

"THE YOSHIDA FAMILY" EXHIBITION GUIDE

This guide provides access to the original prints, contextual photographs, and informative texts that were mounted as part of the special exhibition, [The Yoshida Family: An Artistic Legacy in Prints](#), held January 20, 2015 to June 14, 2015.

INTRODUCTION

The Yoshida family has produced multiple generations of artists and draftsmen since the Edo period (1603-1868), originally as painters of scrolls and screens. In the 1920s, however, Yoshida Hiroshi—the key figure in this exhibition, turned to printmaking, creating a series of remarkable naturalistic prints. Hiroshi's prolific printmaking career and keen entrepreneurship helped create the renowned Yoshida printmaking "brand," deeply affecting the paths of seven other family members—Fujio, Tōshi, Kiso, Hodaka, Chizuko, Tsukasa, and Ayomi—all of whom explored printmaking. These Yoshida artists shared a love of nature and travel, and all created works that drew inspiration from the natural environment and from their experiences abroad. The art of each, however, demonstrates the diverse styles they developed based on their individual experiences and influences. This exhibition features 23 prints by six Yoshida artists and highlights the continuity and diversity of the family's printmaking tradition.

The history of collecting and exhibiting prints by Yoshida artists in the West is an integral part of the family's story. Dorothy L. Blair, a Mount Holyoke alumna from the Class of 1914, gave the Museum most of the prints on display in this gallery. As a curator at the Toledo Museum of Art in the 1930s, Blair produced two milestone exhibitions featuring Yoshida Hiroshi's work, creating widespread enthusiasm among American collectors. Supplementing the art on view, letters and photographs from the Mount Holyoke Archives and Special Collections in the central case reveal the artists behind the prints, as well as their close collaboration with Blair in creating exhibitions and exerting a powerful influence on the Western taste for Japanese prints.

Curated by Yingxi (Lucy) Gong '13

Note: The Japanese names in this exhibition are presented in Japanese tradition with the surname first, followed by the given name.

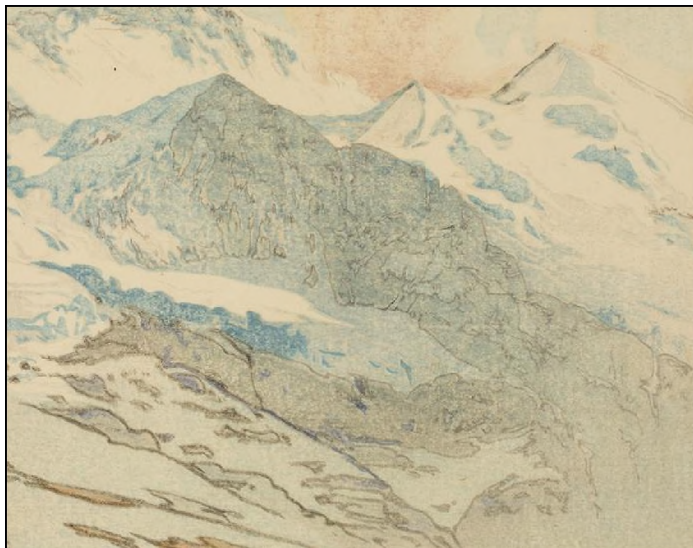
YOSHIDA HIROSHI: A PAINTER'S EYE

For the first 20 years of his artistic career, Yoshida Hiroshi was a successful Western-style oil painter and watercolorist. His breathtaking landscapes were drawn from nature during his travels at home and abroad. When he turned to printmaking in 1920, Hiroshi brought his mastery of light and shadow—learned from oil painting—to traditional Japanese landscape and genre subjects. The two prints in this group demonstrate the painterly quality that became his hallmark, exemplified by the lofty, misty atmosphere.

Hiroshi meticulously oversaw the production of his prints, using pencils to mark different printing areas or make adjustments to the original design. A test print, *Mount Jungfrau* (left) shows the image in its unfinished state without the darker shades. *Mount Fuji from Gotenba* (right), a beautiful example of a finished print, was one of Hiroshi's favorite designs, in which he captured the coldness and humidity of the snow-covered mountain scene. The three-dimensional quality and liveliness of Hiroshi's prints are the result of his high standard of quality and labor-intensive printing process.



