Re:Vision

Landscapes from the Permanent Collection

2-26 May 2013

Mount Holyoke College Art Museum

Brochure design by Maureen Millmore '13

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Carson Teaching Gallery
Mount Holyoke College Art Museum

Produced by Art History 350: Museum Studies Seminar

Introduction

Although landscapes are often seen as views of static and unchanging nature, in fact they are engaged with and affected by human processes, both visible and unseen. Landscape art interprets, edits, and updates space; it is necessarily viewed and considered through the human eye. In selecting as individuals and curating as a class works on paper from the collection of the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, we have involved ourselves in an act of "landscaping," selectively choosing and arranging artworks charged with a sense of human-interpreted, ever-evolving space.

Our vision of this selection is one of re-vision: we hope to inspire you to revise the stylistic and content-related standards, expectations, and lenses through which you consider "landscape art." By our definition, landscape art functions as a story told by the artist about his or her surroundings, and as an invitation to the viewer to see the exterior world as a reflection of the inner self. Just as no landscape exists in isolation, these works converse with one another and with the other landscapes on display in the Museum.

We invite you to consider:

What stories are communicated within these landscapes?
How do they relate to one another?
How do your personal experiences shape your interaction with these landscapes?

We wish to offer warm thanks to the staff at the Art Museum, especially Ellen Alvord, Rachel Beaupré, Brian Kiernan, Wendy Watson, and Maureen Millmore for their hard work in support of the exhibition and catalogue. We deeply appreciate their contributions to this course.

- The members of Visting Professor Nancy Noble's Art History 350 Museum Studies Seminar

Paul Cezanne (French, 1839-1906)
Quarry near Chateau Noir
Watercolor on paper, ca. 1895
Anonymous Loan
2004.L3.2

With its translucent swatches of sage green, peach, and periwinkle blue set against light strokes of graphite pencil, Paul Cezanne's fluid and lyrical watercolor merges the notions of painting and drawing, landscape and abstraction. Its surface allows the viewer to get lost in its ethereal colors and gentle play of light and shadow. Here, Cezanne transforms a solid mass of rock into a delicate and airy scene of aesthetic pleasure.

Although this watercolor may look like a personal, artistic interpretation of the landscape, Cezanne was interested in depicting the scene with as much objectivity as possible. He was fascinated by the intricacies of perception—the way the human eye observes its environment. He spent hours carefully observing the tiniest details of his subjects before ever making a single mark. Cezanne aimed for reality, but denied himself the common means of achieving it, namely the use of outlines for his colors. He refused to paint anything he did not see in nature itself, so his surfaces display a certain disorder. Cezanne has captured this landscape as it truly was: a chaotic, living organism, emerging and solidifying itself before your very eyes.

Emily Nimptsch '13

Joseph Mallord William Turner (British, 1775-1851)
Corsica, A Wooded Headland
Red chalk, pen and red ink, watercolor, and bodycolor on brown paper mounted on card, ca. 1828
Gift of T. Marc Futter
2001.6.1

J. M.W. Turner is best known for sublime representations of natural phenomena in his landscapes. Pioneering a style once viewed by some of his contemporary critics as "soapsuds and whitewash," his pictures are now revered for their ability to convey mist, water, light, and weather with swirling dynamism. A painter, draftsman, and watercolorist, Turner experimented with media and worked tirelessly in sketchbooks throughout his career, particularly during his travels throughout Europe. This drawing, retrospectively given the descriptive titled *Corsica, A Wooded Headland*, for the Mediterranean island, is thought to have been created as he traveled to Florence and Rome from Genoa in 1828.

Corsica, A Wooded Headland reflects Turner's imaginative response to the scenery of the Italian coastline, as he never visited the island on either of his two trips to Italy. The built-up layers of chalk, pen, ink, and watercolor, and bodycolor, create subtle gradations of color and contrasts of form and line. The wooded headland juts out into water made indistinct by the soft coloring and atmospheric haziness. In contrast to the quality of chaotic movement that formed his reputation, this scene is placid, reflecting shifting atmosphere and light at a gently transitory moment in the landscape: when the sea is still and the moon is visible in the sky. In this drawing, Corsica becomes not a geographic place, but a delineation of feeling in response to environment.

Elizabeth Kendrick '14

Gabor Peterdi (American, 1915-2001)
Rolling Sea
Etching and engraving on paper, 1964
Gift of Betty Abbott Adams (Class of 1938)
1979.19.6

I believe in life and it is this faith which compels me to express the creative power of nature as a symbol of the triumph of life over destruction.

