

TRADITIONAL &
CONTEMPORARY
JAPANESE PRINTS



1972/13

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FOREWORD

This is the first time since 1927 that such a comprehensive exhibition of Japanese prints has been on show at this gallery. Most of the works have been selected from our permanent collection. We are grateful for the Idemitsu Art Gallery's invaluable assistance in identifying and authenticating the *Ukiyo-e* woodcuts, which were sent to Tokyo for this purpose. Acknowledgement is also due to the kind service of the Consulate-General of Japan, Auckland, Dr. Walter Auburn, Mr. Trevor Bayliss and Miss Ito.

G. Docking.
(Director)

INTRODUCTION

"I find in the art of this astonishing people nothing strained, a calm, a grandeur, an extraordinary unity – a rather subdued radiance which is nevertheless brilliant".
(Part of a letter from Camille to Lucien Pissarro, dated 3 February 1893.)

The French Impressionist painters and Whistler were the first to bring to our attention the qualities of the Japanese woodcut; the pattern, design and expressive nature of line. The print designers did not intend to make their subjects closely resemble nature in the Western sense. Rather, their interpretation was a decorative one, and it was carried out in the same spirit as their calligraphy.

The woodcut in Japan was introduced towards the end of the 17th century as a popular art form of a society, predominantly bourgeoisie, which emerged with the new city of Edo (Tokyo). The school of art to which these prints belong, *Ukiyo-e*, literally "pictures of the floating world", at first recorded the fleeting moment of passing events, the everchanging scene of daily life, represented in this exhibition by the waitresses of Edo's Yoshiwara district, the famous beauties, actors of the *Kabuki*, and the wrestlers. The landscape views and mediaeval heroic legends were a later addition to the repertoire. The designers of these prints include the well-known artists Utamaro, Hokusai and Hiroshige.

The decline in *Ukiyo-e* art became apparent in the second half of the 19th century, largely caused through the advent of foreign influences. The original themes of the works were neglected, and aniline colours became substitutes for the native pigments, robbing the woodcuts of their original delicacy of colour. It was not until the beginning of the 20th century, when the roots of the contemporary movement were established, that printmaking in Japan began to flourish once again.

For additional information you are advised to refer to F. A. Turk: The Prints of Japan. Arco 1966

A. Kirker
(Curator: Prints and Drawings)

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TRADITIONAL

METHOD

Most traditional Japanese woodcuts consist of a key or outline, printed in black or grey, surrounding areas of colour which are either flat and even throughout or carefully gradated. The outline and colour areas have been printed from the surfaces of separate woodblocks, each corresponding to a different colour.

The **artist** first drew his design on thin paper using a brush with black ink. Parts of the drawing could be altered by attaching pieces of paper over the first drawing or by redrawing over parts of the first design in red (refer drawings A, B). When completed it was handed over to the **engraver**, who pasted it face down on a block, usually of cherry wood. The paper was sometimes oiled to make it more transparent. The key block or *daiban* was cut from this, and reproduced all the outlines of the drawing. Two guide notches were indicated on the key-block to serve as registration marks for the subsequent colour blocks.

The **printer** now took over the process. For his colours he used finely powdered pigments mixed to a paste with water and rice-flour. After inking the block, using a brush, a soft absorbent paper was placed face downwards on it. The impression was taken off by rubbing with a hard bamboo-sheathed disc, called a *baren*. All the impressions necessary were taken from each block in turn.

Increased richness of effect in many prints was achieved by the use of "gauffrage" or blindprinting, and the use of metal powders (refer 39,40).

Although the producers of woodcuts had many technical means and materials on which they could draw, these were often costly. As a rule only considerable demand and large production could make possible the comparatively small prices at which the prints originally sold.

In addition to characters and seals which refer to the subject, and those of the artist, engraver and printer, the majority of *Ukiyo-e* prints have the publishers' trademark on them. This is sometimes accompanied by his seal and that of the censor. The censor seals signified a control of publication and the enforcement of a kind of copyright law.

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Key to Sizes

oban	The usual size for a <i>Ukiyo-e</i> print approx. 10 x 15.
triptych	Three vertical oban prints, the design of which is continuous across the three.
chuban tate-ye	approx. 11 x 8.
kakuban	The most common size of <i>Surimono</i> prints approx. 8 x 7.

BEAUTIFUL WOMEN AND SCENES OF THE YOSHIWARA

Prints showing the famous beauties of the day, are among the very first to be produced by the *Ukiyo-e* School. Apart from the young women of the town, the inmates of the brothels in the Yoshiwara district were undoubtedly the commonest theme of all designs which featured women as the main motif. With the courtesans, interest is centred upon the face, the hair and more particularly, the kimono.

disciple of Torii KIYOMITSU 1735-1785.

