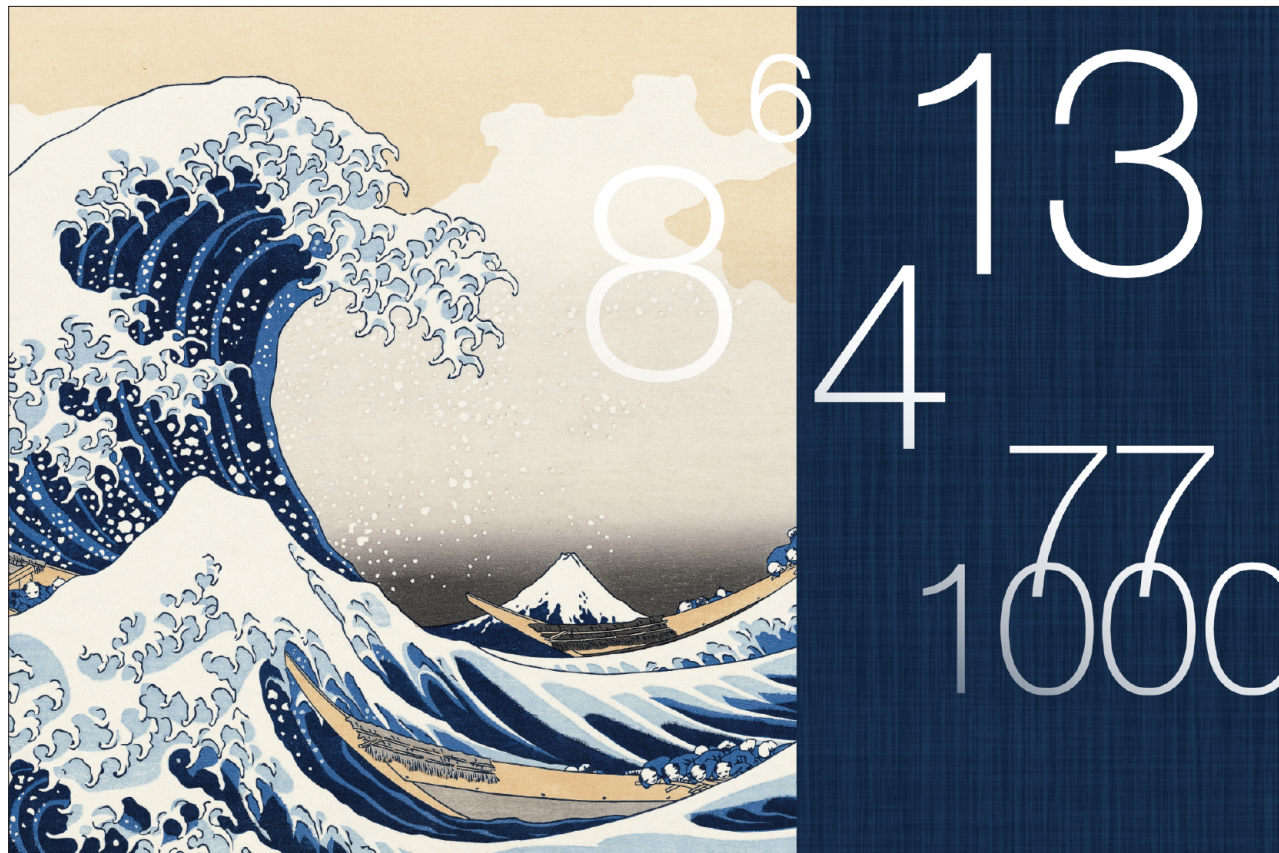


Adachi Foundation for the Preservation of Woodcut Printing 30th Anniversary Exhibition

Understanding the Global Recognition and Appeal of Hokusai's "The Great Wave off Kanagawa" through Numbers



Exhibition Period: June 25, 2024 (Tuesday) – August 24, 2024 (Saturday)

【Closed on Sundays, Mondays, and Public Holidays.】

*Closed for the Obon holiday from August 11 (Sunday) to August 15 (Thursday).

