Adapting and Adopting: Waves of Change as East Encounters West Modern and Contemporary Japanese Art

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ArtLab @ The Lowe


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Foreword and Acknowledgments

The Lowe Art Museum is proud to present *Adapting and Adopting: Waves of Change as East Encounters West, Modern and Contemporary Japanese Art*, the fourth exhibition in the series, *ArtLab @ The Lowe*, on view in the Richard and Shelley Bernmont Focus Gallery through April 21, 2013. The innovative ArtLab program provides University of Miami faculty and students with the opportunity to organize an annual exhibition drawn from the Lowe’s permanent collection of more than 18,000 works of art. For the Spring 2012 semester, I was invited, as a guest lecturer in the Department of Art and Art History, to teach the ArtLab seminar. I chose to organize the class around the exhibition, *Introspection and Awakening: Japanese Art of the Edo and Meiji Periods, 1615-1912*, which opened at the Lowe on June 23, 2012. While this exhibition focuses on the pre-modern period of Japanese art and history, it seemed extremely relevant to complement it with one that would address Japanese modern and contemporary art. The title of the ArtLab exhibition is inspired, in part, by the television documentary, *West Encounters East*, which will run next year on WPBT. Produced by ArtLab sponsor, Stella M. Holmes, the documentary examines the fusion of Asian and Latin American artistic traditions in the work of artists of Asian heritage who live and work in Brazil, and includes footage of the ArtLab class visiting the Morikami Museum & Japanese Gardens in Delray Beach, Florida. In undertaking their exhibition research, student curators working on the ArtLab embraced this theme of multicultural influence on Japanese modernism both at home and abroad, and the works of art they selected for the exhibition include a number of examples by Japanese artists living in Brazil.

The collection at the Lowe is a unique and remarkable teaching tool, containing wonderful works of art in a variety of media that allow students the opportunity to step outside of the classroom setting and examine art historical issues in new contexts. None of this would be possible without the generous support of our many art donors, nor would it be possible without the sponsorship of Stella M. Holmes, whose ongoing encouragement of the ArtLab program has allowed the Lowe to create the perfect teaching laboratory in which to fulfill our primary goal of supporting, extending, and enriching the mission of the University of Miami for students, faculty, scholars, residents, and visitors to South Florida.

*Adapting and Adopting: Waves of Change as East Encounters West, Modern and Contemporary Japanese Art* is an exhibition conceived of and implemented by twelve undergraduate students and one graduate student enrolled in ARH 511 during the Spring 2012 semester. The ArtLab @ The Lowe program, a collaboration of the Department of Art and Art History and the Lowe Art Museum at the University of Miami, provides students with the unique opportunity not only to learn about theoretical aspects of museum studies but to apply this knowledge to the creation of their own exhibition, which will be on view at the Lowe for a calendar year. Many people contributed to the success of this exhibition, and I would first like to thank the Lowe Art Museum’s Assistant Director, Kara Schneiderman, who not only initially conceived the idea for ArtLab, but remains one of its principal guiding forces. Natasha Cuervo, Museum Registrar for Exhibitions and Loans, and Darren Price, Senior Preparator, shared their expertise with the students in the layout and design of the exhibition to make the vision of the student curators a reality. I would also like to thank the scholars, colleagues, and artists who contributed their knowledge to this exhibition, including Koichi Tasa, Archivist at the Otto G. Richter Library, University of Miami; Dr. Daniel McKee, Adjunct Assistant Professor and Japanese Bibliographer, Cornell University; Dr. Chang Qing; Tadasuke Kuwayama; Beatrice Chang of Dai Ichi Gallery; and Joan Mirviss of Joan Mirviss Gallery, both in New York City.

Brian A. Dursum  
Director and Chief Curator  
Lowe Art Museum
Introduction

The islands that form the archipelago that is modern Japan initially experienced waves of invaders from the Asian mainland. These Central Asian peoples helped to shape the early history, language, and art of Japan, but over subsequent centuries, natives of the islands developed their own identity and language distinct from that of East Asia. While separate, the Japanese were not isolated and influences from the more culturally and politically sophisticated Chinese found their way to the islands. In the seventh century, the Japanese more fully embraced Chinese culture through a series of reforms that identified the Yamato Clan as the imperial house of Japan. Although their language developed separately, the Japanese adopted Chinese characters for writing as well as Confucian social organization and bureaucratic structures. Buddhism was also introduced via China and Korea, and was adopted, along with the native Shinto beliefs, as a major religious system. These waves of influence that found their way to Japan over the centuries were consciously adopted by the native peoples and equally adapted to fit their needs.

This integration of foreign influence and its contribution to the development of modern and contemporary Japanese art is the underlying theme of *Adapting and Adopting: Waves of Change as East Encounters West*. The exhibition examines three broad topics in modern and contemporary Japanese art: Japanese artists living abroad, cross-cultural influences returning to Japan, and the role of traditional Japanese art. While it is clear that the Japanese would adopt artistic ideals as it suited them—first from China and Korea and by the seventeenth century from Europe and the Americas—traditional artistic forms were rooted strongly enough in the Japanese psyche to withstand complete transformation. During the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Meiji government (1868-1912) openly encouraged young Japanese to study abroad in an effort to strengthen the motherland and reverse what the Japanese viewed as unequal status vis-à-vis Europe and the Americas. Artists, many of whom had been interested in Western artistic ideas, moved abroad and settled in Europe, and North and South America, especially in Brazil. Yet another group of artists studied abroad and then returned home to form Western-style painting schools, or they joined Japanese painting academies that emphasized either the native Japanese style (*Yamato-e*) or the Western style (*Yoga-e*). In both cases the influence was not, by any means, one-sided, but rather a cross-cultural merging of ideas and influences.

The choice by the student curators of Ushiku Kenji’s woodcut, *Deity of the Mountains*, for the cover of this catalog is representative of the exhibition’s thematic goal. The title appears to have been selected by the artist and clearly holds meaning to him, very likely referencing the traditional Shinto religious beliefs. At least superficially it is an abstract composition that overlays black bands over a red ground, which is legible to the viewer as a strictly Japanese construct but one with decided Western influences. Certainly in the minds of the students this piece addresses the totality of the exhibition’s themes.
Born in the city of Soma in Fukushima Province, Tikashi Fukushima was a young man when he moved to Brazil in 1940. Six years after his move, he worked as an assistant to the painter, Tadashi Kaminagai (1899-1982), and attended classes at the National School of Fine Arts in Rio de Janeiro. In 1949, Tikashi opened a framing shop in Largo Kaminagai, which eventually became the meeting place for the artists of the Grupo Guanabara. Tikashi was strongly influenced by the culture and natural topography of Brazil. He began his career as a representational painter depicting landscapes, but by the 1950s had become known as a significant abstract painter in Brazil. This shift in interest might be explained by his youthful fascination with the hues and colors that were natural to Brazil, and abstraction may have provided a logical style that best expressed his feelings. Tikashi primarily focused on creating contemplative works, using art as a means to communicate and express his innermost feelings. Most of his canvases are unconventional, vertical landscapes that possess a dynamic use of light and shadow, typical of more traditional Japanese painting styles. This untitled painting is unusual in that Tikashi rarely painted in a horizontal format, yet the style and subject matter remain typical of his work. Tikashi was able to maintain strong Japanese painterly qualities throughout his oeuvre, while fusing it with a passion for the lush natural world of Brazil.

