Ten Influential Japanese Flower-and-Bird Printmakers

- Kashū Numata
- Sūgakudō Nakayama
- Sōzan Itō
- Seitei Watanabe
- Bairei Köno
- Morikuni Tachibana
- Hokusai Katsushika
- Koson Ohara
- Shigemasa Kitao
- Shōkei Yamada
Introduction

In Japan, flowers and birds are popular subjects for art prints and more than five thousand such prints have been published during the past three hundred years. Not all prints have unique designs because some artists intentionally copied the designs of their predecessors, either completely or in part. There are a number of possible reasons why one artist would choose to copy the design of another. First, it could be intended as a sign of respect for the work of an artist whom the copier held in high regard (i.e., imitation as a form of flattery). Second, the copier may not have had first-hand experience with a particular bird or flower and chose to copy the work of a more experienced artist. Third, a publisher may have wished to profit from the popularity of a work by a particular artist and commissioned a similar work by another artist. Regardless of the reason for copying, it was a clear sign of artistic influence if one’s work was copied by another. This virtual exhibition profiles the work of ten such influential artists whose designs for flower-and-bird prints were copied by later artists. Their original print designs and the copies they inspired are shown side by side to facilitate comparison. A total of twenty-six pairs, chosen from the Reader Collection of Japanese Art, are included below with the ten influential artists arranged chronologically as follows:

1. Morikuni Tachibana (born 1679 – died 1748) – 3 examples
2. Shigemasa Kitao (born 1739 – died 1820) – 4 examples
3. Hokusai Katsushika (born 1760 – died 1849) – 2 examples
4. Sūgakudō Nakayama (active 1850s) – 2 examples
5. Bairei Kōno (born 1844 – died 1895) – 4 examples
6. Kashū Numata (born 1838 – died 1901) – 2 examples
7. Seitei Watanabe (born 1851 – died 1918) – 3 examples
8. Shōkei Yamada (born 1866 – died ?) – 1 example
9. Sōzan Itō (born 1884 – died ?) – 1 example
10. Koson Ohara (born 1877 – died 1945) – 4 examples

Additional Reading

Original design by Morikuni Tachibana, included in Ehon Ōshukubai (Picture Book of the Plum Tree where the Warbler Dwells), published in 1740.

Princess tree (*Paulownia tomentosa*) and mythical hō-ō bird

Similar design by Yasukuni Tachibana, included in Ehon Eibutsu Sen (Picture Book of Selected Subjects), published in 1779.

Princess tree (*Paulownia tomentosa*) and mythical hō-ō bird
Original design by Morikuni Tachibana, included in Ehon Ōshukubai (Picture Book of the Plum Tree where the Warbler Dwells), published in 1740.

Bunchflower daffodil (Narcissus tazetta), northern goshawk (Accipiter gentilis) and Eurasian tree sparrow (Passer montanus)

Chinese smilax (Smilax china), northern goshawk (Accipiter gentilis) and Eurasian tree sparrow (Passer montanus)

Similar design by Hiroshige Utagawa, published in 1830s.
Original design by Morikuni Tachibana, included in Ehon Ōshukubai (Picture Book of the Plum Tree where the Warbler Dwells), published in 1740.

Hall crabapple (*Malus halliana*) and golden pheasant (*Chrysolophus pictus*)

Similar design by Osui Asai, included in Kachō Gafu (Picture Album of Flowers and Birds), published in 1879.

Hall crabapple (*Malus halliana*) and golden pheasant (*Chrysolophus pictus*)
Original design by Shigemasa Kitao, included in Shashin Kachō Zue (Naturalistic Pictures of Flowers and Birds), published in 1805-27.

Similar design by Hiroshige Utagawa, published in 1830s.

Hall crabapple (*Malus halliana*) and light-vented bulbul (*Pycnonotus sinensis*)

Hollyhock (*Alcea rosea*) and light-vented bulbul (*Pycnonotus sinensis*)
Original design by Shigemasa Kitao, included in Shashin Kachō Zue (Naturalistic Pictures of Flowers and Birds), published in 1805-27.

Similar design by Hiroshige III Utagawa, published in mid-1800s.

Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum*) and Eurasian hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)

Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum*) and Eurasian hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)
Original design by Shigemasa Kitao, included in Shashin Kachō Zue (Naturalistic Pictures of Flowers and Birds), published in 1805-27.

Similar design by Yoshiharu Utagawa, included in Shinsen Kachō Zue (Collection of Newly Selected Pictures of Flowers and Birds), published in 1878.

Oak (Quercus serrata) and white-backed woodpecker (Dendrocopos leucotos)
Original design by Shigemasa Kitao, included in Shashin Kachō Zue (Naturalistic Pictures of Flowers and Birds), published in 1805-27.

Japanese morning glory (*Ipomoea nil*) and oriental greenfinch (*Carduelis sinica*)

Similar design by unknown artist, included in Kachō Zue (Illustrations of Flowers and Birds), late 1800s.

Japanese morning glory (*Ipomoea nil*) and oriental greenfinch (*Carduelis sinica*)
Original design by Hokusai Katsushika, included in Hokusai Gashiki (Hokusai’s Style of Drawing), published in 1819.

Common reed (*Phragmites australis*) and multiple species of birds, including ibis (*Threskiornis* sp.), Eurasian tree sparrow (*Passer montanus*), barn swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), goose (*Anser* sp.) and Java sparrow (*Padda oryzivora*)

Similar design by Koji Shōsō, included in Kachō Gafu (Picture Album of Flowers and Birds), published in 1832.

Common reed (*Phragmites australis*) and goose (*Anser* sp.)
Original design by Hokusai Katsushika, included in Hokusai Gashiki (Hokusai’s Style of Drawing), published in 1819.

Common reed (*Phragmites australis*) and multiple species of birds, including ibis (*Threskiornis* sp.), Eurasian tree sparrow (*Passer montanus*), barn swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), goose (*Anser* sp.) and Java sparrow (*Padda oryzivora*).

Similar design by Taito II Katsushika, included in Kachō Gaden (Drawing Methods for Flowers and Birds), published in 1848-9.

Common reed (*Phragmites australis*) and goose (*Anser* sp.)
Original design by Sūgakudō Nakayama, included in Shō Utsushi Shijū-hachi (Exact Likeness of Forty-eight Hawks), published in 1859.

Similar design by Sadanobu II Hasegawa, published in late 1800s.

Chinese amaranth (*Amaranthus tricolor*) and barn swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)
Original design by Sūgakudō Nakayama, included in Shō Utsushi Shijū-hachi (Exact Likeness of Forty-eight Hawks), published in 1859.

Similar design by Yoshitsuna Yamada, included in Ehon Kachō Soro (Complete Picture Book of Flowers and Birds), published in late 1800s.

Japanese mountain cherry (*Prunus serrulata*) and Japanese robin (*Erithacus akahige*)
Original design by Bairei Kōno, included in Bairei Hyakuchō Gafu (Picture Album of One Hundred Birds by Bairei), published in 1881.

Similar design by Bunrei Maekawa, included in Bunrei Kachō Gafu (Picture Album of Flowers and Birds by Bunrei), published in 1885.

Japanese andromeda (*Pieris japonica*) and brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*)

Japanese andromeda (*Pieris japonica*) and brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*)
Original design by Bairei Kōno, included in Bairei Hyakuchō Gafu (Picture Album of One Hundred Birds by Bairei), published in 1881.

Similar design by Gyoshi Kōsoku, included in Shiki Kachō Gafu (Flowers and Birds of the Four Seasons), published in 1891.

Satsuki azalea (*Rhododendron indicum*) and green pheasant (*Phasianus versicolor*)

Satsuki azalea (*Rhododendron indicum*) and copper pheasant (*Syrmaticus soemmerringii*)
Original design by Bairei Kōno, included in Bairei Hyakuchō Gafu (Picture Album of One Hundred Birds by Bairei), published in 1881.

Similar design by Yūkoku Matsui, included in Kotori no Negura (Roosts of the Little Birds), published in 1901.

