

IJACT 23-9-36

## Ukiyo-e - Oriental Art that Has Been Influencing the World

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### Abstract

*Ukiyo-e, a pivotal facet of Japanese art, had a profound impact on Western art during the 19th century, contributing to the emergence of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. Notably, Katsushika Hokusai's "Great Wave" remains an enduring masterpiece. Ukiyo-e's historical trajectory is intricately linked to the socio-cultural context of its time. Japan's early artistic influences derived from China, evolving through the Nara and Heian periods. Ukiyo-e emerged from the Yamato-e tradition, characterized by its transition from religious themes to secular subjects. Zen Buddhism's influence during the Muromachi Shogunate shifted focus to ink wash painting, which eventually became accessible to the masses. The Azuchi-Momoyama period introduced lavish, colorful works. The Edo Shogunate upheld Kano School for the elite, while folklore painting gained popularity among the commoners, leading to the creation of Ukiyo-e. Ukiyo-e diversified its subjects, including beauty, geisha, sumo, landscapes, and more. The Asakusa district's "Shin-Yoshiwara" added to its vibrant themes. By the late 19th century, Ukiyo-e transcended its roots, encompassing landscapes, wildlife, and beyond. I explore Ukiyo-e's aesthetics and its influence on Impressionism, focusing on "The Three Masters of Ukiyo-e" – Kiyotagawa Komaro, Katsushika Hokusai, and Utagawa Hiroshige.*

**Keywords:** Painting, Ukiyo-e, Impressionism, Kitagawa Utamaro, Katsushika Hokusai, Utagawa Hiroshige

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ukiyo-e is a Japanese woodblock print printed in color during the Edo period. "Ukiyo-e" originally means the mundane world in which people live, and the meaning is later extended to a happy attitude to life in which people can enjoy the joyful scenes depicted in Ukiyo-e. Ukiyo-e originated in the 17th century and entered its creative and commercial heyday in the 18th and 19th centuries, mainly in Edo, depicting everyday life, landscapes and drama. The rise of Ukiyo-e art in the Edo period was closely related to the highly developed economy of the time.

The Edo period (1603-1867), also known as the Tokugawa period, is the period in Japanese history when the Edo Shogunate (Tokugawa Shogunate) ruled for 264 years, beginning in 1603 when Ieyasu Tokugawa was appointed as Shogun and opened the Shogunate in Edo (Tokyo) and ending in 1867 when the return of the government in the third year of Qingying. During the Edo Shogunate period, the Shogun was the de facto controller of power and the supreme leader of the country, and was known as the Great King of Japan. The Mikado of Japan became a symbolic head of state that was hollowed out and monitored by the Shogunate. In the middle of the Edo Shogunate, as the booming local agricultural economy gradually spread throughout the

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Manuscript received: August 3, 2023 / revised: August 21, 2023 / accepted: August 29, 2023

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whole country, the golden age of Genroku formed. The population of Edo reached one million, making it the most populous city in the world, and the proportion of urbanization in the country grew. In terms of culture, as the Chōnin culture emerged, the literacy rate of the people increased rapidly under the Terakoya system. The education level of the people in the Edo period was surprisingly high among feudal countries. All these laid the foundation for the rise of Ukiyo-e. The prosperity of the economy raised the status of merchants. It should be noted that in the Edo period, the entire population was divided into four classes of samurai, peasants, craftsmen and merchants according to a strict hierarchy. Thanks to the rapidly developing economy of the Edo period, the status of the merchant class, which was at the end class, was raised. The merchants established a number of places for recreation and entertainment. The theater near Yoshiwara on the Sumida River was the usual place for them to enjoy themselves. After the war in the Azuchi-Momoyama period, Yoshiwara became more and more civilized. At the beginning of Ieyasu Tokugawa's reign, an improved touring troupe from Kyoto took root in the area because of its successful performance in Edo, and it grew into the Kabuki theater that still exists today. At first, male and female performers performed together, but after 1652, the Shogunate administration decreed that only adult men could play various roles. The proliferation of Yoshiwara's greenhouses and kabuki-zanas was made possible by the wealthy regulars and theatergoers, so their luxurious houses were decorated with the new trend of Edo beauty paintings and folklore paintings, or Flesh-brush Ukiyo-e, which were not affordable to the common people. As a result, Ukiyo-e woodblock prints, which could be reproduced indefinitely and were affordable to the general public, came into being [1].

