

Author: Deborah Shub

Event Krannert Art Museum Opening Reception – January 29, 2009 When I
Response showed up at the opening around 6:15, the private reception had
Exhibition finished and the public opening had just begun. My entrance into the
Opening: link gallery immediately surprised me, for there were a lot of people,
particularly students. However, since the senior art students had just
put up their projects in the gallery, it was clear that those students,
along with their friends, had come to check out the displays.
Additionally, the food and beverages were stationed in the link
gallery, and there were many adults and students crowding the
tables. Once you entered into the new exhibition spaces, there were
many people and the sound of music was subtly playing in the
background, noise that most seemed to ignore. Towards the end of
the evening, however, people seemed to be tired and a large group
all took chairs and sat and listened to the music. Interestingly, I
noted that people seemed reticent to take a look at the work directly
behind the musician, instead opting to see it from afar as opposed
to slipping behind him to get a closer look. In general, the two age
groups that were most significantly represented were college
students and older adults ranging from mid thirties to mid fifties.
Additionally, there were a few families there, showing their children
the artworks. The students seemed to congregate in the Warhol
photo exhibit and the adults in general, were the ones exploring the
Audubon and Mylayne exhibits. I feel that the opening was geared
more towards the staff, faculty, and community members as it
seemed that most of the people attending had stuck around from the
private reception. While walking through the galleries, a lot of the
conversations I overheard were people catching each other up on
their weeks and their personal lives. A majority of the comments
were non-art related, which is common at social gatherings,
although somewhat surprising at an art opening. There were few
people in the WOWDesign shoes exhibit and if anyone spoke, it was
in whispers. The silence was a bit oppressing for I figured people
would be intrigued by the process and asking questions. Something
That Happened Only Once was also a very different and new exhibit,
but since it was the only one downstairs, it seemed that very few
people knew about it or even ventured down there to check it out.
My suggestion would be to try and keep opening exhibits all on the
same level, or to have a brochure when you first enter, detailing
each of the exhibits and where they can be found in the museum.

Art
Explorati
on:

Art Exploration—Gorilla Carrying off a Stone Age Woman

I always find that larger than life statues are striking and fascinating works and Emmanuel Frémiet's bronze entitled Gorilla Carrying off a Stone Age Woman, is no less magnificent or breathtaking. When first looking at this statue, it seems that the woman is being brutally dragged away by the gorilla, a savage animal taking advantage of the helpless, defenseless woman. However, one of the great things about sculpture is that every side can surprise you, and once I took a turn all the way around the sculpture, I realized that the story was not so simple. The gorilla had a gash in his left side, and what looks like part of an arrow, so it seems that the Stone Age woman hunted and shot him. Additionally, if you look closer, the viewer will notice that the woman has what looks like the lower jaw of a gorilla with its teeth still attached dangling from her hair. This suggests that the woman hunts gorillas or is part of a clan that hunts them, and collects mementos of her kills. The situation, therefore, is in fact reversed, and the viewer instead takes pity on the gorilla for being hunted and shot at, and his manhandling seems justified as he drags her off for his revenge.

Although the gorilla may seem like the fierce and untamed beast, he seems almost anthropomorphized by the artist. He stands upright on his hind legs, and holds the woman with one arm, while carrying a rock with the other. Additionally, if you look at the facial expressions, the gorilla's eyes seem to convey his hurt and sadness very well, whereas the closed eyes of the woman seem to indicate her shame and defeat. The bronze statue is crafted well, and the bodies of both look incredibly realistic. The muscles of both and the fur on the gorilla are accentuated by the lines of their bodies. The woman's angles seem balanced by the gorilla's curves, and the contrast suggests that the woman is hard and foreign to the soft and natural space the gorilla takes up. The idea of the natural is also seen in the snake crawling up the base of the statue. The snake brings the viewer's eyes down to the platform the gorilla is standing on, and which the woman is hanging off from, and brings attention to the artist's name carved into the stone. It seems Frémiet wanted to eternalize and identify his work within his creation, and overall, the lesson the work seems to evoke is to not trust first appearances. The viewer must look carefully before coming to conclusions.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the noticeable differences between paintings and sculptures?
 - a. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each medium?
 - b. Do you think one provides more visual or contextual benefits?
 - c. Would this work have been as effective as a two-dimensional painting?
2. What was your first impression of the narrative behind the sculpture?
 - a. How did that change once you looked at it from all sides?
 - b. What do you think the gorilla is going to do to the woman?
 - c. Do you think the gorilla's actions are justified?
3. Do you find that sculpture seems more accessible to you?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. Who do you think this work appeals to?
 - c. Which subject appeals more to you and why?

