

Painterly Prints in Nineteenth-Century Japan, June 1, 2007-September 23, 2007

These prints are distinguished by their painterly qualities: spontaneity, boldness, and calligraphic line. Most were not designed by artists belonging to the mainstream *ukiyo-e* ("floating world") printmaking tradition, but instead were executed by little-known 19th-century printmakers associated with a variety of painting traditions. The Shijō school of painting predominates, but painters from other traditions or schools are also represented.

The woodcut technique is used here to convey the sense of a calligraphic brushstroke, and in most instances the forms are depicted without the black outlines so typical of *ukiyo-e*. This practice, seen in many of the works on view, simulates the "boneless" method of painting that originated in China in the 10th century and was imitated in Japan. These painterly prints often lack the rich overall patterns of color and form so characteristic of *ukiyo-e* works. Instead, the subject is depicted against a blank ground to create a sense of depth and spatial recession, utilizing a compositional approach borrowed from painting.

The books exhibited in the central case complement the prints on the wall by illustrating how an artist's designs were disseminated in book form. The earliest example, *The Moving Brush in "Rough" Painting of 1748-49* by Morikuni (1679-1748), clearly shows how brush techniques were translated into the medium of print. Although it predates the other works in this exhibition, it is included here because its illustrations were some of the earliest to demonstrate the carryover of painting technique to woodblock printing. Other books in the case are picture albums (*gafu*), which circulated a painter's or designer's compositions widely in an inexpensive format.

A unique sense of energy and spontaneity pervades these boldly composed still-lives and nature studies. Their loose and sketchy execution simulates the calligraphic brushwork of painting in the print medium, demonstrating the richly innovative spirit of the Japanese printmaking tradition.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

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

The vibrant textures of ink-wash landscape are conveyed effectively in these two pages of woodcut designs. The forms in these book illustrations have been created without the use of a black-ink block for the outlines, as is the case with many of the prints in this exhibition.

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Kitao Masayoshi, Japanese, 1764-1824
Keisai Eisen, Japanese, 1790-1848
Raian Genki, Japanese
Tōshirō Katano, Japanese
Sketches by Keisai: Vol. 4, ca. 1840
Polychrome woodblock printed books
Bequest of Isaac C. Bates 13.1288

The vibrant textures of ink-wash landscape are conveyed effectively in these two pages of woodcut designs. The forms in these book illustrations have been created without the use of a black-ink block for the outlines, as is the case with many of the prints in this exhibition.

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

This publication deals with the technique of rough and sketchy (cursive) brushwork. These book illustrations were some of the earliest to demonstrate the carryover of brushwork techniques from painting to woodblock printing. Note the textured rendition of the ducks and reeds.

Tachibana Morikuni, Japanese, 1679-1748
Kokando zoban, Japanese
Koto shorin, Japanese
Fujimura Zenemon, Japanese
The Moving Brush in "Rough" Painting, Vol. 2, 1749
Monochrome woodblock printed book
Bequest of Isaac C. Bates 13.1290

This publication deals with the technique of rough and sketchy (cursive) brushwork. These book illustrations were some of the earliest to demonstrate the carryover of brushwork techniques from painting to woodblock printing.

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Note the textured rendition of the tree trunk, especially the point where the contours partially disappear in the “flying white” stroke that imitates brush painting. Also compare this rendition of a Japanese bush warbler with the two Sadanobu II prints on the nearby wall to the left.

Kawamura Kihō, Japanese, 1778-1852

Bunchodo, Japanese

Kihō's Sketchbook (Kihō gafu), Bird on a Flowering Plum Tree, 1827

Woodcut illustrated book with mica-stencilled paper wrappers

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2003.39.6



There is a classic literary association made between the first song of the Japanese bush warbler (*uguisu*) and the plum (*ume*), which together indicate the New Year. Compare this rendition of a Japanese bush warbler with the two Sadanobu II prints on the wall behind you.

