

大正五年七月  
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# Seven Masters

20th-Century Japanese Woodblock Prints

TRAVELING EXHIBITION SERVICE



INTERNATIONAL  
ARTS AND ARTISTS









## SEVEN MASTERS

Early in the 20th century, a desire to revive the great Japanese tradition of woodblock prints (known as *ukiyo-e*, literally “picture[s] of the floating world”) in the context of Japan’s dynamic modern culture gave rise to an art movement known as *shin hanga*, the “new print.” At a time when art forms were undergoing systemic changes following Japan’s rapid Westernization and industrialization, a small group of artists mingled the old with the new, creating beautiful, enticing pictures that were reproduced as prints of almost unsurpassed quality. This revival succeeded largely because the woodblock print conveyed a unique artistic expression that set it apart from established forms, such as ink painting, and from new reprographic media like lithography.

The exhibition *Seven Masters: 20th-Century Japanese Woodblock Prints* focuses on seven artists who played a significant role in the development of the new print, and whose works boldly exemplify this new movement. Drawing from the superb collection at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, the exhibition features the spectacular beauty portraits of the artists Hashiguchi Goyō, Itō Shinsui, Yamakawa Shūhō, and Torii Kotondo; striking images of kabuki actors by Yamamura Toyonari and Natori Shunsen; as well as the evocative landscapes of Kawase Hasui. These multi-talented artists were all successful painters as well, but this exhibition looks exclusively at their unrivaled work in print design, and includes a cache of pencil drawings and rare printing proofs to offer insight into the exacting process of woodblock printing.

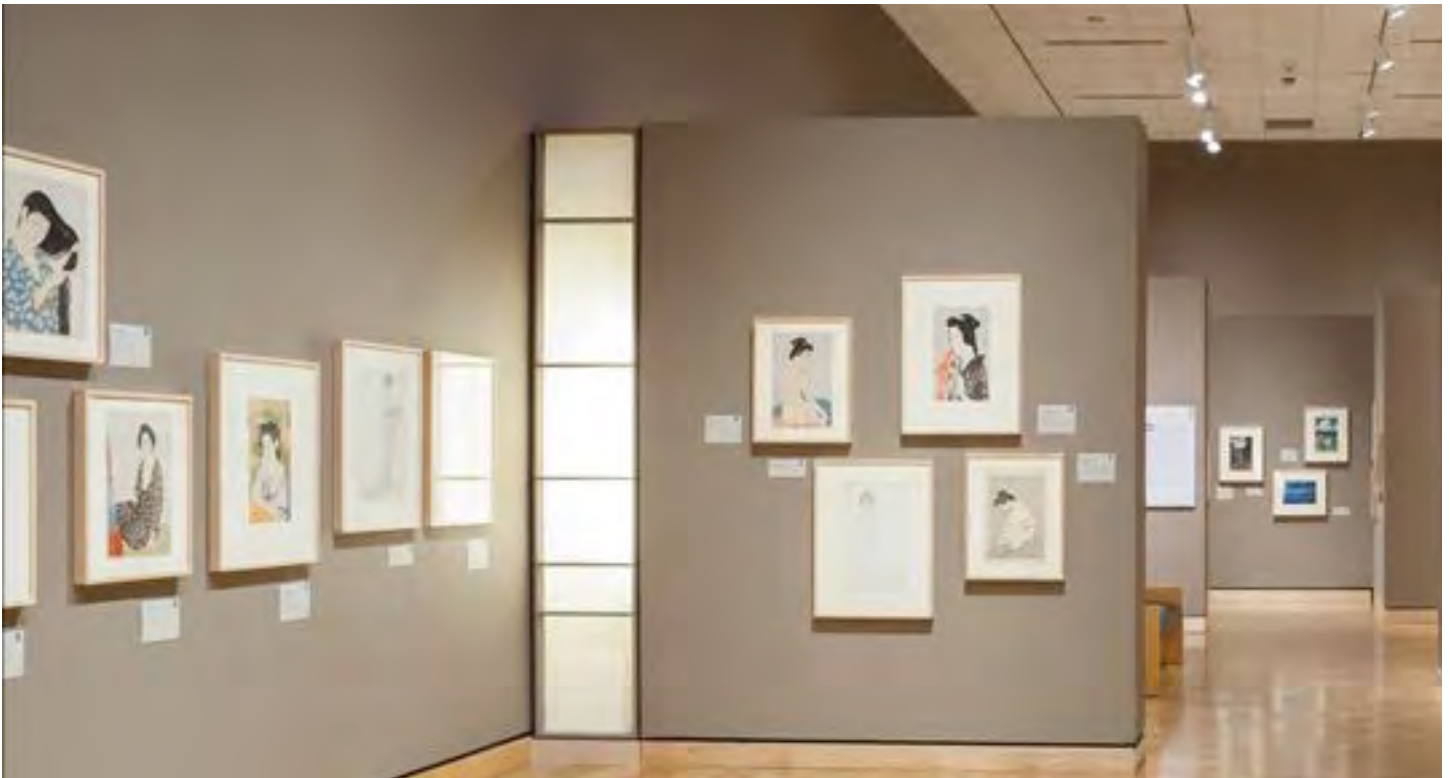
1. Detail of Natori Shunsen, *The Actor Ichikawa Chūsha VII as Takechi Mitsuhide* (from the series *Creative Prints: Collected Portraits by Shunsen*), 1926, woodblock print, ink and color on paper with mica and embossing. Published by Watanabe Shōzaburō. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Ellen and Fred Wells, 2002.161.60. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.