**Keyword
s:**

Object School of Iwasa Matabei (1578–1650)

Guide: Japanese, 17th c. (1650–1670)

Utsusemi scene from the Tale of Genji

Screen Painting 63” x 145”

Purchase, Class of 1908 Fund

1980–16–2

This Japanese screen depicts a scene from the Tale of Genji, a work considered to be the first novel ever written. It tells the third chapter “Utsusemi,” or “Shell of the Locust”. The six-panel screen was created during the Heian Period in Japanese history, where naming a person was considered rude in court society, so the female characters were referred to by their clothing. Utsusemi, one of the

females shown in the first panel, is named by Genji. In the second panel, we see Genji, aided by Utsusemi's younger brother, spying on her and her friend as they are playing a game. The story told by the screen stops there, but in the novel, Utsusemi senses Genji and flees, leaving her outer robe behind. The Tale of Genji is based on Japanese tankas or poems that describe the different scenes. When Genji finds her gown, he writes a poem about it, comparing her gown to the empty shell of a locust and thus giving her the name Utsusemi.

At the base of the tree,

Where the locust

Transformed itself,

The empty shell

Still brings fond memories.

The Tale of Genji became an oral tradition told to aristocratic women and their ladies in waiting. Illustrations would accompany the story telling to help make the tale more accessible to those who were illiterate. These illustrations often took the form of folding screens and became part of a woman's trousseau, or items a woman brings to her new husband upon marriage.

Japanese folding screens (known as *byōbu*, or "protection from the wind") became very popular and distinctive in the 17th century, when new samurai rulers commissioned large screens made of gold leaf to be displayed in their homes. Large multi-fold gold leaf screens often served as backdrops to dancing. These screens not only served the aesthetic functions of settings for special events, but provided practical functions as room partitions and moveable walls as well. This screen most likely served multiple purposes and helped to convey both Japanese history and artistic tradition.

The style of painting, *yamato-e*, was characteristic of this time and of the School of Iwasa Matabei, which is based on an artist who specialized in genre scenes of historical events. The subjects are given dashes for eyes and hooks for noses, which make them appear as flat as the panels. Additionally, the painting seems static, as if the subjects are frozen in their respective scenes. An overabundance of gold surrounds them and they seem to be stuck in

the clouds that permeate the scene. The eye is then drawn across the screen by the heavy slants created by the diagonals of the architectural frame. The roof is removed from the scene in order to display a bird's eye view of what is happening inside. This view puts viewers in the position of spying upon these scenes, just as Genji is spying upon Utsusemi.

Bibliography

Bargen, Doris G. and Murasaki Shikibu. *A Woman's Weapon: Spirit Possession in the Tale of*

Genji". University of Hawaii Press, 1997.

Impey, Oliver R. *The Art of the Japanese Folding Screen: The Collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Ashmolean Museum*. Ashmolean Museum, 1997.

Shikibu, Murasaki and Royall Tyler. *The Tale of Genji: Unabridged*. Penguin Classics, 2001.

Shirane, Haruo. *The Bridge of Dreams: A Poetics of 'The Tale of Genji'*. Stanford University

Press, 1987.

Van der Reyden, Dianne Lee. *The History, Technology, and Care of Folding Screens: Case*

Studies of the Conservation Treatment of Western and Oriental Screens. London: International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, 1988, p. 64-68

Weeks, Edward. *The Art of the Japanese Screen*. Atlantic (01606506) 226.4 (Oct. 1970): 152.

Academic Search Premier. EBSCO. 13 Feb. 2009.

<<http://search.ebscohost.com.proxy2.library.uiuc.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=9515859&site=ehost-live>>.

Annotated Question 1. Based on the shape and size of the screen, what do you think it was used for?

Question

Plan: *To decorate a room, maybe a kids room so they could read the*

pictures.

- a. Does it have more aesthetic or practical value?

It's pretty, but it could also be used to separate things in a room.

- b. Could it be used for both purposes? How?

Yes, as decoration, and to divide rooms for different purposes.

- c. Why do you think it was made?

For someone important—to put in their room.

2. What shapes and colors do you see?

- a. What colors are used?

The background is gold. There's some green and red. Things are outlined in black.

