

Early Collectors of Japanese Prints and The Metropolitan Museum of Art

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THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM acquired its first Japanese woodblock prints in 1894, when Mary L. Cassilly, a New Yorker with an interest in Oriental art, donated two albums (JP205, 206), and the subsequent rapid growth of this collection is closely tied to a handful of diverse personalities centered in New York City. By 1949, the year of the purchase of the Louis V. Ledoux collection, all but a few hundred of the present 3,600 prints had been accessioned. New York was not the only center of Japanese print collecting in America (Boston and Chicago were in the forefront), and the Metropolitan did not benefit from every local collection. Nonetheless, the magic lure of the colored woodblock print enhanced the lives of a fascinating cross-section of artists, scholars, and philanthropists. The story of how these collectors came to amass and treasure so many of these flimsy sheets of mulberry paper will be told in the following pages.

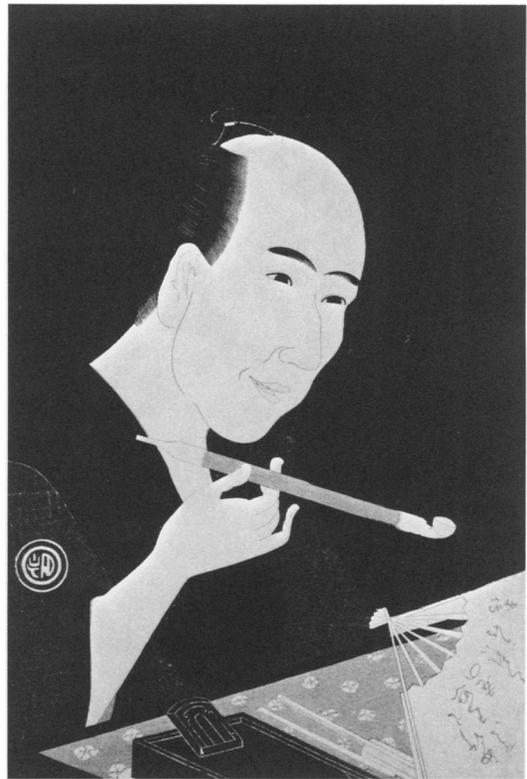
The Japanese print is a joint effort requiring the collaboration of an artist who creates the original design, an engraver who cuts the woodblocks, a printer who applies the colors to the blocks and rubs the handmade mulberry bark paper face down on the blocks with a *baren*, and a publisher who advertises and distributes the prints and finances the entire project. Printed images in black and white with Buddhist themes date from as early as the eighth century in the Far East, but the spread of printing in Japan on a large scale in the second half of the seventeenth century, a time of peace and prosperity, saw secular themes come into their own as well. These prints appealed to a broad-based audience of well-to-do townsmen whose favorite images were those of actors and courtesans in the entertainment quarters (the so-called *ukiyo* or “floating world”). In the nineteenth century, when avid Japanese travelers began to criss-cross the countryside, representations of famous

beauty spots were in demand as souvenirs. Prints were mass-produced in editions as large as ten thousand, and most were purchased for their topical, documentary interest, rather than as works of art. After the Meiji Restoration of 1868, when Japan was concentrating fully on modernization, the earlier woodblock prints were apparently viewed as cheap export items. As a result, the largest and best collections of *ukiyo-e* (“pictures of the floating world”) can today be found in the West.

Ukiyo-e prints and illustrated books arrived in Europe at a fortuitous moment, just as realism and naturalism had reached their peaks, and artists were searching for inspiration. French Impressionists were attracted by the genre themes, bright colors, flattened shapes, unconventional spatial effects, and asymmetrical compositions. Prints were circulating in Paris as early as the 1830s and 1840s and were abundant by the 1850s.¹ Paris remained the primary source of prints in the West throughout most of the nineteenth century.

Manet and Whistler were among the first generation of artists to be stimulated by ukiyo-e. Manet's 1868 portrait of Emile Zola, for example (Figure 1), includes not only a folding screen, but also a Japanese print of a sumo wrestler, presumably from Zola's own extensive collection. Even more revealing of Japanese influence, however, is Zola's three-quarter profile pose, and the way his head is silhouetted against a dark ground and his dark jacket flattened into a two-dimensional shape. The painting is very reminiscent

1. Deborah Johnson, “Japanese Prints in Europe Before 1840,” *Burlington Magazine* 124 (1982) pp. 343–348; John Sandberg, “The Discovery of Japanese Prints in the Nineteenth Century Before 1867,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 71 (May–June 1968) pp. 295–302.



1. Edouard Manet (1832–83), *Portrait of Emile Zola*, ca. 1868. Oil on canvas. Paris, Musée d'Orsay (Galerie du Jeu de Paume) (photo: Réunion des Musées Nationaux)
2. Eiri (active 1790–1800), *Portrait of Santō Kyōden*, 1794. Woodblock print, 15 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (40 × 26 cm.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Howard Mansfield Collection, Rogers Fund, 1936, JP2419

of Eiri's 1794 depiction of the fiction writer and ukiyo-e artist Santō Kyōden (1761–1816) (Figure 2). He, too, is seated by a table with the accouterments of his trade (writing brush, ink stone, and ink stick), and with some of his favorite possessions, a pipe and an open folding fan.

The expatriate American painter James McNeill Whistler, who went to Paris as a student in 1855, was

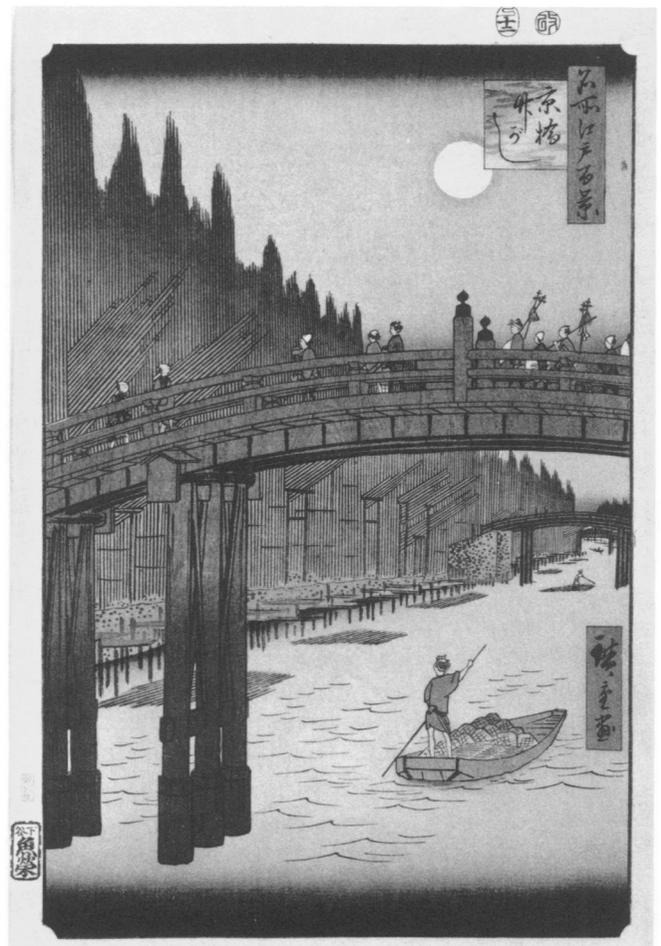
3. James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903), *Caprice in Purple and Gold: The Golden Screen*, 1864. Oil on canvas. Washington, D.C., Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution (photo: Freer Gallery of Art)
4. James McNeill Whistler, *Nocturne in Blue and Gold: Old Battersea Bridge*, ca. 1872–75. Oil on canvas. London, The Tate Gallery (photo: Tate Gallery)



in the vanguard of the early enthusiasts for *Japonisme*, and the development of his own style, under the influence of prints, is typical of the times. His *Golden Screen* (Figure 3), painted in London in 1864, attests to a fascination with Japanese art: he included a screen, a kimono, and a set of what appear to be single-sheet prints by Andō Hiroshige.

By the time of his *Old Battersea Bridge*, eight years later, he had fully ingested Hiroshige's principles of composition (Figure 4). His absorption with Oriental art in this period seems more intense and spontaneous than that of his contemporaries. Whistler's bridge was suggested by Hiroshige's series *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, printed in 1856–59 (Figure 5). The waterways of Tokyo inspired Hiroshige to monumentalize bridges by dramatic close-ups and exaggerated perspective. Whistler's own collection of ukiyo-e excited young British artists in the early 1860s, and

5. Andō Hiroshige (1797–1858), *The Bamboo Yard, Kyōbashi*, from the series *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, 1858. Woodblock print, 14 $\frac{1}{16}$ × 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (35.7 × 24.2 cm.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Howard Mansfield Collection, Rogers Fund, 1936, JP2521



later impressed many of his American colleagues as well.²

By the end of the century the foremost proponent of Japanese art in Paris was the dealer Siegfried Bing (1838–1905), a German who had become a naturalized French citizen. Bing began building his business during the 1870s with the help of his acquisitive brother-in-law, the German consul in Tokyo. Bing himself spent a year in Japan around 1881. He reminisced about that trip: “Once arrived in Japan I beat the drum in order to procure from one end of this remarkable Island Kingdom to the other all the artifacts that money could possibly buy. I . . . let it be known everywhere that a wild man had come ashore to buy up everything.”³ Bing performed a great service to print lovers when he published the influential illustrated journal *Le Japon artistique*, which ran for three years from 1888. Translated into English as *Artistic Japan*, it was a source of new imagery for artists and industrial designers in both America and Europe. Bing was a promoter of ukiyo-e; he mounted a number of important public sale exhibitions, and he always stocked several thousand Japanese prints in his shop, where Van Gogh, Degas, Lautrec, and Mary Cassatt browsed at leisure.⁴ A year before his death he sent a representative to New York to open a shop for the sale of ukiyo-e prints.

Working in direct competition with Bing in Paris was the aggressive Japanese merchant Hayashi Tadamasu (Figure 6). More than simply a shopkeeper, Hayashi was regarded as one of the most knowledgeable connoisseurs of his day. He had arrived in France in 1878 as a foreign language interpreter for the Japanese corporation charged with managing its country's participation in the Paris Exposition Universelle that year. Determined to make a career for himself in Europe, he stayed on to dispose of the remaining stock, worked for several Japanese trading companies, and then in 1884 went into partnership with Wakai Kensaburō, his former employer and a man trained in the antique trade. During the next few years Hayashi traveled widely in China, Europe, and America cultivating clients for Chinese porcelains as well as for Japanese lacquer, bronzes, and prints. From about 1889, when he established himself in sole proprietorship as a merchant of prints, until 1900, when he ceased his commercial activities, he imported 160,000 prints and nearly 10,000 illustrated books. He did business from a handsome apartment on the rue



6. Hayashi Tadamasu (1853–1906) in 1896 at age forty-three (photo: courtesy Jōzuka Taketoshi)

de la Victoire. A French collector who knew both Bing and Hayashi in the 1890s described their separate establishments.