# CREATING A WOODBLOCK PRINT



2. Natori Shunsen, *Movie Actor Hayashi Chōjirō as Yukinojō*, 1935, woodblock print, ink and color on paper with mica. Published by Yoda Michio. Printed by Ono Tomisaburo. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of funds from Ellen Wells, 2014.4. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.





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*Shin hanga* resurrected the highest production values of the distant past, including the use of thick mulberry paper and rich mineral pigments, special features like embossing and mica backgrounds, and an emphasis on the swirly movement of the rubbing tool, or *baren*. Traditionally, each *ukiyo-e* was printed by the hundreds—even thousands for the most popular designs—but *shin hanga* were produced in limited editions to guarantee exclusivity.

The making of Japanese woodblock prints changed little over the centuries. Most prints were not the work of a single, autonomous artist; rather, they were the product of a collaboration, with the publisher as the ultimate decision-maker. In general, the publisher was also the seller, aiming to attract buyers and sell as many impressions of a print as possible.

Japanese prints were composite works of art. Their creation involved a quintet of publisher, designer, carver, printer, and potential buyer. The buyers, in aggregate “the market,” decided the fate of the final print, and thus influenced the production process. The publishers’ initial role was passive—they simply attempted to identify what would be a commercial success. In some cases, a sixth person entered the process as commissioner or patron, financially subsidizing the print and therefore having a say in the design.

The print designer first makes a rough graphite sketch on thin paper. Next, a more refined version is prepared, which is then precisely traced onto translucent paper, producing the final drawing (*hanshita-e*) that will guide the block carver. The

*hanshita-e* goes to the carver, who flips it over and glues it onto a block of cherry wood. Where the drawing is white, wood is carved away, leaving the dark outlines raised. This is the key block. A few impressions are made from it, in black ink, which are then given to the artist for color specifications. Some *shin hanga* designers, instead of providing written instructions, painted the key-block impression with watercolors to resemble the final print, as a guide for the carver and printer.

With the color directions in hand, the carver makes a key-block impression for each color. Like the *hanshita-e*, these are glued onto woodblocks, and a separate carving is made for each color. All the blocks, along with the color instructions, are then delivered to the printer, who prints on thick, moistened mulberry paper, applying pressure with a *baren*. Generally, the key block is printed first and then each color individually.

