

## *The Artistry and Reunion of Two Surimono Albums*

May 23, 2026 - October 4, 2026

Nearly 200 years ago in Osaka, Japan, the poet Iga Kurimi (意雅栗三) gathered his collection of exquisite woodblock prints and mounted them into two accordion-style albums. Combining images and poetry, these surimono (literally “printed things”) were inked with rich colors on the finest paper and embellished with raised designs and metallic pigments to create a multisensorial experience. Poetic inscriptions on these prints provide additional layers of enjoyment. This exhibition explores some of the many stories these special prints tell, offering us a window into Japan’s art and literary scene of the 1800s.

In 1863, a young American geologist named Raphael Pumpelly received Kurimi’s albums as a farewell gift from Japanese friends. The albums were passed down the Pumpelly family. One album, now unbound as individual prints, made its way to the RISD Museum in the 1950s. The other album, still intact, now resides in the collection of the Chiba City Museum of Art in Japan. This exhibition reunites these two extraordinary sets of prints, highlighting the unique contexts in which they were commissioned, created, and shared.

Curated by Wai Yee Chiong, E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Curator of East Asian Art, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and former curator of Asian art, RISD Museum

The Artistry and Reunion of Two Surimono Albums is sponsored by Bank of America. The exhibition is also supported by grants from E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation and the Japan Foundation, with additional program support provided by the IFPDA Foundation and the Felicia Fund.

RISD Museum is supported by a grant from the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, through an appropriation by the Rhode Island General Assembly and a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and with the generous partnership of the Rhode Island School of Design, its Board of Trustees, and Museum Governors.

## CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

### Kyōka Surimono

Highly ornate and intricately printed, the prints in this exhibition—known as kyōka surimono—combine image and poetry. These prints were commissioned and distributed by poets and poetry groups that were actively engaged in kyōka, a form of comic verse that was popular in Japan in the early 1800s. Kyōka poems have 31 syllables and take the form of classical Japanese tanka poetry. Subversive or parodic, kyōka was a popular and more accessible poetry form that requires knowledge of classical Japanese poetry.

To enjoy a kyōka surimono is to look closely at its visual details and unravel its witty text references. Below, neatly stacked mackerel sushi are nestled in bamboo-leaf wrappers. The fish skin shimmers with metallic pigments, and the grains of rice are made tactile with embossing. Two poems printed in elegant calligraphy mention the plum, a reference to spring. The verse on the left likens white plum blossoms to grains of rice and the shrillness of a warbler's voice to tart vinegar, evoking both the taste and texture of the sushi depicted.

Kyōka surimono often name makers, including the poets, illustrator, and woodblock carver. Here, the square red seals on the bottom right belong to Baien, who illustrated the image, while the gourd-shaped red seal at bottom left denotes Tani Seikō, who cut the woodblocks. Seikō also playfully added his name to the sushi wrapper, replacing the name of the sushi store with his own to read "Famous Product: Tani Seikō of Osaka."

Baien 梅園

Active 1820–1829 in Edo and Osaka, Japan

Tani Seikō 谷清好, block carver

*Mackerel Sushi*, ca. 1825–1827

Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic embellishments (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf **56.039.61**



## A Tale of Two Albums

*How . . . satisfying these albums are! People of our own world weave the precious leaves of language into lively verse, today's artists grace them with their brush, and now Mr. Kurimi has collected their surimono one by one.*

—Crane group poet Tsurunoya, on Kurimi's albums

In the 1820s, Osaka poet Iga Kurimi carefully compiled his *kyōka surimono*, placing 84 prints in one album and 88 into another. All were considered literary and artistic treasures, comparable to rare Chinese and Japanese paintings and calligraphy. Tsurunoya—Kurimi's friend and the respected leader of the Crane poetry group based in Osaka—wrote a preface in one of the albums, quoted in part above.

