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THE HASHIRA-E, (pillar print).
With reference to the Chester Beatty Library
and Gallery of Oriental Art, Dublin.

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INTRODUCTION.

In this paper I will outline how the Hashira-e (pillar-print) came into origin and introduce the style to which they were designed. I will also describe the process involved in producing such woodcuts. I have selected seven major artists, Harunobu, Masunobu, Shingemasa, Koryusai, Kiyonaga, Utamaro and Toyohiro, all of which participated in challenging this unusual format. I will briefly outline their lives and some of the major printing techniques for which they were renowned. I have selected eleven pillar prints from the Chester Beatty Collection, where at least one has been designed by each of the above artists and analyse whether they have overcome this awkward format.

The Hashira-e, otherwise known as the pillar print, of all the formats used by the designer is the most essentially Japanese and is without a counterpart in western art. The pillar print arose, as the problems of painting often do, from architecture. Intended as a decoration for the wooden pillars that were a feature of the lightly constructed houses of the country,the difficulties of designing within tall narrow limits of the panel seem to have challenged the ukiyo-e artists, a few which will be discussed later. The Japanese house provides many narrow pillars but few permanent flat wall spaces. Therefore, if one wanted to make pictures for such a house one must make either a Kakemono-e (an upright, narrow rectangular painting which could be pasted on silk, hung in the narrow alcove and rolled up when not in use) or a Hashira-e or "pillar print" (a print on average 65cm long x

12.5cm wide). To comprehend the unusual artistic problems connected with such a print one should cut a long strip of paper 65cm x 12.5cm hang it lengthwise on a wall and decide what kind of image would fit in it, with an agreeable sense of design. Since painters provided many Kakemono, all that was left to the print maker was Hashira-e.

Since the sale of Hashira-e was a sure way of earning money, families being willing to buy one for utalitarian purposes when other kinds of prints had been considered luxuries. Today they remain valuable because prints in good condition are hard to come by. The use to which they were made, made them vulnerable to destruction by tearing, grease-spots and fire or inevitable wearing out.

The Chester Beatty Collection contains twenty-one such prints from the Edo period (1603-1868) and of the Ukiyo-e style. Ukiyo-e literally means "Pictures of the floating world". Later a Ukiyo-e school arose of the classical Japanese style of painting called Yamato-e, an aristocratic art which developed in the tenth century. Ukiyo-e, unlike Yamato-e, was the art of the common people. The Ukiyo-e school refers to both colour pictures handpainted on silk and paper, also to pictures in the same style printed in larger quantities from woodblocks. The important difference between the two is that whereas a painter could produce an individual painting slowly and at vast expense to the buyer, a design by the same artist could be produced as a wood-engraving which could be printed to produce hundreds or thousands of copies both quickly and cheaply. Woodblock prints in full colour became popular among the working people of Japan, who could purchase them for a few pence each. Prints became so cheap to produce that their artistic value was not fully appreciated.

Wood-engraving, the traditional Japanese method of reproduction, was employed with increasing resource and accomplishment to reproduce the drawings of the Ukiyo-e artist. One's admiration is not primarily for the engraving as such but mainly for its compositional design, although the colour-woodcut has a beauty of its own not translateable into any other medium. An admirer of Japanese colour prints derives a special pleasure from the strength of the woodcut line and the surfaces of flat colour. The Japanese colour-prints from woodblocks are technically the finest ever produced, but the print's beauty,

primarily comes from the designer's conception, the power of his brush line, originality of his composition. This applied especially to "pillar prints".

At first the engravings were in black outline only. Then when separately issued sheets began to appear, hand tinting became the custom to further the likeness to an original brush painting. About 1741 the use of additional blocks for printing colours was introduced and after various experiments with further blocks and over-printing to secure additional tints, full polychrome (or nishiki-e) wood-block printing was achieved in 1764. It was then a perfect instrument for reproducing the artists designs. From Harunobu onwards until the end of the century a succession of great artists took advantage of the superb medium ready at hand for those novel and colourful products the Edo public awaited.

The process, involved in producing these colour woodcuts (pillar-prints) is of such great importance that I will briefly outline it.

The artist made a brush drawing on thin transparent paper, which was afterwards pasted face down onto the surface of a prepared cherry-wood onto which the engraver transfers the image by cutting through the original drawing. The wood was cleaned from between the lines thus leaving them in high relief. From this keyblock, other proofs are taken. The artist now proceeded to indicate on one of the proofs where colour was to be printed. From these further blocks are prepared for different colours. The master printer, using water-colours mixed with a little rice paste, was then able to produce the full colour print. The impression is achieved by placing the same sheet of paper over each block in turn. The correct position is secured on each occasion by the simple method of aligning it with raised marks on the two lower corners of each block, these marks were called Kento. Impressions were taken by hand. The printer rubs the surface of the paper firmly with a special pad called a baren. Colours are renewed when necessary, and sometimes changed. For this reason, early impressions of the same print may have different colours. An embossed effect can be achieved by the use of uncoloured blocks which are applied to the finished print. This three dimensional effect is known as Gauffrage. The delicate quality of the colour

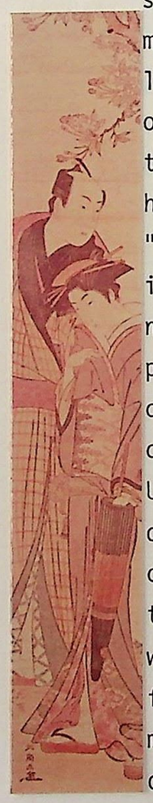
effects owes much to the softness of the paper.

A woodblock will give hundreds or even thousands, of impressions before wearing out while nowadays linoleum is more popular as it is easier to work, its life is considerably shorter.

