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**UKIYOE**

**JAPANESE WOODCUTS**

1975/6

UKIYOE  
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AN APPRECIATION OF THE ART OF THE  
JAPANESE WOODBLOCK PRINT  
WITH A CATALOGUE OF WORKS IN THE  
COLLECTION OF THE QUEENSLAND ART  
GALLERY.  
COMPILED BY MRS. R. VAN ERF

QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY

## THE UKIYOE PRINT

The ukiyoe wood-block print developed in Japan about the middle of the 17th century.

Ukiyoe (approximate pronunciation oo-kee-yoh-eh) means "pictures of the floating, i.e. fleeting world". The term ukiyoe derived originally from the Buddhist conception of phenomenal existence as a transient period of suffering, a world of illusion. A shift of meaning, based on the implied connotation of fickleness, led to emphasis on the hedonistic undertones, and from about 1680 on, a special sense developed, viz.: "the fashionable world", "the pleasures of the flesh" - specifically the money-squandering sensation-seeking life of the rich merchant and other townsmen of the late 16th to the mid 19th century.

During this time, Japan, after centuries of civil warfare, was united and ruled by a succession of brilliant generals. The third of these founded a dynasty which endured from 1603 to 1868. Under this family, the Takugawa, the dominant warrior classes were congregated in castle towns, and big cities like Kyoto, Osaka, and particularly Edo (present Tokyo), the seat of government attracted a large population of merchants and artisans to supply the needs of the warrior rulers. As these classes grew in wealth, they created their own special culture, borrowing standards of conduct, taste, and affluence from their masters, but centred round the Kabuki theatre and the gay quarters. A demand for literature and art reflecting this culture naturally accompanied its growth. This activity first flourished mainly in Kyoto but after about 50 years, Edo became more important, and the ukiyoe print in chiefly associated with the capital. It must be remembered, however, that prints were produced in other important cities as well.

## THE UKIYOE SCHOOL

A ukiyoe or genre school of painting had grown in vigour from about 1680, the favourite subject being people at their occupations, festivals, outings, and (from the 17th century on) beautiful girls.

This school of painting employed styles developed by the two classic schools of Japanese painting, one of which followed a purely native tradition and one of which incorporated mannerisms and techniques borrowed from Chinese painting. Paintings on silk were expensive, but a demand for pin-ups, post-cards, and posters illustrating the actors and courtesans arose and increased. The solution was found in the wood-block printing process already developed to a high standard in the production of books. When genre art was produced by wood-block printing, these techniques formed the basis of the designer's treatment.

## WOOD-BLOCK PRINTING

Wood-block printing originated in China and was transmitted to Japan via Korea. Japanese wood-block printed religious texts survive from the 8th century. The late 12th century has bequeathed wood-cuts of genre subjects on fan-shaped papers inscribed with Buddhist sutras, while between 1391 and 1414 a block-printed history of a Buddhist sect was illustrated by wood-cuts, each several feet in length.

At the beginning of the 17th century a great desire for education was manifested by the lesser-ranking warrior classes, and the merchants and artisans, so that wood-block printing of classic and popular literature began to flourish. Wood-block illustrations were soon added, and about the middle of the 17th century, the idea was hit on of issuing pictures separately.

### THE WOOD-BLOCK TECHNIQUE

The technique of the wood-block print gradually became more sophisticated. At first, prints were simply black-and-white, like book illustrations. These were called sumi-zuri-e (black ink-rubbed pictures).

But soon there was a demand for colour. About the beginning of the 18th century a yellow or orange colour was added by hand, the term tan-e (red lead picture) being employed.

By the 1720's other colours like pink and green were also used, these pictures being termed beni-e (rouge pictures).

When the black ink was mixed with glue to give a lacquer-like sheen, the word urushi-e (lacquer picture) was used.

Colour-printing, invented in China in the 16th century, was introduced into Japan in 1634, but the technique was not applied to popular prints, probably for cost reasons, till the late 1730's. Pink and green were used first, the result being called beni-zuri-e, (rouge-rubbed pictures). A separate block was cut for each colour. Accurate register was obtained by guide marks on the right-hand corner and the bottom.

In 1765 the Polychrome print nishiki-e (brocade picture) appeared.

As time went on many subtle effects were gained by embossing (or relief), blind printing (or indentation), sizing over colour and sprinkling mica, brass, or copper dust, gradation of colour or colour blending on flat blocks, frottage and so on.

## THE PROCESS

The traditional print was the work of three men: the designer-artist, the wood-block carver, and the printer. Over them stood the publisher, often himself a very cultivated man, who gauged the public taste and sought out talent.