Merchants would decorate their houses with some Ukiyo-e. The city's entertainment venues were open to those with sufficient wealth and education. These happy scenes of pleasure became a popular subject for Ukiyo-e painters. It is said that the word "Ukiyo-e" first appeared in *The Tale of the Floating World* by the Edo-period writer Asai Ryōi. In the introduction to his book, he wrote that "Enjoying the present moment, savoring the moon, snow, cherry blossoms and maple leaves, singing, drinking, forgetting the worries of the present, not worrying about the impending poverty, and being carefree. Just like a gourd floating in a flowing river. This is our Ukiyo-e." The earliest Ukiyo-e artists came from the Japanese painting world. The majority of Ukiyo-e painters came from the Kano and Tosa Schools, due to the fact that these schools were very prominent at the time. The Kano School was the largest school in Japanese history, and the Tosa School was part of a school of Yamato-e. Many of the painters who were expelled and rejected by these schools went on to paint Ukiyo-e, and this is how the early Ukiyo-e took shape. These painters who left the painting world depicted real life rather than working on officially prescribed themes. The early Ukiyo-e was mainly hand-painted and printed with ink monochrome woodblock prints (called ink folding painting).

Edo was the main center of Ukiyo-e production throughout the Edo period. At the same time, another center developed in Kyoto and Osaka and the surrounding Kamigami region. In contrast to the range of subjects in Edo woodblock prints, the subjects in the Kamigata region tended to be portraits of courtesans. The differences between the style of Kamigata Ukiyo-e prints and Edo prints did not diminish until the late 18th century, in part because artists often traveled back and forth between the two regions. The colors of Kamigata Ukiyo-e tended to be more muted than those of Edo, and the Tempo Reform of 1841-1843 attempted to suppress Ukiyo-e works that showed extravagant life, including depictions of courtesans and actors. This led many Ukiyo-e artists to design scenes and pictures of travels in the nature, also including birds and flowers. Thus landscape became a school in the late Edo period. Although Ukiyo-e had a long history before that, the school of landscape painting had begun to dominate the Western understanding of Ukiyo-e. Japanese landscapes differed from the Western tradition in that they relied heavily on imagination, composition and atmosphere rather than strict adherence to the laws of nature. In the 300-year history of Ukiyo-e, the most notable artistic achievements have been made by Kitagawa Utamarō, Katsushika Hokusai, Utagawa Hiroshige, who are known as "The Three Masters of Ukiyo-e".

## **2. EXPERIMENTS - The Three Masters of Ukiyo-e**

### **2.2 The Master of Beauty Painting: Kitagawa Utamarō**

The term "beauty painting" also refers to works with beautiful women as their subject matter, especially

traditional East Asian paintings. Japanese beauty painting can be traced back to the Nara period when beauty was the subject of paintings, and to the Heian period when there were many scrolls depicting beautiful women. Ukiyo-e beauty painting, which depicts beautiful folk women, arose in the Edo period. In the Meiji era, Ukiyo-e paintings of beautiful folk women began to decline. In the Taisho era, the artist Yumeji Takehisa created paintings that drew on Western oil painting techniques, and these paintings became widely known as "Yumeji-style beauty".

The main subjects of the early Ukiyo-e were beauty painting and servant painting, and the status of the beauties depicted in beauty painting was usually that of women of low status, such as geisha, yokozuna and townswomen. The beauties in these paintings were usually dressed in kimono and had small and delicate eyebrows and lips, with full and detailed cheeks. In the early days when Ukiyo-e was mainly hand-painted and printed with ink monochrome woodblock prints, the beauty paintings by Hishikawa Shisei, who was later regarded as the "Ancestor of Ukiyo-e," were the first to receive attention, such as his masterpiece, *The Beauty Looking Back*. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the development of Ukiyo-e entered the period of *koi-e*, which was also the heyday of the development of Ukiyo-e, showing a hundred flowers blooming. In the beauty painting field, famous artists such as Toharu Okagawa (founder of the Okagawa School) and Torii Kiyonaga emerged. Suzuki Harunobu, Kitagawa Utamaro, Kaisai Eizumi, Kagawa Kunitsune, Tsukioka Yoshinori and Torii Kiyonaga were known as the "Six Great Painters of Beauty Painting". Suzuki Harunobu, Kitagawa Utamaro, Katsushika Hokusai, Utagawa Hiroshige, Toshusaisai Kairaku and Torii Kiyonaga were also known as the "Six Great Masters of Ukiyo-e".

