

Cover and right:
Tsukioka Yoshitoshi
(月岡芳年). The Two
Brave Men: Inuzuka Shino
and Inugai Genpachi
Battling on the Roof of
Horyukaku (Horyukaku
ryoyu tsutomu). 1887.
Arnold Satterthwait,
Class of 1966, Collection.



## Beyond the Floating World: Traversing Space and Time Through *Ukiyo-e*

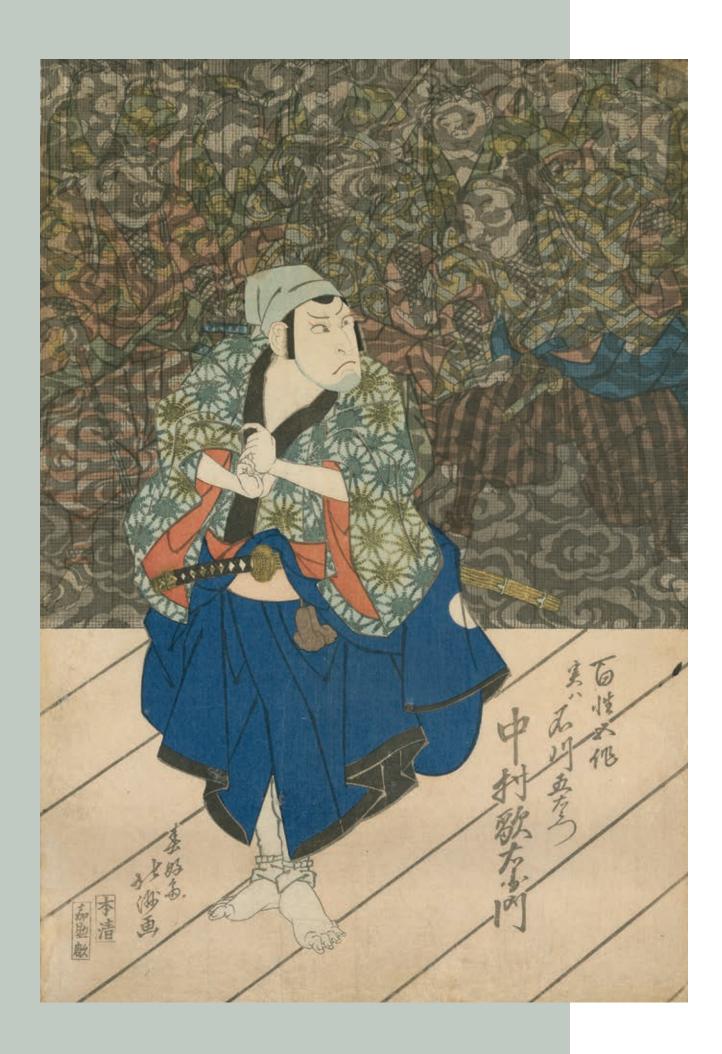
An Exhibition Featuring the Arnold Satterthwait, Class of 1966, Collection

Curated by Stephanie Wang BMC '24

Rebecca and Rick White Gallery Lutnick Library, Haverford College February 19–July 5, 2024

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### The Making of a Collector

#### **Arnold Satterthwait '66**

Shunkōsai Hokushū (春好斎北洲). The Smoke Curtain: Utaemon III as Ishikawa Goemon Disguised as the Farmer Gosaku. 1830. Arnold Satterthwait, Class of 1966, Collection. During my post-doctoral years in Imperial College's chemistry department (1980-82), I spent several weekends in Oxford with Barbara Strachey, a biographer and the author of *The* Journeys of Frodo. Sitting beside a life-sized doll of her Uncle Lytton, I soaked up stories of the Bloomsbury group and of Barbara's grandmother, Mary Smith (1864-1945). Mary had many connections to Haverford and Bryn Mawr, including her first cousin and my great-grandfather, Albanus Longstreth Smith, Class of 1881. Mary's sister, Alys Perarsall Smith, graduated from Bryn Mawr in 1890 and married philosopher Bertrand Russell. Mary established the Villa I Tatti above Florence, Italy, with her husband, Bernard Berenson. Now Harvard's Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, it inspired my collection.

Shortly after opening my lab at The Scripps Research Institute (now Scripps Research) in La Jolla, California, in 1984, I purchased a late impression of a Hiroshige wood-block print that transported me in my imagination to historic Japan. I returned to London in 1985, discovering John Rose's *ukiyo-e* gallery, and buying several prints. In 2002, I purchased prints from his online Auction *Ukiyo-e* that continued for a decade, eventually building a collection of more than 130 items, including multi-print images (polytychs) and paintings.

Initially, I purchased prints for my education, often purposely with unfamiliar themes and styles that I came to appreciate. A turning point came with a pristine, unfaded print. Its stunning colors had me seeking more, building a collection chronologically and balancing themes. I familiarized myself with Osaka *ukiyo-e* from kabuki fan clubs of the 1820s and 1830s. Kabuki theater was a major source of Edo-period entertainment, unfamiliar to Western collectors but a haven for

Japanese culture. Stephanie Wang chose kabuki as a setting for opening this exhibition with the wonderfully appropriate "Monsters, Spirits, and Warriors: Venturing Into the Fantastical Realm."

