

Kawase Hasui (1883-1957)

The Washington Monument on the Potomac River

Japan, Shōwa period, 1935

Color woodblock print

Gift of Philip H. Roach, Jr., 1999

(26637)

In 1912, Tokyo Mayor Ozaki Yukio donated cherry trees to the city of Washington D.C. in honor of the friendship between Japan and the United States. Since 1935, the cherry blossom festival has been held yearly in late March (suspended only during World War II) on the north bank of the Tidal Basin in West Potomac Park.

It is believed that Hasui usually traveled to and sketched the scenes he used in his printmaking. However, it is unknown whether Hasui actually visited Washington D.C. to sketch this particular scene. Through Watanabe, Hasui and other shin hanga artists had a significant market for their prints in the United States, and this subject, one of the most distinctive in Hasui's oeuvre, might have been intended to take advantage of the interest in Japanese culture among U.S. collectors inspired by the cherry blossom festival, which remains popular today.

Kawase Hasui (1883-1957)

Zentsūji Temple, Sanshū, from the series Collection of Scenic Views of Japan II, Kansai Edition

Japan, Shōwa period, 1937

Color woodblock print

Gift of Philip H. Roach, Jr., 1999

(26633)

The series Collection of Scenic Views of Japan II, Kansai Edition contains a total of 23 prints which were produced between 1933 and 1941. The series focuses on famous places and views in the Kansai area including Kyoto, Nara, Osaka, and Kobe.

This print shows the temple of Zentsūji in Shikoku, an important pilgrimage site closely connected with the influential Heian-period Buddhist monk Kūkai, who brought the esoteric teachings of the Shingon sect from China, and established this temple in 807. Like his 19th century predecessor Hiroshige, Hasui was well known for his use of atmospheric effects such as rain and mist, and this is a typical composition for the artist depicting the pagoda of Zentsūji on a rainy day.

Kawase Hasui (1883-1957)

Heirinji Temple, Nobidome

Japan, Shōwa period, 1952

Color woodblock print

Gift of Philip H. Roach, Jr., 1999

(26632)

A Zen temple of the Rinzai sect located in Saitama Prefecture, Heirinji was originally built in 1375. It was destroyed by Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598) in 1590 and rebuilt in 1603 by Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616), founder of the Tokugawa Shogunate that governed Japan during the Edo period, marking the last shogunate before the Meiji Emperor was restored to power in 1868. It has been designated as a Japanese national monument.

Hasui depicts the main wooden entrance of the temple complex in the shade. Following traditional precedents, Hasui provides a clear seasonal reference in the reddish-orange autumn foliage in the background. At the same time, the composition is modernized through the partial sunlight, which creates an illusion of moving patterns of shadows on the ground. This was a common device for prints published by Watanabe and can be found in the works of many artists who designed for him as he was developing the shin hanga style.

Kawase Hasui (1883-1957)

Rain in Maekawa, Sōshū, from the series Selection of Views of the Tōkaidō

Japan, Shōwa period, 1932

Color woodblock print

Gift of Philip H. Roach, Jr., 1999

(26631)

Sōshū is present-day Kanagawa Prefecture. The array of traditional thatched-roof houses along the street, the shadows of large pine trees, a person walking with an umbrella, and the straight lines of rain produce a sense of tranquility as well as the nostalgia reminiscent of some work by Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858), an ukiyo-e designer of the late Edo period.

Watanabe was influential in promoting Hiroshige's work, and held an important retrospective on the sixtieth anniversary of the artist's death in 1918. Not surprisingly, Hasui's compositions are often reminiscent of Hiroshige, but in this case the reference to the earlier artist is almost obligatory, since prints depicting the Tōkaidō were popularized by Hiroshige, beginning with his first series of the fifty-three stations along the road in the 1830s.

Kawase Hasui (1883-1957)

After Snow at Yoshida

Japan, Shōwa period, 1926-1989

Color woodblock print

Promised gift of Philip H. Roach Jr.