Hayashi, a little secretive in the Japanese fashion, distributed his clients in the numerous small rooms that made up the apartment; each had his nook where Hayashi came to join him, and he did not see the person Hayashi had shut up in the adjoining cubicle. This mysteriousness had its charm, and the master of the house excelled in giving you the impression that you were being treated as a fa-

2. Robin Spencer, “Whistler and Japan: Work in Progress,” in *Japonisme in Art*, ed. Society for the Study of Japonisme (Tokyo, 1980) pp. 57–81.

3. Gabriel Weisberg, “L’Art Nouveau Bing,” *Arts in Virginia* 20 (1979) p. 6. See also Peter van Dam, “Siegfried Bing 1838–1905,” *Andon* 10 (1983) pp. 10–14.

4. Siegfried Wichmann, *Japonisme: The Japanese Influence on Western Art in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York, 1980) p. 6. See also Fred Orton, “Vincent van Gogh and Japanese Prints: An Introductory Essay,” in *Japanese Prints Collected by Vincent van Gogh* (Amsterdam, 1978) p. 15.

vorite. Everything was just the reverse at Bing's, or seemed to be so; the clients came and went, opened cupboards, shuffled through folders, and in the little office under the roof that was reserved especially for prints there were often five or six elbowing each other.⁵

Hayashi's wife, Satoko, who remained in Tokyo, was responsible for acquiring prints there at highly favorable prices from dealers all over the country. Eventually, demand drove up prices in Europe to a level that few could afford, and many artists, including Degas, had to barter their own paintings in exchange for prints. Hayashi's Tokyo office employed about five specialists who were reportedly strict in their selection and attributions; it was, however, Mrs. Hayashi's idea to put her husband's stamp on every item that passed through their hands.⁶ This round, red seal bearing his name appears on fine prints in many Western collections and is still regarded as a sign of quality and authenticity. Hayashi's reputation was such that he was appointed Commissioner General of the Japanese section of the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1900. (It is a curious fact that he excluded prints from this exhibition, favoring instead contemporary crafts designed for the export market as well as antique painting and sculptures.)

It has been said that almost all prints of quality left Japan in the 1880s and 1890s, and Hayashi is now often viewed by the Japanese as a plunderer of treasures. In other ways, too, his professional practices have been questioned. For example, it is said that he sometimes bleached prints in the sun in order to make them more attractive to those Europeans who preferred the soft colors of faded prints and who, out of ignorance, were prone to suspecting forgery if the colors were fresh.⁷

In the 1890s Bing and Hayashi both took note of the growing market for ukiyo-e in America. Among Hayashi's American clients were Louisine and Henry O. Havemeyer of New York (Figure 7). Havemeyer was founder and controller of the sugar trust, one of the largest monopolies of that era. At the time of his death, the American Sugar Refining Company, which he directed, manufactured approximately half the sugar consumed in the United States. The "Sugar King" was accustomed to thinking in terms of volume, and his first purchases of Japanese art at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition included dozens of lacquer boxes, brocades, and sword guards.

An incident that illustrates perfectly his attitude toward collecting occurred a year after his marriage to his second wife (his first wife's niece), Louisine Elder.

5. Raymond Koechlin, "Recollections of a Veteran Amateur of Far Eastern Art," H. Bartlett Wells, trans., in *Essays on Japanese Art Presented to Jack Hillier*, ed. Matthi Forrer (London, 1982) p. 179.

6. Jōzuka Taketoshi, *Gashō Hayashi Tadamasa* (Fukuyama, 1972) p. 49. The Hayashi collection of Japanese prints, paintings, sculpture, etc., was sold at auction in Paris in 1902 and 1903. See also *Japonisme in Art*, pp. 167–172, and Jōzuka, *Umi o Wataru Ukiyo-e* (Tokyo, 1981).

7. Harry G. C. Packard, "Nihon Bijutsu Shūshūki," *Geijutsu Shinchō* 314 (Feb. 1976) p. 140.



7. Louisine (1855–1929) and Henry O. Havemeyer (1847–1907) around 1898. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Archives



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 江戸、摺物ハ素新年大小始り明和安永
 間聊カ其美ヲ現然民未夕其美ヲ盡
 云フニ非リキ幸和四年改元甲子ニシテ
 萬飾北齋カテ振テ画巧ヲ萃ニ新春ノ摺
 物最美極ハ蓋ニ未嘗有也尔来其門
 人魚屋北漢茶岡糸梅之店辰此徒
 競テ蓋ニ入リ驚ク近世巴里好事家
 喜レテ之ヲ集メ觀ラテ之ヲ愛ス皆ハ今存
 ニ其曰美ヲ全クシテ希ニシテ長州萩人排
 名江戸花城ハ樹園ノ門ニ出テ文政中
 其名江ノ内ヲ予昨年大板ニ遊テ偶々
 山中氏ノ買手一夫下ノ僕ヨリ振舞リ
 素花城ノ属集ニ云フ所言如不虛題シテ
 春兩集ト云フ今分三冊ト爲シ更ニ百五十葉ヲ
 加ヘ修葺シ以テ後世ヲ傳フ云爾

明治三年四月 林忠正識

8. A page from the Hayashi *surimono* album: Ryūryūkyō Shinsai (1764?–1820), *New Year's Ornaments*, early 19th century; Totoya Hokkei (1780–1850), *Hat, Deerhorn, and Plum Branch Representing Jurōjin*, early 19th century; Ryūryūkyō Shinsai, *Sake Ewer and Cup for New Year Ceremony*, early 19th century. Woodblock prints, 8¼ × 7⅞ in. (21 × 18.7 cm.); 5⅞ × 7⅞ in. (13.6 × 18.7 cm.); 5⅞ × 7½ in. (15 × 19 cm.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929, H. O. Havemeyer Collection, JP2389, 2390, 2391
9. Hayashi's inscription in the *surimono* album from the H. O. Havemeyer Collection

The event was recorded by Mrs. Havemeyer in her delightful memoirs, *Sixteen to Sixty*:

How well I remember my first acquaintance with a tea jar! I think it was in 1884, and as usual, done in Mr. Havemeyer's grand style. My husband said to me one morning:

"A case of tea jars will arrive today. You'd better unpack them; make a selection; take out what you want and put the rest in the storeroom."

"But what is a tea jar?" I asked innocently.

Mr. Havemeyer looked at me curiously, as if amused that my question could puzzle him, and then said frankly:

"Well, I don't know much about them myself. They are little brown jars that hold tea. I guess that covers it, but they are very beautiful, so soft you want to hold them in your hand, and so lovely in color you cannot but admire them; just sober dark brown—but wait and see. I know you will enjoy them—and do as you please with

them." He left me for the excitement of Wall Street while I remained at home and did just as I was told. . . .

I opened the case and was surprised to find it contained innumerable small boxes. I opened these small boxes and found they contained each another box inside. Upon opening the second box I found it had a silk bag and upon undoing the silk bag my little "brownie" revealed himself to me. Like a child with a toy I soon had rows of brownies about me, while the little boxes were in a heap upon the floor beside me. What pretty, dainty things they appeared to me!⁸

Japan was surely only a peripheral interest for the Havemeyers, whose real passion was Old Master and nineteenth-century paintings. They were in the mainstream of contemporary Japonisme, however, when they hired two gifted designers, Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848–1933) and his associate Samuel Colman (1832–1920), to decorate the interior of their new house at 1 East Sixty-sixth Street in 1890. The library ceiling, for example, was a mosaic of colorful swatches of Nō robes, and the oak walls were stained to an olive green, imitating the color of a favorite lacquer panel by Ritsuō.⁹ Like so many of his contemporaries, Colman, who was a New York landscape painter, had a romantic fascination with the exotic Orient. He gave his sizable collection of Japanese ceramics to the Metropolitan Museum in 1893.

The Havemeyer bequest, which so enriched the Metropolitan in 1929, is famous for its European paintings, although it also included Japanese ceramics, paintings, and lacquer. Especially remarkable, however, is the collection of 807 Japanese prints, more than half of which are small *surimono* (literally, "printed things"), limited, luxury-edition prints. They are mounted in three albums that today constitute one of the great treasures of the Museum's print collection (Figure 8). The previous owner, none other than Hayashi Tadamasu, wrote a long inscription, dated 1889 (the year he opened his own business), on the inside cover of the third album (Figure 9). He describes the flowering of *surimono* in the nineteenth century and relates his good fortune in acquiring a large album from the Osaka dealer Yamanaka the year before. He goes on to say that he has remounted it as three albums, repaired the prints, and now passes them along to later generations.

One can safely speculate that the Havemeyers were first led to Hayashi's doorstep in the early 1890s by the American painter Mary Cassatt, who had lived in

Paris since 1874 and was Mrs. Havemeyer's best friend (they had grown up together in Philadelphia). She acted as European guide and adviser to the New York couple in their acquisition of both Old Master paintings and contemporary French Impressionists. Among the Havemeyer prints, works by Utamaro are particularly well represented, and this may reflect the taste of Miss Cassatt, whose own collection of Utamaro hung on the glass-enclosed verandah at her château. Two prints with a similar theme of a mother bathing a child demonstrate this interaction (Figures 10, 11). The Cassatt print is from her well-known series of ten color etchings of 1891, directly inspired by Bing's sale exhibition of seven hundred Japanese prints at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, which she had visited with Degas the year before.¹⁰ The Utamaro was acquired by the Havemeyers and is now in The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Isolated examples of American Japonisme first appeared around the middle of the nineteenth century in Boston, where the China trade quite naturally provided a link with Japan. The painter John La Farge, married to a grandniece of Admiral Perry, whose ships had forced the Japanese to end three hundred years of isolation, is believed to have acquired Japanese prints as early as 1856, probably in Paris, and was incorporating elements from Hokusai and Hiroshige compositions into his paintings by the 1860s, long before his well-chronicled visit to Japan with Henry Adams in 1886. His *Self-Portrait* in The Metropolitan Museum of Art showing the artist at age twenty-four, the year he started painting, has been cited for its Japanese influence, specifically the high horizon line and flat, decorative shapes. A fish still life of 1865, a year after Whistler's *Golden Screen*, is notably early in its use of Japanese principles of composition (Figure 12). This small panel depicting an Atlantic bonito and a spray of flowers against a gold ground was one of a group of paintings intended as a dining room mural in the Beacon Street home of Charles Freeland, a

8. Louise W. Havemeyer, *Sixteen to Sixty: Memoirs of a Collector* (New York, privately printed, 1961) pp. 73–74.

9. Aline Saarinen devoted a chapter to the Havemeyers in *The Proud Possessors* (New York, 1958) pp. 144–173.

10. For a discussion of Cassatt and Japanese prints see Colta Feller Ives, *The Great Wave: The Influence of Japanese Woodcuts on French Prints* (New York, 1974) pp. 45ff.; Cassatt visited the show many times and made purchases to hang in her home. See also S. Bing, *Exposition de la gravure japonaise*, exh. cat. (Paris, 1890).

prosperous builder.¹¹ The yellow ground imitates the gold leaf of a Japanese screen, while the composition recalls Hiroshige's series *A Variety of Fish* (*Sakana Zukushi*), of about 1830 (Figure 13).

