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From *Ukiyo-e* to Creative Printing (*Sosaku Hanga*). Analysis and interpretation of Japanese aesthetics through an original collection of paintings and graphics.

Doctoral dissertation

Promoter

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Introduction

Admission The subject of this doctoral dissertation is related to the author's creative search related to creative contemporary Japanese water printing, referring to the historical Japanese woodcut Ukiyo-e. The concept of Sosaku Hanga (creative print) in the title means for me the search for my own language of artistic expression, which aims to transpose Japanese woodcut in a modern way in various areas of art. In my artistic search, I mainly refer to the technique of water woodcut, which creates many creative possibilities both in the technique of reflection on paper and in oil paintings. It is a specific process of research into matter that led to the creation of prints and oil paintings. By analyzing Japanese aesthetics and listening to my inner voice, I made an attempt to define this different culture in a way that I know, but also drawing on different means of expression. In order to understand and feel live what Japanese art is, I went to Tokyo in 2018, organizing my individual painting exhibition there. My point of view, representing Western values, ie the belief that aesthetics itself is both a physical and moral value, collided with values so far unknown to me. I quickly understood that Japanese aesthetics cannot be simply defined according to Western criteria, in which the main value, according to many cultural researchers, is the imitative role of art. Its different character certainly enriches Western definitions of aesthetics. At every step I encountered a new, completely unknown language of visual arts and symbols. He made me realize that the ambiguity of their ideas introduces meanings to aesthetics, which the Japanese themselves probably do not understand. When asked by me to explain the meanings of hidden symbols in figurines, masks, calligraphy, neon signs, polygraphy or, finally, in contemporary paintings, they replied evasively explaining that it was all their tradition. This feature taught me that, unlike Western art, Japanese art is based on the cycle of duration, space-time, and road. My first live contact with Japanese art was in one of the galleries of old art in France in the 1990s. I saw a Japanese woodcut entitled "The Great Wave" by Katsushik Hokusai, a Japanese artist living at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. The work presented a view of Mount Fuji from the perspective of the ocean. The wave, which is the main motif of the painting, crushing three fishermen's boats, is the most outstanding example of the art known as UKIYO-e. The strange-sounding word did not provide me with a clue or reference by which I could understand the graphic. Years later, the definition of this word took on a different meaning. My live observations and learning about the culture in the capital of Japan make me reflect on one fundamental reflection, on the basis of which many theories and assumptions introducing the concept of Japanese aesthetics have been created. The most important thing is that every aspect of Japanese life, e.g. food, clothing, creative activities, e.g. painting, architecture - are aimed at creating an aesthetic effect. It is not surprising then that the Japanese created many aesthetic terms that characterize the concept of beauty. In this dissertation, I would like to try to define and translate knowledge about Japanese aesthetics in the context of my original collection of oil paintings and graphics.

Chapter I

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF JAPANESE AESTHETICS

Looking at the world map and looking at the very end of the Asian continent, we will certainly not miss the archipelago of several thousand islands called Japan. It is a country with which Poland has established many contacts over the years, both in the social and cultural spheres. The Land of the Rising Sun is primarily an indicator of the canons of beauty for the entire area of the Sea of Japan, but also for the Western world. Concepts of beauty so difficult for a European to understand have evolved over the centuries, developing characteristic schools, trends and concepts. Analyzing various concepts of beauty created over the centuries, we notice that as a result of a long process, a unique aesthetics, appreciated all over the world, was developed, the hallmarks of which include ephemeral, simplicity and ambiguity. However, one should be aware that apart from saving in the means of expression, by some understood as ascetic minimalism, one can see completely opposite trends, which through splendor and excess, based on the richness of forms and means, create an incredible wealth of forms. One should also mention the exceptional attitude of the Japanese towards nature, which contributed to the consolidation of such and not other artistic inclinations that determine the character of Japanese culture, not without reason defined by native thinkers and philosophers, as opposed to the intellectual and abstract culture of the West, as aesthetic¹. A thesis can be put forward that every behavior of a Japanese is lined with an element of aesthetics. My first encounter with the aestheticization of Japanese behavior was when I was observing the streets of Tokyo. The people who were in charge of road traffic were the first to attract attention. Their neat appearance is not everything, because the most important were the movements that were full of harmony and grace. Looking from the side, you could get the impression that it is part of "Swan Lake" by Piotr Tchaikovsky. The science of beauty itself, and thus shaping the issues of Japanese aesthetics in a philosophical context for Western enthusiasts, is not easy to decipher because it was shaped recently taking into account the long history of Japan. It should be emphasized here that the academic studies devoted to it were initiated in Japan relatively recently, in the Meiji era (1868-1912), when the isolation of this country under the rule of the Tokugawa² family, which lasted over two centuries, ended. The reign of the Tokugawa shogunate is the reign of the Edo

¹ G. H. Blocker, Ch.L. Starling, *Japanese Philosophy*, trans. N. Szuster, Krakow 2008, p. 15

² For much more on this, see B. Kubiak Ho-Chi, *Japanese Discovery of Aesthetics*, Japan 2003, No. 16

era. This name also meant the name of the city - the seat of the Tokugawa family. These new concepts for us Europeans are perfectly presented by Barbara Cichy in one of the articles on the determinants of beauty in Japanese culture³, in which we read that the shaped aesthetic presence was noticed before this period in many areas of Japanese art. This is evidenced by the presence of terms related to poetry, theater, monochrome painting and many other branches of art. Beauty was thus expressed, depending on the period, by ideals such as Miyabi (elegance), Aware (melancholy), sabi (patina, imperfection), Wabi (noble poverty), Yumen (secret depth) or Iki (charm, chic). However, many creators of Japanese culture believe that despite this diversity, traditional Japanese aesthetics still lacks a definition, as the existing ones refer only to individual properties. Where should you find confirmation of this thesis? The presented aspects are reflected not only in art, but also in everyday life. My personal reflections after my stay in Japan lead me to describe the phenomenon of sensitivity to beauty as a specific connection with nature (this fact is an essential pillar of Zen). The repeatedly described sensitization of the inhabitants of the Land of the Rising Sun to beauty made them able to find it in almost every aspect of life. Paying attention to everyday phenomena satisfied the aesthetic desires of the Japanese as much as art, after all, to use the words of Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, one of the greatest Japanese writers, "a sense of beauty grows from real life"⁴ Every aspect of Japanese life, such as preparing a meal, clothes, letters, games with children or, finally, the creative process of painting and architecture is aimed at creating an aesthetic effect. And therefore our judgment on the aesthetic terms created should come as no surprise. We can find a lot on this subject in "Japanese Aesthetics" by Krystyna Wilkoszewska. The author points out that the first term referring to the idea of aesthetic feelings (mono-no-aware) appears in the classic work of the writer Murasaki Shikibu, who lived in the years 978-1016 under the title "Genji Monogatari"⁵. This idea represents the pathos of things. It is a specific emotional mood surrounding people, things, nature and art, imbued with sadness and melancholy that arise when faced with the inevitably passing beauty of the outside world. In the words of Ivan Morris:... When people perceive the relationship between beauty and sadness, they feel the mono-no-aware sense most acutely. The sensitive observer is brought to tears by the

³ Barbara Cichy, Artistic determinants of beauty in Japanese Culture, The Polish Journal of the Arts and Culture No. 3 (3/2012)

⁴ Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, Praise of the Shadow, trans. H. Lipszyc [in:] Japanese Aesthetics. Anthology, vol. 3, Aesthetics of life and the beauty of dying, ed. K. Wilkoszewska, Kraków 2005, p. 89.

⁵ Krystyna Wilkoszewska, Japanese Aesthetics Anthology, vol. 1, Japanese Aesthetics, introduction, Kraków 2006, p. 9.

beauty of nature or its embodiment in art (...) not only because it is so touching in itself, but because in the face of this beautiful man becomes aware of the ephemeral nature of everything that lives in this world . Then we read Morris's⁶ words in *The Tale of the Prince Genji*, where one scene after another reaches an emotional climax in presenting the close relationship between aesthetic pleasure and regret⁷. Mikołaj Melanowicz develops thought and goes further in his interpretation: without contact with the essence of being, it is impossible to be *mono-no-aware*⁸. According to the quoted author, the objects of the world around us, especially the objects of nature, put people in a state of contemplation in which the past (memories) succumbs to the present. Subsequently, in the psyche, "the ties with the cyclical course of time, with the seasons of the year and the rites accompanying them are broken" and "impermanence" in itself becomes the subject of contemplation, as an essential quality of being⁹. The word *Mujokan* introduced by the author is a sense of impermanence and the passing of things and people, it is a philosophical, ethical and aesthetic category that underlies *mono-no-aware* emotional sadness. The aforementioned aesthetic concept, characteristic of Buddhism, can be found in Kamo-no Khomei's "Zapiski z hermelki" and in poetry, especially in the 31-syllable form of the *waka*¹⁰ poem, always containing phrases about nature, juxtaposed with phrases communicating emotions: these are most often feelings of sadness and melancholy caused by reflection on the fragility and transience of all forms of life. Another concept that characterizes the ephemeral of beauty is expressed in theater. It is an aesthetic concept of *Yugen*, difficult to define in words, which at its base also expresses the emotional state of the subject, caused by what is deeply hidden in nature. This state can be experienced by the actor of the *Nō*¹¹ theater, when in

⁶ Ivan Morris, English academic teacher, Japanese translator, expert on Japanese culture, author of, among others *The Shining Prince's World: Court Life in Ancient Japan*, 1964. He was president of the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures from 1966–1969. In 1966, he wrote extensively on modern and ancient Japan and translated many classical and contemporary literary works. Ivan Morris was one of the first translators sent to Hiroshima after the explosion of the atomic bomb.

⁷ Ivan Morris, *The World of the Radiant Prince*. PIW, Warsaw 1973. after Mikołaj Melanowicz, *Japanese literature from the 6th to the mid-19th century*. Ed. Science. PWN, Warsaw 1994, vol. I, p. 189

⁸ Mikołaj Melanowicz, *Japanese Literature ... ibid.*, P. 189

⁹ *Ibid.*, s.190

¹⁰ *Waka* translates literally as "Japanese poem" *Kenkyusha's New Japanese-English Dictionary*. Tokyo: Kenkyusha Limited, 1991, s. 1939

¹¹ *Nō* (Japanese 能 *nō*, literally: skill, talent, art, gift, ability). Recognized as one of the oldest performing arts in the world, and by UNESCO for its "intangible cultural heritage". It consists of elements of drama, music and dance. The *nō* theater was fully developed at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries, having various forms of performance from the end of the 6th to the 12th centuries. In the mid-fourteenth century, professional theater operated mainly in Kyoto and Nara. The performances served the purpose of propaganda of doctrines and entertainment, as well as collecting

moments of suspension of the action, without extinguishing the internal tension, he focuses attention and evokes the suggestion of an infinite dimension beyond the world of phenomena; a poet, awakening in us a longing for extrasensory reality provoked by a poetic image; painter - when a part of the painting's plane is covered with clouds, or just the mere sight of a cloud hiding the moon or autumn fog hugging the contours of trees. Yugen has become an aesthetic category thanks to the importance given by the master of the theater, No, Zeami. He wrote: "Yugen is regarded as a sign of the highest achievement in all arts and accomplishments. But especially in No, the manifestation of yugen is of great importance. (...) The actor should be aware that yugen is achieved when all forms of visual and aural expression are beautiful. This happens when the actor himself worked out their rules and made himself their master; then it can be said that he entered the kingdom of yugen "¹²According to Wilkoszewska, this state can be compared to a blooming flower, the essence of its secret depth is an understatement, resignation from what is complementary and finished in favor of phenomena in the phase of beginning or disappearance, when what else or no longer present, it is merely suggested¹³. Further, the author believes that the characteristics of yugen in a broader or narrower scope apply to most of the key, typically Japanese aesthetic terms, already partially indicated by me, such as Aware, Wabi, Sabi, Shiori, Hosomi¹⁴ etc. Another expert on Japanese culture and aesthetics, Donald Keene, writes in his essay "Japanese Aesthetics" that perfection, like some inviolable sphere, is repulsive to the imagination because it leaves no room for its penetration. According to Wilkoszewska, this thesis leads to the conclusion that the basis of Japanese aesthetics is not infinite perfection, but impermanence manifested by phases of growth and phases of decay, each of which has the character of an under-filling. The condition of beauty is not to perpetuate it, but rather to suggest its fragility and passing away. These words will be crucial for understanding what Ukiyo-e is later in my dissertation. This state of ephemeral deeds and the changeability of the world leads to the aesthetic "valorization" of poverty and lack, which was expressed in the notions of wabi sabi, which in some arts, e.g. in the tea ceremony, create a metaphysical and aesthetic concept that

donations for renovation and construction of new sacred buildings. Kenkyusha's New Japanese-English. Tokyo: Kenkyusha Limited, 1991, p. 1240

¹² Quoted from Donald Keen, *Anthology of Japanese Literature*, Nowy York 1955, pp. 260, 262.

¹³ Krystyna Wilkoszewska, *Japanese Aesthetics*, anthology, Krakow 2006, p. 10

¹⁴ More on this in *Nihon Bungaku-ni keru Bi-no Kozo* (The Structure of Beauty in Japanese Literature). Edited by R. Kuriyama. Tokyo 1976.

conditions aesthetic solutions. The very concept of Wabi Sabi¹⁵ is a Japanese philosophy that assumes that beauty does not have to be perfect. In turn, it reflected the loneliness of a man who had abandoned his worldly life with his glitz, the pursuit of money, positions, setting himself a new hermit life. The verb wabi meant to be sad and the adjective wabishii meant something unfortunate. Over time, wabi changed its meaning - it began to characterize a universal idea that defines true beauty, which is not superficial but reflects real reality. In other words, it lures the joy that comes from performing simple activities regardless of material goods, at the same time choosing an ascetic way of life and a spiritual path./Musashi Miyamoto / Sabi is a word that has several meanings, the ones that best reflect its meaning are old age and loneliness. Referring to literature, it means hermit beauty, isolation from the world. The synonymous words sabu, sabishii and susabi refer to weakening something, loneliness and emptiness. According to these meanings, it can be clearly indicated that sabi is the manifestation of ascetic values, their transposition into the values of art. The consequence of this is the statement that these objects, which are created as a result of natural processes, are ambiguous to be specified because they are heterogeneous. They show impermanence and force the viewer to reflect on the transience of the world. The deliberate combination of wabi and sabi leads consistently to the common term wabi-sabi. And now it reflects qualities such as humility, docility, impermanence, humility and, above all, imperfection. Of course, this is completely different to the Western concept, which in ancient times elevated such qualities as durability, symmetry and perfection in every form. Wabi-sabi is a concept of beauty, an expression of respect for nature, what is impermanent, which is manifested in the material world and is a reflection of the spiritual world. This concept fully corresponds to the Japanese love of cherry blossom time / Sakura /. According to Kozyra, wabi-sabi is closely related to the tea ceremony. According to Japanese legend, a young man named Sen no Rikyū wanted to know the rules of the ceremony called "the way of tea". To this end, he went to the tea master Takeeno Joo, who directed him to clean the backyard garden. The young man cleaned the garden, got rid of the rubbish, made the work so that the garden looked perfect, after a while he looked at his creation with satisfaction. However, something was missing, he decided that symmetry was not everything. Before presenting the result of his work to the master, he approached the cherry tree and moved its branches with all his strength, as a result of which several flowers fell casually to the ground. This is what the spirit of wabi-sabi captures:

¹⁵ According to Agnieszka Kozyra, *The Logic of Absolutely Contradictory Self-identity and Aesthetic Values in Zen Art*, *Orientalist Yearbook*, vol. LXVI, issue 1, 2013, the word wabi was probably negative and characterized sadness and poverty.

finding beauty in what is simple and imperfect at the same time. This imperfection will appear in many areas of creativity. Sen no Rikyū is now considered to be the character who exerted the greatest influence on the Japanese art of the tea ceremony and the one who deeply understood the meaning of wabi-sabi. His sense of transient beauty, recorded in Nampōroku, is the most important Japanese document about the tea ceremony. It is a known fact that wabi-sabi reflects the idea of the ephemerality of the world known from Buddhism. Mujō is a Buddhist term that means the transience and death of all things. Yellowed paper, a worn chair surface, a broken cup, a withered branch may be a reflection of this condition. The meditation on the transience of the world, typical of Buddhism, allows you to gain insight into the true nature of reality. A question may be asked: how to read or simply find traces of wabi-sabi in today's world? There are plenty of signposts. The simplicity and beauty of which we are looking for in nature are best reflected in contemporary architecture. We are looking for sources in the structure of matter and organisms. We copy nature. We accept its passing and rebirth. We are looking for innovative solutions related to ecology and living in harmony with nature. We are looking for complete harmony. We are not pursuing at all costs what the ancient Greeks considered to be the determinant of civilization, we reject perfection. We focus on the beauty of the fleeting moment, on what will disappear in a moment. We slow down. The Japanese concept of wabi-sabi affects us more and more often, finding many admirers in the modern world. The experience that brings us to the imperfection that has been touched by time and has gained a deeper meaning for us is important. I experienced it myself when I was a guest at friends' houses in Tokyo. The essence of tea preparation is in itself an aestheticization of simple everyday activities elevated to the rank of art. Another concept that illustrates the idea of ephemerality in art is shibui, which also equates to incompleteness and understatement. This, however, is characterized by peace and tranquility, resulting directly from the adoption of ascetic models of the simplicity of being. Over the centuries, these aesthetic categories have built awareness and sensitivity to beauty. The common feature of the mentioned terms is the so-called a temporary suspension between the transience, fragility and the limitless space of the world of nothingness. Each aesthetic category refers to arts that in their own way pursue reality outside the world of temporal objects. Elusiveness, a feature common to all terms, most present in literature, builds the national consciousness of Japan. This trait has achieved unprecedented mastery unattainable for Westerners in such areas of life as poetry, theater, tea art, architecture and town planning, garden art and flower art. The above-mentioned metaphysics of phenomena should not confuse us, however. The most important feature of Japanese aesthetics is the fact that beauty comes from everyday human life. An

example is the tea-drinking ceremony, the art of flower arranging, which has never been elevated to the rank of art. A British architect hired to build many objects in Japan during the Meiji¹⁶ period, a certain Josiah Conder wrote in his diary: ... The artistic character of the Japanese manifests itself in the way of interpreting the simplicity of natural beauty (...) To understand the essence of Japanese aesthetics, Wilkoszewska refers to the analysis of thinking from the aesthetic-contemplative position, typical of the Japanese way of thinking. What does it mean? Well, getting to know one's own consciousness and the outside world by man is based on objectification. They begin with the act of establishing a subject and an object that are considered independent beings. In this initial act, the subject is established as existing independently of, and in opposition to, the objects of knowledge. In such conditions, the validity of the truth or falsity of the knowledge of objective things and events is demonstrated by verifying whether the content of subjective knowledge is consistent with the non-subjective, i.e. objective, way of existence of these things and events in the external world. In fact, however, all things and events that enter the realm of subjective cognition - be they only things from the outside world, such as objects of the sense of touch, taste, sight and hearing, or the so-called the inner world directly related to the subject of cognition itself. So all things are given existence through the action of what we might call existential articulation¹⁷.

With these aesthetic concepts, I have come to the point where I can argue that the Japanese live in the style of aesthetic experiences. For this form of aesthetic experiences, we can counterbalance the Western idea in which a disinterested attitude determines their beauty. The

¹⁶ Until the second half of the 19th century, Japan was a country that pursued a policy of isolation from the world. The clashes with foreigners made the Japanese realize that the world had changed a lot during the years of isolation of their country. They realized they were backward. Years of hatred suddenly turned into a very strong interest in strangeness. The United States of America influenced the course of events. At the same time, the procession movement intensified. The moral revolution abolished the rule of the Shogunate and the last Shogun ruler Tokugawa Yoshinobu. The rule of warriors / samurai / has gone down in history. At the beginning of 1868, the emperor's power was officially restored. It was Matsuhito. He has become a symbol of modernity and modernization of the country. In early 1869 he moved from Kyoto to former Edo, now Tokyo, which became the capital of Japan. The new government, known as the Meiji oligarchy, / Enlightened Governments /, began to be created by the most active participants of the imperial restoration. They were well educated and knew foreign languages. Japan quickly changed its domestic and foreign policy. The primary goal of the reforms was the abolition of feudalism and the centralization of power around the emperor, defining the borders of Japan. In modern Japanese history, the name Meiji signifies the period of reforms and restoration of Emperor Mutsushito. In the context of painting, graphics and woodcut, the Meiji period marks a new era directed at Western art techniques such as intaglio printing, offset printing and a return to the water woodcut technique / Mokuhanga /, but directing his interests to the surrounding world. The themes were searched again in the context of aesthetics Ukiyo-e.

¹⁷ Krystyna Wilkoszewska, *Japanese Aesthetics, Antologic*, Kraków 2006, *The Subject-Object Relationship in Japanese Thought*, p. 73.

obvious fact for us is that for this concept it is the statement that we are the subject and the so-called a work of art is the focus of our attention. A different view of subjectivity and objectivity in Japanese aesthetics diverts my interest in the idea of art. The aesthetic experience of the average Japanese runs towards humility and a feeling of insignificance. Let our presence in the blooming cherry orchard serve as an example of this idea. We stand in the middle of beauty, our existence is blurred, even insignificant, imperceptible. The cherry blossom is beautiful because the whole tree is covered with them. We can only have such an experience when we are in the center of flowering trees. Such an experience is in opposition to the Western perception of beauty because we focus on a single object. The very idea of blooming cherries and following them through the entire archipelago of islands is very important to the Japanese. In order to connect with nature, the Japanese travel from the southernmost Okinawa to northern Hokkaido. Admiring flowers in bloom is called Hanami and has been practiced for several hundred years and is very popular in Japan. Cherry blossom lasts one to two weeks, usually in March or April, is reported by the media and awaited by most Japanese.

1.1 ORIGIN OF JAPANESE AESTHETICS

I can keep asking what is the Japanese beauty recipe? A model of beauty is a consequence of the Japanese aestheticization of behavior. I personally found out that my sensual attitude to beauty is visible in all my everyday activities and in all artistic activities. Who has not heard of Japanese gardens, beautiful kimonos, sensual intoxication during the cherry blossom period and the sublime beauty of intricately prepared Sushi meals?



1. Two faces of Holy Mount Fuji in the Sushi bar / Sake glass and a piece of fish, Tokyo 2018

This image of Japan is rooted in us, people of Western civilization. There are many such references to true natural beauty. We find such diversity and at the same time an existential experience in painting, graphics, ceramics, sculpture, calligraphy, architecture, theater performances, and gardening. Even the process of making Sushi or making tea has been elevated to the rank of art. But the most popular and transferred to our ground is the art of arranging

flowers, creating compositions from plants called ikebana. Personally, I spent many minutes looking at an aged florist in downtown Tokyo. I was captivated by the concentration and selection of very ascetic means and the breaking of this refined beauty with the white of the flower. From that first moment I knew that beauty according to the Japanese has many definitions. This aestheticization of behavior should be looked for in the beauty of nature. Many artists, poets, painters looked only for beautiful things in nature. And that beauty was an endless source of inspiration for them. An extremely deep experience of beauty is an example of ephemeral beauty, which is combined with the native Japanese religion of Shinto and Buddhism. This passion comes from the idea of being close to nature with its constant paradigms such as seasons, moon phases, day and night phases, rain and heat, snow and fog. Each season heralds a different beauty, e.g. spring begins with the bloom of fruit trees and the courtship of cranes. The crane and the pheasant have the rank of imperial birds. Many of my Japanese friends keep pheasants in their home cages, believing that it brings good luck due to the fact that such birds have been bred at the emperor's court for centuries. We recognize summer on canvases with the bloom of hydrangeas, irises and peonies. Among those flowering exploding with full color we can see cicadas. Just like in our country, we will recognize autumn with chrysanthemum bouquets, but not only. This time of year is of particular importance, as is spring. Autumn in Japan consists mainly of hundreds of variegated maple species. In the animal world, this time of year is symbolized by deer and dragonflies. Winter is symbolized by frost, snow and pine trees. This theme is often shown in graphics.



2. Ikebana Lessons, Flowers Ikebana studio, Tokyo, 2018



3. *Ikebana*, Hotel Shinagawa Prince Hotel Tokio, 2018

Personally, I experienced what I would call aesthetic relief. I found a real inner admiration for ceramics. This kind of art, worshiped for centuries by the Japanese (the first mentions of Japanese ceramics date back to the early antiquity. And as I mentioned earlier, I found references to the natural world in it. In addition to the perfect sculptural form and masterful finish, the attention is drawn to the color, subtle and at the same time expressive, defining the simplified model. It is absolutely true that the concept of beauty stems from the need to be assimilated with nature. The Japanese sees himself as an element that creates nature. The beauty of the garden and the architecture of the void deserve more attention. In the case of the latter, we are dealing not only with old architecture, whose common features can be found in Asian construction, but also in contemporary architecture for which concrete, glass and metal are used. In Tokyo, my attention was drawn to skyscrapers and residential houses. In the case of skyscrapers, I noticed an asymmetry in the form, which, when combined into groups of buildings, creates an unquestionable utopian harmony. Theoretically, something that does not fit together creates unity here. Another interesting feature of contemporary architecture is the application and use of the most modern polycarbonate coatings, which create the illusion of architecture straight from the

fantasy film "Blade Runner 2049". Another interesting feature is the free maneuvering of the internal space, this feature was developed and mastered many centuries ago by architects. Many contemporary interiors are styled as an old interior with the use of traditional tatami¹⁸, portable furniture and what characterizes the most Japanese style are sliding walls that function as doors. This method of space development allows the rooms to be freely modified, adapting them to the needs and to open up to the space and connect with nature-nature.



