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# SURIMONO

ILLUSTRATED POETRY PRINTS OF THE SHIJO

24.10.2019 – 9.2.2020

## SURIMONO

### Illustrated Poetry Prints of the Shijō School

Surimono, literally “printed things”, form an important genre in Japanese graphic art from the early seventeenth to the late nineteenth century. Today, we tend to think of surimono primarily as sumptuously designed colour woodblock prints featuring humorous poems with accompanying illustrations in the *ukiyo-e* style. Surimono prints such as these, known as *kyōka* or *ukiyo-e* surimono, became highly popular among western collectors from the turn of the twentieth century onwards. In spite of their scant knowledge of the Japanese language and culture, these collectors were attracted by the visual appeal of the prints as well as by the fame of the illustrators themselves. It is only in the course of the past three decades that it has become possible to decipher the many-faceted levels of significance and complex allusions in these images and poems, so that we can now “read” the surimono.

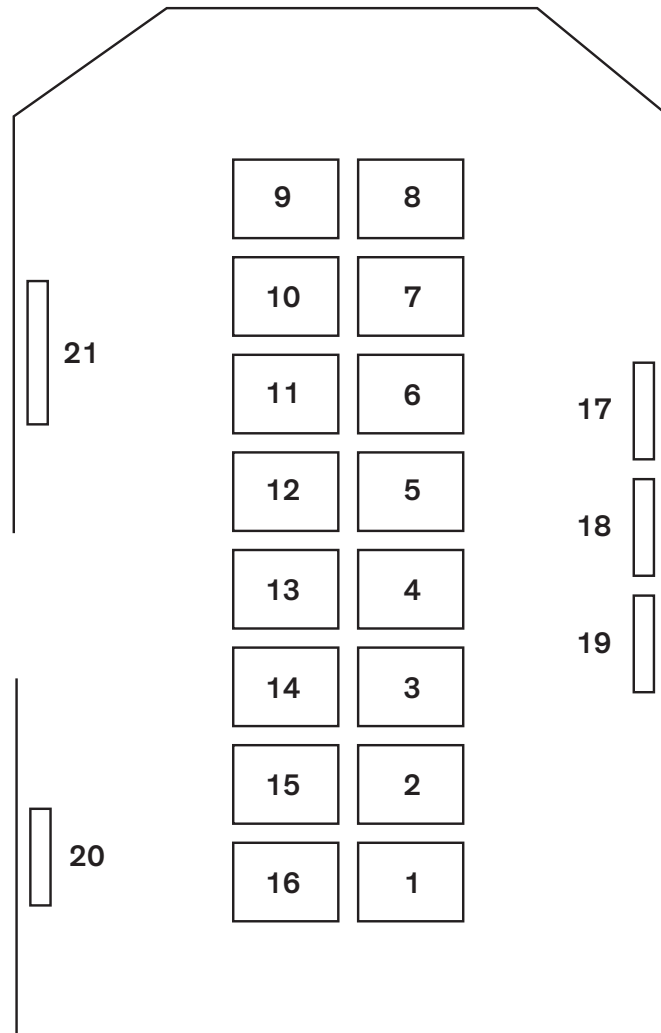
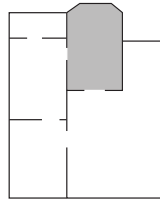
The 80 or so prints in this exhibition also count as “surimono” even though they do differ in many ways from what is described above. Instead of the 31-syllable humorous poem, we find here examples of the 17-syllable *haikai* verse that has become widely known today as haiku. And instead of just two or four verses, we find dozens on each print, so that the illustrative aspect takes on a subordinate role within the overall composition. Many of the prints bear neither the signature nor the seal of the illustrator. Those who could actually be identified turned out to be lesser-known artists adhering to the naturalistic painting style of the Shijō school.

The very fact that the artists and poets in question were relatively unknown, compounded by the complex task of deciphering and translating the many poems, has meant that haikai or Shijō surimono have not been widely collected or researched to date. Nonetheless, the subtly compelling power of expression in these illustrations proves fascinating. Flora and fauna, idyllic landscapes, everyday objects and scenes of daily life, outlined with just a few vigorous brushstrokes, capture the imagination of the viewer even today with their irresistible charm and lyrical mood. This exhi-

bition invites you to embark on a journey of discovery that reveals the diversity of the Shijō surimono. The prints are considered here from a purely art historical perspective – with the emphasis on the subject matter and on the various painting and printing techniques deployed.

It is thanks to the Zurich-based collector Erich Gross that we can now explore, within the wider spectrum of Japanese colour woodblock prints, the quiet beauty of the Shijō surimono. Over the course of several decades, together with his late wife Gisela Müller, he lovingly assembled this collection, which he has now bequeathed to the Museum Rietberg in order for the prints to be made accessible to a wider public.

## ROOM I



## 18 | Surimono – a brief history

Originally, all woodblock prints were called “surimono”. From the early seventeenth century onwards, the term was applied primarily to individual prints produced in limited editions and distributed as private gifts. These non-commercial prints were intended to mark a variety of occasions: from announcements of theatre and concert performances to shop openings, to acknowledging a change of name, as well as – most frequently of all – sending New Year greetings. However, most surimono were commissioned within artistic circles to celebrate the winners of a poetry competition. This is why, in the early phase of surimono, poetry was the focal point, with the image playing only a minor role, if any.