(TD 2010-05-05)

Hasui first trained under the Western-style (yōga) painter Okada Saburōsuke (1869-1939), and, during this time, he learned by sketching real-life objects and scenery. At the age of twenty-seven, Hasui became the student of Kaburaki Kiyokata (1878-1972), a prominent painter in the newly developing Japanese national school of painting called nihonga (literally "Japanese painting") during the early 20th century.

In 1918, Watanabe Shōzaburō (1885-1962), the founder of the new prints movement, saw great promise in Hasui's prints, and, under his direction, Hasui became one of the principal shin-hanga (new prints) landscape artists, shifting focus from painting to woodblock print design. This print seamlessly incorporates compositional techniques from both classical Japanese and European painting.

Yoshimoto Gessō (1881-1936)

Birds on Wisteria Vine

Japan, Taishō period, c. 1920

Color woodblock print

Gift of Philip H. Roach, Jr., 1993

(25353)

Gessō, who trained in traditional Japanese painting, specialized in landscape print designs and kachō-e (pictures of birds and flowers). His prints were produced by commercial publishers such as Nishinomiya Yosaku. Few biographical details are available about the artist, but he left behind a corpus of prints of which this is a typical example, contrasting an atmospheric landscape depicted primarily through ink washes with finely delineated birds and wisteria.

Itō Sōzan (b. 1884)

Dragonfly on Morning Glory Vine

Japan, Meiji-Taishō period, c. 1910

Color woodblock print

Gift of Philip H. Roach, Jr., 1993

(25310)

Little is known about Sōzan, who created a number of “birds and flower” prints in collaboration with Watanabe Shōzaburō. Sōzan was particularly skilled at using soft gradations of color to depict the minute details of birds, flowers, and insects. The lyricism and decorative quality of this print are characteristic of both painting and woodblock prints from the Meiji period, setting the stage for the innovations that marked the second and third decades of the 20th century.

Shōda Kōhō (dates unknown)

Rabbits under a Full Moon

Japan, Shōwa-Heisei period, c. 1990

Color woodblock print

Gift of Philip H. Roach, Jr., 2000

(26850)

Like Gessō several decades earlier, Kōhō also worked with the publisher Nishinomiya, producing numerous landscape and bird-and-flower prints. Although this is a recent print, it is done in a nostalgic style entirely derived from Japanese painting of the Edo period and earlier, appropriate to the traditional subject.

This print depicts two rabbits with autumn plants under a full moon, a popular subject during the moon festival, which typically occurs in either September or October. In a famous legend (which originated in China) a rabbit lives on the moon. In the Japanese version, he pounds rice cakes (mochi), and thus the image of rabbits pounding mochi on the moon represents the celebration of a bountiful harvest.

Kawanabe Kyōsui (1886-1935)

Bee and Chinese Lantern Flower

Japan, Meiji period, c. 1895

Color woodblock print

Gift of Philip H. Roach, Jr., 1992

(23940)

Kyösui was a painter in the new national style of Japanese painting known as nihonga that started to develop in the Meiji period in response to an increasing awareness of international art. She studied with her father, the artist Kawanabe Kyōsai (1831-1889). Although Kyösui was best known as a bijinga (pictures of beautiful women) painter, her firm foundation in traditional techniques and superb calligraphic brush skills are equally evident in this delicate depiction of a bee on a flowering branch.

Nishika (Ryōmi) (active c. 1930)

Mallard and Lotus Leaves

Japan, Shōwa period, c. 1930

Color woodblock print

Gift of Philip H. Roach, Jr., 2005

(28222)

This eclectic style of combining Japanese and Western art elements (such as flowing black outlines juxtaposed with light color gradations) demonstrates a similarity with decorative works of the Western art nouveau style. Many European artists in the late 19th century were inspired by the natural motifs depicted in Japanese ukiyo-e. Such art in turn was imported to Japan, where it was well received, and the resulting cultural and artistic exchange gave birth to new modes and artistic ideas.