4. Housing estate in Hiro district, Tokyo 2018

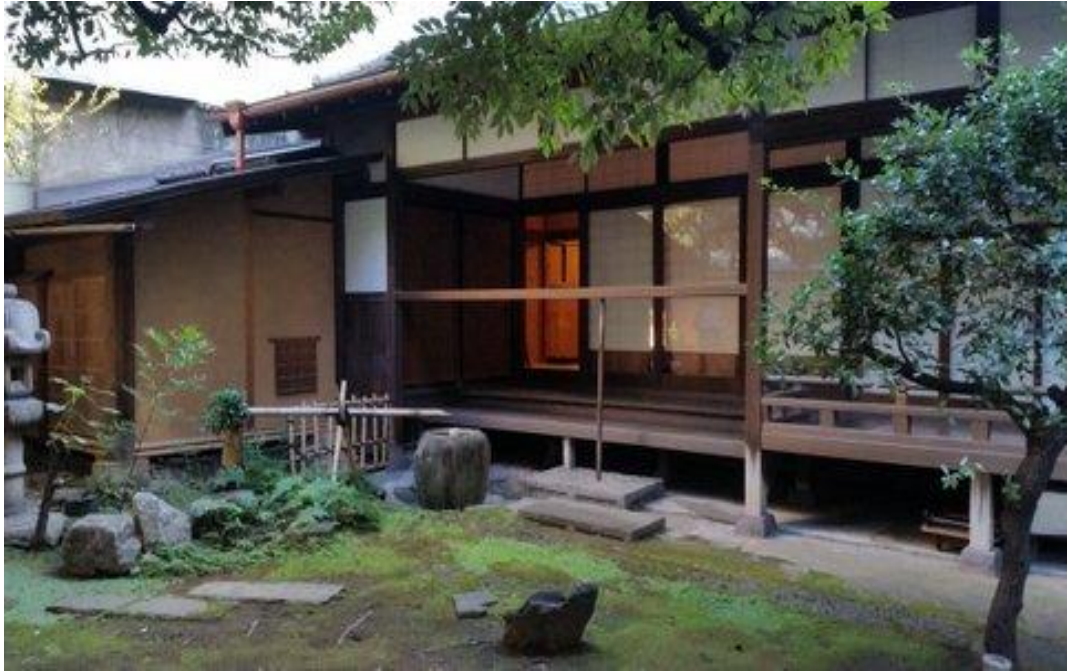
¹⁸ Japanese mat used to cover the floor. The main inner part is made of rice straw and the top layer is made of a double layer of Ligus grass straw. The edges are trimmed with a strip of colored fabric. The standard dimensions are 90x180 cm and at the same time it serves as a measurement unit for the interior area.



5. Largest pedestrian crossing in the world / Shibuya district, Tokyo 2018



6. The Imperial Garden in Tokyo, a halls dedicated to tourists, 2018.



7. Typical Home Garden / Ginza District, Tokyo 2018

And the element that connects man with nature is the garden. Japanese gardens are works of art. As I mentioned, the only source of their inspiration is nature. The basic building blocks of such a garden are stone, gravel, rock, wood, water and plants. What distinguishes them from many gardens of the world is simplicity, harmony and asymmetry as well as focus on spirituality in religion. Shintoism as the most important religion of Japan refers to respect for what is most permanent in nature, that is, mountains, rocks, water and trees. The influence of Buddhism, which came to Japan in the 6th century thanks to Korean monks, cannot be overestimated.

1.2 JAPANESE CONCEPT OF BEAUTY

Today, the idea of beauty as a product of modern times reflects the desires of the Japanese. The style in fashion that retains youth is cult. At almost every step we meet women dressed as girls, and men as eternal boys. In fact, it is a product related to the world of fairy tales. In Japan, a fairy tale is equated with the name Manga. Although this one is an invention of Hokusai students, who persuaded the master to collect his drawings, publish books of drawing. The artist has published a dozen or so drawing volumes, he called those with caricatures and portraits Manga. Today, this word travels on many publishing markets around the world, always referring to the style of Japanese comics. An interesting fact is that Manga evolved in the 80s of the last century in France and Belgium, creating its own already recognizable style. Famous French cartoonists emphasize the importance of Japanese Manga in creating contemporary comics. Many Japanese

art academies place great emphasis on this field of art. Thus, Hokusai's influence on contemporary art is still present.



8. Women dressed as girls, Tokyo 2018

Another interesting and still very popular manifestation of the love for beauty in an exclusively Japanese style is the love for pokemon¹⁹. This display of fascination for forest creatures also manifests itself among adult men. This phenomenon is most likely related to the vision of a different, better world that the average man strives for. This image of a man who cannot live up to life is still very popular and visible. There are stories about men who commit honorable suicide without meeting the expectations of their employer or partner.

¹⁹ Pokemon is the name of the animal's image. According to Wikipedia, the creator of Pokémon is Satoshi Tajiri, in his childhood he collected insects. He abandoned the hobby because the meadows where he caught the specimens were urbanized over time. He moved his interests to slot games. This was the first time he had to think of a hypothetical game of catching and collecting creatures. In 1989, the adult Tajiri founded the amateur magazine Game Freak, entirely devoted to electronic games. When creating it, he collaborated with other game enthusiasts, including cartoonist Ken Sugimori. Soon, the editorial team decided to create their own games and transformed the publishing house into a company producing computer games.



9. Pokemon. Balloon in front of the arcade. Shibuya, Tokyo, 2018

I visited several arcades where I met only men. The most common games are the Pokemon hunts mentioned above. Contemporary canons of beauty in visual arts can be observed in the work of the most recognizable artist, Takashi Murakami. This artist, who comes from the traditional school of painting at the University of Arts in Tokyo, is considered in Japan to be the second Andy Warhol. He is a master of mental shortcut and an outstanding playwright. He does not avoid Pokemon's derisive image, but also promotes references to the traditional style derived from Ukiyo-e.



10. Takashi Murakami. Acrylic on canvas glued to the board. Size 300x450cm.

Takashi Murakami is one of the most sought-after Japanese artists today. In his incredible colorful art, he combines the influences of Ukiyo-e's woodcut with popular culture, which we can see in almost all of his works. This style strongly refers to the graphic style of anime and manga. One cannot say otherwise than that his works are dichotomous, as they are described as charming on the one hand and psychedelic on the other. Here I see references to legends related to ghosts and demons, which we first got to know in Japanese woodcut in the 18th century. What we see most often in his works are flowers, mushrooms ... and skulls.



11. *Takashi Murakami, Kaikai Kiki, 2005*; Christie's

His name appeared in 2000, thanks to his theory of "Superflat", in the catalog for the exhibition of the same name at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. The main assumptions of the theory with which, incidentally, I absolutely agree is the fact of the existence of two-dimensional imagination, which has been present throughout the centuries of Japanese art, and today it is realized in the aesthetics of anime and manga. The artist further believes that this phenomenon, which emphasizes the two-dimensionality of the surface and the use of flat patches of color, completely distinguishes all Japanese art from the Western perception of artistic creativity. Moreover, it is interesting that "Superflat" is his message referring to the society of the Land of the Rising Sun, in which the class differences visible today and, what follows from this argument, by popular tastes of people, were "flattened". This way of interpreting art as a whole social phenomenon that characterizes history and contemporary times, the artist created a new field of pop culture characterized by a negligible distinction between "low-flying" and "high" art. This phenomenon, called "Superflat", defines artistic activity as an endeavor to use or borrow elements considered to be derived from "low" culture in works present in the official art circulation. Like Andy Warhol, he commercializes his art, completely subordinating it to his own aesthetics. We can see it on the example of designed dolls, candies. This fame brought him

profits in the form of participation in advertising campaigns of many famous brands, such as Louis Vuitton, Murakami



12. *Takashi Murakami, Miss ko2, 1996, : Christie's*

Takashi Murakami is the owner of Kaikai Kiki Co. The company promotes works of art, supports young artists, organizes events and artistic projects. Takashi Murakami is promoted by many already recognized young international filmmakers, such as Mark Grothjan KAWS, Anselm Reyle, Matthew Monahan, Chiho Aoshima, Aya Takano. Murakami is an artist in great demand on the market. According to Christie's Auction House, his most expensive work is "Hiropon", an anime-styled female sculpture that sold for \$ 427,500. Some time later, the sculpture "Miss Ko2" reached an auction for \$ 567.5 thousand. However, the artist's absolute auction record is for a work that sold for \$ 13.5 million at Sotheby's in 2008. It was a work entitled "My Lonesome Cowboy" (1998), inspired by anime aesthetics. The sculpture shows a boy masturbating.

Chapter II

FROM UKIYO-E TO HANGA SAUCE, AN OUTLINE OF THE EVOLUTION OF TIMBER TECHNIQUE IN JAPAN

For the average art lover, the term Ukiyo-e is associated with the art of Japanese graphics or painting and is most often associated with the image of the "Great Wave in Kohugawa" by Katsusiko Hokusai, although this certainty is not confirmed by the fact that in its contemporary edition we associate graphics only with Manga (nota bene with the term coined by the said author). Once we immerse ourselves in this extraordinary color of the Wave and start analyzing the content of the painting, we will enter a territory unknown to us, often compared with Picasso's striving for the absolute in art. What they have in common is certainly a long journey in searching for the universe of art. This universe will become my path in search of beauty. The presented artwork is one of the most recognizable works of Japanese art. The Great Wave off Kanagawa has been shaking the art world for over two centuries and remains at the center of contemporary visual arts and design. It was created by Hokusai Katsushika, one of the greatest Japanese painters and graphic artists of the 19th century, as part of his series entitled 36 Famous Views of Mount Fuji, Japan's sacred mountain. The print was originally created by Hokusai around 1830, but its official publication date is 1832. The artwork is printed using wooden stencils, using the traditional Japanese Moku-hanga²⁰ technique commonly known as ukiyo-e. However, the very concept of ukiyo-e is not a technique, but an illustration of aesthetic values in literature, theater and woodcut graphics. In finding the right definition for a complete picture of what Ukiyo-e is, it is worth quoting Krystyna Wilkoszewska, who in her trilogy on Japanese aesthetics refers to a literary definition. In this context, we understand the word Ukiyo-e as images of the passing world. The images the Japanese see are traces of the real world. It is a photograph captured in colorful pictures, in the word of literature and in the magical world of Kabuki theater. Ukijo-e flourished most during the years of Japan's isolationism towards the world. The years 1600-1868 are considered the golden heyday of Ukiyo-e. Keep in mind that the word itself contains the essence of Japanese aesthetics. This isolation from the world under the death penalty of the ruling Shogun Tokugawa brought an unexpected boom in popular arts such as literature, theater and the visual arts. It is worth pointing out the differences between the

²⁰ Moku hanga is a print from a wooden block with the use of water paints / moku with Japanese wood, hang-print /. In graphic arts in the Far East, this technique has been known since the 7th century and probably came to Japan thanks to Buddhist monks who were the first to reproduce miniature wooden block prints of prayers or the image of the Buddha on paper.

western and eastern woodcuts. The woodcut technique, taking into account documented examples, was more popular in the east of the world than in its western part. Certainly, countries such as Ancient China, Korea, Japan - these are the countries that led the way in this simple graphic woodcut technique and in this respect were ahead of Europe. Sources say that as early as the 3rd century BC, wooden elements were used as seals to decorate fabrics. Symbolic elements related to the Tao philosophy were cut in the wood. A milestone in the development of printing in the East was the invention of paper in about the second half of the 1st century BC. The oldest book in the world using wooden stamps dates back to 868. The greatest development of wood engraving took place between the 10th and 13th centuries. Tripitaka (Buddhist canon) was made of as many as 130,000 woodcut blocks!

Ukiyo-e

In order to understand the idea of beauty expressed on many levels in the Land of the Rising Sun, one should refer to several periods of the country's long history. I have already mentioned that Japan was closed to economic, cultural and political contacts for hundreds of years, from the Middle Ages to 1868, when after many attempts to contact the US, Shogun Tokugawa bowed after the presentation of American troops arriving at the coast of Japan. However, the effects of isolation are a great time for the country itself. The long period of peace and political stabilization undoubtedly had a beneficial influence on the development of the country's intellectual activity. The bourgeois culture characteristic of the Edo²¹ period flourished. And here

²¹ Edo-jidai, (1603-1868) - a selective period in the history of Japan in which the shoguns of the Tokugawa family exercised real and practical power. It was also the capital of the then Japan moved from Kyoto. In 1603, as a result of the victory in the civil war, the feudal Tokugawa family came to power in Japan. The beginning of the 17th century was a period of significant development of crafts and trade, cities were developing. Edo and Kyoto in the middle of the 17th century had half a million inhabitants. About a quarter of the area of Japan belonged to the Tokugawa family. Its representatives, as shoguns, then ruled the country for 250 years. In the first place, they limited the rule of the emperor (mikado), whose role was reduced to representative functions only.

The general public was subject to strict control of the central administration, which through a system of orders defined taxes, duties, behavior, clothes and life of particular groups of society. The peasants were forbidden to engage in trade and crafts, and the townspeople were not allowed to wear gold and silver ornaments or build high houses. On the other hand, merchants who were associated in guilds got rich. Lords were not allowed to maintain their own samurai troops over a certain number of them. In the absence of wars, the samurai layer was shrinking quickly, and they were not allowed to do anything else apart from fighting. There were rules based on neo-Confucianism. They professed strict obedience to the authorities. Buddhist monasteries were under the control of the shoguns. At the same time, in order to protect the country from external influences, mainly against the spread of Christianity, in 1639 the borders were closed both to people and goods. Foreign trade was limited to Chinese and Dutch trading posts kept in Nagasaki only. Edo (today's Tokyo) in 1657 was consumed by a fire, in which about 100,000 people lost their lives. Centralized, efficient management and the absence of any internal unrest initially fostered the development of economy, culture and art. Cities grew, crafts flourished, painting, poetry and theater flourished in art. However, the bloody crackdown with Portuguese missionaries, the lack of contacts with

it should be noted that the bourgeoisie, in opposition to the rich nobility established by law, began to create their own art. An expression of this was the observation of the world around everyday activities. In many areas there was a reflection of the world that passes (ukijo), everyday life in cities, full of fun and full of joy, until now unnoticed or forbidden. The forbidden world developed in parallel, human temptations and desires were freed. Gradually, many artists, poets, painters and the so-called Thinkers. Literature smuggled from Dutch ships developed the so-called Dutch²² sciences. It was especially important to return to the sources or refer to social values that maintain order and political order. There was still a system of subjection to the lord (Shogun) and the moral code of the warriors. The role of the Emperor was reduced solely to keeping him out of politics and keeping a testimony of the divine origin of the Japanese people. How is art created in the context of these events?

Shintoism (Shinto, literally the way of deities) as a native religion based on mythology introduced a balance between God, nature and man. Nature becomes a reference to human activities. It connects worldliness with what is reserved in the spiritual realm. Man analyzes the world around him more thoroughly. It imposes a regime of self-improvement through the road²³. At the same time, the economy in Japan changed from typically feudal to early capitalist. As a result of moneylenders taking small plots of land and impoverished peasants, they moved en masse to cities, becoming there cheap labor for rent. They were employed in the feudal factories organized by the princes, among which the most were textile, spinning, silk weaving, dye-works, pottery, paper and lacquer mills. The feudal samurai class was also transformed. Their military services became redundant and they were increasingly engaged in trade and small crafts. They also joined the opposition against the shogunate, which restricted the development of their workplaces through taxes and rationing. However, this state of impoverishment and isolation

Europeans, Japan's cut off from all inventions and scientific achievements from the outside world - all this in the long run caused the country's economic backwardness. It was already clearly visible at the end of the 17th century, when a series of peasant revolts and revolutionary riots took place in the country. However, it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that Japan re-opened to the outside world.

²² After 1639, Japan maintained only contacts with the Dutch. In a Dutch outpost on an artificially created island in Tokyo Bay, one person was employed as a medic. Doctors were not allowed to treat and teach the locals, but the regulations were often ignored. Until now, traditional Chinese treatments have been very expensive, so new opportunities for learning and imitation have opened up for the Japanese. The mimicry effect will be characteristic of Japan until the present day. (page 37, author Elżbieta Nowosielska, History of Japan).

²³ Road is a concept characteristic of the native religion of Japan, i.e. Shintoism, which is characterized by polytheism and a variety of manifestations and cults, among others. Animism and Shamanism. The way of the deities or the way of the gods has become the most important religion in Japan from its beginning, i.e. from the 8th century AD, and continues to this day.

could not last forever. After the opium wars in China that won the European powers, the United States also became interested in the possibilities of using East Asia as its market. To this end, in 1853, the US government sent a military expedition under the command of Matthew Perry to Japan with proposals to open one or two ports in the Japanese Islands for the creation of American trade and supply bases for whaling ships. Perry made it clear to the Japanese that their backward army would not be an obstacle to the American army. A year later (1854), he returned to Edo Bay at the head of a new expedition of nine American warships with 250 guns and a landing of marines, and after a demonstration of gunboats by American shoguns, he agreed to the conclusion of the Kanagawa treaty (now one of the Yokohama districts), according to which the trade with the United States two ports (Shimoda and Hakodate). Within a few years, Japan also concluded similar agreements with Great Britain, Russia, France and the Netherlands. In the years 1867-69 there was a war for the domination of the so-called boshin, as a result of which Yoshinobu Tokugawa was forced to resign as a shogun. There followed the Meiji Restoration, dated 1868, and the period of Japan's opening to foreign influence and the beginning of territorial expansion (Meiji period)²⁴. This moment introduces a completely new quality, goals and a new perspective on painting, graphics, ceramics and theater to the world of Western art. The development of the woodcut technique in Japan probably began in the 8th century due to direct contacts between Buddhist monks. Initially, black and white prints with the image of the Buddha were made. Ukiyo-e is also commonly known as a combination of painting and woodcut. It is a distinctive product of 17th-century Japan. Among the many definitions of the Ukiyo-e phenomenon that are available in internet and scientific sources, we can agree that most probably the average art lover will associate it with the printing of colored pictures on paper. I asked my Tokyo artist friend Yukako Ota what this phenomenon means in Japanese culture for them. Well, it explains that in written language we distinguish between two ways of reading (speaking and produced sound). Today the word Ukiyoe is pronounced as a single word as a proper noun, but the etymology of a word is a combination of two separate words (so-called general nouns). Ukiyo means the modern world and E means painting or painting. Today, the words Ukiyo or Ukiyo-e are pronounced and interpreted in the same way. We distinguish several meanings of this term. The first means the changing world, the second means the mutual love of men and women. One element is the semantic foundation for two concepts. This element is ephemeral, a moment that lasts only for a moment. Hence, in the context of Ukiyo, it is often said about the transient world. Our existence on earth is measured in minutes, hours, months and years.

²⁴ Emanuel Rostworowski, *Universal History, 18th Century*, pp. 92-104.

However, according to Yukako, the word "Ukiyo", which means "modern", is a somewhat outdated word that modern people (especially young people) don't usually use. If someone uses this word, you can be sure that it is the language of older people. Nowadays many young people (unless they are experts) if they hear "Ukiyo" they will think it is "Ukiyo-e (Ukiyoe) according to the Edo period" It is important to know that during the 300 years of the Edo era in Japan there was no major civil war and there was peace. Ordinary people could not buy cultural goods, expensive trinkets for home, or satisfactory medicines. Hunger, epidemics and poor nutrition shortened life. But because there was no war, society enjoyed the culture and food of everyday life, while being modest. Many artisans have also created art that is open and fun. According to Yukako, the Edo Japanese then spoke of a troubled world, a transient world, and they often worried. There was peace in the minds and unlike the kanji and meanings of "sad" and "floating", "It's a short and fleeting life, let's live happily! Let's enjoy this life " Ukiyo-e's paintings, reflected on or painted on paper, were an expression of the community craving entertainment and were created mainly in the largest cities of Japan. Images of Buddha were made using the woodcut technique using matrices as stamps, it was used for printing educational literature, printing pamphlets, commercials for the kabuka theater and even pornographic content. Japanese color woodcut has become a cheap way of acquiring pictures for the bourgeois market. Some treated it as a form of a bulletin for specific districts of larger cities. Samurai were a separate social group of ukiyo-e recipients. Images of women of light manners or genre scenes from the life of avant-garde city quarters were very popular. Later, landscapes, spring views presenting erotic content and elements of fauna and flora became fashionable. Due to the subject matter that was the everyday life of the artists, these prints were called "pictures of the surrounding world". The size of these prints ranged from approx. 250x353mm to 297x420mm. A characteristic feature of these pictures was the signing of prints in the upper left corner. The coat of arms of the ordering person and the name of the author of the drawing were placed there. Harunobu Suzuki, who lived in the 18th century, is believed to be the first author of a multi-colored Japanese woodcut. The most famous artists are Katsushika Hokusai and Hiroshige Ando. How were Ukiyo-e woodcuts made? In order to facilitate the reproduction and distribution of pictures, old woodcut techniques, already known in Japan, were used. The Japanese color woodcut is identified with the Ukiyo-e period, which is the starting point for further considerations. The very process of using water-based inks in the duplicate-reflect process. It is named after MokuHanga from the word -Moku (water), Hanga (print). Preparations for the duplication of prints took place in several stages. The first most important step was the artist making a black and white outline of the sketch, then he marked the names of the colors in which the lines were to be printed. Then the engraver put a sketch on the block of wood. He

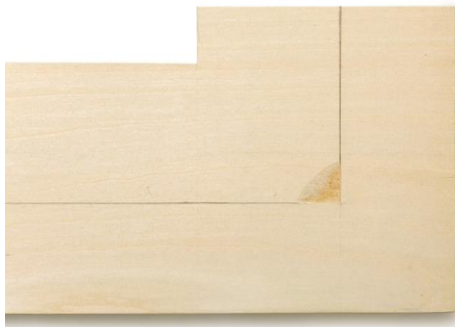
delaminated a special printed paper and made the first matrix based on the reflected lines. As many prints were stamped from the matrix as there were blocks needed to print individual colors. The next stage was sticking the prints on the block and after wiping the paper, stencils for printing individual colors of the intended drawing were made. The printer reflected individual colors from inks obtained from natural dyes combined with water using different matrices. Some of them applied hand-selected additional colors and unique decorations (including powdered mother-of-pearl!) When decorating the prints. The whole cycle of prints ended with their distribution among booksellers and itinerant sellers. Analyzing this technique, we notice that there were many varieties of Ukiyo-e, e.g. black and white called Sumizuri-e, hand-colored Tan-e, hand-colored red beni-e, pictures with a predominance of pink - Benizuri-e, glitter prints called Nishiki -e and Urushi-e, which used black ink mixed with glossy glue. The characteristic and defining feature of this type of printing, commonly known as Ukiyo-e, was the fact that in order to produce it, it was necessary to engage many specialists: draftsman, woodcarver, printer, copyist. There have even been specialized Ukiyo-e schools established in Japan. The development of woodcut printing, which is the basis for Ukiyo-e, can be divided into several stages important from the point of view of its development. It is assumed that this phenomenon began in the period from the great fire of the Meireki era in Edo in 1657 to the era of Horeki (1751-1764). During this period, ukiyo-e were only original freehand drawings and monochrome woodcuts (Samizuri-e). The artist himself who prepared the drawing for the board was called Hanshita-eshi. The most famous artist of this period was Moronobu Hishikawa, known for his many book illustrations and ordinary stories from everyday life (Ukiyo-zoshi). His most famous work that has survived to this day is his drawing, The Beauty Looking Behind Himself (Mikaeri bijin-zu)



13. Moronobu Hishikawa, *The Lovers*, dimensions 23.5 × 33.7 cm, Japanese woodcut, 1680.

Wiesław Kotański, a great expert in Japanese culture, indicates that the beginning of this genre is connected with the activity of an anonymous artist, later referred to in the literature as the Master Camboon, who worked around 1660. It is worth noting that almost 200 years earlier in Europe, Albrecht Durer made the famous woodcut *Riders of the Apocalypse*, considered by his successors to be an unmatched model of woodcutting and printing expertise. With this fact in mind, Ukiyo-e's development during this period seems downright clunky. The next stage in the development of the Japanese technique was the coloring of black and white prints. The master was Kiyonobi Torii, considered an innovator of this technique. The prints were mainly dyed red with pigments of various shades. They were called tan-e (orange-red) and Beni-e (pink). When a few shades of red were added to Beni-e, they were called Benizuri-e. An interesting fact is that many proper names describing color, structure or shade are derived from the names of plants. Benizuri-e as the name of the technique comes from a plant used in dyeing called Benibana (Polish Safflower). Most of the Torii pictures were used as posters for kabuki theater performances. Apparently, this technique adapted well to printing theatrical advertisements, illustrating books that were fashionable at the time, especially pleasure houses in entertainment districts (red lanterns and windows in contemporary brothels may be a reflection of this mood). The heyday of printing took place in the three largest cities of the then Japan, i.e. in Edo (today's

Tokyo) - Yoshiwara district, in Kyoto in the Shimabara district and in Gion, in Osaka in the Shinmachi²⁵ district. These three cities at that time were the so-called the great trinity under the direct supervision of the Shogunate. However, it was in Edo that this art appeared first and flourished the fastest. Thousands of craftsmen migrated to this city from all over Japan, looking for a new market and place to live. At the same time, in the future new capital, they appeared as part of the so-called compulsory appearance and the alternating presence of thousands of samurai. It was simply a control system for the temporary presence of feudal lords at the court of the shoguns. The processions of Han and servants moved along designated routes, which made it impossible for two groups to face each other directly. The flocks of people who arrived in Edo were building houses for themselves. And this fact was the direct cause of the popularity of Ukiyo-e's pictures. This measure was primarily information, but also provided entertainment. The second stage in the development of Japanese woodcut was the period between 1765 and 1806. Calendars with illustrations (e-goyomi) have become popular. Their distribution and exchange took place at more and more popular social gatherings. Their popularity grew rapidly. In response to such great interest, printing began to be improved. The father of traditional color Ukiyo-e was Harunobu Suzuki, who in response to customer needs invented a multi-color printing method called "Eastern Glitter Pictures (Chuma-nishiki-e)²⁶. This invention led directly to the heyday of ukiyo-e. The invention consisted in the development of paper registration marks (kento). They were used for precise printing of many prints on one paper.