The poems of the early surimono were 17-syllable *haikai*, which are better known today as haiku. During the eighteenth century, with the growing popularity of the 31-syllable humorous poem known as *kyōka*, surimono prints increasingly featured two to four satirical verses by renowned poets and lavishly theatrical illustrations by famous masters of the “floating world”, known as *ukiyo-e* (17). Sumptuously designed *kyōka* and *ukiyoe* surimono prints were a product of the metropolitan milieu in Edo (present-day Tokyo) and reached their zenith between 1790 and 1830. During the 1830s, political reforms and keen censorship stemmed the production of satirical verse and, with that, the production of *ukiyoe* surimono.

The 1840s saw a revival of the *haikai* surimono (19). The poems were penned by hobbyists of every social stratum and generation; even women and children were sometimes involved. These collections of poems were illustrated by painters active in the Osaka and Kyoto regions, and were produced in the style of the Shijō school. Founded by Matsumura Goshun, this painterly tradition is known for its lyrical, naturalistic images of landscape and nature as well as for its light-hearted and whimsical everyday scenes.

**17 | Actors Ichikawa Danjūrō VII and Iwai Shijaku I  
in a Genpei play**

Utagawa Kunisada (1786–1865)

Japan, Edo period, c. 1827-1830

Ukiyoe or kyōka surimono, colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2019.326

**19 | Farmer Sowing Rice**

Shibata Zeshin (1807–1891)

Japan, Meiji period, 1868

Shijō or haikai surimono, colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1035

**1 | Materials and Techniques**

Commercial Japanese ukiyoe prints were produced in teamwork: the publisher would commission a design from the artist, on the basis of which the carver would produce a set of woodblocks – one for each colour as well as for special effects such as blind printing or embossing (5, 14). Finally, the printer would colour the blocks as directed by the artist and then make the prints.

Surimono prints were created in a similar way. The client, usually the head of a circle of poets, would choose an artist and collaborate with him on the motif and overall design. Then the client would contact a publisher or the head of a workshop specialising in surimono prints to oversee the entire printing process. A calligrapher to transcribe the poems into an artistically written form and an additional woodcut carver for the texts then completed the team.

Surimono were published in small editions of between 50 and 500 prints as private gifts. They were printed on high-quality, unsized presentation-standard printmaking paper (*hōsho*) using natural pigments and, at times, even precious gold and silver powder (6). The formats differ, from the large *ōbōsho* (c. 42 × 57 cm, 21) to the smaller *yoko-chūban* (c. 21 × 28,5 cm, 2), *shikishi* (c. 21 × 19 cm, 3) and *jūnigiri-ban* (c. 21 × 9,3 cm, 4).

**2 | Clamshells for the kai-awase shell game**

Satō Gyodai (ca. 1806 – ca. 1895)

Japan, Edo period, 1856

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1026

**3 | Bamboo snake and paper bird on bamboo stick**

Matsukawa Hanzan (1818–1882)

Japan, Edo period, 1857

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.894

**4 | Bamboo and plum blossom branch**

Seal not identified

Japan, late Edo to Meiji period, second half of 19th c

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1068



## 5 | Sake bowl with “long life” inscription and perfumed sachet

Ichikawa Kiyū (active Mid-19th c)

Japan, Edo period, 1858, 1870 or 1882 (Year of the Horse)

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.893

The first poem on the right translates loosely as “New Year balls, whether bought or gifted, are replaced each year in this fleeting world”. *Toshidama*, literally “New Year balls”, refers on the one hand to the lucky coins given to children and young people at New Year, while also alluding to *Kusudama*, the perfumed sachets carried to ward off evil spirits. The illustrations by Kiyū reference this: the little red silk bag is used to carry scented wood or powder, while the New Year sake is served in lacquered bowls. Bad and evil influences are kept at bay and toasts made to “long life”. The other poems mention typical New Year motifs such as the croaking of frogs, plum blossoms, ceremonial excursions to the countryside, and decorated shrine gates.

## 6 | Poetry prints decorated with maple leaf and gold dust

Signature illegible

Japan, late Edo to Meiji period, second half of 19th c

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.874

## 7 | A scholar sitting in a pavilion contemplates a blossoming plum tree

Gyokusen (biographical data unknown)

Japan, Edo period, 1857

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.865

## 8 | A scholar sitting in a pavilion contemplates a blossoming plum tree

Gyokusen (biographical data unknown)

Japan, late Edo to Meiji period, 1856, 1868 or 1880 (Year of the Dragon)

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.866

A typical feature of *haikai* surimono is the large number of poems on each print. Normally, each verse takes up one vertical line, with the lower two or three Chinese characters, which are set slightly apart, indicating the name of the author. Verses by poets contributing financially to the production are listed first (in the direction of reading, from right to left). Haikus by leading poets of a circle, or by a guest acting as arbiter, take the place of honour on the outside left of the text block.

Due to the fact that the printing blocks for image and text were created separately, it was possible to re-use the illustration multiple times. An example of this recycling can be found in prints 7 and 8. Gyokusen’s landscape remains the same; only the texts have been changed.

## 9 | Zodiac animals

The twelve animal signs of the eastern zodiac – Rat, Ox, Tiger, Hare, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Sheep, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, Boar – are among the most popular motifs in the surimono presented as New Year gifts. The artists devote their powers of imagination and technical skills to developing ever more sophisticated designs. The animals are either portrayed naturalistically, with a touch of humour and playfulness, but without any further references to legend or historical background (14, 15 and 16) or, more frequently, appear as ornamental elements in the patterns of garments and accessories (11) or as toys or games (3 and 13).

In interpreting the Year of the Snake, the artist who created print 12 has portrayed the stage props for the traditional courtly bugaku dance. The mask is typical of the lead character in the “Genjōraku” play, which tells of a snake-eating islander.

