



大當狂言之
内菅原相

土渡亭因貞画

The
Great
Master
of
Ukiyoe

Kanshojo

Inuki Tachihara
Ōatari Kyōgen

Inuki Tachihara

Inuki Tachihara is recognized as the greatest woodblock artist alive today.

A jazz saxophonist-turned-artist, Tachihara came across an ukiyo-e work which deeply moved him when he was 25 years old. For the past 33 years, he has dedicated himself to extensive scientific research on the types of paper and pigments used in the Edo era, and he has so far reproduced more than 70 ukiyo-e prints.

In the Edo era, ukiyo-e prints were created by the combined efforts of the artist, the engraver and the printer. But Tachihara executes each laborious step of the process all by himself — something unheard of in the past! Moreover, his reprints are so perfect that they have been assessed as “well-preserved first prints from the Edo era.” and museums around the world are paying close attention to his techniques. He is highly esteemed as an authority on the science of Edo colors and has presented a number of lectures on the colors used in ukiyo-e prints to societies in Japan and abroad.

During the last decade, Tachihara has been concentrating his passion more on original works than reproductions. Part of the reason for this was his inability to obtain the types of paper and ink used in the Edo period. Recently, however, the combined efforts of a Japanese paper-making craftsman and an ink specialist have borne fruit: they have successfully reproduced the types of paper and ink used in the twilight years of shogunate rule. In addition, it has become possible to borrow original prints from collectors. These factors encouraged Tachihara to consider tackling “unfinished ukiyo-e works” and he decided to challenge the reproduction of the famous Ōatari Kyōgen no Uchi series of prints by Utagawa Kunisada (Great Performance, published 1814).

Tachihara's ability to engrave more than six lines in one millimeter, using the kewari technique, is unrivalled. The facial expressions seen in these beautiful colorful portraits of impressive Kabuki actors are just exquisite. Tachihara is committed to complete the series with all his might, and we are very excited by the prospect of seeing the whole series completed in 2010.

The reproductions would not have been possible without Tachihara. The prints will be limited to 170 copies, making them of great rarity value. Do not miss this opportunity to add this glorious new version of the seven works of Ōatari Kyōgen to your collection.

Mariko Nukaga
President, Joyconcept



Akoya (by Tachihara)



Banzui Chōbei (by Tachihara)



Kajiwara Genta (by Tachihara)

Ōatari Kyōgen no Uchi

(Artist: Utagawa Kunisada / Publisher: Kawaguchi-ya Uhei)

Oatari Kyogen no Uchi(Great Performances) is a representative series of work by Utagawa Kunisada, one of the leading ukiyo-e artists in the early 19th century. He created the series when he was around 30 years old, one portrait each for major Kabuki actors of the time. A total of seven portraits have been confirmed: Akoya(Nakamura Matsue III); Kan Shojō (Ichikawa Danjurō VII); Kajiwara Genta(Bandō Mitsugorō III); Yaoya Oshichi(Iwai Hanshirō V); Daiku Rokusaburō(Onoe Matsusuke II); Yojiro(Nakamura Utaemon III); and Banzui Chobei(Matsumoto Koshirō V).

The series was published between the end of 1814 and the spring of the following year. Ōkubi-e(bust portraits) were rare at the time because (according to a book titled Ruijū Senyō) the feudal government had issued a ban which read “Danjo no mentei ishō mo kaki ōzukuri ni mitome” meaning that the portrayal in ukiyo-e of men and women wearing flashy and luxurious clothes was prohibited, along with faces in close up. It would therefore appear that the publishing of this series of ōkubi-e using ornate kira-zuri(mica printing) was probably a special project whereby the emerging publisher Kawaguchi-ya and the rising artist Kunisada could promote their creative abilities.

