

Katsushika Hokusai

The Great Wave at Kanagawa

1831–33

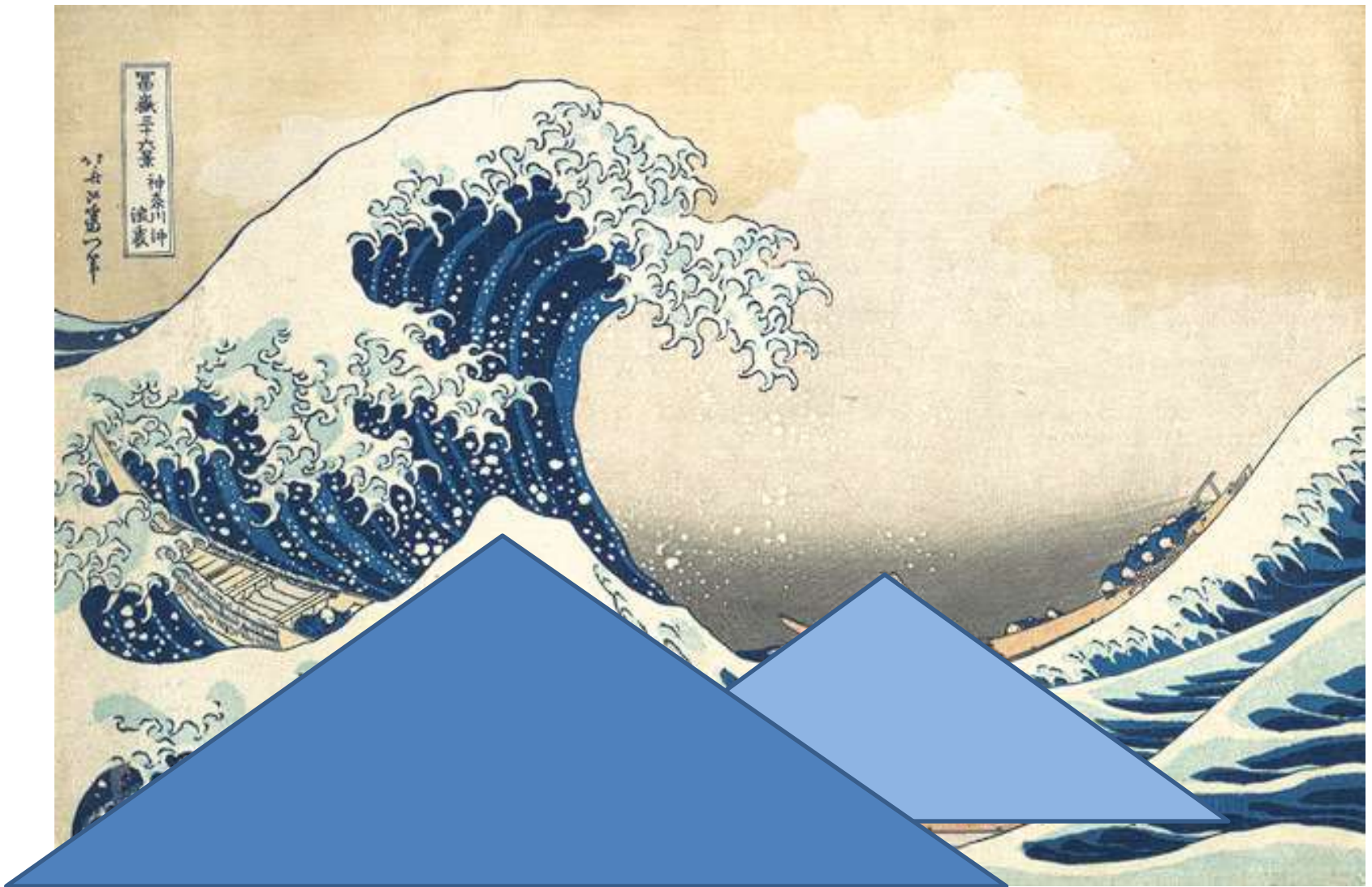
1. Analysis of Formal Qualities

Katsushika Hokusai (Japanese, 1760–1849) **The Great Wave at Kanagawa (from a Series of Thirty–Six Views of Mount Fuji)**
Edo period (1615–1868), ca. 1831–33, Published by Eijudo, polychrome ink and color on paper, 25.7 x 38 cm, Metropolitan
Museum of Art, New York