FUJI SAN: GOTENBA (MOUNT FUJI FROM GOTENBA), 1929 (Shōwa 4)
Yoshida Hiroshi
Japanese (1876-1950)
Color woodblock print (woodcut) on paper



YUNGFURAU YAMA (MOUNT JUNGFRAU), FROM THE SERIES ŌSHŪ
(EUROPE), 1925 (Taishō 14)

Yoshida Hiroshi
Japanese (1876-1950)
Color woodblock print (woodcut) on paper

YOSHIDA HIROSHI: MASTER PRINTMAKER

Yoshida Hiroshi produced numerous landscapes of *meishō* (“famous places”), a traditional subject matter in Japanese printmaking, but he made his landscapes distinctively modern through the use of naturalism, a subtle color palette, and a strong sense of design. *Kameido Bridge* (left) demonstrates the artist’s skill at capturing various textures, such as the soft, heavy quality of the purple wisteria blossoms and the rippling blue water. The bridge and its reflection together form an almost perfect circle, evoking the geometric forms of modern abstract art.

Hiroshi was working within a centuries-old printing tradition in which one woodblock is carved for each color in the finished print. A piece of paper would be printed once with every block, and each had to be perfectly aligned. Hiroshi was committed to making high-quality prints, as can be seen in the perfect alignment of *New Moon* (center), in which different shapes, lines, and patches of colors are perfectly positioned, while the crescent moon is delicately reserved on the white paper.

Farmhouse (right) was the last print Hiroshi produced. Instead of the fresh tones commonly found in his landscapes, this print displays an overwhelming nostalgia through a dimly illuminated interior of a farmhouse, where two static figures are tending to housework. After a lifetime devoted first to Western-style painting and then to modern Japanese woodblock printing, Hiroshi chose to omit any traces of industrialized modern Japan in this last print, a scene taken from his childhood memory.



KAMEIDO [KAMEIDO BRIDGE], FROM THE SERIES TOKYO JŪNIDAI [TWELVE SCENES OF TOKYO], 1927 (Shōwa 2)

Yoshida Hiroshi
Japanese (1876-1950)
Color woodblock print (woodcut) on paper



SHIN GETSU (NEW MOON), 1941 (Shōwa 16)
Yoshida Hiroshi
Japanese (1876-1950)
Color woodblock print (woodcut) on paper



NŌKA (FARM HOUSE), 1946 (Shōwa 21)
Yoshida Hiroshi

Japanese (1876-1950)
Color woodblock print (woodcut) on paper

YOSHIDA HIROSHI'S INLAND SEA COLLECTION

Based on sketches he made during a trip to the Inland Sea of Japan, these four prints are the highlights of Hiroshi's *Inland Sea Collection* (*Seto Naikai Shū*). He used the same woodblocks to print these images in different hues to indicate varying light, weather, and time of day. Unlike the traditional collaborative production of Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints where designer, engraver, printer, and publisher work together, Hiroshi hired his own engraver and printer and meticulously oversaw every step of the production of his own designs. Occasionally, he would even carve his own woodblocks—a process almost never undertaken by designers in traditional Japanese printmaking. Using Western perspective, masterful draftsmanship, and his deep knowledge of watercolor and oil painting techniques, Hiroshi was able to obtain a balance of Eastern and Western aesthetics.