Many *surimono* collectors compiled albums. For Kurimi, this was probably a way to memorialize and record the friendships, encounters, and events represented in the prints. While we do not know who inherited these albums after Kurimi, both of the albums were presented to American geologist Raphael Pumpelly in 1863 and passed on to his descendants. One album was sold in the 1980s through the art dealer Sotheby's to American collector Paul F. Walter, who in 1992 sold it through Christie's auction house to the Chiba City Museum of Art. The other album passed from Raphael Pumpelly's son to the artist Magda Polivanov before being bought back by George Pierce Metcalf, Pumpelly's granddaughter's husband, who gave the prints to the RISD Museum in the 1950s.

## The Chiba City Museum of Art Album

In the spring of 1821, the Osaka-based poet Iga Kurimi journeyed to Edo (now Tokyo), where he attended poetry gatherings and acquired many *kyōka surimono*, likely through exchanges and gifts. After returning to Osaka, he continued participating in *kyōka* poetry circles and collecting *surimono*. When Kurimi created his albums in the late 1820s, he organized them so that one volume largely presented *surimono* made by Edo printmakers and commissioned by Edo poetry groups, and the other featured prints commissioned by Osaka poets.

This album, still in its original binding, features the Edo-associated prints. Many depict or make references to snakes, as they date to 1821, celebrated as the Year of the Snake. Included in this volume are 15 prints by Katsushika Hokusai, 27 by his students Toyota Hokkei and Ryuryukyō Shinsai, and many more by other famous Edo printmakers.

The pages of this album will be turned monthly.

Iga no Kurimi 意雅栗三

Active ca. 1810–1839 in Edo and Osaka, Japan

*Surimono album* 摺物帖, late 1820s

Silk-bound cover accordion book with surimono; ink, color, and metallic pigments

Chiba City Museum of Art



## The RISD Album

The 88 surimono Kurimi assembled in his Osaka album are now separate prints in the RISD Museum collection. No records detail how these prints were originally organized in the album, but almost half were produced in Osaka between 1822 and 1828. Many prints in this group feature motifs associated with the Year of the Horse, which was celebrated in 1822 (and, coincidentally, is being celebrated in 2026 as well).

Most of these prints were commissioned by and related to the Crane poetry group, based in Osaka. Poets in this circle hired printmakers in Edo to produce surimono; they also recruited printmakers in Osaka and designed some prints themselves. Osaka surimono are unique, as their designers trained in different artistic styles compared to Edo printmakers. Nagayama Kōin emphasized realism and used an ink-painting aesthetic. Distinctive also to this group are prints by the woodblock carver Tani Seikō, a member of the Crane poetry circle.

Yanagawa Shigenobu 柳川重信

1787–1832; worked in Edo and Osaka, Japan

Tani Seikō 谷清好, block carver

*A Courtesan and Her Guest*, probably 1823

Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic embellishments (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf 56.039.9



Nagayama Kōin 長山孔寅

1765–1849; born in Akita, Japan; worked in Kyoto and Osaka, Japan

Tani Seikō 谷清好, block carver

*Tortoise Carrying the Isle of the Immortals on His Back*, mid-1820s

Woodblock print (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf 56.039.55



Nagayama Kōin 長山孔寅

1765–1849; born in Akita, Japan; worked in Kyoto and Osaka, Japan

Tani Seikō 谷清好, block carver

*Plums*, possibly 1822

Polychrome woodblock print (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf 56.039.57



Mori Shunkei 森春溪

Active 1800–1820 in Osaka, Japan

Tani Seikō 谷清好, block carver

*Bird on a Crabapple Tree*, mid-1820s

Polychrome woodblock print (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf 56.039.67



Mochizuki no Kagenari 望月影成

Active 1820–1829 in Osaka, Japan

Tani Seikō 谷清好, block carver

*Statue of Buddha and Lily*, mid-1820s

Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic embellishments (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf 56.039.68



## Making Surimono

Surimono combines traditional Japanese woodblock-printing techniques with the highest-quality materials. Multicolor prints required separate woodblocks for each color. The carver made the blocks, and the printer mixed pigments, water, and sometimes animal glue (*nikawa*) to create the desired colors. To produce the final print, the printer applied each block with distinct colors, using the baren to build layers of hues. Special effects were achieved by applying metallic pigments and minerals such as mica. Heavy embossing—produced by pressing uninked woodblocks firmly into the dampened paper—created raised surfaces and rich textures. *Kyōka* verses were made by a woodblock carver who specialized in cutting script to imitate calligraphy.

