



Figuring it Out

Prints and Drawings by Mike Lyon

April 14 - July 19, 2009



fig. 1: Mike Lyon's printing press and garage drawer humididor with *Sara (Sara Reclining)*

Figuring it Out: Prints and Drawings by Mike Lyon
2009 Friends of the Beach Museum of Art Gift Print Artist

Exhibition schedule: April 14 - July 19, 2009

Mike Lyon
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 BA, architecture and fine art, University of Pennsylvania,
 1973
 BFA, painting, Kansas City Art Institute, 1975
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Photography courtesy of Mike Lyon

Front cover: Mike Lyon, *Linda*, 2008, pen and ink on paper
Back cover: Ichirakutei EISUI (Japan, fl. 1790-1823),
Ôgiya uchi Hanaôgi [The Courtesan Hanaôgi of the Ôgi House], 1790s, color woodcut on paper

This exhibition is sponsored by the Friends of the Beach
 Museum of Art Business Partners.



Figuring It Out

by Bill North

Mike Lyon's recent, large-scale prints and drawings are the result of his inventive adaption of digital technology and robotic machinery. The artist's work also testifies to his keen interest in Japanese aesthetics and printmaking techniques. (Lyon has an abiding passion for Japanese art and culture and is an avid collector of Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints, a selection of which is included in this exhibition.) Lyon is not seduced by the bells, whistles, and whiz-bangness of digital technology. Computers and machines are among the many tools in his kit, much like paintbrushes or drawing implements. They are the means by which he seeks to realize his conceptions by moving directly from his mind to the object. Or, as he is fond of putting it, "Look Ma, no hands."

Background

Lyon recognized the utility of computerization long before he applied it to his art making. The artist earned a BA in architecture and fine art from the University of Pennsylvania (1973) and a BFA in painting from the Kansas City Art Institute (1975). In 1976 he went to work for the family business, a Kansas City cattle hide processing operation his great-great grandfather started. There Lyon invented a computerized system to automate the labor-intensive process of grading cattle hides. His system enabled a team of four graders to enter information about a hide's condition using a touch-sensitive console. The data was then compiled and tabulated by computer, providing nearly instantaneous results. Prior to Lyon's innovation, the data was recorded, compiled, and tabulated by hand, an extremely time and labor-intensive process. In 1978 Lyon founded Grading Systems, a computer hardware and software design business. Under his direction, Lyon's company developed ROBO-PIC, a computerized system for automating order fulfillment in large warehouses. ROBO-PIC worked by using remotely controlled dispensers to place items in containers moving along a large conveyor belt. Grading Systems was highly successful and counted companies such as Tupperware among its clients. Lyon sold the business in 1991 and returned to his studio the following year. For the first time in fifteen years, he dedicated himself to making art full time.

Printmaking

Jessica (fig. 2), a color woodcut created in September 2003, typifies Lyon's work of the period. Woodcut is a method of relief printmaking in which the image is printed from the areas of the block's surface that have not been cut away. The artist created the print as part of a demonstration while teaching a class on Japanese woodblock technique at the Center for Contemporary Printmaking in Norwalk, Connecticut. Lyon's print is *ōban*-sized, a standard, traditional Japanese format, approximately fifteen by ten inches. *Jessica* was printed in blue from a hand-carved cherry block. The Japanese woodblock technique of

repeated printings in shades of blue is known as *aizuri-e* (blue printed pictures). *Aizuri-e* prints were popularized in Japan in the 1820s with the availability of Prussian Blue, a stable and lightfast synthetic pigment imported from Europe.

Lyon printed *Jessica* using a *baren*, a traditional Japanese tool made of bamboo leaves wrapped around a disk. Paper is placed on top of the inked block, and pressure is applied by rubbing the *baren* on the paper's backside. This technique allows for a range of expressive possibilities. How the color is applied and wiped on the block, variations in the degree of pressure applied, and variations in the *baren*'s motion all contribute to the final printed result. For example, in printing *Jessica*, Lyon tipped the *baren* slightly to create subtle gradations of color (*baren bokashi*) to provide a rich backdrop for the figure.

Two aspects of *Jessica*'s creation are not related to traditional Japanese methods. The print, like all of Lyon's recent figurative prints and drawings, is based on a photograph. And, unlike *ukiyo-e* woodcuts, which are printed from multiple blocks, *Jessica* was printed from a single block using a method known as reduction woodcut.

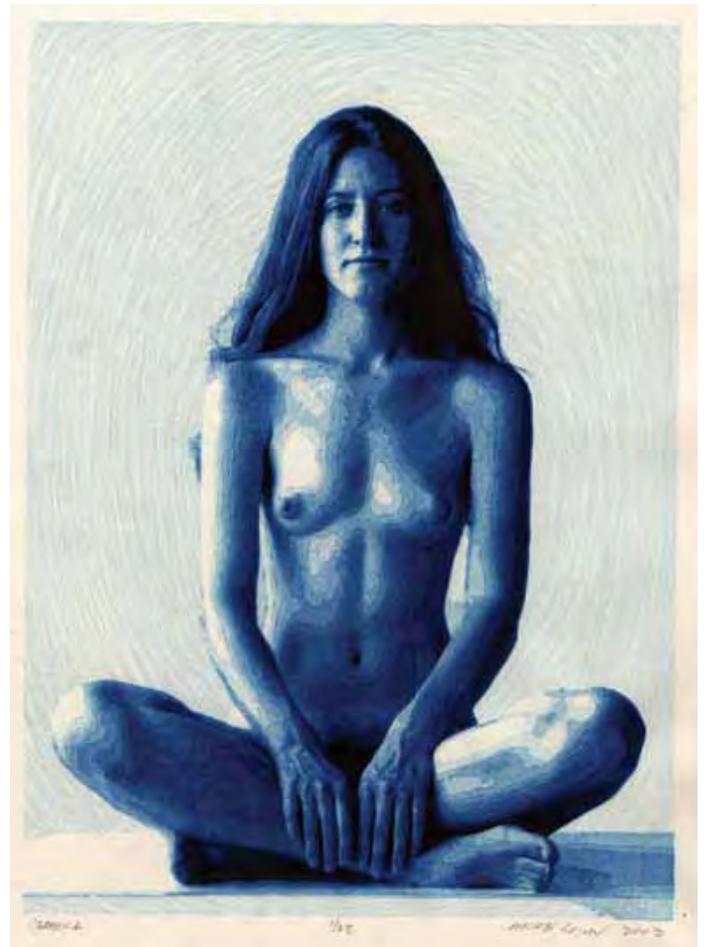


fig. 2: Mike Lyon, *Jessica*, 2003, color woodcut on paper

This challenging technique involves creating an image by carving and printing the block in stages. Portions of the block are carved and printed. More areas are carved, and the block is printed again on top of the initial printing. This process of reprinting the successively reduced block is repeated until the accretion of printings yields the desired image.



fig. 3: ShopBot CNC and **Linda** in Mike Lyon's studio

movement of the ShopBot's router bit along the X (length), Y (width), and Z (height) axes. Lyon struck on the idea of adapting the ShopBot to carve his blocks. He developed a program to extract the information contained in a digital photographic file and convert it to a format the ShopBot understands.* Lyon programs the machine to carve blocks to his specifications, instructing it how far to move the router bit along the X, Y, and Z axes for each cut in the block's surface. Automating the process in this way enables him to produce larger, more complex, photographically-based images.

The ShopBot

Lyon's innovative developments in automation with Grading Systems and ROBO-PIC are conceptual forebears of his current working methods. In spring 2004 the artist acquired a ShopBot CNC (computer numerically controlled) router, a large machine designed for woodworking applications (fig. 3). Coded instructions control the



fig. 4: Mike Lyon, **Anthony**, 2004, color woodcut on paper

Lyon's *Anthony* (fig. 4), a color woodcut completed in April 2004, is the first print the artist created with the ShopBot. Like *Jessica*, this psychologically penetrating portrait is based on a photograph and printed in blue. Instead of printing from a single, successively reduced block, Lyon printed *Anthony* from fifteen cherry plywood blocks. Conceptually, though, he approached *Anthony* as a reduction woodcut.



fig. 5: Mike Lyon, **Sara (Sara Reclining)**, 2006, color woodcut on paper

On each successive block, the carving of the preceding block was essentially duplicated before the additional reduction. Recalling the tradition of Japanese *ōkubi-e* (big-head picture) images, the subject's head is placed close to the picture plane and fills the frame. This is a format Lyon has favored in recent prints and drawings. In *Anthony* photographic verisimilitude is mediated by the artist's sensitive printing, imbuing the subject with a monumental yet human presence.

