WordPress and the Study of Japanese Prints:
Combining object-based learning with digital opportunities

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This website is designed as an online catalogue of Japanese prints from the Kislak Collection. Students in the seminar, ARTH 515: Utamaro and his Contemporaries, conceived of the overall design of the site and conducted research on individual prints. All works featured here are held in the Kislak Center, Van Pelt Library, and are generous gifts made in support of object-based learning and original research.

See the Print Catalogue section for more information about selected prints from the collection.
Attribution problems become catalogue data:
first task: determine facts, authenticity + post data to site

From an unidentified print

To a fully catalogued item
Further study: close looking + compare and contrast at the PMA
Symposium presentations become online catalogue entries

In-class conference-style presentations become complete catalogue entries online

Author: Utagawa Yoshitsuya (Yoshitsuuya Ichieisa) (1822-1886)
Title: A Frenchwoman (Furansu fujin)
Series Title: People of the Barbarian Nations (Bankoku jinbutsu zu)
Date: 1861
Medium: Polychrome woodblock print; ink and color on paper.
Publisher: Ebiya Rinnosuke
Engraver: Masaichi Matsushima
Inscription: "Wearing her foreign garb of spring brocade, a young woman strolls along the streets of Yokohama."
(Karagoromo haru no nishiki o mi ni soete tate Yokohama o ayumu taoyame)
Gift of Satoko Parker

This print by Yoshitsuya Utagawa, signed here as 'Yoshitsuuya Ichieisa,' is a representative example of the boom in Yokohama prints (Yokohama pictures) during the mid-nineteenth century. After the Treaty of the Five Nations was signed in 1858, the port of Yokohama became the locus of international trade in Japan. Interest in foreigners arriving on the Japanese mainland skyrocketed, and over 800 woodblock designs were issued from 1858 to 1861. Yokohama artists sought to appeal to their Japanese audience by emphasizing the foreignness of Western customs and costumes. To do this, artists drew from fashion plates in Western publications like the Illustrated London News and Peterson's Magazine to create a collage of the most unusual aspects of European clothing. Active like that of the Frenchwoman demonstrates how such secondary source material was used as design inspiration.

Prints of expatriate nationals would often be sold in sets with other citizens of the five treaty nations (America, Great Britain, Russia, France, and the Netherlands). This series depicts the people of America, Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, and Italy; Russia is excluded for reasons unknown.

Very few prints of this design still exist; the only other documented impression is at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Bibliography
Student feedback on combining object-based learning with WordPress:

-the website extends our engagement beyond class with research that will go out into the world

-the process of building the website and giving the public presentations gives our work relevance, where the work has an afterlife

-using WordPress gives us the chance to develop a new skill and makes us more attuned to our audience

-and working with a real collection in the library gives us the opportunity for professional experience
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