— Sarah Blattner

Nakayama Tadashi was born in 1927 in the area of Niigata Prefecture. His family name, Nakayama, means “central mountain” in Japanese, while Tadashi, his given name, means “upright.” He graduated in 1947 from the Tama Fine Arts College with a degree in painting, and by the 1950s had begun producing traditional woodblock prints, or moku-hanga. He exhibited these, along with intaglio prints and lithographs, in solo exhibitions at the Nihon Hanga Kyōkai, the Japan Art Society, the Avant-Garde Art Association, and other organizations. He also participated in international exhibitions in Europe and the United States, and taught from 1964–1965 at the Bath Academy in England. Nakayama became one of Japan’s most prominent and widely collected color woodblock artists linked with the sōsaku-hanga or “creative prints” movement that first made its appearance in the early twentieth century. This movement was a reaction against the traditional ukiyo-e woodblock prints that were popular from the seventeenth to the early twentieth century. The sōsaku-hanga movement revolutionized the traditional printing process since the artist both carved and printed the image from his own drawing. This eliminated the four-fold division of labor of artist, woodblock carver, printmaker, and publisher that had functioned in the commercial world of traditional ukiyo-e prints. From this point forward, the artist had greater control over the entire process, adopting the aesthetics of the West along with the sensibilities of earlier Japanese print artists. This untitled print relates to the first distinctive period in Nakayama’s artistic career when he was creating his Phoenix and Incarnation series. If related to the Phoenix series, the black, red, and white forms might represent ascending birds and the rounded forms in the background could be seen as the sun and moon against a darkening sky. The isolated colors selected to represent different flocks of birds, possibly cranes, were perhaps an effort to create shadowing and depth in the composition, suggesting the wild aspect of natural forces. As Nakayama worked alone, and his printing process was quite complicated and time-consuming, he produced only two to three prints per year. Among his favorite subjects are birds, butterflies, young girls, and stylized horses. Living in Europe for a number of years, he returned to Tokyō in the 1980s, where he resides today. Nakayama’s prints are included in the collections of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC, the Fogg Museum at Harvard University, the Achenbach Foundation for the Graphic Arts in San Francisco, and the Western Art Museum in Perth, Australia.

— Giselle Garcia-Gallinar
Japanese Abroad

There are numerous examples of Japanese expatriate artists, individuals who emigrated abroad or are second or third generation Japanese living and working in the United States, South America, or Europe. These artists chose to live and work in newly adopted countries that more clearly defined their artistic sensibilities and goals. Despite their physical distance from Japan, all of these artists remained bound to the artistic traditions of their original homeland. While they may have studied Western painting and printmaking styles with European and American teachers, their work continues to exhibit painterly traits in form and composition that are clearly Japanese. Many of these artists continued to use their Japanese names, signing their works in both Roman letters as well as Japanese characters.

A Japanese-born Brazilian painter, Manabu Mabe experimented with different painting styles and a variety of media throughout his career, ultimately culminating in a purely abstract style. This phase of Mabe’s work, during which he began incorporating vibrating colors and harmonious shapes, lasted from around 1957 until his death in 1997. His Untitled Greeting Card is most likely an abstraction of Japanese calligraphy and demonstrates many of the qualities that have come to define Mabe’s work. As he often alluded to human emotions, this piece may depict the conflict of good and evil within each of us. Its explosive, abstracted calligraphic shapes in black and white, which signify good and evil, contrast with the simple red background that represents the concealment of this inner conflict from the outside world. Though Mabe created this piece many years after his move to Brazil at the age of ten, it depicts the transculturation, or mixing of cultures, he experienced in his early years. While Mabe never forgot the highly valued tradition of Japanese calligraphy, he grew up in the midst of an artistically diverse environment that would shape his creative identity forever. Mabe’s use of vivid colors in nearly all of his artwork embodies the energy and youthfulness of Brazil’s art scene in the 1950s, while his ability to harmoniously combine artistic aspects from two entirely different cultures makes Mabe’s work so captivating. José Gómez-Sicre, former director of the Art Museum of the Americas in Washington, DC, succinctly described this duality of Mabe’s creative inspiration: “He drinks his meditative tea in decorated transparent porcelain to a background of samisen music, yet never would he reject his little cup of strong coffee taken to the beat of Brazilian music.”

— Alicia Casella
Born in Japan, Fuji Nakamizo came to the United States where he studied with Joseph Pennell (1857-1926), among others, and developed an unusual artistic versatility. Ruth Benjamin describes Nakamizo as, “... an equally fascinating fusion of East and West.” He acquired beautiful etching skills as a result of Pennell’s tutelage, and his prints are in the collections of a number of museums in the United States. Many of his etchings focus on animals, which are portrayed in a distinctly Japanese style. According to Alan Priest, former Curator of Asian Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Japanese paint animals with innate understanding, “... as forms of life, complete and beautiful in themselves.” In *Paradise Birds*, Nakamizo’s technique conveys an inexhaustible search for representational truth. His etching strokes serve to express the texture and volume of the physical reality of the birds, yet the print reflects Japanese sensibilities as well. Rather than illustrating a large number of subjects in the composition, Japanese artists would focus on one or two forms in more simplified arrangements, a trend Nakamizo follows in *Paradise Birds*. Though largely known for his etchings, Nakamizo was also a painter but the influence of Pennell is far less evident in Nakamizo’s striking watercolors, in which his personal style reads clearly and seems to span the gap between Japanese art and American Impressionism. His watercolors are usually painted on absorbent paper with a thin wash, resulting in passages that are sometimes heavy but at other times quite transparent. On the other hand, his oil paintings were much more American in theme and technique, and Nakamizo tended to choose this medium to illustrate city skylines, crowded streets, and other urban subjects. During World War II, Nakamizo was confined to an internment camp in Utah, but he returned to New York City after the war and his work was widely exhibited and collected in the United States until his death in 1950.

— Audrey Barth

Tanaka Shu was born and educated in Japan, although he travelled frequently to Europe and spent considerable time in Paris. The influence of Western techniques can be seen throughout his work, including in the painting, *Region Phosphorescente*. Tanaka sought to capture the effects of matter and light in landscapes by employing a loose style that did not adhere to the rules of traditional Japanese schools of painting. Customarily, Japanese landscape paintings, which were based on Chinese prototypes, illustrated a prominent foreground that would include a water element, either a lake or a river, and a receding background usually filled with mist covered mountains. While some of Tanaka’s works are more characteristic of Japanese landscapes, this painting, like many others, tends towards “abstract landscapism.” Tanaka’s spontaneous brush strokes and composition convey the fleeting sensation of a landscape. The use of lively brushstrokes in bright colors against a dark background activates the canvas, while the contrasts and harmonies of color in the composition correspond to movement in nature. Rather than present a concrete image of a landscape, Tanaka leaves interpretation to the viewer. This painting was most likely executed sometime after the artist arrived in Paris in 1954. Tanaka exhibited multiple times with the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, an association of Parisian artists focusing on abstract art. This type of imagery was popular in the West at that time, as the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles had grown out of a succession of similar groups. Interestingly, Tanaka was not strongly influenced by the so-called School of Paris, but instead retained a Japanese spirit in his paintings. By the 1950s, when Tanaka was exhibiting with the Salon, their goal was to represent, “... all the trends of abstraction to the margins of abstraction.” His work was also shown in other group and solo exhibitions both in France and at the Yoshii Gallery in Japan.

