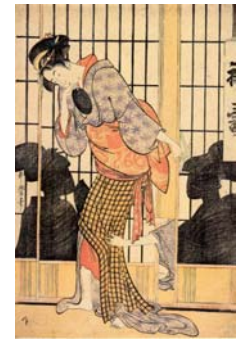


## TECHNIQUE

### JAPANESE WOODBLOCK PRINTS

#### Formal Characteristics of the Japanese Figurative Wood Block Prints

- Signature: in red cartouche in lower left
- Series title: top right
- Top middle/left: cartouche with poem
- Bottom left-hand corner: elongated small black and white cartouche, the name of the publisher
- Bottom left-hand corner: a round and slightly oval seal: a censorship-seal, and a date seal, and below a numeral indicating the month
- In lozenge-shaped cartouche: a system for numbering the prints within the series.
- 



The presence of all these elements is characteristic of the mid-nineteenth century. On earlier prints one will encounter only two or three of these formal features.

*Ukiyo-e* (“Pictures of the floating world,” as these woodblock prints are called in Japanese) represent the combined expertise of three people: the artist, the carver, and the printer. Coordinating and funding the endeavor was a publisher, who commissioned the project and distributed the prints to stores or itinerant peddlers, who would sell them.

The artists supplied the master drawing for the print, executing its outlines with brush and ink on tissue-thin paper. Colors might be indicated, but more often they were understood or decided on later. The drawing was passed on to the carver, who pasted it facedown on a hardwood block, preferably cherry wood, so that the outlines showed through the paper in reverse. A light coating of oil might be brushed on to make the paper more transparent, allowing the drawing to stand out with maximum clarity. The carver then cut around the lines of the drawing with a sharp knife, always working in the same direction as the original brushstrokes. The rest of the block was chiseled away, leaving the outlines standing in relief. This block, which reproduced the master drawing, was called the key block. If the print was to be polychrome, having multiple colors, prints made from the key block were in turn pasted facedown on blocks that would be used as guides for the carver of the colors blocks. Each color generally required a separate block, although both sides of a block might be used for economy.

Once the blocks were completed, the printer took over. Paper for printing was covered lightly with animal glue (gelatin). A few hours before printing, the paper was lightly moistened so that it would take ink and color well. Water-based ink or color was brushed over the block, and the paper placed on top and rubbed with a smooth, padded device called a baren, until the design was completely transferred. The key block was printed first, then the colors one by one. Each block was carved with two small marks called registration marks, in exactly the same place in the margins, outside of the image area---an L in one corner, and a straight line in another. By aligning the paper with these marks before letting it fall over the block, the printer ensured that the colors would be placed correctly within the outlines. One of the most characteristic effects of later Japanese prints is a grading of color from dark to pale. This was achieved by wiping some of the color from the block before printing, or by moistening the block and then applying the color gradually with an unevenly loaded brush---a brush loaded on one side with full-strength color and on the other with diluted color.

#### UKIYO-E: PICTURES OF THE FLOATING WORLD

Not only did newly wealthy merchants patronize painters in the middle and late Edo period, but even artisans and trades people could purchase works of art. Especially in the new capital of Edo, bustling with commerce and cultural activities, people savored the delights of their peaceful society. Buddhism had long preached that pleasures were fleeting; the cherry tree, which blossoms so briefly, became the symbol for the transience of earthly beauty and joy. Commoners in the Edo period did not dispute this transience, but they took a new attitude: Let’s enjoy it to the fullest as long as it lasts. Thus the Buddhist phrase *ukiyo* (“floating world”) became positive rather than negative.

There was no world more transient than that of the pleasure quarter, set up in specified areas of every major city. Here were found restaurants, bathhouses, and brothels. The heroes of the day were no longer famous samurai or aristocratic poets. Instead, swashbuckling actors and beautiful courtesans were admired.

