

## La Salle University La Salle University Digital Commons

---

Art Museum Exhibition Catalogues

La Salle University Art Museum

---

10-1992


# Japanese Prints: 20th Century

La Salle University Art Museum

Caroline Wistar

*La Salle University*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/exhibition\\_catalogues](http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/exhibition_catalogues)

 Part of the [Fine Arts Commons](#), and the [History of Art, Architecture, and Archaeology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

La Salle University Art Museum and Wistar, Caroline, "Japanese Prints: 20th Century" (1992). *Art Museum Exhibition Catalogues*. 44. [http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/exhibition\\_catalogues/44](http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/exhibition_catalogues/44)

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the La Salle University Art Museum at La Salle University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Art Museum Exhibition Catalogues by an authorized administrator of La Salle University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [careyc@lasalle.edu](mailto:careyc@lasalle.edu).



# **Japanese Prints: Twentieth Century**

**La Salle University Art Museum  
October 9th - November 29th, 1992**

## **Japanese Prints: Twentieth Century**

**T**he tradition of graphic arts in Japan (especially the color woodcut, which makes up the majority of works in this exhibition) is a long, rich and distinctive one. Beginning in the mid-17th century, the color woodcut print has always dominated the Japanese visual arts, though there are marked differences between the classical and the modern print in execution, style and subject matter. The La Salle Art Museum is fortunate to have a collection, donated by Benjamin Bernstein, of classical

woodcut "Ukiyo-e" (floating world) prints from the last quarter of the 19th century with which to make this comparison (see #1-3).

The bold flat decorative patterns, exquisite design, subtle gradation of color harmonies and refined but complex method of execution and printing (up to fourteen separate color blocks) that distinguishes these traditional color prints continue to this day but with notable differences. Until the twentieth century, the creation of Japanese woodcut prints involved three principals: the artist who designed the image, the woodblock cutter, and the printer, the latter two remaining anonymous. Modern and contemporary artists perform all three of these creative processes. Moreover, the Japanese 20th century print is no longer mass produced; rather its output is controlled, as in the West, by a limited edition and so indicated by the artist in the margin of the print. But perhaps the most significant difference between the old and the new lies in the unlimited range of expression, with regard to both subject matter and style, available to the modern artist. Though having a profound influence on French

Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artists, the Classical Japanese color woodcut was executed in an essentially similar, representational, and insular style reflecting no influence of Western art until the end of the 19th century. The subject matter was confined to Japanese landscape and figurative scenes of everyday life--essentially the courtesans, lovers, geisha and bathhouse girls who patronized and serviced the city pleasure districts or actors in the popular Kabuki theater. Modern Japanese artists are clearly influenced by the West as well as the East, and their works may be considered international in style and content, whether of an abstract or representational nature. The connection between East and West is especially close in the Fine Arts Department at La Salle. James Lang (see #22-23), La Salle's professor of graphic art, spent eight years of graduate research and teaching at Aoyama Gakuin University in Tokyo. There he practiced and studied printmaking in the studios of Messrs. Higawara, Toshi Yoshida, and Tajima, all of whose works are represented in this exhibition. Mr. Lang, in turn, has influenced scores of La Salle students in the essentials of Japanese

print craftsmanship, and such influence can be seen in the graphic work of one of his pupils, James Colbert, class of 1979 (see #24). It is interesting to note that graphic artists in Japan usually do not receive formal training in art institutions unless they do so in the West, as indeed many of them do. Rather, their training typically consists of an apprenticeship in the studio of a master artist(s) such as Mr. Lang experienced.

Although Japanese modern prints, called "Sosaku hangai" (creative prints) are widely represented in the West today in both private and public collections, their artists are unfortunately accorded little respect in Japan. Consequently their professional life is difficult and frustrating, and most are forced to make a living elsewhere. This unfortunate circumstance, however, is balanced by the reputation and respect the Japanese print has acquired in the West, as reflected in this exhibition. With an economy of means and refined technical control, representational images seem to capture the essence of a particular object, whether the natural beauty of a plant or tree or the symbolic or essential character of a person or animal. Ab-

stract images, which appear to dominate the contemporary print, embody a contemplative, serene, poetic but controlled expression--the very essence of the traditional Japanese spirit of Zen.

The La Salle Art Museum is pleased to offer this exhibition as an introduction to our Japanese print collection and to mark the establishment of the Japan Studies Program at La Salle University.

Caroline Wistar  
Curator



## **Selected Bibliography**

Michener, James, *The Modern Japanese Print: An Appreciation*, (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1968)

Munsterberg, Hugo, *The Art of Modern Japan: From the Meiji Restoration to the Centennial (1868-1968)*, (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1978)

Statler, Oliver, *Modern Japanese Prints: An Art Reborn*, (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1956)

## CHECK LIST

All of the prints in the exhibition are color woodcuts unless otherwise noted.

Three Japanese traditional "Ukiyoe" woodcuts  
by

1. Toyoharu Kunichika, 1835-1900
2. Kuikusui Shigehiro
3. Utagawa Kunsida (Toyokuni III), 1786-1864  
Given by Benjamin D. Bernstein
4. Hideo Higiwara (b. 1913- )  
*Emptiness*  
Lent by James Colbert

5. Kunihiro Amano (b. 1929- )  
*Castle Gate* 1966
  
6. Matsumoto Akira  
*Gogai ga Deta* 1964
  
7. Tomoo Inagaki (b. 1902- )  
*Cats in the Moonlight* 1966
  
8. Joichi Hoshi (1913-1978)  
*Red Branches* 1973  
Purchased with funds provided by  
Benjamin D. Bernstein
  
9. Hideo Higiwara (b. 1913- )  
*Germination #5* 1965

10. Hiroyuki Tajima  
*White Vestige*  
Lent by James Colbert
11. Umetaro Azechi (b. 1902- )  
*Village*  
  
*Pisces*  
  
Both lent by James Colbert
12. Shogo Okamoto  
*Trees in Winter* 1973  
Etching
13. Nagao Ueno (b. 1904- )  
*Recollection of the Past* 1964

14. Joichi Hoshi (1913-1978)  
*Evening Scene* 1977  
Purchased with funds provided by  
Benjamin D. Bernstein
  
15. Ansei Uchima (b. 1921- )  
*Cerulean Space #2* 1970
  
16. Shigeki Kuroda (b. 1953- )  
*Bicycle R-55* 1980  
Etching
  
17. Yoshitoshi Mori (b. 1900- )  
*Warriors* 1967  
Stencil dye-print
  
18. Joichi Hoshi (1913-1978)  
*Blue Limbs* 1978  
Purchased with funds provided by  
Benjamin D. Bernstein

19. Sadao Watanabe (b. 1913- )  
*Woman of Canaan* 1964  
Stencil dye-print

20. Hitoshi Nakazato (b. 1936- )  
(Head of the Graphics Department at the  
University of Pennsylvania)  
*Thonga A* 1977

Silkscreen with Carborundum  
Given by Benjamin D. Bernstein

21. Toshi Yoshida  
*June A* 1962  
Lent by James Colbert

22. James Lang (b. 1931- ), American  
*The Revolution*  
Lent by James Colbert

23. *Beyond the Cosmos* 1972  
Color lithograph

24. James Colbert (b. 1949- ), American  
*Iphigenia*  
Collograph