Unknown maker(s) in Japan  
Keyblock for a Woodblock Print, 1902  
Carved cherrywood  
Gift of Sogo Matsumoto 04.1224



Unknown maker(s) in Japan  
Color Block for a Woodblock Print, 1903  
Carved cherrywood  
Gift of Sogo Matsumoto 04.1225



Totoya Hokkei 魚屋北溪  
1780–1850; worked in Edo, Japan  
*Cranes and Young Pines*  
From the series *A Collection of Thirty-Six Birds*, ca. 1820  
Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic  
embellishment (surimono)  
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. **34.370**



Totoya Hokkei 魚屋北溪  
1780–1850; worked in Edo, Japan  
Album Pasted with Preparatory Drawings and Proof Impressions  
of Surimono, 1804–1844  
Ink on paper  
Chiba City Museum of Art



Designers made preliminary sketches, known as *shita-e*, on thin, almost translucent paper. These rarely survive today, as they were pasted onto woodblocks to guide the carving of the design. Viewing the sketches alongside completed surimono, we see the importance of the carver and the printer in interpreting the vision of the designer.

Baien 梅園

Active 1820–1829 in Edo and Osaka, Japan

Tani Seikō 谷清好, block carver

*Mirror and Rouge Cup*, ca. 1825–1827

Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic embellishments (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf **56.039.59**



Unknown maker(s) in Japan, Edo period (1615–1858)

*Mirror with Design of Pine, Bamboo, and Tortoises*, 1800s

Copper alloy

Bequest of Martha B. Lisle **67.199**



Nagayama Kōin 長山孔寅

1765–1849; born in Akita, Japan; worked in Kyoto and Osaka, Japan

Tani Seikō 谷清好, block carver

*Inro, Turtle Netsuke, and Coral Bead*, 1828

Polychrome woodblock print with metallic embellishments (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf **56.039.70**



Unknown maker(s) in Japan, Edo period (1615–1858)

*Turtle Inro with Sake Cup Netsuke*, 1800s

Wood with lacquer, ivory, and silk cord

Gift of Richard and Inge Chafee in memory of Francis H. Chafee

**2005.86ab**



Many surimono featured still-lives of objects treasured by the people who commissioned the prints. Printmakers strove to mimic not just how these objects looked, but also how it felt to touch them. The bronze mirror in Baien's print is coated with metallic pigments and embossed to suggest the sheen and three-dimensionality of a real bronze mirror, like the one displayed here.

## Marking Occasions

This section highlights *kyōka* surimono that were issued to celebrate the new year and other important occasions, such as the Doll Festival, the Star Festival, and the Children's Festival. They were also commissioned to commemorate birthdays and death anniversaries, and to laud the success of performances. Adorned with images and poetry, the prints were exchanged often at social gatherings.

When these surimono were made, there was already an early Japanese tradition of exchanging poetry, particularly between courtiers and nobility. For *kyōka* poets, whose writing satirized classical Japanese poetry, *kyōka* surimono was a fresh way of sharing their work with like-minded individuals. Many prints depicted objects that could be gifted as proxies for the real thing.

Torii Kiyonaga 鳥居清長

1752–1815; born and worked in Edo, Japan

Ezakiya Kichibei 江崎屋吉兵衛, publisher

1773–1852; Edo, Japan

*Tango: The Boy's Festival Tango*

from the series *Precious Children's Games of the Five Festivals*, ca. 1794

Polychrome woodblock print (nishiki-e)

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke **20.1123**



Yashima Gakutei 八島岳亭

1786–1868; worked in Edo and Osaka, Japan

*Fan Kuai and Tomoe Gozen*, 1820s

Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic embellishments (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf **56.039.32**



Harukawa Goshichi 春川五七

ca. 1776–1831; born in Edo; worked in Edo, Osaka, and Kyoto

Tani Seikō 谷清好, block carver

*A Woman Making an Arrow from an Iris Leaf*, mid-1820s

Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic embellishments (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf **56.039.42**



These prints celebrate Tango no Sekku, one of five major annual festivals observed during the Edo period (1615–1868). Known today as Children's Day, this event—held on the fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar—warded off evil for samurai boys. Gakutei's surimono depicts famous warriors, with poems that allude to the warrior dolls and carp banners that are still the customary decorations for the festival. At bottom, a woman trims a rolled-up iris leaf to create

an arrow. The accompanying poem cheekily asks whether the arrow is meant to honor warriors or to send a love note.

