

Katsushika Hokusai Notes

Woodblock printmaking – a drawing is made on tissue thin paper and pressed onto a block of wood. The wood is cut away so only the lines of the picture are raised. Finally the block is brushed with ink, a piece of paper is pressed on top, and rubbed to transfer the ink from the wood to the paper. Different blocks are used for each color.

From Wikipedia –

(in bio pg): Hokusai changed addresses (93X) and names (>30X).

(in bio pg): After being expelled from Shunshō's studio by Shunkō's, Hokusai **changed** the subjects of his works, **from** the images of courtesans and actors that were the **traditional subjects** of ukiyo-e to **landscapes** and **images of the daily life of Japanese people** from a variety of social levels. **This change of subject was a breakthrough in ukiyo-e and in Hokusai's career.**

In the postscript to this work, Hokusai writes:

“ From around the age of six, I had the habit of sketching from life. I became an artist, and from fifty on began producing works that won some reputation, but nothing I did before the age of seventy was worthy of attention. At seventy-three, I began to grasp the structures of birds and beasts, insects and fish, and of the way plants grow. If I go on trying, I will surely understand them still better by the time I am eighty-six, so that by ninety I will have penetrated to their essential nature. At one hundred, I may well have a positively divine understanding of them, while at one hundred and thirty, forty, or more I will have reached the stage where every dot and every stroke I paint will be alive. May Heaven, that grants long life, give me the chance to prove that this is no lie. ”

Constantly seeking to produce better work, he apparently exclaimed on his deathbed, "If only Heaven will give me just another ten years... Just another five more years, then I could become a real painter." (in bio pg)

The largest of Hokusai's works is the 15-volume collection **Hokusai Manga**, a book crammed with nearly 4,000 sketches that was published in 1814. His influences also stretched to his contemporaries in nineteenth century Europe whose new style **Art Nouveau** was influenced by him and by Japanese art in general. This was also part of the larger Impressionism movement, with similar themes to Hokusai appearing in Claude Monet and Pierre-Auguste Renoir. Many artists collected his woodcuts: Degas, Gauguin, Klimt, Franz Marc, August Macke, Manet, and van Gogh included.

Faith: From Wikipedia: The name Hokusai means "North Studio (room)," an abbreviation of *Hokushinsai* -"North Star Studio." Hokusai was a member of the Nichiren sect of **Buddhism**, who see the North Star as associated with the deity *Myōken* (妙見菩薩?). Mount Fuji has traditionally been linked with eternal life. As Henry Smith expounds, "Thus from an early time, Mt. Fuji was seen as the source of the secret of immortality, a tradition that was at the heart of Hokusai's own obsession with the mountain."