

A Reflection of Female Beauty: Katsushika Hokusai's Paintings

Ka Bo Tsang

Assistant Curator, World Cultures

Royal Ontario Museum

[Animated ROM logo appears with sound sting]

[Close-up view of a Japanese hanging scroll, depicting a woman looking at herself in the mirror; zooms out to show Ka Bo Tsang standing beside the painting in the Garfield Weston Exhibition Hall] I am Ka Bo Tsang, I work at the department of World Cultures at the Royal Ontario Museum...um...Today I'm going to talk about some works included in the exhibition, *Drama and Desire: Japanese Paintings from the Floating World*...um...1690-1850. Um...This exhibition was organized by the Museum of...of Fine Arts in Boston. Um...it has travelled to three cities in Japan already, and one city in the US before coming to Canada, and this is the only venue for its showing.

Here, I am standing in the last section of the exhibition. It's all the works...um...were by this most famous *ukiyo-e* artist, called Katsushika Hokusai. He lived from 1760 to 1849. He was the most versatile and prolific *ukiyo-e* painters of his time.

[Fade to close-up of "Woman Looking at Herself in a Mirror"; pans from her feet up to her head] Here, I'm standing in front of...one of his masterpieces. This depicts, um...very elegant woman adjusting her hair in front of a mirror and her beautiful face is reflected in the mirror. *[close-up view of the woman's face reflected in the mirror]* Now, while this lady adjusting her hair with her left hand, her right hand is actually holding a crumbled letter *[view of the letter in the woman's right hand]* and...she is getting herself ready to go out. How do we know about this? *[Close-up view of the woman's hand at her head; pans to a close-up of the calligraphy along the right side of the painting]*. Because here is a poem that tells us. Um...it says, something like, "Does the letter from the man she expects to see promise a summer's night out."

[Close-up view of a hanging scroll, depicting a woman carrying bundles of wood on her head; zooms out to reveal Ka Bo standing next to the painting]

Now in contrast to the work that we just looked at, which depicts, um, very elegant lady, using very fine brushwork, this painting also of a beauty, is quite different.

[Fade to a close-up view of the woman's skirt, pans down to show the jagged lines of the hem and her feet] The brushwork used here for the drapery lines, um...is

agitated, it shows some kind of movement [*fade to show Ka Bo standing beside the painting, pointing to it*], and also, the colour, [*fade to a close-up of the woman's face*], the skin colour of the woman, is flesh-toned, instead of the shell-white colour, the cosmetic, you know, colour, used, um, by women of the Edo period. [*Fade to view of Ka Bo standing beside the painting, zooms in to focus on the woman in the painting*] This one shows the natural flesh colour of a village woman. [*Zoom out to show Ka Bo standing beside the painting*]. This is actually um, work showing the woman from the Ohara village, which is located north of Kyoto, the ah...ancient Japanese capital. And women in that village, they are recognizable by the costume [*fade to a close-up of the woman's costume*]. If one looks closer, one will be able to see, the cloth is tie-dyed or paste-resist dyed, or woven, and that is the kind of textile used by the village women in those times. [*Fade to overview of painting with Ka Bo's hand visible*] And, she's also recognizable by her cloth legging, and also the um... [*fade to close-up of the bundle of wood on the woman's head*] the sleeveless, the uh...the...fingerless gloves, and the large bundles of firewood or flower that they carried to Kyoto for sale. [*Fade to view of Ka Bo standing beside the painting*] These women were considered to be one of the famous sights in Kyoto at the time. So that's why they became subjects, um, of the ukiyo-e artists.

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