Hours: Tuesdays to Fridays, 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM / Saturdays 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Place : Adachi Tokyo Showroom

3-13-17 Shimo-Ochiai, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 161-0033 (About 10 minutes walk from JR Mejiro St.)

Admission Free

Greeting

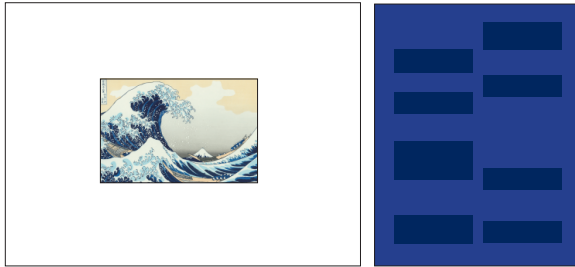
The Adachi Foundation for the Preservation of Woodcut Printing, since its establishment in 1994, has been dedicated to passing on the traditional woodcut printing techniques fostered by ukiyo-e to future generations and introducing them widely both domestically and internationally. This exhibition commemorates the 30th anniversary of the foundation's establishment and celebrates the adoption of Katsushika Hokusai's "The Great Wave off Kanagawa" on the reverse side of the new 1,000 yen bill, to be issued on July 3, 2024.

"The Great Wave off Kanagawa," globally renowned for its iconic beauty and impact, has captivated many with its grandeur. This exhibition aims to highlight the various impressive figures associated with "The Great Wave off Kanagawa," including its astounding auction prices in recent years and its presence in museums worldwide, providing an opportunity for the general public to appreciate its value and allure. Additionally, we will delve into its charm from the perspective of the foundation's production. Through the vividly revived reprints of ukiyo-e, crafted with highly preserved techniques, we invite you to fully enjoy the richness of Japanese culture and the delicacy of its craftsmanship.

Adachi Foundation remains committed to nurturing traditional woodcut print artisans and creating opportunities to showcase their skills. Thank you very much for your continuous understanding and support of our activities.

Adachi Foundation for the Preservation of Woodcut Printing

Introduction



1830 "The Great Wave off Kanagawa" is considered to have been produced around **1830**.

70 When "The Great Wave off Kanagawa" was created, Hokusai was already over **70** years old. Having worked as an artist since the age of 19, this piece represents the culmination of nearly 50 years of his artistic career.

46 "The Great Wave off Kanagawa" was published by the publisher Nishimuraya Yohachi (Eijudo) as part of the "Thirty-Six Views of Mt. Fuji" series. Originally planned to consist of 36 prints, the popularity of this landscape series led to the addition of 10 more prints, making a total of **46** prints in the series.

4·8·6 Hokusai created this dynamic masterpiece using only **4** woodblocks, and **8** printing processes with **6** colors. This achievement was possible because Hokusai was well-versed in ukiyo-e production and had spent many years studying waves.

1747 Prussian blue, a chemically synthesized pigment, was accidentally discovered by a dye merchant in Berlin, Germany, in the early 18th century. It is said to have been first imported to Japan in **1747** (Enkyō 4). Eventually, affordable imports became available, and this pigment was introduced into ukiyo-e prints and called "Bero Ai", allowing for the expression of a vibrant and translucent blue that had never been seen before.

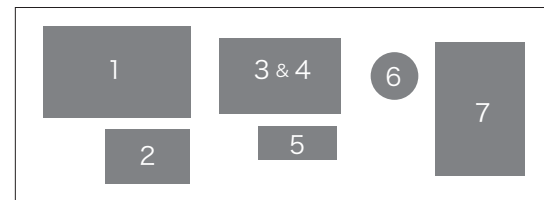
23 On the three boats being tossed by the large waves, you can see people clinging desperately to the boats to avoid being swept into the sea or rowing frantically to try to maintain control. There are **23** people clearly visible, and there might be even more depicted in the shadows of the waves. Please try counting them yourself.

1:1.618 In the composition of "The Great Wave off Kanagawa," one can find the golden ratio (**1:1.618**), which is said to be the most aesthetically pleasing proportion to humans. Was Hokusai aware of this ultimate ratio?

1/5000 When actual waves are captured with the latest high-speed cameras, claw-shaped wave crests similar to those depicted by Hokusai appear. The form of the waves that Hokusai observed can only be captured with a shutter speed of **1/5000**th of a second.

