

## La Salle University La Salle University Digital Commons

---

Art Museum Exhibition Catalogues

La Salle University Art Museum

---

Fall 2000

# Japanese Prints: Ukiyo-E and 20th Century

La Salle University Art Museum

Caroline Wistar

*La Salle University*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/exhibition\\_catalogues](http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/exhibition_catalogues)



Part of the [Fine Arts Commons](#), and the [History of Art, Architecture, and Archaeology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

La Salle University Art Museum and Wistar, Caroline, "Japanese Prints: Ukiyo-E and 20th Century" (2000). *Art Museum Exhibition Catalogues*. 23.

[http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/exhibition\\_catalogues/23](http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/exhibition_catalogues/23)

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the La Salle University Art Museum at La Salle University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Art Museum Exhibition Catalogues by an authorized administrator of La Salle University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [careyc@lasalle.edu](mailto:careyc@lasalle.edu).



# **JAPANESE PRINTS**

**UKIOY-E AND  
20TH CENTURY**

**LA SALLE UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM  
FALL 2000**

***We are much indebted to Mr. Benjamin Bernstein for his generous donation of Ukiyo-e prints and of Japanese sketch-books from which the present exhibits have been drawn.***

## **SPECIAL EXHIBITION GALLERY**

### **JAPANESE "UKIYO-E" WOODCUT PRINTS**

This selection of Japanese woodcuts is all by "Ukiyo-e" artists who practiced during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. "Ukiyo-e" refers to the "fleeting, floating" world of everyday life in Japan especially as experienced by those who serviced and patronized the licensed pleasure and entertainment districts found in all major cities of Japan. Such genre, which was depicted in paintings and books as well as woodcuts, developed in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century in response to the need of the elite Samurai lords and the growing upper-middle class merchant to escape from the rigid confines of the ruling military dictatorship. The strict regimentation of the Tokigawa Shogunate (1603-1867) in an almost feudal, al-

beit peaceful, age, seemed to necessitate an emotional outlet. This was found in the entertainment and pleasure quarters, especially in the capital city Edo (now Tokyo).

The primary subjects of Ukiyo-e art, as demonstrated in this small exhibition, were the educated courtesans and the lovers, in the "red-light" district, *Yoshiwara*, as well as the local Geisha, teahouse, and bath house girls and the actors in the ever popular *Kabuki* Theater

The artistic production of these woodcut prints was divided among three persons: the artist who made the design on a sheet of paper; the master carver who traced and then cut the design onto the keyblock; and the printer. Generally, only the artist was known—the later two remained anonymous craftsmen. It should be noted that

for every color used (sometimes as many as 14), a separate block had to be carved. Using water-base colors of mostly vegetable dyes, the Japanese were exceptionally skilled at brushing a particular color onto the block to produce subtle gradations of tone.

The artist and his dates are the only inscription translated for this exhibition. However, Ukiyo-e prints often included the title of the series, the subtitle, dates, publisher's name, address and seal, and from 1790-1874, a censor mark.

Although these Japanese prints were mass produced for popular consumption, and valued and treated with no more respect than we have today for the souvenir postcard, the Japanese innate sense of color harmony and rhythmic, decorative designs resulted in works of lasting value

which are now regarded the world over as a major artistic achievement. Moreover, they provide a record of a special segment of life in Japan when it was totally isolated from the rest of the world. It wasn't until Japan was forced to open to the West in 1854 by Commodore Matthew Perry that western realism began to dilute the uniqueness of Ukiyo-e art.

On the other hand, the end of Japan's self-imposed isolation made known the expressionistic possibilities of Ukiyo-e art to French Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painters. Artists such as Vuillard, Bonnard, Denis and Degas, all of whose works are represented in the La Salle Art Collection, sought to escape the centuries old, western tradition of three dimensional, surface realism in the visual arts. Thus, the many who searched for a more abstract and symbolic

style to convey their message, found inspiration in the flat decorative patterns and asymmetrical compositions of Ukiyo-e prints. It is not too much to say, then, that the development of our own modernistic style owes a considerable influence to this unique style of the Orient.



## **C H E C K - L I S T**

1. Utagawa Kunisada (Toyokuni III), 1786-1864
2. Toyohara Chikanobu, 1838-1912
3. Utagawa Yoshifuji, 1828-1887
4. Toyoharu Kunichika, 1835-1900
5. Utagawa Kunisada (Toyokuni, III), 1786-1864
6. Utagawa Kunisada (Toyokuni, III), 1786-1864
7. Toyohara Kunichika, 1835-1900
8. Hasegawa Monehiro, active 1848-1867
- 9.-10. Utagawa Kunisada (Toyokuni III), 1786-1864
11. Kikusui Shigehiro, Active 1865-1878
12. Utagawa Yoshitaki, 1841-1899

13. Adachi Ginko, active 1874-1897

14. Utagawa Kunisada (Toyokuni III), 1786-1864

15. Utagawa Yoshitaki, 1841-1899

## **C E N T R A L   C A S E**

**Contents courtesy of Japanese Tea House at  
La Salle University**

## HALL CASES

### JAPANESE SKETCH BOOKS

Katsushika Hokusai (1780-1849) had a long and productive career and is considered a leading master of 19<sup>th</sup> century Ukiyo-e prints and book illustrations, especially those depicting birds, flowers, and landscapes. His most notable print series was *Thirty-Six Views of Mt. Fuji* and his three volume *One Hundred Views of Mt. Fuji* (1834-ca.1835). The fifteen *Manga* sketchbooks he published from 1814 onwards, a few of which are exhibited here, are also considered a important part of his artistic production

