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Torii Kiyonobu, 1664–1729

Ichikawa Danjūrō II, Fujimura Handayū II, Katsuyama Matagorō, and Sanogawa Mangiku, ca. 1719

Woodblock print with *urushi-e*, hand coloring, and metallic flakes

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.22

Cat. no. 1

In addition to painting signboards for theaters, Kiyonobu designed picture books and single-sheet prints. He is credited with being the first artist to design single-sheet prints featuring Kabuki actors rather than beautiful women, thus establishing the genre of *yakusha-e* (pictures of actors) around 1698. For this lively composition, Kiyonobu depicted two courtesans with male companions. Since each wears a kimono emblazoned with a specific crest, they are identifiable as Kabuki actors, and therefore the print represents a scene from a Kabuki play.

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Torii Kiyomasu, active ca. 1704–ca. 1716

**Fujiwara no Teika on Horseback Accompanied by
Ōe Saemon and the Woman Nowake**, ca. 1710

Woodblock print with hand coloring in lead red

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.24

Cat. no. 2

The Heian-period courtier Fujiwara no Sada'ie (1162–1241), also known as Teika, is one of Japan's most admired poets. Teika's strained relationship with Emperor Go-Toba and his irascible nature made him something of a cause célèbre, and he became the subject of many later theatrical productions. This print may have been inspired by a scene in a performance. It shows Teika, on horseback, with his attendant and the woman horse handler Nowake. Nowake is telling Teika about famous places in Ōmi Province, a conversation that Kiyomasu illustrated by picturing in the background such places as the blind courtier Semimaru's hut, the great pine at Karasaki, the shrine at Sakamoto, and Mount Hiei.

Torii Kiyomasu is best known for his vigorous depictions of *aragoto* (rough-style) Kabuki performances. While hardly an example of swashbuckling *aragoto* Kabuki, this print was rendered with great verve and energy, notably in the brushwork that defines the costumes of the three main characters.

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Torii Kiyomasu II, 1706–63

Parrot Komachi

From the series *Seven Komachi*, 1726–36

Woodblock print with hand coloring

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.70.161

Cat. no. 3

The 9th-century court woman and poet Ono no Komachi was extremely beautiful as a young woman and cruelly rejected all suitors. Consequently, she spent her old age in solitude and squalor. She became emblematic of *mono-no-aware*, the melancholy awareness that all enjoyment is fleeting and thus tinged with sadness.

In the Edo period, stories about Komachi were adapted to the Kabuki stage. Here, the aged Komachi is visited by a courtier sent by Emperor Yōzei. As two attendants and a page kneel nearby, the courtier reads the emperor's poetic greeting, which asks if Komachi fondly recalls her time "within the jeweled curtains." Demonstrating her still quick intellect, she recites the emperor's own poem, but changes a single word. Her clever alteration shifts the nuance to an emphatic assertion that she does, indeed, fondly recall her time at court. When the courtier wonders if this is an appropriate response, the old woman delivers a short discourse on poetic forms. She describes her rejoinder as *ōmugaeshi*, or parrot response, since parrots are mimics. Thus, the title of the print, noted next to the series title cartouche, is *Ōmu Komachi* (Parrot Komachi).

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Torii Kiyotada, active 1713–ca. 1748

Ichimura Takenojō IV as Kichisaburō, 1718

Woodblock print with *urushi-e* and hand coloring

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.28

Cat. no. 5

Ikuta Shōnosuke, a servant at Shōsenji temple in Edo, was the love interest of Oshichi, the daughter of a greengrocer. Ikuta and Oshichi met when her family took up residence in the temple after being evacuated from their house following the great fire of 1682. Upon her return home, Oshichi longed to see Ikuta again. A ruffian named Kichisaburō, who lived near the gates of Kichijōji temple, suggested that Oshichi start another fire, thereby necessitating a repeat stay at Shōsenji. Desperate to see her lover, Oshichi took Kichisaburō's sinister advice. The fire was discovered before it caused much damage, but Oshichi was arrested. For endangering the city, she was taken to the Suzugamori execution grounds and burned at the stake. This sensational true story quickly became fodder for playwrights. Kiyotada's print shows the actor Ichimura Takenojō IV, who performed the role of Kichisaburō in 1718 at the Ichimura Theater in Edo.

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Okumura Masanobu, 1686–1764

Wakoku

From the illustrated woodblock book *Picture Book of Courtesans*, 1701

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.47
Cat. no. 6

This is a page from a two-volume work featuring popular courtesans in the city of Edo. Okumura Masanobu, only fifteen years old when he designed the books, closely followed a set by Torii Kiyonobu published the previous year. Masanobu may have intended his set as an homage to Kiyonobu. Consequently, the images exhibit little of Masanobu's own style, but they reveal his precocious talent and presage his future fame. Since in both cases the first page of the first volume illustrates the Yoshiwara's main gate, the books were probably intended as a kind of guidebook to Japan's most famous pleasure quarter.

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Okumura Masanobu, 1686–1764

Parrot Komachi of the Floating World, 1711–16

Woodblock print with *urushi-e* and hand coloring

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.48

Cat. no. 7

Okumura Masanobu was one of the most brilliant personalities associated with ukiyo-e. His extraordinarily long career, beginning when he was fifteen and continuing until his death at seventy-nine, spanned the development of ukiyo-e, and his work benefited from many technical and artistic innovations. His intelligence and wit are evident from the number of images based on, or alluding to, classical literature (*mitate-e*), often with an entertaining twist.

This print was inspired by the story of Ono no Komachi, the famous 9th-century poet who lived her final years in squalor, having rejected all suitors when she was young and beautiful. It illustrates a well-known incident in which Emperor Yōzei sends Komachi a poetic message. Though Masanobu depicted the courtiers in period costume, he updated Komachi to resemble a fashionable courtesan. The basket on her lap presumably holds the love letters of her rejected suitors. Her dramatic robe is decorated with her most famous verse.

*Like cherry blossoms after a long spring rain,
beautiful colors quickly fade.
While I have vainly been seeing
time passing by me
and the world.*

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Okumura Masanobu, 1686–1764

New Year's Gathering in a Brothel

From the series *A Sampling of Bedrooms from the Color-Dyed Mountains*, 1741–44

Woodblock print with *urushi-e* and hand coloring

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.320

Cat. no. 9

This is the first in a series of twelve erotic pictures representing the twelve months. A courtesan and a customer are watching a young male prostitute write a poem or letter. The handsome customer holds a pipe from the lacquered smoking set nearby. The courtesan familiarly slips her hand into the man's sleeve. Near the door, a fine lacquered *sake* set and a food tray indicate that this is an amorous gathering at a high-class brothel. A poem provides further clues to the time and occasion.

*The scent of plum blossoms
would bring the year's first smile
even to a pair of guardian kings.*

Plum trees are the first to bloom in springtime. Guardian kings are fierce celestial protectors of the Buddhist faith, and sculpted versions often flank the entrance to Buddhist temples. In mentioning a pair of guardian kings, the poet likely intended a playfully irreverent reference to the complementary pleasures of the courtesan and the male prostitute.