Of all the painters of the Torii School, Torii Kiyonaga's painting techniques were the most outstanding. He specialized in beauty painting and created an original technique to represent women's light and gorgeous clothes. Another school of Ukiyo-e, the Toriyama School, also specialized in beauty painting. The representative artist of the Toriyama School, Toriyama Sekien, learned from the Kano School artist Kano Choushin in his early years, and later became known for creating Ukiyo-e in his own style. In addition to the beauty paintings, Toriyama Sekien also depicted a large number of ghosts and monsters, which made him famous in the history of painting. His *Ebony Hyakki Nocturne* and *Ebony Bishoujo* have been handed down to this day. Toriyama Sekien's son was named Toriyama Toyoaki and his daughter was named Toriyama Hongryu. There is another theory that Toriyama Toyoaki is the famous Kitagawa Utamaro.

Little is known about the life of Kitagawa Utamaro, the founder of *Oshou-e* (bust with a close-up of his face). He was mentored by his father in his childhood. Toriyama Sekien was very pleased with his son, describing him as a clever and dedicated artist. In addition to his own father, Kitagawa Utamaro also studied painting with a painter of the Kano School. The combination of the two styles of painting led him to perceive a new style. His work began to appear in the 1770s and he became famous in the early 1790s for his exaggerated and elongated portraits of beautiful women, one of the few Ukiyo-e artists to gain popularity in Japan. In 1804, he depicted the daimyo Toyotomi Hideyoshi of the Azuchi-Momoyama period as an entertainer in the debauchery district, as a satire on his extravagant lifestyle. He was immediately arrested and sentenced to 50 days of imprisonment. Then he died two years later.

Kitagawa Utamaro was independent-minded and did not want to follow the trend of painting actors' portraits. At that time, many Ukiyo-e painters were used to draw with the influence of actors to build their own fame. This was shameful to him, and he was determined to create Ukiyo-e in his own way. He was sympathetic to the poor kabuki and Osaka prostitutes who were at the bottom of the social ladder, and he painted many paintings of beauty, mainly of the head, with delicate and elegant strokes, exploring the unique beauty of women's innermost being. His representative works include *Three Beauties of the Edo Kansei Period*. According to the records, the earliest paintings by Kitagawa Utamaro were made in 1770 when he worked with other pupils on the haiku book *Chiyo-no-haru (Eternal Spring)* by Toriyama Sekien. The publisher Tsutaya discovered Kitagawa Utamaro's talent for woodblock prints creation and supported him in publishing a large number of his works. With the help of Tsutaya, Kitagawa Utamaro often participated in poets' gatherings and was inspired by the ideas of cultural movements.

Very little of the story of the life of Kitagawa Utamaro has been handed down. Therefore, the analysis of his development as an artist in later times depends mainly on his works themselves. Although he was notable for his work on flowers, birds, fish and insects, as well as for his style paintings and book illustrations, it is his

beauty paintings that are most celebrated. He produced more than 2,000 woodblock prints during his career, including more than 120 beauty-illustrated subjects. He also created many illustrated books, more than 30 of them, including *Ten Pieces of Women's Human Face*, *The Beauty Selection*, and *Great Love Themes in Classical Poetry (Women in Love)*, and his work appeared in at least 60 publishers. He founded the Kitagawa School of painting and had many accomplished disciples under his tutelage. His works were spread to Europe in the mid-19th century, where it became very popular and enjoyed great popularity in France. He influenced the European Impressionist painters, especially with his representation of partial portraits and his emphasis on imitation of light and shadows. Some European artists of the time referred to "Japanese influence", often in reference to the work of Kitagawa Utamaro.

Of all the Ukiyo-e paintings, the beauty paintings by Kitagawa Utamaro are usually considered the most beautiful and mesmerizing. He succeeded in capturing the subtleties of character and the fleeting emotions of women of all ages in different settings. His reputation has remained intact ever since, and he is recognized as one of the six most outstanding Ukiyo-e artists of all time. The French art critic Edmond de Goucourt published Kitagawa Utamaro in 1891 with the help of a Japanese art dealer, which is considered to be the first monograph on Kitagawa Utamaro.