## Case I

### #1-5 Katsushika Hokusai (1780-1849) Color woodcut sketchbooks

1. Vol. VII - *Manga Series*  
(Toshiro Katano of Aichi Prefecture, September 1, 1878)
2. Vol. II - *Hokusai Kacho Kaden* (Flowers and Birds)  
Nagobei Okura of Kineido, Tokyo, March 10, 1891
3. Vol. III - *Manga Series*  
(Toshiro Katano of Aichi Prefecture, September, 1878)

## Case II

4. Vol. X - *Manga Series*  
(Oyo Shorin of Nagaya)

5. Vol. VII - *Manga Series*  
(Toshiro Katano of Aichi Prefecture,  
September 1, 1878)

6. Eitaku (1843-1890)  
Vol. I - *Banbutsu Hinagata Gafu* (The Drawing Book  
of Patterns for Everything)  
(Kihei Eto of Tokyo Shorin, February 27, 1882)

### Case III

7. Unknown  
*Manbutsu Zukai Issai Gashiki* (Illustrated)  
Book of the Forms of Everything, Fall 1865

8. Hanzan (fl. Ca. 1850-1882)  
*Amidakyo Wakun Zue Series*  
(The Sukhavaii Sutra Explained and Illustrated)  
"The Beginning"  
(Okajima Hokyoku Do)

9. Isai (1821-1880)

Vol V - *Kacho Sanui Saiga Zushiki Series*

(Detailed drawings of flowers, fish, birds mountains and water) 1865

## Case IV

10. Unknown

Vol. I - *Chano Yu Hyorin Taisei*

Commentary on the Tea Ceremony

11. Enjo Takata

Vol. IV - *Illustrated Book of Selected Chinese Poems*

(Toto Shorin)

12. Unknown

Vol. II - *Famous Places of Kiso Highway*

## **TWENTIETH CENTURY HALL**

### **MODERN JAPANESE PRINTS**

The tradition of graphic arts in Japan (especially the color woodcut, which makes up the majority of works in this exhibition) is a long, rich and distinctive one. Beginning in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, the color woodcut print has always dominated the Japanese graphic arts, though there are marked differences between the classical and the modern print in execution, style and subject matter.

The bold flat decorative patterns, exquisite design, subtle gradation of color harmonies and refined but complex method of execution and printing that distinguish traditional color prints continue to this day but with notable differences. Until the twentieth century, the creation

of Japanese woodcut prints involved three principals: the artist who designed the image, the woodblock cutter, and the printer, the latter two remaining anonymous. However, Modern and contemporary artists perform all three of these creative processes. Moreover, the Japanese 20<sup>th</sup> century print is no longer mass produced; rather its output is controlled, as in the West, by a limited edition and so indicated by the artist in the margin of the print. But perhaps the most significant difference between the old and the new lies in the unlimited range of expression, with regard to both subject matter and style, available to the modern artist. Though having a profound influence on French Impressionist and Post-impressionist artists, the classical Japanese color woodcut was executed in an essentially similar, representational, and insular style reflecting no influence of Western art until the end

of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Modern Japanese artists are clearly influenced by both the West as well as the East, and their works may be considered international in style and content, whether abstract or representational.

It is interesting to note that modern graphic artists in Japan usually do not receive formal training in art institutions unless they do so in the West, as indeed many of them do. Rather, their training typically consists of an apprenticeship in the studio of a master artist.

Although Japanese modern prints, called "Sosaku hangai" (creative prints) are widely represented in the West today in both private and public collections, their artists are unfortunately accorded little respect in Japan. Consequently their professional life is difficult and frustrating,

and most are forced to make a living by other employment. This unfortunate circumstance, however, is balanced by the reputation and respect the Japanese print has acquired in the West, as reflected in this exhibition. With an economy of means and refined technical control, representational images seem to capture the essence of a particular object, whether the natural beauty of a plant or tree or a symbolic or essential character of a person or animal. Abstract images, which appear to dominate the contemporary print, embody a contemplative, serene, poetic but controlled expression—the very essence of the traditional Japanese spirit of Zen.

Caroline Wistar  
Curator

## TWENTIETH CENTURY GALLERY

### Check List

All of the prints in the exhibition are color woodcuts unless otherwise noted.

1. Umetaro Azechi (b. 1902- )  
*Village*
2. *Pisces*  
Given by James Colbert
3. Sadao Watanabe (b. 1913- )  
*Woman of Canaan*, 1964  
Stencil dye-print
4. Hiroyuki Tajima  
*Green Castle Gate*, 1972
5. Matsumoto Akira  
*Gogai ga Deta*, 1964

6. Kunihiro Amano (b. 1929- )  
*Castle Gate*, 1966
7. Tomoo Inagaki (b. 1902- )  
*Cats in the Moonlight*, 1966
8. Shigeki Kuroda (b. 1953- )  
*Bicycle R-55*, 1980  
Etching
9. Hideo Higiwara (b. 1913- )  
*Germination # 5*, 1965
10. Hitoshi Nakazato (b. 1936- )  
(Head of the Graphics Department at the  
University of Pennsylvania)  
*Thonga A*, 1977  
Silkscreen with Carborundum  
Given by Benjamin D. Bernstein
11. Joichi Hoshi (1913-1978)  
*Blue Limbs*, 1978
12. *Evening Scene*, 1977

13. *Red Branches*, 1973  
Purchased with funds provided by  
Benjamin D. Bernstein
14. Ansei Uchima (b. 1921- )  
*Cerulean Space #2*, 1970
15. Nagao Ueno (b. 1904- )  
*Recollection of the Past*, 1964