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Okumura Toshinobu, active 1718–49

Sanjō Kantarō II as Yaoya Oshichi, 1718

Woodblock print with *urushi-e* and hand coloring

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.53

Cat. no. 11

The Kabuki actor Sanjō Kantarō II (1702–63) is depicted here in the female role of Yaoya Oshichi. Oshichi was burned at the stake after committing arson in a misguided ploy to be reunited with her lover. This composition shows Oshichi joyfully dressing her hair and suggests nothing of the terrible fate that will befall her.

When Toshinobu designed this print, Sanjō Kantarō was at the height of his career as an *onnagata*, an actor specializing in female roles. His family crest, a butterfly in a circle, decorates Oshichi's right sleeve and the mirror stand. The other crest on the mirror stand, in the shape of a folded letter, is that of Arashi Kiyosaburō, who first popularized the role of Oshichi in 1709. It became customary for actors who played Oshichi to wear Kiyosaburō's crest in addition to their own, as a tribute to him.

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Nishimura Shigenaga, ca. 1697–1756

Evening Bells at Miidera Temple

From the series *Eight Views of Ōmi*, ca. 1730

Woodblock print with *urushi-e*, hand coloring, and metallic flakes

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.57

Cat. no. 13

This print is from a set of eight that illustrate sites around Lake Biwa, in Ōmi Province (modern-day Shiga Prefecture). The Eight Views of Ōmi (*Ōmi hakkei*) was a well-established theme in paintings and prints by the late 17th century. A title cartouche identifies this scene as *Mii no banshō* (Evening Bells at Miidera Temple). Miidera (literally, “temple of three wells”) is a Tendai-sect temple at the foot of Mount Hiei. Rendered in the clouds is a poem traditionally attributed to the courtier Konoe Masaie (1444–1505) or his descendant Konoe Nobutada (1565–1614). A figure dressed in a formal black jacket (probably meant to represent the author of the verse) kneels with his traveling attendant to offer prayers while a young monk rings the temple’s bell, summoning the monks to evening devotion.

*Hearing Mii’s
evening bell
I long for the
dawn pledging
of vows.*

(trans. Judith Ann Stubbs)

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Unknown artist

Fujimura Handayū II in a Dance Scene, 1718–36

Woodblock print with *urushi-e*, hand coloring, and metallic flakes

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.55

Cat. no. 14

Gorgeously attired and alluringly posed with fan held high, possibly in the midst of a dance, this person conveys the seductive charms of a courtesan. The small head cloth, however, indicates that the performer is a man who specializes in female roles (*onnagata*). The cloth, known as *yarō bōshi*, or young man's hat, was first worn by Kabuki actors to hide their shaved hairlines when they played female roles. The government banned women from the Kabuki stage in 1629 and underage males a few years later. Thenceforth, only men with shaved forelocks, signifying that they had come of age, could perform. Later, wigs became available to cover an actor's shaved pate, and *yarō bōshi* were no longer needed. Nevertheless, it remained customary for *onnagata* actors to don small pieces of purple cloth as a reference to this tradition.

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Ishikawa Toyonobu, 1711–85

Set of Three: Left—Osaka, 1751–64

Woodblock print with hand coloring

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.59

Cat. no. 15

This print is from a triptych whose three panels each show a young female attendant accompanying a sumptuously dressed woman who personifies one of Japan's major cities: Osaka (left), Kyoto (center), and Edo (right). In this case, Osaka, the attendant carries a *sake* ewer (*chōshi*) and a cup on a ceremonial serving stand. Her mistress seems to be engrossed in a love letter. Each panel also bears a poem relating a flower or tree to the city represented. Plum blossoms have long been associated with Osaka, and the poem likens the whitened faces of courtesans to this early springtime flower.

*Sunset's passing in
the first month brings
made-up faces of plum blossoms.*

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Suzuki Harunobu, 1724/25–70

Calendar Print and a *Mitate* of Emperor Xuanzong and Yang Guifei, 1765

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.62

Cat. no. 19

The sixth emperor of the Tang dynasty, Xuanzong (reigned 712–56) precipitated the An Shi Rebellion (755–63) by neglecting his duties as sovereign in favor of decadent amusements with Yang Guifei, a woman whose beauty and charm entranced the entire court. According to one account, the emperor banished her when she inappropriately played a flute belonging to a courtier (possibly the emperor's own brother). Later, the heartsick emperor recalled her to the palace. This image thus suggests both playful affection and the harmony of reconciliation. Though these lovers wear Japanese attire, the story of Xuanzong and Yang Guifei was so well known that sophisticated Japanese would have understood the allusion (*mitate*) to the famous Chinese couple.

This print is also an *e-goyomi*, a calendar print. Harunobu cleverly integrated the year and numbers for the long lunar months (thirty days) into the composition by arranging the bamboo leaves of the woman's robe to form numerals and to denote the year, Meiwa 2 (1765).

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Suzuki Harunobu, 1724/25–70

***Mitate* of Meng Zong, One of the Twenty-four Paragons of Filial Piety**, after 1765

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.64

Cat. no. 22

In China, the Twenty-four Paragons of Filial Piety are people who, through selfless devotion to their parents, epitomize Confucian virtue. Stories about paragons became important in both China and Japan for fostering a sense of morality in the populace. This print is based on the story of Meng Zong (Mōsō, in Japanese), who ventured out in winter to find bamboo shoots for his ailing mother. However, Harunobu substituted a young Japanese beauty for the Chinese boy. Moreover, he depicted her in a kimono incongruously fancy for the task at hand, further alerting the viewer that this is a *mitate*, a playful allusion.

Harunobu first designed this image as a calendar print (*e-goyomi*), with the snow-laden bamboo leaves crisscrossing so as to form numerals indicating the long months of 1765. Like many of his *e-goyomi*, it was later altered to remove the calendrical numerals and reprinted for mass distribution, thus popularizing full-color prints (*nishiki-e*).

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Suzuki Harunobu, 1724/25–70

Mitate of Zhou Maoshu, after 1765

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.70.141

Cat. no. 23

Part of this composition's charm arises from the incongruity of a splendidly dressed young woman and her companion engaged in the unlikely task of gathering lotus blossoms. It may be an allusion (*mitate*) to Zhou Maoshu (1017–73), a Confucian scholar of the Northern Song dynasty who was fond of lotuses and wrote a treatise on the subject.

Harunobu first designed this image as a calendar print (*e-goyomi*) for 1765, with the numbers for the long months decorating the obi of the attendant, who leans over to cut a lotus. This version lacks the calendrical numerals, suggesting that it was issued after 1765 to the general public.