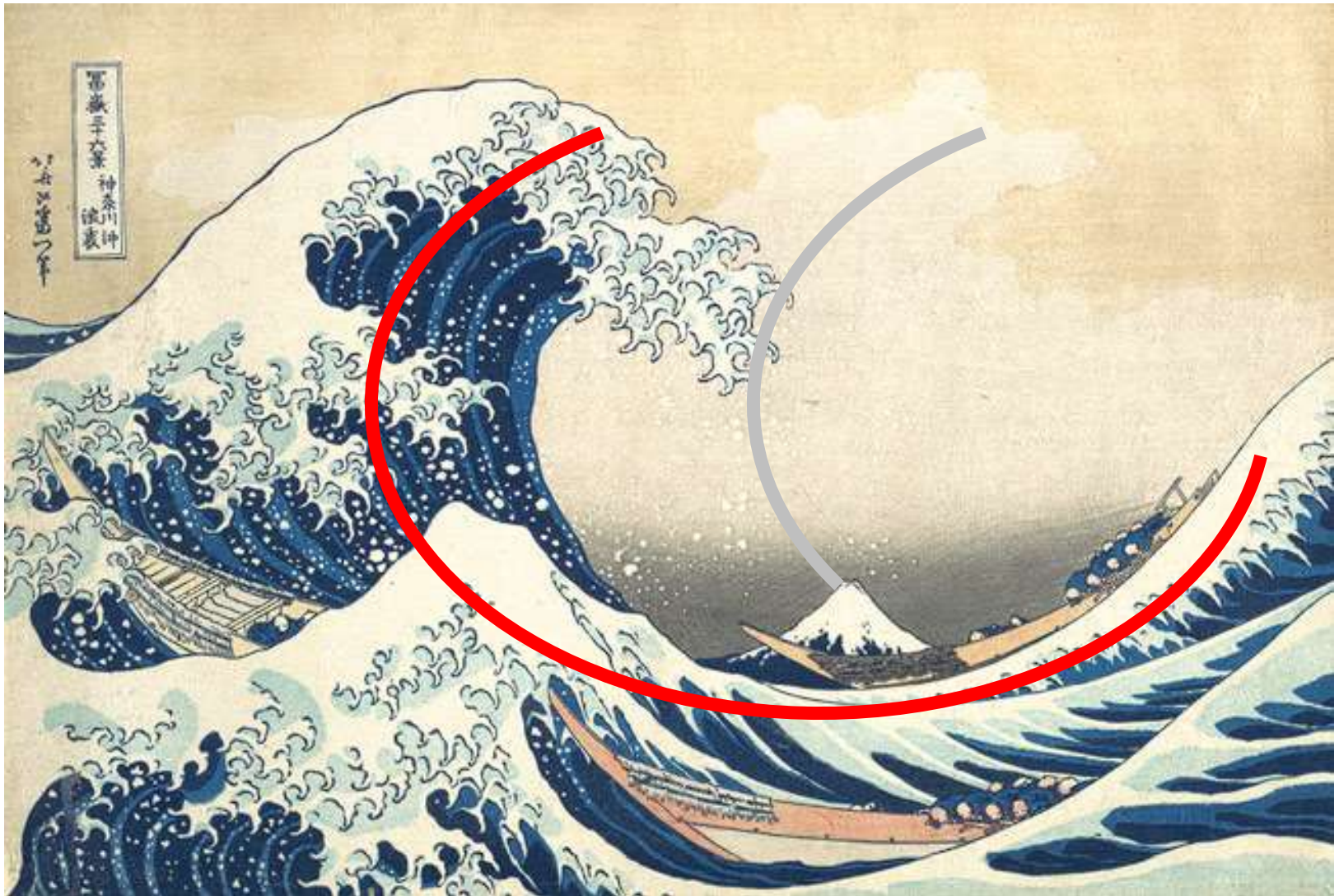
25.7 x 38 cm



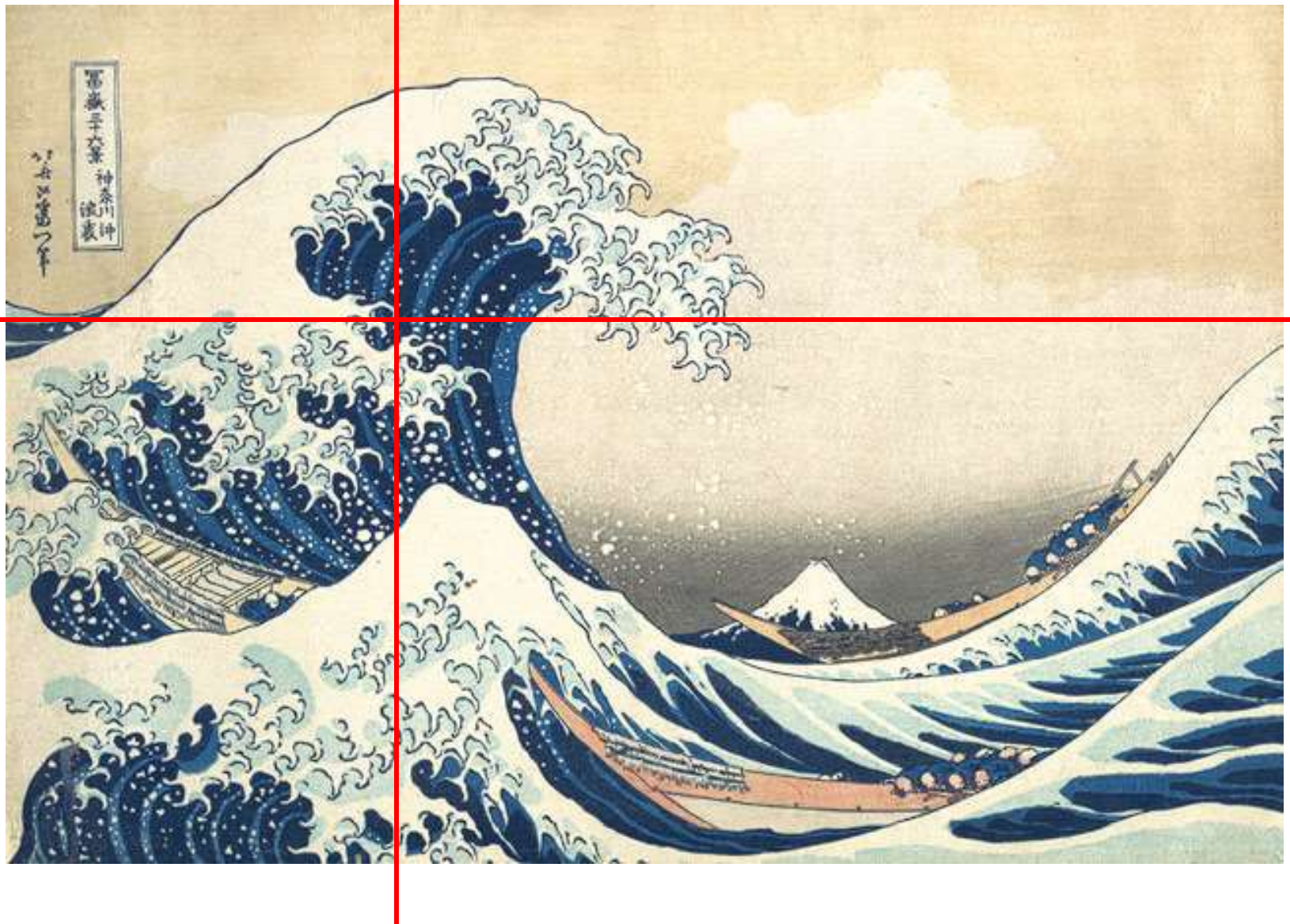
Space is suggested by a sequence of shapes overlapped . The main two props constructing the depth of the scene are the wave in the foreground and the mountain on the background, connected by the same **shape** repeated in different size.



Another pair of shapes with a similar relationship is suggested by the visible parts of the 3 boats. Their curvy **lines** echo the curvy lines that define the waves and their motion, which is emphasized by the different position of the boats. Because of their similarity, they suggest a **rhythm** referring to the progression of the boats in space and time as they were two still frames from the same sequence.



