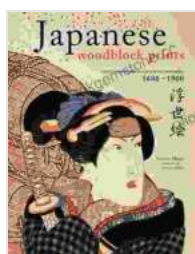


Japanese Woodblock Prints: Artists, Publishers, and Masterworks (1680-1900)

Japanese woodblock prints, known as ukiyo-e, are a unique and captivating art form that flourished in Japan during the Edo period (1603-1868). These prints, typically characterized by their bold colors, intricate designs, and depictions of everyday life, played a significant role in Japanese culture and continue to be admired worldwide.



Japanese Woodblock Prints: Artists, Publishers and Masterworks: 1680 - 1900 by Andreas Marks

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

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In this comprehensive guide, we will delve into the history of Japanese woodblock prints, tracing their origins back to the 1680s. We will explore the techniques used to create these prints, the different styles and genres that emerged over time, and the renowned artists, publishers, and masterworks that have shaped the art form.

Origins and Early Development (1680-1760)

The origins of Japanese woodblock prints can be traced back to the 1680s, during the Genroku era. The earliest known woodblock prints were single-sheet, monochrome images known as *ichimai-e*, often depicting popular actors or courtesans. These prints were initially used as advertisements and announcements, but they quickly gained popularity as a form of affordable and accessible art.



As the popularity of woodblock prints grew, a new generation of artists emerged, specializing in the production of these prints. One of the most influential early artists was Hishikawa Moronobu (1618-1694), who developed a distinctive style characterized by elongated figures and dynamic compositions.

The Golden Age of Ukiyo-e (1760-1860)

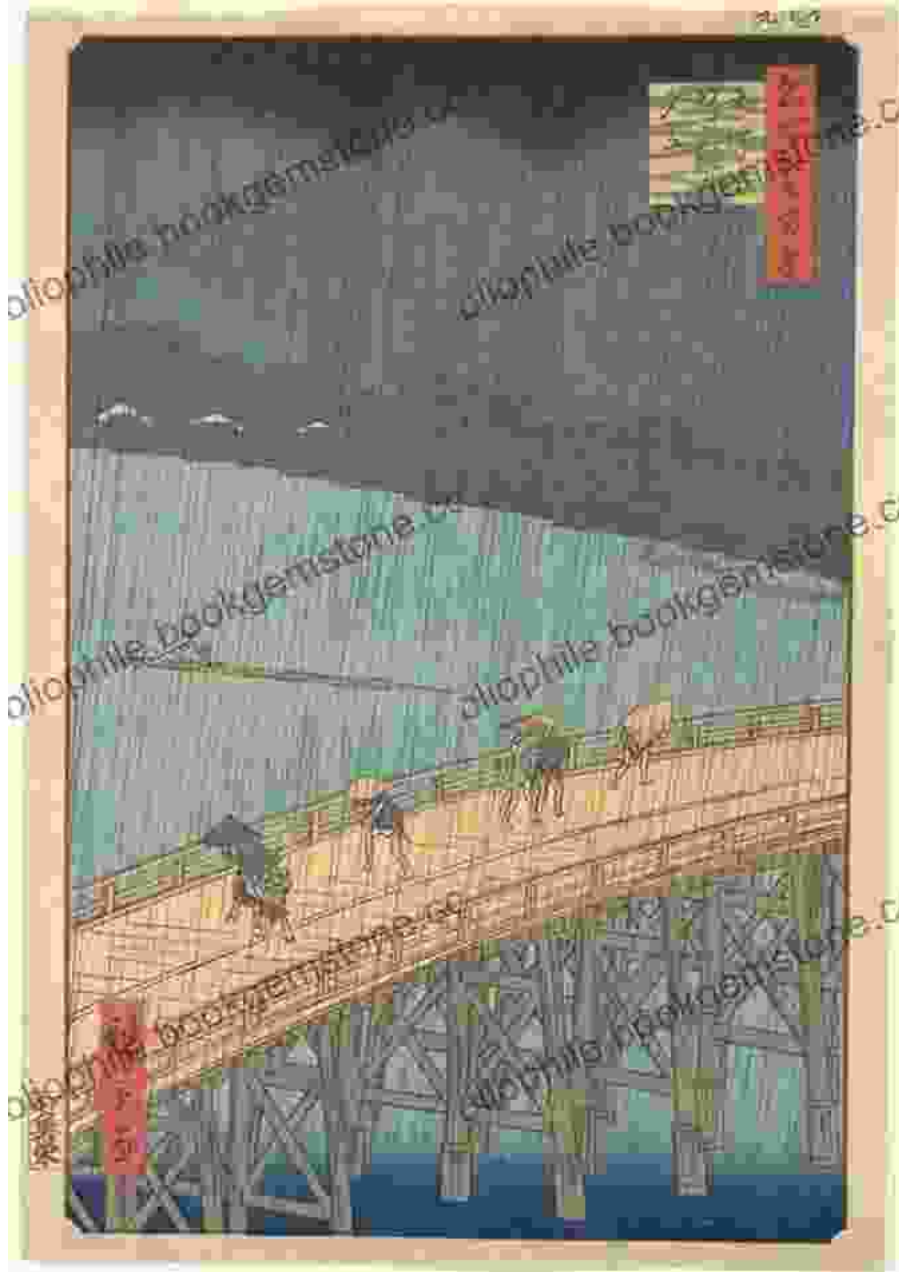
The Edo period, and particularly the 18th and 19th centuries, witnessed the golden age of ukiyo-e. During this time, the production of woodblock prints reached its peak, with countless artists and publishers contributing to the development of the art form.

