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Kitagawa Utamaro, 1753/54–1806

Picture Book: Annual Events in the Pleasure Quarter,
1804

Color woodblock book in 2 volumes, with text by Jippensha Ikku
(1765–1831)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.77.39.14.1,2
Cat. no. 105

By the late 18th century, observances and festivities in the Yoshiwara (Edo's licensed pleasure quarter) had been codified into a series of lavishly staged annual events that cleverly served the quarter's commercial interests. These festivals typically coincided with *monobi* or *monbi*, fete days when the prices for courtesans were doubled. By creating a festive, carnival-like atmosphere on those days, the Yoshiwara attracted throngs of customers, thus ensuring sizable profits. These books feature nineteen occasions. Volume 1 pictures those occurring in spring and summer, and volume 2 showcases autumn and winter events.

This two-page spread illustrates preparations for the lantern festival held each year in the Yoshiwara during the seventh lunar month. The festival began as a commemoration of the legendary courtesan Tamagiku, a woman renowned for her beauty, kindness, and vocal skill, who died in 1726 at the age of twenty-five. To celebrate Tamagiku's life, people held a memorial service on the second anniversary of her death. After that, it became customary to put up lanterns every July.

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Chōbunsai Eishi, 1756–1829

Woman as the Poet Funya no Yasuhide

From the series *Disguised as the Six Immortal Poets*,
1793–94

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.162
Cat. no. 106

While serving as a retainer of the shogun, Chōbunsai Eishi developed a great interest in ukiyo-e, an art form associated with the merchant class. In so doing, he exemplified the life of warriors in the peaceful Tokugawa era, whose minimal duties allowed them to pursue other interests. He ultimately resigned his official position and became a full-time ukiyo-e artist.

Eishi's women are supremely graceful and their delicate features convey the ultimate in femininity. The general trend in ukiyo-e in the late 18th and early 19th centuries was toward greater realism of both style and content. Eishi, however, presented his beauties in a less portrait-like way and revived the earlier practice of picturing contemporary women as embodiments of historical figures. In this composition, Eishi likens his subject to the 9th-century poet Funya no Yasuhide, whose poem he included in the square cartouche.

*Wind blowing from the mountains
raging through the autumn fields
is why the word "storm"
consists of the characters
wind and mountain.*

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Chōbunsai Eishi, 1756–1829

Japanese Poetry

From the series *Fashionable Scenes Likened to the Six Types of Art*, ca. 1794

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.163
Cat. no. 107

This print is from a series of six images representing accomplishments that cultivated Japanese women were expected to master: flower arranging, painting, incense ceremony, tea ceremony, Japanese *koto*, and poetry. This woman, meant to represent poetry, holds a brush in her right hand while reading a verse she has just written on a *tanzaku* (narrow poem paper). An elegant stand with books and scrolls suggests that her verse is informed by literary precedent. The woman is dressed in the white *kosode* (small-sleeve robe) and red *hakama* (trousers) worn by noblewomen as informal apparel, and her hair recalls the long tresses preferred by women of the Heian period (794–1185). Awareness of Japan's classical past was high among the literate Edo-period population. In addition, the rebuilding in Heian-period style of the imperial palace in Kyoto, lost to fire in 1788, prompted a revivalist movement in art.

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Chōbunsai Eishi, 1756–1829

Courtesan as Komachi

From the series *Disguised as the Six Immortal Poets*,

ca. 1796

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Ruth Lathrop Sikes in memory of her brother, Bruce Sikes P.13,952

Cat. no. 109

This bust portrait is rare among Eishi's print designs, which typically are full-length figures, seated or standing. In this series, Eishi depicted courtesans in the guise of Japan's Six Immortal Poets. This woman imitates the élan of Ono no Komachi, a beautiful 9th-century poet who cruelly rejected all suitors and spent her old age in solitude and squalor. Hence, Komachi came to symbolize *mono-no-aware*, the melancholy awareness that all enjoyment is fleeting. Eishi's woman wears her hair in the long, flowing style of a Heian-period court woman but with the decorative pins used by contemporary courtesans. She delicately holds a spray of cherry blossoms, also a symbol of short-lived beauty. Two cartouches, in the shape of *utagaruta* (poetry cards), bear the name of the series and an apt poem by Komachi.

*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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Eishōsai Chōki, active 1789–ca. 1807

A Beauty Looking at the First Sunrise

From the series *Beauties in Four Seasons*, 1793–96

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

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.70.134

Cat. no. 110

Along with book illustrations and some actor prints, Chōki designed many prints of women, including some impressive half-length portraits. This composition, one of his most accomplished productions, is from a four-panel series of beautiful women, commonly known as *Shiki no bijin* (Beauties in Four Seasons). The woman is enjoying the sunrise on New Year's Day, the occasion that marked the coming of spring in the lunar calendar. The first sunrise was considered sacred, and people got up early to pray to the sun for health and happiness during the year. A stone washbasin (*chōzubachi*) in the foreground suggests that this woman has performed ritual ablutions in preparation for her prayers. The potted plant with yellow flowers by the basin is *fukujusō* (literally, "plant of fortune and longevity"), cultivated to bloom at New Year's.

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Tōshūsai Sharaku, active 1794–95

Ichikawa Monnosuke II as Date no Yosaku, 1794

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

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.185

Cat. no. 111

This print of Ichikawa Monnosuke II in the role of Date no Yosaku is one of nine prints inspired by the play *Koinyōbō somewake tazuna*, performed at the Kawarasaki Theater in 1794. In the play, the high-ranking samurai Date no Yosaku finds himself in deep trouble when money entrusted to him to pay off the debts of his lord's geisha lover—and thus rescue her from servitude—is stolen. Adding to his troubles, his forbidden love affair with the lady-in-waiting Shigenoi is discovered, and in consequence he is stripped of his samurai status and expelled from his feudal clan. With help from Shigenoi and his friends, however, Yosaku eventually tracks down the thief and recovers the stolen money. Ultimately he is pardoned and returns to his clan at the end of the play. The actor Monnosuke II was lauded for his portrayal of Yosaku's rather timid disposition. Here, his tightly closed lips and slightly untidy hair quietly convey Yosaku's emotional distress.

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Tōshūsai Sharaku, active 1794–95

Ichikawa Ebizō as Takemura Sadanoshin, 1794

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

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.186

Cat. no. 112

This composition is based on the play *Koinyōbō somewake tazuna*, performed at the Kawarasaki Theater in 1794. It pictures Ichikawa Ebizō in the role of the Nō actor Takemura Sadanoshin, father of the lady-in-waiting Shigenoi. Because of his daughter's adulterous affair with Date no Yosaku, Sadanoshin is exiled from his clan. Before leaving, however, this proud Nō master teaches his lord how to perform a scene from the play *Dōjōji* (Dōjōji Temple) in which the actor hides inside a temple bell to escape a female demon. By imparting the technique for this demanding scene, Sadanoshin hopes to leave an enduring artistic legacy, since he plans to kill himself to atone for his daughter's actions. This print presumably shows Sadanoshin agonizing over his fateful decision.

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Tōshūsai Sharaku, active 1794–95

Osagawa Tsuneyo II in a Female Role, 1794

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

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.187

Cat. no. 113

This distinctive visage is that of the well-known *onnagata* (female impersonator) Osagawa Tsuneyo II (1753–1808). However, the exact role has yet to be identified. Sharaku may have depicted Tsuneyo in a role that he did not actually perform—that of Sakuragi in *Koinyōbō somewake tazuna* at the Kawarasaki Theater in 1794.

In the play, Sadanoshin decides to commit suicide to atone for his daughter's sins. In this print, Tsuneyo's sad eyes and tense lips are details that would convey Sakuragi's distress over her husband's fateful decision. Although Tsuneyo did not play Sakuragi in *Koinyōbō somewake tazuna*, Sharaku perhaps thought he should have been cast in that role, since Tsuneyo excelled in expressing latent emotion. Thus, this print might present Sharaku's ideal casting rather than a record of an actual performance.

