

Recent Japanese posters from the collection

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The Museum of Modern Art's exhibition history—from our founding in 1929 to the present—is available online. It includes exhibition catalogues, primary documents, installation views, and an index of participating artists.

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Recent Japanese Posters from the Collection

The Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53 Street, New York

This exhibition presents posters created in the last two decades by twenty-two Japanese graphic designers from three generations. The work of these artists is distinguished by highly personalized graphic styles. Many of their best posters advertise cultural activities or promote their own work, commissions that allow them the greatest creative freedom.

The commercial Japanese poster is the modern descendant of the woodblock print or ukiyo-e. As in the woodblock print, the images in the posters are flat, make bold use of color, and are indebted to the ancient art of calligraphy. A precise structure and order—common in much Japanese design—strengthens their compositions.

Works by older designers (like Ikko Tanaka) and a number of their younger counterparts remain firmly rooted in traditional motifs and themes. The Noh mask recurs in Tanaka's elegant posters for the theater; simple calligraphy dominates the work of Yoji Yamamoto. The commercial, photographic works of Shigeo Okamoto and Makoto Nakamura display a typically Eastern sensitivity to the tactile nature of materials. The sensual depiction of women is a prominent theme in the designs of some of these artists.

Many of the designers who achieved distinction during the 1960s and early 1970s have been very receptive to Western images and graphic styles, and were influenced by the radical cultural changes that took place in the 1960s. In this group Tadanori Yokoo's work is the most complex. His bold posters consist of an almost psychedelic layering of eclectic images. In one design, references to paintings by René Magritte and Pablo Picasso are juxtaposed with a Japanese warrior and superimposed on a brightly colored sunburst pattern. Shigeo Fukuda and the younger designers Akihiko Tsukamoto and Akira Inada were inspired by the Pop art movement. In their posters the commercial styles that Tom Wesselmann, Roy Lichtenstein, and Andy Warhol elevated to fine art resume their original roles while retaining their wit. In contrast, the posters of Kazumasa Nagai are cosmic landscapes, and Koichi Sato's have a strong spiritual quality. In many of Sato's works objects seem to emit a mystical aura, an effect enhanced by superior offset printing.

All the posters exhibited here were produced with extremely complex printing processes and advanced technical craftsmanship. Their colors and surfaces are surprisingly rich and unique for something as temporal and commercial as the poster. As Japan has become a leader in technology, perhaps it is not unexpected that the Japanese have applied these skills to one of their oldest art forms, printmaking.

Christopher Mount
Department of Architecture and Design

Posters on this wall

Kazumasa Nagai b. 1929

- 1 Kazumasa Nagai Exhibition. 1978
Silkscreen
Gift of Leonard A. Lauder
- 2 Artists Paint Toyama:
100 People, 100 Views Exhibition.
1983
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer
- 3 Kazumasa Nagai Exhibition. 1981
Silkscreen
Gift of Leonard A. Lauder
- 4 Kazumasa Nagai Exhibition. 1981
Silkscreen
Gift of Leonard A. Lauder
- 5 Kazumasa Nagai Exhibition. 1981
Silkscreen
Gift of Leonard A. Lauder
- 6 Kazumasa Nagai Exhibition. 1981
Silkscreen
Gift of Leonard A. Lauder

Kiyoshi Awazu b. 1929

- 7 Noh Performance at UCLA. 1981
Offset lithograph
Gift of the College of Fine Arts,
University of California, Los Angeles
- 8 Sixth Contemporary Japanese
Sculpture Exhibition. 1975
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer
- 9 Nippon Silkscreen Poster Exhibition '55-'72.
1972
Silkscreen
Gift of Ivan Chermayeff
- 10 Ninth Contemporary Japanese
Sculpture Exhibition. 1982
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer

- 11 Theatrical Production of "Osai-Gonza."
1974
Offset lithograph
Gift of Ivan Chermayeff

- 12 Art Today in Kyoto Exhibition. 1983
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer

Akihiko Tsukamoto b. 1952
Akira Inada b. 1949

- 13 Fashion News Magazine. 1980
Silkscreen
Gift of the designers

Kohei Sugiura b. 1932

- 14 The Eighth International Biennial
Exhibition of Prints in Tokyo. 1972
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer

Koichi Sato b. 1944

- 15 Theatrical Production of "Shino-Dan."
1976
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer through the
U.S. Art Directors Club, Inc., New York
- 16 New Music Media, New Magic Media
Concert. 1974
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer
- 17 Theatrical Production of
"Agamemnon."
1972
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer

- 18 **Theatrical Production of "The Story of the Cherry Princess of Azuma."** 1976
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer
- 19 **Theatrical Production of "The Women's Memorial Service."** 1979
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer
- 20 **Theatrical Production of "The Greenroom."** 1981
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer
- 21 **Sixth Gunma Prefectural Art Festival.** 1982
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer
- 22 **Seventh Gunma Prefectural Art Festival.** 1983
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer
- 23 **Ohara-style Flower Arrangement Exhibition.** 1982
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer
- 24 **Theatrical Production of "The Golden Pavilion."** 1983
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer

Tadanori Yokoo b. 1936

- 25 **Theatrical Production of "Yamato Takeru."** 1988
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer
- 26 **Tadanori Yokoo Exhibition: "Total Graph-ty."** 1988
Silkscreen
Gift of the designer
- 27 **Movie: "Fancydance."** 1989
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer

- 28 **Tadanori Yokoo Exhibition.** 1986
Silkscreen
Gift of the designer
- 29 **Japanese Society for the Rights of Authors, Composers, and Publishers.** 1988
Silkscreen
Gift of the designer
- 30 **Tadanori Yokoo Exhibition: "Total Graph-ty."** 1989
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer

Posters on wall to the right

Yoji Yamamoto b. 1943

- 31 **Typography Exhibition: "A River."** 1980
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer and the Japanese Graphic Idea Exhibition Committee
- Shigeo Okamoto b. 1934
- 32 **Shigeo Okamoto Exhibition: 1973-81.** 1981
Silkscreen
Gift of the designer

Ikko Tanaka b. 1930

- 33 **"Discovering Kabuki" Book by Kinosuke Tomata.** 1974
Offset lithograph and silkscreen
Gift of Ivan Chermayeff
- 34 **Theatrical Production of a Kanze Noh Play.** 1980
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer
- 35 **Theatrical Production of a Kanze Noh Play.** 1981
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer
- 36 **Theatrical Production of a Kanze Noh Play.** 1973
Silkscreen
Gift of the designer

Akira Inada

- 52 Crystal Louisiana Hot Sauce. 1982
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer
- 53 Crystal Louisiana Hot Sauce. 1982
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer

Akihiko Tsukamoto

- 54 Man Kiss + Lady Kisse = Love,
Hershey's Co., Ltd. 1982
Silkscreen with silver flocking
Gift of the designer

Akihiko Tsukamoto
Akira Inada

- 55 Helen Reddy's Whisper Was
Trembling, Capitol Records. 1979
Silkscreen
Gift of the designers
- 56 Did You Hear Helen Reddy Knocking?
Capitol Records. 1979
Silkscreen
Gift of the designers

Akihiko Tsukamoto

- 57 Wrestling Picture Book 1. 1983
Silkscreen
Gift of the designer
- 58 Wrestling Picture Book 2. 1983
Silkscreen
Gift of the designer

Shigeo Fukuda b. 1932

- 59 Shigeo Fukuda Exhibition:
"Images of Illusion." 1984
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer
- 60 Shigeo Fukuda Exhibition. 1980
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer
- 61 Shigeo Fukuda Exhibition:
"Images of Illusion." 1984
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer
- 62 Exhibition of Posters by Ten
Artists. 1982
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer
- 63 Shigeo Fukuda Exhibition. 1979
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer
- 64 Kyogen Performance at UCLA. 1981
Offset lithograph
Gift of the College of Fine Arts,
University of California, Los Angeles

Posters on screens

Left screen

Aiijiro Wakita b. 1942

- 65 New Music Media Concert. 1975
Offset lithograph
Gift of Leonard A. Lauder

All posters in this exhibition are from the
collection of my collection, and
belong to the Department of
Architecture and Design, The Museum
of Modern Art.

Shigeo Okamoto

- 66 **The Real Taste is Hidden within the Brown Surface of the Bread, Pasco Bakery.** 1977
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer through the U.S. Art Directors Club, Inc., New York

Makoto Nakamura b. 1926

- 67 **The Drama of a Woman Begins at the Fingertips, Shiseido Nail Enamel.** 1978
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer
- 68 **An Invitation in Your Fingertips Love's Magic Weapon, Shiseido Nail Enamel.** 1982
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer

Middle screen

Shin Matsunaga b. 1940

- 69 **Shiseido Sun Oil.** 1971
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer
- 70 **Shiseido Bronzer.** 1971
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer

Right screen

Masatoshi Toda b. 1948

- 71 **A Woman's Skin is Like Blues Music, Parco Department Store.** 1983
Silkscreen
Gift of the designer
- 72 **A Woman's Skin Absorbs Dreams, Parco Department Store.** 1983
Silkscreen
Gift of the designer

Makoto Nakamura

- 73 **The Wind of Travel Blows Because You Have Forgotten the Color of Tears, Shiseido Perfume.** 1983
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer

Shin Matsunaga

- 74 **New Music Media Concert.** 1977
Offset lithograph
Gift of the designer

Posters on left wall, above

Ikko Tanaka

- 75 **Three Designs for Nihon Buyo Performance at UCLA.** 1981
Silkscreen
Gift of the designer

All posters in the exhibition are from the collection, study collection, and holdings of the Department of Architecture and Design, The Museum of Modern Art.