What’s so great about The Great Wave? Japanese woodblock prints of the Floating World have captivated us for centuries with their playful subjects, ephemeral colors, and delicate artistry. Explore the fascinating breadth and history of Japanese prints and their artists with breathtaking examples from the world-renowned collection of the Art Institute of Chicago. Learn all about the traditional printing process from A to Z and get your hands on a laser-etched replica of an 1858 carved block by Hiroshige.

“…living only for the moment, turning our full attention to the pleasures of the moon, the snow, the cherry blossoms and the maples, singing songs, drinking wine, and diverting ourselves just in floating, floating, caring not a whit for the poverty staring us in the face, refusing to be disheartened, like a gourd floating along with the river current: This is what we call ukiyo.”

— Asai Ryoi, Ukiyo Monogatari (Tales of the Floating World), 1665

1. Kitagawa Utamaro (1753 (?)-1806), Pleasure-Boating on the Sumida River (Sumidagawa funa-asobi), c. 1788/90

2. Torii Kiyomasu I, The Actors Nakamura Takezaburo I as Kewazaka no Shosho and Ichikawa Danjuro II as Soga no Goro dressed as a komuso in the play "Bandō Ichibō Kotobuki Soga," performed at the Nakamura Theater in the first month, 1715

3. Attributed to Torii Kiyonobu I, The Actor Takii Hannosuke as an effeminate youth, c. 1707
Toshusai Sharaku (active 1794-95)

5. LEFT: Naritaya Sansho (The actor Ichikawa Danjuro VI as Arakawa Taro Takesada)

6. CENTER: The actor Ichikawa Ebizo IV as Takemura Sadanoshin

4. Okumura Masanobu, *Large Perspective Picture of the Kaomise Performance on the Kabuki Stage*, c. 1745

Katsukawa Shunsho (1726-1792)
8. LEFT & CENTER: Otani Hiroji III as an Chivalrous Commoner (Otokodate), possibly Satouma Gengobei in Iro Moyyo Aoyagi Soga (Green Willow Soga of Erotic Design), c.1775
9. RIGHT: The Actor Ichikawa Danjuro IV in a "Shibaraku" Role, Possibly from the Play Ima o Sakari Suehiro Genji (The Genji Clan Now at Its Zenith), Performed at the Nakamura Theater from the First Day of the Eleventh Month, 1768

Suzuki Harunobu (1725 (?)–1770)
10. LEFT: Attributed to Suzuki Harunobu, The Fan Peddler, 1765
11. CENTER: Ono no Komachi Washing the Book, 1765/66
12. RIGHT: Giving Daruma a Smoke, 1765
Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849)
The series "Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji (Fugaku sanjurokkei)," 1830-33

15. LEFT & RIGHT: Under the Wave off Kanagawa (Kanagawa oki nami ura), a.k.a. "Great Wave"

14. Fujimigahara in Owari Province
15. Ejiri in Suruga Province
16. Umezawa Marsh in Sagami

18. Shower Below the Summit (Sanka hakuu)

19. LEFT: Oiwa (Oiwa-san), from the series "One Hundred Ghost Tales (Hyaku monogatari)," 1831/32

20. CENTER: The Mansion of the Plates (Sara yashiki), from the series "One Hundred Ghost Tales (Hyaku monogatari)," 1831/32

21. RIGHT: Quick Guide to Drawing, 1812 (Katsushika Hokusai Museum of Art)
22. LEFT: Katsukawa Shunsho (1726-1792), Ichikawa Danjuro V as ghost of Seigen and Iwai Hanshiro IV as Princess Sakura in "Vestiges of Pine and Cherry," part two of "Flower of Edo: An Ichikawa Saga," 1783

23. RIGHT: Katsushika Hokumei (active 1804–30), The Mask Carver, surimono print

Kitagawa Utamaro (1753 (?)-1806)

24. LEFT: Mirror, from the series "Eight Views of Tea-stalls in Celebrated Places," c. 1795/96

25. CENTER: Woman Holding a Tortoise-shell Hair-comb, c. 1795/96

26. Kaigetsudo Dohan (active c. 1704-16), Courtesan Playing with a Cat, c. 1715

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27. Kitagawa Utamaro (1753 (?)-1806), No. 4, 9, and 12, from the series "Women Engaged in the Sericulture Industry," c. 1798/1800

Utagawa Hiroshige (a.k.a. Ando Hiroshige) (1797–1858)

28. LEFT: Snow (Yuki), from the series "Famous Places of Edo (Edo meisho)," c. 1849/52
29. CENTER: Plum Garden at Kameido, from the series "One Hundred Famous Views of Edo," 1857
30. RIGHT: Asakusa Rice Fields and Torinomachi Festival, from the series "One Hundred Famous Views of Edo," 1857

Terms

- **azuri-e** — images popular in the 1830's–40's and in the early 20th century, which were printed only in blue ink that employs gradations and different densities to create depth and variation
- **benizuri-e** — meaning a safflower red-colored print, although commonly employs red, green, and blue
- **baren** — round bamboo tool rubbed across back of paper during printing
- **egoyomi** — calendar print; flourished during the Meiwa era (1764–71) & often privately and illegally commissioned by wealthy patrons
• hashira-e — "pillar print," tall narrow format designed for the square wooden pillars of a home
• mitate-e — a "parody print" or allegorical image alluding to a narrative, legend, or event
• mon — kabuki actor crest typically emblazoned on kimono in actor prints and on stage
• nishiki-e — "brocade print," an image printed in multiple colors; begins c. 1750's
• ogi-e — folding fan print; the folding fan developed in Japan during the Heian era (794–1185)
• onnagata — a kabuki actor who specializes as a "female impersonator"
• surimono — lit. "painted thing;" limited run prints privately commissioned by educated literati and poetry groups for special commemorations; frequently depict substantial haiku poetry
• uchiwa — round (rigid) fan print based on a Chinese style dating back to antiquity
• uki-e — perspectival print conveying Western style vanishing-point or one-point perspective
• ukiyo-e — "pictures of the floating world" capturing the hedonistic pleasures of contemporary life in Edo Japan (1615–1868)
• Yokohama-e — pictures from 1861–62 of foreign culture at Yokohama, the exclusive port of foreign contact
• Yoshiwara — licensed pleasure quarters on the edge of Edo (Tokyo)

Bibliography

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This handout, image gallery, and an extensive glossary at www.ancientartpodcast.org/pennsic