— Audrey Barth
A skilled painter, printmaker, and draughtsman, Hasegawa Shoichi was born in Yaizu in 1929. He began studying painting in his late teens and, as a student at the Kokugi Institute in Tokyo, held his first exhibition in Yaizu in 1957. In 1960 he moved to Paris and began work at the Atelier 17 under the renowned, expatriate English printmaker, Stanley William Hayter (1901-1988). Acclaimed for its collaborative focus and innovative techniques in intaglio color printing, the studio introduced Hasegawa to etching. His early prints depicted symbolic, starkly linear, monochromatic grey and black compositions. Hasegawa focused on mastering translucent colors, blending European etching techniques with Japanese styles and motifs. He showed his work in many group exhibitions in Paris and won first prize for an etching at the International Exhibition in Como in 1968. In 1972, he earned the Young Contemporary Print Artist Award in Tokyo. In the wake of this success, Hasegawa was awarded prizes from around the world and held numerous solo exhibitions in both Paris and Tokyo in subsequent years. Presently living in Paris, Hasegawa continues to create prints and paintings. His style is recognized by a sophisticated command of translucent color, and his current work oscillates between figuration and abstraction. Many of his paintings are mixed media compositions of irregular dabs and splotches of color applied in a fresh, haphazard manner. Combining Asian and European styles, his abstract imagery merges soft backgrounds into playfully airy compositions. This painting is a solid vertical composition divided into thirds. Its balanced structure contrasts with its softly frosted background, causing the darker abstracted imagery of irregular, organic, rough textures and forms to seemingly float on the surface. The minimal coloring creates a tranquil atmospheric effect, and the hazy, translucent blond streaks add to the ethereal nature of the piece. The elegant contrast of his work has made him world-renowned, and his work is represented in the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and the Bibliothèque National de France in Paris, among others.

— Heather Newcomb

Roger Shimomura is a third generation Japanese-American artist, born in Seattle, Washington in 1939. He graduated from the University of Washington, Seattle in 1961 with a B.A., and later received his M.F.A. from Syracuse University in New York. He taught at the University of Kansas in Lawrence from 1969 until his retirement in 2004. During this period, Shimomura developed and mastered the iconic style of Pop Art that emerged in the late 1950s in North America. Shimomura’s oeuvre was influenced both by master Pop artists, such as Andy Warhol (1928-1987) and Roy Lichtenstein (1923-1997), as well as by the Japanese ukiyo-e masters, Utamaro (ca. 1753-1806), Hokusai (1760-1849), and Hiroshige (1797-1858). He is well-known for his thought-provoking and witty depictions of racist stereotypes that affect minority groups in general and Asian-Americans in particular. Among Shimomura’s sources of inspiration were his experiences in a Japanese internment camp in Idaho during World War II, and the discovery of his grandmother’s diaries in the 1970s. *Enter the Rice Cooker* is a comic book graphic-style screen print that integrates the aesthetics of Pop Art and traditional ukiyo-e woodblock prints. In the foreground, a profile figure of a man in a Kabuki costume with suitably painted face holds a rice cooker. He is juxtaposed with a figure of the popularized femme fatale standing behind a screen. In Shimomura’s own words, “American culture is represented by a brick wall, which is a metaphor for European-American culture. This country is forced to be European-American. shoji screens, on the other hand, represent Japanese culture. Go beyond the screens and there is a mixture of both cultures.” Shimomura has lectured about his artwork at over two hundred museums and universities in the United States, has received numerous awards, and has participated in over 150 solo exhibitions. His work is included in a number of museum collections including the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, DC and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

— Giselle Garcia-Gallinar
MURAKAMI TAKASHI (村上 隆)
Japan, b. 1962

Oval (Peter Norton Christmas Project 2000), 2000
polychromed plastic containing a mini-CD
9 7/8 x 7 3/8 x 7 in. (25.1 x 18.7 x 17.8 cm)
Inscribed on bottom: “Peter Norton Family
Christmas Project 2000 / by Takashi Murakami /
Produced by CUBE”
Inscribed on CD-ROM: “Peter Norton Family /
Christmas Project / 2000 / Takashi Murakami /
Music by Zakyumiko / Hiropon Factory”
Gift of the Peter Norton Family, 2002.15
© 2000 Takashi Murakami/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd.
All Rights Reserved.

Born in Tokyo in 1962, Murakami Takashi is one of the few artists to challenge the line between fine art and commercialism. Murakami received his B.F.A., M.F.A. and eventually a Ph.D. from the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. Although he was always fascinated with Japanese pop culture, such as anime and manga comics, he studied Nihonga, the traditional style of Japanese painting. Using this knowledge, he incorporated conventional Japanese style into his very contemporary works of art, ultimately developing his theory of Superflat in 2000, in which he proposed that the differences between high and low culture in Japan had been “flattened” and allowing the line between high art and pop culture to be blurred. While he produces a variety of works for exhibition, Oval, was commissioned by the Peter Norton Family as part of their annual series of gifts sent to museum directors in the United States. Murakami also repackages his fine art works as merchandise that virtually anyone can purchase. In this way, he makes his art more accessible to a much broader audience through objects such as T-shirts and plush toys. In Oval, Murakami employs several recurring themes that exist throughout his work including smiling flowers, Buddhist iconography, and cute but slightly disturbing characters. The figure is loosely based on Buddhist sculpture. Its various faces and expressions embody the full spectrum of human emotions and states of being: happiness, anger, wakefulness, and sleep. To this day, Murakami continues to question the lines drawn between East and West, past and present, high art and pop culture. His works have been exhibited and collected in numerous museums including the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, as well as museums throughout Europe and Japan.

— Melisa N. Ramos

Cross-Cultural Influences

The Western world has influenced Japanese artistic output in painting, sculpture, printmaking, and, to a lesser extent ceramics. The earliest phase of these influences in the late nineteenth century witnessed the almost complete rejection of traditional Japanese artistic styles. This short period was followed by the adoption and adaptation of Western styles to serve an ever-changing Japanese aesthetic. At the same time traditional Japanese art in the form of woodblock prints, pottery, textiles, and a host of other mediums also influenced Western tastes as evidenced in the movement called Japonisme, which first made its appearance in 1872.
TADASKY (TADASUKE KUWAYAMA)
United States (born Japan), b. 1935
#B 127, 1964
acrylic on canvas
51 x 51 in. (129.5 x 129.5 cm)
Signed verso top edge: “#B-127 Tadasky 1964”
Museum purchase, 65.039.000
© 1964 Tadasky (Tadasuke Kuwayama)

KIHARA YASUYUKI
Japan, b. 1932
Ossature, 1973
engraving
22 ⅜ x 18 ⅞ in. (57.5 x 47 cm)
Signed bottom right: “Y Kihara ’73”
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Carl Eisdorfer, 2002.57.38

Tadasky (Kuwayama Tadasuke), born in Nagoya, is known for his concentric circle compositions that, along with other artists, helped spark the Optical Art or Op Art movement of the 1960s. His education in the arts began at an early age under the apprenticeship of his father, who was a master shrine builder. Trained to be sensitive to detail and composition, Tadasky began experimenting with simple shapes and geometric features in his early painting, although such arrangements were considered unconventional and therefore discouraged in traditional Japanese culture. In 1961 he was awarded a scholarship to study at the renowned Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, but declined this opportunity in order to continue his education within New York’s art world, where he found the freedom to explore new techniques and ideas. He settled in Brooklyn, where there was a large Japanese émigré population, and attended the Brooklyn Museum Art School. In the 1960s he further developed his concept of the circle as the most neutral of all shapes. The works he created during this time were featured in the famous 1965 Museum of Modern Art exhibition, The Responsive Eye, which initiated the Op Art movement. Op Art focused on the principles of sensory stimuli triggered by the relationship between color and shape, while employing a limited number of elements—lines, bands and patterns, flat areas of color—to elicit viewer response. Artists created compositions that, “… exist less as objects to be examined than as generators of perceptual responses, of colors and relationships existing solely in vision.” These pieces were designed to produce subjective experiences as well as physical reactions, evoking unique responses from each viewer. This new form of art was meant to be immediate and accessible to all, and to be understood as beauty for the sake of beauty. This successful concept was adapted and used to create a puzzle based on the Lowe’s painting, and Tadasky’s concentric circle paintings also served as one inspiration for The Spellbinder, a DC Comics villain for Batman. After the American Occupation of Japan in 1952, artists struggled to establish a sense of identity coupled with the right balance between modernity and tradition. Tadasky’s carefully calculated concentric circles, while seeming to contradict the Japanese aesthetic, are actually created using traditional Japanese brushes for the finer detail and a special wheel adapted from Japan to compose the shapes. Through these compositions, Tadasky found a balance between his Japanese roots and his adopted American homeland.