HANSEN: ASA [SAILBOATS: MORNING], FROM THE SERIES SETO NAIKAI SHŪ [INLAND SEA COLLECTION], 1926

Yoshida Hiroshi

Japanese (1876-1950)

Color woodblock print (woodcut) on paper



HANSEN: GOZEN [SAILBOATS: FORENOON], FROM THE SERIES SETO NAIKAI SHŪ [INLAND SEA COLLECTION], 1926 (Taishō 15)

Yoshida Hiroshi

Japanese (1876-1950)

Color woodblock print (woodcut) on paper



HANSEN: KIRI [SAILBOATS: MIST], FROM THE SERIES SETO NAIKAI SHŪ [INLAND SEA COLLECTION], 1926 (Taishō 15)

Yoshida Hiroshi

Japanese (1876-1950)

Color woodblock print (woodcut) on paper



HANSEN: YORU [SAILBOATS: NIGHT], FROM THE SERIES SETO NAIKAI SHŪ
[INLAND SEA COLLECTION], 1926 (Taishō 15)

Yoshida Hiroshi

Japanese (1876-1950)

Color woodblock print (woodcut) on paper

YOSHIDA HIROSHI'S PRINTMAKING PROCESS

Woodblock printmaking in Japan is a labor-intensive process. The outlines of a design are first carved in negative on a “keyblock,” then multiple woodblocks are carved with separate portions of the image—each to print a single color. A sheet of paper is then placed onto these blocks in order and a hand tool called a baren is used to press the ink from the surface of the woodblocks onto the paper.

These two prints were among a series of smaller-scale test impressions for Yoshida Hiroshi’s *Hansen (Sailboats)*, the finished versions of which are visible above. The first print on the left is marked as the fourth block impression, showing only a few basic layering of colors on the central boats and their reflections. The second print on the right, the sixth block impression, is closer to a finished product but still needs a few more block impressions to add details. These two images exemplify the meticulous process necessary to produce Hiroshi’s elegant prints.



TWO BLOCK IMPRESSIONS IN THE PROCESS OF PRINTING HIROSHI'S
HANSEN (SAILBOATS), Unknown

Yoshida Hiroshi

Japanese (1876-1950)

Color woodblock print (woodcut) on paper

YOSHIDA HIROSHI AND TŌSHI: FATHER AND SON

These two prints offer a comparison of the styles of father and son. *In Night in Kyoto* (left), as in many of his other works, Hiroshi displays his mastery in creating an atmospheric environment. The wooden buildings along the street merge into the dim background, concealing many details in the darkness. At the center of the design, nearly indiscernible, a bicycle leans against a wall—the only modern element in this seemingly traditional scene. The lanterns, the only sources of light in the street, draw our eye, and their reflections shimmer on the wet pavement. Hiroshi's deft handling of various textures, light, and shadow, conjures a romantic world that draws the viewer in.

Heavily influenced and controlled by his father in his youth, Tōshi followed in Hiroshi's footsteps, creating images of the "old Japan." While also depicting a dimly-lit scene, Tōshi's *Ishiyama Temple* (right) displays subtle differences from his father's style. Although obscured by darkness, details are depicted with uniform clarity, from the patterns on women's kimonos to the names of temple benefactors inscribed on the big red lantern. There is little of Hiroshi's ambiguity and romantic atmosphere here; the scene evokes Tōshi's own vision of peace and tranquility.



KYOTO NO YORU (NIGHT IN KYOTO), 1933 (Shōwa 8)
Yoshida Hiroshi
Japanese (1876-1950)
Color woodblock print (woodcut) on paper



ISHIYAMA-DERA (ISHIYAMA TEMPLE), 1946 (Shōwa 21)
Yoshida Tōshi
Japanese (1911-1995)
Color woodblock print (woodcut) on paper

YOSHIDA TOSHI

Yoshida Tōshi never gave up experimenting with new forms, though he had been pressured to follow Hiroshi's naturalistic style early in his career. The first two prints in this group display Tōshi's interest in semi-abstraction—the trees in the foreground of *Shirasagi Castle* (left) achieve a solid and twisted look that shows the artist's emphasis on shape and volume. *Ginkaku Temple* (left of center) is another example of the same artistic impulse—the normal dark outlines are replaced with white, or “empty” outlines, forming a contrast with the flat but striking colors used in the rest of the print.