For print 10, Matsukawa Hanzan, one of the most prolific and renowned surimono artists of the nineteenth century, portrayed an ox, in only a few dynamic brushstrokes, to create a silhouette framing thirteen haikus.

## 10 | Recumbent ox

Matsukawa Hanzan (1818–1882)

Japan, late Edo to Meiji period, 1853, 1865 or 1877

(Year of the Ox)

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.868

**11 | Theatre wig with tiger and bamboo branch**

Masuda (?) Shūhō (active second half of 19th c)  
Japan, late Edo to Meiji period, 1866, 1878 or 1890  
(Year of the Tiger)  
Colour woodblock print  
Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1043

**12 | Bugaku mask and snake**

Signature illegible  
Japan, late Edo to Meiji period, 1857, 1869 or 1881  
(Year of the Snake)  
Colour woodblock print  
Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1022

**13 | Wooden toy horse and ardisia branches**

Kita Buichi (active mid-19th c)  
Japan, Edo period, 1844  
Colour woodblock print  
Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross |  
2018.889

In contrast to the ukiyoe surimono, image and text are not necessarily closely related in the Shijō surimono. This print provides a good example of that: the angular little wooden horse, painted black, is typical of the folk-art from Miharu in the northern prefecture of Fukushima. Its origins can be traced back to the legend of the eighth-century general Sakanoue no Tamuramaro, according to which Sakanoue was able to win a major battle only with the help of a hundred little wooden horses carved from wood that was left over from a Buddha sculpture. The people of Miharu, where the legendary battle is said to have taken place, have been producing these wooden toy horses ever since as talismans to protect children from illness and misfortune.

However, this surimono was not created at the beginning of a Year of the Horse, but was produced in the autumn of 1844 to celebrate the occasion of a young man taking the tonsure to become a buddhist monk called Tōtarō. The poems refer to the bright light of the full moon, which is a typically autumnal motif, while at the same time alluding to the shaven head of a monk.

**14 | Chickens and eggs**

Matsukawa Hanzan (1818–1882)  
Japan, late Edo to Meiji period, 1861 or 1873  
(Year of the Rooster)  
Colour woodblock print  
Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.867

**15 | Two puppies playing with a ball**

Miyake Eisai (1810–1876)  
Japan, Edo period, 1850  
Colour woodblock print  
Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1027

**16 | Wild boar**

Miyake Eisai (1810–1876)  
Japan, Edo period, 1851  
Colour woodblock print  
Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.884

**20a | Red mat and picnic basket**

Unsigned  
Japan, Edo period, second half of 19th c  
Colour woodblock print  
Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.905

**20b | Street vendor**

Unsigned  
Japan, Edo period, second half of 19th c  
Colour woodblock print  
Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.906

**20c | Two merrymakers on their way home**

Unsigned  
Japan, Edo period, second half of 19th c  
Colour woodblock print  
Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.907

The image of these two evidently inebriated men serves as a visual echo of the motifs addressed in the poems, in which the blossoms – in this case evidently cherry blossoms – are the main theme. They can be found not only on hillside and mountain paths, but also cover the city. High on their scent, a firewood seller longs for a party to celebrate the blossoms. Another poet writes of following the scent of the flowers along the street, only to find that it is merely the smell of a fresh teeth-blackening substance that a married woman has been given by her neighbour.

## **21 | Farmer with plough and oxen**

Unsigned

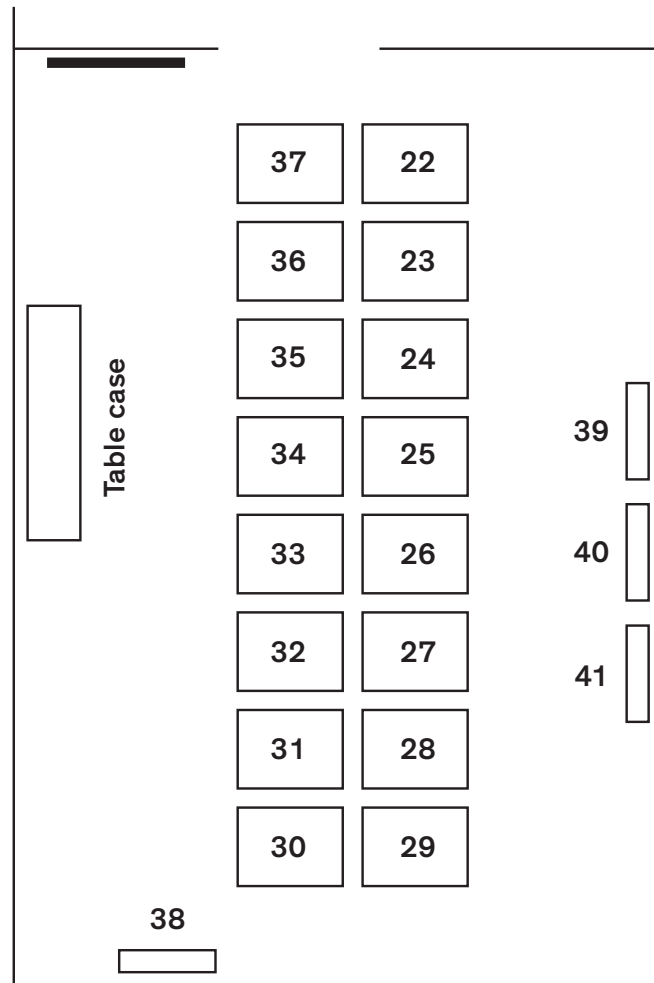
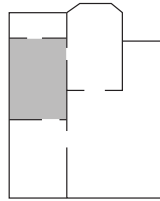
Japan, late Edo to Meiji period, second half of 19th c

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1075

Although, at first glance, this print appears to be an everyday scene of rural life, it can also be read as a parody on the Zen parable of the ten oxen, which describes the various stages of achieving enlightenment. By the sixth stage of this process, the individual pursuing enlightenment has overcome his own ego and is at one with himself. This is normally represented by the figure of a herdboys – symbolising humankind – happily leading his lost and re-found oxen – symbolising the “true, deeper self” – back home.