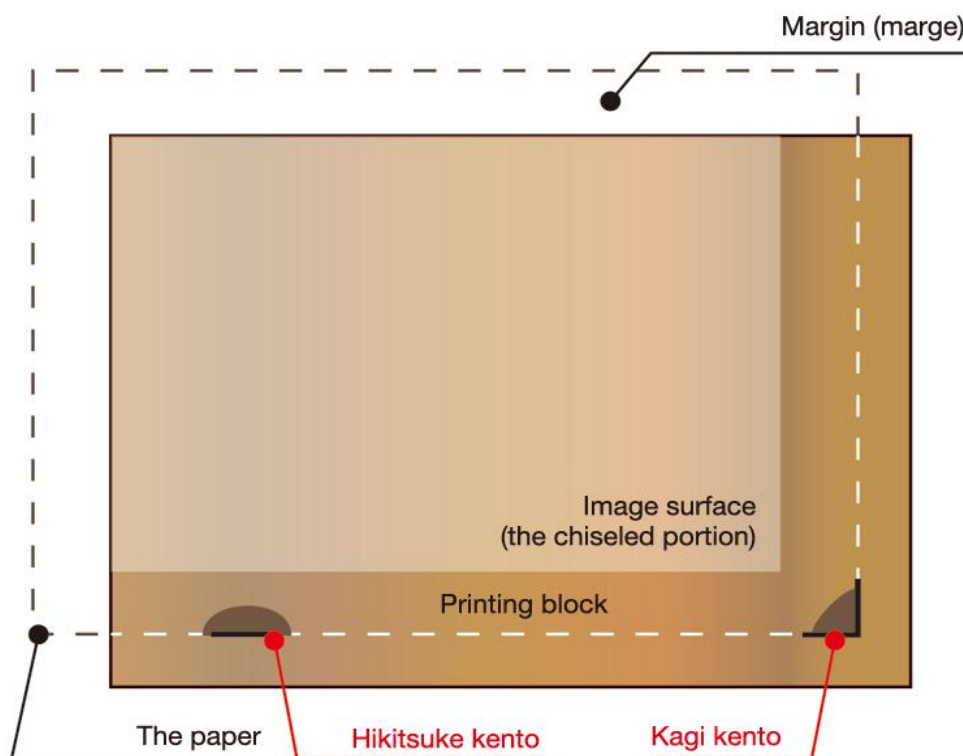
14.Kento signs on board.

²⁵ J.W. Hall: Japan from the earliest times to today. Warsaw: PIW, 1979, p. 189.

²⁶ Japanese-English Character Dictionary. Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, Inc., 1999, p. 542.



15. The method of fixing the paper on Kento signs



16. Visualization of the placement of paper on a wooden matrix during reflection

Kagi kento (L sign) and hikitsuke kento (straight sign) are so-called L-shaped registration plates and straight lines that are cut out on the block as markers to accurately position the paper in the correct printing position. The L mark is engraved in the lower right corner and a simple character is carved about two-thirds along the bottom edge (including the margin on the paper) to the left

of the L mark. During printing, the paper is held between the index and middle fingers of both hands. The lower right corner of the paper is then rested against the L mark and pinned with the thumb of the right hand, and the lower edge of the paper rests against the simple mark and pinned with the thumb of the left hand with the palm. Finally, the paper is gently lowered over the print block. The characters thus allow the paper to be positioned correctly so that, even when using multiple printing blocks, there is no color shift or offset. When making registration marks, it is necessary to calculate the size of the entire image and the margin of work and mark them first directly on the tree block. If the registration mark showing the outer edge of the margin fits in the wood block, mark the position of the L mark in the lower right corner and the straight mark position in the lower left corner directly on the wood block. Affixing registration marks on carving in this way is called "uchi kento". If the size of the block will be the size of the picture, then you need to prepare a wooden board of the same thickness as the block and cut the registration marks on it. This board is called "kento-ban" and the method of using this board is called "soto kento". Registration marks should be cut perpendicular to the block using a tool called a Kento chisel. A knife can be used instead if a kento chisel is not available. Using a flat knife, cut the slope of the registration marks slightly to create a rim that is deep enough for the paper to rest on. In turn, be careful when doing this because if the L sign is not at right angles or if the straight sign is not aligned in a straight line with the line extending from the bottom edge of the L sign, it may cause a color shift when different colored blocks are used matrices. In general, the L sign is on the right and the straight sign is on the left. But they can be put the other way around if one is left-handed. This is obviously a general method recommended for making several prints from multiple matrices. Many contemporary artists do not use this technique. Also, for the first time in these new prints, innovative paper was used, which was stronger, fluffy and snow-white. It is interesting that to this day such paper is produced using it for modern prints (I will mention the paper later in the doctoral dissertation). The paper used for the innovative technique was produced in the province of Echizen from mulberry wood (mulberry bush called goat, Latin *Broussonetia kazinoki* - paper mulberry) and was called echizen-hosho-gami. The name has survived to this day. An important fundamental difference between the new technique of reflecting images was a separate process of preparing several stages of work before final printing. The division of work concerned a draftsman (artist) who, after censorship of a sponsor or publisher with black ink, passed them on to an engraver (craftsman) who stuck them on a block of wood and carved the first matrix, then passed it on to the printer who reflected them. During this period, many outstanding artists appeared, whose works are testimony to extraordinary craftsmanship. Styles emerged. Portraits of the heads of kabuki actors and portraits of courtesans were presented. It is worth mentioning such figures as Shunsho Katsukawa,

Shimegasa Kitao, Utamaro Kitagawa. The latter showed exceptional talent in portraying the character of the portrayed people. His portraits of courtesans show the character of the women they portray. Utamaro visited the forbidden neighborhoods at night, hence his excellent knowledge of interior details. This directly influenced its enormous popularity²⁷. An interesting fact about the popularity of color prints is the history of the prohibition of publishing any pictures in 1790, which was introduced by the authorities under the Kansei era reforms. They established seals approving printing (you might call it censorship). Juzaburo Tsutaya, the publisher of color prints, had to pay a considerable financial penalty for the distribution of politically incorrect works by artists related to the water woodcut technique. In order to save his printing house, he started printing works by Sharaku Toshusai, which were very popular at that time. The works of this artist were appreciated on the market for their masterful technique. The printer got rich quickly, but the artist's works fell into oblivion for years due to too much caricaturization of models. Sharaku was a commercial artist, but as soon as he got onto the market, he disappeared quickly. When analyzing the course and development of the subject matter and the printing technique itself, it is important that his portraits influenced the development of later painting. The act of dethroning the artist was carried out by another famous painter Toyokuni Utagawa, the founder of the largest school of painters ukiyo-e eshi. The years 1781-1804 are considered to be the Ukiyo-e Renaissance. The death of the founder of the Utagawa school caused minor changes in the trend of female portraits (bijn-ga). The changes concerned sensuality and the way sexy beauty is portrayed. The greatest Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai and his competitor, the brilliant Hiroshige Ando, have just entered the stage. They both made the most beautiful Ukiyo-e woodcuts in the history of the genre. Hokusai and Hiroshige will change their art from 19th century Western art. Hokusai started artistic journeys with a sketchbook. The most famous cycle is the Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji - Fugaku sanju-rokkei (Kokugawa's Great Wave comes from this cycle). Hiroshige performs Fifty-Three Stations on the Tokaido -Tokaido goju san-tsugi highway. This is how a drawing style was created that depicts beautiful landscapes (meisho-e). Both artists compete for the palm of priority. Hokusai signed his works by using many pseudonyms, incl. Shunrō, Sōri, Taito, Manji. He studied at the Shunshō studio. He became famous as an extremely prolific artist, brilliant draftsman, landscape painter, author of illustrations and caricatures. In his paintings, he depicted the then Japan. This painter created images of contemporary poets. He has published dozens of volumes with drawings of flowers, turtles, pheasants (incidentally, this bird is considered a

²⁷ Rossella Menegazzo: Japan - a lexicon of civilization. Warsaw: Arkady, 2008, p. 80.

divine creature in Japan), roosters and hens, fabric patterns, seafood. Persuaded by his students, he published 15 volumes of sketches and drawings entitled Manga (this term is used today and refers to the drawing style characteristic of fairy tales, dolls, posters). In 2020, the Japanese government issued a banknote with the image of the most famous Japanese woodcut by Hokusai depicting the Great Wave on the 260th anniversary of the artist's birth. In Tokyo, I had the pleasure of visiting the Hokusai Museum, where I saw many of his unpublished works and Edo-era matrices. This place is visited by thousands of tourists every year, but interestingly, most of them are Japanese themselves. Clearly the Japanese loved this artist creating such a wonderful place. Hokusai spoke of himself as an "old man obsessed with painting". On the back page of the two volumes One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji Hokusai, then seventy-five years old, he wrote about himself: "As a six-year-old I became passionate about drawing objects, and since I was 50, I have often published my drawings. Yet among what I have created over the past seventy years, there is nothing of note. " "... At the age of seventy-three I understood the nature of the structure of animals, birds, insects and fish, as well as the nature of the life of herbs and plants. Therefore, when I turn eighty-six, I will move on. At the age of ninety, I will explore their hidden meaning even more, and when I am one hundred, perhaps I will attain the divine dimension. When I'm one hundred and ten years old, the tiniest dash and dot will have a life of their own. If I could make any wish, I would ask those who will live to see this to see if what I am saying turns out to be true. " Given the phenomenal self-criticism of Hokusai at the very end of his long life, he also said: "If the heavens gave me ten more years [...]. If the heavens gave me at least five extra years of life, I would be a true artist! " If it is appropriate to comment on these words, they should read: We artists Let's take an example! The end of ukiyo-e runs from 1859 to around 1912. The decline of technology is also its greatest boom. During this period, Hokusai and Hiroshige created their most beautiful works. Following opening up to the world, Japan became interested in Western culture. It started to be printed in the Yokohama-ukiyo-e style (landscape paintings, Western-style architecture), and after the Meiji restoration, a new style appeared on the market called the Kaika-e style, representing Western architecture and railway. Many experts on the subject believe that the last master of Ukiyo-e was Yoshita Tsukioka, known mainly for bloody woodcuts (muzan-e), full of violent historical scenes (Rekishi-ga). This style will be a direct inspiration for Japanese and American films depicting distant stories in feudal Japan or referring to the Bushido classics. To sum up, what distinguished Japanese woodcut from European graphics were the paints, medium and paper. An important feature of this print was the fact that dyes were obtained, just like in Europe at that time, from natural minerals and plants. However, the water paint prepared in this way (today we would call it a watercolor) had to be combined with a specially prepared rice paste (Nori). My personal experience with the production of rice

glue confirms my belief that the entire process, from the preparation of the matrices, to the production of paints and pastes, can be done in my own studio without the need to use devices and presses. Color woodcuts using multiple matrices with drawings cut out in the form of simple stamps were cheap entertainment for the masses. They quickly became a collector's item. Sometimes they were political and mocking, and prints depicting the actors of the Kabuki theater functioned as postcards of famous idols. Making the matrix, most often from mountain cherry boards, from which the pictures were printed, was a very hard work. Particular attention was paid to small details of the presented details, e.g. hair ends, eyebrows, tonal transitions. Even about 20 stamps-matrices were used for the most complex woodcuts. This method of duplicating images was the relatively cheapest way of making a large number of the same prints. It was a kind of social newsletter. Among the audience, the most important group were samurai who, despite cultivating the way of the sword / bushido /, did nothing. The most popular themes related to the 18th century ukiyo-e are portraying the life of courtesans, forbidden trysts, landscapes, genre scenes, kabuki theater, and at the end of the splendor of this aesthetic also images of animals. From the beginning of the development of ukiyo-e, the most popular topic was the specific topic of pornography, colloquially known as shunga (spring pictures), which is still very popular in many fields of art. The most important technical principle when printing Ukiyo-e was the transition from lighter colors to darker ones and from blocks with smaller printing areas to larger ones.

Sosaku Hanga

Although the woodcuts made in the same technique as in the Edo period are still made today, the development of the so-called style closes with the extinction of the shogunate. The woodcuts made during the Meiji restoration era are referred to as Mokuhan-ga²⁸, which means literally water-based printing from a wooden block. Thus, the mystery of the old masters continues to be developed in a modernist way. It is worth mentioning here that at the beginning of the 20th century, there were two distinct contemporary Japanese printing movements echoing the former Ukiyo-e school. Shin Hanga, or the "new print" movement, which drew its inspiration from French Impressionist techniques, took advantage of growing realism and reinvented popular ukiyo-e themes through a modern "lens". Sosaku Hanga's movement, or "creative printing", also drew on the increasingly global development of graphics and fine arts, drawing a lot from the European avant-garde, while improving its focus on the artist himself and the creative process. Printing became fully "participative" as opposed to traditional printing which involved a

²⁸ *The New Crown Japanese-English Dictionary*. Tokyo: Sanseido Co., Ltd., 1972, p. 631.

complex manufacturing process between the artist, painter, engraver, printer and publisher that finally approved the printing. Going back to the Shogunat era, it should be pointed out that this classic technique of printing from wooden blocks, or Ukiyo-e, was based on the collaboration of many highly specialized craftsmen, each of whom was responsible for only one stage of production. And this is what distinguishes the new art movement of Sosaku Hanga, in which the artists dealt with all phases of production, bringing out the possibilities of experimenting with various graphic and painting techniques, cutting out and personally printing on traditional plague papers. Hanga's Sosaku, characterized by its block style and large areas of flat color in itself close to abstraction, often featured a strict carving technique to celebrate the nature and materiality of the block. The artist paid tribute to nature, in this sense the print contained a living image of nature (boards, trees). Although the floating world of the Edo period (1603–1868) dispersed in the face of rapid modernization, Sosaku Hang's artists adapted the "wooden substrate" to this changing Japan. Adopting new techniques and aesthetics, contemporary artists have captured the spirit of the 20th century through a familiar medium. The imprints of Sosaku Hang's movement are varied in style, inspiration and theme, but they share both spontaneity and expression. Experimenting with different types of wood allowed artists to discover new formats and textures. Unlike the unnumbered Ukiyo-e prints, the 20th century prints have been numbered and completed with a limited run. In the history of the genre it is assumed that the creator of the new style was Kanae Yamamoto, who in 1904 showed a small graphic of a fisherman²⁹ at the exhibition

²⁹ This modest print marks the beginning of the sosaku-hang movement, which encouraged artists to carve and print wood blocks themselves. Rybak, featured in Myojo's art and literature magazine (Morning Star) in 1904, accompanied an article describing Yamamoto's revolutionary opposition to the traditional separation of the designer from the artisans involved in printing, elevating the woodcuts to the level of works of art. The graphics are also undoubtedly modern in a simple, poignant depiction of an old man of the sea and in the artist's deliberate preservation of traces left by the tools with which he cut a wooden block. Since the mid-nineteenth century, when European and American artists first discovered ukiyo-e prints, Japanese pictorial conventions had a great influence on Western art. Yamamoto was influenced by British graphic artist William Nicholson with his bold style of flat figure on an unmodulated Japanese woodcut background. Author Kanae Yamamoto was a Japanese artist best known for his Western-style graphics and paintings. He is often credited with starting the sōsaku-hanga movement. He initiated movements in folk art and art education for children, which still have a strong influence in Japan. Kanae trained in Western-style wood engraving before studying Western-style painting. In an art school, he made a two-color printout of a fisherman, which he sketched during a trip to Chiba. Its publication sparked an interest in the expressive potential of the prints, which turned into the sōsaku-hang movement. Kanae spent 1912–1916 in Europe and brought ideas back to Japan, drawn from exhibitions of peasant crafts and children's art in Russia. In the late 1910s, he founded movements promoting creative peasant crafts and children's artistic education; the latter quickly gained support, but was suppressed as part of rising Japanese militarism. These ideas revived after the Second World War. Though always a supporter, Kanae left behind his prints in 1920 and devoted his artistic output to painting until he suffered a stroke in 1942. He spent the remaining years in the mountainous Nagano in the city of Ueda, where the Kanae Yamamoto Memorial Museum was built in 1962. An interesting fact is that Kanae Yamamoto comes from the Irie [ja] Hatamoto clan - samurai in the direct service of the Tokugawa shogunate of feudal Japan in Edo (modern Tokyo) . His grandfather died in 1868 at the Battle of Ueno, as depicted in the film



17. Kanae Yamamoto, Portrait of a Fisherman, Japanese woodcut, 1904



18. Kanae Yamamoto, Cow, Japanese woodcut, 1910

"The Last Samurai," by Edward Zick during the Boshin War that led to the fall of the Shogunate and the Meiji Restoration that restored power to the emperor

Discarding the collaborative system of several artisans characteristic of ukiyo-e, Kanae Yamamoto made the print entirely on his own, starting with drawing, carving and printing. This newly adopted way of artistic expression adopted the constant principles of "self-drawing", "self-carving" and "self-printing" which became the pillar characterizing the creative printing movement. Japan's rapid economic development was not a good period for the development of Sōsaku Hanga, as Japanese artists drew from Western art. Multicolored printing was introduced by offset machines, and the artist's workshop was often equipped with presses and lithographic stones. The heirs of water printing acted in secret, often without exhibiting their works, as they were refused to present them in salons. Only international competitions created an opportunity to popularize artists of creative printing. One such significant moment in which the art world sees Japanese reborn art is the 1951 São Paulo Art Biennale. The first two awards go to artists from Japan. They were the aforementioned Yamamoto³⁰ and Kiyoshi Saitō³¹ (1907–1997), graphic artists who surpassed Japanese paintings (nihonga), Western-style paintings (yōga), sculptures and the avant-garde. Other sōaku-hanga artists such as Kōshirō Onchi (1891–1955), Un'ichi Hiratsuka (1895–1997), Sadao Watanabe (1913–1996) and Maki Haku (1924–2000) are also well known in the West. The creative printing movement was one of the many manifestations of the individual's development after decades of modernization. The expressions "I" appeared at the turn of the century in both the artistic and literary circles. In 1910, "A Green Sun" by Kōtarō

³⁰ Author Kanae Yamamoto was a Japanese artist best known for his Western-style graphics and paintings. He is often credited with starting the sōsaku-hanga movement. He initiated movements in folk art and art education for children, which still have a strong influence in Japan. Kanae trained in Western-style wood engraving before studying Western-style painting. In an art school, he made a two-color printout of a fisherman, which he sketched during a trip to Chiba. Its publication sparked an interest in the expressive potential of the prints, which turned into the sōsaku-hang movement. Kanae spent 1912–1916 in Europe and brought ideas back to Japan, drawn from exhibitions of peasant crafts and children's art in Russia. In the late 1910s, he founded movements promoting creative peasant crafts and children's artistic education; the latter quickly gained support, but was suppressed as part of rising Japanese militarism. These ideas revived after the Second World War. Though always a supporter, Kanae left behind his prints in 1920 and devoted his artistic output to painting until he suffered a stroke in 1942. He spent the remaining years in the mountainous Nagano in the city of Ueda, where the Kanae Yamamoto Memorial Museum was built in 1962. An interesting fact is that Kanae Yamamoto comes from the Irie [ja] Hatamoto clan - samurai in the direct service of the Tokugawa shogunate of feudal Japan in Edo (modern Tokyo) . His grandfather died in 1868 at the Battle of Ueno, as depicted in the film "The Last Samurai," by Edward Zick during the Boshin War that led to the fall of the Shogunate and the Meiji restoration, which restored power to the emperor.

³¹ Next to Kanae, Yamamoto is the most famous sōsaku-hanga artist. In 1948 he received the first prize for "Milk" at the Printemps Exhibition, which was intended to support young Japanese artists. In 1950, at the Sao Paulo Biennale, his work "Steady Gaze (Flower)" won the "Japanese Origin in Sao Paulo" award. It was the first international award for a Japanese artist after World War II. This event spread the greatness of modern Japanese prints and the name of Kiyoshi around the world. He later won many awards from Japan and abroad. In 1995, he was honored as Bunkakoroshia (a person of cultural value). Kiyoshi died at the age of 90 in 1997.

Takamura (1883–1956) encouraged artists to express themselves individually: "I want absolute freedom of art. Therefore, I recognize the unlimited authority of an artist's individuality... Even if two or three artists should paint the "green sun", I have never criticized them because I can see the green sun myself. " In 1912, in *Bunten and the Creative Arts* (*Bunten to Geijutsu*), Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916) states that "art begins with self-expression and ends with self-expression." These two essays sparked an intellectual discussion of "me" that immediately found an echo in the art scene. In 1910, the first publication of the monthly *White Birch* (*Shirakaba*), the most important magazine shaping the thought of the Taishō period, was published. Beginning young artists organized the first exhibition in the same year. *Shirakaba* also sponsored Western art exhibitions. In the early creative years, the Sōsaku-hanga movement, like many other artistic movements such as the shin-hanga movement, futurism, and the proletarian art movement, sought to survive, experiment and seek a voice in an art scene dominated by currents. popular art well received by *Bunten*. Hanga in general (including shin-hanga) did not reach the status of Western oil paintings (*yōga*) in Japan. Hanga was considered a craft inferior to paintings and sculptures. Ukiyo-e tree prints have always been considered mere reproductions for mass commercial consumption, contrary to the European view of ukiyo-e as art during the culmination of Japonisme. Sōaku-Hanga artists could not earn a living by making only creative graphics. Many later Sōsaku-Hanga artists, such as Kōshirō Onchi (also known as the father of the creative graphic movement), were book illustrators and wood carvers. It was only in 1927 that the hang was approved by *Teiten* (former *Bunten*). In 1935, extracurricular activities on the hang were finally allowed. The war years 1939–1945 were a metamorphosis for the creative printing movement. The "First Thursday" Society, which was key to the post-war revival of Japanese graphics, was founded in 1939 by groups of people gathered at the Kōshirō Onchi home in Tokyo. The group met once a month to discuss a new way to mirror graphics from wood blocks. The first members were Gen Yamaguchi (1896–1976) and Jun'ichirō Sekino (1914–1988). American connoisseurs Ernst Hacker, William Hartnett and Oliver Statler also participated in the creation of the new movement. Western interest in Japanese printing has revived. The "First Thursday" (*Ichimoku-shū*) collection, ie a collection of prints from members who belonged to the group, was produced in 1944. Such a group and publications through it ensured that colleagues could freely observe what they were doing and what they contributed to the development of this old technique. The revival of Japanese graphic arts coincided with the revival of Japan right after World War II. The 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty ended the American occupation of Japan. During the occupation, American soldiers and their wives bought and collected graphics, similar to Japanese swords. They took them out of the Land of the Rising Sun as souvenirs. Some argue that the new Japanese prints became part of the post-war

economic recovery. In order to promote "democratic art", the US patronage changed from Shin-hang to sōsaku-hang. In 1950, abstraction became the mainstream interest of the Japanese printing movement. Japanese prints were seen as an authentic combination of East and West. Artists such as Kōshirō Onchi, who had a love of abstract expression from an early age, completely returned to abstract art after the war (abstract art was banned by the military government during the war). The São Paulo Art Biennale in 1950 was the first post-war renaissance of Japanese graphics on an international scale. This international victory marked a turning point for Sosaku Hang's artists as well as other Japanese graphic artists. The audience of the movement grew, arousing enthusiasm around the world, respecting institutions such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, developed solid collections of these modern prints. Outstanding artists such as Shikō Munakata (1903-1975) and Naoko Matsubara (born 1937), despite working in the folk art tradition (mingei) and also conducting one-man shows in the United States, were suddenly noticed by the world of Western art . Observing today's Japanese graphics, I have a lot of joy in discovering their workshop secrets. In addition to a very rich variety of themes and styles, we are dealing with an authentic search for a rich repertoire of tools and wooden blocks. Today, the variety of artists is so great that it is impossible to describe each one separately. There are an estimated 5,000 artists in Tokyo alone who practice Sosaku Hanga. There are many informal art groups, artists and schools, both private and for public education. Contemporary Sosaku Hanga is a combination of graphic, photographic and painting techniques. Their common feature is the clash of everyday life, which was so characteristic of the EDO era. It is worth mentioning the person of Tetsuya Noda (born 1940), who deals with photography and presents everyday life in his prints in the form of photo journals. Artists such as Maki Haku (1924–2000) and Shinoda Toko (born 1913) synthesize calligraphy and abstract expression to create strikingly beautiful and cheerful images. Beginning in the 1960s, the line between fine art and commercial media became blurred. Pop and conceptual artists use professional traditional techniques and the possibilities for innovation are endless. Analyzing the legacy of contemporary artists from post-war Japan, one of the Ronin Gallery in Tokyo highlights the works of four key artists of the Sosaku Hang movement: Kiyoshi Saito (1907–1997), Junichiro Sekino (1914–1988), Shiko Munakata (1903–1975) and Yoshitoshi Mori (1898 -1992). Although individually, each artist discovers his own style and technique, together these works highlight the diverse innovations and explorations that characterize Sosaku Hanga's movement. Although the works of these artists resonate with the design and artistry of ukiyo-e, these works stand in opposition to traditional art and belong to the international dialogue of contemporary art.