-Gabor Peterdi

Hungarian born artist Gabor Peterdi used the poetic reality of landscape imagery to rationalize the violence and drama of human existence. Over the course of his seventy-year career, Peterdi experimented with countless styles and techniques, always engaging with themes of the natural world. Peterdi believed in the power of art as a means of communicating deeper ideas. The struggle for survival, the cycle of rebirth and growth, and the complexity of the natural world are all frequent themes in Peterdi's work.

A master printmaker, Gabor Peterdi taught at the Yale School of Art for over fifty years. Known for innovatively combining printmaking techniques, Peterdi's *Rolling Sea* is an etching and engraving. Peterdi builds up his image, using hundreds of small, forceful lines etched deeply into the printing plate. This makes the print's surface uncommonly three-dimensional, something that can only be seen in person. *Rolling Sea* shows a mundane moment in the ocean made extraordinary by the overwhelming power of nature.

Anna Rose Keefe '13

Keisai Eisen (Japanese, 1790-1848)
No. 41, Nojiri, Inakawa-bashi enbô [Nojiri: Distant View of the Ina River Bridge], from the series **Kisoji no eki [The Sixty-Nine Stations of the Kisokaidô Road]**
Woodcut on paper, ca. 1835-1843
Gift of Mrs. Louis C. Black
1973.266.Q.RII

The powerful Ina River rushes towards viewers of this woodcut print. Keisai's depiction of natural forms like water as angular and abstracted capture the beauty of landscape in an inventive way. Keisai brought a unique perspective to his landscapes, partly due to his artistic preference for stylization.

Nojiri: Distant View of the Ina River Bridge is the forty-first print in a series entitled *The Sixty-Nine Stations of the Kisokaido Road*. The Kisokaido, also known as the Nakasendo, was the most important inland highway in early modern Japan, linking Edo to Kyoto. The Nakasendo, meaning "central mountain road," provided an alternative route to the Tokaido Road, a coastal route between the two major cities. The series depicts views associated with the sixty-nine post stations along the road that provided travelers with lodging and other accommodations. While Keisai began creating the series of woodblocks in 1835, he abandoned the project after only completing twenty-four of the prints. His publisher then hired renowned printmaker Utagawa Hiroshige to finish the series. The result is seventy beautifully crafted woodcuts portraying landscapes throughout Japan along the route of the Kisokaido.

Faye Charpentier '13

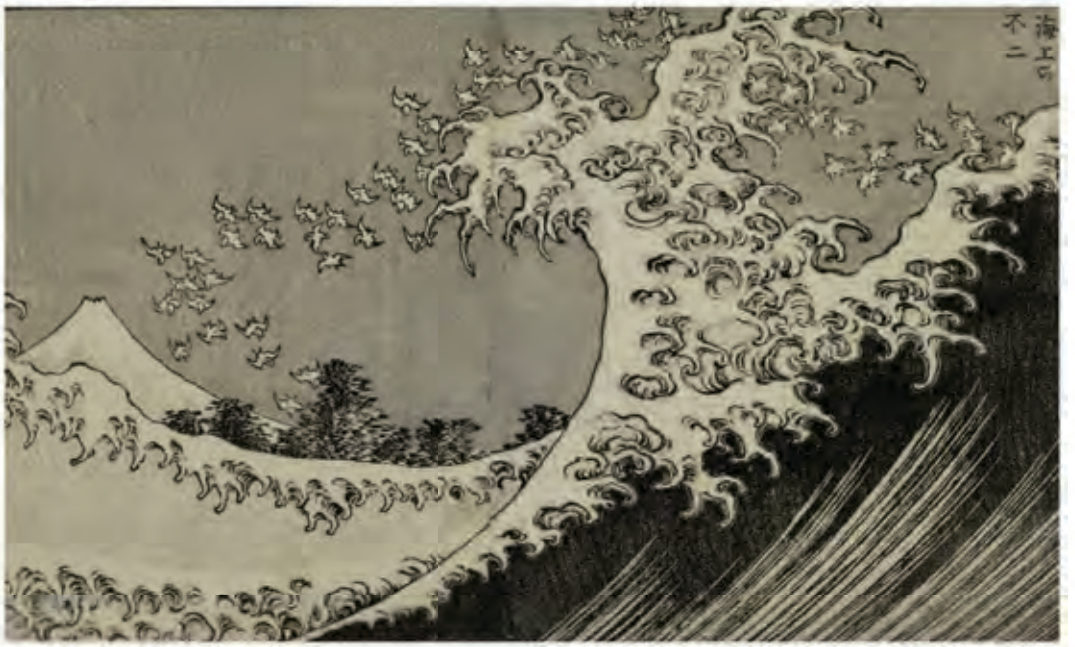
木曾路名所
鵜沢
伊奈川橋
遠景

Katsushika Hokusai (Japanese, 1760-1849)
Fuji of the Waves, from the series **100 Views of Mt. Fuji**
Woodcut on paper, 1836
Gift of Mrs. Louis C. Black
1973.287.Q.RII