Watanabe Seitei (1851-1918)

Pigeons on a Fountain

Japan, Meiji period, c. 1900

Color woodblock print

Gift of Philip H. Roach, Jr., 1994

(25643)

The nihonga artist Watanabe Seitei studied under Kikuchi Yōsai (1788-1878), a Kanō-School-trained artist who advocated the personal observation and sketching of subject matter. Watanabe traveled in the United States and Europe, and studied painting in France for three years. He was perhaps the first nihonga artist trained abroad, and he produced many bird-and-flower prints incorporating Western artistic devices such as chiaroscuro. He received a silver medal for his painting at the Paris Exposition of 1878 and influenced many artists in the generation that followed him, including Mizuno Toshikata (1866-1908) and Kaburaki Kiyokata (1878-1972).

Nakamura Shundei (1904-1966)

White Flowered Gourd

Japan, Shōwa period, c. 1929

Color woodblock print

Promised gift of Philip H. Roach Jr., 2008

(TD 2008-48-06)

Originally from Yamaguchi Prefecture, Shundei was another artist who trained in the newly developing national school of Japanese painting called nihonga. Like many artists from the first half of the 20th century active in nihonga painting and shin hanga woodblock prints, little is known about his life.

This print portrays Shundei's stylized depiction of flowers and leaves with curvilinear lines, wherein the bold contrast between the large

white flowers and the black background imparts a sense of modernity to the composition.

Umehara Eijirō (Active c. 1900)

Evening Cool on the Sumida

Japan, Meiji period, 1900

Color woodblock print

Gift of Philip H. Roach, Jr., 1994

(25616)

Little is known about Umehara Eijirō. The publisher of this print, Nishinomiya Yosaku, published many translated foreign books and prints in Japan, and reached a wide international audience as well. Many woodblock prints from the early 20th century were conservative in their subject matter, resulting not only from the expectations of a domestic market familiar with Edo-period ukiyo-e, but also from the interest in 19th-century landscape prints by artists such as Hokusai and Hiroshige among collectors in Europe and the United States.

Takahashi Hiroaki (Shōtei) (1871-1945)

The Shubi Pine on the Sumida River

Japan, Taishō period, c. 1920

Color woodblock print

Gift of Philip H. Roach, Jr., 1994

(25619)

Takahashi Hiroaki (Shōtei) was a nihonga artist who apprenticed under his uncle, Matsumoto Fūko (1840-1923).



Demand for reproduction of Edo-period ukiyo-e prints grew in the early 20th century, partly due to the revival of the Edo culture within Japan but also driven by the popularity of Japonisme in the United States. Shōtei initially worked in the reproduction business, but upon being discovered by Watanabe he was recruited to create shin hanga prints instead. The subject of this print, a beauty watching fireworks over the Ryōgoku Bridge on the Sumida River in the distance from under a famous scenic pine tree, shows Shōtei's intimate familiarity with the work of Hiroshige, who designed numerous variations on this subject over the course of his career.

Takahashi Hiroaki (Shōtei) (1871-1945)

Sakawa (in Shizuoka Prefecture)

Japan, Taishō period, c. 1920

Color woodblock print

Gift of Philip H. Roach, Jr., 1994

(25622)

This is another print that shows the influence of Hiroshige and other 19th century ukiyo-e on Shōtei, but the color sense, depiction of the evening figures in solid black, and play of shadows and moonlight on the water give this print the distinctively modern aesthetic that distinguished shin hanga from its Edo-period precedents.

Takahashi Hiroaki (Shōtei) (1871-1945)

Throwing Fishing Nets at Tsukuda (Tokyo Bay)

Japan, Taishō period, c. 1920

Color woodblock print

Gift of Philip H. Roach, Jr., 1994

(25621)

Tsuji Kakō (1870-1931)

Moon Fishing

Japan, Meiji period, c. 1900

Color woodblock print

Gift of Philip H. Roach, Jr., 1994

(25600)

Tsuji Kakō studied under Kōno Bairei (1844-1895), a nihonga painter from the Maruyama-Shijō School in Kyoto. Kakō was a leading figure in the early 20th century Kyoto art world, and he eventually became the head of the Kyoto Municipal School of Fine Arts and Crafts. At the same time, Kakō was overshadowed for much of the 20th century by Bairei's more illustrious student Takeuchi Seiho, and only recently has he begun to receive the recognition he deserves in the history of modern Japanese art.