The printer may be asked for various special effects. Embossing is done by pressing the paper firmly, with the elbow, onto an un-inked block. Gradation is achieved by moistening a block, applying color and glue with a brush, and then printing in the usual way. A mica background is created by printing a layer of dissolved glue onto a freshly printed background color and sprinkling mica powder over the glue.

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3. Installation of *Seven Masters: 20th-Century Japanese Woodblock Prints from the Wells Collection* at the Minneapolis Institute of Art.

# THE ARTISTS



4. Kawase Hasui, *Lake Chūzenji at Nikkō*, 1930, woodblock print, ink and color on paper. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Paul Schweitzer, P.77.28.17. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.





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## Hashiguchi Goy 橋口五葉 (1881–1921)

Born Hashiguchi Kiyoshi, the art name he adopted, Goyō (literally, “five leaves”), was inspired by a three-hundred-year-old *goyōmatsu* (Japanese white pine) beside a lake in the garden of the artist’s childhood home in Kagoshima, on the island of Kyushu.

Along with oil paintings, sketches, and watercolors, Goyō’s surviving work includes some stunning *shin hanga*. His artistic expression, molded by the era of transition and transformation in Japanese art of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, was compatible with both Eastern and Western traditions. As a graduate of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, his curriculum would have involved copying from Western artworks and training in the basics of “Western” painting (oil painting).

Goyō excelled at figure studies, and drawing from life remained at the core of his art practice throughout his career. His realistic portrayals of nude female models in diverse poses all testify to



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his skills as a portraitist, one who rendered hair and faces with particular sensitivity.

Less than a year after Goyō’s early death at age thirty-nine, the Ukiyo-e Society of Japan sponsored an exhibition of his work, including selections from his private *ukiyo-e* collection. The poster for the exhibition was designed by the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, who at the time was engaged as a woodblock print dealer and knew Goyō.

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5. Hashiguchi Goyō, *Woman Applying Powder*, 1918, woodblock print; ink and color on paper with mica and embossing. Self-published. Carved by Takano Shichinosuke. Printed by Somekawa Kanzō. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Ellen and Fred Wells 2002.161.206. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.
  6. Hashiguchi Goyō, *Woman Combing Her Hair*, March 1920, woodblock print; ink and color on paper with mica. Self-published. Carved by Koike Masazō. Printed by Somekawa Kanzō. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Ellen and Fred Wells, 2002.161.3. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.



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## Yamamura Kōka 山村耕花 (Toyonari 豊成) (1886–1942)

Yamamura Toyonari began studying classic Japanese painting (*yamato-e*), at age ten, with the painter and print designer Ogata Gekkō (1859–1920). It was Gekkō who bestowed on him his art name, Kōka, in the traditional manner—the last character of Gekkō’s name becoming the first of his pupil’s. When Kōka later entered the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, he learned painting in the neo-traditional Japanese style, or *nihonga*.

By the time he turned thirty, Kōka had established his reputation by participating in almost thirty exhibitions. His first print, in 1916, and all his later actor prints were based on so-called bromides (*buromaido*), actor photos sold to fans at a performance. Emulating his predecessors in *ukiyo-e*, Kōka conveyed the actors’ likenesses in his portrayal of the Kabuki character, occasionally including the hands to suggest a particular actor’s unique stage presence. He also followed earlier examples in highlighting the actors’ faces against darkened backgrounds, sometimes enhanced with mica.

The Great Kantō Earthquake, in September 1923, devastated Tokyo and surrounding areas. Until the earthquake, Kōka’s woodblock prints, unlike his paintings, had pictured only Kabuki subjects. But now he expanded his repertoire in a set of ten prints from 1924 that included beautiful women, landscapes, and bird-and-flower images.