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Tōshūsai Sharaku, active 1794–95

Ichikawa Yaozō III as Fuwa no Banzaemon, 1794

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Mrs. Carl W. Jones in memory of her husband P:13,734

Cat. no. 114

In addition to his famous series of bust portraits, Sharaku also designed a group of prints that show full-length figures, a change that allowed him to represent the actors' gestures as well as their facial expressions. Sharaku lightened the tone of the compositions by replacing the dark gray mica background of his earlier prints with white mica or yellow pigment. For this print, Sharaku depicted Ichikawa Yaozō III as Fuwa no Banzaemon in the play *Keisei sanbon karakasa*, performed at the Miyako Theater in 1794. Banzaemon is embroiled in a love triangle with the beautiful courtesan Katsuragi and another man known as Nagoya Sanza. This print was probably intended to be part of a triptych, with Katsuragi in the center, Banzaemon on the right, and Sanza on the left.

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Tōshūsai Sharaku, active 1794–95

Ichikawa Komazō III as Shinozuka Gorō, 1794

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.70.164

Cat. no. 116

The “Shibaraku” role was first performed in 1697 by Ichikawa Danjūrō in a play titled *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!” This print illustrates just such an instance with the actor Ichikawa Komazō III playing the “Shibaraku” role in a different drama. When Sharaku designed this print, Ichikawa Komazō III was a rising star. Because of his prominent nose, he was popularly known as Hanataka-Kōshirō, or High-Nosed Kōshirō.

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Kabukidō Enkyō, active ca. 1796

Left: **Nakamura Noshio II as Sakuramaru**, 1796

Center: **Ichikawa Yazoō III as Umeōmaru**, 1796

Right: **Nakamura Nakazō II as Matsuōmaru**, 1796

Color woodblock prints (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.190,191,192
Cat. nos. 117, 118, 119

These three images portray characters in a play performed at the Miyako Theater in Edo in 1796. In the play, Umeōmaru and his two brothers, Sakuramaru and Matsuōmaru, are triplets who serve as carriage drivers for rival factions at court. Because the birth of triplets was viewed as auspicious, the three young men were assigned their positions in hopes that their presence would bring harmony at court. In the third act of the play, however, they break their familial attachments and fight bitterly to defend their masters. Umeōmaru (center), aided by Sakuramaru (left), confronts Matsuōmaru (right), whose master is the corrupt courtier Fujiwara no Shihei. Umeōmaru's own master's standing at court has already been jeopardized by Shihei's evil machinations.

Only seven prints by the artist Kabukidō Enkyō are known. All are bust portraits of popular actors in the realistic style of Sharaku. Although there is no evidence that the two artists knew each other, there is little doubt that Enkyō was influenced by Sharaku's dramatic style.

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Utagawa Toyokuni, 1769–1825

Takinoya

From the series *Portraits of Actors on Stage*, 1794

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.172

Cat. no. 120

From the white crests on the shoulders and sleeve of his kimono—three nested squares surrounding the character for “gate” (pronounced “mon”)—the actor depicted can be identified as Ichikawa Monnosuke II (1743–94). The handsome face and elegant bearing of the figure in this print presumably represent the actual characteristics of Monnosuke, who was known for his graceful style in romantic plays.

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Utagawa Toyokuni, 1769–1825

Yamatoya

From the series *Portraits of Actors on Stage*, 1794

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.176

Cat. no. 121

The crest on the figure's left shoulder reveals that the actor is Bandō Mitsugorō II. His costume shows him in the role of Ishii Genzō in a play performed in 1794 at the Miyako Theater in Edo. The play is the story of two brothers attempting to avenge their father's death. Here, Genzō's disheveled hair suggests that he has been fighting. Now, clearly, the struggle has escalated, for he is unsheathing his sword. In the play's next scene, he is killed by his enemy. Portraying Genzō as both intense and pensive, Toyokuni conveyed the character's powerful determination and foreshadowed his tragic end.

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Utagawa Toyokuni, 1769–1825

Otowaya

From the series *Portraits of Actors on Stage*, 1795

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.174

Cat. no. 125

This print illustrates the actor Onoe Matsusuke, who performed in 1795 at the Kawarasaki Theater. In the play *Kanadehon chushingura*, his character carouses in the pleasure quarters so as to divert attention from his plan to avenge his deceased lord. This print might represent the dramatic moment in the play when he discovers the courtesan Okaru accidentally reading a letter sent to him—thus jeopardizing the secrecy of his plot.

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Utagawa Toyokuni, 1769–1825

Segawa Kikunojō III as the Shop Boy Chōkichi, 1796

Likely from the series *Portraits of Actors on Stage*, 1795

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.178

Cat. no. 126

Though lacking a title cartouche, this print probably represents the actor Segawa Kikunojō III. The image may have advertised Kikunojō's role as the young shop clerk Chōkichi in the play *Sumida no haru geisha katagi*, staged at the Kiri Theater in 1796. Chōkichi is murdered on the banks of the Sumida River by Ume no Yoshibei, who does not realize that the shop clerk is his wife's younger brother. Here, Kikunojō as Chōkichi is shown with the unshaven forelocks of a youth not yet of age. He seems to be clutching himself and looking nervously about, as if sensing danger in the darkening gloom of night.

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Utagawa Toyokuni, 1769–1825

Children Delighting in Their Reflections, 1795–1804

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.75.51.136a,b

Cat. no. 127

Here three rambunctious boys see their antics reflected in the lacquered lower surface of two sliding doors (*shōji*). An older woman holding a pipe and a younger one wearing a kimono with long sleeves (*furisode*) observe this amusing scene. The fashionable dress of these women suggests that they are professional entertainers, or geisha, rather than ordinary housekeepers.

Prints featuring children were peripheral to the mainstream market for ukiyo-e imagery, and publishers did not lavish the same care and expense on their production. In this diptych, however, the upper portion of the *shōji* doors was embossed, suggesting the involvement of specialized craftsmen. The prints' overall size and their production as a diptych are also highly unusual, given the subject matter. This work may have been produced for a particular market or may contain some veiled meaning, now indecipherable, that would have piqued customers' interest and justified the expense of its production.

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Utagawa Toyokuni, 1769–1825

Iwai Hanshirō V as Sukeroku, 1816

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.75.51.133

Cat. no. 129

Prints designed for use in making circular, nonfolding fans are known as *uchiwa-e*. After printing, when the paper had dried, the fan shape was cut out and pasted onto wood or bamboo ribs. A number of ukiyo-e artists designed fan prints with typical ukiyo-e subjects such as popular actors, beautiful women, and bird-and-flower themes.

The subject of this fan is the Kabuki actor Iwai Hanshirō V (1776–1847), as revealed by the iris crest on his robe. Although best known as an *onnagata* (female impersonator) with large, beautiful eyes—which were said to be “worth one thousand gold pieces”—Hanshirō occasionally portrayed male characters, as this image attests. Wearing a black kimono and purple headband and carrying a large umbrella, he takes the part of Sukeroku, a generic gallant featured in many popular plays.

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Utagawa Toyokuni, 1769–1825

Sawamura Tanosuke II as Yae, 1816

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.75.51.126

Cat. no. 130

Each summer Kabuki devotees rushed to purchase fans with images of their favorite actors. The inscription at the upper left identifies the actor as Sawamura Tanosuke II (1788–1817) in the role of the woman Yae. A *senryū* poem by an unknown writer offers some punning evidence of the enthusiasm for these popular seasonal commodities.

*Talented actors
in the shape of fans
“fan” respect.*

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Utagawa Kunisada, 1786–1864

Ichikawa Danjūrō VII Preparing New Year's Gifts,
1829–30

Color woodblock print (*surimono*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.75.51.59

Cat. no. 135

Wearing a short jacket with a design of nested squares (the crest of the Ichikawa family of actors) and an inner kimono with the character “ichi” in white, the actor depicted here is Ichikawa Danjūrō VII (1791–1859). In a small room heated with a charcoal brazier, he is folding hand towels into the shape of *happi* (festival jackets), to serve as his New Year's gifts to friends and supporters. The one he is folding bears the Ichikawa family's crest and the characters “ichi” and “kawa.” “Kiba,” written on the collar of the folded towel on the actor's left, refers to the town where he lived. Since poetry circle members were often Kabuki aficionados, actors were among the most popular subjects for *kyōka surimono* prints. The poets who commissioned this print were clearly fans of Danjūrō. However, the two poems inscribed in the upper part of the print, by Shunchōsha Awayuki and Hakuroen Asobi, do not mention the actor directly.