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Suzuki Harunobu, 1724/25–70

Mitate of the Poet Ōta Dōkan, 1766–67Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.69

Cat. no. 25

Once while on a hawking expedition, the warrior Dōkan was caught in a rainstorm. He stopped at a small house and asked to borrow a *mino*, a traditional straw raincoat. The young woman to whom he spoke responded by giving him a spray of *yamabuki* (kerria rose). Later, when he reported the strange encounter to others, he was informed that the girl had actually made a clever pun by alluding to a well-known poem.

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| <i>Nanae yae</i> | <i>Though a many-petaled</i> |
| <i>hana wa sake domo</i> | <i>flower</i> |
| <i>yamabuki no</i> | <i>the yamabuki,</i> |
| <i>mi no hitotsu da ni</i> | <i>lamentably,</i> |
| <i>nakizo kanashiki</i> | <i>is without a single seed.</i> |

In the poem, “*mi no hitotsu da ni nakizo*” (without a single seed) might also be read “*mino hitotsu da ni nakizo*” (without a raincoat). Thus the girl did more than report that the household lacked a raincoat; her gift of *yamabuki* was a supremely elegant apology laden with poetic associations.

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Suzuki Harunobu, 1724/25–70

Courtesan with Attendants on Parade, ca. 1766

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.67

Cat. no. 26

Within the rarefied world of the Yoshiwara, Edo's licensed pleasure quarter, the most celebrated courtesans were beyond the reach of all but the wealthiest patrons. Nevertheless, ordinary visitors could view the reigning beauties during their frequent promenades. When venturing into public, a high-ranking courtesan (*oiran*) was accompanied by a retinue of attendants, including one or two *kamuro* (female apprentices), a *wakaimono* (male servant), and one or two *shinzō* (lower-ranking prostitutes). The somewhat static quality of this print may be Harunobu's attempt to convey the slow, stylized "figure-eight" gait of the *oiran*. Such a spectacle, moving slowly through the streets and attracting throngs of onlookers, was an effective means of advertising the great beauties of the Yoshiwara.

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Suzuki Harunobu, 1724/25–70

Evening Glow of the Lantern

From the series *Eight Views of the Parlor*, after 1766

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.72

Cat. no. 27

Four prints in the collection of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts were part of an eight-print series titled *Zashiki hakkei* (Eight Views of the Parlor). These Eight Views were distantly derived from a famous Chinese theme in poetry and painting of the Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers. Titled *Andon no sekishō* (Evening Glow of the Lantern), this print shows a young woman lighting a lantern, or adjusting its wick, while another sits nearby, presumably reading a love letter. The lighting of the lantern, suggesting the arrival of dusk, is a clever reference to Fishing Village in Evening Glow, from the Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang.

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Suzuki Harunobu, 1724/25–70

Clearing Breeze from a Fan

From the series *Eight Views of the Parlor*, after 1766

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.73

Cat. no. 28

Of all the prints in Harunobu's *Zashiki hakkei* (Eight Views of the Parlor) series, this one offers the subtlest clues to its source. A young woman fanning away the oppressive heat of a summer day, just as wind blows away rainclouds, is an allusion to the theme Clearing Weather in the Mountain Market, from the Chinese Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers. Harunobu also added motifs that suggest coolness: the woman's fan is decorated with bush clover (*hagi*) and grasses associated with autumn, and her long-sleeved kimono has a pattern of snow-laden willows.

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Suzuki Harunobu, 1724/25–70

Evening Snow on the Silk-Dryer

From the series *Eight Views of the Parlor*, after 1766

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.74

Cat. no. 29

Showing a courtesan and her attendant drying cotton wadding (*mawata*) over lacquered heaters (*nurioke*), Harunobu cleverly alludes to the distant snowy mountains featured in paintings of River and Sky in Evening Snow, from the Chinese Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers. The mounds of white cotton covering bell-shaped forms resemble snow on mountains.

During the Edo period, *watatsumi* (cotton picker) was a euphemism for an unlicensed prostitute, and unlicensed brothels were operated under the guise of “cotton shops.” The casual posture of the main figure—who smokes a pipe rather than attending to the cotton—reinforces the idea that the women in this print are not truly shopkeepers.

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Suzuki Harunobu, 1724/25–70

Night Rain on the Tea Stand

From the series *Eight Views of the Parlor*, after 1766

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.70.142

Cat. no. 30

The seductive charm of Harunobu's imagery belies embedded associations and sophisticated allusions. Here a child mischievously inserts a pin, festooned with long paper streamers, into the coiffure of a sleeping older woman while a younger woman looks on in amusement. However, the figures may allude to important masters in the development of the Japanese tea ritual: Murata Shukō (1423–1502), shown here as an elderly woman; Takeno Jōō (1502–55), as a younger woman; and Sen no Rikyū (1522–91) as the boy. The boy's shaved head, resembling that of a monk, is likely a direct reference to Rikyū's deeply held Buddhist beliefs and his use of the formal Buddhist title *koji*, or lay believer.

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Suzuki Harunobu, 1724/25–70

Lovers Playing the Same Shamisen as a *Mitate* of Emperor Xuanzong and Yang Guifei, ca. 1767

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.77

Cat. no. 36

The story of the Chinese emperor Xuanzong and his consort, Yang Guifei, inspired Harunobu to create several compositions featuring young lovers playing a single instrument. In this image, the young man fingers the neck of the *shamisen* while the woman plucks the strings with a plectrum. The *shamisen's* Chinese antecedent, the *sanxian*, dates to the Yuan dynasty and was introduced to Japan via Okinawa during the late 16th century.

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Suzuki Harunobu, 1724/25–70

Ono no Komachi

From the series *Thirty-six Immortal Poets*, ca. 1767

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.80

Cat. no. 37

Aristocrats during Japan's Heian period (794–1185) prized the ability to compose impromptu verse. The best poems were often preserved in imperial poetry anthologies. In the 11th century, the nobleman Fujiwara no Kintō (966–1041) selected *waka* (poems of thirty-one syllables) by thirty-six celebrated authors of the past. Those poets came to be known as the Sanjūrokkasen, or Thirty-six Immortal Poets. Inspired by this time-honored theme, Harunobu created a series of thirty-six color prints, of which thirty-five compositions have now been traced to the sentiments expressed in the poems. In each of Harunobu's compositions, the poet's name and a sample of verse appear in the clouds in the upper portion. This print is based on a poem by the 9th-century poet and legendary beauty Ono no Komachi.

*When lonely
I'm like a reed
cut down at the root.
Should any current invite
I would go along.*

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Suzuki Harunobu, 1724/25–70

Ki no Tomonori

From the series *Thirty-six Immortal Poets*, ca. 1767

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.91

Cat. no. 38

The Saho River has long been celebrated by Japanese poets. A poem by the courtier and “immortal poet” Ki no Tomonori (died ca. 905) mentions plovers, migratory birds that fly between Japan and southern China and India. Harunobu depicted plovers flying in a flock over the water and showed the riverbank covered with newly fallen snow. Attracted by the plovers’ plaintive cries, an elegant woman dressed in a coat and hood has come down to the river. Her attendant holds a lantern to light their way, suggesting that, as in the poem, daylight is waning.