# Studio Arts/AP

**Theme:** Gestural Figure Development

## Artwork Materials:

- Sumi brush and India Ink
- Gel medium, gesso, and sand
- Palette knife
- 2 pieces of matboard
- Drawing board
- Watercolor or acrylic paint
- Pencil
- Masking Tape
- Acrylic & watercolor brushes

## Objective:

You will create a figurative diptych in the Japanese woodblock print style. This is a mixed media piece which will utilize texture to create a strong figure/ground relationship. The positive shape(s) of the figure(s) should fill the majority of the format and the negative space around the figure should become an intricate part of the composition; it should be visually engaging and create its own form. Pay attention to the rule of thirds (your focal point should be at one of the horizontal or vertical intersections) when composing your image, it should be peaceful but not static. A closed composition is generally used though you may elect an open or closed composition. The figure should appear to be 3 dimensional but not highly intricate in detail. The figure should have a flowing quality to it, avoid choppy and jagged lines that slow down visual movement.

- Contrasting textural background
- 3 figures
- Use of perspective (overlapping, size, placement, detail, atmosphere, or converging lines)
- Strong interior values for the figures
- Cross contour lines
- Convincing figure proportions
- Strong gesture - flow and visual movement
- 1+ formal characteristic of the Japanese print

EXTRA CREDIT: pattern on background and drapery - if pattern is used, it should follow the contours of the figure

## Steps

1. Before starting we will create a sampler of textures.
2. You are to create 4-6 thumbnails of your planned diptych; you must show evidence of planning.
3. Tape your mat board to your drawing board – burnish the edges and label your tape with your name and period.
4. Gesso your paper – one coat should be enough. Allow to dry for at least 1 hour.
5. You may draw from life or use a previous study to loosely lay out the first figure on the page with pencil; fill your format and set up a strong composition.
6. Consider perspective and composition before adding the second figure – drawings are generally created from the foreground to the background. Three figures are required between the two images.

7. Mask the format with clear contact paper; you should be able to see the drawing through the plastic. Smooth the clear contact paper out towards the edges of the format to remove air pockets and bubbles. Check the blade on your X-acto knife, is it sharp and secure in the handle holder to avoid cutting yourself? Use the knife to cut along your pencil lines, and then remove the plastic from everything except your figures. The plastic acts as a mask to keep your figures clean during the texture building process.
8. In a small cup mix gesso or gel with sand and stir using a palette knife. Pour the mix over some of the background then use a palette knife to smooth it over. Make sure the mix extends over the edge of the contact paper so that the texture will extend to the very edge of your figure. Create a surface that is 1/8" (.32cm) thick **or less**. Try for a variety of surfaces; rough, smooth, and patterned.
9. Allow this mixture to dry overnight – you will need to leave your work on the drying rack or on a counter, especially if the mixture is thick.
10. Remove the Contact Sheet Mask - Peel off the contact paper, chip off dry flakes, and erase stray pencil marks.
11. Go back into the figurative space and begin building areas of value – work from lightest to darkest – you may use watercolor, ink, or acrylics.
12. When the basic form begins to emerge you must add contrast with darker values – if you are using color, be sure to use complementary color for mixing darks rather than using black.
13. Final touches - use a flowing black line to define contour and cross contour lines – control your line to create texture.
14. Study the prints and refer to the list of formal characteristics at the beginning of this packet. Add one or more of the characteristics to your own art work, to give it a Japanese print influence.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Per: \_\_\_\_\_

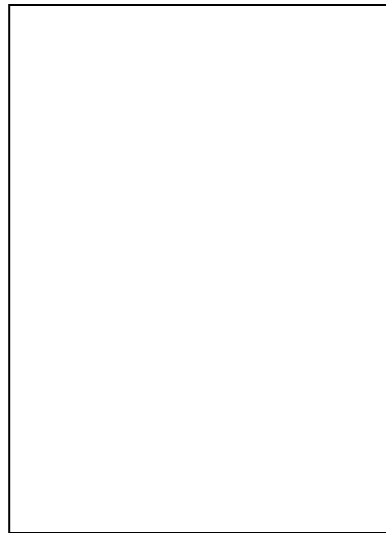
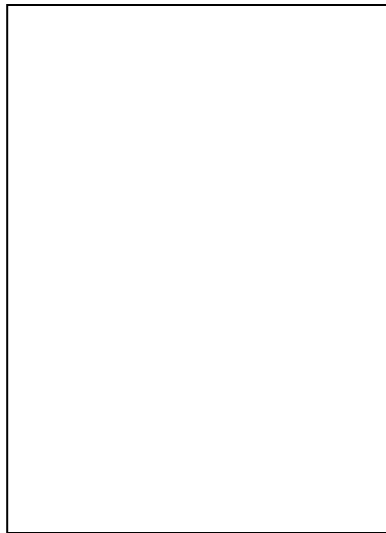
## Thumbnail Composition Sketches

