARCHED DRUM BRIDGE - TAIKOBASHI

A highly curved bridge span resting on solid support foundations, constructed using traditional mortice-and tenon joints, with a walkway composed of cross-laid planks. On both sides run curved railings, commonly referred to as kaidan or karamochi.

Provenance:

From the collection of Dr C. Duisberg, acquired on his journey to Japan prior to 1930 - In his travel diary (p. 43), Dr. Carl Duisberg recounts how, during his journey through Japan, he discovered and was able to acquire a remarkable bronze group in the garden of Yamanaka in Kyoto. Among its elements was this elaborately crafted bridge. In his entry, he describes his find as follows: “This is an artistic representation of an old Chinese legend. On a steeply arched bridge sits a warrior on horseback, named Ko Sekko.” Regrettably, the bronze depicting the mounted warrior was stolen from the park in 1951. A report dated 22 January 1951 documents the theft and outlines the unsuccessful attempts made by the criminal police to recover the piece.

Condition report:

Partial age damage and surface change due to many years of presentation in the park.

Literature:

Taikobashi, or arched drum bridges, are distinctive features often found in front of the torii gates of Shinto shrines in Japan. With their bold, rounded curves, these bridges are rich in symbolic and aesthetic significance. Traditionally conceived as paths traversed solely by the kami-the deities of Shinto belief-Taikobashi act as both physical and spiritual thresholds. They span the kekkai, the dividing line between the secular world and the sacred shin'iki precincts and thus serve as stage-setting structures that encourage introspection and reverence before entering holy ground. Though their dramatic incline can deter casual passage, during festivals, these bridges become vital ceremonial routes, such as when a mikoshi (portable shrine) is carried across in ritual procession.

Approximate sizes:

Height: 25" 64cm
Width: 69 1/4" 176 cm
Depth: 17 cm 43 cm

POA



A PAIR OF HUGE SCALE BRONZE GEESE

The pair of birds realistically depicted, each with its head raised and mouth open in mid-cry, the plumage at the wings finely rendered. Dark patinated bronze, detail at the heads stained in red. Mounted on stone bases.

Provenance:

Acquired by Bayer from Bernheimer by Carl Duisberg around 1919.

Condition report:

Partial age damage and surface change due to many years of presentation in the park, fixed to concrete bases.

Literature:

Geese (kari) are frequently depicted in pairs, thus serving as a symbol of loyalty, partnership and family cohesion. The act of travelling and overcoming obstacles in tandem reflects these

characteristics. Moreover, due to their characteristic flight behaviour, geese also represent seasonal cycles, change and transience. Their seasonal journeys are widely interpreted in Japanese aesthetics and literature as a metaphor for the fleeting nature of life, and this is reflected in the constant coming and going that characterises human existence. Geese are also frequently associated with freedom, self-determination and the spiritual journey, due to the considerable distances they are capable of travelling.

Approximate sizes:

Height overall:

Goose one: 85 cm

Goose two: 95 cm

POA





5
A MONUMENTAL BRONZE
OKIMONO OF A STANDING CRANE.
(TSURU)

The magnificent bird cast in bronze as separate parts which together form a long-legged crane with an outstretched neck and open beak holding his prey, presumably a water snake.

Provenance:
Acquired by Bayer from Bernheimer by Carl Duisberg prior to 1930.

Condition report:
Partial age damage, old repairs and surface changes due to many years of presentation in the park. The four components original and screwed together.

Literature:
In Japanese culture, the crane is a powerful symbol of longevity, good fortune, and fidelity. Revered for its grace and beauty, it is often associated with the idea of eternal life, as cranes are believed to live for a thousand years. In Japanese folklore, the crane is also linked to the concept of selflessness, as seen in the tale of the “crane wife” (tsuru no ongaeshi), where a crane transforms into a woman to marry a kind man. Displaying cranes in art and design is thought to bring blessings, harmony, and prosperity.

Approximate sizes:
Height: 9 feet 5 inches (287 cm)

POA

A MONUMENTAL BRONZE
TEMPLE VASE- FOUNTAIN

The vase or water feature cast in shape of a round lotus leaf, a top a smaller lotus leaf that forms the neck of the vase and rests on another lotus-leaf that serves as the base. Around the neck a separately cast and finely executed figure of a dragon with a raised head and a mouth wide open.

Provenance:
Acquired by Bayer from Bernheimer by Carl Duisberg prior to 1930.

Condition report:
Partial age damage and surface change due to many years of presentation in the park, very good overall condition.

Literature:
The lotus flower (hasu) in Japan symbolizes purity and enlightenment, rising untouched from the muddy waters to bloom in beauty. It reflects the Buddhist path to awakening, where one transcends worldly impurities to achieve clarity and wisdom. The lotus, with its beauty, embodies spiritual growth and the pursuit of inner peace. The blooming of the lotus is a highly anticipated event in Japan, especially in Buddhist temples, during the summer months. This fleeting bloom is a reminder of the transient nature of life, encouraging reflection on the impermanence of existence. As the lotus flourishes, it symbolizes the beauty of embracing the present moment and the importance of spiritual mindfulness. Its brief life, blooming in the morning and fading by afternoon, urges us to rise above life's struggles, finding strength in the cycle of renewal and transformation.

Approximate sizes:
Height: 46 3/4" 119 cm
Diameter: 36" 91 cm

POA





7

LARGE BRONZE TEMPLE LANTERNS - TORO

TÔRÔ 1. Round multi-tiered base tapering upwards to a multi-tiered stand. Above is an oval light chamber with an openwork honeycomb pattern separated by four vertical struts. A Tokugawa crest on the front and back. Above the light chamber is a curved roof (Kasa) with six subdivisions, each decorated with the Tokugawa crest. Small bells are attached to the ends of the crossbars that divide the roof. The apex of the roof ends in a flamed Tama.