Utagawa Kunisada 歌川国貞 (Toyokuni III)  
1786–1865; born in Edo, Japan  
Tsutaya Kichizō 蔦屋吉蔵, publisher  
ca. 1820–1890; Edo, Japan  
Yokokawa Takejirō 横川彫武, block carver  
1800s; Edo, Japan  
*The Third Month: The Doll Festival*  
From the series *The Twelve Months*, 1854  
Polychrome woodblock-printed triptych (nishiki-e)  
Gift of Marshall H. Gould **30.039.11**



Unknown maker(s) in Japan  
*Folding Screen for Doll Festival*, late 1800s–early 1900s  
Ink, color, and gold leaf on paper  
Gift of Marshall H. Gould **43.502**



Unknown maker(s) in Japan  
*Model Palanquin for Doll Festival*, probably 1800–1900  
Exterior: lacquered wood with gold; interior: ink, colors, and gold on paper  
Gift of Marshall H. Gould **43.509**

In Utagawa Kunisada's triptych, a group of women and a child prepare lacquer stands and accessories for a display in celebration of the Doll Festival. On the far left are miniature accessories, including a model of a palanquin (like the one on view here) that might carry a person of high status. As the festival gained popularity in the Edo period (1615–1868), more elaborate dolls and accessories were produced for the occasion.

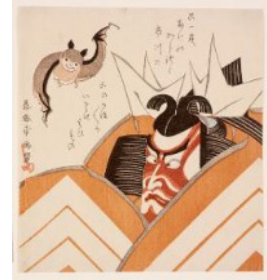
Sakuragawa Jihinari 桜川慈悲成

1762–1835; born and worked in Edo, Japan

*Ichikawa Danjūrō VII as Kamakura Gongorō Kagemasa in the play Shibaraku*, ca. 1830

Polychrome woodblock print (surimono)

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. **34.366**



Utagawa Kunisada 歌川国貞 (Toyokuni III)

1786–1865; born in Edo, Japan

*Ichikawa Danjūrō VII as Soga no Gorō*, possibly 1822

Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic embellishments (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf **56.039.46**



*After just one night, at this sight of Ichikawa's bold and splendid visage, the crows of dawn "Caw, Caw!" for more.*

—poet and designer Sakuragawa Jihinari, on Ichikawa Danjūrō VII

Celebrated in poetry and print, the actor Ichikawa Danjūrō VII was famous for his dynamic Kabuki theater performances. A *kyōka* enthusiast, he also had his own poetry group. Some of his fans and members of his poetry circle commissioned these surimono.

In the lower right of the bottom print is a red seal of three concentric squares—the emblem of Danjūrō's poetry group, which also mirrors his family's crest.

Ryūryūkyō Shinsai 柳々居辰齋

Active 1799–1820 in Edo, Japan

*Cart with Symbols of Longevity*, 1822

Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic embellishment (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf **56.039.17**



The poet Kikunoya Magaki commissioned this surimono to celebrate his mother's 77th birthday. The inscription on the upper right explains that he gathered auspicious items that suggest a bright future and placed them on a cart to be presented to her. A bowl of peaches, symbolizing long life, is appropriately placed on top. Here, the print presented symbolic gifts and was also itself a precious item to be treasured by the recipient.