Since *Anthony*, Lyon has applied the same method to create prints of increasing complexity and scale. His color woodcut *Sara (Sara Reclining)* (fig. 5) of 2006 was printed from seventeen blocks and is forty-two by seventy-seven inches. Iwano Ichibei, a papermaker designated as a Japanese Living National Treasure, made the paper especially for Lyon. Working on this scale presented challenges for Lyon that required innovative solutions. He designed and manufactured a complex, large-format woodblock printing press with a five by ten feet bed (fig. 1). Before printing, the paper must be dampened in a humidifier drawer. To carefully deliver the sheet from drawer to press and back with the printing of each block, Lyon built a system adapting components of an electric garage door opener. When operated, the drawer cantilevers over the press bed (closing the garage door). As the drawer retracts (opening the garage door) the paper is gracefully laid on the block's surface.

In the spring of 2006 Lyon began creating large-scale, photographically-based pen and ink drawings using the ShopBot. After many unsatisfactory attempts to retrofit the router assembly with an ink pen, he was able to successfully make a giant drawing machine. As with his woodcuts, Lyon programs the ShopBot with data extracted and converted from digital photographic files to instruct the machine how far to move the ink pen along the X, Y, and Z axes for each mark. The enormous drawings produced in this manner comprise many layers of intricate marks and require substantial amounts of programming and time. A portrait of the artist's wife, *Linda* (front cover; figs. 3, 6, & 7), for example, at seventy-seven by forty-six inches, took over 12 million lines of code and eleven days of nonstop drawing.

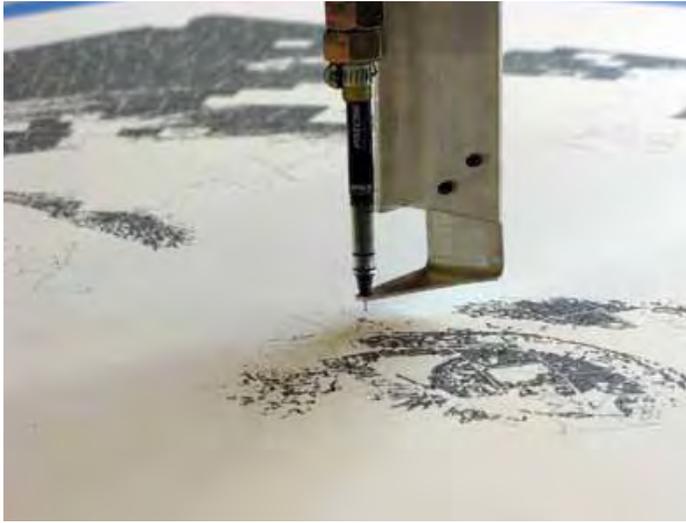


fig. 6: ShopBot CNC drawing **Linda**

The artist and the figure

Recently, Lyon was asked “What draws you to the figure?” Below is an excerpt from his response.

This is quite natural for all of us, I think. We’re just wired that way. As infants, we nurse at our mother’s breast and gaze up at her face. We’re helpless and vulnerable and during our first years we depend entirely on our parents’ good will and love and care. We can’t survive alone. Almost immediately we become attuned to the subtlest nuance of posture and expression and quickly learn how to get what we need – attention, affection, warmth, sustenance, admiration, a wipe. We’re less likely to survive our first few years if we are insensitive. As adults, we (almost all of us) remain extremely sensitive to the moods of those around us – we know right away when someone’s angry, hurt, embarrassed, happy, available, etc. Our antennae are always unconsciously quivering.

Faces, in particular, hold my interest so much. Especially a certain ambiguity of expression which echoes in my mind as I automatically try to sense, is this person angry, interested, anxious, dismissive, dangerous, appealing, or what? I love



fig. 7: Mike Lyon, detail, **Linda**, 2008, pen and ink on paper

faces. Love my mother’s face. My wife’s, yours. It’s the first place I look. The window to the soul. Total fascination.

Switching gears for a moment to discuss process... For purposes of my work in woodblock printmaking and, the past five years, with machine assisted drawing and painting, there are some practical considerations in choosing images. First and foremost the person and the image (in this work I’m working from photographs I make and use as sources for my images) has to cry out to be Art – if a friend’s appearance speaks to me that way, I ask them to model. Often they’ll agree. Then, usually in my studio where I’m familiar with the way light streams in through my big east-facing windows, I’ll take several hundred digital photos (I used to use film, but digital is much easier and less expensive) while we chat. Then I spend a week or more pouring through them to select one (sometimes two) which really beg to become art. I first run through them and abandon the obvious rejects. My selection process is something like having your eyes checked, “which is better, A or B?” I keep the choice and abandon the other, compare with the next, and so on until I have three or four which seem to be possibilities. Throughout, I have in mind my process and its limitations, so I’m looking for images which are ‘suitable’ – that means they have to have areas of great detail, where I can really dig in and make something interesting – that really has more to do with pores, wrinkles, lots of small areas with large color or value changes – these lend themselves best to my processes. If these characteristics don’t exist and the image is really evocative, I’ll ‘cheat’ and create the sort of granularity I want to evaluate. Anyway, it’s impossible, really, for me to explain my aesthetic sensibility – it’s completely unconscious – I like it or don’t much – it’s magic, that’s all. Inexplicable.

*...what draws me to the figure? I just love looking at people, I guess – simple as that.***

*Digital photographic files use a data structure known as raster graphics, which describes images in terms of pixels. When scaled to increased dimensions, raster-based images suffer a loss of resolution and quality. Vector graphics represent images using geometrical primitives such as points, lines, curves, and polygons and thus can be scaled without any loss of resolution. Lyon’s method involves converting a digital photograph to a vector file and using the vector data to instruct the machine how far to move the router bit along the X, Y, and Z axes for each cut.

**Mike Lyon, e-mail message to author, February 26, 2009.

Checklist

Prints and Drawings

Note: All works are by **Mike Lyon (United States, born 1951)** and from the collection of the artist unless otherwise noted. Dimensions are given in inches, height preceding width.

Annette, 2008
Pen and ink with watercolor on paper
Sheet/image: 70 x 45

Anthony, 2007
Pen and ink on paper
Sheet/image: 83 x 45

Anthony, 2004
Color woodcut on paper
Sheet: 30 x 22
Image: 29½ x 20½

Crosby, 2007
Pen and ink on paper
Sheet/image: 84 x 45

Jessica, 2003
Color woodcut on paper
Sheet: 15 x 10
Image: 13 x 9½

Jim, 2007
Acrylic on paper
Sheet/image: 42 x 24

Jim, 2007
Lithograph on paper
Sheet: 43¼ x 30
Image: 37 x 26
KSU, Beach Museum of Art, 2008.104

Linda, 2008
Pen and ink on paper
Sheet/image: 77 x 46

Paper Doll, 2009
Pen and ink on paper
Sheet/image: 10 x 15
KSU, Beach Museum of Art, 2009 Friends of the Beach Museum of Art gift print

Rick, 2007
Pen and ink on paper
Sheet/image: 75 x 45

Sara (Sara Reclining), 2006
Color woodcut on paper
Sheet: 42 x 77
Image: 38¼ x 73-7/8
KSU, Beach Museum of Art, Friends of the Beach Museum of Art purchase, 2007.23

Sarah – Pink Robe, 2004
Color woodcut on paper
Sheet: 7-7/8 x 22-1/8
Image: 7 x 21

Japanese Prints

Note: All works are from the collection of Mike Lyon. Dimensions are indicated using the following common Japanese print sizes:

hashira-e = 28¾ x 4¾ in.
hosoban = 13 x 5-5/8 in.
ōban = 15 x 10 in.