The famous Mt. Fuji is seen low in the background as waves crest and break amidst a flock of plovers. The graceful silhouettes of the birds echo the fringe of the breaking waves, their shape and tone closely resembling that of ocean spray. The low horizon from which Mt. Fuji is seen is typical of Western painting traditions and demonstrates the influence of Western perspective on nineteenth-century Japanese printmaking. However, the traditionally Japanese flat and powerful graphic forms of the waves in the foreground dominate the work. By letting the lines of the composition run out of the picture freely so that they appear to be unlimited, Hokusai suggests a vast environment, unable to be captured within the confines of this picture.

Hokusai is one of the most renowned landscape artists of nineteenth-century Japan; he published series of landscape prints in volumes such as *The 36 Views of Mt. Fuji*, as well as the later *100 Views of Mt. Fuji*. In this particular print, *Fuji of the Waves*, Hokusai presents the monumental power of nature tempered by the inclusion of elegant birds.

Ashley Li '15


海上の
不二

John Marin (American, 1870-1953)
Autumn Tree Forms, Small Point, Maine
Watercolor on paper, 1924
Gift of the estate of Eileen Paradis Barber
(Class of 1929)
1997.14.44

What I attempt to do in my work is to put down objects—a kind of mind-picture in suspended motion—so that when one of my paintings is called abstract, it is only because I leave it to the imagination to supply whether what I have painted is a gull, or a ship, or a person. Let the onlooker supply anything he wishes. There is, after all, a feeling of motion—of music—to what I try to say.

–John Marin

The lively wilderness of rural and urban spaces inspired John Marin's landscape works. As the title suggests, this particular image is his response to his natural surroundings in Maine. Experiencing his environment—the rocks and trees and coasts—filled Marin with utter joy. He celebrated this joy by painting with the movement and dynamism he saw in his surroundings—Marin was known for painting ambidextrously. In *Autumn Tree Forms*, the graceful quickness and precision of Marin's creative movements creates a landscape scene that dances. His use of watercolor, which dries quickly and necessitates deft accuracy, further dynamizes the scene.

Instead of completely filling the canvas, the scene floats in the center of the paper. Greens and blues surround warm oranges and yellows, such that all seasons can be found within it.

Autumn Tree Forms is not rooted in specificity. Though the title references a tangible location, this artistic rendering of Small Point, Maine does not represent a place but rather Marin's joyful exploration of nature and the viewer's visual dance with and within it.

Megan Gregory '13

Paul Gauguin (French, 1848-1903); Printed by Pola Gauguin (French, 1883-1961)
Nave Nave Fenua
Woodcut on paper, 1893-94 (block); 1921 (print)
Gift of Mrs. M. W. Thompson
1962.86.M.R.II

The geometric designs that run along the left side of this woodcut demand the viewer's attention. The patterns not only enrich the image, but also emphasize the fact that the print is a decorative object in itself. Gauguin stresses that this work is made up of marks on a flat surface, yet his depiction of nature makes the landscape come alive; trees sway in the background and tropical flowers twist about in the foreground.

In this print, Gauguin references the biblical story of Adam and Eve. Gauguin first connects the story's paradisiacal setting with the work's title, *Nave Nave Fenua*, which translates to "Delightful Land" and suggests the Garden of Eden. Gauguin carved the plate for this woodcut print in Tahiti, and thus changed several elements of the narrative to stay true to his surroundings: the nude female figure is a Polynesian Eve, and she is not captivated by an apple tree, but instead the blossom of an exotic plant is what tempts her. Lastly, Gauguin replaces the snake that causes Adam and Eve's demise in the original story with a winged lizard, which sits menacingly in the background.

