

**Connections Across Oceans: Debussy, Impressionism,
and "The Floating World (Ukiyo-e)" of Japanese Art**

Tomoko Maki

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Reading Committee:

Robin McCabe

Craig Sheppard

Steven Morrison

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University of Washington

Abstract

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Tomoko Maki

Chair of Supervisory Committee:

Professor Robin McCabe

School of Music

Debussy lived in Paris in the late nineteenth century and Paris at that time was very much a “happening” place; The Paris Exposition, Japonism, and Impressionism were all blossoming. Japonism was the most influential art movement and it exerted a huge influence on many artists, Debussy being one of them. He collected, appreciated and was fascinated by Japanese woodprints and other artworks such as Netsuke. As an artist, Debussy received great inspiration from Japanese art for his composition. This paper focuses on the Japanese art world which Debussy loved and how Japanese art influenced his creativity as a musician and composer.

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Dedication

To My Father

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Preface

~ Once upon a Time – A Miraculous Encounter

It was an afternoon early in the spring of 1856. Twenty-three-year-old Felix Bracquemond, French painter and etcher, was at a busy French port. He was excited to receive a crate of china which he had ordered. After arriving home with the crate, he opened it immediately to check if all the china was intact. He removed the layers of wadded paper that had been used as padding for the china. By accident, he uncrumpled one of the papers. His eyes widened in astonishment. What he saw on the cheap newspaper was *Hokusai Manga* (Hokusai's Random Sketches) (Figure 1) by Katsushika Hokusai. The drawing introduced a new world to him. It was totally different from European conventional drawing style, dimensionally realistic and usually about war, religion, and portraits of the aristocracy. The drawings on this cheap newspaper were about daily life. Some details were deliberately omitted, but still giving lively images to the viewers. Bracquemond started showing off this "album" of Japanese prints to his painter friends. This accidental encounter would make possible a revolutionary art movement – Japonism!



Figure 1. Katsushika Hokusai, *Hokusai Manga*

~ Japonisme

In 1888 Vincent Van Gogh wrote to his brother, Theo from Arles: “The weather here remains fine, and if it was always like this, it would be better than a painter’s paradise... we like Japanese painting, we have its influence, all the impressionists have that in common; then why not go to Japan, that is to say to the equivalent of Japan, the South?”¹ Van Gogh especially admired the “drawing of the blade of the glass” and the “Hokusai”. (Figure 2)



Figure 2 Katsushika Hokusai, *Ejiri in the Suruga province from Fugoku 36 kei*

¹ Borowitz, Helen. *Le Japon Artisque* (Ohio: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1975) 3.

One of the most important contributions to early Japonisme was the magazine *Artistic Japan*, created by the Parisian art dealer Siegfried Bing (1838-1905) in 1888. In the first issue, Bing wrote of the purpose of the magazine: “It is primarily intended for the instruction of the general public in the real and rare beauties of an Art which has hitherto attracted chiefly through its superficial qualities.”² The need for this publication arose, according to Bing, since museums “have disdainfully closed their doors to Japanese art.”³ Because of this, it was impossible for the collector to educate his eyes. Bing was very dismayed that Japanese art could be found “in the shop and the bazaar only...and there merely in its least refined and elevated form.”⁴ Through the publication of articles on the art and culture of Japan, Bing hoped to raise the level of interest in Japanese art to a serious, scholarly level.

Artistic Japan became a “sort of graphic encyclopedia” introducing the finest collection of Japanese art found in Paris. Bing was trying to reach not only the audience of “contemplative dilettanti”, but also the manufacturers and artisans of the West. He expected to revitalize the “lifeless stiffness” of the industrial arts of the West through “the breath of real life that constitutes the secret charm of every achievement of Japanese art.”⁵

In the last issue of *Artistic Japan* in 1891, Roger Marx (1888-1977), French writer and art critic, wrote that Bing had accomplished his mission. *Artistic Japan* demonstrated the important influence of Japan on French art of the nineteenth-century. No one could ignore the Japanese component in the evolution of “the style of today”.

² Borowitz, Helen. *Le Japon Artisque*. (Ohio: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1975) 4.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

According to Maxx, Japan was recognized as an influence on nineteenth-century art as powerful as “the influence of antique art on the age of the Renaissance art.”⁶

Before Japan opened to the West in the middle of the nineteenth century, the reading of various traveler’s experiences was the only way for Europeans to know about Japan. Philipp Franz von Siebold (1796-1866), a German doctor associated with the Dutch colony at Deshima in Nagasaki, Japan, wrote books about Japan, and published them in 1831. These books were translated into French. They also contained the first reproductions of prints by Hokusai. If readers were not satisfied by Von Siebold’s illustrations, they had to venture to Holland, the only European country having regular trade relations with Japan at that time. There, they could see original prints and albums from Japan in the ethnological exhibitions at The Hague and Leyden.

Japan’s isolation caused people in the West to speculate about the situation of its people and its culture. Just before Commodore Perry’s departure for the country, an English author, Charles MacFarlane (1799-1858), wrote in his book about Japan that he hoped that the expedition would proceed “with prudence and gentleness” so that the Japanese people would not return to “barbarity”. He described Japanese women as so cultured and refined that they would be admitted to any “court in Europe.” This admiration in European attitudes towards Japanese continued even after Japan opened the doors to the West.

Commodore Perry’s visit to Japan in 1853 resulted in a flooding of the Parisian art market with Japanese prints and curios. Japanese print albums and single woodblock sheets were sold in curiosity shops, in tea rooms, and even in the many book stalls which

⁶ Borowitz, Helen. *Le Japon Artisque* (Ohio: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1975) 4.

lined the Seine. Ultimately this craze for “anything Japanese” became a movement known as *Japonisme*. The French art critic and writer, Philippe Burty (1830-1890), coined the term *Japonisme* in 1872. He saw *Japonisme* as not limited to the study of the art of Japan, but also as “a new field of study, artistic, historic, and ethnographic.”

The Goncourt brothers, Edmond (1822–1896) and Jules (1830–1870), both French naturalism writers, wrote that, “the collecting of Japanese art was an aristocratic pastime.”⁷ They were connoisseurs of Chinese and rococo art and connected their taste in *Japonisme* and the “chinoiserie” (Chinese style) of eighteenth century rococo. They also saw some similarity in drawings by Utamaro and paintings by French painter, Watteau. For the Goncourts, *Japonisme* was limited to the elite, and when it began to spread to the bourgeoisie in the late sixties, they wrote cynically in their Journal: “It is now spreading to everything and everyone, even to idiots and middle-class women.”⁸

The aesthetic of Western art came from the classical heritage of antiquity and the Renaissance. In 1885, the Goncourts stated in their Journal: “Japanese art is as great an art as Greek art.”⁹ An American-born British painter, James Whistler (1834-1903), concluded his lecture in 1885: “...the story of beautiful is already complete – hewn in marbles of the Parthenon – and embroidered the birds, upon the fan of Hokusai – at the foot of Fujiyama.”¹⁰ A stormy protest arose. Many people found the equating of the Oriental aesthetic to the Greek to be outrageous. However, to the avant-garde French

⁷ Borowitz, Helen. *Le Japon Artisque* (Ohio: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1975) 5.

⁸ Ibid. 6.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

artists, the Impressionists, the Post-Impressionists, and the Symbolists, the Japanese print offered an alternative approach to “the empty formulas of academic history painting.”¹¹

Japanese “ukiyo-e” prints captured casual moments from daily life. The French poet and art critic, Baudelaire (1821-1867), asked the modern painter “to distill the eternal from the transitory.”¹² He was tired of academic formulas. Japanese prints were just such a distillation that the Impressionists had discovered. Helen Borowitz wrote, “the quick glimpse of daily life – whether on the boulevard, in the cabaret, or in the brothel – became the subject of the Impressionist painters.”¹³ This was very similar to the view of the Japanese style of “floating world.” Indeed, “ukiyo-e” was the inspiration for the Impressionists.

Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) and Van Gogh, the Post-Impressionists, admired Japanese art because of their own interests. Borowitz wrote, “the bold color, the emphasis on line, the flat, patterned surface were all devices that suited their emphasis on color and form.”¹⁴ Van Gogh respected the Japanese artists as a humble craftsman and wrote that Japanese art evolved naturally, “as simple as breathing.”¹⁵

The curiosity shop “La Porte Chinoise”, opened as a tea shop in the rue de Rivoli, the most fashionable shopping street in Paris around 1862. This tea shop became the gathering place for collectors of Japanese art in the 1860s. It was in this space that influential writers like Philippe Burty, the Goncourts, and the French writer, Emile Zola (1840-1902), met with other Japonistes who became important artists: French painter,

¹¹ Borowitz, Helen. *Le Japon Artisque* (Ohio: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1975) 6.

¹² *Ibid.* 7.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Edouard Manet (1832-1883), American-born British painter, James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), French painter, James Tissot (1836-1902), and French painter, Edgar Degas (1834-1917). If it were not for the critic Burty and these friends, *Japonisme* would have never developed beyond a fashionable vogue. Sharing an enthusiasm for Japanese art, these artists began to see Japanese art as a revitalizing force for their own work.

Felix Bracquemond (1833-1914), French painter and etcher, was the first artist who saw that Japanese prints could be a useful source of decorative designs. He obtained an album of prints by Hokusai around 1856. This album was from “Hokusai Manga”, published in fifteen volumes and consisting of informal sketches of animals, birds, fish, ghosts, insects, tools, men, women, dancers, and flowers. Bracquemond always carried this album in his pocket and showed to his friends. Then he began to collect albums of Hokusai. He used these vigorous and detailed sketches from nature for his etchings that served as the asymmetrical designs on plates for the Rousseau-Bracquemond table

service (French ceramic design company.) (Figure 3) This service was shown in the Paris Exposition in 1867 and became a sensation. Decoration based on Japanese prints was entirely new in the ceramic industry. The success of the Rousseau-Bracquemond table service inspired other French ceramic designers and they started to follow Bracquemond’s design. Camille



Figure 3 Rousseau-Bracquemond table service, *Iris and Butterfly*

Moreau, an independent French designer, also collected Japanese albums and used the motifs in her works. Her flowering branch design on a plate with a basket-weave pattern on the border is an example of *Japonisme* in French ceramics. Another example is by Albert Dammouse (1848-1926), French ceramic designer and sculptor. He used the cranes on his cup and saucer from his Japanese studies of birds. Eugene Rousseau also used a fish moving through swirling water in his glass vase. This image is from “Hokusai Manga”.

Several printmakers who also collected Japanese art began to record their possessions in etchings. Both Jules Jacquemart (1837-1880), French etcher, and Philippe Burty, the French art critic, made etchings of their private collections. In 1867, the secret “Japoniste” society, the members including Jacquemart and Burty, began to exchange etchings of objects they owned. Most of the members were involved in printmaking. Some of the members were ceramic designers. The meetings were kept secret, but the communication among printmakers, designers, and critics resulted in the publication of several articles dedicated to the support of Japanese art. The members sometimes celebrated their dedication to Japonisme by drinking, eating with chopsticks and audaciously dressing in kimonos. (Figure 4)



Figure 4 Lautrec in Kimono

American-born painter and graphic artist, James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), active mainly in England, was not a member of the secret Japoniste society, but he liked to dress “a la *Japonaise*” (Japanese style). As an avant-garde artist, Whistler contributed to popularize *Japonisme* in its early years. He was also a collector of Chinese ceramics, as were the Goncourts. By the 1870s, Whistler gave up drawing women surrounded by decorative Oriental objects, and turned his attention to landscape. He began to use the designs of Japanese landscape artists in both of his paintings and prints. His work, “Old Battersea Bridge” (Figure 5) derived from the bridge motifs of Hiroshige.(Figure 6) Almost all of the Impressionists were interested in Japanese prints. Monet, Pissarro, and Sisley used the diagonal line from Hiroshige’s prints in their paintings of roads and rivers.



Figure 6 Utagawa Hiroshige, *A shower at the Big bridge from One hundred famous views in Edo*

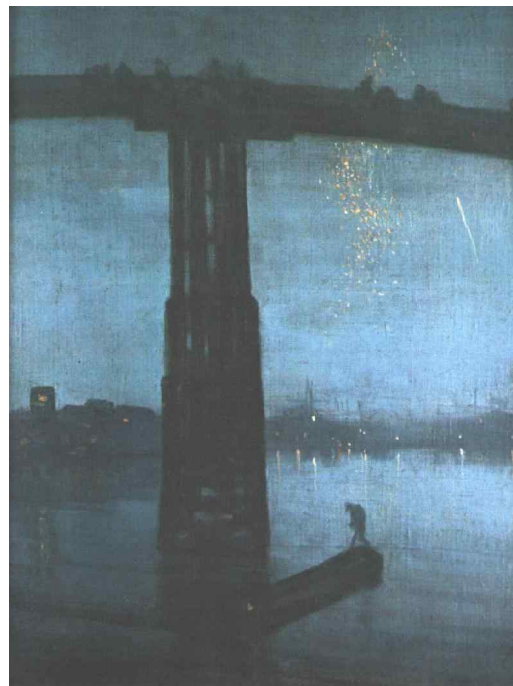


Figure 5 James McNeill Whistler, *Old Battersea Bridge*

The second period of *Japonisme* was the decade between the Paris Expositions of 1867 and 1878. This period was a transitional phase. In Japan, “Taisei ho-kan” happened in 1867. The Japanese Emperor overthrew the shogunate in order to prevent tyranny. This was a radical event in Japanese history. At this time Japan began more active trading with the West. After the Paris Exposition closed, the remaining hundred Japanese prints from the display were sold to collectors. Edouard Manet (1832-1883) included a Japanese woodprint hanging in his work, “Portrait of Zola”. (Figure 7) Manet’s etching *Les Chats* (Figure 8) derived from Hiroshige’s *Ukiyo Ryusai Gwafu*.