The following artists are basically in chronological order, Okurma Masunobu is prior to Suzuki Harunobu. Simply because he was the inventor of the Hashira-e (pillar-print).

Okurma Masunobu. (1761-1816).

This vanglorious, medicious and vastly gifted little man has been credited with several technical innovations that aided the Ukiyo-e style. It was he who invented the tall upright picture, the Hashira-e (pillar-print) which became so pupular in decorating middle class houses. He is supposed to have invented the use of laquer to attain brilliant effects and gold dust to provide sparkle. He pioneered the mica background which was to account for the later prints which were to dazzle Europe. He was certainly the first experimenter with European perspective and he produced several important prints in this form, passing on the idea to others who later specialised in it. He was the first to issue three related prints in the form of an uncut triptych which could be sold together or as individual pieces. He went far back into the history of Chinese art and revived the process of ink rubbings, using it even better than the Chinese themselves. Finally, he was supposed to have invented the brilliant idea of woodblock printing, dispensing with hand work but there is not enough evidence to prove this. He also used to colour in the early stages of his printing, apple green and rose red, which when scattered judiciously upon a print, uncannily suggested a complete spectrum. In addition he was a shrewd business-man, publishing his own pictures and making money from a stable of lesser artists. He is credited with having put the print business on a solid commercial basis and most likely launched the movement to take art peddling off the streets. He advertised blatantly about his prints which he sold in his own shop on Forishio Street named "The genuine brush of the Japanese painter Okumura Masunobu". Later in life he suddenly began to design with furious energy some of the noblest prints in the Ukiyo-e style. There is only one Masunobu pillar-print in the Chester Beatty Collection 'A lady with bowed head carrying an umbrella as she walks alongside a man under a flowering cherry branch'. The composition of this print is of a distinctive Ukiyo-e style. Masunobu portrays a couple on a daily walk. The overall mood when I look at this print is one of peace and calm, created by the warm colours Masunobu has chosen. This mood is seen through many of the following pillar prints. I feel Masunobu has worked out a simple yet effective design solution for this particular format. The two tall figures are cropped on either side and occupy more than half the print. Above them hangs a blossoming cherry branch, of which the rendering is simple and free though every line is carefully



placed. By illustrating these flowers and by including nature in his print Masunobu shows his love for nature. A substantial amount of black is used in the upper half of this print, particularly the samaris collar and in the lady's hair. To differentiate between the two, Masunobu cleverly reversed several lines out of the black areas in the original colour of the paper. The reversed lines give form to the woman's hair. Note the delicate line which forms the face in comparison with the bold line of the clothing. This is a common character with the following pillar prints. Six different fabric patterns are used in this print, simple yet interesting. The prints on the samari's clothing are geometric in design. A patterned kimono on the lady would have been too busy beside the samari's, so Masunobu used flat areas of colour. Around the lady's waist is a floral patterned girdle again simple and of good design. The underlying fabrics also have a floral pattern.

One of the ladies holds her kimono while the other holds a folded paper parasol, simply executed, which lends to a graphic illustration with accurately spaced lines to indicate the ribbing of the parasol, in between there are areas of flat colour.

Overall I find this a pleasing print, only there is one element which irritates me: where the samari's hair meets with the blossoming branch. In this case I would have preferred if the hair did not come in contact with the branch at all.

Okurma Masunobu (1761-1816)

1. "A lady with bowed head carrying an umbrella as she walks alongside a man under a flowering Cherry branch".

   Hashira-e, Nishiki-e.

   c.1780 69cm x 12cm.

   Detail: 'Lady and Samari'.

   Detail: 'Kimono & Umbrella'.

Suzuki Harunobu. (1725-1770).

No major artist was ever influenced more profoundly by a technical improvement in his field than Harunobu, whose entire artistic life was altered by the invention of an improved system whereby as many as thirty different colours could be applied to one print with assured registry.

There is much argument as to who devised this new use of kento marks (meaning aim), but in 1764 Harunobu was known to have experimented with the technique. The year 1765 is an important historical date in woodblock printing. In that year Harunobu achieved the first multicoloured nishiki-e (polychrome print). It was one of a hundred magnificently coloured prints. In the course of this production he perfected the technique to a point beyond which it was never to progress.

Prior to this Harunobu had been a mediocre artist. As early as 1754 he issued prints which looked like Kiyonobu II,though his style soon shifted to Toyonobu and then to Kiyomitsu.

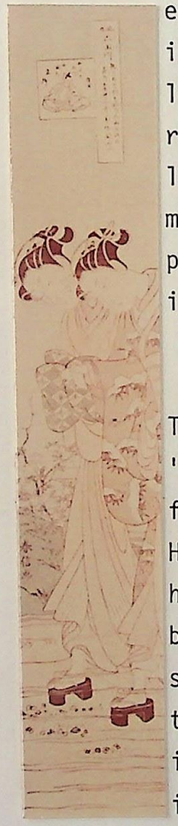
He was forty years old when the lightning of full colour print struck and five years later he was dead. In that time he issued more than six hundred prints. More people instinctively appreciated a Harunobu than any other Ukiyo-e print. His finest are probably the most widely accepted graphic prints produced by any society. This can be seen as even today his prints are used as Christmas cards, i.e. "Heron & Crow", in which a man in black escorts a girl in white through a snowstorm under a yellow umbrella.

