

The Landscape Revisited: The Shin Hanga Movement

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PHOTO BY MIKE FUENTES
THE BATTALION

A Tradition Returns

Japanese woodcuts from the '20s and '30s on display in the MSC

By MANISHA PAREKH
Staff Writer

For a few short weeks, Aggies have the opportunity to experience a piece of Japanese art and culture by viewing "The Landscape Revisited: The Shin Hanga Movement," an exhibition at the J. Wayne Mark Gallery in the MSC.

The Shin Hanga movement was a product of Japan in the 1920s and '30s. Literally meaning "new prints," Shin Hanga is a style of producing prints from a relief carving on block of wood.

The style has its roots in the 17th and 18th centuries when the rising Japanese middle class began to emulate the aristocratic life.

Because paintings were too expensive for the majority of the middle class, woodblock prints, or ukiyo, became very popular as a less expensive alternative.

Catherine Hastedt, a curator for University Art Exhibits, said that the objects of the prints varied.

"There were prints of landscapes, popular kabuki performers, even erotic prints," Hastedt said. "The

prints could be about anything that was popular."

The first step in creating a print involved the artist preparing a drawing on transparent paper. Next, the print was pasted onto a block of wood and the woodcarver cut the impression of the picture out of the wood.

Then the printer applied a single color to the woodblock and pressed it with the print paper. The color application and printing process was repeated for each color until the print was finished.

"The style fell out of use during the mid-19th century," Hastedt said. "It was revived in the 20th century by a Japanese publisher named Watanabe. These 'new prints' became the Shin Hanga movement."

Watanabe gathered together some of the most talented starving artists and began publishing the Shin Hanga. The Stark Gallery exhibit contains works from four of the Watanabe artists.

"The prints depict landscape scenes, and it is interesting to see the influence of Western perspectives on Japanese art," Hastedt said. "If you look at these prints, you notice the

different atmospheric effects, such as use of light."

Hastedt noted that the prints have a cartoon-like look to them.

"The artists used broad strokes of color," she said. "There is a sense of spontaneity. It is almost as if the prints were snapshots."

Tina Watkins, a retiree and docent for the Gallery, said that the University is very fortunate to have a chance to see the exhibit.

"A lot of people could not see these types of art if it wasn't for the Gallery," she said. "These exhibits are set up to educate both students and faculty."

Phyllis Frederikson, also a docent for the Gallery, encourages students to come by the Gallery.

"These exhibits are really for the student and faculty," Frederikson said. "You would be amazed that the prints were made from woodblocks," she said.

Watkins stressed the beauty of the works.

"The prints are very elegant and intriguing. The colors are lovely," Watkins said. "I think this is the type of exhibit that most people can really enjoy."

East Meets West

Organization helps students bridge the gap between A&M and Japanese cultures

By GRAY WHITTEN
Staff Writer

Texas A&M University opened the Koriyama campus in Japan in 1990 as a bridge between the two nations and to help potential exchange students become accustomed to the traditions and language of their temporary homes. Since that time, approximately 40 students involved with the project have graduated from the University.

During their stay in the United States, many Japanese students have found involvement in student activities makes their stay in Texas much more enjoyable and educational.

The Japan Club is an organization that offers students — whether they be Japanese or of any other nationality — a chance to learn more about the Japanese culture and help others experience some of the subtleties of Japanese lifestyles.

Kae Takebuno, an A&M journalism graduate, said the club offers something for everyone.

"The Japan Club is not for only Japanese students, but also Americans and others interested in Japan. It is a way for me to teach my culture," Takenobu said.

Takenobu spent all four years of her college career in College Station. Others may attend preparatory classes at the Koriyama campus before moving to the United States for the completion of their education.

"I was there for all four summer sessions," Takenobu said, "and it was crazy. In Japan, we have four seasons ... but here we only have winter and a long summer."

Takenobu said she enjoyed the longer days and warmer weather; however, she liked spending time outdoors in Texas.