## **2.2 Katsushika Hokusai - The "Painting Maniac" With a Free Soul**

In 1760, Katsushika Hokusai was born in a poor peasant family in Honjo Cut Shimizu, Katsushika-gun, Musashi. His surname was Kawamura clan, and his name was Taro when he was young. Later, he was called Tezo and was commonly known as Nakajima Hachiemon. He worked as a bookstore clerk and delivered books to people one after another. He also apprenticed as a woodblock carver and became interested in the art of painting. Later he returned to his original family. In 1778, he studied from the master of Katsukawa Shunshō, called himself Katsukawa Haruaki. He learned the art of Kano School Tang-e, Meisho-e and Yakushi-e, etc.. Katsushika Hokusai was greatly influenced by the art of Katsukawa Shunshō. During this period, his portraits of kabuki artists clearly showed the artistic style of the Katsukawa School, including posture, facial expressions and natural scenery that is not deliberately arranged. At the same time, the novel and open artistic concepts of Torii Kiyonaga and Utagawa Hiroshige Toyoharu also deeply influenced Katsushika Hokusai.

Katsushika Hokusai began to publish his works at the age of 19, and his yakuza-illustrated work *Segawa Kikunosei* was officially published in 1779. In 1800, at the age of 21, Katsushika Hokusai illustrated the yellow paper work *Life of Tokuemono*, which was his first illustration for popular literature. For a long time afterwards, he illustrated a large number of popular stories such as yellow paper works. After that, Katsushika Hokusai specialized in the Tosa School of painting, and also dabbled in both Chinese and European painting. From about 1794 to 1804, he used the pen name Tokutaro Koge. From 1805, he officially called "Katsushika Hokusai", and Hokusai changed his name as often as 30 times in his life.

In line with the development of tourism in mainland Japan at the time, and because of his personal affinity for Mount Fuji, Katsushika Hokusai decided to create a series of landscape paintings. Mount Fuji is the national symbol of Japan and a symbol of beauty. It is one of the three most famous mountains in Japan, and is also known in ancient literature as "Buji", "Bujin" or "Fuci", and is often referred to as "Lotus Mountain" or "Fuyutsuki". Since ancient times, the name of the mountain has often appeared in the traditional Japanese poem "Waka". In 1826, Katsushika Hokusai created a series of landscapes called *Fugaku Sanjūrokkei (Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji)* based on the appearance of the mountain from different angles. *Fugaku Sanjūrokkei (Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji)* is a total of 46 painting. At first, Hokusai planned to paint only 36 paintings according to the title, but later added 10 more paintings due to its popularity. Among them, the works depicting the majestic beauty of Mount Fuji, such as *South Wind, Clear Sky and White Rain under the Mountain* are widely known, and these two paintings are also affectionately known as "Red Fuji" and "Black Fuji". "Red Fuji" refers to Mount Fuji in summer when there is no snow covering and the color of the sun is red in the morning. This is an auspicious sign in Japanese folklore, as it occurs mainly between late summer and early autumn. The word "Kaifeng (South Wind)" is taken from *The Book of Songs*, and means the gentle south wind that blows in summer. There are other versions of *South Wind, Clear Sky*, but the earliest version is darker in color, and the top of the mountain is not red. As a large number of printed woodblock prints, the British

Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and other museums around the world have collections of *South Wind, Clear Sky*.

Another masterpiece, *Great Wave*, is one of the most well-known Ukiyo-e paintings in the world. The Dutch painter Van Gogh admired this painting so much that his masterpiece *Starry Night* was considered to be inspired by it. And the impressionist French composer Claude Debussy was inspired by it to compose his symphonic poem *The Sea*. At the same time, the triangular wave in *Great Wave* has become one of the famous images parodied by many later creations. The painting depicts a huge wave threatening a ship in Kanagawa (off Kanagawa) and, like other works in the series, Mount Fuji is taken as the background. The painting depicts a fishing boat being swept by a huge wave and the boatmen struggling to survive. *Great Wave*, 25.7 cm in height and 37.9 cm in width, is a large horizontal painting. The title and signature of the painting are written in the upper left corner of the frame. In the rectangular frame, the title reads, "Fugaku Sanjūrokkei, Kanagawa, Great Wave".