- X 1 Seiro Shiki Juni Biki
(one of the "Twelve Beauties of Gay Quarters in Four Seasons" with her attendants.)
published: c1777 chuban tate-ye
presented by Capt. Humphreys-Davies

Kikugawa EIZAN 1787-1867

- 2 Woman reading by the side of a river
publisher: Soshuya Yohei c1805 oban
presented by Capt. Humphreys-Davies

TOYOKUNI I 1769-1825

Three figures in a landscape

- X 3 Woman presenting flowers to kneeling guests.
publisher: Izumiya Ichibei c1789 oban
presented by Capt. Humphreys-Davies

- X 4 The courtesan Yuzurigi
publisher: Yorozya Manbei c1801 oban

Keisai EISEN 1790-1848

- 5 The courtesan Yatsuhashi
publisher: Wakayo c1807 (?)
cancel seal: kiwame oban
presented by Capt. Humphreys-Davies

- 6 A courtesan on parade with her attendants
publisher: Tsuruya Kihei 1815-1842
cancel seal: kiwame oban

- X 7 The River Carnival at Ryogoku (May)
The Festival of the Weaver (July)
(from the series "Beauties of Twelve months")
publisher: Sanoki 1815-1842
cancel seal: kiwame oban

Ikkeisai YOSHIIKU 1833-1904

- 8 Edo-machi 2-chome Yudono no Zu
(a bath house in Edo)
published Jan. 1870 triptych (*left print missing*)
presented by Capt. Humphreys-Davies

- X 9 Mata Meguri-Kurawa Haru no Irodori
(from the series "Spring Scenes in Gay Quarters")
publisher: Ohtaya 1879 triptych (*left print missing*)
presented by the relatives of T. V. Gulliver

Women are also shown in scenes that are intended as a parody on various classical themes. These are *mitate* pictures (10-12).

Kitagawa UTAMARO 1753-1806

- 10 Komei Bijin Mitate Chushingura, Act II
(famous beauties acting the "Chushingura")
publisher: Ohmiya c1798 oban
presented by Capt. Humphreys-Davies
(Chushingura, refer 15-19)

HIROSHIGE 1797-1858

- X 11 Night Rain at Gion
(from the series "Selected Eight Beauties")
published: 1847-1852 triptych
presented by Capt. Humphreys-Davies

Ichiyusai KUNIYOSHI 1797-1861

- 12 The courtesan Kokonoe likened to Murasaki Shikibu
publisher: Ibaya Sensaburo 1843-1847 oban
(Shikibu, refer 38)

KABUKI

Kabuki, the popular theatre of Japan, formed a major part of the subject matter of the woodcuts from the last quarter of the 17th century. Most *Ukiyo-e* artists at one time or another took the stage as their subject, and several of the prints that have been included in the sections, "Beautiful Women" and "Legend and History", formed scenes from the theatre. Normally the prints depict either a single actor, or less often, two, in character. Only male performers were permitted on the *Kabuki* stage.

TOYOKUNI III 1786-1864

- 13 Actors in a scene from the *Kabuki* theatre
From left to right, Ichimura Uzaemon, Nakamura Shigan and Sawamura Tanosuke.
published 1861 triptych
presented by the relatives of T. V. Gulliver

attributed to TOYOKUNI III

- 14 The actor Ichikawa Kodanji in character
publisher: Koshihei after 1859 oban
presented by the relatives of T. V. Gulliver

Scenes from the play "Chushingura" are the most common in the *Kabuki* prints. The drama tells the story of the "Forty-Seven Ronins" (*samurai*), followers of the Lord of Ako, who take their revenge upon his murderer, after which they themselves commit suicide. It is the classic Japanese story of loyalty. (10, 15-19.)

HIROSHIGE 1797-1858

- 15 The "Chushingura", Act 6
publisher: Izumiya Ichibei c1828 oban

Utagawa KUNIAKI d1888

- X 16 Okaru and Kampei from the "Chushingura".
Actors from left to right,
Sawamura Tanosuke as Okaru,
Bando Hikosaburo as Hayano Kampei,
Kataoka Nizaemon as Ichimonjiya Saibe
publisher: Ki-ya 1874 triptych
presented by the relatives of T. V. Gulliver 1939

Ichiyusai KUNIYOSHI 1797-1861

- X 17 Two woodcuts *published* 1847-1852 oban
presented by Capt. Humphreys-Davies

- 18 Woodcut oban

Ichimosai YOSHITORA active 1850-1880

- 19 Actors in character from the series "Seichu Gishi Den"
(pictorial biographies of the "Forty-Seven Ronins")
publisher: Izumiya Ichibei c1850 oban
presented by Mrs. Irwin 1950

SUMO

These prints of wrestlers illustrate one of the oldest and most popular sports of Japan.