La Farge ordered prints from Japan through A. A. Low, a New York importer of Oriental goods, and he shared this interest with a little-known fellow painter named John Chandler Bancroft (1835–1901). Bancroft was a Harvard graduate from a Worcester family, and in the early 1860s spent much time with La Farge in studious retreat at Newport. He, too, visited Japan, although not until 1898, well after his own collection had been formed. Unlike most of his contemporaries, including La Farge, who preferred nineteenth-century artists (especially Hokusai and Hiroshige), Bancroft put together a surprisingly well-balanced group of over three thousand prints spanning the entire history of ukiyo-e.¹² The collection was bequeathed to the Worcester Art Museum.

A younger generation of Harvard-educated Bos-

tonians immersed themselves in the scholarly study of Japan and made a more dramatic and significant contribution to the appreciation of Asian art in America. William Sturgis Bigelow (Figure 14), born of a famous surgeon and a daughter of a wealthy China-trade merchant, studied medicine with Louis Pasteur in Paris for five years in the 1870s and developed a connoisseur's taste for art; he returned with enough Japanese art to sponsor an exhibition of several hundred items at the Museum of Fine Arts in 1881. Inspired to visit the source itself, the restless bachelor left the next year for Japan and stayed on for seven years, until 1889, as a student of Japanese

11. Henry Adams, "A Fish by John La Farge," *Art Bulletin* 62 (June 1980) pp. 269–280. See also idem, "John La Farge, 1830–1870: From Amateur to Artist," unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Yale University, 1980.

12. There is very little information about Bancroft, and none of his paintings are known to survive. John La Farge wrote his obituary for the *New York Times* in Oct. 1901.

10. Mary Cassatt (1845–1926), *The Tub*, 1891. Drypoint, soft-ground etching, and aquatint, eleventh state; printed in color, 11 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (29 × 24.3 cm.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Paul J. Sachs, 16.2.7



11. Kitagawa Utamaro (1753–1806), *Woman Bathing a Baby in a Tub*, late 18th century. Woodblock print, 14 $\frac{1}{16}$ × 9 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (37.3 × 25.1 cm.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929, H. O. Havemeyer Collection, JP1661





12. John La Farge (1835–1910), *Fish*, ca. 1865. Oil on panel. Cambridge, Mass., Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Grenville L. Winthrop Bequest (photo: Fogg Art Museum)



13. Andō Hiroshige, *Gray Mullet with Camellia*, from the series *A Variety of Fish*. Woodblock print, $9\frac{7}{8} \times 14\frac{9}{16}$ in. (25.1 × 37 cm.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Bryan Holme, 1980, JP3593

culture and a disciple of esoteric Buddhism. His family fortune allowed him to collect in overwhelming quantities, and he did so with an enlightened breadth of vision that encompassed all fields ranging from Buddhist paintings to sword guards. When his collection was donated to the Museum of Fine Arts, of which he was a trustee, in 1911, the prints alone numbered a staggering forty thousand. (The figure is approximate—no one has undertaken an exact count.) He traveled widely with Bostonians Ernest Francisco Fenollosa, resident in Japan for twelve years from 1878



14. William Sturgis Bigelow (1850–1926) in the 1880s (photo: courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

as a professor of philosophy at the University of Tokyo (Figure 15), and Edward Sylvester Morse (1830–1925), a brilliant Harvard zoologist who taught Darwinism at the University of Tokyo and whose collecting interests focused on pottery. The three Americans would arrive at a small country inn, descend on the local shops, and await the arrival the next morning of eager dealers bearing works of art of all kinds.¹³

Fenollosa, respected and honored even by the Japanese government, is known as the first serious Western interpreter of Japanese culture. But since he was not a man of independent means, he was of necessity an entrepreneur and self-promoter. When he returned to Boston in 1890 to become the first curator of Japanese art at the Museum of Fine Arts, the collection housed there was largely the one he had sold to fellow Bostonian Charles G. Weld some years earlier. Obviously alert to the popular appeal of ukiyo-e, he featured Hokusai at his inaugural exhibition at the museum in 1892–93 and invited Bing to have a sale exhibition of prints at the museum in April 1894.¹⁴

When Fenollosa was dismissed in 1896 over the matter of his divorce and subsequent marriage to his young assistant in the department of Asian art, he launched a career as a virtuoso lecturer with an impressive platform style, funded by a series of partnerships with print dealers in both Tokyo and New York. His first such venture was a sale, with a catalogue listing no less than 440 prints, in January of 1896 at the Fine Arts Building in New York.¹⁵

Excitement ran high among the little group of budding collectors who gathered at the Metropolitan Museum the next month to hear Fenollosa lecture on prints and other marvels of Japanese civilization.¹⁶

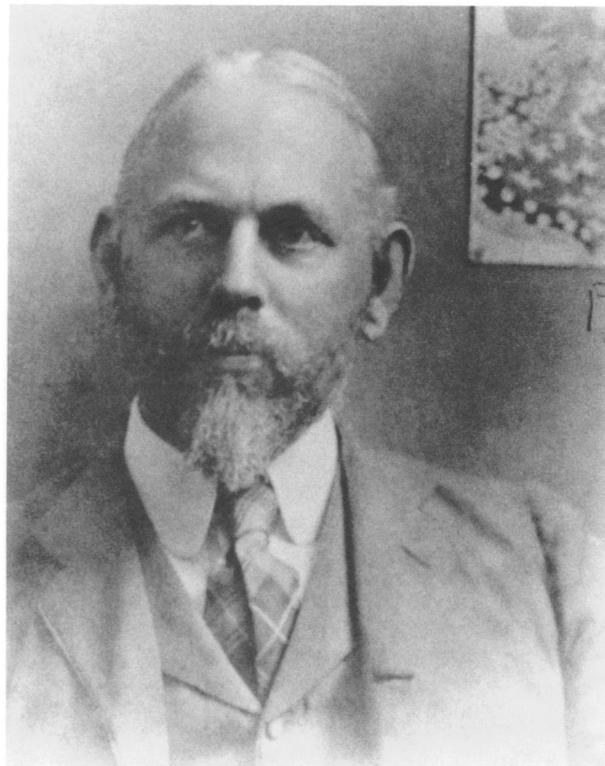
13. Van Wyck Brooks, *Fenollosa and His Circle* (New York, 1962) p. 28.

14. Ernest Francisco Fenollosa, *Hokusai and His School*, exh. cat. (Boston, 1893). Bing's show of Japanese art in New York the previous month at the gallery of the American Art Association had caused something of a sensation, since it was the finest selection that had ever appeared on the market there and the first time that ukiyo-e prints of quality were available for purchase in the United States. See Theodore Robinson diaries, Frick Art Reference Library, New York, entry for Mar. 20, 1894, and Howard Mansfield, "Japanese Prints," *Transactions of the Grolier Club of the City of New York* (New York, 1899) p. 113.

15. Ernest Francisco Fenollosa, *The Masters of Ukiyo-e* (New York, 1896); see also Lawrence W. Chisholm, *Fenollosa: The Far East and American Culture* (New Haven/London, 1963).

16. "Lectures at the Metropolitan Museum," *The Lotus*, no. 9 (1896) pp. 731–733.

15. Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1908) around 1900 (photo: courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)



16. Robert Blum (1857–1903),
The Ameya, ca. 1892. Oil on
 canvas, 25 $\frac{1}{16}$ × 31 $\frac{1}{16}$ in.
 (63.7 × 78.9 cm.). The
 Metropolitan Museum of
 Art, Gift of Estate of
 Alfred Corning Clark,
 04.31



Fenollosa returned to Japan that year to write and to invest heavily in prints, and from 1898 collaborated for several years with the Tokyo dealer Kobayashi Bunshichi (1861–1923), who had earlier been one of Hayashi's chief suppliers. Kobayashi and Fenollosa staged an ukiyo-e print exhibition in Tokyo in 1898 that is thought to be the first ever held in Japan.¹⁷ In 1901, the year Fenollosa returned to America, his wife, Mary, published a book on Hiroshige.¹⁸ He himself subsequently continued to sell and authenticate prints (and paintings) privately, as well as to write gallery catalogues. The year of his death, for example, he wrote the catalogue for a print exhibition at the Yamanaka art gallery in New York, and the gallery in turn sponsored a series of lectures by him at the Waldorf Astoria.¹⁹ Though his credibility was compromised by his commercial activities, Fenollosa certainly helped generate widespread interest in Japanese prints in America. In memoirs and letters, collectors in New York and elsewhere reveal how proud they were to have met him, praising him repeatedly as “preeminently the most competent authority upon the history of Oriental Art in the Far West.”²⁰

Stimulated by a series of sales and exhibitions, New York artists became avid print collectors in the 1890s.

Robert Blum, originally of Cincinnati, moved east in 1878 when he was hired as an illustrator for *Scribner's*. On a European trip a few years later he met Whistler in Venice and took up etching as a result. He lived in Tokyo for two years, between 1890 and 1892, on assignment for *Scribner's*, illustrating a series of articles on Japan by Sir Edwin Arnold. He took a small Japanese house and traveled widely in search of exotic subjects. *The Ameya*, an oil painting now in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, depicts a Japanese candy blower and was produced toward the end of his stay (Figure 16). It was a great success in the

17. Kobayashi Bunshichi, *Catalogue of the Exhibition of Ukiyoe Paintings and Prints*, exh. cat. (Tokyo, 1898). Kobayashi subsequently sold eighty-nine Japanese paintings, predominantly works by Hokusai, to Charles Lang Freer (1854–1919), who gave his collection to the Smithsonian.

18. Mary McNeil Fenollosa, *Hiroshige, the Artist of Mist, Snow and Rain* (San Francisco, 1901).

19. *The Exhibition of Ukiyoe Paintings and Prints at the Yamanaka Galleries* (New York, 1908). Yamanaka and Co. of Osaka opened a store at 254 Fifth Avenue in 1893. The lectures are described in a letter from Fenollosa to Charles L. Freer of Mar. 12, 1907, in the archives of the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution.

20. Frederick Gookin in Fenollosa, *Masters of Ukiyoe*, p. iv.

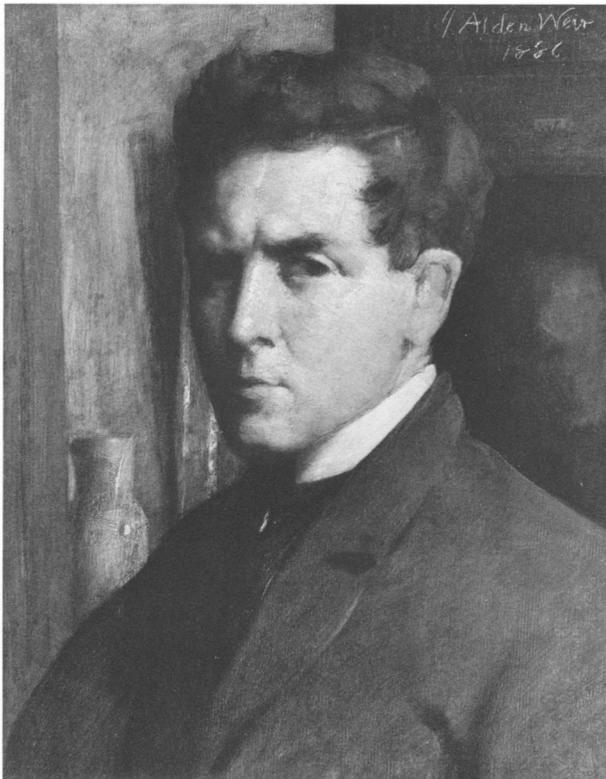
1893 annual exhibition of the National Academy of Design.²¹ Blum wrote about his trip that same year in a three-part article for *Scribner's* entitled "An Artist in Japan." He deplored all evidence of modernization and had nothing but scorn for those Japanese who affected Western clothing. One must bear in mind, however, that he had arrived at a time when the Japanese upper classes were absorbing Western culture as rapidly as possible in order to prove themselves civilized equals. In 1892 no Japanese artist would have chosen the simple street peddler as a subject.