Rose Birnbaum '14

NAVENAVE FENUA
1890

Zao Wou-Ki (French, b. China 1921-2013)
Le soleil rouge [The Red Sun]
Color lithograph, 1950
Bequest of Helene Brosseau Black (Class of 1931)
1991.4.739

Born and trained in China, Zao Wou-Ki moved to Paris in 1948. In his newly adopted Western environment, Zao addressed his inner feelings in abstract landscapes. This 1950 lithograph *Le soleil rouge [The Red Sun]* belongs to the artist's early years of experimentation that led to his final arrival at abstraction.

This piece stands between the representational and the purely abstract. The simplified signs of trees, deer, and human figures revolving around the central green globe suggest a non-realistic realm. To further mystify the landscape, Zao Wou-Ki creates a translucent and nostalgic visual texture by applying multiple layers of extremely diluted ink. This application facilitates the emergence of an obscuring flat space. The unstable positional relationship between the sun and the surrounding forms bring the viewer into another dimension. This dimension happens in the imaginary landscape, a "dreamscape" that springs from the artist's inner feelings, drawing the trees, the animals, the human figures, and the viewer's attention to the "red" sun.

Sisi Gong '13

Giovanni Battista Piranesi (Italian, 1720-1778)
Veduta del Sepolcro di Cajo Cestio [View of the Pyramid of Caius Cestius],
from the series **Vedute di Roma [Views of Rome]**
Etching, 1755 (plate); printed before 1778
Purchase with the Art Acquisition Endowment Fund
2002.10.2

The present and past converge in Giovanni Battista Piranesi's etching of a distinctive monument in Rome: the ancient pyramid belonging to Gaius Cestius, a Roman magistrate whose travels to Egypt may have inspired his exotic choice of tomb. The pyramid stands tall, surrounded by fragments of ancient buildings and columns, colossal souvenirs of imperial glory which dwarf the nearby figures. But the monument is not a static reminder of the past; it springs up from the swelling soil and pierces the sky, wild with vegetation. To the left of the pyramid stands the Porta San Paolo, a late Roman gate leading to a papal basilica outside the walls of Rome. Piranesi combines an ancient pagan monument with an allusion to modern religion to show Rome's eternal power under both the Empire and the Papacy. He produced several versions of the Pyramid of Cestius as part of his successful print series entitled *Vedute di Roma*. Rich textures and bold contrasts of light and shadow enliven Piranesi's detailed, fanciful views of Rome, pictures which celebrate the city's ever-changing landscape.

Sylvia Peterson '13

Wayne Thiebaud (American, b. 1920)
Dark Country, City, from the series **Fantasies of San Francisco**
Softground, drypoint, and aquatint on paper, 1988
Gift of Sondra and Rand Castile in honor of Professor Fredda Reed
1997.13

In his *Fantasies of San Francisco* series, Wayne Thiebaud imagined a new way of conceptualizing, transforming, and navigating the unique geography of the Bay Area. While living in San Francisco, he designed *Dark Country, City*, a print showing his personal relationship with the dynamic scenery.

Thiebaud draws us into his fantastical landscape by merging vacant urban and natural spaces of San Francisco. He uses recognizable imagery that captures the towering hills and imposing skyscrapers that dominate the city's skyline. He does not give us a conventional landscape or cityscape, but rather he interprets and manipulates, subtly invoking the beauties of San Francisco's setting. Through the use of various topographical angles, he playfully challenges our perception, superimposing views of the streets, hills, buildings, and water in layers, projecting the landscape out of the paper. The soft gradations of blue and black invoke a peaceful and quiet San Francisco that simultaneously pulsates with a lively rhythm created by his meticulous and overt etched lines. Thiebaud's vision of San Francisco allows us to see his connection to the vibrant landscape in a new and inventive way.

Julianne R. Levin '13

Hiroshi Yoshida (Japanese, 1876-1950)
Noka [Farmhouse]
Woodcut on paper, 1946
Gift of Dorothy L. Blair (Class of 1914)
1964.126.Q.RII

A small Japanese man bends over a block of cherry-wood, carefully carving lines into its surface. He is Hiroshi Yoshida, one of the most influential and unique Japanese woodblock artists of the modern era. A landscape painter by training, he did not start making woodblock prints until late in life. *Noka* is his last woodblock print, made just four years before his death.

Noka problematizes our definition of landscape. The dark interior seems to spread out before our eyes, as if it were a sprawling vista. However, the most mesmerizing element of *Noka* is not this interior space, but the view through the open window. Yoshida was known for his obsession with pigments, and here it is well justified. The leafy green of the trees and the exquisite luster that perfectly captures the quality of natural light dazzle the eyes. The composition may situate the viewer within the farmhouse, but it is this fleeting glimpse of the natural world beyond that captures our attention. The delicate green trees and ambient light contrast sharply with the darkened interior space, making *Noka* so visually captivating and worthy of inclusion in this exhibition.