— Isabel Sarmiento

Kihara Yasuyuki is an abstract painter and printmaker born in 1932 in Hokkaido. In 1955, he graduated from the Western Painting Department of Musashino Art University, where he studied under Korean-born painter, Takeo Yamaguchi (1902-1983). In 1970, Kihara followed in his teacher’s footsteps and moved to Paris to complete his education. While living in Paris, Kihara spent four years working with British surrealist and abstract painter and printmaker Stanley Hayter (1901-1988) at Hayter’s now famous art studio, Atelier 17. Kihara’s training by both Yamaguchi and Hayter are clearly seen in his woodblock print, Ossature (Framework). Kihara’s use of geometric shapes in a monochromatic print is reminiscent of Yamaguchi’s style. Specifically, his use of biomorphism is illustrated in the work. The shapes floating within one another can be interpreted as representations of islands. This work paradoxically juxtaposes the constant movement of the Western world, as seen in the many shapes, and the Japanese tradition of musing about nature, the shades of blue evoking a feeling of serenity. At the same time Kihara’s piece displays his connection with Hayter, as the engraving was created during Kihara’s time in Paris at Hayter’s studio. Hayter was an adherent to the concept of automatism, which later evolved into abstract expressionism. Kihara’s work can be viewed as a more precise version of this method in which he again combines the Eastern ideal of clean lines with the Western concept of abstraction. Kihara’s work has been featured in exhibitions throughout Japan and Europe, and can be found in the permanent collection of the National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo.

— Mary Alison Reilly
Kawase Hasui (川瀬 巴水)
Japan, 1883-1957
Tōkaidō Nissaka from Selections of Views of the Tōkaidō, 1942
woodcut
9 5/8 x 14 1/8 in. (24.4 x 35.9 cm)
Signed bottom left: “Hasui”
Seal bottom left: “Sui”
Gift of The Rubin-Ladd Foundation, 2010.36.2

Yoshida Hiroshi (吉田 博)
Japan, 1876-1950
Kura in Tomonoura from The Inland Sea Second Series, 1930
woodcut
9 5/8 x 14 1/8 in. (24.4 x 37.1 cm)
Signed bottom right: “Yoshida”
Signed bottom right margin: “Hiroshi Yoshida”
Seal bottom right: “Hiroshi”
Gift of Jay Rosenbaum in honor of Brian A. Dursum, 2009.39

The Tōkaidō was one of the five major roadways first constructed by Tokugawa Iesayu (1543-1616) to link the new capital Edo to the rest of Japan. The Tōkaidō, literally Eastern Sea Road, was constructed along the eastern coast of the largest Japanese island, Honshu. There were a total of fifty-three post stations along the length of this road, which provided stables for horses as well as food and lodging for travelers. This road and its post stations were the subject of a famous print series by the artist Andō Hiroshige (1797-1858). Kawase’s print is undoubtedly referencing this earlier work. Kawase Hasui was born into a Tōkyō merchant family on May 18, 1883 with the given name Bunjirō. As a child Kawase studied with Aoyagi Bokusen (dates unknown) and Araki Kan’yu (dates unknown), but as an adult he learned to paint in the Western style. His first teachers were Okada Saburōsuke (1869-1939), who taught him watercolor and oil painting, and Kaburagi Kiyokata (1878-1972), who was an illustrator and produced frontis-pieces, called kuchi-e, for popular novels. While Kawase did exhibit Japanese-style paintings early in his career, he affiliated himself with the prominent publisher, Watanabe Shōzaburō (1885-1962), with whom he formed a lifelong professional collaboration. Working with Watanabe Shōzaburō, Kawase became one of the leading printmakers of the shin-hanga or “new prints” movement. Kawase created many watercolors, which served as sketches for his woodblock prints. He also produced oil paintings, traditional hanging scrolls, and folding screens. Kawase is mainly known as a Japanese woodblock printmaker and widely known in the West through the American art dealer and collector/connoisseur, Robert O. Muller (1930-1997). Hasui and Hiroshi Yoshida are widely regarded as two of the greatest artists of the shin-hanga style, known especially for their landscape prints. In 1956, Kawase was named a Living National Treasure in Japan.

— Alysia Rodriguez

Yoshida Hiroshi was born on September 19, 1876 in the small city of Kurume in the Kyūshū Perfecture, with the birth name Hiroshi Ueda. His father was a painting teacher in the local school, and from an early age Yoshida demonstrated a strong aptitude for the arts. At age 19, he was sent to Kyōto to study under Tamura Sōritsu (1846-1918), a well-known Western-style painter, and he continued to study with Koyama Shōtarō (1857-1916) in Tōkyō for another three years. By 1899 his work had begun to gain popularity in other countries, starting with an exhibition at the Detroit Museum of Art (now Detroit Institute of Arts). He also collaborated with Watanabe Shōzaburō (1885-1962), a well-known advocate of the shin-hanga movement, presenting his first woodcut at Watanabe’s Print Workshop. His partnership with Shōzaburō and the other Japanese artists in this group was interrupted by the Great Kantō Earthquake on September 1, 1923. Two years later, Yoshida became a fully established artist with the construction of his own studio, at which he employed professional carvers and printers. His mature style combined aspects of ukiyo-e and sōsaku-hanga, but he eventually formed a third school of art, separating himself from these earlier movements. Being trained originally in Western art styles and methods, his work is considered an interesting fusion of primarily American and traditional Japanese printmaking, although his travels to other countries in Europe and Asia were also influential. His son, Yoshida Tōshi (1911-1965), continued the family’s artistic legacy into the second half of the twentieth century.

— Stephanie Kryzak
The Tōkyō-born artist, Shibata Toshio, known for his unusual photographs of civil engineering projects and the Japanese landscape, has produced a body of work that is both universal and representative of his cultural heritage. He received his B.F.A. (1972) and M.F.A. (1974) at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, where he was trained in a Western Classical style. The political turmoil of the time often caused the university to close, thus encouraging Shibata to explore new mediums, one of which was photography. After finishing his studies in Tōkyō, the artist received a scholarship to study at the Royal Academy of Ghent in Belgium where he was encouraged to continue experimenting with photography. The “simplicity and directness” of the process of photography enticed him, but the social protest nature associated with it at the time, as seen in the work of artists such as Moriyama Daidō (b. 1938), was “very different to [his] sensibilities.” In his later travels Toshio was inspired by the approach employed at an exhibition in the prestigious Zabriskie Gallery in Paris called The American West: One Hundred Years of Landscape Photography. In this exhibit, he found a new and refreshing take on photography that suited his interests. “What attracted me initially was the simplicity and directness of this process compared to the difficulty of painting exact figurative images. I already had the sense that I wanted to work with photography but at the time in the 1970s the Japanese photographic scene was very different to my sensibilities. It was based around social protest with photographers like Moriyama Daidō. After seeing the American West show, I felt that I had discovered an approach that suited me. So in 1979 I had finally found my medium: photography.” From his new home in France, Shibata was able to see Japan through different eyes. He found photographing in Europe difficult, as “everything was so different and too photogenic”; yet at the same time he felt Tōkyō was too “chaotic.” He looked for a subject matter that was universal, something characteristic not just of one individual, but at the same time, of everyone. He found this common theme in the interactions between the natural and human-made worlds. Following the Japanese tradition of appreciation of imperfection (wabi) and the desire to maintain harmony with nature, Shibata reflects an unquestionably Japanese aesthetic. Using an 8 x 10” format camera with a wide-angle lens and tight cropping, he creates a surreal landscape that carefully excludes any reference to context. Although from different portfolios and from different parts of the world, Coolidge Dam, San Carlos, AZ and Hinohara Village, Tōkyō narrate a story of the human-altered landscape that is common everywhere. Shibata illustrates that beauty can be found within this dramatic and abstract relationship of conflicting topographies as they find an unexpected balance. The artist presently lives and works in Japan, and his artwork has been exhibited in major institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, as well as the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris.