*Folded and dyed,
hand towels carry
the fragrance of plum
from flowery Naniwa
wafted by the wind.*

(trans. John T. Carpenter)

*In Naniwazu
spring has now come—
with plums in blossom
as our own flower of Edo
is the elder brother of flowers.*

(trans. John T. Carpenter)

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Utagawa Kunisada, 1786–1864

Gathering Mushrooms in Mid-Autumn, ca. 1844

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Mrs. Charles B. Meech 91.112.25a–c
Cat. no. 137

Along with maple viewing, mushroom gathering was a favorite autumn pastime during the Edo period. This triptych pictures three women and a boy gathering mushrooms beneath a maple tree. The *furisode* (long-sleeved kimono) worn by the woman in the center indicates that she is young and unmarried; the robe's style, showing a scattered pattern of maple leaves, suggests she is of the merchant class. The other women are probably her attendants, and the boy (right panel) is likely an apprentice in her father's business. She seems to be accepting a pipe prepared by the attendant on her right, while her other companion and the boy busily look for mushrooms.

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Utagawa Kunisada, 1786–1864

Theater District

From the 3-volume color woodblock book *Poems and Pictures of Flourishing Areas in Edo Where Fortunes Are Spent*, 1854

Bequest of John R. Van Derlip in memory of Ethel Morrison Van Derlip RBL35.445
Cat. no. 138

This book is from a three-volume work titled *Kyōka ehon Edo no hana hi senryō*, commissioned by a private *kyōka* poetry group called Kozuchigawa, or Small Mallet Society. The phrase *hi senryō* (literally, “one thousand gold coins a day”) was an idiomatic expression describing three areas in the city of Edo where a fortune could be spent in the course of a single day: the fish market at Nihonbashi, the Yoshiwara licensed pleasure quarter, and the theater district. Each volume is devoted to one of those areas, and a different artist was commissioned to illustrate each: Hiroshige for the fish market, Kuniyoshi for the Yoshiwara, and Kunisada for the theater district. Eight to ten poems by members of the Small Mallet Society appear on each of the double-page illustrations.

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Utagawa Kunisada, 1786–1864
and Utagawa Hiroshige, 1797–1858

Okitsu

From the series *Fifty-three Stations by Two Brushes*, 1854

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. 96.146.228

Cat. no. 139

Hiroshige, a master of landscape imagery, and Kunisada, a specialist in *yakusha-e* (actor prints), collaborated on the series *Sōhitsu gojūsan-tsugi* (Fifty-three Stations by Two Brushes). *Sōhitsu* (two brushes) refers to the two artists. Nearly all of the fifty-five prints in this series present Hiroshige's landscapes "framed" in the upper part, and one or two figures by Kunisada in the lower portion.

The landscape here is a view of Tagonoura Bay, the seventeenth station of the Tōkaidō road. A small inscription explains that the temple on the hill is Seikenji, built on the site of a fortress called Kiyomigaseki. Fishing nets drying in the foreground indicate the livelihood of some of the locals.

Kunisada's portion shows a woman and a masseur. Traveling baskets and sedge hats reveal that the woman is a traveler. Sightless persons were traditionally trained as masseurs and found employment at inns, where they catered to travelers suffering from aches and pains brought on by days of walking.

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Utagawa Kunisada, 1786–1864
and Utagawa Hiroshige, 1797–1858

Ejiri

From the series *Fifty-three Stations by Two Brushes*, 1854

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.75.51.303

Cat. no. 140

For this print of Ejiri, the eighteenth station of the Tōkaidō road, Hiroshige depicted the pine grove of Miho, and Kunisada featured a celestial maiden in a fanciful feathered robe (*hagoromo*). Their imagery alludes to the Nō play *Hagoromo*, attributed to the famous playwright Zeami (ca. 1363–ca. 1443). In the play, a fisherman finds a fantastically beautiful robe made of feathers, which a celestial maiden has carelessly left hanging from a pine branch. He agrees to return the robe to the panicked maiden if she will dance for him. She obliges, dedicating her dance to the beauty of Miho, a pine-clad sandbar in Suruga Bay. Kunisada represented the heavenly maiden in flight, presumably after her dance. The wings and feathers on her back signify her divine nature, but her hairdo, resplendent *uchikake* robe, and yellow obi tied in front reflect the style popular among contemporary high-ranking courtesans.

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Utagawa Kunisada, 1786–1864
and Utagawa Hiroshige, 1797–1858

Goyu

From the series *Fifty-three Stations by Two Brushes*, 1855

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.75.51.247

Cat. no. 141

Instead of the bustling town of Goyu, the thirty-fifth station on the Tōkaidō, Hiroshige depicted the bucolic marsh of Honnogahara, east of town. The Tōkaidō road did not, in fact, pass through Honnogahara, which was located along a subsidiary road (*waki-kaidō*) that diverged from the Tōkaidō at Mitsuke, the twenty-eighth station. This alternative route was preferred by women because they could avoid Arai, the thirty-first station, where government officials were known to interrogate female travelers about their reasons for being on the road. By picturing the route through Honnogahara, Hiroshige revealed his awareness of such tactics to circumvent government controls.

Kunisada contributed two Kabuki actors to the composition. The standing figure performs the role of Yamamoto Kansuke, a famous 16th-century warrior who was born in Goyu.

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Utagawa Kunisada, 1786–1864
and Utagawa Hiroshige, 1797–1858

Ishibe

From the series *Fifty-three Stations by Two Brushes*, 1855

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.75.51.305

Cat. no. 142

For this print, Kunisada pictured two characters from a Kabuki play based on a real-life double suicide that occurred in 1761. The event was later dramatized for the puppet theater and the Kabuki stage. The story concerns star-crossed lovers. Chōemon, a middle-aged merchant from Kyoto, and his neighbor's teenage daughter, Ohan, fall deeply in love after meeting at an inn in Ishibe. Determined to die rather than be separated, they drown themselves in the Katsura River. Ukiyo-e artists typically portrayed Chōemon carrying Ohan on his back as the two enter the water. To illustrate Ishibe station on the Tōkaidō road, however, Kunisada placed the lovers in a bedroom, presumably at the inn where they first met.

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Utagawa Kuniyoshi, 1797–1861

Washing Hands as a *Mitate* of Gongsun Sheng

From the series *Fashionable Women as Heroes of the Water Margin*, ca. 1828

Color woodblock print (*surimono*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.75.51.86

Cat. no. 143

Success for the artist Kuniyoshi came around 1827 with a print series showing the heroes of the 14th-century Chinese epic *Shuihu zhuan* (The Water Margin). Riding on this success, he designed a series picturing heroes from the *Shuihu zhuan* as beautiful women. The woman here is drying her hands by a stone water basin of the kind commonly placed near the entrances to temples and shrines for ritual purification. The Myōken temple at Yanagishima, in the city of Edo, once had a pavilion over its stone basin with a dragon painted on the ceiling. In Kuniyoshi's print, the reflection of a dragon in the water basin suggests the scene is the Myōken temple. The hero represented is not named on the print, but the poem hints that he is the Daoist priest Gongsun Sheng, nicknamed Dragon in the Clouds, who possessed magical power to summon the wind and rain.

*The hero's power
to bring the rain
would be no less than that
of a dragon reflected in the water
at the Myōken temple.*

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Utagawa Kuniyoshi, 1797–1861

Ensei

From the series *Fashionable Women as Heroes of the Water Margin*, ca. 1829

Color woodblock print (*surimono*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. 81.133.154
Cat. no. 144

The idea of substituting women for the heroes of the famous Chinese epic *Shuihu zhuan* (The Water Margin) must have appealed to Kuniyoshi since he used this artifice in three different series produced for poetry societies. This print is from the second series commissioned by the Hisakataya poetry society. The woman represents Ensei (Yan Qing, in Chinese), one of the youngest among the 108 Chinese heroes—a good-looking, fair-skinned man who excelled in music and dance. Her aristocratic white robes and lacquered hat are the typical attire of *shirabyōshi*, or professional dancers. Two verses on the theme of spring, presumably composed by ranking members of the Hisakataya society, accompany the image.