When Harunobu's prints of young girls first appeared, miraculously embellished with a wide range of imprinted colours, and had successfully managed to incorporate in each print the entertainments and amusements, showing considerable variety to ordinary family life, to the Edo public. He was also a daring innovator who was not content with colours to be found at hand. He was willing to experiment with rosy-pink skies, kelly-green earth, a positively jet black night sky, a blue of his own manufactured for sunny skies and an opaque brown which produced warm happy results. Harunobu also pioneered a grey (made of white ink and ground mica) which lends beauty to any print upon which it

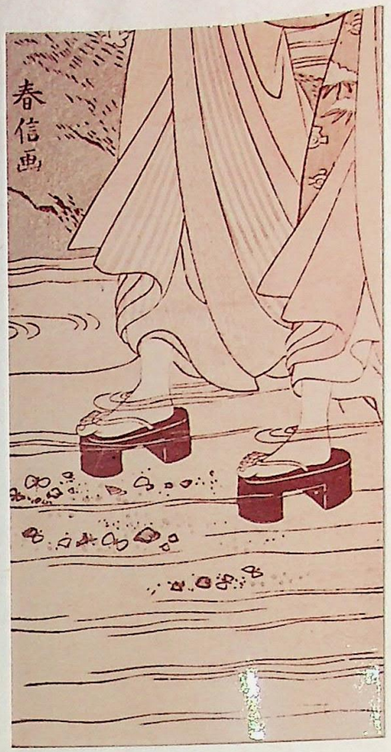
appears. Harunobu was also supposed to have invented the technique of embossing, (also called gauffage or blind printing) but this is not true as it was used in early laquer prints. Yet Harunobu used embossing variously in kimono designs, snow banks, horizon lines, birds in flight or as a substitute for portions of the key block. His effects were at their best when embossing was used sparingly in connection with colours to suggest cloth. This technique is still popular in graphic design today.

Harunobu also perfected the precise print Hashira-e (pillar print), as if he experienced new artistic vitality when faced with this awkward format, as we shall see in his two prints. "Two girls walking in a stream" and "Ofuji standing in front of her father's cosmetic shop".

But it is not his technical experiments that have made Harunobu the darling of Ukiyo-e. He created a private artistic world of his own, a feat which few can accomplish. It is a world of Spring, rippling waterfalls, flowers and young girls perpetually beautiful. No fears, age, hurt, anger or withering grass intrude. No artist ever portrayed so black a night sky as Harunobu, but he always illuminates it so that the living world under the jet black sky is a little brighter than noonday. Most of all his prints are a recollection of how entrancingly beautiful girls can be. How very lazy-like the wind coming across the lake on a Summer day. Life must assume hundreds of aspects which an artist could legitimately preempt for his private world. Harunobu alone chose the aspect which is forever fair.



"Two girls walking in a stream".
This print comes from a series, the elegant six crystal rivers: 'The crystal river of Ide at Yamashiro'. Two girls enter the print from the right. Hand-in-hand they escort each other up stream. Here we can see Harunobu's subtle use of colour. His subject matter has created a world of calm, gentle flowing steams, blossoms and beautiful young girls. The colours of this print have been tastefully selected, even though they have faded and appear softer and lend to the mood of this print. In all I counted seven different coloured inks not including the background paper which is allowed show through in certain areas.



Suzuki Harunobu (1725-1770).

2. "Two girls walking in a stream".

Series: The elegant Six Crystal Rivers: "The Crystal River of Ide at Yamashiro".

Hashira-e, Nishiki-e.

c.1770 67cm x 12.5.

Detail: 'Two girls', (faces).

Detail: 'Feet in water'.

The number of inks shows Harunobu's keen interest in polychrome prints. His summery blue sky covers the top half of the back-ground, while the lower is covered by a grass bank, blossoms and an ankle-deep stream. The transparency of the water is shown by the stones on the bottom of and the feet of the girls breaking the water level. A sense of movement is created by ripples gathering in front of their ankles due to the flow of the stream. This also gives a slight three dimensional effect to the print.

At first glance the girls themselves with heads bent downwards carefully watching under foot are hard to differentiate facially. But if one looks closely at the heads of these girls they are clearly different. Their hair is of the same style, yet it is bound differently by combs, clips and ribbon. They both have different noses, mouths and eyes. A fine line indicates these features, but not nearly as fine as the line whichleads from the forehead to the dark black of their hair.

The patterns on their kimonos differs and they are printed in different warm colours. The girl on the rights dress is of light brown; the pattern of snow-laden leaves and small flying birds are neatly placed between the folds. Her underlying garment, contrary to the dress is decorated with two linear patterns. One with a heavy brown stripe on the cream, (of the background paper) and the other, the colours in reverse (white on brown), which is of a wood grain pattern. This girl carries a muff in her right hand which is of a chequered green and white with a floral design introduced in the white squares.

Another of Harunobu's prints which is in possession of the Chester Beatty Collection is that of 'Ofuji, a famous beauty in front of her father's Cosmetic shop'. Again, the figure enters from the right of the print. Tall, and thin, Ofuji stands poised in front of her father's Cosmetic shop, with calligraphy behind her reading 'Moto Yanagi Ya' meaning the house of a thousand willows. In one hand she is holding a fan which has a simple floral design on it. The other hand is adjusting a hairpin.

The overall line of this print is finer than the previous print and a stronger amount of black is used, which would have contrasted nicely against the now faded red and softer brown colours. The

stripe pattern on her kimono indicates what way the drapes are falling. It also helps to give form to the underlying body. Ofuji's face has the qualities of a bygone era. Like a lot of Harunobu's female figures. They belong to the same world as those who inhabited the dream-like depths of the 'Tale of Genji Picture Schroll' of Heian times .

The pupils are clearly indicated. The modest lady-like curve of the nose is flanked by delicate nostrils, and the tiny red lips are given the faintest suspicion of a smile. These qualities are also visable in Harunobu's print, "Two girls walking in a stream".

