

## Extra-ordinary Anatomy: The Human Figure in Japanese Prints

This installation focuses on the distinctive characteristics of the human figure as depicted in Japanese prints from the Edo and early Meiji periods (between 1700 and 1900): crooked backs, sloping necks, contorted feet, twisted heads, sinewy arms, and potbellies. Drawn only with contour lines, but rendered as if in three dimensions, the figures in these prints seem to present the antithesis of anatomical correctness according to Western academic standards. Instead, they demonstrate their artists' own concepts of anatomy and strong understanding of space.

The history of the human body in Japan differs greatly from that in Europe and America. In Heian Japan, for instance, women blackened their teeth and shaved off their eyebrows. The practice of teeth blackening continued during the Edo period, when female courtesans also began putting wax into their hair to facilitate elaborate, stiff hairstyles. Men shaved the tops of their heads and wore the remainder in a bun; in the summertime, they would bare their skin, wearing only *fundoshi*, or loincloths. This history of style and conceptions of the body is reflected in the prints presented here. Four themes highlight this history: muscles, clothing, faces, and the relationship between the body and nature.

*Veronica Nicholson*  
*Class of 2016*

## Musculature

This group emphasizes how printmakers depicted muscles. One could say that the muscles are over-rendered: the bamboo cutter has exceptionally wrinkled limbs and facial features. This manner of portrayal was common for old men, who in these prints have sagging bellies, crooked legs, and joints like those of marionettes.



### Japanese

**Actor as Warrior**, 19th century

Woodblock print (ōban tate-e format); ink and color on paper  
Gift of Hugh Trumbull Adams, Class of 1935 (x1965-41)



### Japanese

**Edo period**, 1600–1868

**Hokkei**, 1780–1850

**Man and Servant**, Bunsei 3 (1820)

Woodblock print (surimono egoyomi); ink and color on paper  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Straka (x1983-96)



### Japanese

**Edo period**, 1600–1868

**Andō Hiroshige 安藤広重**, 1797–1858

**Fujieda: Changing Porters/Horses from the series Fifty-Three Stations of the Tōkaidō (Tōkaidō gojūsan tsugi no uchi: Fujieda)**

Woodblock print (ōban yoko-e format); ink and color on paper  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Straka (x1983-35)



**Japanese**  
**Edo period**, 1600–1868  
**Katsushika Hokusai**, 1760–1849  
***Peasants by a Stream Working a Press***, 1819  
Woodblock print; ink and color on paper  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Straka (x1983-56)



**Japanese**  
**Edo period**, 1600–1868  
**Anonymous**  
***Bijōmaru***, early 18th century  
Woodblock print; ink on paper  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Straka (x1983-90)



**Japanese**  
**Edo period**, 1600–1868  
**Katsushika Hokusai**, 1760–1849  
***Artisan***  
Woodblock print (surimono); ink and color on paper  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Straka (x1983-104)



**Japanese**  
**Edo period**, 1600–1868  
**Andō Hiroshige** 安藤広重, 1797–1858  
***Miya***, from the series *Fifty-Three Stations of the Tōkaidō (Tōkaidō gojūsan tsugi no uchi: Miya)*, ca. 1832–34  
Woodblock print (ōban yoko-e format); ink and color on paper  
Gift from the collection of Anne van Biema (1997-548)



**Japanese**  
**after Hokkei**, 1780–1850  
***Things of Special Interest throughout the Country: Two Men Dancing (Shokoku Meibutsu)***  
Woodblock print (surimono); ink and color on paper  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Straka (x1983-97)

## Facial Features

The subjects in this group have unusual facial expressions: bulging, crossed eyes, comically downturned mouths, and miniscule features that express anxiety, humor, intrigue, amusement, anger, and pleasure. In the print by Utamaro, *Courtesan Passing a Letter*, the two women have small eyes and even tinier mouths set in the expanse of their white, oval faces. In the print by Shunsho, *Actor Dancing*, the frizzy-haired, dancing actor bites his nails and has a cartoonish frown.