Chapter III

MY FIRST EXPERIENCES WITH JAPANESE WOOD TECHNIQUE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON MY ARTISTIC WORK

In 2018, at the invitation of friends from Tokyo, I organized an exhibition of paintings and graphics there in one of the contemporary art galleries. My exhibition coincided with the start of doctoral studies at the Academy of Fine Arts. Władysław Strzemiński in Łódź. I did not hesitate for a moment. In order to confront my expectations and my search for Ukiyo-e in contemporary Japan, I set off to a country that I knew was different in terms of Poland. My idea of Japan was focused on the Godzilla myth, the art of calligraphy, the tea ceremony, ikebana and Akira Kurosawa's films. I set out into the world with no idea that Ukiyo-e is not an artifact of a world that no longer exists, but a hidden dimension that manifests itself almost at every turn. During my nearly three-week stay in Tokyo, I planned to discover the world of historic Japan in the context of the contemporary glow and noise of the city bustling 24 hours a day. I was the first to visit the Geidai Art University in the Uedo district. I went to a meeting in the graphic arts studio with prof. Michael Schneider, who showed me around the university, presenting the Japanese woodcut workshop and the metal technique workshop.



19. Visiting University of Tokio , In the middle Prof. *Michael Schneider* and Prof. *Hiroshi Suito*, 2018



20. Visitation of the rotogravure and woodcut works hop, Tokyo University, 2018

It is interesting that the Japanese woodcut technique is developed only by foreign students, but the classes are conducted by Japanese artists. Students make wooden matrices in birch plywood on their own. The workshop I visited uses a full range of tools, pigments and boards so characteristic of Shin-Hang. However, in my opinion, the artistic level of the prints was weak, which may have been due to the fact that the potential student has too little time in the educational process to thoroughly learn the secrets of this wonderful printing tradition. Most of the prints presented were of natural forms (mainly insects, amphibians and plants). The paints were prepared in accordance with tradition, i.e. by combining natural mineral dyes with water. After getting acquainted with the woodcut workshop, I also visited the metal techniques workshop, where etching techniques such as etching and aquatint are mainly performed. In the studio I also met many foreign students, mainly from the Antipodes and Western Europe. The process of preparing the plates for etching and the printing process itself is the same as we use in Poland, e.g. in the Intaglio Technics studio of Prof. Dr hab. Alicja Habisiak-Matczak, where I am conducting my PhD.



21. German student in the processing of a wooden matrix, Tokyo University of Arts, 2018



22. Works by students from the woodcut studio at the University of Arts in Tokyo, 2018

It is interesting that the subject matter of the presented works differs from that known to me from visits to the studios of Polish artists or graphic competitions in Poland. I noticed that what might seem obvious, e.g. making graphics in line with the national spirit or a certain culture of students, is different. It mainly refers to Japanese culture. Themes from fairy tales or Japanese films are often used. Is it a subconscious reference to the world around them? If so, isn't it a kind of Ukiyo-e transplantation into today's art? Does an international student studying in the heart of Japan subconsciously want to be Japanese in showing the world? During the visit to the

University, I also met the painter Hiroshi Sugito, who introduced me to his students preparing their diploma theses ending their education at the school at the level of master of arts. It is interesting that each of them received the so-called the studio where they live and prepare their diploma. In practice, it looks like a dormitory with large windows to Ueno Park and the city skyline. Hiroshi Sugito is an artist who had the opportunity to present his art at the MOCAM Museum of Contemporary Art in Krakow in 2015. He is an artist who practices painting difficult to define, operating on the verge of fantasy and abstraction. He has repeatedly presented his works in several European galleries. After getting to know Tokyo's public arts education system, I decided to visit an artist dealing with Shin Hang and Sosaku Hang, which I didn't know at first. I was recommended to visit an artist with several decades of experience. I met Shinkichi Numabe in his studio on the outskirts of Tokyo. From the very beginning of our meeting, I sensed a great passion for his work. Our meeting began with the discussion and presentation of the prints of the most eminent Ukiyo-e representatives such as Katsushika Hokusai, Hiroshige Ando, and Utamaro Kitagawa. The artist discussed and presented the cuts for engraving cherry planks. The very preparation of thin lines is a very long and precise process. I had the opportunity to try cherry tree engraving, the one from which most of the boards for the most popular Ukiyo-e prints are made. After a few attempts to cut lines, the Master presented the most difficult process of preparing graphics, which is printing on specially prepared for this purpose paper. Paper, as in the case of gravure printing, is very important. This one must be a tear-resistant paper, machine-made paper is commonly used due to lower costs and high print runs. However, mountain mulberry paper, commonly known by us as washi³², is specially dedicated to

³² Washi is a traditional Japanese paper. The word "washi" comes from wa, which means "Japanese" and shi means "paper". The term is used to describe paper that uses local fibers, processed by hand and produced in a traditional way. Washi is made using fibers from the inner bark of a gampi tree, a mitsumata shrub (*Edgeworthia chrysantha*), or a paper mulberry bush (*kōzo*). Hughes, Sukey (1978). Washi: the world of Japanese paper. Tokyo: Kodansha International. As Japanese craftsmanship, it is registered as UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage. Government, paper makers welcome addition of 'washi' to UNESCO list. In the justification of the decision, the UNESCO representative stated that washi - by connecting local communities over the centuries - supports the survival of traditional crafts. Thanks to him, mulberries, which are the material for the production of traditional paper, are still planted throughout Japan. The traditional values and skills that are passed down from generation to generation in washi factories were also indicated. for calligraphy, origami, ukiyo-e, lanterns, screens, packaging, umbrellas, fans, clothes and shōji (slightly transmitting light walls characteristic of traditional Japanese architecture). <https://japonia-info.pl/washi-papier-japonski-wpisany-na-liste-unesco/> It is also used for the production of Japanese banknotes and speaker membrane elements. In addition, it is also used in religious rites, e.g. in Shintoite purification rites (*harae*), as one of the elements of the cleansing wand (*harai-gushi*). The first mentions of papermaking are in the chronicle of *Nihongi* (720 AD) - according to these records, the art of papermaking came to Japan from China in the early 7th century AD. Washi is generally more difficult than plain paper made of wood pulp and is used in many traditional arts. Origami, Shodo, and Ukiyo-e were produced using washi. Washi was also used to make various everyday items such as clothes, household items, and toys, as well as robes and ritual items for Shinto priests and Buddha statues. It

the water woodcut. Paper needs moisturizing. When making tests with paper moisture, the best results are obtained after 15 minutes of moistening the paper with water. For this purpose, a wide flat Dosa brush is used to moisten the plump paper with one movement. Set aside for 15 minutes between newspapers, it releases moisture. The paper prepared in this way with a right angle cut in the Kento slots is ready for printing. Before printing, the previously prepared mineral dye inks were mixed so that the pigment was mixed with the water. Many contemporary artists from Sosaku Hanga note that it is worth adding gum arabic to the paint. The mineral pigment with water does not have a binder combining both factors. Gum arabic is used to combine both factors. Akira Kurosaki, the most popular Japanese artist of the past 25 years, during his workshops with adepts of the Shin-Hanga art, pointed out that it is the binder of paint and appropriate hydration that determines the nature and atmosphere of the prints. The artist also used acrylic paints, which, thanks to the fact that they can be mixed with water, are perfect for printing. Personally, in retrospect, I think original watercolors in tubes are just as good.



23. A visit to Master Numabe's studio and discussions on the Ukiyo-e technique.
Attempts at engraving in linden wood.

The master with whom I took the Shin-Hanga lesson presented prints that are used for commercial purposes. It turns out that today every artist who wants to sell copies of prints, eg Hokusai, can print them freely after making matrices from wood. However, to maintain the

was even used to make wreaths that winners received at the 1998 Winter Paralympics. Several types of washi, collectively known as Japanese tissue paper, are used in the maintenance and repair of books.

quality of the prints, the Adachi Institute established in 2000 issues permits and supervises the printing of copies of famous artists.



24. The matrice is made of cherry wood

After the presentation of commercial prints, Master Numabe presented his works to me, which should be considered as *Sosaku-Hanga* prints. The self-made matrices and the contemporary subject of the work seemed to me very interesting and encouraging to make independent attempts. Another discovery of contemporary *Ukiyo-e* was my visit to the aforementioned Adachi Institute, which was established by the Tokyo Administration to register, collect and popularize Japanese woodcuts. The oldest examples of Japanese woodcut can be found in their book collections. In addition, the Institute organizes an annual competition for a contemporary drawing or painting, which is then given to craftsmen working for the Institute who make wooden matrices and printing in accordance with the *Ukiyo-e* trend. They also organize workshops for artists to identify the most talented of them. They receive the commitment and the right to make matrices of copies of recognized artists recognized as icons of this technique. I had the opportunity to watch documentation and a film on the traditional *Ukiyo-e* technique featuring famous and recognized contemporary artists.



25. Director of the Adach Institute in Tokyo - Ms Meguri Nakayama



26. Wooden matrices stored at the Adachi Institute

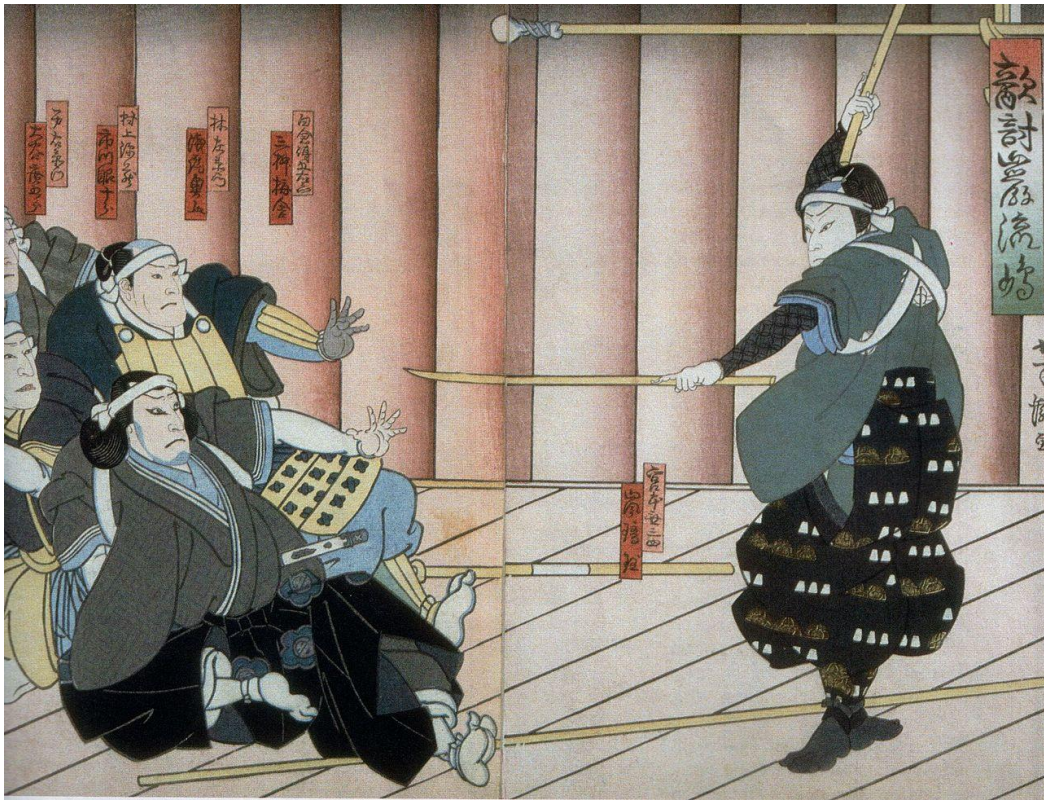


27. Ukiyo-e Book collections at the Adachi Institute in Tokyo. Collections of books and albums popularizing Ukiyo-e

During my stay in Tokyo, I also visited the Katsushiko Hokusai Museum, which was honored by the Japanese with funding a very modernist Museum. Inside, there is a permanent exhibition of his most popular series of prints. The next step was to discover and systematize knowledge about Japan, for this purpose I visited the Edo National Museum in Tokyo. Among the huge collection of artifacts, you can find an exhibition on the origins of woodcuts imported from Korea. An interesting testimony to the development of this technique are scrolls depicting black and white prints, on which you can still notice a clear contour showing the landscape and figures. While analyzing the Museum's collection, I came to the conclusion that a lot of space is devoted to the Ukiyo-e-style woodcut development collection. We can see the first prints of the most famous representatives of the genre there. Once again, the complexity of the graphic process, which is so different to Western art, can be traced on the basis of the presentation of matrices, preliminary trial prints. There, too, we are dealing with the pathos of Japanese aesthetics and love for daily activities and submission to the Shogunate. On the one hand, the realization of values including centuries-old traditions and love of Busido is visible, on the other hand, a revolutionary approach and building against the norms, but to the delight of the people, a new aesthetics that builds a modern society influencing Western art. This place is a perfect example of penetration, contrary to the authors of the national idea of staying on the road. This concept, most often interpreted through the way of a warrior, obtained its fullest form in the Edo period. The Tokugawa

Shogunate put the warrior class on the path of inevitable pauperization. Paradoxically, this road called Bushido in the literature of the genre, compared to the smell of mountain cherry at dawn, crystallized in times of peace, full isolation of Japan from the world. The loyalty of the arriving samurai to Edo came at a price in the form of wages paid. Absolute obedience was a virtue. When for some reason he was discharged from duty, he became the Ronin, a stray samurai with no livelihood. To say that the essence of bushido is death was not true but an affirmation of life. The samurai was supposed not only not to be afraid of death, but also to appreciate every moment of his life, he had to be ready to die with honor. Does not such an understanding of bushido build the foundations of aesthetics related to art as such? We know many outstanding samurai who were also great artists (the most famous is Miyamoto Musashi³³, master of painting and calligraphy). An interesting fact is that this character ronin entered the pop culture of modern Manga, becoming a model for many generations of artists, both visual and filmmakers. One of the artists fascinated by the figure of Musashi was the already presented creator of Ukiyo-e, Kuniyoshi Utagawa. Below I present a woodcut of a samurai.

³³ Miyamoto Musashi is known today as the invincible Ronin samurai. (born 1584, died 13 June 1645), founder of the school of fighting with two swords niten'ichi-ryū (Japanese: "style - two heavens as one"), author of Gorin-no Sho (Books of five circles, Japanese : 五輪書). He was also a painter, poet and craftsman. Musashi won his first match at the age of 13. He has fought over 60 documented duels in his life and has never been defeated by any swordsman. He took part in many wars. His posthumous Buddhist name - Niten.



28. Tsunejirō Yoshitaki: *Musashi Miyamoto* , woodcut japanese, (1855)

After learning solid historical and technical foundations, I discovered traces of Ukiyo-e in modern Sosaku Hanga printing by visiting many art galleries. I saw the largest collection of contemporary graphics in one of the galleries in the Ginza district. The artist that interested me is Saito Kiyoshi.



29. *Saito Kiyoshi*, Gallery Ginza, Tokio, 2018

Among the several dozen works presented at the exhibition, my attention was drawn to the prints depicting landscapes. Interestingly, the print formats are still small in size, which is a continuation of Ukiyo-e. The formats of the works presented at the exhibition refer to the canons of prints developed in the 17th century, according to which the image is presented in a rectangular area close to a square. shikishiban. Several works clearly referred to the so-called the horizontal format developed by Hokusai in 1810 to the so-called oban (25X36 cm). Others, shown in the Tanzaku format (vertical format, 13 x 38 cm), complemented the entire exhibition.

Chapter IV

SEARCH FOR ORIGINAL SOLUTIONS INSPIRED BY "CREATIVE PRINT" - GRAPHICS

Searching for original solutions inspired by "creative print". The first stage of my research included in this doctoral dissertation was to collect source materials on the graphic technique of Japanese woodcut. The most important book, which I found necessary to learn about its secrets, is the book "Landscapes of Japan: Japanese woodcut ukiyo-e and shin hanga" from the collection of the National Museum in Warsaw "by Katarzyna Maleszko. I found the book interesting to systematize my knowledge of the Japanese woodcut. In addition, while in Japan, I bought a few textbooks illustrating this unknown technique. Due to the fact that, like most books on workshop secrets, they are published in Japanese, I made use of translations of my Japanese acquaintances. One of the first conclusions that emerged during the research contained in the book was the fact of using materials that are not widely used among Polish graphic designers. An example is the use of Niro rice paste, which can be purchased on foreign internet portals or in shops with supplies for artists, e.g. in Berlin. The main distinguishing tool, apart from the generally available Japanese engraving knives, is a disc made of string and bamboo cane called Baren. This innovative tool with several hundred years of history is used for rubbing water paint into paper, the recipe of which, according to the masters, is also closely guarded by the studios. I learned this recipe in the Wetanabe studio in Tokyo. The main element on the basis of which the paint is created are natural minerals combined with water, in a proportion that allows it to be easily applied with a brush. The suspension must not be too thick or too thin. During my stay in the studio of Master Wetanabe, I got to know several variants of creating paints. The common feature of all the paints presented to me was the use of mineral pigments. Their characteristic feature is that they reflect perfect colors, saturated with natural dye extract. Many Sosaku Hanga artists use this formula, and this is the formula presented by Akira Kurosaki³⁴ during the workshops for Shin Hanga lovers of gum arabic in order to better combine

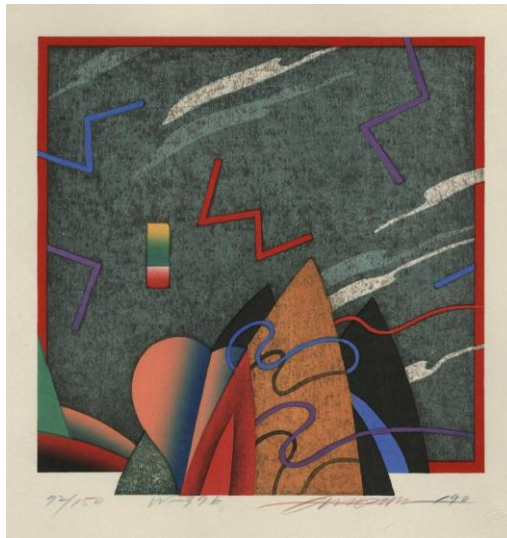
³⁴ Akira Kurosaki was the greatest contemporary Japanese woodcutter. He was a key artist who contributed to the revitalization of the traditional Japanese ukiyo-e woodcut technique in the post-war period, seen by Westerners as the quintessence of Japanese tradition. He was born in Talien Manchuria in 1937. He graduated in 1962 in Kyoto. The first woodcuts by Akira Kurosaki were created around 1965. His early engravings (1965-67) are quite simple compositions made of two woodcut blocks resembling the works of artists such as Gauguin or Munch. As the artist felt more and more at ease in the process of creating, his engravings became more and more complex. Some figures consisted of 15 woodcut blocks with engraved matrices, over 20 colors and as many as 100 prints. Later, his work was influenced by visits to the Harvard University and the Hochschule für Bildende Kunst in Hamburg. From 1970, Akira Kurosaki was a professor in the department of graphics at Seika University in Kyoto. From 1978, he worked as visiting professor and artist-in-residence at various universities in the United States, including Washington,

the dye with water. In his opinion, the dye and water alone are not a sufficient binder for each other. Another most important issue when printing with water-based inks from wooden matrices is the aforementioned rice glue, which makes the ink that covers and soaks into the paper gives character and wide luminosity to the colors. Apparently, it is the glue that causes the graphics to gain flavor and character over time. The color becomes uniform. During my stay in the studio in Tokyo, I had the pleasure to see the entire preparatory cycle from making a matrix in cherry wood, through preparing paints, making Nori glue and imprinting on Kozo paper.



30. Akira Kurosaki, The Trap, 68x38 cm, Japanese woodcut

Seattle, Harvard University-Cambridge, New York, Boston, Portland, Australia - Canberra and London Europe. His art has been staged all over the world and won awards at the world's largest Graphic Biennials in Paris, Tokyo, Krakow, Florence, Seoul, Fredrikstadt, Ljubljana, Maastricht, Beijing, Łódź, San Francisco and Kyoto. For his woodcuts, communities in Japan and America consider him a 'national treasure'. He lived and worked in Kyoto. He died on May 14, 2019.



31. Akira Kurosaki, Wandering Heart, 20.8 x19.8 cm, Japanese woodcut

I transferred my experiences from Japan to my own land. I started work related to this work immediately after returning from Tokyo in 2018. Many attempts related to the proper selection of cherry plank substitutes were carried out with the use of plywood material, e.g. I used 2 cm birch plywood, which met my expectations up to a certain point, i.e. when i wanted to apply full areas to print. Birch allows you to obtain natural rings in the print. I carried out further attempts to prepare wooden matrices on linden boards, which turned out to be a very good material that allowed to obtain the expected material for further processing rather quickly. For the purpose of making wooden matrices, I used two materials, i.e. birch wood (plywood) and a linden board. During my research on the Sosaku Hanga technique, I decided to make trial prints of the intact planes of the wood material in order to find out about the possibility of reproducing the detail on the paper. After conducting a series of tests, I decided to use linden wood in the process of creating Sosaku Hang-style prints for the artistic part of my doctorate. 30x20 cm in size, 2 cm thick, and water-based watercolor paints made of mineral dyes, which I have already tested. Many attempts to make paints convinced me that it is better to use ready-made watercolor paints adapted to water woodcut. The use of good quality paints is of particular importance, because thanks to this, you can achieve a larger scale of color tones on the print. During my research on the technique of water woodcut, I applied the recommendations from the workshop of my Master Wetanabe. It is important to properly wet the wooden matrices before applying the water-based paints, so that the wood absorbs the right amount of water and does not cause the paper to stick. During my research on the use of Sosaku Hanga's technique in artistic creation, I decided to create a series of oil paintings, drawings and graphics - prints on Japanese Kozo paper. I decided that what seems to me characteristic of Ukijo-e is the line that is characteristic of all the Edo period artists. It is a line that characterizes the painting, but not always the feature that

determines the drawing itself. From the line, the journey in the plane of the picture begins. It is she who determines the composition, strength and character of the presented motifs. I started working on the Japanese woodcut technique by making a matrix of 30x20 cm birch plywood. Carving in such plywood is associated with the risk of tearing the thin layer of plywood.



32. Birch board, Dimensions 33 x 24 cm, preliminary preparation



33. Hand-stained woodcut, Dimensions 30 x 20 cm, Konzo Washi paper

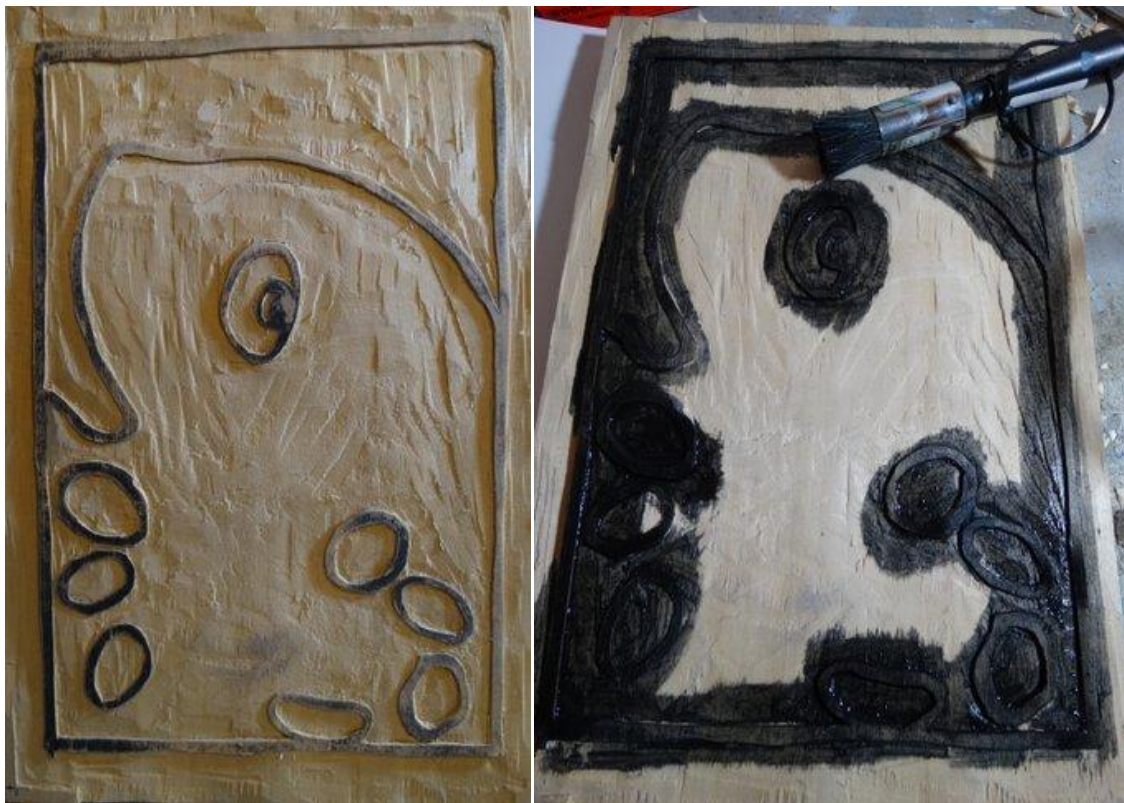
One of the three such layers is 2 millimeters long and is glued to another. Too much pressure will break the line, i.e. break the continuity. There are several such broken lines in the matrix I made. Before making test prints, I soaked the matrix with water and prepared Nori glue and watercolor paints. The first prints were not satisfactory, I tried to vary the Baren pressure and tried to print on different papers with different moisture content. Finally, due to the fact that I made one basic matrix, I decided to manually color the blanks, leaving the printout for further processing related to making other matrices assigned to the given colors. However, I decided to try the linden boards. For this purpose, I sanded the purchased boards with dimensions of 30x20 cm and began to prepare drawings. The first drawing that I transferred to the board referred directly to the sea creatures that Master Hokusai admired so much. I don't use photography in my work. I believe that using photography is taking shortcuts and is not appropriate for real art. Photography, if considered art, should be developed solely in its category. Perhaps this is an inappropriate judgment. However, I want to keep the art pure. For example, later in the work I made the image of the Octopus (Latin name *Oktopus*) presented by me from memory. Today in Japan, this cephalopod is almost always associated with the work of Hokusai and his series of erotic drawings and prints. In the very center of the Hiro district, I found an image of an octopus made of red resin on a

children's playground. This image was undoubtedly a pleasant surprise and the conviction that Hokusai's art still has such a great impact on the contemporary world.