— Isabel Sarmiento
This print and its companion, Matsue in Izumo [Hazy Moon] from Souvenirs of Travel, Third Series, were executed in the style of earlier Edo Period (1615-1868) prints. They were intended to showcase scenic and religious areas in Japan in the tradition of Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), Andō Hiroshige (1797-1858), and other ukiyo-e artists. It is perhaps not coincidental that Matsue in Shimane Prefecture was also the home of shin-hanga artist, Hirat- suka Un’ichi (1895-1997), who was one of the major figures in this movement. Kawase Hasui was a painter, printmaker, and a follower of the shin-hanga print movement. Prints produced during the shin-hanga movement were considered revitalizations of traditional Japanese printmaking of the earlier Edo and Meiji Periods (1868-1912), characterized by conventional Japanese subjects rendered using modern techniques. Kawase studied painting and watercolor before turning his attention to woodcut prints. Many of his watercolors depicted actors and landscapes, and were published in magazines and other publications towards the end of the Meiji Period and the beginning of the Taishō Period (1912-1926). Kawase mainly worked for the publisher Watanbe Shōzaburō (1885-1962), a very influential figure in the shin-hanga movement who was responsible for employing several artists and selling their prints commercially. Despite his skill in painting, Kawase is mostly known for his woodblock prints, and together with Yoshida Hiroshi (1876-1950), was considered one of the greatest masters of the shin-hanga style. Like earlier Edo Period artists such as Andō Hiroshige (1797-1858) and Utagawa Kunisada (1786-1865), Kawase based his prints on sketches and watercolors that he produced while traveling throughout Japan. Unlike his contemporaries, who made prints of well-known locations, Kawase preferred to depict serene landscapes that were left untouched during this period of rapid urbanization in Japan. He was especially skilled at creating moods and capturing the effects of light and weather on land and water. His landscapes, usually devoid of humans or animals, often come across as eerie and deserted. Many of his works were destroyed in the 1923 earthquake, and his surviving works are now quite rare and highly sought after by collectors. He was named a National Living Treasure by the Japanese government shortly before his death in 1956.

— Gabriella Vigoreaux
Traditional Japan

Many Japanese artists took advantage of opportunities to live and study for a time in Europe or the United States, but opted to return to their homeland to live and work in their native Japan. At least one of the artists, Hiratsuka Un’ichi, was a major force in the Japanese print movement in the early part of the twentieth century and influenced the work of other Japanese artists, such as Azechi Umetaro. The Japanese spirit is particularly pronounced in the ceramics that have been produced following a time-honored tradition of crafting functional vessels with potting techniques and glazing that are clearly recognizable as Japanese. Many of the ceramics may not appear to be purely functional, but the Japanese are masters of merging function and beauty into a single form. Contemporary Japanese ceramists have adopted the time-honored practice of constructing wooden boxes to house their ceramics when they are not in use or on display. This tradition had its origin in earlier times when Japanese monks first began to bring back Chinese tea bowls and boxes were created to house what were, in the minds of the Japanese, very precious objects. The Japanese owners of these bowls went so far as to name the objects and write information about the object on the box. Ceramists expanded the tradition by signing the box and placing their seal on it. Japanese object boxes then became not only containers to house the object but also the documentary history or provenance for the object. In some cases the artist does not sign the object at all, which makes the signed box all that more important to the collector/connoisseur.

Azechi Umetaro

Azechi Umetaro was born in 1902 in the small town of Uwajima in Ehime Province on the island of Shikoku. Since childhood Azechi dreamed of becoming an artist, although he never attended a formal art school. He studied painting by correspondence before moving to Tōkyō in 1920. He eventually secured a government job in a printing office, and taught himself the art of plate engraving using equipment at the plant and scrap materials. He made his first prints by scratching out designs on lead plates, inking them, and using a teacup as a baren, a hand tool used during the printmaking process. His prints from the 1920s and 1930s, the period during which he first began to develop his unique angular style, depicted landscapes. During this time, he developed connections with other woodblock artists and decided to leave his position to devote his time fully to block printing. He was encouraged to participate in exhibitions with the Nihon Sōsaku-Hanga Kyōkai by the printmaker, Hiratsuka Un’ichi (1895-1997). In the period following World War II, Azechi was given the opportunity to exhibit some of his works and ultimately gained acceptance as a serious artist. His international reputation was secured with exhibitions at the 1953 São Paulo Biennale, the 1956 Lugano International Print Exhibition, and the 1957 Tōkyō Print Biennale. Mountain Man with Bird was inspired by Azechi’s love of mountaineering, about which he wrote extensively. Through his use of bold stripes to represent the beards of his mountain men and the patterned feathers of his birds, Azechi’s prints seem to elaborate on the connection between human beings and the natural world.

— Andrew Simon

AZECHI UMETARO (畦地 梅太郎)
Japan, 1902-1999
Mountain Man with Bird, 1955
woodcut
16 x 11 5/8 in. (40.6 x 29.5 cm)
Signed bottom left: “-55 U. Azechi”
Seal bottom right: [stylized U]
Bequest of Larue Storm, 2006.27.29
Hiratsuka Un’ichi was an artist, teacher, and mentor highly regarded in his native Japan as well as in the United States, where he lived for 33 years. His style of woodblock printing blended various ideas from both East and West, and his work exemplified the focus on self-expression that was central to the sosaku-hanga, or creative prints movement, of twentieth-century Japan. In his own words, “Western Art gave me my technique, but Japanese Art gave me my approach.”23 In particular, Hiratsuka referenced his use of primarily Western-style wood engraving tools and his desire to capture the real essence of his subject, a truly Japanese tradition.24 Un’ichi was able to use woodblocks to reveal the vitality or “soul” that he discovered through constantly sketching what he observed.25 Through its ability to convey the richness and power of what he wanted to express, black-on-white prints were, in his mind, “the final point” in the printing technique.26 From the early 1940s on, his mature black-and-white style, alongside the exaggerated roughness of his prints, accomplished by tsuki-bori, a method of gouging sideways with a small, flat chisel called an aisuki, became fundamental to his approach. The unique symbiosis of Eastern and Western Art was truly his own, and it was an approach influenced by Western engraving techniques yet one that was strongly reminiscent of the rugged, earthy aesthetic of the Japanese folk-art movement. His piece Amakusa wa (Island with Poem) is one of twelve prints from his book, Recollections of Travel, in which Hiratsuka depicted from memory places that were special to him.27 Using sketches as a reference, the series of prints possess an energy and serenity that speaks to the true essence of a traveler’s memory. Each print was accompanied by a 31-syllable tanka poem printed in both Japanese and English.28

— Megan Besecker
The title of this print, *Deity of the Mountains*, suggests the ancient Japanese concept of Shintō or “Way of the Spirits.” Spirits, known as *kami*, were associated with elements of the natural world such as mountains, rivers, lightning, wind, waves, trees, and rocks. *Kami* and people were not considered separate; rather they existed within the same world and shared its interrelated complexity. Ushiku Kenji was born in Chiba Prefecture in 1922, and graduated from the Western painting department of the Tōkyō School of Fine Arts. He became known for his etchings but also for the more traditional Japanese woodblock prints, or *moku-hanga*. Ushiku was interested in a wide range of subject matter, including people, flowers, and abstractions. His first etchings and engravings were published in Japan in the mid-1950s and since then, his graphic work has been included in major exhibitions in the United States, Europe, and Japan. During the 1960s and 1970s, Ushiku’s color etchings and aquatints were commissioned by both Japanese and American publishers. He participated in the Tōkyō International Print Exhibitions of 1957, 1960, and 1962, and is a member of the Japan Print Association.

