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Woodcuts 1946-1953 by Kōsaka Gajin (1877-1953):
The Discovery of Children’s Art in Japan and German Expressionism

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(Abstract)

The career and woodblock prints by the twentieth century Japanese artist Kōsaka Gajin (1877-1953) have not been studied in depth in Japan or overseas. This thesis examines his important role in the Japanese Creative Print movement in the early twentieth century when Japan was largely influenced by Western modernization. Japan’s adoption of German educational subjects and methods greatly contributed its modernization. Kōsaka, also an educator of children’s drawing, published books; one of which was a study of his own son’s drawings from age one to age six from a German psychological perspective. Kōsaka’s graphic art was inspired by his study of children’s drawings. This thesis compares and contrasts abstract art and theory by Kōsaka and his contemporary European artist Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) who lived in Germany; both artists valued children’s art in a similar way reflected in their art. My scholarly work also covers the social influences on artists in both countries.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Illustrations. ................................................................. 2

Introduction
   A. Purpose of Research ......................................................... 5
   B. Significance of My Thesis ................................................. 8

Chapter I. Japan and Germany at the End of the Nineteenth Century
   A. The Japanese Perception of Germany in the Modern Period. .... 10
   B. German Expressionism and the Creative Print Movement. ....... 12

Chapter II. Historical Overview of Modern Japanese Prints
   A. The Rise of the Creative Print Movement. ......................... 18
   B. Kōsaka Gajin (1877-1953) and His Contemporaries ............... 22

Chapter III. Kōsaka Gajin
   A. Biography. ........................................................................ 24
   B. Graphic Art. ................................................................... 31
   C. Books by Kōsaka Gajin. .................................................. 35
   D. Kōsaka’s Abstract Images. .............................................. 38

Chapter IV. Kandinsky’s Views of Children’s Drawings. ............... 42
   A. Lines and Composition in Children’s Drawings. ................ 45
   B. The Nature of Expression in Children’s Drawings. .............. 47

Chapter V. Comparative Analysis of German Expressionism and the Creative Print Movement. ................................. 49

Conclusion. ............................................................................. 57
List of Illustrations

Figure

1. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Portrait of the Wife of Professor Goldstein*, woodcut, 45.7 x 23.9 cm., 1916, British Museum, London.

2. Erich Heckel, *Standing Child*, color woodcut, 37.5 x 27.4 cm., 1910, British Museum, London.


22. Child’s drawing (Paulot Seddeler), pencil drawing, c. 1905-1914, Collection Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner-Stiftung, Munich.

23. Child’s drawing (Paulot Seddeler), pencil drawing, c. 1905-1914, Collection Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner-Stiftung, Munich.

24. Child’s drawing (Elisabeth Busse), pencil drawing, c. 1905-1914, Collection Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner-Stiftung, Munich.

25. Wassily Kandinsky, *Landscape with Female Form and Rider*, pencil drawing, c.1907, whereabouts unknown.


27. Child’s drawing (Martin Mosner), color drawing, c. 1905-1914, Collection Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner-Stiftung, Munich.


30. Hiratsuka Un’ichi, *Senkakuwan Bay, Sado Island*, woodcut, 43 x 53.5 cm., 1938,
whereabouts unknown.


INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose of My Research

This thesis studies monochromatic prints by the Japanese graphic artist Kōsaka Gajin\(^1\) (1877-1953) and his theory of abstract art as described in his writings. Kōsaka was an artist as well as an art educator at the time of the modern art movement in Japan. This thesis attempts to show that Kōsaka’s work and his abstract art theory were significantly influenced by his study of children’s drawings.

The Meiji era (1868-1912) marked the beginning of Japan’s industrialization and modernization. While Japan experienced cultural exchanges with various Western countries, Germany in particular was seen as a significant model for its industrial, social, and political development from the end of the nineteenth century onwards. One can especially find parallels in the emphasis that these two governments placed on education. Like the Germans, the Japanese stressed education in order to spur the country’s industrial growth. At the beginning of the 1870s, Japanese schools had been using American teaching methods. However, soon afterwards, Japan began to follow the example of Germany by including the psychological point of view in educational theory. This educational theory based on psychology particularly focused on teachers’ conduct in class in order to instill intellectual ideas into children’s minds.

The career of Kōsaka Gajin, the subject of my thesis, exemplifies the result of the introduction of educational psychology into Japan in the early twentieth century. While in teacher’s college in Tokyo, he studied new theories that were becoming known within

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\(^1\) Throughout this thesis, Japanese people’s names are cited in the Japanese manner, with the first name last, and the last name first.
the Japanese educational establishment. There he met Narasaki Asatarō (1881-1974) who would later become his co-author in the studies of art education for children. Kōsaka tried to improve art education by trying to help teachers understand the mind of the child better. Based on his experience as a teacher at elementary schools in his youth, he began to publish books on the educational value of children’s drawings in the 1930s. The titles of these books are: *Gano kyōiku gaku* (Pedagogy of Drawing, 1930), and *Kodomono e no mikata to sodate kata* (How to Observe and Encourage a Child’s Drawings, 1931), and *Byōgengaku to shiteno zugakyōiku ron* (Educational Theory of Drawings, 1933).

I discovered that his second book, *How to Observe and Encourage a Child’s Drawings*, was one of the earliest studies of children’s art education from a psychological approach in Japan. Kōsaka studied the development of his own son’s drawings from age one to age six. In this thesis, I contend that Kōsaka’s examination of his son’s drawings was based on German psychological perspective, which had become prevalent among Japanese educationalists in the late nineteenth century.

While Kōsaka devoted himself to the educational development of children’s drawings, he began to pay more attention to children’s minds as they expressed their feelings in their drawings. To understand them, Kōsaka often copied his own child’s drawings and created his own prints based on them. He later entitled these works “*dōshin hanga*” (Prints of Children’s Innocence). As a result of such experiment, his graphic art became increasingly abstract. My thesis attempts to show that he was inspired by

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2 Narasaki Asatarō was a professor of literature and psychologist at Kinki University. He became the first principal of the elementary school at the Kinki University in 1954. He published various studies on education including educational psychology.

children’s drawings, which he believed expressed their feelings toward the world around them.

Kōsaka’s involvement in art education, as I will explain in more detail later, was responsible for his contributions to sōsaku hanga (Creative Print) Movement. This movement was initiated by Yamamoto Kanae (1882-1946) and Ishii Hakutei (1882-1958) around the beginning of the twentieth century and attracted many artists. The main goal of this group was to create their own prints, which they described as “self-carved, self-printed.” Among the group members, Onchi Kōshirō (1891-1955), Hiratsuka Un’ichi (1895-1997), and Munakata Shikō (1903-1975) were admired not only in Japan but also overseas.

Kōsaka’s concept of art was largely influenced by that of contemporary Western artists. During an interview with the artist’s son Takeru in 2000, I learned that Kōsaka Gajin admired Russian artist Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), the prominent Expressionist who worked mostly in Germany. Takeru also mentioned that newspaper reviews of Kōsaka’s 1956 retrospective show in Germany described his father’s art precisely as he used to describe it in his lifetime.4 One of the reviews even compared Kōsaka’s work with Kandinsky’s work. In discussing his abstract art, Kandinsky sometimes referred to children’s drawings which he believed often “spoke themselves.”5 In this thesis, I will compare Kandinsky’s concept of abstract art with that of Kōsaka’s, especially in terms of their appreciation of children’s drawings.

4 Kōsaka Gajin’s son, Kōsaka Takeru, and grandson, Kōsaka Hitoshi, interview by author, March 20, 2000, the Kōsakas, Tokyo.
In Kōsaka’s oeuvre, his favorite subjects—nature, landscape, and buildings—were depicted in black ink on washi (Japanese paper). These subjects evoke the visual characteristics of traditional Japanese art as was mentioned in the newspaper reviews in Germany: “It looks like ink painting which gives an impression that the black ink is oozing.” However, what made his art different from traditional Japanese art was his solid composition and semi-abstraction of form. This combination of the new and the old won him international acclaim in the last few years of his life. A solo-show at the Cernuschi Museum in Paris in 1953 was especially well-received throughout Europe. Admiration of his art continued after his death, as demonstrated by five retrospective exhibitions in 1956 in France, Austria, Italy, Germany, and the United States.

B. Significance of My Research

Kōsaka’s graphic art has been published in various museum catalogues both in Japan and overseas. However, it has never been studied in depth. In addition, his books have never been thoroughly studied nor translated into English.

Kōsaka was one of the first Creative Print artists who devoted himself to the understanding of children’s drawings. His work reflects his theories of art as formulated by his devotion to children’s art education. His artistic works and books epitomize an important aspect of the Japanese abstract art movement in the twentieth century.

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6 Washi (Japanese paper) is hand-made paper and made from plant fibers. It is known for its durability. There were some Creative Print artists such as Hiratsuka Un’ichi who was rigid in quality of Japanese paper. However, some artists including Kōsaka used cheap Japanese papers which were not purely hand-made.

7 K. G., “Japanische Holzschnitte” (Japanese woodcuts,) Der Tag meldet (Berlin), November 21, 1956. All English translation from German are done by author and edited by Dr. Lloyd Engelbrecht, unless otherwise noted.
It is important to note that the founder of Sōsaku hanga kyōkai (Creative Print Association), Yamamoto Kanae, was also a great admirer of children’s art. Inspired by children’s art as well as peasant art in Russia in 1916, he brought his enthusiasm back to Japan. He mounted exhibitions of children’s art and founded Jidō jiyūga kyōkai (Japan Children’s Free Painting Society) in 1919. Yamamoto encouraged free expression in children’s art because children in Japan had been receiving compulsory art education which consisted of copying painting models. Yamamoto, who believed such an approach spoiled children’s creativity, dissolved Japan Children’s Free Painting Society and formed Japan Free Education Society in order to change the art education system in Japan. By 1930, this children’s free art movement dissolved because of criticism from the Ministry of Education: however, many teachers continued to adopt Yamamoto’s views.8

It is quite possible that Kōsaka was one of those many teachers who were influenced by the children’s free art movement. He became an art teacher in 1901 and wrote books about children’s art education, which were published between 1930 and 1932, immediately after Yamamoto’s Society was dissolved. Kōsaka studied the history of children’s art education from the Meiji period and explicated his opinions about the educational value of children’s art in his books. Kōsaka also insisted that children had to be free from compulsory art education. This involvement in art education was beneficial to Kōsaka’s own art. While he was devoting himself to this endeavor, he also discovered the main point in his theory of art. He later elaborated on it in the catalogue for his 1952 exhibition at the Sendai City Hall in Japan.

In this thesis, I will show that there are explicit visual similarities in the woodblock prints by German Expressionists and Creative Print artists of the mid-twentieth century. As mentioned above, Kōsaka admired Wassily Kandinsky who was one of the most prominent figures in German Expressionism.\footnote{Interview with Kōsaka Gajin’s son Kōsaka Takeru and grandson Kōsaka Hitoshi, interview by author, March 20, 2000, the Kōsakas, Tokyo.} Although there are no specific documents by Kōsaka mentioning that his theory and work of art were influenced by that of Kandinsky, I will point out show the similarities between their work. In my discussion, I will compare and contrast Kandinsky’s concept of children’s drawings with that of Kōsaka’s. I will use as my sources Kandinsky’s book, Über das Geistige in der Kunst (Concerning the Spiritual in Art, 1911), and the anthology of Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider) artists, the Blaue Reiter Almanac (1912).