Unknown maker(s) in China, Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE)  
*Horse*, 700–750 CE  
 Earthenware with pigment  
 Gift of Houghton P. Metcalf 25.012



Ryūryūkyō Shinsai 柳々居辰齋  
 Active 1799–1820 in Edo, Japan  
*A Woman and Two Boys with a Hobby Horse*, 1822  
 Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic  
 embellishments (surimono)  
 Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf 56.039.19



Ryūryūkyō Shinsai 柳々居辰齋  
 Active 1799–1820 in Edo, Japan  
*Turtle Netsuke and Inro with Potted Plant and Books*, 1822  
 Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic  
 embellishments (surimono)  
 Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf 56.039.22



Ryūryūkyō Shinsai 柳々居辰齋  
 Active 1799–1820 in Edo, Japan  
*A Woman Leading a Horse*, 1822  
 Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic  
 embellishments (surimono)  
 Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf 56.039.24



Yashima Gakutei 八島岳亭  
 1786–1868; worked in Edo and Osaka, Japan  
*View of the Yoshiwara*, 1822  
 Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic  
 embellishments (surimono)  
 Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf 56.039.31



Baien 梅園  
 Active 1820–1829 in Edo and Osaka, Japan  
 Nagayama Kōin 長山孔寅  
 1765–1849; born in Akita, Japan; worked in Kyoto and Osaka, Japan  
 Tani Seikō 谷清好, block carver  
*Hobby Horse and Vegetables*, ca. 1825–1827  
 Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic  
 embellishments (surimono)  
 Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf 56.039.66



Bokutei Hyakuba 牧亭百馬

Active in the 1820s in Japan

*Stirrup*, 1822

Polychrome woodblock print with metallic embellishments (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf **56.039.72**

New Year's, perhaps the most important festival in Japan, was a popular time for exchanging *kyōka* surimono conveying messages of longevity, wealth, and prosperity. Poetry groups gathered to compose and recite poems with wishes for abundance and happiness.

The prints gathered here were made in 1822, a Year of the Horse according to the East Asian zodiac calendar, which repeats every 12 years. From real horses to toy hobby horses to more subtle references such as stirrups, printmakers and poets delighted in inventing images and verses that drew on the theme of horses.

Coincidentally, 2026 is also the Year of the Horse, seen as a time of movement and progress. We wish you an abundant and happy year, and hope you gain inspiration from these prints.





Yashima Gakutei 八島岳亭

1786–1868; worked in Edo and Osaka, Japan

*A Woman with a Box*, 1820s

*A Woman with Spools*, 1820s

Polychrome woodblock prints with embossing and metallic embellishments (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf

**56.039.35–.36**

In celebration of the annual Star Festival, Osaka poets commissioned these prints of two women, one of whom threads a needle. Adopted in Japan from China, the festival marks the meeting of two deities—the Weaving Princess and the Cowherd—who could only be together one day a year. It was customary to pray for skills such as sewing and weaving during the Star Festival, held the seventh day of the seventh month of the lunar year. Today, people celebrate by writing wishes on small strips of paper and tying them to trees.



Yashima Gakutei 八島岳亭

1786–1868; worked in Edo and Osaka, Japan

*Doll on a Stand and Glass Wine Jar*, 1822

Polychrome woodblock-printed diptych with embossing and metallic embellishments (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf

**56.039.85 and .39**

This diptych was made to celebrate Hinamatsuri, or the Doll Festival, held on the third day of the third month of the lunar calendar. Featuring a doll dressed as a courtier and a festively decorated wine jar, the print includes poems that mention dolls and their accessories, playfully alluding to the beauty of young women. During this festival, dolls were elaborately displayed.

Utagawa Toyokuni 歌川豊国

1769–1825; born in Edo, Japan

*Matsumoto Kōshirō V as Banzuin Chobei*, 1822

Polychrome woodblock print (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.45

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf **56.039.45**

This surimono was commissioned by a group of kyōka poets who were fans of the popular actor Matsumoto Kōshirō V, who toured the Kyoto and Osaka region and performed in a Kabuki play there in the autumn of 1821. Kōshirō's visit probably generated a lot of excitement. He is pictured here in his role as Banzuin Chōbei, a chivalrous townsman.