1905 The symphonic poem "La Mer," composed in **1905** by the French composer Claude Achille Debussy (1862-1918), is said to have been inspired by "The Great Wave off Kanagawa." The design of the cover for the first edition of the score featured "The Great Wave off Kanagawa." Additionally, Debussy had "The Great Wave off Kanagawa" displayed in his study, and this is widely known as an example of "Japonisme," where Japanese culture influenced Western artists.

Showcase



13, 77 As of 2020, 58 museums in **13** countries around the world hold a total of **77** prints of "The Great Wave off Kanagawa" that were printed during the Edo period.

16 In the art museums and the museums within Japan, there are **16** prints of "The Great Wave off Kanagawa." The fact that the same work is scattered around the world is a unique feature of ukiyo-e prints, which could be mass-produced. It is fascinating that these prints, which were casually enjoyed by common people during the Edo period, are now preserved as artworks worldwide. This suggests the profound impact ukiyo-e has had on the world.

3 The British Museum in London, UK, holds **3** original prints of "The Great Wave off Kanagawa." In 2008, during the unveiling of the third print, Adachi Foundation demonstrated the ukiyo-e printing process. During this event, a reproduction of "The Great Wave off Kanagawa," was produced by the artisans of the Adachi Institute of Woodcut Prints, was also added to the British Museum's collection.

2,760,000 In March 2023, at an auction held by Christie's in New York, "The Great Wave off Kanagawa" was sold for **\$2.76 million** (approximately ¥360 million), setting a record for the highest price ever paid for a Hokusai work.

50,000 400 In 2023, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, held a special exhibition titled "Hokusai: Inspiration and Influence," which examined the impact of Hokusai's works across different eras and countries. Among the exhibits was a LEGO brick replica of "The Great Wave off Kanagawa," created by LEGO® Certified Professional Jumpei Mitsui. This piece used **50,000** LEGO bricks and took **400** hours to complete.

1971 The surf brand Quiksilver has been using a logo inspired by "The Great Wave off Kanagawa," called the Mountain and Wave logo, since **1971**.

40 "The Great Wave off Kanagawa" was featured on the **40**-yen stamp issued on October 6, 1963, for International Letter-Writing Week, as well as on the 1000-yen stamp from the "Greeting JAPAN" series issued on January 29, 2016.

2020 In **2020**, 24 works from the "Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji," including "The Great Wave off Kanagawa," were featured on the visa pages of Japanese passports.

1000 On July 3, 2024, a new **1000**-yen bill featuring "The Great Wave off Kanagawa" was issued. The fact that this artwork is used on currency and passports truly makes it a representative image of Japan.

<Items Displayed in the Showcase>

1. Cover Design of the First Edition Score of Claude Debussy's Symphonic Poem "La Mer"
Source: Exhibition Catalog "Debussy: Music and Art" (July 2012, Bridgestone Museum of Art)

2. Photograph of "The Great Wave off Kanagawa" in Claude Debussy's Room
Photograph Taken by Erik Satie: Featuring Claude Debussy (left) and Igor Stravinsky (right), 1910
Source: HOKUSAI's GREAT WAVE (The British Museum Press)

3. Japanese New 1000 yen Bill (On the Reverse Side)
Issued on July 3, 2024

4. Japanese Passports (On the Visa Pages)
Adopted in February 2020

5. 40 Yen Stamp Commemorating International Letter Week
Issued in 1963
Private Collection

6. Fuji-san BE@RBRICK
Limited Edition Released in Commemoration of the "Great Ukiyo-e Exhibition" in 2014

7. "QUICKSILVER" T-Shirt
QUICKSILVER was founded in 1969 by two Australian surfers. Their logo influenced by "The Great Wave off Kanagawa" features Mt. Fuji and a wave (since 1971)

The Evolution of Waves Depicted by Hokusai

[C-1]

The Waves Pursued Throughout His Lifetime

Throughout his long life, Hokusai repeatedly depicted the motif of “waves.” Despite this repetition, he never fell into stylization; instead, with each depiction, he attempted new expressions and techniques. The evolution of wave representations seen here tells the story of Hokusai’s unrelenting quest for exploration. Among these, “The Great Wave off Kanagawa” represents a culmination of his wave expression and undoubtedly evoked significant reactions at the time. However, Hokusai did not rest on his laurels. In his subsequent work “Fishing Boats at Choshi,” he challenged himself with a composition that approaches the ocean’s surface even more closely. In the waves depicted on the ceiling of the festival float in his later years in Obuse, one can sense his determination to capture the undulations of cosmic energy. The timeless masterpiece “The Great Wave off Kanagawa” was born from Hokusai’s constant effort and boundless ambition.