— Alysia Rodriguez

**USHIKU KENJI (牛玖 健治)**

Japan, b. 1922
*Deity of the Mountains*, not dated
woodcut
18 ⅜ x 12 ⅞ in. (46 x 32.1 cm)
Signed bottom right: "Kenji-Ushku"
Seal bottom right: [Ushiku]
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Carl Eisdorfer, 2002.57.42

**YOSHIDA TŌSHI (吉田 遠志)**

Japan, 1911-1995
*Varieties of the Japanese Print Volume 1*, 1967
Image: No. 20 Gradation Printing (Bokashi-zuri)
book with woodcuts
8 ⅞ x 9 x ⅛ in. (20.6 x 22.9 x 1.3 cm)
Signed on title page: “Toshi Yoshida / 吉田 遠志”
Gift of Molle and Edward Grad, 2006.30.1

Born in Tōkyō in 1911, Yoshida Tōshi was the third-generation artist in the Yoshida family. His grandfather was an oil painter who was strongly influenced by Italian painting, and each generation of Yoshida family artists that followed him, including Tōshi, modified this influence in their own unique way. Tōshi began his career as an oil painter, but became interested in woodblock printmaking by the age of thirteen. The inspiration for his prints was largely drawn from the natural world: plants, fish, the tides, and other ocean phenomena. He was also very inspired by animal life, which likely began when one of his legs was paralyzed as a child. Unable to attend school, he spent much of his time in his father’s workshop observing the animals outside. Tōshi’s interest in animal motifs also partially stemmed from his need to differentiate his art from the landscape prints of his father, Hiroshi (1876-1950). Beginning in his twenties, Tōshi traveled to many different countries in Asia and Europe, as well as to the United States and Mexico, and applied these foreign influences acquired during his travels to his own printmaking process, while still maintaining his connections with the *sōsaka-hanga* print movement. After the death of his father, Tōshi decided to pursue a different direction with his prints and began to work on a variety of abstract woodcuts. Some of his prints are characterized by abstract compositions with traditional Japanese qualities while others verge on surrealism. Towards the end of his artistic career, he returned to his love of animal-inspired woodcuts, especially birds, and even illustrated children’s books with these motifs.

— Gabriella Vigoreaux
Japan has a long tradition of drawing and cartooning, or *manga*. Many of the great woodblock print artists, such as Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), created illustrated books with a wide variety of subject matter in order to demonstrate drawing techniques. *Manga* also depicted Buddhist teachings, jokes, funny situations, erotic scenes, folk tales, and poetic illustration. Over time, however, the cartoon nature of *manga* became a satiric vehicle in journalism. Many artists were harassed, imprisoned, harshly punished, or killed because of the content of their images. *Manga* is notorious for its satiric nature and ability to present multiple layers of meaning. Japanese language and culture depend on contextual clues for accurate interpretation; therefore, conveying body language, facial clues, onomatopoeia, and situational circumstance became an integral element of Japanese cartooning. Mythology, supernatural figures, and ferocious beings often appeared in drawings with humorous undertones or in satirical situations. The Japanese particularly enjoyed images that had the effect of simultaneously frightening and amusing. Appearing in both *Three Men with Rat and Fish*, and the earlier *Figure Studies*, which is shown as an example of the continuity of such drawings, the fox is the most feared of magical beasts in the Japanese tradition. Foxes often took the form of a person, usually a woman, to cause mischief and misfortune for anyone they might encounter. Although the figures in the drawing could all be part of the same scene, it seems likely that this piece is a figure study or unfinished sketch. Unlike more developed *manga*, the figures are floating, devoid of scenery or setting. The top left scene depicts a seated man who appears to be watching the action unfold, and at top right is a supernatural fox transformation. The figure to the far right is probably a *sambaso* dancer. The sketch at bottom left shows a small man using the magical properties of a gourd to hold down a *namazu*, a catfish-like fish that symbolized earthquakes and disorder. Before the theory of plate tectonics, it was a common belief that earthquakes were caused by an imbalance in *yin* and *yang*. The flopping of an unrestrained *namazu* symbolized the shaking of the earth. The image of a man, or often a monkey, suppressing a *namazu* with a smooth bottle gourd became a common Japanese metaphor for the effort and determination needed to accomplish a seemingly impossible task.

— Heather Newcomb

A large part of the work involved in the ArtLab program is to examine and research works of art in the permanent collection. When this drawing was acquired by the Lowe in 2001, it was attributed to Kitao Masatoshi; however, neither the artist’s biography nor the period during which the drawing was executed could be verified by the student curator or Lowe staff. An earlier Edo Period artist with a similar name, Kitao Masayoshi (1764-1824), has been identified but this drawing is not signed and cannot be definitively attributed to either artist.

Brian A. Dursum, Director and Chief Curator
**SAITŌ KIYOSHI** (斎藤 清)

Japan, 1907-1997

*Aizu Yanaizu Fukushima*, 1965

*woodcut*

15 ¼ x 20 7/8 in. (39.4 x 53 cm)

Signed bottom right: “Kiyoshi Saito”

Seal bottom right: [Kiyoshi]

Gift of David Kimmelman, 98.0054.28

Saitō Kiyoshi was a crucial player in the *sōsaku-hanga* movement in twentieth-century Japan. When he was five years old, his father lost his business in Fukushima and the family moved further north to the island of Hōkkaидō, where his father worked in the coal mines in Ōtaru. When Saitō was thirteen years old, his mother died and he was sent away to become the ward of a Buddhist temple in Hōkkaïdō. Due to his uncooperative attitude, Saitō was eventually allowed to leave the temple. He went to the northernmost island in the Japanese archipelago, Hōkkaïdō, where he apprenticed as a sign painter. This provided him with a simple way of life and allowed him the time to polish his artistic skills. Dreaming of becoming a painter, he began to sketch gypsum casts at night and founded his first sign painting business before his twentieth birthday, ensuring himself a living and modest financial success. Saitō’s artistic skills took priority when he discovered he had a unique talent for oil painting and woodblock printing. His prints were first published in 1938, as part of the now well-known *Winter in Aizu* series. Many of his prints feature local villages and their inhabitants, with an emphasis on portraying them in a realistic, three-dimensional manner. Later in life, he would blend many aspects of Western and Japanese techniques, experimenting with architecture, plant life, and two-dimensional perspective. Saitō is also known for being one of the first Japanese printmakers to win an award at the São Paulo Biennale in 1951, an exhibition originally founded in Brazil to promote contemporary art and establish an international art scene.