Figure 7 Edouard Manet, *Portrait of Zola by Manet*

Edgar Degas (1834-1917) was a friend of Burty

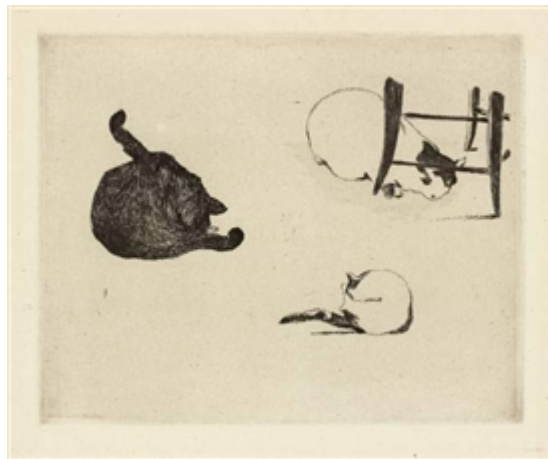


Figure 8 Edouard Manet, *Les Chats*



Figure 9 Torii Kiyonaga, *Bathhouse women*

and had access to Burty's collection of Japanese art. Degas hung Kiyonaga's "Bath House", (Figure 9) in his bedroom and later bathhouse women became one of his favorite subjects.

Degas used many of compositional techniques from "Ukiyo-e" prints: the cutting off of the view in his backstage scenes, the bird's-eye viewpoint, and the casual arrangement arrangement. These gave the impression of a viewer's quick glance. His work, "At the Louvre: The Painter Mary Cassatt" was one of his most successful prints.



(Figure 10) In this etching, Degas used the central ideas from the Japanese prints: the close positioning of two women, the tilted background, and the marbleized pillar which divided the view.

After Claude Monet (1840-1926) visited in Holland in 1871, his colors became brighter. His use of bright color as referring to Japanese prints was not recognized at first. But, the Goncourts wrote in 1892, "as we were leafing through the big plates of Fujiyama by Hokusai, Maizi said to me: 'Look, here is Monet's great yellow areas.' And he was right. People are not sufficiently aware of how much our contemporary landscape artists have borrowed from these pictures, especially

Figure 10 Edgar Degas, *At the Louvre: the Painter Mary Cassatt*

Monet, whom I often encounter at Bing's in the little attic where Lévy is in charge of the Japanese prints.”¹⁶

In 1871, the French composer, Camille Saint-Saëns (1840-1926) wrote the opera, “The Yellow Princess”. In the story, the main role Rena's lover Kornélis is crazy about Japanese “Ukiyo-e” and she is jealous of the woman in the “Ukiyo-e”.

Other Impressionists perceived Japanese prints for their inspiration. The linear qualities were probably important for Manet and Degas. But to Pissaro, the mist, rain, and fog he found in Japanese prints were transitory effects of weather ideally suited to the Impressionist sensibility.

It is not clear how many of decorative designers used Japanese motifs in their works during the phase of Japonisme. However, “A Clock” by Alphonse Giroux (-1848), French art restorer and exclusive furniture maker, was typical of the style of the 1870s. It was made of metal, wood, and ivory. The clock face in the form of a drum was balanced on the back of a rooster perched on a platform, supported by turtles.

Many of the nineteenth-century decorative designers had been trained in the rococo style. “Rococo” style developed in the early part of the 18th century in Paris, as a reaction against the grandeur, symmetry and strict regulations of the Baroque, especially that of the Palace of Versailles. The artists used a more jocular, florid and graceful approach to Baroque art and architecture. Rococo art and architecture was ornate and made of use of creamy, pastel-like colors, asymmetrical designs, curves, and lots of gold.

The work of a French artist, Émile Gallé (1846-1904), who mainly worked in glass, reflected his evolution from rococo to *Japonisme*. His *Japonisme* example is that

¹⁶ Borowitz, Helen. *Le Japon Artisque* (Ohio: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1975) 12.

of a faience vase. It had bright decoration on the surface, with flowering branch and geometric patterns. The gilded surface was in Japanese decorative style, and it appealed greatly to the French taste for general elegance.

The Japanese art dealer, Tadamasa Hayashi (1853-1906), arrived to Paris in 1887 from Japan as an interpreter at the Paris Exposition of that year. He remained in Paris after the Exposition and served as an expert advisor to collectors and scholars of Japanese prints. Edmond de Goncourt wrote in 1891 that he visited Hayashi with prints on loan from Bing. "...I carry away enough Japanese prints to load a horse, taking on the run to Hayashi's so that he may interpret them for me then and there, until seven o'clock, when I have promised to return them to Bing's."¹⁷ Hayashi arrived in Paris at the end of the transitional phase of *Japonisme*. He made scholarly contributions that were important for the full flowering of the style in the eighties and nineties.

The French art historian, Louis Gonse, (1846-1921) organized an important exhibition of Japanese art with the help of Hayashi. Japanese prints and artifacts from the private collections of Gonse, Philippe Burty, Edmond de Goncourt, S. Bing, and many other collectors, including the actress Sarah Bernhardt, were gathered in a display of some 3000 objects. At this time the French painter and illustrator, Felix Buhot (1847-1898) made an etching of a bronze frog from Burty's collection. The toad on Debussy's desk seems a typical example of this figure. The renaissance of printmaking during the eighties in Paris was dominated by Japanese design and technique.

The French painter and etcher, August Lepere (1849-1918), and the French artist and designer, Henri Riviere (1864-1951), were inspired by Japanese woodprints and tried

¹⁷ Borowitz, Helen. *Le Japon Artisque* (Ohio: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1975) 13.

to incorporate oriental effects in their prints. Lepere achieved the color-wash effects of Japanese prints through the use of water-base pigments. Riviere created a series of color lithographs showing thirty-six views of the Eiffel tower, inspired by Hokusai's series of thirty-six views of Mt.Fuji. The American painter and printmaker, Mary Cassatt (1844-1926), lived much of her adult life in France. A friend of Edgar Degas, she began to experiment with color-etching in 1891. She also liked the pale color-wash effects in

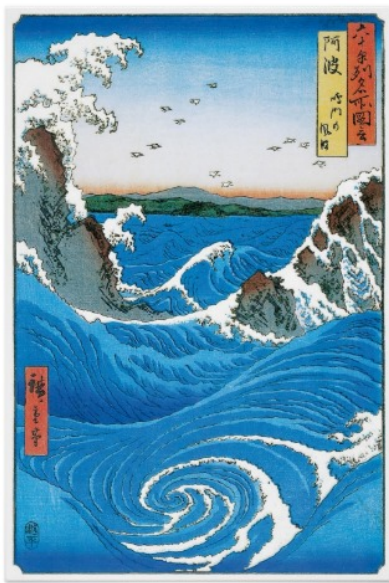


Figure 11 Utagawa Hiroshige, *Naruto Whirlpools in Awa province*

series of zincographs based on his paintings were printed on yellow paper, reflecting the Japanese use of varied papers. Gauguin's prints showed the influence of the bold color and line of Japanese prints. Another obvious influence of Japanese prints on French painting was the anonymous pointillist painting made as a stippled copy of Hiroshige's "Whirlpool of Naruto in Awa province" at the end of the century. (Figure 11)

Japanese prints and tried to use them in her work. She created her etchings in the two-dimensional style of the Japanese "ukiyo-e" prints and chose subjects from daily life inspired by the prints by Harunobu and Utamaro.

French lithographers became aware of Japanese color prints by 1889. Paul

Gauguin was one of the innovative artists who used lithography. His

Vincent Van Gogh was also impressed by Hiroshige's prints and copied many of them. In his drawing "The Rock of Montmajour with Trees", (Figure 12) he experimented with the reed pen of the Japanese artist. This simple tool appealed to Van Gogh, who tried to represent the landscape "with an eye more Japanese."



Figure 12 Vincent Van Gogh, *The Rock of Montmajour with Trees*

Many young artists were influenced by Monet's early *Japonisme*. In both prints and paintings they presented everyday French life in a flat format reminiscent of Japanese prints. The French painter and printmaker, Pierre Bonnard (1867-1947) created "Family Scene." Its flat patterns and subtle color recall Utamaro's prints of domestic life.

The French painter, printmaker, and illustrator, Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901), began collecting Japanese prints around the time of Gonse's Japanese exhibition. The Japanese portraits of "Kabuki" actors with bold and almost caricature style had a strong impact on Lautrec's print design. The bold, flat shapes, and the off-shades of color from Japanese prints created the image suited to the advertising function of Lautrec's cabaret

posters. One example is his lithograph of Aristide Bruant in 1893. (Figure 13) The unusual view of the actor seen from the back was a technique of Japanese prints



Figure 13 Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Bruant in his night club*

calculated to arouse a viewer's curiosity. Lautrec's debt to the Japanese print was publicly acknowledged in his monogram signature designed as a Japanese circle stamp. Many of Lautrec's works influenced popular advertising at this time. The revival of the graphic arts stimulated by the Japanese prints led to many experimental techniques in color printmaking in the eighties and nineties.

The high value that the Japanese put on craftsmanship is reflected in the exquisite care one sees in a small object. The Japanese artist chose the most insignificant

creatures, such as fish or insects, as part of his decorative subject, so the tiniest object was considered worthy of his finest efforts. The elevation of craftsmanship and choice material is reflected in the introduction of French designers during this period to new semi-precious materials, such as ivory and animal horn, which had long been honored in Japan. The French designers began to value materials, such as the translucence of horn, for their aesthetic quality rather than for their rarity.

The Japanese artistic integration into every aspect of life refined the French sensibility towards objects in daily use. At the same time, Japonisme brought to Western fine arts a new aesthetic and many new techniques. In three areas, printmaking, painting, and the decorative arts, *Japonisme* revitalized the work of many leading artists of the day.

~ In Debussy's Room

Debussy's art was rooted, nurtured, and formed in Paris in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The British pianist Paul Roberts writes in his book *Images*, "The cultural world of Debussy's formative years, and indeed the whole of his life, was dominated by Impressionism and its aftermath, one of the greatest upheavals in visual art since the Renaissance."¹⁸ The most radical development of the last *fin de siècle* occurred in visual art.

In addition to his background, Debussy had a very sensitive and strong sense of the visual, since he was young. His sister recalled that Debussy frequently sat quietly outside all day, daydreaming, even as an eight-year old. He was unconsciously absorbing the external inspirations that would later mould his art. Debussy was always fascinated by illustrations in books and magazines. As a boy, he cut out reproductions of famous paintings from *Le Monde Illustré* to decorate his bedroom. Debussy actually said, "J'aime presque autant les images que la musique. (I like pictures as much as music.)"

Collecting original prints was one of the passions of the *fin de siècle* (end of century): lithographs, woodcuts, and colored engravings. But the most obsessively collected prints of all were the Japanese colored woodblock prints. Japonism was the greatest and most influential art movement in the period of Impressionism. Debussy was no less intrigued than were painters such as Manet, Monet, Degas, Gauguin, Van Gogh, Lautrec, and Matisse. There are two Japanese prints by Hokusai and Utamaro on the wall in two photographs of Debussy in his room. Camille Claudel, the French sculptress, first introduced Debussy to Japanese art such as Hokusai's *Manga*. Beside Hokusai, Debussy

¹⁸ Paul Roberts. *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Portland Oregon: Amadeus Press. 1996) 15.

also knew the work of Hokusai's contemporary, another great landscape artist, Utagawa Hiroshige and his work *Fifty-three Stations of the Tokaido*. In 1896, Debussy actually gave a print by Hiroshige (one of the series *Fifty-three Stations of the Tokaido*) to his friend Rene Peter. Hiroshige is definitively one of the most important *ukiyo-e* artists, in addition to Hokusai and Utamaro.



Debussy in his room with two Japanese prints by Hokusai and Utamaro on the wall



Japanese Netsuke of frog

Debussy also collected other Japanese artwork such as Netsuke. Raoul, Debussy's brother-in-law, wrote, "...Debussy was devoted to various objects, silent but faithful companions, which decorated his work-table..."¹⁹ Debussy was using a Japanese Netsuke of a toad as his paperweight which he named Arkel after the old king in *Pelleas et Melisande*. The French publisher, Jacques Durand (1865–1928) recalled, "The wide table which Debussy used to work was cluttered with high-class Japanese objects. His favorite was a porcelain toad (named Arkel) which he called his fetish and which he took with him when he moved, claiming he could not work unless it was in sight."²⁰ In the Musée Debussy at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Debussy's other collections, such as a lacquered Japanese cigarette case depicting carp, and ornaments from his desk (including two small Japanese pen holders) are preserved. In the following chapters we will explore the Japanese art world which Debussy so loved.

¹⁹ Roberts, Paul. *Claude Debussy* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2008) 183.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 178.

~ Art of Netsuke: a forgotten tradition

When Japanese isolation from foreign cultures ended in the mid-nineteenth century, Western collectors discovered the arts of Japan. One of the most popular art forms was *netsuke*. Westerners were enchanted by the small size and elaborate detail of these little sculptures.

In the Edo period (1603-1867), people wore the traditional Japanese garment, the kimono. Since the kimono did not have pockets, other means were devised to carry around items of daily use. The sash (*obi*), secured around the waist and used to hold the kimono together, became the primary method for carrying items. This was achieved simply by tucking the item, such as a fan, into the sash. Other pouches, containers, or miscellaneous items, known collectively as *sagemono* (hanging things), were suspended from the sash. *Sagemono* included a money pouch (*kinchaku*), a smoking pouch (*tabakoire*), pipe (*kiseru*) and pipecase (*kiseruzutsu*), and a lidded basket (*inrou*)

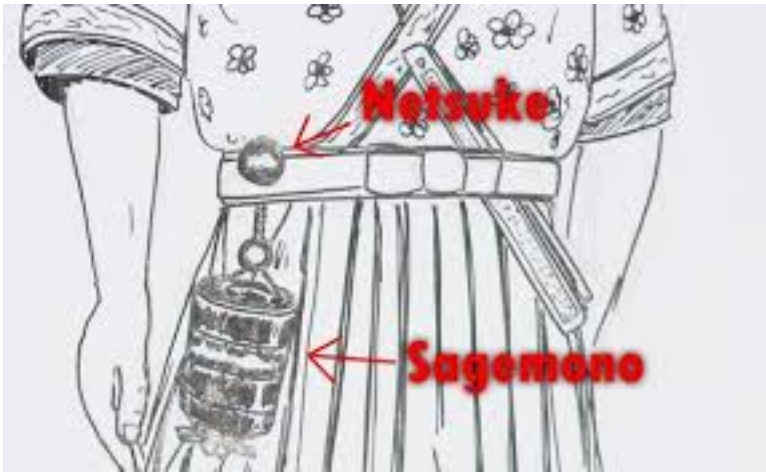


Figure 14 Netsuke and Sagemono

for medicine. *Sagemono* were used only by men in the Edo period. They displayed their taste in the choice of fashionable dress accessories, particularly *inrou* and *netsuke*.