CHAPTER I
JAPAN AND GERMANY AT THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

A. The Japanese Perception of Germany in the Modern Period

While Japan’s modernization and industrialization were inspired by the United States, France, and England, the Japanese were particularly interested in the German constitutional monarchy and its national laws. The reason why Japan looked at Germany can be found in the records of the Iwakura shisetsudan, the Japanese diplomatic mission which visited Western countries in 1873 to draw up strategies for Japan’s modernization. The record, later published in 1878 as Tokumei zenkentaishi bēokairanjikki (A True Account of the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary’s Journal of Observation Through the United States of America and Europe), gave an account of their views of
each country they visited. One of the members, Ōkubo Toshimichi (1830-1878), cited Germany as being at a level equal to that of Japan, while describing the United States, France, and England as countries that had already been industrially developed and were, therefore, beyond immediate emulation.\textsuperscript{10} Japanese scholars, after seeing European countries first-hand, felt more sympathy for and affinity to Germany.\textsuperscript{11} There are some historic parallels between Japan and Germany. The German empire was established in 1871 after the unification of separate states, and it evolved into one of the great European powers. Moreover, Germany, which had been an underdeveloped agricultural country before the 1850s, was quickly industrialized after the Industrial Revolution and the establishment of railways.\textsuperscript{12} Japanese diplomats recognized resemblances between Japan and Germany, and they hoped to achieve similar success by walking in Germany’s footsteps.

The Japanese government revised and updated its theory of educational curricula by introducing various subjects from the West such as politics, economics, philosophy, pedagogy, and psychology. The government also tried to promote education by providing all children with an equal opportunity for learning. For an effective teaching of children, German educational methods, including their educational psychology, were introduced. A German educator, Emil Hausknecht (1853-1927), was invited to Japan in 1887, and the new educational theory that he introduced totally changed both the former educational theory and the method of teaching which had originated in the United

\textsuperscript{10} Nishikawa Nagao and Matsumiya Hideharu, “Bōkairanjikki” o yomu: 1870 nendai no sekai to nihon (Reading “A True Account of the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary’s Journal of Observation Through the United States of America and Europe”: The world and Japan in the 1870s) (Tokyo: Hōritsubunkasya, 1995).
\textsuperscript{12} Nishikawa and Matsumiya, 116.
States. This new educational theory from Germany, known as the Five-Step Teaching Method of the Herbert School, set up the teaching method in five steps for the purpose of instilling good morals and ideas including the importance of creativity into children’s minds. Herbert was the first scholar who advocated the significance of psychology in order for education to instill ethics in pupils. He thereby systematically constructed a theory of education. The principal doctrine of this school was that the important task of education was to develop morality and that the science of pedagogy depended on practical philosophy and psychology. Japan’s adaptation of these theories sheds light on the situation in Japan at the end of the nineteenth century. Both philosophy and psychology were considered to be an important part of education and were expected to play a major role in Japan’s modernization.

B. German Expressionism and the Creative Print Movement

Many young Japanese artists of the modern period dreamed of visiting Paris, convinced that France was the center of the art world. Some of them indeed visited Paris to study Western-style painting and introduced Western aesthetics and technique to Japan. They were particularly influenced by the French Impressionists, Post-Impressionists, and Fauvists.

The artistic ties between Germany and Japan were not established until the early twentieth century. The magazine Gendai no Yōga (Contemporary Western-style paintings) dedicated an issue to prints in February 1914. It featured Kandinsky’s abstract print, Untitled, along with prints by Japanese artists. In the following months, an

exhibition of German Expressionist prints, including works by Erick Heckel (1883-1970), Kandinsky, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1938), Kokoschka, and Franz Marc, was held at the Hibiya Art Museum in Tokyo. The magazine *Tsukubae* (Moonglow), edited by printmakers Onchi Kōshirō, Fujimori Shizuo (1891-1943), and Tanaka Kyōkichi (1892-1915) featured their own abstract prints in 1914. In the 1920s, various exhibitions of German expressionists were mounted in Tokyo.

Two major artists’ groups in Germany, *Die Brücke* and *Der Blaue Reiter*, developed the style that came to be recognized as German Expressionism. Their ideas of art reflected their discontent with contemporary political and economical oppression that had resulted from Germany’s rapid modernization. These artists revolted against this development, which had produced a bourgeois class who had little appreciation for new art. They turned away from traditional art associated with the bourgeoisie and developed new images inspired by the life of “primitive” people and children’s drawings. *Die Brücke* and *Der Blaue Reiter* represented a unified view against European society which they thought had been corrupted by the rapid industrial development. Such forced artists to think profoundly about their own spirituality. The work of the German expressionists pursued the expression of subjectivity through deformation and abstraction.

The first group of German Expressionists, *Die Brücke*, was formed in 1905 by three architecture students in Dresden: Kirchner, Heckel, and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (1884-1976). These students protested against academic and conventional art, which

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14 Japanese artists were able to travel to the United States and Europe freely by this time. Yamamoto Kanae, the founder of *Sōsaku Hanga Kyōkai* (Creative Print Association) in 1918, stayed in France and Russia from 1914 to 1916. Murayama Tomoyoshi (1901-1977), who was not a Creative Print artist, visited Berlin in 1921 and returned to Japan in the next year. Murayama brought about a revolution to the Japanese art world, most notably the emergence of Dadaism in Japan.
they believed was only for the pleasure of the elite. Die Brücke’s art reflected the students’ stance against modernization by showing the “primitive” images inspired by other countries such as some of those in Africa and Oceania. The acceleration of German colonial expansion in these areas of the world since the end of the nineteenth century gave many German artists the opportunity to look at non-European art for new inspirations.

Woodcuts were a favored medium of Die Brücke artists since they believed that they spoke a simple visual language that was accessible to workers and the uneducated. This was done in an attempt to create a popular art for the economically deprived. Kirchner, recognized as the leader of Die Brücke, was inspired by the wood carvings from Africa and Oceania displayed in a local ethnographic museum. He often visited the museum and made sketches of the carvings with colored crayons. His numerous woodcuts reflect those images. A monochromatic work, Portrait of the Wife of Professor Goldstein (1916), shows sharp straight lines that are characteristic of his style (Fig. 1). Heckel, who was responsible for holding the group together, also applied such simplification of form to his woodcuts. In Standing Child (1910) (Fig. 2), a naked girl is contoured in bold angular lines without much detail. Her simplified face is similar to an African mask. A woodcut, House Behind Trees (1911) (Fig. 3), by Schmidt-Rottluff also represents an image in the same manner with straight lines and sharp edges. He applied thinner ink to the block so that the impression reveals the grain of wood.

Die Brücke artists were more interested in “primitive” images than in children’s art; however, their simplified form resembling those in children’s drawings spread new inspirations to other artists in Germany. Heckel’s Standing Child embodies the link between children’s art and the concept of the primitive. Die Brücke artists longed for a simple life of “primitive” people or children who, they believed, were pure and innocent and did not have any sinister thoughts as generated by modern society, which had been corrupted by war.

The other major group of German Expressionists, Der Blaue Reiter, was formed seven years after the formation of Die Brücke by the editors of the Blaue Reiter Almanac, Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, in rebellion against the conventional ideas of art that was becoming widespread in Germany. Like Die Brücke, they also sought to create new art. In contrast to Die Brücke, each member of Der Blaue Reiter tended to have a more individual style. Der Blaue Reiter artists also included foreign artists who had come to study in Germany. Members of the group, the Russian-born artist Kandinsky, the German-born Marc, and the Swiss-born Paul Klee (1879-1940), represented their spiritual qualities in their works. Der Blaue Reiter artists struggled to find their own visible forms and balance them with their inner voice.

The Blaue Reiter Almanac, which was published in 1912, served as the forum for avant-garde art. It attempted to convey the message of what new art must be in the dawn of the twentieth century by publishing essays by artists, theater plays, music scores, and a number of illustrations including children’s drawings, “primitive arts,” and French Symbolist art. Their artistic goal was to return to simple form and clear coloration as

seen in peasant art and children’s drawings. Without concerns for conventional academic art, the *Blaue Reiter Almanac* encouraged not only professional artists but also laymen to recognize the spiritual relationship between a work of art and its creator.

Kandinsky’s theory of abstraction is based on his philosophical concepts. He remarked that the theme of the picture was best revealed by reducing the representational form and allowing the abstract element to emerge. In his publications, Kandinsky also explained the enormous power that color, line, and shape had on human visual perception. He believed that this power would affect a viewer’s soul and enable him to see the inner meaning of representation. He also explained that this power could influence the human body both psychologically and physically. What he was most interested in was what is often translated as “spirituality” in abstract expression. Kandinsky believed that spirituality could be best conveyed when his work was abstract.

He explained spirituality in religious faith by saying that we could not represent God in a tangible form. He believed that one should feel God, not see God. He believed that painting would lose its spirituality if the subject was represented figuratively.18

The other editor of *Der Blaue Reiter*, Franz Marc, explored a way to express his spirituality through animal motifs. He studied their behavior and natural habitat so that he could represent them convincingly. He rejected spatial illusionism and adopted a more two-dimensional format. In explaining his “primitive” world, untouched by civilization, Marc was revealing deep pessimism and profound hatred of modern civilization.19

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18 Kandinsky and Marc, ed., *The Blaue Reiter Almanac*, 149.
19 Lindemann, *History of German Art*, 218.
The Swiss artist Paul Klee fully realized and appreciated the naiveté of children, and he was inspired by their creative impulse. The employment of children’s art in his drawings was a means of making the invisible visible to him.20

German influences are apparent in Japanese graphics as early as in the 1910’s. In 1914, reproductions of prints by German Expressionists were published in several magazines in Japan, and Onchi Kōshirō created *Lyric* series, his first non-figurative prints for the magazine *Tsukubae*. It is presumed that Onchi was inspired by Kandinsky’s *Lyric poem* which had been introduced in the magazine *Kamen* (Mask) two months earlier.21 By the end of the 1940s, many Creative Print artists such as Onchi, his pupil Yamaguchi Gen, as well as Kōsaka Gajin had begun to experiment with abstraction. These artists used this abstract form as a means of expressing themselves. Other artists such as Hiratsuka Un’ichi and his pupil Munakata Shikō employed the style of *Die Brücke* artists, especially jagged and angular lines. The work of German Expressionists was thus conceptually and stylistically influential to Creative Print artists.

Western influences inspired Japanese artists to fully embrace the idea of individualism. German Expressionism in particular encouraged Japanese artists to express their feelings in abstract form. In this thesis, I investigate the Creative Print artist Kōsaka Gajin an important figure whose career represents the significant connection between Japanese Creative Print artists and German Expressionists.

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CHAPTER II
HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF MODERN JAPANESE PRINTS

A. The Rise of the Creative Print Movement

One of the well-known genres in Japanese graphic art is *ukiyo-e* (pictures of the floating world), which depicts the entertainment quarters of the new capital of Edo (now Tokyo). Due to the relative peace and prosperity of Edo, population and city grew rapidly, and various entertainment districts such as theaters, teahouses, restaurants, and brothels thrived as a result. *Ukiyo-e* represented such a world. In the early seventeenth century, *ukiyo-e* originated in book illustrations. During its so-called golden age in the middle of the eighteenth century, *ukiyo-e* became the quintessential popular art of Edo.

After the Meiji era began in 1868, the new government enforced rapid industrialization based on Western models. Westernization influenced Japanese culture. In the field of printmaking, a new practice and aesthetics were merged into the traditional printmaking. When *Fisherman* (1904) (Fig. 4) by Yamamoto Kanae appeared in a literary journal *Myōjō* with comments by Ishii Hakutei (1882-1958), it caused a sensation. Yamamoto’s print introduced a new practice and aesthetics in printmaking. It was entirely created by him from designing and carving to printing, unlike the traditional printmaking process of *ukiyo-e* which involved an artist, carver, and publisher.

Yamamoto’s individuality was reflected through his work. Ishii emphasized Yamamoto’s aesthetic innovation that he created his print just like a painter painted. Yamamoto carved out lines to create white lines, as if a painter painted on canvas with

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22 He was a painter and printmaker as well as influential art critic and writer.
his brush. Ishii’s statement about the creativity shown in *Fisherman* encouraged many young artists to pursue their own individual creativity.