Ippitsusai BUNCHŌ (Japan, 1755-1794)
The Actor Segawa Kikunojō II performing the Lion Dance, ca. 1770
Color woodcut and embossing on paper; hosoban

Ichirakutei EISUI (Japan, fl. 1790-1823)
Ōgiya uchi Hanaōgi [The Courtesan Hanaōgi of the Ōgi House], 1790s
Untitled series of courtesan bust portraits
Color woodcut on paper; ōban

Suzuki HARUNOBU (Japan, ca. 1725-died 1770)
Courtesan on veranda, ca. 1767
Color woodcut on paper; hashira-e

Utagawa HIROSHIGE (Japan, 1797-1858)
Snowy Gorge at Fuji River, 1842
Color woodcut on paper; vertical ōban diptych

Shunbaisai HOKUEI (Japan, active 1824-died 1837)
The Actor Arashi Rikan II as Miyagi Asojirō, ca. 1835
Color woodcut with silver pigment on paper; ōban

Shunbaisai HOKUEI (Japan, active 1824-died 1837)
The Actor Nakamura Shikan II as a Fox Impersonating Satō Tadanobu, 1835
Color woodcut with metallic pigment and embossing on paper; ōban

Shunbaisai HOKUEI (Japan, active 1824-died 1837)
Shibai Suikoden Hykuhachinin no uchi [108 Heroes of the Theatre Suikoden], ca. 1835
Color woodcut with metallic pigment and embossing on paper; ōban tetrptych

Shunkōsai HOKUSHŪ (Japan, active 1802-1832)
The Actor Ichikawa Ebijūrō I as Tōken Jūbei, ca. 1822
Color woodcut on paper; ōban

Shunkōsai HOKUSHŪ (Japan, active 1802-1832)
The Actor Ichikawa Ebijūrō I as Wada Raihachi, 1824
Color woodcut on paper; ōban

Shunkōsai HOKUSHŪ (Japan, active 1802-1832)
The Actor Nakamura Utaemon III as Katō Masakiyo, ca. 1822
Color woodcut with silver pigment on paper; ōban

Utagawa KUNIYOSHI (Japan, 1797-1861)
Kanchi Shuki fitting message arrow to bow, ca. 1830
Series: *Tzuzoku suikoden hyakuhachinin no hitori [108 Heroes of the Suikoden, One by One]*
Color woodcut on paper; ōban

attrib. **Utagawa KUNIYOSHI** (Japan, 1797-1861)
The Maiden of Dōjō Temple, ca. 1830
Color woodcut on paper; vertical ōban diptych

Itō SHINSUI (Japan, 1898-1972)
Mayuzumi [Eyebrow Ink], 1928
Color woodcut on paper; ōban

Baikōsai SHUNKEI (Japan, active 1820s-30s)
The Actor Arashi Rikan II as Sankichi, 1834
Color woodcut with embossing on paper; ōban

Natori SHUNSEN (Japan, 1886-1960)
The Actor Jitsukawa Enjaku II as Danshichi Kurobei, 1926
Series: *Shunsen nigao-e shū [Collection of Shunsen Portraits]*, 1925-31
Color woodcut on paper, ōban

Gatōkan SHUNSHI (Japan, active 1820s-30s)
The Actor Onoe Tamizō II as Shirai Saihachiro, 1832
Color woodcut on paper; ōban

Utagawa TOYOKUNI I (Japan, 1769-1825)
The Actor Sawamura Sōjurō III as fishmonger Satsuma Gengobei, 1798
Color woodcut on paper; ōban

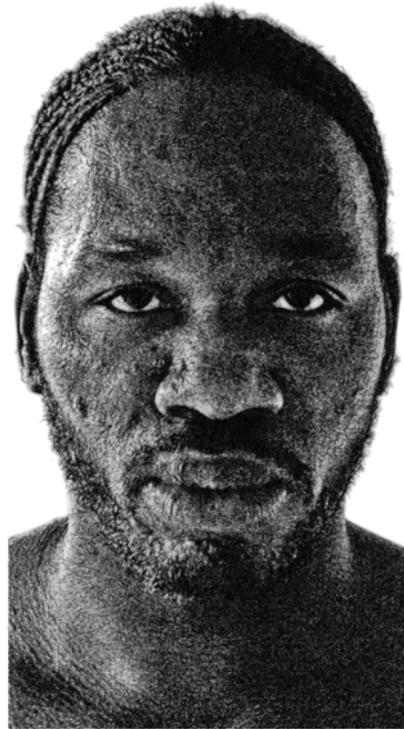
Kitagawa UTAMARO (Japan, 1753-1806)
Yotsude ami [Four-armed Scoop-net], ca. 1801
Color woodcut on paper; ōban triptych

Paintings, Drawings, and Prints

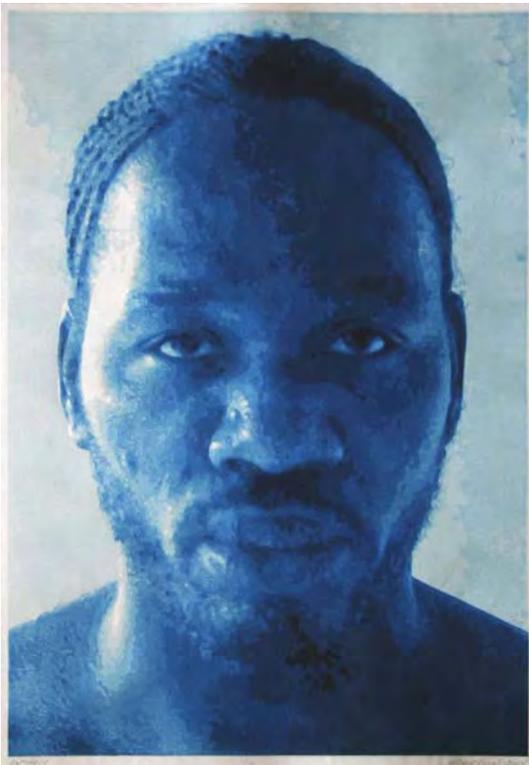
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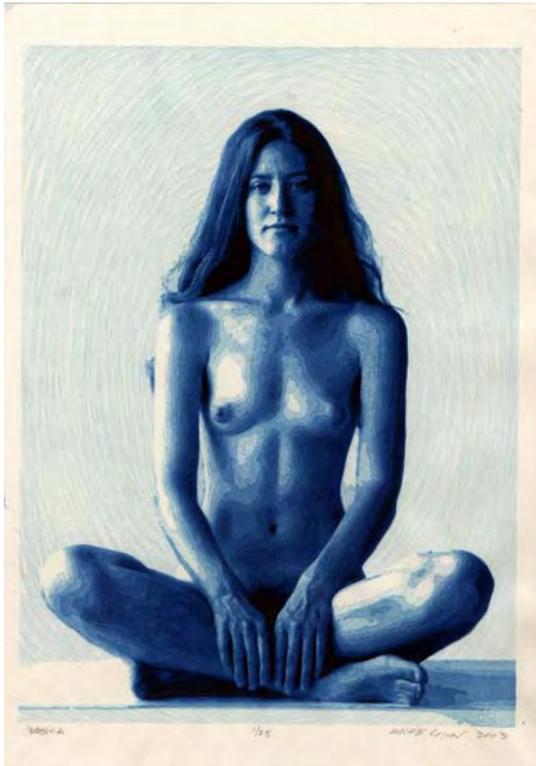
Anthony, 2007
Pen and ink on paper
Sheet/image: 83 x 45



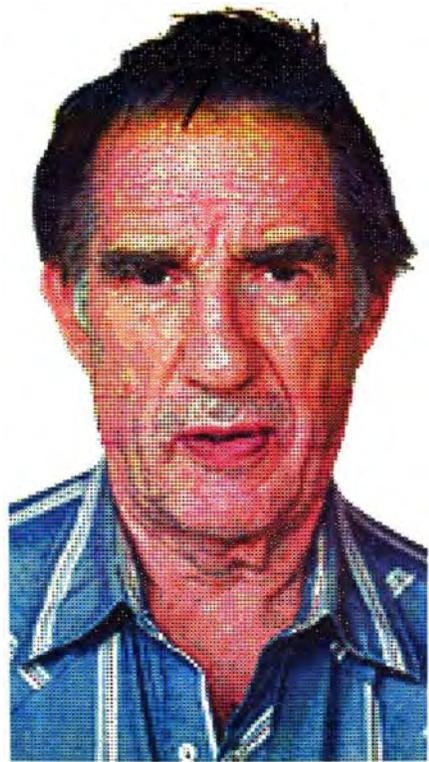
Anthony, 2004
Color woodcut on paper
Sheet: 30 x 22 Image: 29½ x 20½



