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I, Leah Daniel, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Art History.

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Utamaro's Picture Books: A Study in Cross-Cultural Artistic Aesthetic

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Utamaro's Picture Books: A Study in Cross-Cultural Artistic Aesthetic

A thesis submitted to the
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by

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ABSTRACT

In the postscript of Kitagawa Utamaro's (1753-1868) first illustrated picture book in woodblock, entitled *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures* (*Ehon mushi erami*, 1788), artist Toriyama Sekien (1712-1788) penned a tribute to Utamaro's "painting from the heart," as Sekien described it. Art historian Julie Nelson Davis hypothesizes in her book *Utamaro and the Spectacle of Beauty* (2008) that the language and expressions Sekien used in this introduction indicate a painterly legacy for the pictures within, asserting that Sekien's manner of praise would be typically reserved for painters and not woodblock print artists.

It is against this background that I put forth the suggestion that Utamaro might have been equally, if not more, influenced by the Dutch naturalist art being imported through Nagasaki and consumed by Japanese scholars of Dutch culture, or *rangaku* scholars. Taking into account the Japanese tradition of bird and flower painting and the style of the Kanō school, the premiere style of painting at the time of Utamaro's picture books, I will investigate Davis' hypothesis while putting forth my own. I will then support my theory that Utamaro looked to Dutch naturalism when devising his illustrations to *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures*, *Gifts of the Ebb Tide* (*Shiohi no tsuto*, 1789), and *Myriad Birds* (*Momo chidori*, 1790.) Bolstering this idea are the elements of engraving in Utamaro's illustrations, such as hatching, and the likely association of Utamaro with renowned *rangaku* scholars such as Hiraga Gennai (1728-1780) through his publisher, Tsutaya Jūzaburō (1750-1797). I will perform formal analysis of both Utamaro's illustrations as well as previous and contemporary artworks, such as the landscape painting *Shichirigahama Beach, Kamakura* (1796) by Shiba Kōkan (1747-1818), in order to illustrate my ideas.

The dominant theory prior to this thesis was that Utamaro looked exclusively to the traditions of the Kanō school in the creation of his picture books; however, it fails to give the artist the adequate credit. This thesis will orient Utamaro amongst the ranks of innovative contemporaries such as Shiba Kōkan and Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), and establish him as an artist who could both uphold classical traditions while applying new techniques and ideas. With this new perspective, Utamaro becomes an even more complex and significant artist of Japanese history that he has been credited.

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INTRODUCTION

During the Edo Period in Japan (also known as the Tokugawa Period, 1603-1868), Dutch traders were permitted from 1640 to 1853 to live in a settlement called Deshima off the coast of Nagasaki in southern Japan in order to trade with the Japanese merchants. Through contact with the Dutch, Japanese visual artists began to draw from Western science and art. For example, the traditional Japanese aesthetics involved a perspective where subjects looked as if seen from an aerial view; however, having taught themselves Western artistic techniques and principles, some Japanese artists began to incorporate a linear perspective into their art during the eighteenth century.

In my thesis I will discuss the influence of *rangaku* (Dutch studies) on Kitagawa Utamaro's (1753-1806) woodblock illustrations to books of poetry.¹ Primarily known for his single-sheet woodblock prints of local beauties, Utamaro found critical acclaim in his illustration of three picture books (*ehon*), which consist of the following: *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures* (*Ehon mushi erami*, 1788); *Gifts from the Ebb Tide* (*Shiohi no tsuto*, 1789); and *Myriad Birds* (*Momo chidori*, 1790). These books contain woodblock print (*ukiyo-e*) illustrations of insects, shells, and birds that accompany the humorous poems called "crazy verse" (*kyōka*). I chose to investigate these three books because they are a previously unconsidered example of the synthesis between Western and Japanese art. In this study I will draw evidence together to conclude that *rangaku*, specifically Dutch naturalism, informed the illustrations in Utamaro's picture books. Consequently, the depictions of their subject matter changed to a more, scientific new aesthetic from the earlier, traditional mode seen in the art of Utamaro and his predecessors

¹ In this proposal I will be using the terms *rangaku* and *kyōka* in their original Japanese due to the lack of precise English equivalents. Japanese names are given last name first, though individuals are often referred to by their given names (or artist names.)

such as Suzuki Harunobu (1724-1770), the developer of the full-color print. Formal analysis of both Western and Japanese images and historical research of the effect of *rangaku* on Japanese art will support this conclusion.

The following are the central questions to my thesis: Were the subjects of insects, shells, and birds portrayed in the same manner prior to Utamaro's *ehon* and contemporaneous works? Can a conclusive line of impact be drawn between Western naturalist prints and drawings and Utamaro's *ehon*? For reference I will be looking to the East Asian tradition of still life, especially its incarnation of the Akita Ranga School (1773-1780), because of its relationship with *rangaku*. In my research I will further explore the formal analysis of Utamaro's illustrations versus referential and scientific images by Dutch naturalist printmaker Noël Antoine Pluche (1688-1761). Throughout the study I will be employing a combination of sociohistorical analysis and formalist methodology.

Chapter One will be a brief biography of Utamaro himself as well as the milieu of *ukiyo-e* in which he was situated. The second chapter will focus on the artistic lineage of Utamaro's picture book, specifically, the bird and flower tradition, Kanō school, and *rangaku*. Contemporary scholars cite the Kanō school as his primary inspiration, and Utamaro's picture book illustrations are organized in a manner reminiscent of the bird and flower tradition, an Asian still life genre that will later be explained in detail. Further, I find elements of Western artistic techniques within the images. It will end with my suggestion of how Utamaro may have had access to *rangaku* circles. Finally, the third chapter of my thesis will use formal analysis to establish a connection between *rangaku* and the illustrations in Utamaro's picture books, as well as show the similar influence of the Kanō school.

My thesis' primary merit lies in its focus on the three *ehon* by Utamaro, on which English language scholarship remains scarce. Nonetheless, some brief comments and opinions provide me with a point of departure. The selections of literature are as follows: Fitzwilliam Museum's website edited by Craig Hartley, Julie Nelson Davis' book *Utamaro and the Spectacle of Beauty* (2007), as well as her essay "Artistic Identity and Ukiyo-e Prints: The Representation of Kitagawa Utamaro to the Edo Public" in *The Artist as Professional in Japan* as edited by Melinda Takeuchi (2004), and *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art* by Michael Sullivan (1989).

Fitzwilliam Museum's website created by Craig Hartley provides a strong literary analysis and explanation of cultural motifs as used for the poetry of the *ehon*.² Dr. John T. Carpenter (The Metropolitan Museum of Art) and selections from Dr. Timothy Clark's *The Passionate Art of Kitagawa Utamaro* (British Museum Press, London, 1995) provide both the translations and the interpretations of the texts on the Fitzwilliam Museum website. These analyses are limited to the literary dimensions of the book, referencing cultural motifs mentioned in the poems rather than visual motifs, such as the pairing of butterflies with peonies. Carpenter and Clark's analyses explain the insect and flora pairings, which originate in the adjacent poems, and thus highlight cultural sources of the arrangements. However, neither mentioned nor explored is the relationship of *rangaku* to Utamaro's *ehon*. The art is not considered either, for the most part. This source thereby evidences a lack of exploration into the formal elements of the *ehon* as well as any analysis thereof.

Julie Nelson Davis' book, *Utamaro and the Spectacle of Beauty*, focuses on the entirety of Utamaro's career as a woodblock printmaker.³ Although Davis briefly discusses Utamaro's

² It is unknown when this website was either published or last edited; it is at least three to four years old.

³ Julie Nelson Davis, *Utamaro and the Spectacle of Beauty*. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007).

Picture Book of Crawling Creatures, her focus is on the art historical background of the style that Utamaro utilized. She uses the postscript written by Utamaro's tutor Toriyama Sekien (1712-1788) to support her assertions, wherein she concludes that artistic tropes usually reserved for painting schools were applied in order to praise Utamaro's work. Her arguments go deeper than those of Carpenter's and Clark's, but they still remain sparse – devoting only two pages of a 247-page book to Utamaro's *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures*, and ignoring *Gifts from the Ebb Tide* and *Myriad Birds* entirely. Drawing upon the theories and information put forth by Davis, Carpenter, and Clark, I will acknowledge the influence of classical Japanese painting such as the Kanō school, while also putting forth my own hypothesis that Utamaro looked to *rangaku* when composing his illustrations for the three picture books.

The Artist as Professional in Japan, edited by Melinda Takeuchi, contains a chapter entitled “Artistic Identity and *Ukiyo-e* Prints: The Representation of Kitagawa Utamaro to the Edo Public,” another work by Julie Nelson Davis.⁴ Here, Davis discusses Utamaro's career at length, and briefly touches on his *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures*, referring back to it in later references to Utamaro's naturalistic style. No explanation is given as to what she means when using this term, leaving one to wonder which culture's naturalism she is referring to – Japanese or Western. There are merits to Davis' attribution of the Kanō School to the stylistic decisions of *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures*, yet I feel that it leaves out the influences of contemporary works and *rangaku* – particularly when she chooses to use the term “naturalist” in referring to Utamaro and his style. Her entire chapter highlights the absence of personal documents by Utamaro, such as diaries or sketchbooks, which do not exist – it is unknown if they ever did. However, this article uncovers the working relationship between Utamaro and his

⁴ Melinda Takeuchi, *The Artist as Professional in Japan* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2004), 113-151.

publisher Tsutaya Jūzaburō (1750-1797) and resulting relationships with other notaries such as *kyōka* poet Ōta Nanpo (1749-1823) and *rangaku* scholar Hiraga Gennai (1728-1780), further emphasizing connections that facilitated the sharing of ideas. Personal connections to noted scholars of *rangaku* will be one of my strongest sources of historical evidence for the influence of *rangaku* on Utamaro's picture books, which I will discuss in Chapter Two.

Michael Sullivan's *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art* is the only source that I have found so far that provides a brief formal analysis that suggests aesthetic impact from abroad.⁵ Its section entitled "Western Influence on the Japanese Colour Print" briefly touches on the clear differences between Utamaro's prints from *Gifts of the Ebb Tide* and previous Japanese images in the treatment of space. However, Sullivan does not confirm whether the source of influence is Chinese or Western – though it is most likely both. In addition, of all of my sources on Utamaro's three *ehon*, this is the only one that considers a foreign influence on Utamaro's picture book illustrations. All of the authors reviewed above offer minimal, if any, visual analysis of Utamaro's *ehon*. They do not mention *rangaku*, leaving much to be desired for support of my hypothesis. However, they do offer other insights into the possible influences on Utamaro's *ehon*.

This thesis will admittedly have its limitations. The most significant is the lack of historical resources regarding Utamaro's connection to *rangaku*. There exist no sketchbooks by Utamaro similar to the ones by Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) that intricately detail Western artistic techniques and explicitly copy Dutch illustrations. There are no journals recording research on *rangaku*, or any other books he referenced. I am left with only formal analysis and guilt-by-association, and will use both to suggest a connection between *rangaku* and Utamaro's woodblock print illustrations of the three *kyōka* picture books.

⁵ Michael Sullivan, *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 29-40.

In sum, this thesis will be the first work of scholarship in English that discusses Utamaro's three picture books at length. While there is much scholarship available on the influence of *rangaku* on Japan's visual arts, this will be the first to discuss this scenario specifically in relation to these picture books by Utamaro and, perhaps, about his work in general. I will thereby fill in the gap in scholarship on the effect of *rangaku* on the artist Utamaro and his three picture books.

CHAPTER ONE

Utamaro, Ukiyo-e's Milieu, and the Scientific Gaze

In this chapter I will discuss the milieu of Utamaro and *ukiyo-e*, while also noting the importance of the scientific gaze of the eighteenth century that Utamaro employed in his illustrations. This discussion will begin to weave together the artistic references that Utamaro might have used or to which he might have been exposed.