The goal of thumbnail sketches is to work out compositional solutions before beginning the final piece. Use the boxes below to try out 4-5 different compositions, take into consideration what you are attempting to communicate. Figurative diptych thumbnails influenced by the Japanese Print of the mid and late Edo period. Your compositions should capture *Ukiyo-e* (Pictures of the floating world, scenes from daily life)

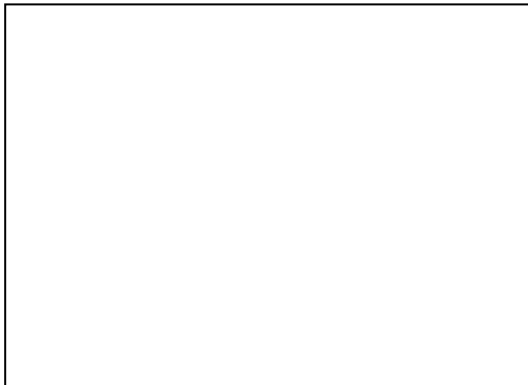
### Requirements

1. 3 figures – the figures fill the majority of the format  
Convincing figure proportions
2. Visually emphasize *Ukiyo-e* with surroundings
3. Use of perspective (foreground and background - overlapping, size, placement, detail, atmosphere, or converging lines)
4. Strong gesture - flow and visual movement  
A focal point that follows the rule of thirds (greatest contrast at the intersection of the horizontal and vertical 3rds)
5. 1+ formal characteristic of the Japanese print

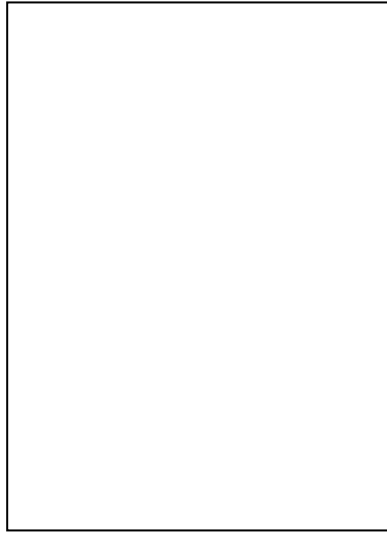
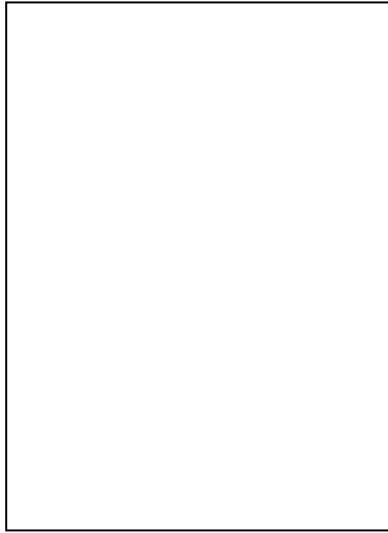
Use a pencil – credit will be given for thoughtfully developed sketches which include all of the requirements



