



Sabah Husain is a printmaker and painter of repute whose works have been exhibited extensively in Pakistan and in a number of international exhibitions. Among other Venues her work has been exhibited at Kyoto City Museum, Japan (1988) and Victoria and Albert Museum, London (1997).

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She has received her education from Kyoto Institute of Technology, and completed her M.F.A. (Printmaking) at the Kyoto University of Fine Arts and Music; conducted research and studied papermaking at the Kochi Institute of Papermaking in Japan. Initially, she did her studies at the National College of Arts, Lahore.

She was awarded the Japan Foundation fellowship in 2004.

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Her prints and paperworks are in the collection of the National Art Gallery, Islamabad, Pakistan, Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Museum, London, Bradford Art Galleries and Museums, in UK and Okinawa Museum of Modern Art in Japan.

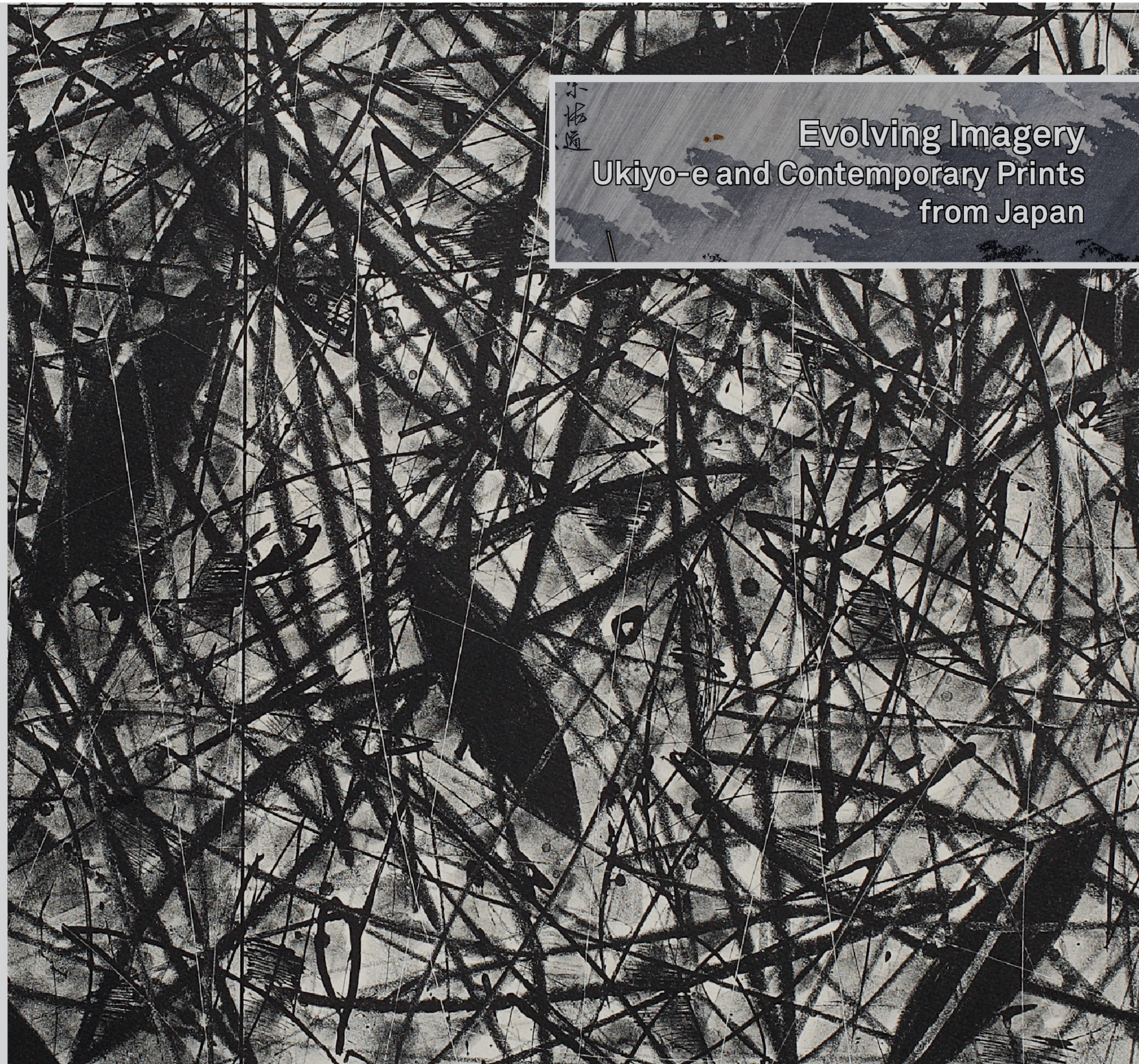
She currently live and works in Lahore, Pakistan and is the director of the Lahore Arts Foundation Trust.

sabahhusainlaft@yahoo.com



**Lahore Arts Foundation Trust**

is dedicated to promoting visual arts  
in Pakistan



Evolving Imagery  
Ukiyo-e and Contemporary Prints  
from Japan

Organised and curated by  
**Sabah Husain**



**Lahore Arts Foundation Trust**

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## Acknowledgements

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And finally thanks are due to my family for their support.

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## Curators Note

Contemporary Japanese print artists brought the print into a more demanding arena of aesthetics and conceptual concerns. Their practice embraces a wider understanding of not just printmaking but also of other disciplines. I tend to agree with Lucy Lippard' [1990]:

“I'm inclined to welcome any approach that destabilises, sometimes dismantles, and looks to the reconstruction or invention of an identity that is both new and ancient, that elbows it's way into the future, while remaining conscious and caring of its past” ‘Evolving Imagery Ukiyo-e and Contemporary Prints from Japan’ is an attempt to provide insight into the rich and dynamic tradition of graphic arts and their reinvention in Japan, enriching our perception of contemporary prints in the postmodern era in Japan. There are 22 contemporary prints. The eight contemporary print artists participating in the show are Ikeda Ryoji, Reika Iwami, Kimura Hideki, Maihara Katsunori, Nagai Kenji, Nakabayashi Tadayoshi, Noda Tetsuya and Yoshihara Hideo.

I have provided a brief overview touching upon issues relating to the concepts and aesthetics of the prints in Japan. Ukiyo-e prints (reproductions) on display are from private collections in Lahore. There are 35 prints by Kitagawa Utamaro, Toshusai Sharaku, Katsushika Hokusai and Utagawa Hiroshige. And there are two works by Toyokuni-I and Utagawa Kunishida.

This is the eighth exhibition of prints organized by the Lahore Arts Foundation Trust, including display of prints from Japan, China, Indonesia and Thailand. On the 20th anniversary of the Trust, Ukiyo-e and contemporary prints from Japan were exhibited at the Alhamra Arts Council, Allah Bakhsh Art Gallery from 23rd October to 8th November 2013. We have also exhibited the works of a number of contemporary Pakistani artists at home and abroad. Gallery talks and workshops are held alongside the exhibitions organized by the Trust. In the future we aim to organize exhibitions, workshops and events in collaboration with other national and international organizations.

## Evolving Imagery Ukiyo-e and Contemporary Prints From Japan

Prints have been an integral part of Japan's cultural past; the tradition of graphic imagery has been prevalent for centuries. In particular, Ukiyo-e prints from the Edo era have received world wide acclaim. However little is known outside Japan of the exciting new techniques in woodblock printmaking that have been evolving in Japan since the 60's. Primarily, contemporary Japanese artists have developed woodblock prints along a particular trajectory and these have evolved in a direct and uninterrupted line that grows out of the use of traditional techniques.