One characteristic of the Oatari Kyogen no Uchi series is the Kunisada-style exaggerated portraitist that emphasizes the fantastic world of Kabuki and the masculinity of the actors, giving a strong impression without diminishing their attractiveness. This characteristic is supported by the use of white mica in their backgrounds. In terms of the techniques used to depict expression, attention should be paid to the way the eyelashes and wigs are depicted: no other artist before Kunisada had portrayed the upper and lower eyelashes clearly from the inside toward the outside. It was also very innovative to depict the actors' hairlines in a way that suggested they were wearing wigs. Three other points are striking: a small amount of benihana(red pigment made from safflower) applied to the eyes, noses and ears; the itabokashi (fuzzy gradation) technique used in the costume patterns; and the rich texture created by using irregular patterns of small and large patches of color.

Museo D'Arte Orientale Edoardo Chiossone in Genova, Italy is the only museum that possesses the complete series of seven portraits. The whereabouts of individual prints have also been confirmed, but they are very few in number, making this an invaluable series.

Shugo Asano
Director The Museum Yamato Bunkakan



Daiku Rokusaburō (by Tachihara)



Yaoya Oshichi (by Tachihara)



Yojirō (by Tachihara)

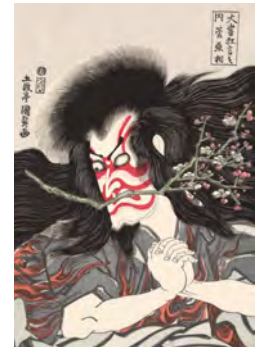
The Vivid Colors of Ukiyo-e

Most of the pigments used for ukiyo-e were made of natural materials, so the colors tend to fade over the years even if the prints are kept in a good state of preservation. Looking at one of the original prints, we can see that the red beni-hana safflower pigment used for the actor's kumadori make-up lines is now discolored. And the red lead pigment used for the flame design of the kimono has aged and darkened because of the metallic content. These phenomena are inevitable. In the reproductions, the original colors have been revived as if a veil has been lifted, and the contrast between the red and the black, one of the great attractions of this work, is finely presented.

Originally, white mica powder was used to accentuate the background of the prints, a technique called kirazuri. The mica has flaked off over the years, so the effect can no longer be seen on the original prints. But it has been reproduced perfectly on the reprints; the



Kanshojo(original)



Kanshojo(by Tachihara)

elegantly beautiful background glistens, depending on the angle you view it from. Long years dedicated to the study of paper and pigments led to a significant result; we are now able once again to enjoy the resonance of freshly printed ukiyo-e.

Utagawa Kunisada(1786~1864) Studio names: Gototei, Kōchōrō, and Toyokuni III

Utagawa Kunisada was one of the finest representatives of ukiyo-e woodblock print artists in the late Edo era. Following the death of his master Utagawa Toyokuni in 1825, he was the most popular and talented ukiyo-e artist for about 40 years(if we consider Hokusai as being in a class of his own). He was accepted by Utagawa Toyokuni as an apprentice around 1801 and quickly distinguished himself. During the 15years-period from 1811 until the death of Toyokuni, Kunisada created his most attractive yakusha-e(kabuki-actor portraits). As can be seen in the Ōtari Kyōgen no Uchi prints, he produced fresh and dynamic portraits that brought out the charms of actors, paying careful attention to the balance between realism and exaggeration. He also developed a new style for bijin-fuzoku-ga(portraits of beautiful women) and depicted many stylish and sensual women in various scenes from life.

Kunisada reigned in the field of ukiyo-e in the late Edo era and is said to have been most prolific artist. His works can be found today in the collections of museums, art galleries and private collectors around the world.

Inuki Tachihara “Ōtari Kyōgen” [Limited 170 edition]

(reproduction of “Ōtari Kyōgen no Uchi” by Utagawa Kunisada)

The works are in a special handmade box.

Size : Sheet 38cm×27cm Box 51cm×39.5cm×47cm

Appendix : Detailed Explanation by Shugo Asano

(Director. The Museum Yamato Bunkakan / Director. International Ukiyo-e Society)

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