TOYOKUNI III 1786-1864

- 20 Wrestling match triptych
- 21 *Wrestlers from left to right*
Nishino Kata Kaigatake, Higashinokata Ichiniki,
Higashinokata Kuroiwa
publisher: Ibaya Sensaburo 1847-1852 oban
presented by Capt. Humphreys-Davies

LANDSCAPE

The demand for landscape prints in the 19th century resulted from the growing interest in travel among the Japanese populace. A further stimulus to draw the famous views was the advent of the government edict of 1842 which forbade the production of actor and courtesan prints and exhorted the artists to choose their subjects from landscape as well as the more heroic events of history and legend.

Keisai EISEN 1790-1848

- 22 Nikko Meisho no uchi Kegon no Taki
(the Kegon waterfall from the series of "Famous Views in Nikko")
censor seal: used 1815-1842 oban
presented by Capt. Humphreys-Davies

Fugaku sanju rokkei (the "Thirty-Six Views of Mt. Fuji"). A famous series of prints depicting the beauty of this peerless mountain. Much of Hokusai's fame rests on his series of forty-six plates. Later Hiroshige produced upright views of the subject. Unlike so many other landscape subjects, these views by Hokusai and Hiroshige were not fixed either by locality or season. (23, 24.)

Katsushika HOKUSAI 1760-1849

- 23 Mt. Fuji from the Coast of Seven Leagues, Sagami Bay
published: 1823-1833 oban
(woodcut designed entirely in varying shades of blue)
presented by Capt. Humphreys-Davies

HIROSHIGE 1797-1858

- 24 View from the sea off the coast of Satta
View from the Sea of Muira
publisher: Tsutaya Kichizo April 1858 oban
presented by Capt. Humphreys-Davies
- 25 Tsutenkyo Bridge (No. 2)
(from the series "Ten Famous Views of Kyoto")
publisher: Kawaguchi Shozo c1834 oban

Tokaido Gojusan Tsugi no uchi (the "Fifty-Three Stations of the Tokaido").
The series by Hiroshige, numbers fifty-five plates, and illustrates probably the most popular theme of the landscape prints. The great highway between Edo and Kyoto was known as the Tokaido Road.

- 26 **Kanaya Station (No. 25)**
Shinagawa Station (No. 2)
publisher: Takeuchi Hoeido 1835
editor seal: kiwame oban
presented by Capt. Humphreys-Davies

Meisho Edo Hakkei (a "Hundred Views of Edo").
The famous series of one hundred and eighteen prints depicting the scenery in and around Edo.

- 27 **The Kamedo Tenjin Shrine (No. 57)**
published: July 1856 oban
presented by Capt. Humphreys-Davies

N.B. 24, 26, 27 are believed to be reprints.

LEGEND AND HISTORY

This type of print rose in popularity during the second decade of the 19th century. The artists drew from a wide range of material, many portraying scenes involving swordplay, murder and assassination. Incidents dealing with the civil wars of the middle ages between the two dominant clans, the Minamoto and Taira (also referred to as Gengi and Heike) were often depicted. (Refer drawings A, B, and Nos. 28-30.)

- Ichiyusai KUNIYOSHI 1797-1861**
28 **Naval Battle showing the hero Yoshitsune leaping over seven boats.**
published: 1815-1841 triptych
presented by Capt. Humphreys-Davies

- Isseisai YOSHITSURU**
29 **Naval battle between the Minamoto and Taira clans**
publisher: Tsutaya Kichizo c1850 triptych
(left print missing)
presented by Capt. Humphreys-Davies

- Ichimosai YOSHITORA active 1850-1880**
30 **Battle scene of the Chihaya Castle**
publisher: Aritaya Seimon triptych
presented by Capt. Humphreys-Davies

- Ichiyusai KUNIYOSHI 1797-1861**
31 **A samurai (Yoshitsune?)**
publisher: Yamaguchiya Tobei 1847-1852 triptych
presented by Capt. Humphreys-Davies

- 32 **A samurai. Buei Meiba Kurabe (The Fine Horses)**
publisher: Yamaguchiya Tobei c1849 oban

- TOYOKUNI III 1786-1864**
33 **The samurai Yoshiie Hachimantaro on horseback**
publisher: Iwatoya 1843-1847 oban

- Kaisai YOSHITOSHI 1839-1892**
34 **A samurai drinking from a ladel**
publisher: Iseki Feb. 1878 oban
presented by Capt. Humphreys-Davies