34. Octopus sculpture inspired by Hokusai woodcut, Ibisu district, Tokyo, 2018.

Carving the first matrix took several hours. The first print of it was used to determine the technical defects of the matrix itself. It turned out that it still requires a lot of work and a lot of corrections. Before starting the trial prints, I also sanded the surfaces of the matrix with sandpaper with a gradation of 300, then with a gradation of 500. According to the tradition, the Japanese sand the plates with shark skin. The first print served as a starting point for the development of the entire printout and for color marking on individual plans. In the process, also marked and made Kento points which ensure accurate printing in planned places from several matrices.



35. Matrix for pre-printing and applying paint on it, size 30x20 cm



36. Wooden matrix correction, format 30x20 cm

I made 4 matrices for red, blue and green. From the few prints made, I chose the one. During several trials, I experimented with diluting the paints and with the amount of Nori glue added. Such attempts are always unknown, especially at the stage of improving the technique. Too much glue dilutes the color, but also gives an interesting texture to the paper. In this way, you can give the paint structure a brush effect with a visible abrasion. After this first attempt accepted by me, I decided that I would start making prints directly related to the subject of my paintings, i.e. to the scenes most often depicting dogs and women. I decided to break the scheme of building a picture in one frame. My idea for the graphic was to use 3 matrices on which I would use a different color in several different places.



37. Dog, woodcut japanese, size 3x30x20 cm, paper *Kozo Washi*



38. Tests with the color and the pressure of the paper against the matrix

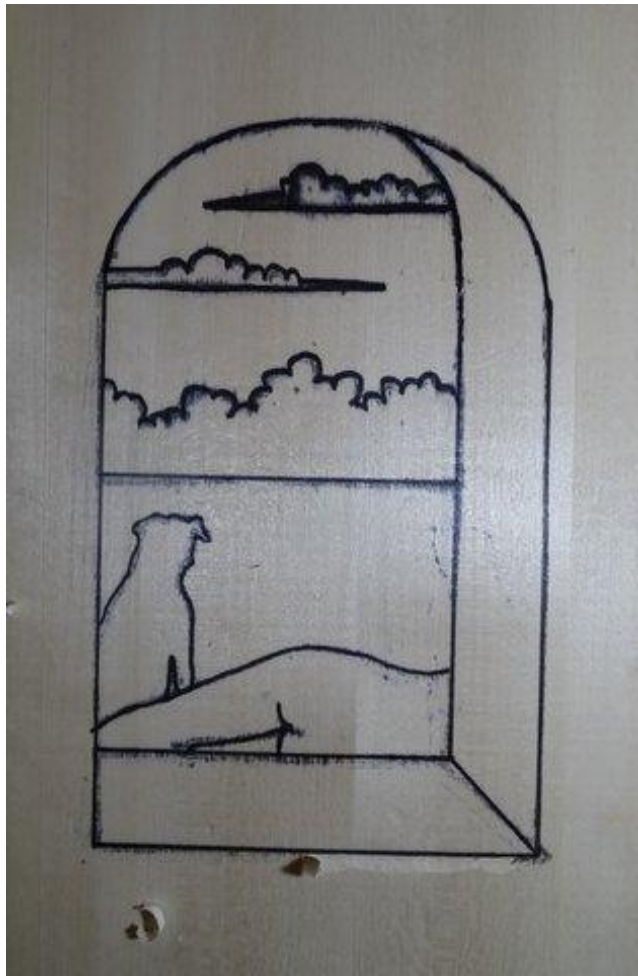


39. Print from one matrice on lithography paper, size 20x30 cm



40. Wooden matrices covered with water

I made the drawing with a pencil directly on three matrices arranged one below the other. In the foreground I made an image of a dog (this motif often appears in my works) and an image of a woman in the background. I made the prints on Kozo paper with a weight of 30 grams. However, in the process of reflecting, I experimented with moisturizing the paper. During the first attempt to reflect the graphics with the image of Octopus, I reflected on the same paper, but moistened more. I noticed that the longer the paper stays wet, the better the paint is absorbed. Even if we apply more Nori glue to the matrix, it does not interfere with the good reproduction of color and detail. The second graphic with the image of a dog and a woman is made with simplified means of expression. We are not dealing here with details, but well-thought-out planes building the entire composition. I decided to make several color versions, starting from a light range of colors to a dark one falling into navy blue. It is interesting that the more I experimented with color, the more I found this technique to be like painting. The only difference is that the oil painting is the only one. The color effects in the woodcut are similar to painting. I also made test prints from the first matrix with a dog's head in several colors and on different papers. I brought papers for works from London (a shop called John Purcell Paper), from a very famous manufactory. I received a dozen or so different papers with a white shade and different texture. The seller recommended me a paper that was hand-made, but made industrially. The recommendation was given to Zerkall 7624 Smooth 145 gsm. However, due to the small size of the paper samples, I decided to make a different, smaller matrix, but also keeping my style. I decided to present a scene like many in a lazy summer rhythm set somewhere on a yellow beach, with a blue sky watched from inside the room. The characters of this scene are the dog and its owner. For this purpose, I made a preliminary drawing on a 30x20 cm matrix, then proceeded to remove the wood to extract the contour and proceeded to the first trial prints. The first prints did not require any corrections. I decided that I could start developing matrices filling the picture with the color plane. I made matrices for yellow and blue. From the very beginning of planning the graphics, I wanted to blur the latter tonally in a few colors. For this one color field, I made a dozen or so tests on 6 different papers, which I received from a London manufacture. I noticed that machine-made paper does not require so much moistening, too much water causes paint blurring and uncontrolled stains. Perhaps this effect is also due to too thinned paint. Further tests on these papers convinced me that the prints should be made on only slightly moistened paper, but kept between other papers before printing, so that the moisture could penetrate the entire surface of the paper. I decided that the best print that I was satisfied with was made on Zerkall Ene Special Making 150 gsm paper. I made other tests on hand-made Kozo 250 gm mulberry paper and I found this paper the most satisfactory.



41. A freehand drawing on a linden board, board size 30x20 cm

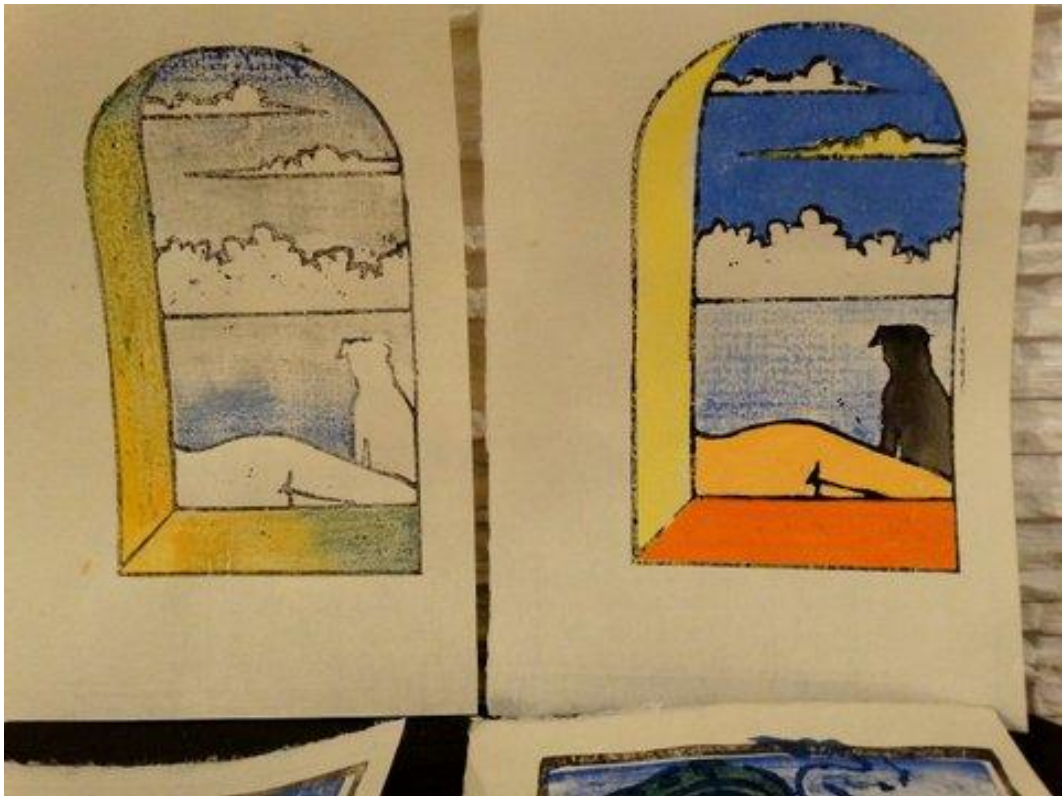
An interesting feature of this paper - considered the best for Shin-Hang prints is its fluffiness. This feature allowed the Japanese to perfect the effects of the so-called bas-relief. relief on paper. On many prints we see a drawing of a detail made with an imprint, but without paint, the so-called dry piston. Moreover, Kozo paper perfectly absorbs paint over time, giving it its own life. This suggestion, which I encountered in Japan, initially seemed irrelevant to me, gained practical relevance in my studio.



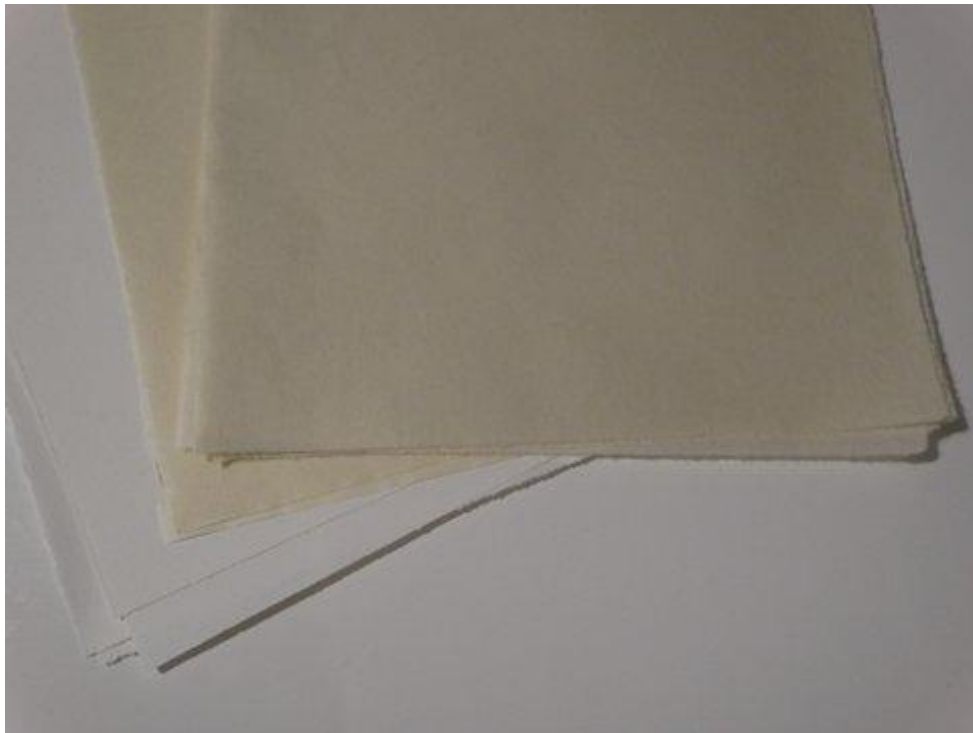
42. Delamination of the Kozo paper, on the second board / the next matrix / to determine the color range.



43. Matrices for yellow and blue



44. Prints from three matrices, Kozo paper



45. Zerkall 7624 Smooth factory papers in various weights



46. Test prints on Zerkall 7624 Smooth factory papers

Another work, designed so that one matrix could be used, but with many possibilities of applying color, was also made of a linden matrix with dimensions of 30x20 cm. The scene I presented is the main theme - a portrait of a man and a background image of a woman and a dog. Based on these few graphics, a skilled eye will notice that my favorite subject is a dog. The image of a dog is a masculine element in the patriarchal world where social roles change. In psychology, the figure of a black dog causes anxiety and, at the same time, anxiety about an uncertain future, also anxiety about what may happen during close contact. However, in painting, the dog symbolizes fidelity and protection, and is often synonymous with courage and friendship. I have adopted the dog theme so much in my work that I begin to build virtually every image or graphic with this character. The motif on the next board, 30 x 20 cm, in the vertical version, was printed on paper with the lowest grammage of 145 gm, Zerkall 7624, which I bought in a Polish store. I conducted experiments with the amount of paint I covered the matrix, taking into account the low basis weight of the paper, I did not decide to use a smaller amount of paint. I decided that I would achieve the effect of natural mixing of the color. While the experiments were interesting

from the point of view of the painting effects, I was not able to predict the streaks on the edges. I did not moisten the paper, as I subconsciously decided that it would be better to absorb the paint. After analyzing the sample prints, I came to the conclusion that, for better precision, I would repeat the imprinting of the graphics from the matrices on Kozo paper. It turned out that, as in the case of the first prints, I obtained the best prints on fluffy Kozo mulberry paper. The printout on this paper turned out to be satisfactory. On Kozo paper, I made 5 color versions, each of them in satisfactory quality. The best print is made in brown and yellow tones.



47. Linden block matrix, detail processing.



48. Prints in several color versions, Kozo paper, format 18 X 30 cm

I am convinced that an important feature influencing the obtaining of good-quality graphic prints is the proper preparation of the matrix, sanding its surface, which is associated with additional hours of work, but above all, obtaining the right proportion of Nori paint and glue. This effect is determined by dozens of hours spent on the independent water printing process. Contrary to etching techniques, where in the end the quality of the prints is determined by the pressure of the printing press, which is often too large to make such prints in a small home studio, the Japanese printing technique makes it much easier for us to do without the necessary tools. It is worth saying at this point that the side effect of my many months of work are injuries to the hands and fingers, most often resulting from poorly conducted cutting tools, i.e. chisels for woodworking. Despite the fact that while working, I tried to take various precautions in the form of a rubber pad that prevented the boards from moving, working with gloves, I did not avoid serious injuries. Today I understand the division of labor into individual masters in their profession referring to Ukiyo-e. Those who continued the tradition, but shortened the printing preparation process for their own processing, must have faced similar problems. Nobody ever spoke for sure about the hardships of making graphics from hand carved matrices.



49. Author injured while making a wooden matrice

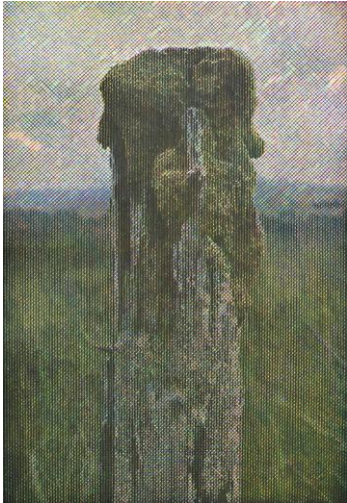
Creating prints in accordance with Shin Hang's principles offers many possibilities. I am still convinced of this by browsing the works made a few months ago. I have the impression that with the passage of time the vividness of the color acquires a certain patina, which would seem impossible, as this predisposition is characteristic only in oil painting, and only over the years, when the painting acquires a patina of time as a result of the clover. Although in this case, taking into account the location of the paint directly, waiting for it to be absorbed into the paper, I

would rather compare this technique to the alla prima principle (i.e. from the first time). While studying the knowledge of Mokuhanga I came across many contemporary artists with whom I am in contact. An interesting artist, whose style suits me very well in terms of the subject matter, is Ralph Kiggell, a versatile artist dealing exclusively with Mokuhanga's printing.



50. Ralph Kiggell, Animals, Japanese water engraving. Format 1: 35x80 cm, 2, 3,4: 50x50 cm, Tosa Kozo paper.

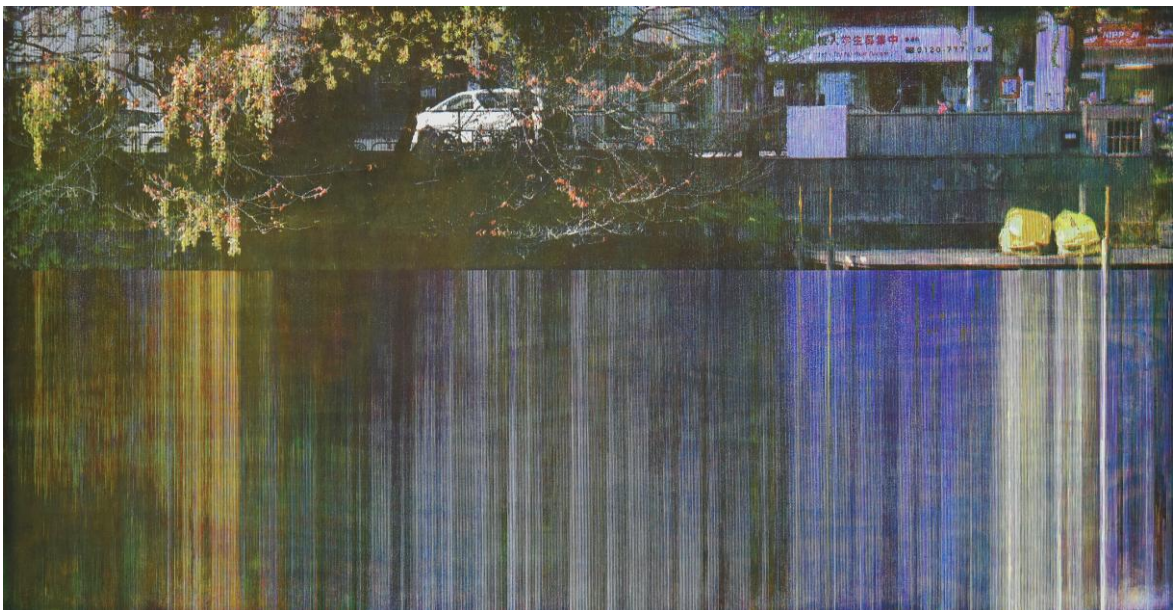
His approach to technology is very easy, he does not adhere to the rigor of precision of the matrix, in this matter his works resemble oil paintings. It only uses a few boards in the process. Another very interesting contemporary Japanese woodcut artist is the founder of the EAST TOKYO MOKUHANGA STUDIO school, KATSUTOSHI YUASA, who treats the printing process slightly differently from other artists. The artist asks a question about the essence of print as a medium. He refers to photography and uses it. Yuasa goes on in his search. He recalls the figure and words of photography critic Chihiro Minato, who said in his book: "Memory is a construction as well as a reconstruction. Memory is a creation as well as a recreation. ... Our memory is a constructed present based on context and emotions, as well as a past based on a moment." (Memory, Kodansha) Painting is supposed to change the world into an image, but the image medium is the world of visualization, symbolization and being a printing plate. The artist realizes his graphics, referring to their preparation as the resultant of printing colors in the offset or serigraphy technique, overlapping matrices made for 4 colors, i.e. for CMYK (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Black). It makes fairly large stencils in wood for each color. Previously, he uses an inkjet printer that prints the discoloration of the colors to him like offset sheets prepared to obtain full color. I have seen prints over one meter in size. It is interesting that despite such an innovative approach to MokuHanga's woodcut, the artist perceives graphics as an illustrative medium, asking an important philosophical question about our presence on earth. The reason why it implements an innovative water printing system is to provide people with relevant information. Since the Kobe earthquake in 1995, the Japanese have once again realized that they live in an unstable world. The artist reminds about it and asks a question about the future.



51. Katsutoshi Yuasa, Tower / 45 x 30cm / Woodcut, medium watercolor, 2019, paper



52. Katsutoshi Yuasa, Piccadilly Circus / 85x205 cm / Woodcut, medium oil paint



53. Katsutoshi Yuasa, Quadrichromie / 91 x 180cm / Woodcut, watercolor medium

Despite the divisions in the issue of nomenclature and the essence of contemporary Japanese woodcut, it is worth indicating the continuators of the historical Ukiyo-e technique. It would seem that the phenomenon of creative printing will replace the traditional preparation of graphics in water technology. Nothing could be more wrong. Artist Yu Miyazaki from Osaka, is a recognized and appreciated continuator of this valued and historical technique. The previously described Adachi Institute in Tokyo, which collects book collections and promotes Japanese woodcut in the world, organizes world competitions for the contemporary form of woodcut. During my visit to the Institute, I had the pleasure to see the competition entries and analyze the graphics that I won in the 2018 edition. The aforementioned artist won the competition presenting the image of the girl, depicted as an old painting. The job seems very interesting. Being in the gallery, I saw graphics reflected from several matrices in accordance with Ukiyo-e art. The artist herself presented an acrylic painting in the competition. After receiving the main prize, by the decision of the Board of the Institute, as part of the award, it was copied using the water printing technique. The artist herself continues this trend and her work is a very interesting phenomenon in the raging pop culture of Japan.



54. One of the wooden matrices made on the basis of a picture for a print in the Japanese woodcut technique. Image by Yu Miyazaki



55. Yu Miyazaki, Portrait of a girl, size 35.2 × 24 cm, technique: Japanese woodcut, kizuki hosho washi chizen paper.

In the justification of the verdict, the jury wrote: "Ukiyo-e portraits beautiful women called" bijin-ga "without colors, such as the face and hands, on which the woman's skin is visible. Instead, the skin is expressed through the soft texture of Japanese washi paper itself. Thin black ink used to emphasize the delicate contour of the face and light pink lips combined with the soft texture of the paper create sensual faces of a woman. "

Chapter V

SEARCH FOR ORIGINAL SOLUTIONS INSPIRED BY "CREATIVE PRINT" - PAINTING AND DRAWING

Parallel to the process of making Sosaku-Hang-style prints, I was looking for a lot of inspiration in Ukiyo-e. This style became an inspiration for the series of drawing series illustrating everyday life (in line with the principle of showing the world at any moment) and for the execution of 10 oil paintings that form two thematic groups. It is well known that the influence of Japanese woodcutters such as Hiroshige and Hokusai had a significant influence on the development of painting styles in Western Europe in the 19th century. This period can be called the Ukiyo-e Renaissance, which is not without significance, referring to many phenomena in the art of painting in this part of the world. The cycle of my five oil paintings refers directly to the style of the climate of the Ukiyo-e woodcut print, with a characteristic supersaturation of color and a black contour around the presented figures. The other six paintings are inspired by the erotic style of Ukiyo-e Shunga (spring paintings). The first series of paintings is inspired by the work of Katsushiko Hokusai and his woodcuts related to the presentation of ordinary life with scenes related to characters, animals and plants. The first oil painting on linen canvas with the format 100X70 cm shows a portrait of lovers. The image is in the style of intermingling color planes with a clear indication of the character of the figure with a black line outline. In my opinion, the line is the most important determinant of the content that permeates the content of the image. This idea is characteristic of the entire Ukiyo-e period and modern Sosaku Hang. Even today, the most important feature of contemporary Japanese painting print is line. Often finding its origin and transposition directly referring to Japanese calligraphy.



56. Lovers, oil on canvas, 100x70 cm, 2018

The second picture in this series is the presentation of Geisha with a Bulldog. It is a 135 x 45 cm picture inspired by the painting of a Geisha immortalized in many images of women on woodcuts by Hokusai, Tamaro and Hiroshige. Seemingly referring to the historical approach to the subject, the picture actually presents a contemporary image of a woman with her pet. It is only the sharp colors used that refers directly to the expressive prints of the Japanese woodcut. The third painting is inspired by my visit to the Tokyo City Bath during my stay in the Land of the Rising Sun. I had the pleasure of experiencing night baths in one of the city's baths for men and women. I chose this pleasure because of the frequent theme in Ukiyo-e style graphics. In the confrontation with the video series of Katarzyna Kozyra's Baths, my observations in the Japanese bath resulted only from my love for beauty and cultural diversity. I had no other purpose or idea. I tried to become an observer of earthly pleasures, knowing that I was in a place where in the 19th century the observers of these pleasures were the most famous Ukiyo-e creators, whose records and observations today we can admire in beautiful graphics, for example

by artists such as Torii Kiyonaga, who he became famous for subjects related to the images of women and children in saunas, inside houses.



57. Girl with a bulldog, oil on canvas, 100x35cm, 2018



58. Torii Kiyonaga, Sauna, Japanese woodcut (1752-1815).

The painting *Woman with a Bulldog (Geisha)* is a film image that happened, a kind of stopping the moment. What in the French film of the 1960s Andre Basin called the mummy effect, I took literally and painted, or actually transferred the image seen on the canvas. It is not an inspiration associated with a given artist, but with the subject of many graphics and paintings on paper. Geisha is the most popular trend of Ukiyo, that is, depicting the passing life in relation to literature and theater. The Utamaro geisha cycle still influences many artists from the so-called western art. A reflection of these fleeting moments is another painting of mine called "Sauna" in the 130x100 cm format, which also with its style and color refers to the style of Mokuhang's graphics. The background of the picture shown in soft red fills almost the entire space of the picture. The two figures of women sitting, seemingly opposite each other, are alien to each other, they have masks on their faces, although they are symbolically outlined only with a color that reflects the pale makeup of the geisha. The image of a black dog is outlined in the left side of the painting. I found inspiration for this painting in the already mentioned bathhouse in Tokyo. Another image that I present in my series of works related to Ukiyo-e is a work showing Geisha, but this time with the dog Akita Inu. The dog of this breed, for which the Japanese created a bronze monument twice, is very important in the history of the city of Tokyo. I present in the painting a historical reference to Hatchiko, a dog who waited for his Lord for 10 years at Shibuya Station in Tokyo. The history is, of course, so well known that I do not go into more detail.