Blum returned from Japan with nearly six hundred ukiyo-e prints, including a set of Hiroshige's *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, which he bequeathed to the Cincinnati Art Museum.²² With the exception of the red seal-shaped square enclosing his signature, which he often used on his prints and drawings, Japanese art had no apparent influence on his highly realistic style, but he did immerse himself in the culture to such an extent that he took lessons in the ancient

dance form of Nō when making a watercolor drawing of the subject. Blum confided to his publisher that it would "be a damned sight nearer than La Farge's nightmare of the thing he called a 'No dancer.'"²³ He must have conveyed his enthusiasm to his circle of friends in New York, and it is more than likely that he mailed them prints from Japan. Having always felt the liveliest curiosity to know how these prints were produced, he visited an ukiyo-e printing establishment and was excited by the possibility of making a woodcut himself for an issue of *Scribner's*—or at least writing an article with seven to ten illustrations showing the process of "A Japanese Print."²⁴

Blum's friends included J. Alden Weir (Figure 17). For Weir, the colored woodcut was as vital as it had been for the French Impressionists. He received shipments of prints not only from Japan (an invoice dated 1891 may have been sent to him by Blum)²⁵ but also from Bing²⁶ and Hayashi²⁷ in Paris. That he was a serious collector throughout his life is documented by his purchase of thirty-six prints at auction as late as 1919, only six months before his death. The \$275 he paid for a Hiroshige triptych was the highest bid placed at that entire sale.²⁸ During his student days in Paris in the 1870s, Weir befriended Whistler, who

17. J. Alden Weir (1852–1919), *Self-Portrait*, 1886. Oil on canvas. New York City, National Academy of Design (photo: National Academy)



21. Doreen Bolger Burke, *American Painting in The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York, 1980) III, pp. 301–304.

22. For information regarding Blum's collection of Japanese prints and photographs, I am indebted to the research of Bernice Weisman and Kristin Spangenberg at the Cincinnati Art Museum.

23. Letter from Blum dated Tokyo, Nov. 11, 1890 (published with permission of Princeton University Library). Correspondence with *Scribner's* (Publishers' Archives, Charles Scribner's Sons, Princeton University Library).

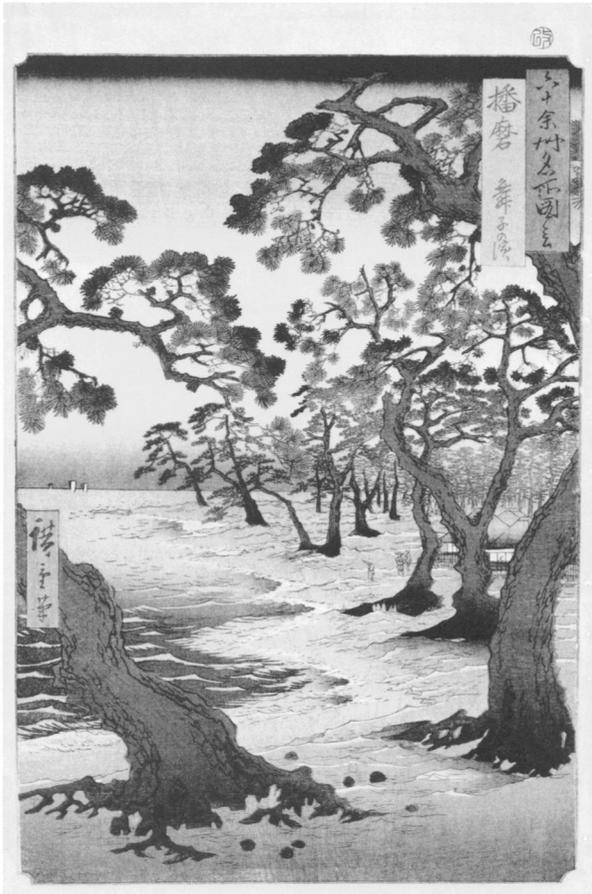
24. *Ibid.*, letter from Blum dated Tokyo, Dec. 26, 1890.

25. Invoice in J. Alden Weir scrapbook dated Meiji 24; Weir's scrapbook also contains an address label for the Fine Art Curio Depot of K. Sano in the Imperial Hotel, Tokyo. I am heavily indebted to Doreen Burke for information concerning the American Impressionists and Japanese prints. See Doreen Bolger Burke, *J. Alden Weir: An American Impressionist* (Newark, 1983) pp. 202–216.

26. Letters of sale from Bing in the Weir scrapbook are dated 1896, 1899, and 1900.

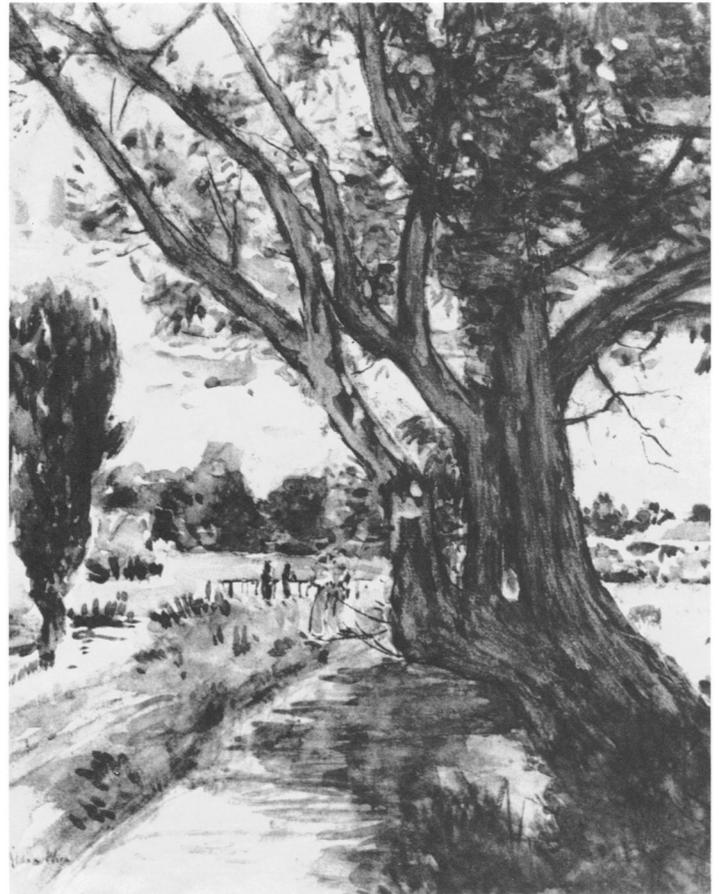
27. A letter in the Weir scrapbook from Hayashi, dated Paris 1894, offers to send a large group of prints from which the artist might select the ones he liked.

28. Annotated copy of the *Illustrated Catalogue of the Collection of Japanese Color Prints, the Property of Mr. Judson Metzgar* (New York, The American Art Association, 1919.) Weir bid a total of \$634.50 at this sale. He bid at the 1916 Metzgar sale as well. See Judson Metzgar, *Adventures in Prints* (San Francisco, n.d.) p. 50.



18. Andō Hiroshige, *Harima: The Shore at Maiko*, from the series *Famous Views of the Sixty-Odd Provinces*. Woodblock print, 12 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 9 in. (31.4 × 22.9 cm.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Howard Mansfield Collection, Rogers Fund, 1936, JP2509

had been a pupil of his father at West Point, and he may have acquired prints at that time. As for his own painting, although he made eleven trips to Europe, he did not embrace an Impressionist style until 1891, a breakthrough year in his career. His work demonstrates very nicely the confluence of French Impressionism and Japanese woodcuts in American painting in the 1890s. If we compare Hiroshige's *Harima: The Shore at Maiko*, a design Weir is known to have owned (much of his collection has survived intact), and Weir's watercolor of an old tree, the painter's indebtedness to the print will be obvious (Figures 18, 19). Weir also experimented with Japanese brush and ink, which he had acquired through Hayashi, occasionally copying reproductions in Bing's *Artistic Japan*. In the summer



19. J. Alden Weir, *Landscape*, 1890s. Watercolor. Private collection

of 1895, Weir painted *The Red Bridge*, now in The Metropolitan Museum of Art (Figure 20). It "received scant notice when exhibited at the [National] Academy [of Design] the next spring: 'a stiff iron bridge' was evidently not considered a proper subject for art."²⁹ It is recorded that Weir had at first been dismayed to find that one of the picturesque old covered bridges spanning the Shetucket River near Windham, Connecticut, had been replaced by a stark iron bridge. Then one day, after a fresh coat of vibrant red paint had been applied, he suddenly saw in the modern structure a picture that stirred his soul.

29. Dorothy Weir Young, *The Life and Letters of J. Alden Weir* (New Haven, 1960) p. 187.



20. J. Alden Weir, *The Red Bridge*, 1895. Oil on canvas, 22¼ × 33¾ in. (61.6 × 85.7 cm.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. John A. Rutherford, 14.141

Perhaps it reminded him of a print such as Hiroshige's *Twilight Moon at Ryōgoku Bridge*, a print in his own collection (Figure 21).

