



TITLE: *Battle of Tennozan*
ARTIST: Utagawa (Hashimoto) Sadahide (1807-1873)
DATE: 19th Century
SIZE: 3 images each: 14 1/4 x 9 3/4 inches;
framed: 36 1/4 x 20 1/4 inches
MEDIUM: ukiyo-e woodblock print
ACQUISITION #: 70.206
Additional works in the collection by the artist?
Yes ___ No X



STATEMENT ABOUT THE ARTIST

Sadahide "was among the first Japanese artists to seriously explore Western elements within his art....We see a deliberate attempt to build perspective between the foreground and background. Such an element was completely alien to Japanese art."
-artoftheprint.com

Large image, above, is a detail of the entire work on the right.

ARTIST'S BIOGRAPHY

Utagawa Sadahide, also known as Hashimoto Sadahide or Utagawa Kenjiro, studied under master Utagawa Kunisada I (1786-1864). Sadahide is mostly known for his depictions of Westerners who lived in Yokohama during his time. In 1866, his works were displayed in the World Exhibition in Paris where he received the Legion d'Honneur. Sadahide was also one of the leading printers of the *Ichranzu*, or panoramic view. For his depictions of Westerners he adopted a bird's eye-view which he then applied to the portrayal of other cities like Osaka and Nagasaki. He also included Western practices in art like perspective and shading.

CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

The Battle of Tennozan, most commonly known as the Battle of Yamazaki, took place in 1582. This conflict occurred after Daimyo Oda Nobunaga was attacked and forced to commit seppuku (samurai form of honorable suicide) by one of his retainers, Akechi Mitsuhide. After 13 days, Mitsuhide, who had taken over Nobunaga's territory, was met in Yamazaki by Toyotomi Hideyoshi, a samurai of Nobunaga. The battle ended with Hideyoshi defeating and killing Mitsuhide. The Battle at Tennozan marks the end of the Sengoku Period (1477-1558) in Japanese history and the beginning of the Momoyama Period (1558-1600), named after the castle of Hideyoshi. Japan opened up to the west during Hideyoshi's rule and the Momoyama Period. Hideyoshi conquered all of Japan by 1590 thus creating the beginnings of a nation. During Sadahide's time, about 250 years after the event, his rendition of the battle would serve as a moral tale that would encourage loyalty and the samurai code. Sadahide's triptych seems to be honoring the work and actions of Hideyoshi. A very one-sided battle is portrayed. Hideyoshi's men dominate the field from the left and drive the opposition to cover on the right. Mitsuhide's actions would seem dishonorable and dangerous to the unified Japanese society of the artist's time. This piece would serve as a reminder to preserve the stability of the Japanese government and warn those wishing to act against it. Sadahide's piece most likely noted loyalty and adherence to the then current government.

MEDIA DESCRIPTION

Woodblock prints have been an important part of Japanese culture for centuries. Ukiyo-e (floating world pictures) prints go back to the 1680s. They depicted scenes from tea houses, theater performances and other entertainment district occurrences. Color woodblock printing requires many steps and attention to detail. Each color in a design requires a separate block to be carved by the artist(s). Precision and patience is required to layer the various block designs onto a single surface so there is little, or preferably no, sign of overlap. Sadahide followed the ukiyo-e style of printing.

REFERENCES

- "Gountei Sadahide: Foreigners in the Drawing Room of a Foreign Merchant's House in Yokohama." *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*. Web. 14 July 2010. <<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/2007.49.131a-c>>.
- "History of Woodblock Prints." *Sweet Briar College: Art Collection and Galleries*. Web. 16 July 2010. <<http://www.artgallery.sbc.edu/ukiyo-e/historyofwoodblockprints.html>>.
- "Ukiyo-e Prints: Utagawa Sadahide." *Lawrence University*. Web. 16 July 2010. <http://www.lawrence.edu/dept/wriston/collections/jwp/utagawa_sadahide.htm>.

RELATED TERMINOLOGY

Daimyo: social and political title given to the leader of a large piece of territory in Japan. Daimyos had their own samurai armies.



Katsushika Hokusai, *South Wind, Clear Sky*, 1830-33. Japanese Woodblock Print.