Untitled, No. 9 (right) represents a type of abstraction Tōshi explored after his father's death in 1950. Initially influenced by his younger brother, Hodaka, Tōshi subsequently developed his own taste for abstract forms and applied his knowledge of the ukiyo-e technique to his new prints. As he grew more confident in abstract printmaking, Tōshi's later prints became more audacious and daring, as seen in his 1970 print, *Horizon* (right of center).



SHIRASAGI-JŌ (SHIRASAGI CASTLE), 1942 (Shōwa 17)

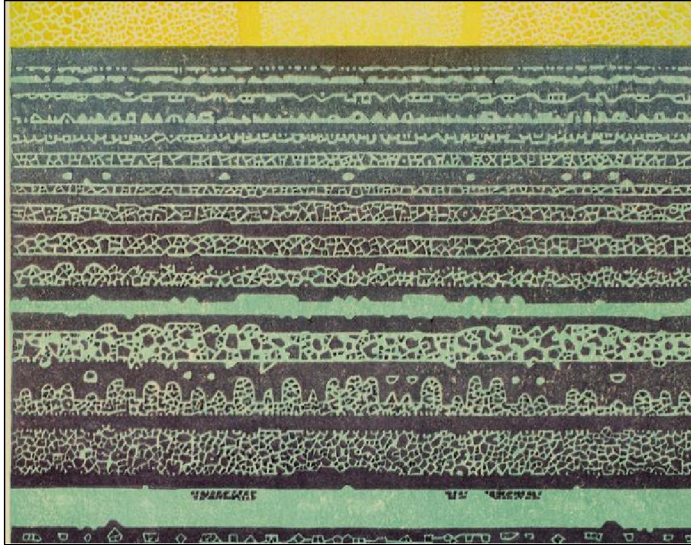
Yoshida Tōshi

Japanese (1911-1995)

Color woodblock print (woodcut) on paper



GINKAKU-JI NO NIWA (GINKAKU TEMPLE), 1963
Yoshida Tōshi
Japanese (1911-1995)
Color woodblock print (woodcut) on paper



HORIZON, 1970
Yoshida Tōshi
Japanese (1911-1995)
Color woodblock print (woodcut) on paper



UNTITLED, NO. 9, 1952
Yoshida Tōshi
Japanese (1911-1995)
Color woodblock print (woodcut) on paper

YOSHIDA HODAKA

As the second son, Yoshida Hodaka was expected by his parents to be a scientist, for as his mother Fujio said, “One artist (Tōshi) is enough for a family.” However, Hodaka declared himself an artist at a young age. Rebelling against his parents’ ambitions for him, he began to teach himself oil painting at 15 with the help of his brother Tōshi. Distinguishing himself from the other family artists, he worked in an abstract style, and after ten years of painting he turned to woodblock prints, the medium that he favored for the rest of his life.

The three prints on display represent Hodaka’s early stages of artistic development. *Plant* (left) comes from a group of 30 prints he made between 1951 and 1953. Translating an object into a semi-abstract design, Hodaka played with simple shapes, overlapping flat planes of color with little reference to spatial depth.

Distant View of Yakushi-Ji, Nara (right) belongs to a group of prints produced by Hodaka and his wife Chizuko after their honeymoon trip to Nara and Kyoto. In these two ancient capitals of Japan, Hodaka drew inspiration from Buddhist sculptures and traditional architecture. In this particular print, he depicted the landscape naturalistically, incorporating Western perspective to suggest depth while retaining a sense of horizontality and flatness.



PLANT, 1952
Yoshida Hodaka
Japanese (1926-1995)
Color woodblock print (woodcut) on paper



STONE AND MOSS, 1952
Yoshida Hodaka
Japanese (1926-1995)
Color woodblock print (woodcut) on paper



YAKUSHI-JI TŌ ENBŌ (YAKUSHIJI DISTANT VIEW OF YAKUSHI-JI, NARA),
1954

Yoshida Hodaka

Japanese (1926-1995)

Color woodblock print (woodcut) on paper

YOSHIDA FUJIO

Yoshida Hiroshi's wife, Fujio, was the first of many female artists in the Yoshida family lineage. Working first as Hiroshi's protégée, she quickly showed talent in sketching and painting in the Western manner and soon emerged from Hiroshi's shadow, exhibiting frequently with the Shuyōkai group of female artists.