(Figure 14) All *sagemono* were provided with the means to hang them from the sash.

The two cords were passed behind the sash with the pouch or container positioned below it. They were attached to a *netsuke* or small carved toggle which lay over the upper part of the sash. The sash was tightened around the kimono and the bulk of the *netsuke* helped to prevent the pouch or container from falling to the ground. Because of this reason, *netsuke* needed to be comparatively small and not too heavy, while at the same time having sufficient size and bulk to prevent the suspended object from falling to the ground. *Netsuke* also must have been somewhat round in shape, and solid, because it had to slide smoothly between the kimono and the sash.

One of the most striking features of *netsuke* was the materials from which they were made. Almost all materials known in Japan, both native and imported, were used at one time or another to make *netsuke*. By the nineteenth century, the *netsuke-shi* (*netsuke* maker) had a wide range of materials and selected the most appropriate one for a particular design or effect.

Both wood and ivory were traditionally most widely used for *netsuke*, but wood was more common until the mid-nineteenth century. Since trees grew abundantly across Japan, wood was not only readily available, but many varieties could also be obtained at a reasonable price. Wood had been one of the main materials used for Buddhist sculpture since the seventh century, and so there was a long tradition of expertise in wood carving.

Since Japanese cypress (*hinoki*) was widely used in the building of temples and shrines, it was widely used for early wooden *netsuke*. However, as it was a soft wood, its carved surface was easily worn down, so that some detail was lost. For this reason, cypress (*hinoki*) was not normally the first choice for *netsuke* carving, although such shortcomings could somewhat be overcome by painting or lacquering the surface after

carving. Another soft wood, yew (*ichii*), was used particularly for its color. The outer layer near the bark was creamy-white to yellow, but the center was yellow to brown, with additional veining providing attractive contrast. Where local supplies of specific trees were plentiful, such as the yew in Hida province, such wood was frequently used for the basis of regional *netsuke* production. *Netsuke* in the western part of Japan was also exemplified by the widespread use of cherry (*sakura*), a dark-reddish wood, by *netsuke-shi* in Nagoya and Gifu areas.

Many of the trees native to Japan were intrinsically not suitable for *netsuke* carving because of softness and their large grain. Since the *netsuke* were small and subject to much handling, a durable wood with a fine grain and dense quality was preferred for *netsuke* carving. Boxwood (*tsuge*) was a material that most fulfilled these criteria, and it was quite often used for *netsuke*. Other woods used often for *netsuke* were Japanese persimmon (*kurogaki*), camellia (*tsubaki*), jujube (*natusme*), and bamboo (*take*.)

From an early date, *netsuke-shi* sought new and interesting materials for *netsuke*. As early as 1682, it was recorded that a *netsuke* of rare imported wood was used to suspend an *inrou* and pouch. The imported woods were ebony, fragrant sandalwood (*byakudan*), ironwood (*tagayasan*), and red sandalwood (*shitan*.) Certain fruit stones and nuts, such as walnut shells were also used as *netsuke*. (Figure 15)

Ivory was one of the most important and widely used materials for the manufacture of



Figure 15 Netsuke made of walnut shell

netsuke. This term included the tusks, teeth, bones, and antlers of various animals, as well as vegetable ivory. However, true ivory came from the incisor teeth or tusks of elephants and mammoths. Since mammoths have been extinct for many thousands years, carvers had to be satisfied with the occasional chance find, particularly from Siberia. Although mammoth tusks could reach up to five meters in length, they were still carved. Elephant ivory was derived from both the African elephant and the Indian elephant, though the tusks of the male African elephant grew longer than those of the Indian elephant. Throughout the Edo period (1603-1867), ivory from the Indian elephant was imported by Chinese and Dutch traders. African ivory only reached Japan in more recent times. The natural color of ivory is creamy-white and Indian ivory is whiter than African ivory. The surface can be polished, but it can also be painted or stained, while surface detail can be incised, carved, or inlaid. Ivory has a hard, dense body that is strong yet pliable and lends itself to intricate carving.



Figure 16 Netsuke made of Ivory

Although ivory was an imported and luxury material, it was highly suitable for *netsuke* carving because it was possible to use a small piece of ivory to maximum effect. (Figure 16)

A tusk could be cut in different ways, depending on the purpose: the best parts for

netsuke were the tip and adjoining section. It is often possible to identify the part of the tusk from which a *netsuke* originated by its form.

Netsuke from tusks of wild boar were the hallmark of carvers from the Iwami province (now Shimane prefecture),

where there was a large population of boar. (Figure 17)



Figure 17 Netsuke made of tusk of wild boar

Tusks from marine animals that lived in arctic regions, such as the walrus and narwhal, were also used as *netsuke* materials. Since they were not from Japanese waters, they had to be imported and thus were rare and expensive.

Stag antler was widely used for *netsuke*, especially in Asakusa, Tokyo, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Male deer shed their antlers every year in spring, followed by regrowth. Stag antler was easily available and cheap, since it could be picked up by a hunter or found lying in the woods, once shed by the deer.

The teeth of the sperm whale were also suitable for *netsuke*. Sperm whale teeth were more dense and harder than ivory. Hippopotamus tooth was used for *netsuke* as well. It had a thick enamel coat, but once this had been penetrated, it could be carved much like ivory.

Vegetable ivory, a species of the palm, produces six or seven fruits, each containing up to nine nuts of around 2.5cm. In early stage, the nuts have a clear liquid inside of the outer case, which turns milky color and hardens with age. Since it resembled ivory, vegetable ivory was occasionally used for *netsuke*. Synthetic ivories

have been used as a cheap substitute for elephant ivory in the making of *netsuke*. Celluloid, a transparent plastic made from camphor and cellulose nitrate, was also available from 1880 onwards. Since synthetic ivory *netsuke* were shaped in molds, they had an unattractive ‘seam’ running around the *netsuke*. While such *netsuke* had no artistic merit, their intention was undoubtedly for mass production.

Netsuke made entirely of metal were rare because they were heavy and could damage *inrou* by an accidental knock. The use of metal tended to be restricted to the *netsuke* for which it was most suited, such as ashtray *netsuke*. The most common use of metal in *netsuke* manufacture was the disk shaped of a *kagami netsuke*. (Figure 18)



Figure 18 Kagami Netsuke

The disks were made of iron, bronze, brass, and copper, as well as various alloys. Japanese metalworkers made three copper alloys: *shakudou*, *shibuichi*, and *sentoku*. The first two were

immersed in acid baths and heated, resulting in patinas of wide range of color.

The greatest number of disks were made of *shibuichi*, which refers to the rough proportion of copper to silver that it contained. Although this typically produced a silver-grey color, it could vary from light grey to brown. The more silver, the lighter the color.

Sentoku, a variety of brass, was composed of copper, zinc, tin, and lead. The mixture resulted in a range of color from light to golden yellow. The most spectacular colors, from blue to purple and black, were the result of *shakudou*, which consists of

copper with a small amount of gold. As a focal point of *kagami netsuke*, disks were usually highly decorated in a broad variety of techniques. The Japanese metalworkers used a wide range of tools that included chisels, hammers, punches, and needles to both form and decorate an object. Since most *inrou* were made of lacquer covering, *netsuke* were also often decorated by lacquer, even though it was expensive and time-consuming. Lacquer was the sap from the tree *Rhus verniciflua* or *Urushi* (Chinese lacquer tree), which grows throughout East Asia. After refining, lacquer can be colored by adding vegetable and mineral dyes, which were traditionally restricted to black, brown, red, green, and yellow. Lacquer has to be applied in extremely thin layers in order to harden, after which it is polished before the next layer is added. For a piece of high-quality lacquer, some twenty base layers were applied before the craftsman began to make decoration upon the surface. The finest achievements of Japanese lacquer work is called *makie*. It involves building up a design by sprinkling metal or color powders on a lacquer surface before it dries. Once the design has hardened, it is then polished. The process is



Figure 19 Manju Netsuke

repeated until the desired effect is achieved. There are many other painstaking lacquer techniques associated with *netsuke* decoration. During the second half of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it became popular to make *manju netsuke* (*manju* is a Japanese style bun stuffed with azuki-bean paste and it is round) in carved lacquer, a

technique associated with China. (Figure 19)

For lacquer carving, it is necessary to build up the thickness by superimposing some one hundred layers of lacquer for an *inro* and *netsuke*. After transferring the design to the lacquer surface, the craftsman then carved the lacquer with chisels, knives and gouges to produce extremely complex designs. Another lacquer technique for *netsuke* was *Negoro-nuri* (*Negoro* lacquer.) This is a generic term for a style of decoration, where red is applied over black lacquer. The surface is rubbed down on purpose so that the underlying color shows through in irregular patterns, providing an attractive contrast.

During the last quarter of the twentieth century, a new generation of *netsuke-shi* began to use some new materials such as acrylic with a greater selection of woods from all over the world. Also, changing attitudes to endangered species have resulted in the International Netsuke Carvers' Association deciding against the use of newly-imported elephant ivory. Signatories of the Washington Convention prohibited all international trade in ivory and other materials from endangered species in 1989. Because of this reason, fossil ivory and rhinoceros horn have been used for *netsuke*.

Since 2001, the manufacture of *netsuke* has taken a new direction, with mass-production at a very reasonable price. Born out of the collaboration of two companies, one producing toys and the other confectionary, they are sold in packs with one *netsuke* to two sweets. (Figure 20) Each example has *himotoshi* (a hole for a cord) of *netsuke*. Serving a purely decorative purpose, such *netsuke* may be attached to mobile phones, key rings, or bags, especially school bags, or placed on computers or desks as ornaments, or simply collected.

The greatest appeal of *netsuke* lies in their subjects. *Netsuke* portray an extremely wide range of subjects, reflecting not only the real or imaginary world, but also the many scenes of daily life in Japan. The main inspiration for *netsuke* subjects was undisputedly the natural world, most frequently animals, birds, sea creatures, insects,



Figure 20 A plastic Netsuke with a confection surface texture such as the fur of an animal or the plumage of a bird. This was also seen in the deliberate depiction of different, highly textured surfaces, such as the combination of a toad on a straw sandal. (Figure 21) It was taxing for the *netsuke-shi* to equally create the contrast. This was

both real and imaginary, and, of course, people. These were expressed in numerous compositional groupings, individually, as pairs, mother and young or as a larger assemblage, either on their own or with some reference to their natural habitat or the human world. In the mid-eighteenth century, *Netsuke-shi* (*netsuke* makers) began to portray *netsuke* more realistically, especially the



Figure 21 A toad on a straw sandal

well exemplified by a group of mushrooms, with their smooth upper surface juxtaposed with the intricate pattern of the gills underneath. It looked simple, but actually required enormous skill to make the mushrooms appear realistic.

People, whether real, mythical or historical, offered a rich source of inspiration for *netsuke-shi*. The distinctive imaginary pair *Ashinaga* (long legs) and *Tenaga* (long arms) was often depicted. (Figure 22) Trades and occupations, such as the mirror polisher, blind masseur and rat catcher, and people going about their daily lives, formed an important genre of *netsuke* subjects.



Figure 22 Ashinaga and Tenaga

The themes of place and the sense of travel are deeply rooted in Japanese art. Despite the fact that people were not allowed to move around freely during the early part of the Edo period, the government built an efficient network of roads and waterways that were fundamental to its political and economic hegemony. The only legitimate reason to travel was to make pilgrimages to sacred temples and shrines. As a pretext for religious purposes, many people also used these travels as an opportunity for additional sightseeing. As restrictions were eased during the 1820's, national travel for business and pleasure became common. This is reflected in the subject of certain *netsuke*, such as the enormous pillar at the Great Buddha Hall of the *Todaiji* temple in Nara. This pillar is well known to tourists and it has a square hole cut right through near the base, allowing slim and agile visitors to climb through. It was believed in Japan that crawling through

the opening was thought to bring religious merit. People who had just completed a trip or pilgrimage to *Todaiji* might have bought a *netsuke* of this subject.



Figure 23 Three famous views of Japan. Ivory. Signed 'Issai Fujiwara Masahiro.' 1775-1825

Netsuke, portraying landscape, is comparatively rare. This was not only for the reason of size, but also because such *netsuke* generally required a large base. An interesting example of the landscape theme is represented by a *netsuke* in the form of a clam shell, decorated with three famous views of Japan. Whereas Matsushima and Ama no Hashidate were depicted in low relief on the shell's exterior surface, Miyajima temple was carved

in openwork and relief inside the shell. (Figure 23)

Netsuke that portray religious subjects are surprisingly numerous and this is a result of the secularization of religion during the Edo period. Buddhist figures were rarely made, but rather peripheral subjects, such as the Indian priest Bodhidharma (*Bodai Daruma* or *Daruma*), the founder of Zen Buddhism. For the religious enlightenment, he was believed to have meditated in a cave for nine years, during which his arms and legs atrophied. It was for this reason that he was frequently depicted as a rounded amalgam of head and body without limbs. (Figure 24) He was very popular in



Figure 24 Daruma Netsuke

this form during the Edo period, as a roly-poly toy that stands back up when it is knocked down. Gods and other revered figures in popular mythology were frequently depicted, such as the Gods of Wind and Thunder (*Fujin* and *Raijin*), as well as the Seven Gods of Good Fortune (*Shichifukujin*.)

