

Art Forms Entwined: Painting and Printmaking in Edo-Period Japan,

September 7, 2001-December 2, 2001

Although the mainstream *ukiyo-e* tradition of courtesan and actor prints was dependent on subjects and themes developed during the Edo period (1600-1868), Japanese bird-and-flower prints (*kachōga*) drew heavily upon Chinese and Japanese painting traditions evolved in earlier centuries. These enduring art forms provided inspiration in composition, technique, and meaning. The inexpensive medium of the printed book, in turn, served as a means of spreading artistic ideas more widely. Printed books of sketches, known as *gafu*, were popular from the mid-18th century on and served to proclaim an artist's skill and disseminate his style.

Chinese painting had long been known in Japan, but with the introduction of Chinese printed books such as the *Mustard Seed Garden Manual* (Chin. *Jieziyuan hampu*; Jap. *Kaishien gaden*), painting exemplars became more readily available. Japanese books such as the *Ransai gafu* transmitted Chinese-style compositions as they were known through artists such as Shen Quan (1682-1760?), active in the city of Nagasaki between 1731 and 1733. The *Umpitsu saga* of 1749 (shown in the center case) is one of the earliest Japanese printed books to simulate the rough brushwork and the unevenness of the painted ink line, qualities the Japanese first learned from Chinese painting.

Other prints that imitate rough brushwork are also included in this exhibition, the most dramatic of which are the paired painted and printed depictions of a crow attributed to Kyōsai (1831-1889). This eccentric and creative artist is also represented in the gallery by a book that preserves some of his sketches (*Kyōsai donga*). Another group of prints illustrates the transfer of graded ink tones into the medium of the woodblock print, along with the dissolution of outlines. In these works, black-ink contours are often omitted completely. Jakuchū (1716-1800), an innovative artist active in Kyoto, attempted to make the woodblock technique replicate a Chinese rubbing printed with a black ground. His paintings and prints are often highly decorative, and both refer in part to Chinese models.

The rich variety of compositions and techniques seen in this exhibition demonstrate the fertile exchange between the arts of painting and printmaking and illustrates how the tradition of Japanese bird-and-flower prints was enriched by a wide range of Chinese and Japanese painting traditions.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Kitao Masayoshi, Japanese, 1764-1824

Keisai Eisen, Japanese, 1790-1848

Quail (Chikukei), *Raikin zui (Pictures of imported birds)*, 1790

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.529.2



RISD MUSEUM

Mori Shunkei, Japanese, active ca. 1800-1820
Insects and pinks (Mushi to nadeshiko), Insect album, 1905
Polychrome woodblock print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.598



Mori Ransai, Japanese, 1740?-1801
Owada Yasubei, Japanese
Suwaraya Mohei, Japanese
Inoue Seifu, Japanese
Inoue Shofu, Japanese
Falcon and small bird in waves, from the illustrated book Ransai gafu (Picture book by Ransai), 1801
Woodblock print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.469



Ransai was a painter trained in the style of Shen Quan (1682-1760?), a Chinese artist active in the port of Nagasaki between 1731 and 1733. Ransai filled the final series of his published sketchbooks with lively depictions of nature studies such as this one.

Toyohiro Utagawa, Japanese, 1773-1828
Cuckoo in Rain, 1810's
Woodblock print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.384

The theme of the cuckoo in the rain evokes poetic associations of summer and unrequited love. The sketchy rendering of the trees in the foreground recalls loosely delineated Chinese and Japanese ink paintings of mist-filled landscapes.



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Kitagawa Utamaro II, Japanese, 1804-1855
Kitagawa Utamaro, Japanese, 1754-1806
Yamaguchiya Tobei, Japanese, 18th century
Sparrow and bamboo, ca. 1810?
Woodblock print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.591

Two painting techniques are contrasted in this print, where the more usual contourless bamboo stalk is rendered side by side with carefully outlined bamboo leaves.



Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858
Tsujiya Yasubei
Sparrow and bamboo, 1847-1852
Woodblock print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.283

Here the more usual contourless rendering of bamboo stalks and leaves in painting is imitated in the woodblock print medium.



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Japanese

Hokusai Katsushika, Japanese, fl. 1804-1829

Sparrow and bamboo (Take ni suzume), late 1800s

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.318

This delightful subject is derived from Chinese academic painting of the 12th and 13th centuries. The woodblock print once again utilizes the “boneless” or contourless technique for painting bamboo and contrasts it with the carefully rendered forms of the sparrow and sheaf of rice.



Ko Sukei, Japanese, 1762-1817

Cranes, cherry, and old well (Furuido ni sakura to tsuru), ca. 1810

Polychrome woodblock print with embossing

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.476



Kawanabe Kyōsai, Japanese, 1831-1889

Crow on Branch, early 1900s

Ink on paper

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.475

Crows became a popular subject in Kyōsai's oeuvre during the 1880s, as this painting and the print to the right attest.