Although prints produced by most contemporary artists are an integral part of their artistic endeavour, the eight participating Japanese artists have pursued this medium exclusively. Contemporary printmaking artists have received recognition at home and abroad. In Japan since the early 50's printmaking as a medium has been pursued with great enthusiasm. They are "innovators, whose geographical circumstances and creative praxis drew on local traditions whilst absorbing international trends. In their radical revisionism they acknowledged the specificity of history and place, conditions of contingency and forces of globalization." [Kirker<sup>2</sup>.2009.p.8.] Hence the Japanese prints produced during the late 20th century are connected to the postmodern ethos and to a broader cultural and artistic nexus.

In the context of Japanese aesthetics cultural production must emphasize technical virtuosity and craftsmanship, irrespective of the medium. Ukiyo-e images were produced as part of a collective endeavour under the guild system. By comparison, contemporary print artists (1950's), though heir to a grand artistic legacy, produced their works individually, completing the entire process from conception to execution of the print by themselves.

*Nihon Sosaku Hanga Kyokai* modern Japanese print movement was initiated in Tokyo in 1918. And the focus changed from collaborative printmaking to individual expression. Later Hideo Hagiwara, Koschiro Onchi and Munakata Shiko began the contemporary printmaking movement in Japan. Prints played a crucial role in establishing Japan firmly on the contemporary art scene after the Second world war. Japanese print artists received awards at international exhibitions in the 1950 and, simultaneously in Japan, the international Biennial exhibition of prints was held in Tokyo in 1957. In 1967, a group of artists launched a movement, later known as *Mono-ha* [Object].

Lee U -Fan [b-1936] became the leading figure of this major conceptual art movement. *Mono-ha* was pivotal in introducing a paradigm shift from subjective to formal and conceptual concerns. Printmaking remained at the vanguard of this movement and ultimately became synonymous with contemporary art in Japan, [Matsuyama<sup>3</sup>.2004.p.75].

Japanese artists explored and experimented with western concepts as well as techniques such as silkscreen, lithography, etching and photography arriving at new combinations and permutations. The relationship between contemporary and traditional art practices was not antagonistic but rather productively dialectical, initiating the post modern discourse.

Practices embraced conceptual and aesthetic concerns. Of particular importance are the personal approach and procedure of individual print artists. This makes their work both interesting and distinctive; Ikeda's etchings have a lyrical quality. His philosophical and intellectual concerns regarding cyclical regeneration are eloquently woven into his visual statements: 'Revelation of time'. Maihara's prints offer an entirely different perspective: the delicate mark making is reminiscent of Japanese calligraphy 'office-Hi- Visionary Scene' is a comment on the endlessly mundane time and space in the mechanized age.

Reika Iwami is an accomplished print artist she is the only woman artist featured in this exhibition. During the 60's there were very few women in the print making arena in Japan. She renders the trilogy sun, moon, and water in gradations of black and grey: 'Water of Mt Fuji'. Kimura Hideki is best known for his conceptual work. He constructs his compositions out of the simplest elements: pure colour and straight lines in a grid format, possibly as a tribute to the Dutch artist Piet Mondrian. His image titled 'Misty Dutch' is printed on Lambda paper using silkscreen and photography.

Yoshihara's lithographs are skillfully rendered: two dimensional geometrical shapes are juxtaposed with delicate rendering of the human head, 'Sounds of Trees', Whispering People '92-D'; his images have an affinity to Pop Art.

Nakabayashi creates meticulously wrought etchings in black and white, 'Transposition '97-Ground-1.' Light to dark gradations convey his virtuosity with the sensuous possibilities of these resources. While Tetsuya Noda has creatively integrated the traditional woodblock printing with photography and silkscreen, 'Dairy: July 10th, 02'. They were both students of Komai Tetsuro at Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music.

Nagai Kenji portrays the two aspects of the same reality: the yin and yang. His superb lithographs are a study in the construction of organic blacks. Tusche

washes and crayons are layered to build the blacks and scraping tools are used to lift light out of solid blacks.

The effects achieved in Japanese woodblock prints depend to a great extent on the inherent qualities of Japanese handmade paper, '*Washi*', the generic term for all types of traditional Japanese handmade paper. Contemporary artists also use a particular kind of *Washi* for etching and lithographs. Ukiyo-e publishers used the finest paper for their prints. Even today woodblock printmaking, a graphic technique deeply rooted in Japanese tradition, exercises great influence on Japanese art. The collection of Ukiyo-e prints shown in this exhibition are largely works by the four of the most well known artists: Kitagawa Utamaro, Toshusai Sharaku, Katsushika Hokusai and Utagawa Hiroshige. And there are two works by Toyokuni I and Utagawa Kunishida.

Woodblock prints had already been established in Japan for a millennium, before the era of multi-colour woodcuts. Although woodblock prints were used for illustrations for many years in Japan, Hishikawa Moronobu heralded the birth of Ukiyo-e. The years from 1765 to 1860 or so were the golden era of the multi-colour woodcut. Within a century the Japanese multi-colour woodcut reached artistic and technical perfection. Ukiyo-e refers to the Buddhist notion of transience and flux. Paradoxically, perhaps, a genre of Ukiyo-e prints also reflected the changing fashions and leisure pursuits in the entertainment districts of Edo and Kyoto.

The Edo Period [1603-1868] in Japan was a time of great change. It is also known as the Tokugawa period. The country was ruled for 250 years by Tokugawa Shogunate that established the city of Edo [now called Tokyo] as the capital. And after almost a century of strife and warfare brought peace and stability in Japan, paving the way for economic reforms. An affluent middle class emerged; artists were commissioned by the emerging bourgeoisies to paint and print scenes of town life such as festivals and theatrical performances. To these were later added genre subjects, related to landscapes, portraits of courtesans, kabuki actors and historical subjects. The Edo era is credited with the development of classical techniques of Ukiyo-e prints and its famous exponents such as Hiroshige, Hokusai, Utamaro and Sharaku. This was always a collaborative effort. The team involved in the production of Ukiyo-e was known as the Ukiyo-e quartet. It comprised the publisher [who usually had overall control of the process], the artist, the block cutter and the printer.

Ukiyo-e prints were the product of a highly commercialised and competitive publishing industry. Kitagawa Utamaro was one of the most sought after artists. His primary concerns were portraits of courtesans and famous beauties of Edo, their elaborate costumes, fans and other small articles always correspond to

the seasons of the year. Utamaro's repertoire though was not limited to the idealized femininity; for the first time drunken prostitutes of the lower strata also became a subject of woodblock prints, from the series 'Through Parents Moralizing Spectacles'. He produced many explicit works, [shunga], despite the severe censorship and control exercised by the shogunate.

Kabuki theatre, prints celebrating Kabuki actors and Bunraku puppet theatre were patronised by the now affluent merchants of Edo. Toshusai Sharaku created dramatic portraits of Kabuki actors with exaggerated expressions, 'Bando Mitsugoro II'. His entire repertoire was produced in ten months. He was active as a print designer for just ten months and then vanished from the art world. Sharaku remains an enigma as no one knows who exactly he was; he produced about 140 works. Utagawa Toyokuni's forte was also the portrayal of Kabuki actors. The print '12 Months of Modern Beauties' is from a series of Fan prints. Utagawa Kunisada was Toyokuni's pupil; he was a book illustrator. 'Torioi-a Female Street Musician' is an excellent study of a female instrumentalist.

