

Nishikawa Sukenobu (1671 – 1750)

Princess Soto'ori and the Spider

Japan, Edo period (1603– 1868), 1720s

Woodblock print; ink on paper

Gift of James A. Michener, 1971

(16077)

According to Japanese folklore, the appearance of a spider on one's clothing was thought to indicate the imminent arrival of a lover. In this print depicting a scene from the 8th century *Nihonshoki* (*Chronicles of Japan*), Princess Soto'ori is inspired by the spider, and writes a poem longing for her lover, the emperor:

*I know in advance
from the acts of the spider
like a tiny crab:
tonight is surely a night
when my beloved will come.*

(Translation by Helen Craig McCullough)

Nishikawa Sukenobu (1671 – 1750)
***Young Woman Dressing the Hair of a
Man Playing Shamisen***

Japan, Edo period (1603 – 1868), 1730s

Woodblock print; ink on paper

Gift of James A. Michener, 1991

(21631)

Sukenobu was a prominent artist who began his career making drawings and illustrations for popular fiction books, as well as compositions with strong kabuki themes. His work is considered *kamigata-e*, the term given to artwork coming from the Osaka/Kyoto region, distinct from that of Edo (modern day Tokyo).

Torii Kiyonobu (1664—1729)
Ikushima Shingorō as Chihara Sakon,
Ichikawa Danjūrō II as Ukishima
Danjō, and Kirinami Takie as Hyogo's
wife, Iwaki

Japan, Edo period (1603—1868), 1711
Woodblock print; ink on paper with hand-
coloring (*tan-e*)

Gift of James A. Michener, 1991
(21659)

This print, an illustration of a scene from a kabuki theater performance, was initially attributed to Torii Kiyomasu (c. 1690s—1720s). However, upon further study of actual kabuki performances of the time, including specific dates, actors, and roles played, scholars have suggested it is actually the work of Torii Kiyonobu. The illustration is a scene from the play *Shida Konjiki no Uroko* showing a confrontation among characters over a missing treasure.

Torii Kiyomasu I (c.1696—1716)
The Onnagata Actor Nakamura Senya
I, in the role of Tokonatsu in the play
Mitsudomoe katoku biraki

Japan, Edo period (1603—1868), 1717
Woodblock print; ink on paper with hand-
coloring (*tan-e*)
Gift of James A. Michener, 1988
(20497)

Torii Kiyomasu I remains a mysterious figure. His style is difficult to distinguish from that of Torii Kiyonobu (1664—1729), and in fact it is possible the two were the same artist simply using different names for different types of work. This print was chosen as the cover to the *Ukiyo-e taisei*, a catalogue of over 5,000 prints for quick reference assembled in the 20th century, a testament to its quality of design and execution.

Sugimura Jihei (active c.1681 – 1703)

The Story of the Jewel Theft

Japan, Edo period (1603– 1868), late 1670s

Woodblock print; ink on paper with hand-coloring (*tan-e*)

Gift of James A. Michener, 1972

(17042)

Sugimura Jihei was the pupil of Hishikawa Moronobu (1618– 1694), one of the most successful *sumizuri-e* artists. He was also one of the earliest designers of single sheet prints, or *ichimai-e*. This is one sheet of a diptych illustrating the legend of a woman diver stealing the hidden treasure of a dragon god. In the full composition, the figure in the lower right is pulling the female jewel thief out of the water and into the boat, as she is being chased by the dragon.

Utagawa Toyoharu (1735—1814)

***The Tenma Tenjin Festival
at Night in Osaka***

Japan, Edo period (1603—1868), late 1770s
Woodblock print; ink on paper with hand-
coloring (*tan-e*)

Gift of James A. Michener, 1973
(16507)

The Tenjin *matsuri*, or festival, is a great boat festival that takes place in Osaka during the summer. It is a celebration of Tenman Tenjin, the patron god of learning and art, and involves performances of traditional Japanese arts. There are processions of thousands of people on land as well as on boats sailing upstream of the Tenmabashi Bridge. At dusk the boats are lit up with fire, which reflects off of the water, creating a striking and exquisite vision. This print offers an example of single-point perspective, a European influence experimented with in ukiyo-e prints.