Cresting Waves Like Claws

*“These waves are claws, the boat is caught in them, you can feel it.”
-from “The Letters of Vincent Van Gogh”-*

Let’s focus on the depiction of the wave crests that characterize “The Great Wave off Kanagawa.” The wave crests, expressed by layering short, varying-thickness lines, seize the viewer’s heart. Van Gogh, a painter who deeply loved ukiyo-e, mentioned “The Great Wave off Kanagawa” in his letters to his brother Theo, praising its line work. Also, please note the skill of the carver who faithfully transferred Hokusai’s unique rhythmic lines onto the woodblock.

The Eternal Attraction of a Masterpiece

The golden ratio of 1:1.618 (Phi) is often said to be the ideal proportion in painting. By drawing a quarter circle with the short side as the radius within a rectangle of this ratio, a golden spiral is created. The wave lines in Hokusai’s “The Great Wave off Kanagawa” can be overlaid with the curves of the golden spiral.

[C-2]

Exploring the Production Process of “The Great Wave off Kanagawa” Producing the Powerful Great Wave

Born from repeated trial and error, “The Great Wave off Kanagawa” recorded a major commercial success during the Edo period. Behind the birth of this masterpiece was the production system of division of labor, which enabled mass production, and the stringent constraints that prioritized profitability.

Tracing the Artistic Journey of Hokusai’s Woodcut Prints

[D-1]

The world-renowned genius: Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849)

Hokusai was born in 1760 in the Edo Honjo Warigesui area which is now Sumida Ward, Tokyo. During his teenage years, he trained as a carver of woodcut printing for a period and, at the age of 19, became a disciple of Katsukawa Shunsho, the leading ukiyo-e artist of actor portraits at that time. After working as an artist in the Katsukawa school, he studied various schools and styles of Japanese, Chinese, and Western paintings, eventually developing his unique artistic style by engaging in various genres of ukiyo-e. It was only after he turned 70 that he produced the iconic series “Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji,” which cemented his reputation and produced some of his most renowned ukiyo-e.

Hokusai was obsessed with depicting all phenomena in the universe, and even in old age, his creative drive never waned. Over his 90-year life, he left behind numerous works. In 1999, he was the only Japanese individual featured in the Millennium edition of the American LIFE magazine’s “100 Most Important Events and People of the Past 1,000 Years.” He remains one of the most acclaimed ukiyo-e artists in recent times.

[D-2]

Shunro [春朗] Period

In 1778, at the age of 19, Hokusai apprenticed under Katsukawa Shunshō, the foremost portrait artist of actors. The following year, he adopted the name Katsukawa Shunrō. From his master Shunshō’s name, he took the character “ 春 ” (spring), and from his master’s alternate name Kyokurōsei, he received the character “ 朗 ” (brightness). This indicates the high expectations placed on him as a promising artist. Initially, Hokusai focused on actor portraits and beautiful women, adhering closely to the Katsukawa school’s style. However, over time, he gradually developed a more free-flowing and distinctive artistic style of his own.

[D-3]

Sori [宗理] Period

After the death of his master, Katsukawa Shunsho, Hokusai left the Katsukawa school. Around 1794, he took on the name “Tawaraya Sori,” influenced by the Rinpa school, and began producing elegant surimono (privately commissioned prints), illustrations for kyoka books (books of humorous poems), and hand-painted bijin-ga (pictures of beautiful women). In 1798, Hokusai changed his name to “Hokusai Tokimasa” and embarked on a new path as an independent artist. However, he continued to work in the Sori style. Around 1801, Hokusai resumed the production of ukiyo-e and depicted numerous Western-style landscape paintings utilizing Western perspective techniques.