Lauren E. Cabral '13

Hiroshi Yoshida (Japanese, 1876-1950)
Night in Kyoto
Woodcut on paper, 1933
Gift of Dorothy L. Blair (Class of 1914)
1964.123.Q.RII

Hiroshi Yoshida was a master of imbuing his woodblock prints with deep color. *Night in Kyoto*, although a nighttime scene, hums with a vibrancy that stems from the deeply saturated tones that are a hallmark of the artist's style. It is this vibrancy that makes the urban landscape come alive.

Lauren E. Cabral '13

Maurice Brazil Prendergast (American, 1858-1924)
The Waterfall
Watercolor, oil pastel, and pencil on paper, ca. 1920-23
Gift of Mrs. Charles (Eugenie) Prendergast
1992.6.2

American artist Maurice Brazil Prendergast is associated with watercolor depictions of leisurely scenes. Inspired by Pierre Bonnard and Paul Cézanne, Prendergast developed a highly personal style that set him apart from other American artists of his generation. In *The Waterfall*, jewel-toned colors, rhythmic brushstrokes, and a flattened composition attest to his exploration of abstract art. At first glance, it is difficult to distinguish the trees, rocks, and waterfall, forcing the viewer to concentrate on the multiple layers of colors. Prendergast accents the drawing with contrasting yellow-green and orange oil pastels, which add texture and create a simultaneously mosaic-like yet radically simplified drawing. The forested landscape presents the viewer with a space for imagination. One can almost hear the water rumble as it cascades over the rocks, while sunlight peeks through the trees, illuminating the leaves and leaving the viewer in a tranquil and meditative state.

Gabriela Ramirez '15

Charles Ephraim Burchfield (American, 1893-1967)
Grey and Black Landscape
Watercolor and pencil on paper, 1920
Purchase with gift of funds from Stuart and Barbara Hermanson Padnos (Class of 1946) in memory of Rita and Joseph Hermanson and form the Art Acquisition Endowment Fund
2012.14.7

This is my beauty—all the beauty I wish for:
the love of this nature around my home.

They talk of Italian skies. I envy not the Italians. Nor do they envy me.
I find no sympathetic beauty in the sky I have not lived under.

The Elysian fields are not at the ends of the earth –
they are here at my feet.

– Charles Burchfield, 1944

Charles Burchfield's beloved hometown of Salem, Ohio is the subject of many early watercolor works, much like *Grey and Black Landscape*. There is no specific identification attributed to this landscape, but Burchfield has found a sense of space nonetheless, blurring the line between imagined and factual landscape. He feels an environment based on a sensory reaction to it. Cold grays, blues, and diluted hues with hints of green and yellow are used to better depict a cold, haunting, diminished landscape. A reoccurring theme in Burchfield's vibrant, vivid work explores the relationship between humankind and nature. The dead quiet of winter permeates the painting's fields—an eerie, haunting mystery lingering unsolved, echoing humans' role in the natural landscape. Is the streak of electric white encapsulated by an aura of red and turquoise a road creeping around the curves of the Appalachians into a world unknown, or is it a lightening bolt, suddenly shaking the otherwise peaceful wind-swept knoll?

Mallory Roark '13

Thomas Hart Benton (American, 1889-1975)
Loading Corn
Lithograph on paper, 1945
Gift of Marian Cordner (Marian Karr, Class of 1940)
2002.11

The lithograph, *Loading Corn*, by Thomas Hart Benton perfectly exemplifies his skill with landscapes. Although lacking the bright, bold colors of his paintings, it portrays his signature sinuous lines and vibrant movement. As a leading artist of the American Regionalist movement of the early twentieth century, Benton produced a great number of works focusing on rural American labor and landscape. Regionalist art rejected modernism and industry and instead aimed to speak to common Americans. This print in particular illustrates the raw beauty of American farmland and the strenuous labor of American farmers. The strong pyramidal cornstalks combined with the undulating curves of the fields convey a tangible liveliness that is as active as the figures in the scene. Works such as this provided a source of pride in the American landscape.