Landscape prints as an independent genre of Ukiyo-e, was established by Katsushika Hokusai. The basic concepts and style of oriental landscape painting were established in China. The landscape was idealised and highly stylised. Both these elements inform Hokusai's prints. During the Edo period there was gradual improvement in the road systems in Japan and artists travelled and documented its scenic beauty. Hokusai too was an avid traveller and is best known for his series based on Mount Fuji, 'Stormy Sea off Kanagawa, from [Thirty-six views of Mount Fuji]'. And his sketch books *Hokusai Manga* are predecessors to modern *manga* comics in Japan. Hiroshige travelled along the Tokaido [road between Tokyo and Kyoto] following in the footsteps of Hokusai. He documented the peoples customs and habitat on his travels. He published many series of Tokaido and the environs of Edo, 'View of the whirl Pools at Awa'. Hiroshige based and sustained his art on direct observation of nature. His legendary works "The Fifty-three stations on the Tokaido" won him fame in Japan. His most remarkable prints in this series are invariably those containing one element of Hiroshige's magical trilogy: The moon, rain and snow.

Ukiyo-e prints also influenced the impressionist during the last century and their impact on the Western art is universally recognized.

Sabah Husain  
Director  
Lahore Arts Foundation Trust

Ikeda Ryoji (b - 1947)

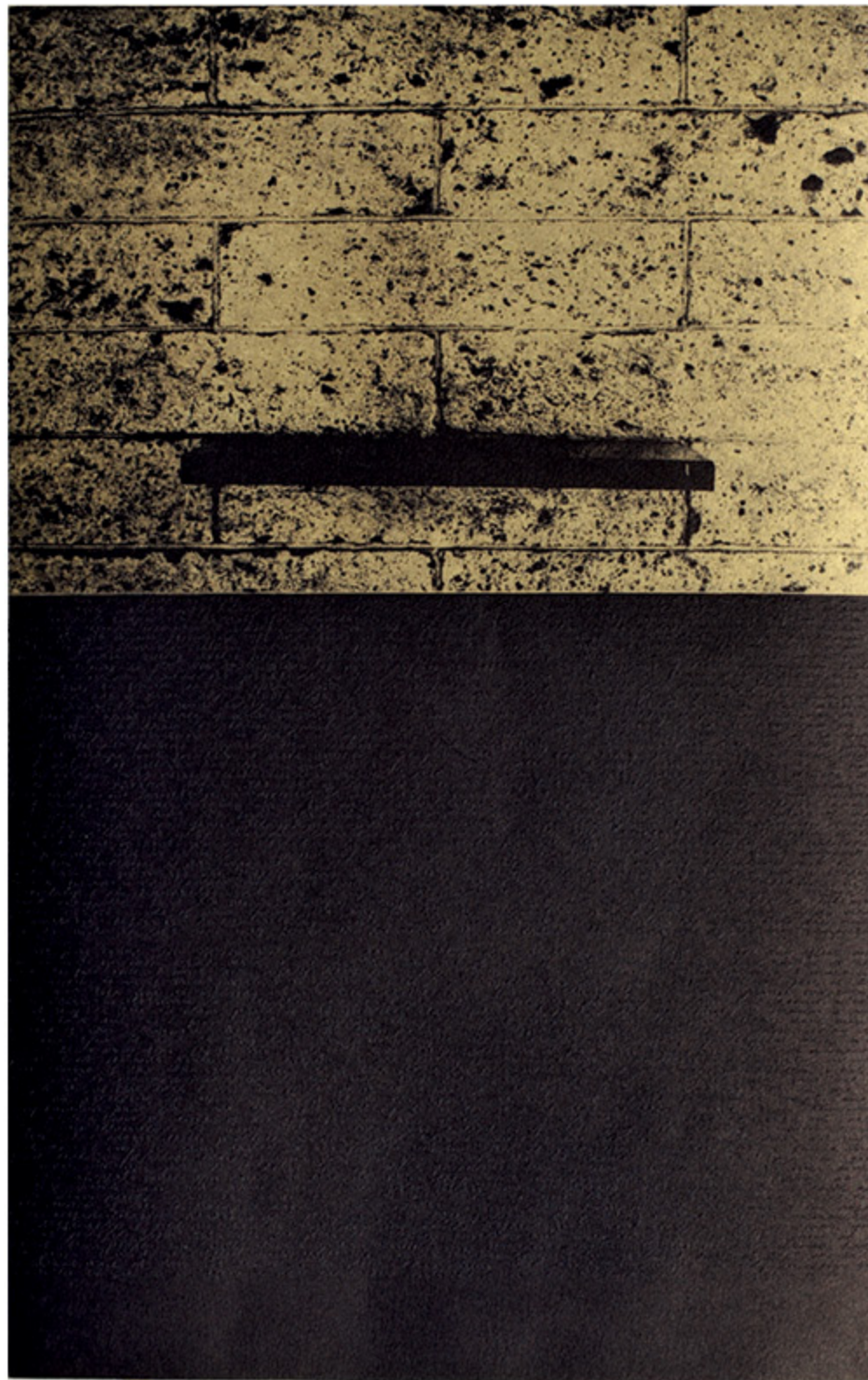
Revelation of Time

52 x 33 cm

Photoetching, etching, aquatint, gampi chine-colle

25

2002



Maihara Katsunori (b - 1937)

Office-Hi-Visionary Scene

32 x 32 cm

Etching

AP

1986





Kimura Hideki (b - 1948)