Okumura Toshinobu
(active c.1717–1740s)

Ichimura Takenojō IV as a Courtesan

Japan, Edo period (1603–1868), 1722

Woodblock print; ink on paper with hand-applied lacquer (*urushi-e*)

Gift of James A. Michener, 1971
(16080)

The actor Ichimura Takenojō IV was known for his roles as agile, ostentatious male characters. This depiction of him in the role of a courtesan is outside of his typical repertoire. The questions of which specific character and play are depicted in this print are still unresolved. However, the butterfly emblem on the actor's kimono is widely associated with the character Soga no Gorō and his lover Kewaizaka no Shōshō, so it has been suggested that this is Takenojō in the role of Shōshō.

Unknown Artist
Soga no Gorō and Kobayashi
Asahina

Japan, Edo period (1603—1868), late 1720s
Woodblock print; ink on paper with hand-
applied lacquer (*urushi-e*)
Gift of James A. Michener, 1991
(24461)

Represented in this print is a scene, though not a stage performance, from the *Soga Monogatari*, a tale of the revenge of the Soga brothers. Here, Asahina is stopping Gorō from attacking Kudō Suketsune, who killed his father. The thicker lines and “gourd-like” legs are characteristic of Kabuki illustrations, contrasting with the delicate brush strokes and slender renditions of images of courtesans.

Torii Kiyomasu II (1706—1750)
Three Actors, center: Yamashita
Kinsaku

Japan, Edo period (1603—1868), late 1720s
Woodblock print; ink on paper with hand-
applied lacquer (*urushi-e*)
Gift of James A. Michener, 1970
(15951)

This is the center panel of a triptych showing three actors. *Urushi* was most often applied to hair, kimono, and thick, dark lines in order to achieve a richer, more lustrous look. The plum blossoms on the kimono in this print suggest a connection to the city Osaka.

Nishimura Shigenaga (1697—1756)

A Parody of the Immortal Kinkō

Japan, Edo period (1603—1868), c.1737

Woodblock print; ink on paper with hand-applied lacquer (*urushi-e*)

Gift of James A. Michener, 1972

(16313)

This print is one of the earliest examples of *mitate* in a single sheet print. *Mitate-e* made references to historical or literary events and themes, sometimes linking unlikely subjects. Comparisons, metaphors, and allusions are often employed in *mitate-e*. In this print, a courtesan replaces a Taoist immortal in a Chinese legend about that character returning from meeting the Fish King, riding a carp. The courtesan is carrying a letter that reads “How tender was our meeting yesterday!” It is interesting to note how commoners during the Edo period, such as the artist Shigenaga, had enough education to understand and produce parodies of the classics.

Torii Kiyomasu II (1706—1750)
The Onnagata Actor Segawa Kikujirō
I as Shirokiya Okuma

Japan, Edo period (1603—1868), c.1737

Woodblock print; ink on paper with hand-applied lacquer (*urushi-e*)

Gift of James A. Michener, 1972

(16309)

Overlapping with prints that employed the use of lacquer were prints that included a greater variety in hand-painted colors. Much credit is given to Okumura Masanobu (1686—1764) for developing the *beni-e*, or red picture, style. In these prints, the pictures are printed in black only and then hand-painted with, predictably, overt use of crimson. As these prints gained in popularity, the time artists put into the hand-coloring diminished, and the results were at times slapdash.

Okumura Masanobu (1686—1764)
Soga Gorō at the Banquet of Wada no
Yoshimori, from Soga Monogatari

Japan, Edo period (1603—1868), 1740s
Woodblock print; ink on paper with hand-coloring

Purchase, 1935
(10384)

This is an early example of a perspective print. The arrangement of the architecture is pivotal in determining the composition's recession into depth. Represented is another scene from the *Soga Monogatari* in which Asahina is preventing Soga Gorō (at left) from attacking his enemy Kudō Suketsune, the man who killed his father.

Okumura Masanobu (1686—1764)

Segawa Kikujirō and Sanogawa Ichimatsu

Japan, Edo period (1603—1868), early 1750s

Woodblock print; ink on paper with hand-coloring

Gift of James A. Michener, 1971

(16007)

Segawa Kikujirō, an *onnagata*, or man playing a female role, is on the right smoking a long tobacco pipe. A *kamuro*, or young servant to a courtesan, is carrying a tray of coal. Sanogawa Ichimatsu, playing the role of a servant, carries an umbrella decorated with illustrations of peonies.

