



**TITLE:** *Scene From a Nō Play*  
(*Death Rock*)

**ARTIST:** Tsukioka Kōgyo

**DATE:** 1898

**SIZE:** 9 ¼ x 13 ¾ inches

**MEDIUM:** Ukiyo-e woodblock print

**ACQUISITION #:** 70.49

**ADDITIONAL WORKS BY ARTIST IN COLLECTION:** YES  NO



**MoFA**  
Florida State University Museum of Fine Arts

### Artist Biography

Tsukioka Kōgyo was born as Hanyu Sadanosuke on April 18th, 1869; he died February 25, 1927 at the age of 57. Kogyo was a well-known Japanese ukiyo-e artist of the Meiji Period (1868-1912). As a teenager, he became a student and adopted son of Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (his mother married Yoshitoshi) from whom he learned the fundamentals of painting. He took his stepfather's name Tsukioka. Later, Kogyo studied under Ogata Gekko, well known Japanese painter and printmaker; Gekko gave Tsukioka the name Kogyo. Kogyo became interested in nō theatre from his stepfather who was also fascinated with nō. In the 1890s Kogyo used his knowledge of print design to create three major series of prints related to the nō theatre. Over the span of his life Kogyo produced over a dozen nō paintings. He created five sets of prints inclusive of approximately 700 individual prints. He created other individual prints of nō and kyōgen subjects, as well as over one hundred illustrations of nō and kyōgen plays for Japan's first graphic magazine, *Fuzoku gaho*.

### Nō Plays and Kogyo's Nōgaku zue

Nō plays come in five categories concerned with gods, warriors, women, contemporary themes, and supernatural beings. Plays chosen by Kogyo often deal with the connections between spirits and humans. Originally, nō drama was a very stylized type of dance-drama that was performed before nobility and their families. However, by the late 19th century the Meiji Restoration (1868-1889) allowed for the drama to become more accessible. Due to nō being so closely associated with the overthrown shogunate (shogun, or warrior led government), the art form was almost lost forever.

Kogyo's five-volume print series, *Nōgaku zue* played a significant role in keeping the tradition of nō and kyōgen theater alive. Published between 1897 and 1903, the fourth volume contains the *Death Rock* print. The series was carefully designed and constructed using refined materials that appealed to nō collectors. Each print could be examined and read carefully as each print contains "poetic quotations" or text, intended to help the reader reexperience the performance.

### Death Rock

This print is a scene from the nō play *Sesshoseki, Death Rock*, in which the fox spirit emerges from the "translated death rock." Genno, a priest traveled to a place called Nasuno, the location of a large rock. He witnessed a bird falling dead when it flew over the rock. He was warned by a local woman about going near the rock, which she identified as the "death rock," because it contained the evil spirit of a golden-haired fox that killed any living thing that came near. The woman explained that the spirit was chased out of the palace for trying to kill the emperor, and hid itself in the "death rock." Genno prays for the spirit, the spirit exits the rock, confesses to all the killings, and promises to cease his murderous ways.

### Statement about the Artist: Kogyo's Daughter

Kogyo had a daughter named Fumio who became known as the artist Tsukioka Gyokusei (1908-1994). She took over the Tsukioka school after Kogyo's death in 1927. She describes her father's work habits:

*"I remember beginning at the age of fifteen going to the Kanze nō stage at Omigari in Tokyo with my father. Before the play began, father would sketch the stage, beginning with the hashigakari. People around him were amazed at the speed and facility with which he drew.... When father was absorbed with a painting, he worked with a fierce look on his face, and I knew not to enter his studio."*

### References:

<https://login.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/290877016?accountid=4840>  
[www.myjapanesehanga.com/home/artists/tsukioka-kogyo-1869-1927](http://www.myjapanesehanga.com/home/artists/tsukioka-kogyo-1869-1927)  
<http://digital.library.pitt.edu/k/kogyo/biography.html>  
[https://www.artelino.com/articles/tsukioka\\_kogyo.asp](https://www.artelino.com/articles/tsukioka_kogyo.asp)  
Serper, Zvika. "Japanese Nōh and Kyōgen Plays: Staging Dichotomy." *Comparative Drama*, vol. 39, no. 3/4, 2005, pp. 307-360., [www.jstor.org/stable/41154287](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41154287).  
<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-asia-art-japan/edo-period/a/the-evolution-of-ukiyo-e-and-woodblock-prints>

### Vocabulary

**Japanese nō:** perfected during the Muromachi period (1336-1568), the term means "skill" or "ability." It is a lyrical, traditional Japanese theater that draws its materials from many sources and its form from rituals and folk dances.

**Ukiyo-e:** the term means "pictures of the floating world." It is a genre of art in Japan that focused on momentary pleasures and flourished from the 17<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**Hashigakari:** a bridgeway that connects the main stage to the mirror room.

**Meiji Restoration:** an event of change that restored practical imperial rule to Japan in 1868 under Emperor Meiji.