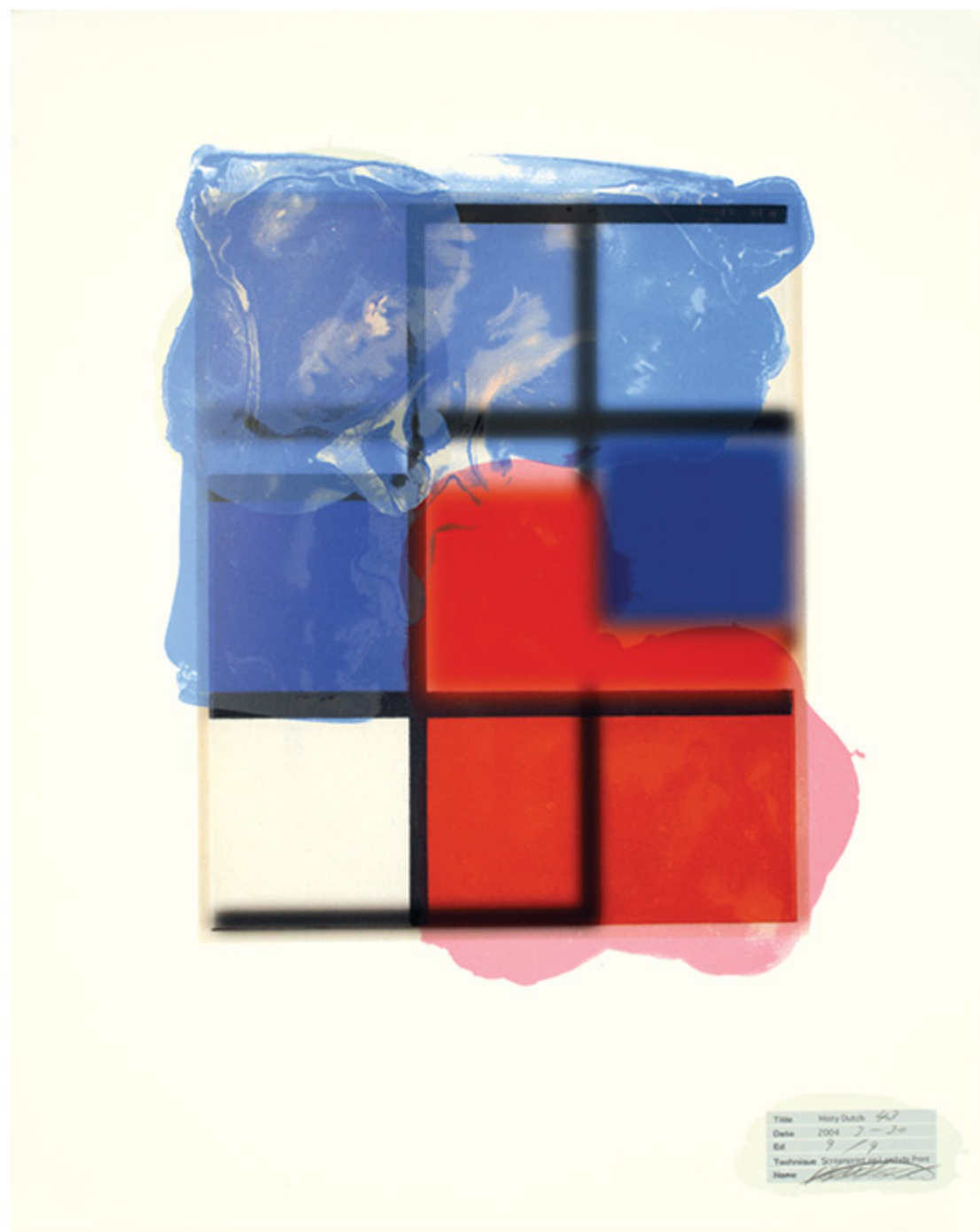
Misty Dutch 44

50 x 40 cm

Silkscreen

9/9

2004





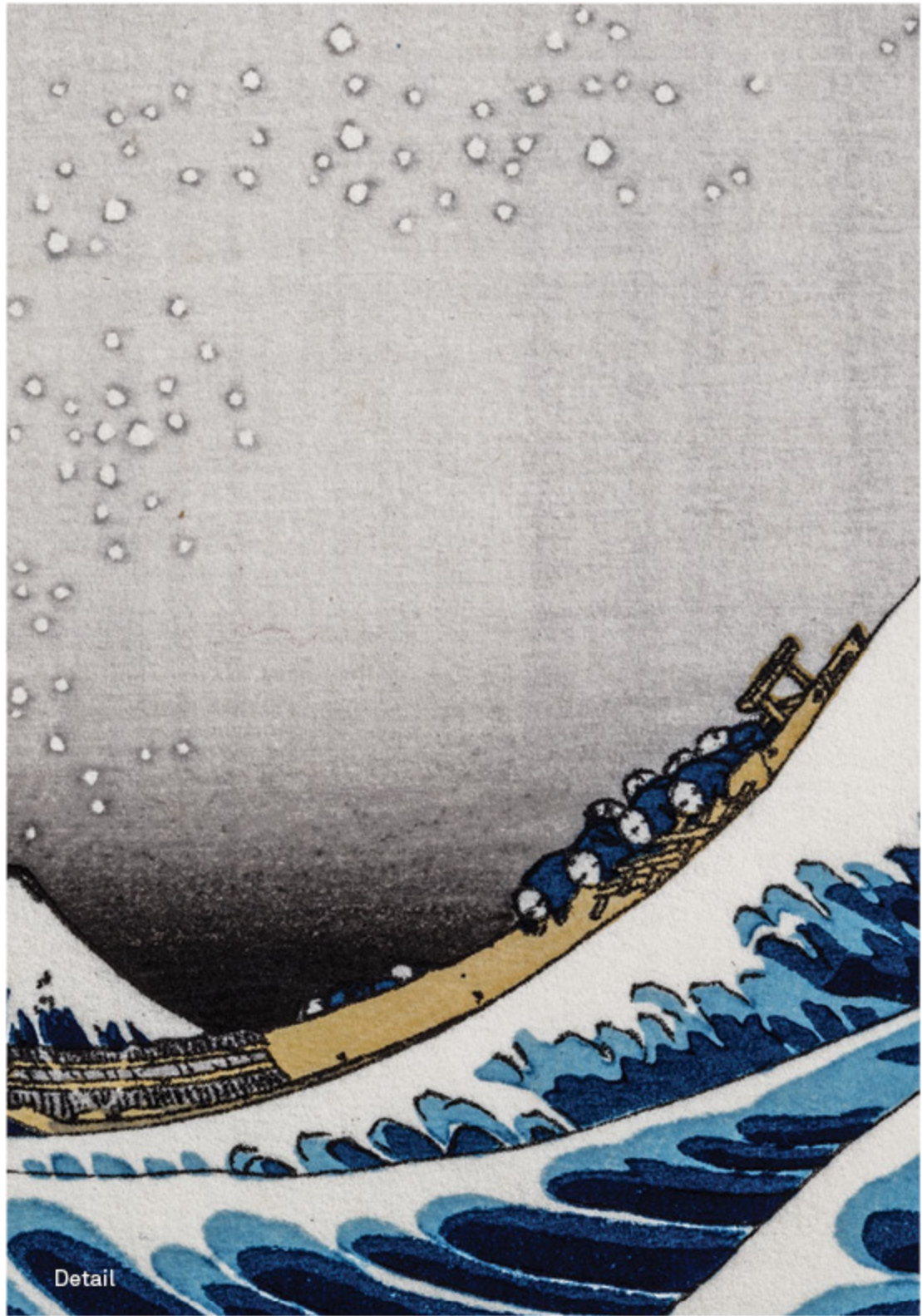
Iwami Reika (b - 1927)

Water of Mt. Fuji  
43 x 60 cm  
Woodblock print  
5/35  
2002



Katsushika Hokusai (1760 - 1849)

Stormy Sea off Kanagawa, from the series Thirty  
six View of Mount Fuji  
25 x 37 cm  
Ukiyo-e print (Woodblock)



Detail



Detail



Yoshihara Hideo (1931 - 2006)  
Sounds of Trees, Whispering People '92-D  
66 x 50 cm  
Lithograph  
10/20  
1992



Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806)  
Takashima Ohisa  
38.4 x 25.6 cm  
Ukiyo-e print (Woodblock)





Utagawa Kunisada (1786-1864)

Torioi a female street musician  
26.5 x 39 cm  
Ukiyo-e print (Woodblock)



Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806)

Through parents moralizing spectacles  
38.7 x 25.7 cm  
Ukiyo-e print (Woodblock)



Nakabayashi Tadayashi (b - 1937)

Transposition '97 - Ground -I

59.5 x 101 cm

Etching, aquatint, lithograph | 50

1997



Utagawa Hiroshige (1797 - 1858)