Weir's intimate friends included American Impressionists Theodore Robinson (1852–96), John H. Twachtman (1853–1902), and Childe Hassam (1859–1935). Robinson had spent much of his career in France, frequently visiting Claude Monet at Giverny, and when he returned to New York permanently in 1892 he helped introduce Impressionism. In his diary entries between 1893 and 1896, the year of his death, Robinson recorded the interest that he and his fellow artists shared for both French art and Japanese woodblock prints. In October 1893, for example, he reported that Twachtman came back from a trip to

Boston talking about Fenollosa's Hokusai exhibition, and feeling that there was a great deal to be learned from it.³⁰ Robinson dined with the Weirs regularly on Sundays, looking at Japanese and French art afterward. On November 30, 1893, he wrote:

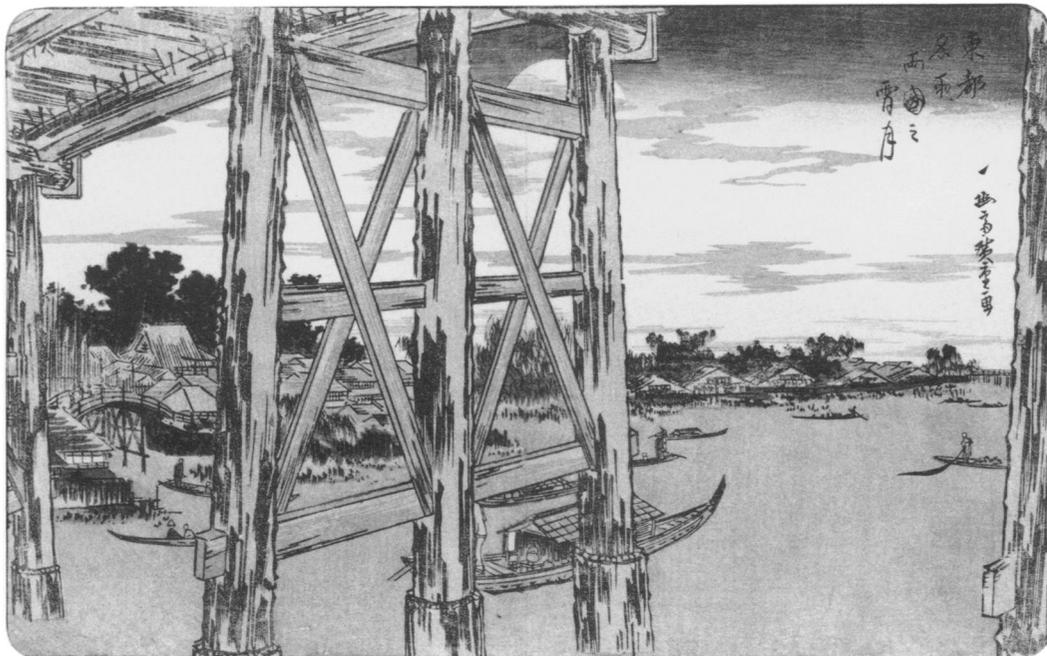
W. enthusiastic over some old Japanese prints. . . . It is very pleasant to sit with Weir at a table and look over proofs, etchings, or Japonaiseries together. . . . I imagine the best men have been influenced for the better by Japanese art, not only in arrangements, but in their extraordinary delicacy of tone and color, and I've often noticed in Monet a subtlety, nearness of two values, almost unknown to other men, that one constantly sees in nature, especially in seas and skies.³¹

After he and Weir bought some Japanese prints at Boussod-Valladon in New York in February 1894 he

30. Theodore Robinson diaries, entry for Oct. 31, 1893.

31. *Ibid.*, entry for Nov. 30, 1893.

21. Andō Hiroshige, *Twilight Moon at Ryōgoku Bridge*, from the series *Famous Sights of the Eastern Capital*. Woodblock print, $9\frac{3}{8} \times 15\frac{3}{16}$ in. (24.4 × 38.6 cm.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1922, JP1312



discussed at length his desire to incorporate elements of the print in his own work: “My Japanese print points in a direction I must take: an aim for refinement and a kind of precision. . . . Japanese work ought to open one’s eyes to certain things in nature, before almost invisible . . . their extraordinary combination of the convention and the reality.”³² He and Weir purchased ukiyo-e prints at American Art Association sales in 1894 (this was Bing’s sale) and 1895.³³ Finally, he took in the Ketcham sale of Fenollosa prints in 1896.³⁴

A mysterious and fascinating dinner guest at the Weir home on April 8, 1894 (along with Robinson and Twachtman), was “Mr. Shugio, a Japanese gentleman who explained certain things about prints and books.”³⁵ Shugio Hiromichi stands out as a pioneer in introducing New Yorkers to the beauty of Japanese woodblock prints and illustrated books. He staged the city’s first major ukiyo-e exhibition in 1889 and lec-

tured on the subject well before there were any noteworthy local collections.

Shugio was born into a samurai family in Saga Prefecture on the southern island of Kyūshū and was one of the elite Japanese singled out for leadership in the early years of the Meiji period (1868–1912). In 1869, at age sixteen, he had been sent by his prefectural government to Oxford University for three years of study. His mission was to acquire language skills and expertise in foreign trade. In 1878 he was appointed the first manager of the Hong Kong office of Mitsui and Co., the first and largest international trading

32. *Ibid.*, entries for Feb. 16 and 17, 1894.

33. *Ibid.*, entries for Mar. 20, 1894, and Jan. 30, 1895. Robinson purchased a dozen prints by Isoda Koryūsai (active ca. 1764–88) for \$57.50 at the latter sale.

34. *Ibid.*, entry for Jan. 11, 1896.

35. *Ibid.*, entry for Apr. 8, 1894.



22. Shugio Hiromichi (1853–1927) in New York around 1884 (photo: Grolier Club)

company in Japan.³⁶ Shugio arrived in New York around 1880 and became director of the First Japan Manufacturing and Trading Co. (later the First Japan Trading Co.), purveyors of Japanese parasols and porcelains on Broadway. He immediately joined the Tile Club, a club for artists, where he must have met fellow members Weir, Twachtman, and Winslow Homer, among others.³⁷ He also became a member of the Grolier Club, only two months after this prestigious club for bibliophiles and admirers of fine printing was founded in 1884, and before other notables such as John La Farge, Louis Tiffany, Charles Freer, and H. O. Havemeyer. Japanese prints were displayed at the club's inaugural meeting.

An early Grolier Club photo of Shugio reveals a man of evident distinction, affecting Western hairstyle and glasses, and with no overtly Japanese features, qualities that possibly worked in his favor (Figure 22). For his talk at the club on Japanese books and printing in 1887, he displayed actual tools and materials of the printer. He received unanimous praise

from the press, and was described as “a thorough man of the world” and a “gentleman of rare culture and refinement.”³⁸ (His nickname at the Tile Club was “Varnish.”) He must have been something of a humorist as well: one of the prints he brought out depicted Admiral Perry expressing obvious disgust at the prospect of being offered live fish to eat. An 1889 exhibition of two hundred items at the Grolier Club was drawn entirely from Shugio's reportedly superb personal collection.³⁹ The show he arranged for the club in April of 1896, however, consisted of loans from Weir and Colman, as well as from Chicagoans Clarence Buckingham (1854–1913), Frederick W. Gookin (1853–1936), and Charles J. Morse.⁴⁰

Shugio's warm friendship with many New York artists can be documented. Robert Blum speaks of him in his correspondence from Japan in 1890,⁴¹ and Weir received the following letter from Shugio in 1894:

Your kind note of May 24th came to me today and I am glad to hear that you are enjoying the pure and glorious country air. Yes by all means I would like to have your complete set of etchings if I can have them in trade for Japanese prints or something that I have for I am so greatly taken by your etchings. Why can I not send you some Japanese paper for you to print them? I think your etchings will look better on Japan paper. I should like to come and spend a day with you when I am in New York early in June, if it is agreeable to you and Mrs. Weir.

I hope you will get Hayashi's prints soon. I send you by this post a reprint of a paper on Japanese wood engraving which I know you will enjoy in reading as it is an authentic account and it will give you a better idea of its methods. You can't buy it and I thought you will value it more for it.⁴²

36. Information conveyed to the author in a letter from Shugio Ippei, dated Tokyo, Mar. 30, 1983.

37. J. B. Millet, “The Tile Club,” in *Julian Alden Weir: An Appreciation of His Life and Works* (New York, 1922) p. 78.

38. *Town Topics* (May 12, 1887) and *American Bookmaker* (June 1887).

39. *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Japanese Colored Prints and Illustrated Books* (New York, 1889); reviewed in *Critic* (Apr. 13, 1883).

40. Shugio Hiromichi, *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Japanese Prints* (New York, 1896).

41. Letter from Blum dated Tokyo, Nov. 14, 1890. Correspondence with *Scribner's* (Publishers' Archives, Charles Scribner's Sons, Princeton University Library).

42. Letter from Shugio Hiromichi to Weir dated Georgetown, May 26, 1894, in the J. Alden Weir scrapbook. Shugio also transcribed the Japanese version of the preface to John La Farge's *An Artist's Letters from Japan* (New York, 1897).

By 1900 Shugio had returned to Tokyo to enter government service as a member of the imperial commission in charge of overseas Japanese art exhibitions. He appeared there in the role of guide and confidant to Frank Lloyd Wright (who erroneously referred to his friend as “Baron” Shugio), when the architect was searching for prints between 1913 and 1922.⁴³ Shugio retained his membership in the Grolier Club until his death, and often sent gifts, including prints and a large sketch for a painting by Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1798–1861). The latter now hangs over the fireplace in the club’s fifth-floor library.

On the occasion of the Grolier Club’s 1896 print exhibition, Howard Mansfield, a member and later president of the club, delivered the Ladies’ Day lecture (Figure 23). Mansfield was a graduate of Yale and of Columbia Law School and worked for the firm of

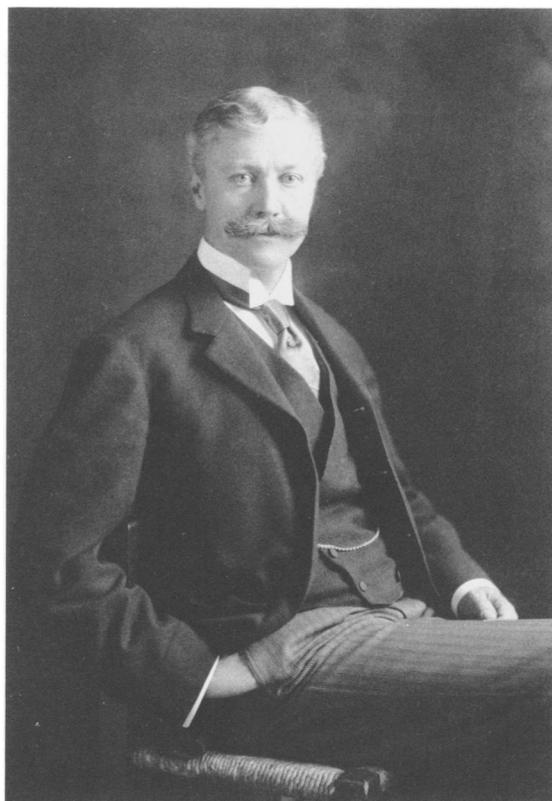
Lord, Day and Taylor until his death at age eighty-nine. A man of charm and discriminating taste, he was prominent in the cultural life of New York City for fifty years. His association with the Metropolitan Museum began in 1891, when he was elected a fellow for life. He became a trustee in 1909, the year of the photograph in Figure 24, and served as treasurer until 1921. Mansfield may have come to Japanese art through his first love, Whistler. In fact, he had one of only two comprehensive collections of Whistler etchings and lithographs—the other belonged to Charles Freer, whom he had introduced to Whistler’s work.

43. Julia Meech-Pekarik, “Frank Lloyd Wright and Japanese Prints,” *MMAB* 40, no. 2 (Fall 1982) pp. 49–56; idem, *Frank Lloyd Wright and Japanese Prints: The Collection of Mrs. Avery Coonley* (Washington, D.C., 1983).

23. Ladies’ Day lecture invitation, 1896. New York, Grolier Club (photo: Otto E. Nelson)



24. Howard Mansfield (1849–1938) in 1909. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Archives (photo: Marceau, New York)



Weir and Mansfield often dined together and discussed Japanese prints.⁴⁴ The latter's remarks on the occasion of his Ladies' Day lecture make clear his own strong bias: "Taken as a whole, the art of Ukiyoe . . . prints, is, in my judgment, not only one of the most remarkable phases of art expression in Japan, but deserves to rank as one of the most notable forms of pure art which the world has seen."⁴⁵

In 1915 he went on to write an interesting account of the state of the field entitled "American Appreciation of Japanese Art."⁴⁶ Mansfield's collection of more than three hundred outstanding ukiyo-e prints, as well as fine Japanese lacquer, painting, pottery, sword furniture, and textiles, was acquired by the Metropolitan in 1936 (see Figures 2 and 18).