In 2012, I joined San Diego Museum's Asian Arts Council during the museum's preparation for an *ukiyo-e* exhibition. I met curators including Andreas Marks, author of many books on *ukiyo-e*, who published an image of my carved woodblock in his first book. Later, I met Michael Kiefer from Haverford's Office of Institutional Advancement, who encouraged me to submit a summary for evaluation. Following Professor Erin Schoneveld's *ukiyo-e* course and working with Sarah Horowitz and Stephanie on this exhibition has me wishing to be a Haverford student again.

I bought my first *ukiyo-e* painting by Kubo Shunman from Christie's in an after-auction bargaining session. My collection has continued to grow since retirement, which has afforded me several trips to Japan. I discovered Tokyo's Hagurodo Gallery, a prior training ground for *ukiyo-e* painting dealers, and purchased three more 18th-century paintings there, two authenticated by its founder, Kimura Tosuke. I bought a fifth painting in Kyoto, by Hiroshige's early teacher Utagawa Toyohiro and authenticated by Muneshige Narazaki, whose insights opened Professor Schoneveld's course.

I isolated during COVID. An irredeemable dreamer, I pictured myself a modern day Boccaccio, holed up in the Villa Palmeiri (adjacent, incidentally, to the Villa I Tatti), writing tales of *ukiyo-e*. Collectors of original art are fortunate indeed. My hope is that Haverford will benefit. What adventures it could unleash!



# Beyond the Floating World: Traversing Space and Time Through *Ukiyo-e*

Stephanie Wang BMC '24

Fig. 1: Utagawa Toyoharu (歌川 豊春). Naka-no-chô in the New Yoshiwara (Shin Yoshiwara Naka-no-chô no zu), from the series Perspective Pictures of Japanese Scenes (Uki-e wakoku keiseki). 1770s. Arnold Satterthwait, Class of 1966, Collection.

#### Ukiyo-e and the Floating World

The works in the Arnold Satterthwait, class of 1966, Collection belong to an artistic tradition known as "images of the floating world" (ukiyo-e 浮世絵), the visual manifestation of a unique culture that emerged and flourished in Edo period Japan (1605–1868) under the military dictatorship of the Tokugawa shogunate. The word *ukiyo* locates its origins in Buddhist doctrines of the medieval period; it referred to the hardship and instability brought on by worldly pursuits, in contrast to the blissful state that one could achieve in the heavenly realm of Nirvana. 1 By the mid-17th century, the term had been appropriated and transformed. The original combination of characters, "sorrow" (憂) and "world" (世), were replaced by the homonym "floating world" (浮世), and the connotations of ukiyo shifted accordingly. To live in this new floating world was to detach oneself from the monotony and frustrations of the quotidian and surrender to the ephemeral pleasures of the here-and-now. This hedonistic reconception of *ukiyo* is perhaps most aptly expressed in the preface to Asai Ryōi's 1666 novel Tales of the Floating World (Ukiyo monogatari):

Cross each bridge as you come to it; gaze at the moon, the snow, the cherry blossoms, and the bright autumn leaves; recite poems; drink saké; and make merry. Not even poverty will be a bother. Floating along with an unsinkable disposition, like a gourd bobbing along with the current—this is what we call the floating world [ukiyo]...<sup>2</sup>

Although conceptually divorced from the mundane present, the floating world was tethered

to tangible sites across the shogunal capital of Edo (present-day Tokyo): the licensed pleasure quarter (yūkaku 遊廓) of the Yoshiwara, the theater district (shibaimachi 芝居町), and sumo competition sites, among others (Fig. 1). These centers of urban culture, collectively referred to as "evil places" (akusho 悪所), seemed to exist outside the bounds of established society, operating according to their own systems of values and regulations. Under the Tokugawa polity, society was organized into a top-down neo-Confucian hierarchy of samurai, farmer, artisan, and merchant (shi-nō-kō-shō 士農工育).3 This meant that virtually all aspects of daily life—what people wore, where they lived, what professions they practiced, even who they met—were determined by their position within this four-class system.<sup>4</sup> In the society and culture of the floating world, these strictly delineated hierarchical distinctions were rendered more fluid. The theater district and pleasure quarter, in particular, were "melting pots" that were frequented by samurai and wealthy townspeople (chōnin 町人) alike. As Craig Hartley notes, they were "a world where one man's money was as good as another's, and privilege could be bought, albeit at fantastic expense." In this particular social milieu, the floating world represented a conscious flight from the world of feudal regulation and its straightjacket of hierarchy, duty, and status.<sup>6</sup>

Acutely aware of its disruptive potential, the shogunal administration took various measures to prevent the floating world and its patterns of thought from trickling into the wider public imagination. Legal restrictions were bolstered by spatial tactics. Kabuki theaters were located within a small zone in the heart of the downtown area, while the city's brothels and tea houses were circumscribed to the Yoshiwara, a district

on the northern perimeter of Edo whose walls, moat, and gates effectively prevented courtesans from leaving at will.8 The subversive quality of the floating world was likewise inhibited by the nature of its amusements. Much like the snow and cherry blossoms of which Ryōi speaks established metaphors in Japanese literature and visual culture for transition, change, and impermanence—the feeling of bliss that could be derived from the entertainment and pleasure quarters was fleeting. A visit to the kabuki theater had the ability to transport one to the space and time of the fiction being enacted on stage, yet this only lasted the duration of the performance. Similarly, the fickleness of the Yoshiwara's courtesans was legendary; the affection and attention which they lavished on their clients would disappear the instant the money ran dry. The floating world, as a space that was at once localized and transient, was to be a self-contained universe that ran parallel to, but never intersected with, Edo society at large. After a few hours of indulgence and carefree pleasure, party goers were expected to resume their assigned roles, and the neo-Confucian social order was to continue on its appointed course with only minor disruption.<sup>10</sup>