The name *hanga* (print) was newly coined by Ishii Hakutei to designate this particular genre of graphic art, and it first appeared in *Bungei Hyakka Zensho* (Encyclopedia of Literature and Art) in 1909. There were two woodblock print movements in modern Japan: *Sōsaku hanga* (Creative Print) which lasted from 1904 to prosperous years of the 1960s, and *Shin hanga* (New Print) which lasted from 1910s to the early 1960s. Most of the Creative Print artists were trained in Western-style art and tended to emulate European models. They pursued the concept of “a modern artist” and tried to differentiate themselves from artisans and tried to chase individualism and originality. On the other hand, New Prints artists were more interested in reviving *ukiyo-e*. They preferred to depict traditional *ukiyo-e*-style landscape and portraits of beautiful women. They chose to work with professional block carvers and printers just as *ukiyo-e* masters had done, and their prints were usually sold as commercial merchandise and used in advertising. In fact, in the beginning of the movement, Creative Print artists were occasionally producing their prints through a workshop process. However, when Creative Print artists tried to make an accurate distinction between these two movements, they described their principle as “self-carved, self-printed,” as shown in Yamamoto’s print.

Because of the conventional view of printing as a means of reproducing images, modern Japanese printmakers also had to face the prejudice that prints were merely copies. While many young artists were inspired by Creative Print artists, critics ridiculed their work by saying that it was not full-fledged art. Ironically, the word *hanga* was a
homonym of “half-picture” in Japanese. Major exhibitions in Japan up until the late 1920s always excluded prints. For instance, the prestigious national exhibition, *Bunten* (abbreviation of *Monbushō bijutsu tenrankai*)\(^{24}\), established in 1907 and held annually by the Ministry of Education, did not include prints because they were not considered as original art. The other major exhibition, *Nihon bijutsuin tenrankai* (Japan Art Academy Exhibition), known as *Inten*, established by Okakura Tenshin\(^{25}\) in 1889, excluded prints for the same reason.

Magazines played an important role in disseminating the ideas and works of artists in Japan. In 1907, Yamamoto, Ishii, and other members of the Creative Print Movement launched their own magazine, *Hōsun*, and published total of thirty-five issues in four years. *Hōsun* included works by European-style painters along with works by Creative Print artists. After *Hōsun*, *Tsukubae* (Moonglow), a seminal print and poetry magazine, was published in 1914, by Onchi Kōshirō, Fujimori Shizuo (1891-1943), Tanaka Kyōkichi (1892-1915). All three were students at *Tokyo bijutsu gakkō* (Tokyo School of Art). *Tsukubae* was published for two years until Tanaka became too ill to work on the magazine.

Apart from print-related magazines, some magazines featured work by Western-style painters. *Fyūzan*, a magazine with a name based on the French word for charcoal (*fusain*), published six issues between November 1912 and June 1913. The magazine’s contributors were members of a painter’s group, the *Fyūzan-kai*. The *Fyūzan-kai* was

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\(^{24}\) *Bunten* was composed of three sections: Japanese-style painting, Western-style painting, and sculpture. *Bunten* lasted from 1907 to 1918 and was reorganized into *Teiten* (Imperial Art Academy Exhibition) in 1919.

\(^{25}\) Okakura Kakuzō (1816-1913) was better known by his pen name Okakura Tenshin. When he was a student at Tokyo University, he worked with Ernest Francisco Fenollosa (1853-1908), American philosopher and a scholar of Japanese art. After he resigned from the Tokyo School of Art, he founded the Japan Art Academy in 1889 to synthesize Japanese and Western art.
founded by Saitō Yori (1885-1959) and Kishida Ryusei (1891-1929) who were inspired by French Post-Impressionism and Fauvism. One of the members, Yorozu Tetsugorō (1885-1927) claimed to be largely influenced by Van Gogh and Matisse. The use of vivid colors and bold touches of Fauvists was particularly striking to artists in Japan at the time. The oil painting, *Nude Beauty* (1912), by Yorozu is regarded as one of the earliest examples of Fauvism in Japan. Yorozu’s rough brushstrokes and burning red and green were much like a painting by Van Gogh. Many other artists’ groups were also inspired by European modernism. By accepting European modernist art, Japanese artists, including the Creative Print artists, learned to create their works by merging Western aesthetics with their styles.

In the 1920s, magazines specializing in prints were launched, and Creative Print simultaneously began to further penetrate into Japanese society. Small short-lived coterie magazines contributed to the popularity of *sōsaku hanga*. Creative Print Association was formed by Yamamoto Kanae and Ishii Hakutei in 1918. Its exhibition was held in the following year at the Mitsukoshi Department Store in Nihonbashi, Tokyo. The works by twenty-six artists were exhibited and well-received by the audience. In 1927, the prestigious exhibition *Teikoku bijutsuin tenrankai* (Imperial Academy of Fine Arts Exhibition, abbreviated as *Teiten*)26 included prints in its Western-style painting section for the first time for state-run art exhibition.

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26 In 1919 *Teikoku bijutsuin* (Imperial Academy of Fine Arts) was established by the support from the government. This exhibition sponsored by the government was *Teiten*, which replaced *Bunten*. 
B. Kōsaka Gajin (1877-1953) and His Contemporaries

Creative prints by Kōsaka Gajin were first accepted by *Sōsaku hanga kyōkai ten* (Creative Print Association Exhibition) in 1922, and Kōsaka became a member of the association.27 The major figures of this association were the founder Yamamoto Kanae, Onchi Kōshirō, Hiratsuka Un’ichi, and Munakata Shikō. The Creative Print Association was reorganized as *Nihon hanga kyōkai* (Japan Print Association) in 1931 to include Western-style painting artists and independent artists. Kōsaka, who had left the association after 1945 because of war, rejoined the Association in 1949. His oeuvre of graphic art neatly falls into the category of Creative Print because of his philosophy of “self-carved, self-printed” and his artistic style, which is discussed in the next chapter. Kōsaka’s views of graphic art had much in common with those of the Creative Print artists. Kōsaka pursued the integrity of his art by being involved in the entire printmaking process. The principle of his artmaking was hinged on the spirit of individualism, which was prevalent among the members of the association.

Yamamoto Kanae, as explained in the previous section, influenced many artists to work in the field of printmaking. With his enthusiastic personality, he created an atmosphere of accepting innovative unconventional ideas within his group. Yamamoto used the western technique of wood engraving in his work. In the technique of *ukiyo-e*, the lines remain uncut, for instance, both sides of a line were cut out so that the line left uncut creates a black line when it is printed. Yamamoto’s *On the Deck* (Fig. 5) shows his application of western techniques; a line is cut out to create white lines against the uncut

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27 Kōsaka Takeru, “Chichi: Gajin no shōgai” (My father: Gajin’s life,) *Mizue* (Tokyo), April 1956, 61. The articles cuttings were kept by the artist’s son, Takeru. It does not have publication information. I have not been able to recover it.
portion of the wood. He also used a new tool, the curved-blade chisel, which had never been used in *ukiyo-e* technique.\(^2\) This chisel leaves a wide carved mark on the block. Aesthetically and technically, Yamamoto was a revolutionary figure who influenced enthusiastic young artists in Japan.

Onchi Kōshirō was one of the most acclaimed artists of the Creative Print Movement. He became a member of Creative Print Association in 1919. His prints carried abstract forms as early as 1914 when he was associated with the other members of *Hōsun* and created his first prints of the *Lyric* series. Although his style varied from non-figurative to figurative images over several decades, he consistently created various abstract motifs in the late 1940s. He created numerous ongoing lyric series depicting abstract forms such as *Lyric Number 13: Melancholy of Japan* (1952) (Fig. 6). He was born in an aristocratic family and was interested in music as well as poetry. He read German because he had planned to be a doctor and entered a German middle school in Tokyo before deciding to be an artist. He received inspiration from the works of Wassily Kandinsky and Edvard Munch. As his later works demonstrated, his approach to abstraction is reminiscent of the work of Kandinsky.

Kōsaka was among the older generation in the Creative Print Movement. His art and his theory, however, were different from other Creative Print artists because his ideas were stimulated by the naiveté of children. He was first inspired to create his deformed images at the end of the 1920s when he began to analyze his son’s drawings. Kōsaka’s theory of abstract art was based on the study of his child’s drawings in 1926. Non-figurative images in his prints were numerous after he joined the Japan Print Association.

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in 1949 and befriended Onchi Kōshirō who later produced various abstract prints especially towards the end of the 1940s. Kōsaka and Onchi had different motives for creating abstract prints. Onchi was essentially a musician and a poet whose tastes were embodied in his Lyric series. On the other hand, Kōsaka’s enthusiasm was deeply inspired by children whose naiveté he valued. They inspired and influenced each other. Though the motives of each artist were different, the simplified style in their prints represented the visual similarities to German Expressionist’s work.

CHAPTER III
KŌSAKA GAJIN

A. Biography

Kōsaka Masanosuke, who later became known as Kōsaka Gajin (Fig. 7), was born May 10, 1877 in Kyoto, Western Japan, as the second son of Kōsaka Shōjirō who ran a book store named Gosho shorin (Imperial book store) that could offer books to the Japanese Imperial family. As a teenager, he studied Japanese-style painting under Kōno Bairei29 and Yamamoto Shunkyo.30 In 1895, Kōsaka won a prize for his Japanese-style bird and flower painting at the fourth Naikoku kangyō hakurankai (National Industrial Exposition).31 Bird and flower painting (kachō-ga) was a traditional subject matter in Chinese and Japanese painting, and it is an East Asian term for still life painting. By 1895, Kōsaka had produced over one thousand Japanese-style paintings.32 He worked as

29 Kōno Bairei (1844-1895) was a Japanese-style painter, book illustrator, and teacher. He opened his own school in 1881. After his retirement from teaching, he became involved in establishing the Japanese-style painting association, Kyoto biyutsu kyōkai (Kyoto Art Association) in 1890.
30 Yamamoto Shunkyo (1871-1933), was a judge and exhibitor in Bunten and Teiten.
31 The first National Industrial Exposition was held in Ueno, Tokyo in 1877, the same year Kōsaka Gajin was born. The exposition was in emulation of Western international expositions.
an art teacher at Toyooka Elementary School (1901-1903) and Kyoto Elementary School (1903-1906) in Kyoto, until he moved to Tokyo in 1907. When he moved to Tokyo, he studied Western-style painting at *Hakubakai kenkyūjo* (White Horse Society Institute)\(^{33}\) and *Taihei yōgakai* (Pacific Painting Society).\(^{34}\) For approximately three years from 1910, he ran a business at his home designing embroidery patterns for a sewing company. In 1915, he married Takahashi Katsu whose parents ran a paper wholesale store in Sendai. Kōsaka’s daughter Masako was born in the next year, and son Noboru four years later. After living in Ōtsu, Osaka, and then Kyoto, he again settled in Tokyo in 1920.

At the age of forty-three, Kōsaka began to focus on monochromatic graphic art, and his career as a print artist went into full gear. His prints were exhibited at the Creative Print Exhibition, which was a juried show, in 1922. He called himself “*Masa*” as a professional name at this time before he called himself “*Gajin*.”\(^{35}\) From 1922 his prints were accepted and exhibited at the Creative Print Exhibition. In 1923, the year of the Great Kantō Earthquake, Kōsaka spent his time sketching the earthquake debris and held an outdoor exhibition in the Marunouchi district in Tokyo.\(^{36}\) In 1924, his second son Takeru was born.

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33 White Horse Society was an association of Western-style painters and sculptors in the late Meiji period (1868-1912). It was founded in 1896 when Kuroda Seiki, Kume Keiichirō (1866-1934), and other painters broke away from the Meiji bijutsukai (Meiji Fine Arts Society). White Horse Society sponsored exhibitions, supported research, and trained many young painters before it dissolved in 1910. *Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (Tokyo:Kodansha, 1993), 492.

