

## ***Tradition and Innovation in Meiji-Period Prints***, December 6, 2002-March 2, 2003

The Meiji period (1868-1912) was an era of dynamic political, economic, and social change that paved the way for the modernization of Japan. With the restoration of the emperor's power in 1868 and the dissolution of the feudal system that had existed under the Tokugawa shoguns (military dictators), Japan gradually became a centralized, monarchical state with an industrialized economy. These changes laid the foundation for Japan's Westernization and for its role as a world power in the 20th century.

The prints on view were produced during this period of transition. In some, the subject falls within the tradition of *ukiyo-e*, or "floating world" prints: heroic samurai or famous kabuki actors still dominate the field. Others are distinguished by more contemporary themes of modernization and modern warfare. Whether conservative or innovative in subject matter, these prints occasionally exhibit tonal modeling and foreshortening, drawing techniques borrowed from the West. Other notable compositional devices, such as atmospheric perspective and deep spatial recession, were already part of the Japanese visual vocabulary. Meiji-period artists also enhanced their usual printmaking palette through the addition of inks made with aniline dyes, synthetically manufactured colors imported from the West. The energy and variety of these artworks reflect the creative ferment of change as Japanese society evolved from its traditional culture to engage with the modern world.

### **CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION**

Chikanobu Toyohara, Japanese, 1838-1912

Tsutsumi Kichibei, Japanese

Yamada Yukimoto, Japanese

*Battle at Shizugatake: Kato Toranosuke and Yamaji Shogen*

*(Shizugatake kassen: Kato Toranosuke Yamaji Shogen)*, ca. 1897

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff 85.197.13



The battle of Shizugatake took place in 1583 and marked the ascendancy of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-98) as a powerful feudal lord after the death of Oda Nobunaga (1534-82), whom Hideyoshi had served. Here Hideyoshi's loyal follower, Kato Kiyomasa (1562-1611), is seen guarding a mountain pass during the battle.

# RISD MUSEUM

Chikanobu Toyohara, Japanese, 1838-1912

*The tea ceremony and flower arranging (Chanoyu kiribana), Women's quarters of Edo Castle, 1880s*

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff 85.197.14



Kobayashi Kiyochika, Japanese, 1847-1915

*Scouts near Niuzhuang on a Snowy Night (Gyūsō fukin setsuya no sekkō), ca. 1895*

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Roger S. Keyes and Elizabeth Coombs 1998.72.2



The city of Niuzhuang in Manchuria fell to the Japanese on March 5, 1895, during the Sino-Japanese War. Kiyochika's dramatic portrayal of scouts patrolling on a winter night focuses on the atmospheric effects that he was so skilled at depicting. As with so many of the prints made during the Sino-Japanese War, Kiyochika produced this masterful composition from his own imagination, since he was never on the battlefield.

Japanese

*Kimono design, no. 5 (Kimono no zu daigogo), ca. 1904*

Polychrome woodblock print with embossing

Gift of Roger S. Keyes and Elizabeth Coombs 1997.90.18



The steamship depicted on this kimono design is a clear indication of the modernization process occurring in Japan during the Meiji period (1868-1912).

Kason Suzuki, Japanese, 1860 - 1919

*Woman reading a dispatch (Senshi koho), ca. 1904*

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Roger S. Keyes and Elizabeth Coombs 1997.90.5



This dramatic presentation clearly alludes to the bad news conveyed in the dispatch being read by the seated woman.

# RISD MUSEUM

Ogata Gekkō, Japanese, 1859-1920

Matsuno Yonejiro, Japanese

*The First Army Advancing on Fengtienfu (Daiichigun hōtenfu shingeki no zu)*, 1894

Polychrome woodblock print

Bequest of Isaac C. Bates 13.2335



In the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, peace negotiations began as the Japanese were contemplating marching on the city of Mukden in Manchuria. This print is an example of an event that never took place because the Japanese army never actually reached the city. Japanese war prints of this period were frequently produced even before military victories were announced, and their compositions were often dependent on the artist's imagination or on descriptions of the battles relayed by war correspondents.