## THE ARTIST AND HIS DESIGN

The artist first collected his basic sketches, then composed and sketched his design, made corrections, and then produced the finished line-drawing in black and white.

This was carefully pasted face down on the key-block, and the back surface-rubbed off to expose the design through the back more clearly.

The lines were then cut in relief, and the unwanted areas cleared.

A number of impressions of the key-block were then taken. This number was determined by the number of colours to be used. The artist then indicated in red on each impression the areas to be printed in that particular colour. The colour blocks were then carved, and an artist's proof printed.

The artist adjusted the colours to his liking, faults in carving were corrected, and the print went into production.

## THE WOOD-BLOCK

Cherry was the wood most generally used, cut vertically, not horizontally, from the tree trunk, so that the carver worked with, not across the grain. The blocks were seasoned for several years, then planed six times to produce a smooth surface.

Especially hard and therefore heavy wood with a straight, close grain was used for the key-block, but softer though close grained types were preferred for colour-blocks.

A cherry-wood block could be used for more than 10,000 impressions.

## THE CARVERS

The chief carver concentrated on the fine work required in heads, hair and faces. His subordinate carver cut the bodies and other parts of the design, while apprentices were permitted only to "clear" or cut away the unwanted parts of the surface.

The carving was a highly skilled work, the craftsman could produce lines much finer than the brush strokes of the artist's brush.

The lines were cut to an even depth, then intervening spaces cleared away, starting from the outside and ending up at the lines. The carver used a special tool for cutting the kento or register guide, a right angle at the lower right hand corner and a straight one near the lower left hand corner.

In the colour blocks, the detail for each particular colour was carved in relief within a trough.

### THE TOOLS

These included a knife (for cutting the lines), plus veiners, gouges, scrapers, and flat chisels used with the mallet (for clearing between the lines). Whetstones of varying surface grades ensured razor sharp edges for these cutting tools.

### THE PAPER

Japanese hand-made paper made of plant fibres, e.g. mitsumata and a kind of mulberry, etc. was used. Its absorbency was controlled (a) by sizing with a mixture of glue and alum, and (b) damping to a degree carefully maintained throughout the process.

### THE PRINTER

The beauty of the final print depended to an even greater extent on the printer than on the carver, though his status was not so high.

### THE TOOLS

The printer's brushes were made of horsehair or bamboo. The horsehair brushes included shapes varying from that of a boot-brush, to that of a house-painter's brushes, and a fine Japanese-style writing brush. The bamboo brush looked a little like a miniature witch's broom.

The baren, or pressing pad, was round in shape and made of paper and bamboo. The sheath of a species of bamboo grown in Kyushu was softened by soaking in water, air-dried, scraped, split into thin strips, and plaited into cords, and then replaited and replaited, alternatively clockwise and anti-clockwise until an 8, 12 or 16 ply cord was obtained.

This was formed into a flat spiral and fitted into a shallow-rimmed laminated disk of compressed paper of a special kind, thicker at the centre than at the circumference. The disk and spiral were then wrapped in a large piece of softened bamboo sheath or husk with tapered ends. The centre part was stretched firmly over the cord-spiral, with the disk inverted, and snugly up round the rim of the disk. Each tapered end in turn was pleated into a twist, which was reinforced by a role of bamboo-husk. These twists were then tied across the back of the baren with twine.

### THE COLOURS

These were mineral and vegetable pigments soluble in water. Among them may be mentioned:

SUMI or BLACK	soot from the smoke of fresh pine needles mixed with glue.
WHITE	ground sea shells and glue.
BENI	safflower and plum.
TAN	lead, salt-petre and sulphur.
INDIGO	from the indigo plant

The colours were mixed on the block with paste made from rice soaked in water, pounded, and boiled till it became translucent, stirred and strained.

The pigment was placed on the block, with the bamboo brush and a drop of paste added, and then pigment and paste were brushed into the block with the appropriate horse-hair brush.

For gradation printing, the block was first rubbed with a wet cloth. The paper was positioned on the block by reference to the kento guides, and the back was rubbed with the baren, the printer applying the strength of his whole body and moving it in the same direction as the fibre of the paper. The strokes were controlled in length and direction.

### ORDER OF THE BLOCKS

The key block was the first. The order of the colour block was determined by the size of the area to be printed, in order to maintain the degree of moisture at an even level, and by the intensity of the colours, either from light to dark or from medium to light and dark alternately.