34 Dissolving Meiji Fine Arts Society in 1901, Yoshida Hiroshi, Mitsutani Kunishirō, Nakagawa Hachirō, Ishikawa Toraji, and Ōshita Tōjirō founded the Pacific Painting Society and mounted its first exhibition in 1902 in Tokyo. Artists who studied in Europe joined in this group after returning to Japan. A sculptor, Shinkai Taketaro, opened the sculpture section in this group after studying in Berlin from 1900. During the Meiji period, this group and White Horse Society led the world of Western-style painting in Japan. In 1904, the Pacific Painting Society founded Western-style Painting Research Institute. It was renamed as *Taiyeiō bijutsu kai* (Taiheiō Art.) in 1957.

35 Before he called himself Masa, he named himself Ippō when he became a student of Yamamoto Shunkyō. He changed his name as he changed the style of painting.

36 Marunouchi is the business district where the Tokyo railroad station is located.
In 1925, Kōsaka proposed an idea to Count Ōki Tōkichi of publishing a book of the pedagogy of children’s art.\(^{37}\) Ōki, who sympathized with Kōsaka’s idea, gathered members and established Zuga kyōhō kenkyūkai (Society of Doctrine for Drawing.)\(^{38}\) *E no kyōikugaku* (Pedagogy of Drawings), authored by Kōsaka, was published in 1930 and presented to the Ministry of Education. In 1927, two of his prints were accepted by the seventh Japanese Creative Print Exhibition in Tokyo. At the eighth Japanese Creative Print Exhibition in the following year, two prints, one of which was based upon the design by his son Takeru, were exhibited (Fig. 8).\(^{39}\)

As noted above, Kōsaka published three books on children’s drawings and children’s art education: Pedagogy of Drawings, 1930, *Kodomo no e no mikata to sodate kata* (How to Observe and Encourage a Child’s Drawing, 1931), and *Byōgengaku to shiteno zugakyōiku ron* (Educational Theory of Drawings, 1932.) For the 1931 book, Kōsaka studied drawings by his own son, Takeru, from a psychological perspective. His professional collaborator was Narasaki Asatarō. Together, they pursued the study of children’s drawings.\(^{40}\) In 1931, Kōsaka was commissioned by the Japanese Education Ministry to work on editing a drawing textbook for elementary school children.

For a few years, Kōsaka devoted himself to studying and writing books, but by 1941, he began to produce prints again. His works were exhibited at various exhibitions

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\(^{38}\) Because Count Ōki Tōkichi died right after the establishment of the Society of Doctrine for Drawing, Count Sakai Tadamasa became a president.
\(^{39}\) Kōsaka Gajin and Narasaki Asatarō, *Kodomo no e no mikata to sodate kata* (How to Observe a Child’s Drawings) (Tokyo: Fujii Shoin, 1931), 171.
\(^{40}\) Narasaki met Kōsaka while they were attending at the Tokyo Normal School. Narasaki was also a member of the Society of Doctrine for Drawing.
including the tenth Nihon hanga kyōkai ten (Japan Print Association Exhibition)\(^{41}\) in 1941, the eleventh Japan Print Association Exhibition and the seventeenth Kokugakai ten (National Art Association Exhibition),\(^{42}\) both in 1942, and the nineteenth National Art Association Exhibition and the eleventh Ōgen ten, in 1943.\(^{43}\) In 1944, his prints entitled “Prints of Children’s Innocence” (dōshin hanga) were exhibited at the nineteenth National Art Association and the thirteenth Japan Print Association Exhibitions.\(^{44}\)

When World War II devastated Tokyo in 1945, Kōsaka evacuated to Sendai City in Miyagi Prefecture, in northern Japan, where his wife Katsu was originally from, and stayed there until 1949. Most of his works that remained in Tokyo were destroyed during an air raid. Therefore, the majority of his existing works are from 1948. It was the year when he again began to produce prints after his recovery from stomach cancer. At this time he started to call himself “Gajin,” which is known as his professional name today.\(^{45}\)

Returning to Tokyo in 1949, Kōsaka joined the Japan Print Association. He became acquainted with the eminent Japanese print artist Onchi Kōshiro, who had been a member of the Creative Print Association. In the annual get-together of the Japan Print Association of 1949, Onchi introduced Kōsaka to Oliver Statler (1915-2002), American

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\(^{41}\) Japan Print Association was formed with Okada Saburōsuke as president in 1931 after the dissolution of Creative Print Association. Having a base in Creative Print Association, Japan Print Association welcomed Western-style prints and independent print artists and actively introduced them to overseas.

\(^{42}\) In 1928 this association was renamed as such after the dissolution of Japanese-style painting section in Kokuga sōsaku kyōkai (National Art Creative Association), founded in 1918 by artists who were dissatisfied with the jury system in Bunten. National Art Association created a print section after the participation by Hiratsuka Un’ichi in 1930.

\(^{43}\) Ōgen kai (Flourish and Profundity Group) was organized in 1933 by the leader Makino Torao (1890-1946) who resigned from the jury position of Teikoku Bijyutsuin (Imperial Academy of Fine Arts). Inspired by Western-style painting, this group intended to express the natural features of Japan in a more easily understandable way. The group changed its name from Ōgen-sha to Ōgen-kai in 1947 due to the war and also because of the death of Makino, and it has continued to the present.


\(^{45}\) The Chinese character “Masa” in his name “Masanosuke” is also pronounced “Ga” and means grace or elegance, and the Chinese character “Jin” means a man or a person.
writer and researcher of modern Japanese prints. Kōsaka’s prints attracted large audience; as Onchi told Statler, “there was something very good in his work.”

His seventeen prints entitled Chokkaku zōkei (Intuitive Form), with the title written on the corner of each piece in Japanese black ink, were exhibited in the seventeenth Japan Print Association Exhibition in that year.

Kōsaka’s prints were introduced to the United States in 1949 by a Mrs. Ryder, who was the wife of a U.S. Army General. Her enthusiasm for his works began when she first saw his solo-show in 1948 at the United States Army Education Center in Sendai. She arranged for the 1949 exhibition that showed twenty of his prints, along with works by Japanese children, at the Los Angeles Municipal Gallery in the City Hall. In 1952, his solo-show was mounted at the Sendai City Hall in Miyagi under the title of Junsuitenchi saku (Image That Transmits Purity). This exhibition became the last one in Japan during his lifetime. He stated his theory of art in this exhibition catalogue.

Kōsaka was internationally acclaimed, especially after his solo-exhibition in Paris in 1953. This show was organized by the assistant director of the Cernuschi museum, Vadime Elisseeff, who visited Kōsaka in order to organize the show. Although Kōsaka

47 The spelling of Mrs. Ryder’s name is uncertain and her first name is not available because the Kōsakas did not have detailed record about her. No other record about her is available at this time.
48 Statler, “Old Master Gajin Deserved Acclaim.”
49 Merritt, Modern Japanese Woodblock Prints, 250.
51 Because Kōsaka was involved in the psychological study of children’s education, his theory was presented by Takeru in the forty-fourth Tōhoku shinri gakkai (Northeast Psychology Society) the same year as the exhibition. Kōsaka could not present it because he was ill. His theory is in the society’s catalogue (p. 12-13) published in December 1952.
52 This catalogue had never been published. The exhibition lasted five days from June 4 to June 8 in 1952.
53 The exhibition title was “20 gravures sur bois du peintre japonais Kōsaka Gajin.” There was no catalogue published but several newspaper reviews in French were published. (Faxed letter from the Chief Curator at the Japanese Department, Cernuschi Museum Michel Maucuer to Mary Baskett, September 23, 2002).
died three months after the closing of the exhibition, the success of his print exhibition
cought the eyes of the former chief curator of Musée National d’Art Moderne in Paris,
Bernard Dorival, and the former director of Musée National d’Art Moderne, Georges
Salles.\textsuperscript{54} They visited the Kōsaka family in 1955 and arranged his retrospective
exhibition for the next year.\textsuperscript{55} This forty-six-piece retrospective exhibition traveled all
over the world: Musée National d’Art Moderne in Paris, Museum für Angewandte Kunst
in Austria, Museo Di Palazzo Venezia in Italy, Tiergarten Museum in Germany, as well
as at the New York Contemporary Gallery in the United States.\textsuperscript{56} In one of the exhibition
reviews published in Der Tag, a Berlin newspaper, it was explained that “It looks like a
monochromatic ink painting (\textit{sumi-e})...Despite his abstraction, in most cases his subject
remains recognizable.”\textsuperscript{57} An article in another Berlin newspaper, Der Telegraf, said that
his Western influence was visible in his prints.\textsuperscript{58} People overseas admired his prints
which incorporated traditional Japanese visual conventions with Western influences.

Today Kōsaka Gajin’s works are well represented in the collections of major
museums in Japan and the United States. They include the Museum of Modern Art in
New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Cincinnati Art Museum, The University of
Maryland, the National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo, the Miyagi Museum of Art,
Chiba City Museum of Art, the Wakayama Museum of Modern Art, and the National

\textsuperscript{54} Georges Salles (1953-1959) was also the second president of ICOM (International Council of
Museum), which is an organization belonging to UNESCO.

\textsuperscript{55} “Sumi isshoku no sobokusa” (Simplicity of black ink,) 
\textit{Kahoku Shinpō} (Sendai), February 12, 1956.

\textsuperscript{56} Museo Di Palazzo Venezia (Museum of Venice Palace) is built in Rome in the middle of the fifteenth
century. The museum occupied part of the papal apartment of the first great Renaissance palace of Rome.

\textsuperscript{57} K. G., “Japanese woodcuts.” “Seine Holzschnitte sehen aus wie Tuschzeichnungen ... Trotz stärkster
Abstrahierungen jedoch bleibt in den meisten Fällen der reale Gegenstand erkennbar.”

\textsuperscript{58} F. D., “Japan–alt und modern: Holzschnitte von Gajin Kōsaka am Lützowplatz,” (Japan–old and
modern: Woodcuts of Gajin Kosaka at Luetzowplatz,) \textit{Der Telegraf} (Berlin), November 21, 1956. “nicht
zufällig studierte er auch die Malerei des Abendlandes - und es ruht doch sicher in der Überlieferung seiner
Heimat.”
Museum of Modern Art in Kyoto. Among them, the Cincinnati Art Museum owns the largest public collection of his work. The forty-nine prints are part of a 2750-print collection, which represents 255 printmakers such as Hatsuyama Shigeru, Hiratsuka Un’ichi, and Munakata Shikō. This modern creative print collection is one of the largest in the world.

The Cincinnati Art Museum’s Japanese twentieth-century prints collection was donated by Caroline and Howard Diekmeier Porter. Howard Diekmeier Porter (1902-1974) lived in Japan from 1945 to 1960 since he was involved in the Allied occupation of Japan. He was a friend of Caroline Russel and her husband, Albert L. Russel. Their friendship was long, and while Howard still lived in Japan, he sent the couple two prints by Yoshida Hiroshi (1865-1950). Caroline Russel became widowed in 1952. In 1959 she purchased her first Japanese print from Oliver Statler, who was a scholar of modern Japanese prints. Statler lectured at the Cincinnati Art Museum on Creative Print artists. Caroline started to collect more prints, including the works of Munakata Shikō, Hatsuyama Shigeru, and Sekino Jun’ichirō. She visited Japan with two of her daughters in 1958. Apparently, they met up with Howard Diekmeier Porter because when he came back to Cincinnati in 1960, he and Caroline were married. They began their yearly donations of their prints to the Cincinnati Art Museum in 1961, which evolved into the largest twentieth-century Japanese collection in the world.59

Oliver Statler had broadened and strengthened his relationship with modern Japanese print artists when he lived in Japan after World War II. He wrote the book, *Modern Japanese Prints: An Art Reborn*, in 1960 which became invaluable studies of

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modern Japanese prints to American collectors. Although Statler did not include Kōsaka in his book, Statler did mention him in the 1960 article about the modern Japanese prints exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago. Statler wrote: “I include as pioneers that neglected giant Kōsaka Gajin, whose massive black and white prints combine subtle artistry with primitive force…”

B. Graphic Art

Kōsaka Gajin was versatile in his drawing, watercolor painting, and graphic art, but he was best known for his monochromatic woodblock prints. He began to create prints in 1922. For three decades, he devoted himself to monochromatic expression because he was certain that black and white were equally as expressive as colors. He also believed that an artist who was insensitive to colors could not keep dealing with only black and white for a long time. His work, especially in the last few years in his life, attained fame not only in Japan but also overseas. People overseas found his images to be very Japanese due to the use of black ink and Japanese paper just like the art of Japanese calligraphy.