*As evening falls across
the banks of the Saho River
on the breeze
comes the sound of a plover
crying for its companion.*

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Suzuki Harunobu, 1724/25–70

Autumn Moon of Matsukaze

From the series *Eight Elegant Scenes from Nō Chants*,
ca. 1767

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.94
Cat. no. 40

This is one of eight prints illustrating scenes from famous Nō plays. Harunobu alludes to *Matsukaze*, a story based on the life of the high-ranking courtier Ariwara no Yukihiro (818–93). While exiled to Suma Beach, Yukihiro was befriended by two sisters, Matsukaze and Murasame, whose livelihood involved making salt beneath the pine trees on the beach. The play takes place long after Yukihiro, Matsukaze, and Murasame have died. The restless spirits of the women return to Suma Beach and recall their love for Yukihiro, who was pardoned and quickly left Suma for the capital without bidding the sisters farewell. Matsukaze, who was maddened with grief, performs a dance with Yukihiro's lacquered hat (*eboshi*) and robe, which he left behind. In the print, the woman meant to represent Matsukaze holds an *eboshi* and a robe. Murasame kneels next to her, dressed in a kimono adorned with morning glories, flowers associated with autumn—the season in which the play is set and also a time of loneliness and solitude.

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Suzuki Harunobu, 1724/25–70

Courtesan Detaining a Young Man as a *Mitate* of Ibaraki and Watanabe no Tsuna, ca. 1767

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.83

Cat. no. 41

At first glance, this looks like a picture of a young woman detaining her lover after an amorous encounter. But in fact the image is an ingenious play on the story of the warrior Watanabe no Tsuna (953–1025), who was sent by his master, Minamoto no Yorimitsu, to kill the demoness Ibaraki, who preyed on people around Rashōmon, the southern gateway to the capital city of Kyoto. On a rainy night, Watanabe no Tsuna encountered Ibaraki but only managed to sever one of her arms. Harunobu left little doubt as to his inspiration here, emblazoning the name Ibarakiya (Ibaraki Shop) on the establishment's doorway curtain. He reinforced the Ibaraki connection by having the man carry an umbrella (an allusion to the rainy weather in the play) and showing the courtesan in a state of dishevelment, recalling Watanabe no Tsuna's tussle with Ibaraki. The woman also hides her left hand inside her sleeve, a clever allusion to Ibaraki's severed arm.

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Suzuki Harunobu, 1724/25–70

Fishing near Mimeguri Shrine on the Sumida River,
ca. 1767

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.81

Cat. no. 42

This print appears to show well-dressed young people fishing and having fun. Across the river, on the far bank, the distinctive shrine gateway and nearby rice paddies suggest a setting in the vicinity of Mimeguri Shrine, a popular area for outings on the Sumida River. However, Harunobu may have intended a subtle allusion to a poem by Yamanoue no Okura (660–ca. 733) from the 8th-century *Manyōshū*, Japan's oldest poetry anthology. The poem mentions a local legend about Empress Jingū, a mythical heroine said to have led a military campaign against Korea in the year 200. Returning from Korea, she stopped at the mouth of the Matura River, in today's Saga Prefecture, and caught sweetfish using a thread pulled from her dress, with a piece of rice as bait. The central figure in Harunobu's composition may represent Empress Jingū, but as is typical of his playful conflation, she is dressed as a stylish contemporary woman.

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Suzuki Harunobu, 1724/25–70

Women Disembarking from a Boat, ca. 1767

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.84

Cat. no. 43

The strict confines of the Yoshiwara were not the only place for dalliances. In addition to many unlicensed pleasure districts, pleasure boats plied the Sumida River, offering customers the company of skilled geisha as well as *sake* and food. And the riverbanks en route to the Yoshiwara, planted with willow and cherry trees, afforded opportunities for seasonal outings. Popular destinations included Tsukiji temple, Ryōgoku bridge, Sensōji temple, Mimeguri Shrine, and innumerable riverside restaurants.

This print shows two women disembarking from a *yanebune* (roofed boat). That they are geisha can be surmised from the presence of an oblong box for transporting a *shamisen*. Just visible within the boat's enclosure are the knee, foot, and shoulder of a man. Since he seems to be lifting the box, he is likely the women's attendant (*hakoya*).

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Suzuki Harunobu, 1724/25–70

Woman Boarding a Boat, ca. 1767

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.85

Cat. no. 44

Harunobu may have designed this print as part of a sequence that included an image of women disembarking from a boat (on view above). If so, this scene is probably the earlier. A young woman is boarding a pleasure boat after visiting a Shinto shrine—suggested by the portion of a *torii*, or gateway to the sacred precinct, visible at the upper left. Mimeguri Shrine was located near the Sumida River, and Harunobu may have had that popular destination in mind. The women would have disembarked after the festivities on the boat concluded, to return home or continue to another party.

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Suzuki Harunobu, 1724/25–70

Lovers Plying a Rooster with *Sake*, ca. 1767

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.93

Cat. no. 45

A hallmark of Harunobu's artistic vision is his charming, if somewhat unlikely, depiction of young lovers. Here, a couple gives *sake* to a rooster in hopes the bird will become too intoxicated to crow, thus prolonging their time together before the household awakens. Seen through the open sliding door, a lantern in the adjoining room indicates it is still early morning, before the previous evening's accoutrements have been stowed away. However, beyond the woven fence, a deutzia (*unohana*), which blossoms in summer, hints that dawn will come early, adding urgency to the lovers' antics. The details and comic quality of this scene suggest that Harunobu may have adopted it from a humorous passage in a Kabuki or Kyōgen play, although such a scene has not yet been identified.

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Suzuki Harunobu, 1724/25–70

Falconer, 1769–70

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.98

Cat. no. 53

From its origins in central Asia, falconry was introduced to Japan by way of Korea. As in many other countries, falconry was a pastime of the aristocracy and high-ranking warriors, a noble sport forbidden to commoners. During the Edo period (1615–1868), even the aristocracy was barred. Falconry became the exclusive privilege of the warrior class, and *takajō* (master falconers) were accorded special rank in the samurai hierarchy. Here, a boy still too young to have had his forelocks shaved holds a fierce hawk in one hand and a training stick in the other. The boy's multilayered kimono (rather than pleated pants) and his sock-covered feet and elegant sandals (rather than leggings and rough footwear) suggest that Harunobu's image is a conflation of the ukiyo-e ideal of an elegant, fashionable youth (*wakashu*) and the widely admired warrior profession of falconer.

