



CONTEMPORARY

JAPANESE

WOODCUTS

Auckland City Art Gallery

1960

contemporary japanese woodcuts

Some Japanese prints were included in the 'Contemporary Japanese Art' exhibition shown throughout New Zealand last year but this is the first exhibition in this country devoted solely to the new *sosaku-hanga* prints of Japan.

We are most grateful to Mr T. Takahashi of the Yoseido Gallery, Tokyo, for both selecting and lending us the prints included in this exhibition.

P. A. TOMORY

introduction

It was from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries that the Japanese produced the wood block prints for which they became famous. These are the *ukiyo-e* (floating world) prints which, after the opening of Japan by Commodore Matthew G. Perry's United States Naval Expedition in 1853, gave the West its first view of Japanese life and culture and created a romantic idea of the Far East which exists in many instances to this day.

From 1853 the traditions of Japanese printmaking were increasingly undermined by the influences of Western art and although much good work was still produced a general decadence resulting from misunderstood and unassimilated Western influence reduced the floating world of the early prints to less symbolic and more earthbound images marking the end of the floating world and the emergence of Japan as a modern culture with interests in both East and West.

Japan's new prints, *sosaku hanga* — the name was chosen by the artists themselves to distinguish their works from those of the *ukiyo-e* printmakers, and means creative prints — were first made in 1904 and marked the point where neglected Japanese traditions once again were restored to their rightful place and Japanese artists realised that not only the West but both East and West must contribute to the new culture of Japan. These prints show the results of this fusion.

All the exhibits are woodcuts.

Names of the artists are given Japanese style, surname first.

the catalogue

HIRATSUKA UN'ICHI (b.1895) has been the great teacher and quiet leader of the modern print movement for many years. His own work goes back to the ancient Buddhist prints of Japan, the strong sumi-e of Sesshu, and the black-and-white work of such early ukiya-e greats as Moronobu.

- 1 A pine tree
- 2 Old tower in Spring

HATSUYAMA SHIGERU (b.1897) received his early training in a dyeing shop and has made a living by illustrating books for children in the same mood of fantasy that suffuses his best prints.

- 3 Pluck B
- 4 Nudes

HASHIMOTO OKIIE (b.1899), since graduating from the Tokyo Art School in 1924, has taught art in a Tokyo school.

- 5 Bamboo Grove
- 6 Garden with Stepping Stones

AZECHI UMETARO (b.1902) is a native of Shikoku, largely self-taught, who has managed to retain a rough, rustic charm in his works through the years.

- 7 Blue Ice
- 8 A Mountaineer in Grief

INAGAKI TOMOO (b.1902)

- 9 Dual character of a cat
- 10 Night Walk

YAMAGUCHI GEN (b.1903) led a varied career before being drawn to printmaking.

- 11 Doctrinairism
- 12 Human Being

MUNAKATA SHIKO (b.1903) goes back to the same simple techniques as Hiratsuka (Nos. 1 and 2), but imbues them with a strange power and near-religious intensity. He first achieved some success as a painter in oils, but eventually determined that he could never fully express himself in that alien form.

13 Matsu-taka

14 Setsuin

SASAJIMA KIHEI (b.1906)

15 Old Tower, No. 1

16 A Clump of Trees

SAITO KIYOSHI (b.1907) is one of the most productive and popular of the moderns; a native of Aizu, his early work concentrated on the snow scenes of that region.

17 Sendo — Goshō Garden, Kyoto

18 Winter in Aizu (4)

NAKAO YOSHITAKA (b.1910) lives on the island of Shikoku and has experimented with unusual techniques of printmaking.

19 Sunny

20 Official Inspection

HAGIWARA HIDEO (b.1913)

21 Midnight

22 Clematis

23 Snow No. 1

SEKINO JUN'ICHIRO (b.1914) studied Western art briefly, but is largely self-taught. He is well known for his figure-prints and his kabuki scenes. Recently he has worked in a bold, abstract style.

24 A Hawk

25 Boy with Black Cloth

KAWANO KAORU (b.1916) is a native of Hokkaido. His charming visions of young girls have recently achieved considerable acclaim.

26 Quiet Rain

27 Charge

28 Camellia C

YOSHIDA MASAJI (b.1917), unrelated to the famous Yoshida family of printmakers, studied at the Tokyo Art School under Hiratsuka and has himself been most successful in teaching printmaking to school children.

29 Moss, No. 1

30 Spare Time

KITAOKA FUMIO (b.1918)

31 Driftwood and Cloud

32 Flower on the North Seashore

MABUCHI THORU (b.1920) — the 'Thoru' is his own romanization of the name Toru — was taught first by his father, a woodblock engraver, and later studied at the Tokyo Art School under Hiratsuka.

33 Haniwa, C

34 Black Vessel

UCHIMA ANSEI (b.1921) is an American of Japanese ancestry who was caught in Japan by the war. He has been active in organising exhibitions of modern prints, as well as in developing a style of his own.

35 Eulogy

36 Way for Hakone

KINOSHITA TOMIO (b.1923) is a new printmaker just beginning to succeed in the art world.

37 Masks (Calamity)

38 Masks No. 4

MAKI HAKU (b.1924)

39 Work. B

40 Book of Poems

YOSHIDA HODAKA (b.1926) became a printmaker more or less against his artist father's wishes; much of his work is abstract.

41 Antique Man

42 Prey

NAKAYAMA TADASHI (b.1927)

43 Black Wind

44 Crown

AMANO KUNIHIRO (b.1929)

45 Fish — J

46 Flying

KUMAGAI GORŌ (b.1932)

47 Pastoral

48 Wind in May

AMANO WAZO

49 Young Cook *lock*

50 Anxiety