

***Surimono from Osaka and Edo: The Pumpelly Album*, May 23, 2008–October 5, 2008**

Surimono (literally “printed objects”) are distinguished from polychrome woodblock prints by the presence of a variety of texts integrated into their overall compositions. Privately commissioned and published as announcements, commemorations, or most often as New Year’s greetings bearing poetry, they are characterized by elaborate printing and embossing techniques and the application of metallic dusts and colors on thick paper. The link between text and image in *surimono* is an important one. By the early 19th century, when these objects were made, the image and the accompanying poem or poems were conceived together in what is now regarded as the classic *surimono* form. The square size (*shikishiban*, one sixth of an *obōsho* sheet, approx. 15 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 23 $\frac{1}{4}$ in.) was nearly standard, and the accompanying poetry was usually *kyōka* (“crazy verse”), witty 31-syllable *waka* (court) poems written by members of various poetry groups who subsidized the production of the prints. Whether the poetry referred directly to the print’s visual subject or played upon it through word puns and allusions, the artwork was always infused with visual and verbal meaning and a sensuous beauty meant to be savored and enjoyed by its recipient.

The selections in this exhibition are from a group of 88 rare and beautiful works given to the Museum in 1956 by George Pierce Metcalf (1890–1957). Mr. Metcalf’s wife, Pauline Pumpelly Cabot (1903–1976), was the granddaughter of Raphael Pumpelly (1837–1923), geologist, explorer, and archaeologist. These prints came from a single album, one of two presented as gifts to Pumpelly on his departure from Japan in early 1863, soon after that country opened its doors to visitors from the West. Not only are these some of the earliest prints to leave Japan, but the album’s unique association with Osaka is confirmed through the inclusion of Osaka poets and printmakers whose works are not as well known as those from Edo (modern Tokyo). The album was assembled by Iga no Kurimi (active ca. 1810–1839), who participated in poetry gatherings in both Edo and Osaka. The numerous *kyōka* poems by Tsurunoya Osamaru (ca. 1751–ca. 1839) and members of his Crane Poetry Group (Tsuru-gawa), as well as the appearance of a nesting crane (*tsuru* means “crane” in Japanese) emblem on many of the prints, make it clear that his patronage and that of his fellow Osaka poets provided the impetus for the creation of a fair percentage of works in the RISD album. Mostly dated to the 1820s, these prints also point to a collaboration between the poets and Tani Seikō (act. 1822–1831), a masterful blockcutter whose subtle carving and printing skills were enlisted in their production. The specialized division of labor common in the Japanese woodblock printing process was sometimes overlooked in the album. Painters and poets designed some of the *surimono* with guidance from Tani Seikō, whose personal seal is found on many of these examples. He then carved and printed their designs.

The Museum gratefully acknowledges the research of Dr. Roger S. Keyes, who has studied and published the Pumpelly album on exhibition here.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Katsushika Hokusai, Japanese, 1760-1849
Asakusa-an Ichindo, Japanese
Tsutaya Jūzaburō, Japanese, 1750 - 1797
Illustrated dances of the east: Vol. 2, spring 1802
Illustrated woodblock-printed book
Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 31.395.2

The book by Hokusai is a *kyōkaban*, an illustrated collection of the *kyōka* poetry (“crazy verse”) that was so often the source for visual imagery and inscribed texts on *surimono*. Books of this type were produced beginning in the late 18th century.

The prints all illustrate still-life subjects, which first became popular in the early decades of the 19th century, when the square *shikishiban surimono* format flourished. To show how such objects actually looked, the mirror is exhibited next to a New Year’s *surimono* depicting a similar object.

Yanagawa Shigenobu, Japanese, 1787-1832
White Horse, 1822
Polychrome woodblock print with embossing
Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.16

This print was made as a New Year’s greeting for 1822, the year of the horse. Note the beautiful pictorial seal of a willow tree near a stream in the lower right corner. The artist’s surname, Yanagawa, means “willow stream” in Japanese.



