

# RISD MUSEUM

## *Japonisme: Japanese Prints and Their Influences in France, ca. 1860-1880,*

August 26, 2005-February 12, 2006

Fascination with Japan took root in the 1860s, soon after the opening of Japanese ports to the West. Edgar Degas was one of the first French artists to discover Japanese art at mid-decade, along with Édouard Manet, James Jacques Joseph Tissot, Félix Bracquemond, and the expatriate American James Abbott McNeill Whistler. By 1872, when the term "Japonisme" was coined by Philippe Burty, critic and avid collector of things Japanese, Japanese influence was becoming far more pervasive. Artists and critics of the French avant-garde were studying Japanese prints to absorb valuable lessons-in composition; flattened, bird's-eye, oblique, and one-point perspectives; contrast of dense pattern with blank areas; and subject matter-in order to apply them within the context of their own art.

This exhibition is intended only as a brief introduction to the topic of Japonisme. These prints have been selected to illustrate the compositional devices and subjects of greatest significance for late 19th-century French artists. Oblique recession into space, the use of bird's-eye perspective, and motifs such as waves and bridges are all present in the landscapes by Hokusai and Hiroshige. Other prints contain flat fields of color without gradation, cut-off and foreshortened figures, or figures gazing back over their shoulders. All of these devices entered Degas's repertory and are identifiable in his work.

The appearance of the first Japanese delegation in Europe in 1862, the inclusion of a Japanese pavilion at the Universal Exposition of 1867 in Paris, and the increasing availability of Japanese goods at Parisian specialty shops opened during the decade all stimulated the development of Japonisme. Critics and dealers began visiting Japan in 1871 and collecting impressive numbers of Japanese works to keep and to sell in France. Tadamasa Hayashi, a trained printer who came to Paris in 1878 to work for the Japanese commissioner at the Universal Exposition of that year, remained to become a highly knowledgeable connoisseur of and respected dealer in Japanese art. The decade of the 1880s was distinguished by the publication of the first chronological history of these materials, Louis Gonse's *L'Art japonaise* (1883), and by the appearance of well-known art dealer "Samuel" (Siegfried) Bing's *Le Japon artistique (Artistic Japan)*, a magazine issued monthly from 1888 until 1891. The widespread appreciation for Japanese art had become an integral part of late 19th-century French culture.

### CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Katsushika Hokusai, Japanese, 1760-1849

Nishimuraya Yohachi, Japanese

*Hodogaya on the Tokaido (Tokaido hodogaya), Thirty-six views of Mount Fuji*, ca. 1829-1833

Polychrome wood block print

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1196



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Kitagawa Utamaro, Japanese, 1754-1806

*Totsuka, Beauties of the first rank and the Fifty-three stations [of the Tokaidō]*, mid 1700s-early 1800s

Polychrome woodblock print with embossing

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1143

In this series, Utamaro pairs beautiful women with the fifty-three stations of the Tōkaidō, the road connecting Edo (modern-day Tokyo) and Kyoto during the Edo period (1603-1867). The cut-off figures and asymmetrical composition of this print make a telling comparison with Degas's large pastel that is the subject of the exhibition *Edgar Degas: Six Friends at Dieppe*. Degas's understanding of Japanese art subtly inspired his innovative compositions without assuming the form of direct borrowing.



Torii Kiyonaga, Japanese, 1752-1815

Nishimuraya Yohachi, Japanese

*Ten scenes around Kinryuzan Temple, Asakusa (Asakusa kinryuzan jukkyo)*, ca. 1783

Polychrome wood block print

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1118

A woman stands in front of the Yanagi shop, turning to look back at the shop-lady who prepares a toothbrush for her. This shop was located on the grounds of the Kinryūzan Temple in the Asakusa district of Edo (modern-day Tokyo).

In this scene, the subtle interaction of the two subjects is a device that Degas understood and used in pairings of figures in his own compositions. Degas is known to have hung a diptych of female bathers by Kiyonaga over his bed. It was one of the most prized objects in his personal collection.



