

## Left Right – Right Left

Because many of the western written forms are scanned left to right and top to bottom, we are inclined to scan graphic art in the same way. However, in the east words on a page go from top to bottom – and then right to left. Consequently, the western eye scans pictorial art from left to right, but the eastern eye scans pictorial art from right to left. Katsushika Hokusai's famous woodblock artwork known as 'The Great Wave' highlight these differences.



To the western eye, the dominant image is the wave itself, and we are further captivated by the vicious looking claw shapes that the surf mutates into in the top left. Hokusai then cleverly plays with perspective and makes Japan's grandest mountain appear as a small triangular mound within the hollow of the cresting wave. In fact, Mount Fuji appears so small it almost functions like a visual full stop; and we don't see beyond to the three small boats and twenty-four tiny human beings who are in danger of being engulfed by the wave.