

Selections from NDL collections

## The World of Japanese Book Illustration

The National Diet Library (NDL) held the FY2017 exhibition entitled *The World of Japanese Book Illustration* from October 10 to November 11 at the Tokyo Main Library and from November 17 to December 9 at the Kansai-kan. The exhibition featured some 90 books, magazines, and newspapers that were printed from the 1880's to present.



Poster of the exhibition

The exhibition comprised three parts:

- Part 1: The beginnings of book illustration—from the popularity of illustrated newspapers to the spread of illustrated books  
Featuring MIZUNO Toshikata's illustrations for serial novels in newspapers, *Konjikiyasha* (*The Usurer*, also known as *The Golden Demon*) and its book illustration
- Part 2: The development of book illustration—the spread of illustrated magazines and activities of some well-known illustrators  
Featuring illustrations from magazines for teens, KOMURA Settai
- Part 3: The diversification of book illustration—a variety of forms of expression and the illustrators  
Featuring the diffusion of sci-fi art, established "illustrators"

You can check the list of exhibited materials (in Japanese) on the [NDL website](#). This article presents some of the materials from the exhibition that are available online.

### 1. OCHIAI Yoshiiku, TSUKIOKA Yoshitoshi and Mizuno Toshikata

Newspapers, *shinbun* in Japanese, such as the *Yokohama mainichi shinbun*, which began publication in 1870 and

targeted well-educated people, were known as *oshinbun* (major newspapers, analogous to broadsheet newspapers) and did not include illustrations. In contrast, *nishiki-e shinbun* (woodblock-printed illustrated newspapers, analogous to tabloid newspapers) were one-sheet papers that featured remarkably wonderful or bizarre stories cited from the *oshinbun*. Ochiai Yoshiiku, who worked for the *nishiki-e* version of the *Tokyo nichinichi shinbun*, and Tsukioka Yoshitoshi, who was in charge of the *Yubin hochi shinbun*, had both been students of the ukiyo-e artist UTAGAWA Kuniyoshi, whose sometimes fantastic illustrations of the "floating world" were famous. These two tabloids competed with each other on the basis of sensationalized illustrations.



Illustrations by Ochiai Yoshiiku from *Tokyo nichinichi shinbun oonishiki*; NDL Call No. 234-111;

\* Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#)

The illustrations above are examples of the *Tokyo nichinichi shinbun oonishiki* illustrated by Yoshiiku, in which multiple pages of the *nishiki-e* version of the *Tokyo nichinichi shinbun* were bound together in folded accordion style in a cover with the title.

The *nishiki-e shinbun* fell into decline when illustrated newspapers, known as *koshinbun* (minor newspapers), began to target the general public. The *Yomiuri shinbun*, which was launched in 1874, is one example of such a newspaper. In 1875, Yoshiiku himself founded the *Hiragana eiri shinbun*. The story on Iwata Yasohachi carried in its November 29, 1875 issue is said to be the first illustrated newspaper article.



Illustration by Yoshitoshi from *Shinbun furoku azuma nishikie*; NDL Call No. 234-85;

\* Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#)

Above is an illustration from *Shinbun furoku azuma nishikie* by Yoshitoshi. In *Shinbun furoku azuma nishikie*, sheets of different papers such as the *Yubin hochi shinbun* are bound together with a cover in accordion style. Yoshitoshi also worked on the *Yubin hochi shinbun* under other names such as Ikkaisai Yoshitoshi and Taiso Yoshitoshi. As a master of the *Gen'yadana* school, he had more than 200 disciples, and produced a wide variety of *ukiyo-e* works, such as portraits of kabuki actors, military art, pictures of monsters and apparitions, and bloody works depicting murder scenes. Also, just like his master Kuniyoshi, he was enthusiastic in studying techniques of western-style

painting, and encouraged his disciples to receive training under other art schools.

After the *nishiki-e shinbun* trend came to an end, Yoshitoshi worked with different minor newspapers such as *Eiri jiyu shinbun* and *Yomiuri shinbun*. In 1886, Yoshitoshi joined a minor newspaper called *Yamato shinbun* together with one of his disciples, Mizuno Toshikata. Toshikata was hired on Yoshitoshi's recommendation, and so the master and pupil started working together.