*Here comes the breeze.
The pine grove rustles in chorus.
The breeze also carries
the scent of plum flowers.
Spring is here!*

Hisakataya

*As if pulled with a string
the pond water swirls up.
It may be the spring wind
dancing with a fan-shaped kite
for the first act of the season.*

Amanoya Wakashiba

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Utagawa Kuniyoshi, 1797–1861

Black Carp, ca. 1842

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.78.65.55

Cat. no. 145

Although best known for his depictions of warriors and his highly detailed images of fantastic legends, Kuniyoshi also produced closely observed views of nature. The black carp is rendered in a masterly manner that conveys a sense of its being underwater. Seen from above, the fish seems to be languorously swimming toward the surface. This image is from a series of five pairs of prints in *chūtanzakuban* format (a vertical half of an *ōban* sheet) picturing aquatic creatures. Kuniyoshi paired the carp with a catfish.

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Utagawa Kuniyoshi, 1797–1861

Yōkō

From the series *Mirror of Twenty-four Paragons of Filial Piety*, 1844–46

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.78.65.60
Cat. no. 146

Paragons of filial piety have been an enduring theme in Chinese art and literature since the time of the famous sage Confucius (551–479 B.C.), whose teachings stressed the importance of absolute devotion to one's parents and elders. Japan's Tokugawa leaders frequently commissioned painters to render the filial subjects, thereby helping to establish this tradition in Japan. Ukiyo-e artists also picked up the theme, and Utagawa Kuniyoshi featured the twenty-four paragons on several occasions.

The subject here is the story of Yōkō (Yang Xiang, in Chinese) and his father. These two were attacked by a fierce tiger in the mountains. Without thinking of his own safety, Yōkō shielded his father with his own body while demanding that the tiger devour him rather than his father. Impressed with the youth's bravery, the tiger retreated into the forest, sparing both father and son.

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Utagawa Kuniyoshi, 1797–1861

Popular Ōtsu-e Phenomenon, 1848

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Harriet and Edson Spencer 99.59.24a–c
Cat. no. 147

Folk paintings produced by anonymous artists in Ōmi Province (present-day Shiga Prefecture) during the Edo period came to be called *Ōtsu-e* (Ōtsu paintings) because they were sold in and around the town of Ōtsu, an official way station on the Tōkaidō road.

For this print, Kuniyoshi drew on the play *Keisei hangonkō* (The Beauty Whose Spirit Appears in the Incense Smoke), written for the puppet theater by Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653–1724). In one dramatic episode, the authorities are about to arrest a certain artist named Matahei on false charges, but the characters in Matahei's paintings magically spring to life and defend him. The composition was actually slightly subversive. Attempting to evade edicts forbidding the depiction of Kabuki actors, Kuniyoshi substituted the faces of famous performers for the *Ōtsu-e* characters' faces. As if taunting government censors, he even pictured the warrior monk Benkei wearing *kumadori* (Kabuki makeup).

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Utagawa Kuniyoshi, 1797–1861

Inuzaka Keno

From the series *The Loyal Heroes from the Legend of the Eight Dog Warriors*, ca. 1852

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.75.51.208

Cat. no. 148

Kuniyoshi's literary source for this print was the best-selling novel *Nansō Satomi hakkenden* (The Legend of the Eight Dog Warriors of the Satomi Clan in Awa Province), by Kyokutei Bakin (1767–1848). This ninety-eight-volume epic, which took Bakin nearly thirty years to complete, was published in serial format between 1814 and 1842. Set in the mid-16th century, *Hakkenden* was the saga of eight young warriors born under the influence of the dog god, Yatsubusa. The eight were spiritually related and thus destined to find each other. Once united, they would help the warlord Satomi rise to power in Awa Province (modern-day Chiba Prefecture). This print shows one of the warriors dressed as a female dancer in a colorful outer kimono, his hair tied up in a red cloth. He is prepared to fight, however, for he wears red body armor beneath the kimono.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Staff-Waving Dance

From the series *Mibu Kyōgen*, ca. 1790

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.78.64.16.1

Cat. no. 149

This print is from one of Hokusai's earliest series, comprising scenes from Mibu Kyōgen plays. Kyōgen are short comic plays usually performed in conjunction with Nō dramas. A related theatrical tradition emerged at Mibudera temple in Kyoto around 1300. In the Edo period, these playful performances featured masked and unmasked actors who conducted their routines entirely in pantomime. In *Bōfuri* (Staff Waving), a dancer wields a staff in all directions, as if fighting off evil and thus purifying the stage, while other cast members cheer him on by tapping their folded fans on the stage in time to the music (as shown here) or by fanning him with open fans. The *kyōka* poem on this print captures the excitement.

*With enthusiastic applause,
audiences are buzzing
like mosquitoes.
These staff-waving dancers
are extraordinary!*

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

The Day before the Beginning of Spring

From the series *Mibu Kyōgen*, ca. 1790

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.78.64.16.3

Cat. no. 150

This print represents a play called *Setsubun*, after a seasonal festival held on the day before the beginning of spring. On this day, people scatter dried beans in their houses to drive out bad luck. In the play, a young demon shows up at the house of a widow who has hung a sacred straw rope to repel evil. Undeterred by the talisman, the amorous demon quickly devises a strategy. He conjures human clothing by swinging his magic mallet. Disguised as a gentleman, he calls on the widow bearing gifts of clothing. Delighted with the finery, she treats him to some rice wine. The demon gets drunk and passes out, and the widow takes his magic mallet and strips him of his clothing. When he awakens, he tries to seize her, but she drives him away by throwing beans at him. The attached poem carries a comical message.

*Under the rain of beans
an earnest and youthful "demon"
looks surprisingly attractive.
As the old saying goes,
"No seventeen-year-olds are ugly."*

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Flower Thief

From the series *Mibu Kyōgen*, ca. 1790

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.78.64.16.7

Cat. no. 151

In the *Mibu Kyōgen* play *Flower Thief*, a wealthy samurai goes on an excursion to enjoy blossoming cherry trees and breaks off a spray to take home. When a thief snatches the spray, the samurai's attendant tries to stop him but ends up losing his short sword to the wily rogue. The samurai lends his own sword to his retainer and commands him to kill the thief. Again, the thief outsmarts the attendant, this time stealing the samurai's sword. The frustrated samurai apprehends the thief himself and orders his attendant to make a rope for tying the rascal up. The attendant makes the rope but accidentally ties up his master. The thief escapes, and the furious samurai, wielding a mallet, chases away the attendant. This print shows the attendant making the rope. The *kyōka* poem complements the story.

*They start making a rope
after catching the thief.
This is going to be a long day.
But you don't mind because the flowers
and the Mibu farce are never boring.*

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Offering Pails of Water

From the series *Mibu Kyōgen*, ca. 1790

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.78.64.16.4

Cat. no. 152

In the Mibu Kyōgen play *Oketori* (Offering Pails of Water), the beautiful dancer Teruko, who was born lacking two fingers on her left hand, visits Mibudera temple every day to pray that she will be reborn without physical defects. One day, when she is carrying a wooden pail filled with water as an offering, a wealthy man named Wake no Toshikiyo sees her and falls in love. Eventually, he persuades her to teach him how to dance. Toshikiyo's pregnant wife shows up and berates him for his infidelity. As Toshikiyo and his wife fight, Teruko escapes. When Toshikiyo notices that Teruko is gone, he decides to follow her, abandoning his ranting wife. The wife then concludes that her own unattractive appearance is the cause of her husband's wandering heart. The scene depicted here is presumably an early one, in which Toshikiyo, holding a large umbrella, approaches Teruko, who is carrying a pail. A poem is inscribed in the fan-shaped cartouche.