## THE SUBJECTS

The traditional print concentrated on certain fixed themes:

### EROTICA (shunga)

First produced in Kyoto, these were in the beginning crude, but later the master designer, Sukenobu, lifted them to lyrical heights, producing work remarkable for its tenderness and seriousness. Other early masters were: Okumura Masunobu, Hishikawa Moronobu, and Tsukioka Settei, but almost all the great ukiyoe artists included erotica among their work. E.g. Utamaro produced 35 albums of the kind between 1784 and 1804. Outside of shunga, the nude is rare, though partly draped figures, and gestures and postures with a vague erotic suggestiveness are frequent in the next category.

### THE BROTHEL

The Yoshiwara and later Shin-Yoshiwara in Edo, the Shimabara district in Kyoto, and Shimmachi in Osaka were the most famous licensed quarters of Tokugawa times, and underwent extensive development about the middle of the 17th century. From this time the courtesan figured prominently in literature and art.

For the Japanese man, whose marriage was arranged for family and financial considerations, the brothel provided romance and the chance to prove himself in the competition for love. "The Japanese courtesan was at once a prostitute and not a prostitute..... She could theoretically be had for money,..... but at the same time she enjoyed a considerable degree of freedom and influence in her own limited world." and developed her own standards for judging would-be lovers.

The popular literature of the time included guides to the brothels which contained critical appreciations of the qualities of leading courtesans. At first, samurai were the main frequenters, but by 1678 the townsmen were becoming the chief customers.

Prints of courtesans show quarter-festivals, processions, customs and street scenes, geisha and courtesans with their attendants, apprentices, and portraits of individual celebrated beauties. These prints served as souvenirs, guides, or objects of longing for customer or would-be customers.

### PICTURES OF BEAUTIFUL WOMEN (bijinga)

The author James Michener has estimated that, between 1660 and 1860, 40 per cent of the total production of ukiyoe were of this category.



These included courtesans, geisha, tea-house waitresses and shop-assistants renowned for their looks, and women in domestic life - sometimes, though rarely, women of the upper classes. The type of woman depicted can often be detected from the dress, e.g. their footwear or the way the obi is tied. Courtesans are usually barefoot, while other women wear digitated socks; after 1741 the obi was tied at the back, but courtesans adhered to the older style of tying it in front.

Women are depicted before their mirrors or after a bath, admiring the moon, dreaming of their seduction, eloping, with musical instruments, pets, pipes, or dolls, playing games, with their children, maids, or lovers, at feminine occupations like sewing, writing poems, or visiting a temple, compared with flowers, poems or scenery, or in parodies of historical or literary incidents.

The ideal of feminine beauty was subject to the vagaries of fashion: Kaigetsudo Ando and Torii Kiyonaga drew stately women, usually of solid proportions; Harunobu's ideal was frail and graceful; Kiyonaga's women were elongated though naturalistic; Utamaro's majestic, tall, reserved though seductive; Eishi (1756-1829) made his figures delicate, but abnormally elongated; Eiri (1790's) produced romantic dolls; Hokusai created frail, appealing women.

### COSTUME

In ukiyoe frequently the whole interest of the design centres on the kimono. The pattern and colours of materials and the arrangement of the kimono, the width, design, and style of tying the sash (obi), as in the popular literature of the day, provided endless interest for ukiyoe purchasers. This was to be expected in a society where being up to the minute, or displaying a recherche knowledge of the antique was highly admired.

The ukiyoe print is a mine of information on fashion and weaving. Koryusai, Kiyonaga and Eizan were particularly renowned for their kimono designs.

Sometimes the design on a kimono gives a clue to the identity of the wearer. A pattern of chrysanthemums on a kimono would suggest the wearer's name was O-kiku (Miss Chrysanthemum), or a crest (of a family, actors' school, or prostitute) might be incorporated to make identification exact.

### PICTURES OF ACTORS

As the brothel supplied the material for male dreams, so the theatre served women, but it was also a centre of pederasty.

The Kabuki theatre was founded in 1600. It began with risqué skits by transvestite actresses and actors, and under repressive government regulations, developed by way of lewd shows by female, and then male prostitutes, to a highly skilled art-form, surrealist in histrionic technique, and gorgeous and spectacular in costuming and presentation. From the last quarter of the 17th century, it provided a major part of the subject matter of ukiyoe prints.

Yakusha-e include posters and playbills (from 1696), pin-ups, usually showing the actors in character in some dramatic pose (mie), or sometimes in groups in famous scenes from popular plays, or in twos or threes in climactic moments, designs for fans (after 1740) and memorial portraits of dead actors (after 1820).