Kitagawa Utamaro (1753?-1806) was a native of Edo, and was thereby born into the center of the developing art world. As a child he studied under Toriyama Sekien. He was also proficient in *kyōka*, and adopted the pseudonym “Fude no ayamaru (筆綾丸)” for his writings.⁶ In 1781 he took on the art name “Utamaro” by which we know him today. Publisher Tsutaya Jūzaburō (also known as “Tsutajū”, 1750-1797) discovered Utamaro in Ueno Ikenohata, the heart of modern Tokyo. The artist subsequently focused on the woodblock print genre that portrays beautiful women. These prints were distinct from previous portrayals of beautiful women due to the focus being shifted from the women’s beautiful garments to the women’s faces and expressions. From 1788 to 1790, Utamaro and Tsutajū published the *kyōka* picture books around which this thesis is formed: *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures (Ehon mushi erami, 1788)*, *Gifts of the Ebb Tide (Shiohi no tsuto, 1789)*, and *Myriad Birds (Momo chidori, 1790)*. Utamaro died in 1806, just two years following a severe punishment of shackles and house arrest in 1804 by the shogunate for publishing a satirical work of past shōgun Toyotomi

⁶ This is a pun on “making a mistake with the brush” (誤る), *ayamaru*; from the expression “*Kobo ni mo fude ayamaru*,” (弘法にも筆誤る) or “Even [the famous calligrapher’s] brush sometimes slips.” “喜多川歌麿,” JapanKnowledge Lib, *JapanKnowledge*, <http://japanknowledge.com/lib/display/?lid=1001000062544>.

Hideyoshi (1536-1598) with his wife and concubines. The prints referred to a banned work of literature and were deemed to be politically subversive subject matter.⁷

Despite his varied background, Utamaro primarily worked in *ukiyo-e*. The term *ukiyo-e* refers to a type of art that found its inspiration in the pleasure districts of Edo period Japan. While Western scholarship tends to use *ukiyo-e* to refer to woodblock prints in general, its origin in a more specific understanding of the word is as a genre of the technique of woodblock printing. The first half of the word, *ukiyo*, can be translated as “floating world,” a term that denoted the quarter of Edo that had been devoted to courtesans as well as kabuki performances; *-e*, meanwhile, is a term that indicates a two-dimensional image. *Ukiyo-e*, therefore, was mass-produced artwork of the populace that was initially used to represent two primary subjects, the world of kabuki and images of courtesans. The artist credited with popularizing the woodblock print is Hishikawa Moronobu (1618-1694). Moronobu and his contemporaries worked in a black and white, monochrome format. Although full color prints were used in the making of scientific and mathematical books since the seventeenth century, stand-alone polychrome prints only began to appear in the mid-eighteenth century.⁸ The first full-color print, known as “brocade print (*nishiki-e*),” was produced in 1765 by Suzuki Harunobu (1725-1770) when he was commissioned to design a colorful calendar print.⁹ Utamaro published the bulk of his prints when the brocade print was at the height of its popularity. In the late 1700s

⁷ The Shogunate was strict about the portrayal of contemporary political events and figures. Quoting Julie Nelson Davis in *Utamaro and the Spectacle of Beauty*, p.13:

“Certain subjects were consistently forbidden from commercial printing. In 1722 materials prohibited in Edo included:

(1) new books which contained depraved or divergent opinions on the subjects of Confucianism, Buddhism, Shintoism, medicine, or poetry were prohibited; (2) amorous books were not to be printed; (3) it was prohibited to publish matters about anyone’s family background or ancestors; (4) all books were to list the author’s and publisher’s names in the colophon; (5) no one was to publish about Tokugawa Ieyasu or his family. Special permission might be requested at the office of the commissioner.”

⁸ Penelope Mason, *History of Japanese Art: Second edition* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005), 281.

⁹ Ibid.

Utagawa Toyoharu (1735-1814) founded a school that would popularize his use of the Western one-point perspective. The resulting prints with the use of perspective were called *uki-e*, or “floating pictures.”¹⁰ Beginning with Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849),¹¹ landscape prints were in vogue by 1835. Continuing the genre and even eventually eclipsing the reputation of Hokusai was Andō Hiroshige (1797-1858) with his series *Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō* (1833-1834). As will be further discussed in Chapter Three, we can see this use of the *uki-e* technique in the opening illustration to Utamaro’s *Gifts of the Ebb Tide* (fig. 1).

Another popular genre of woodblock printing that can be aesthetically tied to Utamaro’s picture books was *surimono* (literally: “something rubbed.”) *Surimono* are celebratory prints, usually created for the New Year, that are characterized by woodblock print illustrations accompanied by poetry.¹² Its origins can be traced back to the original, monochrome *ukiyo-e* of courtesans and actors, when short poems – presumably penned by the subjects themselves – would accompany the illustrations. At times these prints would celebrate special occasions, such as a first performance of a kabuki play in Edo. With the advent of the brocade print, *ukiyo-e* and subsequently *surimono* took on a newfound popularity.¹³ Subjects of *surimono* would eventually include actors, beautiful women, and nature.¹⁴ *Surimono* were made in the same manner as *ukiyo-e*, except that the direction of the prints was controlled by the poet or poetry circle and publisher more than the artist and publisher.¹⁵ The primary difference between *surimono* from preceding *ukiyo-e* was that it was by and for literate men. Also, whereas *ukiyo-e* was largely for mass consumption, *surimono* would be distributed to a smaller circle of educated clients and

¹⁰ Ibid., 288.

¹¹ Hokusai is best known for his series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*, which began in 1823 and was completed in 1831.

¹² *Surimono: Poetry and Image in Japanese Prints* (Leiden: Hotei Publishing, 2000), 9.

¹³ Ibid., 15.

¹⁴ Ibid., 17.

¹⁵ Ibid., 29.

heavily depended on the use of poetry and classical literary references.¹⁶ Utamaro's picture books bridge these two audiences by combining the *ukiyo-e* picture book format, as seen in his contemporary work *Utamakura* (Poem of the Pillow, 1788), with poetry, as seen in the *surimono* format.

Another possible influence on Utamaro's picture books was a series of reforms whereby the content of woodblock prints and literature was restricted. The feudal hierarchy had been turned on its head during the Edo period, as merchants – the lowest class – raked in wealth while the samurai – the highest class – were living primarily on dwindling funds. This resulted in merchants becoming patrons of the arts – specifically woodblock prints – alongside the samurai. In order to rein back the increasingly flamboyant merchant class, the samurai ruling class enacted a series of edicts throughout the Edo period: The Kyōhō Reforms (1716-1736), the Kansei Reforms (1787-1793), and the Tempō Reforms (1841-1845).¹⁷ These sumptuary laws were declared with the hopes of restoring the Confucian, hierarchical organization of the populace.¹⁸ The Kyōhō Reforms were the most influential, and were issued by Tokugawa shogun Yoshimune (r. 1716-1745); heretical and risqué contents, subject matter concerning the first shogun Ieyasu and/or his family, tales of other, particularly elite, families.¹⁹ The subject matter of Utamaro's *ehon* might then have been a manner of circumventing these sumptuary laws. By disguising the ribald nature of the poems with such innocuous subjects as insects, shells, and

¹⁶ There are exceptions to the rule, however: woodblock print artist Harunobu, amongst others, would allude to poetry in his prints, which were not *surimono*.

¹⁷ Aranka Leonard, "Stories That Should Not Be Told: *Sharebon*, *kibyōshi* and censorship in early modern Japan," (Master's thesis, Leiden University, 2014), 10-11.

¹⁸ Writes Aranka Leonard: "The Confucian ideology on which the shogunate had built its base demanded a frugal and strongly moralistic lifestyle from all subjects. Laws concerning proper attire for each class of society and other lifestyle related consumption had readily been put into place. These so-called sumptuary laws were especially strictly applied to chōnin ("townspeople") as they had the economic strength and leisure to live well beyond their Confucian means, and so could threaten the order of society." Leonard, 23.

¹⁹ Yu Chang, "Identity and Hegemony in Mid-Tokugawa Japan: A Study of the Kyōhō Reforms," (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2003), 31.

birds, Utamaro and the poetry circle who wrote the *kyōka* verses were able to pass the censors and still publish risqué, or “immoral contents.” This use of rhopography, or “the depiction of those things which lack importance,”²⁰ successfully bypassed the human-focused laws by removing man from the picture entirely.

I contend that Utamaro employed the Western scientific gaze when drafting the subjects of his three picture books, in contrast to his previous work that primarily focused on idealistic portrayals of beautiful women of the pleasure quarters (fig. 1). This new method of seeing was based on observation, as opposed to the traditional, “synaptic” or conceptual method of viewing the world, as art historian Timon Screech describes it.²¹ He writes:

A “gaze” is taken here to imply a fixity of looking – sight held and used to dismantle what lies around; being scientific, this gaze dissected and selected, dwelling on objects and separating them as autonomous and apart, evacuating their cultural ballast. The Western scientific gaze was rooted in close and objectifying observation.²²

Applying this objective sight, Utamaro’s work resulted in precise renderings of insects, shells, and birds drawn from nature itself, *not* from literary and cultural descriptors. This served to set apart his picture books from his previous and later works. The contemporary Japanese scholar Kobayashi Tadashi, who contends that the color prints’ illustrations in Utamaro’s trilogy portray insects, shellfish, and birds with a “drawn-from-nature” (*shaseifū*) method, further supports this theory.²³

²⁰ Bryson, 61.

²¹ Screech, 2.

²² Ibid.

²³ In the original Japanese: 『画本虫撰（えほんむしえらみ）』（1788 刊）、『潮干（しおひ）のつと』『百千鳥（ももちどり）』（以上 1789、90 刊）の三部作は、虫、貝、鳥を写生風に描いた色摺りの挿絵をもつ歌麿狂歌絵本の代表作として知られる。

My translation: The trilogy of *Ehon mushi erami* (The Picture Book of Insects) (pub. 1788), *Shiohi no tsuto* (Gifts of the Ebb Tide), and *Momo chidori* (Myriad Birds) (pub. 1789, 1790) are known for their portrayal of insects, shellfish, and birds with a drawn-from-nature method, and considered the best works of Utamaro’s illustrations to books of *kyōka*. “喜多川歌麿.”

Utamaro's *ehon* find themselves situated between the worlds of *ukiyo-e* and *surimono*. This set of works owes its lineage to both the woodblock prints of the floating world that were mass-produced for general consumption just as much as it does the high-brow, literary works of *surimono*, whose main clients were literate men. Contemporary examples of *ukiyo-e* picture books might lack accompanying text, while *surimono* placed its emphasis on the poetry, resulting in the illustrations playing second fiddle. The *ehon* of note in this thesis – *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures*, *Gifts of the Ebb Tide*, and *Myriad Birds* – gave the leading role to the poetry as was done in *surimono*, yet the quality and extensive work of Utamaro's illustrations was as significant as in a text-less *ukiyo-e* picture book. Next, we will see how these illustrations are also indebted to both classical Japanese painting genres as well as the influx of artistic and scientific knowledge as imported through the Dutch.

CHAPTER TWO

Bird and Flower, the Kanō Tradition, Akita Ranga, and *Rangaku*

The pedigree of indigenous Japanese paintings of “bird and flower,” images of still life subjects that originated in China, constituted the backdrop to Utamaro’s three picture books. Unlike Western still life, bird and flower paintings consisted of birds situated amongst foliage. This subject matter earned prestige in medieval to early modern Japan partly because the Kano school, the hereditary school of painters serving the shogun and the samurai class, frequently worked with it. As noted above, its repertoire of bird and flower has been considered to be the inspiration for Utamaro’s *ukiyo-e* illustrations in the selected picture books.

Bird-and-flower painting is an East Asian artistic tradition that originated in China during the Northern Song dynasty (960-1127). Beginning with a style of and fondness for flower painting that was imported along with Buddhism from India and central Asia, birds were added during the Northern Song dynasty, creating a new genre in its own right.²⁴ These paintings are typically naturalistic in form but imaginary in conception. They are not drawn from direct observation but from the memory of the artist, or they were based on copybooks. The genre is comparable to Japanese landscapes, wherein the locations are drawn based on the image of the place as portrayed in literature. In the case of Japanese bird-and-flower paintings, artists often used earlier Chinese renderings for their models, until the artist Maruyama Ōkyo (1733-1795) changed this practice by painting directly from nature.²⁵

A classic example of this genre is *Five-Color Parakeet* (1110s) (fig. 2), by Huizong (r. 1101-1127). Huizong was the emperor of the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127) who founded

²⁴ Michael Sullivan, *The Arts of China*, 5th ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 188.