- Ipposai YOSHIFUSA**
35 **Scene from an unknown legend**
published Feb. 1856 triptych
(left and right prints missing)
presented by Capt. Humphreys-Davies

- Ichiyusai KUNIYOSHI 1797-1861**
36 **Sangokushi Chohankyo no Zu (a scene from a Chinese story)**
publisher: Tsutaya Kichizo June 1852 triptych
presented by the relatives of T. V. Gulliver

- Ichieisai HOEN 1822-1866**
37 **Jiraiya Goketsu Tan**
(From the story of Jiraiya, the son of the Lord of Ogata, who was taught in his youth, the magical preparations of the Toad Spirit).
published 1847-1852 triptych
presented by Capt. Humphreys-Davies

- TOYOKUNI IV 1823-1880**
38 **Yuugiri, from the "Genji Monogatari"**
by the 10th century author, Murasaki Shikibu
(each of the fifty-four chapters of the story has been illustrated by woodcuts)
published November 1857 oban
(Shikibu, refer 12)

SURIMONO

The *Surimono* is a special form of woodcut derived from *Ukiyo-e*, but not falling into that category. They were principally used in the 19th century as a form of greeting card, being often produced with satirical *kyōka* poems as a New Year's gift. Often specially commissioned and not for general public sale these woodcuts represent the acme of the printer's and engraver's art.

HOKKEI 1780-1850

- 39 Liu Pang killing the Dragon
(Liu Pang was founder of the Han dynasty of China)
kakuban.

presented by Capt. Humphreys-Davies

TOYOKUNI III 1786-1864

- 40 Lady with a fan
kakuban

presented by Capt. Humphreys-Davies

INK DRAWINGS

Two original artist's outlines for the key-blocks of woodcuts. Scenes from the *Kabuki* theatre.

attributed to TOYOKUNI III 1786-1864

- A Scene based on the Minamoto and Taira Wars
triptych.

Artist Unknown

- B Yoshitsune with his attendants.
(Yoshitsune, a famous warrior of the Minamoto clan, was born in 1159)
publisher: Wakasaya Yoichi triptych.
(Clan wars, refer 28-30)
-

2 CONTEMPORARY

The contemporary Japanese printmaker consciously responds to international styles. As in the West, a lively experimental approach is one of his main stimulants. At the same time his prints suggest a rediscovery of Japan's own tradition and characteristics. Unlike the *Ukiyo-e* woodcuts, the artist is no longer just the designer who left the actual production to other craftsmen. He now performs all the stages of production himself.

Dimensions are given in inches, height before width, and refer to the image size.

Kuzumi AMANO b1927

- 1 A work of 1968 embossed woodcut 32 x 17 $\frac{3}{4}$
lent by Japanese Consulate-General

Umetaro AZECHI b1902

- 2 Woodcut 19 x 14 $\frac{1}{2}$
lent by Japanese Consulate-General

Hideo HAGIWARA b1913

- 3 A Clematis 1960 woodcut 23 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{2}$
4 Soil (20) Barren Land 1960 woodcut 22 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{2}$
5 Fantasy in Red (1) 1962 woodcut 33 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 23 $\frac{1}{2}$

Maki HAKU b1924

- 6 Book of Poems 1958 woodcut 12 x 15 $\frac{1}{4}$

Okiie HASHIMOTO b1899

- 7 Garden with Stepping Stones 1959 woodcut
21 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 16 $\frac{3}{4}$

Kaoru KAWANO b1916

- 8 Quiet Rain woodcut 15 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 22 $\frac{1}{2}$

Tomio KINOSHITA b1923

- 9 Masks (Calamity) 1960 woodcut 24 x 35 $\frac{3}{4}$
10 The End 1961 woodcut 21 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 31 $\frac{3}{4}$

Kenji KUSAKA

- 11 A work of 1969 mixed media 32 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 20 $\frac{5}{8}$
lent by Japanese Consulate-General

Tokio MIYASHITA b1930

- 12 Mixed media 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 17 $\frac{5}{8}$
lent by Japanese Consulate-General

Yoshitoshi MORI b1898

- 13 A work of 1964 woodcut 30 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 21 $\frac{1}{4}$
lent by Japanese Consulate-General

Shiko MUNAKATA b1903

- 14 Setsuin woodcut 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 18 $\frac{1}{8}$
15 Bent Hawk 1950 woodcut 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 21 $\frac{3}{4}$
lent by Dr. W. H. Auburn
16 Self Portrait woodcut 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{4}$
lent by Dr. W. H. Auburn