### LANDSCAPES

Imports of European copperplate engravings of landscapes during the 17th century contributed to the rise of Japanese landscape prints. Guide books to famous places appeared in 1640 to cater for the travel boom in Tokugawa times, which reached a peak in Hiroshige's time. Moronobu published an album of prints of the Tokaido Road (from Edo to Kyoto) in 1690.

The atmospheric landscape print made its debut as early as 1738 - 1742. In 1842 a government edict forbade the production of actor and courtesan prints, and thus gave a strong fillip to the production of landscape prints.

The landscape prints dealt with the posting stations on the great trunk roads, and famous beauty spots, particularly noted rivers and the sacred mountain Fuji viewed from various localities.

An interesting sidelight on landscapes (and interiors also) is the type of perspective used, whether reversed or Western.

### PRINTS OF BIRDS, FLOWERS AND FISH (kacho-e)

The earliest were prints of eagles by Torii Kiyomasa I in 1716 on kakemono size sheets. In 1735 those subjects appeared in hoso-ban size. Utamaro published five albums of bird, insect and fish studies in 1796, and Hokusai designed two sets, one large (in 1830) and one small of flower studies. Hiroshige also produced several fine sets.

### OTHERS

Other types of prints are pictures showing sumo wrestlers, foreigners in Nagasaki or Yokohama (Nagasaki-e, and Yokohama-e), fan-prints - folding (sensu), the earliest by Hiroshige, or oval (uchiwa) and greeting-cards (surimono) as early as the 1720's.

Prints continued to be issued in the Meiji period (1868-1911) and Taisho period (1911-1926) as broadsheets or news announcements. Copper-plate engraving was introduced into Japan early in the period of foreign intercourse, and after Meiji, European methods of engraving became popular.

#### FORMAT

Prints were issued as album collections (horizontal prints folded in the middle and bound), and single sheets of varying sizes. These included large "kakemono-e" (hanging scroll type prints) as cheaper substitutes for alcove paintings, narrow pillar prints (hashira-e) for pinning on pillars, large, middle-size, small and square sheets.

#### SIZE OF PRINTS

Large (oban)	15" x 10"
Middle (chuban)	11" x 8"
Small (koban)	10" x 7"
Narrow (hosoe)	12" x 6"
Pillar (hashira-e)	27" x 5"
Kakemono-size	27" x 12"

#### INSCRIPTION ON PRINTS

These include the title of the print, the series in which it occurs, the artist's signature, sometimes including his artistic names (indicating changes in his style or condition of life), and the name bestowed on him by his school, after 1790 censors' seals included seals meaning kiwame or aratame (censored), names of censors, date, block-carvers' seals, publishers' names and seals, dates, locations of scenes. This information often helps in difficult identifications of prints.

## INFLUENCE OF JAPANESE PRINTS ON WESTERN ART

Soon after the unification of Japan by the powerful Tokugawa family at the beginning of the 17th century, Japan closed her doors to foreign countries for the next two centuries. In this period, the ukiyoe print was able to develop in the full sense of being an expression of Japanese social life as the country was almost completely free from foreign influences. Bankoku, works devoted to foreign peoples, are rare for this reason.

On the other hand there was little movement of Japanese art out of the country during this period.

With the final fall of the Japanese feudal system in 1868, Westernisation of the country caused a stagnation of Japanese traditional art.

However, if Japanese art was to suffer from Western influences, the reverse was to apply to Western art through imported Japanese influences at the time when French Impressionism was beginning so many vital changes in painting.

About the middle of the nineteenth century, Japanese prints began to create interest in Paris. In 1856, Bracquemond, who was later to be one of the Cafe Guerbois group, discovered a little volume of Hokusai which had been used as packing for chinaware. Bracquemond was to circulate this volume widely among his colleagues. Monet was also interested in Japanese prints which he had come across at Le Havre about the same time.

However, a very important source of supply of Japanese prints was "La Porte Chinoise" an oriental art shop opened in 1862 by M. and Mme. Desoye who had lived in Japan. Among the many artists who bought from this shop were Whistler, Rossetti, Manet, Fantin-Latour, Alfred Stevens, James Tissot and Degas. The writers Beaudelaire, Zola and the Goncourt brothers were also patrons.

Thus, within a short time, Japanese prints became well-known in the intellectual circles which were motivating the changes in Western art. The Paris World's Fair of 1867 which featured Japanese prints in a particular section devoted to oriental art, consolidated this interest.

It is further significant that, at the opening of his Salon of Art Nouveau in Paris in 1895, Samuel Bing concurrently presented his adjoining Japanese Galleries devoted entirely to art of Japan.