Shibata Zeshin, Japanese, 1807-1891

Morning glories in rain (Uchu no hirugao), 1870s-1880s

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.406

The rich, painterly textures, especially those in the leaves, are rendered in graduated ink tones in the print medium.



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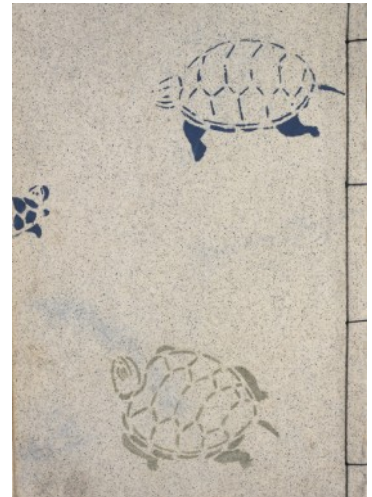
Kitagawa Tsukimaro, Japanese, active by 1840, d. 1830
Kitagawa Yukimaro, Japanese, 1797-1856
Yukimaro, Japanese, 1797-1856
Magnolias and butterfly (Mokuren ni cho), 1830s
Polychrome woodblock print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.626



The graded ink tones of the branch and the colored washes in the flowers simulate the textures of a painting.

Japanese
Two pages from an artist's sketchbook, second half 1800s
ink on paper, or ink and slight color on paper
Museum Collection 49.439

These compositions with quail relate well to the two prints on the wall by Keisai and by Nampō and Keibun, demonstrating that traditional designs such as these were repeated over and over again in painting and printmaking.



Oda Nanpo, Japanese, flourished 1840
Matsumura Keibun, Japanese, 1779-1843
Quail and Bush Clover (Hagi ni uzura), ca. 1840
Polychrome woodblock print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.482



RISD MUSEUM

Itō Jakuchū, Japanese, 1716-1800

Hen and Rooster (Niwatori), *Kacho-zulate* 1800s-early 1900s

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.409

In contrast to the other three Jakuchū prints exhibited on this wall, this design appears to have been executed as a woodblock print. The last block to be printed was the black, which simulated the ground of an ink rubbing.



Itō Jakuchū, Japanese, 1716-1800

Parrot and rose (Bara ni inko), *Kacho-zulate* 1800s- early 1900s

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.423

These three examples from the *Kachō-zu* were produced soon after the first polychrome woodblock prints (*nishiki-e*) were made in Edo (modern Tokyo). Jakuchū, a painter active in Kyoto, appears to have simulated the rich color of *nishiki-e* by painting his designs into cutout stencils applied to the surface of the paper. The black ground would have been printed from a block after the designs were filled in.



Itō Jakuchū, Japanese, 1716-1800

White-headed bird and camellias (Tsubaki ni kotori), *Kacho-zulate* 1800s-early 1900s

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.424



RISD MUSEUM

Itō Jakuchū, Japanese, 1716-1800
Parrot and oak (Kashi ni inko), 1771
Polychrome woodblock print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.422



Kawanabe Kyōsai, Japanese, 1831-1889
Inada Genkichi, Japanese
Kyosai's idle drawings: Vol. 1, 1881
woodcut illustrated book with embossed paper wrappers, sewn
Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 31.404

The title alludes to Kyōsai's "dull" sketches, a typically satiric commentary by this highly creative artist.

Kitao Masayoshi, Japanese, 1764-1824
Keisai Eisen, Japanese, 1790-1848
Raian Genki, Japanese
Tōshirō Katano, Japanese
Sketches by Keisai: Vol. 2, 1842
Polychrome woodblock printed books
Bequest of Isaac C. Bates 13.1287

This book utilizes an innovative technique in which each page is printed from a single woodblock inked with several colors. Although attributed to Keisai, it was probably made after his death.

Tachibana Morikuni, Japanese, 1679-1748
Fujimura Zenemon, Japanese
Shibukawa Seiemon, Japanese
Shibukawa Yoichi
Nishimura Genroku, Japanese
The Moving Brush in "Rough" Painting, vol. 1, 1748
Monochrome woodblock printed book
Bequest of Isaac C. Bates 13.1289

RISD MUSEUM

Morikuni experimented in this publication with rendering the tonalities of ink painting. Compare it to the Toyohiro *Cuckoo in the Rain* mounted on the wall to the left.

Kawanabe Kyōsai, Japanese, 1831-1889

Japanese

Crow on Snow-covered Plum Branch, 1870s-1880s

Color woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.473

Contrasting shades of black in the crow's body and the mica scattered over the surface of this finely rendered print indicate the care with which it was made. The poem inscribed on the left is translated as follows:

The plum accompanies their squawking forms;

Its fragrance assaults their feathers.

Beautiful shadows of the branches in the moonlight

Climb towards the study curtains.

The pair of crows that have lodged in my house

Cry and make to fly away,

Under the bright moon in the depths of the night.

Trans. Timothy Clark, *The Demon of Painting: The Art of Kawanabe Kyōsai* (London: 1993), p. 148