View of the whirl Pools at Awa  
Triptych 36.7 x 73.9 cm





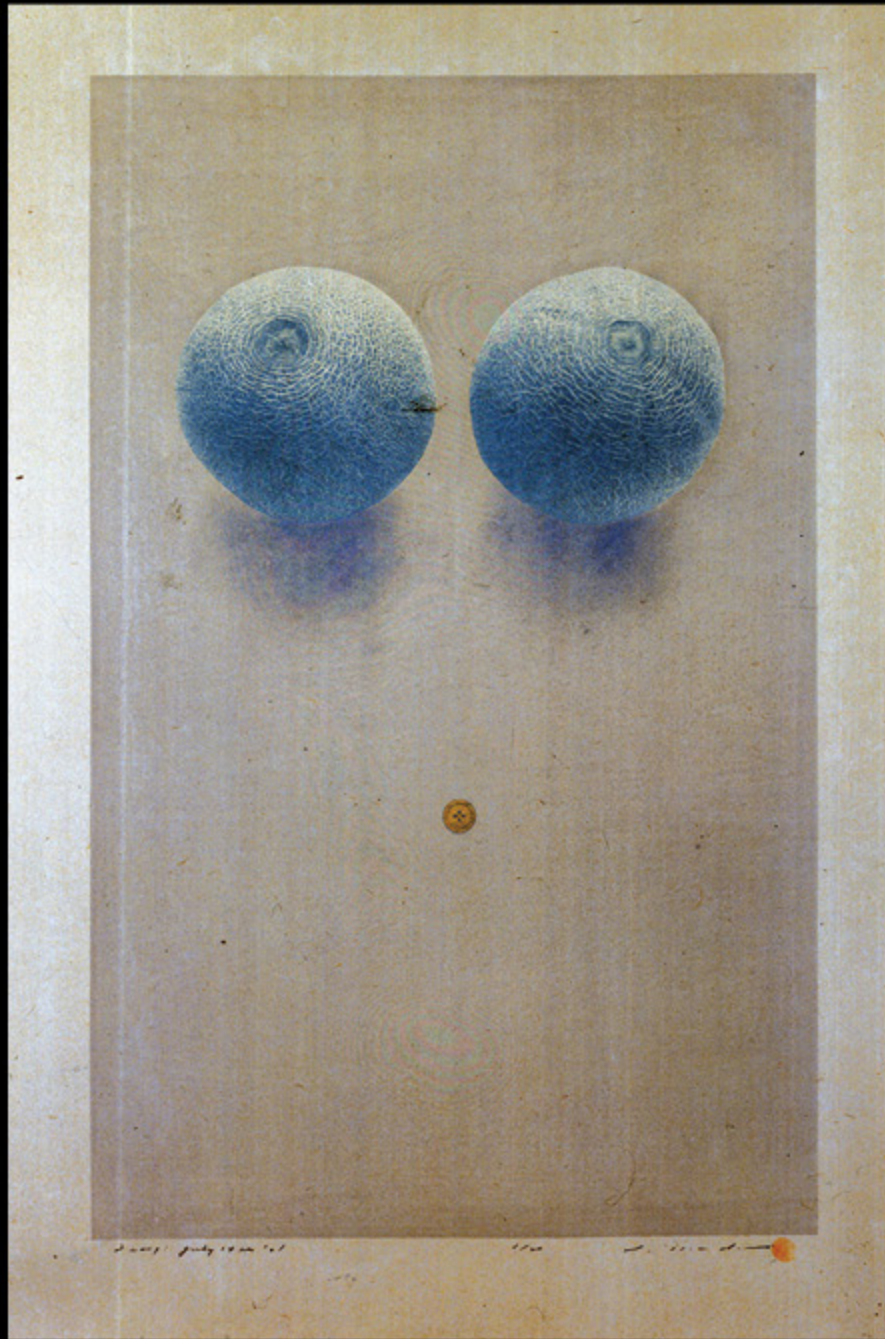
Nagai Kenji (b - 1947)

WL 05-5  
80 x 120 cm  
Lithograph  
10 3/10  
2005



Utagawa Hiroshige (1797 - 1858)

Shower at Shono, from the series Fifty-three  
Stations on the Tokaido.  
24.2 x 36.7 cm  
Ukiyo-e print (Woodblock)



Noda Tetsuya (b - 1940)

Diary: Sept. 28th, 03  
62.4 x 41.8 cm  
Woodcut, Silkscreen  
25  
2003



Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806)

Flirtatious Woman  
37.9 x 24.4 cm  
Ukiyo-e print (Woodblock)



Utagawa Toyokuni-I (1769-1825)

Series fan prints: 12 Months of Modern Beauties  
23.5 x 30.5 cm each  
Ukiyo-e print (Woodblock)



Toshusai Sharaku (active from 1794-1795)

Kabuki actors  
31.3 x 21 cm  
Ukiyo-e print (Woodblock)



Toshusai Sharaku

Bando Mitsugoro, Kabuki actor  
31.3 x 21 cm  
Ukiyo-e print (Woodblock)

京都名所  
之内  
淀川

歌川重画



Utagawa Hiroshige (1797 - 1858)

Yodogawa, Kyoto  
38.4 x 25.6 cm  
Ukiyo-e print (Woodblock)



## References

- 1 Lucy Lippard. *Mixed Blessings: new art in multicultural America* Pantheon Books. New York 1990
- 2 Marjorie Ann Kirker. *Printmaking as an Expanding Field in Contemporary Practice: A case study of Japan, Australia and Thailand. Critical essays on Japanese prints.* Queensland University of Technology, Australia. 2009
- 3 Tatsuo Matsuyama. *ISPA Japan 2004.* Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. Tokyo 2004



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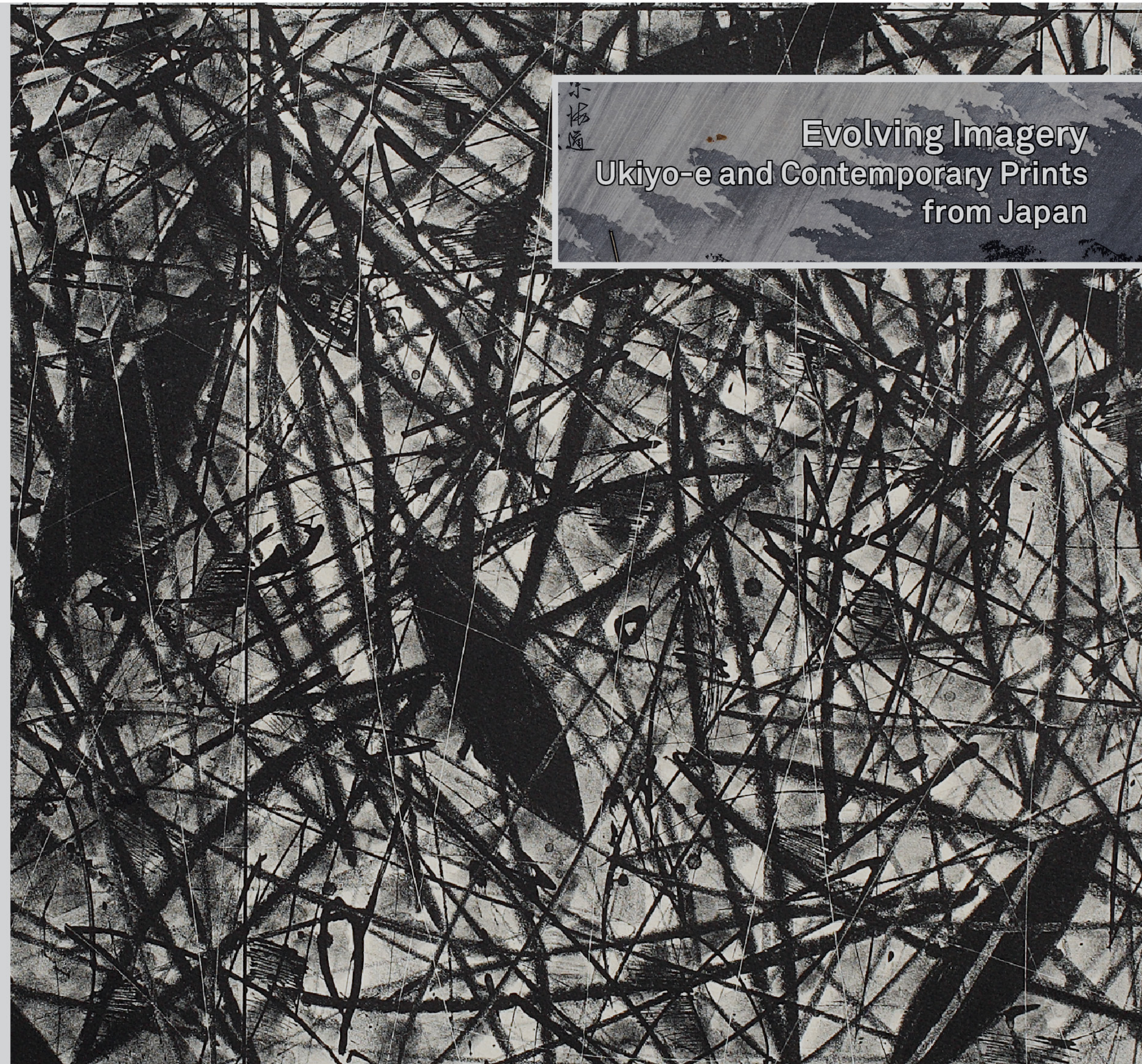
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The effects achieved in Japanese woodblock prints depend to a great extent on the inherent qualities of Japanese handmade paper, '*Washi*', the generic term for all types of traditional Japanese handmade paper. Contemporary artists also use a particular kind of *Washi* for etching and lithographs. Ukiyo-e publishers used the finest paper for their prints. Even today woodblock printmaking, a graphic technique deeply rooted in Japanese tradition, exercises great influence on Japanese art. The collection of Ukiyo-e prints shown in this exhibition are largely works by the four of the most well known artists: Kitagawa Utamaro, Toshusai Sharaku, Katsushika Hokusai and Utagawa Hiroshige. And there are two works by Toyokuni I and Utagawa Kunishida.