## ROOM II



## 22 | Welcoming the New Year with tea

One of the most popular New Year traditions was “drawing the first water”. On the first morning of the New Year, fresh spring water would be drawn from a well adorned with symbols of good fortune such as pine branches and *shimenawa* – ropes of straw decorated with paper streamers (23). The “young water”, or *wakamizu*, would then be used to make the “tea of good fortune” served along with foods considered to bring luck.

Poetry-writing circles would often hold tea ceremonies during the first two weeks of the New Year, at which the members would exchange *surimono*. Portrayals of the accoutrements used for such gatherings are therefore popular motifs in any New Year *surimono*. In addition to the classic *chanoyu* tea ceremony, in which the powdered green tea known as *matcha* (26, 27) was served, haiku poets of the eighteenth and nineteenth century also enjoyed drinking *sencha*, made from whole tea leaves brewed in iron, pottery or porcelain teapots (24) and served in small bowls (28). Sake would also be served, in shallow lacquered bowls (29).

### 23 | First Water of the New Year

Kōen (biographical data unknown)

Japan, Edo period, 1857

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.891

### 24 | Teapot and fern shoots (*warabi*)

Shibata Zeshin (1807–1891)

Japan, Meiji period, 1878

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.901

### 25 | Plum blossom branch, picnic box and teapot

Unsigned

Japan, late Edo to Meiji period, second half of 19th c

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.876

This New Year *surimono* also served as an advertisement for Asahino – a shop located in the Shinchi district of Osaka, specialising in *chazuke*. *Chazuke* is a simple traditional dish of cooked rice with topping such as dried salmon flakes, marinated plums,



wasabi, dried seaweed etc., doused in green tea. The name of the shop appears on the little box used as a picnic box or as a container for the dried *chazuke* ingredients.

The 31-syllable waka poem on the teapot extols the reflection of the morning sun on the Kamo River in Kyoto and the hustle and bustle of everyday life there. The characters that spell “morning sun” also feature in the shop name Asahino.

The prose text praises the various delicacies offered by Asahino that are eaten during the winter, in anticipation of the coming spring.

### 26 | Black raku ware tea bowl and plum blossom

Kei(?)gaku (biographical data unknown)

Japan, Edo period, Mid-19th c

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.896

Raku ware derives its name from the family of potters active in Kyoto since the 1580s. Its irregularities and unpretentious appearance, echo the *wabicha* aesthetic. The raku tea bowls used in this style of tea ceremony founded by tea master Sen no Rikyū pay homage to his concept of austere beauty and simplicity.

What is particularly noteworthy here is the design of the high-sided tea bowl whose deliberately irregular form is portrayed using the “boneless” painterly technique that eschews clear contour lines. The printer requires a high degree of skill to apply the ink to the woodblock and rub it into the paper in such a way as to create the textural impression of a coarse-grained, uneven glaze.

### 27 | Tee caddy (*chaire*) in brocade bag, dried chestnut, nuts and sweet

Harada Keigaku (1794–1856)

Japan, Edo period, 1850

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.903

The small, round-bellied caddy in its sumptuous brocade bag is used for storing *matcha* tea powder. Tea caddies of this kind, imported from China, Korea and Southeast Asia, are known as *chaire* and were highly prized objects. In addition to the tea bowls and other utensils used in the tea ceremony, they were a conversation point.

Dried chestnuts, *kachiguri*, bring good fortune, as the first part of the word is pronounced in the same way as the word for “victory” or “conquest”. The sweet in the form of a knot recalls the wishing paper knots tied to trees at shrines and temples.

### 28 | Water keg, tea-leaf caddy and two tea bowls on a lacquer tray

Sansetsu? (biographical data unknown)

Japan, Edo period, ca. Mid-19th c

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.878

### 29 | New Year sake utensils

Mitsumasa? (biographical data unknown)

Japan, late Edo to Meij period, second half of 19th c

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1021

## 30 | Scenes of everyday life

*Haikai* surimono, produced from the 1840s onwards in der Kamigata region around Osaka and Kyoto, were often illustrated by painters of the Shijō school, which is why they are often also referred to as Shijō surimono. The name of this painterly tradition comes from the location of the studio run by the school’s founder, Matsumura Goshun (1752–1811), on the fourth street, Shijō, in Kyoto.

Goshun initially studied under Yosa Buson, one of the leading poets and literary painters of the eighteenth century, and after the latter’s death, sought the tutelage of Maruyama Ōkyo, who enjoyed considerable success with his decorative and naturalistic style of painting. Goshun’s style combines Ōkyo’s realism with Buson’s lyricism. It is in his portrayals of the human figure, especially, that Buson’s influence comes to the fore: though sketchy and caricature-like, his figures display endearing and humorous traits, in keeping with the down-to-earth, witty tone of the accompanying haiku.

