



THE PRIVATE WORLD OF Surimono

摺物の私的世界

*Japanese Prints From the Virginia Shawan Drosten
and Patrick Kenadjian Collection*

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with Adam Haliburton

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Yashima Gakutei 八島岳亭

ca. 1786–ca. 1855

Three Crabs at Water’s Edge
ca. 1827
Polychrome woodblock print with mica and gaufrage

Artist’s Seal: “Gakutei” 岳亭 (lower right)
Poetry Club: Katsushika-ren (Katsushika Club) 葛飾連
Promised gift of Virginia Shawan Drosten and Patrick Kenadjian, B.A. 1970

SANSHŌ VII
[ICHIKAWA DANJŪRŌ VII] (1791–1859)
七代目三升 [七代目市川團十郎]

*hatsuhikage
min tote izuru
shiohama ni
kani no ayumi no
kasumi hikikeri*
Hoping we might glimpse
the year’s new sun, we went out
to the seacoast where,
with a crab’s gait,
a mist drew in with the tide.

BUNBUNSHA KANIKOMARU
(1770–1827) 文々舎蟹子丸

*sawagani mo
toshi no nada wo ba
koyurugi no
isogade hiroe
hama no masagoji*
You too, little crab,
pass through the rush
at year’s end without fret;
take your time picking a path
among the sands of the strand.

The deeply undulating curves of the waves in the water of this print, dusted with mica, catch the light and reflect a metallic blue sheen. The three crabs on the shore are a hallmark of the poet Bunbunsha Kanikomaru, whose pen name, while primarily a punning complaint about the buzzing of mosquitoes, also contains the word for “crab” (*kani*) 蟹. In prints, crabs usually take on a comic aspect, with eyes jutting out and appearing, as they do here, as if mid-dance.

Bunbunsha, who contributed the second poem on this print and whose actual name was Kubo Arihiro, studied poetry under the samurai poet Ōta Nanpo (1749–1823), who headed one of the so-called Three Great Houses of *kyōka* poetry, the Yamanote-ren, and was the central figure of this circle of poets. Bunbunsha was also a member of the Mimasu-ren, the patronage club of the other poet associated with this print, Ichikawa Danjūrō VII (here using one of his numerous art names, Sanshō VII), and was head of the Katsushika-ren (Katsushika Club), to which the designer of this print, Yashima Gakutei, also belonged. Bunbunsha’s poems feature on a number of surimono issued by these clubs. Surimono like this one, featuring both Bunbunsha and Danjūrō, were often issued as keepsakes of the boisterous gatherings known as *kyōkai*, which were ostensibly for poetic improvisation and competition but which included all sorts of carousing on any number of common interests and playful topics. These gatherings were also social settings in which people could mix across the boundaries of class and occupation, from the uppermost stratum of the samurai to the very bottom one, which included actors and other legal “nonpersons.” Such a gathering served as a nexus of creativity and networking, where artists and poets, patrons and friends, could be introduced to each other in ways outside of the prescribed social order.

The poems on this print indicate that it commemorated a gathering at the advent of the new year. The crab at the top looks out over the water, as if having come to see the year’s first sunrise mentioned in the first poem. The other two crabs—the one in the foreground larger and presumably older, grown over with dark algae—square off. One can only imagine what scene from the poetry gathering this image might commemorate. —AH



文政庚辰秋

於堺町中村座

坂東秀佳

名殘狂言

一谷嫩軍記

熊谷直實

薩摩忠度

月雪花名殘文臺

七變化所作夏

浪枕月淺妻

玉兔月影勝

狂亂雪空解

猩々雪醉覺

寒行雪姿見

女扇花文箱

戀奴花供侍

[illegible]



Poem 1: KÖKŌ 廣好

tate nagara
hotoke ni tote ka
hanahachisu
tabusa todokanu
ike ni sakuran

Does it offer itself up to him
who has moved on,
this rising lotus, to flower on waters
beyond my reach?

Poem 2: CHŌJŪ OR NAGAZUMI 長住

oku tsuyu no
hikari wo kiyomi
hachisuba ni
kokoro no tsuki mo
sumu kokochi seri

By the clarified light of the dewdrops
on the leaves of the lotus
I feel my heart, too, enlightened,
gleaming like the moon.