Nagayama Kōin 長山孔寅

1765–1849; born in Akita, Japan; worked in Kyoto and Osaka, Japan

Tani Seikō 谷清好, block carver

*Cakes Wrapped in Oak Leaves*, 1822

Polychrome woodblock print with embossing (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf 56.039.54

Kashiwa mochi—rice cakes wrapped in oak leaves and filled with sweet bean or miso—were popularly enjoyed during the Tango no Sekku festival. Here an image of these treats accompanies poems that play on the word *kashiwa* (oak leaf). In the third poem, the poet Tsurunoya mentions the eating of kashiwa mochi on Tango no Sekku, suggesting that this print was commissioned to commemorate the festival.



Hayami Shungyōsai II 速水春暁齋 二代目

Active in Osaka, Japan; died in 1867

Tani Seikō 谷清好, block carver

*Grapes, Scissors, and Porcelain Bowl*, mid-1820s

Polychrome woodblock print with metallic embellishments (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf 56.039.71

*Yesterday we sat beneath the grape vines wondering when it ripened  
who would pick the fruit and where each one of us would be then*  
—scholar Roger Keyes

To commemorate the death of his dear friend Matsudaira Susumu (1933–2000), art historian Roger Keyes (1942–2022) composed this verse, with this surimono as his inspiration. The poet Ōe no Kitayori commissioned the print in the mid-1820s, to be distributed at his father's memorial ceremony. Keyes, who studied surimono with Susumu, knew that his friend would have loved the beauty of this commemorative print, and he reactivated it more than 100 years after it was first issued by composing his own poem.



## Who's Who

Kyōka poets and poetry groups were behind the production of most of the prints in this exhibition. From actors and courtesans to merchants, samurai, and artisans, kyōka attracted participants across occupation, status, and gender.

This section explores the Crane poetry group, which was active in Osaka in the 1820s. Led by kyōka poet Tsurunoya (whose name means “the crane’s dwelling”), this group had many members who, through their friendships and close collaboration, played multiple roles in the creation of surimono. Their activities, seen through the prints themselves, give us a glimpse into Japanese social and cultural networks in the 1820s.

Mori Shunkei 森春溪

Tani Seikō 谷清好, block carver and printer

*Butterflies*, from the book *Things Creeping Under Hand*, 1820

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. **34.607**



Unknown maker(s) in Japan, Edo period (1615–1858)

*Sprig of Cherry Blossom*, 1822

Polychrome woodblock print with embossing (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf **56.039.88**



Closely acquainted with the Crane poetry group, Tani Seikō was an amateur kyōka poet and an expert printmaker who was unusual for signing his work. You can find his gourd-shaped seal on many of the surimono throughout this exhibition. At top is a print from one of his first projects in Osaka, the book *Things Creeping Under Hand*, which depicted various insects. Seikō playfully signed his name as Hori Mushi, which can be read as Cutter Bug. At bottom, in the small surimono depicting cherry blossoms, Seikō’s verse commemorates an outing the Crane group took together in the spring of 1822.



Yanagawa Shigenobu 柳川重信

1787–1832; worked in Edo and Osaka, Japan

Tani Seikō 谷清好, block carver

*The Poets Asaka no Katsumi and Chiyo no Matsuhiko with Companions*,  
probably spring 1823

Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic  
embellishment (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf **56.039.4 and  
.6**

This diptych depicts Chiyo no Matsuhiko and Asaka no Katsumi, two poets from the Crane poetry group. These surimono were likely commissioned to commemorate an outing to Imamiya, just outside Osaka. Matsuhiko, author of the poem on the right print, stands on the far right, identified by his jacket adorned with the character matsu 松. An amateur woodblock cutter, he carved the printing blocks for the portrait of Tsurunoya. The poet Asaka no Katsumi was a publisher and collector of antiques. He is likely the figure in the green headwrap, and his poem is featured on the left print.



Hayami Shungyosai 速水春暁齋

ca. 1760–1823; worked in Osaka, Japan

Tani Seikō 谷清好, block carver

*Ichikawa Danjūrō VII, Tsurunoya, and Companions*, 1823

Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic embellishments (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf **56.039.5 and .79**

Pictured on the right print is Tsurunoya, leader of the Crane poetry group, identified through the crane emblem on his jacket. He is followed by the actor Ichikawa Danjūrō VII, recognizable by the crest of three nested squares on his sleeve. Commissioned by Iga Kurimi, who compiled the two albums in this exhibition, this diptych was likely made to remind Tsurunoya of fond memories of Edo (now Tokyo). Kurimi also contributed a poem to the print, inscribed on the far left. His poem mentions courtesans beckoning to guests in the pleasure quarters of Edo, likely a memorable place for Tsurunoya.