### Japanese

**Edo period**, 1600–1868

**Katsukawa Shunshō**, 1726–1792

**Actor Dancing**, ca. 1790

Woodblock print (hosōban format); ink and color on paper  
Gift of Mrs. Anne van Biema (x1991-260)



### Japanese

**Edo period**, 1600–1868

**Utagawa Kuniyoshi (Ichiyūsai)**, 1797–1861

**Actor in the Role of Sadakuro from the series Sixty-nine Stations of the Kisodaido**, ca. 1852

Woodblock print (ōban tate-e format); ink and color on paper  
Gift of Anne van Biema (x1991-274)



### Japanese

**Edo period**, 1600–1868

**Katsushika Hokusai**, 1760–1849

**Woman at Loom**

Woodblock print (surimono); ink and color on paper  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Straka (x1983-102)



**Japanese**

**Edo period**, 1600–1868

**Kitagawa Utamarō**, 1753–1806

***Courtesan Passing a Letter***

Woodblock print (ōban format); ink, mica, and color on paper

Bequest of Professor C.R. Hall, for the Laura P. Hall Memorial Collection (x1946-388)



**Japanese**

**Edo period**, 1600–1868

**Gochōtei Sadamasu**

***Portrait of the Comic Narrator Hanaedabo Enba***, mid 19th century

Woodblock print (ōban tate-e format); ink and color on paper

Museum purchase, Anne van Biema Collection Fund (2011-93)



**Japanese**

**Anonymous**

***Actor***

Woodblock print (surimono); ink and color on paper

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Straka (x1983-93)

## The Body as Landscape

These prints blur the boundaries between landscape art and the art of the figure. In Hokusai's print of Kaosho Rochishin, parts of the monk's body adopt the forms of forest flora. The hair on his body resembles tufts of grass, while his robe extends out from him in a manner reminiscent of tree roots. In the large *shun-ga* ("spring" picture) print, titled *Lovers*, the robes become the surface for a landscape, including a bridge, a Shinto gate, and, to the far left, a priest or aristocrat. In Hokusai's landscapes from the *100 Views of Fuji* series, the figures blend into their settings.



**Japanese**  
**Edo period**, 1600–1868  
**Katsushika Hokusai**, 1760–1849  
**100 Views of Fuji**, 1834–35  
Gift of Frank Jewett Mather Jr. (x1940-8.2.10)



**Japanese**  
**Edo period**, 1600–1868  
**Katsushika Hokusai**, 1760–1849  
**100 Views of Fuji**, 1834–35  
Gift of Frank Jewett Mather Jr. (x1940-8.2.24)



**Japanese**  
**Edo period**, 1600–1868  
**Ryūsai Shigeharu** 柳窗重春, 1803–1853  
**Arashi Rikan II as the Shogun Taro, Nakamura Karoku I as Takiyosa, and Ichikawa Sukejiro in an unidentified role in a scene from the Play Soma Tarō Hyōbundan performed at the Naka Theater in 11/1832**  
Woodblock print (ōban tate-e diptych); ink and color on paper  
Museum purchase, Laura P. Hall Memorial Fund, selected for acquisition by students in Art 425: The Japanese Print (2011-59 a-b)



**Japanese**  
**Edo period**, 1600–1868  
**Katsushika Hokusai**, 1760–1849  
**100 Views of Fuji**, 1834–35  
Gift of Frank Jewett Mather Jr. (x1940-8.2.25)



**Japanese**  
**Edo period**, 1600–1868  
**after Kitagawa Utamarō**, 1753–1806  
**Woman and Fox Trap**  
Woodblock print; ink and color on paper  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Straka (x1983-109)



**Japanese**  
**Edo period**, 1600–1868  
**Katsushika Hokusai**, 1760–1849  
**100 Views of Fuji**, 1834–35  
Gift of Frank Jewett Mather Jr. (x1940-8.2.12)