Depictions of everyday scenes, as in the prints shown here, are a staple in the Shijō school’s repertoire. It is remarkable how, by minimal stylistic means, the artists were able not only to express such lively insights into the activities of daily life, but also to convey so tangibly the mood of the individuals in their portraits.

### 31 | Two boys with puppy and ferns

Matsukawa Hanzan (1818–1882)

Japan, late Edo period to Meiji period, 1850, 1862 or 1874 (Year of the Dog)

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1029

### 32 | Toy vendor and two boys

Matsukawa Hanzan (1818–1882)

Japan, late Edo to Meiji period, 1850, 1862 or 1874 (Year of the Dog)

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1089

### 33 | Returning home from a blossom-viewing party

Yabu Chōsui (active 1830–1864)

Japan, Edo period, c. 1860

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1052

### 34 | Man and boy with lucky arrows (*hamaya*) on the way home from visiting a shrine at New Year

Donshū (active mid-19th c)

Japan, Edo period, 1857 Multicolour print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1090

To this day, decorative “demon-banning” arrows known as *hamaya* are sold for boys and girls at Shinto shrines. This custom goes back to the Samurai tradition of giving a boy a bow and arrow to mark his first New Year and to protect him from evil influences.

### 35 | Vendor of New Year decorations and a boy

Tōkyoen (biographical data unknown)

Japan, late Edo to Meiji period, 1817 or 1877

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.898

### 36 | Farmer working the land

Maki Sozan (active 1850–1860)

Japan, Edo period, c. mid-19th c

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1047

### 37 | Boating excursion on a river

Kigensei? (biographical data unknown)

Japan, Meiji period, 1869

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1040

A boat carrying people of all ages, from different social and professional backgrounds, is a recurrent motif in the “pictures of the floating world”, or *ukiyo-e*. It represents the Buddhist concept that all people – and animals – are ultimately equal and must all follow the same path towards enlightenment. The poems refer to the mixed company on the boat and provide a commentary about the various people: the *torioi* singer, the *manzai* dancer, the showman with his monkey, the monk, the herb vendor, the dandy and the samurai.

### 38a | Bamboo branch hung with lucky talismans

Gyokuen (active 1830–1860)

Japan, late Edo to Meiji period, 1867-1868

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1093

This large surimono with twenty-five poems was issued by various kabuki actors to celebrate the name-change of a young colleague. The introductory text is by Tamaroku, who was given the new stage name Asao Tomozō V in 1867. In his text, he thanks his older colleagues for their kindness and instruction, and asks them to continue to be well-disposed towards him. Verses were contributed by actors from renowned traditional lines, such as Asao, Ichikawa and Bandō. In addition to the usual springtime motifs such as morning dew, east wind and plum blossoms, the poets also speak of “young leaves” in reference to new and still evolving talent, as well as to the fresh greenery of spring.

Bamboo branches, decorated with lucky talismans such as money-bags, hammers, coins, rice balls etc., are traditionally distributed in the Shinto shrines and are meant to give the recipient good fortune and wealth throughout the year.

### 38b | Lucky ox statuette (*nadeushi*) on three cushions

Matsukawa Hanzan (1818–1882)

Japan, late Edo to Meiji period, second half of 19th c

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1102

*Nadeushi*, or “stroking oxen”, are small statuettes of stone or wood displayed in business premises. The person stroking the ox can make a wish – often a wish for many clients. If the wish is fulfilled, a small cushion is placed under the figure. Portrayals of *nadeushi* can often be found in surimono produced for the Year of the Ox.

The poems are by members of the Tōrien circle from Osaka, founded by Tōrien Kurimado. They mention the usual springtime motifs of plum blossoms, spring herbs, nightingale song, cherry blossoms and the five-day Tōka Ebisu festival dedicated to Ebisu, the tutelary deity of fishermen and commerce, which is held at Ebisu shrines during the second week of the first month.

### **39a | Camellia branch**

Kyūzan (biographical data unknown)

Japan, Meiji period, 1880

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.860

The evergreen camellia shrub blooms from November to March and its flowers are regarded as a symbol of New Year. Their colours – red, white or two-tone red and white – are thought to bring good luck, while the evergreen leaves are associated with longevity.

### **39b | Two poppyseed pods and a blown-away petal**

Kōen? (biographical data unknown)

Japan, late Edo to Meiji period, second half of 19th c

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.861

### **40a | Lead and water bucket with New Year decorations**

Sōga? (biographical data unknown)

Japan, late Edo to Meiji period, end 19th c

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1042

### **40b | Hand towel (*tenugui*) on a plum tree**

Iwase Kyōsui (1816–1867)

Japan, Edo period, 1867

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.892

### **41a | A deer on a promontory gazing at the full moon**

Seal not identified

Japan, Edo period, 1856

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.864

### **41b | Deer gazing at the moon**

Tanaka Shūtei (1810–1858)

Japan, Edo period, c. mid-19th c

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.879

Surimono were not only published at New Year, but also to mark seasonal festivals. In Japanese literature and visual arts, the motif of a deer gazing up at the moon has long been associated with autumn. The poems on these two prints reference the melancholy mood of this season and the beauty of the autumn moon.