Ukiyo-e collected by two New York artists of the same generation as Weir and Mansfield became the foundation of the Metropolitan Museum's collection. Francis Lathrop and Samuel P. Isham (1855–1914) both enjoyed successful careers, but their reputations as artists have not survived the test of time, and today the Museum does not own a single example of the work of either man. Lathrop (Figure 25), whose portrait was painted by his good friend J. Alden Weir, probably discovered ukiyo-e in London during a period of tutelage under Whistler. He pursued additional studies under Pre-Raphaelites Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris, and subsequently returned to New York to specialize in mural painting and stained glass for churches and college chapels from Maine to New Jersey. During the last fifteen years of his life he accumulated twelve thousand woodblock prints, including four thousand by Hokusai alone. As one of the original members of the Grolier Club, he may have been spurred on by an acquaintance with Shugio Hiromichi, but he also acquired prints from Fenollosa, who catalogued portions of his collection.

Unpublished letters in the archives of the Museum show that a year before his death Lathrop offered to sell his entire collection to the Museum for \$150,000. Museum officials declined this offer, but the prints were offered again by the executors of his estate in 1910. At the time there was not yet a curator of Far Eastern art, and a purchase of a collection of Japanese prints of this magnitude was obviously unthinkable to most of the trustees.

The eventual purchase by the Museum in 1912 of a small group of 164 prints from the Lathrop collec-

tion was almost certainly inspired by Howard Mansfield. From the thousands of prints left in Lathrop's studio in the tower room of the old University Building at Washington Square, Mansfield eventually selected those he thought most suitable for the Museum. The preliminary cataloguing, a formidable task, was carried out by one of the executors (who eventually demanded compensation), the Brooklyn artist and art dealer Hamilton Easter Field (1873–1922).⁴⁷ Field was an active leader on the New York art scene as critic, painter, and dealer between 1910 and 1922. He began to buy Japanese prints himself from Bing when he was in Paris in the 1890s as a student of Gérôme, and after he opened his Brooklyn gallery in 1910 he displayed American moderns like Winslow Homer side by side with Japanese prints. Lathrop was among his print clients.⁴⁸ Field advertised "Japanese prints at the lowest prices, suitable for Christmas gifts."⁴⁹ (In 1922 the Metropolitan Museum purchased forty-nine prints from the Field collection when it was auctioned by the American Art Association.)

At Mansfield's suggestion, the Museum hired the Chicago connoisseur Frederick W. Gookin, regarded as the foremost authority on ukiyo-e prints, to clean, mount, and properly catalogue the Lathrop collection. Gookin published a brief description of this material in the February 1912 issue of the *Bulletin of The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, and subsequently went on to catalogue and describe for *Bulletin* readers the more than two hundred prints from the estate of Samuel

44. Theodore Robinson diaries, entry for Jan. 22, 1895.

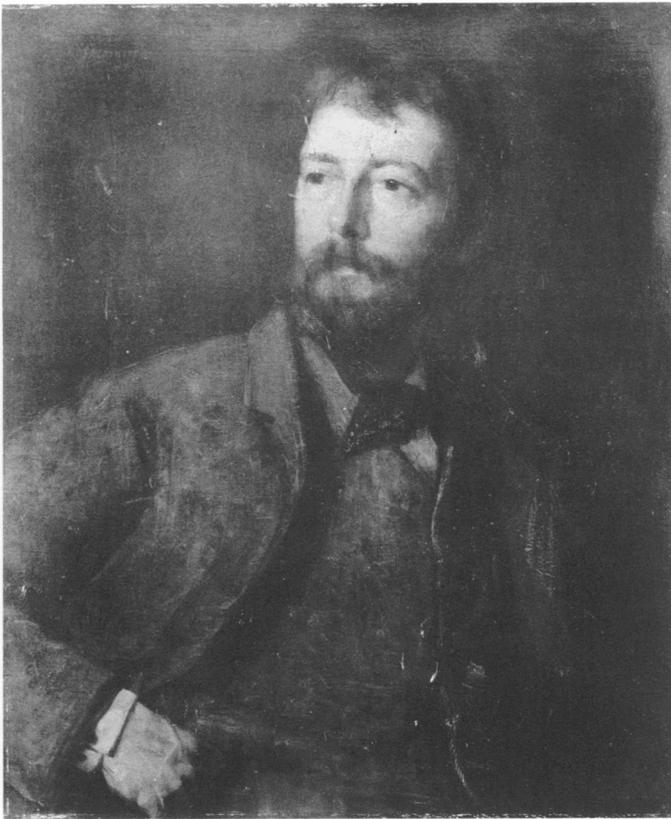
45. Mansfield, "Japanese Prints," p. 128.

46. Howard Mansfield, "American Appreciation of Japanese Art," in Lindsay Russell, ed., *America to Japan* (New York/London, 1915) pp. 239–250. Mansfield, whose interests were broad, also wrote the introduction to *The Armor and Arms Club Catalogue of a Loan Exhibition of Japanese Sword Guards Held at The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York, 1921).

47. Field had written an essay on the importance of the Lathrop collection, "The Art of Kiyonaga as Illustrated in an American Collection," *Burlington Magazine* 13, no. 61 (1908) pp. 241–248.

48. One of the Metropolitan prints from the Lathrop collection (JP737) is stamped with Field's seal.

49. Doreen Bolger Burke, "Hamilton Easter Field and the Rise of Modern Art in America," unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Delaware, 1973, p. 21, n. 3. See also William Green, "Hamilton Easter Field (1873–1922)," *Impressions* 8 (Summer 1983) pp. 4–12.



25. J. Alden Weir, *Portrait of Francis Lathrop* (1849–1909), 1884. Oil on canvas. New York, The Hispanic Society of America (photo: courtesy Hispanic Society)

P. Isham, a gift to the Museum in 1914 by the artist's sister in his memory.⁵⁰

Isham was born in New York City, graduated from Yale, and spent a total of seven years studying in Paris, at the same time as Weir. He painted landscapes and figures, exhibited all over America, won medals, and was well regarded in the world of art during his lifetime. Today, however, he is remembered more as an art historian: his magnum opus was a large volume entitled *The History of American Painting*, published in 1905. His writing is sprinkled with references to Japanese painting, and his canvases bear suggestive titles such as *The Lilac Kimono*. It is a tribute to his expertise that in April of 1914 (two months before his death) the Museum invited Isham to write about a newly acquired group of prints for the *May Bulletin*.⁵¹ He was even asked to write the labels for the small exhibition planned concurrently with this publication.

The prints in question were a choice selection of several hundred examples (predominantly Hiroshige) purchased from the Spaulding collection in Boston for the then large sum of \$17,000. Again, the instigator was Howard Mansfield, who apparently became a de facto acting curator. On September 25, 1913, he wrote to Edward Robinson (1858–1931), director of the Museum:⁵²

I think you must have heard of the Spaulding Brothers—William S. and John T.—of Boston, and of their wonderful collection of Japanese prints. Very likely you know them as Harvard men.

Well, they have very systematically and thoroughly undertaken to get together as fine a collection as possible, and seem to me to have succeeded. Beginning in Japan and continuing to receive prints from there, buying the prints that Fenollosa turned over to his first wife after the separation; acquiring then the fine collection formed by Dr. Clarence Webster of Chicago; then the remarkable collection of prints by Shunsho and his followers from Carl [*sic*] Wright of Chicago; afterward buying from Yamanaka & Co. the collection of prints by Sharaku, that was shown in the Japan Society's exhibition⁵³ and the greater part of the princely collection of Baron Sumitomo—the “copper king” of Japan, who then concentrated on Chinese bronzes—the Spauldings have finally acquired from Wright the amazing impressions that he has acquired in Japan during a four month stay early this year. So that now they have a collection that is probably unsurpassed in quality anywhere. . . .

Knowing that in the collections which they had made . . . before . . . acquiring the prints that Wright bought in Japan, there must be many duplicates of splendid quality—as fine as the other impressions from the same block belonging to them, or so fine that it would not be easy to decide between two similar impressions—I urged the Spauldings some time ago to separate the duplicates and let me see them, thinking that I might strain my purse and conscience and secure a few. On Monday of this week I went to Pride's Crossing to look at the duplicates available for purchase. I was amazed at the number

50. Frederick W. Gookin, “The Samuel Isham Gift of Japanese Color Prints,” *MMAB* 10, no. 7 (July 1915) pp. 136–138.

51. Samuel P. Isham, “Japanese Color Prints,” *MMAB* 9, no. 5 (May 1914) p. 122.

52. Robinson graduated from Harvard in 1879. A Greek scholar, he was curator of classical antiquities at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts for seventeen years. He served as director of The Metropolitan Museum of Art from 1910 until his death.

53. See Frederick W. Gookin, *Japanese Colour-Prints and Their Designers*, exh. cat. (New York, 1913) pp. 47–48. The exhibition was held from April 19 to May 19, 1911.

and quality. Taken by themselves, they seemed unsurpassable, and comparison in a number of instances between the duplicate and what was kept left little to choose between them. Then there are some 300 of these duplicates, nearly all worthy of any collection. Of course, I couldn't dream of acquiring but few, and the suggestion is made that our museum might like to purchase a selection at the marked prices, which seem to me moderate and are in no instance, I believe, higher than the cost to the Spauldings and in a number of instances of very costly prints are materially less—an average having been struck, perhaps, between the two impressions. The opportunity is exceptional for obtaining fine and rare prints by Hokusai, in whose work the museum's collection is weak, as is my own. . . .

Now if you think that the museum would like to make a selection from these duplicates, after I have taken my few, the Spauldings will send the prints to New York on approval. The purchase of those that are specially fine and highly desirable, and that would wonderfully supplement the museum's present collection and make it really important and worthy, would require, I should say, the expenditure of about fifteen—possibly twenty—thousand dollars. But then the museum would have a collection worth talking about—of higher overall quality—and importance, perhaps, than that of the New York Public Library.