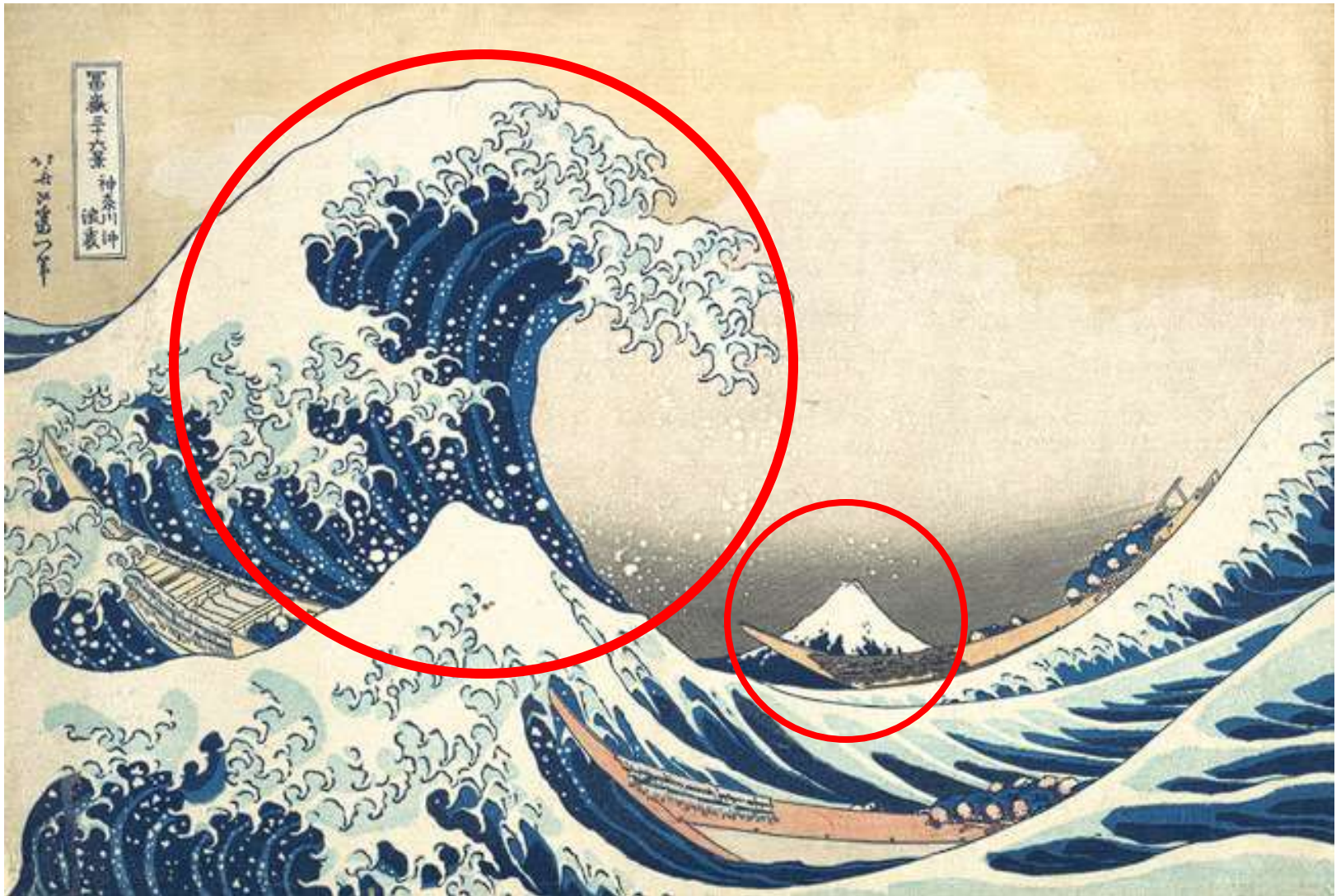
The **unity** of the composition is given by the exclusive use of arched lines . Ranging from the tiny curves of waves foam up to the largest bends depicting the waves,,lines have a wide **variety** of size . Arched lines suggest tension and potential energy to the frozen image of the agitated sea. .The cloud barely visible in the sky pairs the big wave and reinforces the unity of the composition by marking the central area of the print.