#### The Spatiality and Temporality of Ukiyo-e

The floating world culture gave rise to and found its most vivid expression in the artistic genre of *ukiyo-e*. These "images of the floating world" served a range of functions, from more pragmatic representations of historical events and literary narratives to more promotional Yoshiwara guidebooks and kabuki playbills. 11 They also encompassed a range of formats and mediums, including paintings, illustrated books, and woodblock prints. Of these, single-sheet woodblock prints were arguably the most ubiquitous. Produced in large quantities through the collaborative effort of artist, block cutter, printer, and publisher—the "ukiyo-e quartet"—they were differentiated from other forms of imagery by their accessibility and affordability (Fig. 2). Paintings, which had long dominated Japan's artistic landscape, were made almost exclusively for members of the upper ranks of society; only a select few had the funds and connections necessary to commission works from painting ateliers. By contrast, prints were readily available to the public through a citywide distribution system of publishing houses and print shops,

and could be purchased for as little as sixteen mon (文)—roughly the cost of a bowl of buckwheat noodles.<sup>12</sup> While paintings were the product of direct transactions between patron and artist, prints were at the heart of a commercial enterprise that had mass production and dissemination as its primary goals. They were, in essence, commodities whose marketability depended on their ability to keep pace with innovations in printing techniques and recent fashions and trends. It was this pressure to satisfy the ever-changing tastes of a diverse clientele, coupled with the boundless creativity that artists demonstrated in their attempts to circumvent censorship regulations, that rendered the woodblock print medium especially dynamic. The landmark invention of sophisticated, full-color "brocade pictures" (nishiki-e 錦絵) occurred in the 1760s, less than a century after the emergence of monochrome, "black printed pictures" (sumizuri-e 墨摺絵) in the 1670s. While the subject matter of early prints was limited in scope, consisting primarily of alluring beauties and kabuki performers of the urban pleasure districts, the repertoire of print designers broadened considerably over the course of the Edo period. By the time the Tokugawa shogunate fell in 1868, ukiyo-e subjects would include magnificent vistas, still lifes, flora and fauna, portraiture, and historical scenes.

Ukiyo-e offered a point of access, a way of seeing inside the floating world. As art historian Allen Hockley writes, the prints' "dramatic compositions, executed in vivid colors, were a spectacular match for the floating world's most dazzling events and theatrical performances."13 However, the floating world as it existed within the pictorial space of paintings and prints was considerably more vast, extending far beyond the space and time of the urban locales that gave birth to it.14 Fantastical renderings of spirits, demons, and monsters whisked viewers away to a mythological space entirely divorced from the real world, while landscape prints afforded individuals, irrespective of their social or financial background, the chance to explore the famous places (meisho 名所) of Japan to their heart's content. In the realm of time, ukiyo-e arose from a range of subtly interacting social and cultural factors that were specific to the Edo period, yet its scope and influence was by no means limited to this single historical moment. Parody pictures (mitate-e 見立絵) brought elements of the



Fig. 2: Toyohara Kunichika (豊原 国周). *Danjuro IX* in Shibaraku. 1869. Arnold Satterthwait, Class of 1966, Collection.

pre-Tokugawa past into provocative tension with the floating world present. The legacy of the *ukiyo-e* has lived on, not only in the works of contemporary print artists, but also in the exhibition space. Ultimately, the experience of beholding a woodblock print is the same for the contemporary gallery viewer as it was for the Edoite: to lay one's eyes on a print is to be transported temporally and spatially into an alternate universe, the combination of beauty, drama, and fantasy that is the floating world.

#### "Gazing Upon Faraway Flowers": Landscape Prints, Travel, and New Perceptions of Space

In 1834, the celebrated writer and critic Kyokutei Bakin (1767–1848) likened the experience of reading an *Edo meisho zue* (江戶名所図会), a richly illustrated survey of the city's most famous sites, to "gazing upon faraway flowers." <sup>15</sup> The book, he argued, would compensate for not being

able to visit the sites in person; while the city's landmarks might remain distant flowers, they "bloomed" within the pages of the picture guidebooks (*meisho zue* 名所図会) for one to ponder at home. <sup>16</sup> Bakin's observations are reflective of a late-Edo phenomenon, wherein the popularization of new genres of printed material—travel guidebooks and landscape prints—radically transformed the way that people perceived movement and space.

The emergence of landscape prints (*meisho-e* 名所绘) in a market that had long been dominated by courtesan and actor imagery was not a sudden occurrence, but rather, the natural outgrowth of several interrelated trends. The first of these is the emergence of what scholars have termed the "culture of movement" (*kōdō bunka* 行動文化).<sup>17</sup> In the early years of its regime, the Tokugawa shogunate established a system of highways to facilitate the transport of goods and people, while also strengthening its control.