Print Your Ancestors

ACTIVITY LESSON PLAN: (K–5)

Session Activity: Students are going to create their own prints about events in the history of their families following instructions that resemble the Japanese woodblock process. Through this activity they should learn the detail, effort, and planning that goes into creating a single color woodblock print.

Activity Procedures: Students will first be shown different Japanese woodblock prints, including Sadahide's *Battle of Tennozan*. The discussion of these prints should focus on the look of the prints rather than their subjects. Students should be asked to compare and contrast them with other 2D works presented so they can see the variation in the look and style between media like paint, pencil, printing ink, etc. Questions to be asked follow. Is there a background? Do you think the objects look flatter? Do the people seem different? Do colors blend? Is shading used (...from one medium to another)?

Objective: Student will understand the general process of Japanese color woodblock prints.

Vocabulary

Dai-bai (Keyblock): The first block carved in woodblock printing; it prints the black outlines, and prints pulled from this block are used in the creation of the blocks for printing the colors.

Materials

Chisel tipped markers (to create thick lines), 2 linoleum blocks per student and linoleum cutting tools (OR Styrofoam blocks and plastic cut-tery), paint or ink, paper.

This discussion will show the students the way the medium of printmaking determines the style and aesthetic of the works themselves and the way the artists had to create their desired images with the woodblock process in mind. The students, learning the difficulty and process that goes into printing, will create drawings (with thick markers) which they will apply to the linoleum plates. These designs will be about family histories the way Sadahide's print was about his Japanese ancestors. They will carve and print the dai-bai, or keyblock, that will become the black outline of the print.

After these prints dry, another discussion will take place regarding the application of color. Painting onto the print itself? Creating another woodblock? Would that need require a different block to be carved? How? After this discussion each student will create a second block by pressing the first block's design onto the second. Then each will pick a single area for color application. The student will then carve the block to allow this color area to stand in relief. Encourage the use of lighter, more transparent color so when printed the color areas will not obliterate the black lines of the first print if some overlapping occurs. Utilize a registration method for matching the two printings (several methods can be found on the internet). This second printing activity will demonstrate to the students the long color application process; for each color desired a new block must be carved.

Finally, students should be prompted to study *Battle of Tennozan* and count the number of colors (including different shades of each) in it. Ask: so how many carved blocks did the artist make? Would you do this?

VISUAL ARTS SUNSHINE STATE STANDARDS: K–5

Strand A: Skills and Techniques
Standard 1: The student understands and applies media, techniques, and processes.

HISTORY SUNSHINE STATE STANDARDS: 6–12

Strand A: Time, Continuity, and Change
Standard 1: The student understands historical chronology and the historical perspective.

Celebration of History or Propaganda? You Decide.

ART HISTORY LESSON PLAN: (6-12)

Session Activity & Objectives: *The Battle of Tennozan* was an important event in Japanese history. Students will be guided in a discussion about historical events portrayed in art works through time and discuss their effect on society. From the lesson students should connect influence from the art to its audience and subsequent developments in society.

Discussion: The discussion should first start with an analysis of Sadahide's piece. The discussion should guide the students to examine the effect the portrayal of the battle would have on its audience. Possible questions can be: what is the attitude towards the battle being portrayed? Support or denouncement? Since this was made centuries after the actual battle, why do you think the artist made this?

Activity: After the students see that Sadahide's piece would influence people, ask the students to think of other art works, from any place or time period, that depict a historical event (ie. *Liberty Leading the People* by Delacroix or *Washington Crossing the Delaware* by Emanuel Leutze). Students will further explore the works mentioned as far as their meaning, purpose, influence, history and so on with questions like:

- What was the historical event? When did it happen? What did that particular work say about the portrayed event? The people involved? The artist and his/her views?
- Would this work encourage people to act? Anybody in particular? How does it do this?
- Who would benefit from the influence of the work? Who would suffer? Who would not like it? Would this put the artist at risk?
- Would you consider this work a form of propaganda? Or simply an analysis or a celebration of history?

Students should ultimately be able to see the way the works discussed fit into history. Terms like propaganda and media influence should come up in the discussion. Finally, the class should be divided into even groups of students. Every two groups should be assigned an appropriate artwork to research and then debate. One group should argue for the piece as a celebration of history while the other should argue for the piece as propaganda. The rest of the class can serve as audience and decide whether the piece on debate is a "celebration of history" or "propaganda."



Eugene Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People*, 1831. Oil on Canvas.