Poem 3: TŌHAKU OR FUJISHIRO 藤白

koko ni ima
miru mo tae nari
kano kuni no
ike no hachisu no
hana ya ikanaru

Even here and now,
to look on it is sublime;
how, then, must the blossoms of the lotus
appear
on the waters of that other realm.

Poem 4: KŌBIN 幸敏

naki hito no
tama ka to mie te
hachisuba ni
tsuyu no hikari mo
tōtoku zo teru

Could it be the soul of the departed?
The dew on the lotus leaf shines
with a light divine.

Poem 5: SHUNKEI 俊恵

naki hito no
tamuke to oreru
hachisuba ni
tsuyu yori hayaku
oku namida kana

On the lotus leaves
taken in offering to the dead,
tears fall before the dew.

Poem 6: UNKEI 雲溪 [笠原雲溪?]

oku tsuyu wo
sanagara aka no
mizu ni shite
isami hotoke ni
hachisu sasagen

We shall bravely dedicate these lotuses,
with their tributary dew,
to the spirit of the departed.

Poem 7: MICHIIHIRO 三千尋

itsushika to
tama matsuru hi wo
machinarashi
ike no hachisu no
makiba kachi naru

Like loyal attendants standing at
attention,
they seem to have been waiting,
ever ready,
for this day of commemoration—
the unfurling leaves of the lotus on
the pond.

Poem 8: SHUN'A 春阿

kano kishi ni
yori ya tsukamashi
hachisu saku
kono ikemizu ni
fune wo ukabe ba

Might we draw near and
land on that distant shore,
if we embarked upon the waters
of this lotus blooming pond?

Poem 9: KAJIKO (1785-1862) 梶子
[TAMURA KAJIKO 田村梶子]

taga fune no
hachisu naruran
saku hana wo
miru kokoro sae
suzushi karikeri

Whence did this white lotus set sail,
which stills the very heart of
those who look upon it?

Poem 10: SHUNSON (OR HARUMURA)
(1799-1866) 春村 [KUROKAWA SHUNSON
黒川春村]

tokoroseki
tsuyu ni mo aru ka
hanahachisu
izure wo hito no
tama ka to wa min

In the apparition of dewdrops
crowded on the petals of the lotus,
in which does his spirit appear?

Poem 11: SHUNKO 春湖 [PROBABLY KITTA
SHUNKO 橘田春湖 (1815-1886)]

tamuke ni to
oreba midaruru
hachisuba no
tsuyu to namida to
izure masareri

Among the drops that scatter
when the lotuses are plucked
for an offering,
is there more dew than tears?

Madyoa 窓屋

active ca. 1831

Mount Tenpō (Tenpōzan) 天保山

Series: Eighteen Admirations of Naniwa in Spring (Naniwa shunshō jūhachiban no uchi) 波速春賞十八番之内

1830s

Polychrome woodblock print with gaufrage

Signature: “ōju Madoya hitsu” (“brushed by Madoya on commission”) 応需窓屋筆

Promised gift of Virginia Shawan Drosten and Patrick Kenadjian, B.A. 1970

YAGIKEN KIKUEI 八木軒菊英

*kokoro aru
hito mo kokoro no
naki hito mo
miruya naniwa no
haru no nigiwai*

People, some with
poetry in their souls
and some with none—
come to see thriving
Naniwa, springing to life.

HYAKUJŌRŌ ARIKAZU 百丈楼有員

*Naniwa me ga
kasumi to tomo ni
hiku ito mo
mitsu no iroka no
haru no wakayama*

The lady of Naniwa draws in
alongside strands of mist,
her charms glistening
like the sea-tangled waters beneath
the budding mountain in springtime.

KEISEIEN UTANARI 蛙声園歌成

*Tsu no kuni no
Tenpōzan no
haru geshiki
egokoro no aru
hito ni miseba ya*

Mount Tempō in spring
in the land of Tsu;
if only I could show it
to someone with the heart-sight
to frame the scene.

Although inscribed as one of a series called *Eighteen Admirations of Naniwa in Spring*, this print appears to be the sole example of a work by Madoya. It celebrates the dredging of the mouth of the Aji River in the Bay of Osaka in 1831. This project of early modern geoengineering was undertaken to accommodate larger ships at the port, allowing them to dock and unload their wares in the port town. The silt removed during the dredging was deposited nearby and became Mount Tenpō, named after the era in which it was created and mentioned in the third poem from right. It is now distinguished, due to subsidence of the land, as Japan’s lowest mountain, at just a little over 14 3/4 feet above sea level, but at the time of its creation, Mount Tenpō was more than 65 feet tall and was marked with a lighthouse to aid ships navigating the harbor. For this reason, during the Edo period it was known as Mejrushiyama, or “Landmark Mountain.” Its creation in 1831 provides a terminus post quem for this undated surimono.