The Tōkaidō was the most important of these routes as it linked Kyoto, the traditional capital and the home of the emperor, to Edo, the seat of the shogun's regime and the center of political power.<sup>18</sup> Along the route were 53 governmentdesignated stations which supplied travelers with stables, provisions, and lodging. The highway was regularly traveled by daimyo processions, moving between their domains, their residences, and Edo, as well as ordinary people on pilgrimages, merchants, entertainers, and sightseers. As the traffic on the Tōkaidō grew, so did the interest in travel amongst the general public. Many associated the activity with a sense of freedom that could not be found within the limits of the city; it was a chance to shed their daily worries and economic concerns. As Ikku Jippensha (1765–1831) noted in Shank's Mare (Tōkaidōchū Hizakurige 東海道中膝栗毛), a comical travel novel published between 1802 and 1822, "Truly traveling means cleaning the life of care." 19 By the dawn of the 19th century, this sense of wanderlust had grown so pervasive that there was what was referred to as "Hakkei culture," a large body of individuals who were so desirous of traveling that they met in groups to discuss their obsession.<sup>20</sup>

It was in this climate that the landscape genre appeared. Utagawa Hiroshige (歌川広重)

(1797-1858)'s 1833 series The 53 Stations of the Tōkaidō (Tōkaidō gojūsan tsugi 東海道五十三次), which depicts scenes that one might encounter while making the journey from Edo to Kyoto, is arguably the most well-known. But the idea for creating a series on the Tokaido theme did not emerge in a vacuum; it had become an established subject in literature and art long before it was appropriated by Hiroshige. Meisho zue, which emerged in the 1780s, showcased the famous sights and landmarks (meisho 名所) of specific locales (the Tōkaidō, Edo, Kyoto, etc.) with a combination of visual graphics ( $zu \boxtimes$ ) and textual commentaries (mondan 文談) (Fig. 3).21 In his study on the genre, Robert Goree contends that meisho zue were not only used as guidebooks in the traditional sense; travelers would have preferred the more compact meisho-ki (名 所記). For many, they also offered an experience akin to armchair travel. According to one Edoperiod scholar, meisho zue enabled readers to "wander using the eyes alone with a feeling of movement on roads to distant eastern lands, without the anxiety of stepping on large stones and clambering up steep mountain roads."22 In other words, they enabled people to travel vicariously, enjoying the aesthetic and escapist pleasures of the pastime without the financial costs or physical exertion.

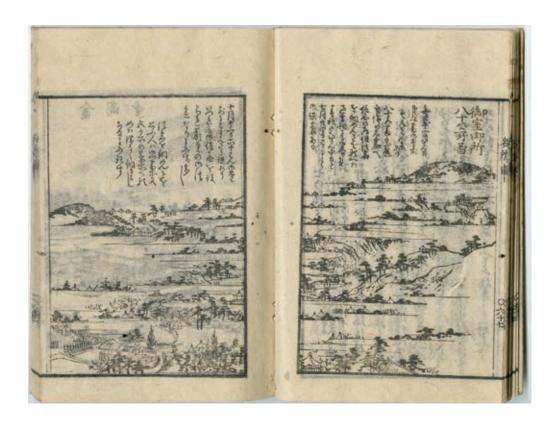


Fig. 3: Töriti Ikeda, editor. A Trip Through the Famous Places of the Capital (Miyako meishoguruma). Kyoto: Kambei Murakami, 1800s. Quaker & Special Collections, Haverford College.



Fig. 4: Katsushika Hokusai (萬飾北斎). Goyu, from the series Fifty-Three Stations of the Tōkaidō (Tōkaidō gojusan tsugi). 1805–1806. Bryn Mawr Special Collections.

One of the earliest known appearances of the Tōkaidō theme in woodblock prints was an untitled set (c. 1801) by Katsushika Hokusai (葛 飾北斎) (1760-1849). Although the artist likely capitalized on the popularity of meisho zue and meisho-ki, he took a novel approach that set his compositions apart from those of his predecessors. For the most part, meisho zue illustrations depict bustling town-centers, bridges, and landscapes from an aerial perspective. The focus is on the scene as a whole, rather than on any singular subject. Hokusai's compositions, by contrast, bring the point of view closer to the spectator, and are more concerned with capturing mundane moments such as the daily lives of the stations' inhabitants and interactions between locals and tourists. In the process, they often downplay the opportunities for portraying the magnificent scenic points of the Tōkaidō.<sup>23</sup> The print Goyu (御油) (1805-1806), for example, is situated along the highway, the name of the station

indicated by a stone marker (Fig. 4). A man sits in the shade of a large pine tree, enjoying a moment of repose, while a fellow traveler approaches from the left, trailed by a man that he has presumably hired to carry his belongings. A mountain is visible in the far distance, peeking through the mist, but the emphasis of the composition is clearly on the interaction that is taking place in the foreground, a brief but friendly encounter between two strangers.

For all their naturalism and vitality, Hokusai's compositions were not based on first-hand experience, as the artist almost certainly did not visit the various places that he depicted in this early series. They were products of his imagination, modeled after earlier illustrations in *meisho zue*, in addition to oral reports from travelers. Hiroshige, on the other hand, is believed to have traveled the length of the Tōkaidō in 1832 as part of an official delegation escorting the shogun's gift horses to the imperial court. Throughout



the journey, he sketched in detail the incidents that he witnessed at various stations, in addition to famous buildings and geographical sites.<sup>24</sup> Upon returning to Edo, Hiroshige immediately commenced work on his first Tokaido series, which would be published the following year in 1833. He ultimately completed a total of 55 prints, one for each of the stations, in addition to one for the starting and ending points in Edo and Kyoto. Hiroshige's travel experience surely contributed to the vividness of his prints. However, the series is not to be understood as a faithful representation of visually observed reality. Like Hokusai, Hiroshige was influenced by earlier representations. For example, the layout of the Kanaya station print recalls that of the Ōigawa view of Kanaya in the *Tōkaidō meisho zue* (1797), with porters emerging from the river in the bottom left, and crossing the central sandbank towards the mountains in the upper right.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, the comical scene that unfolds in *Goyu*, pushy employees attempting to drag travelers into inns for the night, was borrowed from Jippensha's Shank's Mare. 26 The fictitious quality of the series is also apparent in its depiction of scenes from all four seasons, such as heavy snow in Kanbara and an early summer horse festival in Chiryū, when