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Katsukawa Shunshō, 1726–92

Bandō Matatarō IV as Gempachibyōe, 1769

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.102

Cat. no. 56

Bandō Matatarō IV (died 1801), identifiable by his family crest on his costume, specialized in portraying villains in the *aragoto* (rough) style, characterized by exaggerated postures, bombastic elocution, and dramatic costumes and makeup. Here, Shunshō depicted him as Gempachibyōe, the faithful servant of the 12th-century aristocratic warrior Minamoto no Yoshitsune. The play's emotional climax is conveyed through the actor's tense, contorted pose and crossed eyes.

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Katsukawa Shunshō, 1726–92

Yamashita Kinsaku II as the Lady Asaka, 1772

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.104

Cat. no. 57

This print illustrates a scene from a play performed in 1772 at the Morita Theater in Edo. The actor Yamashita Kinsaku II (1733–99) had the role of Lady Asaka no Tsubone, here holding her sedge hat against a rainstorm. A pupil of the prominent *onnagata* (female-role specialist) Nakamura Tomijūrō, Yamashita Kinsaku II made his first appearance on stage in 1747. As an *onnagata* he performed a wide range of roles, including both warriors' wives and courtesans. Depictions of him in his later years show him as rather heavysset. Here, however, he has the lithe physique and delicate beauty of his younger years.

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Katsukawa Shunshō, 1726–92

Bandō Mitsugorō as Tokiyori, 1773

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.105

Cat. no. 58

The actor Bandō Mitsugorō is shown here in the role of Saimyōji Tokiyori, based on the life of Hōjō Tokiyori (1227–63), the fifth regent of the Kamakura shogunate (1185–1333). In the play, the retired Tokiyori travels throughout the country in the guise of a Buddhist monk, in order to detect government corruption. Here, Shunshō shows him scanning the landscape, seeking shelter from the snow and cold. As is typical of early Katsukawa school works, the setting is minimal.

Bandō Mitsugorō started his career at a minor theater by the Dōtonbori Canal in Osaka. He attracted bigger audiences after moving to Edo in 1766. A versatile actor adept at both male and female roles, he was admired for his handsome looks and skillful dancing. He enjoyed a successful career until 1782, when he collapsed and died in his dressing room at the Morita Theater. He was only thirty-eight years old.

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Katsukawa Shunshō, 1726–92

Ichikawa Yaozō II in the Shibaraku Role, 1774

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.106

Cat. no. 59

The “Shibaraku” role was first performed in 1697 by Ichikawa Danjūrō at the Nakamura Theater in the play *Sankai Nagoya*. In one scene, a villain and his henchmen are harassing a group of innocent people when suddenly the hero, played by Danjūrō, shouts “Shibaraku!” or “Wait a moment!” in a fierce voice before he defeats the ruffians. The scene’s popularity led many playwrights to embed a similar sequence in their plays, including the famous line “Shibaraku!” Nevertheless, “Shibaraku” roles have traditionally been reserved for actors of the Ichikawa lineage. Ichikawa Yaozō II (1735–77), whom Shunshō portrayed here, was renowned for his ability to play both a brave hero and a gentle lover, and he became especially popular among female Kabuki enthusiasts. According to one story, when he accidentally stepped into a barrel of water (kept near the stage in case of fire), a starstruck female fan drew off some of the water and took it home to drink.

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Katsukawa Shunshō, 1726–92

Ōtani Hiroemon III as Asahara Jirō, 1778

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.108

Cat. no. 60

The family crest prominently displayed on his right sleeve, and his notably large mouth, suggest that the actor depicted here is Ōtani Hiroemon III (1726–90). Hiroemon III debuted in Edo in the late 1740s and established his reputation playing villains. Here he is shown in the role of the bandit Asahara Jirō. His dramatic blue *kumadori* indicates the sinister nature of the character he is portraying.

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Katsukawa Shunshō, 1726–92

Ichikawa Danjūrō V as the Monk Wantetsu, 1778

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Ruth Lathrop Sikes in memory of her brother, Bruce Sikes P.13,933
Cat. no. 61

Played by Ichikawa Danjūrō V, the corrupt monk Wantetsu has just been discovered sneaking into the warrior Yoshiie's estate with the intention of killing him. His grimacing expression, wild hair, and the splayed fingers of his left hand convey his anger, fear, and surprise. The intense emotion seems barely contained within the narrow *hosoban* format. This image is the left panel of a diptych; the right panel (not in the museum's collection), shows the actor Ichikawa Danzō IV as Kagemasa, the fearless ally of Yoshiie. Thus Shunshō pictured the two men glaring at each other.

As one of the most celebrated actors of the 1770s and 1780s, Ichikawa Danjūrō V (1741–1806) was a favorite subject of print designers and publishers. His prominent nose made him easily recognizable, and artists often portrayed him in profile to accentuate this renowned feature.

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Katsukawa Shun'ei, 1762–1819

Ichikawa Danjūrō V, 1785–92

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.115

Cat. no. 65

A pupil of Katsukawa Shunshō, Shun'ei started designing prints around 1778. Although his work is dominated by Kabuki subjects, both as single-sheet prints and as illustrations for playbills (*banzuke*), he is also admired for a series of women performing Kabuki dances and for his *sumō-e*, or pictures of wrestlers.

Ichikawa Danjūrō V (1741–1806), perhaps the most celebrated Kabuki actor of all time, appears here in an unusual costume complete with dark, bumpy skin, and claws for toes and fingers. This costume has raised speculation that the image represents Danjūrō performing one of his favorite roles, that of the wizard Tenjiku Tokubei, whose powers permitted him not only to disappear, but also to turn into a giant toad.

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Katsukawa Shun'ei, 1762–1819

Ōtani Oniji III as Niki Bennosuke, 1792

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.116

Cat. no. 67

Standing by a river and holding a lantern in his mouth, the character depicted here is Niki Bennosuke, a villain who plots to depose the prominent Date clan in the play *Keisei kogane no hakarime*, performed at the Kawarasaki Theater in 1792. Katsukawa Shun'ei shows Niki hiking up his kimono in preparation for drawing his sword to kill an infant scion of the Date clan. As indicated by the crest on the actor's shoulder, Ōtani Oniji III (1761–96) performed the role of the evil Niki. This print is the right-hand panel of a diptych, whose left panel (not in the museum's collection) shows a woman attempting to protect the hapless child.

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Katsukawa Shun'ei, 1762–1819

**Segawa Kikunojō III as Itohagi, Nakayama Tatezō
as Motoyoshi Shirō, and Nakayama Tomisaburō as
Matsushima, 1792**

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.70.167a–c
Cat. no. 68

This triptych shows a scene from a play based on the true story of the warrior brothers Yoshitsune and Yoritomo of the Minamoto clan in the 12th century. After defeating the rival Taira clan, Yoritomo turned against Yoshitsune and sent his army to kill him. In the play, Yoshitsune is in hiding with his lover, Shizuka, when his loyal retainer Motoyoshi Shirō and the lady Itohagi hatch a plan to fake the fugitives' deaths, allowing them to escape and regroup. With the help of the courtesan Matsushima, Motoyoshi and Itohagi dress up as Yoshitsune and Shizuka and are killed by Yoritomo's forces.