The creation of Mount Tenpō spurred the development of a small leisure district in its vicinity, which was memorialized in prints by the Edo artists Yashima Gakutei, Utagawa Hiroshige, Katsushika Hokusai (fig. 1). These artists brought an Edo sensibility to the genre of “famous views,” and their compositions lend a grand, outsize aspect to the heap of silt, intending to establish it as a topos in the mind of viewers rather than to provide a true-to-life depiction. Madoya chose to focus, up close and personal, on a woman and a large trading ship, emphasizing the practical effects on travel and trade for his city provided by the newly deepened harbor. The mountain is relegated in his design to the distance, past hazes of mist and fenced in behind retaining posts. The woman sits in a small boat with a letter and parcel, moving toward the looming merchant ship. The incongruity of the two craft, neither fully framed, and the sheer size of one—with a large rope bumper hanging down over the edge of the ship’s deck—as well as the post with cross-beams beyond, makes for a queer composition, one reminiscent of Hokusai’s Great Wave in its emphasis on the activity on the sea rather than the landscape ashore. Madoya approaches this mountain landscape, that is, from a decidedly maritime perspective.

The cross-beamed post at the verge of darkening blue pigmentation is a channel marker, indicating deeper waters, and to this day a symbol of Osaka, used in





62
Takashima Chiharu (1780–1859) 高島千春
Flower Cart with Autumnal Plants 花車図
1810 (Year of the Horse)
Polychrome woodblock print (horizontal *ō-ban*)
Gift of Virginia Shawan Drosten and Patrick Kenadjian, B.A. 1970,
2018.116.3



63
Takashima Chiharu (1780–1859) 高島千春
Arare Tenjin Festival Float 霰天神山鉾
probably 1820
Polychrome woodblock print with brass and traces of silver
Promised gift of Virginia Shawan Drosten and Patrick Kenadjian,
B.A. 1970



66
Ichikawa Danjūrō VII (1791–1859) 七代目市川團十郎
Self-Portrait of Ichikawa Danjūrō VII 七代目市川團十郎自画像
1828 (Year of the Rat)
Polychrome woodblock print with brass
Promised gift of Virginia Shawan Drosten and Patrick Kenadjian,
B.A. 1970



67
Keisai Eisen (1790–1848) 溪斎英泉
Woman Sitting at a Loom, from the series *The Famous Sites and Products of Yamashiro [Southern Section of Kyoto District]* 山城名所名物 機織
ca. 1818
Polychrome woodblock print with traces of brass and silver, and
gauffrage
Promised gift of Virginia Shawan Drosten and Patrick
Kenadjian, B.A. 1970



64
Attributed to Takashima Chiharu (1780–1859) 高島千春
Purple Trousers, Chapter 30 {TK} from *The Tale of Genji*
『源氏物語』藤袴
1835–37
Polychrome woodblock print with extensive brass and
debossing
Promised gift of Virginia Shawan Drosten and Patrick
Kenadjian, B.A. 1970



65
Ōnishi Chinnen (1792–1851) 大西椿年
Pine Tree with a Preface and Three Poems 松に三句
autumn 1850 (Year of the Dog)
Monochrome woodblock print (horizontal *chū-ban*)
Promised gift of Virginia Shawan Drosten and Patrick
Kenadjian, B.A. 1970



68
Keisai Eisen (1790–1848) 溪斎英泉
Red and Black Lacquer Water Bucket and a Cherry Branch 手桶と桜
ca. 1820
Polychrome woodblock print with gauffrage (double *ō-ban*)
Gift of Virginia Shawan Drosten and Patrick Kenadjian, B.A. 1970,
2018.116.9



69
Keisai Eisen (1790–1848) 溪斎英泉
Snake Coiled around a Pine Tree before the Rising Sun
松、蛇と日の出
1821 (Year of the Snake)
Polychrome woodblock print with brass, silver, and gauffrage
Promised gift of Virginia Shawan Drosten and Patrick
Kenadjian, B.A. 1970