Theater was important during the Edo period, whether it was classical *No* drama, *Kabuki* (the popular urban theater) or *Bunraku* (puppet theater). With the exception of *Kabuki*, masks were a common feature of many of these performances, whether spoken or dance. *Netsuke* alluding to the performing arts often portrayed an actor, dancer or a mask. Masks worn by principle actors of the *No* theater reached their most developed form, representing every conceivable emotion of man, woman, animal, and supernatural being at different stages of life. Also, there are some notable exceptions, such as *Okame*, comical rather unattractive woman. As a mask *netsuke*, she is usually portrayed with a kind and laughing countenance composed of a rounded triangular face, deep-set eyes and eyebrows painted high on the forehead.

The *netsuke* subject was often connected with a specific season or festival. One of the most important of these was undisputedly the New Year. The Japanese used to divide their year according to the lunar calendar, with a new year falling between late January and early February of the western calendar. However, in 1872, under Western influence, the solar calendar was adopted so that today, Japanese New Year corresponds with that of the West. The East Asian zodiac, which derives from Chinese cosmology, made use of twelve animals or *junishi*: the rat, ox, tiger, hare, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, cock, dog, and boar, in their traditional order. Although this was a challenge to the craftsman's compositional and carving skills, it was common to find *netsuke*

depicting all twelve animals. It was clearly the *junishi* system that provided the main motivation for the production of animals from around the mid-eighteenth century onwards. It was most fitting for a man to use the appropriate zodiac animal *netsuke* over the new-year festivities.

The great appeal of *netsuke* lies not only in the wide range of motifs, but also in the interesting and inventive manner in which they are portrayed. For example, similar to the effect of an action photograph, some *netsuke* even go so far as to depict a moment of dynamic movement that is encapsulated within an inanimate object, such as the wild boar in full gallop.

Another example of *netsuke* is the story of *Dojoji* (The *Dojo* temple.) This story, with its interpretation of vengeful, female jealousy, presents *netsuke-shi* with unique possibilities for hidden and surprising elements. The story stems from a tenth-century legend, which later formed the basis of *Noh* and *Kabuki* plays. According to the story, Kiyohime, the beautiful young daughter of an innkeeper, fell in love with a handsome visiting priest, Anchin. But even though he had promised to return to her, he did not. Kiyohime became furious at the sudden change of his heart and pursued him in rage. Anchin and Kiyohime met at the edge of the Hidaka river, where he asked a boatman to help him to cross the river, but told him not to let her cross with his boat. When Kiyohime found that Anchin was escaping her, she jumped into the river and started to swim after him. While swimming in the torrent of the river, she transformed into a huge serpent because of her rage. When Anchin saw her coming after him in the form of a large serpent, he ran into the temple called *Dojoji*. He asked the priests of *Dojoji* for help and they hid Anchin under the great bronze bell of the temple. But, the serpent smelled

him hiding inside the bell and used her magical powers to force the bell to crash to the ground trapping Anchin inside. The serpent started to coil around it and banged the bell loudly several times with its tail. Then she gave a great belch of fire creating an intense heat that burnt Anchin to death.



Figure 25 Dragon coiled around Dojoji bell

One contemporary *netsuke* depicted this story in the form of a bell, made from lacquer imitating bronze. (Figure 25) A detailed work also reveals a dragon coiled around the inside, together with a skull and bone. It is an extremely skillful achievement. Another *netsuke* uses hidden elements to tell the story. The *netsuke* again

portrays a bell around which a dragon is coiled, but by a trick mechanism, the bell opens up to reveal Kiyohime dancing inside. Such remarkable workmanship is typical of netsuke of the second half of the nineteenth century.

The *Soken kisho*, a book published during the Edo period that deals with *netsuke*, illustrates some of the more exceptional pieces known at that time. This book became widely used as a design source for contemporary and future craftsmen.

In recent years, considerable research has been carried out on the use of woodblock-printed books as source material for *netsuke*. The *netsuke* makers were essentially craftsmen rather than artists, and were not always able to provide an endless source of original designs for their work. Instead, they looked into printed books that began to circulate widely in Japan at affordable prices from the seventeenth century

onwards. Such books illustrate a vast range of subjects from the natural world to everyday life, as well as myths and legends. They provided a wealth of visual information well beyond the knowledge and experience of most craftsmen, such as flora and fauna that were not indigenous to Japan. Although a few woodblock-printed books were produced for craftsmen, there was no book solely intended for the manufacture of *netsuke*. However, there were some books that were obviously meant to include *netsuke-shi*, as well as material for other craftsmen. *Banshoku zuko* (designs for all craftsmen) a series of five volumes was published between 1827 and 1850. The series was illustrated by Genryusai Taito, a follower of Katsushika Hokusai. Volume three includes a number of illustrations of animals and plants that lend themselves particularly to *netsuke*, while several are contained within a circle, suggesting their suitability for the disc of *kagami* or *manju netsuke*. Katsushika Isai, another pupil of Hokusai, created several books that were admirably suited for the requirements of *netsuke-shi*. *Isai gashiki banshoku zuko* (Isai's drawing method for many things), published around 1850, offered detailed drawings of possible subjects, including some portrayed within circles. *Manga* (Random sketches), an extensive work by Hokusai published in 15 volumes between 1814 and 1878, provided endless inspiration for many craftsmen. It is exemplified by a page from volume fifteen, which depicts a terrified man caught unaware in the tentacles of an octopus. The disc of a *kagami netsuke* was produced that was a close copy of this image. Netsuke of the Chinese general, Gentoku is another example similar to an illustration from *Ehon shaho bukuro* (Bag of sketching treasures) by Tachibana Morikuni, first published in 1720. (Figure 26)



Figure 26 Ivory Netsuke, Gentoku

Ukiyo-e prints are also known to have been adapted to netsuke formats. A print by Utagawa Kunisada (1786-1846) depicting a scene from the *Shiranui monogatari* (The tale of the white embroiderer) was evidently the design source for a *manju netsuke*. The *Shiranui*

monogatari, a novel and Kabuki play of the late Edo period, is about the revenge of Princess Wakana of the Otomo clan against the brave and loyal Toriyama Shusaku of the Kikuchi clan. Utagawa's print depicts the confrontation between the two, with the former obtaining magical powers from the spider spirit. Owing to the overall complexity, the *netsuke-shi* has rendered only the half of the original composition, showing the princess seated on an enormous spider. He has further adapted the design by omitting the background of waves, substituting instead of a large web that continues over to the reverse side. (Figure 27)

In addition to their original function, *netsuke* became the focus of decorative attention from an early date, also often bringing their owner much pleasure and enjoyment. Depending on one's financial circumstances, an individual was likely to have possessed a number of netsuke, so that one could select the most appropriate for the occasion, time of year, and one's personal mood as well.



Figure 27 Princess Wakana on a spider, and its web. Ivory. Signed 'Reigyoku'. 1850-1900. The Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the status of netsuke changed drastically. This was because of a chain of events initiated by the arrival of Commodore Matthew Perry and his American fleet of ships off the coast of Japan in 1853. The following year, the first of many trade agreements was contracted, while full commercial treaties with the leading Western nations were not negotiated until 1858. After a period of long national seclusion, external pressure exacerbated internal unrest, culminating in the downfall of the Tokugawa regime and the restoration of the Meiji Emperor in 1868. This not only resulted in deep political, economical, and social change, but also opened the floodgates to Western influence. Although the adoption of Western dress was not nearly as sudden as is often believed, it was undisputedly seen as modern and progressive, heralding the decline of the kimono. Since the Western suit included pockets, the netsuke, as well as the *sagemono* in general, were no longer needed. This is the reason why in this modern period most Japanese do not even know what *netsuke* is. Ultimately, netsuke came to be considered old-fashioned, and archaic.

In 1878, Sir Rutherford Alcock (1809-1897), a British surgeon, the first British diplomatic representative to live in Japan, wrote: “In Japan the sudden demand of foreigners has carried out of the country all that was best worth possessing in *netsuzkes*...”²¹ There is evidence for this with enormous numbers of netsuke leaving Japan and forming the basis of many Western collections especially in England, France, and Germany. Indeed, the recent publication (2010) of Edmund de Waal’s enchanting memoir, “The Hare With Amber Eyes,” documents the 100-year Journey of 264 netsuke acquired by the Ephreussi Dynasty: from Yokohama, to Vienna, to Paris and back to Japan!

As the first generation of netsuke collectors passed away and their collections were dispersed, their objects in turn entered new collections, thus creating a new generation of collectors. When netsuke first reached the West, they could be bought comparatively cheaply. Before long, prices began to rise steadily, with collectors and dealers paying surprising sums to secure their purchase in more recent years. In 1984, the situation was excellently summed up by Bernard Hurtig, a *netsuke* collector in Hawaii: “Great change(s) have transpired in the world of *netsuke* in the past fifty years. Netsuke, prior to 1967, were relatively a minor art, but in the last fourteen years, collectors have seen a major recognition of their favorite collectible. Although prices have increased dramatically over last few years, to this day, Japanese netsuke remain one of the most undervalued of all art forms... A netsuke, while not always original in design, is always a hand-sculptured work of art...”²²

²¹ Hutt, Julia. *Japanese Netsuke* (London: V&A Publications, 2003) 102.

²² *Ibid.* 103.

~ Hokusai's life

Katsushika Hokusai, who changed his name thirty times and moved some ninety-three times in his life, was both an eccentric genius and by far the most famous Japanese painter in the world. Hokusai can be seen as a “giant” who began drawing as a teenager and in the next seventy years elevated the genre of “Ukiyo-e” to that of first-rate art. His works and life influenced worlds as far off as Paris, and launched not only the mode of “Japonism”, but also served to influence all European art in the second half of the 19th century.

As in the case of many other Ukiyo-e painters, we do not have substantial resources and documentation about Hokusai's life. The reason for this is that the “Ukiyo-e” artist's social status was quite low during the Edo period, (1603-1867), even for a very popular and famous artist such as Hokusai. In Japan, he was not seen as an important artist and people did not think that they had to keep records of him. The mainstream of the art scene during the Edo period was Chinese-style drawing that was supported by the Shogunate. “Ukiyo-e” was Japan's new original style of popular drawing. Hokusai was very popular and famous, but still just one of the craftsmen of popular prints in the society at that time. Hokusai was first acknowledged by foreign countries at the end of Meiji period (1868-1912). Before the beginning of the Meiji period, to own Hokusai's works was even considered as shameful. This is why many of his works found their way to foreign countries where they were appreciated.

Hokusai was born on September 23rd in 1760 at Honjo -Warigesui in Tokyo, where currently situated between the Ryogoku station and the Kinshi station on the JR Sobu line. He was constantly moving and traveling in Honjo, Katsushika county. His

pen name “Katsushika” comes from this county’s name. And he wrote in his postscript of “Fugaku-hyakkei” (100 views of Mt.Fuji) that he already had a habit of copying the shape of objects when he was six years old!

We are not sure who were his parents, but some scholars strongly believe that he was probably the son of a Mr. Kawamura. The reason is that his grave in Seikyo temple in Asakusa, Tokyo, has the name “crazy old artist’s grave Mr.Kawamura.” His sister died when Hokusai was only seven, which must have been a terrible shock to him.

Seiji Nagata, an “Ukiyo-e” scholar, said that Hokusai worked at a library when he was young. He had to carry many books on his back and make the rounds of the customers everyday. But, whenever he had spare time at the library, he copied and learned illustrations from books.

He stopped working at the library at age fourteen and began to study carving. Designing, carving and printing are all separate crafts. Each is done by a designer, a carving artist, and a printing artist. Since Hokusai had practical experience in the studio of a master carving artist when he was young, later in his life he was very demanding and he retained high expectations about the work of other artists.

The world of carving artists in the 18th century was quite strict. For professional carving artists, there were two levels: “Kashira-bori”(head carving) and “Dou-bori”(body carving). It is said that to become a carving artist who can carve face and hair, one needed to practice for at least ten years. After a few years of practice, Hokusai was already carving letters. He was a precocious and unusual student.

At the age of 19, he finally visited the master of carving and the most popular Ukiyo-e artist at that time, Shunsho Katsukawa, and asked to be accepted as a pupil. At

that time Shunsho was fifty-three years old. His style of painting was mature and broad.

He drew beautiful women, actors, Sumo wrestlers, Samurai, and also illustrations for children's books and popular books. But, the most lucrative area for him was drawing actors and this created effective publicity for them. The drawings were so realistic that everyone could recognize the actor with a single glance. Shunsho was actually called



Figure 28 Actors portrait by Katsukawa Shunsho

“the prince of the actors’ portrait.” (Figure 28) Hokusai also practiced drawing actors at this time, but he was overshadowed by two other pupils, Shunkou Katsukawa and Shun’ei Katsukawa.

One day, Hokusai was commissioned to draw the signboard for a wholesale store. The owner was happy to put it at his storefront. Then, Shunkou appeared. He laughed at Hokusai’s work and was scornful. He said that putting the work here shamed their

master, Shunsho Katsukawa and he tore the sign in pieces in front of Hokusai. Hokusai barely controlled his anger; cultural practice prevented him from saying anything, because he was younger than Shunkou. At this time Hokusai was determined that he would someday be the best artist in the world. And this would wipe away Shunkou's insult. This was an important lesson for him to learn patience and commitment to study and perfect his art. He secretly went to learn drawing from other teachers. In late life, Hokusai said that, ironically his improvement as a painter began when Shunkou insulted him.

Hokusai's pen name was "Shunrou" when he was a pupil of Shunsho Katsukawa. "Shun" came from his master's name "Shunsho", and "rou" came from Shunsho's other pen name "Kyokurou-sei". (Hokusai must have been Shunsho's favorite student.) Hokusai kept this pen name "Shunrou" for 15 years until age 34. He worked hard, but could not yet claim fame.