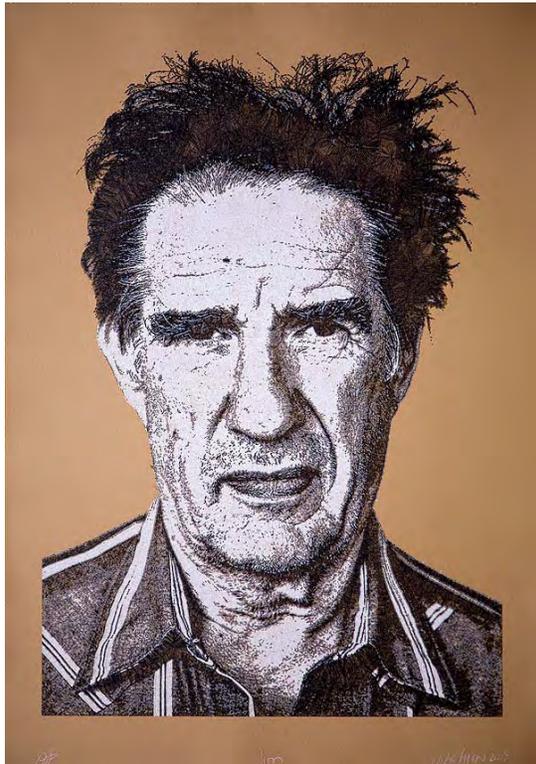
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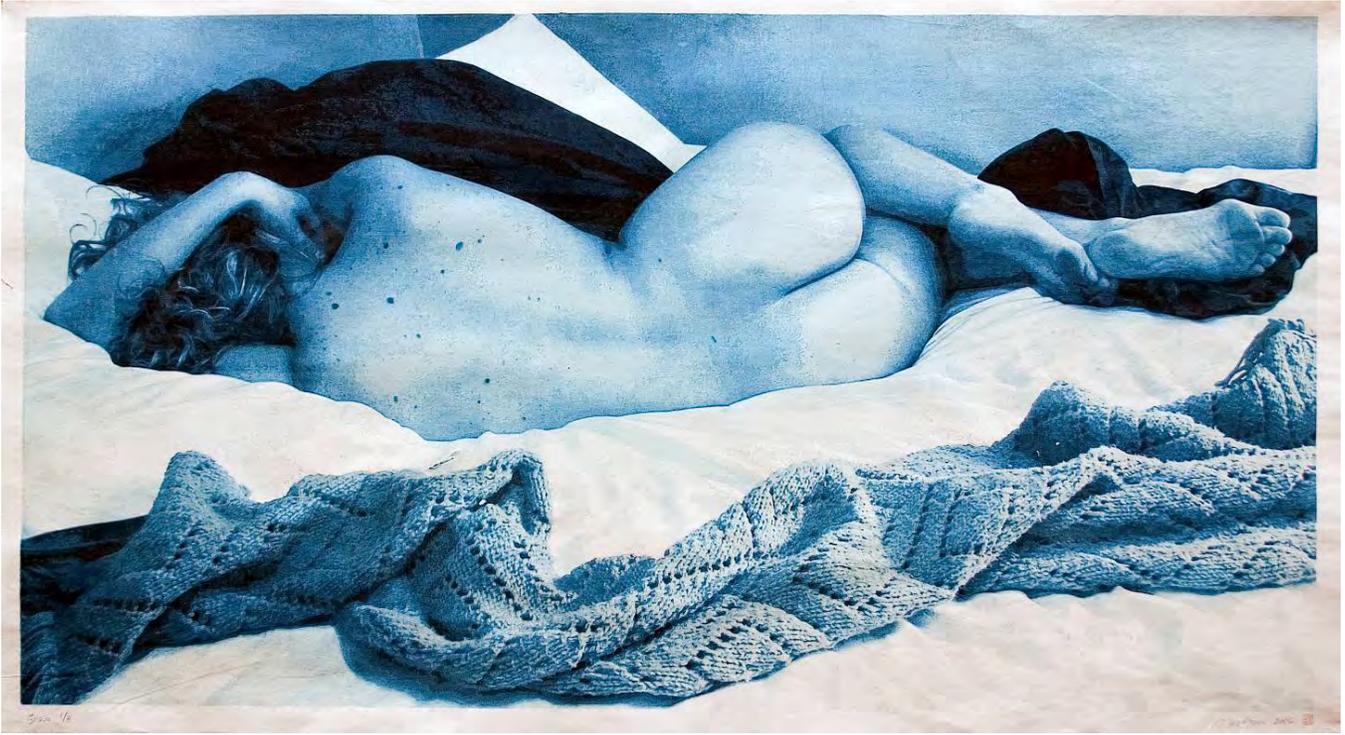
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Sarah - Pink Robe, 2004
Color woodcut on paper
Sheet: 7-7/8 x 22-1/8
Image: 7 x 21

Ukiyo-e Prints in the Mike Lyon Collection

by Cori Sherman North

Mike Lyon was fortunate to have grown up familiar with Japanese prints. In his youth Lyon's parents and grandparents displayed examples that certainly inspired his own artistic development. He began acquiring Japanese color woodcuts early in his career as an artist. The types of prints that feature most prominently among the many hundreds in Lyon's collection reflect the artist's deep appreciation of the human figure and the expressive facial portrait. The vast majority of Japanese prints in the Lyon collection represent views of actors (*yakusha-e*) and beautiful women (*bijin-ga*), and in particular the close-up, bust-length portraits (*okubi-e*) of the same (back cover & fig. 8).

The history of the Japanese print and its subject matter is tied to the spheres of urban entertainment and "pleasure districts" of Edo (now Tokyo) and the Osaka-Kyoto Kamigata region. The brilliantly colored woodcut prints were dubbed "*ukiyo-e*," or "pictures of the floating world," as they primarily depicted scenes from kabuki theaters and brothels that were set apart in controlled districts outside city limits. These leisure-time destinations were frequented by the merchant and commoner class of city-dwellers, but the samurai and aristocratic classes were legally forbidden to visit. Naturally, many of them managed to attend play performances and surreptitiously pass their time with elegant courtesans in the teashops and euphemistically-termed "green houses" (*seiro*) of these ladies of the night. In Japan, *ukiyo-e* prints have not been considered fine art and worthy of art historical attention until more recent times. The production of multi-color prints was market-driven and an entirely commercial enterprise. The audience for these images comprised the moneyed merchants who were barred from owning land. *Ukiyo-e* prints were considered as popular culture ephemera—similar to today's photographs, posters, and magazine spreads of movie stars and sports celebrities.

Ukiyo-e printmaking began by 1700, creations from black-line ink paintings depicting kabuki actors and beautiful courtesans and designed by well-known painters of the day. Over time, improvements were introduced to the printing process: hand-coloring, stencil coloring, embossing or blind printing, addition of glittery mica and metallic pigments. By 1765 the multi-color printed "*nishiki-e*" (brocade pictures) were in great demand. Historical evidence suggests that *kentō* registration, the method for precisely registering a single sheet of paper as it is printed from multiple woodblocks, was known much earlier but was not economically feasible until this date.

The catchphrase "*ukiyo-e* quartet" coined by western print enthusiasts, distills description of the printmaking process



fig. 8: Shunkōsai HOKUSHŪ (Japan, active 1802-1832), The Actor Nakamura Utaemon III as Katō Masakiyo, ca. 1822

to its essential components. A publisher (1) would generally contract an artist (2) to create a design, often an ink drawing on tissue-thin paper, which then was sent to the professional block carver (3) whose studio would produce the required number of woodblocks (one for each color and the outline "keyblock"). The set of blocks was given to the printer (4) who brushed water-based inks artfully onto the raised areas of design, creating shading and special effects with the colors.

There were restrictions on the printmaking trade. From the 1790s, government censors had to approve and certify *ukiyo-e* designs. Approval was indicated with their official seals, which were carved into the woodblocks along with artists' signatures and publishers' marks. These regulatory efforts included attempts to control the popularity of kabuki actors and their sway over public sentiment by limiting the number of prints

issued, the formats used, and the images' content. For instance, the *okubi-e*, or "large head" portrait was officially banned for a time in the early nineteenth century, but the style had such enormous appeal that restrictions proved ineffectual. The Tenpō reforms of the 1840s prohibited printing the names of actors on *ukiyo-e* prints. But, despite these measures, contemporary audiences had no trouble discerning their favorites in thinly-disguised scenes. Large noses and distinctive profiles were especially admired.