Of the group of painters who met regularly at the Cafe Guerbois in Paris to discuss painting in general, and in particular Japanese art, it was Degas who showed the most interest in Japanese prints. Manet was the leader of this group whose regular members included Bracquemond, Bazille, Fantin-Latour, Renoir; other constant visitors were Cezanne, Sisley, Monet, Pissarro and Alfred Stevens. Zola and other writers were also regular visitors.

Unlike Tissot and Whistler, who made more direct use of picturesque Japanese subjects or elements, Degas endeavoured to absorb the principles of Japanese art into his own style. These derived elements are the subtle use of line, decorative qualities, foreshortening and composition.

The principal subjects were often placed off-centre with strong accent on asymmetric diagonal composition in which space was expressed by the juncture of two diagonals inclined at 45°, instead of through the usual movement of lines drawn in perspective towards a converging point. This last element of perspective, derived from Japanese prints represents the first dramatic change in the use of conventional perspective which was established by Brunelleschi and Alberti in the early days of the Renaissance. This change in perspective was to have far-reaching effects in the use of the human figure purely as an element of design in a picture.

Lautrec had in common with Degas a particular concern with the appeal of line in the definition of the object. He admired the uncompromising analytical use of line in Japanese prints held in check by overall discipline. The boldness of composition of the Japanese prints, their sureness of line and use of colour were factors that influenced Lautrec strongly in producing his poster lithographs for the Moulin Rouge. In fact Lautrec is credited as the originator of Western poster art.

It is interesting to note here that the ukiyoe prints featured actors of the Kabuki Theatre from as far back as 1696: the first being produced by Kiyonobu I, the son of a Kabuki actor, who was also the first to design play bills for wood-block reproductions.

Lautrec's theatre lithographs are a continuation of this tradition.

Whistler, who introduced the cult of the Japanese to London in 1859, was particularly influenced by Japanese prints in his portraits. This being evident in their delicacy and exquisiteness of colour and in their composition.

It was his series of 'Nocturnes' based on views of the Thames at night which showed most distinct Japanese influence in the simplicity of their composition.

One of these in particular, 'Nocturne in Blue and Silver; Old Battersea Bridge' provoked Ruskin, whose criticism brought on the famous (rather 'infamous') libel suit in which Whistler won his case but was awarded only one farthing damages!

Another American artist, Mary Cassat, who worked with the Impressionists, was strongly influenced by Japanese prints in the simplification and precision of line in her etchings.

Van Gogh and Gauguin, who shared the Impressionists ideals for a time, were also influenced by Japanese prints.

Van Gogh had come into contact with these prints in his parents' home at Nuenen and also in Amsterdam before finally going to Paris and copying works of Hiroshige and Kesai Yeisen. (During the two centuries in which Japan cut herself off from all foreign contact, a small number of Dutch were the sole Europeans allowed to trade with Japan. Doubtless some prints found their way to Holland through this source).

In Paris, Van Gogh also came into contact with Japanese prints in the shop of Pere Tanguy and painted two portraits of the old man against a background decorated with Japanese prints.

The incisive outlines of these prints was to have a strong influence on the work Van Gogh did in and around Arles.

Gauguin when he left the influence of the Impressionists (c 1889) began to paint in large areas of flat colour with shapes surrounded by pronounced outlines, a procedure derived from the influence of Japanese prints.

In this style, increasing use of curvaceous and decorative lines made Gauguin one of the forerunners of Art Nouveau.

John Peter Russell (1859-1930), the Australian expatriate painter provides an interesting link with the influence of Japanese prints on Rodin. As a youth Russell was sent on a tour of the Pacific to visit China and Japan. When he later settled on the island of Belle-ile-en Mer off the coast of Brittany and became a particular friend of Rodin, his collection of Japanese prints and Chinese drawings were to inspire the sculptor to do his famous wash and line sketches of nudes which were preparatory to his clay models of figures. These sketches now stand as complete expressions in their own right.

To return finally to the Cafe Guerbois group, there is little doubt that, in relation to their discussions on the subject of shadows, Japanese prints with their disregard for treatment of shadows and frank use of pure colour acted as a strong catalyst in the process of change in Western painting in relation to the importance of colour itself.

This development taken up by Cezanne led him to his concept of rendering volumes and 'architecting forms' through noting with exactitude the necessary colour of each plane. Extending the idea of the importance of colour through the Post Impressionists and Fauves to Robert Delaunay we reach his discovery that 'Colour alone is both form and subject', which concept is one of the main bases of modern abstract art.