## **Table case**

### **Album with fourteen surimono**

Various artists

Japan, Edo period, 1863

Leporello album, colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.908 to .922

### **Album with poetry surimono, compiled by “old man”**

**Baimin, vol. 1**

Various artists

Japan, Edo period, 2nd half of 19th c

Leporello album, colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.923 bis .1018

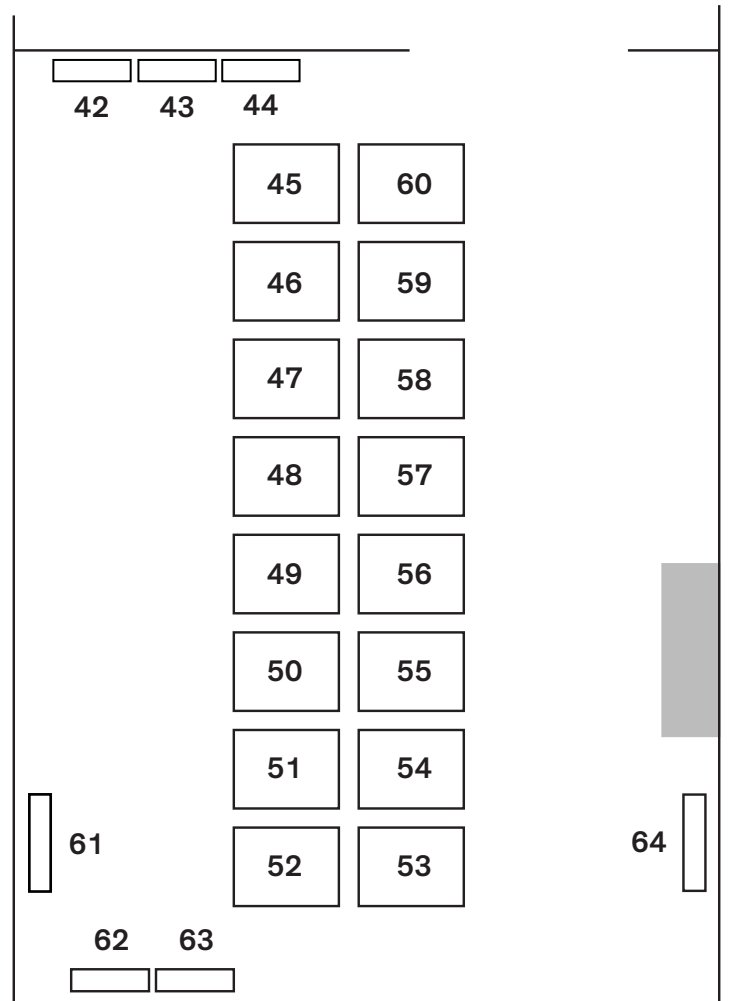
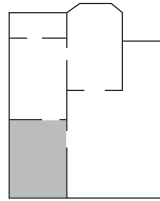
This album contains 96 surimono, with the oldest dated 1827 and the most recent dated 1872. Most of the other prints are from the 1850s.

Almost no biographical information is available about Baimin, who compiled this album. The suffix “ō” attached to his name, literally meaning “old man”, indicates that he had reached the age of 60. Baimin not only compiled this volume of surimono – one of three in all – but also appears on some prints as both illustrator

and poet. This suggests that he was a haiku master who headed a network of amateur poets from various provinces and earned his living by improving the poems of his students, evaluating them and ultimately selecting them for publication. This form of “long-distance learning” was not uncommon in nineteenth century Japan. By that time, a well-developed and well-maintained road network was facilitating increased mobility and a constantly growing exchange of goods and information between the major urban centres and the rural provinces.

Poets’ circles, such as that of Baimin, formed a “utopian realm” in which social barriers were overcome and people from all walks of life and from diverse regions could exchange their views and ideas about poetry.

## ROOM III



## 45 | Auspicious food

Due to their lucky powers, certain types of fruit, vegetables and fish are frequently donated as offerings at Shinto shrines, sent as thank-you gifts to superiors and other patrons, or used to decorate the home.

Round in form and red in hue, the bitter orange (**46, 47**) is redolent of the rising sun and, with that, conjures the auspicious beginning of the day, or, in this case, the year. Its other name, *daidai*, also means “generation upon generation”, equating to the wish for many offspring. The white turnip (48) is said to banish evil and ensure a long life. The sea bream (50), called *tai* in Japanese, rhymes with the word *medetai*, meaning “auspicious, propitious” and is therefore a popular food on festive occasions. It is also often associated with the lucky god Ebisu. Clams (51) not only symbolise marital harmony, but are also said to exhale a purple mist that renders visible the legendary island of the immortals or the palace of the Dragon King.

## 46 | Basket with bitter orange and spring herbs

Matsukawa Hanzan (1818–1882)

Japan, Edo period, 1856

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.887

## 47 | Basket with bitter orange, spring herbs and surimono cover

Watanabe Shōeki (biographical data unknown)

Japan, Meiji period, 1874

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.890

## 48 | Bamboo basket with white turnips

Umekawa Tōkyo (biographical data unknown)

Japan, late Edo to Meiji period, second half of 19th c

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1048



#### 49 | Lily and three mushrooms

Shiokawa Bunrin (1808–1877)

Japan, late Edo to Meiji period, second half of 19th C.

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1061

#### 50 | Sea bream on sasa leaves and cherry blossoms

Matsukawa Hanzan (1818–1882)

Japan, Edo period, c. 1850

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.885

The poems in this New Year surimono are probably by young female entertainment artists, as the feminine-sounding names of the poets suggest. One of the authors has even stated her age as nineteen. Some have recently changed their stage names, which may have occasioned the publication of this surimono. The motif of the sea bream symbolises the celebratory nature of this print.