**Japanese**  
**Edo period**, 1600–1868  
**attributed to Torii Kiyonobu 鳥居清信**, 1664–1729  
**Lovers**  
Woodblock print (ōban yoko-e format); ink on paper  
Museum purchase, Laura P. Hall Memorial Fund, selected for acquisition by students in Art 425: The Japanese Print (2009-35)



**Japanese**  
**Edo period**, 1600–1868  
**Katsushika Hokusai**, 1760–1849  
**Kaosho Rochishin (Flower Monk) from the Manga (1814)**  
Woodblock print; ink and color on paper  
Gift of Heather S. Haaga (2000-258)





**Japanese**

**Edo period**, 1600–1868

**Katsushika Hokusai**, 1760–1849

**100 Views of Fuji**, 1834–35

Gift of Frank Jewett Mather Jr. (x1940-8.2.19)



## Kimonos Extending the Body

In Japanese prints, clothing often conceals and distorts proportions. Figures wear garments that make them appear larger than life. This is seen in the print of an actor by Shunkosai Hokushu. The outsized actor stands in the foreground, and a fabric hanging almost totally obscures the figures in the background. In some prints, female bodies, mostly hidden by their kimonos, take on extreme proportions: miniscule hands and feet and elongated necks peek out from column-like robes in a serpentine manner.



**Japanese**

**Edo period**, 1600–1868

**Kesai Eisen**, 1790–1848

**Yoshiwara**, from the series **Bijin Tokaidō**, printed 19th century

Woodblock print (ōban tate-e format); ink and color on paper

Gift of Hugh Trumbull Adams, Class of 1935 (x1965-45)



**Japanese**

**Edo period**, 1600–1868

copy after **Suzuki Harunobu** 鈴木春信 1725?–1770

Scene from **Michiyuki tabiji no yomeiri (Tonase and Konami 道行旅路の嫁入 (戸名瀬と小浪)**; ink and color on paper

Gift of Carl Otto von Kienbusch, for the Carl Otto von Kienbusch Jr., Memorial Collection (x1942-308)



**Japanese**

**Edo period**, 1600–1868

**Utagawa Kunisada** 歌川国貞 1786–1865

**Actor Bando Mitsugoro in the Role of Asazuma-bune**, ca. 1827

Woodblock print (ōban tate-e format); ink and color on paper

Gift of Anne van Biema (x1991-277)



**Japanese**

**Edo period**, 1600–1868

**Suzuki Harunobu** 鈴木春信, 1725?–1770

***Lighting a Lamp-Sunset Glow (Andon no sekisho)***, ca. 1766

Woodblock print (chuban, nishiki-e format); ink and color on paper  
Museum Purchase, Anne Van Biema Collection Fund (2007-162)



**Japanese**

**Edo period**, 1600–1868

**Keisai Eisen**, 1790–1848

***A View of Yoshiwara***

Woodblock print (ōban tate-e format); ink and color on off-white Oriental paper  
Bequest of Rensselaer W. Lee, Class of 1922 (x1985-127)



**Japanese**

**Edo period**, 1600–1868

**Suzuki Harunobu** 鈴木春信, 1725?–1770

***Courtesan Smoking***

Woodblock print (chuban tate-e format); ink and color on paper  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Straka (x1983-28)



**Japanese**

**Edo period**, 1600–1868

**Shunkōsai Hokushū**, active 1810–1832

***Nakamura Utaemon III as Ishikawa Goemon***

Woodblock print (ōban tate-e format); ink and color on paper  
Museum purchase, the Anne van Biema Collection Fund (2011-39)



**Japanese**

**Edo period**, 1600–1868

**Suzuki Harunobu** 鈴木春信, 1725?–1770

***Courtesan saying goodbye to lover beneath mosquito net***, ca. 1767–69

Woodblock print (chuban tate-e format); ink and color on paper  
Museum purchase, Laura P. Hall Memorial Fund, selected for acquisition by students in Art 425: The Japanese Print (2013-5)