RISD MUSEUM

Yanagawa Shigenobu, Japanese, 1787-1832

Asahina with a Turtle (from a Soga play), From an untitled series, 1823/1

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.2

Asahina, a character in a Soga revenge play, is depicted here with his very long sword. The crane on his large wine cup and the turtle are both symbols of long life and of the New Year, indicating that this was a *surimono* intended to convey auspicious wishes for the New Year. Since the crane also points to the Crane Poetry Group Tsurunoya Osamaru (ca. 1751-ca. 1839) and his poem appears on the far left, this print was certainly sponsored by poets within that group. The gourd seal of blockcutter Tani Seikō (act. 1822-31) appears in the lower right corner.



Ryuryukyo Shinsai, Japanese

Lobster and Cup, 1820s

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.21

The character in the plate is the word for long life (*su*).



Ryuryukyo Shinsai, Japanese

Fan, Boxes, and Cloth, 1820s

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.26

The silk wrapping cloth (*fukusa*) is the focus of a still life that includes a fan and several boxes, at least one of which is lacquered. The plum branch, resting on what appears to be a silk covering for a sheet of paper, most likely alludes to the New Year.



RISD MUSEUM

Sadaoka Gakutei, Japanese, 1786?-1868

Kinko, Courtesans as Immortals, 1820s

Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic embellishment

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.27

The Osaka-based Crane Poetry Group commissioned Gakutei, an Edo (modern Tokyo) printmaker, to design a set of *surimono* depicting courtesans as immortals. The holy hermit Kinkō is said to have traveled on the back of a large carp. The poem to the left of the courtesan is by Chiyo no Matsuhiko (act. mid-1820s), a member of the Crane Poetry Group, and the nesting-crane emblem is part of the series title in the upper right. Gakutei designed the background with crane images and identified himself as an artist from Edo.



Sadaoka Gakutei, Japanese, 1786?-1868

Fan Ceng and Tomoe Gozen, 1820s

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.32

The renowned female warrior Tomoe Gozen (late 12th century) was the concubine of Minamoto no Yoshinaka (1154-84), who was killed by his brothers after being named shogun by the emperor. Hankei (Chinese, Fan Kuai, d. 189 BCE) was a follower of Liu Bang (247-195 BCE), the first Han emperor. Hankei saved the Chinese emperor's life by getting drunk at a banquet and creating a diversion that allowed the emperor to flee from an assassin. The poems, which were composed by Asaka no Katsumi (act. early 19th century), Hokusō (Baikō Kitamado or Umeyoshi), and Mochizuki no Kagenari (act. 1820s), members of the Crane Poetry Group led by Tsurunoya Osamaru (ca. 1751-ca. 1839), all allude to the Boys' Day Festival traditionally celebrated on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month. The print was probably made for that festival because Hankei was considered a hero and an appropriate role model for children. The inclusion of Tomoe Gozen here might be based on Gakutei's imitation of a composition by Hokusai.



RISD MUSEUM

Sadaoka Gakutei, Japanese, 1786?-1868

A Chinese Woman with a Box, 1820s

Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic embellishment

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.35

This print was originally issued as a diptych for the Drum Poetry Group (Taiko-gawa) in Edo (modern Tokyo), whose leader was Dondontei Wataru (d. 1822). This version was reissued later with a different set of poems by four Osaka poets, including Tsurunoya Osamaru (ca. 1751-ca. 1839).



Sadaoka Gakutei, Japanese, 1786?-1868

A Chinese Woman with Spools, 1820s

Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic embellishment

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.36

This print was originally issued as a diptych for the Drum Poetry Group (Taiko-gawa) in Edo (modern Tokyo), whose leader was Dondontei Wataru (d. 1822). This version was reissued later with a different set of poems by four Osaka poets, including Tsurunoya Osamaru (ca. 1751-ca. 1839).



Sadaoka Gakutei, Japanese, 1786?-1868

Doll on a Stand, probably made for the Doll Festival in 1822

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.39

Given the subject, this print may have been designed for the Doll's Festival (Hina Matsuri) in 1822. The holiday, which traditionally fell on the third day of the third lunar month, was a celebration for girls. On this day, gifts were exchanged and dolls were exhibited on a stepped platform. A poem by Tsurunoya Osamaru (ca. 1751-ca. 1839) appears on the left.