TÔRÔ 2. A hexagonal multi-tiered base, partially adorned with relief decoration, which tapers upwards and transitions into a multi-step stand, its walls decorated with mythical creatures. Above it, an oval light chamber with an intricately pierced honeycomb pattern, separated by vertical ribs and featuring a hinged door. Above the light chamber, a curved roof with fish-shaped hooks at the edges, where small bells once hung. The apex of the roof culminates in a flamed Tama.

Provenance:

Acquired by Bayer from Bernheimer by Carl Duisberg prior to 1930.

Condition report:

Partial age damage and surface change due to many years of presentation in the park, minor losses to Tôrô 2. Both lanterns will require re-wiring.

Literature:

These intricately crafted bronze lanterns, known as Tôrô, are far more than mere sources of light. They embody deeply rooted symbols within the cultural and religious landscape of Japan. Originally introduced from China, Tôrô gradually assumed a significant place in Buddhist temples, Shintô shrines, and later in Japanese ornamental gardens. In temple settings, the lanterns symbolise the light of Buddha's enlightenment. They serve as guides, dispelling the darkness of ignorance. Their structure follows a fixed principle that reflects the Buddhist cosmology. The five main components - base, shaft, light chamber, roof, and finial - correspond to the elements of earth, water, fire, wind, and void. These elements allude to the transience of all things and to the profound interconnectedness of nature. A distinctive feature is the presence of small bells at the corners of the roofs, which are not only decorative but traditionally believed to ward off malevolent spirits and give voice to the passing wind. Bronze Tôrô reached their height during the Muromachi period (1336 to 1573) and the Edo period (1603 to 1868). In these eras, they were valued not only as ritual objects but also as refined expressions of artisanal excellence. In later centuries, they became integral to Japanese gardens.

Approximate sizes:

TORO 1: 65 3/4" 167 cm

TORO 2: 66 1/2" 169 cm

POA



A PAIR OF HANGING BRONZE LANTERNS - TSURIDORO

Both lanterns with a triangular base on three short pedestals and open-worked light chambers and lantern roofs (kasa). The corners decorated with stylized heads of phoenixes, each with an iron side hanger entwined by a swirling bronze dragon holding a Tāmā.



Provenance:

Acquired by Bayer from Bernheimer by Carl Duisberg prior to 1930
- A letter to L. Bernheimer reveals that Carl Duisberg had already considered the area near his Japanese teahouse as the intended location for the lanterns prior to their acquisition.

Condition report:

Partial age damage and surface change due to many years of presentation in the park. These lanterns will require re-wiring.

Literature:

In Japanese art, the motif of a dragon holding a Tama, a sacred jewel or flaming pearl, combines powerful symbolism with elegant design. Used as a suspension for a hanging lantern, the dragon serves both a structural and protective role. The dragon symbolizes strength, wisdom, and control over the elements, while the Tama represents spiritual energy, enlightenment, and the wish-fulfilling jewel of Buddhist tradition. Together, they evoke the idea of light and insight descending from above, bringing protection and auspiciousness.

Approximate sizes:

Height: 23 1/2" 60 cm

POA



A HUGE PAIR OF ELABORATE BRONZE USUBATA URNS

Each vase composed of a tiered base, a cylindrical body, and a wide flaring rim. The walls are decorated in relief with a dynamically coiled dragon amid surging waves and foaming spray. The handles are sculpted in high relief with floral ornamentation featuring blossoms and foliage. Each vase is set into a bronze base imitating rock formations, pine trees, and bamboo.

Provenance:

Acquired by Bayer from Bernheimer by Carl Duisberg prior to 1930.

Condition report:

Partial age damage and surface change due to many years of presentation in the park

Literature:

Usubata vases, characterized by their wide, shallow bowls, are an iconic part of Japanese flower arrangement, especially Ikebana. Originating in the 17th century during the Edo period, these bronze vessels were designed for formal floral displays, offering a harmonious setting for flowers with their broad rims. In the early Meiji era, Usubata vases gained international attention as Japan opened to the West. Elaborate, multi part vases from regions like Takaoka and Kanazawa became highly prized at global exhibitions and were widely exported. Skilled artisans created intricate designs featuring natural motifs, blending traditional Japanese aesthetics with Western influences.

Approximate sizes:

Height: 70 cm

Diameter: 54 cm

POA



10

BRONZE LIFESIZE OKIMONO
OF STANDING GEESE - KARI



Goose One: A naturalistically cast model of a standing goose, presumably a humped goose with a neck stretched forwards and closed beak. Dark patinated bronze, the plumage on the wings well defined.

Goose Two: Naturalistically cast model of a standing goose, presumably a humped goose with its head turned backwards and its beak open. Dark patinated bronze, the plumage on the wings well defined and the forehead hump with traces of reddish colouring.

Provenance:

Acquired by Bayer from Bernheimer by Carl Duisberg prior to 1930.

Condition report:

Partial age damage and surface change due to many years of presentation in the park, fixed to concrete bases.

Literature:

In addition to their general symbolism of marital happiness and fidelity, geese in Japan also played a role as inadvertent messengers of military secrets. Historical accounts tell of sudden flights of geese that betrayed hidden troop positions, ultimately leading to victory in battle. This protective function found expression in the decoration of sword fittings and possibly in the adoption of the goose as a family crest motif. Their presence in art was further reinforced by their seasonal return in autumn: the eighth lunar month was celebrated as kanraigetsu, the "month of the returning geese"

Approximate sizes:

Goose one: 22 1/2" 57 cm (bronze only)

Goose two: 22 1/2" 57 cm (bronze only)

POA