- b. Why do you think the background was done in gold?

It makes it look fancier. It seems like something for a special occasion.

- c. Look at the faces, do they seem realistic?

They look flat. They've got squinty eyes. Their faces are pale and their hair is black.

- d. How can you tell this work is Asian and not European?

The way people are dressed. The color of their hair and the features of their face.

3. What do you see?

- a. What are the interactions on each panel?

Often the genders are separated. Women are interacting with other women and men are interacting with other men. Nature and trees are seen throughout the panels.

- b. Is the story told in a linear fashion?

Yes. (Although it's not)

c. Why are the groups of people separated by panels?

Because it shows different events happening one after the other (I believe it's all simultaneous, however)

d. How does the separation help you understand the story?

It helps separate the interactions and show what the groups are doing individually

4. When you read a book, do you like having pictures accompany the text?

Yes.

a. How do the illustrations add to the text?

They're pretty. They help explain what's going on in the story.

b. What is the relationship between the pictures and the written story?

The pictures show what's happening in the story.

c. What story do these pictures tell you?

There are two women playing a game. There are two men talking, one of them is hiding. There are two men sitting by a tree and a horse, with a woman and a man nearby. Perhaps the men are spying on the women. They all look like people of higher class.

**Tour
Stop:**

Tour Stop: Utsusemi scene from the Tale of Genji

Overview: Students will explore the Japanese screen in the Asian gallery, particularly the Utsusemi scene from the Tale of Genji. They will then create a picture book that tells a story just as the folding screen tells a chapter from the Tale of Genji.

Artwork:

School of Iwasa Matabei (1578–1650)

Japanese, 17th c. (1650–1670)

Utsusemi scene from the Tale of Genji

Screen Painting 63” x 145”

Purchase, Class of 1908 Fund

1980–16–2

Supplies (for the longer art activity):

Metallic crayons

Light colored construction paper

Procedure:

Have the children look at the screen for about 30–45 seconds and ask them to look carefully and remember as much as they can. Then have them turn around and shut their eyes and think about what they saw. When they open them, ask them to provide the one detail they remembered the most vividly about the screen. Then they can turn back around and look at it to answer the following questions.

Questions:

1. What do you see? What’s happening in each of the panels? What story does this screen tell you?
2. Describe the subjects. Look at their faces. Do they seem realistic? What are they wearing?
3. What colors does the artist use? Which color pops out the most? What kind of effect does this give the screen?
4. What do you think this screen was used for? Why? How is it both functional/practical and aesthetic/art?
5. Do you like reading books that include pictures? How do the illustrations add to the text? What’s the relationship between the words and the pictures?

Quick Activity

How many of you read comic books? What do you like about them? How does this screen compare to a comic book? What’s similar about the way this story is told to the way a comic book artist tells

the story? What's different? Do you like it better when there are words accompanying the pictures? Why or why not?

Possible Art Activity if Time Allows (Art-to-Go)

Now, we're going to create our own story by making a picture book. Think of a story you can tell using only pictures. It can be based on your life, based on a story you've read, or based on a historical event.

1) Each student gets a piece of construction paper and access to the metallic crayons.

2) They will fold their paper in half horizontally, with the fold facing the left.

3) On the front, they can write the title of their work and their names as the artist of the book.

4) When they open up the construction paper (so that the title is facedown on the left), they will draw their story on the two inside panels

Their story then "unfolds" just as the Japanese folding screen does.

Audience Study – Kids@Kr annert:

Audience Development of College Students Out of the five people I interviewed, two of the five had never set foot inside the art museum, and a third interviewee had only been there once. On the other hand, the other two students had not only been to the art museum, but had gone on multiple occasions throughout their college careers, for different events and exhibitions.

: In general, those who had been to the Krannert Art Museum had very positive and enjoyable experiences and said that they would return for similar events or to check out new exhibitions. This positive feedback also expanded to the friends that the interviewee went with to the museum. The interviewees rarely went to the museum alone. They either went with a group of friends or went with their class for an event or assignment.

One of the interesting suggestions I heard in my interviews was

making lectures and events at the Krannert Art Museum more integral and integrative within class curriculums. There were multiple ways in which to achieve this. Some students suggested that KAM partner with other departments and/or institutions in the university such as the Spurlock Museum and the Krannert Center, in which to put together a joint project. Other students suggested bringing KAM to central locations, or putting exhibits in public places, such as the quad. One example that was used was the artwork in front of the cultural houses on Nevada, particularly the Native American House, where signs with the chief's name spelled backwards were displayed. The article made the DI and brought attention to art initiatives on campus.