RISD MUSEUM

Yanagawa Shigenobu, Japanese, 1787-1832

The Poet Chiyo no Matsuhiko with a Companion, probably spring 1823

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.4

In the left panel, the attendants and the samurai, who wears a sword, are escorting two women. Described as singers in the poem by Asaka no Katsumi (act. early 19th century) inscribed above, the women are likely to be courtesans.

The poet Chiyo no Matsuhiko (act. mid-1820s), identified by the pine crest (*matsu* means “pine” in Japanese) on his robe, stands at the far right of the right panel. His poem describes a visit to Imamiya, a temple associated with Ebisu, the god of business who also signals good fortune. The bamboo branch carried by one of the servants is distributed on the tenth day of the first lunar month at a festival for Ebisu during the New Year’s season. Tani Seikō’s (act. 1822-1831) gourd seal appear in the lower right corner of this panel.



Goshichi Harukawa, Japanese, ca. 1776-1831

Tani Seiko, Japanese

Woman by a Circular Window, 1920-1929

Woodblock print, ink, color, and metallic embellishment on paper

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.43

Trained in Edo (modern Tokyo), Goshichi moved to Kyoto around 1818 and continued his work as a surimono artist. A poem by Tsurunoya Osamaru (ca. 1751 – ca. 1839) appears on the left, and the gourd seal of Tani Seikō (act. 1822 – 1831) appears in the lower left corner.



Utagawa Toyokuni, Japanese, 1769-1825

Matsumoto Koshiro V as Banzuin Chobei, 1820s

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.45

This print indicates how popular Matsumoto Kōshirō V (1764 – 1838) was in Osaka. The Edo-based kabuki actor performed this role in the ninth lunar month of 1821 in Osaka and repeated it in Edo (modern Tokyo) in the spring of 1822. Four Crane Group poets — Hanahiko, Kitayori, Hayabusa, and Utanari — sponsored this print and composed texts for it.



RISD MUSEUM

Totoya Hokkei, Japanese, 1780-1850

The Emperor Genso Meets His Concubine: Moon (Getsu), From the series *Flowers, Birds, Wind, and Moon (Kachofugetsu)*, early 1820s
Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic embellishment

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.49

The Emperor Gensō (Chinese, Emperor Xuanzong, 685 – 762, r. 712 – 56, also known as Minghuang) was enamoured of his concubine Yōkihi (Chinese, Yang Guifei, 719 – 756). In 756, at the beginning of the An Lushan rebellion, the emperor was forced to flee westward. His entourage, who blamed Yōkihi and her family for the rebellion, demanded that she be executed. Here, she stands in front of a moon palace, and he is about to ascend a staircase constructed by a magician in order to visit her once more.



Hayami Shungyosai, Japanese, ca. 1760-1823

Courtesan and Attendants, 1823/1

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.5

In the right panel, Tsurunoya Osamaru (ca. 1751-ca. 1839) is identified by the crane emblem on his left sleeve. The well-known kabuki actor Danjūrō VII, whose sleeve bears his crest of three squares, one within another, walks behind. The two men approach a courtesan during a visit to the Yoshiwara pleasure quarters in Edo (modern Tokyo).



Totoya Hokkei, Japanese, 1780-1850

Nankai Plum, Program of the Hanazono Group, 1823

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.52

This series, which was commissioned by the Hanazono Poetry Group in Edo (modern Tokyo), probably derived its subject from the group leader's name, Garyōen Umemaro, which describes a type of flowering plum (*ume*). The series focused on varieties of plum, and the Chinese poem inscribed above the plum at the right defines this particular type from Nanjing in China. Among the prints in the Pumpelly album are some that Iga no Kurimi (act. ca. 1810s-1830s) probably acquired during his residence in Edo, such as this one.



RISD MUSEUM

Nagayama Kōin, Japanese, 1765-1849

Cakes Wrapped in Oak Leaves, possibly fifth lunar month of 1822

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.54

These rice cakes, known in Japanese as *kashiwa mochi*, are filled with sweet bean paste and wrapped in oak leaves for the celebration of the Boys' Day Festival, a traditional holiday that fell on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month. In modern Japan, the holiday is now called Children's Day and falls on May 5. A poem by Tsurunoya Osamaru (ca. 1751-ca. 1839) is inscribed on the right, and Tani Seikō's (active 1822-1831) gourd seal, configured here in a slightly different form, is impressed in the lower left corner.