These fifteen years are called the practice period in his 70-year career as an artist. During this period, he made over 200 "Ukiyo-e" printings. "Ukiyo-e" printings are of wide variety: animals, seven gods, toys, children, Samurai, and even Buddha. But most of his drawings were of actors. Feminine beauty was also a favorite theme for Hokusai and he left us at least thirty works of beautiful women, depicted in various surroundings.

In addition to learning "Ukiyo-e" as a pupil of Katsukawa, Hokusai also learned the basis of landscape art. This involved another type of drawing, called "Uki-e", which was popular from 1740 to 1750. "Uki-e" is the drawing of buildings and landscape with the perspective representation from Western European art tradition. Through this perspective one can view pictures in three-dimensions. It is said that Hokusai copied and

learned the technique of perspective from Toyoharu Utagawa. “Uki-e” was less conspicuous as a style than “Ukiyo-e”, but Hokusai built his basic skill for landscape by learning “Uki-e”. Ten works by Hokusai have been confirmed employing this technique. “Shinban, Uki-e, Urashima Ryugu iri no zu” is one of them. (Figure 29) Hokusai’s total output “Uki-e” works influenced other “Ukiyo-e” artists.

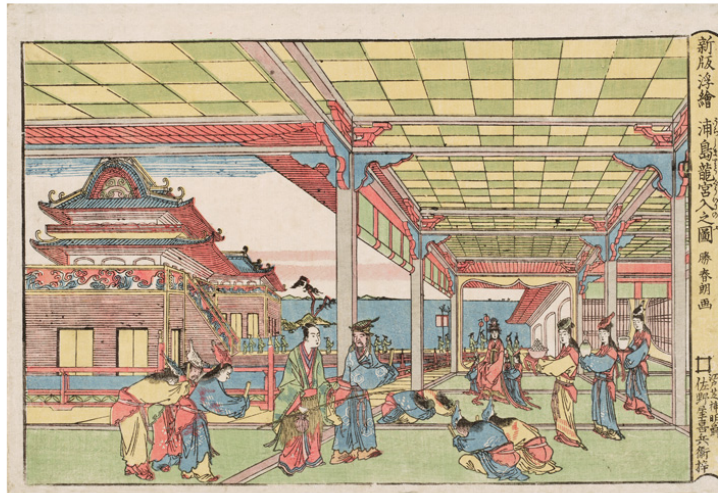


Figure 29 Katsushika Hokusai. *Shinban Uki-e Urashima Ryugu-iri no zu*

For Hokusai, this Shunrou period was a time of devotion to illustration. Hokusai left us a total of 670 illustrations. He was of course a serious artist, but he also drew more popular genre, since he had a good sense of humor. This shows clearly in one of his later works, “Hokusai Manga”, written largely as a tutorial for his many students.

In 1794, when Hokusai was 34, he stopped his studies as a pupil of Katsukawa. The reason is not clear, but some scholars think that it might have been because Hokusai was learning design techniques from other competing schools. Japanese schools of painters at this time were clearly divided and the competition among them sometimes even caused the act of murder! Another possible reason is that because after Shunsho’s

death, Hokusai might have thought there was nothing further he could learn, since his master was gone.

In 1795, Hokusai began to call himself “Sori.” The Sori school genre focused on more realistic drawing. It was different from the Katsukawa school, but it was also another first-rate art school. Hokusai was eager to learn new genres. At first, he did his own hand drawings, and illustrations for secular haiku and serious haiku. This might have been a restriction in the Sori school, but interestingly Hokusai did not work at all on “Ukiyo-e” printing in this period.

In 1798 he finally named himself “Hokusai”. He was already 39 years old. His works at this time did not yet have a pronounced self-assertion. But this quality became stronger later in his life. At this time his hand drawings were of black ink painting with vermilion and indigo. After age 50, his style of drawing changed dramatically, involving more colors and more individual personality.

In 1799, at age 40, Hokusai left the Sori school and named himself “Hokusai Tokimasa”. After this point, Hokusai never belonged to any particular school, and decided to be a pupil of nature and a free spirit of the greater universe. In 1799, he became an independent, free-lance artist.

Now that he had no restriction within a school, Hokusai was highly motivated to create new works. One of his important works in this time was with western style printing. Hokusai used the drawing method from the copperplate and oil paintings that were popular at that time. From 1795 to 1804, Hokusai devoted himself to drawing “Surimono”. “Surimono” is an illustration for “Tanka”, which is a secular short poem

and “Haiku”. (Figure 30)



Figure 30 “Surimono” by Katsushika Hokusai

This “Surimono” was a private project, not for commercial sale. Most of “Surimono” were very luxurious: skillful carving and printing, and using high quality paint and paper. Hokusai was the leading figure of “Surimono”. Scholars have not yet determined how many prints he produced during this period.

During the period from 1804 to 1829, Hokusai also drew many “Shunga”(erotic “Ukiyo-e”). “Shunga” was one type of official works for “Ukiyo-e” painters and there were some master works in the genre. Hokusai presented his “Shunga” with his stamp (this is Japanese signature) to the public without hesitation. (Figure 31)

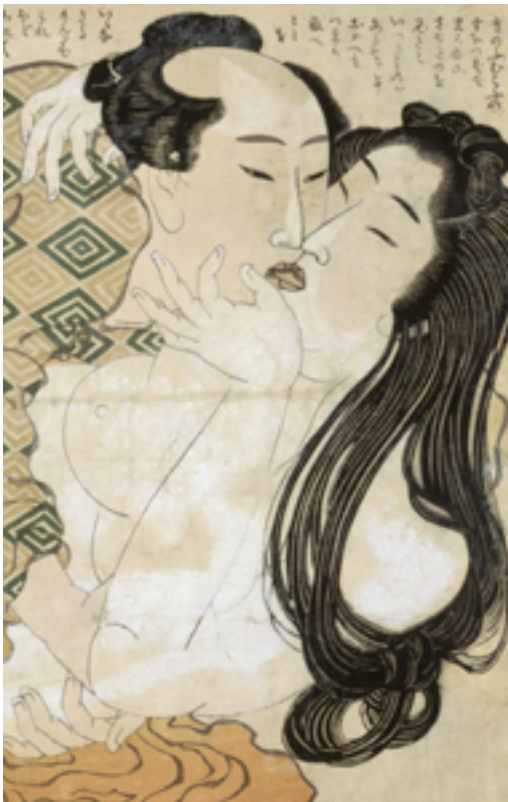


Figure 31 Hokusai, *Fukujuso* (Shunga)

a thousand of these illustrations. This art required great knowledge and skill because the story behind the pictures is usually very complex. The illustration itself was drawn with only black ink. The quality of the illustration indeed depends on the skill of the artist.

Illustration for novels was also a genre to which Hokusai devoted himself. He left over



葛飾北斎「北斎漫画」

Figure 32 Katsushika Hokusai, *Hokusai Manga*

Around 1813, Hokusai stopped drawing these illustrations and began drawing tutorial illustrations or model illustrations for his students. This tutorial illustration

became very popular and remained in print until he passed away. The most well-known of his tutorial illustration is “Hokusai Manga”(Hokusai sketch.) (Figure 32)

This collection totals 15 volumes and 3900 illustrations. “Manga” usually means comics, but “Hokusai Manga” is not merely comics, but a compilation of illustrations. “Man” of “Manga” means random and “Ga” of “Manga” means drawing. Hokusai drew virtually everything imaginable in this huge collection of illustrations!

Hokusai’s illustrations were also used as designs by many different types of artists. “Imayou-setsukin-hinagata” is a collection of designs of combs and pipes.

1820 to 1833 is Hokusai’s most prolific Nishiki-e period in which he created multi-colored “Ukiyo-e”. These thirteen years between age 60 and 73 were a brilliant time for him as an artist, but in his private life, Hokusai had some misfortunes. He married twice and had two sons and four daughters. In 1821, one of his daughters passed away. In 1828, Hokusai’s wife passed away and in 1829 his grandson committed a crime. Hokusai accepted responsibility for this crime and likely paid a fine to the authorities. Hokusai was very financially stressed at this time because of these circumstances.

Most of his extant letters today show that he was in debt even though he was famous painter and his works had sold well. This was because he was indifferent about money and devoted himself to his work. The fees for his work were very low. Hokusai’s daily life was simple. He did not drink, did not smoke, did not drink select tea, but he did like to have some sweets. He did not care about keeping his room clean. When his room was disorganized enough, he moved to other quarters like Beethoven. After he lost his second wife, Hokusai could never approach another woman. In his late life, Hokusai

lived with one of his daughters, Oei, and devoted himself to drawing. Both Hokusai and Oei did not have other casual hobbies. But Hokusai did devote himself to his religion, of Japanese Buddhism, known as “Nichiren.”

Hokusai’s major “Nishiki-e” works in this period are “Fugoku 36 kei”(36 sights of Mt.Fuji), “Chie no umi”(Chie’s ocean), and “Shokoku taki meguri”(touring waterfalls). “Chie no umi” is 10 variations of water and a description of fishermen’s work. (Figure 33)



Figure 33 Katsushika Hokusai, *Chie no Umi*

In 2011, this complete set of 10 works were found at the Paris national library, France. Sadly, they don't have the complete set in Japan.



Figure 34 Katsushika Hokusai, *Shokoku taki meguri*

“Shokoku taki meguri” is eight sets of giant size “Nishiki-e”. Hokusai also depicted the movement of famous waterfalls in Japan. (Figure 34) Debussy might well have gotten an inspiration of composing for his many images of “water” music after he saw these prints. “Fugoku 36 kei” was Hokusai’s most important achievement in landscape. This work was the colored wood print of 46 view of Mount Fuji. (Figure 35, 36, and 37)



Figure 35 Katsushika Hokusai, *Gaifu Kaisei* from *Fugoku 36-kei*



Figure 36 Katsushika Hokusai, *Fugoku 36-kei*

Mt. Fuji was as popular a mountain at that time as is the case now. When Hokusai created this “Fugoku 36 kei”, drawings or prints of Mount Fuji were sold well because there was a religious group “Fuji kou”, believing in Mount Fuji, was very popular in Edo (Tokyo). This spiritual connection might have been one of the reasons for the birth of “Fugoku 36 kei.”

At first, “Fugoku 36 kei” consists of thirty-six sets of wood prints, but the series met with a favorable reception and ten more prints were added at a later time. The famous “Great Wave” is one of them.



Figure 37 Katsushika Hokusai, *Kanagawa-oki namiura (Great Wave)* from *Fugoku 36-kei*

Hokusai finally achieved this masterpiece at the age of 72. About forty years before he created this “Great Wave”, Hokusai had drawn “E no shima shunbou”, influenced by the Chinese painter, Koukan Shiba. Hokusai’s “E no shima shunbou” in 1794 became the origin of the “Great Wave”. Between 1804 and 1818, Hokusai also

drew “Oshiokuri hato-sen no zu”. (Figure 38)



Figure 38 Katsushika Hokusai, *Oshiokuri hato-sen no zu*

The Japanese ship was maneuvered by hands and feet at that time. In the Edo period, they used this ship to deliver fresh fish from other parts of Japan to Edo (Tokyo). They actually had to brave giant waves, as seen in this work. Hokusai spent over twenty years to create the “Great Wave”.

Hokusai was different from all other Ukiyo-e painters because he learned and drew from many other kinds of paintings. When society became more open, he immediately started to study western style oil paintings and copperplates. These styles all influenced him greatly and helped to define his personal artistry. In his later life, Hokusai created “Ehon saisyoku-tsu” (color books). In these two books, he emphasized

the importance of the technique of Western style drawing and explained about oil painting and the technique of copperplates.

In 1834, at age 74, Hokusai started to use his last pen name “Manji”(swastika) for his work “Fugoku 36 kei.” In late life, a frustrated Tsuyuki, one of Hokusai’s pupils, told Hokusai’s daughter, Ei, that he could not draw well. Then she said, “Look at my father. He is now over eighty years old and has been drawing every single day, but he was crying the other day and saying that he can not draw well even one cat!”²³

In Hokusai’s final years, he created many hand drawings. He was a very active artist until becoming ill shortly before his death. After Hokusai took to his bed, friends and pupils ran to his side to take care of him, but he soon passed away in April, 1849 at the age of ninety.

After his death, from the end of the Edo period (after 1853), Hokusai’s works were bought and taken back to Europe by tourists and introduced in books and magazines. Hokusai’s work became known as “art” because they found “Hokusai Manga” accidentally in Paris in 1856! The French impressionist painter, Degas and his friends became absorbed in looking at “Hokusai Manga.” Around this time, “Ukiyo-e” started to arrive in Europe and was seen more broadly by people in general. In 1867, “Ukiyo-e” was introduced officially at the Paris International Exposition. It created a sensation. Since then, Hokusai has been known as one of Japan’s master artists in the world. Hokusai lived a humble life, but he now occupies a major place in the world of art history.

²³ Nagata, Seiji. *Hokusai*. vol. 5 of *Ukiyo-e hakka*. (Tokyo: Heibon-sha, 1984) 138.

~ The Art and Craft of Wood Block Printing

“Ukiyo-e” printing involves printing on wood. The design, carving and printing were each done by different artists in separate studios.

First, an artist would draw a design on flimsy paper, turn it over and put it on a wood board. They usually used mountain cherry wood for this. Next, an artist would carve the wood. If the work needed different colors, he had to make more printing blocks, depending on the number of colors. These printing blocks were important properties for publishers. The transfer of the copyright was done by selling and buying the printing blocks.

At the beginning of the Edo period (1603-1867), the skills of carving artists were not highly developed. The lines were rough and works were not always carved accurately. But, in the late Edo period, some carving artists could carve three thin lines, like three hairs in only two millimeters of space. The carving artists could carve in almost exactly the same way as the original design in the late Edo period. (It is said that the basic training period for a carving artist now is seven years.)