It was a legend that Katsushika Hokusai moved 93 times in his life and had a rich life experience. So his painting world was very broad and the subjects were very rich such as flowers, birds, insects, fish, landscapes and people. He was especially good at depicting the beautiful scenery of Japan's mountains and rivers and the people's labor life and hobbies. He was good at both brushwork and painting. As a model textbook for learning painting, *Hokusai Manga*, which was well received at that time, is also the masterpiece of Katsushika Hokusai, with 15 chapters, about 4,000 pictures, color folding book, and being printed by three colors (black, gray and flesh color). In 1814, when Katsushika Hokusai was 54 years old (pen name "Dai Dou"), *Hokusai Manga* was first published. The book contained the city, landscape, birds, beasts, gods, Buddhas and monsters. *Hokusai Manga* was the product of the cooperation between two publishers, Nagare Star ing Nagoya and Maruya in Edo, which made the fame of Katsushika Hokusai spread to the area outside of Edo. In addition to *Hokusai Manga*, Katsushika Hokusai also created works such as *Hokusai Sanjiku Shuppan*, *Shuppan Hayashi*, *Shuppan Shuppan List*, and *Hokusai Photo Shuppan* during the period when he used "Dai Dou" as his pen name. Katsushika Hokusai died at the age of 88, and the works left in his life are estimated to be about 35,000.

### **2.3 The Delicate and Lyrical Utagawa Hiroshige**

Born in a lower class of samurai, Utagawa Hiroshige was originally named Ando Shigemon. He was one of the few Ukiyo-e artists who did not come from a family of artisans and townspeople. His father worked as a fireman in Edo at a fire station located in the heart of the city, now called Marunouchi. This fire station was also a staff dormitory with a capacity of two to three hundred people, and the Ando family lived there. Although Utagawa Hiroshige came from the samurai class, the family's humble status was also evident from his father's occupation. Before his father died, he passed on the position of fireman to him. At the end of the Edo Shogunate, with political corruption and military inactivity, firefighters spent most of their time playing cards and gambling, not doing their jobs. In 1806, when a North Korean envoy arrived, the 10-year-old Utagawa Hiroshige drew a sketch of the procession entering Edo, which was very good for a boy of his age, in terms of drawing and coloring. At the age of 15, he became a disciple of Utagawa Toyohiro of the Utagawa School and formally studied painting. In accordance with the master-apprentice relationship in the painting world, it was necessary to have a stage name. Toyohiro combined the "Hiro" in his own name with the "Shige" in his real name, and named him "Hiroshige". This is the origin of the name "Hiroshige".

Utagawa Hiroshige kept exploring and creating landscape painting and illustrations, including the 1818 poetry collection *Volume of Crazy Songs*. In 1820, at the age of 24, he first illustrated the popular novel *Yonkaku no Aido* and continued to illustrate more than a dozen different popular novels until 1850. In 1830, he began to experiment with different painting styles. The situation started to change in 1832, when Utagawa Hiroshige passed his job as a fireman to his son and concentrated on being a painter himself. On one occasion, he was assigned to accompany the Shogun's special commissioner to Kyoto on August 1 to present the imperial horses to the Emperor. He painted many works for this solemn ceremony and presented them to the Shogunate. On his way there and back, he painted many scenes along the way. Upon his return to Edo, he published a series of beautiful landscape paintings on Reikishi Island at the request of a bookseller, and the heirloom masterpiece *Tokaido Gojūsan Tsugi* was born. This set of works came out one after another between 1832 and 1834, and

Katsushika Hokusai's popularity was immediately overshadowed by his. Many people thought that Utagawa Hiroshige was a student or "imitator" of Katsushika Hokusai, but this was completely wrong. They were two completely different artists. They were in different states of mind. Katsushika Hokusai was passionate and Kakugawa Hiroshige was quiet. Tokaido Gojuusan Tsugi depicts the scenery of the 53 shukubas (equivalent to a post station) that used to pass through from Edo to Kyoto in Japan. The series contains 55 scenes starting in Edo and ending in Kyoto, and all the original paintings must be published in batches between 1832 and 1834. However, some of the scenes are not entirely realistic, but are based on the imagination of Utagawa Hiroshige. In 1601, 53 shukubas were designated on the Tokaido from Shinagawa to Otsu, known as the Tokaido Gojuusan Tsugi. In the Ukiyo-e of the Edo period, Nihonbashi was often depicted as the subject of the artist's drawings, because it was the base for the construction of the national road network in 1603 during the Tokugawa Ieyasu period, and the first Nihonbashi was built in the same year. It is a wooden bridge that has been rebuilt several times due to fires since then.