Woodblock prints had already been established in Japan for a millennium, before the era of multi-colour woodcuts. Although woodblock prints were used for illustrations for many years in Japan, Hishikawa Moronobu heralded the birth of Ukiyo-e. The years from 1765 to 1860 or so were the golden era of the multi-colour woodcut. Within a century the Japanese multi-colour woodcut reached artistic and technical perfection. Ukiyo-e refers to the Buddhist notion of transience and flux. Paradoxically, perhaps, a genre of Ukiyo-e prints also reflected the changing fashions and leisure pursuits in the entertainment districts of Edo and Kyoto.

The Edo Period [1603-1868] in Japan was a time of great change. It is also known as the Tokugawa period. The country was ruled for 250 years by Tokugawa Shogunate that established the city of Edo [now called Tokyo] as the capital. And after almost a century of strife and warfare brought peace and stability in Japan, paving the way for economic reforms. An affluent middle class emerged; artists were commissioned by the emerging bourgeoisies to paint and print scenes of town life such as festivals and theatrical performances. To these were later added genre subjects, related to landscapes, portraits of courtesans, kabuki actors and historical subjects. The Edo era is credited with the development of classical techniques of Ukiyo-e prints and its famous exponents such as Hiroshige, Hokusai, Utamaro and Sharaku. This was always a collaborative effort. The team involved in the production of Ukiyo-e was known as the Ukiyo-e quartet. It comprised the publisher [who usually had overall control of the process], the artist, the block cutter and the printer.

Ukiyo-e prints were the product of a highly commercialised and competitive publishing industry. Kitagawa Utamaro was one of the most sought after artists. His primary concerns were portraits of courtesans and famous beauties of Edo, their elaborate costumes, fans and other small articles always correspond to

the seasons of the year. Utamaro's repertoire though was not limited to the idealized femininity; for the first time drunken prostitutes of the lower strata also became a subject of woodblock prints, from the series 'Through Parents Moralizing Spectacles'. He produced many explicit works, [shunga], despite the severe censorship and control exercised by the shogunate.

Kabuki theatre, prints celebrating Kabuki actors and Bunraku puppet theatre were patronised by the now affluent merchants of Edo. Toshusai Sharaku created dramatic portraits of Kabuki actors with exaggerated expressions, 'Bando Mitsugoro II'. His entire repertoire was produced in ten months. He was active as a print designer for just ten months and then vanished from the art world. Sharaku remains an enigma as no one knows who exactly he was; he produced about 140 works. Utagawa Toyokuni's forte was also the portrayal of Kabuki actors. The print '12 Months of Modern Beauties' is from a series of Fan prints. Utagawa Kunisada was Toyokuni's pupil; he was a book illustrator. 'Torioi-a Female Street Musician' is an excellent study of a female instrumentalist.

Landscape prints as an independent genre of Ukiyo-e, was established by Katsushika Hokusai. The basic concepts and style of oriental landscape painting were established in China. The landscape was idealised and highly stylised. Both these elements inform Hokusai's prints. During the Edo period there was gradual improvement in the road systems in Japan and artists travelled and documented its scenic beauty. Hokusai too was an avid traveller and is best known for his series based on Mount Fuji, 'Stormy Sea off Kanagawa, from [Thirty-six views of Mount Fuji]'. And his sketch books *Hokusai Manga* are predecessors to modern *manga* comics in Japan. Hiroshige travelled along the Tokaido [road between Tokyo and Kyoto] following in the footsteps of Hokusai. He documented the peoples customs and habitat on his travels. He published many series of Tokaido and the environs of Edo, 'View of the whirl Pools at Awa'. Hiroshige based and sustained his art on direct observation of nature. His legendary works "The Fifty-three stations on the Tokaido" won him fame in Japan. His most remarkable prints in this series are invariably those containing one element of Hiroshige's magical trilogy: The moon, rain and snow.

Ukiyo-e prints also influenced the impressionist during the last century and their impact on the Western art is universally recognized.

Sabah Husain  
Director  
Lahore Arts Foundation Trust

Ikeda Ryoji (b - 1947)