²⁵ Timon Screech, “Ōkyo's 'New Concept'” In *Shogun's Painted Culture*, (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), 167.

the Hanlin Academy and preferred painting to military maneuvers, much to his nation's detriment. *Five-Color Parakeet* is a demure, horizontal scroll painting that portrays a parakeet perched atop a flowered branch. The bird, painted in five different colors, sits roughly in the center of the image on a branch speckled with delicate white blossoms, which stretches from the edge of the bottom left corner to just short of the upper right corner of the painting. In the top right corner there is the artist's seal, and beneath it black calligraphy, which continues to the bottom of the image. The tip of the branch juts between the two. The parakeet's form is recognizable, but there is a stark difference when compared to those in Utamaro's *Myriad Birds*. The feathers of the parakeet are outlined and filled with color, but they lack the hatching seen in Utamaro's picture book. Further, *Five-Color Parakeet* does not suggest three-dimensionality by shading and highlighting and has a simple composition and a plain background. It subscribes to the traditional Northern Song style with its meticulous attention to detail and possesses a simple layout.

Much of pre-modern Japanese art can be divided into "schools," or lineages. A particularly influential school of art was the Kanō school, which dominated Japanese art from the late fifteenth century until the early twentieth century. The Kanō school was a lineage-based style of art that began with Kanō Masanobu (1434-1530) in the Muromachi period (1333-1568). His son and successor Kanō Motonobu (1476-1559) further developed the style. Described as a "true eclectic," it was Motonobu who combined the Chinese-style monochrome painting with the brilliant and native Japanese painting style. The Kanō school reached its zenith in the Momoyama period (1568-1600), particularly under the guidance of Kanō Eitoku (1543-1590).²⁶

²⁶ Paul Varley, *Japanese Culture*, 4th ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 152-153.

The strength of the Kanō school continued into the Edo period, carried on by Kanō Tan'yū (1602-1674), but lost some of that esteem during the early Meiji period (1868-1912).²⁷

The Kanō school may have begun with a resurgence of interest in Chinese academy painting, but it quickly added to the strong outlines its own style of bold colors and golden fields for backgrounds. These characteristics originated from *yamato-e*, the traditional Japanese style of painting²⁸; the inclusion of which was an eclectic choice of the Kanō school since Japan had a long history of looking to China for artistic innovation. Animals – typically birds – are rendered in a seemingly naturalistic fashion, but are conceived from reference to copybooks or the memory of the artist rather than drawn from observation. Thus, birds appear stiff and as though arranged by an intervening hand and lack the snapshot-like quality of naturalistic works. More fantastical animals are much less realistic in their appearance, such as the tigers paired with a storm-dragon in a pair of sixfold screens by Kanō Sanraku (seventeenth century) (fig. 3). The two screens are primarily covered in goldleaf, from which foliage and the subject matter peek. The storm-dragon appears from within the clouds in the top right corner, antagonizing the pair of tigers – a male and female – on the left screen. Painted in a boneless, serpentine style, the tigers of the Kanō school are not drawn from observation but rather from memory, copybook, or tales. As a result, they are only close caricatures of the true animal.

While the Kanō School and Utamaro were active, the West was nearing the end of the Age of Enlightenment, which lasted from the 1680s until 1800. It was a time for a “radically new synthesis of ideas concerning humanity, reason, nature, and God.”²⁹ The art of the Enlightenment reflected this attitude, largely by turning a new focus on scientific advancements. Naturalism, “a

²⁷ Ibid., 265-266.

²⁸ This style of art was distinct from *kara-e*, the Chinese style of painting. Later in the Meiji period it was paired against *yoga*, or Western style painting.

²⁹ Marilyn Stokstad and Bradford R. Collins, *Art History, Revised edition, Vol. II*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999), 929.

style of depiction in which the physical appearance of the rendered image in nature is the primary inspiration,” was a result of this new mindset.³⁰ The most important characteristic of Western Naturalism of the Enlightenment period was the employment of a scientific gaze, wherein objects are depicted as *seen* and not *perceived*.

A popular method of making prints during the Enlightenment was etching. The process of etching involves using acid to create an intaglio (or reverse relief) engraving upon metal that has been coated with an acid-resistant substance. The resulting layer is scratched away to create an image, which is then left vulnerable to the acid bath, creating the intaglio design. The recessed marks that result will hold ink, the excess having been wiped away, and will transfer the ink onto the page when pressed against it. Formal aspects of etchings consist of gradation of ink, parallel lines with varied spacing called “hatching”, and cross-hatching, all of which are used to indicate form and shading. Popular with naturalists, etching was a common medium for the production and publication of scientific images.

Beginning with the shogunal government’s edict of 1639, Japan was closed to the West – with the exception of the Dutch, because of their disinterest in proselytizing. The most influential type of Dutch visual arts coming into Japan during the Edo period was etching in scientific texts. Those studying *rangaku*, which included some painters, happily consumed these books. As William De Bary explained:

[The term *rangaku* was] used by the Japanese in the 1770s to differentiate those Japanese scholars with a particular interest in the West from the Nagasaki interpreters.³¹ At first *rangaku* scholars narrowly defined Dutch studies as the scholarship of Holland ([O]Ran). However, since commerce in the *sakoku*³² era was permitted only with Holland, all the knowledge and techniques from the West were transmitted through the medium of the

³⁰ Stokstad and Collins, Glossary 9.

³¹ Nagasaki interpreters were those people who worked strictly as interpreters between the Dutch merchants and the Japanese. Their position and profession did not necessarily indicate an advanced interest in Dutch or Western culture.

³² The *Sakoku* Edicts (written 1633-1639, ended 1853) were a series of laws and policies enacted by Tokugawa Iemitsu (r. 1623-1651). Under these rules, any foreigner entering Japan or Japanese national leaving the country was punishable by death.

Dutch language, and so it is not surprising that *rangaku* became the prevalent appellation for all Western learning.³³

Rangaku was made possible during the Edo period in 1720 when the eighth Tokugawa shogun, Yoshimune (1684-1751), lifted the ban on the import of Dutch and Chinese books, provided they did not discuss Christianity.³⁴ The resulting surge of interest in the Western sciences brought about large translations of many Dutch books. Studies were not limited to merely the text, however; artists quickly gleaned new techniques and concepts from the etchings that accompanied the writings, as well as imported, stand-alone etchings and oil paintings. Learning from these artworks and art manuals such as Gérard de Lairesse's (1640-1711) *Groot schilderboek* (1707), Japanese artists began to incorporate Western techniques and perspectives into their compositions.³⁵

Rangaku, whose students would observe rather than conceive their subject matter, spurred change in artistic works. Landscapes by the *rangaku* scholar Shiba Kōkan (1747-1818), such as *Shichirigahama Beach, Kamakura* (1796) (fig. 5), depict famous places known for their scenic beauty. A primarily blue composition depicts a lightly clouded sky and approaching waves; a splash of brown draws your eye to the right hand of the image and indicates the shoreline and rock crops leading into the water. Two people are seen interacting in the bottom right of this horizontal image. This visage of a famous location in Japan possesses the following characteristics that distance it from previous Japanese landscapes: a specific, fixed viewpoint, and a lack of literary or spiritual references. Further, Kōkan actually referenced his experience of the image *in situ*, unlike previous painters of these locations. These practices were uncommon in

³³ William Theodore De Bary, *Sources of Japanese Tradition: Volume 2, 1600 to 2000*, Vol. 2, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 362.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 220

³⁵ Stephen Little, "The Lure of the West: European Elements in the Art of the Floating World," *Asian Art at The Art Institute of Chicago* 22, no. 1, 74-96, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4104359>, 78.

Japanese art prior to the influx of Western ideas and resulted in an oil painting with a horizon line, vanishing point perspective, and modeling. To emphasize these changes, compare Kōkan's *meisho*³⁶ work to the pair of screens by Tawaraya Sōtatsu (1576-1643) entitled *Waves at Matsushima* (seventeenth century) (fig. 6).³⁷ The painting spreads across a pair of sixfold screens. The first of the pair possesses a gold field, puddled pine branches reaching out from the top right corner, and an intriguing island shape amidst the decorative waves. The second of the two carries on the same gold field and waves, along with two oddly shaped outcroppings adorned with small pine trees. This conceptualization of a famous place was based on a poetic rendition of the location, to which the painter most likely had never been. As a result, the flat islands are swimming in gold fields with multiple perspectives as though recalled from a dream or, in this case, a poem.

A possible reference for Utamaro was Noël Antoine Pluche (1688-1761) – a failed priest and successful teacher of the humanities and sciences. His eight encyclopedic volumes, originally titled *La spectacle de la nature* (*Spectacle of Nature*, 1732), demonstrate the values and techniques of Western, Enlightenment, and Naturalist etchings. They were first published in France and were soon translated into several languages. The *Complete Dictionary of Scientific Biography* describes the work as “didactic” and notes that it was used in childhood education.³⁸ Written as though it were a conversation, it is accompanied by many informative etchings that illustrate all manner of natural science. It is important to note that *Spectacle of Nature* was highly influential to Japanese art and was even listed in *rangaku* scholar Hiraga Gennai's (1728-1779) *List of Books* (*Bussan shomoku*, 1769), a list of eight foreign books that he had collected. A

³⁶ Writes art historian Melinda Takeuchi: “*Meisho-e* referred to the ancient genre of paintings of celebrated beauty spots whose imagery overlapped with places extolled in classical poetry.” Melinda Takeuchi, ““True” Views: Taiga's Shinkeizu and the Evolution of Literati Painting Theory in Japan,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 48, no. 1 (1989): 3, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2057661?origin=JSTOR-pdf>.

³⁷ More commonly referred to in English as “Pine Islands.”

³⁸ Hiroko Johnson, *Western Influences on Japanese Art*, (Amsterdam: Hotei, 2005), 99-100.

careful description of each book was penned, including provenance, page counts, and availability in Japan.³⁹ Furthermore, *Spectacle of Nature* was a model for the *Three Sketchbooks* by Satake Shozan (1748-1785) of the Akita Ranga school, as pointed out by Hiroko Johnson.⁴⁰

It is possible that Emanuel Sweerts's *Florilegium*, one of the eight books of Gennai's collection, also influenced Shozan. Both Pluche and Sweerts illustrate differences in species down to minute details. However, Shozan most probably used the *Schouwtoneel der Natuur* as his prototype, because Sweerts's illustrations of flowers include plants with roots, whereas Pluche's and Shozan's do not.⁴¹

The influence of Pluche is recognizable in other Japanese artists' works as well. In her book *Western Influences on Japanese Art*, Hiroko Johnson suggests that the engraving "Little Vessel" from Pluche's *Spectacle of Nature* might have served as a model for "the techniques of casting shadows on a water surface: it has clear reflections of the boat on water" (fig. 7). This can be seen in *Returning Sailboat along Shinagawa Shore* (date unknown, attributed to Odano Naotake) (fig. 8), where the composition of two sailors readying the boat to dock and the manner in which the boat reflects on the water were borrowed.⁴² The boat is also a prime example of hatching to indicate form and create modeling, as the lines progress, densely packed at first, from the nose of the boat to none at all on its broad, well-lit sides.

Artists producing woodblock prints for mass consumption had been experimenting with Western perspective since the early Edo period. The first example of this is Okumura Masanobu's (1686-1784) *Large Perspective Picture of an Eleventh-Month Kyōgen Performance* (1745) (fig. 9), which features an approximation of Western one-point perspective.⁴³ The image has clearly defined lines by the placement of the audience, disappearing into the focal point of the stage. This technique gives the scene a sense of depth and space. As *ukiyo-e* artists continued

³⁹ Hiroko Johnson, "Shozan's Sketchbooks and Schouwtoneel Der Natuur: The Akita Ranga School and Foreign Books," <http://faculty.oxy.edu/yuhas/articles/arth368/JohnsonAkitaRenga.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Johnson, *Western Influences*, 123.

⁴² Ibid., 66.

⁴³ Little, 76-78.

in this tradition, it would have been only natural that its effects reached Utamaro. Some Japanese artists were experimenting with creating etchings during the Edo period as well. Kōkan and Aōdō Denzen (1748-1822) were producing copperplate prints just a few years before the publication of Utamaro's picture books. Kōkan primarily etched "topographical" scenes much like the ones imported from Europe, while Denzen mostly used the art for scholarly illustrations while keeping to oil paintings for his topographical works.⁴⁴ Their engraved landscapes were valued for the rendition of spatial depth.⁴⁵ A prime example of these engravings is Kōkan's *View of the Mimeguri Shrine (Mimeguri no kei)* (1783) (fig. 10). It demonstrates a sophisticated attempt at horizon line and vanishing point perspective, though the result is a lake-like river and bowed perspective lines. The creation of these prints flanked that of Utamaro's picture books, from 1793 and onward.⁴⁶ Thus one might conclude that the art of the etching had infiltrated the visual culture by the time Utamaro produced his three *kyōka* picture books.