The first painting in Tokaido Gojuusan Tsugi depicts Nihonbashi. In Nihonbashi - View of the Morning, the early morning scene full of morning sunlight in Edo is shown. The entire composition of the picture is centered on Nihonbashi, and the realistic technique makes the whole scene realistic and believable. The red horizon echoes the working people, creating a restrained yet energetic atmosphere. In Tokaido Gojuusan Tsugi, the first eight paintings are all clear skies. But in the ninth painting, it is in a reversal of the norm and the sky is raining with dogs and cats. The title of this work is Oisojuku - Rain of the Tiger. The so-called "Rain of the Tiger" refers to the rain that falls on the 28th day of the 5th month of the lunar calendar every year. The end of the Tokaido is the Sanjo Bridge, which leads to Kyoto, the capital city. This bridge crosses the Kamogawa River and there is no clear record of when it was built, but Kyoto - Sanjo Bridge depicts this bridge. When you cross the Sanjo Bridge, you will arrive at Kyoto. After Ieyasu Tokugawa replaced Hideyoshi Toyotomi as the ruler of Japan, he set up the Shogunate in Edo. The emperor was still in Kyoto, so the nominal capital of Japan was still Kyoto. Kyoto was also the most important city in Japanese culture and religion at that time, and many scholars were highly accomplished in the fields of Confucianism, Rangaku and Buddhism. In the Edo period, Kyoto, Osaka and Edo were known as the "Three Capitals".

The series works of Tokaido Gojuusan Tsugi laid the foundation for the artistic status of Utagawa Hiroshige. The series has been reprinted numerous times with varying quality, but still sells well. The series is created by depicting 53 shukubas in the middle between Edo and Kyoto (55 in total, including Edo and Kyoto). His work draws on travel books and traditional Chinese painting. However, the greatest aspect of Utagawa Hiroshige's works is his ability to integrate Eastern and Western cultures and the richness of his thoughtfulness. The landscape woodblock print represented by Meisho Edo Hyakkei (One Hundred Famous Views of Edo) is novel. It was created by Utagawa Hiroshige between 1856 and 1858. This set of 118 prints contains the four seasons of the year and is divided into the spring section, the summer section, the autumn section and the winter section. The picture of Edo depicted by Utagawa Hiroshige is very beautiful, and the scenery is pleasant throughout the year. However, in fact, this was not the case in Edo, which was hit by a major earthquake in October 1855, with a magnitude of about 7.0, in the densely populated eastern part of the city, where merchants and artisans lived. About 7,000 people lost their lives, and half a million houses and fifty temples were destroyed by the earthquake or by the ensuing fire. The area near Utagawa Hiroshige's hometown was also destroyed by fire. After this earthquake, the publisher published Meisho Edo Hyakkei (One Hundred Famous Views of Edo).

In the last few years of his career, Utagawa Hiroshige experimented with new painting techniques and forms and created some experimental works. As described in the essay Kokusho 60 in 1852, Tokaido Cheung Kiu Exhibition consisted of 18 prints pieced together from the artist's travel memories. During the same period, Utagawa Hiroshige also collaborated with other Ukiyo-e artists to complete his paintings. Utagawa Hiroshige, Utagawa Kunitsune and Utagawa Kuniyoshi collaborated on a series of 100 prints, Ogura meiyaku no hakumoto, each of which contains a poem by Fujiwara Dinka, all of which he composed in 1235. In the last years of his artistic career, Utagawa Hiroshige was keen to show his talent in landscape painting, and he made prints of landscape subjects for many private employers. His prints can also be found in a number of books sold by private individuals, including Tachisai Kusai Kusai Kusai Koushitsu, Tōkaidō Meisho Tō, Meisho Fashō Gakkai, published between 1848 and 1850, and Tōkaidō Scenic Picture Club, Tōkaidō Meisho Tōkaidō,

Kiso Meisho Tō Ei, and Emoto Edo Souvenir, published by Matsubayashi-do in 1851. In October 1858, Utagawa Hiroshige died. Before his death, he wrote in his will, "I will leave my brush behind me and in Edo. I will step into a brand new journey to enjoy all the famous scenery of the Western Paradise."

