

The Smithsonian Museum's Recent Discovery of a Collection of Historical Artwork Sends Shock Waves through the Art World

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[/EINPresswire.com/](https://www.einpresswire.com/) -- The Smithsonian Museum's discovery of a private collection of historical artwork and a recent donation by a private collector to the museum of an original portrait drawing of former Prime Minister of Japan, Kishi Nobusuke, by world renowned artist Saito Kiyoshi, currently on exhibition at the museum is an extraordinary discovery. The significance of the artist and the subject combined is beginning to send shockwaves around the art world as to the significance of this discovery and its historical significance, meaning and context globally.

As there has been a great resurgence in Japanese artwork over the past year, one privately owned collection in particular of Saito Kiyoshi's original earlier works is leading the way. In 1967 Saito Kiyoshi was commissioned by TIME Magazine to design a cover image of Japanese Prime Minister Sato Eisuke (1901-1975) who would later negotiate with Richard Nixon for the repatriation of Okinawa to Japan. Although Saito's prints had been reproduced in earlier issues, this was the first time a woodblock print by any artist had been used on the cover.

However, a recently discovered collection of Saito's original earlier works by the Smithsonian Museum NMAA attributed to the artist suggests now that Saito had been working on the subject of Japanese political figures even prior to his commission by TIME Magazine in 1967. The topic of political subject is quite significant and this collection of works in particular owned by a private source is of great historical significance globally.

Originally once a part of this private treasure and collection of Saito's earlier works of original



Original portrait drawing of former Prime Minister of Japan, Kishi Nobusuke, by world renowned artist Saito Kiyoshi

drawings, owned by a renowned philanthropist and lifetime collector of art, an original graphite on paper portrait drawing of former Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke dated January 24, 1954 was recently gifted to the Smithsonian Museum in 2024 from this collection where this one original drawing is currently on display on exhibition at the Smithsonian surrounded by a slew of woodblock prints by many of the great Japanese Sōsaku-hanga artists throughout the years.

Encased in an approximate 6' x 4' protective glass mantle lies the original portrait drawing by Saito dated 1954, graphite on paper of of former Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke and is featured next to a 1967 TIME Magazine cover with one of Saito's wood block prints of Prime Minister Sato on the cover. Although Saito's wood block prints have been circulated around the world, and are on display in almost every major world class museum, it is his original drawings of earlier works that are highly scarce and sought after by collectors and museums around the world. It is believed that only two museums in the United States now have at least one Saito Kiyoshi original drawing outside of this private collection and whatever remaining originals are in the Saito Kiyoshi museum in Japan and a few collectors around the world. The significance of the subject of this drawing is also quite extraordinary to say the least.

Kishi Nobusuke (13 November 1896 – 7 August 1987) was a Japanese bureaucrat and politician who was prime minister of Japan from 1957 to 1960. Known for his exploitative rule of the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo in Northeast China in the 1930s, Kishi was nicknamed the "Monster of the Shōwa era." Kishi later served in the wartime cabinet of Prime Minister Hideki Tōjō as Minister of Commerce and Vice Minister of Munitions, and co-signed the declaration of



Encased in a protective glass mantle lies the original portrait drawing by Saito dated 1954, graphite on paper of former Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke.



The Smithsonian Museum's recent discovery of a great historical and globally significant artwork collection is a very scarce rare find.

war against the United States on December 7, 1941 together with Emperor Hirohito.

After World War II, Kishi was imprisoned for three years as a suspected Class A war criminal. However, the U.S. government did not charge, try, or convict him, and eventually released him as they considered Kishi to be the best man to lead a post-war Japan in a pro-American direction. With U.S. support, he went on to consolidate the Japanese conservative camp against perceived threats from the Japan Socialist Party in the 1950s. Kishi was instrumental in the formation of the powerful Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

As The Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., is significant for its role in telling the multifaceted story of America,

The discovery of this collection of art tells the story by which the works within the collection of former Prime Minister's, former First Ladies, Emperor's, Prince's, Military Generals and a Plenipotentiary of Japan who each had served Japan just prior to, during and after World War II were instrumental in shaping the landscape of the world just prior to, during and after World War II.

Many of these political figures in this collection that Saito had drawn had either been convicted of class A war crimes against humanity and sentenced to death, imprisoned for life, had committed suicide, or were assassinated. Many of these political figures actions had either led to the beginning WW II of or were an instrumental part of what took place just before during and after WW II which was the deadliest conflict in history, resulting in 70 to 85 million deaths, more than half of which were civilians. Millions died in genocides, including the Holocaust, and by massacres, starvation, and disease. After the Allied victory, Germany, Austria, Japan and Korea were occupied, and German and Japanese leaders were tried for war crimes.

Over the years writers like James Michener and Oliver Statler promoted Sōsaku-hanga as an example of how Japan was capable of modernizing after World War II by adhering to Japanese tradition (woodblock printing) while aligning with Western ideals (individualism and self-expression). However, it is this collection of original drawings and now the drawing owned by the Smithsonian that shines a light on the significant roles, each of these Japanese political figures played in their involvement in the war.

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