Sakai Hōitsu, Japanese, 1761-1829

Kamo Suetaka

Matsuzawa Rōsen, Japanese

Ōson's Picture Album: A Book of Pictures by Priest Hōitsu of Universal Phenomena, 1807

woodcut illustrated book with paper wrappers, sewn

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 31.408

Hōitsu belonged to the Rinpa school of painting. The flat, decorative arrangement of plant forms and the juxtaposition of a poetic text inscribed in fluid cursive script are typical of that tradition. Here the printed forms are once again without outline. Bush clover (*hagi*) is one of the “seven grasses of autumn.”

Hasegawa Sadanobu II, Japanese

Turnip and Carrot (Kubura to ninjin), 1850's

Polychrome wood block print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.399



The five prints by Sadanobu II on this wall may have been conceived as a set because of their similarity in size and theme. This example is distinguished by its unusual subject matter. The still-life is executed in a rough and loose style typical of casual album paintings.

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Shibata Zeshin, Japanese, 1807-1891
Morning glories in rain (Uchu no hirugao), 1870's-1880's
Polychrome woodblock print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.406

Zeshin, who was trained as a painter in the Shijō style and excelled as a lacquer artist, also created prints. Of the three Zeshin works in this exhibition, this delicately rendered autumn scene evokes the lyricism of the Shijō painting style most effectively.



Hasegawa Sadanobu II, Japanese
Bird and yellow roses (Yamabuki ni kotori), 1850's
Polychrome wood block print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.414

The five prints by Sadanobu II on this wall may have been conceived as a set because of their similarity in size and theme. The flower is a Japanese rose, or *Kerria japonica* (*yamabuki*). Note how the artist has depicted the bird's wings in several delicate colors.



Renzan Takanobu, Japanese, 1805-1859
Renzan, Japanese, 1805-1859
Ivy and old well (Furuido to tsuta), 1840's
Polychrome wood block print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.415

Renzan studied with his father-in-law, Kishi Ganku (1749-1838), a Kyoto painter who founded an offshoot of the Shijō tradition known as the Kishi school. This print simulates the effects of a paintbrush in the contours of the wooden well cover. The multicolored ivy leaves further reflect the colored ink washes used in painting.



Kitagawa Tsukimaro, Japanese, active by 1840, d. 1830
Hawk on a Plum Tree, Descending Geese (Ume ni taka; rakugan), ca. 1810's
Polychrome woodblock print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.418

This composition combines a number of themes from painting – a boat moored at the shore, geese descending, and a hawk on a flowering tree – in a black-ink print where the lines imitate



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brushstrokes. Hand coloring is added to enhance the print's appearance.

Kishi Ganrei, Japanese, 1816-1883
Karasumaru Mitsuhiro, Japanese, 19th century
Sparrows and bamboo, ca. 1870's
Polychrome woodblock print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.419

Another member of the Kishi lineage of painters, Ganrei was the grandson of the school's founder, Kishi Ganku (1756-1838). Note how the bamboo is rendered in subtle tones of green in this print and observe its somewhat monumental scale and the representation of nearly life-size sparrows.



Hasegawa Sadanobu II, Japanese
Pheasant on snow-covered pine (Yukimatsu ni kigi), 1850's
Polychrome wood block print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.428

The five prints by Sadanobu II on this wall may have been conceived as a set because of their similarity in size and theme. In this striking composition, Sadanobu II has placed the pheasant and pine on the left half of the page, filling the blank space on the right only with his signature and seal. This use of the image surface is also seen in Japanese painting.



Hasegawa Sadanobu II, Japanese
Japanese Bush Warbler and Aronia (Kaido ni uguisu), 1850's
Polychrome wood block print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.430

The five prints by Sadanobu II on this wall may have been conceived as a set because of their similarity in size and theme. This flowering tree has been identified as aronia (*kaidō*), but on the basis of its drooping, slender branches and serrated leaves, it might also be plum (*ume*). There is a classic literary association between the first song of



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the Japanese bush warbler (*uguisu*) and the plum, which together indicate the New Year.

