



東京大学赤門 1957



Red Gate of Tokyo University (Tokyo Daigaku Akamon)

Unsōdō

Not on display

Title/Description: Red Gate of Tokyo University (Tokyo Daigaku Akamon)

Artist/Maker: Unsōdō (Publisher)

Born: 1957 Exact

Object Type: Graphics

Materials: Ink, Paper

Technique: Woodcut

Measurements: image h. 368 x w. 250, support h. 413 x w. 287mm

Inscription: Name seal

Accession Number: 41461

Historic Period: 20th century - Mid

Production Place: Asia, East Asia, Japan

The woodblock print depicts the historic Red Gate at the entrance to the University of Tokyo after snowfall. Nariyasu Maeda had the gate built in 1827 for the Edo residence of the Maeda clan of Kaga domain. The gate was constructed to welcome Nariyasu Maeda's new bride, Lady Yasu, daughter of the 11th shogun of the Tokugawa shogunate. The Akamon Gate was moved to its current location at the end of the Meiji period (1868-1912). [1]

Framed by snow-laden branches, the viewer peers up at its arched gable from a sideways angle. Kasamatsu Shirō (1898-1991) has used rough and individualistic carving and bold colours to capture the imposing, brightly painted structure. Pale blue and grey shadows on the drifts of snow create a mood that is fresh and invigorating.

From the age of 13, Kasamatsu Shirō trained as a Nihonga painter and printmaker at the school of Kaburagi Kiyokata (1878-1973). From 1916, Kasamatsu began to produce woodblock prints in the style of artists of the 'New Prints' or Shin Hanga movement, becoming a key exponent of this group. [2] Through his teacher, Kasamatsu Shirō was introduced to the publisher and exporter of Shin Hanga prints, Watanabe Shozaburō (1885-1962). [3]

During the Taishō and Shōwa eras, Shin Hanga (c.1910-c.1960) developed the traditional craft of woodblock printing to reflect a new sensibility that was both romantic and nostalgic. Influenced by European Impressionist painting and photography, Shin Hanga artists used their technical skill to capture the subtle and atmospheric qualities of light. [4]

From the late 1950s until 1960, Kasamatsu Shirō published his work through Unsōdōin Kyoto, a competitor of Watanabe Shozaburō. Around this time, Kasamatsu was drawn to the experimental approach of the 'Creative Print' or Sōsaku-Hanga movement, and began to carve, print and publish his own work. [5] The print in the Sainsbury Centre's collection dates from this later period.

Vanessa Tothill, September 2020

[1] 'University of Tokyo: Why UTokyo?' Home Page

https://www.u-tokyo.ac.jp/en/whyutokyo/hongo_hi_007.html [accessed 29 May 2020]

[2] Amy Reigle Newland (ed.), *Printed to Perfection: Twentieth-Century Japanese Prints from the Robert O. Muller Collection* (Amsterdam: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC in association with Hotei Publishing, 2004), p. 112.

[3] https://www.artelino.com/articles/kiyokata_kaburagi.asp [accessed 21 May 2020]

[4] https://www.artelino.com/articles/shiro_kasamatsu.asp [accessed 21 May 2020]

[5] Newland, p. 112.

Further Reading

Newland, Amy Reigle (ed.). *Printed to Perfection: Twentieth-Century Japanese Prints from the Robert O. Muller Collection* (Amsterdam: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC in association with Hotei Publishing, 2004)