"If I have to leave here now I'm really going to miss it," she said.

Bill Stout, former director of the Koriyama campus and a retired professor of agricultural engineering from A&M, said many of the program's previous graduates have moved on to careers in many business and academic fields across the globe, and some attend graduate schools in the United States.

As of the end of 1997, there were 87 students from the Koriyama program working toward their degrees, Stout said in a report from University Relations.

Other students transfer to A&M after completing their undergraduate work elsewhere.

Tsuyoshi Watanabe, a wildlife & fisheries science graduate student, came to College Station after completing his undergraduate biology degree in Japan and then obtaining his master's degree in Connecticut.

After spending time in Japan and various places in the United States, Watanabe had good things to say about A&M.

"It's completely different ... the professors are so friendly and supportive and helpful," Watanabe said of the differences between the student-teacher relationships in Japan and America.

"In Japan, the students sometimes can't talk to the professor ... it's much better here," Watanabe said.

While the University is not well-known in Japan, Watanabe said he enjoys A&M's fame in the United States.

"When I first got here, I thought it was just a small college town ... but there are lots of international students here, and a lot of diversity," he said.

Watanabe also was a member of the Japan Club at A&M and suggested it as a good way to meet students of all nationalities, as well as those from his country.

After completing classes here in College Station, Watanabe will move on to a research project that will likely take him to Siberia next summer.

His team will be researching the migration of cranes using satellite telemetry tracking methods. The project will be a multi-national venture, including American, Russian, Canadian and Mexican researchers.

Takenobu said she felt that the new environment has greatly influenced her life.

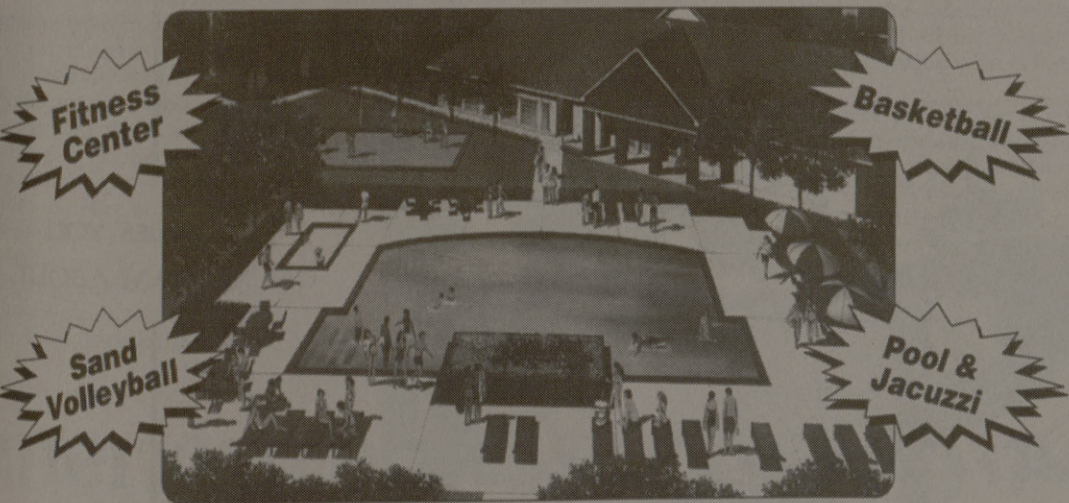
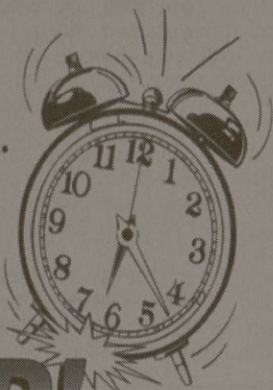
"I think that all the people I met gave me many ideas and ways to think. Different countries have different backgrounds and bases of life ... to understand them, I have to understand their backgrounds first," she said.



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