7. Yamamura Kōka (Toyonari), *Dancing at the New Carlton Café in Shanghai* (from an untitled set of ten prints), 1924, woodblock print, ink and color on paper with mica. Published by Yamamura Kōka Hanga Kankōkai. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of funds from Ellen Wells, 2014.35. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.
8. Yamamura Kōka (Toyonari), *The Actor Morita Kaniya XIII as Jean Valjean* (from an untitled actor series, sometimes called *Flowers of the Theatrical World*), 1921, woodblock print, ink and color on paper. Published by Yamamura Kōka Hanga Kankōkai. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Ellen and Fred Wells, 2002.161.53. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.





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## Natori Shunsen 名取春仙 (1886–1960)

As a child, Natori Shunsen showed artistic promise, and began his formal training under the prominent painter Ayaoka Yūshin (1846–1910). Shunsen became a student at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts in 1904, but soon dropped out and began working as an illustrator for magazines, books, and advertisements. By 1907 he was illustrating popular serial novels published in the prominent newspaper *Asahi Shimbun*.

Shunsen never gave up his main artistic pursuit and continued to submit paintings to various juried exhibitions. Increasingly interested in producing actor portraits, in 1916 he participated in the second Theater Pictures Exhibition. His painting of the actor Nakamura Ganjirō I in the role of Kamiya Jihei attracted the attention of the publisher Watanabe Shōzaburō, who suggested making a print based on the painting.

Eight years later, in 1925, Watanabe enlisted Shunsen again, for a series of thirty-six actor prints titled *Creative Prints: Collected*



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*Portraits by Shunsen*. Shunsen based them on photos of actors, which had been sold to Kabuki aficionados in previous years. His bright, clear coloring and noncalligraphic lines contributed to the modern look of these portraits. By the mid-1930s, Shunsen had established himself as portraitist of the Kabuki stars, which was cemented with the publication of the *New Version of Figures on the Stage*, a series of thirty portraits designed between 1951 and 1954.

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9. Natori Shunsen, *The Actor Ichikawa Sadanji II as Narukami* (from the series *Creative Prints: Collected Portraits by Shunsen*), 1926, woodblock print, ink and color on paper with mica and embossing. Published by Watanabe Shōzaburō. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Ellen and Fred Wells, X2004.2.11. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.
  10. Natori Shunsen, *Actor Nakamura Fukusuke V as Ohan*, 1928, woodblock print, ink and color on paper with embossing. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Ellen and Fred Wells, 2002.161.146. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.





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## It Shinsui 伊藤深水 (1898–1972)

During Itō Shinsui's early years, in Fukagawa in downtown Tokyo, his family enjoyed the economic benefits of the Sino-Japanese War boom. But their fortunes changed, and Shinsui had to leave school to work, first at a sign shop and then as a factory hand at the Tokyo Printing Company. His talent in drawing and painting led to an apprenticeship in the design section of the company in 1911, and through the staff there he met Kaburaki Kiyokata (1878–1972), a genre artist known for images of beautiful women.

Kiyokata took the aspiring young painter under his wing, encouraging Shinsui to study and waiving the tuition fee so he could attend night school. Shinsui's debut as a painter in 1912 showcased his portrayal of genre painting. Like other *nihonga* painters, he chose to represent the everyday lives of working people rather than classical subjects. Although Kiyokata did not join Watanabe Shōzaburō's "new print" movement, Watanabe recruited a number of Kiyokata's students to design *shin hanga*. Itō Shinsui was the first to participate in this project; his *Woman*



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*Looking at a Mirror* was published in July 1916, followed in December by another beauty print and a landscape. Concentrating on these themes, Shinsui designed prints exclusively for Watanabe until 1925, and by 1960 had designed 129 prints for him.

In the true spirit of genre painting, after World War II Shinsui shifted from pictures of beauties to portraits of assertive, confident women. Portraiture became his focus, and he depicted subjects of all ages and occupations. He also continued to experiment in different styles, sometimes bold and minimalist, sometimes pastel-like. His last exhibition of new works was in 1970.

