

## *Textile Printing with Paper Stencils in Japan: Ise katagami*

December 14, 2023 - May 5, 2024

Printing fabric is generally faster and easier than hand-embroidering or weaving designs or using other surface techniques. However, making the tool to reproduce a motif can be a process that is just as complex and time-consuming. This grouping of works presents *ise katagami*—one of the many ways Japanese makers have introduced pattern onto fabric. Paper stencils (*katagami*) are shown alongside printed fabrics and textile swatches.

The RISD Museum cares for a collection of nearly 100 handmade and hand-cut *katagami*, an art form now identified by the Japanese government as an Intangible Cultural Heritage. Historically and even today, these stencils are produced in the Ise-Shima Peninsula of Japan. *Katagami*, and specifically those examples using silk support threads, led to the popular printing technique known as silkscreen.

—Laurie Anne Brewer, curator of costume and textiles

### CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Anonymous Japanese designer (*Shitaeshi*)  
*Dyer's Pattern Book of Small-Scale Designs (Komon-cho)*, 1875-1900  
Paper (*washi*) pages with paste-resist-printed small-scale (*komon*) plain-woven cotton samples  
Museum Collection **49.449**



Anonymous Japanese designer (*Shitaeshi*)  
*Textile-Printing Stencil (Katagami)*, 1850-1907  
Mulberry (*kozo*) paper (*washi*) with persimmon-tannin stain (*kakishibu*)  
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke **07.011**



Anonymous Japanese designer (*Shitaeshi*)  
*Textile-Printing Stencil (Katagami)*, 1850-1907  
Mulberry (*kozo*) paper (*washi*) with persimmon-tannin stain (*kakishibu*)  
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke **07.034**



Anonymous Japanese designer (*Shitaeshi*)  
*Textile-Printing Stencil (Katagami)*, 1850-1907  
Mulberry (*kozo*) paper (*washi*) with persimmon-tannin stain (*kakishibu*)  
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke **07.043**



Anonymous Japanese designer (*Shitaeshi*)  
*Textile-Printing Stencil (Katagami)*, 1850-1907  
Mulberry (*kozo*) paper (*washi*) with persimmon-tannin stain (*kakishibu*)  
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke **07.064**



These small-scale design stencils (*komon*) were crafted primarily using drill or punch carving. Due to the complexity of these patterns, only highly skilled carvers could produce them. During the Edo period (1615–1868), the use of stencils to print fabric soared in terms of technique and popularity.

Unidentified Japanese designer  
*Hip-Length Robe Worn over a Kimono (Ise katagami Haori)*, 1929  
Figured-weave silk crepe, paste-resist-printed using a stencil  
(*katagami*) with a plain weave; printed cotton lining  
Gift of Mrs. Torry Allen **67.084.2**



Anonymous Japanese designer (*Shitaeshi*)  
*Textile-Printing Stencils (Katagami)*, 1850-1907  
Mulberry (*kozo*) paper (*washi*) with persimmon-tannin stain (*kakishibu*)  
Bequest of Isaac C. Bates **13.465**



Anonymous Japanese designer (*Shitaeshi*)  
*Textile-Printing Stencils (Katagami)*, 1850-1907  
Mulberry (*kozo*) paper (*washi*) with persimmon-tannin stain (*kakishibu*)  
Bequest of Isaac C. Bates **13.466**



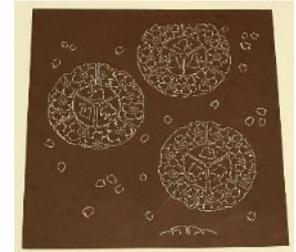
Anonymous Japanese designer (*Shitaeshi*)  
*Textile-Printing Stencils (Katagami)*, 1850-1907  
Mulberry (*kozo*) paper (*washi*) with persimmon-tannin stain (*kakishibu*)  
Bequest of Isaac C. Bates **13.785**



In this series, a design that was too complex for a single stencil is spread over multiple sheets (*nimai gata* and *okkake gata*). From left to right the stencil becomes more refined, with less open space where the rice paste (*nori*) could pass through. Any areas covered with paste appear as white on the finished textile, as the dried rice paste resists the dye.

