Japanese Sōsaku Hanga: Bird Prints
Introduction

Sōsaku hanga (i.e., creative art print) is the name given to a style of Japanese printed art that was first practiced in the early 1900s. This style was then new in two ways. First, artists “created” new objects by intentionally changing the shape and (or) color of real objects in an attempt to distance themselves from traditional Japanese artistic styles in which objects were drawn in a more true-to-life way. Second, artists tackled all three steps in the process of making a woodblock print (i.e., drawing the picture design, transferring the design to a block of wood and then printing the design). Previously the artist had only provided the picture design. This design had then been passed to another person who was skilled at transferring the design to the surface of a block of wood (i.e., block cutter) and finally on to a third person (i.e., the printer) who was skilled at adding ink to the surface of the woodblock, followed by a piece of paper, and rubbing the back of the paper to transfer the design to paper. By taking complete control of the printmaking process the sōsaku hanga artist could be creative not only at the design step in the process by also in the block cutting and printing steps as well.

Birds were one of the many objects chosen for depiction by sōsaku hanga artists. The first sōsaku hanga bird print was made in the late 1920s by Un’ichi Hiratsuka. During the next fifty years an additional forty-five sōsaku hanga artists made about 750 bird prints. Examples of the bird prints made by thirty sōsaku hanga artists are included in this virtual exhibition. These examples were chosen from sōsaku hanga in the Reader Collection of Japanese Art. For each of the thirty prints, the following information is provided: name of the bird(s) depicted, if identifiable, artist name, print title, if any, and print size.

Additional Reading

1 Unidentified bird by **Un’ichi Hiratsuka**, print entitled fairy tale bird, 145 x 180 mm

2 Unidentified bird by **Fujio Nishitani**, 180 x 240 mm
3 Unidentified bird by Yoshio Kanamori, 110 x 75 mm

4 Unidentified bird by Takeji Asano, print entitled bird and fruit, 400 x 295 mm
5  Unidentified bird by **Yasuhide Kobashi**, print entitled *birds at night*, 195 x 255 mm

6  Unidentified bird by **Fumio Fujita**, print entitled *bird picture*, 320 x 445 mm
7  Unidentified bird by Umetarō Azechi, 130 x 110 mm

8  Unidentified bird by Hideo Hagiwara, 175 x 125 mm
9 Unidentified bird by **Rokushū Mizufune**, 110 x 125 mm

10 Unidentified bird by **Fumio Kitaoka**, print entitled flower and bird, 165 x 240 mm
11  Unidentified bird by Tamami Shima, print entitled resting birds, 425 x 585 mm

12  Unidentified bird by Shirō Takagi, print entitled small birds, 285 x 425 mm
13 Azure-winged magpie (*Cyanopica cyana*) by Tomoo Inagaki, 440 x 560 mm

14 Crane (*Grus* sp.) by Tadashi Nakayama, 440 x 660 mm
15  Dove (*Columba livia*) by Makoto Ueno, 635 x 485 mm

16  Dove (*Columba livia*) by Kunihiro Amano, print entitled dove, 385 x 280 mm
17  Dove (*Columba livia*) by Jun'ichirō Sekino, 180 x 140 mm

18  Large-billed crow (*Corvus macrorhynchos*) by Tadashige Ono, print entitled shallow beach, 235 x 155 mm
19 Large-billed crow (*Corvus macrorhynchos*) by Akyio Onda, 300 x 340 mm

20 Large-billed crow (*Corvus macrorhynchos*) by Yoichi Nakano, print entitled crow (B), 180 x 180 mm
21  Domestic fowl (*Gallus gallus*) by Kaoru Kawano, 430 x 285 mm

22  Domestic fowl (*Gallus gallus*) by Tomikichirō Tokuriki, 410 x 270 mm
23  Domestic fowl (Gallus gallus) by Shun'ichi Kadowaki, print entitled self-carved woodcut rooster, 240 x 275 mm

24  Scops owl (Otus sp.) by Manjirō Asaka, print entitled owl, 280 x 400 mm
25   Scops owl (*Otus* sp.) by **Masahiro Hayashi**, print entitled *smile bags of paradise*, 640 x 480 mm

26   Scops owl (*Otus* sp.) and hawk (*Accipiter* sp.) by **Shiko Munakata**, 340 x 310 mm
27 Ural owl (*Strix uralensis*) by Kan Kozaki, 200 x 250 mm

28 Scops owl (*Otus* sp.) by Iwao Akiyama, print entitled winter wind, 250 x 300 mm
29  Scops owl (*Otus* sp.) by Morikazu Maeda, 150 x 125 mm

30  Scops owl (*Otus* sp.) by Yoshiharu Kimura, print entitled scops owl, 370 x 335 mm

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