Hiroshige's trip took place in late summer.<sup>27</sup>

Hiroshige's 53 Stations, more decidedly than Hokusai's, are "travel prints about the act of traveling itself." 28 Whereas Hokusai tended to focus on the locals, Hiroshige concentrated on tourists making their way through the locations depicted. In Kawasaki (川崎), a ferry carries a small party of travelers across the Rokugō River, while a second group stands on the far shore, awaiting its return (Fig. 5); two men are seated in a Mariko teahouse, enjoying the regional specialty of grated yam soup; horses and porters are changed outside a post station in Fujieda in preparation for the final leg of the journey. These mundane scenes are occasionally disrupted by images of magnificent grandeur, in which nature takes the central role and human presence is barely visible, reduced to a small sailboat in a vast body of water, or a narrow trail of dots on a massive cliff face. This pattern paralleled the tourist experience; after suffering from physical exhaustion, homesickness, and "travel tedium" (ryojō 旅情), they would be rewarded with beautiful sights.<sup>29</sup> With this, the act of virtual travel became all the more convincing for the viewer of the print.

Fig. 5: Utagawa Hiroshige (歌川 広重). Kawasaki: The Rokugō Ferry (Kawasaki, Rokugō watashibune), from the series Fifty-Three Stations of the Tōkaidō Road (Tōkaidō gojūsan tsugi no uchi). 1833–1834. Arnold Satterthwait, Class of 1966, Collection.

Fig. 6: Kubo Shunman (窪俊満). Courtesan and her Kamuro Strolling Down the Nakano-cho of the Yoshiwara at Cherry Blossom Time. 1800. Arnold Satterthwait, Class of 1966, Collection.



## Bijinga: Capturing the Elusive Female Ideal

One of the most abiding print genres was the "beautiful person picture" or bijinga (美人画), a term that encompasses alluring and idealized representations of beauties from all walks of life. Literally translated as "beautiful person," the term bijin (美人) was originally not gender specific and would have referred to depictions of males as well as females. However, by the end of the 18th century, the term denoted women almost exclusively, and was most frequently applied to paintings and prints of waitresses, geisha entertainers, lower-class prostitutes, and high-ranked courtesans—the women of the floating world. Although bijinga artists derived their inspiration from the people and sites of the pleasure quarters, verisimilitude was not their primary motivation. Instead, the disagreeable aspects of life in the pleasure quarters were dispensed with so as to avoid shattering the mirage of the floating world as a place of glamor, romance, and desire.<sup>30</sup> An example is found in a hanging scroll (kakemono 掛物) dated to 1800 by Kubo Shunman (窪俊満) (1757-1820) (Fig. 6). It paints a pleasant scene: a Yoshiwara courtesan—her elite status denoted by the richness of her layered kimonos and her elaborate, upswept butterfly hairstyle (yokohyogo), pinned with bamboo-comb wings—and her young apprentice (kamuro 秃), gaily parading past a cherry tree in full bloom.

The illusory nature of the *bijin* was likewise evident through the ways in which she was represented. *Bijinga* artists were not concerned with capturing the physical likenesses of their female subjects. Rather, the general contours of the face and figure were typically rendered according to a basic template, and the women were distinguished by other elements of their appearance, namely their garments, hairstyles, cosmetics, and posture.

In her study of Meiji *bijin*, Miya Elise Mizuta Lippit likens the subject to a mannequin for displaying the "customs and manners" (*fūzoku* 風俗) of different times.<sup>31</sup> As she writes, "beauty was not conceived as a property of the *bijin*, but an expression given to the *bijin* to affirm what was preferred by Meiji culture at any given moment. The *bijin* allowed for the articulation of a beauty that was subjective, accommodating it as something impermanent that flowed through historical time and cultural space." This temporal specificity of the *bijin* is readily apparent if we consider the Edo period beauties of Utamaro and

