

Visions of Modernity: 20th-Century Japanese Woodblock Prints

Visions of Modernity, presented in a series of rotations from the Museum's permanent collection, explores the creative process of printmaking in the first half of the 20th century in Japan. During the Meiji Restoration (1868-1912), the Japanese government encouraged the rapid adaptation of new political, social, economic, and cultural concepts, leading artists of all disciplines to react with a new sense of individualism in their work using ideas and technologies from the West. Printmakers, like other visual artists, learned Western artistic conventions such as linear perspective, photographic realism, and the techniques of lithography and etching, which fueled two parallel printmaking movements—*shin-hanga* (new prints) and *sosaku-hanga* (creative prints).

Artists of *shin-hanga*, a term coined in 1915 by the influential “new prints” publisher Watanabe Shozaburo, continued depicting traditional *ukiyo-e* (floating world pictures) subjects of the preceding centuries—beautiful women, Kabuki actors, and landscapes—but in a more naturalistic manner using Western pictorial techniques. These prints, produced in the time-honored collaborative workshop of artist/designer, carver, printer, and publisher, revitalizing the printmaking tradition with a unique, refreshed look. *Sosaku-hanga* artists, on the other hand, boldly embraced the new visual language of abstraction. They expressed their artistic independence by designing, carving, and producing their own works from start to finish. As a result, their prints appear more individualistic in their expression, abstract in design, and diverse in subject matter.

All prints included in this exhibition, unless otherwise noted, were generously donated by Dr. and Mrs. Roland A. Way.