Nagayama Kōin, Japanese, 1765-1849

Tortoise Carrying the Isle of the Immortals on His Back, mid-1820s

Privately commissioned woodblock print (surimono)

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.55

The Japanese have a saying that "the crane lives for a thousand years and the tortoise for ten thousand." The long-tailed turtle, the cranes perched on top of the Isle of the Immortals (Hōrai), and the isle itself all convey the conventional New Year's wish for long life. Poems by Horikawa Utanari, Ki no Tsukunari (act. 1820s), and Tsurunoya Osamaru (ca. 1751-ca. 1839) also contain allusions to the New Year. The gourd seal of blockcutter Tani Seikō (active 1822-1831) appears in the lower left corner.



Nagayama Kōin, Japanese, 1765-1849

Chrysanthemums, mid-1820s

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.56

This beautifully embossed print bears the impression of another print that faced it in the album in which it was mounted. On the basis of its black color and outline, the shadowed image visible here is most likely from the Mochizuki print to the left.



RISD MUSEUM

Baien, Japanese, d. 1886

Mirror and Rouge Cup, ca. 1825-27

Polychrome woodblock print with embossing and metallic embellishment

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.59



Three Osaka poets, including Tsurunoya Osamaru (ca. 1751–ca. 1839), utilize spring imagery in combination with references to cosmetics to create intricate connections through the visual imagery of the print. The pine, bamboo, and cranes allude to the lunar New Year that marks the arrival of spring. To evoke the presence of a beautiful woman, a rouge cup is paired with the mirror on which these symbols appear. Baien is the poet Ki no Tsukunari (d. 1886).

Yanagawa Shigenobu, Japanese, 1787-1832

The Poet Asaka no Katsumi with Companions, probably spring 1823

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.6



In the left panel, the attendants and the samurai, who wears a sword, are escorting two women. Described as singers in the poem by Asaka no Katsumi (act. early 19th century) inscribed above, the women are likely to be courtesans.

The poet Chiyo no Matsuhiko (act. mid-1820s), identified by the pine crest (matsu means “pine” in Japanese) on his robe, stands at the far right of the right panel. His poem describes a visit to Imamiya, a temple associated with Ebisu, the god of business who also signals good fortune. The bamboo branch carried by one of the servants is distributed on the tenth day of the first lunar month at a festival for Ebisu during the New Year’s season. Tani Seikō’s (act. 1822-1831) gourd seal appear in the lower right corner of this panel.

Baien, Japanese, d. 1886

Mackerel Sushi, ca. 1825-1827

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.61



A poem by Tsurunoya Osamaru (ca. 1751–ca. 1839) appears in the upper left corner, and the gourd seal of blockcutter Tani Seikō (act. 1822–1831) appears in the lower left corner. Baien is the poet Ki no Tsukunari (d. 1886).

RISD MUSEUM

Baien, Japanese, d. 1886

Pipe and Tobacco Pouch, possibly first lunar month of 1827

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.62

Smoking was introduced into Japan in the late 16th century, probably by Spanish or Portuguese merchants, and it soon became a very popular habit. The nesting crane (*tsuru* means “crane” in Japanese) on the tobacco pouch is Tsurunoya Osamaru’s (ca. 1751-ca. 1839) emblem, and his poem appears at the left. A poem by Iga no Kurimi (act. ca. 1810s-1830s), who assembled the Pumpelly album, links him with Tsurunoya. Tani Seikō’s (act. 1822-1831) gourd seal appears in the lower left. Seikō encouraged Baien (the poet Ki no Tsukunari) to draw.



The print is dated on the basis of a reference to a boar in one of the poems; 1827 was a year of the boar.

Mori Shunkei, Japanese, active ca. 1800-1820

Paddy Bird on a Crabapple Tree, mid-1820s

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.67

Printed on blue silk, this unusual print designed by painter Mori Shunkei imitates a Chinese-style bird-and-flower composition. The poems, too, are written in Chinese verse. The blocks were cut by the poet Chiyo no Matsuhiko (act. mid-1820s), another protégé of Tani Seikō (act. 1822–1831).



