

Unique Japanese art at University museum

By Ming Rodrigues
Emerald Contributor

Two uniquely different Japanese art forms are on display at the University's Museum of Art.

"Expressive Quilts," a collection of hand-sewn pictorial quilts by contemporary Japanese-American artist Kumiko Sudo of Eugene, is a far throw from the American quilt.

Using antique silk, cotton kimonos and obis as her primary materials, Sudo marries traditional Japanese color and design principles with a contemporary American flair for the pictorial (scenes from "The Tale of the Genji" and the Bible) and the abstract.

But while Sudo's work blends the best of East and West, she only began employing Japanese subjects after moving here five years ago.

"When I live in my own country, I am not so careful to see my own history or environment," said Sudo in what she refers to as "my broken English."

"In Japan, I already know about American quilts for 20 years. But I never see my own country's history. But in moving to United States, I am remembering what my country is over the sea. Then start to study what is good about my country," she said.

In ancient Japanese society, according to Sudo, dress was of social importance, and the old Japanese costumes signified

one's social status. Certain colors and design patterns had symbolic meaning, and there were rules about what clothing, color and fabrics could be worn together.

This historical influence has survived in modern Japan and forms part of Sudo's cultural heritage, making her approach different from traditional quilting and giving it a character all its own.

Japanese Ukiyo-e woodblock prints portraying actors in famous Kabuki theater roles is the other Museum of Art exhibit.

Due to feudalism's breakdown and Japan's consequent transition from a rice to a money economy, the Tokugawa era saw the rise of the urban merchant middle class who founded its own comparable art form in the Kabuki and Ukiyo-e.

Ukiyo-e literally means "pictures of the floating world" referring to the fleeting nature of material goods and sensual pleasures. Themes often depicted in these prints include actors in the Noh theater roles, the aristocratic class's dramatic form and the Geisha's private entertainment sphere. The Geisha were not courtesans, but entertainers specializing in song and dance.

Closer in social connotations and atmosphere to a vaudeville theater than to an opera house, the 18th century Kabuki theater was founded on pantomime, choral and musical accompaniment, lavish costumes and



Courtesy photo
One of the Japanese woodblock prints displayed at the University's Museum of Art features the actor Ichikawa Ix as Terasubi No Kamiko, a demon.

make-up.

Both exhibitions are held in conjunction with the 50th anniversary celebration of the University's Asian Studies Program.

The exhibitions will be on display until Sunday, May 3. The Museum of Art is open free to the public from noon till 5 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday.

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Other works by Toni Morrison include: *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Song of Solomon* (winner of the 1978 National Book Critics Circle Award), *Tar Baby* and *Beloved* (winner of the 1988 Pulitzer Prize for fiction).

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