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11. Itō Shinsui, *Woman Looking at a Mirror*, July 1916, woodblock print; ink and color on paper. Published by Watanabe Shōzaburō. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Ellen and Fred Wells, 2002.161.205. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.
  12. Itō Shinsui, *Floating Temple of Katada*, 1918, woodblock print, ink and color on paper. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Ellen and Fred Wells, 2002.161.17.2. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.





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## Kawase Hasui 川瀬巴水 (1883–1957)

The most prolific print artist of his time, and a pillar of the *shin hanga* movement, Kawase Hasui designed more than six hundred woodblock prints. In his youth, Hasui struggled to balance his obligations as the future head of the family business—manufacturing and selling braided silk cording—with his interest in art. At age twenty-five, too old for a traditional apprenticeship, he joined a painting school founded by a group of Western-style artists.

When Itō Shinsui showed his landscape print series *The Eight Views of Lake Biwa* in the 1918 Kyōdokai exhibition, Hasui felt encouraged to show his own landscape sketches to the publisher Watanabe Shōzaburō. Watanabe agreed to test the market with three landscapes by Hasui of the town of Shiobara. These must have been well received, as more than five hundred of Hasui’s designs were published over the next decades.

Hasui was very selective about where he opened his sketchbook; he depicted famous spots, but rarely from the most obvious angle, preferring an idiosyncratic viewpoint. He once offended a well-intentioned local guide, rejecting “a picturesque spot” for what the man deemed “an unsightly place.”

13. Kawase Hasui, *Snow at Kiyomizu Hall in Ueno*, July 1929, woodblock print, ink and color on paper. Published by Kawaguchi Jirō. Carved by Maeda Kentarō. Printed by Komatsu Wasankichi. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Paul Schweitzer, P.77.28.10. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.

14. Kawase Hasui, *Irises*, July 1929, woodblock print, ink and color on paper. Published by Kawaguchi Jirō. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Ellen and Fred Wells, 2002.161.134. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.





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## Yamakawa Shh 山川秀峰 (1898–1944)

Yamakawa Shūhō was born in Kyoto. At age fifteen, having moved to Tokyo, he began to paint bird-and-flower pictures while studying the neo-traditional Japanese style known as *nihonga*. Around 1913, Shūhō became a pupil of the famous painter Kaburaki Kiyokata (1878–1972).

Shūhō was highly successful in submitting paintings to government-sponsored exhibitions, but unfortunately most of those paintings, like the works of many other painters, are now lost. In October 1927, his four-panel screen *Fireflies* was accepted to Teiten—as the Exhibition of the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts is commonly known. Around that time, plans must have solidified with the small publishing firm Bijutsusha for a series of four prints called *Women in Four Settings*; aside from those, however, Shūhō showed little interest in pursuing print design, and eight years passed before he took it up again briefly.

Shūhō's success as a painter allowed him to take on students of his own, and, as his sphere of influence grew, newspapers and magazines reported on his life and supported the progress of his career. By 1931, he had developed a keen interest in dance. He made sketches and took hundreds of photographs of dancers, and also borrowed costumes and props used in dance performances. Shūhō finally returned to designing prints in the late 1930s, including a series of dancers and beauties.

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15. Yamakawa Shūhō, *Autumn* (from the series *Women in Four Settings*), 1927, woodblock print, ink and color on paper. Published by Bijutsusha. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Ellen and Fred Wells, 2002.161.120. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.
16. Yamakawa Shūhō, *Approaching Snow* (from the series *Women in Four Settings*), December 1927, woodblock print, ink and color on paper. Published by Bijutsusha. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Ellen and Fred Wells, 2002.161.55. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.