Kōsaka’s Japanese style graphic art resembles traditional Japanese ink-painting. He explained in his 1952 statement entitled Image That Transmits Purity: “The quality of paper is most important to paintings. We should not forget that Japanese paper has a distinctive quality which could never be explored fully in European oil painting. The

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61 Kōsaka Gajin, “Junsuitenchi saku” (Image That Transmits Purity) (catalogue presented at the Sendai City Hall Exhibition, Sendai, Miyagi, June 4-8, 1952), 5. “…gaka wa hito ichibai ni iro ni taisuru kanjusei o motteiru. Sono hito ga sumi isshoku de shūshi shitei to iukoto wa iro ni taisuru binkansa ga arebakoso, korega jizokudekiru no deatte kesshite sonohito ga iro ni taishite chishiki ga nainode wa arimasen.”
harmony of Japanese black ink and Japanese paper is unsurpassed.”62 He was proud of these traditional materials.

People overseas also recognized in Kōsaka’s prints Western aesthetics which merged with traditional materials. He represented abstract forms. He received inspiration from Western aesthetics as he was studying Western-style painting before beginning to create graphic art. While Kōsaka admired traditional art, he rebelled against the imitation of conventional, mainstream art by saying “as for myself, imitating tradition is a shame.”63 He advocated abstraction in Western art. His eyes were looking more to Western art than Japanese conventional art.

The artist’s son, Kōsaka Takeru, recalls that the newspaper reviewers of his father’s 1956 retrospective exhibitions in Germany explained the art precisely as Kōsaka had done. One of the articles, “Der Tag meldet: Japanische Holzschnitte,” explains as follows:

Kōsaka’s woodcut expands our idea of a graphic technique. It looks like a monochromatic-ink painting (sumi-e) which gives an impression that the black ink is oozing. His art shows very thick lines. As a result, there is no detailed representation, and he is focused on the substantial. Despite his abstraction, in most cases his subject remains recognizable. But that is not his intention. He does not want to represent a tree but an idea of tree. Thus, parts of trees, such as a branch and a crown, are depicted for the whole.64

62 Ibid., 6. “Kaiga wa honrai kami o totobimasu. Tokuni washi no mochiaji wa ōshūno aburae no tōtei tsuijishienai dokutoku no myōmi no arukoto o wasurete wa narimasen. Sarani washi to yūgōsuru waboku no aji wa tenkaippin to ite oshikuarimasen.”
63 Ibid., 6. “Watashi wa dentō no keishiki o mohōsukuroto no kokuminteki no haji o nihonjin toshite mune no soko kara dentōkyohi o rikisetsu shimasu.”
One of the major German newspapers, *Der Tagesspiegel*, stated that Kōsaka’s art resembled the works of Karl Schmidt-Rottluff and Wassily Kandinsky.\(^{65}\) The lines in Kōsaka’s prints are very thick and non-representational. His subjects were depicted by the mass of those black lines. The German contemporary audience recognized the visual similarities between the works by Kōsaka and German Expressionists.

*Der Tagesspiegel* compared Kōsaka’s graphic art with German Expressionists’ and explained that Kōsaka’s images showed softness different from the works by German Expressionists.\(^{66}\) Kōsaka’s key technique in representing a soft atmosphere was to dampen Japanese paper before impressing it on a carved block. According to Helen Merritt, Kōsaka learned this technique from Matsuo Jun’ichirō (1904-1945), with whom he had become friends.\(^ {67}\) 68 Black ink spread on moistened paper becomes blurred and hides clear outlines. Because of the moisture, the contours of his images are softened, concealing clear edges.

Kōsaka’s prints are often dominated by deformed images because he transferred imagery from his mind immediately to his prints. *Temple Gate* (1952) (Fig. 9) shows a simplified representation of a temple. Kōsaka concentrated on showing the essence of a massive temple using thick black lines and eliminated inessential details. The *Berliner*
Morgenpost remarked that Kōsaka’s strong lines represented a revolutionary power which was freed from the typical fine representation in traditional Japanese art.69

Kōsaka’s composition shows space in black and white and emphasizes flatness. This flatness is remarkable in both the main motif and its background. In *A Church at Surugadai* (1950) (Fig. 10), which depicts European architecture, he emphasizes the flatness of the wall by using thick black lines and white space. In his prints depicting architecture, Kōsaka does not elaborate the background as if he intended to focus only on representing a motif. As a result, the subject, in black, emerges strikingly against the white background. Despite the flatness of space, he showed perspective by manipulating the placement of black lines. An article in Der Tagesspiegel mentioned that the black lines appeared concentrated or scattered in different prints.70 The work, however, is organized as a whole. In *Castle Tower* (1952) (Fig. 11) (1950), he used black lines in order to depict the essential form of a castle. A few triangular figures are used to represent a Japanese castle. Because he did not depict the background, the castle stands out clearly as a result. His intention was to transmit the essential quality of the Castle Tower.

Kōsaka’s art represents both Japanese and Western aesthetics. Japanese atmosphere is strongly emphasized by the materials he used. However, the deformation and simplicity of his images are akin to contemporary Western-style painting.

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60 “‘Hauptgebäude eines buddhistichen Temples,’ gleichen einem Ausdruck der revolutionären Kraft, mit der sich die japanische Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts von der subtilen Auffassung der alten Kunst Japans zu lösen scheint.”
70 C. H., “Pictures from Japan and Berlin.”
C. Books by Kōsaka Gajin

Although there is no clear evidence that Kōsaka studied Hausknecht’s teaching method, it is evident that he knew about it because it was part of the German Educational psychology adopted by the Japanese public education system in 1887. Kōsaka taught drawing at elementary schools for six years from 1901 to 1907 and felt that there had not been art pedagogy in Japan that he could agree with. In his *Educational Theory of Drawings* (1932), he proposed an educational curriculum for children’s art so as to improve the state of compulsory education. He was confident that his new teaching system could enable children to express themselves more freely. He stated his enthusiasm in *How to Observe and Encourage a Child’s Drawings* (1931), which he co-wrote with Narasaki Asatarō. Narasaki explained their method in the introduction. In it he cited “die Methode der Subjektivierung” (the method of subjectivity) which dealt with psychology.71 This method is to study a child’s drawings by considering every possible environmental impact that might affect them. Another method, as Narasaki explained, was “die Methode der Objektivierung” (the method of objectivity), which mainly dealt with quantity and statistics. In order to examine a child’s subjectivity, they studied one child, Kōsaka’s son, Takeru, and observed Takeru’s 200 selected drawings in pencil, color pen, and brush and ink from age one to age six. Narasaki remarked that the study of a child’s drawings by the method of subjectivity was important to teachers and parents in order to understand and appreciate the individual child’s drawings. Kōsaka stressed the importance of teacher conduct in this book. In order to support the child’s creativity in drawings, the teacher must not force children to draw a subject exactly as it appears.

He encouraged children to use their imagination in drawing an abject. Kōsaka also insisted on further psychological studies of children’s drawings so that teachers would prevent themselves from only looking at objective qualities such as form, shape, and composition. In the book, Kōsaka gave an example of how to conduct a children’s drawing class. His way was to instill imagination and creativity in children.

Kōsaka’s studies of his son’s drawing in this book were reflected in his theory of abstract art. He claimed that one had to look at children’s drawings in the same way as children look at their world. Style and tradition have nothing to do with their vision. This idea is also essential to our understanding of Kōsaka’s theory of abstract art.

Kōsaka was astonished by the natural and spontaneous creativity of children who sometimes reached a surprisingly phenomenal point, where even a professional adult artist could not reach with ease. In How to Observe and Encourage a Child’s Drawings, he analyzed a design of Takeru’s drawings from the age two. Human figures and faces drawn by Takeru were not easily recognizable as such because they consisted of simple geometric forms such as a big circle, two dots, and lines. Kōsaka stated that artistic values of these drawings were as high as in paintings by adults. As Takeru drew several human figures, Kōsaka turned them into prints (Fig. 12, 13). In Kōsaka’s eyes, a child’s mind instantly transferred onto a paper a “true vision” of their world. Thus, Kōsaka believed that Takeru’s drawings were “pure.” This purity conveyed in a child’s drawing was, to him, as great as a work by an adult. He stated “If adults let children show their individualities, any children have potential of being genius.”

72 Ibid., 171. “…kodomoto iumonowa, zonbun ni kosei o hakkisaseteyareba, dare datte tensai no sochitsu ga arunodesu.”
Kōsaka created one of his woodblock prints, *Untitled* (1926-27), based on a drawing by Takeru. This print was accepted at the eighth Creative Print Exhibition in 1928 (Fig. 8). A newspaper article at this time spotlighted *Untitled* in the exhibition as the work of a four-year-old genius. Kōsaka remarked in his book that he played the role of artisan to produce the print of his son’s drawing as accurately as he possibly could without losing what his son attempted to express. The main reason for copying his son’s drawings at the time was simply to preserve it; he appreciated and understood his son’s design. He stated, “This print is popular among my artist friends. I clarify here that I created my print based on Takeru’s drawing, *Lines Drawn by Yellow Color*, and it shows that the design by a four-year-old child could be approved as a work of art.”

Takeru’s drawings at age four astonished Kōsaka’s Western-style painter friends because the child’s drawings carried the lines and colors that reminded them of paintings by Kandinsky and his well-known theories. In Kandinsky’s theory, colors and forms possess a musical form that affects the viewer’s mind in a spiritual way. Takeru drew wavy lines, circles, triangles, and squares as seen in *Musical Drawing with Lines and Colors, a & b*, (Sen to iro to no onritsu teki na e, a & b). (Fig. 14, 15) *Musical Drawing, a*, (Fig. 14) shows wavy lines and circles floating around. From the top left side of the picture plane, wavy lines come down to the bottom of the picture plane. The fish-like shape composed of a little triangle and an elliptical shape is floating as if it were swimming up to the left upper corner following a wavy line. Behind those lines and shapes are five fold-lined circles. Similarly, *Musical Drawing, b* (Fig. 15) consists of geometric figures such as lines, squares, and triangle in colors. Kōsaka described these

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73 Ibid., 69. “Kono hanga wa gakanakama dewa hyōban no yoi e dearu. Geijutsu wa yonsai no kodomo no e o motonisheito seiritsu suru…”
drawings as follows: “When I asked my son how he felt when he did these drawings, he answered that he did not know. He also said that he did not even know if these drawings were good or bad.” The innocence of children often amazes adults. To Kōsaka and his artist friends, Takeru’s musical drawing reached the point where a professional artist might finally reach after years of training.

D. Kōsaka’s Abstract Images

There are similarities between painting theories of Kōsaka Gajin and German Expressionists. This section addresses Kōsaka’s principles of art by examining his major abstract prints.