59. *Japonka i Shiba Inu*, olej na płótnie, 100x80 cm, 2019

I was looking for inspiration for the next painting in the world of red light, characteristic of the graphics of Hiroshige Ado, who became known as the creator of countless portraits of women, but also illustrations of birds. The painting shows a Japanese woman with a canary. The canary is the focus of all attention. At the same time, he is a male element in the world of women. A geisha is a contemporary image of a woman. It is worth mentioning here that in the period of Meiji's revival, when the arts officially renaissance, there were changes in the meaning of women. Polygamy was abolished and the old manners of serving men were considered barbaric. The geisha tradition is derived from male taiko-mochi (or hōkan)³⁵ jesters. In later times, women joined this profession, called onna-geisha or "geisha woman". Currently, only women become geisha. In Tokyo, I met women in traditional geisha clothes almost everywhere. When asked where this image came from, I always heard about respect for tradition and respect for the Emperor.



60. Japanese girl and Canary, oil on canvas, 120x100 cm, 2019

Another picture is a contemporary reminiscence of a genre scene in the style of the captured moment, entitled "Bathing". The oil painting is painted with planes of a uniform color in a sparing form, without unnecessary distinguishing marks. The attention is focused on three

³⁵ Koh Masuda: Kenkyusha's New Japanese-English Dictionary. Tokyo: Kenkyusha Limited, p. 474.

elements, i.e. women's faces full of colors contrasting with the surroundings and a uniform, almost monochromatic dog in the outline. Before I started painting this painting, I studied a lot of information related to the image of a dog in Japanese painting.

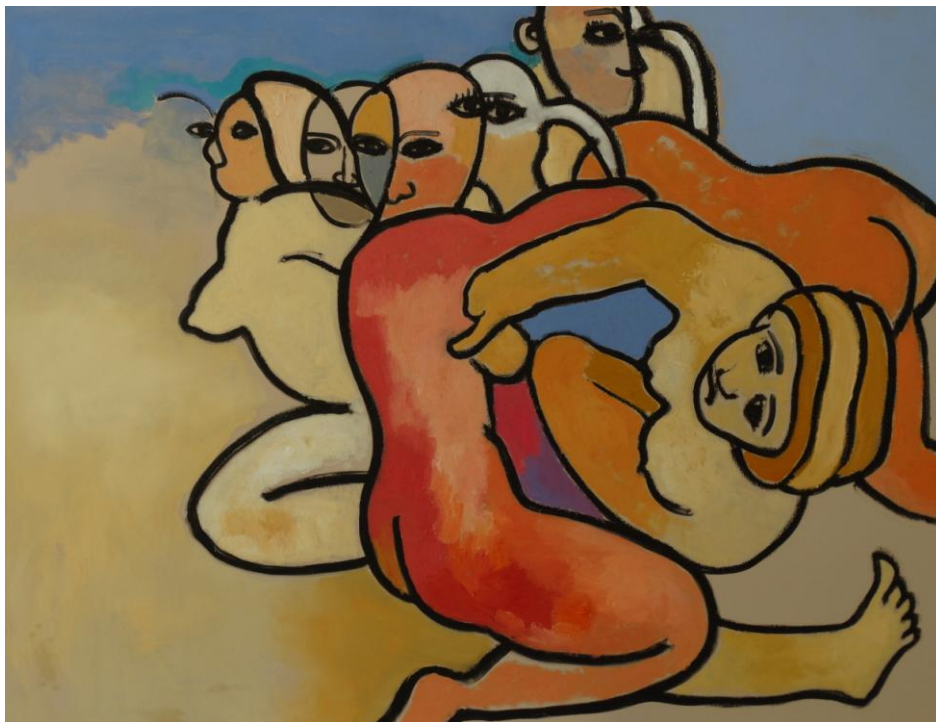


61. Bathers, oil on canvas, 100x120 cm, 2019

The dog figure is rooted in the demonology of Japan. Originally, dogs were creatures called Inugas, which were dog souls that acted as the guardian of the home. I have seen such stone statues of dogs in front of buildings' entrances many times in Tokyo. However, the image of a dog often has a bad meaning, in the form of a black creature it follows people to possess them. Their image was depicted as a mummified dog's head, often dressed in ceremonial robes. A separate group of paintings is a series of five works in the format 100x130 cm referring directly to the erotic art of a separate genre of Ukiyo-e, which functions under the name of Shunga. When creating this series, I referred directly to what, in my opinion, constitutes the strength of Japanese printing, i.e. the line itself, led with a strong line and playfully curled, building sensuality and increasing erotic tension. Often the drawing is not linear but the artist's personal sign, a specific signature. Shunga is the Japanese euphemism for everything that sex means. This

concept was created by Katsushika Hokusai, as I mentioned before, and in this unchanged name it functions in many areas of contemporary art. Europeans believe that this is a special moral corruption that reflects an unnatural sex drive. The starting point for the creation of this series were my 3 sketches made on Japanese blotting paper with the use of a wooden matrix and freehand drawing with carbon pencil. The blue color of the line blends with the blue of the paint. I used a wooden block to make a tonal transition in blue, showing the ephemeral. Delicate eroticism encouraged me to take the topic on a larger format. Before proceeding to the final sketches on canvas, I studied a number of publications related to Japanese eroticism. I believe that in many of my other paintings one can find a parallel to Shungi. I assumed that I would not use the style of Japanese art directly, so as not to be accused of epigonism, although this phenomenon is encountered very often in the history of art. If we assume that the new painting styles created at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries were stimulated by Japanese art, it is completely understandable. Today I see, analyzing the history of art and achievements located in time and places, that this great step forward in defining the world through art could not have happened without apparent coincidences and meetings. Paul Gauguin's great painting tribute to future generations in a letter to his friend Edmund de Goncourt was most likely stimulated by what he learned, what he learned from others and what he sensed. All these achievements found in manifestos by Western artists would not appeal to other generations, including our contemporaries, if it were not for the enigmatic, colorful and distant world shown on paper. In painting, I try to expose human flaws. I refer to features that we are rather ashamed of. In this respect, wanting to paint in accordance with my conscience, not imitating others and not borrowing both the themes and means of expression, I decided to once again unmask the contemporary generation of crazy life, a world where beauty and money are the determinants. Guided by the assumption that I am an observer of the passing world, and that my work is a film that captures moments, I referred to my notes made on the beaches. I made 3 pictures of beach scenes, which I wrote down in a sketchbook and which I transferred to canvas. A topic related to the social phenomenon (a mirror of contemporary culture) that is present in social media is the concept of Selfie, i.e. a photographic self-portrait. The topic seems to be popularized today due to smartphones with a built-in camera. However, we find examples of this phenomenon much earlier. Anyone who thinks that this is a contemporary phenomenon is wrong. Interesting examples of this narcissism can be observed, for example, in photos from the era when the first cameras called daguerreotypes were created. The invention of 1837 was created by several artists and scientists in France. This fact was cleverly used in their work by painters, often taking pictures of themselves. One of the first Selfies can be considered a self-portrait taken by Robert Cornelius in 1839. However, compared to today's ease of taking pictures, Cornelius had to sit in

front of the lens for several dozen seconds. The word Selfie probably first appeared on the Internet forum on September 13th 2002 According to various opinions of psychologists, this phenomenon is so strong that it requires an analysis by scientists. Those have concluded that the need to take a Selfie bears signs of a mental disorder for which they have adopted the term "Selfitis". Research conducted in India has shown that selfitis affects people with low self-esteem, who want to attract attention, who want to be like others. My personal reflections on this are slightly different. I notice that Selfies are made by people with a strongly developed sense of arrogance, egocentrism and snobbery. I absolutely deny this attitude. And it is in opposition to this very common phenomenon, which arose thanks to the Internet, that I decided to expose them in the worst terms, ie in naked bodies, in tangles and social networks. The resulting images reveal the human psyche by means inspired by Shung's art in Ukiyo-e. Regardless of the form and theme taken up in these paintings, the guiding principle was to see the elements of everyday life in its lights and shadows.



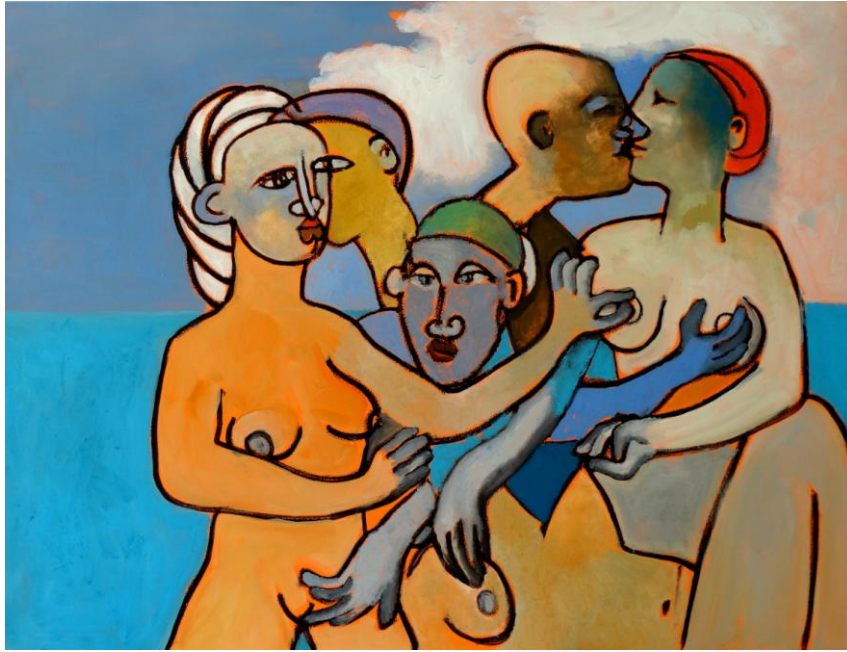
62. Selfie, oil on canvas, 100x120 cm, 2019



63. *Selfie II*, oil on canvas, 120x100 cm, 2019



64. *Selfie III*, oil on canvas, 120x100 cm, 2019



65. *Bathers*, oil on canvas, 100x120 cm, 2019



66. *Bathers II*, oil on canvas, 100x120 cm, 2019

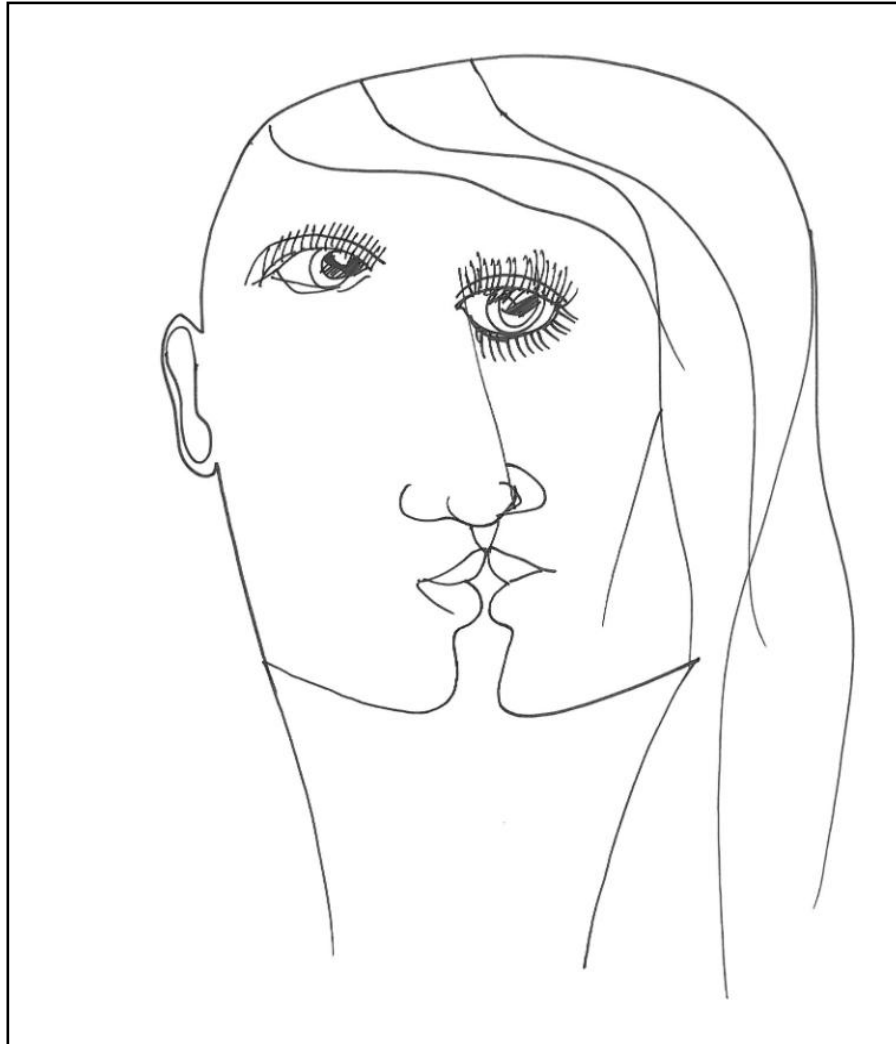
A different category of works presented in the doctoral thesis is a series of drawings characterized by a simplified and very sparing line. For me, the essence of considering the nature of work, i.e. printing or painting, is always drawing. It is he who builds tension and determines the plasticity of work. The line, which is one of the determinants of the work of art, determines the wealth and craftsmanship of the artist. It is often an indicator of creative searches, somehow a hallmark. I believe that the strength of Japanese printing is determined by the characteristic line that builds the composition and closes it at the same time. The discovery of cloisonism³⁶ by artists associated with the artistic movement of Paul Gauguin resulted directly from the discovery of old prints of graphics brought from Japan. Characterizing this trend, we see the use of uniform-colored spots surrounded by a contour. Takashi Murakami, mentioned earlier, in 2000 curated Superflat, an exhibition presenting works by artists whose techniques and media synthesize various aspects of Japanese visual culture, from Ukiyo-e (Edo prints) to Anime and Kawaii (cartoons, handwriting). Thanks to this exhibition, Murakami developed his theory of Superflat art, which emphasizes the "flatness" of Japanese visual culture from traditional painting to contemporary subcultures in the context of World War II and its aftermath. He outlines the spots with a clear contour, often giving up fillings. Thus, a line or a more broadly considered outline is the main advantage of the composition, but also the content. In my drawings I do not refer to the works of Maracas. I am looking for my own solutions and simplifications for further creative searches. In the course of my doctoral dissertation, I prepared about 1000 drawings. I divided them into cycles depicting landscapes, people, animals in terms of nudes and miscellaneous. Drawings are made on acid paper with the format 210x297 mm in the nib and pen technique. I pay particular attention to the acts and scenes that the Japanese especially like. The erotic art trend is close to me. The delicate eroticism of the drawings is the beginning of further works, both in oil and in the technique of water printing. Eroticism in drawings is also a consequence of my search to perfect the drawing technique. Shung's style described above is a constant inspiration for me. I believe that if an artist does not draw, he loses the ability to use lines freely. The unbridled line determines the size and artistic level of Shungi's tasteful prints. With this in mind, I assumed that in a few years I could achieve a satisfactory level. I am aware that many Polish artists also attempt to polemics with Japanese art, some even specialize in Japanese woodcut and achieve excellent results. The Japanese woodcut technique is developed by many artists in Poland and sometimes we can see exhibitions of very interesting

³⁶ Terry W. Strieter: Nineteenth-century European art: a topical dictionar. Westport, Conn. Greenwood Press, 1999, p. 44.

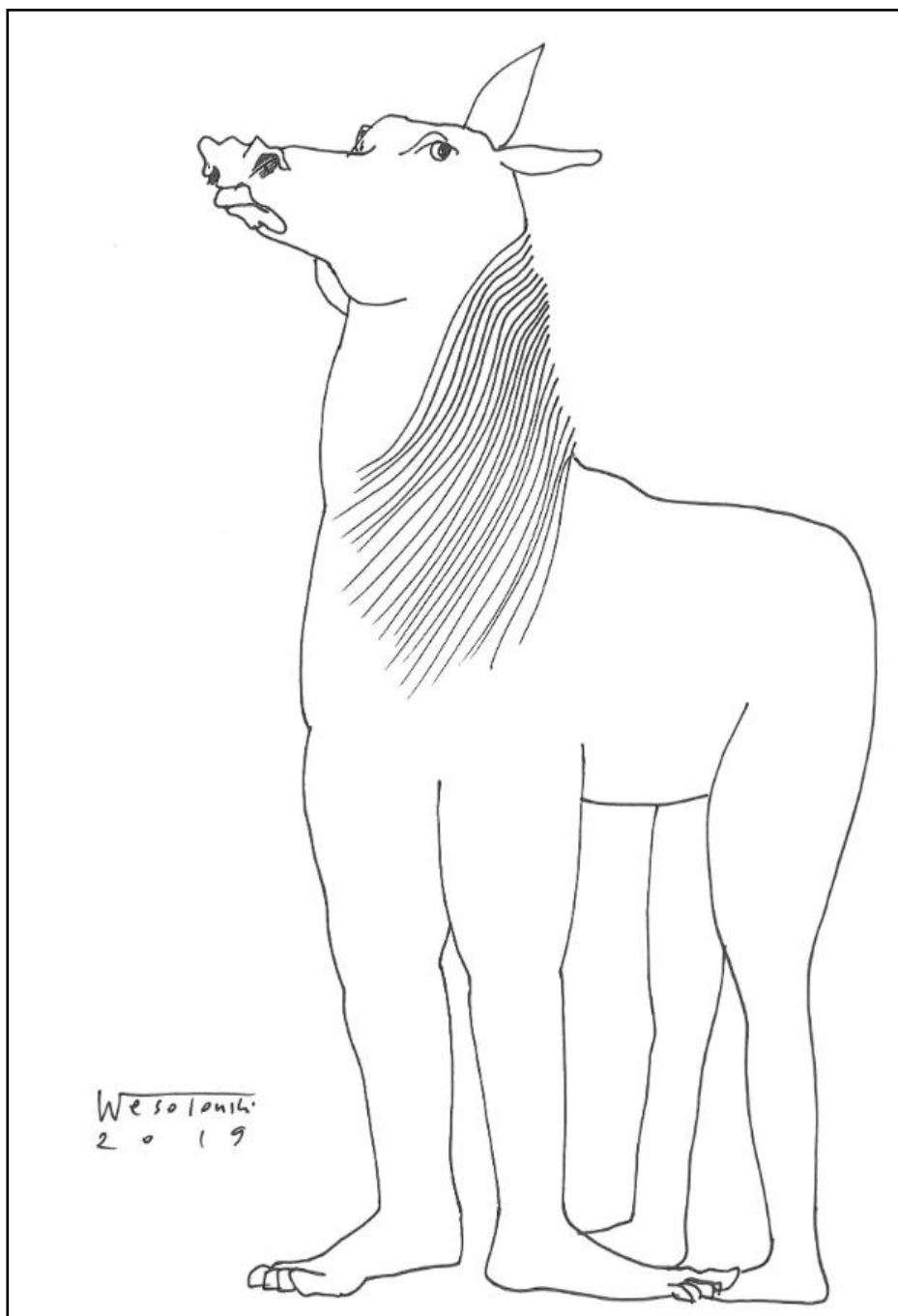
artists. Many of them had direct contact with the technique of water woodcut in Japan .. It is worth mentioning here the international collective exhibition Moku Hanga, which took place in 2019 at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow. The organizer of the exhibition and a graduate of the same university, Mrs. Marta Bożyk invited two colleagues from Poland to the exhibition: Dr. Tomasz Kawelczyk - a graduate and lecturer at the Academy of Fine Arts in Łódź, and probably the most recognizable Japanese woodcut artist, Prof. Dariusz Kaca. Prof. Dariusz Kaca runs the workshop of woodcut techniques and Art Book at the Faculty of Graphics and Painting of the Academy of Fine Arts On Strzemiński in Łódź. His artistic output in the field of Japanese woodcut seems to me closest to my aesthetics related to this printing technique. He creates his works very artfully, with a great sense of color and knowledge of the principles of this technique, which is different for us. Perhaps it was the direct influence of the Japanese masters whom he met in Japan during the workshops he held. Mr. Tomasz Kawelczyk, implements his ideas in the Moku Hanga technique, presents interesting concepts of planes using the entire range of workshop possibilities of materials used for printing. It is also worth mentioning his exhibition at the turn of 2019/2020 at the Łódź Philharmonic, where he presented the concept of the Qi Gardens. Pictures in non-standard formats, as for Japanese woodcut, are an example of creative printing, allowing you to freely treat both the subject and the workshop. The series of pictures on paper shows us a very interesting approach to landscape, partially giving up the perspective of flat forms, which implicitly build the perception of space in us. When looking for an answer to the internal imperative to the interest and inspiration in Japanese graphics and to follow it in my own work, it is worth pointing to its features that directly influenced my work. In my subjective opinion, Japanese graphics are a space of experience reserved for the average person thanks to its accessibility and simple language. Watching the graphics made in the Japanese woodcut technique, the space there is framed by a constant, almost flat visual element in close proximity to the viewer, but not devoid of a spiritual dimension. The issue of space as a void full of potential possibilities is an interwoven motif in the graphics of old masters, but also of those completely contemporary. The void can be seen as a certain imaginary game space, intellectual shortcuts. Often times, the human being is barely perceptible, the images we see create an image of the world. Contemporary graphics are constantly transformed and searched. What was figurative is subject to geometrization, and the synthesis becomes the main guide to a complex puzzle. An interesting feature of Japanese graphics is a different approach to the issues of convergent perspective. In the light of my observations and in the context of the finished paintings and graphics that I created in the research process for my doctoral dissertation, I pay attention to the characteristic elements of Japanese graphics, its flatness and at the same time borrowing a different perspective. I also try to show in my works an element of spirituality,

adoration for everyday activities and reflection on the transience of the state of affairs. The most important element in building compositions in my works and the artistic means used to define them is the idea of a flat plan, which is often a hallmark of Japanese graphic techniques. Our European way of knowing the world is based on principles that developed almost six centuries ago. The traditional approach to presenting reality and space, known to us, was invented by Italian artists in the Renaissance era. However, could the Japanese see the pictures depicting this other way of presenting space? They could, thanks to the Dutch who might have had postcards or illustrations made by European artists? In 1420, the Italian artist Filippo Brunelleschi presents perspective tiles explaining his discovery related to the principles of convergent perspective. Just five years later, in the church of Santa Maria Novella, a painting of the Holy Trinity is created in Florence by another painter, Tommaso di Ser Giovanni di Simone, known as Masaccio, in which he first presents a convergent perspective. The first ship from Europe arrived in Japan on April 19, 1600, almost two hundred years after the principles of the convergent perspective were discovered. This fact must have been noticed by Japanese artists on the imported maps and paintings. However, the works of the Japanese definitely represent a different approach to the issues of perspective. It is worth pointing out here that the "bird's eye view" perspective is probably the most popular perspective, where we see the landscape from above, over buildings and a vast area. Artists presented architectural elements fixed on paper using the so-called axonometry, i.e. presenting landscape elements on a plane using a rectangular axis system, where the front and rear walls were drawn parallel to the horizon line. In this arrangement, we do not see vanishing points on the horizon line of individual objects. In fact, we see the interior of houses without roofs, where the scenes of events are open spaces with visible figures. This way of seeing is called *fukinuki-yatai*. We define this way of presenting an image as a specific frame. Other ways of expressing depth on the surface of the paper are the frontal or frontal perspective, where the artist uses one vanishing point on the horizon in the very center of the composition as a point of reference, creating the illusion of depth. A perspective close to natural vision (the one I mentioned in the context of Masaccio) is noticed only in the works of artists from the Meiji period. There is also a bird's eye view perspective, which was used fluently by Utagawa Hiroshige, which I have already presented. All the conventions that we find in the graphics of artists from the Japanese archipelago are their vision of the world in which they lived. It is a specific language of visual arts which was unknown to us for many years. The flatness of color, initially without conscious *chiaroscuro* over the course of several centuries, has transformed into a calculated and perfected aesthetic shaping a new perception of the surrounding world. This new perception of the world, which is the basis for me in the research process of my doctoral dissertation, is a constant source of inspiration and a pretext for further research.