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## Torii Kotondo 鳥居言人 (1900–1976)

Torii Kotondo was born into a family of artists who traced their lineage to the seminal painter and printmaker Torii Kiyonobu (1664–1729). Kiyonobu had contracts from all the theaters in Edo for their signboards, agreements that endured through multiple generations for some three hundred years, right up to the present day. Kotondo became the eighth head of the Torii school, and excelled at the family specialty of exquisitely designed theater signs.

In 1917, Kotondo began an apprenticeship with Kobori Tomone (1864–1931), a prominent painter in the neo-traditional Japanese style (*nihonga*), who specialized in historical subjects. Later that year, he entered the atelier of Kaburaki Kiyokata (1878–1972), under whose guidance he added beautiful women to his repertoire. Kotondo did not come to the print medium until 1929, when he began a collaboration with the publishers Sakai and Kawaguchi on nine portraits of beautiful women. In the early 1930s, he designed a series of twelve beauty prints for the publisher Ikeda Tomizō.



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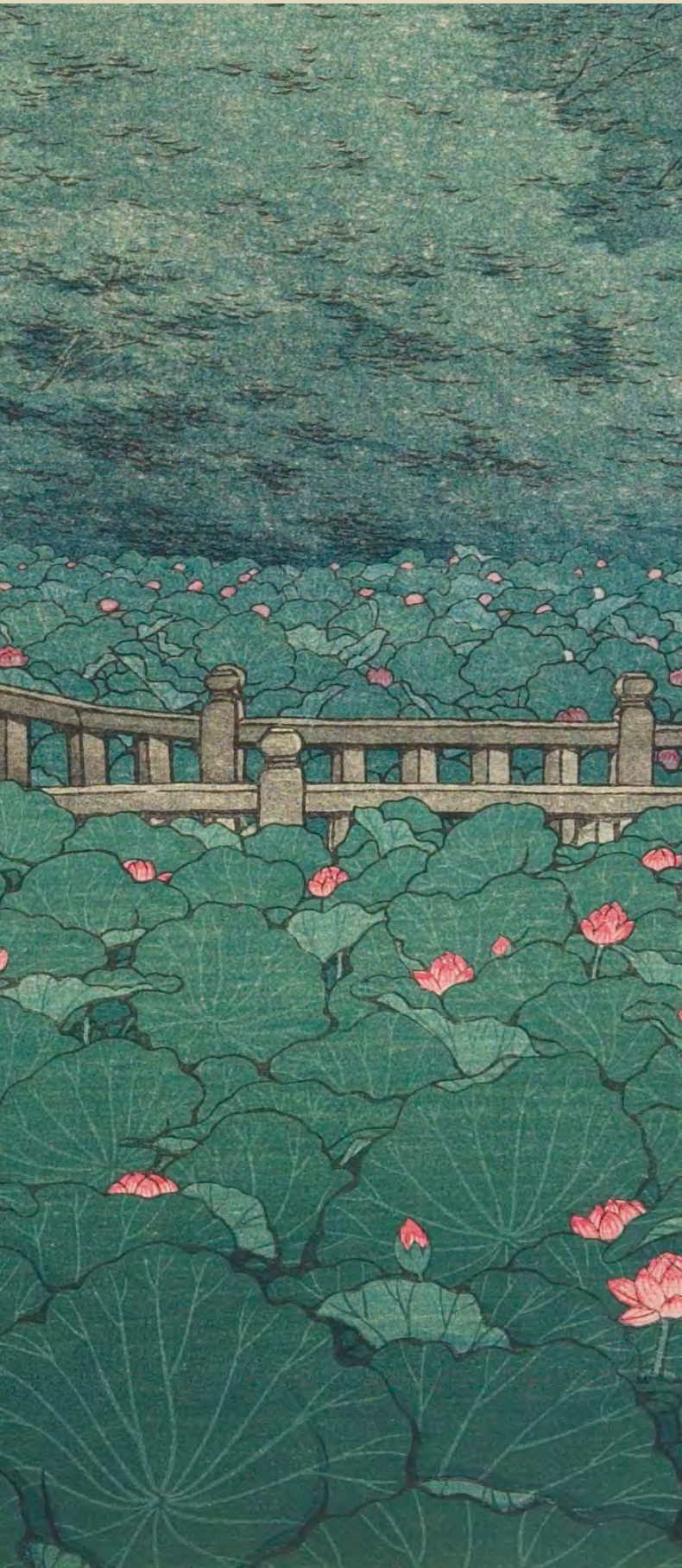
While Kotondo's paintings show women from various eras of Japanese history, his woodblock prints picture only women of his own time. All are clad in kimono, even though many women in the 1920s and 1930s wore Western dress. The designs include mundane details that give intimacy to the images, as if these are snapshots of women going about their daily lives.