Illustrations from *Mizuno Toshikata shinbun shosetsu sashie*; by Mizuno Toshikata, NDL Call No. 201-271;

\* Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#)

Above are Toshikata's illustrations for a serial novel carried in the *Yamato shinbun*. After the death of Yoshitoshi, Toshikata continued to work for *Yamato shinbun*. He also took part in a newly launched art association and received a great number of prizes at exhibitions, establishing himself as a pioneer of Japanese-style paintings. Even after gaining a reputation, he did not decline requests for illustrations for books and newspapers. He died at the young age of 43.

### Column: Mizuno Toshikata Collection previously held by the Imperial Library

Mizuno Toshikata became a disciple of the *ukiyo-e* artist Tsukioka Yoshitoshi and actively worked as an illustrator for newspapers and magazines, while producing historical paintings and establishing a modern *ukiyo-e* school in the Japanese art community. One of his disciples was KABURAKI Kiyokata who was famous for his paintings of beautiful women.

In 1895, Toshikata moved from his hometown Kanda to Ueno in Tokyo. The place was near to the Imperial Library, one of the origins of the NDL, and reportedly Toshikata

often visited the library to conduct background research for his historical paintings and study techniques of western-style paintings. His wife, Mizuno Hidekata, who was also an *ukiyo-e* painter and a pupil of Toshikata, donated his collections of drafts, proof copies, books and *ukiyo-e* to the Imperial Library.

## 2. Impact of Aubrey BEARDSLEY' s illustrations

The literary magazines *Myojo* established by YOSANO Tekkan and *Shirakaba* by MUSHANOKOJI Saneatsu devoted pages introducing western arts. One of the artists who met with a great response from readers was the English illustrator Aubrey Beardsley.

*Shirakaba* carried articles with illustrations in two issues, and also showed Beardsley' s work in its art exhibition.

Beardsley was born in England in 1872. With the ambience of Eros and decadence, delicate pen strokes seemingly influenced by Japanese art, and a high contrast of black and white in his works, he became a favorite of the time. He soon gained huge popularity, but died young at the age of 25. His distinct illustrations inspired illustrators in Japan who were looking for new ways of making use of the printing technology of the time.

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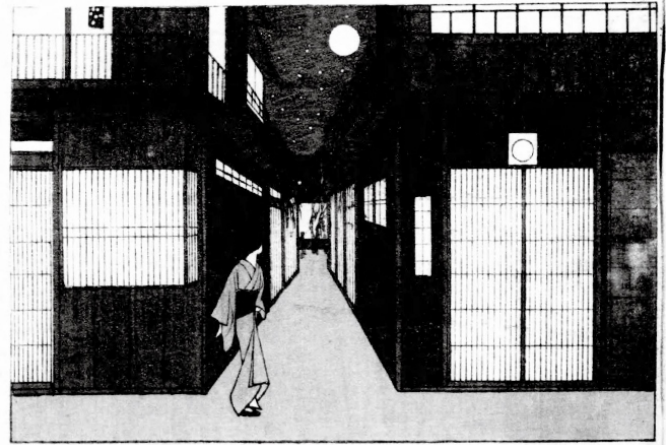
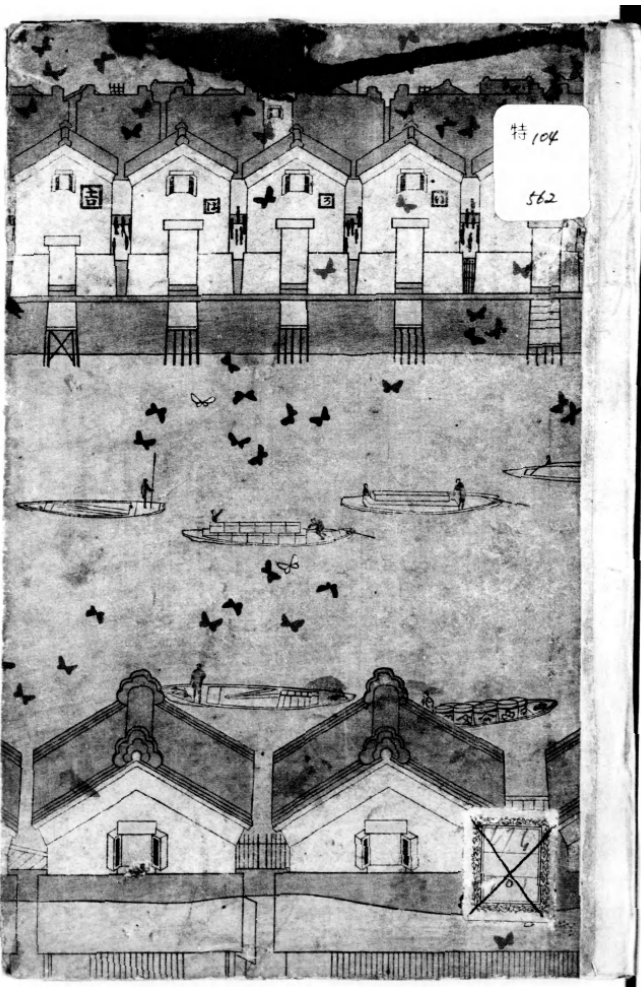
TANIZAKI Jun' ichiro, *Ningyo no nageki / majutsushi*;  
Illustrations by MIZUSHIMA Nio;  
published by Shun'yodo in 1919; NDL Call No. 331-133;  
\* Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#)

