

***An Abundance of Color: Spring Blossoms*, March 5, 2004-May 30, 2004**

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the Japanese were still using a traditional lunar calendar in which the new year began in early to mid-February. (This year the new lunar year began slightly earlier, on January 22, 2004, according to Western date-keeping). The first three months of the lunar calendar were designated as spring, so the season depicted in the prints in this exhibition falls somewhat earlier than spring in the northeastern United States.

In Japan, the flowers most closely identified with this season are the plum (*ume*), the peach (*momo*), and most of all, the cherry (*sakura*). In painting and printmaking, the plum is often snow-covered because it traditionally blooms at the turn of the lunar new year. The other flowers blossom later, at the height of spring.

The poetry on these prints creates expected associations, drawing upon a rich body of allusion that derives from both the Chinese and Japanese literary traditions. In composition, too, these images often draw upon classical Chinese subjects rendered in the uniquely Japanese style of “bird-and-flower” prints (*kachō-e*).

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858
Bullfinch and Japanese Kerria (Yamabuki ni uso), late 1830s
Polychrome woodblock print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.173

Kerria japonica, known in Japanese as *yamabuki*, blossoms in late spring.



RISD MUSEUM

Kitagawa Utamaro II, Japanese, 1804-1855

Kitagawa Utamaro, Japanese, 1754-1806

Flower arrangement with red plum (Seika kobai), ca. 1810?

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.595



Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858

Kawaguchiya Shozo, Japanese

Moon and Plum (Tsuki ni ume), 1843-1847

Polychrome wood block print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.171

The theme of the plum blossoming in moonlight is an old one derived from Chinese sources. The text of the poem is identical to that on Hiroshige's *Blossoming Plum Tree* (acc. no. 34.170) in this exhibition.



RISD MUSEUM

Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858
Blossoming Plum Branches (Ume), 1843-1847
Polychrome wood block print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.170

This poem evokes the theme of spring through the use of the seasonal word “tranquillity” and contrasts the beauty and delicacy of the flowering plum with its underlying resilience and strength:

Gently nurtured
in complete tranquillity –
bundles of muscle.
(Alfred H. Marks, trans.)



Nakamura Hōchū, Japanese, fl. 1790-1813
Kinkado of Edo, Japanese
Tampankan, Japanese
Bush warbler and blossoming plum (Ume ni uguisu), *Korin gafu* (An album of pictures by Korin), late 1800s-early 1900s
Polychrome wood block print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.401



This print is a product of the revival of the Rinpa school and of Kōrin's work in the early 19th century.

RISD MUSEUM

Yashima Gakutei, Japanese, ca. 1786-1868

Caged Bird and Plum Branch (Ume ni torikago), Two sheets for the *Bizen Circle*, 1820s

Polychrome wood block print with embossing and metallic highlights
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.351

The allusions in the poetry connect the visual imagery of the print with the New Year and the early flowering of the plum.



Katsushika Hokusai, Japanese, 1760-1849

Moriya Jihei, Japanese

Hawk and Cherry Blossoms (Kaido ni taka), From a set of five untitled prints of animals, ca. 1834

Color woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.498

The falcon, which symbolizes military prowess and strength, is a symbol of the warrior (samurai) class in Japan. The delicate flowering cherry, in contrast, is the most popular of Japanese flowering trees. Falling cherry blossoms evoke themes of frailty and ephemerality, which may allude to a warrior dying young.



RISD MUSEUM

Katsushika Hokusai, Japanese, 1760-1849

Nishimuraya Yohachi, Japanese

Bullfinch and weeping cherry (Uso shidarezakura), Untitled (known as Small Flowers), ca. 1834

Polychrome wood block print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.489



RISD MUSEUM

Katsushika Taito II, Japanese, ca. 1810's-1853
Finches and cherry blossoms (Sakura ni kimpapa), 1830s
Polychrome woodblock print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.483

This artist was a pupil of Hokusai and is known as "Taito the Second" because Hokusai gave him his own pseudonym (*gō*) of Taito in 1820. Note the similarity between this composition and the large vertical print by Hokusai to the left.



