

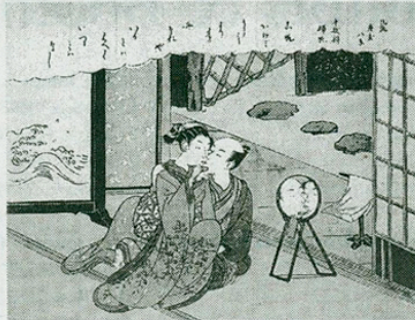


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'Lyrical Images: Poetry & Japan's Visual Arts' At Joan B Mirviss From November 14



Suzuki Harunobu (1724–70) "Returning Sail At The Towel Rack," circa 1768, color woodblock print.

Watanabe Seitei (1851–1918), "Murasaki Shikibu On A Veranda," circa 1905, ink and color on silk.

NEW YORK CITY — Joan B Mirviss is presenting a selection of more than 35 Japanese prints and paintings from the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries that explore the rich artistic legacy that developed between Japan's literary and visual arts. Organized around cherished poetic themes and lyrical motifs, the exhibition will include examples of calligraphy, color woodblock prints, gold-leaf screens and painted hanging scrolls. "Lyrical Images: Poetry And Japan's Visual Arts" will open to the public on November 14 and will remain on view through December 20.

Individual poems, or verses that were included in lyrical prose, were an integral part of Japan's literary tradition. From the romantic *Tale of Genji* to the narrative *Tale of the Heike*, poetry and the act of composing poems were key elements in the plots of many of Japan's epic novels, many of which originated during the flowering of imperial court culture during the Heian period (794–1185).

Complex iconography with layered allusions and metaphors arose from these poetic episodes that addressed such subjects as love, beauty, nature and spirituality, and provided painters and printmakers with a significant source of inspiration. For example, images of Murasaki Shikibu (circa 973–1014), the renowned author of the *Tale of Genji*, came to represent the epitome of refined aristocratic culture, brilliant prose and ideal beauty.

One highlight from the exhibition is a painting on silk by Watanabe Seitei (1851–1918), whose portrait of the revered poetess seated on a balcony



under a full moon captures the emotional appeal of her celebrated writing.

In addition to literal representations, "Lyrical Images" will include examples by masters of the color woodblock medium that reinterpret these classical themes in both beautiful and, at times, humorous ways. One striking print by Suzuki Harunobu (1724–1770) depicts a playful parody on the established lyrical theme of "eight views" (*hakkei*), which paired set poems with the natural beauty of famous locales.

Poetry and literature also held an important role in the religions of Japan and their strong connections with nature and spirituality. Calligraphy and ink painting served

both as forms of meditation as well as powerful tools to proselytize. Two Zen Buddhist ink paintings by the artists Hakuin Ekaku (1685–1768) and Ottagaki Rengetsu (1791–1875) are highlights conveying the visual and textual relationships between word and image. Both artists have created dramatic expressions in ink by combining traditional Buddhist subjects with their own poetry and calligraphy.

As a complement to the two-dimensional works, a selection of contemporary Japanese ceramics will be included that reflect the timelessness of these lyrical compositions.

Joan B Mirviss is at 39 East 78th Street at Madison Avenue. For information, 212-799-4021 or www.mirviss.com.