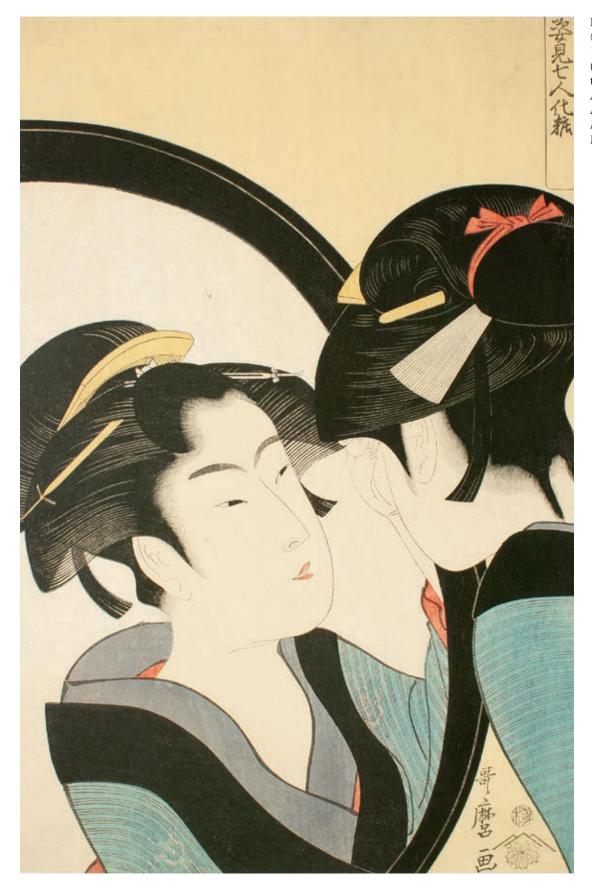


Fig. 7: Kitagawa Utamaro (喜多川歌麿). Picture of a Woman Applying Makeup (Bijin Keshō no Zu), from the series Seven Women Applying Makeup Using a Mirror (Sugatami Shichinin Keshō). ca. 1789. Bryn Mawr Special Collections.

the like, in comparison to those of the subsequent Meiji period (1868–1912). After opening up to foreign influence in the late 1850s, Japan underwent several decades of intense modernization, marked by the assimilation of Western values and practices. These characteristics were not unique to *ukiyo-e*, but were seen in many eras of Japanese art.<sup>33</sup>

Consider Picture of a Woman Applying Makeup (Bijin Keshō no Zu 美人化粧之図) (1789) by Kitagawa Utamaro (喜多川歌麿) (1753?–1806) (Fig. 7). The subject of the print, whose face is revealed in the reflection of a handheld mirror, typifies the female beauty for which the artist was known, including elongated facial features such as a thin neck, long nose, and high eyebrows. Yet the only indication of her identity is the paulownia crest on her kimono, an emblem that was frequently associated with Okita, a waitress at the Naniwaya teahouse and one of the "Three Beauties of Edo." While the inclusion of the mirror gestures toward the conceit that Utamaro is capturing a moment in time, Utamaro was creating not portraits of individual women but illustrations of cultural types, which he emphasized through hairstyles and costumes.34

However, the *bijinga* should not merely be understood as a documentation of changing notions of beauty. Art historian Lena Fritsch understands the term "body" as a "a changeable surface, inscribed and coded by social meanings of various regimes of discipline." Whereas Edo *bijin* exuded sexual appeal and coquettishness, their Meiji counterparts expressed purity, nobility, composure, and intellect. This attested to a fundamental shift in the function and meaning of the "beautiful woman." She was no longer a mere object of pleasure for the male gaze, but rather, a symbol of the feminine ideal of the modern age, a role model to which ordinary women aspired.

Ultimately, the *bijinga* represents a uniquely Japanese manner of envisioning and representing the idealized woman, its lack of individuation and its transient character standing in direct contrast from the immutable ideal of beauty embodied by the female nude of the Western canon.

## From Heian to Tokugawa: Transcending Time through *Mitate-e*

In his 1975 essay "Mitate kō," kabuki historian Hattori Yukio suggested that for the people of Edo, the past coexisted with the present in a unique two-layered structure, a double exposure (kasane-yaki 重焼)36 in which "the world of ancient events is superimposed onto the visible world" (ganzen no sekai ni koji no sekai o kasanemiru 眼前の世界に故事の世界を重見る).37 Nowhere is this synthesis of multiple temporal moments more clearly manifested than in the genre of mitate-e. The term mitate, which roughly translates to "likening one thing to another" (betsu no mono ni nazoraeru koto 別の物に準 えること), was first used in poetry anthologies of the medieval period to denote figurative language involving indirect metaphors and comparisons. In the early 18th century, the technique was revived by haikai poets, before spreading into other creative spheres, including popular fiction, theater, and the visual arts.

Paintings and woodblock prints that employed this strategy were referred to as "parody pictures" or mitate-e. They featured, to use the words of Timothy T. Clark, "bizarre, brain-teasing collisions"38 between two inherently incongruous things, whose effects ranged from humorous and innocently charming to transgressive and iconoclastic.<sup>39</sup> A diverse array of topics provided the framework for mitate, including geography (mountains, rivers), travel (stations along the Tōkaidō highway, famous sights in Edo), popular culture (courtesans and kabuki actors), literature (famous poets, verses from classical poetry anthologies), and pastimes (painting, tea, ceramics).<sup>40</sup> But for all the variation in parodic subjects, the majority of *mitate-e* were composed according to an established structure of binary juxtaposition: the first topic would be an element of contemporary life with which viewers would be familiar and would make up the main illustration, while the second would be an established cultural framework that provided the basis for an inscription, cartouche, or background setting.41 Popular courtesans or kabuki actors might, for example, be portrayed as the modern analogues of historic poets or famed warriors. Ultimately, mitate involved two forms of juxtaposition, one temporal and the other conceptual; the Tokugawa present would be conflated with the historical past, while the mundane and the

vulgar (zoku 俗) would be played off against the elegant and the refined (ga 雅).