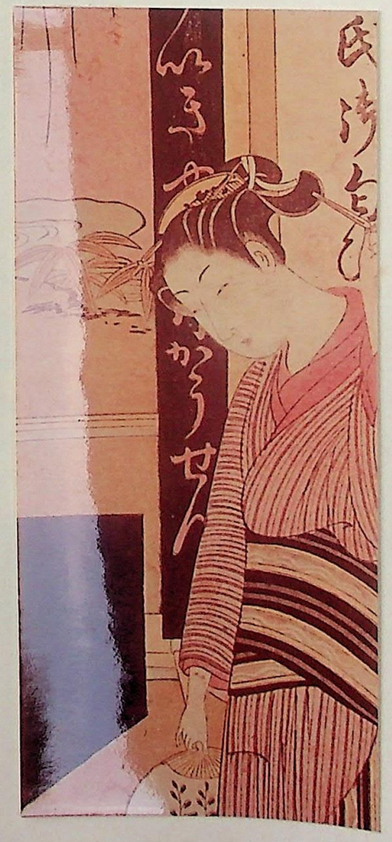
I find the background confusing and overcrowded. Had it been simpler it would have created a better design for this format. Here we see Harunobu's use of perspective in the leg of the step and the way the platform proceeds backwards, created by a large black area on the left. I also find this area interfering with the design of this print. It comes forward too much against the pale colours of the print. The rest of the background is of her father's shop showing part of a decorated panel and sunshade from the roof.

Suzuki Harunobu.

3. "Ofiyi, a famous beauty in front of her father's cosmetic shop".

Hashira-e, Nishiki-e.
c.1770 70cm x 12.

Detail.



Kitao Shigemasa. (1739-1820).

A Ukiyo-e painter, printmaker and poet was the eldest son of Suharaya Saburobu, a book dealer in Edo. He was largely self taught, though perhaps he was a late pupil of Nishimura Shigenaga and was influenced by Harunoba. This can be seen in the features of his figures and certain colour combinations in rose red and kelly green, which is used in his print "Kikiyoedo, the exiled Chinese", which I will discuss later. Since he illustrated many books while designing relatively few prints, his graphic work is rare and paintings even rarer. In 1755, when only twenty, he prepared the art work for the Edo calander, an important contemporary publication. He did so yearly, with only two misses, until his death. He specialised in bijinga and actor prints, but also did topographical scenes. According to some contemporaries a better artist than Shunsho with whom he collaborated on what most critics hail as the finest Ukiyo-e colour book, 'Seiro Bijin Sugata Kagami', (a mirror reflecting the forms of fair women of the Green Houses, 1776). In 1775 he created his own style of larger designs of bijin. His figures a trifle too massive, his colour used in broad opaque masses. He was an excellent technician but gained much greater repute as a calligrapher. His style generally reflected what was fashionable at that moment, at one time like Harunobu and later like Shunsho in manner.

I will be talking about two of the three of his pillar prints from the Chester Beatty Collection "Kikiyedo, the exiled Chinese" and "Two lovers standing under the branch of a pine tree".

Firstly, I will take "Kikiyedo, the exiled Chinese", the figure is shorter than those of Harunobu and Masunobu and is facing towards the right, he is barefooted and is standing on rocky ground. He holds a pen in his right hand and writes on the leaves of chrysanthemums, the buddhist Sutra ensuring safety and longevity given to him by the emperor Muh Wang, whose attendant and favourite he had been. This he does from morning till night for fear of forgetting them. Kikiyoedo, obviously in exile in the mountains in the background there is a large white cloud and distant mountain peaks, giving the impression that Kikiyoedo stands on a height.

Kitao Shigemasa (1739-1820)

4. "Kikiyedo, the exiled Chinese".

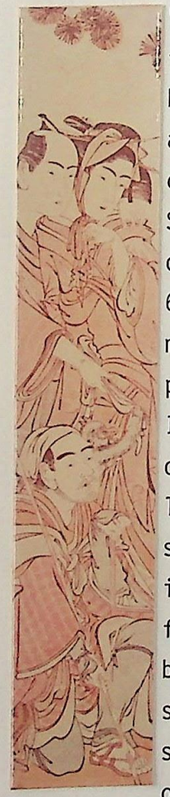
Hashira-e, Nishiki-e.
c.1800.

Detail:

In this print Shigemasa exercises his characteristic colour sensitivity. The two main colours being beni-e, a soft rose red (dye from Sapan-wood), and green in addition to the black linear structure and the creamy white paper. These produce colour harmonies and implications of other colours which bewilder the eye. It was not only Shigemasa who participated in Benizuri-e (print in two colours, usually rose red and green in addition to the basic black). It was Masunobu who was mainly responsible for the perfection of this technique in the 1730s.

The chrysanthemums are of two colours, beni-e and creamy-white. When one observes them closely they have a stylized simple, and graphic appearance with a flat abstract pattern, which is created by each petal being painted separately. A lot of care and observation went into rendering these blossoms. The leaves are of flat green and their form is held together by accurately placed strokes to indicate veins.