*Flirtation is like a wooden pail with a loose hoop.
Once its hoop is taken off,
the water spills out from it [corrupting a religious woman],
the pail breaks apart [breaking a wife's heart].
This is said in the Mibu farce.*

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Aridōshi Shrine, 1801–4

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.196

Cat. no. 153

A legendary episode that took place in front of Aridōshi Shrine (in modern-day Osaka) provided the subject of this composition. One rainy night, the famous poet Ki no Tsurayuki (ca. 868–ca. 945) came to Aridōshi Shrine while making his way back to Kyoto. He had planned to stop and pray but changed his mind because of the inclement weather. His horse, however, suddenly collapsed at the shrine's gateway. Tsurayuki took this as a sign that his neglectful attitude had offended the shrine deity. He quickly offered prayers and recited a poem dedicated to the deity. As he uttered the final syllable, his horse miraculously stood up, and Tsurayuki was able to proceed on his way.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Goldfish Vendor, 1801–5

Color woodblock print (*surimono*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.324

Cat. no. 154

In addition to his commercial woodblock designs for mass consumption, Hokusai made a large number of *surimono*, or deluxe prints for private clients. This print was once part of an announcement, program, or poetry compilation, but the accompanying information that might have identified the purpose has been trimmed away. The scene shows a goldfish vendor by her tank under the trees. The Japanese first imported goldfish from China in the 16th century, fascinated by their novelty and shimmering colors. By the early 19th century, goldfish had become affordable pets for ordinary citizens. Every summer, they were a popular commodity because, psychologically at least, viewing fish swimming in delicate glass bowls tempered the heat. In this print, a little boy excitedly holds up a glass container, perhaps pleading with his mother to buy a goldfish.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Visiting Ōji Inari Shrine, 1801–5

Color woodblock print (*surimono*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. 96.146.326

Cat. no. 155

This *surimono* (privately commissioned print) was originally part of a larger sheet of paper, half of which bore poems or, in all likelihood, some notation indicating why the composition was produced. Although that half is now lacking, Hokusai discreetly embedded enough information in the image to identify the print's purpose. Emblazoned on two red lanterns hanging in a roofed stand are the words "Hōnō Ōji Inari Daimyōjin" (Offering to Ōji Inari Shrine). Ōji Inari Shrine, on the outskirts of Edo, was an important shrine dedicated to Inari, god of rice. Its scenic beauty made it a popular destination for Edo residents. Also written on the lanterns is "hayashi" (a type of musical performance), "nagauta" (a type of singing), and "shamisen" (a three-stringed musical instrument). So the image was likely commissioned by a music association to advertise or commemorate a performance.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Daikagura Performers, 1801–5

Color wood block print (*surimono*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.323

Cat. no. 156

Daikagura performers organized into traveling troupes at New Year's in order to distribute amulets from the great Shinto shrine at Ise. They performed the *shishimai*, the dance of divine lions, and a variety of acrobatic feats. In this print, a group of women and children chance upon a Daikagura troupe. To the delight of one boy, an entertainer is doing a balancing act while simultaneously playing the flute. One of his companions keeps time by beating a drum while another unpacks. Other auspicious motifs in the composition include a view of Mount Fuji in the background and a blossoming plum tree, considered a harbinger of spring. The ideogram for longevity appears on the boy's kite. This celebratory composition was probably commissioned for a poetry society's publication of poems in commemoration of the New Year. Unfortunately, the text that would have helped identify the poetry group has been trimmed from the image.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Abalone

From the series *Shell Pairing by Immortal Poets in the Genroku Style*, 1821

Color woodblock print (*surimono*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.75.51.264
Cat. no. 158

This composition is from Hokusai's largest series of *surimono* (privately commissioned prints), which comprises thirty-six images. The works feature poems about spring and seashells. Each print bears a fan-shaped cartouche decorated with the shells (and their names) mentioned in the poems.

In this print, with abalone on its fan cartouche, Hokusai depicted a fisherman and two women hanging thinly sliced ribbons of abalone on a bamboo frame set up on the beach. Dried abalone strips, called *noshi-awabi*, were originally used as religious offerings. Later it became customary to wrap *noshi-awabi* in red and white paper tied with paper string arranged in fanciful and symbolic knots. Such ceremonial gifts were common at weddings. The third poem likens the strength of dried abalone to conjugal bonds.

*A wife and husband
all by themselves
making dried abalone.
Like dried abalone strips
they'll never break apart.*

Kado no Marume

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Leading-a-Horse Money

From the series *All about Horses*, 1822

Color woodblock print (*surimono*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.200

Cat. no. 159

To celebrate the coming of spring in 1822, Hokusai designed a series of thirty *surimono* featuring poems from the Yomogawa circle of poets. Because 1822 was the “year of the horse,” the subject of that year’s anthology was the horse. The title *Komahiki zeni* (Leading-a-Horse Money) refers to souvenir coins minted in the Edo period that pictured, on one side, a person leading a horse. Such coins were believed to possess talismanic power to “lead” other coins into one’s purse. Hokusai depicted *komahiki zeni* and keys spilling out of a man’s purse. A covered teacup sits on a lacquered saucer decorated with a pattern of plum blossoms, symbolic of spring. Black beans and peppercorns, scattered in the foreground, are used for flavoring *fukucha* (literally, “lucky tea”), served during the festivities mentioned in one of the poems.

*The wind brings the scent of plum blossoms,
ruffling the surface of the lucky tea
flavored with a dried plum.*

*Although it is still a little cold,
today is the beginning of spring!*

Shōbaitei Kiraku

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Horse Talisman

From the series *All about Horses*, 1822

Color woodblock print (*surimono*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.201

Cat. no. 160

This print is from Hokusai's *Uma zukushi* (All about Horses) series, a production of thirty *surimono* published in 1822. At first glance, it might appear to be a still life of household objects unrelated to the title, *Mayoke* (Horse Talisman). Hokusai altered the word *mayoke*, typically written with the characters for "evil" (*ma*) and "barrier" (*yoke*), by replacing the character for "evil" with that for "horse," both pronounced "ma." The title may refer to the legend of the 16th-century warrior Akechi Mitsuharu, who tied his faithful horse to a fence rather than have it killed in battle. Thus, *mayoke* means horse (*ma*) fence (*yoke*), since in this story a fence is a kind of barrier. Because the battle took place on the shores of Lake Biwa, Hokusai decorated the ceramic and lacquered objects in the image with views around the lake.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Laughing Demoness

From the series *One Hundred Tales*, 1831–32

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. 56.52.2

Cat. no. 161

In the early 1830s, Hokusai created the five-print series *Hyaku monogatari* (One Hundred Tales). The title refers to a popular game in which people gathered at night to tell macabre tales of ghosts and demons by the light of one hundred tapers. As each tale was told, a taper was extinguished. Adding to the excitement and dread was the popular belief that the ghouls would appear when the last flame was blown out.

This print shows a female demon (*hannya*) holding the severed head of an infant. She may represent Kishimojin (Hariti, in Sanskrit), a being of Indian origins said to kill human children in order to feed her own prodigious brood. Through the Buddha's intervention, however, she ceased her heinous habit and, with ten of her daughters, became a protector of the Buddhist faith.

Clearly, Hokusai pictured Kishimojin before her conversion. By giving her the jaw and snout of a wild boar and peltlike hair, he emphasized her feral nature. Most disturbing is the *hannya's* expression of glee at her own ghastly deed. Her perverse delight is the more horrifying because she is in fact laughing at her own image, reflected in a polished circular mirror.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Kohada Koheiji

From the series *One Hundred Tales*, 1831–32

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. 56.52.3

Cat. no. 162

By the time Hokusai embarked on his *Hyaku monogatari* (One Hundred Tales) series in the early 1830s, the story of Kohada Koheiji was already well known. Invented by the writer Santō Kyōden, Koheiji was a hapless actor who was murdered by his wife's lover. To the dismay of the cruel couple, however, Koheiji's spirit returned to haunt them. Hokusai's print shows the skeleton of Koheiji emerging in supernatural flames that lick the dome of his skull. The flesh still clinging to his bones and the Buddhist rosary hanging around his neck both suggest Koheiji's recent demise. The bony hands pulling back a mosquito net, presumably over the bed of his wife and her lover, give the apparition a chilling immediacy. Yet by omitting the couple from the scene, Hokusai generalized the haunting in a masterly way, making it the stuff of nightmares for everyone.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

The Manor's Dishes

From the series *One Hundred Tales*, 1831–32

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. 56.52.4

Cat. no. 163

This print illustrates the fate of Okiku, a servant who accidentally broke a precious plate from a set of ten. Angered by her clumsiness, her cruel master killed her and dumped her body into an old well. The troubled spirit of Okiku rises from the well each night and counts nine plates, whereupon she wails miserably and disappears back into her watery tomb. Here, her wet hair trails down a ghostly body composed of blue-and-white plates, and a smokelike wisp issuing from her mouth signifies her plaintive voice. The abandoned well is overgrown with ivy, a plant associated with decay.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Deep Attachment

From the series *One Hundred Tales*, 1831–32

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. 56.52.5

Cat. no. 164

Unlike the other images in Hokusai's five-print *One Hundred Tales* series, which all represent supernatural apparitions, this one is a still life. It shows a Buddhist memorial tablet (*ihai*), offerings of food on a black lacquered stand, and water in a porcelain cup emblazoned with a *svastika* (a symbol of the Buddha). While at first glance the inscription on the tablet seems standard for such memorials, a closer look reveals Hokusai's sense of humor. The Sanskrit character at the top is not an actual character; rather, it resembles the profile of a laughing human head. The posthumous name, too, is comically bogus. The first part, Momonjii-in, might be translated "Old Wild Boar," and this is followed by "Faithful Follower Mr. No-Lie."