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Japanese Ukiyo-e revolutionized European painting of the same era and contributed to the development of Impressionism. After the opening of Japan to the outside world, the world exhibitions in London and Paris introduced Japanese Ukiyo-e to Europe for the first time. Most importantly, the landscapes of Utagawa Hiroshige brought a charm of Oriental origin to the European artists of the time. The Japanese art style was completely different from that of Europe, which was accustomed to shaping three-dimensional space, while Ukiyo-e was flat and decorative. After the invention of photography, the flat art style was a new artistic path for the European painters.

Legend has it that an artist discovered a collection of sketches by Katsushika Hokusai in a Parisian art dealer's store, and subsequently Ukiyo-e became widely distributed in art circles. The French art critic Philippe Berti, who was the most enthusiastic collector of Japanese Ukiyo-e, published a number of articles on Ukiyo-e in the journal *Renaissance Literature and Art* in 1872. The articles examined Japanese art with a critical opinion, while Philippe Burty coined the term "Japonisme"[2] to describe the Ukiyo-e art popular in Europe at the time. In 1875, an English translation of this article was published in the magazine of London Academy of Arts. It can be said that "Japonisme" influenced art, sculpture, architecture, decorative arts and performing arts throughout Western culture at the time.

During the 1850s, Japanese products were exhibited in Britain, including maps, texts, textiles and some everyday items. These exhibitions prompted the British to identify with Eastern culture in a broad sense, and an image of an independent Japanese nation was established. James Whistler, an American artist working in England, rejected the realist painting style sought after by his contemporaries and promoted Japanese art, in which he liked the simplicity. Whistler did not copy Japanese art exactly, but incorporated the forms of expression and composition from it into his own work. Thus, instead of depicting Japanese objects in his own works, Whistler worked on the composition to give the images an exotic tone. This artistic proposition made him one of the most avant-garde painters in the history of 19th century art. Whistler blended the art of Ukiyo-e in his creations and struck his own artistic path. As a London sojourner, Whistler was not influenced by the American trend of "art for morality's sake". Instead, he pursued aestheticism, or "art for art's sake", a theory that beauty should be the sole goal of artistic pursuit. *Nocturne in Black and Gold* is basically composed of dark tones, with three main colors: blue, green and yellow. The use of color is sparse and precise, and the work takes on a soft and harmonious compositional form. The rolling smoke allows the viewer to clearly distinguish between water and sky, the separation of which blurs into a cohesive and somber imaginary space. The expression clearly distinguishes it from other European contemporaries.

The earliest painter to circulate a collection of prints by Japanese artists would be Claude Monet, who could even be called a collector of Japanese prints. Despite this, the Japanese element in Monet's work was clearly lacking in comparison to other Impressionist artists, and it was difficult to find any tentative application of Japanese painting techniques and compositional approaches by him. Many art historians agreed that Monet should have considered it unnecessary to learn from Japanese painting. His most daring attempt was his *Woman in Kimono*, painted in 1876. With the samurai peeking out of the kimono, the various Japanese style fans in the background, except the typically Western woman's face of the artist's wife, Camille, everything in the picture was deliberately Japanese. Other art historians argued that Monet's works had always had a strong tendency towards Japanese composition and decoration, but that the truth was obscured by the bright and thickly painted colors. Monet's *Japanese Bridge and Water Lilies* in 1899 was thought to have been borrowed from the wooden bridges often found in Ukiyo-e. The oil painting *Spring* was also very suggestive of Ukiyo-e beauty painting. In his later years, he created the large group painting *Water Lilies*, which were reminiscent of the screens and sliding doors in the palace rooms of ancient Japanese daimyo [3].

Degas was introduced to Japanese Ukiyo-e prints by his friend Bracamon around the late 1850s. A tendency

toward "Japanization" could be easily found in Degas's works, and Degas seemed to have been particularly thorough in this regard. He was so fond of Japanese fans that he was no longer content to merely embellish them in the background of a picture, but preferred to paint them for his own amusement or to depict ballet scenes on real fans. Of course, this was only a superficial copy, but the most striking feature of Degas's Japanese paintings was the use of intercepting compositions, or what we usually called the cropping of forms. In traditional Western painting, or before the Impressionists, Western artists always placed the subject to be represented in the center of the picture or treated it with some kind of symmetry-like expression in order to obtain a sense of balance in the picture. It was rare to see a form of expression in which the depicted object was placed at the edge of the picture and its subject was cut. However, this was a frequent occurrence in Degas's works, where he unconcernedly adopted a peculiar perspective to crop the dancer's beautiful body.