26. S. C. Bosch Reitz (1860–1938) in Austria around 1936 (photo: courtesy H. M. A. F. Six)

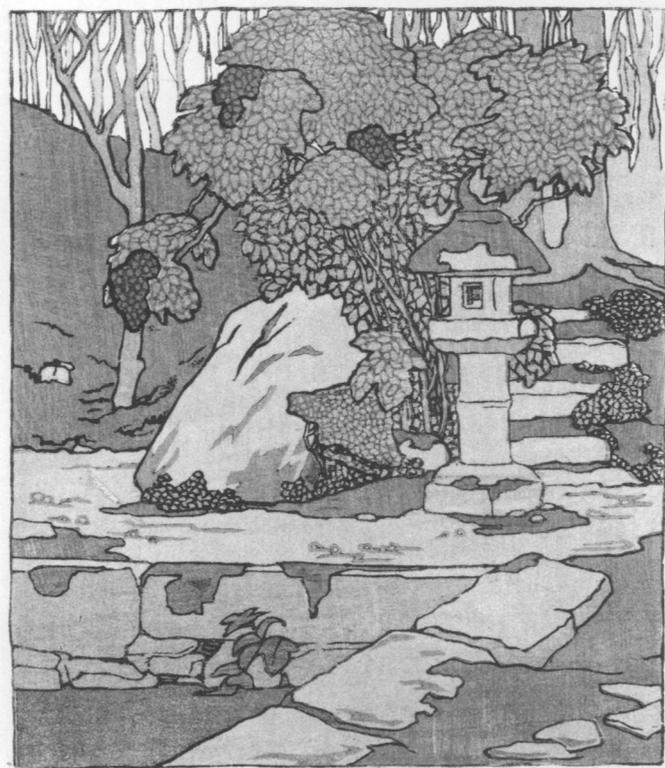
In short, I strongly advise such a purchase, for such a chance may never come again. Japan is pretty well drained of prints, and these particular prints have been carefully chosen by one or another exacting collector for their quality. . . .⁵⁴

Mansfield also persuaded several friends to make a few selections for their personal collections. Robinson himself took seven, and two young men, Louis V. Ledoux and Harold G. Henderson, Sr., each purchased one or two.

The famed Spaulding collection of seven thousand prints, considered the finest in the world, was eventually promised to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston in 1921. The prints in the New York Public Library alluded to by Mansfield were the gift, around 1901, of New York philanthropist Charles Stewart Smith (1832–1909), who made his fortune in the dry goods business. A trustee of the Metropolitan Museum from 1889, he gave the Museum his collection

54. Unpublished letter in the MMA Archives.

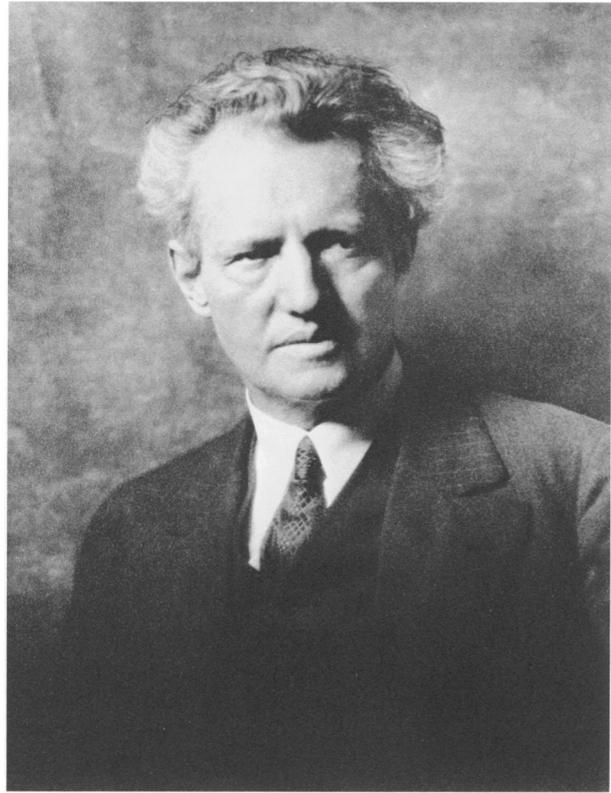
27. S. C. Bosch Reitz, *Japanese Garden*, 1900. Woodblock print. Laren, Holland, collection of H. S. Six (photo: Rijksmuseum-Stichting, Amsterdam)



of 522 Japanese ceramics in 1893. He had acquired both the ceramics and prints the year before while honeymooning in Japan with his third wife. An Englishman, Captain Frank Brinkley (1841–1912), active in Japan since the 1860s first as a journalist, author, and military adviser to the Japanese government, and then as a dealer, had apparently sold the Smiths a ready-made collection. In a letter of September 9, 1893, to the director of the Museum, Smith reported on the state of the Japanese art market in a manner that sounds all too familiar: “I have had a letter from Brinkley a few days since in which he says that it would be absolutely impossible to make such a collection now.”⁵⁵ In 1896 Smith was pleased to have Fenollosa spend an entire day with him looking over his Japanese prints.

In their meeting of June 14, 1915, the trustees finally voted to establish a Department of Far Eastern Art, and to appoint as its curator S. C. (Sigisbert Chrétien) Bosch Reitz, a native of Amsterdam and descendant of an old and cultivated family of art lovers (Figure 26).⁵⁶ Bosch Reitz, trained as a painter in the academic style, entered the Académie Julien in Paris in 1884 (a year after Samuel Isham), and subsequently exhibited in the Paris Salon, where he was awarded a gold medal. In 1900 he went to Japan for a year to study Japanese art, and this was clearly a turning point in his life. While in Japan, Bosch Reitz learned the technique of woodcutting under the tutelage of another European, the Austrian graphic artist Emil Orlik (1870–1932), and one handsome example of the Dutchman’s work in this medium has survived (Figure 27). (The paintings made there were all stolen a few days before he left Japan.⁵⁷) In 1909 he began to devote his time to the study of Oriental ceramics in European museums and in 1914 was offered a cataloguing job at the Louvre. The outbreak of war prevented his accepting that appointment, and he found himself instead in New York, where he was approached by the Metropolitan Museum. Although this was his first museum position, he quickly initiated a program of exhibitions of Chinese and Japanese art, and until his retirement in 1927 (when he returned to Holland and resumed painting), he was remarkably active in the pursuit of prints. He bought heavily at auction, taking advantage of the availability of great collections that were being dispersed by the first generation of collectors.

Arnold Genthe, an American high-society photog-



28. Arnold Genthe (1869–1942), *Self-Portrait*. Photograph. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Clarence McK. Lewis, 54.549.35

rapher of German descent who spent much of his life in New York (Figure 28), was another artist who began collecting ukiyo-e around the turn of the century. He credited Fenollosa with sparking his interest in prints and eventually owned some two thousand examples.⁵⁸ Genthe devoted a chapter of his memoirs to Japan, where he traveled for six months in 1908. He was a serious and sensitive visitor, who took the trouble to learn some colloquial Japanese and

55. Letter in the MMA Archives.

56. Edward Robinson, “Department of Far Eastern Art,” *MMAB* 10, no. 7 (July 1915) pp. 135–136.

57. K. G. Boon, “A Dutch Artist in Japan,” in H. M. Kaempfer and Jhr. W. O. G. Sickinghe, eds., *The Fascinating World of the Japanese Artist* (The Hague, 1971) p. 48; see notes compiled by Peter Six, MMA Archives. Miss H.M.A.F. Six also provided information on Bosch Reitz’s family history.

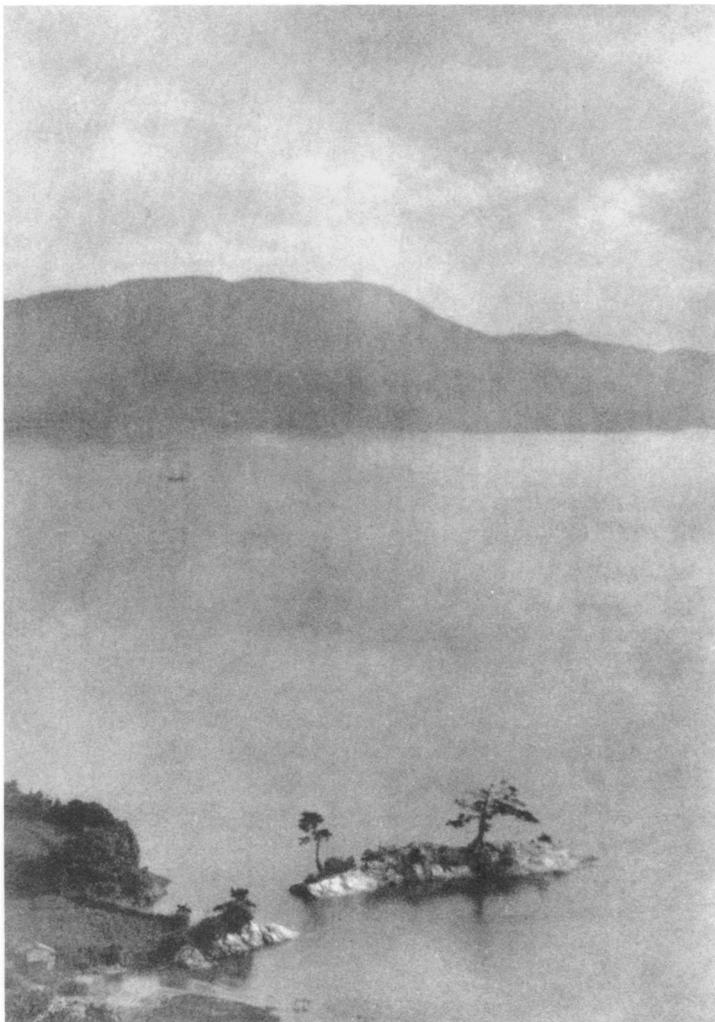
58. Arnold Genthe, *As I Remember* (New York, 1936) p. 145.

practice calligraphy. He climbed Mount Fuji and spent a few months with the Ainu aborigines. He was also ideally situated to collect Japanese art. His host

would have sent word to the curio dealers of the place that a distinguished collector from America was with them and wanted to see some of their wares. Along they would come in the evening with large bundles, and before an audience that included the entire household, the servants in the background at a respectful distance, they spread out a fascinating array of embroideries, hangings, kimonos, *netsukes*, *kakemonos*, prints, illustrated books, ancient swords, etc. There were long sessions with much bargaining and tea drinking in the best Japanese manner. . . .⁵⁹

A comparison of his 1908 bird's-eye view of the Inland Sea and the right-hand portion of a Hiroshige triptych, *Whirlpools at Awa*, suggests that Genthe was trying to see the world through the eyes of a Japa-

29. Arnold Genthe, *The Inland Sea*, 1908. Photograph. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 33.43.224



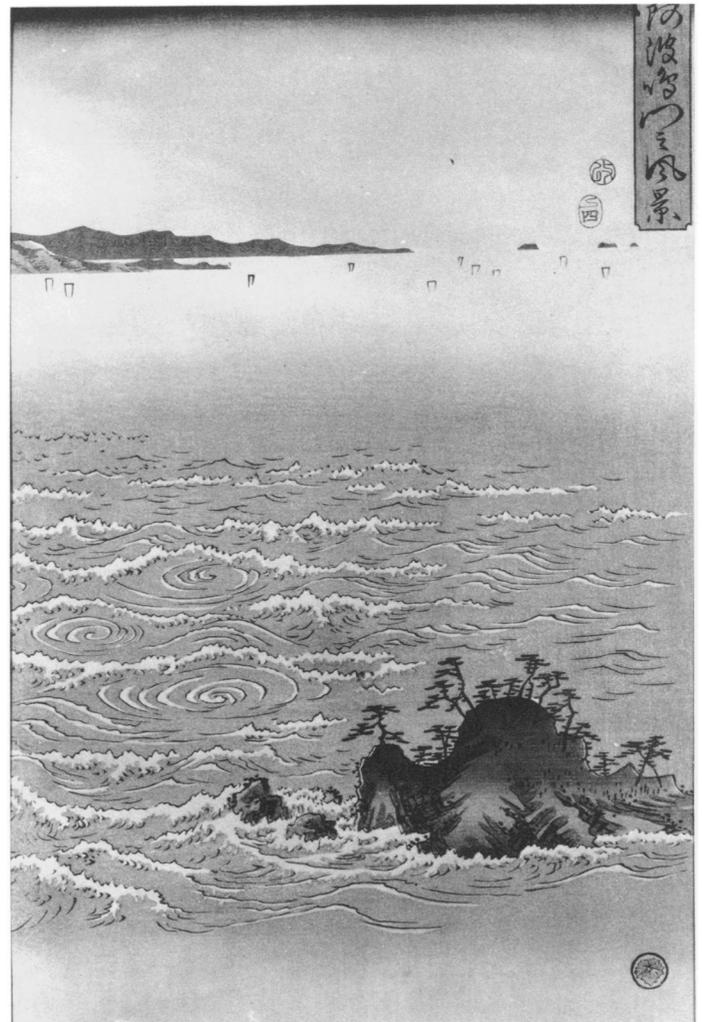
nese artist (Figures 29, 30). When he sold his print collection at auction in New York in 1917 it was to finance a new interest, Chinese painting.⁶⁰

One New York couple who amassed a splendid collection during the teens, the golden age of print collecting in America, were Mr. and Mrs. Henry L. Phillips. They made their purchases between 1911 and 1922 in New York, London, and Paris, but also in Japan. It was apparently at the suggestion of their friend Howard Mansfield that some of their 270 prints were placed on loan to the Museum in 1927. Like Mans-

59. Ibid., p. 225.

60. *400 Japanese Color Prints Collected by Arnold Genthe* (New York, The Anderson Galleries, 1917).