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Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858

Sanoya Kihei, Japanese

*Rain shower, Nihon Bridge (Nihonbashi no hakuu), Famous places of the eastern capital, ca. 1832*

Polychrome wood block print

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1287



French artists of the later 19th century were impressed by the Japanese ability to render climatic and temporal conditions as well as to utilize bridges to unify a composition and create an overarching formal structure.

To illustrate how well known such compositions were, please see *L'Art japonais (Japanese Art)* of 1883 by Louis Gonse (1846-1921). The copy of the Hiroshige print reproduced by Gonse in volume I of his introduction to Japanese art belonged to Théodore Duret (1838-1927), a critic and supporter of the avant-garde who visited Japan in 1871 and formed a significant collection of Japanese art. Gonse's work was the first exhaustive chronological history of Japanese art organized by category and medium.

Utagawa Kuniyoshi, Japanese, 1797-1861

*Recovering the Stolen Jewel from the Palace of the Dragon King (Ryugu Tamatori Hime no su)*, 1853

Three-paneled polychrome woodblock print

Elizabeth T. and Dorothy N. Casey Fund 2005.80



This powerful composition depicts the critical moment at which the pearl diver, who has rescued the magic crystal from the dragon king's palace beneath the sea, confronts the infuriated ruler of the deep. To save the crystal, she is about to slash open her abdomen and place it within. Since the dragon king can't touch dead flesh, her body with the crystal will wash up on the shore. In this tale, the Japanese statesman for whom the crystal was intended kept his pledge to the pearl diver to care for her son and raise him as a nobleman.

This is the print depicted in the background of Édouard Manet's painting *Repose* (acc. no. 59.027), ca. 1870-71.

# RISD MUSEUM

Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858

Yamadaya Shojiro, Japanese

*Enjoying the Evening Cool with Fireworks, Ryogoku Bridge (Ryogoku noryo ohanabi)*, 1847-1852

Three-paneled polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Marshall H. Gould 46.293.11



On summer evenings, the Ryōgoku Bridge was a focus for entertainment that occasionally included dramatic displays of fireworks. The area was also known for its prostitutes, who plied their trade in pleasure boats cruising up and down the Sumida River. The bridge here is a unifying device against which the three women are dramatically framed.

Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858

Takenouchi Magohachi, Japanese, late 18th century-mid 19th century

*Driving rain, Shono (Shono hakuu), The fifty-three stations of the Tokaido*, ca. 1833

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 41.080.46



In volume II of *L'Art japonais*, Louis Gonse reproduces a copy of this highly admired composition by Hiroshige, another example of how effectively the Japanese rendered climatic and temporal conditions in the medium of woodblock printing.

# RISD MUSEUM

Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858

Kichizō Tsutaya, Japanese

*The sea at Satta, Suruga Province, Thirty-six views of Mount Fuji*, 1858

Polychrome wood block print

Gift of Marshall H. Gould 46.293.5



Kitagawa Utamaro, Japanese, 1754-1806

Yamadaya Sanshiro, Japanese, 18th century

*Left panel of the triptych Washing and Stretching Cloth (Arai-bari)*, ca. 1796-1797

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1140

French artist Edgar Degas was attracted by scenes of contemporary life and by the depiction of women in informal situations so common in Japanese prints.



Katsushika Hokusai, Japanese, 1760-1849

Nishimuraya Yohachi, Japanese

*Kajikazawa in Kai Province (Koshu kajikazawa), Thirty-six views of Mount Fuji*, ca. 1829-1833

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1206



# RISD MUSEUM

Katsushika Hokusai, Japanese, 1760-1849

*Four sketches: figures and tiger*, 1800s

pen and ink on paper

Museum collection INV2005.56

Pages of this type consist mostly of drawings made after the Hokusai sketches reproduced in his published sketchbooks (*Manga*) and other printed books. These works after Hokusai were preserved in albums that were later divided into individual pages and sold. The group of figures in the lower left recalls a sketch from volume one of the *Manga*.

This drawing bears the seal of Tadamasa Hayashi (1854-1906), one of the great Japanese art dealers in late 19th-century Paris.