Kōsaka began to create graphic art in 1920 when he moved to Tokyo. His Japanese-style painting and watercolor painting before that period were more conventional. Kōsaka’s work from 1926 to 1927 represents his first attempt at abstraction. He devoted his energy to the publication of books on children’s art education from 1930 to 1932 and consequently did not work very much in the studio. However, from the late 1940s, he began to create prints under the title of “dōshin hanga” (Prints of Children’s Innocence.) In the catalogue of his 1952 exhibition, we encounter his theory of abstraction: “In my case, when my heart perceived an object, abstract image

74 Ibid., 69. “Kono e nitsuite, tōji no kokoromochi o kiitemo shiranai to kotaeru. Mata, honnin wa kono e ga yoi tomo warui tomo wakaranai to iu…”
75 As an adult, Takeru worked as a technical official at the Ministry of International Trade and Industry in Japan.
was born from all of my senses, and at the same time, I tried to give shape to abstraction.”

What Kōsaka sought in abstract art was the expression of an artist’s inner self, and he expected viewers to see what he felt instead of what he actually depicted. When he created a print, he hesitated to give it a title because he wanted viewers to appreciate the images in their own way. When he exhibited fifty prints at his solo exhibition at the Sendai City Hall, Japan, in 1952, Kōsaka described his art theory in the exhibition catalogue under the title of Junsuitenchi saku (Image That Transmits Purity) as follows:

Artists traditionally give a title to their own work, but recently there are artists who do away with it. Although I have no idea about their reasons, I have my own reason not to give a title to my work. The reason is when an artist depicts a mountain, he would most likely entitle his work Fuji-san (Mt. Fuji) or some other mountain in Japan. If it is Mt. Fuji it would be a view from the Tōkaidō. Viewers would look at the work imagining Mt. Fuji. However, my Mt. Fuji as I depict it would not be the same Mt. Fuji as other people expect. It is nothing but “a mountain of as I perceived it” (kankaku no yama). People who had seen Mt. Fuji from many different spots asked me where I saw this Mt. Fuji and said that they had never seen it this way. By seeing the title of a work, a viewer mentally creates his preconception. Looking at an object with a preconception might have been necessary if, like in the old days, things had to be represented exactly as they looked like. However, abstract art today is totally different because it seeks to represent “the mountain on the artist’s mind.” This is the reason why viewers can appreciate an untitled art object more freely.

76 Kōsaka, “Image That Transmits Purity,” 1. “Watashi no baainiwa, gaibutsu ni kokoro ga fureta toki, tadachini subeteno chikaku no hataraki kara chūshō o umu to tomoni chūshō no umu ni tsutomemasu.”
77 Tōkaidō was one of major highways that connects Tokyo and Kyoto.
78 Kōsaka, “Work of Transmitting Purity,” 4. “Dentō wa sakuhingoto ni gadaid o tsuketeiru ga, konogoro sakkaniyotte gadaid o haishisuru hito ga arimasu. Sonoito wa wakarimasenga, watashi wa watashi no kanga kara gadaid o tsukemasen. Sono riyū wa, dentō no gadaid wa tatoeba yama o egakeba fuji-san toktato, nihon ni shozai suru sammei o tsukemasen. Mata sakuhinmo tōkaidō no fuji-san no shasei desu. Kanbō suru hito mo fuji-san o sōki shite sakuhin o nagamemasu. Shikashi, watashi no sakuhin wa, kari ni fuji-san o zōkeishitemo kesshite zenjutsu no yōna yama o egakunode wa arimasen. Sunawachi, kanjita yama desu. Watashi no sakuhin ni fuji-san to tsukeruto kanbōshachō niwa kono fuji-san wa dokokara mitaka, watashī wa shihōhappō kara konoyama o nagamete shitteiruga, konna katachi ni mierutokoro wa hitotsumo nai to imasu. Kono kanga kara wa tsunen gaibutsu ni taishi ‘kotei katchi o gentei suru’ toiu shinrisayō ga atte, makushin no yōni atakamo shajutsu o utsusu to dōitsu no sakuhin o stukutta jidai naraba sono kangaekata to tekito de shōga, genbait ni okeru chūshōkaiga wa zenzen omomuki o koto ni shite kame ni no yama o koi suru no desukara, kesshite shasei no yama dewa arimasen. Jōjutsu no imikara gadaid o tsukenuihō ga kanbōsha wa jiyū na kokoromochi kara kanbōshikimasu.”
He made various prints of *Mt. Fuji* (1952) (Fig. 16, 17, 18) just as one of the best-known *ukiyo-e* masters, Hokusai (1760-1849), had depicted the mountain repeatedly. However, the difference between Hokusai and Kōsaka is that Kōsaka created his Mt. Fuji based on “a mountain as he perceived it.” Each individual Mt. Fuji print by him appeared in different shapes which were not factual representation. As Mt. Fuji is said to have various faces at different times of the day, Kōsaka’s Mt. Fuji looks different depending on how he felt about the view.

Kōsaka’s prints consisted of semi-abstract forms that abolished detailed representation. I have classified his subjects under three categories: landscape, nature, and architecture. His forms are created by the contrast of black and white. He believed that using only black and white in representing something required a high degree of skill. He paid much attention to lines. He did not want viewers to look at his lines as just lines. He believed that they were not merely lines but “symbols of personality (*jinkaku kigō*).”79

These so-called “symbols” in his prints are thick and bold. In *Stillness* (1952) (Fig. 19), there are no longer any lines. The sun rising from the horizon is shown in white, and a street-like shape toward the sun is also shown in white. The light of the sun is in black ink. The eminent art historian and Tokyo University professor Fujikake Shizuya (1881-1958) commented on the “symbol of personality,” in Kōsaka’s work in the 1952 Sendai exhibition catalogue:

79 Ibid., 1.
Kōsaka discusses his work as *junsuitenchi* (transmission of purity.) In short, it means that he purely transmitted his impression of subject to his work. According to him, his personality is shown through the shape and color of his print.80

Kōsaka’s attempt to represent feelings is demonstrated in *Stillness* (1952), one of his nature prints. He tried to transfer this intangible content directly into an image, and there his feeling becomes visible as two abstract forms: a semi-circle and a black horizontal line. The viewers may perceive the shapes as the sunset or sunrise. Kōsaka commented on *Stillness* as follows: “Today’s abstract images are just like this. I cannot say this is typical, but in this print there is no sign that it merely imitated conventional Japanese art.” 81 He depicted the “sense” of stillness rejecting any conventional style of art but paid much attention to his individual feeling. He was confident that viewers could sense his feelings through his abstraction. This image itself was the feeling the creator depicted in a tangible shape. Therefore, the viewers were expected to re-experience his feelings by seeing his image and to feel what he felt in their own way. He remarked:

If viewers also observe works with a pure mind leaving their greed behind, they will feel resonance from works. It is not necessary to explain what this resonance is. They only need to absorb it into our heart.82

Kōsaka believed that abstract art was expressive and could tell much more things about the creator’s feeling than figurative art. Kōsaka most valued art that represented the character of artist as individuals.

80 Kōsaka, “Image That Transmits Purity,” commented by Fujikake Shizuya, 20. “Kōsaka shi wa jisaku o junsuitenchi to iu. Yōsuru ni kanmei o junsui ni tenchisuru no imi de atte, shikisai o motsu jinkakukigō to kōseraru.”
81 Ibid., 12. “Gendai no chūshō kaiga wa konoyōna mono desu. Kore ga daihyōsaku towa iemasenga, chūkeihōsō no nioi wa kesshite arimasen.”
82 Ibid., 3. “Jyunsuina kokoromochi kara yoku toku o hanarete sakuhin ni sessurunaraba, sakuhin kara nanimonokano hibiki o ataerareru deshō. Sono hibiki o uketa koto ni taishi setsumei wa muyōdesu. Kokoro no naka ni kyūshūsure ba yoi nodesu.”
Kōsaka’s theory of abstract art is similar to Kandinsky’s theory in that both greatly appreciated the expressive power of children’s drawings. In this chapter, I investigate Kandinsky’s theory in order to illustrate its similarity to Kosaka’s idea.

Wassily Kandinsky went through various stylistic transformations during the 1910s before his breakthrough to abstract art. He claimed that there was a correspondence between a work of art and the viewer, which he called “Die Klang” (sound or resonance.) He said, "Color is the power which directly influences the soul. Color is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand which plays, touching one key or another, to cause vibrations in the soul."83 This invisible tie between an artist and the viewer was based on the spirituality of a visual image. Kandinsky believed in and valued children’s abilities to find that spirituality. He stated, “The artist, whose whole life is similar in many ways to that of a child, can often realize the inner sound of things more easily than any one else.”84

Kandinsky also acknowledged the power of children’s drawings as follows: “There is an enormous unconscious power in the child that expresses itself here and that raises his work to the level of adult’s work (sometimes even higher!)”85 In Kandinsky’s theory, children’s “enormous unconscious power” enabled them to see the “inner sound” of things, and their drawings reflected the sound. His most important goal was to feel the profound and invisible value of objects and represent them as they were. He elaborated

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84 Kandinsky and Marc, ed., The Blaue Reiter Almanac, 178.
85 Ibid., 176.
on this concept in *Reminiscences*, which was written in June 1913 and published in *Der Sturm* a year later: “I have much with which to reproach myself, but I have always remained faithful to one thing – the inner voice that defined my goal in art, which I hope to follow until my dying hour.”

Kandinsky’s art synthesized all the aesthetic elements that led him to abstraction. His art was first inspired by folk art from his native country, Russia, and influenced by Fauvism, which he observed while in France from 1906 to 1907. After he moved to Germany, he began to seek a greater meaning hidden behind symbols. Those inspiration gradually led Kandinsky to abstraction. This chapter analyzes the importance of children’s art to his creativity. In an essay by Barbara Wörwag, she clarifies the possible influence of “the pictorial invention of children” on Kandinsky’s aspiration to abstraction. She opens the argument by stating that the second Izdebsky salon was the crucial source of inspiration for Kandinsky as well as other artists concerned with children’s drawings. The salon was held in Odessa, Russia, where the works of artists including Kandinsky, Gabriele Münter (1877-1962), Alexi Jawlensky (1864-1941) and Marianne von Werefkin (1860-1938) were exhibited along with children’s drawings in the categories of still lifes, landscapes, portraits, and pictures of markets and fairy tales.

At the end of 1910, Kandinsky returned to his homeland in Russia and stayed in Moscow and Odessa for almost three months. During this time he corresponded with Gabriele Münter, with whom he had an intimate relationship. The purpose of the visit

was not only to satisfy his personal feeling to his homeland but also to strengthen his relationship with the Russian artists belonging to the *Neue Künstlervereinigung München* (New Artist’s Federation), which was established at the beginning of 1909. When Kandinsky went to Odessa to visit his parents, the second Izdebsky salon, which included the drawings by children, was in the process of setting up its exhibition. In a letter to Münter, Kandinsky wrote that Vladimir Izdebsky (1882-1965)\(^88\) asked him to write a foreword for the catalogue of the exhibition. Eventually, fifty-three paintings and studies by Kandinsky were also included in the exhibition, and the catalogue’s cover featured one of his woodcuts. In the catalogue he commented on his ideas about art. These ideas were clearly essential to his later works because what he sought was an expression of “outer form” spontaneously conveying its “inner content.” “The work whose outer form completely reflects the inner content is magnificent (that is like the eternally unattainable idea). In this way the form of artwork is determined by the essence of the inner necessity.”\(^89\) The second Izdebsky salon thus indicates the connection between children’s drawings and Kandinsky’s work.

In fact, Kandinsky had appreciated children’s drawings even before this exhibition. His interest in children’s drawings is evident in the fact that Kandinsky and Münter collected children’s art. After they separated, Münter continued collecting, and her collection reached over 250 works.\(^90\) The majority of children’s work in their collection dates from 1905-1906 through 1914.

