

UKIKO-E: JAPANESE WOODBLOCK ART PRINTS

In celebration of Asian American Heritage Month, the Office of Multicultural Student Services (OMSS) is presenting the special art exhibition, *Ukiyo-e: Japanese Woodblock Art Prints*, in the Student Union Building, Room 2500 on the University of Toledo campus through September 12, 2008.

Woodblock printing is a technique for printing text, images or patterns used widely throughout East Asia and originated in China as a method of printing during the Han Dynasty.

However, Ukiyo-e (Japanese Woodblock Printing), is a multi-color technique called Nishiki-e (“Brocade Pictures”) which became a major artistic form in Japan from 1596 through the end of the 19th century.

The woodblock printing process gained popularity among the Japanese artists of Ukiyo-e and was used to produce art prints as well as popular books on urban culture (Sharebon), satirical novels (Kibyōshi) and theatre scripts (Jōruri).

This special display, of Japanese prints from the Edo, Meiji and Shin Periods, is drawn from a private collection in the Midwest which includes fine examples by masters of the art such as Toyokuni (1769-1825) Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797-1861), Utagawa Kunisada (Toyokuni III; 1786-1864) and Kunichika Toyohara (1835-1900). These selected prints of Kabuki actors, heroic Samuri warriors, courtesans and birds are bold and subtle in color, design and composition- the pinnacle of the art form.

Nina Grant, Senior Director of OMSS, is grateful to the lenders of the exhibition, *Ukiyo-e: Japanese Woodblock Art Prints*, and is very pleased to share this rich and beautiful Asian cultural heritage with UT students and the larger UT community.

WOODBLOCK TECHNIQUE:

The wood block is prepared as a relief matrix, which means the areas to show ‘white’ are cut away with a knife or chisel, leaving the characters or image to show in ‘black’ at the original surface level. The block was cut along the grain of the wood. It is only necessary to ink the block and bring it into firm and even contact with the rice paper to achieve an acceptable print. The content would of course print “in reverse” or mirror-image, a further complication when text was involved. The art of carving the woodcut is technically known as *xylography*. For color printing, multiple blocks are used, each for one color, although overprinting two colors may produce further colors on the print. Multiple colors can be printed by keying the paper to a frame around the wood blocks.

UKIKO-E: JAPANESE WOODBLOCK ART PRINTS Exhibition List

Artist: Kunichika Toyohara (1835-1900)
Title: Ichikowa Kotanji
Date: 1864

Artist: Utagawa Kunisada III (1786-1864)
Date: c. 1800
Subject: Man Overboard

Artist: Utagawa Kunisada III (1786-1864)
Date: c. 1800
Subject: Samurai Warrior

Artist: Yoshitora
Date: c. 1860
Subject: Two Warriors

Artist: Kunichika Toyohara (1835-1900)
Series: Kahuki, 1871
Subject: Munemori & Kagekiyo (Heroic Triptych)

Artist: Toyokuni I (1769-1825)
Subject: Moon Light Maiden (Bijin)

Artist: Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797-1861)
Subject: Ronin Warrior
Publisher: Yamaguchiya Tobei

Artist: Koson Ohara (1877-1945)
Subject: Bird on branch (Diptych)

Artist: Koson Ohara (1877-1945)
Title/date: Two young birds (Diptych)
Style: Sumi

Artist: Utagawa Kunisada (1786-1864)
Date: c. 1852/1853
Subject: Kabuki Actor (Bijin)

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