Another important school that looked to etchings during the Edo period was the Akita Ranga school (1773-1780), headed by the domain lord of Akita, Satake Shozan (1748-1785), and his retainer Odano Naotake (1748-1780). According to art historian Hiroko Johnson, "Akita Ranga is an amalgamation of different art schools that existed at the time and it displays aspects of traditional as well as contemporary art."⁴⁷ Akita Ranga art was characterized by traditional Japanese compositions and themes with Western techniques and materials. The art of Shen Nanpin (1682-after 1760) was a heavy influence on this school, portraying in his works flora and fauna rendered in a naturalistic manner, such as in his painting *Pine, Plum, and Cranes* (1759)

⁴⁴ Timon Screech, *The Shogun's Painted Culture: Fear and Creativity in the Japanese States, 1760-1829*, (London: Reaktion, 2000), 44-45.

⁴⁵ Tamon Miki, "The Influence of Western Culture on Japanese Art," *Monumenta Nipponica* 19, no. 3/4 (1964): 380-401, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2383178>, 390.

⁴⁶ Timon Screech, "The Meaning of Western Perspective in Edo Popular Culture," *Archives of Asian Art* 47 (1994): 58-69, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20111244>.

⁴⁷ Johnson, *Western Influences on Japanese Art*, 129.

(fig. 11). Further shaping Akita Ranga were engravings from European books that were being imported to Japan by the Dutch. For instance, artist Sō Shiseki (1715-1786) based his painting *Lion* on that of *Johnston's Illustrated Book of Animals*, a book from Gennai's collection (fig. 12).⁴⁸ The predatory feline crouches in the bottom half of the scroll, his bristling expression a direct copy of Johnston's male lion in his *Lions* etching (fig. 13).⁴⁹

Utamaro has no known direct copies of Western etchings, but given his circle of influence, this does not necessarily eliminate the possibility of him referencing such works. Utamaro's publisher, Tsutaya Jūzaburō, connected him with such forward thinkers as Ōta Nanpo and Hiraga Gennai. Gennai is known to have possessed a copy of Pluche's *Spectacle of Nature*, while Nanpo was a famous poet of the Edo period, to whom Utamaro was connected with as a member of his poetry circle. Gennai, commonly considered to be the father of *rangaku*, was also the playwright mentor of Nanpo whose works were also published by Tsutaya.⁵⁰ Further, Gennai was versed in *honzōgaku*, or a type pharmacology that originated in China but was later influenced by the Western sciences. He initially worked for the lord of the Takamatsu Domain Matsudaira Yoritaka (1810-1886), and traveled to Nagasaki in 1752. In 1754 he moved to Edo to study under botanist Tamura Ransui (1733-1817). By 1763 he retired from his samurai post and became a *rōnin*, or freelance, masterless samurai. Achieving much in his life, Gennai mastered not only the sciences – inventing such important machines as the magnetic compass needle and the electric generator – but also dabbled in Western-style painting (fig. 14), inspiring the school of Akita Ranga while he was commissioned by Satake Shozan to investigate a copper mine in his

⁴⁸ Ibid., 140.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 139-140.

⁵⁰ Katsuya Hirano, *The Politics of Dialogic Imagination: Power and Popular Culture in Early Modern Japan*, Online-Aug. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 76.

domain.⁵¹ While there is no known direct connection between Gennai and Utamaro, there is much hypothesis to be had in the fact that they were involved in the same circle.

⁵¹ Timon Screech, *The Lens Within the Heart: the Western Scientific Gaze and Popular Imagery in Later Edo Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 461-462.

CHAPTER THREE

The Picture Books

Utamaro's picture books, *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures*, *Myriad Birds*, and *Gifts of the Ebb Tide*, were authored by various famed poets of the time period and illustrated with his woodblock prints. In the postscript of *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures*, artist Toriyama Sekien (1712-1788) penned a beautiful tribute to Utamaro's "painting from the heart," as Sekien described it. It reads:

These are true pictures from the heart – my student Utamaro captures the life expressed in the being of the insects, and he follows the **laws of painting in pictures and abides by the rules of the brush to draw life in its heart and spirit**. Long ago, as a child, Mr. Uta[maro], who cares for the details of things, was even in amusing himself someone who studied intently while playing with a dragonfly tied by a string – flap-flap – and by carrying crickets and grasshoppers in his palm. And I warned him often, fearful for that life that so he deeply desired [to understand]. But now in the means of his brush, in truth and sincerity he has burnished the virtue of his deeds. He puts to shame old painting – stealing the lustre of the jewel beetle, rashly borrowing the scythe of the praying mantis and digging into the earth with the worms, to return in pictures directly buoyant with mosquito larvae. In the dark origins his way is illuminated by the glow of firefly lights and he loosens the thread of the spiders cobweb, in line with the collected poetry by these gentlemen, while the engraver Fuji Kazumune uses his knife to set it to the cherry-wood, and it is left to me to pray to the truth of its origins.

Tenmei 7, the year of the Sheep – written by Toriyama Sekien⁵²

The reasons this description has led scholars to attribute Utamaro's style in the *ehon* to the Kanō school are two-fold: Sekien's manner of praise is typically reserved for painters, not woodblock print artists, and Sekien was once an artist of the Kanō school. Writes Julie Nelson Davis:

Sekien praises Utamaro with familiar tropes for the painter's talent – from the "true pictures of the heart" to "following the laws of painting and the rules of the brush," from capturing the life-spirit" to the image of the child in close observation of living things. These time-honoured phrases are tropes for genius in Chinese and Japanese painting gleaned from a long textual tradition. Japanese theorists prioritized hierarchies of techniques and styles, as well as painters and schools, which they combined with traditional aesthetics and theories of artistic practice. The Kano and Tosa schools

⁵² Davis, 56.

participated in this painterly discourse, and many other painters and critics joined in throughout the Edo period. These were not, however, commonly used tropes for *ukiyo-e* artists. In fact, no *ukiyo-e* artists prior to Utamaro had had their artistry proclaimed in a printed text like this. Sekien's text thus transfers elements of these discussions to "Utamaro".⁵³

As I will show below, Uta's *ehon* contains two elements that characterized the art of the Kanō school. The first characteristic is Chinese brushwork paired with a Japanese use of color and patterns. Second, crossing both cultures is the use of traditional motif, such as a carp leaping a waterfall.⁵⁴ The presence of these two elements in Utamaro's *ehon* lends credence to the claim that they were inspired by the Kanō school of painting; however, I contend Utamaro was just as much influenced by Dutch naturalism.

Utamaro's style and subject of illustrations were atypical at the time of their production. My research indicates that, prior to the publication of his picture books, there were no such detailed, focused, and naturalistic portrayals of insects, shells, plant, or animal life *in the woodblock print medium*. In fact, Utamaro may have coined a new genre with his series of illustrations.⁵⁵ Prior to this new class of woodblock prints, the bird and flower motif was left to painting; furthermore, Utamaro's picture books illustrations possess a resemblance to copperplate engravings in imported Dutch books, which will be explained later in further detail.

The books feature *kyōka* verses – a comedic variation of *waka* ("31-syllable court poetry") that was popular among wealthy and literate commoners during the Edo period, especially in the city of Edo during the late seventeenth century. *Kyōka* originated with the Edo

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ This motif originated in China.

⁵⁵ This genre can be seen in Totoya Hokkei's (1780-1850) almost copy-cat woodblock print and poetry (*surimono*) illustrations in the series *A set of shells (Kaitsukushi)* (1821) (Fig. 36) and Hōtei Gosei's (ca. 1804-35) *surimono* print of two turtles entitled *Shinobazu Pond (Shinobazu no Ike)* (ca. 1820) (Fig. 37). Admittedly, it took a little time for the genre to catch on, though I have found a rougher woodblock print of shells called "The Shell Screen" by an unknown artist dated 1798 (Fig. 35).

period samurai before trickling down to commoners and eventually throughout the nation.⁵⁶

Writes Japanese literature scholar Haruo Shirane:

The humor of *kyōka* essentially derives from placing something vulgar, low, or mundane in an elegant Japanese form or context. Typically, a *kyōka* poet treated a classical topic using popular language and attitudes or, conversely, approached a popular, mundane topic (such as theater, licensed quarters, or farting) using classical diction or a classical perspective.⁵⁷

This humor is apparent in the case of Utamaro's picture books, wherein the mundane topic of insects, shells, and birds are treated in both classical language and a sophisticated art style. Furthermore, many of the poems hide their ribald nature behind classical allusions.⁵⁸ This might have been due to governmental bans.

The prose preface of *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures*, attributed to a Yadoya no Meshimori, playfully attributes the creation of the *kyōka* to a gathering of "the usual group of comic poets [...] spread out [...] on the embankment of the Sumida River near Iosaki."⁵⁹ *Gifts of the Ebb Tide* similarly begins with a preface by an Akera Kankō, who tells of the poets' journey now "to Sode-ga-ura, the Bay of Sleeves, to gather seaweed and seashells on the beach at ebb tide."⁶⁰ *Myriad Birds* possesses two introductions, both penned by an Akamatsu Kinkei. The first praises Utamaro "[taking] up his brush to colour in [myriad birds'] feathers of five hues, and to capture the attitudes of flocking birds in brocade prints of the east (where poets say birds do cry),"

⁵⁶ Haruo Shirane, *Early Modern Japanese Literature: An Anthology 1600-1900*. (Columbia: New York, 2002), 528.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ One example from *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures*:

If you no longer love me
then leave, like a dragonfly
that wants to fly away,
yet I won't let you escape
from my long, sticky pole!
- Ichifuji Nitaka

⁵⁹ Timothy Clark, "UTAMARO," The Fitzwilliam Museum, accessed November 18, 2014, <http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/gallery/utamaro/>.

⁶⁰ John T. Carpenter, "UTAMARO," The Fitzwilliam Museum, accessed November 18, 2014, <http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/gallery/utamaro/>.

while the second preface focuses on the theme of the poems.⁶¹ Similar to the “book of insects,” the “book of shells” also possesses a postscript. In *Gifts of the Ebb Tide*, calligrapher Chieda writes out a nod to “the members of the Yaegaki poetry circle” who have “carried out the second act [or publication] of a planned four-act performance.”⁶²⁶³ The fourth book, however, was never created.

The three picture books are composed of woodblock prints spanning two pages each, with poetry written near the illustrations. In *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures*, each half of the two-page spreads is framed with its own border (fig. 15). The border returns in *Gifts of the Ebb Tide* but this time it frames both pages at once (fig. 1). *Myriad Birds* replicates this design (fig. 16). The books are bound in four spots along the spine, and the covers sport printed patterns of their own. *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures* is comprised of two volumes that are bookended with a preface, postscript, and a list of other books by Tsutaya Jūzaburō. *Gifts of the Ebb Tide* is a single volume with a preface, postscript, artist’s name and seal, as well as publisher’s address. *Myriad Birds* returns to the two-volume format but, in addition to the preface at the front, includes advertisements for other books as well as the artist’s and publisher’s information in the back of the first volume. The second volume begins with another preface by the same author, Akamatsu Kinkei, but this time being “Retired Samurai of the Quick Bath” instead of “of Kōzuke Province.”⁶⁴ Finally, the last two-page spread of the second volume can be likened to that of the first volume.

We will first look at images from *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures*, beginning with the wasps in the first illustration (fig. 15). A vine with small, purple buds, along which a

⁶¹ Clark, “UTAMARO.”

⁶² While envisioned, the fourth “act” was never published.

⁶³ Carpenter, “UTAMARO.”

⁶⁴ Ibid.

caterpillar creeps, dominates the right side of the image. The wasps have built their nest in the upper left corner of the image; one clings to the nest while the other approaches from the below and to the left. While the wasps' legs are aesthetically pleasing, their wings and abdomens are true to nature. The nest reminds one of a diagram from a biological study – this is reinforced when one looks at the diagrams of beehives and wasp nests in *Spectacle of Nature* (*Schouwtoneel der natuur*, 1732-50) (fig. 17). There is some shading in the depiction of the nest, which is unusual for *ukiyo-e* prior to these picture books. The wasps' abdomens also show slight, delicate shading. Even the wings have been subtly shaded as one might see in real life (fig. 18). This use of shading creates a modeling effect that was previously uncommon in woodblock prints.