#### 51 | Clams and plum blossoms

Harada Keigaku (1794–1856)

Japan, Edo period, 1861

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.902

#### 52 | Rice straw balls and sparrows

Matsukawa Hanzan (1818–1882)

Japan, Edo period, 1862

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1028

#### 53 | Landscape and figures

One essential difference between the *kyōka* surimono and the *haikai* surimono lies in the weighting given to image and text. *Kyōka* surimono usually contain two to four poems that correlate closely with the illustrations. Poetry and imagery complement each other and both elements are linked by a complex web of ambiguities, multiple meanings and references to historical events and/or traditional customs.

*Haikai* surimono, on the other hand, are generally illustrated collections of poems. The prints can include as many as fifty haiku, penned not only by members of a specific poetry circle, but often within the context of a nationwide poetry competition. For this reason, the illustrations tend to play only a subordinate role within the overall composition and serve primarily as an ornamental accompaniment to the poems. The motifs are decorative and easy to understand.

The landscapes do not relate to identifiable areas of countryside, but are imaginary, idyllic scenes evoking a respite from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. The figures are often based on popular folkloric characters.

#### 54 | Spring landscape with hut

Signature illegible

Japan, Edo period, 1844

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1091

#### 55 | Wood-gatherer in a hilly landscape

Unsigned

Japan, late Edo to Meiji period, second half of 19th c

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1057

The eight haiku in this surimono are by members of the Katsura lineage of *rakugo* performers– a form of theatre consisting mainly of comic monologues.

The poems express the glad anticipation of spring, when, in spite of the cold and the snow, the first scent of plum blossoms and the song of the nightingale arrive.

The introductory passage indicates that this surimono is dedicated to a master who has died; probably Katsura Bunshi I (1773–1815), founder of the Katsura school of *rakugo*.

#### 56 | Mountain village in spring

Kakusho (active 1850–1870)

Japan, Meiji period, 1869

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1062

### 57 | Riverscape

Himemaru Kyūtarō (active first half of 19th c)

Japan, Edo period, first half of 19th c

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.900

### 58 | Ohara woman peddling firewood

Ōnishi Chinnen (1792–1851)

Japan, Edo period, 1829 or 1841 (Year of the Ox)

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.899

Ohara, a picturesque rural district north-east of Kyoto, is famous for its Buddhist temples and its magnificent autumn foliage. The *Oharame*, or “maidens of Ohara” have been an integral part of folklore and a popular subject in art since at least the thirteenth century. Dressed in simple, indigo blue cotton garb with a cotton *tenugui* headcloth, they balance large bundles of firewood on their heads. Depictions of *Oharame* were especially popular in the paintings and woodcut prints of the Edo period.

### 59 | Old married couple Jō and Uba

Matsuyama Nantei (active mid-19th c)

Japan, late Edo to Meiji period, second half of 19th c

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.897

According to legend, on the shores of the bay of Osaka, there are two pine-trees in the villages of Sumiyoshi and Takasago, respectively, which symbolise the long-married couple Jō (literally “old man”) and Uba (literally “old woman”). When he was a young man, Jō fell in love with a beautiful young woman – the spirit of the tall pine-tree at Takasago beach. However, with the blessing of the deity of Sumiyoshi, the two were able to lead a happy life together until a ripe old age. Not only did this legend form the basis for the Nō play “Takasago”, but the figures of the old couple, harking pine needles together on the beach, also became a popular subject in the arts and crafts. Figures of Jō and Uba are often displayed at New Year as a lucky symbol promising long life and marital harmony.

### 60 | Chang’e flies to the moon with the elixir of immortality

Tanaka Shūtei (1810–1858)

Japan, Edo period, 1856

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.881

The young woman dressed in the garb of a Chinese court lady, holding a pottery jar in her hands and hurtling, cloud-borne, towards the full moon, is probably Chang’e, Goddess of the Moon in Chinese mythology. Chang’e was married to the legendary archer Houyi, who shot down nine suns to save the world from being scorched. In gratitude, the Queen Mother of the West gave him the elixir of immortality. Chang’e discovered and drank the magic potion that her husband had kept secret from her. The overdose made her ever lighter, until she floated up to the moon.

### 42a | Street musician

Miyake Eisai (1810–1876)

Japan, Edo period, c. 1850

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.883

### 42b | Hunter in courtly robes with servant

Matsukawa Hanzan (1818–1882)

Japan, Edo period, 1850 or 1862 (Year of the Dog)

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.886

### 43a | A noblewoman’s travel hat on a blossoming cherry tree

Tanaka Shūtei (1810–1858)

Japan, Edo period, 1856

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1023

### 43b | Fans, poem slip, pines and plum blossoms

Katsushika Hokuun (active 1810–1845)

Japan, Edo period, c. 1830

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1066

This surimono was published by the Kyōsaki group from the province of Hida (now Gifu prefecture). The poems are 31-syllable *waka*, “poems in the Japanese style”, singing of the natural phenomena that accompany spring, such as the early morning mist, the first fresh willow leaves, the rising east wind, and the first sunrise of the year.

Among the authors, many of them known for their humorous poems, the most famous is Ishikawa Masamochi (1754–1830). Masamochi, who also wrote under the pen name Rokujuen, lived in Edo (now Tokyo) and was a scholar of “national studies”, a *kyōka* poet and a writer of popular literature.