Consider Chōbunsai Eishi (鳥文斎栄之) (1756–1829)'s painting *Parody of the Three Vinegar* Tasters (Mitate sanzan zu 見立三酸図) (1821) (Fig. 8). Three elaborately dressed bijin stand around a vat of vinegar, a formation that recalls the classical Chinese story of the three vinegar tasters. According to legend, Confucian poet Su Shi (1037–1101) and Daoist Huang Tingjian (1045-1105) paid a visit to the Zen Buddhist monk Foyin (1032–1098), and together, the three men tasted vinegar and puckered their mouths at its astringency. Despite the differences in their philosophies, the Three Sages were forced to recognize the same ultimate reality, thus alluding to the "unity of the three creeds." 42 In his reworking of this classical theme, Eishi replaced the three men with three bijin from different spaces and times: a Yoshiwara courtesan, the Tang concubine Yang Guifei, and the fabled Heian beauty Ono no Komachi. Above them is an inscription by the poet Ōta Nanpo (1749–1823). It reads: "When they try a sip / the connoisseurs can tell you / whether it's sweet or sour. / Both in China and Japan / the Three Sages know."43

"Eight Views" (hakkei 八景) was another mitate subject that was derived from a Chinese source, namely the Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers. The two rivers, celebrated for their extraordinary beauty, were a staple in classical Chinese poetry, and by the Song dynasty (960– 1279), it had become fashionable to paint the area's scenery in a prescribed set of eight landscapes, each of which was associated with a motif: alighting geese, sailboats heading for port, snow at dusk, evening rain, autumn moon, vesper bells, and sunset. 44 By the 17th century, Japanese literati painters had developed their own versions of the Eight Views, situating the original motifs within the geographic landscape of their native soil. The earliest and most popular of these localized adaptations was the Eight Views of Ōmi (Ōmi hakkei 近江八景), set in Lake Biwa and the surrounding Ōmi Province (modern-day Shiga Prefecture).45

The use of the Eight Views quickly expanded beyond the landscape genre, as artists paired the theme with other subjects to produce innumerable sets of *mitate-e*. One fascinating example is the series *Eight Views of the Parlour (Zashiki hakkei* 坐敷入景), designed by Suzuki Harunobu (鈴木春信) (1725–1770) in 1766. The landscape



scenery associated with the Eight Views is noticeably absent; instead, each of the compositions is situated within a contemporary parlor room. One print from the set, Descending Geese of the Koto Bridges (Kotoji no rakugan 琴柱の落雁), depicts a well-to-do girl and her maidservant seated on either side of a koto (筝), a traditional Japanese stringed instrument (Fig. 9). What might appear to be a mundane domestic scene is, upon closer inspection, a parody of the classical theme of alighting geese on the sandbank. The diagonal arrangement of the v-shaped bridges across the thirteen strings was meant to recall a skein of geese, while the striations of the instrument's paulownia-wood surface paired with the pattern of pine trees on the girl's kimono was reminiscent of a sandbank. 46 Other prints from the series similarly mesh past and present in witty visual puns, likening hand-towels drying on a rack to returning sails off a distant shore, and silk floss draped across floss-shapers to the snow-capped

Fig. 8: Chōbunsai Eishi (烏文斎栄之). Parody of the Three Vinegar Tasters (Mitate sanzan zu). 1821. Arnold Satterthwait, Class of 1966, Collection. (This is a preliminary drawing for the painting discussed.)

Fig. 9: Suzuki Harunobu (鈴木春信). Descending Geese of the Koto Bridges (Kotoji no rakugan) from the series Eight Views of the Parlor (Zashiki hakkei). 1766. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.





Fig. 10: Toyohara Kunichika (豊原 国周). Chapter 25: Fireflies (Hotaru), from the series Fifty-Four Modern Feelings Matched with Chapters of Genji (Genji gojûyo jô). 1884. Arnold Satterthwait, Class of 1966, Collection.

slopes of Mt. Hira. Detecting the latent associations that Harunobu so cleverly encoded within each composition required a considerable level of visual and cultural literacy concerning the classics.<sup>47</sup> *Mitate-e* such as these had the effect of broadening the consumer base of woodblock prints by drawing the well-educated and intellectually-inclined into the market.

While the popularity of *mitate-e* subjects such as the Eight Views endured throughout the Edo period and into the Meiji era (1868-1912), others came and went in response to shifts in consumer tastes. The saturation of the print market with Genji pictures (Genji-e 源氏絵) in the 1830s, for example, was triggered by the immense popularity of The False Murasaki's Rustic Genji (Nise Murasaki Inaka Genji 偐紫田舎源氏), an illustrated novel that was written by Ryūtei Tanehiko (1783-1842) and published between 1829 and 1842. The work is based on the great 10th-century novel Tale of Genji (Genji monogatari 源氏物語) by Murasaki Shikibu (active c. 1000), which follows the life and amorous pursuits of the titular character Prince Genji. However, Tanehiko's *Inaka Genji* is set in the shogunate of the 15th century instead of the 10th-century Heian court.<sup>48</sup> Additionally, the original work was written entirely in kanji (Chinese-style characters) and classical Chinese, which would have made it illegible to the majority of the public, save a small number of well-educated elites. By contrast, Inaka Genji features a combination of colloquial and elegant language, and its prose is interspersed with illustrations. Accessible to a broad, popular readership, the novel became "the treasure of the colloquial literary world." <sup>49</sup> It was not long before the influence of this literary work seeped into the realm of visual culture. Michael Emmerich emphasizes the ubiquity of Genji imagery during the 1830s: "there were votive plaques for shrines and temples, patterns on clothing, fabric pictures on sliding walls paneled with Chinese-style paper—in the end, hardly a surface was left that wasn't decorated with a 'Genji picture.'" 50 Wood-block prints were no exception. Business-savvy publishers were quick to capitalize on the popularity of Genji, and it was not long before elements of the story began to appear within prints, its classical subjects reworked to appeal to modern sensibilities (Fig. 10).51