Mochizuki no Kagenari

Statue of Buddha and a Lily, mid-1820s

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.68

It is likely that this surimono was made to commemorate the Buddha’s birthday, which fell on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month in the traditional Japanese calendar (it is now celebrated on April 8). On this day, religious Buddhists wash a statue of the child Buddha in perfumed water. This print was designed by the poet Mochizuki no Kagenari (also known as Morinaka Mochizuki), who studied drawing with the printer and blockcutter Tani Seikō (act. 1822-1831).



RISD MUSEUM

The beautifully embossed print to the right bears the shadowed image of another work. On the basis of its form and color, this work probably made that shadowed image when the two objects were mounted opposite each other in the Pumpelly album.

Yanagawa Shigenobu, Japanese, 1787-1832

Huang Chuping with a stone Goat (Huang Chuping and the Goat),
1823/1

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.7

This print was a New Year's greeting for 1823, the year of the goat. Huang Chuping was a Daoist adept who, after meditating for forty years, found that he could bring life to his goats, which had turned to stone during his long retreat. The "nesting crane" emblem of the Crane Poetry Group appears in the upper right, and the blockcutter Tani Seikō's (act. 1822-1831) gourd seal is impressed on the print at the lower left.



Hayami Shungyosai II

Grapes, Scissors, and Porcelain Bowl, mid-1820s

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.71

This print was distributed by the Osaka poet Ōe no Kitayori on the occasion of a memorial service commemorating the anniversary of his father's death, possibly in 1824. The authors of the poems, including the leader of the Crane Poetry Group, Tsurunoya Osamaru (ca. 1751-ca. 1839), and the blockcutter Tani Seikō (active 1822-1831), had all experienced losses around the time that the print was made.



Asaka no Katsumi, Japanese, early 19th century

Portrait of Tsurunoya as a Papier-mache Doll of a Gidayu Chanter,
1820s

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.73

Tsurunoya Osamaru (ca. 1751-ca. 1839) is shown as a doll chanting *gidayū*, a type of dramatic narrative song. His head bends forward as he performs to the musical accompaniment. On his robe is the nesting crane that is his crest, and the poem at the left is signed by him as well.



RISD MUSEUM

Katsumi (act. ca. 1810s-1830s), the son of a well-known Edo poet, designed this print. Although the calligraphy block was probably cut by Tani Seikō (act. 1822-1831), the blocks for the image were cut and printed by Chiyo no Matsuhiko (act. mid-1820s), another Crane Group poet and Seikō's pupil.

Hayami Shungyosai I

Ichikawa Danjuro VII and Tsurunoya, first lunar month of 1823

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.79

The well-known kabuki actor Danjūrō VII, whose sleeve bears his crest of three squares, one within another, walks behind. The two men approach a courtesan during a visit to the Yoshiwara pleasure quarters in Edo (modern Tokyo).



Sadaoka Gakutei, Japanese, 1786?-1868

Glass Wine Jar, probably made for the Dolls Festival, spring 1822

Polychrome woodblock print with metallic embellishment

Gift of George Pierce Metcalf 56.039.85

Given the subject, this print may have been designed for the Doll's Festival (Hina Matsuri) in 1822. The holiday, which traditionally fell on the third day of the third lunar month, was a celebration for girls. On this day, gifts were exchanged and dolls were exhibited on a stepped platform. A poem by Tsurunoya Osamaru (ca. 1751-ca. 1839) appears on the left.



RISD MUSEUM

Japanese; Edo

Mirror with Design of Pine, Bamboo, and Tortoises, 1800s

Copper Alloy

Bequest of Martha B. Lisle 67.199

Pine and bamboo are traditionally used as New Year decorations, and the long-tailed tortoise symbolizes long life. Similar imagery, with cranes instead of tortoises, appears in the print illustrating a mirror to the left; whereas a long-tailed tortoise carries the Isle of the Immortals on its back in the Kōin print on the wall in front of you (acc. no. 56.039.55).