Barley (*Hordeum vulgare*) and skylark (*Alauda arvensis*)

Rape (*Brassica napus*) and skylark (*Alauda arvensis*)
Original design by Bairei Kōno, included in Bairei Kachō Gafu (Picture Album of Flowers and Birds by Bairei), published in 1884 and reprinted in 1899.

Similar design by Ginkō Adachi, included in Kachō Gafu (Picture Album of Flowers and Birds), published in 1898.

Cherry (*Prunus* sp.) and woodpecker (*Dendrocopos* sp.)
Original design by Kashū Numata, included in Shūchō Gafu (Picture Album of Bird Drawings), published in 1885-90.

Tree peony (*Paeonia suffruticosa*) and green peafowl (*Pavo muticus*)

Similar design by Ginkō Adachi, included in Ginkō Manga (Sketches by Ginkō), published in 1902.

Common garden peony (*Paeonia lactiflora*) and green peafowl (*Pavo muticus*)
Original design by Kashū Numata, included in Shūchō Gafu (Picture Album of Bird Drawings), published in 1885-90.

Similar design by Hodō Nishimura, published in 1937.

Plum (*Prunus mume*) and canary (*Serinus canaria*)
**Original design by** Seitei Watanabe, included in Kachō Gafu (Picture Album of Flowers and Birds), published in 1903.

Shirozakura cherry (*Prunus buergeriana*) and Eurasian tree sparrow (*Passer montanus*)

**Similar design by** Seiko, published in early 1900s.

Shirozakura cherry (*Prunus buergeriana*) and Eurasian tree sparrow (*Passer montanus*)
Original design by Seitei Watanabe, published in Nijūni Kachō (Twenty-two Flowers and Birds), published in 1916.

Similar design by Gyōsui, published in mid-1900s.

Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) and blue-and-white flycatcher (*Cyanoptila cyanomelana*)

Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), aster (*Aster* sp.) and blue-and-white flycatcher (*Cyanoptila cyanomelana*)
Original design by Seitei Watanabe, published in Nijūni Kachō (Twenty-two Flowers and Birds), published in 1916.

Willow (*Salix* sp.) and Japanese robin (*Erithacus akahige*)

Similar design by Keigetsu, published in mid-1900s.

Willow (*Salix* sp.) and Japanese robin (*Erithacus akahige*)
Original design by Shōkei Yamada, included in Shōkei Kachō Gafu (Picture Album of Flowers and Birds by Shōkei), edited by Gessai Fukui, published in 1895.

Cherry (*Prunus* sp.) and scops owl (*Otus* sp.)

Similar design by Bihō Takahashi, published in early 1900s.

Cherry (*Prunus* sp.) and scops owl (*Otus* sp.)
Original design by Sōzan Itō, published in early 1900s.

Sweet osmanthus (*Osmanthus fragrans*), hyacinth macaw (*Amodorhynchus hyacinthinus*) and scarlet macaw (*Ara macao*)

Similar design by Shunkō, published in mid-1900s.

Sweet osmanthus (*Osmanthus fragrans*), hyacinth macaw (*Amodorhynchus hyacinthinus*) and scarlet macaw (*Ara macao*)
Original design by Koson Ohara, published in early 1900s.

Pomegranate (*Punica granatum*) and cockatoo (*Cacatua sp.*)

Similar design by Hodō Nishimura, published in 1938.

Chinese trumpet-creeper (*Campsis grandiflora*) and cockatoo (*Cacatua sp.*)
Original design by Koson Ohara, published in early 1900s.

Similar design by Untan, published in mid-1900s.

Pine (Pinus sp.) and green peafowl (Pavo muticus)

Pine (Pinus sp.) and green peafowl (Pavo muticus)
Original design by Koson Ohara, published in early 1900s.

Similar design by Keigetsu, published in mid-1900s.

Japanese persimmon (*Diospyros kaki*) and Japanese white-eye (*Zosterops japonicus*)
Original design by Koson Ohara, published in early 1900s.

Similar design by Seiko Aoki, published in mid-1900s.

Cherry (*Prunus* sp.) and Japanese waxwing (*Bombycilla japonica*)

Cherry (*Prunus* sp.) and Japanese waxwing (*Bombycilla japonica*)