Encircling the three objects is a *yamakagashi* (Japanese grass snake). Snakes are regarded as troubled souls, fettered to this world by strong human emotions like vengefulness. This accords with the print's title, *Shūnen*, meaning "deep attachment," the opposite of the Buddhist ideal of enlightenment. This snake may represent the restive soul of "Mr. No-Lie."

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Waterwheel at Onden

From the series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*, 1831–34

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.226

Cat. no. 168

During the Edo period, Onden was a quiet farm village near the Shibuya River, shown here beyond the mill. Today, the area is known as Harajuku, a hotspot for fashion-forward young people. The Shibuya River (also known as the Onden River) was covered over during road construction before the Olympic Games held in Tokyo in 1964. However, it once was a valuable natural resource. As early as 1769, farmers built waterwheels on the river's tributaries and used them to run grain mills and threshing machines.

In this image, two women—one with a wooden bucket, the other with a woven basket—appear to be doing laundry in the millrace. Near them, a boy stares curiously at the waterwheel while his pet turtle tugs at its leash. The two men approaching with heavy sacks are possibly bringing rice to be milled.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Hodogaya on the Tōkaidō Road

From the series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*, 1831–34

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.237

Cat. no. 169

Hodogaya was the fourth station along the Tōkaidō road en route from Edo to Kyoto. This print probably shows travelers on nearby Shinanozaka Hill, famous for the pine trees flanking the road there. Mount Fuji is seen through the trees, whose irregular trunks create an interesting vertical screen.

Hokusai rendered the figures in unusual detail. They form three groups, each traveling in a different manner. On the left are two palanquin bearers and their client, who sits comfortably bundled in the litter. One bearer wipes sweat from his brow while the other ties his shoelaces. Hokusai seems to have had particular sympathy for these men, who earned their living through backbreaking labor.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Under the Wave off Kanagawa

From the series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*, 1831–34

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.230

Cat. no. 170

Under the Wave off Kanagawa is among the strongest images in Hokusai's famous *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*, and it has become an artistic icon, known around the world. Hokusai's greatest rival, Utagawa Hiroshige, who specialized in views of famous places (*meisho-e*), criticized Hokusai's unconventional compositions as too artificial. Certainly this image is the most extreme example of Hokusai's unusual approach.

Mount Fuji appears smaller here than in most of the series' other images. The great wave, arching over the view of the distant mountain, dominates the composition. In fact, Fuji is nearly eclipsed and might even be overlooked by a casual viewer. As if to prevent that, Hokusai designed the curling foam of the wave so as to lead the viewer's gaze toward the far-off sacred mountain. Three boats, tossed by the waves, symbolize the inconsequence of humankind in relation to the power and majesty of nature.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Fine Wind, Clear Weather

From the series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*, 1831–34

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.70.148

Cat. no. 171

The intense red of the mountain suggests that Mount Fuji is illuminated by the setting sun. However, Hokusai may have designed the composition as a view of Fuji bathed in morning sunlight. The word *gaifū* (fine wind) in the title was used by poets to describe the warm southerly breezes that blow across Japan in the summer, and late summer and early autumn were prime times for viewing Mount Fuji at sunrise from across Lake Kawaguchi. An earlier edition of the print has soft coloration, with the summit a paler red, fading to white before meeting the green of the tree line, and the sky a paler blue.

The printer likely began using a darker red pigment when the image was first reprinted, and this new version seems to have met with popular approval. The earlier version is now quite rare, whereas the later one is comparatively plentiful. The image is better known as Red Fuji than as *Fine Wind, Clear Weather*, the title assigned by Hokusai.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Rainstorm beneath the Summit

From the series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*, 1831–34

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.227

Cat. no. 172

Hokusai took an interest in the work of Rinpa school artists, whose boldly designed compositions were often inspired by themes from classical court painting. Hokusai must have been aware of two important sets of folding screens by earlier Rinpa artists picturing the gods of wind and thunder: one by Tawaraya Sōtatsu (active ca. 1600–ca. 1640), the other by Ogata Kōrin (1658–1716). His own renditions of those gods appear in the third volume of *Hokusai manga* (Random Sketches of Hokusai), published in 1815. He was probably also familiar with an interpretation of Kōrin's wind and thunder gods by Sakai Hōitsu (1761–1828), who painted windblown autumn grasses and rain-soaked summer flowers on the reverse of Kōrin's screens. Hokusai's *Rainstorm beneath the Summit*, with its dramatic bolt of lightning, obviously stands for thunder, and his *Fine Wind, Clear Weather* (on view nearby) could represent wind. Hokusai may have intended these two compositions as companion pieces in his *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji* series.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Waterfall at Aoigaoka in Edo

From the series *A Journey to Waterfalls in Various Provinces*, ca. 1833

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.239

Cat. no. 176

Riding a wave of interest in his immensely popular *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji* series, Hokusai designed several more landscape sets in rapid succession. The first of these, *Shokoku taki meguri* (A Journey to Waterfalls in Various Provinces), consists of eight views of waterfalls. Unlike the others in the series, Aoigaoka Waterfall is not a natural cascade. Rather, it was created in the mid-17th century when the third Tokugawa shogun completed a moat system around Edo castle. The pond at Akasawa fed the southernmost moat via Aoigaoka Waterfall. This print shows the stone walls of the moat, the pond in the distance, and a long slope (Aoizaka) leading to the level of the pond.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Kirifuri Falls near Mount Kurokami in Shimotsuke Province

From the series *A Journey to Waterfalls in Various Provinces*, ca. 1833

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.240

Cat. no. 177

Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616) chose the mountainous region north of Edo as the site of his mausoleum. The construction of roadways into the area made it a popular destination for ordinary travelers, who journeyed from afar to pay their respects to the founder of the Tokugawa shogunate. Visitors also enjoyed the area's natural beauty, which included several spectacular waterfalls. Hokusai's vision of Kirifuri Falls is an especially dynamic image in his waterfall series. He depicted only the lower portion of the two-tier falls but has it dominate the picture, thereby emphasizing its scale and power. The diminutive human figures—viewing the falls from a spit of land in the foreground and walking and kneeling precariously partway up the steep slope—accentuate the falls' grandeur.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Ono Falls on the Kisokaidō Road

From the series *A Journey to Waterfalls in Various Provinces*, ca. 1833

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.238

Cat. no. 178

Ono Falls is near the town of Agematsu in Nagano Prefecture. In Hokusai's time, it was between the post towns of Suhara and Agematsu on the Kisokaidō, the roadway linking the historical capital of Kyoto with the shogun's headquarters in Edo through the central mountains. With sixty-nine post towns strung along 320 miles, the Kisokaidō was a picturesque if arduous route.

In this view, a small Shinto shrine stands on a rocky promontory near the falls. The Japanese have traditionally believed that remarkable natural phenomena indicate the presence of a *kami*, or Shinto god, and waterfalls were often a destination for religious adepts, who purified themselves beneath the icy torrents. The people in this image, however, seem to be ordinary travelers, happy to marvel at the falls from the safety of the bridge.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Rōben Falls at Ōyama in Sagami Province

From the series *A Journey to Waterfalls in Various Provinces*, ca. 1833

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Provenance Mrs. Carl W. Jones P:13,728

Cat. no. 179

The Buddhist monk Rōben (689–773) was a religious adviser to Emperor Shōmu. Rōben is credited with the founding, in 755, of Ukōsan Daisanji, popularly known as Ōyamadera temple. *Ukō* means “rainfall” and suggests the mountain’s power to bring rain. A waterfall issuing from the mountain came to be called Rōben Falls.