Colleen Fairchild '13

George Sidney Shepherd (British, 1784-1861)
Remains of Guildford Castle, Surry [sic]
Watercolor on paper, first quarter of the 19th century
Gift of Professor Emeritus Dorothy Cogswell
1986.23.1

George Sidney Shepherd was well known in the nineteenth century for his striking topographical and architectural watercolors of rural British landscapes. As one of the founders of the New Society of Painters in Water Colours, Shepherd touted the use of this transportable medium, which allowed artists and amateurs alike to venture into the countryside and directly illustrate their impressions of nature on paper.

Framed by trees and a curving road, a crumbling room of the Guildford Castle stands as the lonely survivor of a once formidable fortress. With delicate realism, Shepherd portrays the former Norman fortress and royal residence seemingly overtaken by surrounding nature. Figures in the foreground along with the artist's signature provide an active, human presence in the work; this presence contrasts greatly with the dilapidated, graying remains of the castle, further emphasizing the feeling of transience. Viewing ruins, in person or in art, stimulates the imagination to recreate what the original building might have looked like and asserts the inevitable passage of time.

Lily Hoot '13

Garry Winogrand (American, 1928-1984)
Castle Rock, Colorado, 1960
Black and white silver print photograph on paper, 1960
On long-term loan from Lawrence Schafran
1979.L1.14

How have you experienced American landscape? From the window of a moving car? From select vantage points off highways? From prescribed pull-offs during drives through national parks? For better or worse, most modern Americans' experience with the landscape has become thoroughly entwined with the experience of travel and movement. Garry Winogrand's early-career photograph of Colorado's Castle Rock exemplifies the work of a contemporary school of photographers who explored American culture by car and imaged a changing nation as seen from the road, referencing the artistic frameworks of classic American mythology only to distort them. Winogrand's careful attention to composition—observe the mirroring of forms between his car and the shape of Castle Rock, the deep variation of tones, the sense of almost heavenly light—aligns him with a time-honored Western artistic tradition whose founders include Albert Bierstadt. His unflinching attention to elements of the man-altered landscape, in the form of street signs, lampposts, and bisecting highways, align him with later photographers who imaged the West not as eternal, divine wilderness, but as something closer to reality—a space profoundly charged by human interference. The abstracted, snapshot quality of the image forces viewers to ask, is this how I consider and experience American landscape? Is this how I should consider and experience American landscape?

Genevieve Oliver '13

Helen Frankenthaler (American, 1928-2011)
Brown Moons
Three-color lithograph on unbleached Crisbrook handmade paper, 1961
Gift of the William S. Rubin Foundation
1971.162.I(b).RII

At first glance, Helen Frankenthaler's *Brown Moons* is full of paradoxes. It hardly seems like a landscape; if not for the title, we might not even recognize it as a scene from nature—but that is exactly what it is. The sweeping, fluid lines of *Brown Moons* seem more akin to a watercolor than to a print. This print is one of three that marks Frankenthaler's first foray into printmaking after a well-established career as a painter.

Brown Moons contains a quiet but forceful energy, representing the monumental timelessness of a mountain lake at night. Nine strokes, in dark and somber colors, convey the whole landscape. The splotchy forms seem to wriggle and squirm with a life of their own. The three black gestures—the mountains—seem like figures, sweeping upward towards the sky, bending towards each other as though they are dancing. The scene is at once youthful and ancient: four moons reflected in the surface of the lake reflect the millennia that these mountains have witnessed, and remind us that we are but a small part of a big, old world.

Sarah A. Barringer '14

Kawase Hasui (Japanese, 1883-1957)
Shimabara minato Mayuyama [Mayuyama at the Port of Shimabara] from the series **Nihon fukei senshu [Selected Views of Japan]**
Woodcut on paper, 1922
Gift of Dorothy L. Blair (Class of 1914)
1964.150.Q.RII

The blue is arresting. The gentle gradation of the aqua foothills to the deep-saturated blue peaks ends with a surprising contrast between the dark silhouette of the mountaintop and the clean white of the clouds. The weight and volume of the mountain implied by the contour lines is vitalized by the lightness and subtle fluidity of the shimmering reflections in the water. A row of traditional wood houses mediates the bands of blue above and below. The only sign of human activity is the drift of smoke from a chimney. Everything is quiet, stable, and timeless, an ideal world where humans live in the untouched magnificence of nature.

As one of the leading artists of the *shin hanga* movement, Kawase Hasui was fully aware of the dramatic modernization taking place everywhere in Japan. The fact that this beautiful print was designed during a period of such social changes further creates a sense of loss and ephemerality. Through saturated colors and stable composition, Hasui offers in this print a transcendent calm, but a calm that even he knew would soon be shattered.

Yingxi Lucy Gong '13