The second Shingemasa print I find interesting is that of "Two lovers standing under the branch of a pine tree". The overall feeling of this print is one of happiness and amusement and is basically an entertaining piece of work. In this pring Shingemasa again uses two basic colours, overall tones of beni-e and a grey, in connection with the black line work and cream paper. I feel if Shingemasa had used brighter colours they would have improved the mood of this print. Shingemasa has made full use of this format. 66.5 cm x 11.5 cm. He manages to introduce three figures and a monkey, not to include a pine tree which hangs from the top of the print, without any feeling of cramp or interference to the design. In this print Shingemasa depicts two lovers standing under the branch of a pine tree. He with his right arm around her neck, while his left is pulling away her obi from a sma-l monkey seated on the shoulder of a travelling showman who is kneeling. The man acts as if he is playing with the monkey to entertain his companion, whose facial expressions suggest that she is amused by the monkey's behaviour. But she dares not touch the monkey, seen in the way she politely draws her hand away from it. The monkey seated on the shoulder of showman fights dramatically for the obi with his mouth open obviously screaming in disgust. The monkey's furry arm and head is composed of active line work which does not make it easy to detect any underlying bone structure. The monkey's eye is fixed



on the girdle, while the travelling showman stares in the opposite direction. He has a blank expression on his face and is not paying any attention to the monkey's activity. This expression gives me the impression that he is blind, supported by the fact that he is carrying two canes. His face is unshaven and he has a beard and mustache. Leggings, material on his arms and a dull kimono indicates poverty, in comparison to the tasteful patterned kimonos of the couple behind. Overall I find this an entertaining piece of work.

Kitao Shigemasa.

5. "Two lovers standing under the branch of a pine tree".
Hashira-e, Nishiki-e.
c.1800. 66.5cm x 11.5cm.

Isoda Koryusai. active 1760-1788.

Koryusai was directly influenced by Harunobu. This is evident in his early prints, and often caused some confusion for some have felt that his earlier name Koryu was merely a signature of Harunobu. Again it was claimed that some late Harunobus were actually designed by Koryusai. It is difficult to understand such suggestions for Koryusai's bold system contrasts Harunobu's soft colour.

Koryusai had three basic colour schemes, all strong and sometimes clashing. His earliest prints stress a vigorous orange-red, made from a lead base which oxidized rapidly producing a most attractive black and orange mottled effect. If this is not pleasing to the eye it may be removed by applying pure peroxide which dissolves the oxidization and restores the original colour. Most owners of a good Koryusai print however are sorry when they have corrected this interesting effect.

The second basic colour scheme is a combination of a strong brick-red heightened by dashes of bright yellow, dominant purple and midnight blue. In his final colour scheme a dominant black plays a major role, being surrounded by rather dull colours, particularly a subdued blue. These prints are exceptionally pleasing to one who likes the effect of black, but at times the black becomes overwhelming in its force.

He flourished as a print designer between the years 1765-1780 and as a painter from 1780-1788. Koryusai was also noted for his prints of birds. But most of all Koryusai was chiefly remembered for the pillar-print, a form in which he excelled. Koryusai, faced with paper 65 cm x 12.5 cm created brilliant designs. The greatest Koryusai prints have always been treasured, four of which are in the Chester Beatty Collection. I will be discussing only two, which were in the exhibition "Twelve Hundred Years Of Japanese Woodblock Printing". The first "A Girl, holds up a gourd from which a magic horse is emerging and a youth beside her is exhaling his spirit which mounts the horse". The second print is called "A Youth aids a young girl to sweep down a spider's web".

I find the first pillar-print an enchanting piece of work, excellent in design, filling the pillar-print's format with an air of

Isoda Koryusai (active 1760-1788).

6. "A girl, holds up a gourd from which a magic horse is emerging and a youth beside her is exhaling his spirit which mounts the horse".

Hashira-e, Nishiki-e.

c.1777. 66cm x 12.7cm.

Detail: 'Girl with gourd and Boy with snake pipe'.

Detail: Spirit on horseback.

magic. The girl is holding a gourd in her right hand from which the smoke rises to reveal a magic galloping horse. A youth Tekkai stands behind her and rests his left hand on her shoulder. In the other hand he holds a snake cup and is exhaling his spirit which in bodily form has mounted on the horse. The spirit looks down from on high. The horse and spirit are graphically interpreted, a simple black outline with flat areas of grey ink, made richer as it is printed over the background colour. The two figures are small in relation to the size of the print and both are looking up at the spirit on horseback as they participate in this activity, making the print appear even longer. Their kimonos are of three colours, a yellow, brick red and grey. The girl's kimono is mainly of a brick-red honeycomb pattern, with a star shape in each comb printed against the cream of the paper. She is also wearing a yellow obi (waist band) which is folded to the front and on it is a pattern of birds (cormorants) in grey within a red circle. The youth's kimono is mainly of grey and cream and he has a red collar. It is simple in design, so not to clash with the girl's kimono. Their features have a strong resemblance to Harunobu's figures (eyes, nose, mouths).

There is a freedom about this print which is highly refreshing and a fairytale beauty which allures. There is no evidence of Koryusai's strong colour schemes. The colours are soft, which help create a mood of calm, which was also a common factor with Harunobu. The next print by Koryusai is of "A youth aids a young girl to sweep down a spider's web". This print is of a typical ukiyo-e style, depicting an everyday activity. Koryusai uses only two colours, various tones of rose-red and a green. This colour combination is similar to Shingemasa's print "Kikiyedo, the exiled Chinese". In this print Koryusai shows a youth down on one knee, holding up a girl, who rests on his shoulder. The girl holds a feather duster with both hands and is sweeping down a spider's web which hangs from the verandah to a branch of a tree. The boy looks calm and patient. The girl's expression shows she is not nervous on the boy's shoulder, or of the spider in the web.

The boy's kimono is again a plain and simple mass of flat grey with a greek-like pattern bordering the edge all around. While the girl's is still fairly simple with a square pattern of rose-red on pink. Around her waist hangs belts of grey and light orange.

Behind her is a bamboo fence, created out of fine black lines. The colours of this print are not strong, yet the drawing is vibrant. It is a joyous print for in not a single Koryusai hashira-e is there a feeling of contrivance or cramping.

Isoda Koryusai.

7. "A youth aids a young girl to sweep down a spider's web".