Yellow Canna illustrates Fujio's move toward abstraction after Hiroshi's death. It also represents her return to printmaking after a thirty-year hiatus—she tried printmaking briefly after Hiroshi set up his studio in 1925 but soon abandoned it in favor of oil painting. In this print, Fujio created a lively floral composition that combines bold orange and red with a strong sense of linear design, creating a vibrant and almost rebellious energy.



YELLOW CANNA, 1954
Yoshida Fujio
Japanese (1887-1987)
Color woodblock print (woodcut) on paper

YOSHIDA HODAKA AND CHIZUKO

These three prints are by Yoshida Hodaka and Chizuko, the talented couple who were perhaps the most avant-garde artists in the Yoshida family. In *Woods* (left), as in many of his other works, Hodaka played with shape and color, placing bold forms on top of one another to construct his composition. Here, the flat gray background abuts layers of blue, gray, and orange in the lower portion of the print. The olive-green foreground leads our eye deeper into the print, creating the illusion of perspectival space.

Chizuko's *Autumn* (center) and *Rain* (right) display the same kind of attention to technique, composition, and color. Already a well-established oil painter when she met Hodaka in 1950, Chizuko was never afraid to try new media and ideas. Fascinated by her husband's prints, Chizuko took a serious interest in woodblock printing and started to attend printmaking seminars with Hodaka. After marrying in 1953, Chizuko completely devoted her artistic career to woodblock prints and soon developed her own aesthetic.

Both *Autumn* and *Rain* exemplify her daring color palette and her sophisticated compositional sense. Chizuko admitted to singing while she worked, and one can see how music is embodied in her prints—one can almost feel the rhythm underlying her interlocking colors and shapes.



MORI (WOODS), 1955
Yoshida Hodaka
Japanese (1926-1995)
Color woodblock print (woodcut) on paper



RAIN, 1954 October
Yoshida Chizuko
Japanese (1924 - 2017)
Color woodblock print (woodcut) on paper



AUTUMN, 1955
Yoshida Chizuko
Japanese (1924 - 2017)
Color woodblock print (woodcut) on paper

YOSHIDA AYOMI

Brought up in a family in which her parents, uncle, and grandparents were all practicing artists, it was almost inevitable that Yoshida Ayomi became an artist. Though Ayomi was exposed to woodcut printing at a young age, it wasn't until she studied screenprinting in California at the age of 21 that she started to make woodblock prints.

This mesmerizing print comes from her *Touches* series. Inspired by a set of photographs she took of the water on the Kanda River in Tokyo and a series of pencil drawings she did in 1983, Ayomi translated the river's rhythm into two dimensions, reducing it to elemental patterns and colors while retaining the essence of the water's movement.

Ayomi's blending of purple, red, and green in short strokes creates a repetitive pattern that suggests movement, while the intentional overlapping of each woodblock's impression on the paper (each carrying a different color) produces a dizzying effect as our eyes move across the surface of the print. Ayomi adopted a minimalist approach in titling her prints. For example, in the title of this print, W10 stands for "water theme no. 10," V for violet, C for cardinal and B for billiard green.



TOUCHES W10.V.C.B, 1990
Yoshida Ayomi
Japanese (b. 1958)
Woodblock print with colored ink

FAMILY ARCHIVES

Original photographs from the archives of the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum.