Anonymous Japanese designer (*Shitaeshi*)  
*Textile-Printing Stencil (Katagami)*, 1850-1907  
Mulberry (*kozo*) paper (*washi*) with persimmon-tannin stain (*kakishibu*)  
Museum Collection **INV2003.18**

*Katagami* stencils are made from a web of natural fibers. Bast fibers from the mulberry tree (*kozo*) are boiled in a vat, pounded into pulp, swirled with a gelatinous material, and drawn out with a reed strainer. The resulting mass dries into a strong, stable paper. A fermented persimmon stain (*kakishibu*) is then brushed on, preserving and waterproofing the paper, into which a craftsperson carves the design. In this example, small plovers fly around and form crest designs.



Unidentified Japanese designer  
*Short Robe Worn under a Kimono (Hanjuban)*, 1840-1870  
Silk patchwork of textiles with stenciled and woven motifs; stencil-printed (*katazome*) silk lining  
Gift of Cynthia Shaver in honor of Noriko Miyamoto **2021.47.2**



This dynamic patchwork robe is an unusual example of stencil-printed technique (*katazome*) on silk textiles. It was donated to the museum by scholar Cynthia Shaver in honor of fellow scholar Noriko Miyamoto. Together they authored the 1998 book *Hanten and Happi: Traditional Japanese Work Coats*.

Anonymous Japanese designer (*Shitaeshi*)  
*Textile-Printing Stencil (Katagami)*, 1850-1907  
Mulberry (*kozo*) paper (*washi*) with persimmon-tannin stain (*kakishibu*),  
silk-thread insertions (*ito ire*)  
Gift of Mrs. Henry D. Sharpe **21.428**



Anonymous Japanese designer (*Shitaeshi*)  
*Textile-Printing Stencil (Katagami)*, 1850-1907  
Mulberry (*kozo*) paper (*washi*) with persimmon-tannin stain (*kakishibu*);  
silk-thread insertions (*ito ire*)  
Gift of Mrs. Henry D. Sharpe **21.440**



Japanese  
*Textile-Printing Stencil (Katagami)*, 1850-1907  
Mulberry (*kozo*) paper (*washi*) with persimmon-tannin stain (*kakishibu*);  
silk-thread insertions (*ito ire*)  
Museum Collection **INV2003.24**



Large-scale *katagami* such as these—in particular those with large open areas for printing negative spaces—require silk-thread insertions (*ito ire*) for support. Working anonymously within guilds, skilled carvers used thrust-carving (*tsukibori*) techniques to achieve sensuous curves and delicate stripes (*shima*). The stencil at the far right features cattail stripes (*gama suji*), a striped pattern with tapered swellings.

Anonymous Japanese designer (*Shitaeshi*)  
*Textile-Printing Stencil (Katagami)*, 1850-1907  
Mulberry (*kozo*) paper (*washi*) with persimmon-tannin stain (*kakishibu*)  
Bequest of Isaac C. Bates **13.476**



Japanese  
*Sword (Katana)*  
Bronze, iron, gold, lacquer, pigment, sharkskin, and silk  
Gift of Dr. Augustus M. Lord **19.233**



Using a drill (*kirī*) to cut stippled circles from the paper base, a stencil maker created this example. It evokes constellations of stars or weather patterns (*dai-shō arare*), as well as the texture of sharkskin, also known as shagreen (*same*). Because the hilts of samurai swords were covered in sharkskin leather, textiles printed to resemble sharkskin were reserved patterns available only to certain elite people within Japanese society. The tanned leather of a shark or ray was used to provide a nubby grip on the handle of this sword in the museum collection.