Next we have the third illustration of mole cricket and earwig situated with a relatively large bamboo shoot (fig. 19). The earwig's back is arched, its pinchers poised in an almost threatening manner as it perches on the bamboo shoot. The mole cricket noses about the ground nearby in an unassuming position. What might be roses peak out from behind the bamboo shoot, which dominates the spread of the two pages. The details of the bamboo shoot are of particular interest – the overlapping leaves and their tendrils are given texture with tiny, parallel lines that suggest shape as they become either tighter or more loosely positioned. The flowers and roots of the bamboo shoot, on the other hand, use fading ink for gradation purposes.

Another example of hatching can be found in the illustration of the spider and the cicada on an ear of corn (fig. 20). The *kyōka* verse dominates the first quarter of the image from the left, while the corn leans out across the pages from the right to meet it. The vegetable itself is embossed into the paper before being colored with yellow, the silk of the corn being drawn in painful detail. What interests us here, however, are the leaves on the stalk – their shape, form,

and shading being indicated with a distinct use of hatching. The spider and cicada seem almost cartoonish in their simplicity next to the mass of thin, parallel lines.

Now we turn to the second book in the series, called *Gifts of the Ebb Tide*. This book has a motif of seashells and opens with a beach scene of men, women, and children gathering shells by the shore (fig. 1). The two-page spread employs linear perspective, with objects and the shores becoming smaller as they disappear into a blue horizon. There is also embossing of the water in two different ways: parallel lines used to emphasize the shading of the waves crashing onto the beach, and, growing gradually smaller, hillocks of waves disappearing into the bay. Mica dust is also employed to give the sand a subtle sparkling effect (fig. 21). Here, the most obvious effect of Dutch naturalism can be seen. The beach is laid out diagonally from the top left corner to the bottom right. The shell collectors recede into the distance, along with ever shrinking shoreline and tiny boats out by the horizon. In this image we see the distinctly known European techniques of vanishing point perspective and a blue horizon. Prior to the influx of European art, the Japanese used isometric perspective and a nondescript golden field in their artwork, much as in *Waves at Matsushima* (fig. 6). This illustration alone makes the strongest case for Utamaro's dabbling in Dutch naturalism.

The third illustration in *Gifts of the Ebb Tide* displays an array of seashells, some shaded with ink, others with parallel lines, set against a sandy background sprinkled with brass or mica dust (fig. 22). Seaweed lies behind a cluster of shells on the left page, some of which are highlighted with more mica dust. The shells of interest are referred to as *horagai* (conch shell) in the accompanying poems, but were likely based off of the similar *bōshū-bora*, or Japanese triton shell.⁶⁵ These shells use parallel, contouring lines to indicate the curves and shading of their shapes, as well as otherwise flat, block coloring that the lines emphasize. Several other shells on

⁶⁵ Ibid.

these two pages use similar effects, such as the “crimson” shell or *masuho-gai*. A similar technique can be seen in the exterior of an abalone shell (fig. 23). The shell lies amid a cluster of seaweed in the third quarter of the image, with smaller shells scattered about. When one looks closely at detail (fig. 24), one can see delicate hatching lines that work to indicate the curved and three-dimensional shape of the shell.

Finally, we will look at *Myriad Birds*. To begin, the Chinese brushwork of the Kanō school is most evident in some of the branches of trees in *Myriad Birds*. This is initially seen in the third illustration of a woodpecker and Japanese grosbeak perched upon a gnarled, old pine tree (fig. 25). The woodpecker sits on the trunk of the tree in the bottom left corner of the image, turning its head to match the stare of the small grosbeak perched upon a branch that frames the top right corner of the image. The brushwork here is calligraphic, much like that of Kanō Eitoku’s (1543-1590) *Birds and Flowers of the Four Seasons* (fig. 26), with thick and thin, dry and wet qualities amongst the same stroke. The birds seem almost hyper-realistic next to them, particularly with hatching being used to indicate the directions of their feathers and the curves of their bellies and throats. This technique is also employed in the illustration of the wren and snipe (fig. 27), and the copper pheasants paired with the wagtail (fig. 28), both in *Myriad Birds*.

The eighth illustration possesses a trio of birds as well – a chicken, an imposing rooster, and a meadow bunting (fig. 16). The chicken and rooster, in their overlapping position, dominate the majority of the two-page spread, while the meadow bunting peeks in from the left side, perched on a stick around which morning glories wrap themselves. There is much to describe about the chicken and rooster; the two are printed in bold, contrasting colors and shades. Utamaro again applies the parallel line or hatching technique in order to depict feathers and accentuate shading. Lines and shapes are overlapping and conflicting with one another amongst

these two birds in order to indicate the layers and complexity of their feathers' positioning. Finally, the feet are a significant part to which one must pay attention – they are pointing in differing directions, as though the chicken and rooster were actually situated upon a grounded plane. The meadow bunting pushes into the frame almost as an afterthought or filler, and does not draw nearly the amount of attention that the rooster and chicken command. This leads us to a technique that might have been gleaned from Dutch naturalism. When compared to the seventeenth-century Kanō school pair of folding screens *Roosters and Chicken in a Bamboo Grove* (fig. 29), Utamaro's rooster and chicken are much more naturally posed. With the exception of one rooster who holds his left foot curled up to his breast, the feet of the birds in *Roosters and Chicken in a Bamboo Grove* look almost duplicated, resulting in the effect of the birds floating just above the undefined earth. Utamaro, however, has turned the feet of the chicken and rooster slightly apart from one another in order to better ground them. They rest on the sandy earth in the center of the two-page spread. The rooster looks forward to a short verse, while the chicken cranes her head back to indicate the second poem for this illustration. This snapshot, rather than posed and copied qualities, lends a naturalistic air to the image.

Next, seen occasionally in Utamaro's picture books are traditional Japanese motifs. The first to appear are butterflies and peonies, seen paired in the fourth illustration of *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures* (fig. 30). The peonies reach up from the bottom of the print, encompassing three quarters of the image starting from the right side. A dragonfly with iridescent wings is poised above a small bud on the right half of the image, while the butterflies alight upon a bloom on the left. Other motifs that appear in the picture books are grasses with fireflies⁶⁶ (fig. 31), from the Japanese seasonal expression, "Decayed grasses turn into fireflies" (*fusō hotaru to naru*), and the Japanese bush warbler with plum blossoms (fig. 32) in *Myriad Birds*. This last

⁶⁶ Carpenter, "UTAMARO."

pairing uses two traditional symbols of the onset of spring.⁶⁷ The use of these motifs hearkens back to the literary and cultural references made in Kanō school paintings. Finally, all illustrations in *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures* and *Myriad Birds* pair the creatures with plants in the tradition of bird and flower paintings, be they insects, lizards, amphibians, or birds. *Gifts of the Ebb Tide* is left as the only outlier.

As shown above, some images in Utamaro's picture books, such as the butterflies and peonies (fig. 30), wasps and caterpillar (fig. 15), and an assortment of shells with seaweed (fig. 22), contain features that resemble copperplate etchings: gradients to indicate shape, parallel lines running close to one another in varying degrees also to indicate shading and form, snapshot quality poses, vanishing point perspective, a true to life depiction of nature, and a blue horizon. These qualities in the illustrations suggest that Utamaro might have looked to copperplate images in Dutch books much like Pluche's *Spectacle of Nature*,⁶⁸ and lead us to assert the ongoing theory that the Kanō school exclusively influenced Utamaro's picture books is shortsighted.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ For example images please look to a study of butterflies and caterpillars (fig. 33), a study of wasps and their nests (fig. 17), and a cross section of shells (fig. 34).

CONCLUSION

This thesis was written as an inquiry into the mixed artistic lineages of Utamaro's picture books, *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures*, *Gifts from the Ebb Tide*, and *Myriad Birds*. It hypothesizes that, in addition to the already determined influence of the Kanō school, Utamaro looked to the Western techniques unearthed by *rangaku* scholars and artists in order to enhance his illustrative work, perhaps by viewing the imported Dutch etchings. I have provided extensive background on the Western and Japanese artistic lineages of Utamaro's work and performed in-depth formal analyses in order to justify this theory.

First, I discussed Utamaro's background and the milieu in which he honed his artistic style. He was a practicing artist when various types and formats of ukiyo-e, such as the brocade print (*nishiki-e*), the perspective print (*uki-e*), and the poetic print (*surimono*), arose and flourished – these three types of woodblock prints were synthesized in his insect, shell, and bird picture books. The scientific gaze, wherein the artist closely examines his subject matter and reproduces it in a manner that is true to life, was growing in popularity and might have drawn Utamaro to the naturalistic style he employed in his illustrations. Finally, the sumptuary laws of the time might have driven the choice of this innocuous subject matter for its subtly ribald content.

Second, I highlighted the old and new traditions of bird and flower painting, the Kanō school, and *rangaku* that Utamaro might have looked to in drafting his illustrations. The use of shading and hatching to create modeling, as seen in the image of the earwig and mole cricket on the bamboo shoot (fig. 19), as well as the application of one-point perspective and a horizon line in the opening pages to *Gifts of the Ebb Tide* (fig.1), exemplify the application of Western

techniques in a traditional Japanese art form. Similarly, the bird and flower motifs, *surimono* format, and calligraphic line work in images such as that of the woodpecker and grosbeak in *Myriad Birds*, can be traced back to the Kanō school (fig. 25).

The research herein does have its limitations. First and foremost, there are no known surviving journals or sketchbooks that once belonged to Utamaro. Unlike Hokusai, Utamaro neither published a series of sketches, nor left behind any similar documents that possess directly copied Western illustrations or outlined Western techniques. As a result we are left to discern the stylistic roots of his picture books through formal analysis, as well as possible associations with known *rangaku* scholars Gennai and Nanpo. My inability to translate Japanese sources did cause some challenges. Provided the ability to further investigate Japanese sources, this thesis would have been much enriched. It is important to point out, however, that Kobayashi Tadashi, a renowned scholar of *ukiyo-e*, also describes Utamaro's approach in the three books as a "drawn-from-nature method."⁶⁹ This statement supports my theory that Utamaro might have been employing the scientific gaze when crafting his illustrations for the *ehon*.

In sum, as shown through formal analysis and background research, this thesis has furnished a hypothesis that Utamaro looked to *rangaku* sources and influences as much as he did the Kanō school, which was most strongly suggested by Julie Nelson Davis. This theory brings Utamaro forth into the ranks of his fellow enterprising artists of the Edo period, such as Shiba Kōkan and Katsushika Hokusai, and establishes him as an artist who could both uphold classical traditions while applying new techniques and ideas. Furthermore, the new genre generated by the picture books' illustrations can be seen in a variety of examples, though I have found only one example that is chronologically close to *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures*, *Gifts of the Ebb Tide*, and *Myriad Birds*. This work is the anonymous print of shells called "The Shell Screen"

⁶⁹ "喜多川歌麿."

(1978) (fig. 35). Other examples, following much later, include Toyota Hokkei's (1780-1850) *A set of shells* (*Kaitsukushi*, 1821) (fig. 36) and Hōtei Gosei's (active c.1804-1844) *Shinobazu Pond* (*Shinobazu no ike*, c.1809-c.1813) (fig. 37). I contend that this thesis is a necessary addition to the scholarship on Utamaro as it is the first extensive English study to suggest the use of Western techniques in his picture books, which are skillfully synthesized with his classical Japanese roots. With these new perspectives, Utamaro becomes an even further complex and significant artist of Japanese history.