One of the most significant developments in woodblock printing came with the invention of the color block. Rather than apply color with a brush, additional woodblocks were carved for the purpose of applying pigments, one color at a time. In order to ensure that the various blocks lined up correctly on the paper, two markings were cut into opposite corners of the blocks. This register is called a *kento*. Applying color via the blocks opened up new avenues for creativity and ingenuity in woodblock design. The earliest of these prints, which still employed an overt use of red, are called *benizuri-e*.

Okumura Masanobu (1686—1764)
Courtesan and Two Kamuro Reading
a Playbill

Japan, Edo period (1603—1868), 1750
Woodblock print; ink and color on paper
(*benizuri-e*)
Gift of James A. Michener, 1957
(14033)

Okumura Masanobu (1686—1764)

***Sanogawa Ichimatsu as Uga no
Rangiku-maru***

Japan, Edo period (1603—1868), 1756

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper

(*benizuri-e*)

Gift of James A. Michener, 1991

(24454)

This is one of Masanobu's last designs. The artist was active and prolific throughout this period of dynamic development of the use of color in woodblock prints. He created works in the *sumizuri-e* style, explored *tan-e*, *urushi-e*, and *beni-e*, and was one of the first to try his hand at using blocks to apply color in *benizuri-e*. His work viewed on its own is demonstrative of the advances made in woodblock printing technique in the 18th century.

Torii Kiyonaga (1752—1815)

Afterglow of Late Summer

Japan, Edo period (1603—1868), 1779

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper

(*benizuri-e*)

Gift of James A. Michener, 1970

(15975)

Torii Kiyonaga is best known for his prints and book illustrations of elegant women with elongated, slender figures in urban settings capturing the vibrancy of Edo during his time. Kiyonaga was the last celebrated artist of the Torii School. In this image depicting the heat of the month of June, a geisha returning from a bath stops and pauses at a garden bench. Originally her robe was blue, but with the passage of time it has faded to yellow.

Suzuki Harunobu (1724—1770)
The Story of Giō (Hotoke-gozen):
Dancing Before Kiyomori

Japan, Edo period (1603—1868), c.1765

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper

(*nishiki-e*)

Gift of James A. Michener, 1959

(14840)

Harunobu, who is featured in the alcove in the Japan gallery next door, is credited with the innovation of *nishiki-e*, or brocade prints. Depicted here is the warlord Taira no Kiyomori (1118—81) seated next to his female companion, Giō. After Giō arranged for the dancer Hotoke-gozen to perform, Kiyomori subsequently fell in love with her, and banished Giō (as an expression of his adoration of Hotoke-gozen). Hotoke-gozen was so bothered by this injustice that she joined Giō in living a life of prayer.

Isoda Koryūsai (1735—1790)
The Courtesan Nanaya of the
Kadokanaya Brothel
with her Two Kamuro

Japan, Edo period (1603—1868), c. 1780
Woodblock print; ink and color on paper
(*nishiki-e*)
Gift of James A. Michener, 1973
(16405)

Koryūsai was one of the most prolific artists of his time, producing over 2,500 print designs. However, he is rarely as highly regarded as his more innovative contemporaries Harunobu (1724—1770) and Kiyonaga (1752—1815). Nevertheless, Koryūsai should be recognized as an important figure within the ukiyo-e tradition, because his contributions helped to sustain the popular appeal of this art form.

Torii Kiyonaga (1752—1815)

***Segawa Kikunojō III in the Nō play
Shakkyō (The Stone Bridge)***

Japan, Edo period (1603—1868), 1789

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper

(*nishiki-e*)

Gift of James A. Michener, 1970

(15561)

Segawa Kikunojō is depicted here performing the lion dance in a Nō drama. The peonies he holds in his hands (as well as those surrounding him), his long red wig, and his three decorative kimono all show the vibrancy that may be achieved by applying color via woodblocks.

Kubo Shunman (1757—1820)

Chōfu, Chidori, and Kōya

Japan, Edo period (1603—1868),

c.1787—1788

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper

(*beni-girai*)

Gift of James A. Michener, 1991

(21885)

On display are three of a complete set of six prints illustrating the Six Crystal Rivers, a popular subject in ukiyo-e prints. The rivers are found in different provinces, and all are associated with classical poetry. In this set, the rivers are depicted as one, and provide the setting for *bijin* (beautiful women), undertaking various water-related tasks.