Yashima Gakutei 八島岳亭

1786–1868; worked in Edo and Osaka, Japan

*Gama, Rogō, and Tekkai*, from the series *Courtesans Viewed as Immortals*, mid-1820s

Polychrome woodblock prints with embossing and metallic embellishments (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf 56.039.38, .30, and .37



Yashima Gakutei 八島岳亭

1786–1868; worked in Edo and Osaka, Japan

*Tōbōsaku, Kinkō, and Okyō*, from the series *Courtesans Viewed as Immortals*, mid-1820s

Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic embellishments (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf 56.039.27, .28, and .29

This was likely the first series of prints that members of the Crane poetry group commissioned from the Edo-based designer Yashima Gakutei. The Crane symbol of the bird in profile is found on the right side of each print, and embossed cranes decorate the backgrounds. This series features beautiful women dressed as Daoist immortals. Different members of the Crane group also added their poems to each print.

Each print is signed “Gakutei from the Eastern Capital” at the bottom right, establishing the printmaker’s identity as a designer from Edo (present-day Tokyo). This text also alludes to the Crane group’s far-reaching influence, including their ability to commission work from a cosmopolitan city located 300 miles away.

Yashima Gakutei 八島岳亭

1786–1868; worked in Edo and Osaka, Japan

Tani Seikō 谷清好, block carver

*Court Lady at a Writing Table*, possibly 1828

Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic embellishments (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf **56.039.34**



This surimono, depicting a noblewoman seated at a desk, bears a poem by Matsu no Chiyoko, a female poet from the Crane poetry group. Her poem likens this court lady to Saohime, the goddess of spring, as she writes the first character for the new year. Many *kyōka* poets were women, including some featured in the adjacent illustrated book.

Baien 梅園

Active 1820–1829 in Edo and Osaka, Japan

*Wine Cup and Clay Toys*, ca. 1825–1827

Polychrome woodblock print (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf **56.039.60**



Baien 梅園

Active 1820–1829 in Edo and Osaka, Japan

Tani Seikō 谷清好, block carver

*Pipe and Tobacco Pouch*, 1827

Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic embellishments (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf **56.039.62**



Asaka Katsumi 浅香勝躬

Active 1820–1825 in Edo and Osaka, Japan

Chiyo Matsuhiko 千代松彦, block carver

*Portrait of Tsurunoya as a Paper-Mache Doll of a Gidayu Chanter*, mid-1820s

Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic embellishments (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce and Pauline Pumpelly Cabot Metcalf **56.039.73**



Tsurunoya, the revered leader of the Crane poetry group, is comically depicted as a chanter in a puppet theater production. A merchant by profession, Tsurunoya lived in Edo (present-day Tokyo) for many years and studied *kyōka* poetry there. Around 1810 he retired to Osaka and turned his attention to poetry, establishing the Crane poetry group. He commissioned and inscribed many of the surimono in this exhibition.

The tobacco pouch and wine cup depicted in the prints likely belonged to Tsurunoya, as both are marked with his crane emblem. Like many of his friends and fellow poets, Tsurunoya was a collector who delighted in beautiful objects.

Gakutei Harunobu 岳亭春信  
1786–1868; worked in Edo and Osaka, Japan  
*Kyōka Nihon Fudoki* 狂歌日本風土記, 1819  
Polychrome woodblock printed book  
Chiba City Museum of Art, Ravicz Collection

Kyōka poets produced many books of their verse. In the first half of this example from 1819, poems are paired with illustrations, with the second half of the book featuring a list of poems. The opening pages show a kyōka gathering, identifying many of the participants as members of the Crane poetry group. Some of these participants were also professional and amateur printmakers and collectors, including Iga Kurimi, the surimono collector who assembled the albums in this exhibition.