30. Andō Hiroshige, *Whirlpools at Awa*, from the series *Snow, Moon, and Flowers*, 1857, right-hand panel of triptych. Woodblock print, 14½ × 9⅛ in. (36.8 × 24.6 cm.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929, H. O. Havemeyer Collection, JP1892





31. Henry L. Phillips (died 1939). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Archives

32. Eishi (1756–1829), *Ono no Komachi* from the series *An Elegant Parody of the Six Immortal Poets*. Woodblock print, 14 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 9 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (37.1 × 24.4 cm.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Henry L. Phillips, 1939, JP2815



field, Henry Phillips (Figure 31) had been elected a fellow for life of the Museum in the 1890s. When Phillips died in 1939, his prints (including many fine *surimono*) were bequeathed to the Museum (Figure 32).⁶¹ He must have felt extremely possessive about these fragile works, because he made the rather bizarre stipulation in his will that except when placed on exhibition, the prints could not be shown to visitors. (This restriction was not enforced by the Museum.)

Howard Mansfield's best-known and most gifted disciple in the study of Japanese art was Louis V. Ledoux (Figure 33), president of Ledoux and Co., expert assayers and chemists for mining and metallurgical firms. With his bony face and thin, lean good looks he impressed one admirer as "a truly elegant man, on a par only with Baron Hosokawa." Others recall him in less flattering terms as a nervous aesthete. Educated at Columbia University, Ledoux was

a promising lyric poet and a collector of rare books when he met Mansfield, who treated the young man almost like a son. Ledoux and his wife, Jean, made the first of several trips to Japan in 1920. The experience converted him into a serious collector and scholar of Japanese prints. Because of his literary background, Ledoux was one of the few in his day concerned with translating the poems that are integral to so many of Hiroshige's bird and flower prints, and he was assisted in this work by the New York-based Japanese dealer Matsuki Kihachirō.⁶² In 1924

61. Alan Priest, *Japanese Prints from the Henry L. Phillips Collection* (New York, 1947).

62. Louis V. Ledoux, "Pathfinding in Paradise: The Poems on Japanese Prints," *The Arts* (October 1921) pp. 15–22. I am grateful for the personal recollections of Louis Ledoux provided by Charles Greenfield, Alice Boney, Pauline Simmons, and Roland Koscherak.



33. Alexandre Iacovleff, unfinished portrait of Louis V. Ledoux (1880–1948), May 10, 1936. Sepia. Cornwall on Hudson, New York, collection of Louis Pierre Ledoux (photo: Otto E. Nelson)

he organized exhibitions of figure and landscape prints at the Grolier Club, and in 1927 there was a joint display of prints from the collections of Mansfield and Ledoux at the gallery of the Century Association. That same year the Japan Society, where he later served as president, published Ledoux's *The Art of Japan*, in which he cited prints at the head of a list of the most original artistic products of Japan:

Scorned until recently in Japan, because they were made by and for the people of the middle classes and represented merely the joys and sorrows of this fleeting world, prints made an immediate, irresistible appeal to Europe and America. They are distinctively Japanese in scope and feeling, they have the humor, gaiety, the charm of Japan . . . and they depict all this with a consummate mastery of form and line and color that was the heritage of a thousand years of technical achievement.⁶³

Ledoux gave several prints to the Metropolitan in 1927 and 1931, and lent his entire print collection to the Museum during the winter of 1928 for a series of rotating exhibitions. These were documented by another New Yorker, Harold G. Henderson, Sr. (1889–1974), who worked with the Museum's prints as an assistant to the curator of Far Eastern Art from 1927

to 1929. Henderson subsequently studied in Japan from 1930 to 1933, then joined the faculty at Columbia University, where he taught the Japanese language and initiated a course in Japanese art. He published books on Japanese grammar, poetry, and art, and later in his life was decorated by the Japanese government with the Order of the Sacred Treasure, the highest decoration given to a foreigner. Former students recall that Henderson conducted small classes at the Ledoux apartment on Park Avenue. The prints were set out one at a time on an easel, and Mr. and Mrs. Ledoux observed the proceedings from the mezzanine-level balcony of their high-ceilinged living room. At the conclusion of each session they came down to chat. In 1939 Henderson and Ledoux coauthored *The Surviving Works of Sharaku*, which was dedicated to the memory of S. C. Bosch Reitz. In this catalogue, for an exhibition shown in New York, Boston, and Chicago, they not only pinpointed for the first time the brief ten-month career in 1794 of the elusive Tōshūsai Sharaku, renowned for his realistic actor portraits, but also influenced the future of ukiyo-e scholarship by insisting on detailed descriptions of individual prints.

The Ledoux collection was no mere random accumulation. More than any of his predecessors, he was a specialist, meticulous about maintaining the high quality of his collection. He did so by deliberately limiting its size to 250 prints, a number he had attained by the early 1920s. Thereafter he was obliged to sell a print for every new example he acquired. This selectivity was a practice inspired by his early master, Howard Mansfield. Ledoux, however, felt the need not only to collect but to record his collection for posterity in a five-volume catalogue, of which the first volume, *Japanese Prints of the Primitive Period*, appeared in 1942. "In the past," he wrote, "these prints have been loved separately by others; for a moment they are together, dear to me; and before the storms of time scatter them, as well they may, their loveliness should be recorded for the study and solace of those who care for beauty in the years that are to come."⁶⁴

63. Idem, *The Art of Japan* (New York, 1927) p. 30. See also p. 12.

64. Idem, *Japanese Prints of the Primitive Period in the Collection of Louis V. Ledoux* (New York, 1942) foreword. Recently a selection of Ledoux prints was reunited by Donald Jenkins, *The Ledoux Heritage: The Collecting of Ukiyo-e Master Prints* (New York, 1973).

The publication of the final two volumes was left to the supervision of Mrs. Ledoux following her husband's death in 1948, and necessitated the sale of the collection itself the following year. Alan Priest (1898–1969), the witty and eccentric curator of Far Eastern Art who succeeded Bosch Reitz and remained for thirty-five years, was given first choice. He selected

34. Torii Kiyonobu (1664–1729), *The Actor Yamanaka Heikurō*. Hand-colored woodblock print, 21¼ × 11½ in. (55.2 × 29.2 cm.). Formerly in the collection of Louis V. Ledoux. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund and Rogers Fund, 1949, JP3098



the finest of the Ledoux prints for the Metropolitan: all the early examples (see Figure 34), and nineteen by Sharaku (see Figure 35) for which the Museum is still renowned. Priest was never much of a print enthusiast (he was a scholar of Chinese art), and therefore he deserves special credit for taking advantage of this rare opportunity. Ledoux had succeeded in bringing together no fewer than six of the thirty-nine recorded prints of stately courtesans by the Kaigetsudo artists. Two of these six are the only known impressions. He expressed his own strong bias toward these early figure prints in his 1938 *An Essay on Japanese Prints*: "It is fairly safe to say that with a few



35. Tōshūsai Sharaku (active 1794–95), *The Actor Nakamura Nakazō II in the Role of Prince Korekata Disguised as the Peasant Tsuchizo*, 1794. Woodblock print, 12 × 8½ in. (30.5 × 21.6 cm.). Formerly in the collection of Louis V. Ledoux. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund and Rogers Fund, 1949, JP3129



36. Ichigeisai Yoshitomi (active ca. 1850–73), *An American Drawn from Life*, 1861. Woodblock print, 14¼ × 10 in. (36.2 × 25.4 cm.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Lincoln Kirstein, 1959, JP3329

splendid exceptions . . . most of the figure prints published between 1805 and 1920 are practically worthless as works of art and are printed in glaringly bad colors.”⁶⁵

Ledoux was a specialist and the last of the great

collectors. Among contemporaries he had no competitors as a collector and connoisseur, with the possible exception of the Parisian jeweler Henri Vever (1854–1943). Ledoux appeared at a Parke Bernet print auction in 1948 one month before his death, even though paralyzed by a stroke and confined to a wheelchair. By the time of his death the Japanese print was no longer as sought after as it had once been. When the Mansfield prints were exhibited together for the first time in 1946, one critic for the *New York Herald Tribune* questioned whether the display could effect a resurgence in the taste for ukiyo-e. “While the popularity of Japanese prints reached a state of exquisite connoisseurship some years ago,” he wrote, “this kind of appreciation is hard to recapture in the modern world.”⁶⁶

The last significant group of prints added to the Museum’s collection were the two hundred nineteenth-century examples given by Lincoln Kirstein in 1959 and 1960, but they represented for him no more than a brief infatuation, the result of two short trips to Japan with the New York City Ballet. Still, it is a remarkably personal and focused collection, depicting foreigners and the Western influence that followed the arrival of Commodore Perry (Figure 36). Kirstein discovered a delightful new world, but one that would have been despised as late and decadent by his predecessors.

The early decades of the twentieth century, before the Japanese themselves had entered the market as competitive bidders, were the golden years of print collecting in this country, and the colored woodblock print played a pivotal role in introducing Japanese art to the West. (It should be noted, of course, that in those days paintings, sculptures, and ceramics of fine quality were rarely made available to Western buyers.) Today, following a period of neglect, Japanese prints have become appropriate subjects for serious scholarly research and cataloguing. At the same time a recent resurgence of interest in the medium of woodcut printing itself is luring a new generation of graphic artists to Japan.

65. Louis V. Ledoux, *An Essay on Japanese Prints* (New York, 1938) p. 30.

66. Carlyle Burrows, “Art of the Week: Old Japanese Prints, and Modern Paintings,” *New York Herald Tribune* (Dec. 8, 1946) p. 10.