However, since there was a limit even for the master artists of how much a carving artist could accomplish, masters started dividing the labor. The important parts of the work were carved by the master; other parts were carved by his pupils.

Since Hokusai learned carving as a pupil of his own demanding master for several years when he was young, he always retained high expectations for carving artists later in his life. Tomekichi Egawa, one of the master carving artists in the Edo period, was his favorite artist because of the consistency of his work.

By comparison to carving works, printing work could appear to be easy. But, this work actually required high skill. Making “Balén”, a tool to rub over a paper by hand on the printing block, was the first important technique for the printing artist. Hiroshige was especially demanding about printing work. He often said, “ make the color lighter!” Some of his master works had subtle gradation of black ink and exquisite coordination of the color. The printing technique for color is what made the prints special.

“Fuki-bokashi” was an important printing technique for landscape prints in the late Edo period. It moistened the wood block by a damp towel and put color on it by brush and printed the oozing color. This required high skill and a lot of time.

Japanese wood printing involved highly skilled work. It is hard to imagine now how much time and energy these artists expended in the technique and printing on wood.

~ Hiroshige's life

Hiroshige Utagawa was born in 1797, in Yasuyogashi, Edo (now Chiyoda-ku in Tokyo.) Compared to other “Ukiyo-e” artists, details of his background are more clear. His father was Gen’uemon Ando, a fireman. Hiroshige’s name during his childhood was Tokutaro Ando. When he turned thirteen years old, Hiroshige took up his father’s position and also became a fireman. His responsibility was to protect the Edo castle. Tragically, in that same year, he lost both his father and mother.

Hiroshige showed an interest in drawing at an early age. He copied the scenery of a particular parade in Edo when he was just ten years old. Scholars thought that they had lost this work when the Great Kanto Earthquake occurred in 1923. However, this drawing was found and exhibited in 1980’s at “Ukiyo-e” Ota memorial museum of art in Shibuya, Tokyo. This exhibition created a huge sensation in the Japanese art world.

While working as a fireman, Hiroshige began studying art. In 1811, when he was fifteen, he became a pupil of Toyohiro Utagawa. In the following year, he was permitted to name himself “Hiroshige”. Before becoming Toyohiro’s pupil, Hiroshige first asked Toyokuni Utagawa to accept him as a student. Toyokuni was the most popular “Ukiyo-e” painter in Edo at this time. But, Toyokuni did not take Hiroshige as his pupil because he had more students than he could handle. Hiroshige then approached Toyohiro, and was accepted as his pupil. This was fortunate for Hiroshige, because Toyokuni focused on drawing actors and beautiful women, which Hiroshige needed to learn. But, Toyohiro also drew another subject, that of “landscape”. Under Toyohiro, Hiroshige would develop his talent for this genre.

The years of 1818 to 1831 were Hiroshige's practice period. During this time, an important event occurred for him. Hiroshige's grandfather took a third wife and they had a boy. According to Japanese customs, Hiroshige had to give over the job of fireman to the boy. This was opportune for Hiroshige because he was then able to focus on his work as an artist.

In 1831, Hiroshige started drawing landscapes. "Tohto meisho" (the sight of Edo or Tokyo) is his first mature drawing. He used refreshing indigo for the base color of this work and also added bright red. (Figure 39)



Figure 39 Utagawa Hiroshige, *Konryu-zan Bansyo* from *Tohto Meisho*

This was also the year in which Hokusai's "Fugoku hyakkei" (100 sights of Mt. Fuji) started to circulate in public.

Hiroshige often added "Haiku" in his works. "Haiku" is an important literary genre for Japanese people and it usually has seasonal context which indicate what the

time of year the Haiku depicts. The world of “Haiku” provided influential literature for Hiroshige’s drawings. (Figure 40)



Figure 40 Utagawa Hiroshige

In 1832, Hiroshige went to Kyoto to visit the Imperial Palace. As one of the official delegation members, his purpose was to present a horse as present from the Shogun to the Emperor. Hiroshige created “Kyoto meisho no uchi” (the sights of Kyoto) later, based on his impressions of the Kyoto trip. (Figure 41)

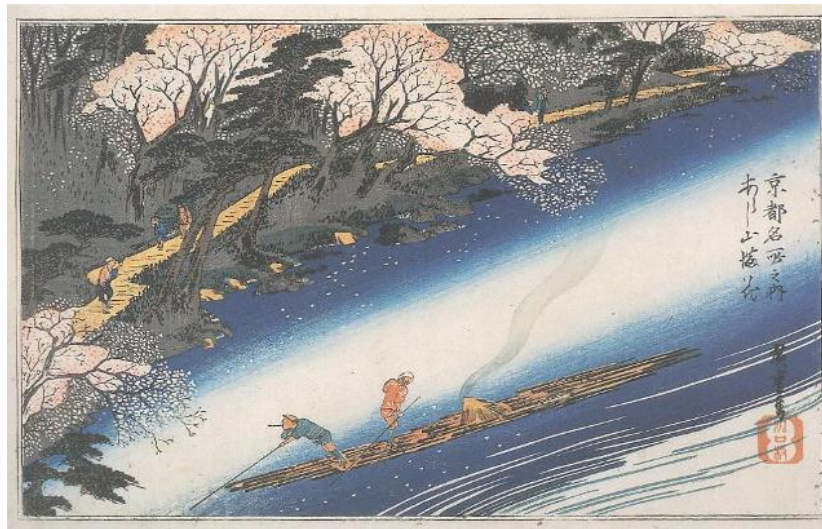


Figure 41 Utagawa Hiroshige, *Arashi-yama Manka* from *Kyoto Meisho*

Hiroshige's "Tokai-do 53 tsugi" (53 stations on Tokai road) was completed in 1834. (Figure 42 and 43) This work marked his first big success as a professional artist. Since the Edo period, Tokai-do has served as one of the main roads in Japan that connects Kyoto and Edo (Tokyo). Fifty-three stations were set between Edo and Kyoto, wherein travelers could rest, have a meal, and sleep. When Hiroshige traveled between Edo and Kyoto, he drew many sketches. This "Tokai-do 53 tsugi" was based upon the sketches he drew on his numerous trips to Kyoto.

The main theme of "Tokai-do 53 tsugi" was a depiction of the road for travelers. In addition to drawing people, Hiroshige drew the seasons, changes in time, and in weather.

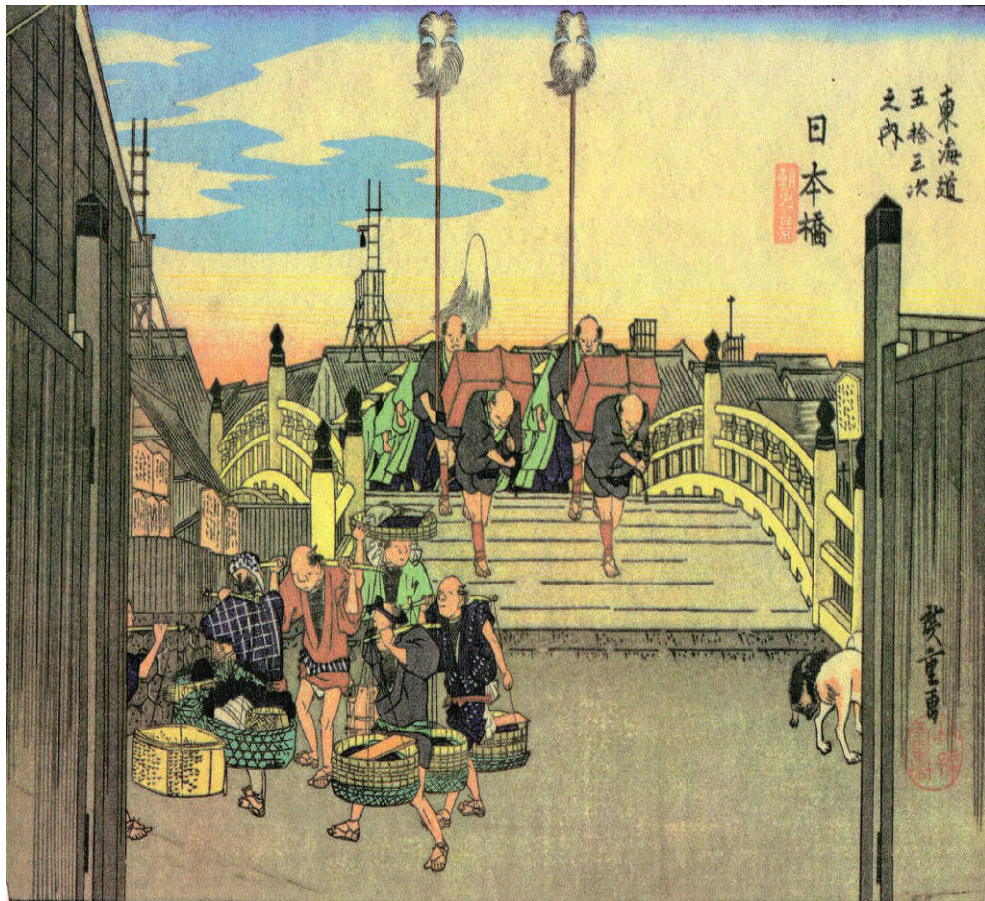


Figure 42 Utagawa Hiroshige, *Nihon-bashi* from *Tokai-do 53 tsugi*



Figure 43 Utagawa Hiroshige, *Kanbara from Tokai-do 53 tsugi*

Hiroshige used natural perspectives in this work. In 1802, “Tokai-docyu hizakurige” (walking trip on Tokai-do) was published. This was a very popular humorous story about two travelers on Tokai-do. The popularity of this book was a partly why Hiroshige created “Tokai-do 53 tsugi”. The two characters in this book were included some of Hiroshige’s works in “Tokai-do 53 tsugi.” (Figure 44)



Figure 44 Utagawa Hiroshige, *Mariko from Tokai-do 53 tsugi*

At first, this work was co-published by Sengaku-do and Hoei-do, but later, the publication was managed solely by Hoei-do. Hoei-do was only a third-rate publisher, but this collaboration influenced and advanced Hiroshige's later career. The owner of Hoei-do, Sonya Takenouchi, enjoyed drawing in the "Shijo-ha" style as his hobby, a style that was also influential for Hiroshige.

In the 19th century, there was one art school, "Shijo-ha," that was the major hub for art in Kyoto. This school still exists today. Kyoto had a salon-style culture, where artists would gather in private homes to discuss and show their works. (The French style of salon culture actually existed in Kyoto, Japan.) One of their drawing methods at this time was "Mokkotsu gahou" (no line technique.) The technique was originally one of Chinese origin. It involved drawing without outlines: the object was expressed only by colors and black. Hiroshige used this technique for his work, "Ajisai ni kawasemi" (Hydrangea with kingfisher.) One could see that Hiroshige tried to blur clear outlines, on purpose. He also used "Mokkotsu gahou", and some basic designs for his "Tokaido 53tsugi no uchi" from "Tokaido meisho zue." This "Tokaido meisho zue" is a collaborative work by many different artists, most of whom were "Shijo-ha" artists.

"Shijo-ha" style drawings had a gentle and calming tone, focusing on scenery. (Basho Matsuo, who was a leading figure of "Haiku" world, most valued this aesthetic sense.) Hiroshige used this technique in his "Nishiki-e" of flowers and birds. (Figure 45) We can see that Hiroshige chose mild, pastel colors very carefully in these works, and gradated the outline to soften the image for the viewer.

Another important "Shijo-ha" artist was Zeshin Shibata. Zeshin was famous as a gold lacquer artist at this time, but he was also a gifted painter. When Zeshin was 24

years old, he went to Kyoto to learn drawing with Toyohiko Okamoto, a major figure for “Shijo-ha” artists. Zeshin also learned poetry with Keiki Kagawa. Keiki’s philosophy of poetry was “don’t look at things subjectively. Just read as it is.” Hiroshige wrote in his preface of “Fujimi hyaku-zu”(100 views of Mt.Fuji) that he drew “as it was” and these were intended to be landscapes in the style of photograph. (This could be the influence of the poet, Keiki.)



Figure 45 Utagawa Hiroshige, *Gekka Touka ni Tsubame*

After the success of “Tokaido 53 tsugi,” Hiroshige drew “Ohmi hakkei no uchi,” (the best 8 sights around Biwa-lake in Shiga prefecture.) In this work, Hiroshige drew no figures and focused entirely on landscape. “Karasaki no you”(the night rain at the Karasaki shrine) was the most famous drawing of this set. Hiroshige used only indigo and black ink in this work and these colors, as straight lines of rain, and in shadow of the pine tree, created an unusual and appealing lyricism. (Figure 46)



Figure 46 Utagawa Hiroshige, *Karasaki no You* from *Ohmi Hakkei no uchi*

In 1855, Edo (now Tokyo) was hit by a strong earthquake. It was a magnitude of 7.1. The earthquake caused devastating damage to Edo. Hiroshige had drawn 1500 views of Edo before this earthquake, but all these views were destroyed in this disaster.

Hiroshige created “Meisho Edo hyakkei”(the hundred sights of Tokyo,) from

1855 to 1858. He began to draw this work several months after the earthquake. It became the monumental landscape accomplishment of his entire life.