This image shows pilgrims performing ritual purification (*mizugori*) in Rōben Falls before ascending the mountain to visit Ōyamadera. Many of them carry long wooden swordlike objects, a custom recalling the warrior Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147–99), who is said to have had a wooden sword purified at the temple in hopes this would ensure victory in battle. The pilgrims’ “swords,” which are inscribed with prayers, would have been offered at the temple following the ritual ablutions illustrated here.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Drum Bridge at Kameido Tenjin Shrine

From the series *Unusual Views of Famous Bridges in Various Provinces*, 1833–34

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.218
Cat. no. 180

Whereas Hokusai's series on waterfalls may have sprung from a Japanese reverence for natural phenomena, his series on bridges is a cataloguing of different bridge types, from temporary examples to solidly built, permanent structures. Most of the bridges in the series actually existed, but some were legendary and known to Hokusai through literature and folklore. A set of twelve prints likely was intended, although only eleven are known. Two are on view here.

This bridge is one of two dramatic "drum" bridges at Kameido Tenjin Shrine in Edo. Probably inspired by Chinese "moon" bridges, they were dubbed *taiko* (drum) bridges. The half-circle form made a full circle when reflected in the water, suggesting the shape of a round drum. By showing the bridge from an oblique viewpoint, Hokusai cleverly revealed the topside planking and also the underside and the support pilings.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Horseman in Snow

From the series *Faithful Mirrors of Japanese and Chinese Poems*, 1833–34

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.242

Cat. no. 190

The ten prints in *Shiika shashin kyō* (Faithful Mirrors of Japanese and Chinese Poems) illustrate famous poems and episodes from the lives of famous poets. Nine of the prints have titles that make their subjects clear. This one, however, lacks a title, making its subject somewhat uncertain. The scene may represent a famous poem by the Chinese poet Liu Zongyuan (773–819), whose verses were published widely in both China and Japan. His poem “Jiangxue” (River Snow) describes the serene beauty of a snowy riverbank. Hokusai’s depiction of calm blue water zigzagging through snow-covered embankments evokes Liu’s imagery. The horseman gazing at the water may be the poet himself, enjoying the view.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

A Youth's Journey

From the series *Faithful Mirrors of Japanese and Chinese Poems*, 1833–34

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.243

Cat. no. 191

This print was inspired by a verse by the 8th-century Chinese poet Cui Guofu. The poem implies a young man's hesitation to retrieve his coral whip from the pleasure quarter, because a courtesan might mistake his return as affection. White horses and coral whips were fashionable among young men in China at that time. More generally, the poem extols the beauty of springtime and youth.

Because he left his coral whip behind

his white horse does not move.

He breaks a willow branch in the pleasure quarter

[and uses it as a whip].

It's a beautiful spring day!

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Poppies

From the *Large Flower Series*, ca. 1832

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.206

Cat. no. 192

Poppies were introduced to Japan during the Muromachi period (1392–1573) from China, where they had been cultivated as early as the 7th century. Hokusai's poppies appear to be blown by the wind. Their tall, flexible stems and stiff, serrated leaves have been deftly captured. The prickly roughness of the blue-gray leaves is suggested by black stippling, while subtly darker veining on the petals conveys the flowers' paperlike delicacy. The pale blue background implies clear, sunny weather, conducive to ripening the seedpods that complete the growth cycle. Petals on one blossom have already fallen, leaving only the seedpod. Such details would seem to indicate Hokusai's close observation of actual poppies.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Frog and Morning Glories

From the *Large Flower Series*, ca. 1832

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.208

Cat. no. 193

In creating his flower series, Hokusai may have been influenced by the frequent publication, from the early 19th century on, of modest woodblock-printed picture books featuring the latest botanic cultivars. These books were in high demand as gardening became a popular pastime at all levels of society. A book on unusual varieties of morning glories was published in 1815, and many other specialized publications followed. Hidden among Hokusai's morning glory leaves is a small tree frog whose bent legs echo the vine's angular branching—a playful note reflecting the artist's own quirky sensibilities.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Chrysanthemums and Horsefly

From the *Large Flower Series*, ca. 1832

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.210

Cat. no. 195

Imported from China in the 8th or 9th century, the chrysanthemum (*kiku*) has been an abiding motif in the work of Japanese poets, painters, and textile designers. The imperial family adopted the chrysanthemum as its official emblem. Hokusai, interestingly, paired his chrysanthemums with a common horsefly (*abu*), perhaps implying his independence from the flower's august history.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Rose Mallow and Sparrow

From the *Large Flower Series*, ca. 1832

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.213

Cat. no. 196

This composition is among the most painterly in Hokusai's *Large Flower Series*. While he depicted the blossoms in careful detail, including the petals' network of delicate veining, he rendered the leaves by laying his brush on its side and dragging it diagonally. Each leaf consists of several such strokes rapidly applied. The woodblock carver deftly captured the ragged edges resulting from this brush technique. Hokusai appears to have executed the leaves in two colors, also faithfully reproduced in printed form. The effect is impressionistic; the leaves seem to move in shadow. This painterly technique also suggests the raggedness of rose mallow leaves in late summer and early fall, ravaged by wind and insects by the time the large, showy flowers begin to open.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Lilies

From the *Large Flower Series*, ca. 1832

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.214

Cat. no. 197

A temperate climate—kept mild by the surrounding seas—makes Japan a hospitable place for a wide range of plant life. Some fifteen varieties of lilies (*yuri*) are indigenous to the islands, and the Japanese have eaten the starchy bulbs of some of these plants for centuries. The large and fragrant flowers of wild lilies—conspicuous in fields and mountains during the summer—have long served as subject matter for artists. As with morning glories and other flowering plants, the cultivation and propagation of unique varieties of lilies became a popular pastime among urban gardeners in the Edo period (1615–1868).

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Hydrangea and Swallow

From the *Large Flower Series*, ca. 1832

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.215

Cat. no. 198

Several species of hydrangea (*ajisai*) are indigenous to Japan. *Hydrangea macrophylla* includes *gaku ajisai* varieties, known in the West as lacecaps, with tiny fertile flowers clustered in the center and showy sterile flowers around the outer edge. Other varieties produce large heads of sterile flowers with inconspicuous fertile flowers hidden beneath—like the hydrangeas in this print from Hokusai's *Large Flower Series*. Hokusai depicted the interlocking calyxes in such a way as to give the masses of flowers an abstract quality. Defined by dark, ragged brushstrokes, the swallow serves as a foil to the delicate flowers and creates visual tension with its sharp descent.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Peonies and Canary

From the *Small Flower Series*, ca. 1833

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.205

Cat. no. 199

After the successful publication of his ten-print bird-and-flower (*kachō-ga*) series in the horizontal format (examples on view nearby), Hokusai released another *kachō-ga* series with the same publisher, Nishimuraya. The new set consisted of ten vertical compositions (three are on view) bearing a poem mentioning the featured flower. The Chinese-style poem at the upper right of this print is attributed to the Southern Song scholar Wang Shipeng (1112–71).

*Double-flowered peonies from Yangzhou,
the king of flowers in bloom this spring.*

The idea of cultivating plants as an elegant pastime was introduced from China as early as the 12th century and caught on among Japan's aristocracy and military elite. By the Edo period, the hobby was pursued by all classes of society, even in thriving metropolitan areas like Edo. Peonies were especially popular, with blossoms of various colors, sizes, and types.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Black-Naped Oriole and China Roses

From the *Small Flower Series*, ca. 1833

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.204

Cat. no. 200

The poem on this print is ascribed to Otsuni, presumably Iwama Otsuni (1756–1823), known for poetry reflecting customs and sentiments unique to northern Japan. This verse may evoke his nostalgia for his home there.

*China roses
may be falling
near the house on the hill.*

China roses (*Rosa chinensis*) were popular in the Edo period because they flower year round—except in the far north, where they go dormant in autumn. The falling roses in his poem subtly reveal the poet's northern origins. The black-naped oriole on Hokusai's spray of red and variegated blossoms visits Japan when migrating in spring and autumn. In this unusual view, the bird is seen from above, its head foreshortened against its body.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Japanese Grosbeak and Four-o’Clocks

From the *Small Flower Series*, ca. 1833

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.203

Cat. no. 201

Four-o’clocks were introduced to Japan in the early 17th century and became popular among amateur horticulturists. To protect the flowers from direct sunlight, gardeners typically planted four-o’clocks near a fence, as mentioned in the poem. In contrast to the large, showy blooms of peonies, the “king of flowers,” which thrive in sunlight, four-o’clock blossoms are small and modest, discreetly opening late in the day and withering in the morning sun. Orange gradation along the print’s upper edge suggests sunset, when four-o’clocks are open. The poem is ascribed to “a woman of Yōdai.” A reference to fairyland or the moon, Yōdai implies the poet has supernatural beauty.

