

## *An Abundance of Color: Spring Blossoms*, March 5, 2004-May 30, 2004

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the Japanese were still using a traditional lunar calendar in which the new year began in early to mid-February. (This year the new lunar year began slightly earlier, on January 22, 2004, according to Western date-keeping). The first three months of the lunar calendar were designated as spring, so the season depicted in the prints in this exhibition falls somewhat earlier than spring in the northeastern United States.

In Japan, the flowers most closely identified with this season are the plum (*ume*), the peach (*momo*), and most of all, the cherry (*sakura*). In painting and printmaking, the plum is often snow-covered because it traditionally blooms at the turn of the lunar new year. The other flowers blossom later, at the height of spring.

The poetry on these prints creates expected associations, drawing upon a rich body of allusion that derives from both the Chinese and Japanese literary traditions. In composition, too, these images often draw upon classical Chinese subjects rendered in the uniquely Japanese style of "bird-and-flower" prints (*kachō-e*).

### CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858  
*Bullfinch and Japanese Kerria (Yamabuki ni uso)*, late 1830s  
Polychrome woodblock print  
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.173

*Kerria japonica*, known in Japanese as *yamabuki*, blossoms in late spring.



# RISD MUSEUM

Kitagawa Utamaro II, Japanese, 1804-1855  
Kitagawa Utamaro, Japanese, 1754-1806  
*Flower arrangement with red plum (Seika kobai)*, ca. 1810?  
Polychrome woodblock print  
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.595



Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858  
Kawaguchiya Shozo, Japanese  
*Moon and Plum (Tsuki ni ume)*, 1843-1847  
Polychrome wood block print  
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.171

The theme of the plum blossoming in moonlight is an old one derived from Chinese sources. The text of the poem is identical to that on Hiroshige's *Blossoming Plum Tree* (acc. no. 34.170) in this exhibition.



# RISD MUSEUM

Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858  
*Blossoming Plum Branches (Ume)*, 1843-1847  
Polychrome wood block print  
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.170

This poem evokes the theme of spring through the use of the seasonal word “tranquillity” and contrasts the beauty and delicacy of the flowering plum with its underlying resilience and strength:

Gently nurtured  
in complete tranquillity –  
bundles of muscle.  
(Alfred H. Marks, trans.)



Nakamura Hōchū, Japanese, fl. 1790-1813  
Kinkado of Edo, Japanese  
Tampankan, Japanese  
*Bush warbler and blossoming plum (Ume ni uguisu)*, *Korin gafu* (An album of pictures by Korin), late 1800s-early 1900s  
Polychrome wood block print  
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.401

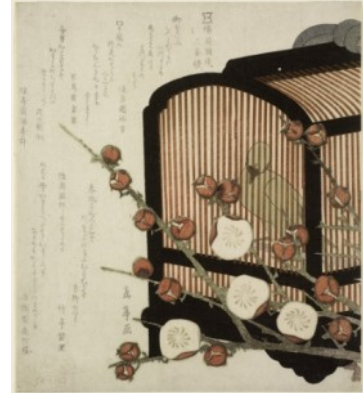


This print is a product of the revival of the Rinpa school and of Kōrin’s work in the early 19th century.

# RISD MUSEUM

Yashima Gakutei, Japanese, ca. 1786-1868  
*Caged Bird and Plum Branch (Ume ni torikago)*, Two sheets for the  
*Bizen Circle*, 1820s  
Polychrome wood block print with embossing and metallic highlights  
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.351

The allusions in the poetry connect the visual imagery of the print with the New Year and the early flowering of the plum.



Katsushika Hokusai, Japanese, 1760-1849  
Moriya Jihei, Japanese  
*Hawk and Cherry Blossoms (Kaido ni taka)*, From a set of five untitled  
*prints of animals*, ca. 1834  
Color woodblock print  
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.498

The falcon, which symbolizes military prowess and strength, is a symbol of the warrior (samurai) class in Japan. The delicate flowering cherry, in contrast, is the most popular of Japanese flowering trees. Falling cherry blossoms evoke themes of frailty and ephemerality, which may allude to a warrior dying young.



