

The poetry of cathy song and the painting of kitagawa utamaro essay sample

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



Both Kitagawa Utamaro's "Girl Powdering her Neck" and interpretive poem by Cathy Song by Kitagawa Utamaro are very beautiful and more than capable of "standing on their own". Taken together the effect is both natural and intensely powerful. The result is like looking at a photograph of a clear stream flowing through a rocky bed while hearing the subtle sound of water flowing over rock outcroppings. Not only is the experienced magnified by the combination of the two, it is impossible to later look at the photograph without hearing the water, or hearing the water and not envisioning the stream. However, Utamaro's and Song's compositions go a great deal farther.

He does not disclose the entirety of the girl; in fact, he discloses very little, and even more discretely shows her face only in a mirror. We must speculate on how she is seated and the actions of her other hand. There is nothing else in the painting—nothing on the wall, no vases or bowls—to distract attention away from the girl. We speculate as to the intricacy of her ritual and what transformation will be made. We compare the line of her face to that in the mirror; "a reflection in a winter pond rising to meet itself." The vision in the poem allows us to go back and forth between verse and painting; it lets us imagine what is missing and more fully explore what we see. Now we can see the low bench and her folded legs; we can imagine the delicacy of her touch as "she practices pleasure" applying powder with her fingers. Although she may have been referring to her face and reflection, her words wonderfully apply to the combined interpretation of poem and painting: "Two chrysanthemums touch in the middle of the lake and drift apart." Each is beautiful alone; together the whole is greater than the sum

of the parts; separated again we cannot help to see both when we see only one.

Works Cited

Utamaro, Kitagawa. " Girl Powdering her Neck". Painting. Song, Cathy. " Girl Powdering

her Neck". May 18, 2007, from [http://homepage. mac. com/mseffie/ assignments/paintings&poems/utamaro. html](http://homepage.mac.com/mseffie/assignments/paintings&poems/utamaro.html).