— Stephanie Kryzak

**KOHARA YASUHIRO** (小原 康裕)

Japan, b. 1954

*Plate*, not dated

*pottery and glaze*

10 ¼ x 11 x 1 ⅞ in. (26.7 x 27.9 x 4.4 cm)

*Mark on bottom: [Yasu?]*


© Kohara Yasuhiro

Unlike most traditional and renowned Japanese ceramic artists, Kohara Yasuhiro never attended ceramics school and never studied with a master. Nonetheless, Kohara’s work relies heavily upon the long-held *shigaraki* tradition of Japanese ceramics, to which he adds his intuition and personal experience. Using a traditional medium with a unique approach, Kohara asserts himself as an artist through distinctly modern forms that embody confidence in both their size and density. He judges his work purely in formal terms, seeking balance and proportion, and carefully manipulates the clay to embrace kiln accidents and create emotionally charged ceramics. Kohara’s reliance on intuition and improvisation speaks to his modern and international tastes, which helped to shape his aesthetic just as much as his uncommon training as an artist, and his love of jazz, sports cars, and the work of abstract Western artists such as Joan Miró (1893-1983), Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), and Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-1988). Inspiration aside, Kohara’s knowledge of his medium can clearly be seen in his potting and glaze technique. His passion as an artist grows stronger with each piece, in which he always looks for something new. In essence, he follows “no philosophy” other than his true calling as an artist, respecting tradition but moving it in new, unexpected directions.

— Megan Besecker
Born in the city of Shimoda in Shizuoka Prefecture, Sakiyama Takayuki is an admired Japanese artist known for creating unique ceramic vessels inspired by the movement of the ocean and patterns made by sand on the shoreline. Situated on the Izu Peninsula, Takayuki’s studio overlooks the sea, providing him with a constant source of inspiration for his ceramic work. Because it is a sea-faring nation, water plays a crucial role in Japanese society, as evidenced in Takayuki’s ceramics. The movement and silhouette of the waves, and the undulating sandy surface of the water’s edge, inspire almost all of his ceramic forms. *Choto: Listening to the Waves* follows Sakiyama’s artistic style. There is no clear distinction between the interior and the exterior of the vessel, as the wave-like design rolls over the rim towards the inside of the piece. Sakiyama brilliantly achieves shadows that work to enhance the vessel and create a more dynamic result. The coarse, ribbed texture of the surface beautifully resembles the sand patterns of the Japanese shoreline that Sakiyama sees from his studio daily; he also combs the clay to mimic the raked sand of a Zen kare sansui garden. This double-walled vessel creates a visually stimulating object through its carved and rippling surface patterns, twisting as if in eternal motion while remaining stylistically Japanese through its strong reference to water.

— Sarah Blattner

Born in Nagoya, Yoshimi Futumara is a world-renowned ceramicist best known for her nature-inspired earthenware. A Japanese expatriate, Futumara began her career in the late 1970s at the Seto Aichi Prefectural Ceramic Technical Institute in Japan. In 1986, she moved to France to complete her degree in ceramics at the Arts School Duperré, Paris, focusing her studies in this medium because it allowed her to use the earth itself to create art. Although she currently lives and works in Paris, her work resembles the Japanese tradition of the *wabi-sabi* style by mimicking the imperfections of the natural world, most notably through inconsistencies in topography, bark, and soil. Futumara also uses her ceramics to display the connection between the earth and the origin of life, through which her work is also reflective of the Japanese belief in rebirth through the cycle of life. This *vasque*, or basin, is an example of Futumara’s attempt to recreate nature in her art. The piece consists of both sandstone and porcelain slip. The clay has inconsistent breaks and folds to suggest the basin is organic, made from a living material that has the ability to change form. The cracked surface is intended to be reminiscent of bark and to suggest the roughness of the environment. The work is made more dynamic by the dusting of white porcelain slip to reflect light and permit the eye to move with the slip in and out of the cracks in the basin, allowing the viewer to become an active participant with the object. Futumara effectively forces the viewer to see her ceramics from many angles to more fully appreciate their beauty.

— Mary Alison Reilly
Calligraphy was considered the highest art form in East Asia. Since calligraphy and painting required years of practice, its production was strictly limited to a scholar-official class largely drawn from the wealthy and landed gentry or the nobility and samurai class in Japan. It was this group who could afford the time necessary to study. Rather than selling their work, which would classify them as professional artists living off their talents, their paintings and calligraphy were customarily given to close friends or appreciative colleagues. Born in 1835 into a samurai family, Matsukata grew up in the domain of the Lord (daimyō) of Satsuma (present day Kagoshima Prefecture). When he reached the age of thirteen he was sent to the Zōshikan, the local Confucian Academy, where he studied the teachings of the great Wang Yang-ming (China, 1472–1529), which stressed loyalty to the emperor. In 1866 he was sent to Nagasaki to study Western science, mathematics, and surveying. This highly educated man, who served in the Japanese government beginning in 1866, went on to become the Finance Minister of Japan and later, Prime Minister (1896-1898). His love of calligraphy led him to create pieces similar to this one for pure enjoyment or possibly as a special gift to friends.35

The calligraphy reads as follows:

忍而和齊家上策
Dilertion and harmony are a superlative plan to manage one’s family.

勤與儉創業良圖
Diligence and thriftiness are an excellent plan to start one’s business.36

— Andrew Simon

Yoshikawa Masamichi is one of Japan’s most distinguished potters but originally, he yearned to be an interior designer as it was the concept of “beauty within functionality,” or yo-no-bi, that strongly influenced him. Using underglaze cobalt blue on porcelain, he creates vessels with bold constructions that express the malleability and freedom of the medium, creating extraordinarily contemporary reinterpretations of earlier Chinese and Japanese ceramic forms and glazes. He works almost exclusively in high-fired porcelain with a blue-white glaze called seihakuji. This glaze owes its inspiration and name to the earlier Chinese qingbai glaze of the Song Dynasty (960-1279). His functional vessels are artfully painted with abstract designs in sometsuke (underglaze cobalt blue), and his work is characterized by architectural forms with hand-formed plains that sometimes include incised lines filled with cobalt blue. Masamichi’s intimate involvement in the creative process is easily visible in his work, as sometimes are small superficial cracks that only add to the aesthetic quality of the piece and follow the Japanese concept that imperfection is part of the nature of the creative process. In the case of this sake flask, indentions on the lip of the flask are a clear indication of the involvement of the artist in the creative process. Named a National Treasure during his lifetime, Masamichi’s work has been recognized internationally. He currently owns a shop with his wife in Tokoname, where he lives and works.

— Andrew Simon
KATO YASUKAGE (加藤 康景)
Japan, b. 1962
*Sake Pot and Cup*, ca. 2006
pottery and glaze
6 x 6 1/2 x 4 7/8 in. (15.2 x 16.5 x 12.4 cm)
Signed on box: [14th generation Yasukage]
Seal on box: [Yasukage]
Gift of The Rubin-Ladd Foundation, 2008.39.4-.5
© Kato Yasukage

In the Japanese city of Mino, the family name Kato is not only well known, it reigns supreme. While the dozens of Katos in Mino are not all related, they all have pottery kilns in the low-lying hills surrounding the historic city. These renowned, influential potters and artists fled local battles to find a quiet place to work, thus the Mino region has become celebrated as one of the largest ceramic production centers in Japan. Kato Yasukage’s family was known for their skills in pottery and Yasukage is the fourteenth-generation ceramist in his family. Though he attained the honor of being named head of his family at the relatively young age of thirty-six, Yasukage’s ceramic works reveal his refined skill and many collectors judge his *chawan*, or tea bowls, as having been produced by an artist decades beyond his true age. Yasukage continues his family’s ceramic heritage through the use of traditional glazes and classic techniques while incorporating bold sculptural forms and fresh perspectives. The deep green color of this sake pot and cup is a distinctive quality of *oribe* ware, a type of Japanese pottery most identifiable by its green copper glaze. *Oribe* ware has been produced in Mino since the end of the twelfth century and the Mino region is today renowned for the creation of this type of ware. The boldly cut facets of Yasukage’s sake pot and cup seem to mimic Japanese woodcarving. The irregularity of the facets is undoubtedly intentional as Japanese artists seek to portray the feeling of imperfection in their work. Difficult to execute, this style is believed to make the artwork more personal to the artist while also demonstrating skill and an affinity for the medium. Among the major museums collecting Kato Yasukage’s work are the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