The idea of a true portrait likeness (*nigao-e*) evolved along with printmaking technology. The earliest Edo-period (1600-1868) images of actors and courtesans were fairly sparse. The success of these simple outline drawings depended more on public recognition of a figure based on context and activity, than on facial features and body types. Actor family crests (*mon*), often depicted on costumes and accessories, provided another key to identification. By the mid-1800s, audience demand for portraits was insatiable. As an Osaka printmaker recalled, "No matter how well theater prints were designed, if the faces of the figures were not exact likenesses of the actors they would not sell at all, and the publishers took a terrific loss. So the publisher went to pains to obtain the services of the very best portrait artists..."* Happily, Mike Lyon's portrait-making has been completely unhampered by limitations to size, format, subject, or process. His detailed transcriptions of his models' faces provide a fascinating visual map of the individual contours of a unique personality.

*Kawasaki Kyosen, "Nishiki-e ni naru ma-de" [How Color Prints are Made], *Kinsei Insatsu Bunkashi Kō*, 1938, 46-8. trans. and quoted in Roger Keyes and Keiko Mizushima, *The Theatrical World of Osaka Prints* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1973), 319.

Japanese Prints

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- ōban = 15 x 10 in.

(Written descriptions by Cori Sherman North)

Ippitsusai BUNCHŌ (Japan, 1755-1794)

The Actor Segawa Kikunojō II performing the Lion Dance, ca.1770

Color woodcut and embossing on paper; hosoban

Collection of Mike Lyon

Segawa Kikunojō II (1741-1773) is known to have performed the *shakkyō*, lion dance, in the fifth month of 1769 at the Nakamura Theater in Edo (now Tokyo). This kabuki dance, recognizable by lions' head puppets and peony flower motifs, is traditionally set against a background of a stone bridge (*shakkyō*) and likely has its roots in ancient fertility rites. The actor was particularly famous for his expressive rendition dancing as an *onnagata*, or female-role specialist, just as his adoptive father Segawa Kikunojō I (1693?-1749) was known for one of earliest recorded performances of this dance in 1734. A large portion of the artist Bunchō's print oeuvre depicted Kikunojō II, who in 1770 was almost 30 years old and at height of his powers enthraling kabuki audiences. He was the leading *onnagata* of the time, influencing contemporary fashions and even had colors named after him.

Bunchō gained repute as a brilliant colorist as this remarkably preserved impression attests. Bunchō relied heavily on his contemporary, Harunobu's (see 'Courtesan on Veranda' this exhibition), examples for colorways and themes, and in 1770 the two collaborated on an ambitious series of prints. That set of color woodcuts featured a new type of actor image, the *yakusha nigao-e* ["pictures of actors' facial likenesses"], and from this point Bunchō is recognized as moving closer to the life-like depiction of individual features than any artist before him.



Ichirakutei EISUI (Japan, fl.1790-1823)

Ōgiya uchi Hanaōgi [*The Courtesan Hanaōgi of the Ōgi House*], 1790s

Untitled series of courtesan bust portraits

Color woodcut on paper; ōban

Collection of Mike Lyon

Sadly, there are few remaining records of Eisui's career. He was a pupil of Hosoda Eishi (1756-1829), clearly echoing the master's style depicting beautiful women [*bijin-ga*]. Eisui is particularly remembered for his bust portrait (*ōkubi-e*) series of famous courtesans of the day. Eisui's *Beauties of the 5 Festivals* [*Bijin gosekku*] of the later 1790s is very similar in format to this print's untitled series of courtesan close-ups of select brothels' celebrities. These beautiful women are depicted holding a variety of feminine items, such as the transparent round-fan seen here, that also serve to demonstrate the skill of the printmaking artisans.



Suzuki HARUNOBU (Japan, ca.1725-died 1770)

Courtesan on veranda, ca. 1767

Color woodcut on paper; *hashira-e*

Collection of Mike Lyon

1765 is identified as the point at which multi-block color printing was economically feasible and then became the standard for *ukiyo-e* [pictures of the floating world]. Collaborating with private poetry clubs that engaged skilled carvers, Harunobu's designs for their calendar print exchanges caught the attention of publishers and were immediately in great public demand. The variety of color and background scenes added by the artist profoundly influenced the evolution of Japanese print style and technique, and gave rise to the new term "*nishiki-e*" [brocade pictures] for these sumptuous productions. Mike Lyon appreciates the artistry of Harunobu's images, with his lithe, delicate beauties such as this glimpse of a courtesan wistfully standing outside while a teahouse party goes on behind her. As one of the gems of Lyon's collection, he says of this piece that, "It still inspires me every time I look at it." Harunobu produced more than a thousand print images, but only a limited number number of his paintings are known. Almost 150 of the artist's designs are in the "pillar" print [*hashira-e*] size; a long, thin format that particularly suits Harunobu's attenuated figures. Many examples of pillar prints that survive are in poor condition as the new shape of the 1750s was a perfect fit for hanging on the standard exposed pillars in Japanese homes, and were often pasted directly onto the wood.



Utagawa HIROSHIGE (Japan, 1797-1858)

Fuji River Gorge in Snow, 1842

Color woodcut on paper; vertical *ōban* diptych

Collection of Mike Lyon

This tour-de-force of landscape printmaking was intended to act as a hanging scroll painting for display in the home. Hiroshige has evoked a traditional Chinese style of landscape painting, with deep recession in space and dependence on line to carry the composition, rather than using a dazzling array of color. There was a ready market for blue and white winter scenes such as this one, with dramatic shading through *bokashi* inking effects. These were achieved by skilled brushing and wiping pigment across the wood block in preparation for laying the paper down and printing, and then repeating the process several times to intensify deep blues and grey-blacks. Scattered snowflakes across the sky and river unify the top and bottom sheets. The virtuosity required to create such masterpiece continues to amaze artist Mike Lyon.

Although it very likely that none of Hiroshige's earlier landscape series from the first decades of the 19th century were drawn from life, by 1842, when this snowy scene was composed, Hiroshige had been able to travel and view picturesque sites around Japan. There are records noting a visit to Fujikawa [Fuji River] in 1841, and another trip in 1842 to Kōfu about 80 miles west of from Edo (now Tokyo) where Hiroshige must have had to cross upper reaches of the river.





Shunbaisai HOKUEI (Japan, active 1824-died 1837)

Shibai Suikoden Hyakuhachinin no uchi [108 Heroes of the Theatre Suikoden], ca. 1835

Color woodcut with metallic pigment and embossing on paper; ōban tetrptych

Collection of Mike Lyon

This acclaimed masterpiece of Osaka printmaking with its detailed landscape setting provides a grand panoramic of the kabuki play, *Shibau suikoden Hyakuhachinin no uchi* [108 Heroes of the Theatre Suikoden], performed in the 11th month of 1835 in Osaka. The four-panel composition features the actor Arashi Rikan II (1788-1837) as the tattooed Rorihakuto Chōjun on left, and Nakamura Utaemon III (1778-1838) second from the right as Junryū Kosonsho. The hero, Kumonryū Shishi, on the right is likely the actor Nakamura Shikan II (1798-1852), Utaemon III's protégé who later became Utaemon IV. Tales of the Chinese legendary "Suikoden" [water margin] outlaws and their adventures were easily adapted to exciting dramas for the kabuki stage. In this color woodcut set Hokuei captured a particular performance, but other print artists (such as Kuniyoshi in this exhibition) simply illustrated the well-known stories from their own imaginations.

The artist Hokuei was a pupil of Hokushū (also in this exhibition), whose portrait style greatly influenced Hokuei's in characteristic bulging eyes and large ovoid jaws. Hokuei was a pioneer in applying luxury *surimono* effects to actor portrait woodcuts, such as precious metals and deep embossing. This deluxe set, which is rarely found complete, required no less than three master carvers and two printers to accomplish. Hokuei is known to have designed more than 250 compositions including some recognized as the most technically complex *ukiyo-e* prints ever produced.

Shunbaisai HOKUEI (Japan, active 1824-died 1837)

The Actor Arashi Rikan II as Miyagi Asojirō, 1832

Color woodcut with silver pigment and embossing on paper; ōban
Collection of Mike Lyon

This is an opening scene of firefly-viewing from the kabuki drama, *Keisei tsukushi no tsumagoto* [The Devastating Courtesan Playing the Tsukushi Koto], was enacted at the Chikugo Theatre in Osaka in the third month of 1832. Chasing fireflies was a common pastime on pleasant summer evenings and is a natural setting for flirtations and romance. The hero of this play, here the actor Arashi Rikan II (1788-1837) shown holding a lantern with the name of the Tsūen teahouse along with his short and long swords indicating samurai status, meets his true love among the glittering firefly lights and the drama unfolds as a love story with complications of mistaken identity. Eventual recognition of a poem first written on a round-fan in the opening scene is crucial to the lovers reuniting. However, the poem printed in silver in the night sky in this print design is composed by the actor Rikan II himself, displaying humility in comparing his own skills compared with beauties of nature:

Fireflies	<i>Futsutsu kana</i>
I am ashamed	<i>ware hazukashiki</i>
Like an ignorant rustic ¹	<i>hotaru kana</i>



About forty percent of Hokuei's known oeuvre depicts Rikan II who was a celebrity known for his versatility as well as his large, expressive eyes. He acceded to the famed Rikan kabuki family name in 1828. This short-statured actor with the nick-name "Metoku" [eye virtue] may have had no dance skills but excelled at both romantic male leads and the *onnagata*, or women's roles.

