

The Art of the Fan: Uchiwa-e in Japanese Prints, December 7, 2001-March 3, 2002

Uchiwa-e have a distinct shape directly related to their function. Normally these prints were cut and mounted onto stiff, flat wooden frames with handles and sold as fans. Fans had been used in Japan for centuries, but during the Edo period (1615-1868) they came to be seen everywhere in Japanese prints: held by kabuki actors, courtesans, and ordinary folk.

Very few examples of fan prints survived because they were used and discarded. The museum's collection is unusual for its variety and quality.

In Japan, seasonal references are of great importance. In making a selection at the fan shop, the buyer would certainly consider the symbolism of the individual designs and the seasonal appropriateness of their imagery. Irises and peonies represent summer, morning glories and cotton roses (a type of hibiscus) late summer and early fall, and chrysanthemums the full bloom of autumn.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Utagawa Sadahide, Japanese, 1807-1878 or 1879
Ayu fish and bell flowers (Ayu to kikyō), 1843-1847
 Polychrome woodblock print
 Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.319

Kikyō (balloon flower) is one of the "seven flowers of autumn" in Japan.



Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858
 Sanoya Kihei, Japanese
Canary and rose mallow (Fuyo ni kanaria), Yellow Bird and Cotton Rose, 1852
 Polychrome wood block print
 Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.300

The cotton rose (*fuyō*) is a type of hibiscus that blooms in late summer and fall. The bird here may be a canary.



RISD MUSEUM

Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858
Kingfisher and peonies (Botan ni kawasemi), Bird and Cotton Rose,
 1830s
 Polychrome woodblock print
 Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.301



Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858
Golden pheasant and snow-covered pine (Setchu komatsu ni kinkei),
 1830s
 Polychrome woodblock fan print (uchiwa-e)
 Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.302



This print shows signs of wear, indicating that it was probably actually used as a fan.

Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858
 Aritaya Seiemon, Japanese, ca. 19th century
Morning glories (Asagao), Fashionable refreshing summer flower gardens, 1843-1847
 Polychrome woodblock print
 Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.303



Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858
 Ibaya Sensaburo, Japanese, 19th century
Sparrow and winter camellias (Kantsubaki ni suzume), Collected flowers of the four seasons, 1843-1847
 Polychrome woodblock print
 Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.304



Camellia (*tsubaki*, or *camellia japonica*) blossoms in the late winter or early spring, just around the season of the New Year. In this print, Hiroshige has chosen to emphasize its endurance in a season of unpredictable and snowy weather.

RISD MUSEUM

Utagawa Sadahide, Japanese, 1807-1878 or 1879

Honya Kyusuke, Japanese

Java sparrow and rice plants (Kome no hana ni suzume), A set of birds and flowers, 1834

Polychrome wood block print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.307



Utagawa Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797-1858

Aritaya Seiemon, Japanese, ca. 19th century

Rose mallow (Fuyo), Fashionable summer flower gardens, 1843-1847

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.299



Utagawa Sadahide, Japanese, 1807-1878 or 1879

Iseya Soemon, Japanese

Peonies (Botan), 1835

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.317



These are tree peonies (*botan*). Both herbaceous and tree peonies are cultivated in Japan.

Gakuki, Japanese, 19th century

Mount Fuji and pine (Matsu to Fujisan), 1820s

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.335



Dreaming of Mt. Fuji on the morning of the first day of the New Year was considered an auspicious omen for happiness during that year. This theme is represented by the pine, a symbol associated with the New Year's celebration, combined with Mt. Fuji and the rising sun, indicate the dream.

RISD MUSEUM

Utagawa Sadafusa, Japanese
Iseya Soemon, Japanese
Chrysanthemums (Kiku), 1843-1847
Polychrome woodblock print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.316



Utagawa Kunisada, Japanese, 1786-1865
Cuckoo and Moon (Tsuki ni hototogisu), 1828
Polychrome woodblock print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.311

The cuckoo (*hototogisu*) is associated with summer. In this lovely fan with its highly evocative composition, the moon and the cuckoo complement each other beautifully.



Utagawa Kunisada II, Japanese, 1823-1880
Tsujiya Yasubei
Utagawa Kunisada, Japanese, 1786-1865
Herbaceous peonies and great tits (Shakuyaku ni shijukara), 1858
Polychrome wood block print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.312

These are herbaceous peonies (*shakuyaku*). Both herbaceous and tree peonies are cultivated in Japan.



Katsukawa Shunzan, Japanese, fl. ca. 1782-1798
Cockerel, hen and plum (Ume ni niwatori), 1790s
Polychrome woodblock print
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.321

The plum blossoms indicate that this fan was intended for the New Year's season, when the plum flowers. The Japanese New Year typically falls in late January or early February according to the traditional lunar calendar.



RISD MUSEUM

Katsukawa Shunzan, Japanese, fl. ca. 1782-1798

Shunzan, Japanese, fl. ca. 1782-1798

Rising sun and Takasago pine (Hinode to Takasago no matsu), 1790s

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.322

The story of the pine spirit Takasago (identified by the rake), who every night visited his love (represented by the broom) at Sumiyoshi, is taken from a famous Nō play. In addition to symbolizing the pines for which these two places were famous, the two spirits also stand for eternal fidelity and longevity.



Utagawa Kuniyoshi, Japanese, 1797-1861

Ibaya Sensaburo, Japanese, 19th century

Chrysanthemums under the moon (Tsuki ni kiku), ca. 1830

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.324



Tsukioka Tanka, Japanese, 19th century

Descending geese and flying swallows (Kaeru gan to kuru tsubame), 1825

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.334



Utagawa Sadahide, Japanese, 1807-1878 or 1879

Tsujiya Yasubei

Reed warblers, iris and Indian strawberries (Kakitsubata yoshikiri hebiichigo), 1834

Polychrome wood block print

Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. 34.314

This type of iris is known as *kakitsubata*, or “rabbit-ear” iris, because of its shape.