— Alicia Casella

HIGASHIDA SHIGEMASA (東田 茂正)
Japan, b. 1955
*Lidded Vessel*, not dated
pottery and glaze
8 7/8 x 12 7/8 x 10 1/2 in. (22.5 x 32.7 x 26.7 cm)
Signed on bottom: “Shigemasa Higashida”
Gift of The Rubin-Ladd Foundation, 2009.41.4
© Higashida Shigemasa

Higashida Shigemasa was born in Hiroshima, and received his B.A. from Shimonoseki Municipal University. After a brief but successful career as stock trader, he began pursuing his love of ceramics. Working primarily in the *shino* and *oribe* styles, Higashida has developed his own approach that stays true to his Japanese roots while still challenging them through his unusual technique. Most of his pieces are meant to be aesthetically pleasing as well as functional. This vessel was created in the traditional *oribe* style, as evidenced by the green, almost glass-like glaze finish. It depicts a landscape, which evokes a meditative state for both artist and viewer, but its lid can be removed to reveal a small compartment. Higashida’s works have been exhibited in museums both nationally and internationally including the National Design Academy in Nottingham, England, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Hamilton Art Gallery in Hamilton, Australia. Higashida has also lectured widely on *oribe* and *shino* style pottery.

— Melisa N. Ramos
Born in Kyōtō, Kamada Koji’s career in ceramics began in 1968 when he started training under Tadashi Shimizu (dates unknown). While working under Tadashi in the community kiln of Kyōtō, Kamada developed a fascination with the beautiful but challenging world of tenmoku, a very dark glaze with a surface that resembles oil spotting, which is created during the heating and cooling of the ceramic. Tenmoku glaze was so named by Japanese Buddhist monks who visited the Buddhist temple on Mount Tianmu in present Zhejiang Province in the thirteenth century. At the temple they were introduced to this type of tea ceremony, with its associated ceramic bowls. The tea bowls were produced in neighboring Fujian Province, which was also a primary tea-producing region. Kamada is one of only a handful of artists who have devoted their works to the production of tenmoku. This beautiful pottery was appreciated by both Japanese and Chinese connoisseurs; the very best examples are known to have been selected as tribute to the Chinese court during the Song Dynasty (960-1279) and were avidly collected by the Japanese.37 One contemporary art connoisseur has said that, “Kamada’s Tenmoku bowls are magical and the sake cups, when filled, are mesmerizing; just like looking up at a brilliant night time star-filled sky except you hold the sky in your hands.”38 Throughout his lifetime, Kamada has made tenmoku ceramics for a variety of purposes, including tea bowls, sake flasks, incense burners, and vases. The tenmoku technique is evident as the dark blue bowl glistens with an almost oily finish. The bowl is cinched at the center and features a notched rim under blue-black and streaked silver glazes. Kamada’s ceramics have been exhibited at museums in Japan, and the United States, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

— Melisa N. Ramos

1 Email communication with the artist’s son, Takashi Fukushima, March 28, 2012.
3 The Ren Brown Collection Gallery, Tadashi Nakayama (on-line reference: www.renbrown.com).
4 Lowe Art Museum, Manabu Mabe (Coral Gables, FL: Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami, 1980).
10 Benjamin, 14.
13 Ibid.


Yamaguchi was also an abstract artist who spent most of his life in Japan and France.


Okada Saburosuke lived in France from 1897-1901 where he learned painting from Raphael Collin (1850-1916). On his return to Japan in 1902, he became a professor at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts when it first opened its Department of Western Art.

Interview with Toshio Shibata by EYECURIOUS blog. Interviewer: Marc Feustel. 17 August 2009.


Translation by Dr. Daniel McKee, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

Merritt, Helen, et. al., Hiratsuka: Modern Master (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2001), 16.

Ibid, 16-17.

Ibid, p 17.


Amakusa is a group of small islands in the southwest of Kumamoto Prefecture (Kyūshū) renowned for its sweet potato production.


Ibid. p. 86.

Zen kare sansui, also known as a "dry landscape" garden or zen garden, creates a miniature stylized landscape through carefully-composed arrangement of rocks, moss, pruned trees, and bushes, and uses gravel or sand that is raked to represent ripples in water.

"Wabi-Sabi style represents the Japanese desire to accept change and the imperfections of nature. The concept is derived from the Buddhist teaching of the three marks of existence (specifically impermanence, the other two being suffering and emptiness.) Characteristics of the wabi-sabi aesthetic include asymmetry, asperity (roughness or irregularity), simplicity, and the appreciation of the integrity of natural objects and processes."

E-mail communication with the artist, April 4, 2012.

The storage box for the painting bears the inscription, 松方老侯書, “Written by the venerable Marquis Matsukata.” While the box appears to have been produced in the early twentieth century, it is unlikely that it was signed by the artist but rather made to house what the owner considered to be an important object.

(Translation and commentary by Brian A. Dursum.)

These two sentences reflect a Chinese proverb recorded in some early books, such as Jinhu Fei Shi jiapu (金湖費氏家譜) [The pedigree of the Fei family in Jinhu county (of present-day Hua’an in Jiangsu Province), which was probably compiled in the eighteenth century during China’s Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).] At least as early as this period, the Chinese were familiar with this proverb. In fact, the proverb may be traced to the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BCE) in the Book of Ritual, Liji (禮記) compiled by followers of Confucius and later Confucian scholars.

(Translation and commentary by Dr. Chang Qing.)

Dursum, Brian A., Clay and Brush: The Ceramic Art of China (Coral Gables, FL: Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami, 2007), 61.

# GLOSSARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anime (アニメ)</strong></td>
<td>Japanese abbreviated pronunciation for animation.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Edo Period (江戸時代)</strong></td>
<td>The period traditionally dating from 1612-1868 during the rule of the Tokugawa Shogunate.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Manga (漫画)</strong></td>
<td>The Japanese term used both for comics and for study drawings known as cartoons.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Moku-hanga (木版画)</strong></td>
<td>Woodblock print making.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Meiji Period (明治時代)</strong></td>
<td>The modernizing and industrializing period of Japan dating from 1868-1912.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shigaraki (信楽町)</strong></td>
<td>The name of a pottery produced in this region.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shin-Hanga (新版画)</strong></td>
<td>Literally means &quot;new prints&quot; and defined an early twentieth-century art movement to revitalize the ukiyo-e print tradition of the Edo and Meiji Periods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sōsaku-Hanga (創作版画)</strong></td>
<td>The Japanese creative print movement, which began in the early years of the twentieth century.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tenmoku (天目)</strong></td>
<td>A pottery ware first invented in China and extremely popular in Japan. The spotting on the glaze is the result of a reduction firing of red iron oxide on the vessel's surface.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wabi-Sabi (侘寂)</strong></td>
<td>Japanese aesthetic centered on the acceptance of transience or change.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ukiyo-e (浮世絵)</strong></td>
<td>Literally “pictures of the floating world.”</td>
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