To sum up, it is pertinent to quote Bernard Dorival who stated in his book of 'Twentieth Century Painters', that it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the role played by the ukiyoe prints in the revival of Western painting.

He states: "That depth, for example can be expressed by other means than that of geometric or aerial perspective, that felicitous effects can be obtained by 'shots' taken from angles not normally seen in Western painting or by compositions deliberately off-centred, that intensity of colour need not necessarily be diminished with recession not weakened by shadow, that line in the same way as description can be a suggestion and that a stroke of pen or brush by its thickness, thinness, elisions, curves or interruptions can indicate matter and form, that it is not high treason to show human figures from the back or in silhouette or as incidental to more important subjects, that the world still contains original sights which the Western world has neither looked at, noticed nor seen represented since the Renaissance - all these lessons Hokusai and Hiroshige and Kiyonaga, old or new masters of Japanese engraving, taught first to the Parisian painters of the end of the Second Empire and notably to Whistler and Degas, before teaching them to the Impressionists and their successors".

Kitagawa UTAMARO, 1753 - 1806

Pupil of Toriyama Sekiyen, but owed his greatest debt to KIYONAGA.

The first decade or so of Utamaro's published work was devoted mainly to book illustration, culminating in the famous Insect, Shell, and Bird albums of 1787 - 1791 remarkable artistic tributes to the rising spirit of scientific inquiry.

By the late 1770's he was taken in as a protege by the great publisher Tsutaya, and within a decade had begun to establish his own mature style. To the boldly graceful, lifelike women of Kiyonaga he added a strong element of eroticism based on an intuitive grasp of the nature of female psychology. It is this element that has made Utamaro the best known in the West of the dozens of able Japanese portrayals of womanhood. His girls and women speak directly to the viewer in terms of a frankly sensual beauty; and, behind this surface attraction, in Utamaro's finest works we sense the mind of the "eternal female", seemingly oblivious of her charms, yet well aware of their effect upon her male audience and of their profound influence upon her own life and her concepts of happiness. Despite his varied talents Utamaro's fame will always rest principally on this new ideal of womanhood which he helped create.

1. "Woman Caught in Shower of Rain" 37.5 x 24 cm
2. "Woman Reading a Scroll" 37 x 24 cm
3. "The Courtesan"  
(Blue flowered Kimono, Fan) 38.5 x 25 cm
4. "Woman III"  
(Green dove printed Kimono) 37 x 24 cm
5. "Two Women Reading I" 37 x 24 cm

Yeishosai CHOKI, 1760 - 1800

A fellow student with Utamaro under Sekiyen, Choki was influenced by Utamaro and Kiyonaga, and was one of the first to pay Sharaku the tribute of imitation. But the essential Choki is confined to a handful of lovely prints, dated about 1794, which have been described as 'an emotional quality rare in Ukiyo-ye'.

6. "Courtesan OSAKA SHINONACHI with attendant Yoshidaya Drinking Tea" 37.5 x 24 cm

Katsushika HOKUSAI, 1760 - 1849

Born in Yedo, the son of a mirror-maker, he was apprenticed to a wood engraver, but soon turned to designing. His first master was Shunsho, under whom his name was Shunro.



About 1777 his first illustrated book appeared, the fore-runner of an enormous output in this field. His work covers almost every sphere of Ukiyo-ye activity, actor-prints in Shunsho manner, bijin-ye with a Kiyonaga cast, and surimono of unsurpassed delicacy and invention; but his finest work is pre-eminently in the realm of landscape, especially in the great series that appeared after 1820 - the 'Thirty six Views of Fuji' the 'Waterfalls', the 'Bridges' and many others. The Landscape became more important than human figures and used perspective to a new effect. Hokusai's pupils are very numerous. The following are the most important: Shinsai, Hokkei, Hokuju, Yamagawa Shigenobu, Gakutei, Katsushika Taito, Hokuba, Hokuga, Hoku-un, Hokujei, Hokutei, Hokusui, Hoku-i.

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|-----|---|----------------|
| 7.  | "White Rain" from 36 Views of Mt. Fuji                | 25.5 x 37.5 cm |
| 8.  | "Koishikawa, Snowy Morning"                           | 24.5 x 37 cm   |
| 9.  | "Buffaloes Carrying Brush"                            | 24.5 x 36.5 cm |
| 10. | "Two Men Fishing on Low Cliff" Mt. Fuji in background | 23.5 x 36 cm   |
| 11. | "The Wave"  | 24 x 36.5 cm   |
| 12. | "Fishing in Stream, Senju, Musashi (Tokyo)"           | 24 x 35.5 cm   |

Utagawa TOYOKUNI, 1769 - 1825

Toyokuni entered the studio of his neighbour Toyoharu at an early age, issuing his first book of illustrations in his mid-teens. He lacked the classical background of such contemporaries as Utamaro and Eishi, having been trained entirely in the Ukiyo-e tradition.