Famous Woodblock Print Artists

- **Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849):** One of the most celebrated ukiyo-e artists, Hokusai is renowned for his iconic series, "Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji," as well as his vibrant landscapes and depictions of everyday life.



- **Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858):** Known for his serene landscapes and depictions of famous sites around Japan, Hiroshige's prints captured the beauty of the natural world and influenced Western artists such as Vincent van Gogh.



- **Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806):** A master of bijin-ga, Utamaro specialized in portraits of beautiful women. His prints were known for their delicate brushwork and elegant compositions.



- **Toshusai Sharaku (active 1794-1795):** Sharaku is renowned for his distinctive kabuki actor portraits, characterized by their exaggerated expressions and bold colors.



Prominent Woodblock Print Publishers

In addition to the talented artists, the success of Japanese woodblock prints was also due to the efforts of publishers who commissioned, printed, and distributed these works.

- **Tsutaya Juzaburo (1750-1823):** One of the most influential publishers of the golden age, Tsutaya was known for his collaboration with

renowned artists such as Hokusai and Hiroshige.

- **Eijudo Nishimuraya Yohachi (1790-1841):** Specializing in landscape prints, Eijudo published many of Hokusai's famous works, including his "Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji."
- **Maruya Jimbei (1770-1841):** Known for his innovative printing techniques, Maruya published works by Sharaku and other artists, contributing to the development of the expressive style known as *kacho-e* (bird-and-flower prints).

Masterworks of Japanese Woodblock Prints

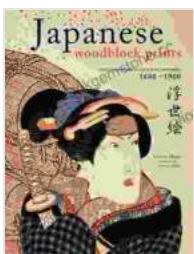
Throughout the history of ukiyo-e, countless masterpieces have been created, showcasing the extraordinary skill and creativity of the artists and publishers involved. Here are some of the most iconic and influential woodblock prints:

1. **"The Great Wave off Kanagawa" by Katsushika Hokusai:** Perhaps the most famous woodblock print in the world, this dynamic and awe-inspiring depiction of a giant wave threatening boats represents the power and majesty of nature.
2. **"Kanagawa Station: Sudden Shower over the Ocean" by Utagawa Hiroshige:** A serene and atmospheric print that captures the beauty of the natural world and the changing seasons, this image has become an iconic representation of Japanese landscape art.
3. **"Rain at Ohashi Bridge, Sudden Shower over Shin-Ohashi Bridge and Atake" by Utagawa Hiroshige:** This triptych, consisting of three connected prints, offers a stunning panorama of a bustling bridge in Edo, capturing the daily life and traditions of the time.

4. **"Courtesan with a Fan" by Kitagawa Utamaro:** This elegant and sensual portrait of a beautiful woman, known as okubi-e (large-head portrait), showcases Utamaro's mastery of bijin-ga.
5. **"Actor Ichikawa Ebizo IV as Yakko Edobe" by Toshusai Sharaku:** This distinctive kabuki actor portrait, characterized by its exaggerated expression and bold colors, embodies the expressive style of *kacho-e*.

Japanese woodblock prints are a testament to the artistry, creativity, and cultural significance of this unique art form. From their humble origins in the 17th century to their golden age in the 18th and 19th centuries, woodblock prints have captivated audiences worldwide with their bold colors, intricate designs, and depictions of everyday life and culture.

Through the works of renowned artists like Hokusai and Hiroshige, publishers like Tsutaya and Eijudo, and the creation of iconic masterworks such as "The Great Wave off Kanagawa," Japanese woodblock prints have left an indelible mark on the history of art. Today, these prints continue to be admired, collected, and studied, providing a glimpse into the vibrant and fascinating world of Edo-period Japan.



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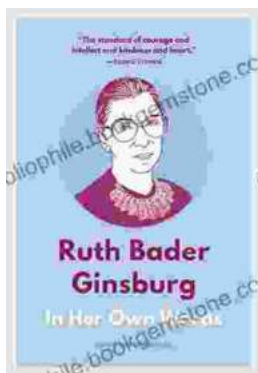
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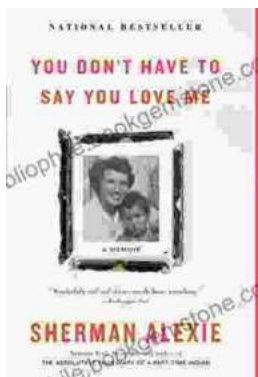
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