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FIGURES

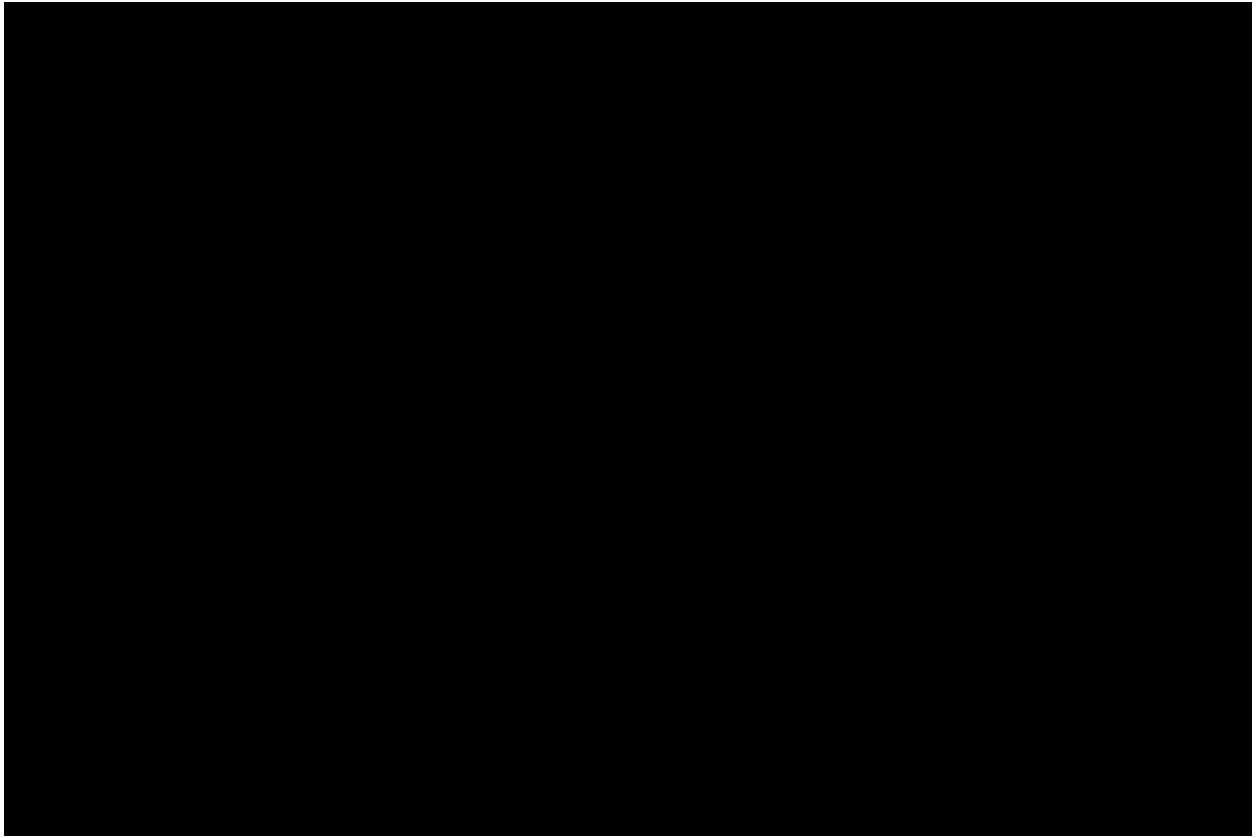


Figure 1 Utamaro Kitagawa, Beach scene from *Gifts of the Ebb Tide* (*Shiohi no tsuto*), 1789, woodblock printed book; ink, color, and mica on paper, 25.1 x 18.2 cm (9 7/8 x 7 3/16 in.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

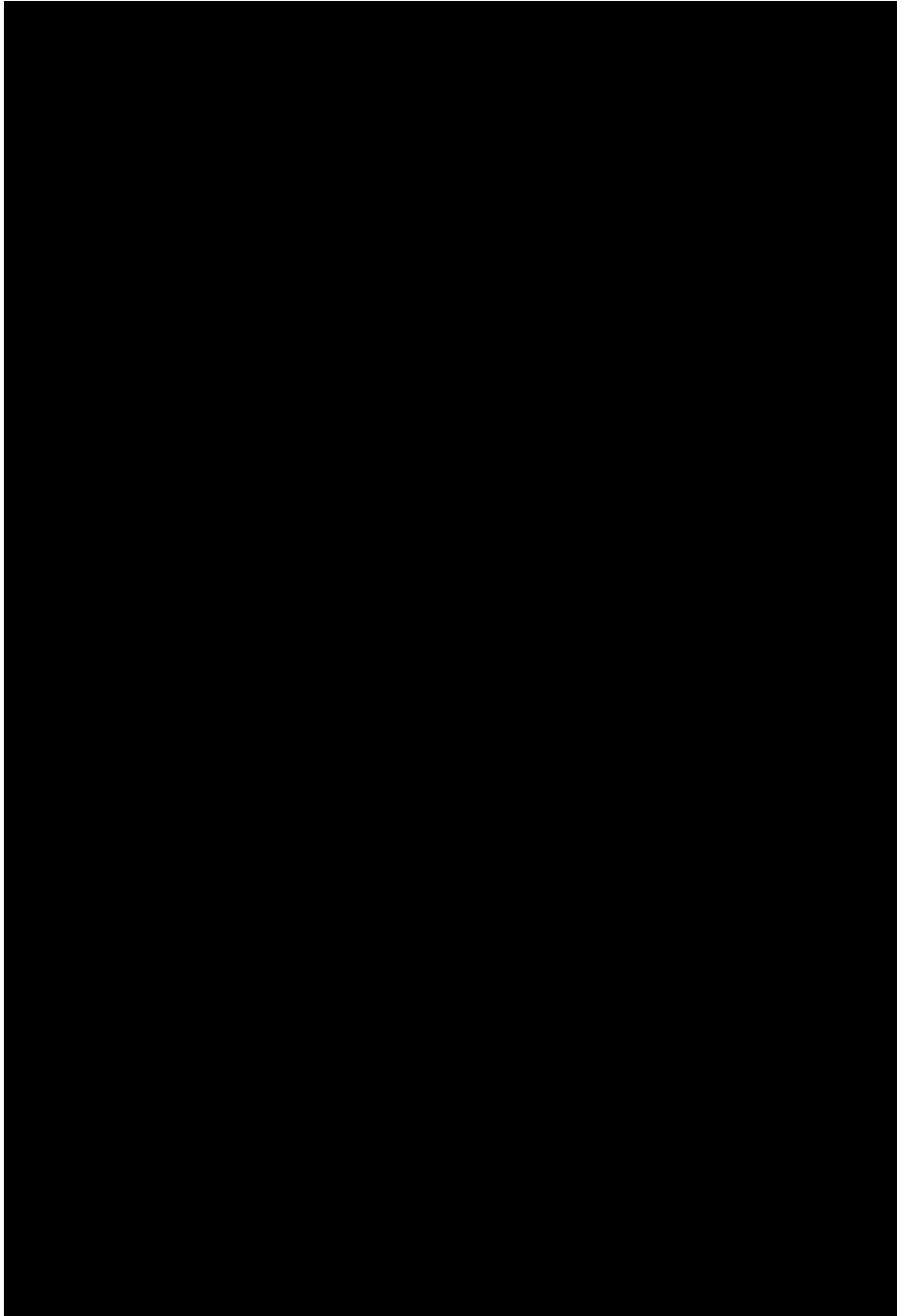


Figure 2 Kitagawa Utamaro, *Toji san bijin (Three Beauties of the Present Day)*, woodblock print; ink and color on paper, 38.7 x 26.2 cm (15.24 x10.31 in), Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, OH.



Figure 3 Emperor Huizong, *Five-colored parakeet on a blossoming apricot tree*, c.1110, ink and color on silk, 53.3 x 125.1 cm (21 x 49¼ in), Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Boston.

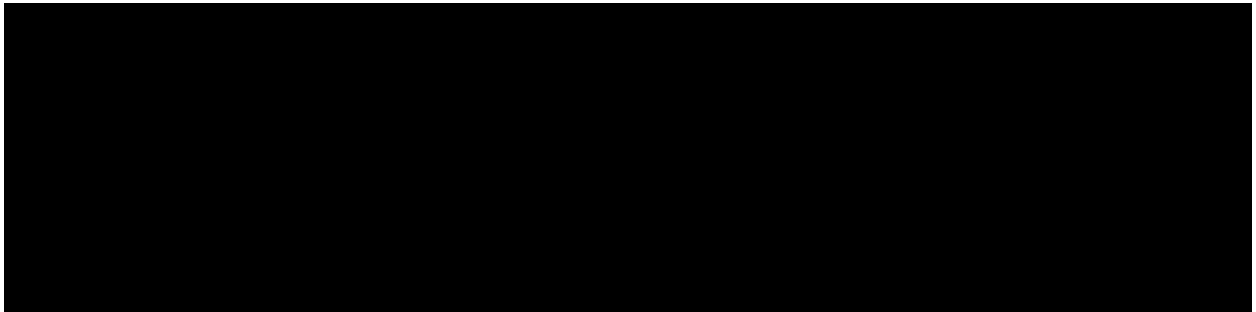


Figure 4. Kanō Sanraku, *Pair of screens with tigers and storm-dragon*, 17th century, pair of six-panel folding screens; ink, colors, gofun, gold and gold leaf on paper, each 1.78 x 3.57 m, Wikimedia Commons, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tigres_et_dragons_par_Kan%C5%8D_Sanraku.jpg



Figure 5 Shiba Kōkan, *Shichirigahama Beach, Kamakura*, ca. 1800, hanging scroll; oil on silk, 47 x 73.7 cm, Museum Yamato Bunkakan, Nara.

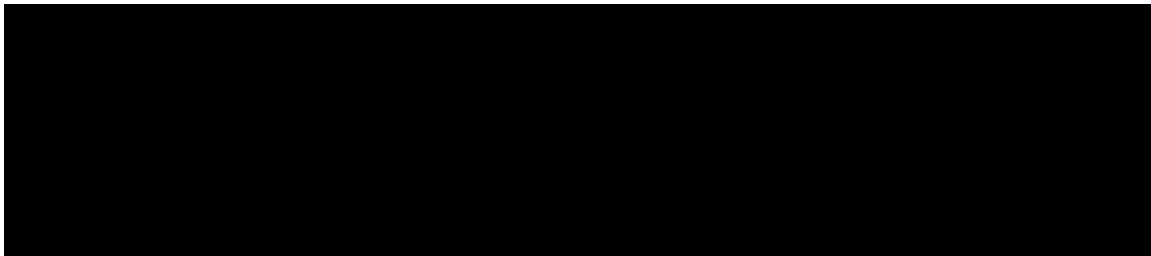


Figure 6 Tawaraya Sōtatsu, *Waves at Matsushima*, 17th century, ink, color, gold, and silver on paper, 152 x 369.9 cm, Freer-Sackler The Smithsonian's Museums of Asian Art, Washington, D.C.

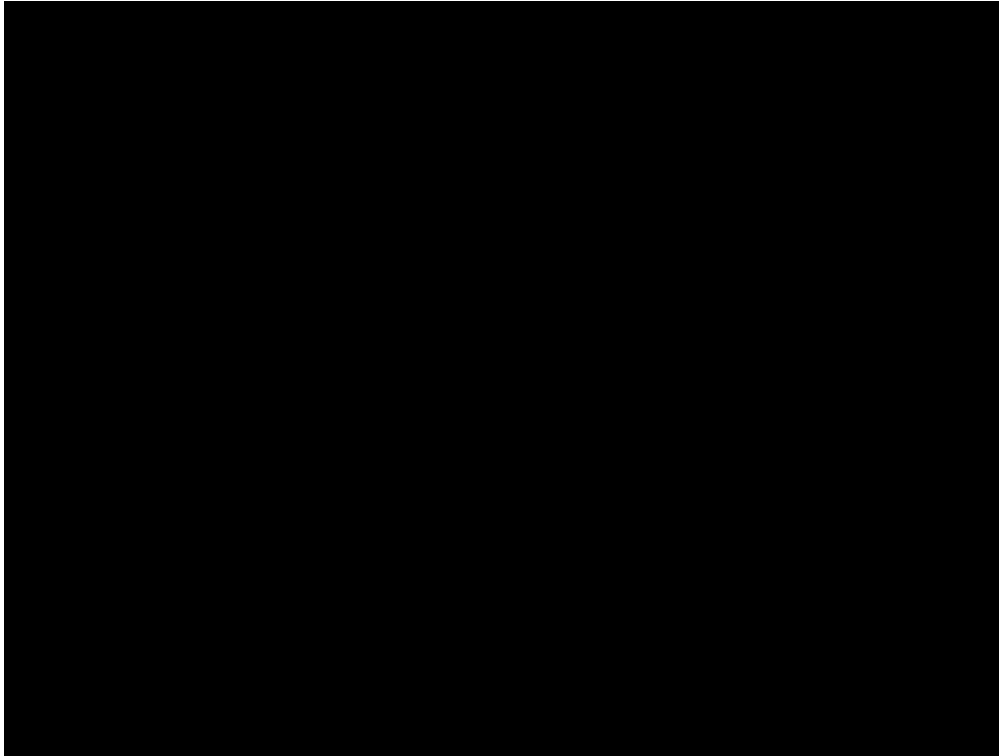


Figure 7 Noël Pluche, *Little Vessel*, from *Schouwtoneel der Natuur*, 1736 edition, Hancock Natural History Collection, University of Southern California, California.