Toyokuni was the popular giant of the new Ukiyo-e and was at his best in work where the bold and coarse form a desirable element, as in some of his historical prints and Kabuki scenes, as well as in a few prints of girls in which the poster colouring compensates for any inherent crudity of insight or design.

Toyokuni worked in many fields, but it was in the portrayal of Kabuki actors that he made his greatest name, where he dominated this field for nearly three decades.

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|-----|--|--------------|
| 13. | "A Lady with her Servant"                        | 37.5 x 24 cm |
| 14. | "A Lady writing on a Scroll"                     | 38 x 26 cm   |
| 15. | "Actor, Koshiro Matsumoto"                       | 35 x 24 cm   |
| 16. | "Actor, Genosuke Sawamura"                       | 37 x 24 cm   |
| 17. | "Actor, Bando Mitsugoro, posed with drawn sword" | 35.5 x 24 cm |
| 18. | "Actor, green garment, drawn sword behind back"  | 35.5 x 24 cm |

Toshusai SHARAKU,

(active 1794-5) died 1801

Originally an actor in the Nohdrama, the appearance of this dynamic artist in the Ukiyo-ye ranks is one of the mysteries of Japanese art. As far as has been traced, he was without previous training, but in 1794 he designed a series of over one hundred actor prints. These prints, are penetrating, realistic portraits of Kabuki actors in action. The large heads, in particular, at least as far as the type is concerned, were prompted by Shunyei, but the intensity of the drawings, the bizarre colour against the dark mica backgrounds, are without parallel in the annals of Ukiyo-ye. Presumably, the realism of these prints was not to the public's taste, for after his meteoric appearance, Sharaku returns to the obscurity from whence he had sprung.

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|-----|--|----------------|
| 19. | "Actor in a Fawn Cap"  | 37.5 x 24.5 cm |
| 20. | "Two Actors, one in Female Character, holding Yellow Sunshade" | 35.5 x 25 cm   |

Utagawa KUNISADA,

1786 - 1865

Follower of Toyokuni (sometimes called Toyokuni III) Kunisada, who had also studied the style of ITCHO, was the most famous and prolific figure-print artist of his day, particularly for his prints of courtesans and for his erotica. Without doubt his work as a whole better typifies the neurotic and unstable tendencies of his age than that of any other artist.

Like all the pupils of Toyokuni he adopted his masters surname being the second to do so. The whole Utagawa school in the nineteenth century bears the mark of the stereo type into which Kunisada (Toyokuni III) had sunk following the death or retirement of his betters at the opening of the century.

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| 21. | "Actor VI, Holding sheath of sword"                 | 35 x 24 cm     |
| 22. | "Actor, Once Shosuke with drawn sword"              | 34 x 24 cm     |
| 23. | "Actor - Crouched on knee, holding closed sunshade" | 34 x 24 cm     |
| 24. | "Actor, Mitsugaro Bando with Umbrella"              | 34 x 23.5 cm   |
| 25. | "Actor, Once Shosuke"                               | 34 x 23.5 cm   |
| 26. | "Actor, leaning on sword"                           | 34 x 23.5 cm   |
| 27. | Triptitch "Kenryuzan Temple at Asakusa (Tokyo)"     | 37.5 x 25.5 cm |
| 28. | Triptitch "Kenryuzan Temple at Asakusa (Tokyo)"     | 37.5 x 25.5 cm |

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| 29. | Triptitch "Kenryuzan Temple<br>at Asakusa (Tokyo)                            | 37.5 x 25.5 cm |
| 30. | "Rain on Autumn Evening from<br>Lattice Window"                              | 36.5 x 24.5 cm |
| 31. | "Actor VII, seated and holding<br>scroll"(painted under name of<br>Toyokuni) | 37 x 24 cm     |
| 32. | "Actor; with coolie hat"<br>(painted under name of<br>Toyokuni)              | 35 x 22.5 cm   |

Ando HIROSHIGE, 1797 - 1858

Hiroshige was a well known official in the fire brigade detachment in Edo; (TOKYO). Pupil of Toyohiro and a fellow student of Toyokuni. On the death of his master he turned to the field of landscape and nature studies, following Hokusai's great step in developing the Japanese landscape print as an independent genre. Hiroshige was certainly indebted to Hokusai; but the rare and sustained poetic mood was clearly his own innovation.