Suzuki Harunobu (1724—1770)

Boy on a Hobby Horse

Japan, Edo period (1603—1868),

c.1767–1768

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper

(*nishiki-e*)

Gift of James A. Michener, 1959

(14653)

Harunobu is known for his charming portrayal of domestic scenes. Here a child is shown playing on a hobby horse, wearing a kimono with a design that makes it look as if he is actually riding a real horse. The woman gazes at the boy while she shields them both with a parasol, exemplifying her maternal devotion.

Suzuki Harunobu (1724—1770)

***The Wrestling Bout (Parody of
Ushiwakamaru and Benkei)***

Japan, Edo period (1603—1868), c.1767

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper

(*nishiki-e*)

Gift of James A. Michener, 1957

(14045)

While this print first appears to be another quaint scene of domestic life, it has been suggested that it is actually a parody of a fight between the legendary Yoshitsune and Benkei in Kyoto. Two of Japan's most loved heroes, their adventures are the focus of many Kabuki and Nō performances. The handrail on the patio is a reference to the Gojō Bridge where the fight took place, and the plum blossoms allude to Tenjin Shrine, which Yoshitsune visited. This, then, is an example of *mitate-e*, pictures that reference literary or historical events and characters in a symbolic or metaphorical way.

Suzuki Harunobu (1724—1770)
A Parody of the Chinese Sage, Sun Kang: A Couple Reading a Letter

Japan, Edo period (1603—1868), c.1770

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper

(*nishiki-e*)

Gift of James A. Michener, 1991

(21733)

This is a later version of an earlier print that had markings indicating that it was once used as a calendar. Because Japanese calendar production was controlled by the government, privately printed calendars concealed the calendar markings within the imagery of the print. In this print, the calendar markings have been removed from the letter that the young man and woman are reading. It has been suggested that the scene is from Act VII of the *Chūshingura*, a common literary reference in ukiyo-e prints.

Suzuki Harunobu (1724—1770)

Bush Clover

Japan, Edo period (1603—1868), c.1769

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper

(*nishiki-e*)

Gift of James A. Michener, 1991

(14014)

In Japanese culture plants, animals, birds, and insects are often used to symbolize seasons, and the associated feelings at that time of year. A bush clover, or *hagi*, signifies the melancholy of autumn, as summer ends and winter approaches. The poem in this print reflects the melancholy the bush clover represents:

*To those delicate branches of hagi
Which make one feel so much concern
Even the dews look disturbing
On an autumn evening.*

Suzuki Harunobu (1724—1770)

Catching Fireflies

Japan, Edo period (1603—1868), c.1765-1770

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper
(*nishiki-e*)

Gift of James A. Michener, 1969
(15485)

Harunobu often used soft, flat tones in the background of his compositions. The use of a flat black in the background of this print makes the other objects and components of the fore and middle ground stand out.

Suzuki Harunobu (1724—1770)

Wild Geese in the Rain

Japan, Edo period (1603—1868), c.1767

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper

(*nishiki-e*)

Gift of James A. Michener, 1970

(15559)

Harunobu's idealized women are characteristically slender and youthful. His lyrical style was consistent with the "floating world" culture of the Edo period, that is, unashamedly partaking in superficial, hedonistic behaviors and ignoring the hardships and difficulties of the lower classes.

The poem on this print reads:

*In the autumn rain
Overcome with loneliness
In the dark of night
Only the voices
Of the crossing call of the goose*

*Aki no ame ni
Mono samuku nari
Yami no yo o
Koe bakari nite
Wataru karigane*

Suzuki Harunobu (1724—1770)

Three Women Making a Snow Ball

Japan, Edo period (1603—1868), c.1766

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper

(*nishiki-e*)

Gift of James A. Michener, 1957

(13992)

Another technique employed by Harunobu is that of *karazuri*, which is known as embossing, or gauffrage, in English. This method requires pressure and a polishing tool to be applied to the paper while it is over an un-inked block, leaving the pattern on the block sculpted into the paper. The highly texturized effect can be seen in both this print, and the one immediately following to the right, *A Parody of Lin Ho-ching (21730)*.

Suzuki Harunobu (1724—1770)

A Parody of Lin Ho-ching

Japan, Edo period (1603—1868), c.1765

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper

(*nishiki-e*)

Gift of James A. Michener, 1991

(21730)

This image is thought to be a *mitate-e* of Fukurokuju, the God of happiness, wealth, and longevity. Fukurokuju is often depicted with two symbols of longevity, the crane and the turtle. In this picture, only the crane is visible. The god's trademark long beard is represented by a straw apron draped on the pail to the right.