[D-4]

Katsushika Hokusai [葛飾北斎] and Taito [戴斗] Period

In 1805, at the age of 46, Hokusai adopted the artist name “Katsushika Hokusai.” During this period, he devoted much of his effort to depict illustrations for yomihon (reading books) by authors such as Kyokutei Bakin and Ryutei Tanehiko. In ukiyo-e, he produced many series of famous place pictures, caricatures, toy pictures, as well as refined surimono (privately commissioned prints) and sensuous hand-painted bijin-ga (pictures of beautiful women).

Around 1810, Hokusai adopted the name “Taito” and began focusing on the production of drawing manuals. The “Hokusai Manga,” which has gained significant attention in recent years, is from this period.

[D-5]

Iitsui [為一] Period

In 1820, at the age of 61, Hokusai adopted the artist name “Iitsu.” During a brief period from his late 60s to early 70s, Hokusai immersed himself in the creation of ukiyo-e, producing many of the works that define his artistic career. These include the iconic “Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji,” “A Tour of Waterfalls in Various Provinces,” “Famous Bridges in Various Provinces,” and “One Hundred Ghost Stories.” Hokusai’s interests extended beyond landscapes to encompass flowers and birds, architecture, historical and classical figures, and more, aiming to depict the entirety of the natural and cultural world.

[D-6]

Gakyō Rojin Manji [画狂老人卍] Period

In 1834, Hokusai, who had created numerous masterpieces featuring Mount Fuji, used the artist name “Gakyō Rōjin Manji” (The Old Man Mad about Drawing) for the first time in his illustrated book “One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji,” which serves as the culmination of his works on Mount Fuji. At the end of the book, he expressed his desire for further improvement in his artistic skills. In his final years, Hokusai’s subjects expanded beyond the confines of ukiyo-e as genre prints to include increasing depictions of natural elements, as well as religious motifs. He aspired to refine his artistic techniques until his last moments, relentlessly pursuing the path of a true artist throughout his life.

Western Art and Ukiyo-e —New Expressions Brought by the West

[E-1]

From the Netherlands to Japan: Depth in Landscapes Made Possible by Linear Perspective

One-point perspective (linear perspective *) was established in the Western world in the 15th century as a painting technique. It is said to have been introduced to Japan during the Edo period through Dutch prints (copper engravings and book illustrations) imported into Nagasaki and Chinese prints. The impact on ukiyo-e was significant, and artists attempted to depict scenes such as theaters using this new technique. These works were called “uki-e” (floating pictures) because the images appeared to float forward. (There are various theories about the origin of “uki-e.”)

Hokusai, who diligently studied both Japanese and Western painting techniques, produced several uki-e in his 40s. Among them are a few works drawn in the style of Dutch copper engravings, reflecting Hokusai’s strong awareness of the West.

On the other hand, in “View of Mt. Fuji under Takabashi Bridge,” Hokusai uses the uki-e technique to create a sense of depth while also incorporating his characteristic exaggeration by showing Mount Fuji through the tall bridge piers. This approach is also seen in his later work, “Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji.” Furthermore, in “Nihonbashi in Edo,” from the “Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji,” which was drawn with a composition close to one-point perspective, Hokusai deliberately breaks the parallel lines, showing his pursuit of a unique expression while incorporating Western elements.

*In painting, a spatial representation technique where objects are drawn larger when close and smaller when far, converging at a single vanishing point.

Katsushika Hokusai, “Perspective View of Oji Inari Shrine, Asukayama”
Katsushika Hokusai, “View of Mt. Fuji under Takabashi Bridge”
Katsushika Hokusai, “Nihonbashi in Edo”

[E-2]

Would “The Great Wave off Kanagawa” Exist without “Prussian Blue, Bero Ai”? — The Vibrant Blue that Enthralled People

Discovered in Berlin, Germany in 1704, and first imported to Japan in 1747, the synthetic pigment known as Prussian blue was called “*Bero Ai*,” meaning “Berlin blue.” Initially, it was a rare and valuable pigment, but as it began to be produced cheaply in China, its importation increased. By the Tempo period (1830-1844), Bero Ai was widely used in ukiyo-e, leading to a surge in demand for artworks featuring this beautiful and vivid blue.