YOSHIDA HIROSHI, ca. 1924
Maker Unknown
Culture Unknown
Photograph



YOSHIDA FUJIO (HIROSHI'S WIFE), ca. 1926
Maker Unknown
Culture Unknown
Photograph



YOSHIDA FAMILY, 1949-50
Maker Unknown
Culture Unknown
Photograph



YOSHIDA HIROSHI'S PRINTER, ca. 1930

Maker Unknown

Culture Unknown

Photograph



HIROSHI AND TŌSHI VISITING THE TEITEN ("CAPITAL EXHIBITION"), ca. 1933

Maker Unknown

Culture Unknown

Photograph

DOROTHY BLAIR

Dorothy L. Blair (1890-1989, Class of 1914), the donor of most prints on display here, was one of the few women in the early 20th century who stepped into the male-dominated field of museum curatorship. Although she never became a senior curator, Blair went from an entry-level museum assistant to an expert in Japanese art and culture over her 71-year career. In 1927, Blair spent a year in Japan as a special guest student in the Department of Archaeology at the Kyoto Imperial University. During this year she also reconnected with the Yoshida family whom she had met earlier in the United States. When she returned to America she began her tenure at the Toledo Museum of Art, where she curated many exhibitions of Asian art. Her two major exhibitions of modern Japanese prints in the 1930s sparked enthusiasm among American collectors and her catalogues became the foundation for modern Japanese print studies. Her relationship with the Yoshida family continued after the two exhibitions and developed into a long-term friendship and business partnership.



DOROTHY BLAIR SEATED WITH MRS. HAMADA,
1927

Maker Unknown

Culture Unknown

Photograph



DOROTHY BLAIR WITH K. HAYASHI AT ASUKA TEMPLE,

1927

Maker Unknown

Culture Unknown

Photograph



DOROTHY BLAIR'S NOTES FROM A COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE,

n.d.

Maker Unknown

Culture Unknown

Ink on paper



DOROTHY BLAIR WITH FRIENDS MRS. MATSUYAMA, MRS. HAMADA, AND AN UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN,

1952

Maker Unknown

Culture Unknown

Photograph

May 8th 1950

Dear Miss Dorothy Blair

I am very sorry to write to you about my father's death. I could not write soon after his death. We are very busy and not feeling well.

We are very sorry not to be able to see him any more.

He passed on 5th April. We never expected he will pass so soon. He was not well since last September, but around Jan. he looked much better and he will be recovered when the spring comes, but he had very bad uraemia, so he could not recover from it.

I received your kind letter in Jan.

DIARY ENTRY,

1950

Blair, Dorothy

American (1890-1989)

Ink on paper

272. Nakayats, Takayogawata Machi
Tokyo, Japan

Aug 23rd 1930

My dear Miss Dorothy Blair

We are much pleased to hear from you and you have ordered my prints. One of Iijima's from Katsushika was my favorite one. When Key block had printed by first proof. When it came to finished print, I wanted to print it in ultramarine color body opaque. The line do not come out clear.

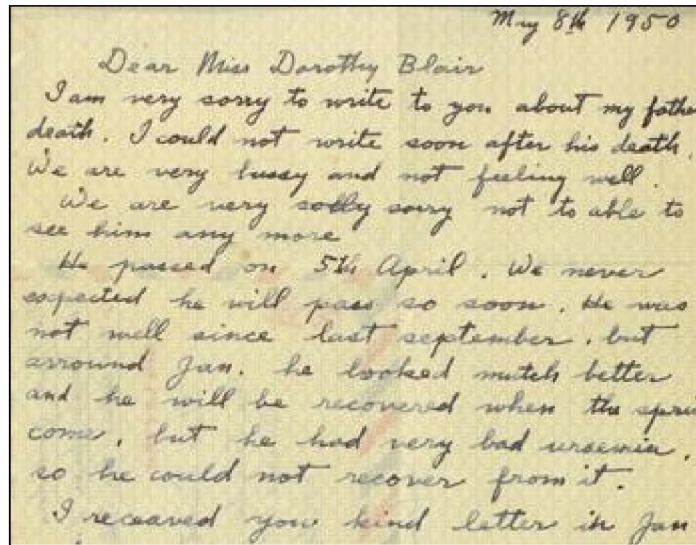
LETTER TO DOROTHY BLAIR FROM YOSHIDA HIROSHI,

1930

Yoshida Hiroshi

Japanese (1876-1950)

Ink on paper



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LETTER TO DOROTHY BLAIR FROM YOSHIDA TŌSHI,

1950

Yoshida Tōshi

Japanese (1911-1995)

Ink on paper