Here, the spirits of Motoyoshi (center) and Itohagi (left) have returned from hell. To bring about this miraculous occurrence, Matsushima made a pilgrimage. She appears in the right panel, holding up a pilgrim's jacket inscribed "saigoku sanjūsan sho" (thirty-three sacred places in the western provinces), referring to the route of her religious journey.

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Isoda Koryūsai, active ca. 1768–ca. 1789

**Young Man at a Gate as a *Mitate* of the Kabuki Play
Women's Version of "Potted Trees," 1770–75**

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.305

Cat. no. 74

This print may illustrate a scene from the popular play *Onna Hachinoki* (Women's Version of "Potted Trees"), in which a retired shogunal regent, Hōjō Tokiyori, travels the country incognito as a simple monk. Seeking shelter in a snowstorm, he knocks at the gate of his faithful vassal Sano Genzaemon, who graciously welcomes the unknown monk and impresses Tokiyori with his loyalty. Although depictions of this scene usually include additional elements of the story, Koryūsai may have felt that a man knocking at a gateway in snow would certainly be recognized as a reference to this famous play.

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Torii Kiyonaga, 1752–1815

Ferryboat on the Rokugō River, 1784

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.127a,b

Cat. no. 76

The Rokugō River, which separates Edo from the neighboring town of Kawasaki, was crossed by ferry. Kawasaki was a popular destination for Edo residents hoping to escape the city's hectic pace, if only for a daylong excursion to visit the picturesque temple Kawasaki Daishi, shown here on the farther bank.

Kiyonaga gave his compositions greater verisimilitude by lowering the viewer's vantage point and by depicting distant scenes in proportionally reduced scale. He also rendered the tall, elegant figures so as to suggest movement and interaction.

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Torii Kiyonaga, 1752–1815

**Triptych of Cooling Off in the Evening at the Shijō
Riverbank, 1784**

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.126a–c

Cat. no. 77

By 1784 Kiyonaga had fully developed his style of depicting tall, elegant, mature women—images well suited to the generous proportions of *nishiki-e ōban* paper (roughly 15 x 10 inches), newly popular in the 1780s. Kiyonaga also increased the breadth of his compositions by designing multiple-panel prints, giving him scope for sweeping background views and complex compositions featuring numerous figures interacting in a naturalistic manner.

In the scene depicted here, a party enjoys *kawayuka* (riverside dining) on a platform built over the Kamo River, which runs through the center of Kyoto. Such temporary platforms built by nearby restaurateurs allowed diners to enjoy cooling breezes during Kyoto's notoriously hot and humid summers.

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Torii Kiyonaga, 1752–1815

Women by an Iris Pond, 1785

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.125

Cat. no. 78

This is the right half of a diptych picturing five women by a pond. Flowers in bloom provided occasions for frequent outdoor excursions. Irises bloomed in early summer as the weather turned warm and moist before the monsoon rains. Here, the standing woman wears a sheer outer robe of *kasuri* (ikat) and a sedge hat and is fanning herself—details that convey the season's heat. Despite careful attention to seasonal details, Kiyonaga included a flowering lespedeza (*hagi*), associated with early autumn. A later edition of the diptych features a pine tree instead, suggesting the lespedeza was an inadvertent error.

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Torii Kiyonaga, 1752–1815

Scene from the Kabuki Play *Yukimotsutake Furisode Genji*, 1785

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.128

Cat. no. 80

This scene is from a Kabuki play based on the historic rivalry between the Taira and Minamoto clans. In 1159, Minamoto no Yoshitomo attempted to overthrow Emperor Nijō, whose regime was bolstered by the warrior Taira no Kiyomori. The coup d'état failed but led to a full-scale war.

The play is set in the aftermath of the attempted coup. In the scene illustrated here, four key characters unexpectedly meet in Kyoto's Gion district. Hatchōsubute no Kiheiji, a Minamoto warrior who switched his allegiance to the Taira clan, has been living covertly as a monk who fills temple lamps with oil. Played here by Nakamura Kojūrō VI, he is shown holding an oil pot. Minamoto no Yoshihira (son of the coup's leader, Yoshitomo), played by Ichikawa Yaozō III, has also been living undercover, waiting for an opportunity to again attack the Taira. Here, Yoshihira has recognized the traitor and begins to draw his sword, a magical weapon known as Raiden-maru (Lightning) because its unsheathing causes a thunderclap.

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Torii Kiyonaga, 1752–1815

Outing at Mukōjima, 1787

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Mrs. Carl W. Jones in memory of her husband P:13,732

Cat. no. 81

Separated by the Sumida River from the center of Edo city, Mukōjima retained its rural character into the 20th century. The sprawling woodlands of Mokuboji temple and Mimeguri Shrine gave the area a parklike atmosphere in which visitors enjoyed seasonal flowers. Here, on the land spit in the center, a thatched building, probably a restaurant, affords patrons a view of the river. By Kiyonaga's time, a thriving culinary culture catered to the city's wealthy merchants and craftsmen. The woman wearing a hat may be the young wife of a successful merchant, since she is nicely dressed and accompanied by a female attendant. The boy behind her carries a package wrapped in a red cloth, possibly containing her lunch.

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Torii Kiyonaga, 1752–1815

Sudden Shower at Mimeguri Shrine, 1787

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.130a–c

Cat. no. 82

This triptych is one of Kiyonaga's best productions. A sudden shower has sent people rushing to take shelter beneath a gateway at Mimeguri Shrine. Kiyonaga's wit is revealed by the vaporous apparition in the clouds. A group of horned gods dressed as fashionable townsmen lounge and smoke thin pipes. In a parody of the poetry gatherings popular among Edo sophisticates, Kiyonaga depicted two demons considering a verse written on a *tanzaku*, a long, narrow slip of paper. This is a reference to a poem by Takarai Kikaku (1661–1707), who dedicated it to Mimeguri Shrine in 1693 as a prayer for rain. Kiyonaga's composition is an interpretation of this legend: favorably impressed by Kikaku's poem, the demons cause the rain to fall. Kikaku's poem (not legible on the print) is preserved today at Mimeguri Shrine, etched in a commemorative stone. In the poem, *mimeguri* is used both as a name and in its literal meaning of "patrol."

*Grant us an evening shower
since you are the gods
who patrol the fields.*

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Katsukawa Shunchō, active ca. 1783–ca. 1795

Waitress Okita of Naniwaya Teahouse, 1792–93

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.70.165

Cat. no. 85

Many ukiyo-e artists immortalized the beautiful waitress Okita of the Naniwaya teahouse. Here, Okita is shown wearing a black open-weave outer robe emblazoned with her paulownia crest. Such gossamer robes were worn during the hot summer months for comfort and also for the impression of physical coolness they conveyed. The geometric fretwork pattern of her inner kimono is visible beneath the outer robe—a testament to the skill of the carvers and printers.