Katsushika Hokusai, Japanese, 1760-1849

Nishimuraya Yohachi, Japanese

*The temple Honganji, Asakusa, in the eastern capital (Toto asakusa honganji)*, *Thirty-six views of Mount Fuji*, ca. 1829-1833

Polychrome wood block print

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1213



# RISD MUSEUM

Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858

Murataya Jirobei, Japanese

*Cuckoo above Eitai Bridge (Eitaibashi no hototogisu), Newly published famous places of the eastern capital, 1835-1839*

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.246



Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858

Uoya Eikichi, Japanese, 19th century

*Yabukoji at the foot of Atago (Atagoshita Yabukoji), from the series*

*One hundred views of famous places (Meisho Edo hyakkei), 1857.12*

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1292



# RISD MUSEUM

Keisai Eisen, Japanese, 1790-1848

Kichizō Tsutaya, Japanese

*Moon: The courtesan Egawa of the Marueiya (Tsuki: Egawa Marueiya nai), Parody of snow, moon and flower, 1830s*

Polychrome wood block print

Gift of Isaac C. Bates 97.020

This courtesan, Egawa of the Maruei Teahouse, is a characteristic type in Japanese prints. The representation of her body twisting in space against a neutral ground and the tension between the three-dimensionality of the revolving figure and her flat, brightly colored robes would have been of great aesthetic interest in late 19th-century France.



Keisai Eisen, Japanese, 1790-1848

Sanoya Kihei, Japanese

*Ono no Komachi at Sekidera, Today's seven Komachi, ca. 1825*

Polychrome woodblock print

Bequest of Isaac C. Bates 13.1386

This print represents a courtesan in the guise of Ono no Komachi, the great 9th-century poetess, at the Sekidera Temple. Edgar Degas was influenced by Japanese depictions of women dressing and attending to their appearance, a subject that he used in his own art.



# RISD MUSEUM

Katsushika Hokusai, Japanese, 1760-1849  
*Eight sketches: courtier, samurai, waves*, 1800s  
Pen and ink on paper  
Museum collection INV2005.55

Pages of this type consist mostly of drawings made after the Hokusai sketches reproduced in the *Manga* and other printed books. These drawings were preserved in albums that were later divided into individual pages and sold.

This drawing bears the seal of Tadamasa Hayashi (1854-1906), one of the great Japanese art dealers in late 19th-century Paris.



Katsushika Hokusai, Japanese, 1760-1849  
Nishimuraya Yohachi, Japanese  
*Under the well of the great wave off Kanagawa (Kanagawa oki nami ura)*, from the series *Thirty-six views of Mount Fuji*, ca. 1829-1833  
Polychrome wood block print  
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1195



Félix Bracquemond, French, 1833-1914  
L.M. and Company, French, ca. 1866-1875  
*Two Plates from the "Rousseau" Service*, 1866-1875  
transfer-printed earthenware; glaze; enamel  
Museum Purchase: Gift of David G. Carter in memory of Elmina Malloy 1997.37.2

The impact of Japanese art was first seen in the decorative arts, where artists such as Bracquemond evolved designs on the basis of Japanese sources, especially Hokusai's *Manga (Sketchbooks)* and other printed books. The dinner service that Bracquemond designed for Eugène Rousseau is the first example of Japonisme, the poppy design being derived from an illustration in *Kach gaden*, a printed manual by Hokusen (Katsushika Taito II, fl. 1810-53), a pupil of Hokusai. Although not the actual model for the poppy motif on this plate, the Hokusai print illustrated here certainly bears comparison with Bracquemond's floral pattern.



# RISD MUSEUM

Katsushika Hokusai, Japanese, 1760-1849

Tōshirō Katano, Japanese

*Random sketches by Hokusai: Vol. 1, 1814*

woodblock printed book with paper wrappers, sewn

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 31.394.1

This page of lively sketches from the first volume of Hokusai's famed *Manga* illustrates figures in various positions, some of whom are women bathing. The wealth of imagery in these printed sketchbooks (and in other printed books by Hokusai) became important sources for French artists and were available in Paris as early as the 1850s. For Degas's treatment of this subject, see the lithograph of a *Standing Nude Woman Dressing* (acc. no. 59.115).



This copy of the *Manga* bears the seal of Tadamasa Hayashi (1854-1906), one of the great Japanese art dealers in late 19th-century Paris.