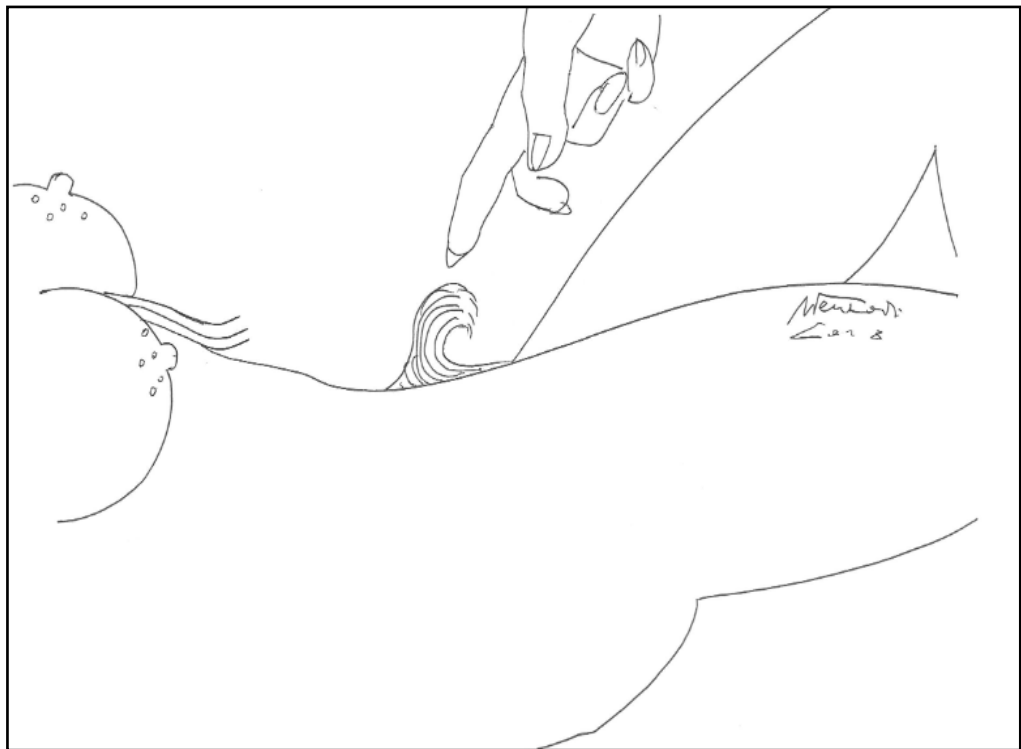
DRAWINGS INSPIRED BY UKIYO-E



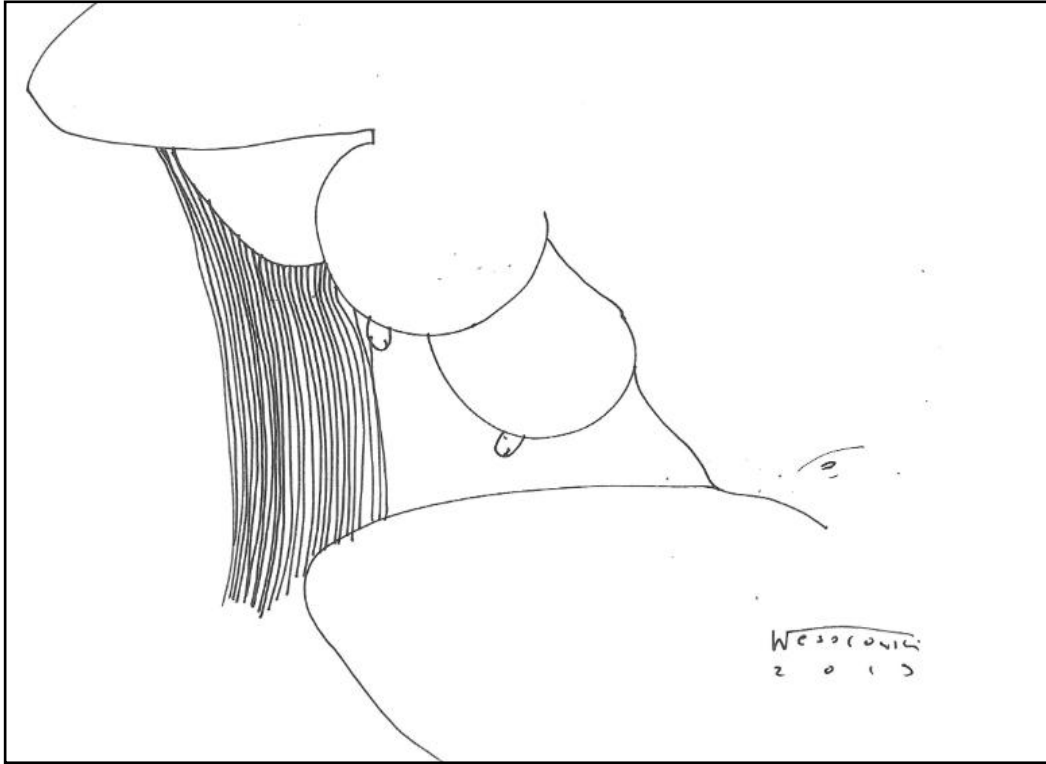
67. *Lovers*, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 30 x 21 cm, 2019



68. *Horse*, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 30 x 21 cm, 2019



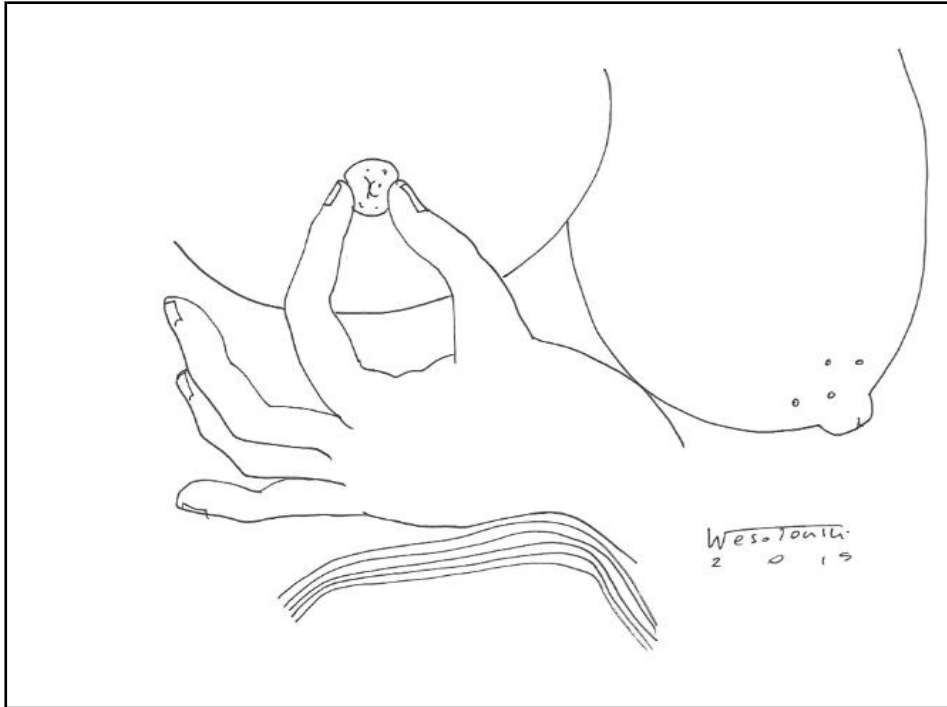
69. *Great Wave*, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 30 x 21 cm, 2018



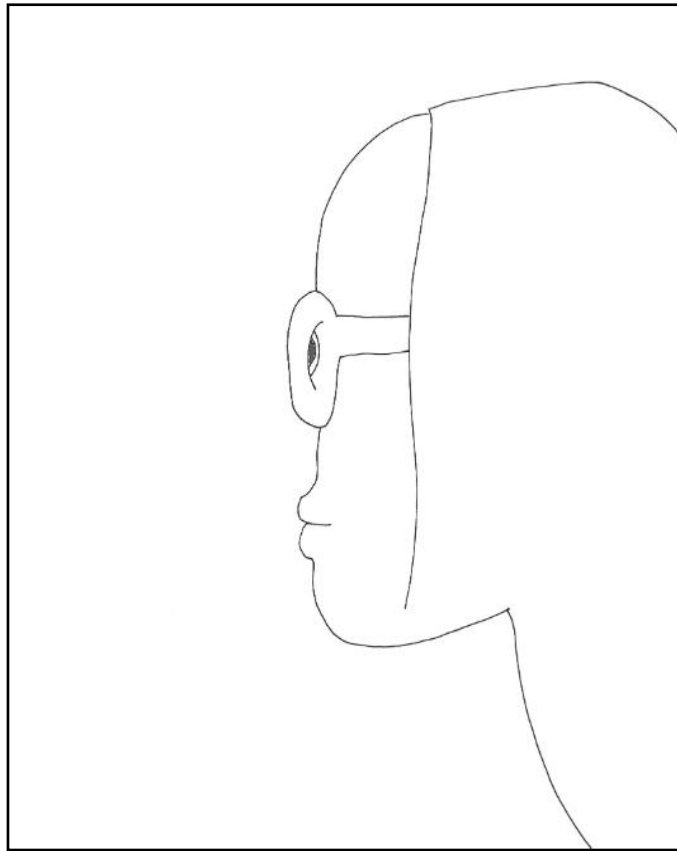
70. *Naked*, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 21 x 30 cm, 2019



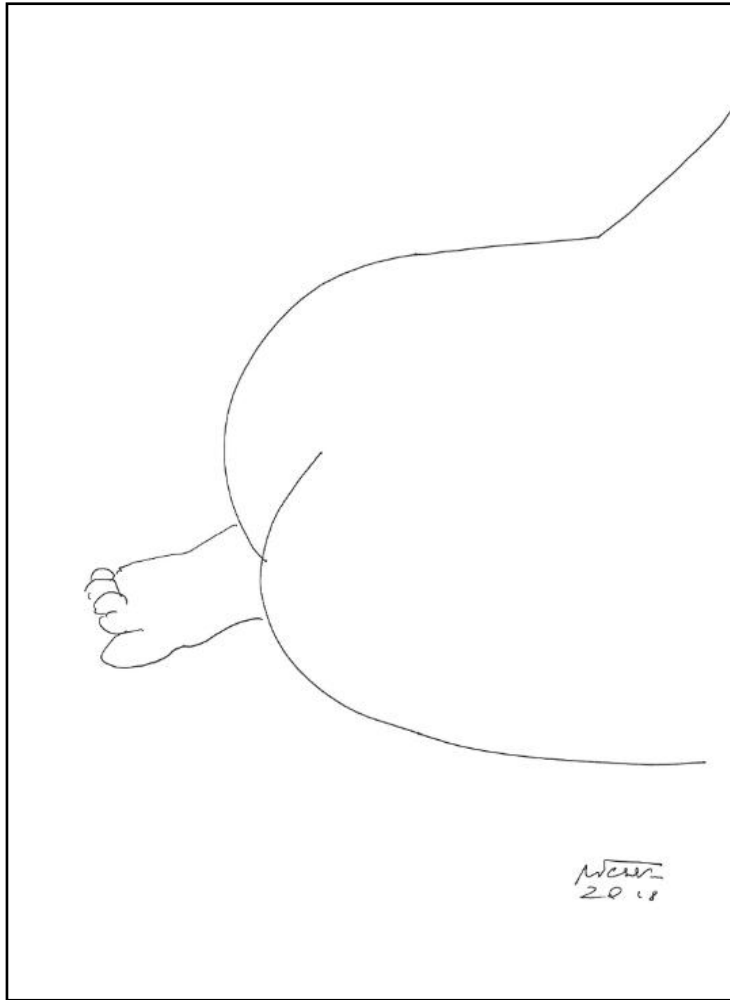
71. *Mirror*, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 21 x 30 cm, 2019



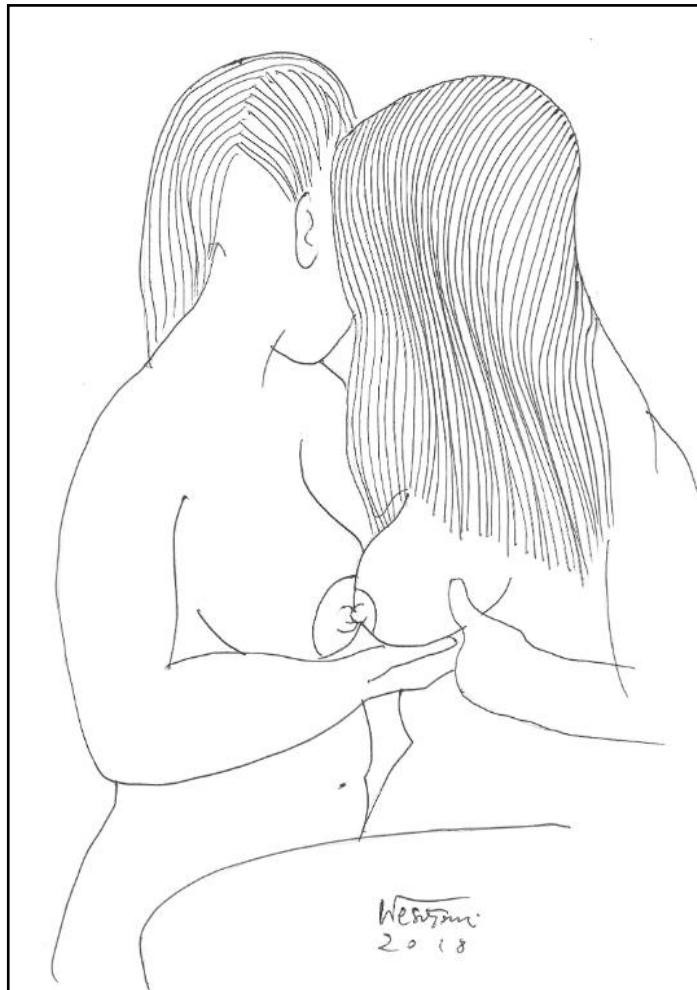
72. *Erotic*, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 21 x 30 cm, 2019



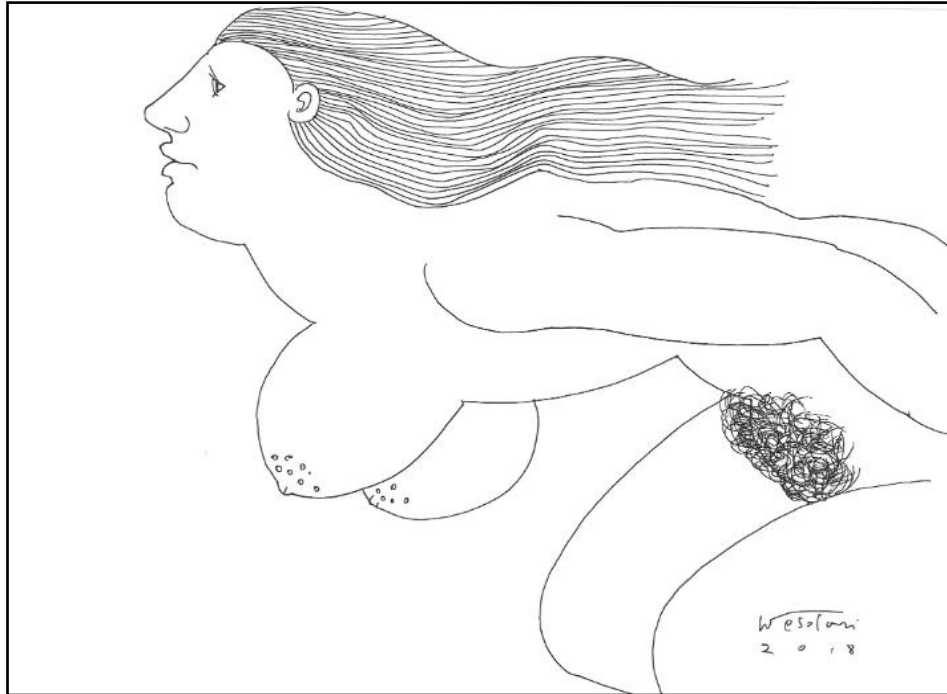
73. *Portrait of a Japanese woman*, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 30 x 21 cm, 2019



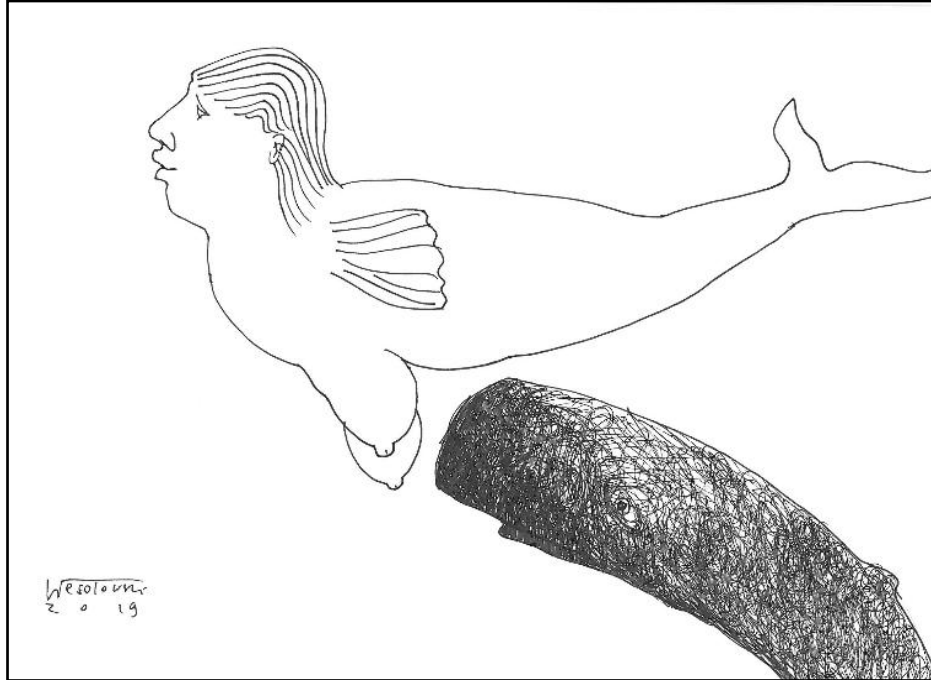
74. *Erotic I*, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 30 x 21 cm, 2018



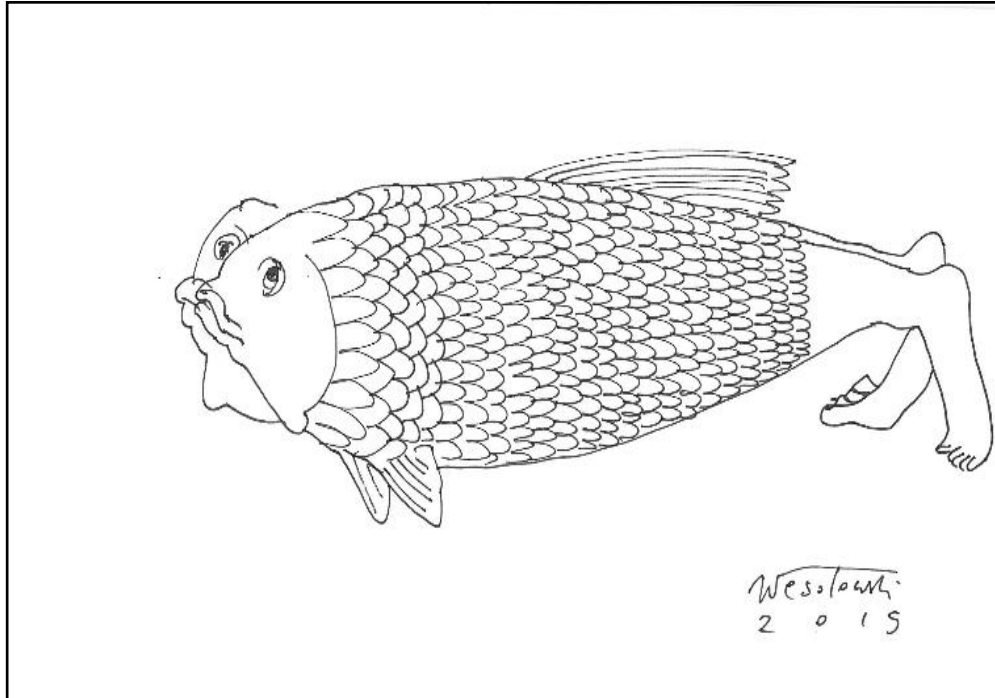
75. *Japanese women*, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 30 x 21 cm, 2018



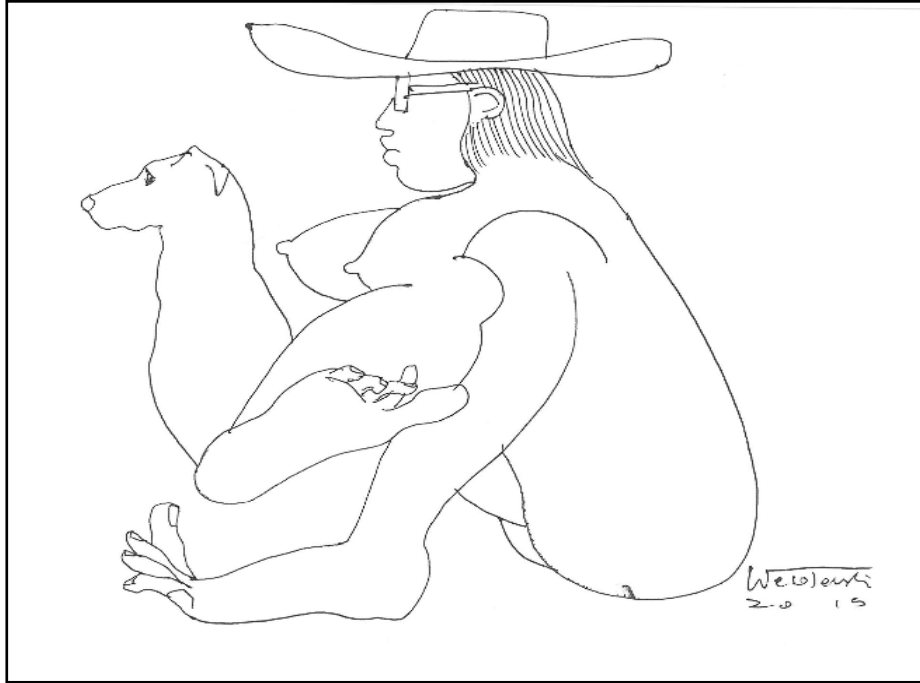
76. *Japanese girl*, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 21 x 30 cm, 2018



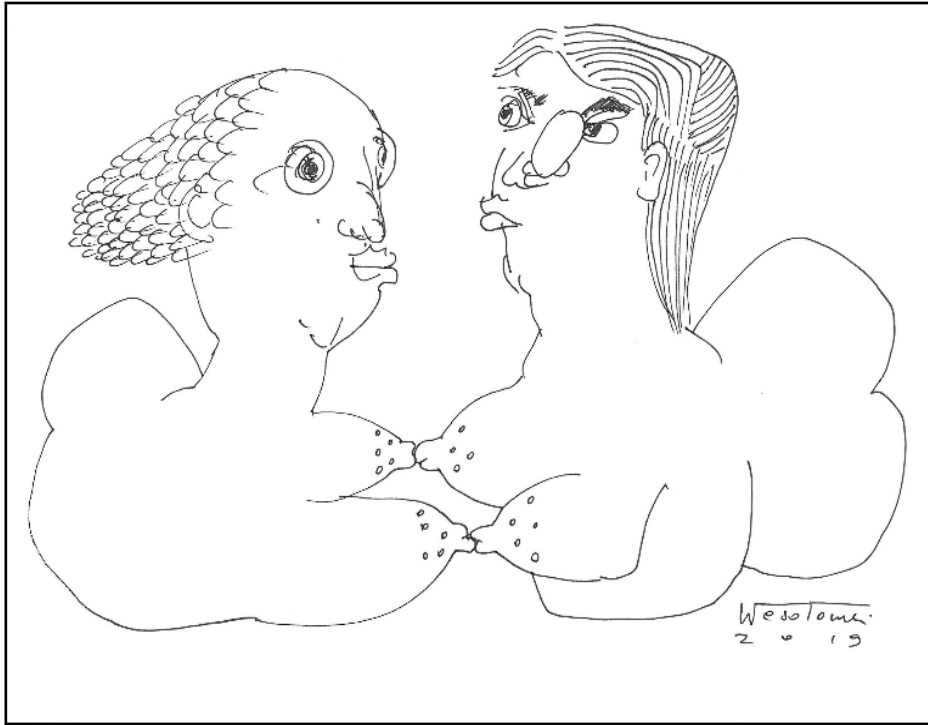
77. *Ocean*, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 21 x 30 cm, 2019



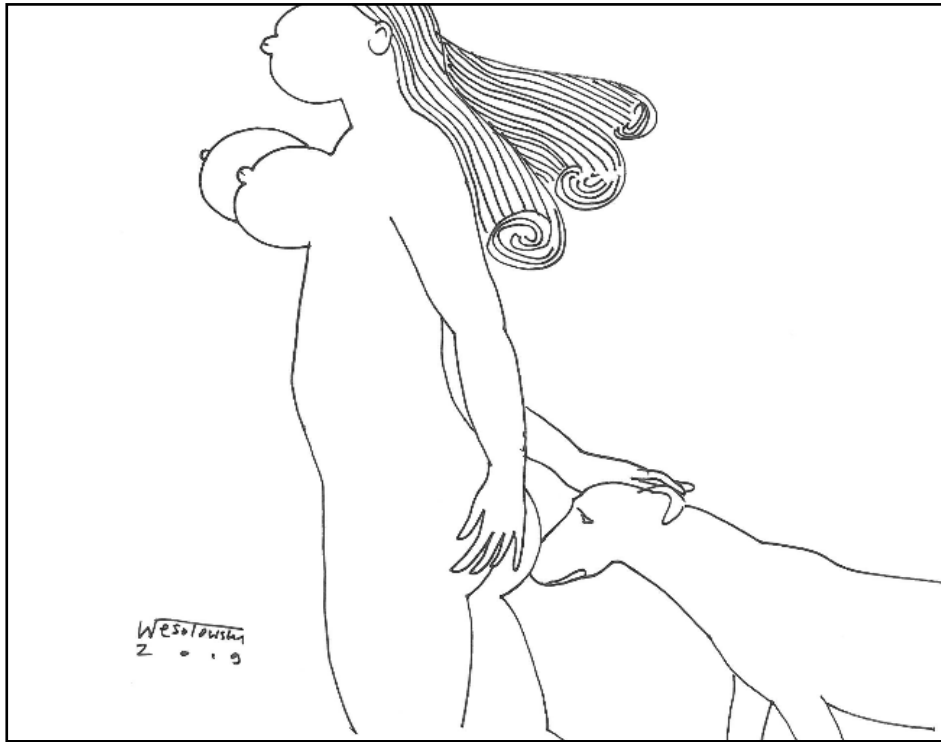
78. Mr. Fish, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 21 x 30 cm, 2019