Masanari MURAI b1905

- 17 A work of 1966 lithograph 23 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 17 $\frac{5}{8}$
lent by Japanese Consulate-General

Kihei SASAJIMA b1906

- 18 A Clump of Trees 1959 woodcut 18 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 17 $\frac{3}{4}$

Junko TAKAHASHI

- 19 Shooting Star 1961 etching 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 8 $\frac{5}{8}$

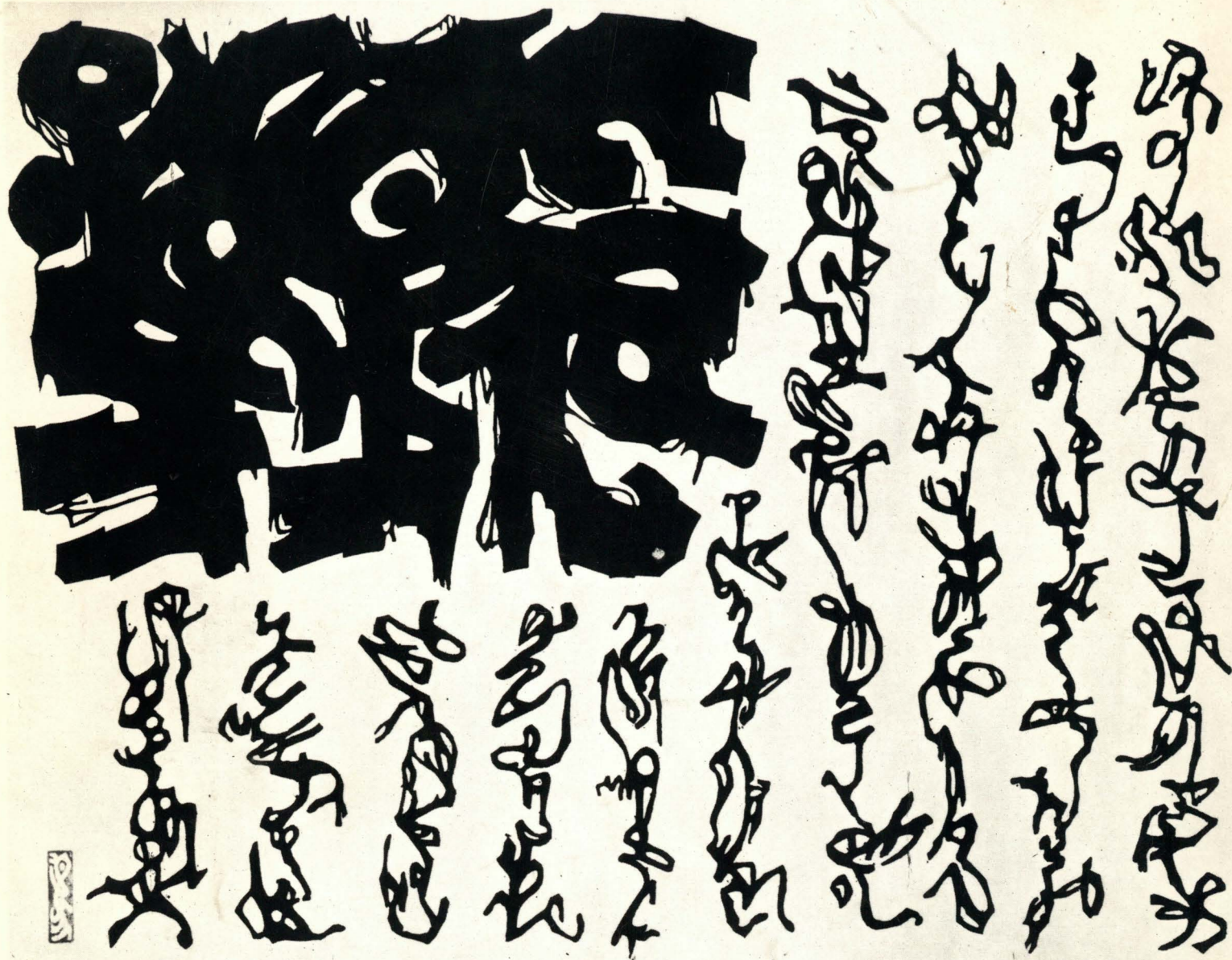
Kojin TONEYAMA b1921

- 20 A work of 1969 embossed woodcut 27 x 21
lent by Japanese Consulate-General

Masaji YOSHIDA b1917

- 21 Space, No. 10 1961 woodcut 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 17 $\frac{1}{2}$
22 Moss No. 1 1958 woodcut 17 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 11 $\frac{1}{4}$

AUCKLAND CITY
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