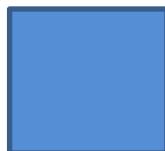
The main subject of the composition is located in the upper left part of the image according to the rule of the thirds.



The horizon is located in the lowest part of the image according to the rule of the thirds as if the point of view was that of a man on board of a pitching boat.



The subject matter of the composition is clearly focused by the juxtaposition of the huge wave and the Fuji mount, much smaller than the wave because of the distance.



2. Interpretation of function and purpose



16 mon, double noodle dish

sold at Sotheby's, Hong Kong on 2 June 2017 for 436.782 Euro

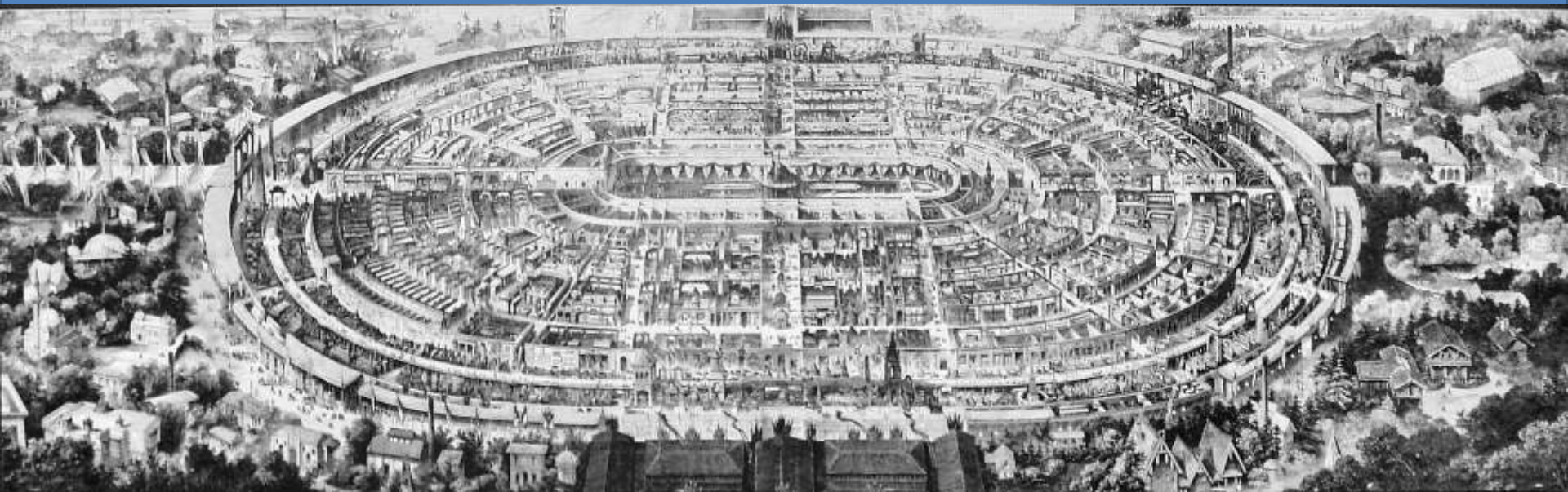
Woodblock prints such as Hokusai romantic landscapes reintroduce a traditional genre by making available to anyone captivating images with a bit of extra cash.

The Edo-period (1615–1868) cities contained newly rich townspeople, mostly merchants and artisans, who gained economic strength by taking advantage of the dramatic expansion of commerce. Eventually, they found themselves in a paradoxical position of being economically powerful but socially confined by the conservative military government, that promoted the entertainment industry as a way of contrasting any potentially dangerous rising political power. As a result, people turned their attention to conspicuous consumption and the pursuit of pleasure in the entertainment districts.

The expression *ukiyo* (浮世 *floating world*) refers to their hedonistic lifestyle, against the homophone expression *ukiyo* (憂き世, sorrowful world) referring to the traditional pessimistic Buddhist idea of the transitory nature of life.