Hasegawa Sadanobu II, Japanese
Japanese Bush Warbler and Flowering Plum (Ume ni uguisu), 1850's
Polychrome wood block print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.431

The five prints by Sadanobu II on this wall may have been conceived as a set because of their similarity in size and theme. There is a classic literary association between the Japanese bush warbler's (*uguisu*) first song and the plum (*ume*), which together indicate the New Year.



Shibata Zeshin, Japanese, 1807-1891
Peony blossom (Botan), probably 1850's-1860's
Polychrome wood block print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.432

Zeshin, who was trained as a painter in the Shijō style and excelled as a lacquer artist, also created prints. In this work, he focuses solely on the peony, separating it from its context in nature and presenting it against a plain ground.



Shibata Zeshin, Japanese, 1807-1891
Duck swimming amongst reeds (Ashi ni kamo), 1887
Polychrome woodblock print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.433

Zeshin, who was trained as a painter in the Shijō style and excelled as a lacquer artist, also created prints. Here he juxtaposes the duck against reeds, boldly establishing a sense of space and three-dimensional recession by superimposing the reeds over the duck behind.



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Fuminobu, Japanese, 19th century
Autumn plants (Akikusa), ca. 1850
Polychrome woodblock print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.439

Fuminobu was a member of the Shijō school who studied under Matsumura Keibun (1779-1843), another Shijō painter. This unusual print with its black ground recalls late 18th-century experiments in printmaking by the painter Itō Jakuchū (1716-1800).



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

Here the medium of print is used to render delicate ink washes in shades of gray. Kō Sukei, to whom this print is attributed, was a member of the Hanabusa school of painting.



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

On the basis of the relative positions of their signatures, it appears that Keibun designed the quail and Nanpō the clover in this finely rendered scene. Keibun was a Shijō painter, and Nanpō was trained as a Nanga-school artist. Although the Nanga school emulated Chinese scholar's painting, there is little trace of that style in this print. Bush clover (*hagi*) is one of the "seven grasses of autumn."



Keisai Eisen, Japanese, 1790-1848
Grasshopper and morning glories (Asagao ni kirigisu), ca. 1820
Polychrome woodblock print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.515

This wonderful close-up of nature was designed by Eisen, a mainstream ukiyo-e artist whose usual subjects were courtesans and landscapes.



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Gyodai, Japanese, 1st half of the 19th century

Sakuseki, Japanese, 19th century

Plum (Ume),

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.624

The trunk of this plum tree (*ume*) is rendered in soft tones of black ink that imitate the ink washes of a brush in painting. In addition, the boldness of the composition and the sharply angled tree trunk also reflect a painter's approach.



Kitagawa Tsukimaro, Japanese, active by 1840, d. 1830

Kitagawa Yukimaro, Japanese, 1797-1856

Yukimaro, Japanese, 1797-1856

Magnolias and butterfly (Mokuren ni cho), 1830's

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.626

This beautiful composition was executed by a teacher and his pupil. The teacher, Tsukimaro, signs his name here as "Kansetsu," a name he used later in his life. The pupil, Yukimaro, signs himself just to the left of the butterfly as "Butterfly (*cho*) Yukimaro." Although these artists both belonged to the Kitagawa lineage of the famed printmaker Utamaro (1753-1806) and Tsukimaro is described as Utamaro's best pupil, their subject here differs markedly from the compositions of courtesans and genre subjects for which their master was so well known.

Note how the stalks of the magnolia tree are deftly rendered as if painted with a brush.



Taneaki Takakura, Japanese, fl. 1850-1899

Sparrows and chrysanthemums (Kiku ni suzume), probably ca. 1860

Polychrome wood block print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.628

Little is known of Chōsui, who produced many Shijō-style surimono in the mid-19th century. The abbreviated design on a blank ground recalls how a painter might have depicted this subject, and the presence of chrysanthemums (*kiku*) indicates that the season is autumn.