The introduction of Bero Ai brought significant changes to ukiyo-e. It expanded the range of expression for skies and water, helping landscape paintings to become a major genre alongside bijin-ga (pictures of beautiful women) and yakusha-e (actor prints). Keisai Eisen (1791-1848), a disciple of Katsushika Hokusai, capitalized on this pigment by creating “aizuri-e,” prints made with only shades of blue, achieving great success.

Records indicate that Hokusai’s famous series “Thirty-Six Views of Mt. Fuji” was initially planned as a collection of aizuri-e. Without the discovery of Bero Ai, masterpieces such as “The Great Wave off Kanagawa,” part of the “Thirty-Six Views of Mt. Fuji,” might never have been created. The vibrant blue that captured the public’s imagination was crucial to the development and popularity of these iconic works.

Katsushika Hokusai, “The Lone Fisherman at Kajikazawa”
Keisai Eisen, “Asazuma of Ogiya”

**Western Art and Ukiyo-e
— Japonisme: The Western Fascination with Japanese Art**

[E-3]

An Innovative and Free Perspective: Inspiration for Western Artists

In the latter half of the 19th century, as Japonisme swept through Europe, the burgeoning popularity of photography began to challenge traditional notions of realism in painting. This period saw a growing interest in artistic expression that went beyond mere realistic representation. Amidst this cultural shift, the innovative and unrestrained ideas found in ukiyo-e provided Western artists with fresh perspectives.

For instance, the bird’s-eye view composition seen in Hiroshige’s “Bridge Ohashi and Atake in Sudden Shower” and the extreme close-up technique to create a sense of depth (foreground-focused composition) in “Plum Garden at Kameido” exemplify the free and imaginative approach of ukiyo-e. These techniques, which did not conform to the strictures of realism, offered Western artists new ways of seeing and depicting the world.

Artists such as Paul Gauguin and Toulouse-Lautrec, who collected ukiyo-e prints, were notably influenced by these Japanese ukiyo-e. Vincent van Gogh, in particular, along with his brother Theo, amassed a collection of over 400 ukiyo-e prints and even created copies of some. Van Gogh’s distinctive use of vibrant colors and his bold, unconventional compositions—unlike anything seen in Western art at the time—can be largely attributed to the profound impact of ukiyo-e on his work.

Utagawa Hiroshige, “Bridge Ohashi and Atake in Sudden Shower”
Utagawa Hiroshige, “Plum Garden at Kameido”

[E-4]

The composition of looking through trees or flowers to the scenery beyond is a technique often used by Hokusai and Hiroshige in their landscape prints. By clearly separating the foreground and background with trees, they created a sense of depth and added the intrigue of peeking at the landscape through the gaps in the foliage. Hokusai’s “Hodogaya on the Tokaido” is said to have influenced Claude Monet, “The Fonds at Varengeville” (1882) and “Poplars on the Epte” (1891).

Following the rise of Japonisme, similar compositions became prevalent in Western paintings and prints, reflecting the significant impact of ukiyo-e. The innovative approach of using natural elements to frame and enhance the depth of a scene is a testament to the lasting influence of Japanese woodcut prints on Western art.

Katsushika Hokusai, “Hodogaya on the Tokaido”

[E-5]

The Reverse Importation of *Bero Ai*: Hiroshige Blue and Hokusai Blue

The vibrant blue derived from Germany, known as *Bero Ai*, which captivated the people of Edo, also enchanted Western audiences when ukiyo-e prints made their way across the seas. In the West, inks and paints typically contained oils or other substances to help them adhere to paper or canvas, making them largely opaque. In contrast, Japanese ukiyo-e prints use water-based pigments, which are soaked into the fibers of washi paper by skilled artisans. As a result, fixatives are not mixed into the pigments. This allowed the natural transparency and luminosity of the pigments to be appreciated.

