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The portrayal of emotions and creation of mood
and atmosphere in Japanese prints.

I chose Japanese prints as my topic to research as they appeal to me because of their simplistic and often basic principles and techniques that create a great deal of atmosphere and evoke emotions within the print and inside the viewer. The main focus of my research of Japanese prints is on the way in which atmosphere and mood is created within the prints I have chosen. I have focused primarily on these aspects as the main ambition of Japanese print artists was not to re-create the image they saw but to re-create the emotions it stirred within them. I have mainly focused on landscape prints as these appeal to me the most as the artists seem to create the most atmosphere and emotion with landscape images as opposed to prints that consist greatly of people.

A great deal of the Japanese culture and tradition is portrayed within Japanese prints with the creation of emotion through the use of tone, colour and the use of people in many Japanese prints. This is mainly what my research has focused on and how atmosphere is created in Japanese prints with the use of the same formal elements.

My findings relate to the movement of a certain school of painters that did not fit in with the Ukiyo-e works or what they are also known as 'pictures of the floating world'. Ukiyo-e was created when the world had turned it's back on Japan and they were trying to fight a war outside their country. A certain few artists expressed how it felt to feel locked inside your own world with everything else going on outside of them and this form of art is known as Ukiyo-e.

However, I will be looking at the movement of a few artists that created a style of their own that didn't fit in with the traditional Ukiyo-e style these are known as the Japanese colour printers.

During my research of Japanese prints I have found that many of the landscape prints are not entirely realistic of what the artist was printing. This is mainly due to the fact that many Japanese artists did not paint from the actual object in the way that western artists did but instead they stored images in their heads. When they felt the time was right and their mood was right to re-create the image they did so. This could account for the lack of detail in many Japanese prints and also the strong creation of mood and atmosphere in Japanese prints could be due to the artist being in a strong emotional state and reflecting this in their work.

I have connected this to my own work in the respect that I will need to create the same sense of atmosphere and emotion. I will need to do this by not trying to input too much detail into my work and instead trying to think about the colours, brushes, textures and tones of my final piece in the same way that the Japanese printers did.

I have done this in my Journal work especially when I was working in pencil. I used flat colours and concentrated on the grandness, scale and beauty of the landscape I chose to use. I used little detail and I managed to evoke an atmosphere in the same way the Japanese printers did. I have used simple lines to create a small amount of detail in some of my drawings in the same way that Hiroshige did in his prints.

Through my research I have also found out that Japanese printers concentrated on the formal elements of printing more than the style of Ukiyo-e did. They took into account the application of paint and what effect it could have in terms of how it would evoke emotions and atmosphere.

Japanese prints are said to evoke ideas, feelings and emotions already in the beholder's mind but have not yet been awakened yet. They do this by concentrating on how they apply their paint and the way they create tone. This creates a much stronger atmosphere of the image other than the actual likeness of the image. This also gives the print more of a sense of place, time and atmosphere. I have also tried to create these feelings in my own work by trying to give my work a sense of time and atmosphere by exaggerating the lighting of the scene. I have especially done this with sunrise/sunset images and with mountains fading

into the background. This creates a very effective atmosphere as you can see below in these two prints by Hiroshige.

The print on the left (Boats returning to Yabase, 1857) is very atmospheric and more atmospheric than the one on the right (Evening snow at Kanbara, 1853). The print on the right uses more line and creates a more representational print but still retains an atmospheric feel. Whereas the print on the left uses a great deal of tone and colour and has a stronger atmospheric feel and creates a stronger sense of time and place than the print on the right.

Both prints create a sense of scale, which is what I am going to try to include in my print. The print on the left creates a sense of scale better than the print on the right due to the mountains fading off into the background, the boats providing something to measure against, and the sea providing a base to the print to measure everything up against.

In the print on the right the scale seems to be harder to understand as there is now space between the mountains. This means you cannot understand fully the grandness of the mountains against the people because there is nothing to contrast the mountains against unlike the print on the left.

This is something I am going to consider along with texture I can create with my screen print, tone, line and colour. These are formal elements that the Japanese printers used to create their own landscape prints and I am going to use these elements in the creation of my own landscape print.