Figure 47 Utagawa Hiroshige, *Saruwakamachi Yoru no Kei* from *Meisho Edo Hyakkei*

In this style, Hiroshige quite often used blue paint. (Figure 47) Japan imported a great amount of blue paint intermittently from Holland, China, and Germany during the Bunsei period (1818 - 1830). This blue paint enjoyed great popularity in use for “Ukiyo-e” during Tenhou period (1830 -1844.) Hokusai also used

this blue in his “Fugoku 36 kei”(36 view of Mt. Fuji). There was a time that this shade was called “Hiroshige blue” in Europe. In English, the hue was called “ Berlin Blue” because it was made in Berlin, Germany. The form of drawing he took for this work was of two different kinds. One approach is that of looking from a high place down on a large space. “Fukagawa suzaki ju-man tsubo”(81 acre reclaimed land in Fukagawa) (Figure 48) and “Ryogoku hanabi” (fireworks at Ryogoku) (Figure 49) are examples of this method. Another approach is that of drawing something extremely close, omitting the middle ground, but drawing the background. “Yotsuya Naito Shinjuku”



Figure 48 Utagawa Hiroshige, *Ryogoku Hanabi*



Figure 49 *Fukagawa suzaki ju-man tsubo*

(Naito Shinjuku station in Yotsuya) (Figure 50) and “Kameido Ume Yashiki” (Plum Garden in Kameido) (Figure 51) are good example of this technique. Vincent van Gogh, Dutch painter, copied “Kameido Ume Yashiki.” (Figure 52)

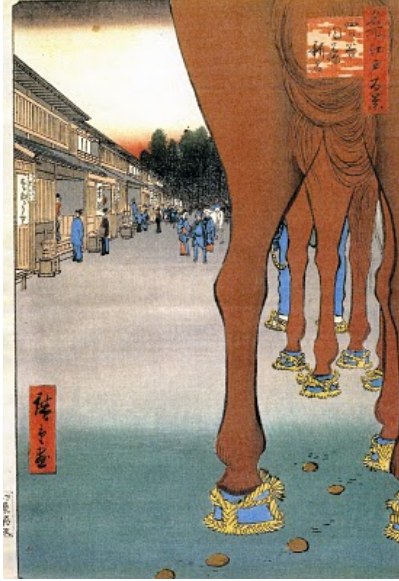


Figure 50 Utagawa Hiroshige, *Yotsuya Naito* from *Meisho Edo Hyakkei*



Figure 51 Hiroshige, *Kameido Ume Yashiki*



Figure 52 Vincent van Gogh, *The Blooming Plumtree*

Hiroshige passed away in 1858. People thought it was because of Cholera, but scholars have not yet found clear evidence about the cause of his death.

~ Hokusai and Hiroshige

Hokusai was born in 1760 and, Hiroshige in 1797. When Hiroshige was born, Hokusai was already 37 years old. Hiroshige respected Hokusai as the older master artist, but in his later life Hiroshige became very critical of Hokusai. When Hiroshige was asked to comment on art works, he usually ironically said, “this is good because this is not by Hokusai” and “this is bad because this is by Hokusai.”²⁴

“Fugoku 36 kei” by Hokusai and “Tokaido 53 tsugi no uchi” by Hiroshige were published about the same time period, but Hiroshige’s work sold more than Hokusai’s work at this time. Hiroshige never drew Mt. Fuji while Hokusai was alive, but after Hokusai’s death, he started to draw Mt. Fuji, and continued drawing the subject for several years.

Hiroshige wrote in his preface of “Fujimi hyaku-zu”(100 views of Mt.Fuji) that he drew these views as realistically as possible. He emphasized this because he wanted to be clear that his work was different from that of Hokusai. Hokusai’s main focus was “how drawing could be interesting:” it was more editorial or more personal.

Hiroshige tried to draw just as he saw the object. Hiroshige thought that Hokusai’s work was “too exaggerated.” But, for Hokusai, drawing was, “good if it is interesting.” They were two different individuals, from of their births different time periods. The social circumstances of the time when each of them was born were very different.

For example, in 1767, Okitsugu Tanuma became “soba-yonin”, who was a connector of Shogun (general) and Roju (a high-ranking post in the Edo period under the

²⁴ Kano, Hiroyuki. *Hiroshige*. Vol. 8 of *Ukiyo-e hakka*. (Tokyo: Heibon-sha, 1984) 132.

direct control of Shogun.) If the Shogun is like the prime minister, Roju is like the cabinet minister. He was promoted to Roju, the center of the Shogunate, in 1772. Okitsugu instituted economic reform in order to promote economic growth. Because of this, political bribes prevailed. But it was also the most vibrant time in the Edo period, in which Western drawing bloomed. Most people in Edo enjoyed the style of “Kyoka”, a poem that could include slang and jargon. At the center of the “Kyoka” world was Akara Yomono, a junior official of the Shogunate. The “golden time” of Akara style Kyoka occurred around 1783. At this time, the scenes of this style were very free. This Akara style was lively, original, and somewhat eccentric. The poets at that time detested slow, mild, and tasteless poetry. It was during this time that Hokusai lived as a young man. Hiroshige was not yet born.

As “Roju”, Okitsugu tried to establish a mine and reclaim lakes and marshes, and even open the country to foreign nations. But these plans did not work out. The worst massive famine in modern Japanese history happened at this time because of natural disasters. In 1787, Okitsugu was dismissed from his position.

Sadanobu Matsudaira took over Okitsugu’s post and became Roju. Sadanobu tried to repair all the bad decisions Okitsugu had made. His other main goal was to control thought and creativity, and restore moral decency. This of course affected the popular art world. Akara no longer wrote poetry. Hiroshige was not yet born, so he was never to see the golden free time of “Kyoka”.

Although Hiroshige was critical of Hokusai, he was always conscious of Hokusai’s presence and stature. Before Hiroshige drew “Tokai-do 53 tsugi”, Hokusai had already created several drawings of “Tokai-do”. Many “Ukiyo-e” scholars think that

Hiroshige got inspiration from Hokusai's works, because they find similarity in the figures of the two artists. Also, in Hiroshige's last monumental work, "Meisho Edo hyakkei" (100 sights of Tokyo,) he created one of his most personal and fantastic drawings, "Kameido ume yashiki" (plum garden in Kameido.)

Hiroshige had been always critical of Hokusai and his subjective personal style. However, in his final years Hiroshige started to enjoy creating his own personal perspective in his drawings, much like the Hokusai. The relationship of Hokusai and Hiroshige reminds me of the relationship of composers Debussy and Ravel. They managed to be friends even if they were rivals, and they had a great influence on each other's life and art.

~ *Estampes* and Japanese “ukiyo-e”

As we have seen in the previous chapters, there are numerous connections between French and Japanese art. Most French artists in the nineteenth century were admirers of Japanese art. The French Impressionist painter, Claude Monet (1840-1926) wrote, “If you must find precedents, compare me to the Japanese masters: their rareness of taste always intrigued me, and I approve of their aesthetic sense, their powers of suggestion which evoke presence by a shadow, the complete picture by a fragment.” He perfectly described one of Japanese “ukiyo-e” technical characteristics.

Before the Europeans discovered Japanese “ukiyo-e”, their conventional drawing style was dimensionally realistic, with mostly dark colors and depictions of war, religion, and portraits of the aristocracy. (Figure 53) But Japanese “ukiyo-e” was about daily life. (Figure 54)



Figure 53 Paul Delaroche, *Cromwell and the corpse of Charles*



Figure 54 Katsushika Hokusai, *Hokusai Manga*

Some details were deliberately omitted to emphasize more important themes in the drawing. Also, the colors used in European drawing and Japanese “ukiyo-e” were different. The colors used in “ukiyo-e” were very bright. (Figure 55) European artists were astonished by the use of the bright colors in “ukiyo-e”.



Figure 55 Utagawa Hiroshige, *Kanaya from Tokai-do 53 tsugi*

The bold lines for the outlines of the object were another feature of “ukiyo-e”. (Figure 56)



Figure 56 Kitagawa Utamaro, *Tôji san bijin*



Figure 57 Utagawa Hiroshige, *Ryogoku Hanabi*

The viewpoint for drawing in European style was also different from that in Japanese style. The high sight-line was a feature of “ukiyo-e”. (Figure 57) To draw always from the artist’s sight-line was the Western traditional drawing technique. There was also a difference in the form of how artists places people in the drawing. The symmetric form was the European conventional style and the person was usually put at the center of the drawing. But “ukiyo-e” style was asymmetric. (Figure 58) Artists often drew even only half of the person; a technique which was considered “bad luck” in the European art world.



Figure 58 Utagawa Hiroshige, *Tsuki no Misaki*

Another interesting feature of “ukiyo-e” was that of continuous, but separate drawings on three different pieces of paper, with spaces between them. This type of drawing was often created for the promotion of “Kabuki” plays in the nineteenth century, which were very popular. Since the drawing was on three separate papers, often the background and person were cut out. (Figure 59)



Figure 59 Ukiyo-e for Kabuki promotion

How did Japanese art influence Debussy's music? How did Debussy use Japanese art techniques for his music? Paul Roberts, writes, "it is the Japanese print which is arguably the background to Debussy's own *Estampes*...we can not say that Debussy's music would have been unthinkable, but we can suggest on evidence of his ceaseless interest in visual art, the *Estampes*, without the Japanese, would have been conceived differently (or not at all.)"²⁵ Roberts examines the taste and technique of Japanese art in his book *Images* to recognize the originality of Debussy's intentions in this piano work.

Roberts writes, "...the way the artist blithely cut off a view of the complete scene or object with the picture frame to give a sense of intense activity, or presence, just out of sight. This became a characteristic of the pictures of Manet and Degas in particular ...Debussy employs a similar technique in *La soiree dans Granade*...As we become absorbed in the drama, we realize only in retrospect that the authentic Andalusian atmosphere is created from just a glimpse of the full picture, from snatches of guitar rhythms and languid flamenco melodies that appear to lead nowhere."²⁶ In *La soiree dans Granade*, the second piece of *Estampes*, after the first sixteen measures of the habanera rhythm, creating the air of Andalusian evening, the passionate flamenco guitar rhythms appear suddenly. But, this is for only four measures before the habanera rhythm returns, without a transition. In this piece, we take a glance at the scene of the evening of Granada, but not the entire scene. This incomplete picture enkindles our imagination to complete the picture by ourselves. This is a typical "ukiyo-e" characteristic technique as Japanese artists created the drawings for "Kabuki" promotion.

²⁵ Roberts, Paul. *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Portland OR: Amadeus Press, 1996) 46-52.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 60.

Debussy deliberately limited the material for pieces in *Estampes*. Roberts writes, “The habanera rhythm and guitar figurations of *La soiree*, like the pentatonic scales and gong effects of *Pagodes*, are all part of the stylization of these pieces, giving them a deliberate air of the picturesque...Debussy stylizes his music as Hokusai his mountains and trees: both artists use the minimum means to make their subjects understood, depicting objects and scenes by easily recognizable conventions.”²⁷ In *Pagodes*, the first piece of *Estampes*, Debussy uses melodic arabesques on pentatonic scales in the right hand on the black keys with the gong in the left hand. This right hand seems to create a texture of sensitive and shining light. If one only looks at the music’s shape as a picture, the right hand, especially in the last 21 measures, looks like a beautiful curvaceous decorative line. This is similar to Hokusai’s bold and ornamental line. In 1901, in one of his articles for the arts magazine *La revue blanche*, Debussy actually wrote the praise of the “divine arabesque,” the art of the decorative and ornamental line as the root of all kinds of art. From 1888 to 1891, Debussy wrote two Arabesques. We can see the music’s shape (Figure 60) as that of an Arabesque (Figure 61).



Figure 60 Debussy Arabesque 2

²⁷ Roberts, Paul. *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Portland OR: Amadeus Press, 1996) 62.

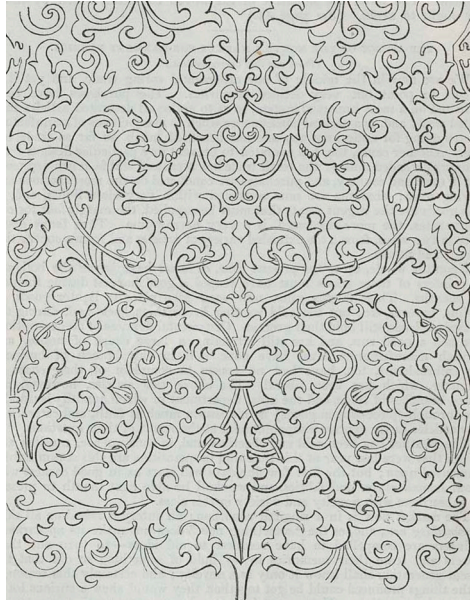


Figure 61 Arabesque design

Debussy drew this arabesque pattern in *Pagodes*. With the left hand's sonorous gong, the music evokes the world of the Far East. Debussy does not draw the detail of the world of the Far East, but gives us the gong that is a typical oriental sound, and the open interval shining color of the pentatonic scale that is also an Asian sound. Gong and light create the scene. Debussy basically uses only these means, but we can still imagine the oriental serenity it creates. This is the "powers of suggestion", as Monet said.

Jardins sous la pluie, the last piece of *Estampes*, is a more traditional western style of print. Walking in Paris some years ago, I saw immediately why this piece was born here. *Seeing is believing*, as the saying goes. For me, the broken-chord patterns clearly describe the rain, but also the harmonic progression expresses images of the character of a rainy day in Paris: dryness, energy, along with the extreme tenderness of children's songs heard in a city garden or park. At first, the rain falls upon the dry pavement. The music gains energy to describe the wind gusts and then one hears two

French nursery songs, “Dodo, l’enfant do” and “Nous n’irons plus au bois”. Before the rain stops, the sun appears brightly.

I remember that when I went to the Louvre in Paris, I was surprised to see a group of children sitting around the many first-rate art objects. They were elementary school students and had come to the art museum as an excursion. They probably did not understand why these art works were in the Louvre, but they were there to observe and absorb the natural beauty of the art. Debussy was born and grew up in this “visual” city. The British pianist, Roy Howat writes in his book *The Art of French Piano Music*, “...Rather than resist, we can benefit from a look at how exactly some techniques in painting are reflected in this music...French habits are traditionally visual – Parisian concerts are still normally advertised and listed under the heading *spectacles*.”²⁸ Again, remembering that Debussy himself would have loved to become a painter, we are fortunate to have his beautiful paintings through sound. In the *Estampes*, the piano served, literally, as his paint box.

Debussy did not leave any document as evidence of how he applied painting techniques to his music, but this certainly could have been his intention. This can influence and enhance the performer’s interpretation and give delectable “freedom” to imagine his or her own picture of music. I am convinced that this was important part of Debussy’s creative context and artistic impulse.