RISD MUSEUM

Hasegawa Sadanobu II, Japanese

Japanese Bush Warbler and Flowering Plum (Ume ni uguisu), 1850's

Polychrome wood block print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.431

The early flowering of the plum is emphasized here by its snow-covered branches.



Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858

Kawaguchiya Shozo, Japanese

Java Sparrow and Lily Magnolia (Mokuren ni bunchô), 1830s

Polychrome wood block print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.222.1



RISD MUSEUM

Kawamura Kihō, Japanese, 1778-1852

Bunchodo, Japanese

Kihō's Sketchbook (Kihō gafu), Bird on a Flowering Plum Tree, 1827

Woodcut illustrated book with mica-stencilled paper wrappers

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2003.39.6

This printed book preserves sketches and compositions by the painter Kawamura Kihō. Once again it is the Chinese “cut-off branch” compositional type that is seen in this illustration.



Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858

Long-tailed Bird and Peach Blossoms (Momo ni onagadori), 1830s

Polychrome wood block print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.057

The seasonal allusion here is to peach blossoms:

A field all in flame,
shining for a brief moment
with peach blossoms.
(Alfred H. Marks, trans.)



Hasegawa Sadanobu II, Japanese

Japanese Bush Warbler and Aronia (Kaido ni uguisu), 1850s

Polychrome wood block print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.430

Privately commissioned print (*surimono*).



RISD MUSEUM

Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858

Great Tit and Mountain Cherry (Yamazakura ni shijûkara), 1840s

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.177.2



RISD MUSEUM

Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858

Wakasaya Yoichi, Japanese

Barn Swallows and Peach Blossoms under Full Moon (Tsukiyo momo ni tsubame), early 1830s

Polychrome wood block print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.286

The exuberance of this representation of swallows amidst flowering peach branches reflects the tone of the text, in which allusions to the Chinese poet Tao Qian's (365-428) "Peach Blossom Spring" evoke the famous tale of a fisherman who finds the land of the immortals:

Spring has come and all the streams
are filled with peach blossoms.
Nobody knows where the land of the

immortals is,

but all wonder

(Alfred H. Marks, trans.; modified)



Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858

Sanoya Kihei, Japanese

Bullfinch and blossoming aronia (Kaido ni uso), 1830s

Polychrome wood block print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.285.2



RISD MUSEUM

Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858
Crested Bird and Flowering Crabapple (Kaidô ni kotori), 1830s
Polychrome wood block print with embossing
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.038

The poem on this print refers to the crab apple (kaidô, literally, “sea pear”):

They call it “sea pear,”
and it submerges the spring
when it comes in bloom.
(Alfred H. Marks, trans.)



Katsushika Hokusai, Japanese, 1760-1849
Nishimuraya Yohachi, Japanese
Japanese wagtail and wisteria (Fuji sekirei), *Untitled (known as Small Flowers)*, ca. 1832
Polychrome woodblock print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.490



RISD MUSEUM

Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858
Kawaguchiya Shozo, Japanese
Great tit and wisteria (Fuji ni shijukara), 1830s
Polychrome wood block print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.259



Mori Kansai, Japanese, 1814-1894
Nuthatcher on a Flowering Cherry Tree, from an *Album of Eight Paintings*, 1873
Ink, colors, and gold on silk
Elizabeth T. and Dorothy N. Casey Fund 2001.16A

This delicately painted album leaf is a 19th-century Japanese interpretation of a much earlier Chinese composition also seen in some of the prints on view here. This “cut-off branch” format evolved in China in the 11th and 12th centuries and was transmitted to Japan through trade and cultural contacts.



RISD MUSEUM

Toyohiro Utagawa, Japanese, 1773-1828

Hawk and white plum (Shiraume ni taka), 1810s

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.636

The flowering plum symbolizes the New Year because it blossoms at the beginning of the lunar calendar year, the first three months of which are designated as spring.