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Kubo Shunman, 1757–1820

Six Jewel Rivers, ca. 1787

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.133a–f
Cat. no. 86

Kubo Shunman seems to have had a particular interest in *beni-girai* (red-avoiding) images, producing several prints and paintings with a palette largely restricted to black and gray tonalities. Famous as an artist, novelist, and poet, Shunman was an urbane sophisticate, and the subtlety of *beni-girai* may have appealed to his refined tastes. This six-panel composition is one of his most ambitious undertakings.

The term *tamagawa* (jewel river) first occurred in the 8th-century poetry anthology *Manyōshū* and then was used frequently by poets to describe any beautiful river in Japan. At least by the Edo period, six “jewel rivers” at specific geographic locations had been designated as a thematic set. Print designers in the late 18th century often employed diptychs and triptychs. Shunman’s choice of a six-panel set was atypical but well suited to the theme. His approach was unusual, too, in that a single river flowing through a continuous landscape represents all six rivers. However, in each print the activities of the figures, the seasons depicted, and the objects and other attributes are unrelated to those of the adjacent compositions. In typical ukiyo-e fashion, the people mentioned in the poems are transformed into fashionable contemporary women.

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Kitagawa Utamaro, 1753/54–1806

Mallards and a Kingfisher

From the illustrated woodblock book *Myriad Birds: A Kyōka Competition*, 1790

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.75.51.128
Cat. no. 88

The publisher Tsutaya Jūzaburō planned to publish three illustrated *kyōka* anthologies, dedicated to themes of birds, animals, and fish. Only that on birds, *Momochidori kyōka-awase* (*Myriad Birds: A Kyōka Competition*), was produced. Each composition featured two birds and included two poems ostensibly about them. *Myriad Birds* and two earlier books, one on insects (on view nearby) and another on seashells, are now considered a trilogy of Utamaro's nature studies.

Utamaro captured the birds' plumage through extremely fine linework and complicated color combinations. Such a detailed and highly realistic approach to nature was not the norm, especially for an ukiyo-e artist. It probably reflected the growing interest in Western naturalism and copperplate engraving.

Kingfisher

*When you and I
Go into the next life,
Let us perch
On lotus leaves
Like kingfishers, wing to wing.*

Sandara Hōshi (trans. James T. Kenney)

Mallard

*To a man
Sending a love note,
Even the swift messenger
Seems slow as a duck
Stuck on birdlime.*

Hōnen no Yukimaru (trans. James T. Kenney)

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Kitagawa Utamaro, 1753/54–1806

Fickle Type

From the series *Ten Types in the Physiognomic Study of Women*, 1792–93

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*) with mica background

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.143

Cat. no. 89

After producing a few successful books, Utamaro and the publisher Tsutaya launched an innovative type of *bijin-ga* (pictures of beautiful women) series. It was the first to feature women in half-length portraits, a format previously reserved for *yakusha-e* (actor prints). It was also the first attempt by an ukiyo-e artist to represent the individuality of women. Except for the most famous courtesans, print designers tended to depict women as stereotypes of femininity. Utamaro's close-up portraits straightforwardly captured the facial expressions of his models, vividly evoking their personalities despite their anonymity. The woman shown here is identified on the print as the "fickle type." To convey that quality, Utamaro has her casting a glance over her shoulder, hoping to catch the eye of an interested suitor as she returns, careless and disheveled, from the bath.

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Kitagawa Utamaro, 1753/54–1806

Asazuma-bune, Fan Seller, and Poetic Epithets

From the series *Female Performers Section of the Yoshiwara Niwaka Festival*, 1793

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*) with mica background

Gift of Mrs. Carl W. Jones in memory of her husband P:13,739

Cat. no. 90

This image is from a series of four prints, each depicting three women who performed in the Yoshiwara district's Niwaka Festival. *Niwaka*, which means "spontaneous," refers to impromptu comedy skits originally performed in the streets or on portable stages in conjunction with shrine festivals. The lightheartedness of *niwaka* performances complemented the jovial atmosphere of the pleasure quarters, and in the 1770s *niwaka* performances were introduced to Edo's Yoshiwara. Before long they were formalized into an annual event. Held for several days in the eighth lunar month, the Niwaka Festival consisted of costumed parades, processions of floats, and *niwaka* performances, all accompanied by music and dancing. During the festival, the pleasure quarter's policy of restricted access was temporarily lifted so that Edo townspeople, including women who were not regular visitors to the quarter, could enjoy the attractions.

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Kitagawa Utamaro, 1753/54–1806

Naniwaya Teahouse Waitress Okita, ca. 1793

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*) with mica background

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.146

Cat. no. 91

No other ukiyo-e artist paid as much attention to ordinary women as Utamaro. Although he often pictured the exotic courtesans of the pleasure quarters, he also excelled at capturing the mundane charm of housewives, waitresses, and other working-class women. The teahouse waitress Okita seems to have been Utamaro's favorite, as he depicted her on several occasions. In this portrait, she is believed to have been only sixteen years old; the fullness of her hair and her slightly shy look suggest her youth. The poem on the decorative cartouche suggests Okita's popularity without even mentioning her name.

*Naniwa-zu no
nani ou mono wa
yukikai ni
ashi no tomara nu
hito mo araji na*

*As Naniwa Bay is famously thick with reeds,
the teahouse of that name is famously
crowded with customers
who come around
and cannot help stopping by.*

The poem contains a humorous wordplay in that *ashi* (reed) is a homonym for *ashi* (feet), suggesting both the numerous reeds in the bay and the feet of the many people who come to see Okita at the Naniwaya teahouse.

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Kitagawa Utamaro, 1753/54–1806

Courtesan Hanaōgi of the Ōgiya House, 1793–94

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*) with mica background

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.147

Cat. no. 92

Hanaōgi (literally, “flower fan”) may well be the most frequently depicted woman in ukiyo-e. In fact, Hanaōgi was a pseudonym used by several generations of courtesans from the Ōgiya house, one of the most exclusive brothels in the Yoshiwara. This print represents Hanaōgi IV, the highest-ranked courtesan in the Ōgiya from 1791 through 1797. The oblong cartouche contains a poem comparing the pale beauty of Hanaōgi by moonlight to a delicate moonflower.

*Blossoming moonflowers arranged on a flower-fan
and Hanaōgi's face after moonrise
are so adorable
that people never tire of seeing them and
forget that autumn is coming.*

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Kitagawa Utamaro, 1753/54–1806

Courtesan Konosumi

From the series *Beauties of the Southern Quarter*, 1793–94

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*) with mica background

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.145

Cat. no. 93

The Yoshiwara was the only pleasure quarter officially licensed by the city of Edo, but unlicensed brothels existed in great numbers. Shinagawa, for example, was the first stop for people en route to Kyoto from Edo. Located south of Edo castle, the pleasure quarter at Shinagawa was nicknamed “the southern quarter.” In this print, Utamaro depicted a courtesan working for one of the brothels in Shinagawa. Her elaborate coiffure, hair ornaments, and layered kimono rival those of the higher-ranking courtesans of the Yoshiwara. That this woman’s name was Konosumi is suggested by characters on her kimono collar and the poem on her fan.