Tsukioka Yoshitoshi, Japanese, 1839-1892

Akiyama Buemon, Japanese

Yamamoto Shōun, Japanese, 1870-1965

*Moon at Mount Inaba (Inabayama no tsuki)*, from the series *One Hundred Aspects of the Moon (Tsuki hyakushi)*, 1885.12.10

Polychrome woodblock print

Bequest of Isaac C. Bates 13.1376



To assist in the taking of Gifu castle during a siege, Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-98), a young commander in the army of Oda Nobunaga (1534-82), scaled a very difficult cliff to gain access to the fortress. This heroic deed was very significant in Nobunaga's military campaign to unify Japan under his leadership at the end of the 16th century.

Tsukioka Yoshitoshi, Japanese, 1839-1892

Komiyama Shohei

*Liu Xuande (Liu Pei; J., Gentoku) visits Zhuge Liang (Liang Chu-ko; J., Komei) in a snowstorm*, from *Illustrated Chronicle of the Three Kingdoms*, 1883

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff 85.197.15



# RISD MUSEUM

Liu Xuande called upon Zhu Geliang, a great scholar and political adviser, three times before he found him at home. In this scene, Yoshitoshi has illustrated the third and final visit, in which Zhu agrees to become an adviser to Liu in his bid to control China.

Tsukioka Yoshitoshi, Japanese, 1839-1892

Akiyama Buemon, Japanese

*Kobayashi Heihachiro: Dawn Moon and Falling Snow (Seppu no gyogetsu Kobayashi Heihachiro)*, from the series *One Hundred Phases of the Moon (Tsuki hyakushi)*, 1886

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Isaac C. Bates 97.017

Kobayashi Heihachirō is seen here bravely defending his master, Lord Kira, against an unseen assailant, one of the famed forty-seven loyal retainers who sought vengeance for the death of their master, Lord Asano. Their tale is recounted in the *Chūshingura*, *The Treasury of Loyalty*, and these heroes are known as the “forty-seven rōnin” (“masterless samurai”).



Toyohara Kunichika, Japanese, 1835-1900

Hayashi Kichizo, Japanese

*Kabuki actors in the play Benkei in the Boat (Funa Benkei): Ichikawa Sadanji (the warrior-monk Musashi Benkei); Ichikawa Ebizo VIII (Minamoto no Yoshitsune) and Nakamura Shikan IV (Funaosa Mihodayu)*, 1875

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff 85.197.23

This print illustrates the Kabuki play *Funa Benkei*, which tells the tale of Minamoto no Yoshitsune’s voyage from the port of Daimotsu. The ghost of Taira Tomomori, whose clan was defeated in a famous sea battle against the Minamoto clan, rises from the sea during a violent storm. Benkei, Yoshitsune’s loyal companion, is depicted at the center of the triptych defending his master.



# RISD MUSEUM

Mizuno Toshikata, Japanese, 1866-1908

Katada Chojiro, Japanese

Hori Tatsu, Japanese

*Two [Chinese] warriors fight below camp headquarters at Liangshan (Ryozanpaku no fumoto ni ryoketsu yu o arasou), 1890s*

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff 85.197.22



Yang Zhi (“Blue-Faced Beast”) and Lin Chong (“Panther Head”) are two of the heroes of the Chinese novel *Water Margin (Shuihuzhuan)*, a tale of righteous outlaws who fight against injustice. This encounter is critical in determining that both of these great warriors will eventually join the outlaw band that hides out at Liang Mountain, on the right in this depiction.

Toyohara Kunichika, Japanese, 1835-1900

Fukuda Kumajiro, Japanese

*Nakamura Shikan as Hige no Ikyu, Ichikawa Danjuro IX as*

*Hanakawado Sukeroku and Nakamura Fukusuke as Miuraya no Agemaki in the play Edo zakura (Edo cherry blossoms), April 1896*

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of Roger S. Keyes and Elizabeth Coombs 1997.90.9

