

From Black and White through Brocade: The Development of Woodblock-Printing Techniques in 18th-Century Japan

April 7–June 5, 2016

The subtle, pink blush of cherry blossoms, the glamorous pastels of kimono, the charming vibrancy of seasonal landscapes, and the dramatic Prussian blue of ocean waves. While the reserved palette of monochromatic prints has unmistakable appeal, *ukiyo-e* is most widely celebrated for its spectacular use of color. The origins of polychromatic printmaking, however, remain a mystery to many viewers.

Beginning with the elegant black-and-white book illustrations of Nishikawa Sukenobu (1671–1750), this print rotation [reveals](#) the stylistic evolution of Japanese woodblock printmaking over the short span of the 18th century, including the hand-application of cinnabar (Japanese: *tan-e*) and colored lacquer (*urushi-e*), as well as the development of multi-block woodblock printmaking (*nishiki-e*; literally, “brocade prints”). Some of the works on view will include up to [10](#) distinct colors.

[Also on display](#) in the alcove of the adjoining Japan gallery will be works by the celebrated print designer Suzuki Harunobu (1725—1770), who is credited with the innovation of *nishiki-e*.—Heather Flemming, Society of Asian Art in Hawai'i Intern

Suggested images:

Nishikawa Sukenobu (1671–1750)

Princess Soto'ori and the Spider

Japan, Edo period (1615–1868), 1720s

Woodblock print; ink on paper

Gift of James A. Michener, 1971 (16077)

Suzuki Harunobu (1725–1770)

The Story of Giō (Hotoke-Gozen): Dancing Before Kiyomori

Japan, Edo period (1615–1868), c.1765

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper

Gift of James A. Michener, 1959 (14840)

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