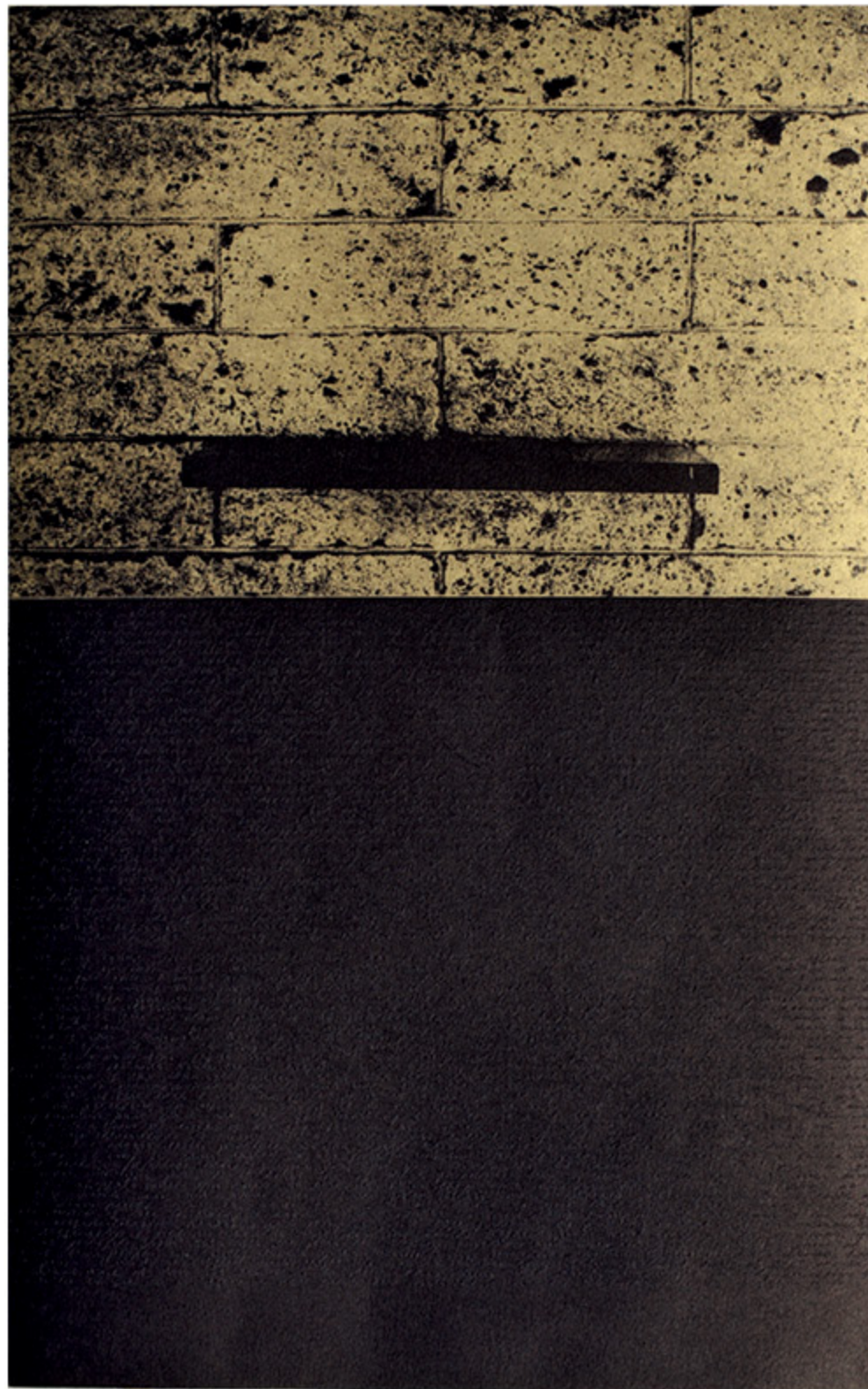
Revelation of Time

52 x 33 cm

Photoetching, etching, aquatint, gampi chine-colle

25

2002



Maihara Katsunori (b - 1937)

Office-Hi-Visionary Scene

32 x 32 cm

Etching

AP

1986



Kimura Hideki (b - 1948)

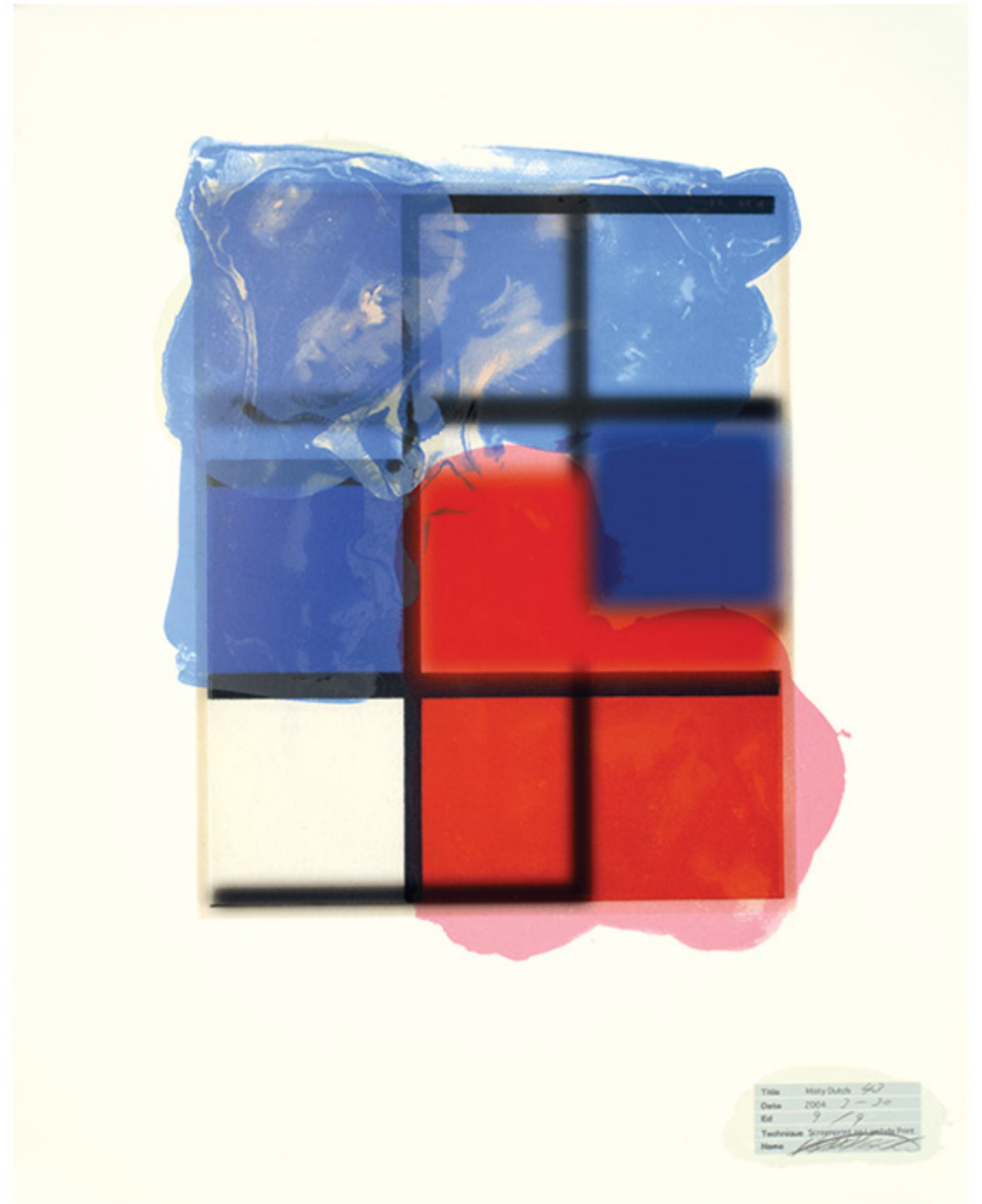
Misty Dutch 44

50 x 40 cm

Silkscreen

9/9

2004





Iwami Reika (b - 1927)

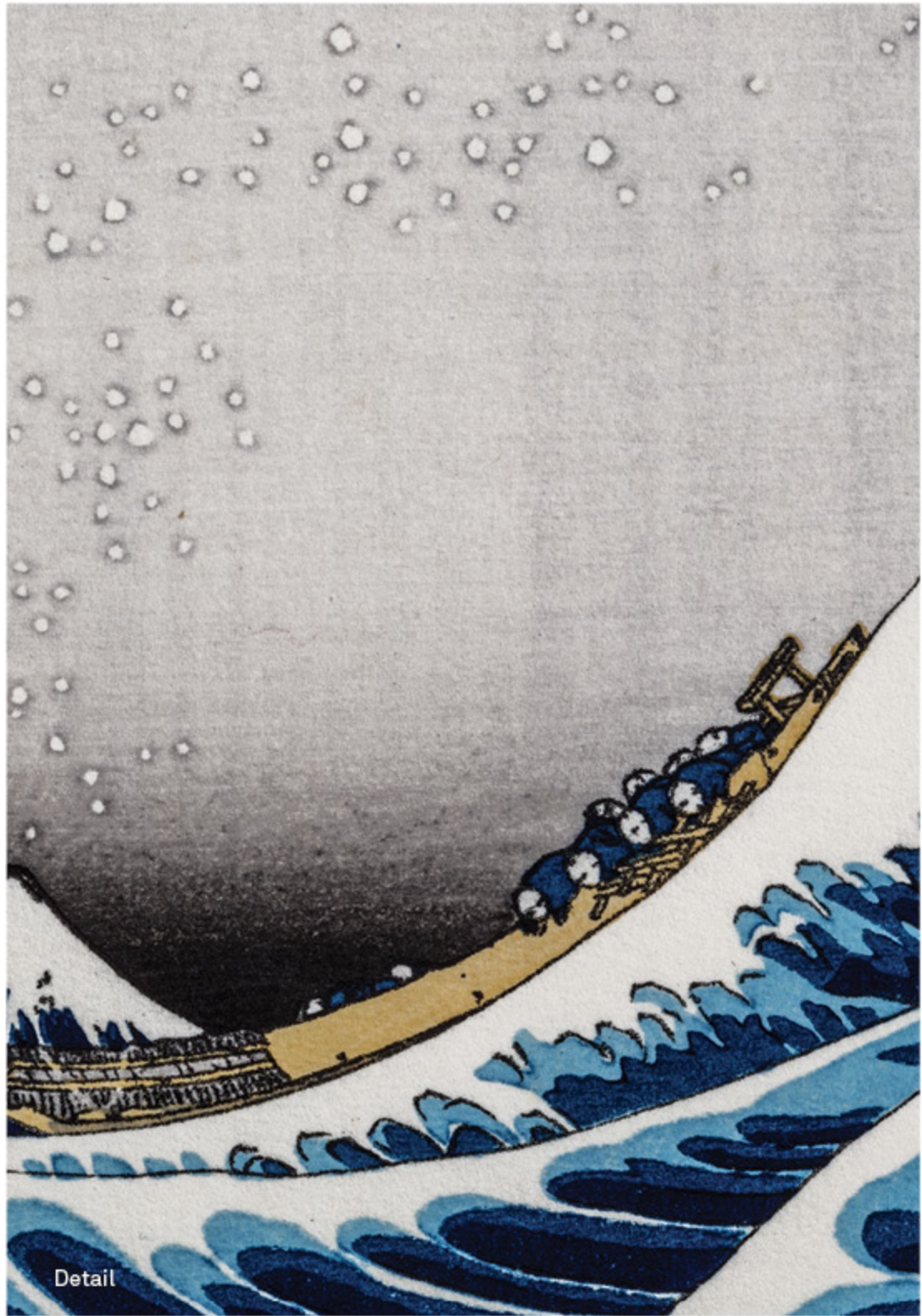
Water of Mt. Fuji  
43 x 60 cm  
Woodblock print  
5/35  
2002