In 1832 he was sent to accompany a horse which was taken along the Tokaido to be presented to the Emperor at Kyoto. On this trip Hiroshige made innumerable drawings, and in the same year issued his set of fifty-three posting stations on the Tokaido-Road. He had absorbed Japan's beauty, both natural and human, into his subconscious, and it was this ideal image that found expression in his evocations of specific scenes. Hiroshige's final verse - Leaving my brush behind in Edo I set forth on a new journey: let me sightsee all the famous views in Paradise!

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| 33. | "From 53 Stations of the Tokaido"<br>(crossing streams with porters by<br>means of Rendai-Watashi, platform<br>ferry)(possibly OI river) | 23 x 36.5 cm |
| 34. | "From 53 Stations of the Tokaido,<br>Kuwana"   | 24.5 x 37 cm |
| 35. | "From 53 Stations of the Tokaido,<br>YOKKAICHI"(man chasing hat)   | 23.5 x 35 cm |
| 36. | "From 53 Stations of the Tokaido"<br>(Kites)   | 23.5 x 37 cm |
| 37. | "From 53 Stations of the Tokaido,<br>Meeting at the Milestone"   | 23 x 34 cm   |
| 38. | "From 53 Stations of the Tokaido,<br>arriving at the Tea-house"  | 23 x 36 cm   |
| 39. | "Toenizan Temple at UENO, Tokyo"   | 25 x 37.5 cm |
| 40. | "TOJIBA, Hot Springs"  | 35 x 23.5 cm |
| 41. | "Water at Kameido, Edo (Tokyo)   | 34 x 24 cm   |

HIROSHIGE (later generation)

42. "Regulations of the Horse Tram" 34 x 23.5 cm

Hiroshi YOSHIDA, 1875 - 1910

43. "Tea House in Ayalia Garden" 24 x 37 cm

Hodaka YOSHIDA

44. "Misty Day in Nikko" 37 x 24.5 cm

Hasui KAWASE, B. 1883

Produced traditional prints, i.e. his compositions were carved and printed by artisans in the traditional manner, and his work helped keep alive the old tradition of wood-block printing. Wood-block carving and printing houses which preserve these ancient skills are still in operation and now concentrate mainly on reproductions.

45. Matsushima Island, Near Sendai 34 x 23.5 cm

Mesumi Mope HIROAKI

46. "Fireworks of the Southern Land"

Hiroaki TAKAHASHI

47. "MOUNT FUJI FROM MIZUKUBO,  
Morning" 23 x 35.5 cm

GASHOGETSU

48. "Harbour Scene" 25 x 37 cm

HOKUJU

Pupil of Hokusai.

49. "Seascape, TSUKUDAJIMA, Tokyo" 25.5 x 37.5 cm

KOMEI

50. "Houses Covered in Snow" 37.5 x 16.5 cm

KUNICHIKA

51. "Courtesan, NAKAMONJE HAMURA  
with Attendant" 34 x 21 cm
52. "Courtesan with Attendant by  
a Waterfall" 34 x 21.5 cm

Koitsu TSUCHUJA

53. "AKASHI BEACH, Near Kobe" 34.5 x 23.5 cm

Shiro KASAMATSU

54. "Moon Rising at Nezu Gongen  
Shrine, Tokyo" 34 x 23.5 cm

FOUJITA

55. "Self Portrait with Cat" 35 x 27 cm

UNKNOWN

56. "Woman by table, lake in  
Background" 34.5 x 24 cm
57. "Bird and Waterlillies" 37.5 x 16.5 cm
58. "Two Birds"(Quails)? 37 x 16.5 cm
59. "Goldfish" 34 x 23.5 cm
60. "Cockatoo & Pomegranate" 34 x 23.5 cm
61. "Warrior, Kiyomasa Kato in  
Combat" 22.5 x 34.5 cm

MODERN

Shoichi HASEGAWA

62. "ASA MOYA" etching 31 x 36.5 cm

G. ONOYI

63. "UNTITLED" lithograph 64 x 60 cm

Kikei SASAJIMA

64. "IN THE WOODS" Woodblock 28 x 50.5 cm

H. TAJIMA

65. "MISCELLANY A" lithograph 62.5 x 46.5 cm

KINOSHITA

66. "FACE WHITE" Inkless print in relief 40.5 x 76.5 cm

Hideo HAGIWARA

67. "A MAN IN ARMOUR" lithograph 92.5 x 61.5 cm

Shoichi HASEGAWA

68. "TOMASHIBI" etching 29.5 x 30.5 cm