*At Sodegaura Beach by Shinagawa Bay,
the breeze never stops blowing.*

*Clients who want to see Konosumi
never stop coming in.*

What a cool place it is.

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Kitagawa Utamaro, 1753/54–1806

Woman Playing with a Child with a *Tengu* Mask,
1795–1802

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.75.51.132

Cat. no. 96

A young woman in a sheer summer kimono with a pattern of primrose (*sakurasō*) is playing peek-a-boo with a little boy who holds a *tengu* mask in front of his face. *Tengu*—mythical birdlike creatures with human characteristics—were believed to live deep in mountain forests. Artistic representations of *tengu* sometimes transform their beaks into long noses, as is the case with this boy's mask. Because of their ferociousness and martial prowess, *tengu* became popular male symbols, and the phallic connotations of their long noses made them comic as well. In this regard, the seemingly innocent moment of playfulness between a woman and child is given decidedly erotic overtones.

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Kitagawa Utamaro, 1753/54–1806

Kitchen Scene, 1794–95

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.150a,b
Cat. no. 97

In this diptych, sophisticated production techniques—such as the use of a copper pigment for the stove and pink mica for the rim of the firebox—contrast with the mundane scene of women working in a kitchen. Utamaro's interests extended well beyond the rarefied milieu of courtesans and actors to the commonplace world around him. In the right panel, a squatting woman tends the fire, poking it with a pair of metal tongs and blowing on it through a bamboo tube. The resulting burst of hot air and smoke from the firebox causes another woman to recoil as she attempts to ladle hot water into a bowl. In the left panel, one woman concentrates on peeling an eggplant, and the other dries a lacquered bowl while glancing tenderly at the child who clings to her back. With only minor changes to the facial features, Utamaro managed to give each woman a different expression.

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Kitagawa Utamaro, 1753/54–1806

Portrait of Tomimoto Toyohina

From the series *Famous Beauties Likened to the Six Immortal Poets*, 1795–96

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.149
Cat. no. 98

Tomimoto Toyohina was a much sought-after geisha (entertainer) who performed narrative ballads accompanied by the *shamisen*. She was one of several noncourtesan beauties, including teahouse waitresses, whom Utamaro depicted repeatedly in the early to mid 1790s. Here she wears a headdress called *agebōshi*, used by fashionable women to protect their oiled coiffures from dust and wind when they went out. For this image, the printer rendered the *agebōshi* in pale pink mica to suggest the texture of silk.

This composition is from a six-print series comprising half-length portraits of famous beauties. The women are not identified directly, but their names are given in *hanji-e*, or picture riddles, adjoining the title cartouche. Utamaro may have used this device to circumvent an edict issued in 1793 that prohibited the naming of women in ukiyo-e prints unless they were courtesans. Here, a lottery box (*tomi*), duckweed (*mo*), and a whetstone (*to*) serve to “spell” Tomimoto; a door (*to*), a lantern to suggest night (*yo*), and a doll (*hina*) signify Toyohina. This practice ceased in 1796 when a new proclamation specifically forbade the use of picture riddles.

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Kitagawa Utamaro, 1753/54–1806

Love for a Farmer's Wife, 1795–96

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.152

Cat. no. 99

Utamaro's picture of a farmer's wife was inspired by the *kyōka* poem by Ki no Masanari reproduced in the fan-shaped cartouche.

*Once the seeds of love
are sown
in the flooded paddy,
let our union
be watertight.*

Utamaro indicated the woman's humble lot through her plain kimono with unfashionable plaid trim and her untidy hair. Few lowly farmers ever experienced the stylish culture that flourished in the major metropolitan areas. Within that rarefied milieu, worldly sophistication and wit were highly prized and assiduously cultivated. Farm women, naïve and uneducated, were typically regarded as the least attractive among all classes of women. This daring depiction suggests that Utamaro sympathized with their difficult circumstances. Despite the prevailing attitude, Utamaro rendered the farmer's wife with unexpected charm. Here, her unaffected smile and disheveled clothes (brought about by hard work) suggest an innocence quite distinct from the cultivated coquettishness of more refined women of the time. The sentiment expressed in Masanari's *kyōka* reinforces Utamaro's sympathetic vision.

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Kitagawa Utamaro, 1753/54–1806

Abalone Divers, 1797–98

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.156a–c

Cat. no. 100

This triptych shows four women divers who harvest abalone and other marine delicacies from the rocky ocean floor. Historically, these *ama* (literally, “women of the sea”) were the wives of fishermen, supplementing the family’s income with this seasonal occupation. In order to move freely as they searched for abalone among rocky crevices, *ama* typically dove topless, wearing only their underskirts.

The statuesque beauty of Utamaro’s women, the novelty of their nudity and long, undressed hair, and the unexpected grandeur of a composition featuring fisherwomen all combined to make this an impressive production. Technically, too, it is a rare example in which the printer used red pigment, rather than the usual black ink, to outline the women’s bodies, giving them a more fleshlike appearance. It is also one of the best examples of how ukiyo-e artists circumvented government regulations against morally corrupting images. By picturing women whose profession required partial nudity, Utamaro and his publisher could claim that the women’s sexuality resulted from realism rather than eroticism.

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Kitagawa Utamaro, 1753/54–1806

Shaving a Boy's Head, ca. 1801

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.153

Cat. no. 102

While this print may be another example of Utamaro's attempts to avoid censorship by depicting a seminude woman as a paragon of motherhood, the effect here is only minimally erotic. This is partly due to both the woman's and the barber's intense concentration on the slumbering child. And it is difficult not to sympathize with the young woman, who has become disheveled in her attempts to settle the child, perhaps finally resorting to breast-feeding him so he would fall asleep, allowing the barber to shave his head without mishap. There is the implicit suggestion that the woman was desperate to make use of this itinerant barber's services while he was in the neighborhood.

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Kitagawa Utamaro, 1753/54–1806

Courtesan Hitomoto of the Daimonjiya House

From the series *Selections from Six Houses in the Yoshiwara*, 1801–2

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.154
Cat. no. 103

This image is from a series of six prints featuring the top-ranked courtesans of the six most famous brothels in the Yoshiwara. Hitomoto, of the brothel called Daimonjiya, appears in a casual pose, holding a pipe. The fame and status of women associated with these houses permitted them to command “courtship” by their potential lovers, who were obliged to pay the teahouses and restaurants where their meetings were arranged and hosted, to bear the cost of banquets, entertainers, and servants, and to buy gifts—all in addition to the price of the courtesan herself. Such costly affairs were beyond the means of all but the wealthiest customers. Images in woodblock form offered most men their only access to such exalted women, unless they were lucky enough to glimpse one taking an occasional promenade in the Yoshiwara.

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