

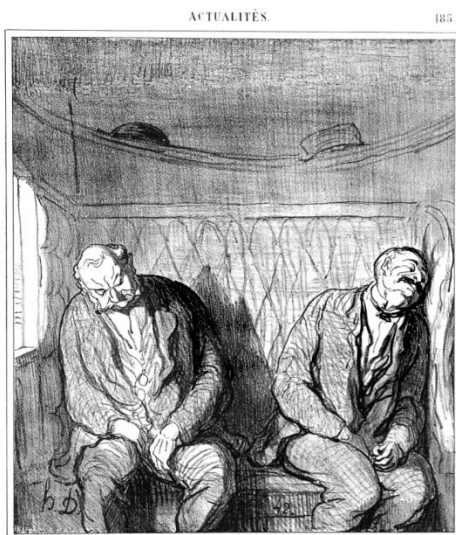
Students Question Students

Daumier & Hokusai: Art for the Masses, Selected Works from the Collection of Patrick M. Rowe

Critical thinking questions authored by students to challenge fellow students to thoughtfully engage with the artwork presented in the exhibition.

By: Casey Fisch, Joohee Kang, Jenna Mulberry, Elizabeth Shanks.

1. During the nineteenth century western art underwent a drastic transformation and became accessible to the masses. In the East in the early to mid 1800s Hokusai had printed books and through the mid to latter 1800s Daumier created political cartoons for newspapers in Paris. What are some of the causes of this western transformation and what effects did they have on the artistic world? Consider innovations/inventions these artists would have utilized. What effect did mass produced art have on society?
2. In 1835, the French government passed laws censoring the press. Daumier couldn't respond to political issues until this censorship was relaxed in 1848. Similarly, Hokusai experienced limitations by the Edo government with the closing of Japan to the West. In what way did the artists overcome these obstacles to maintain their innovative style and adapt to their political climate? Refer to Daumier's print catalogued as #169. The caption was changed three times due to the government censor's disapproval. How do artists respond to this conflict between government and society today? In what ways have western society's ideas on censorship changed over time?



ACTUALITÉS 1835
- Faisons semblant de dormir car il serait capable de me développer son amendement sur le dernier projet de loi. - Il faut qu'il croie que je dors, sans quoi il prendrait la parole sur le procès verbal de la dernière séance.

Print # 169, Daumier

During his lifetime, Daumier was not considered a fine artist; his works were printed in daily newspapers and sometimes in limited editions, thus many collectors disregarded Daumier's works because they were cheap and readily available. When his

3. Daumier used a printing process called lithography, a technique which enables durable and detailed printing. On the flat

work was exhibited in 1878 the show cost more money to display than it made in revenue. What were Daumier's intentions in creating artworks that did not sell for much money? Consider the prints Daumier created about politics, the press and war and how viewers would have perceived these images. How would strong images like plates #144 and #149 have influenced French viewers at this time?

4. Daumier's political cartoons addressed issues relevant during the time of publication, oftentimes pertaining to the climate of French politics, economics and society. Refer to print #43, depicting two French justices; what does their interaction indicate about the justice system? What statement does print #72 make about Feminism during this time period? Although your knowledge of this period of France may be limited, as best you can draw a contrast between the impact of the message then and now. Does the image still hold meaning for us? Print #96 depicts difficult living conditions endured by less well-off Parisians. What can you infer about life in 19th century France?

5. Political cartoons are typically comprised of caricatures which are exaggerated portraits intended to create humor and appeal to the viewer's emotions; for instance, Daumier depicted King Louis Philippe as a bulbous pear and enormous glutton in order to generate jest and animosity towards an abhorrent politician. Think of current political cartoons and the manner in which many characters are depicted. In reviewing Daumier's caricatures, do you notice the repetition of similar characteristics or the same exaggerated features? Consider Daumier's viewer's reactions and compare it with your own reaction to present political cartoons. Look at print # 123 to help answer.



Print #123, Daumier

6. Daumier invented a fictitious character he called "Ratapoil" (literally "hairy rat") to personify the hated supporters of Louis-Napoleon. In 1852, Louis-Napoleon, although elected the first president of the Second French Republic, restored the Empire and declared himself to be Napoleon III. He held power from 1848 to 1870. Ratapoil is portrayed with the same basic physical features as Louis-Napoleon, but Daumier was careful never to specifically identify this character as the despotic leader. As a contemporary viewer, do you think the impact of this humor is lost? In studying Daumier's caricatures, do you think Daumier may have imposed certain characteristics on different members of society? Centuries from now, how will societies perceive current political cartoons? Again look at print # 123 to help answer the question.
7. Consider Daumier's sketchy style of aggressive and energetic lines in his illustrations as well as the juxtaposition of light and dark masses. Look specifically at print #168: does the line help to suggest the mood in which the viewer should interpret the drawing?
8. The son of an impoverished poet and playwright, Daumier sympathized with the poor workers of the French Industrial Revolution. During times of increased censorship, Daumier printed vignettes of daily Gallic life. Examples of this can be seen in the catalog with images #97 and #98. How is the upper class portrayed in comparison to the lower class? How would the different classes have perceived these caustic depictions?



A Dream of Nanka, Hokusai

9. The term, ukiyo-e, refers to a genre of Japanese woodblock prints and paintings produced between the 17th and 20th centuries. In this period, although the traditional classes of Japanese society were bound by numerous strictures and prohibitions, the rising merchant class was relatively unregulated, and turned its attention to temporal pursuits rather than “timeless issues.” Ukiyo-e, translated into “pictures of the floating world,” generally features scenes of everyday life and leisure time. Find two works that you feel represent the “floating world” among Hokusai’s works and explain why.

10. Hokusai is famous as a precursor to Impressionism, a style of painting in France at the end of the 19th century. In Japan, toward the end of the Edo Period (1854), the government opened its ports which allowed the introduction of Japanese culture to the West. As a result the bold designs of Japanese woodblock prints influenced the Impressionists. The Japanese asymmetrical arrangements as well as the contrasting large areas of flat color with patches of intricate pattern offered a compositional format through which the Impressionists could develop their ideas about color. Besides color and composition, how does Hokusai’s print influence Impressionism? Consider Mary Cassatt’s image *Children Playing on the Beach* and Hokusai’s image, *The Great Wave of Kanagawa*.



Children Playing on the Beach, Mary Cassatt



The Great Wave of Kanagawa, Hokusai

11. All styles seemed open to Hokusai—Japanese, Chinese, and Western. Even though Japan was isolated from the West during his life (1760-1849), Hokusai could study western style through Dutch books that had been filtering into the country. Foreign prints gave him a basic knowledge of western realism and perspective rules. Name a print that seems to show the influence of the western style on Hokusai’s imagery? Hokusai was influenced by Dutch and French landscape paintings. Hokusai saw etchings of landscapes by artists like the Dutch painter Koninck Philips (1619-1688). Look at some of Philips’s paintings on the internet and compare them to Hokusai’s prints.