Shunbaisai HOKUEI (Japan, active 1824-died 1837)

The Actor Nakamura Shikan II as a Fox Impersonating Satō Tadanobu, 1835

Color woodcut with metallic pigment and embossing on paper; ōban
Collection of Mike Lyon

In Japanese lore, fox-spirits are able to assume human form and maintain close relationships with people for certain periods of time. "Fox-fires" [*kitsu-nebi*] such as the three seen here in the top section, always indicate something supernatural going on. In this instance, a popular kabuki dance scene from the play, *Hanayagura hitome senbon* [Thousand Glances from the Flower-viewing Point], captures a moment in Act 2 when a fox disguised as the loyal samurai retainer Tadanobu begins transforming during a shrine's drum-playing celebration, where it involuntarily dances its way back into a fox. The actor is shown dressed in samurai armour and holding a horse's saddle, while he performs a *kitsune roppō* [fox in six directions]. *Roppō* is the term for a dynamic, explosive dance in kabuki theater. The six directions refer to north, south, east, west, and also heaven and earth, so the description characterizes dance movements so expansive they must contain all the directions in the world. After being recognized as a true hero in subsequent scenes, the fox does return to the animal world.



¹ Trans. John Fiorillo, "Surimono-Style Prints by Hokuei," *Impressions*. v.20 (1998): 64.

The actor Nakamura Shikan II (1798-1852) performed this fox role at the Naka Theater in Osaka during the 5th month of 1835. He was famous for his large, imposing good looks as well as his dancing skills and was billed as an all-around actor, a sort of “man of a thousand faces.” This luxury print’s portrayal of Shikan II is one of the artist’s most sought-after prints, among an oeuvre almost exclusively dedicated to full-length figures of actors in their famous roles.

Shunkōsai HOKUSHŪ (Japan, active 1802-1832)
 The Actor Ichikawa Ebijūrō I as Tōken Jūbei, 1822
 Color woodcut on paper; ōban
 Collection of Mike Lyon

The actor Ichikawa Ebijūrō I (1777-1827) played the role of Tōken [China Dog] Jūbei in the kabuki drama *Benimurasaki aide someage* [*Red and Purple, Rich Dyes of Osaka*] only once, in Osaka at the Kado Theater in the 8th month of 1816. However, this print was actually published around the spring of 1822 as part of a series of bust-length portraits (*ōkubi-e*, “large head”) on bright yellow backgrounds. There are at least five versions of this eye-catching design with various combinations of inscribed artisan names and publisher marks, the last printed with a blue ground. This impression appears to represent the third state, lacking the original actor’s name and role, as well as the carver’s seal that were at the upper right.



The poem seen above reads:

Even Saohime, Goddess of Spring, cannot help but be won over by the prawn [“Ebi”] the pièce-de-résistance of the New Year offering in this fine spring season. ²	<i>Saohime mo nabiki ya suran hōrai no ebi wa rippa na haru no hanagata</i>
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Hokushū was known as a great portraitist who had been the pupil of Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), artist of the world-renowned woodcut, *The Great Wave*. In turn, he took on many students of his own such as Hokuei, Shunkei, and Shunshi, all included in this exhibition.

² Trans. John T. Carpenter, *Designed for Pleasure: The World of Edo Japan in Prints and Paintings, 1680-1860*. (New York: Asia Society and Japanese Art Society, 2008), 211.

Shunkōsai HOKUSHŪ (Japan, active 1802-1832)

The Actor Nakamura Utaemon III as Katō Masakiyo, ca. 1822

Color woodcut with silver pigment on paper; ōban

Collection of Mike Lyon

Nakamura Utaemon III (1778-1838) was the most versatile and popular actor in Osaka stage history, with half the color woodcut print production dedicated to images of him in many years. This portrait of the actor depicts a tense moment in the play *Hachijin shugo no honjō* [8 Battle-ranks in Defense of Osaka Castle] in which he as Masakiyo (loosely based on the warlord Katō Kiyomasa, 1562-1611) has just knowingly swallowed poisoned sake [rice wine] in order to protect his lord's heir and Osaka Castle. The poem above the actor's head references the real, historical figure:

Kiyomasa is the moon shining on the world at midday; an art of piercing insight. ³	Sekai jū kagayaku tsuki no Kiyomasa wa janome o akete araiteru gei
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Shunkōsai HOKUSHŪ (Japan, active 1802-1832)

The Actor Ichikawa Ebijūrō I as Wada Raihachi, 1824

Color woodcut on paper; ōban

Collection of Mike Lyon

This play, *Appare keisei matsura no tōriya*, was written by the celebrity actor Nakamura Utaemon III (1778-1838) who revised an earlier drama by an important Osaka playwright. The story involves an attempt to overthrow a master archer, more than one murder, romantic entanglements, an archery contest, and a lost heirloom arrow. In this staging in the first month of 1824, the actor Ichikawa Ebijūrō I (1777-1827) has the role of Wada Raihachi, based on the historical figure Wasa Daihachirō who in 1687 shot a record-breaking 8,133 arrows in one 24-hour period the entire length of the Sanjūsangendō hall (390 feet). In the kabuki play, Wasa is exposed as a villain involved in a violent inheritance plot, although the real archer had no such stigma.

This color woodcut with its luxurious, bright pink background is very likely one panel from a larger set. This particular sheet was probably the most appealing (“action-packed”) and would have been bought in the largest numbers and thus be preserved more often than the other panels. Until the end of the nineteenth century, polyptychs with two or more panel sheets of paper that together formed an entire panorama were designed in such a way that consumers could purchase one sheet of a set and still have a picture that could be enjoyed on its own. Naturally, publishers hoped that most kabuki fans and print aficionados would prefer to collect all the sheets possible for a complete scene.



³ Trans. Roger Keyes, *The Theatrical World of Osaka Prints*. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1973), 68.

Utagawa TOYOKUNI I (Japan, 1769-1825)

The Actor Sawamura Sōjurō III as Satsuma Gengobei, ca. 1801

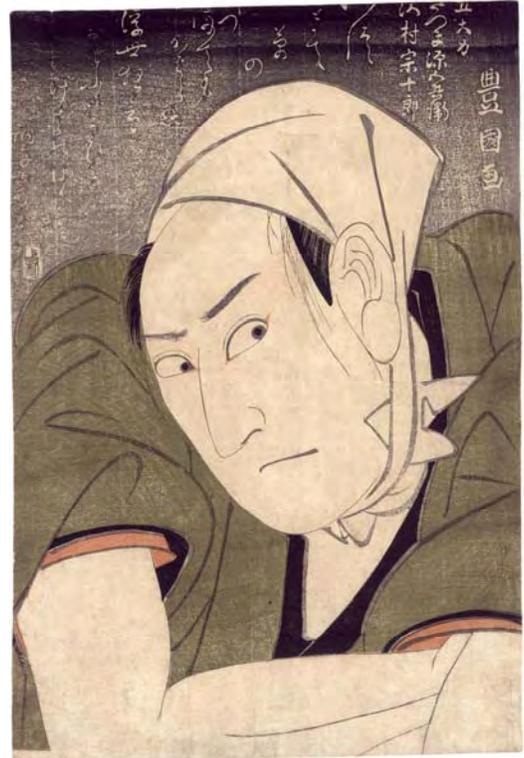
Color woodcut on paper; ōban

Collection of Mike Lyon

Toyokuni I came to prominence in Edo (now Tokyo) printmaking in the 1790's with his actor portraits. Influenced by the innovative work of his contemporaries Utamaro (in this exhibition) and Sharaku (active 1794-95) who pioneered the bust-length portrait (*ōkubi-e*), he designed powerful full-figure and half-length actor prints and established his own style that led the Utagawa school of artists well into the Meiji Era (1868-1912). Toyokuni also initiated the practice of depicting actors in their private lives, behind the scenes which held enormous appeal for Edo kabuki fans. Capitalizing on his own success, by 1817 the artist authored and illustrated a how-to book on his methods, *Yakusha nigao haya geiko*

[*Quick Instruction in the Drawing of Actor Likenesses*].