Impressionist artists, who depicted everyday scenes of riversides and skies with unprecedented brightness and light, drew significant inspiration from this technique. The combination of *Bero Ai* and traditional Japanese blues,

applied with a transparency and vividness unique to ukiyo-e, provided a new perspective on capturing daily life. This influence is evident in the Impressionists’ use of high brightness and luminous colors, which were not typical in traditional Western landscape painting.

Utagawa Hiroshige, “Awa Province: Naruto Whirlpools”
Utagawa Hiroshige, “Night at Saruwakacho”
Katsushika Hokusai, “Umezawa in Sagami Province”



[F-1]

“Japonisme”, the Circulation of Art: The Influence of Ukiyo-e

In the latter half of the 19th century, Japanese art and crafts were widely introduced overseas through events such as world expositions. This sparked a fascination with Japanese aesthetics, particularly in France, leading to a movement known as Japonisme. This movement profoundly influenced various forms of European art and design, with ukiyo-e playing a pivotal role in driving this trend.

Initially, ukiyo-e was not regarded as having significant artistic value in Japan. For the Japanese, ukiyo-e prints were common, everyday items. This is exemplified by the story of Hokusai’s “Manga” being used as packing material in boxes of ceramics destined for export, which astonished European recipients. European artists, including the Impressionists, rediscovered and celebrated these prints, which had been overlooked within Japan itself.

The rediscovery of ukiyo-e by European artists and collectors was crucial. Influential art dealers like Samuel Siegfried Bing and Tadamas Hayashi in Paris played a significant role. They did more than just sell Japanese art and crafts; they organized exhibitions, published works, and actively promoted Japanese culture.

Though Japonisme was a temporary fashion, it provided many with the opportunity to appreciate Japanese ukiyo-e, laying the groundwork for its current global recognition. It’s intriguing to consider that a Hokusai print, once purchased by your distant ancestor in an Edo-era bookshop, might have traversed the world, eventually ending up in a museum collection. Reflecting on the history of ukiyo-e’s circulation and influence, it feels somewhat surreal that Hokusai’s “The Great Wave off Kanagawa” now features on banknotes in Japan, circulating among people worldwide who visit the country. This modern phenomenon highlights the enduring impact and legacy of ukiyo-e on global culture.

[F-2]

The Value of Ukiyo-e as Reflected in Auction Prices

At the beginning of this exhibition, you saw the current valuation of “The Great Wave off Kanagawa.” However, the global appreciation of ukiyo-e, which spread through Japonisme, is not limited to Hokusai alone.

Examining the collections of ukiyo-e prints in major museums worldwide, we find that the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (USA) collects approximately 55,000 pieces, while the Victoria and Albert Museum (UK) in London holds around 25,000. The Honolulu Museum of Art (USA) boasts a collection of about 10,000 ukiyo-e prints, with the world’s largest collection of works by Hiroshige. These extensive collections illustrate how the mass-produced ukiyo-e spread across the globe.

The economic value of ukiyo-e has also been steadily rising over the years. Here are some notable auction results:

Toshusai Sharaku, “The Actor Arashi Ryuzo as Ishibe no Kinkichi, the Money Lender”: approximately 53.6 million yen (396,000 euros) at PISA, France, October 16, 2009, according to AFP.
Kitagawa Utamaro, “Love Brooding”: approximately 88 million yen (745,000 euros) at a joint auction by Beausant-Lefevre and Christie’s, Paris, June 22, 2016, according to AFP.
Katsushika Hokusai, “Thirty-Six Views of Mt. Fuji” (complete set of 46 prints): approximately 540 million yen (3.559 million dollars) at Christie’s, New York, March 19, 2024, according to NHK News.

These are the hammer prices from major auctions around the world. Notably, “Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji” garnered significant attention this year, 2024, as all 46 prints were auctioned as a complete set for the first time in approximately 22 years. When it comes to ukiyo-e prints, the price can fluctuate greatly depending on their condition, and their appeal cannot be measured solely by economic value. However, these high auction prices undeniably serve as an indicator of the contemporary appreciation of ukiyo-e.

In the Edo period, ukiyo-e prints were enjoyed by common people, reportedly costing about the price of a bowl of soba. If people of that time knew their current value, they likely would have cherished them as family treasures, carefully preserving them for generations.