

## ON JAPANESE WOODBLOCK PRINTING

The Japanese woodblock print was first originated in ancient China and brought over with the introduction of Buddhism into this country. Japanese woodblock prints, so-called Ukiyo-e or color prints, are a kind of Japanese paintings, which have been eagerly sought after by connoisseurs of arts all over the world as one of the Japan's most traditional fine arts. It can be said that such prints form a unique Japanese art, which marks a new epoch in the world history of fine arts and of printing as well.

The art of woodblock printing had its golden age in the 18th century and towards the end of this period there appeared Hokusai who excelled in animated depiction of all objects of natural and human affairs, and Hiroshige, unsurpassed in the expression of the beauties of Japan's nature in purely Japanese taste. These artists and others competing with each other to gain the popularity among the common people, enlivened the Ukiyo-e world with their own respective styles. Consequently, these prints became more and more refined. Since then in this field there have appeared such talented artists as Toyokuni, Utamaro, Hokusai, Hiroshige, Sharaku, Kunisada, Kuniyoshi and Sadanobu. Kiyochika Kobayashi was outstanding in the Meiji Era. Such men as Hiroshi Yoshida, Shinsui Itoh, Hasui Kawase, Goyo Hashiguchi, Koshiro Onchi, Tomikichiro Tokuriki, Eiichi Kotozuka, Benji Asada, Sadanobu Hasegawa, Kin-u Takeshita and Sanzo Wada are the leading contemporary artists of present Japan.

In the process of making the woodblock print, the designer traces the lines of the original picture on several sheets of thin paper and he applies the colors, one after another, using a different sheet for each color. The carver puts those thin papers upon the blocks (made of cherry wood) and engraves or cuts them with gouges and chisels, making one block for each different color. Next, the printer prints the picture on the paper (made from paper-mulberry bark), using the engraved blocks in consecutive order.

Today, in the Showa period, our company has advanced the art of the woodblock prints, presenting such artists as E.Kotozuka, T.Tokuriki, B.Asada, S.Hasegawa, etc., who specialize in scenery, flowers, birds, figures and historical pictures. In co-operation together with these artists we have been trying our best to produce modern prints of the 20th century using the inherited but much improved techniques of Ukiyo-e. To this effect it is the most essential that the work of the three persons, designer, carver and printer, should be harmoniously blended.

The publisher, UCHIDA WOODBLOCK PRINTING COMPANY LTD., established more than forty years ago, has come to be watched with keen interest for superior technique not only by the connoisseurs of fine arts but by the Japanese Government which seeks to preserve the woodblock printing techniques. We sincerely hope that the gracious art of the woodblock print will be more and more cherished and preserved by its enthusiasts all over the world.

UCHIDA WOODBLOCK PRINTING CO., LTD

Marutamachi St. Kawaramachi-nishi,

Kamikyo-ku, Kyoto, JAPAN.