# RISD MUSEUM

Katsushika Hokusai, Japanese, 1760-1849

Nishimuraya Yohachi, Japanese

*Bullfinch and weeping cherry (Uso shidarezakura), Untitled (known as Small Flowers)*, ca. 1834

Polychrome wood block print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.489



# RISD MUSEUM

Katsushika Taito II, Japanese, ca. 1810's-1853  
*Finches and cherry blossoms (Sakura ni kimpara)*, 1830s  
Polychrome woodblock print  
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.483

This artist was a pupil of Hokusai and is known as "Taito the Second" because Hokusai gave him his own pseudonym (*gō*) of Taito in 1820. Note the similarity between this composition and the large vertical print by Hokusai to the left.



# RISD MUSEUM

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 early flowering of the plum is emphasized here by its snow-covered branches.



Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858  
Kawaguchiya Shozo, Japanese  
*Java Sparrow and Lily Magnolia (Mokuren ni bunchô)*, 1830s  
Polychrome wood block print  
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.222.1



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

This printed book preserves sketches and compositions by the painter Kawamura Kihō. Once again it is the Chinese “cut-off branch” compositional type that is seen in this illustration.



Utawaga Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858

*Long-tailed Bird and Peach Blossoms (Momo ni onagadori), 1830s*

Polychrome wood block print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.057

The seasonal allusion here is to peach blossoms:

A field all in flame,  
shining for a brief moment  
with peach blossoms.  
(Alfred H. Marks, trans.)



Hasegawa Sadanobu II, Japanese

*Japanese Bush Warbler and Aronia (Kaido ni uguisu), 1850s*

Polychrome wood block print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.430

Privately commissioned print (*surimono*).





# RISD MUSEUM

Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858

*Great Tit and Mountain Cherry (Yamazakura ni shijūkara)*, 1840s

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.177.2



# RISD MUSEUM

Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858  
Wakasaya Yoichi, Japanese  
*Barn Swallows and Peach Blossoms under Full Moon (Tsukiyo momo ni tsubame)*, early 1830s  
Polychrome wood block print  
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.286

The exuberance of this representation of swallows amidst flowering peach branches reflects the tone of the text, in which allusions to the Chinese poet Tao Qian's (365-428) "Peach Blossom Spring" evoke the famous tale of a fisherman who finds the land of the immortals:

Spring has come and all the streams  
are filled with peach blossoms.  
Nobody knows where the land of the

immortals is,

but all wonder

(Alfred H. Marks, trans.; modified)



Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858  
Sanoya Kihei, Japanese  
*Bullfinch and blossoming aronia (Kaido ni uso)*, 1830s  
Polychrome wood block print  
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.285.2



Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858  
*Crested Bird and Flowering Crabapple (Kaidō ni kotori)*, 1830s  
Polychrome wood block print with embossing  
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.038

The poem on this print refers to the crab apple (kaidō, literally, “sea pear”):

They call it “sea pear,”  
and it submerges the spring  
when it comes in bloom.  
(Alfred H. Marks, trans.)



Katsushika Hokusai, Japanese, 1760-1849  
Nishimuraya Yohachi, Japanese  
*Japanese wagtail and wisteria (Fuji sekirei)*, *Untitled (known as Small Flowers)*, ca. 1832  
Polychrome woodblock print  
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.490



# RISD MUSEUM

Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858  
Kawaguchiya Shozo, Japanese  
*Great tit and wisteria (Fuji ni shijukara)*, 1830s  
Polychrome wood block print  
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.259



Mori Kansai, Japanese, 1814-1894  
*Nuthatcher on a Flowering Cherry Tree*, from an *Album of Eight Paintings*, 1873  
Ink, colors, and gold on silk  
Elizabeth T. and Dorothy N. Casey Fund 2001.16A

This delicately painted album leaf is a 19th-century Japanese interpretation of a much earlier Chinese composition also seen in some of the prints on view here. This "cut-off branch" format evolved in China in the 11th and 12th centuries and was transmitted to Japan through trade and cultural contacts.



# RISD MUSEUM

Toyohiro Utagawa, Japanese, 1773-1828  
*Hawk and white plum (Shiraume ni taka)*, 1810s  
Polychrome woodblock print  
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.636

The flowering plum symbolizes the New Year because it blossoms at the beginning of the lunar calendar year, the first three months of which are designated as spring.