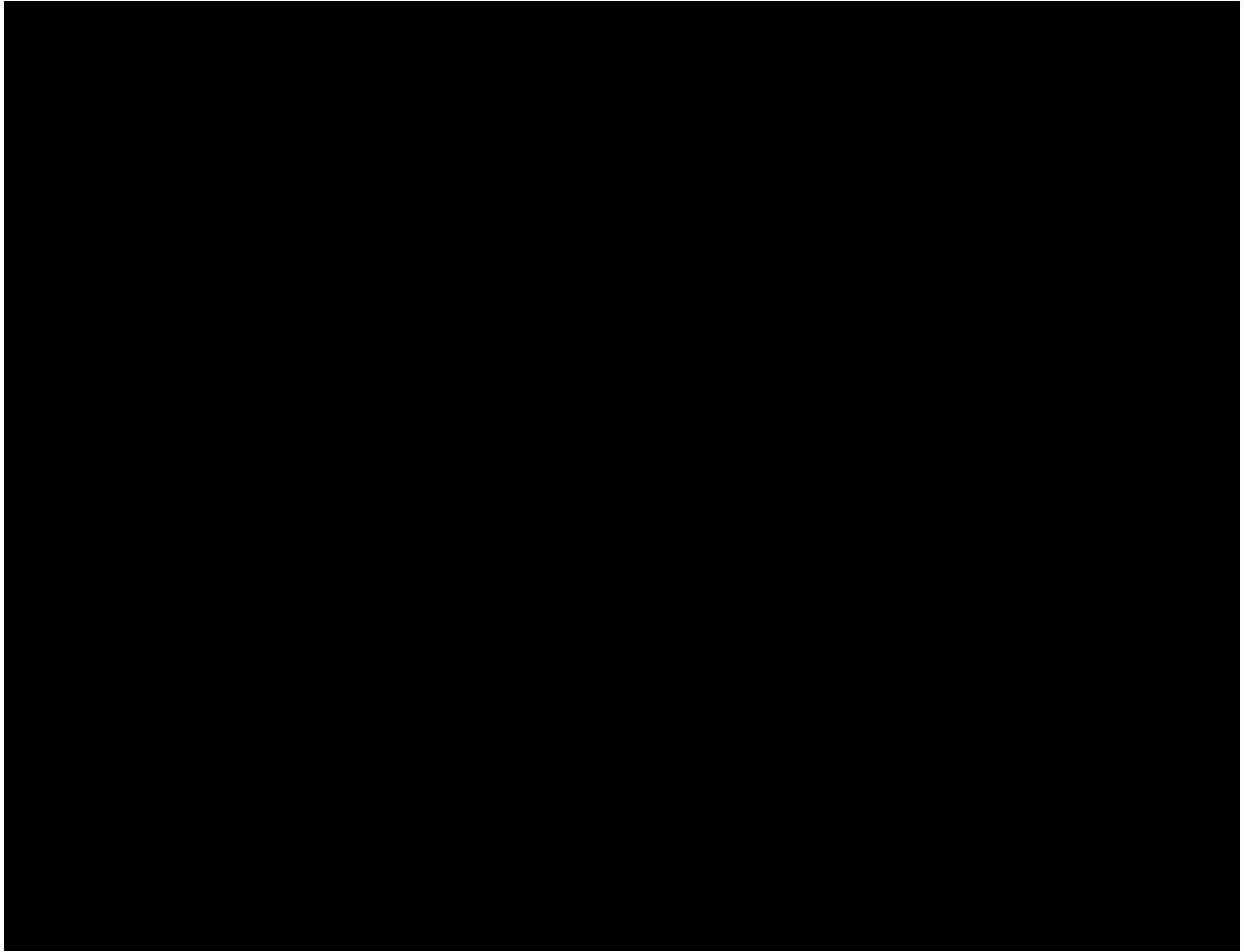


Figure 8. Unsigned (attr. Odano Naotake), *Hinkai kihan-zu* (*Returning Sailboat Along Shinagawa Shore*), hanging scroll, color on silk, 48.5 x 62.0 cm, Private collection.

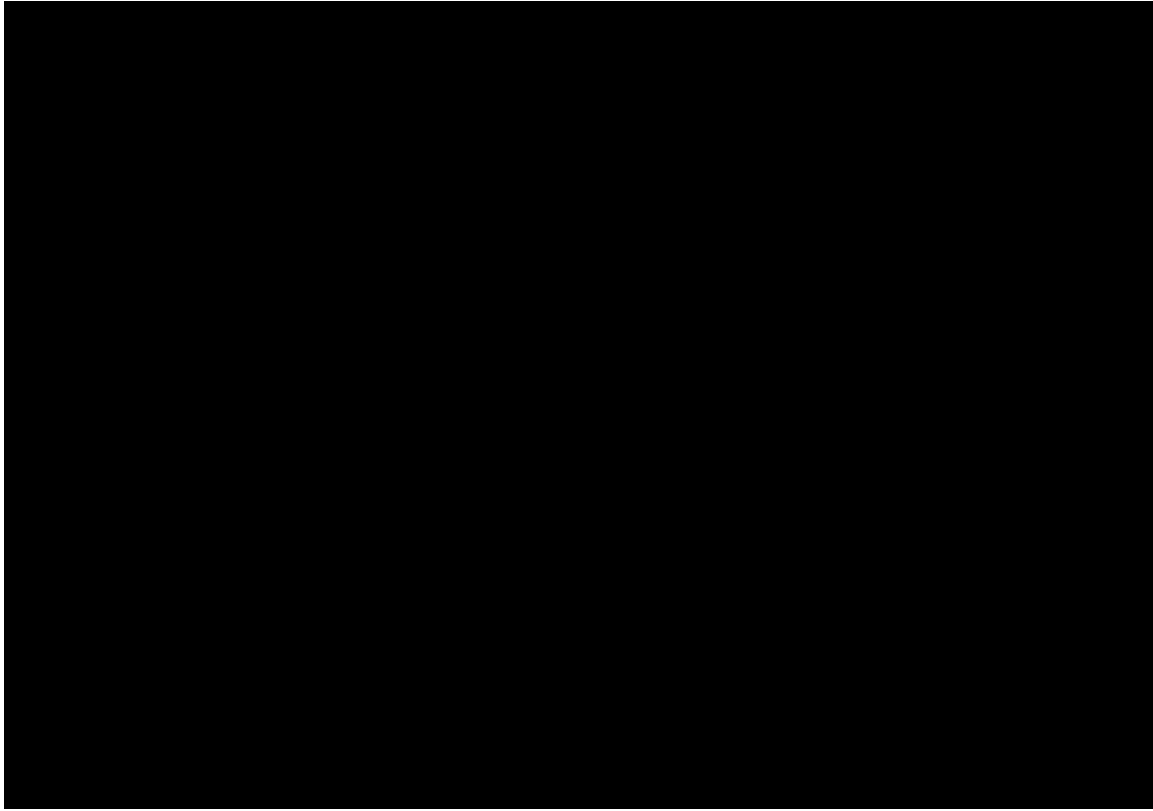


Figure 9 Okumura Masanobu, *Large Perspective Picture of an Eleventh-Month Kyōgen Performance*, 1745, woodblock printed book; ink and color on paper, 43.8 x 65 cm, The British Museum, London.

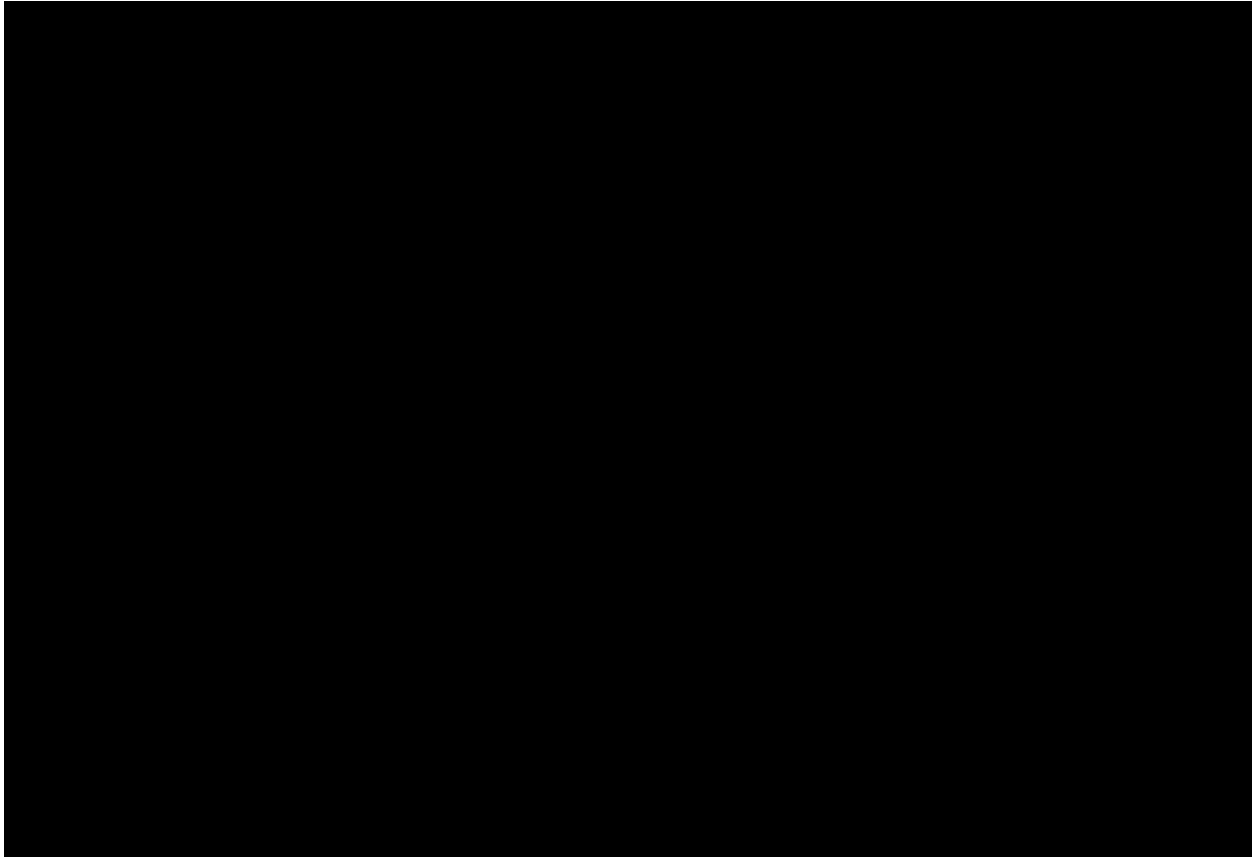


Figure 10 Shiba Kōkan, *View of Mimeguri Shrine (Mimeguri no kei)*, 1783, ink and color on paper, 26.5 x 38.7 cm, National Diet Library, Tokyo.



Figure 11 Shen Quan, *Pine, Plum and Cranes*, 1759, hanging scroll, ink and colour on silk, The Palace Museum, Beijing.