The reason Degas would take such a compositional approach may come from two sources. The first one is the use of photographic techniques. After Degas's death, a large number of photographs taken with a camera in the private rooms of the theater were found in his studio. These photographs, which Degas did not reveal in any way during his lifetime, undoubtedly contributed to Degas's use of chance angles and unique points of view, composition and the cutting up of objects in his depictions of ballet dancers. The second one is the influence of Japanese Ukiyo-e [4]. In examining the works of the Ukiyo-e, it can be found that intercepting compositions do appear in them, although not in large numbers. There are three main reasons for the appearance of this composition in Japanese painting. First, there existed such a form of multi-page work in Japanese painting, so that what many Europeans mistakenly thought was a complete work was in fact only a fragment of a larger multi-page work. Second, the fact that Ukiyo-e works originally entered Europe as packaging material for porcelain and tea, so the possibility of cutting the packaging material as needed was great. Third, they were painted on Japanese folding screens. An entire screen painting would inevitably be artificially cut into several parts, and a cut-out image would often appear on another screen adjacent to it. The art of Ukiyo-e with its flat and decorative art style had a strong influence on Post-Impressionist art. The Post-Impressionists took different art forms to the extreme, with little regard for any subject matter or content. In terms of artistic expression, the Post-Impressionists placed more emphasis on compositional relationships, believing that the artistic image should be different from the living object, transforming the objective object with the author's subjective feelings, and expressing "subjective objectivity". While respecting the achievements of Impressionist light and color, they did not pursue external light unilaterally, but focused on the specificity, stability and inner structure of the material [5].

Vincent van Gogh was probably the most influenced by the Ukiyo-e among the famous painters. Van Gogh became interested in the Ukiyo-e ever since he discovered its paintings in *Illustrated London News* and *Le Monde*. During his stay in Paris between 1886 and 1888, Van Gogh collected a number of Ukiyo-e style engravings and used them to decorate his studio. Van Gogh was influenced by the Ukiyo-e, which could be divided into two phases: the Parisian period when he copied the form of the Ukiyo-e, and the Arles period when he pursued the spirit of the Ukiyo-e. There were two types of copying: direct copying and indirect copying. Three of the works copied directly were *Courtesan* by Eizumi Kaisai, "Kameido Umeya" by Utagawa Hiroshige, and "In the Rain" created in 1857 [6]. Van Gogh made a breakthrough while completely preserving the original image by copying prints in oil, using brushwork instead of knives, and bringing Impressionist colors and pointillism to Japanese landscapes. With far stronger and more vivid colors than the original, the masterpiece of which was *Portrait of Father Tanguy*. Through their own explorations, both Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artists developed extremely different styles of art that originated in Japan in a broader range of possibilities [7].

## 4. CONCLUSION

In 1633, the Edo Shogunate initiated the "Sea Ban," closing Japan to foreign influence. Subsequently, the "Mounin Repulse Order" further restricted foreign ships, leading to a complete isolation policy. However, limited trade continued with specific partners, like the Dutch, Ming, and Qing dynasties. This era gave rise to "Rangaku," or Dutch learning, where Japanese acquired Western knowledge, including technology and



medicine. Rangaku facilitated Japan's understanding of Western culture during the Edo Shogunate's lockdown (1641-1853). Notably, Prussian blue, used in Ukiyo-e art, was introduced through Rangaku. In 1720, Shogun Yoshimune Tokugawa relaxed the ban on foreign books, and texts like "Red Hair Miscellany" in 1787 documented Dutch knowledge. Rangaku advocates pushed for modernization and foreign trade. Japan ended its isolation in 1854, sending students abroad and employing foreign advisors for rapid modernization. Rangaku bridged Japan to Western technological progress, laying the groundwork for science. This openness aided Japan's swift modernization after 1854, marking Ukiyo-e's decline. Ukiyo-e artists like Utagawa Hiroshige and Katsushika Hokusai incorporated Western perspective, influencing Impressionist masters and enriching global art. This interchange between civilizations underscores the enduring relevance of Ukiyo-e and Impressionist art today.

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