²⁸ Howat, Roy. *The Art of French Piano Music: Debussy, Ravel, Faure, Chabrier* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009) 3.

~ Debussy's *La Mer*

Debussy's relationship to the sea had a long history, just as Hokusai had himself. When he was forty-three years old, Debussy wrote to the French music critic Pierre Lalo (1866-1943) in October, 1905; "I love the sea and have listened to it with the passionate respect it deserves..."²⁹ Debussy had been hearing and seeing the sea since he was a young boy. And all the images he had absorbed were kept within his memory and would later inspire his music. His sister Adele also recalled that Debussy would often spend "entire days seated in a chair dreaming about no one knew what" when he was only eight years of age. Debussy wrote, "I remember the railway passing in front of the house and the sea on the distant horizon, which made me believe sometimes that the railway came out of the sea, or went into (as you chose). Then, also, there was the road to Antibes, where there were so many roses that in all my life I've never seen so many at the same time – the perfume along that road failed to be 'intoxicated'. I hope they've left the railway...and roses."³⁰ Debussy was not only a visual person, but also a great dreamer. He imagined something beyond objects or scenes.

Debussy, the award-winning composer of the Rome Grand Prix, and also the composer who disliked established musical rules and forms, kept asking himself what the sea represented for him. He searched for a new way to express "his sea" in music. Debussy said in an interview in 1910, "All the noises we hear around ourselves can be re-created. Every sound perceived by the acute ear in the rhythm of the world about us can be represented musically. Some people above all wish to conform to the rules; for

²⁹ Lesure, Francois and Roger Nichols. ed., *Debussy Letters*. Translated by Roger Nichols (London: Faber and Faber, 1987) 163.

³⁰ Roberts, Paul. *Claude Debussy* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2008) 26.

myself I wish to render only what I hear.”³¹ Debussy, of course, knew all the rules of music and was able to use them fully, but after digesting all the rules, he was already well beyond the stage of many other musicians and composers. Debussy heard something not only through his acute ear, but he also heard something beyond. The French composer Jean Barraque (1928-1973) wrote in 1962, “In *La Mer* Debussy invented a procedure of development in which the notions of exposition and development co-exist in an uninterrupted stream, permitting the work to be propelled along by itself without recourse to any pre-established model.”³² How did Debussy get the inspiration to create this “uninterrupted stream” of the sea in his music?

Debussy was fortunate to encounter the first influence on his artistic inspiration from Japanese prints. For the front cover of the first edition of *La Mer*, Debussy asked his publisher to place the image of a wave, taken from *The Hollow of the Wave* by Hokusai, a color print which was on the wall of his study. As an artist, Debussy took from all that inspired him and transformed it into his art. But he was French, and kept the French tradition for sensibility, taste, and refined restraint. Even though he admired Wagner’s works, Debussy despised Wagnerian bombast and Wagner’s way of expounding his philosophy in music.

It was a miracle for Debussy to have access to Japanese color prints in the nineteenth century. This helped him clarify what he wanted to express in his art. With regard to Impressionist painting, the French poet and critic, Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) wrote, “Nothing should be absolutely fixed, in order that we may feel that the bright gleam which lights the picture, or the diaphanous shadow which veils it, are only

³¹ Roberts, Paul. *Claude Debussy* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2008) 173.

³² *Ibid.* 175.

seeing in passing.”³³ This “unfixed image” and “only seeing in passing” were the goals that Debussy sought for his art. Paul Roberts writes in his book *Claude Debussy*, “The art was to achieve the impression of spontaneous, momentary experience, an image caught in the blink of an eye...”³⁴ Japanese art showed how to create these elements because it was suggestive, and leaving space and possibility for viewers to complete the picture in their own imagination. In his *Preludes*, Debussy wrote all the titles at the end of each piece. He did not want to give a “fixed image” to performers at the beginning; he wanted them to imagine and create their own scenes first in the music.

Debussy was a dreamer, but also an artist of great persistence and discipline. To complete his own work, Debussy had great patience and energy. Debussy’s advice to his son in law, Raoul Bardac (1881-1950), was “gather impressions, but don’t be in a hurry to write them down.”³⁵ Artists have to be disciplined enough to be able to wait and spend time to develop their work, just as Hokusai spent over twenty years to create the Great Wave. The French poet, Baudelaire (1821-1867) wrote: “The whole visible universe is nothing but a storehouse of images and signs, to which man’s imagination will assign a place and relative value; it is a kind of pasture for the imagination to divest and transform.”³⁶ This was actually what Debussy had been doing since childhood.

Baudelaire also wrote in his review *Le Salon de 1859*, “The imagination decomposes all creation and with the wealth of materials amassed and ordered according to rules whose origins can be found only in the deepest recesses of the soul, it creates a new world.”³⁷ It

³³ Roberts, Paul. *Claude Debussy* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2008) 191.

³⁴ Ibid. 191.

³⁵ Ibid. 173.

³⁶ Ibid. 170.

³⁷ Ibid. 170.

is not possible for all people to reach “in the deepest recesses of the soul”, but it is more possible for the genuine and dedicated artist.

Another such artist, Katsushika Hokusai, also kept asking himself what the sea represented for him. Of course, Hokusai and Debussy never met each other and they lived under totally different circumstances. But both had similar great imagination, patience, and energy to pursue their artistic passion.

The British pianist, Roy Howat observes *La Mer* from a different point of view. He examines how Debussy applies the Golden Section for his music in his book, “Debussy in proportion”. In western culture, the Golden Section is considered the most beautiful ratio in the universe; during the Renaissance period, this ratio was supported by Christianity and it was consecrated as “sacred”. This ratio has been used for many architectural as well as art works such as the Venus of Milo, Triumphal Arch in Paris, the Temple of Parthenon in Greece, Pyramid in Egypt, the building of United Nations in New York, Leonard Da Vinci’s “Mona Lisa” and “Last Supper”. Humans have attempted to create this proportional beauty since ancient times. The Fibonacci series is another name for this ratio and it is the series of number: 0,1,1,2,3,5,8,13,21,34,55,89... As the series continues, it gradually gets closer to the Golden Section.

Howat examines two different editions of *La Mer*. Debussy completed *La Mer* in 1905 and the score was published in the same year. But, Debussy revised it in 1909 after conducting a number of performances of *La Mer*. One of the more significant changes is that Debussy compressed two bars into one bar in the first movement. The total measures of the first movement are 142 in 1905 edition and 141 in 1909. Howat writes that if we think of the beginning of second principle section (measure 84) as a turning point, the

1909 edition gets closer to an accurate ratio of the Golden Section. Debussy did not leave any comment if this was his intention; he is known to have destroyed the large majority of his sketches. But, how could Debussy not know about the Golden Section? There were so many opportunities for him to learn about the ratio in Paris, from his friends of painters and artists; the interest of the Golden Section was endemic in the visual arts at that time. It is documented by the exhibition in Paris by the *Section d'or* (Golden Section) group of painters in 1912. Also, Debussy himself wrote a letter to his publisher, Jacques Durand in 1903, "I was just getting ready to send you the proofs... You will see, on page 8 of 'Jardins sous la pluie', there is a bar missing; my fault, in fact, as it is not in the manuscript. Even so, it is necessary from the point of view of number; the divine number..." Debussy was aware of this ratio. It could be possible for Debussy to apply the Golden Section in his music because it is an important element for visual art which he loved, and also that is simpler to apply numbers in music than to apply color.

The former Japanese National Defense Academy physiography professor Kiyoshi Watanabe presented his view about the Golden Section in his book *Japanese beauty and golden section*. As an expert of measurement, he measured Japanese gardens, temples, *Noh* masks, and prints by Hokusai and Hiroshige. As a result of these measurements, he found that the Golden Section is everywhere in these objects. Roy Howat also measured "Great Wave" by Hokusai in his book, "The Art of French Piano Music" and found the Golden Section in this Japanese print. It is said that the Golden Section arrived in Japan sometime in the fourteenth century, but there is no clear evidence to support this. Watanabe writes that the Golden Section was already in Japan before this arrival and this ratio is not only for western culture, but also universal. Since we can find the Fibonacci

series in nature, such as branching in trees, the fruitlets of a pineapple, and the flowering of artichoke, it seems that he is correct. But, the most remarkable fact is that people all over the world have instinctively tried to attain this proportional beauty since ancient times.

Artists strive to create beauty. And their main theme is human nature. As an artist, Debussy had searched for ways to express the beauty of the sea. Ronald Moore, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Washington said in his presentation at the UW Summer Piano Institute on July 16, 2013, "...beauty is a triadic relation: For there to be beauty there must be a human perceiver, the experience of perceiving, and a perceived object. So, if there are no humans left after a disaster, two of the three elements will be missing, and beauty can not exist..."³⁸ Beauty has to be perceived by human eyes. Debussy might have intuitively known this since childhood. Debussy and Hokusai have similarities; the sea or water was the favorite theme for both artists. And both artists knew that beauty has to be perceived by human eyes in order to exist.

Debussy was intensively visual and extremely suggestible as a creative artist, but he did not begin composing music as an impressionist. His early music was not in the least impressionistic; his suite *Bergamasque* is written in romantic style using classical dance forms of antiquity: *Prelude*, *Minuet*, *Clair de Lune*, and *Passepied*. Another example is his Piano Trio in G, written in 1880. No one could guess this work to be by Debussy; it is in typical conservative romantic style, and it gives no hint of the personal style that Debussy would develop in his "signature" narrative format of *La soirée dans Grenade*, for example.

³⁸ Moore, Ronald. *Why Beauty is Important in Music and Elsewhere* (A presentation to the UW Summer Piano Institute, July 16, 2013)

Debussy's transition to a more impressionistic style developed when he was exposed to new outside influences: The paintings of Turner, American Ragtime, The Cakewalk, and Japonisme. The International Exposition in Paris in 1889 was likely a major trigger for his creativity, where he first heard the exotic Javanese Gamelan. These external stimuli -- painting, nature, instruments like the Gamelan, landscapes of the sky, the sea -- all were influences that Debussy eagerly absorbed. And, Japonisme, and the Japanese print in particular, was a major inspiration for him as he developed his personal compositional style. Paul Roberts writes, "it is the Japanese print which is arguably the background to Debussy's own *Estampes*...we can not say that Debussy's music would have been unthinkable, but we can suggest on evidence of his ceaseless interest in visual art, the *Estampes*, without the Japanese, would have been conceived differently (or not at all.)"³⁹

At the time when Felix Bracquemond accidentally discovered Hokusai's *Manga* on cheap news paper, most artists in Europe had tired of conventional Western academic formulae; it had become "empty" and "lifeless" for them. They were searching and needing new ways to express their art. They all tried to seek the actual, vibrant "life of art". Japanese art fit their need because it gave them more structural and imaginative "freedom". All of Paris was crazy for Japonisme, so why would Debussy not join in this? He did, enthusiastically just as did many artists, writers, painters, and poets. It was a huge inspiration for Debussy to find his own creative path. The influence of Japonisme upon him was transformative.

³⁹ Roberts, Paul. *Image: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Portland OR, Amadeus Press, 1996) 46.

Debussy might have seen also that the qualities of human nature are embodied in the sea. Paul Roberts wrote, “*La Mer* is not only an impressionistic evocation of the sea, surface shimmer; the work is a transmutation of mankind’s complex and subconscious responses to the sea, achieved through and within the very pith of musical material. As an artist Debussy seizes the experience – the longing, the fear, the delight, the age-old responses – and sets it down in his own medium...For Debussy the sea is already a symbol...”⁴⁰ It might have not been simple, but it was still beautiful for him and Debussy wanted to express it lively, brightly, and freely. Miraculously, it was the Japanese print which encouraged him to express these elements. With all this in mind, one can say with strong confidence that the Japanese print, and the larger context of Japonisme as well, was a significant inspiration at the core of Debussy's development.

⁴⁰ Roberts, Paul. *Claude Debussy* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2008) 175.

~ Conclusion

It is remarkable and surprising to discover that French artists became acquainted with Japanese art despite the vast distance the world of France and Japan. The distance between Paris and Tokyo is 6046 miles and of course they did not have a direct flight! Sea travel took long months. The Wright brothers, Orville (1871-1948) and Wilbur (1867-1912) succeeded in the world their first powered flight in December, 1903. People in the nineteenth to early twentieth centuries still traveled long distances by train and ship.

This “encounter” of French art and Japanese art was “kismet”, great fortune. It might have even been “destiny.” Without this encounter, the art of graphic design itself, or even Impressionism might have never been born! Debussy’s music that we so appreciate would have been different without this wonderful “collision”. Japanese people should be grateful to Westerners, since they recognized Japanese art first and preserved the artworks of styles. Hokusai’s works are priceless now, but his own Japanese people printed his works on cheap newspaper and did not bother to preserve them in a caring way.

It is fortunate that Debussy fell in love with Japanese art. The Netsuke frog which Debussy loved and named Arkel was always his quiet and faithful companion on his work desk. Debussy doubtless received some inspiration from this small, elaborate and fine sculpture. He also learned how artwork itself could embody “freedom” from his study of Japanese woodprints. In other words, he found how he could create music that is “not fixed”. As a result of this, performers have responsibilities when they play Debussy’s music, to create their own picture through their imagination.

Since I was a high school student, visiting art museums has been my fond habit. But I never imagined that I would someday write a dissertation about “music and art”. This is another magical confluence for me. “Ukiyo-e” was my favorite art since my youth, but I knew nothing about “Netsuke” until I began this project. Great art often tells through the work itself what the artist has experienced. Since I have enjoyed studying Netsuke, I see how Netsuke makers took delight in creating these elaborate artworks with stunning imagination. We are very fortunate to have this great artwork preserved.

It might have been a stunning event for French artists to discover Japanese art, but it also seems for me to have been “destiny”. We are all the beneficiaries of the remarkable coincidences which brought together the worlds of “Ukiyo-e” and French Impressionism.

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