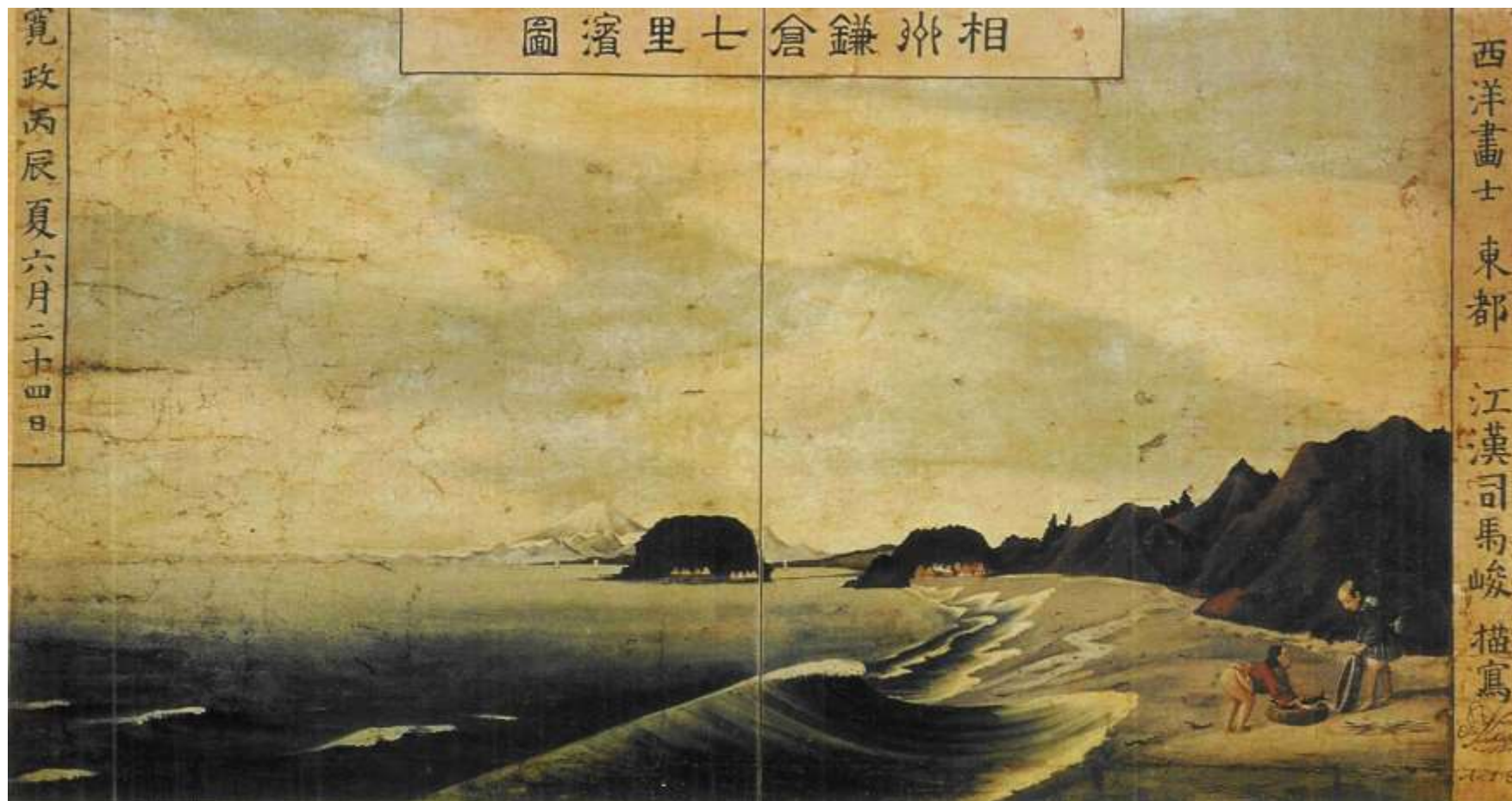
3. Evaluation of cultural significance



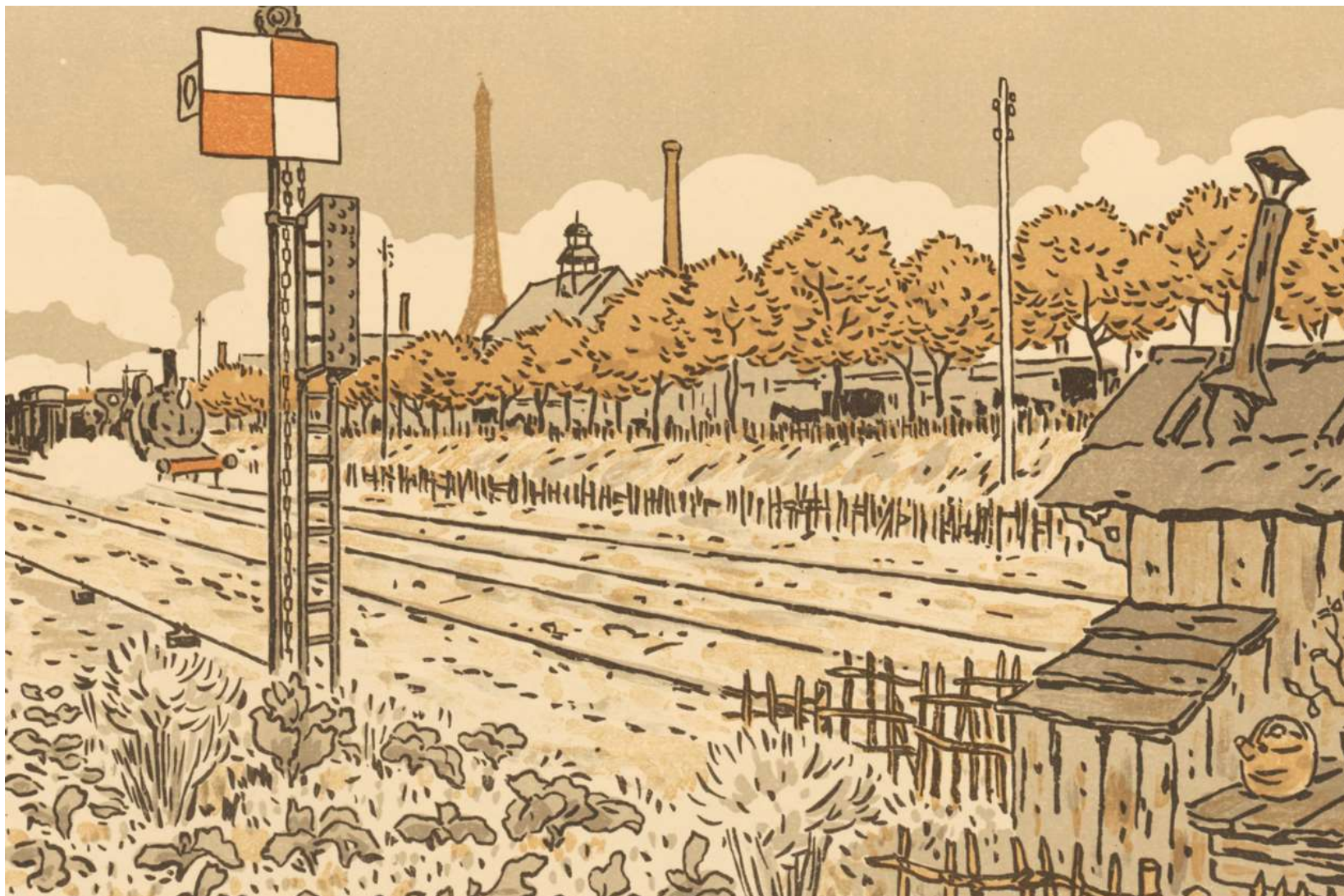
Exposition Universelle, Paris 1867



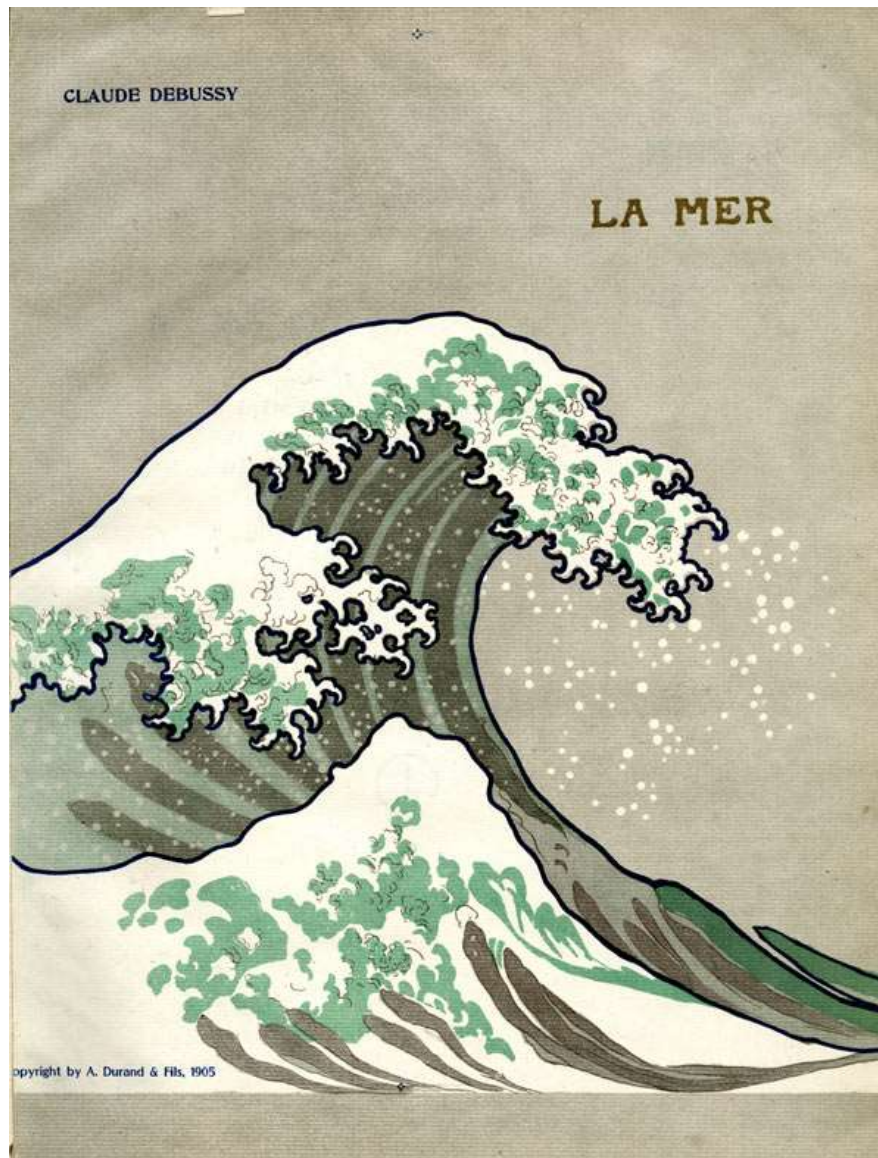
Ogata Kōrin, *Waves*, ca. 1704-09, ink and gold leaf on paper, 147 x 165 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