Above is an illustration by Mizushima Nio from the novel *Ningyo no nageki* written by Tanizaki Jun' ichiro. Mizushima, after studying Japanese painting at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, actively engaged in founding the art group Koujusha, publishing the literature fan magazine *Mozaiku*, contributing cartoons of topical themes in newspapers, etc. With a genius literary talent, in addition, he also wrote many books. The novel *Ningyo no nageki* by Tanizaki was originally published in 1917, illustrated by NAGOSHI Kunisaburo, another illustrator whose work was also influenced by Beardsley. However,

this book was banned, and was again published with Mizushima's illustrations two years later.

### 3. Illustrations for the novel *Nihonbashi* by Komura Settai

Komura Settai also studied Japanese painting at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts and graduated in 1908. He had close ties to IZUMI Kyoka, whom he got to know in the previous year. For example, Kyoka gave him his pseudonym Settai, and asked him to design the binding of his novel *Nihonbashi*, which brought Settai into the spotlight. Settai engaged in reproducing famous old artworks upon request from Kokkasha, the publisher of a magazine focusing on oriental art, and his alma mater. From 1918 to 1923, Settai belonged to the design department of the Japanese cosmetics company Shiseido. Started by *Tajobusshin* written by SATOMI Ton in 1922, he drew illustrations for more than 200 books and magazines to be a popular illustrator. Settai was a master of plate-making techniques, and was also famous for making stage settings for plays. His sharp and refined style earned great popularity.



Izumi Kyoka, *Nihonbashi*; illustration by Komura Settai; published by Senshoukan in 1914; NDL Call No. 特 104-562; \*Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#)

This is an illustration from *Nihonbashi*. Although Settai did not have any career as an illustrator at that moment, Izumi Kyoka assigned the job to Settai. Illustrated on the cover is a river bank with a row of storehouses, ships going down and coming up the Sumida River, and fluttering butterflies in a fanciful atmosphere. It was not until the novel was completed that Settai learned that the novel was given the title *Nihonbashi*, a bridge over the Sumida river, so he had to redo the cover illustration in a hurry. The inside four pages of endpaper depict the four seasons in the Nihonbashi area. The illustrations are wood-block prints on Japanese paper.

(Translated by Yuko Kumakura)

Related articles from the National Diet Library Newsletter:

- [Report of the exhibition "Autograph manuscripts and original artwork of well-known people 2" and the launch of the English version of the digital exhibition "Autograph manuscripts and original artwork of well-known people" \(No. 211, April 2017\)](#)
- [Special Exhibition "1945: The things we read and wrote before and after the war ended" \(No. 202, October 2015\)](#)
- [Exhibition "Autograph manuscripts and original artwork of well-known people" \(No. 197, December 2014\)](#)
- [Exhibition "The great match!" \(No.193, April 2014\)](#)
- [Exhibition "Japan and the West—Intersection of Images" \(No.188, April 2013\)](#)