*Four-o’clocks
bloom near the fence
behind the peonies.*

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Cranes on Pine, ca. 1834

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.241

Cat. no. 202

Although Hokusai did not include a series title, this oversize print belongs to a set of five images representing creatures with long-standing symbolic associations: cranes and pines, longevity; carp, social ambition; hawks, focused endeavor; tortoises, longevity; horses, fecundity. All the prints except the one with horses were typical of New Year's decoration. They would have been mounted as hanging scrolls for display in the *tokonoma*, or alcove, in Japanese homes. Capitalizing on the vertical format, Hokusai depicted two red-crested cranes with their long legs and graceful necks. In contrast to the carefully delineated birds, the snow-covered pine branch is defined by impressionistic dots and dabs, as if rendered with a brush, supporting the contention that the prints in this series were meant to be mounted as hanging scrolls to mimic paintings.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Kakinomoto no Hitomaro

From the series *Pictures of 100 Poems by 100 Poets
as Told by the Nurse*, 1835–36

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.75.51.269
Cat. no. 203

This composition is based on a famous poem by the courtier Kakinomoto Hitomaro (late 7th–early 8th century).

*Ah! the foot-drawn trail
Of the mountain-pheasant's tail
Drooped like down-curved branch!—
Through this long, long-dragging night
Must I keep my couch alone?*

(trans. Clay MacCauley)

While the poem describes the poet's loneliness on a long autumn night, the picture shows fishermen dragging their net upstream. Presumably Hokusai's design was prompted by the poem's imagery, in which a pheasant's long tail is a metaphor for the long and lonely autumn night. The exhausting labor of the fishermen symbolizes the weariness of the lonely poet. In his typical dramatic fashion, Hokusai arranged this composition around precipitous diagonals: the mountain stream; the fishermen linked by the ropes of their net; the slope of the hills; and the drift of the bonfire's smoke.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Ono no Komachi

From the series *Pictures of 100 Poems by 100 Poets as Told by the Nurse*, 1835–36

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.250

Cat. no. 204

At first glance this scene looks like an ordinary farmers' village in springtime. The image fits the season described in the poem at the upper right, by the famous 9th-century poet Ono no Komachi.

*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.*

Print and poem have more in common, however, than just the season. Two women outside the house at the right are dyeing cloths attached to a board (the seated woman is applying pigment from a pail), while a woman in the center of the picture appears to be washing dyed cloth in the river. Their activity may allude to the colors mentioned in the poem. The man with a broom seems to be sweeping up fallen flowers, which of course quickly fade. Finally, the old woman leaning on her cane under the cherry tree, watching the flowers falling, may represent the poet Komachi in her old age. Komachi herself embodied the sadness of lost youth that is implied in her poem.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Kan-ke

From the series *Pictures of 100 Poems by 100 Poets as Told by the Nurse*, 1835–36

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.251
Cat. no. 205

Hokusai based this image on a poem by Sugawara no Michizane (845–903), a renowned scholar, politician, poet, and calligrapher. Michizane wrote the poem when he accompanied the retired emperor Uda on an outing to Yamato, in present-day Nara Prefecture.

*Coming on the journey this time
I am unable to offer nusa.
A brocade of red leaves,
on the holy mountain
for the pleasure of the gods.*

Typically, travelers offered *nusa*—strips of white paper or multicolored cloth hung from a stick—to *dōsojin* (guardian deities of roads and borders), with prayers for a safe trip. The poem suggests that Michizane, unprepared with *nusa*, offers up the fiery maple leaves of the mountainside as his gift to the gods.

In this print, an elaborately decorated oxcart, of the type used by aristocrats for travel during the Heian period (794–1185), has halted within a temple precinct (indicated by the stone lanterns). Two courtiers in white robes stand next to the cart, apparently talking to the emperor, who remains inside. One of them may be Michizane reporting that he neglected to bring an offering.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Kiyohara no Fukayabu

From the series *Pictures of 100 Poems by 100 Poets as Told by the Nurse*, 1835–36

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.248

Cat. no. 207

Japan's summer months are oppressively hot and humid. A sentiment universal among Japanese is that summer nights are too short. This view reflects not only scientific reality, but also the emotional perception that time slips away faster at night, when the cooler air provides respite from the day's heat and an opportunity for pleasant pastimes. That feeling is expressed in a poem by the 10th-century courtier Kiyohara no Fukayabu, which appears in the square cartouche on the print.

*The summer night is so short
that while evening still seems here
dawn is already coming.
Where in the clouds, I wonder,
has my moon retreated.*

Hokusai illustrated the classical poem with a contemporary scene of a pleasure boat on the Sumida River—the perfect place to enjoy cooling breezes off the water. The largest boat, on the left, could hold dozens of revelers. The smaller boat in the foreground is probably a floating caterer, providing food and services to keep everyone happy.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Minamoto no Muneyuki Ason

From the series *Pictures of 100 Poems by 100 Poets
as Told by the Nurse*, 1835–36

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.24
Cat. no. 206

The poem illustrated here, which appears in the square cartouche, is by Minamoto no Muneyuki (died 939), a high-ranking nobleman and grandson of Emperor Kōkō (reigned 884–87).

*In this mountain hamlet
my loneliness grows
deeper in winter.
Because I know there will be no visitors,
and leaves and grasses will wither.*

Rather than showing an isolated person forlorn in the desolation of winter, Hokusai pictured a group of hunters and woodsmen gathered around a fire and enjoying each other's company. Perhaps he intended to represent the happy moment before the cheerful party's inevitable end. Yet Muneyuki's verse suggests that the poet's loneliness is a permanent condition, exacerbated by winter, when even infrequent visitors cease to call. Possibly the image is Hokusai's personal response to the poet and not meant to illustrate the poem's literal meaning at all. The implication seems to be that winter need not be melancholy if one has a crackling fire and the company of friends.

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Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849

Suspension Bridge between Hida and Etchū

From the series *Unusual Views of Famous Bridges in Various Provinces*, 1833–34

Color woodblock print (*nishiki-e*)

Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.219

Cat. no. 181

Fashioning simple suspension bridges from vines to span mountain rivers or dangerous ravines has been a common practice around the world since ancient times. In rural Japan, where light traffic did not warrant the effort and expense of constructing more permanent structures, vine bridges continued to be built into the Meiji era (1868–1912).

The print's title notes the remote location of this bridge, on the border of two provinces in western Honshu. Hokusai dramatically emphasized both the dizzying height of the bridge above the mist-cloaked treetops and the flexibility that causes its shape to change with each footstep of those traversing it. Nevertheless, the image has a bucolic serenity. The peasants crossing the chasm seem unconcerned about their safety. The foremost worker plods along, and the woman behind him appears to be taking in the view.

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Kitagawa Utamaro, 1753/54–1806

Snake and Lizard

From the illustrated woodblock book
Picture Book: Selected Insects, 1788

Color wood block print (*surimono*)

Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.75.51.130
Cat. no. 87

Utamaro began his career as an illustrator of novels and poetry anthologies, which became popular in the 1780s among cultured urbanites.

Ehon mushi erabi (Picture Book: Selected Insects), a two-volume anthology parodying classical *waka* poetry, was among the first to feature color illustrations. It consists of 15 compositions of insects, reptiles, and plants. Nature has always been a major theme of Japanese art, but many subjects chosen for *Ehon mushi erabi*, such as the earthworm, horsefly, snake, and lizard, are unconventional. Each composition includes two poems about the creatures pictured. As the use of homonyms and metaphors makes clear, however, they are really about love.

Lizard

*Because I am so disliked,
My grudge against you, my love,
Has turned me into a green lizard
Which crawls around
The leaves of arrowroot vine.*

Tonya no Sakefune (trans. Betchaku and Mirviss)

Snake

*I am sending you a long, wistful letter
Written on paper
Rolled up like a coiled snake.
My pent-up passion,
Is as deep as a snake is long.*

Chida no Hanamoto (trans. Betchaku and Mirviss)

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