By making art more “public,” students will gain more exposure to it and what the Krannert Art Museum provides. One interviewee said that exposure was the real key to better meeting the needs of college students. This exposure can come from having more classes integrate lessons at the museum and showing students the importance of it. Many interviewees talked about the similarities between the Krannert Center and the museum and how confusing the relationship between the two is. Most suggested that KAM needed to advertise more in order for them to go the museum. Most students were unaware of exhibitions and events, but said if they were aware, they would be more likely to check them out.

**Audio
Guide**

Audio Guide: Utsusemi Screen in the Asian Gallery

Script:

Welcome to the Asian Gallery of the Krannert Art Museum. We are going to take a look at the Japanese screens here on your left, and we will be discussing the left most screen of the pair.

This six-panel Japanese screen depicts a scene from the Tale of Genji, a work considered to be the first novel ever written. It was painted during the 17th century by an unknown artist from the School of Iwasa Matabei.

Prince Genji was a son of a Japanese emperor during the Heian period, which lasted from the late 8th to late 12th centuries. This story details the majority of Genji's life, but this screen focuses on part of the third chapter “Utsusemi.” It utilizes Japanese tankas or poems that describe the different scenes.

Unlike Western traditions, viewers “read” these panels from right to left. The three panels on the right illustrate Genji's servant party

waiting outside Utsusemi's mansion. If you move to your left, you see Genji crouching, aided by Utsusemi's younger brother. They are spying on Utsusemi and her friend who are depicted in the last panel, where you see two females sitting in front of a low table that looks like a board game. They are playing a strategic game called igo.

You may notice the roof is removed from the scene. This helps to display a bird's eye view of what is happening inside. This angle puts viewers in the position of spying upon these scenes, just as Genji is spying upon Utsusemi.

The story told by the screen stops there, but in the novel, Utsusemi senses Genji watching her and flees, leaving her outer robe behind. When Genji finds her gown, he writes a poem about it, comparing her gown to the empty shell of a locust and thus giving her the name Utsusemi, which literally translates to "Shell of the Locust." Genji names her this because during the Heian period, naming a person in court society was considered rude, so the female characters were referred to by their clothing.

Japanese folding screens (known as *byōbu*, or "protection from the wind") became very popular and distinctive in the 17th century. These screens not only served the aesthetic functions of settings for special events, but provided practical functions as room partitions and moveable walls. You can see examples of this in the first panel where the screens are depicted in blue.

The style of painting, *yamato-e*, was characteristic of this time and of the School of Iwasa Matabei, which is based on an artist who specialized in historical genre scenes, scenes from everyday life in the past. According to this style, the subjects are given dashes for eyes and hooks for noses.

Thank you for listening to our discussion of the Utsusemi screen from the Tale of Genji. This has been Vanessa Bordo and Deborah Shub. Please feel free to wander through the rest of the galleries.

**Audience
Study –
Art After
Hours:**

Event
Response

Gallery Conversation—February 5, 2009

Additional Event: e – Going to the Gallery Conversation was a new and very enjoyable experience. At a very rough estimate, I would said there were about 40 or so people there, and I was surprised at how many students attended this event. I would say it was about 75% students and 25% adults. The adults seemed to either be Krannert Art Museum members or professors and faculty at the school, particularly Art & Design and Art History faculty or those who knew the faculty that were part of the conversation. A lot of the students looked a bit older, so perhaps they were grad students in an art discipline.

The set-up of the event was interesting in that information was given about the artist's and their intent and then the guest speakers were asked to comment on the artworks, with the audience being able to add additional comments or questions. The guests did not really seem to know what to do at first, but they soon struck up a conversation about their issues with the Mylayne photos. Everyone seemed very engaged and intent on the conversations the speakers were having. There weren't enough chairs for people to sit in, but the rest of the attendees either stood or sat on the floor, with their focus on the photos and the professors discussing them. I think the professors did a good job of keeping the discussion relevant and the audience engaged with their comments and the artwork. It really helped bring the process and meaning to life. The only drawback that I noticed to the event was that the Warhol gallery space was not large enough to fit everyone who came. There were many people standing outside the space listening to the remarks, but they could not see what was being looked at or referred to. They seemed interested and attentive nonetheless, and overall I felt it was a very successful and worthwhile event that I wish I had known about earlier.