The actor portrayed in this striking bust-length view (*ōkubi-e*) is Sawamura Sōjurō III (1753-1801) in one of his best roles, the master-less samurai Satsuma Gengobei in the play *Godairiki koi no fūjime* [*Five Great Strengths that Seal Love*]. This play full of intrigue, disguise, and deception, as well of love and revenge, is based on the infamous “five murders at Sonezaki” incident that occurred in 1737 and debuted as a New Year’s performance at Edo’s Miyako Theater in 1795. The color woodcut was first released soon afterward, but then re-issued upon the actor’s death. This second version added calligraphy by Sōjurō III’s widow quoting lines from the play that allude to the ephemeral nature of the kabuki world.



Utagawa KUNIYOSHI (Japan, 1797 -1861)

Kanchi Shuki fitting message arrow to bow, 1827-30

Series: *Tzuzoku suikoden hyakuhachinin no hitori* [*108 Heroes of the Suikoden, One by One*]

Color woodcut on paper; ōban

Collection of Mike Lyon

The stories encapsulated in this print series are based upon episodes from the Japanese translation (*Suikoden*, “Tales of the Water Margin”) of a 14th-century Chinese novel (*Shuihu Zhuan*, “Marshes of Mt. Liang”). One of the first English translations was undertaken by the author Pearl S. Buck (1892-1973), a 70-chapter version titled *All Men are Brothers*, published in 1933. Another, Sidney Shapiro’s *Outlaws of the Marsh* published in 1980, is considered one of the best. The novel was originally based on the historical exploits of the outlaw Song Jiang and his band of 36 men who spawned tales of “Robin Hood”-like adventures, finally surrendering to government militia in 1121. There is a strong theory that *Water Margin* stories became popularized in the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368) as resentment against Mongol rule grew throughout China. The earlier rebellion was a safe topic as it criticized Song Dynasty (960-1279) politics and stressed virtues of comradeship and loyalty, but underlying the tales was a deep opposition to all corrupt government.



Kuniyoshi's print series of the *Suikoden* (1827-30) in Japan may also have become wildly popular due to similar circumstances. Early 19th-century Japan saw general prosperity, but also an iron rule by the Tokugawa shogunate. Strict censorship and an unbending social order left the commoner classes no chance to challenge the ruling powers, and it was these people who adored the *Suikoden* stories the most. Kuniyoshi himself ran afoul of the authorities more than once, suspected of hiding political satire within his color woodcut pictures. But it was this early series that made Kuniyoshi's fortune. Although he had been trained by Utagawa school pioneer Toyokuni (included in this exhibition), from 1814 when the artist produced his first commercially-printed work until this commission, Kuniyoshi had to resort to trading in tatami straw mats to supplement his income. In 1827 the publisher Kagaya Kichibei secured Kuniyoshi's hand for the design of five prints in a planned continuing series of the 108 Heroes of the *Suikoden*. Great success of these first issues earned Kuniyoshi commissions for 69 more prints. He was thenceforth nicknamed "Warrior Kuniyoshi," and must be credited with establishing the warrior print [*musha-e*] as a major genre in the history of *ukiyo-e* prints. When the government's Tenpō-era reforms of 1842 banned images of kabuki actors and "beautiful women" (meaning courtesans and prostitutes), Kuniyoshi's designs of warriors and legendary tales were much in demand. He continued to introduce new elements like the exotic *chinoiserie* of this *Suikoden* series and hints of western-style perspective throughout his career.

The *Suikoden* hero seen here is Kanchikotsuritsu Shuki, from the Chinese Zhu Gui character who was known as the "dry-land crocodile" and installed as a tavern owner at the periphery of the desolate marshes surrounding Mt. Liang where the outlaws stronghold was located. His job was to be "eyes and ears" and note circumstances of travelers passing through. If solitary visitors had nothing, they were untouched. If trifling possessions were deemed of interest, Zhu Gui would drug the owner but let him live. If a wealthy merchant appeared, however, he was killed and butchered for lean meat (edible pemmican) and body fat (lamp oil). To send messages from the inn to his bandit comrades, Zhu Gui would fit whistling arrows with sealed information at the tip to his bow and fire it across the Yellow River into the vegetation opposite where outlaw sentries would be waiting.

attrib. **Utagawa KUNIYOSHI** (Japan, 1797 -1861)
 The Maiden of Dōjō Temple, ca. 1830
 Color woodcut on paper; vertical ōban diptych
 Collection of Mike Lyon

The story behind this image is one of Mike Lyon's favorite Japanese tales, appearing even in examples of his own work. The legend is evoked here simply by a woman wearing a tall golden hat (*tate eboshi*) of ancient tradition looking up at a temple bell. Viewers familiar with the motifs will imagine the 10th-century monk, Anchin, trying to escape the unwelcome advances of Kiyohime, an obsessed princess. In the end, he hides under his temple's bell while Kiyohime dances to make the bell fall and trap her love. The dance also causes her to turn into a dragon-serpent that twines around the bell, crushing and melting it as she bursts into flame, consumed by her own jealousy.

The attribution of this unsigned *kakemono-e* [hanging scroll-like picture] print set is quite reasonably given to Kuniyoshi. The publisher seal at the foot denotes Wakasaya Yōichi (in business 1790s-1860s), one of the artist's frequent patrons. Kuniyoshi's few, known hanging scroll paintings are of women rather than actors, warriors, or landscapes. Most confirming, however, is the artist's very similar composition of circa 1835, *Shirabyoshi* [*White Hat*] a *kakemono-e* vertical diptych print set which was titled and signed.



Itō SHINSUI (Japan, 1898-1972)
Mayazumi [*Eyebrow Ink*], 1928
Color woodcut on paper; ōban
Collection of Mike Lyon

This modern-era color print is one of Mike Lyon's very favorite in a collection full of remarkable works on paper. It was on his wish-list for years before he located an impression available for purchase, around 2005. Created in an edition of only 200 prints, *Mayazumi* was a special production requiring unusually high technical skill, especially for the saturated red background achieved through multiple printings of the color. The publisher Watanabe Shōzaburō (1885-1962) commissioned and issued the edition in 1928, more than 10 years after he had coined the term "*shin hanga*" [new print] in the process of reviving the old methods of *ukiyo-e* printmaking. Watanabe re-instituted the close collaboration of publisher, artist, carver, and printer that defined the traditional production of earlier eras. Shinsui designed prints for Watanabe from 1916 when the publisher saw the young artist's work displayed in Kaburagi Kiyokata's (1878-1973) art academy annual student exhibition. Not only did the publishing house espouse the production methods of the past, it also favored the same genres of prints popularized in the Edo period (1600-1868): landscape, actor portraits, and pictures of beautiful women (*bijin-ga*).



During his long career working with Watanabe, Shinsui experimented with a variety of subject matter, styles, and certainly color palettes but by 1922 he had settled into painting *bijin-ga* as his primary subject. His portrait heads were considered his best work, blending traditional *ukiyo-e* design that was dependent on strength of line with contemporary fashion of the modern age. *Mayazumi* [*Eyebrow Ink*] exemplified this and in 1928 it was an instant critical and commercial success, selling out the entire edition very quickly. This private glimpse of a female actress applying make-up before a barely-seen mirror in preparation for a performance encompasses all the best elements of Japanese printmaking. Shinsui was recognized as a master artist in his own time, as in 1952 his artwork was declared an "Intangible Cultural Property" and in 1970 he was awarded the "Order of the Rising Sun," both significant gifts from a grateful nation.

Natori SHUNSEN (Japan, 1886 -1960)

The Actor Jitsukawa Enjaku II as Danshichi Kurōbei, 1926

Series: *Shunsen nigao-e shū* [*Collection of Shunsen Portraits*], 1925-31

Color woodcut on paper, ōban

Collection of Mike Lyon

Natori Shunsen studied traditional Japanese painting at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts and after graduating from the program took an illustrator position at a Tokyo newspaper as he continued to exhibit his paintings in the city's galleries. The prominent print publisher Watanabe Shōzaburō (1885-1962) saw Shunsen's paintings and proposed a mutually-beneficial working relationship. Shunsen went on to create several print series over the years with Watanabe, usually in very small, luxury editions that often featured metallic pigments and deep embossing. Shunsen's prints were marketed by subscription only, making them rare and rather expensive to collect even in the short-term. This series was issued as an actor portrait per month over the years 1925-31.