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17. Torii Kotondo, *Rain*, October 1929, woodblock print, ink and color on paper. Published by Sakai and Kawaguchi. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Ellen and Fred Wells, 2002.161.20.  
© Torii Kotondo. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.
18. Torii Kotondo, *Sash*, November 1929, woodblock print, ink and color on paper with mica. Published by Kawaguchi. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Ellen and Fred Wells, 2002.161.141.  
© Torii Kotondo. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.









## ABOUT THE CURATOR

Dr. Andreas Marks is the Head of the Japanese and Korean Art Department at the Minneapolis Institute of Art. From 2008 to 2013, he was the Director and Chief Curator of the Clark Center for Japanese Art and Culture in California. He has a PhD from Leiden University in the Netherlands and a master's degree in East Asian Art History from the University of Bonn. A specialist of Japanese woodblock prints, he is the author of 14 books. His *Publishers of Japanese Prints: A Compendium* is the first comprehensive reference work in any language on Japanese print publishers. In 2014 he received an award from the International Ukiyo-e Society in Japan for his research.

## ABOUT THE MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ART

Home to more than 89,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history, the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) inspires wonder, spurs creativity, and nourishes the imagination. With extraordinary exhibitions and one of the finest wide-ranging art collections in the country—Rembrandt to van Gogh, Monet to Matisse, Asian to African—Mia links the past to the present, enables global conversations, and offers an exceptional setting for inspiration.

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19. Detail of Kawase Hasui, *Benten Pond at Shiba*, August 1929, woodblock print, ink and color on paper. Published by Kawaguchi Jirō. Carved by Maeda Kentarō. Printed by Komatsu Wasankichi. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Paul Schweitzer, P.77.28.15. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.





FRONT Itō Shinsui, *Woman Looking at a Mirror*, July 1916, woodblock print; ink and color on paper. Published by Watanabe Shōzaburō. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Ellen and Fred Wells, 2002.161.205. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.

BACK Installation of *Seven Masters: 20th-Century Japanese Woodblock Prints from the Wells Collection* at the Minneapolis Institute of Art.

## EXHIBITION SPECIFICATIONS

### Number of Works

There are two versions of the exhibition, each containing 75 comparable works of art, including woodblock prints and drawings

### Organized by

Minneapolis Institute of Art

### Curator

Andreas Marks, PhD, Mary Griggs Burke Curator of Japanese and Korean Art, Minneapolis Institute of Art

### Requirements

High security; 300–350 linear feet

### Participation Fee

Please Inquire

### Shipping

IA&A makes all arrangements; exhibitors pay outgoing shipping costs within the contiguous U.S.

### Booking Period

12 weeks

### Tour

January 2020–January 2022

### Publication

*Seven Masters: 20th-Century Japanese Woodblock Prints from the Wells Collection* by Andreas Marks, with essays by Chiaki Ajioka, Ishida Yasuhiro, Yuiko Kimura-Tilford, Amy Reigle Newland, Charles Walbridge, Matthew Welch, and Yano Haruyo

### Educational Materials

Forthcoming

### Contact

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