

25th Anniversary Exhibition of Yokohama Museum of Art

Fascinating Japanese Woodcut Prints

March 1 – May 25, 2014

Yokohama Museum of Art



KAWASE Hasui, *Atago-yama Hill in the Spring* from the *Woodblock Print Album "Twelve Scenes of Tokyo"*, 1921, Color woodblock print, 36.5x24.3cm, Yokohama Museum of Art

From Ukiyo-e to Chiyogami and Contemporary Art – The Diverse World of Woodblock Print Art

Of all the forms of artistic expression, woodblock printmaking is perhaps one of those for which the Japanese people have the deepest affinity.

During the Edo Period (1603-1868), ukiyo-e prints were ubiquitous, and woodblock prints became established as the "art of the common people."

Woodblock printmaking was also used to make printed matter such as *chiyogami* decorative paper and *hikifuda* leaflets, which were regular features of life at this time. With the arrival of the Taisho Era (1912-1926), came the so-called *sosaku hanga* (creative print) movement, which took full advantage of woodblock printmaking's bold expressionistic potential, and the *shin-hanga*

(new print) movement, which sought to recapture ukiyo-e's detailed lines and vivid colors. Meanwhile, printed matter such as book covers and decorated

envelopes combining a uniquely woodblock print softness of texture with modern design also brought color to the lives of the people.

After the war, Japanese woodblock printmaking, which had developed uniquely on the basis of both tradition and new innovation, began to garner attention abroad. This in turn led to increased excitement about the medium domestically and, to this day, there continue to be a great many artists who focus their energies on this traditional technique.

At the Yokohama Museum of Art, we have roughly 1,600 woodblock prints in our collection, dating from the late-Edo Period to the present. Consisting of some 220 works, primarily from the collection but also including some new works by contemporary artists, this exhibition demonstrates the attractiveness of woodblock print expression across historical periods. We encourage you to come and experience the world of "Fascinating Japanese Woodcut Prints," teeming with originality and the spirit of the common people.

Chapter 1

Late-Edo and Meiji; Woodblock Prints Bring Color to Life

In this section, we present the wide range of woodblock print expression that arose out of the late-Edo Period and Meiji Era (1868-1912).

At this time, both ukiyo-e woodblock prints made in the Edo Period style and new Western styles of woodblock printmaking were popular, and woodblock prints in general were a constant presence in people's lives. *Chiyogami* decorative paper, *uchiwa* handheld fans, *hikifuda* leaflets and *noshibukuro* decorative envelopes for gifts - all of which were printed at this time using woodblock techniques - helped define the medium as "the art of the common people."

Chapter 2

Taisho to Showa; The Woodblock Print Revival

In the late Meiji Period, the emergence of lithography caused a decline in the popularity of woodblock printmaking, but during the Taisho and Showa (1926-1989) eras a group of artists became reawakened to the medium's creative potential. *Sosaku hanga* saw for the first time the concentration of all related tasks - drawing, carving and printing - in the printmaker-as-artist, while *shin-hanga* resulted from the activities of foreign-born artists working in the ukiyo-e style and the publisher WATANABE Shozaburo. At the same time, printmakers TAKEHISA Yumeji and KAWAKAMI Sumio became actively involved in creating printed matter such as magazine covers and illustrations, letter paper and *chiyogami*.

Chapter 3

The 1950 and Beyond; To International Stage

After the war, woodblock printmaking spread overseas. Commencing from SAITO Kiyoshi's winning of a prize at the Sao Paulo Biennale in 1951, unique prints by the likes of MUNAKATA Shiko and YOSHIDA Hodaka garnered attention abroad, leading to a rapid increase in interest in the technique.

Chapter 4

Today; Toward a New Form of Woodblock Print Expression

In this section, we introduce works made since 2000 by contemporary artists.

Even upon the stage of contemporary art, woodblock printmaking is well represented. Confronting contemporary issues, artists digest the traditional technique and then make something new out of it, thereby contributing to the constant updating of Japanese woodblock printmaking history.



KOBAYASHI Kiyochika, *Shin-Ohashi Bridge in the Rain in Tokyo*,
1876, Color woodblock print,
21.5x33.2cm, Yokohama Museum of Art (Donated
by Mr. KATO Eiichi)

TAKEHISA Yumeji,
Decorative Paper (Camellia), Color woodblock print,
38.6x27.4cm,
The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto (Collection
of KAWANISHI Hide)



Admission**Adult: ¥1,100 (1,000)****High School and University Student: ¥700 (600)****Junior High School Student: ¥400 (300)****Elementary School Student and Younger: Free**

*Admission for high school and younger student is free every Saturday.

(Student ID or student handbook required)

*Admission is free for visitors with physical disability certificate and one accompanying person.

*()= Advance and Group of over 20 people (pre-booking required)

*Advance tickets are on sale until February 28th, 2014

*Free Admission on March 29th, 2014



SAITO Kiyoshi, *Steady Gaze*, 1962, Color woodblock print, 53.0x38.7cm, Yokohama Museum of Art(Donated by Mr. SAITO Kiyoshi)

General Information**25th Anniversary Exhibition of Yokohama Museum of Art****Fascinating Japanese Woodcut Prints**

Dates: March 1 – May 25, 2014

Open hours: 10:00 – 18:00 (Last admission at 17:30)

Closed: Thursdays

Venue: Yokohama Museum of Art

3-4-1, Minatomirai, Nishi-ku, Yokohama 220-0012

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URL : <http://www.yaf.or.jp/yma/>

YOSHIDA Ayomi, *YEDOENSIS*, 2008, Oil based block on gampi paper, digital vinyl wall paper
※Installation view at NIU Art Museum
Photo by Larry Gregory

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Nishi Ward 70th Anniversary

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