Takahashi Hiroaki (Shōtei) (1871-1945)

Edo River

Japan, Taishō period, c. 1915

Color woodblock print

Gift of Philip H. Roach, Jr., 1994

(25623)

Typical of the nostalgia popular in shin hanga subjects, Shōtei here eschews all but the most subtle indications of the modernization and industrialization that gripped Japan in the early 20th century, capturing instead a timeless moment on the Edo River under a full moon that could equally have taken place centuries earlier.

Tsuchiya Köitsu (1870-1949)

Morigasaki Coast

Japan, Shōwa period, c. 1930

Color woodblock print

Gift of Philip H. Roach, Jr., 2000

(26835)

Tsuchiya Köitsu first came to Tokyo to apprentice under Matsuzaki, a carver for Kobayashi Kiyochika (1847-1915), when he was fifteen years old. Kiyochika, a Meiji print artist, took Köitsu into his home for four years. Köitsu designed woodblock prints depicting the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), and later became a lithographer. From 1932, Köitsu collaborated with the main publishing companies of the time, including Watanabe, Kawaguchi, and Doi. His prints are characterized by the dramatic use of light, a trait shared with his teacher, Kiyochika. This particular print is also reminiscent of works by William Turner (1789-1862), a Romantic landscape artist who was known as "the painter of light."

Tanauchi (Dates Unknown)

Sailing Boat on a Lake

Japan, Shōwa period, c. 1960

Color woodblock print

Gift of Philip H. Roach, Jr., 1995

(26004)

This impressionistic print was produced by Kyoto Hangain Publishing Company, known for its sumō prints and attractive landscapes equally popular in the domestic and foreign tourist markets. The artist, a certain Tanauchi, is otherwise unknown.

Ishiwata Köitsu (1897 - ?)

Twilight in Imamiya Street, Chōshi

Japan, Shōwa period, 1932

Color woodblock print

Gift of Philip H. Roach, Jr., 1999

(26630)

Ishiwata Köitsu studied design, modern Japanese painting (nihonga), and fabric dyeing. He gained a reputation in the 1920s as a fabric designer for the Nozawa department store in Yokohama. Köitsu was inspired by his older, more famous contemporary Kawase Hasui to design shin hanga and worked with Hasui's publisher, Watanabe Shōzaburō. Watanabe published a set of nostalgic prints designed by Köitsu depicting genre scenes of small town life in 1931, and this print might be from that series.

Tsuchiya Köitsu (1870-1949)

The Pond of Sarusawa, Nara on a Rainy Day

Japan, Shōwa period, 1941

Color woodblock print

Gift of Philip H. Roach, Jr., 2004

(28044)

As the bottom of this print reveals, modern Japanese woodblock prints often had English titles, showing the international market for shin hanga and the importance of English-speaking patrons to the artists and publishing houses that specialized in this new genre of woodblock prints.

Seemingly timeless scenes like this, using pleasant colors to depict light and movement, were especially appreciated by foreigners who

sought the old Japan represented in Edo-period ukiyo-e by artists such as Hiroshige, and still present through ancient monuments like Sarusawa pond in the early capital of Nara and the 15th-century pagoda of Kōfukuji in the background.

Tsuchiya Kōitsu (1870-1949)

Asakusa Kannon Temple

Japan, Shōwa period, 1933

Color woodblock print

Gift of Philip H. Roach, Jr., 1999

(26629)

Itō Yūhan (Dates Unknown)

Sarusawa Pond

Japan, Shōwa period, c. 1935

Color woodblock print

Gift of Philip H. Roach, Jr., 1993

(25311)

Itō Yūhan was a landscape artist who designed several woodblock prints during the 1930s. His works were published by Nishinomiya Yosaku, who collaborated with many artists to produce modern Japanese woodblock prints. Itō's prints are characterized by the soft colors and subtle gradations seen in this print. They appear similar to watercolors, as they lack an outlining black keyblock.