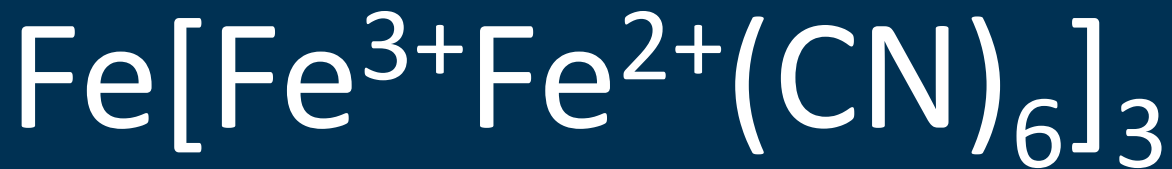
Yōga painting (Western style) by Shiba Kōkan (1747-1818)



Henri Rivière (1864–1951), **Du quai de Javel, 36 Vues del la tour Eiffel**, 1902, 5 colors lithography, 17 x 20 cm



Claude Debussy, La mer, 1905



Prussian Blue

invented in 1704 by Diesbach , industrial color maker in Berlin, while experimenting with iron oxides. Available to the artists from 1724, it soon became very popular in Europe. As a dye was employed for Prussian and French uniforms.

Imported in Japan by Dutch, or more likely, Chinese traders.