Hashira-e, Nishiki-e.
c.1777. 70.5cm x 12cm.

Detail: "Girl sweeping down spider's web".

Torii Kiyonaga. (1752-1815).

Kiyonaga was a pupil of Torii Kiyomitsu, the artist who bore the proud name of Torii III who painted theatrical billboards and trained young Kiyonaga who eventually became Torii IV. Kiyomitsu lived for some years and attended to the theatrical billboards leaving Kiyonaga to develop his talents. In early years Kiyonaga issued magnificent prints upon which his fame rests. Before he was thirty he annihilated all competing ukiyo-e artists but Shunsho, and either drew them into his own orbit or drove them from the field.

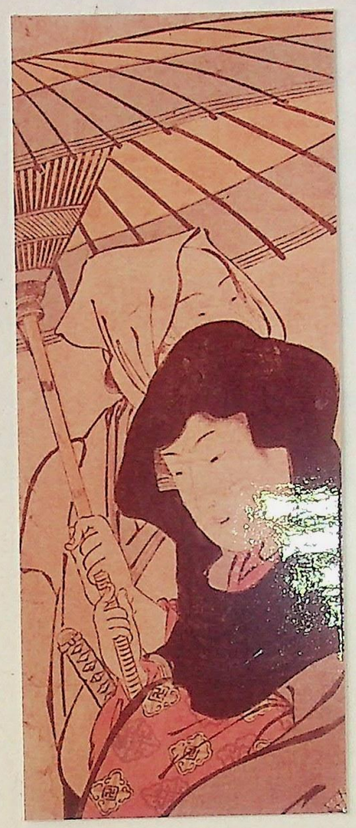
Then secure upon a height that no other could reach or challenge, he abruptly halted his flood of prints and resigned himself to painting hack billboards. Three reasons have been suggested for this behaviour and each casts light on the problems of the Japanese woodblock artist. The first reason, when Kiyomitsu was no longer able to paint billboards, Kiyonaga felt honour bound to abandon what he was doing, no matter how satisfying, and assume his obligations. The second reason for Kiyonaga's abducation was he undertook the task of training Kiyomitsu's infant grandson into the title Torii V. The final reason may have been overwork. In 1783, his climatic year, he produced 144 complete prints, some in two and three panels each, plus nine completed illustrated books, for publishers who were avaricious monsters screaming for fresh designs. There was a constant need for something new or some daring colour. If the hairstyle of a leading courtesan should change between the time Kiyonaga finished a design and the print published, some hack artist would be instructed to redraw the head. Kiyonaga published with twentyeight different publishers and approximately a dozen unidentified and each had the right to hound him. Another possible reason for Kiyonaga's withdrawal was the appearance of Ultamaro, whose fresh designs startled Edo in the 1790s and captured the city like Kiyonaga did in the 1780s.

Most great artists have been sensible enough to study their predecessors and Kiyonaga also studied his. Kiyonaga borrowed major ideas from Kiyomitsu, Harunobu, Shingemasa, Korusai and occasionally from Masunobu. Then he became the Ukiyo-e artist whom everybody copied, some so faithfully that their works can scarcely be separated.

In colour he was bold, venturing forth with harmonies which were notably stronger than any which preceding artists had used. He pioneered many of the colour relationships that later became standard: the use of jet-black for a central figure, the use of sombre, glowing colours, for surrounding figures, introduction of a brilliant yellow for backgrounds, using three colours one on top of one another to achieve a sense of airy summer clothing. He used good colours for maximum emotional effects and willing subdued them completely when necessary. In addition to these basic skills he was Ukiyo-es best student of anatomy, a brilliant book illustrator and a great supporter of the pageantry of Edo.

Two pillar prints exist in the Chester Beatty Collection by Torii Kiyonaga: "Woman in summer costume and sun hat walking under the bough of a tree" and "A man and woman walking, both hold an umbrella". I will discuss the latter first, this simple, graphic print is of Ukiyo-e style. Here we see Kiyonaga's use of black for the central figure, in this case the woman. He uses more sombre colours for the surroundings including the man,in which he uses no colour; the man standing behind the woman, in a hooded garment (Zukin) is illustrated by the use of black outline against the creamy white of the paper, no other colour is introduced, which works well with overall design of the print. The woman, obviously Kiyonaga's main interest in this print, is wearing a jet-black hood, which forms a frame around her face and separates it strongly from the rest of the print without interfering with the design of the print. This frame of black puts emphasis on her beauty. Her features have a strong resemblance to Harunobu's which seemed popular with most artists of the time. The colours of this print relate well with each other, i.e. the red of her underlying costume contrasts beautifully with the black of the print, i.e. black shoes and hood. The couple share an umbrella which is beautifully executed. There is a bamboo handle which leads to the supports indicated by a black wood cut line. Over these a pale blue and a soft yellow fabric is stretched. These colours almost appear transparent which gives a bright airy effect to the print.

Kiyonaga's second print is somewhat simpler, with a courtesan filling three-quarters of the print while a branch of a tree and some calligraphy occupies the upper quarter. The figure is cropped on both



Torii Kiyonaga (1752-1815)

8. "A man and woman walking both hold an Umbrella".

Hashira-e, Nishiki-e,
c.1770.

Detail: 'Man and Woman under Umbrella'.

sides: on the right as she steps into the picture and the left to halt the movement long enough to view the figure within this awkward format. The courtesan holds open a folding fan, fanning herself in the heat of the day. Her sunhat is made of straw, a flat saucer shape, pink in colour (probably a faded red), is carefully balanced on her head, which brings an elegant quality into the print. Again, the central and only figure in this case is dressed in black. On her kimono is a cross hatching pattern which allows the pink underlying colour to show through, giving a light summery quality and suggests the fabric is silk. The obi she wears has a dragon pattern of yellow and green. Her right hand holds up her kimono to make it easier to walk and showing her ankle and summer shoe.