#### **44a | Cuckoo in flight against a full moon**

Hōsai (active 1840–1860)

Japan, Edo period, 1856

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.882

#### **44b | Two butterflies against distant mountains**

Sesshin? (biographical data unknown)

Japan, Edo period, 1865

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1053

#### **61a | Courtly carriage and young pine-trees**

Muramatsu Kisui (active 1880s)

Japan, Edo period, c. 1845

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1065

#### **61b | Mosquito net and a fan**

Tanaka Shūtei (1810–1858)

Japan, Edo period, 1856

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.880

#### **62a | Raising silkworm**

Ueda Kōchū (1819–1911)

Japan, Edo period, 1860s

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.870

Although depictions of silkworms are generally associated with late spring, the poems in this print mention activities and objects typical of New Year: donning new clothes in the first three days, the first sunrise, the preparation of New Year foods such as herring roe, a symbol of many offspring and wealth.

#### **62b | Ivy leaf and brush**

Sōhaku? (biographical data unknown)

Japan, Edo period, 1856

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.871

#### **63a | Fish and other sea creatures riding on insects and a bug crawling up a wooden lattice**

Tanaka Shūtei (1810–1858)

Japan, Edo period, 1856

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.869

#### **63b | Frogs and toads**

Satō Suiseki (active 1806–1840) / Shōzan?

Japan, Edo period, first half of 19th c

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.888

#### **64a | Leaping carp in a net**

Muramatsu Kisui (active 1880s)

Japan, Meiji period, c. 1880

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1074

#### **64b | Japanese primroses in a blue-and-white porcelain dish**

Suga Shōhō (1792–1851)

Japan, Edo period, 1828

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1072

This surimono, published in 1828, has the heading “Song of Spring” and contains fifteen haiku by members of the Kane circle of the Enjubō school for the three-stringed Japanese lute *shamisen*. The head of the group was Enjubō, whose poems take the place of honour on the outer left-hand margin. Enjubō was the pen-name of the *shamisen* player Okamuraya Tōbei, who was awarded the title Kiyomoto Enjudayū II in 1827. This surimono was presumably produced to mark his change of name. Some of the contributing poets, including musicians from the same ensemble, had also changed their artist names.

The poems conjure up typical springtime motifs such as plum blossom, nightingale song, and the yellow pheasant’s eye (*adonis vernalis*) flowers often set around the home at New Year to bring luck. The illustration by Suga Shōhō, however, shows Japanese primroses (*primula japonica*). These were imported from China in the eighteenth century and became popular as both garden and indoor plants.

**64c | Tatami (straw mat) maker**

Sekkō (biographical data unknown)

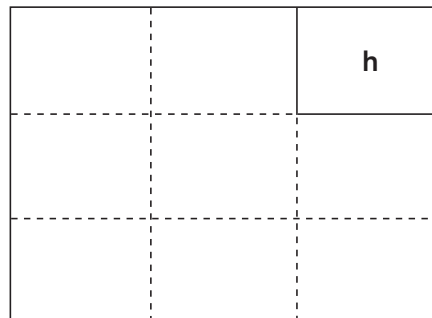
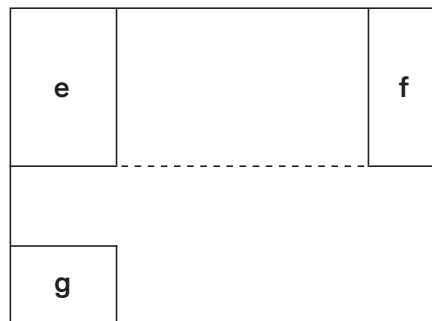
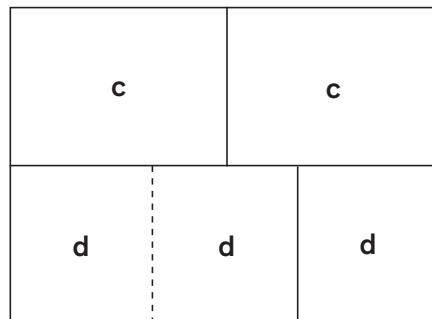
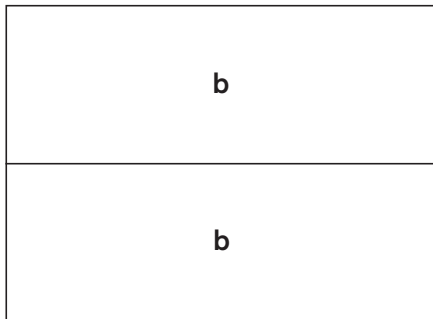
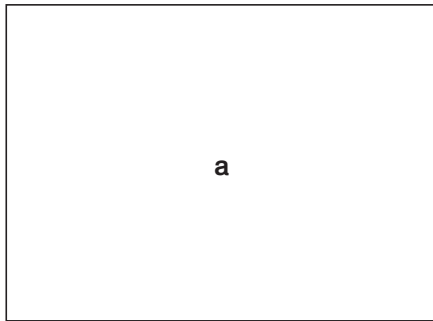
Japan, Edo period, 1839

Colour woodblock print

Bequest of Gisela Müller and Erich Gross | 2018.1098

## Surimono Formats

- a *ō-bōsho*, “large hōsho sheet”, c. 42 × 57 cm
- b *chōban* or *nagaban*, “long sheet”, c. 21 × 57 cm
- c *yoko-chūban*, “horizontal medium sheet”, c. 21 × 28,5 cm
- d *shikishi-ban*, “square sheet”, c. 21 × 19 cm
- e *yatsugiri-ban*, “one eighth sheet”, c. 21 × 14,2 cm
- f *jūnigiri-ban*, “one twelfth sheet”, c. 21 × 9,3 cm
- g *jūrokugiri-ban*, “one sixth sheet”, c. 10 × 14,2 cm
- h *kokonotsugiri-ban*, “one ninth sheet”, c. 14 × 19 cm



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*Translation: Ishbel Flett*