Shunsen worked primarily within the *okubi-e* ("large head", bust portrait) format aiming to capture and convey the individual personality of an actor, as well as the character's, in a kabuki role. This compelling example of Jitsukawa Enjaku II (1877-1951) playing the role of Danshichi Kurobei is widely considered a masterpiece of the genre. Collector Mike Lyon believably claims that it, "makes my heart beat fast," every time he sees it. Its basic color scheme is technically very complex, with numbers of blocks needed to print the varying intensities of checked patterns along with the delicately-rendered facial expression. In the nine-act play, *Natsu matsuri naniwa kagami* [*Summer Festival, Mirror of Naniwa*] performed in 1926, the hero Danshichi Kurobei is popularly felt to embody aspirations of common folk. Scholarly speculation places the scene of this complicated plot to when Kurobei is freshly barbered and shedding his prison appearance immed landing in the new role as protector to a runaway courtesan. The actor Enjaku II himself was known as graceful and charming, enjoying an extravagant lifestyle as an inveterate ladies man, and this was considered one of his best roles.



Baikōsai SHUNKEI (Japan, active 1820s-30s)
The Actor Arashi Rikan II as Sankichi, 1834
Color woodcut with embossing on paper; ōban
Collection of Mike Lyon

Almost nothing remains of the artistic career of Shunkei. Very few print examples are known, and in fact the only entry in the most comprehensive Japanese *ukiyo-e* encyclopedia (11 volumes) is about this color woodcut: “Arashi Rikan as Sankichi,” the “tobacco-cutter” in the kabuki play “*Keisei somewake tazuna*” (usually translated as *A Courtesan’s reins, dyed in colors*), performed at the “Naka Theater” in Osaka in the “first month of 1834.” That reference source also provides the information that Shunkei was a pupil of the artist Hokushū (also in this exhibition), who had himself designed prints for the same play when it debuted in 1822. The drama was co-authored by the celebrity actor Nakamura Utaemon III (1778-1838) who, naturally, starred in the first performance as the hero, Sankichi.

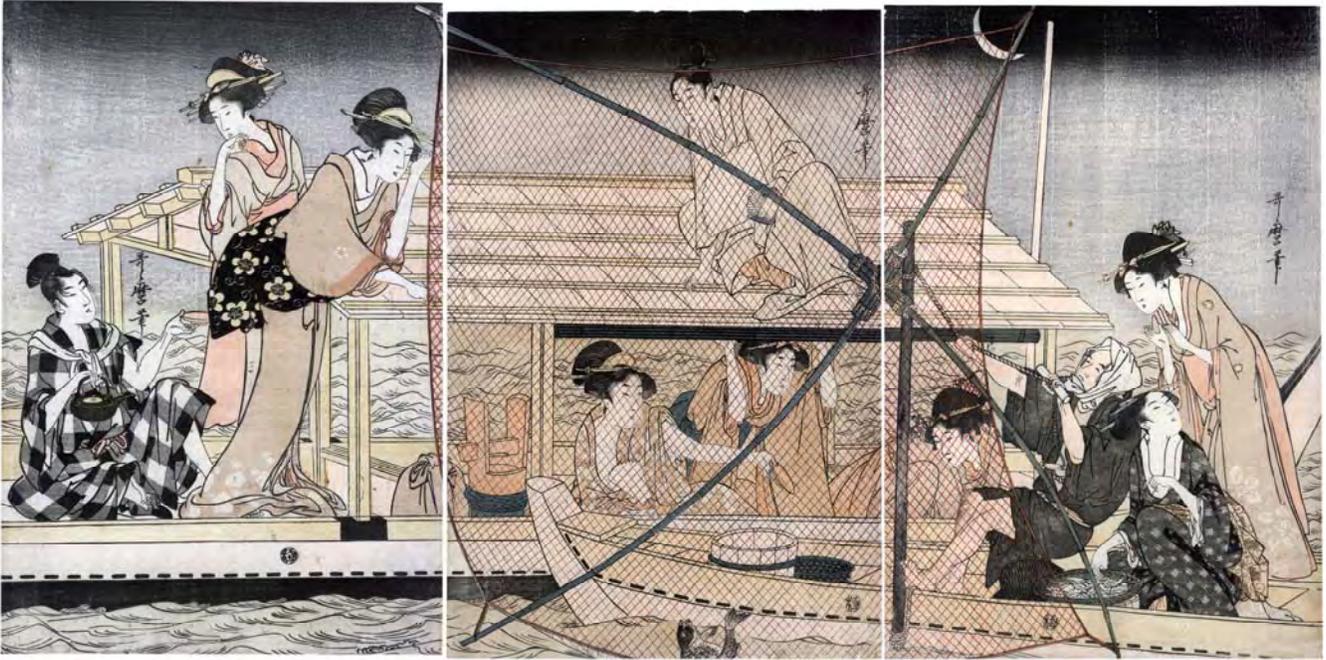
In the performance of 1834 it was the actor Arashi Rikan II (1788-1837) who starred as Sankichi, the tobacco-cutter who helps to stop conspirators plotting to steal treasures from a samurai family. Rikan II, who was called “Metuku” [Eye virtue] for his famously large, beautiful eyes, excelled at playing romantic heroes as well as women of all ages. Although he lacked dancing skills (especially important for playing female roles) by 1832 he has earned the highest rating in published kabuki critiques, the coveted ranking of “ultimate-upper-upper-excellent” actor.



Gatōkan SHUNSHI (Japan, active 1820s-1830s)
The Actor Onoe Tamizō II as Shirai Saihachiro, 1832
Color woodcut on paper; ōban
Collection of Mike Lyon

The artist Shunshi often depicted the kabuki actor Onoe Tamizō II (1799-1886), a long-lived Osaka-based talent who excelled in quick-change roles and ghost plays. In this *okubi-e* [large head, bust-length portrait] close-up of the actor, his acting family crest appears as partial glimpses on the front robe and again on the sleeve at the bottom of the print. Many artists of the period produced prints featuring the actor, from Shunshi’s master Hokushū through Kuniyoshi (both in this exhibition) and other Utagawa school descendants. The actor was extremely versatile and appeared on stages in both Edo and Osaka in an enormous variety of roles. Being short, overweight (later quite fat, as documented in *ukiyo-e* prints of the latter 19th century) and known as a showman, he never achieved the high-ranking of some of his peers but enjoyed a career success few could equal. Here, Shunshi has evoked the portrait style of a decade earlier, placing the actor Tamizō II on a bold yellow background.





Kitagawa UTAMARO (Japan, 1753-1806)
Yotsude ami [*Four-armed Scoop-net*], ca. 1801
Color woodcut on paper; ōban triptych
Collection of Mike Lyon

Before he ever saw the complete triptych set, Mike Lyon found an impression of the left-most sheet featuring the young man enjoying sake (rice wine). Lyon was enthralled with the printing effects he saw revealed in the fabrics of the *yukata*, summer kimono. The artist Utamaro is known for his strong compositions, often with innovative visual effects. Always pushing the limits of paper's two dimensions, Utamaro experimented with layering, especially with transparent material, to achieve a sense of three-dimensional space. Here, the see-through netting braced on a wide-sweeping bamboo frame employed by a fisherman at work serves to connect all three panels of the composition horizontally at the same time setting up visual cues for distances in a receding space.

And yet, the visceral response to this scene of a party of young men and lovely courtesans cruising along the Sumida River in springtime is pure pleasure. Utamaro's audience appreciated all his print designs, prompting creation of more than 2,000 in the artist's career. From 1782 when Utamaro partnered with the publisher Tsutaya Jūzaburō (1750-1797) his work became central to the artistic sphere in Edo (now Tokyo) and beyond. Utamaro is credited as the pioneer of *ōkubi-e* (bust portraits), particularly of beautiful women, in the first years of the 1790s. There are no direct sources or precedents for this format in Japanese art. Speculation has it that Dutch glass paintings may have been an inspiration, and perhaps even prompted the use of ground mica to emulate the sparkle of such a reflective surface. Whatever the history, Utamaro's print designs were immediately taken as models for his contemporaries, such as Eisui's bust-portrait of the Courtesan Ōgiya (in this exhibition).



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