I find this a pleasing print and find no area overworked. The overall mood is fresh, calm and summery as the woman goes for a walk. The colour combination lends admirably with the theme of this print.

Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806).

The date of Utamaro's birth has been disputed, (support can be found for at least four different birth places). It seems fairly well established that he was born in 1753, but there is no certainty concerning his birthplace; Kawagoe, Edo, Osaka and Kyoto. His death was long confused with that of the publisher Tsutaya Jusaburo, with whom he lived for some years. Some will say these details are irrelevant and unimportant; all we should be concerned with the legacy of the artist, his works. Yet nobody can deny that a man's work takes on its full significance only in the light of his environment and its effect on art, it is important to consider the place of his work in relation to the social background of the period so, however scanty the material, I have tried to piece together the known facts to give some substance to the shadowy figure we know as Utamaro.

Of his father little is known, unless we accept the view that Joriyama Sekien was his father, as well as his master. About this there has been endless controversy, one camp holding tenaciously to the view that Utamaro was the son, the other that he was simply the pupil of Sekien, and both producing telling evidence to support their arguments. It may never be settled definitely one way or the other, but for our purpose at least it is granted that Sekien was indisputably Utamaro's father in Art and that, even if it were only by adoption, Utamaro became a member of the family. In Japan such cases of adoption were not uncommon and the master did in fact seem to stand in loco parentis to the child pupil. Like most Ukiyo-e painters and printmakers, Utamaro began his career by providing illustrations for various kinds of cheap popular literature such as theatre publications which gave details of subject and cast in current productions. The earliest known to be by Utamaro is dated 1775.

He was arrested and imprisoned in 1804 by the Shogunate for publishing a tryptych that violated a government prohibition.

Utamaro, more than any Ukiyo-e artist, reflects the importance of the role played by women in the life of Edo- particularly women of the gay quarters. His early prints of actors and young courtesans were in the manner of Kiyonaga but soon developed his own personal style. The themes of the prints for which he is best known were taken

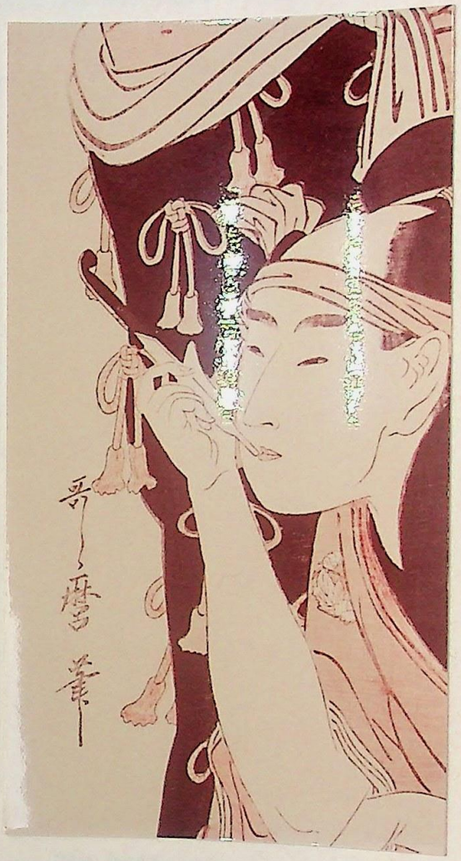
largely from the lives of women, both in the home and the licensed quarter. These he depicted in his distinctive, attractive, elegant style. The features generally small, the figures tall and graceful, the colours fresh. So appealing was his style that it dominated the print world for a generation. Utamaro was one of the first Japanese artists known in Europe and had a considerable influence on western artists (i.e. Toulouse Lautrec). Utamaro was both a great designer and technician as we will see in his pillar print. There are two Utamaro pillar-prints in the Chester Beatty Collection and both portray famous lovers: "The lovers Gompachi and Komuraki" and "Two famous lovers Agemaki and Sukerku".

I will now introduce you to the latter which was on exhibition in "Twelve Hundred Years of Japanese Woodblock Prints". I find this print very graphic in design and one of the most appealing of the pillar prints in the Collection. The bigness of the figures, the precision of line and contrasting colours are very appealing. The woodcut line is crisp and hard and there is no evidence of hisitancy. The composition is simple and Utamaro concentrates on the portrait of this couple, especially the beautiful Agemaki. The figures fill the full length of this format. The top of this print is as important as the bottom and there is no background, just flat colour.

The tall elegant figure of Agemaki of Mura stands behind Sukeroku of Yorzuya who is seated on the bottom right of the print. He is supporting his right elboy on his left hand, while he puts a pipe to his mouth. His right arm is exquisitely executed in flat colour with a minimum amount of detail. Fine lines indicate the elbow, wrist and figures giving the required amount of form and showing Ultamaro's knowledge of anatomy. His face and right arm stand forward against the heavy black of Agemaki's kimono which is tastefully decorated with red tassels. Agemaki's head is gracefully turned towards the left. Her jet-black hair is perfectly illustrated with fine lines. It is drawn back off her face and is tied up with three combs giving an interesting curving pattern across the top of her head, and there are a number of clips creating a criss-cross design. We observe a hair style which is different to any seen in previous prints. Her face is beautiful and has typically idealized features of Utamaro. Again, fine line creates heavy eyebrows, small slanted eyes clearly showing the pupils, a long slim nose and small pink lips showing her teeth as if she were about to smile, clearly

showing an influence of Harunobu's work, i.e. "Ofiyi, a famour beauty in front of her father's cosmetic shop". Sukeroku has similar features but appear harder against the black of Agemaki's shawl, which surrounds his face. The rest of Agemaki's kimono is of an almost transparent shade of pink which has a feminine stripe and floral pattern on it.

