

Chapter IV

Ukiyo-e Prints

Beauty in Hand

During the Edo period, following the Warring States period, culture for ordinary people developed due to stable politics. *Ukiyo-e* prints became popular during this time. This means that pictorial arts were no longer limited to a specific class of people.

Ukiyo-e prints could be mass-produced, so they became familiar art forms that everyone could access and an important media for communication.

Since the mid-17th century, when woodblock printing techniques were first used to produce images, printing techniques have rapidly improved. Black-and-white prints gradually began incorporating colors. By the mid-18th century, *nishiki-e* print, a multicolored print that could express delicate color tones, was born.

Ukiyo-e originally emerged from an epicurean sense of values in this world. Therefore, the main themes of these prints were related to the red-light districts and entertainment districts where people sought enjoyment. With the spread of ukiyo-e, various artists created remarkable works, depicting a wide range of subjects, including landscapes, flowers, birds, and humorous images.

Today, various print techniques have been developed, allowing us to easily enjoy replica prints, such as posters, postcards, and painting books. These activities continue in the same way as during the Edo period, when people enjoyed ukiyo-e prints.

At that time, ukiyo-e prints were small and lightweight, so people held them in their hands to view them. In this exhibition, ukiyo-e prints which have since become artworks, will be displayed in glass cases due to conservation rules. However, please imagine holding them in your hands and viewing them from various angles.