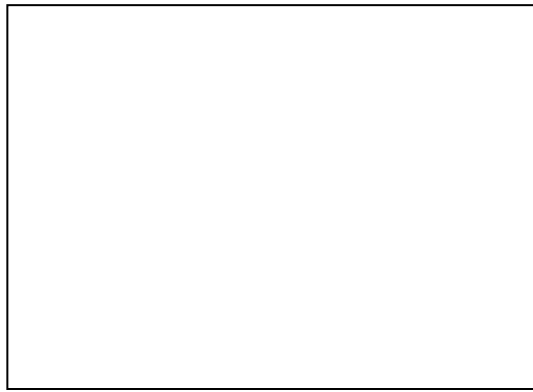
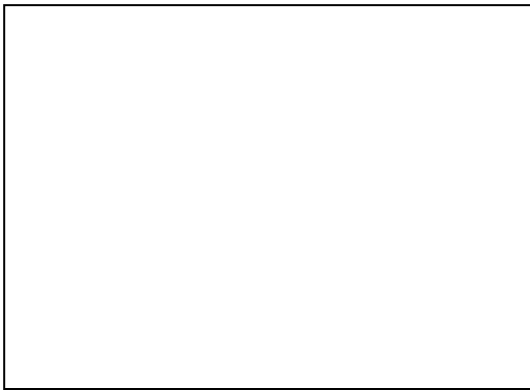
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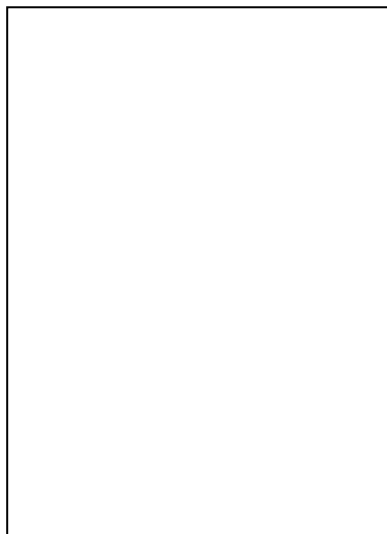
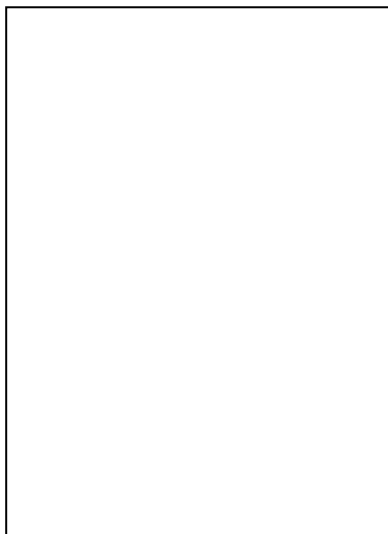
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\_\_\_\_/5



\_\_\_\_/5  
\_\_\_\_/20 Total

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Studio Arts/AP

Self -evaluate your work by placing an X in the box you feel you earned. Attach this sheet and your title card to your drawing with a paperclip.

<b>Evaluation Criteria</b>	Couldn't be Better	Well Done	Gets the Basics	Confused about the basics	Missing or incomplete
<b>Theme: Gestural Figure Development</b>					
Contrasting textural background					
3 figures					
Use of perspective (overlapping, size, placement, detail, atmosphere, or converging lines)					
Strong interior values for the figures					
Cross contour lines					
Convincing Figure Proportions					
Strong gesture - flow and visual movement					
1+ formal characteristic(s) of the Japanese print					
<b>Presentation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signed on front right hand corner</li> <li>• Name, period and date on back right hand corner</li> <li>• Work is smudge, tear and wrinkle free</li> <li>• Title card is included</li> </ul>					

\_\_\_\_\_/10 2-4 Compositional thumbnails completed prior to beginning this project

\_\_\_\_\_/10 Extra Credit - pattern on background and drapery

\_\_\_\_\_/90 Project points

\_\_\_\_\_/10 Typed reflection

\_\_\_\_\_/120 Total points earned

### Required written reflection:

Use the assignment vocabulary and references to the elements and principles of art for full credit.

On a separate sheet of paper type a paragraph responding to the following:

- What was the objective of this project?
- How did you proceed towards this goal?
- What were some of your observations and learning along the way?
- Describe the areas in which you were particularly successful.
- Describe the areas in which you need to improve.