Although the examples discussed thus far illustrate how the strategy was employed to produce intellectually stimulating or comical effects, mitate-e were not always so innocuous. Relative to other print genres, the viewing of a mitate-e involved a considerable degree of interpretation. This meant that a single print could be invested with multiple meanings, depending on the background knowledge and personal values of each viewer. Taking advantage of this lack of explicitness, artists employed mitate-e as a vehicle through which they could obliquely critique current events and elite culture while avoiding punishment, adhering to the letter of the law while subverting its intent.<sup>52</sup> Parodic substitutions of holy figures for Floating World celebrities, for example, could be understood as iconoclastic critiques of Zen Buddhism as well as the culture of the ruling samurai class, who boasted of their dedication to the religion.<sup>53</sup>

The transgressive potential of *mitate-e* was especially apparent in times of heightened government repression. Between 1841 and 1843, the shogunate passed a series of decrees, collectively known as the Tenpō Reforms. They were intended to reinforce the ideological underpinnings of shogunal authority by curbing spending on frivolous luxuries and refocusing the samurai class on its traditional pursuits of military arts and scholarship. The highly visible excess of the floating world made it an easy scapegoat and consequently, designers and publishers of ukiyo-e were singled out for persecution.<sup>54</sup> According to an 1842 edict, formats and designs that were "wasteful and needlessly expensive" were banned, the number of color blocks per print was limited to eight, and polyptychs were restricted to a maximum of three oban sheets.<sup>55</sup> These sumptuary laws were accompanied by regulations on subject matter: single-sheet prints of kabuki actors, courtesans, and geisha were forbidden, as they were "detrimental to public morals." Instead, works were to be composed "in accordance with [the values of] loyalty and fidelity, to promote virtue among children and women." 56

Those in the printing industry ultimately proved adept at circumventing the restrictions placed upon it, an effort in which *mitate* played a crucial role. Several compositions from Kuniyoshi's (1798–1861) set *Ukiyo-e Parallels to Cloudy Chapters of Genji (Genji kumo ukiyo-e awase* 

源氏雲浮世絵合) (1845), for example, situate actors in localities linked to current kabuki productions.<sup>57</sup> So as to avoid detection by the authorities, these connections were carefully hidden and disguised. The actors were unnamed, and were presented as famous individuals from literature, history, and legend. Yet this lack of textual information would not have posed a problem to the kabuki aficionados for whom such works were produced. Knowledgeable fans would be able to recognize allusions to roles and theater production from the figures' poses and costumes, and the systematic use of standardized likenesses in actor portraits over the preceding four decades would have made the stars identifiable by their faces alone.

## Traces of *Ukiyo-e* in 20th- and 21st-Century Artistic Practice

Post-1868 Japanese prints are almost always created in conversation, even if antagonistic, with *ukiyo-e*. Although the print production system associated with *ukiyo-e* declined in the early 20th century, the prints and their history continue to influence artists working in Japan. Many of the more contemporary print movements, such as new prints, also known as revival prints (*shinhanga* 洋画) and creative prints (*sōsaku hanga* 創作版画) borrow from and pay homage to the *ukiyo-e* tradition while also reflecting contemporary sensibilities, or move explicitly away from the conventions and genres of traditional *ukiyo-e* prints in order to present themselves differently.

See, for example, Evening Snow at Terashima Village (Yuki ni kure no Terashima mura 雪に暮 れの寺島村) from the series Twelve Scenes of Tokyo (Tōkyō Jūnidai 東京十二題) produced in 1920 by Kawase Hasui (川瀬 巴水) (1883-1957) (Fig. 11). Snowflakes pound down upon the village of Terashima, clinging to the utility poles and blanketing the rooftops. A solitary figure trudges home under an umbrella. Warm light cuts through the cool blues of the evening sky, emanating from the windows and reflecting off of the water in the narrow canal. The scene harkens back to ukiyo-e sensibilities, borrowing motifs from Hiroshige's canonical landscape Evening Snow at Kanbara (Kanbara yoru no yuki 東海道五十 三次之内蒲原夜之雪) (1833-1834). But Hasui has inserted into this traditional scene elements of the modern age—electric lighting and utility poles—so as to underscore the beauty of the old through its contrast with the new. 59 This print

was one of Hasui's first, and it exemplifies the nostalgic longing for an "unblemished" Japan of times past that would come to characterize his prolific body of work.

A more radical departure from the *ukiyo-e* tradition can be found in the works of *sosaku-hanga* artists. Whereas their *shin-hanga* counterparts preserved the traditional four-person system of print production, those of the Creative Print movement believed in the expressive power of the woodblock; it was only in a self-drawn, self-carved, and self-printed work that this individualism could find its fullest expression. As such, the works that fell within this category were incredibly diverse, even amongst artists working in the same historical moment.

The continued influence of *ukiyo-e* is not restricted to imagery; it also appears in the collection of *ukiyo-e* by both individuals and institutions in Japan and the West. It is through these collections, like the Arnold Satterthwait, Class of 1966, Collection featured in this exhibit, that the floating world lives on.

Fig. 11: Kawase Hasui (川瀬 巴水). Evening Snow at Terashima Village (Yuki ni kure no Terashima mura), from the series Twelve Scenes of Tokyo (Tōkyō Jūnidai). 1920. Bryn Mawr Special Collections.



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Detail of Fig. 5.