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88 Izdebsky was Ukrainian sculptor. He lived in Germany from 1904 to 1909 and associated with Kandinsky. He was interested in the new art movement in Europe.
89 “Inhalt und Form,” in exhibition catalogue of the second Izdebsky salon (Odessa 1910-11), 15. Translated into English by Andrew Ziarnik in Barbara Wörwag’s essay “There is an Unconscious, Vast Power in the Child: Notes on Kandinsky, Münter and Children’s Drawings,” 69.
90 Wörwag, “Notes on Kandinsky, Münter and Children’s Drawings,” 70.
A. Lines and Composition in Children’s Drawings

Kandinsky and Münter learned particularly from the simplification of form and the treatment of space in children’s art. However, there was a clear difference between the works by Kandinsky and Münter. Kandinsky attempted to synthesize many artistic elements without limiting himself to children’s motifs, while Münter made more direct use of the motifs and elements from children’s drawings. Kandinsky studied the simplification of forms in his sketchbooks from 1907-1908. (Fig. 20, 21) Barbara Wörwag, in her essay, shows drawings by four-year-old Paulot Seddler from Kandinsky and Münter’s collection representing simple forms by lines of circles, waves, and geometric forms. (Fig. 22, 23) Because children draw simple lines in the earlier stages of life, Wörwag emphasizes that these drawings can be studied as the source of Kandinsky’s inspiration for his transition to abstract art.

Kandinsky recognized that lines had strong expressive power. Lines make an object tangible and show the essence of an object. Simple lines in a drawing (Fig. 24) by a girl named Elisabeth Busse in the collection show a bird, a house, and a gate in two-dimensional perspective. Her simple lines show the texture of an object. Hardness of the house wall is conveyed through a straight line, and softness of the bird with a curvy line. By conveying the texture of the object, lines also can create a space separating background from the object. Kandinsky’s application of such expressive power of lines is found in his sketch of landscapes *Landscape with Female Form and Rider.* (Fig. 25) A female form and a rider stand in the foreground, and a small wood

91 Ibid., 74.
and sky are drawn in the background. Zig-zag lines of spiky trees show the different essence of lines in comparison with the numerous vertical straight lines which represent the overlapping trunks of trees. A pattern of the sky is represented by wavy lines to show a texture of clouds. Kandinsky valued such power of lines in children’s drawings.

Kandinsky treated spatial organization in a similar way as children’s drawings. Wörwag compares the drawing by a boy named Josef Wechsler (Fig. 26) with Kandinsky’s sketch of *Landscape with Female Form and Rider* (Fig. 25). In the child’s drawing, a house with yard is depicted with the view of a mountain. Because each figure is shown in a different size without accurate perspective, a figure of a goat on the mountain looks separated from the background. In Kandinsky’s drawing, the same effect is noticeable because of the placement of the female form and rider in front of the jagged forest. Kandinsky ignored rational spatial organization in this sketch.

It is worth noting that the direct use of motifs that Münter saw in children’s drawings parallels Kōsaka Gajin’s approach. Münter’s appreciation of children’s drawings is particularly evident in the way she copied children’s drawings in her oil paintings from 1914. A child’s drawing of a mill near a waterfall (Fig. 27) is painted by Münter in the same color, style, and composition, precisely as the child’s painting looks (Fig. 28). In her oil paintings, two-dimensionality of form is particularly similar to children’s drawings.

A point in common between Kandinsky and Münter is that both were concerned with the treatment of lines and composition as seen in children’s drawings. Kandinsky praised lines and composition in children’s drawings and regarded their drawings as highly as work by adults. Even if the children’s drawings appeared to be odd,
Kandinsky believed that they could still represent something unseen on the surface, which conveys the “inner sound” of an object.

The child is indifferent to practical meanings since he looks at everything with fresh eyes, and he still has the natural ability to absorb the thing as such. Only later does the child by many, often sad, experiences slowly learn about the practical meanings. Without exception, in each child’s drawing the inner sound of the subject is revealed automatically.92

B. The Nature of Expression in Children’s Drawings

Kandinsky used various symbolic motifs in his work. His attraction to those symbolic motifs was related to common subject in children’s drawings. He was inspired by children’s subjects based on their surroundings. Kandinsky came to understand that ordinary subjects from children’s immediate environment could convey a profound emotion. Children tend to represent animals, human beings, and houses because those are closely affiliated with them in their own world. Although they seem to be ordinary themes in children’s drawings, this affiliation conveys a profound feeling. Kandinsky wrote in his essay Reminiscences that he used to enjoy horseback riding as a child. This probably indicates his affinity for the motif of a figure riding a horse. An image of St. George riding a horse appears in Kandinsky’s numerous works as a symbolic figure. There was a strong tie between the figure of a horse and the emotion of his childhood memory. He adopted the form of a horse to convey his feelings. However, he did not simply borrow the motif. In Reminiscences he argued:

I have never been able to persuade myself to use a form that arose within me by way of logic, rather than feeling. I could not devise such forms, and it disgusts me when I see them. Every form I ever used arrived “of its own accord,” presenting itself fully fledged before my eyes, so that I had only to copy it, or else constituting itself actually in the course of work, often to my own surprise.93

His symbolic motifs were largely influenced by the motifs of children’s drawings and memories of his childhood. They were shown as various symbolic motifs that had deeper meanings. Kandinsky sketched the image of the locomotive (Fig. 29), one of the favorite subjects of a child. The locomotive travels from place to place, and this could be interpreted not only as a vehicle but also as a symbol of emotions. The image of the locomotive in his work thus contains deeper meanings mixed with memories and feelings. The locomotive is seen as the symbol of emotions associated with travel. Kandinsky explained this as follows:

On the average man only the impressions caused by very familiar objects, will be purely superficial. A first encounter with any new phenomenon exercises immediately an impression on the soul. This is the experience of the child discovering the world, to whom every object is new.94

Children’s drawings were not merely primordial art to Kandinsky and other German Expressionists. Children’s art was inspirational to them and encouraged them to show their inner feelings in their own ways.

94 Kandinsky, Concerning the Spiritual in Art, 23.
The German Expressionist style was an outgrowth of changes in society. The rapid industrial growth in the nineteenth century brought on the political and economic depression in Germany through the mid-twentieth century. Such development created a gap between rich and poor people. The bourgeoisie appreciated conventional art that was based on conventional ideas. Respect for classicism, which had been prevalent since the sixteenth century, was revived by the work of Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) in the eighteenth century. The bourgeoisie who emerged from the rapid industrial development sought romantic feelings in a classical, realistic style. At the end of the nineteenth century when academic art, favored by the elite, was widespread, the artists who were associated German Expressionists were students. Young artists rebelled against this academic art because they believed that it was only for the pleasure of rich people. They developed a new style which was simplified and deformed. In their oil paintings, Die Brücke artists such as Kirchner, Heckel, and Schmidt-Rottluff show rough application of pigments similar to Van Gogh’s. Max Pechstein (1881-1955) remarked that “Van Gogh was a father to us all!”\(^95\) Gauguin’s works also exerted influence over German Expressionists. Gauguin represented the symbolic union of man and nature, which inspired Max Pechstein and Emil Nolde to travel to the South seas. Van Gogh and Gauguin also emphasized the importance of colors. Gauguin spoke of “the musical role which color will henceforth play in modern painting,”\(^96\) and Van Gogh said “…Painting


\(^{96}\) Ibid., 29.
as it is now promises to become more subtle—more music and less sculpture…in a word, it promises color…"97 The attention Van Gogh and Gauguin gave to colors influenced Der Blaue Reiter artists, especially Kandinsky, Münter, and Alexej von Jawlensky.

However, a very important influence on German Expressionists came from Norwegian artist Edvard Munch, whose works showed strong expression of emotion. His impact was strong to artists in Germany especially between 1913 and 1915. Although Munch’s expression was based on his personal misery, his work was also emblematic of the feeling of depression that prevailed in Europe during World War I.

Japanese artists embraced abstract art from Germany, which largely dealt with the artist’s spirituality. When German artists, especially Kandinsky, went on to abstraction as a form of expression, Creative Print artists like Onchi Kōshirō instantly sympathized. Japanese artists in the early twentieth century could comprehend Western abstract art with ease because this idea of representing the intangible had already been accustomed in Japanese art. Yokoyama Taikan (1868-1958), a prominent modern Japanese-style painter, insisted that representations of spirituality was essential to Japanese-style paintings. For instance, in bunjinga (literati painting), which flourished in Japan during the eighteenth century, painters represented their poetic inspirations in their work. Kōsaka quoted Taikan’s passage, in his second book, How to Observe and Encourage a Child’s Drawings:

Japanese-style painting was based on the Eastern spirituality and originated from subjective reality. The foundation of depiction was different from Western-style painting because Western-style painting depicted the objective world realistically, but Japanese-style painters represented intangible reality of their minds…The

97 Ibid., 29.
The essence of Japanese-style painting is to represent intangible reality by using tangible objects.\(^{98}\)

Yokoyama here referred to conventional Western art that depicted objects realistically. When Western aesthetics experienced a change of direction from representing the object realistically to obscurely in the late nineteenth century, Japanese artists sympathized by the Western new movement. At this time Yokoyama incorporated Western painting style into traditional Japanese painting. His style, which harmonized Western and Japanese elements, was called *mōrōtai* (blurred style). Yokoyama was stimulated by the work of Japanese Western-style painters at the Japan Art Academy, and he experimented with creating the sense of atmosphere and light in Japanese-style painting. The linear quality of traditional Japanese-style painting was abandoned. In so doing, he abandoned the linear quality of traditional Japanese-style painting. His blurred style paintings, as a result, resemble Kōsaka’s monochromatic prints.

Kōsaka’s quotation of Yokoyama’s ideas above was meant to emphasize his own idea of the principle of *shasei* (naturalism). He felt that naturalism was understood as depicting objects as realistically as possible. Kōsaka attempted in his book to remind his readers of the significance of naturalism. He stated, “In naturalism, representing form is superficial to the third person, but to the person himself the principle of naturalism is to depict life, sense, and spirituality.”\(^{99}\) No matter what images in picture looked like, Kōsaka believed that if the images conveyed spirituality, they would be admirable.

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99 Kōsaka and Narasaki, *How to Observe and Encourage a Child’s Drawings*, 196. “Daisansha no (shasei shita) e o gaimen yori mireba, gaibutsu no iro to katachi o utsusuyō ni mieru….egakusonomono ni nattemiruto, shin no byōga no ishiki o mireba, seimei o utsusu nodearu.”
However, Kōsaka believed that naturalism did not possess as much expressive power as abstraction.

Many of the Creative Print artists were fascinated by expressive power such as *The Scream* (1893) by Edvard Munch. Creative Print artists were inspired by German Expressionists’ visual principles which represented the same values as those of Munch. Creative Print artists were inspired to represent subject not in a realistic way but to convey its spiritual essence. In order to show such spiritual essence they simplified and deformed their images. For example, Kirchner used in his works the typical style of *Die Brücke*, such as jagged and angular lines. Kirchner’s lines were much finer and more flexible than the others, but their works show similar raggedness nevertheless. (Fig. 1) This style is evident in the work of Creative Print artists, especially by Hiratsuka (Fig. 30) and Munakata (Fig. 31). Hiratsuka’s earlier monochromatic prints show the roughness of forms which is reminiscent of the *Die Brücke* style. Munakata’s work (Fig. 31) also consists of deformed image through jagged lines similar to that of Schmidt-Rottluff (Fig. 3). Kōsaka’s prints based on designs by his son Takeru (Fig. 8, 12, 13) also show the same elements.