Katsushika Hokusai (1760 - 1849)

Stormy Sea off Kanagawa, from the series Thirty  
six View of Mount Fuji  
25 x 37 cm  
Ukiyo-e print (Woodblock)





Detail



Detail



Yoshihara Hideo (1931 - 2006)  
Sounds of Trees, Whispering People '92-D  
66 x 50 cm  
Lithograph  
10/20  
1992



Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806)  
Takashima Ohisa  
38.4 x 25.6 cm  
Ukiyo-e print (Woodblock)





Utagawa Kunisada (1786-1864)

Toriōi a female street musician  
26.5 x 39 cm  
Ukiyo-e print (Woodblock)



Kitagawa Utamarō (1753-1806)

Through parents moralizing spectacles  
38.7 x 25.7 cm  
Ukiyo-e print (Woodblock)



Nakabayashi Tadayashi (b - 1937)

Transposition '97 - Ground -I

59.5 x 101 cm

Etching, aquatint, lithograph | 50

1997



Utagawa Hiroshige (1797 - 1858)

View of the whirl Pools at Awa  
Triptych 36.7 x 73.9 cm



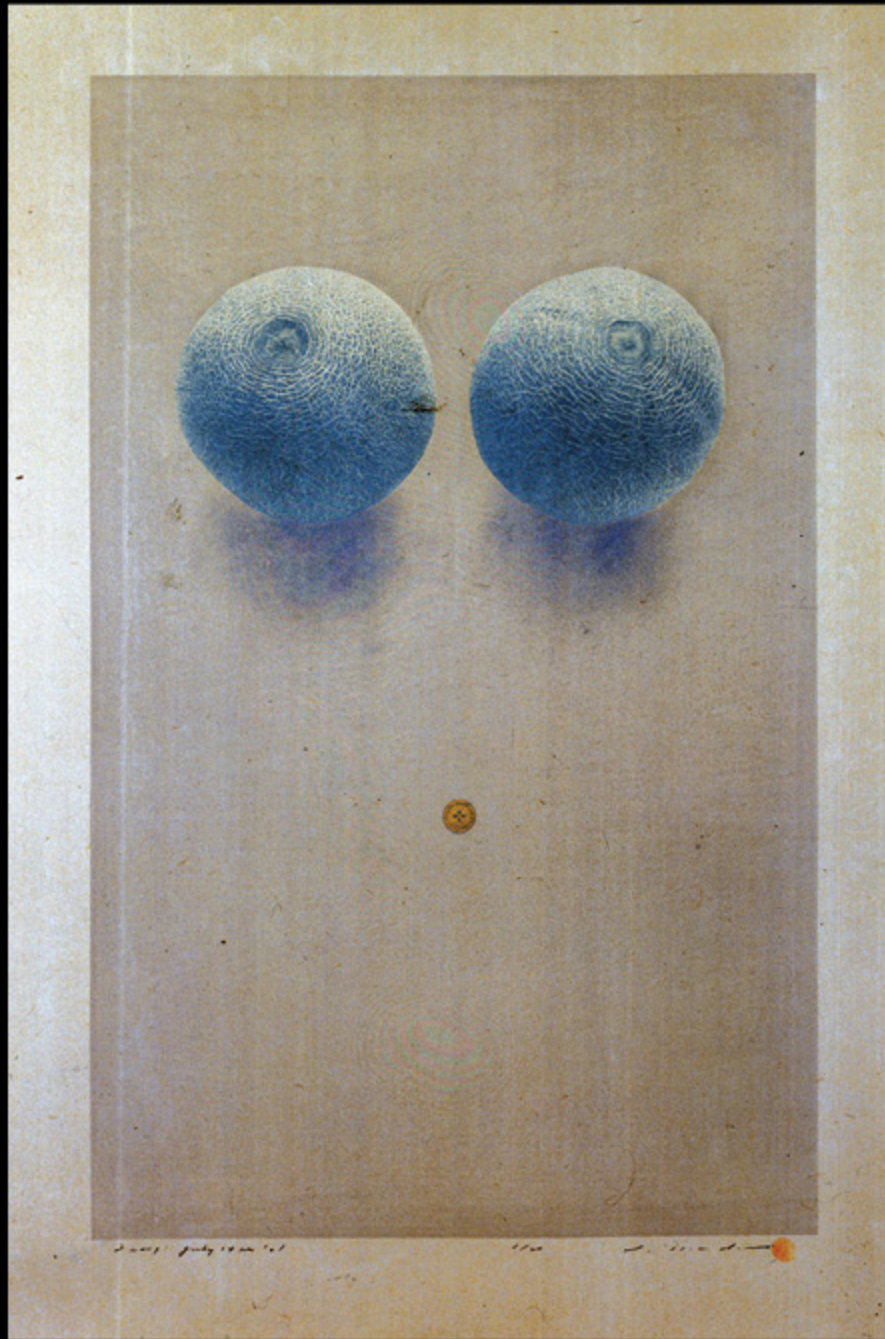
Nagai Kenji (b - 1947)

WL 05-5  
80 x 120 cm  
Lithograph  
10 3/10  
2005



Utagawa Hiroshige (1797 - 1858)

Shower at Shono, from the series Fifty-three  
Stations on the Tokaido.  
24.2 x 36.7 cm  
Ukiyo-e print (Woodblock)



Noda Tetsuya (b - 1940)

Diary: Sept. 28th, 03  
62.4 x 41.8 cm  
Woodcut, Silkscreen  
25  
2003



Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806)

Flirtatious Woman  
37.9 x 24.4 cm  
Ukiyo-e print (Woodblock)





Utagawa Toyokuni-I (1769-1825)

Series fan prints: 12 Months of Modern Beauties  
23.5 x 30.5 cm each  
Ukiyo-e print (Woodblock)



Toshusai Sharaku (active from 1794-1795)

Kabuki actors

31.3 x 21 cm

Ukiyo-e print (Woodblock)



Toshusai Sharaku

Bando Mitsugoro, Kabuki actor

31.3 x 21 cm

Ukiyo-e print (Woodblock)

京都名所  
之内  
淀川

歌川重画



Utagawa Hiroshige (1797 - 1858)

Yodogawa, Kyoto  
38.4 x 25.6 cm  
Ukiyo-e print (Woodblock)



## References

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