I think that this print is a good example of a good design solution for the peculiar pillar print shape.



Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806)

10. "Two famous lovers Agemaki and Sukerku".

Hashira-e, Nishiki-e.
c.1790. 64cm x 15.3cm.

Detail: 'Agemaki'

Detail: 'Sukerku'.

Utagawa Toyohiro (1773-1828).

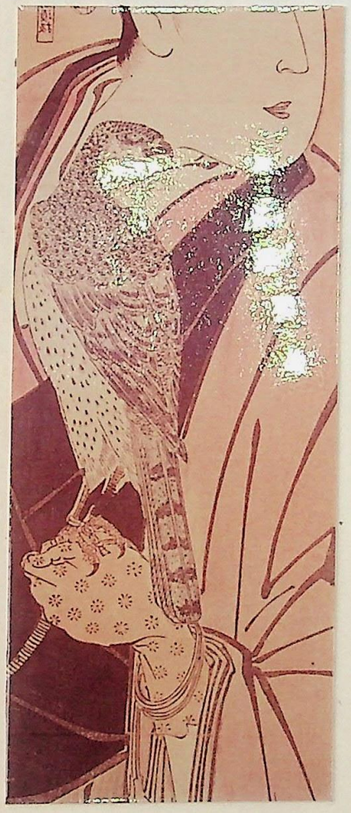
Ukiyo-e painter, printmaker born and lived in Edo and lived with Toyokuni who was not his brother. He studied under Utagawa Toyoharu, whose studio he entered around 1782. He also studied kano painting. In the print field he designed a development of landscape print, which influenced his pupil Hiroshige. Binjin (study of woman) and landscape were his usual themes. His major works designed in the 1790s are comparatively rare. His style was close to that of Eishi. His figures having the same attenuated grace. In the history of Ukiyo-e, Toyohiro was most recognised for having Hiroshige among his pupils. His paintings are quiet and elegant. He was a good landscape artist, printmaker and also an able illustrator of story books.

Toyohiro was a most graceful artist who produced many appealing prints. This can be seen in his pillar print "A young man, standing looking left and holding a falcon". This print shows a young man, with his head turned towards the left with a falcon perched on his hand which is protected by a leather glove. The falcon also looks left, which arouses my curiousity evenmore about what could have distracted them. But this strong line movement out of the print does not distract my interest from this charming print. This print appeals to me because of the bigness of the figure and falcon and the illustrative way in which Toyohiro has protrayed the relationship between man and falcon. The young man and falcon seem more alive than in previous prints, this being due to the use of clearly defined outlines in the man's clothing and the flat areas of black, green and brick-red confined within the delineated areas. These are typical qualities of Japanese painting which Toyohiro actively used. Evidence of this is clearly seen in the falcon which is simplified but still holds realistic qualities (i.e. the head and plummage). Along with general outline and flat colour he has applied dabs of black and grey across the bird's back which is similar to that of active brushwork in different density to distinguish the bird's talons and various feathers. This creates an interesting interpretation as well as pattern.

The young man's face has features similar to Utamaro, which like so many other artists derived from Harunobu. The line work of the face is fine and precise contrary to the clothing and falcon.

His hair is tied up and is drawn off the face into a large black mass, giving balance to the black in his clothing. The leather gloves he is wearing are tight fitting to reveal the underlying structure of the hand. Details such as the strap with which the falcon is tied is not forgotten by Toyohiro.

Here we see another close-up of a figure for a solution to the pillar prints format. But here Toyohiro introduces fauna unlike Utamaro which holds one's attention even more. I would prefer Toyohiro's and Utamaro's design solution for this format than any of the previous prints dealt with in this paper.



Utagawa Toyohiro (1773-1828).

11. "A young man, standing looking left holding a falcon".

Hashira-e, Nishiki-e.
c.1800. 68.5cm x 12.5 cm.

Detail: 'Young man and falcon'.

In this paper we have seen that pillar-prints have served not only to the middle-class Japanese of the eighteenth century but also to record the manners and customs of the people. They show not only prevailing styles of technique but also styles of head-dress, dress and the pursuits and amusements of the common folk. They are excellent depositaries of dress pattern. The prints preserve the ruling fashions of different periods, combs, other hair ornaments, fans, footwear and household ornaments and utensils. This being evident in the above Hashira-e (pillar-print). Although this is one of many formats used in Japanese woodblock printing, to me it is the most graphically interesting. From the above prints which I have selected I feel that these Japanese artists have worked out an admirable design solution in each case. It is also notable from this paper how the figure changed as time went by. In the early prints i.e. Harunobu, full length figures are seen,later they are cropped on one side if not both, i.e. Koryusai, which brings us to Utamaro and Toyohiro who crops the figure fully showing only the faces or from the waist up, which creates a print with a new concept of design.

Due to printing error in the following plates are in reverse:

4. Kitao Shigemasa.
'Kikiyedo, the exiled Chinese'.

5. Kitao Shigemasa.
'Two lovers standing under a pine tree'.

6. Isoda Koryusai.
'A girl holds up a gourd from which a magic horse is emerging and a youth beside her is exhaling his spirit which mounts the horse.

11. Utagawa Toyohiro.
'A young man standing looking left, holding a falcon.

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Suzuki Harunobu. An exhibition of his colour prints and illustrations looks on the occasion of his bicentenary of his death.

Philidelphia Museum of Art. 18 Sept. to 22 Nov. 1970.