Kandinsky was one of the most important abstract artists of his time. Kandinsky featured geometric figures in his woodcut *Small World VI* (1922) (Fig. 32). Various figures are floating in the picture plane as if they symbolized various incidents of the small world. Small independent motifs are a part of the world Kandinsky depicted. This work embodies Kandinsky’s artistic concept; he attempted to depict the inner voice of the world by using abstract representation. Creative Print artist Onchi Kōshirō depicted a similar abstract element in his print. His polychrome print *Lyric Number 13: Melancholy*
of Japan (Fig. 6) employs several independent motifs in different colors. The figures
float around in the picture plane. A darker triangle and an elongated motif seems to
represent the Japanese archipelago. Onchi, who was a poet and musician like Kandinsky,
tried to represent music in his prints. Kōsaka also represented images conveying his
feeling as seen in his print Stillness (Fig. 19). Kōsaka and Kandinsky both considered
form as reflection of the artist’s spirit. Kōsaka called his images “symbol of personality.”
Kandinsky also said “Form reflects the spirit of the individual artist. Form bears the
stamp of the personality.”

However, most of the images in Kōsaka’s prints are
figurative. His favorite subjects, nature, landscape, and architecture, are identifiable in
his works. The visual images are much more similar to the deformed images of Die
Brücke’s (Fig. 3, 9) than these of Kandinsky.

It is important to note that there are some important differences between the
works by Creative Print artists and German Expressionists. The works of German
Expressionists often depict fright, terror, and death. The Nazis considered German
Expressionist art offensive and anti-German, so they prevented this art from being
exhibited. Some artists chose exile from Germany over censorship; Kandinsky left for
Paris, and Klee returned to Switzerland. German artists, including Schmidt-Rottluff and
others, remained and were forbidden to exhibit. Heckel’s works were expelled from
German museums. The Nazis exhibited Expressionist paintings and prints under the title
of Entartete Kunst (Degenerate Art) in 1937 in order to denote them.

On the other hand, the work of Creative Print artists rarely showed images of the
oppression caused by the war. They tended to show calm images of nature. Just like the
Nazis, the Japanese government controlled society through censorship, but only a few

100 Kandinsky and Marc, ed., The Blaue Reiter Almanac, 150.
artists were actually censored. Kendall H. Brown remarks that print artists during this period often created works representing a patriotic ideology.\(^{101}\) In this period, some print artists were recruited by the government to go to foreign territories and to create prints for Japanese citizens. The purpose, however, was not to represent cruel, destructive images of war but to represent it peacefully to gain civilian support to the war effort.\(^{102}\) In the late 1930s, the modern Japanese-style painter Yokoyama Taikan repeatedly depicted Mt. Fuji, which was the symbol of Japan. Itō Shinsui (1898-1972) and Yoshida Hiroshi (1876-1950), New Print artists who were military-service painters, also depicted famous Japanese landscape in their prints including Mt. Fuji. Brown also points out a patriotic idea of artists by quoting Munakata Shikō, who stated that war was necessary for the development of national culture. Munakata remarked that “Japan is presently in the greatest war in history.”\(^{103}\) Because of the resulting cultural development during the war, Munakata’s affinities for Buddhist images could be described as “nativist.”\(^{104}\) While the prints by German Expressionists were seen by the German government as anti-nationalistic, the work by Japanese artists were appreciated by the government as a tool of propaganda.

The patriotic aspect of Creative Print artists was pointed out by Kendall Brown. Creative Print artists were involved with *Nihon hanga hōkōkai* (Japan Print Service Society), which was organized in 1943. This society was “formed to support war

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102 Ibid., 67.
effort” and simultaneously attempted to promote prints as the representation of the Japanese national character. The inaugural ceremony of the society was held on May 11, 1943 at the headquarters of Taisei yokusankai (the Imperial Rule Assistance Association), a governmental organization designed to unify nationalistic groups in Japan. The majority of the artists in the Japan Print Service Society were Creative Print artists including chairman Onchi Kōshirō, councilors Yamamoto Kanae, Ishii Hakutei, Hiratsuka Un’ichi, and the eminent art historian and Tokyo University professor Fujikake Shizuya (1881-1958). Fujikake delivered a speech on the history of Japanese prints and claimed that prints had just entered a new era when Japan became the leader of Asia. By participating in the nationalistic organization, works by print artists were at the same time highly demanded by the government.

Kōsaka’s oeuvre depicted nature and landscape which were categorized as nationalistic motifs, but his intention was not to support the government. The position of Creative Print artists may be perceived as nationalistic; however, it is unlikely that all of them intended to support the government. The idea of patriotism was not prevalent among artists in Japan. The oil painting by New Print artist Yoshida Hiroshi, which showed support for the government, was refused by many artists when he submitted his work to Shin Bunten (New Ministry of Education Art Exhibition) in 1937. Creative Print artist Onchi Kōshirō, though he worked as one of the military-service painters, stayed away from nationalistic subjects. In 1943 Onchi made the portrait of Hagiwara Sakutarō, a poet who was explicitly oppressed to Japanese militarism. Onchi’s work seems to represent Hagiwara’s depression caused by society. Munakata Shikō, though he claimed

105 Ibid., 66.
the necessity of war, never joined the Japanese Print Service Society, and he was one of the few artists whose works were censored by the government. Although Kōsaka Gajin was involved in the Japanese Print Service Society with other artists who donated their prints to the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, it was not Kōsaka’s concern whether he was creating patriotic images or not. Kōsaka devoted himself to children’s art education especially from the 1930s. The nationalistic tone that dominated the work of other print artists is missing from Kōsaka’s work even during “the dark valley period” between 1937 and 1945.

Kōsaka seemed to separate his work from patriotism. According to the artist’s son, Kōsaka Takeru, Kōsaka did not talk about the war with him. Takeru believes that Kōsaka did not allow him to see the cruelty of the war at the time. Because Kōsaka had not been involved in activities concerning the war, Takeru presumed that he was against the war.

Kōsaka’s peaceful images must have given him private enjoyment especially when he was suffering from illness, which was intensified by the war. As an educator who studied children’s psychology as shown in their drawings, he did not express his pessimism toward his illness and the oppression caused by the war. Inspired by the children’s world, he expressed his own world in his own way, which was different from the nationalistic tone of other contemporary print artists.

108 E-mail correspondence with Kōsaka Hitoshi (grandson of Kōsaka Gajin) on February 4, 2003.
CONCLUSION

During the early twentieth century, Western cultures influenced Japan tremendously. It is not an exaggeration to say that German influences on Japan became the foundation of the Japanese nation. Various studies in German politics, economics, engineering, pedagogy, and psychology were supported by the state. Among these subjects, German pedagogy introduced the new method of teaching children. Psychology was deemed to be particularly important for instilling intellectual ideas in children.

Kōsaka Gajin was one of the most prominent Creative Print artists who devoted himself to the analysis of children’s art from a psychological perspective. Having taught drawing at elementary schools for over six years as a young man, he later published books about children’s art education, one of which was dedicated to the study of his own son’s drawing from age one to age six. Kōsaka’s simplified monochromatic prints were inspired by his child’s drawings. Through his understanding of children’s psychology, he began to express himself in his art. His art was influenced by the naïveté of children.

Children’s art was admired by German Expressionist as well. The similarity between the work of Kōsaka and German Expressionists is evident. The visual similarity was that the images were simplified and deformed like drawings by children. The theoretical similarity was that both Kōsaka and German Expressionists believed that the simplified forms revealed profound emotions. German Expressionists influenced Kōsaka as well as other Creative Print artists in these respects. There were exhibitions of German Expressionism in Tokyo as early as 1914. The woodcuts by prominent figures of Expressionism including Kirchner, Heckel, and Kandinsky were displayed. As a result, German Expressionist art became prevalent in Japan by the 1920s. Kandinsky, one of the
most important abstract artists, who wrote his art theory in various publications including the *Blaue Reiter Almanac*, recognized enormous expressive power in children’s drawings. German Expressionists paid great respect to children’s naiveté. Their simplification of form affected Japanese artists visually and theoretically.

In this thesis, I have argued that there were similarities between Kandinsky’s theory and Kōsaka’s theory. What they strove for more than anything was to create works that conveyed echo from their own life. To Kōsaka and Kandinsky, it was not always necessary for viewers to understand what their works depicted, but they expected viewers to absorb the resonance experienced in the image into their hearts. They both valued children’s art. Their representations of subjectivity were inspired by the art of children. Kandinsky once said, “There is an enormous unconscious power in the child that expresses itself here and that raises his work to the level of adult’s work (sometimes even higher!”) Kōsaka also insisted that “any children have potential for being a genius.” Both Kōsaka and Kandinsky were greatly influenced by the power of children’s art in their own art making.

The Creative Print artist Kōsaka Gajin largely relied on German influences. He applied a psychological approach to children’s art education and to his own graphic art. His simplified abstract images were similar to those of German Expressionists visually and theoretically. Kōsaka Gajin was one of the most important Creative Print artists because he developed a theory of abstract art based on his studies of children’s drawings with a psychological approach and abstraction in German Expressionism.
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Fig. 1. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Portrait of the Wife of Professor Goldstein*, woodcut, 1916.
Fig. 2. Erich Heckel, *Standing Child*, color woodcut, 1910.
Fig. 3. Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, *House behind trees*, woodcut, 1911.
Fig. 4. Yamamoto Kanae, *Fisherman*, woodcut, 1904.
Fig. 5. Yamamoto Kanae, *On the Deck*, woodcut, 1912.
Fig. 6. Onchi Kōshirō, *Lyric Number 13: Melancholy of Japan*, woodcut, 1952.
Fig. 7. Photo of Kōsaka Gajin at age seventy-one, taken in Sendai, c.1948.
Fig. 12. Kōsaka Gajin, *Human, a*, woodcut, 1926-27, copy after a 1926 drawing by Takeru.

Fig. 13. Kōsaka Gajin, *Human, b*, woodcut, 1926-27, copy after a 1926 drawing by Takeru.

Fig. 8. Kōsaka Gajin, *Untitled*, woodcut, 1926-27, copy after a 1926 drawing by Takeru.
Fig. 9. Kōsaka Gajin, *Temple Gate*, woodcut, 1952.
Fig. 10. Kōsaka Gajin, *A Church at Surugadai*, woodcut, 1950.
Fig. 11. Kōsaka Gajin, *Castle Tower*, woodcut, 1952.

Fig. 15. Kōsaka Takeru, *Musical Drawing with Lines and Colors, b*, watercolor painting, 1928.
Fig. 16. Kōsaka Gajin, *Mt. Fuji*, woodcut, 1952,

Fig. 17. Kōsaka Gajin, *Mt. Fuji*, woodcut, 1952,
Fig. 18. Kōsaka Gajin, *Mt. Fuji*, woodcut, 1952.
Fig. 19. Kōsaka Gajin, *Stillness*, woodcut, 1952.
Fig. 20. Wassily Kandinsky, *Mountain with Domed Towers and Two Figures*, 1908-09

Fig. 21. Wassily Kandinsky, *Sheet of studies*, c.1909

Fig. 22. Child’s drawing, a, (Paulot Seddeler)

Fig. 23. Child’s drawing, b, (Paulot Seddeler)
Fig. 24. Child’s drawing (Elithabeth Busse)

Fig. 25. Wassily Kandinsky, Landscape with Female Form and Rider, c.1907

Fig. 26. Child’s drawing (Josef Wechsler)
Fig. 27. Child’s color drawing (Martin Mosner)

Fig. 28. Gabriele Münter, *Untitled*, oil painting, 1914, copy after figure 29

Fig. 29. Wassily Kandinsky, *Locomotive near Murnau*, oil on canvas, 1909
Fig. 30. Hiratsuka Un’ichi, *Senkakuwan Bay, Sado Island*, woodcut, 1938.
Fig. 31. Munakata Shikō, *Ten Great Disciples of Buddah*, woodcut, 1939.
Fig. 32. Wassily Kandinsky, *Small Worlds VI*, woodcut, 1922.