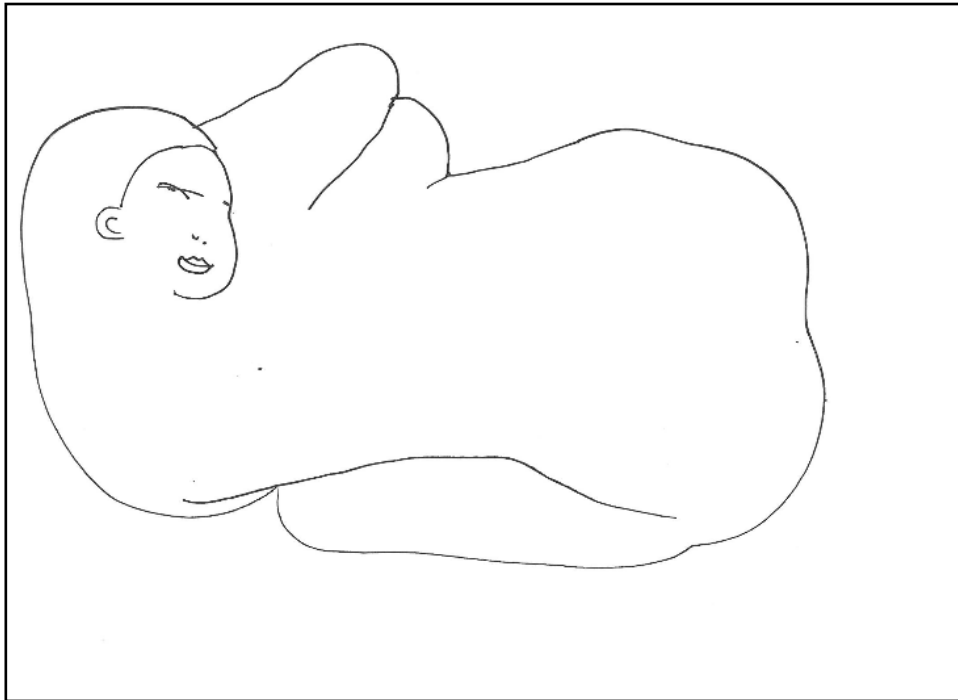
79. *On the beach*, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 21 x 30 cm, 2019



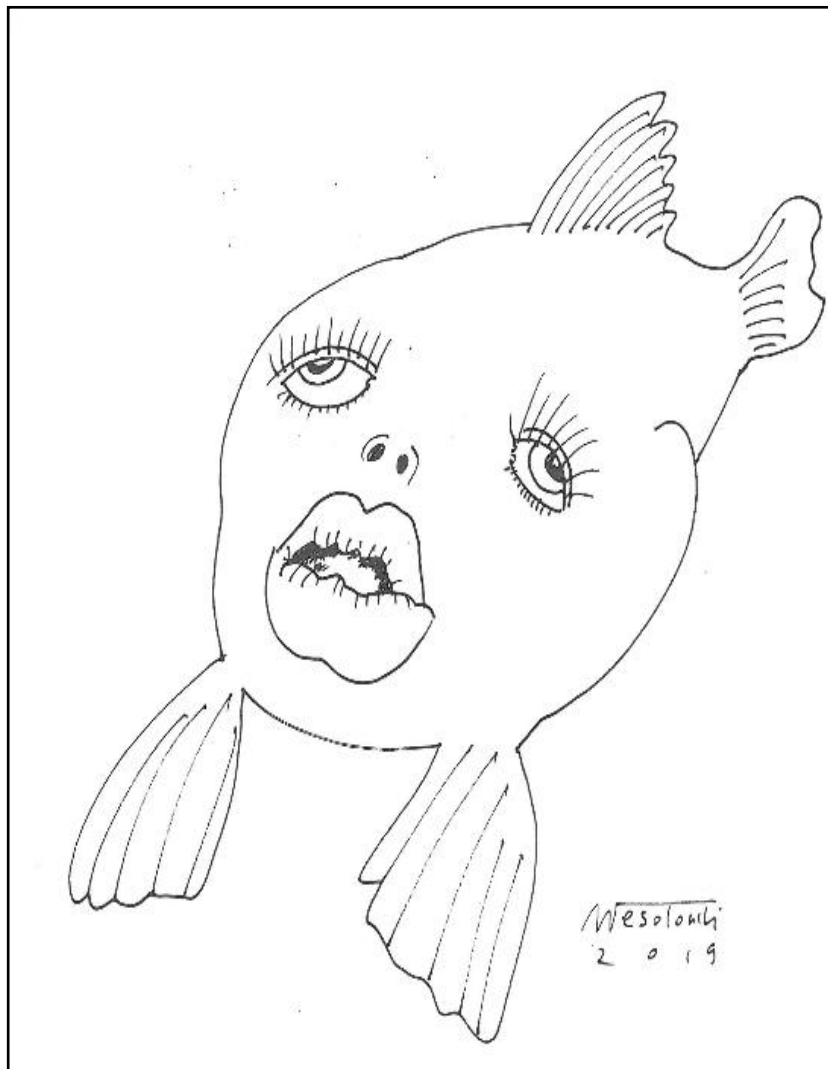
80. *Conversations*, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 21 x 30 cm, 2019



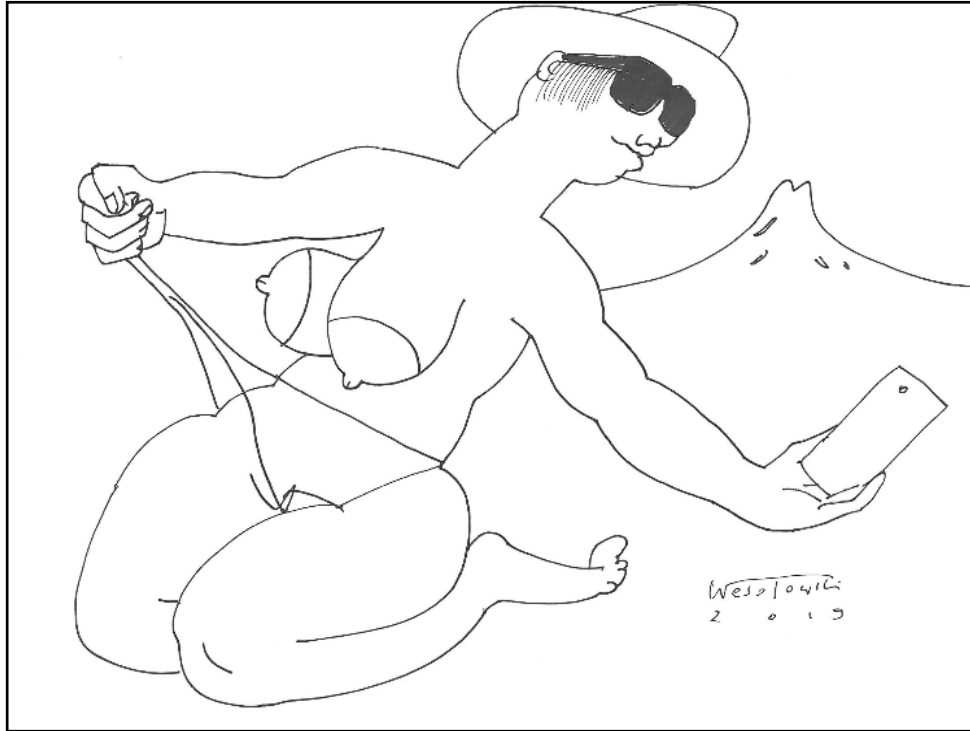
81. *Walk*, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 21 x 30 cm, 2019



82. *Lying nude*, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 21 x 30 cm, 2019



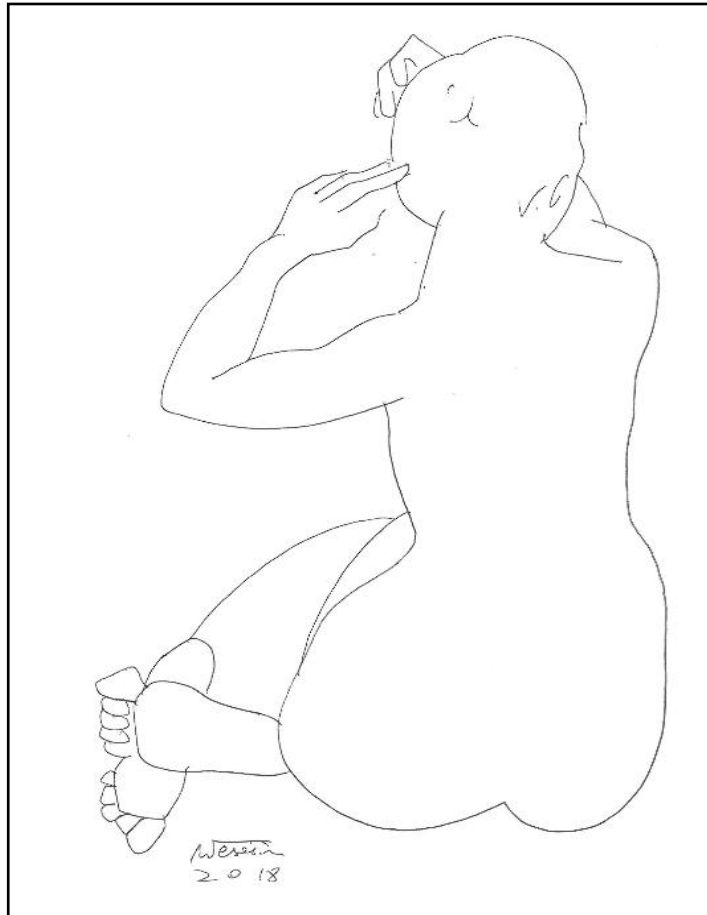
83. *Sea of Japan fish*, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 30 x 21 cm, 2019



84. *Fuji*, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 21 x 30 cm, 2019



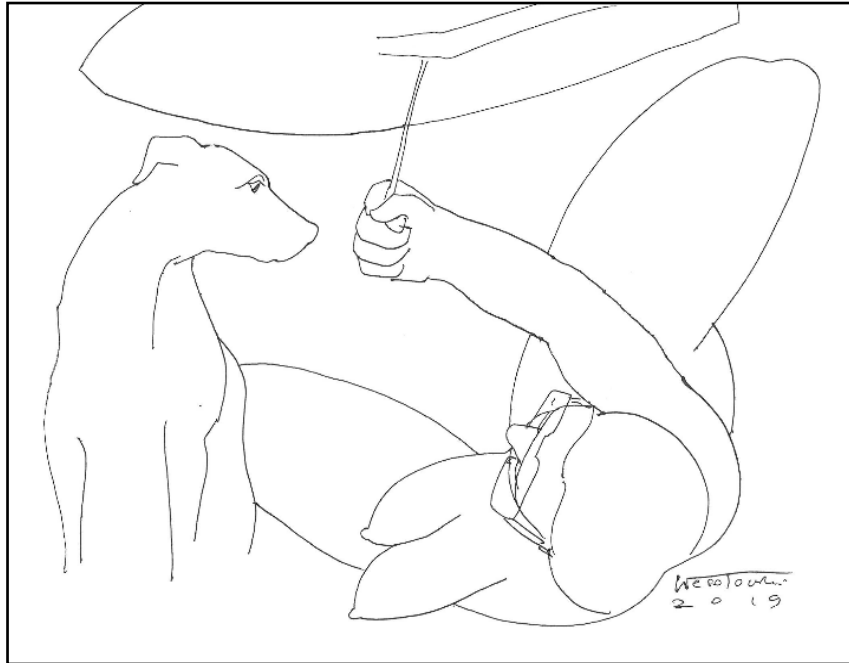
85. *Beach*, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 21 x 30 cm, 2019



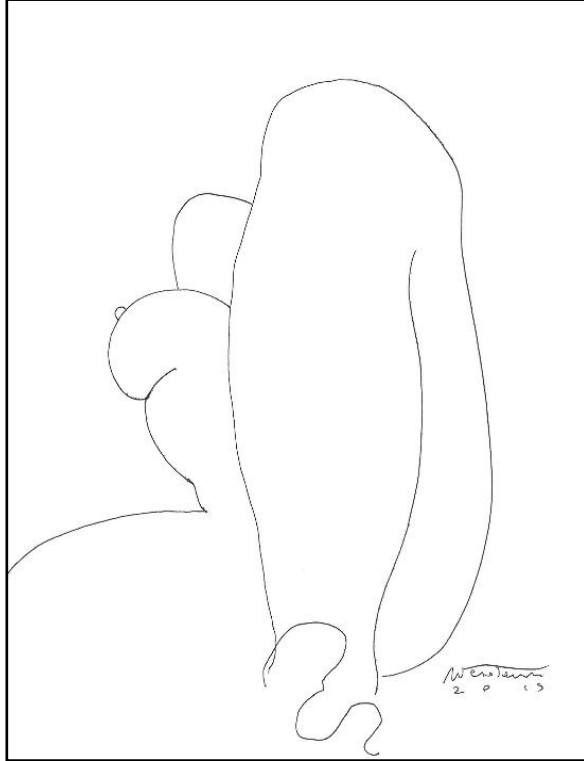
86. *Nude*, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 30 x 21 cm, 2018



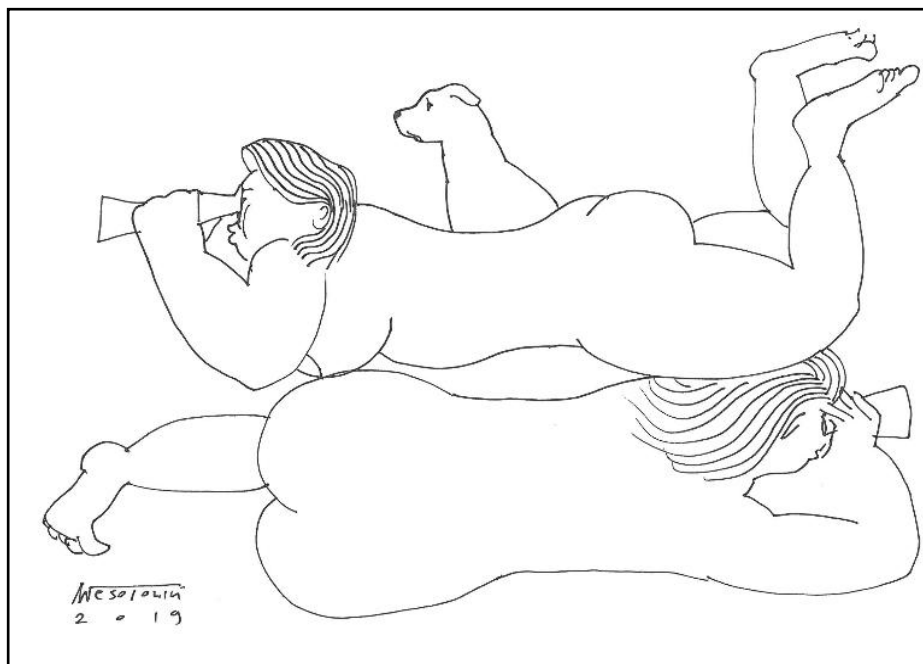
87. *Sunflower flower*, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 30 x 21 cm, 2019



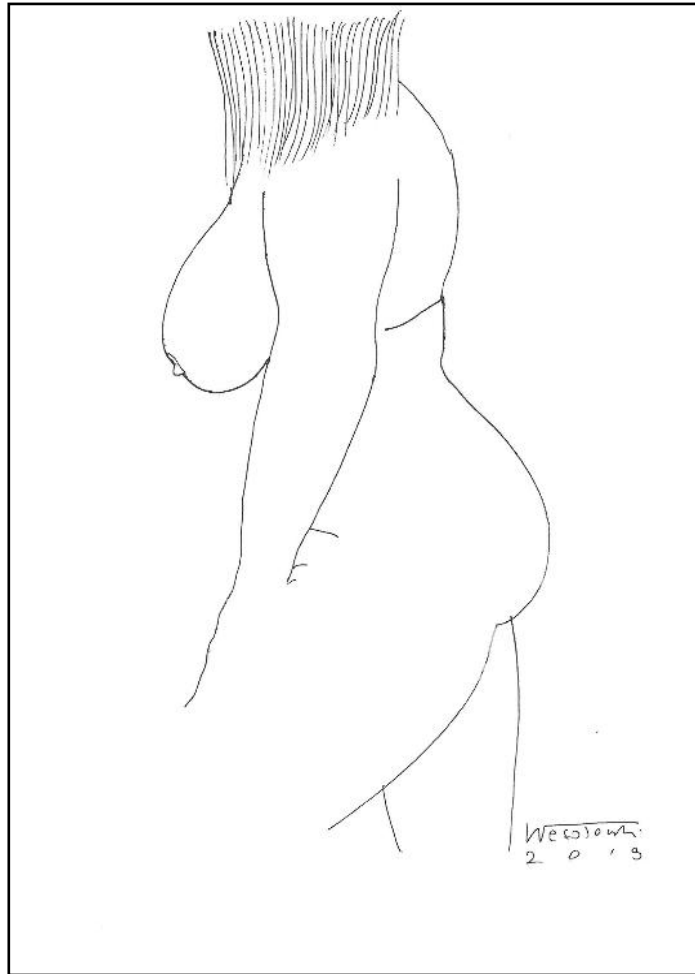
88. *Under the umbrella*, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 21 x 30 cm, 2019



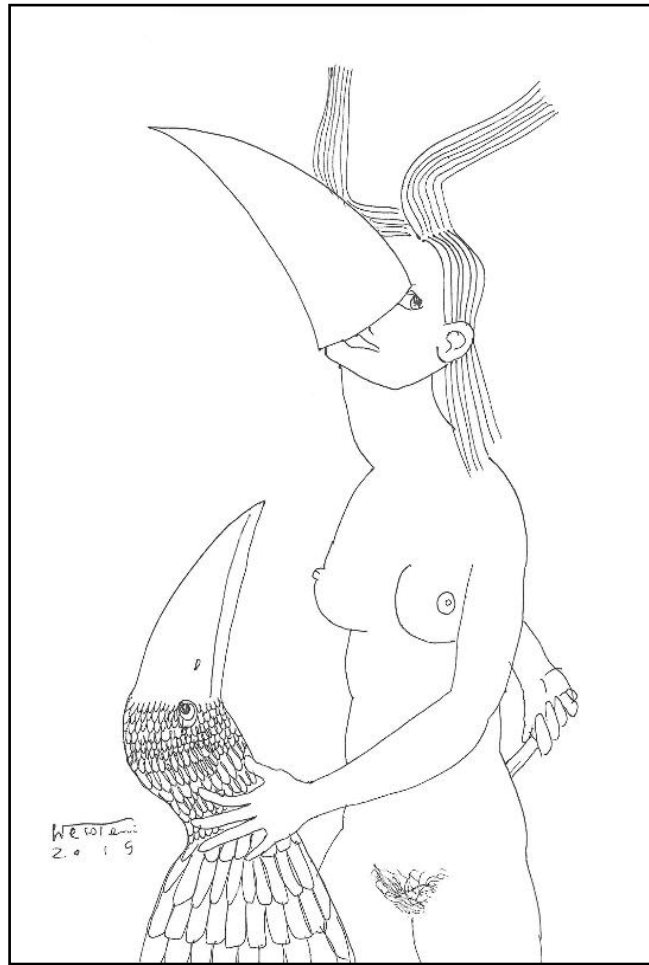
89. *Knee*, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 30 x 21 cm, 2019



90. *Under the umbrella*, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 21 x 30 cm, 2019



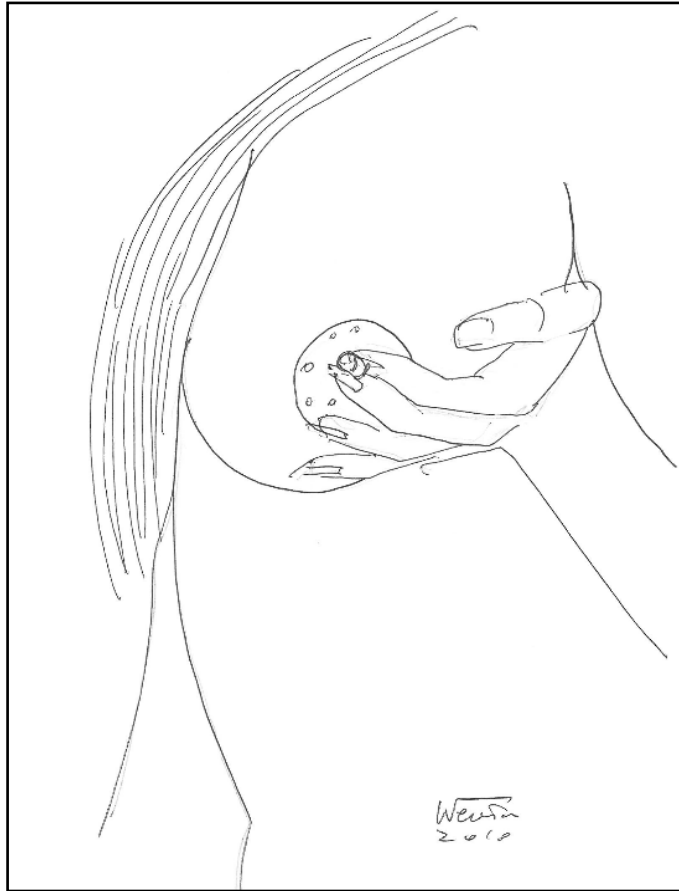
91. *Nude*, feather, drawing pen, Kozo paper, 30 x 21 cm, 2019



92 *And then they baked the birds*, drawing pen, a Kozo paper, 30 x 21 cm, 2019



93. *Dog*, drawing pen , Kozo paper, 30 x 21 cm, 2018



94. Woman's breast, 30x21cm, Kozo paper, feather.

Ending

Before I started writing this work, I did not know how extensive the subject I would have to deal with. The search for original solutions in the field of creating works inspired by Japanese woodcut is particularly important to me, because I have always been fascinated by the culture of Japan. Throughout the period of creative research related to the material for this doctoral dissertation, I managed to develop methods that allow me to use the assumptions, technique and artistic narrative in my artistic work, which so far I have not been able to apply and fully develop. The experience that I have gained as a result of mistakes and technical imperfections is the foundation for me to develop completely new methods of operation on the basis of my own art. The process of creating prints made in Sosaku Hang's technique, described and presented in a photographic form, may seem very simple at first, but I would like to point out here that the strength, style and artistic message of this type of graphic art are in the artist's experience. My Master told me that with 10,000 prints, I would only know the nature of the paper, assuming that I would print on the same paper during this period. I will need the following years to bring out the character of the color. And where is the matrix preparation process? The need to systematize the knowledge and get to know the process of creating different graphic techniques in relation to our Western culture inspired me to constantly search for the possibility of their application in my artistic work. In this work, I also decided to present some issues that constitute the foundation of Japanese aesthetics, which shapes the sense of beauty of the inhabitants of the Land of the Rising Sun. The fascination with Japanese art continues all over the world, we succumb to it sometimes consciously, sometimes ignoring it. The tribute to the creators of Ukiyo-e manifests itself in everyday life. The famous Great Wave of Hokusai is today a cult marketing product, which with its momentum and power crushes the walls of many galleries, prompting artists from around the world to reflect and refer to themselves. Today I know that Japanese art, despite many cultural differences, is close to me. Sometimes, as a digression, I compare it and look in it for references to our civilization. These attempts at comparisons are my admiration for difference and a tribute to artists whose influence on today's culture cannot be overestimated. Contact with Japan through the technique of woodcut, its process of creation, concentration at work and many attempts in the process of reflection brings me closer to nature, prompts me to reflect on the essence of admiration for the passing of life. I believe this is where Moku Hang's strength lies. I would like to emphasize that the main goal of my artistic research in the field of inspiration with Japanese graphics in combination with painting was to create a compendium of knowledge related to this topic, which could be used in my didactic work with students from the workshop graphics studio at the Academy of Fine Arts in Łódź. The vastness of the topic allows for a constant search for the most appropriate solutions and stimulating young people to their own creative searches.

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12. Takashi Murakami, Miss ko2, 1996, source: Christie's
13. Moronobu Hishikawa, The Lovers, dimensions 23.5 × 33.7 cm, Japanese woodcut, 1680./ <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/56550>
14. Kento signs on the board / <http://art-design-glossary.musabi.ac.jp/kagi-kento-and-hikitsuke-kento/>
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Abstract

The aim of this doctoral dissertation is to present my own artistic work with a series of oil paintings and graphic prints, which are inspired by Japanese graphics from the Ukiyo-e period and are evolved to its contemporary form known as Sosakuhanga. The doctoral dissertation and the research conducted during its implementation reflect my interest in Japanese culture, including a little-known contemporary water woodcut, commonly known as MokuHanga. This style distinguished several methods of approaching the traditional Ukiyo-e school. Because of this, my research focuses on the printing style of Sosaku Hanga, commonly known to Japanese simply as 'creative printing'.

In this concept, I looked for references to Japanese aesthetics, starting with the comparative method of techniques and free interpretations in my own artistic work. My method is to make prints from wooden matrices, made in accordance with the assumptions of the old Japanese school, and to freely create oil paintings that are a reference to the notions of beauty in Japan.

My goal is firstly to use a foreign aesthetic principle and methods to create something which is beautiful to my own culture. Artists often do this. But more importantly, I want to find, creative common denominators for the creative process by doing this.

My specific method is to explore different sources of beauty and transform them into art as a language. What Poland, Europe and the West have in common with Japanese aesthetics are our notions of color, composition and line. In the semantic layer of the doctoral dissertation, I maintain a constant focus on these elements to compare. I only use my artistic imagination to find new solutions within the creative processes and aesthetic notions we have in common.

Such an analysis allows for further studies in this field, and the unlimited access to source materials both in Poland and in Japan makes it possible to take masterclasses or participate in scientific symposia on contemporary Japanese art.