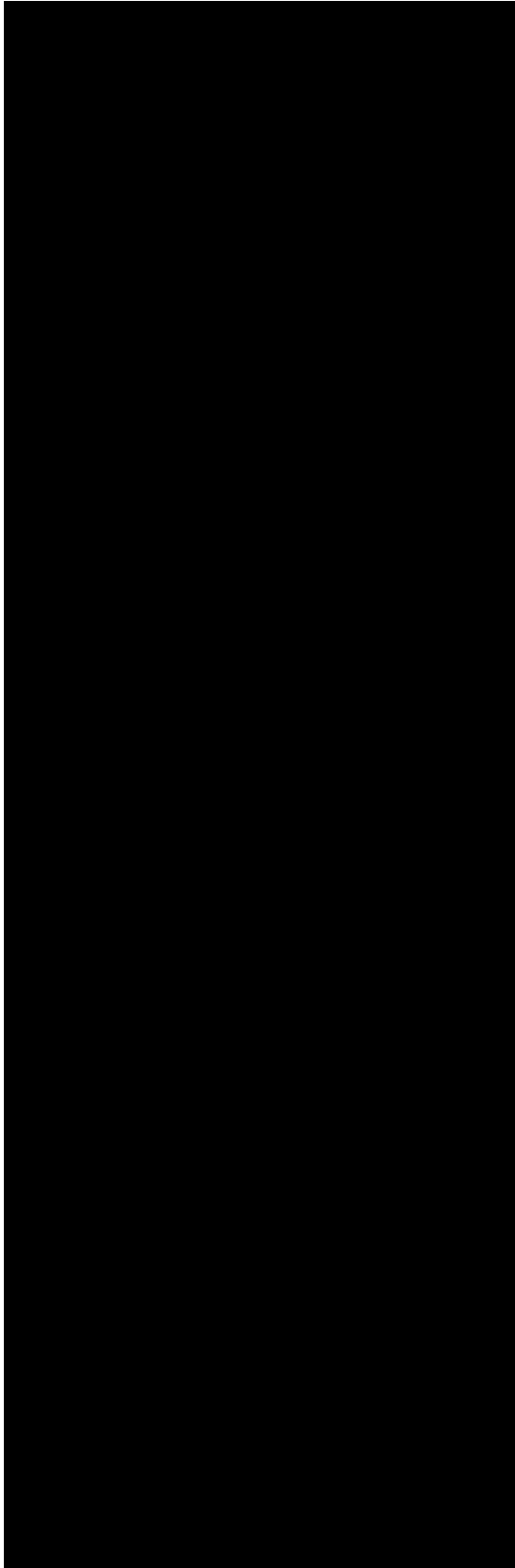


Figure 12 Odano Naotake, *Shishi-zu* (Lion), hanging scroll, colour on silk, 92.5 x 31.5 cm., Private collection.

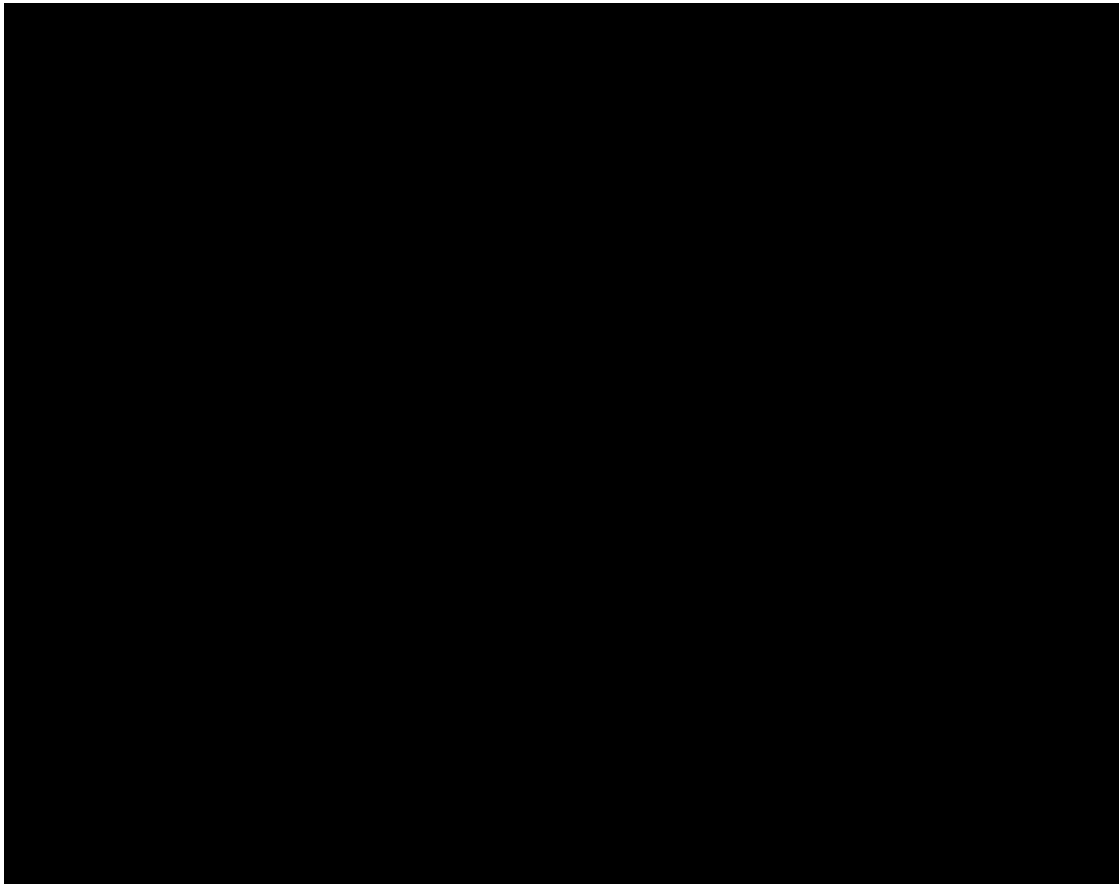


Figure 13 *Lions* from Jan Johnston, *Naeukeurige Beschryving van de Natuur der Vier-voetige Dieren, Vissen en Bloedlooze Water-Dieren, Vogelen, Kronkel Dieren, Slangen en Draken*. Hancock Natural History Collection University of Southern California, California.

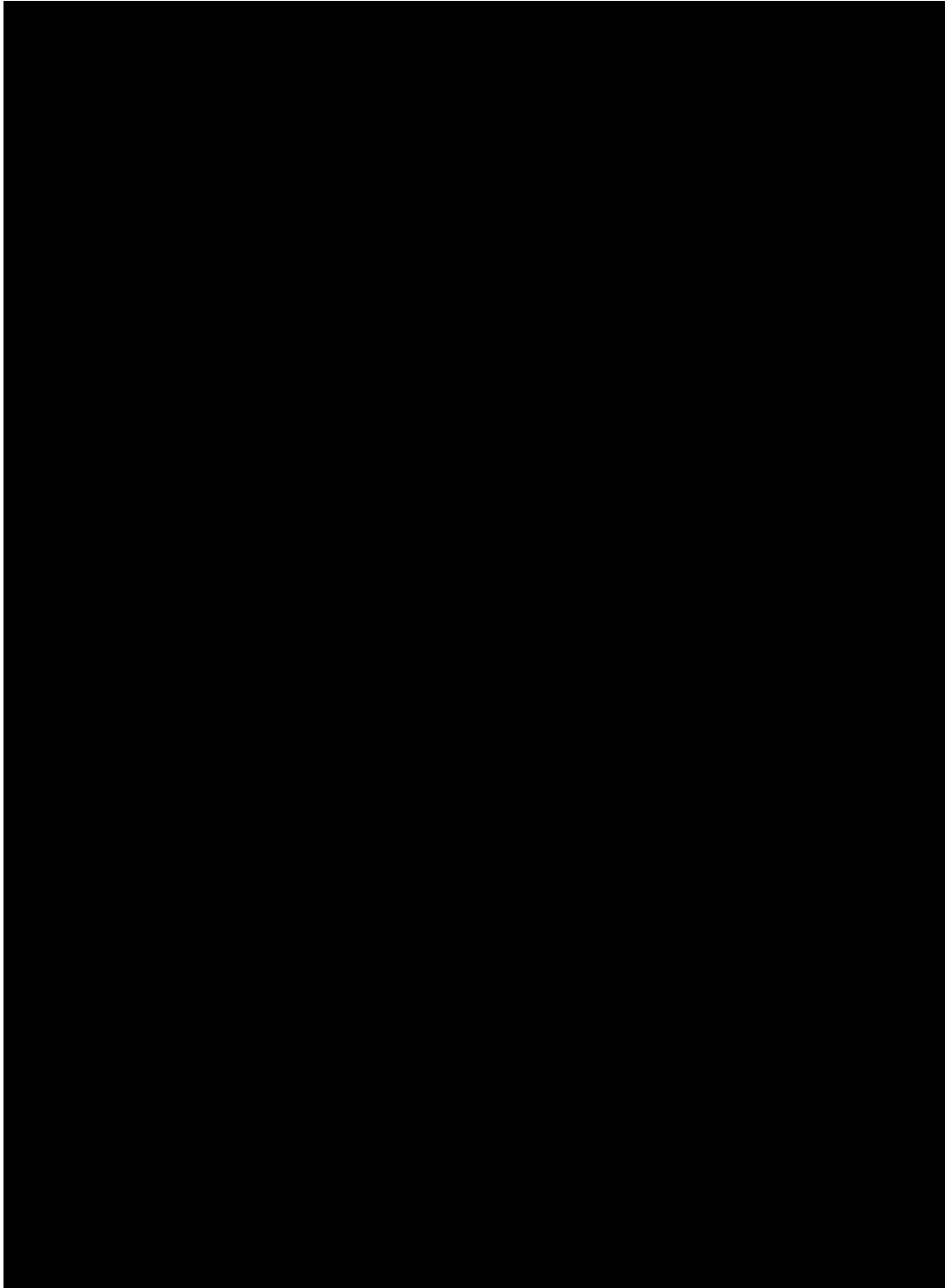


Figure 14 Hiraga Gennai, *Woman*, c. 1760, Wikimedia Commons
<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hiraga_Gennai_Frau_r.jpg>

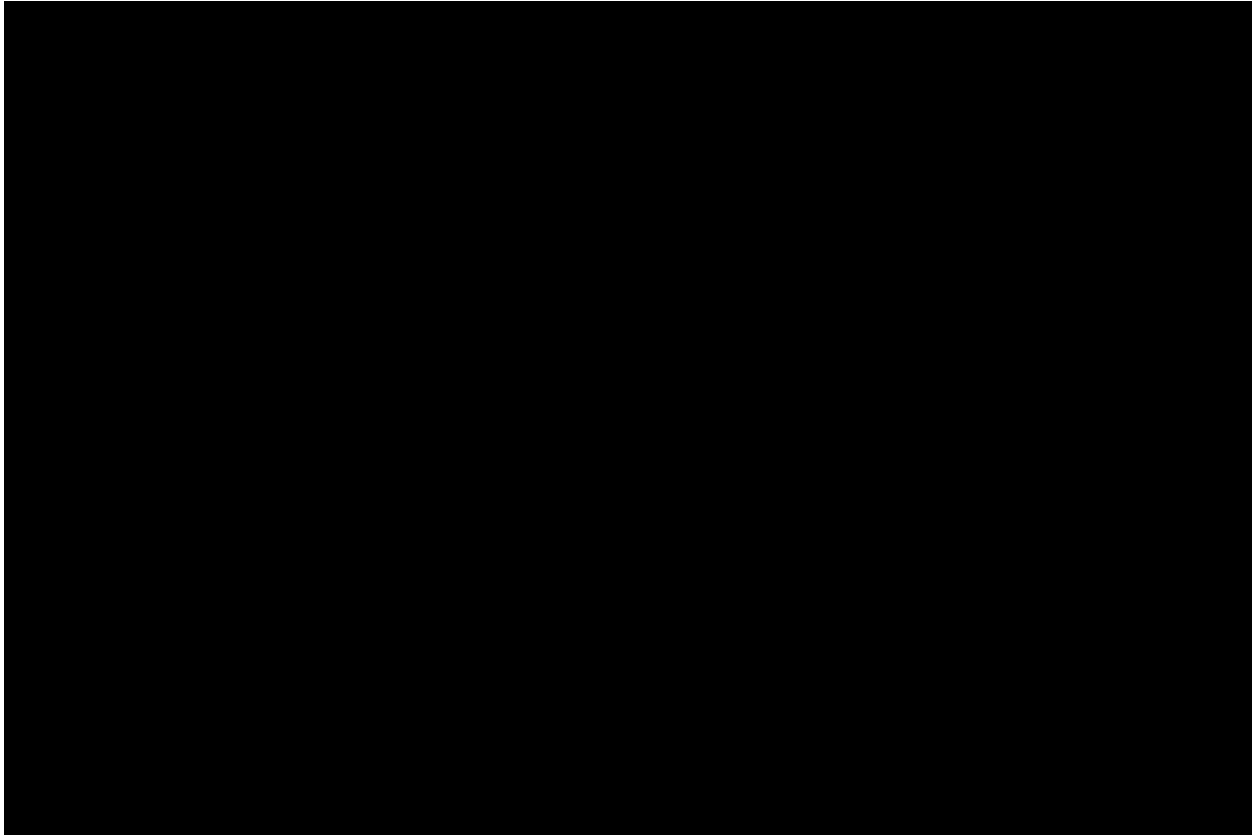


Figure 15 Utamaro Kitagawa, Wasps and caterpillar from *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures* (*Ehon mushi erami*), 1788, woodblock printed book; ink, color, and mica on paper, 25.1 x 18.2 cm (9 7/8 x 7 3/16 in.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

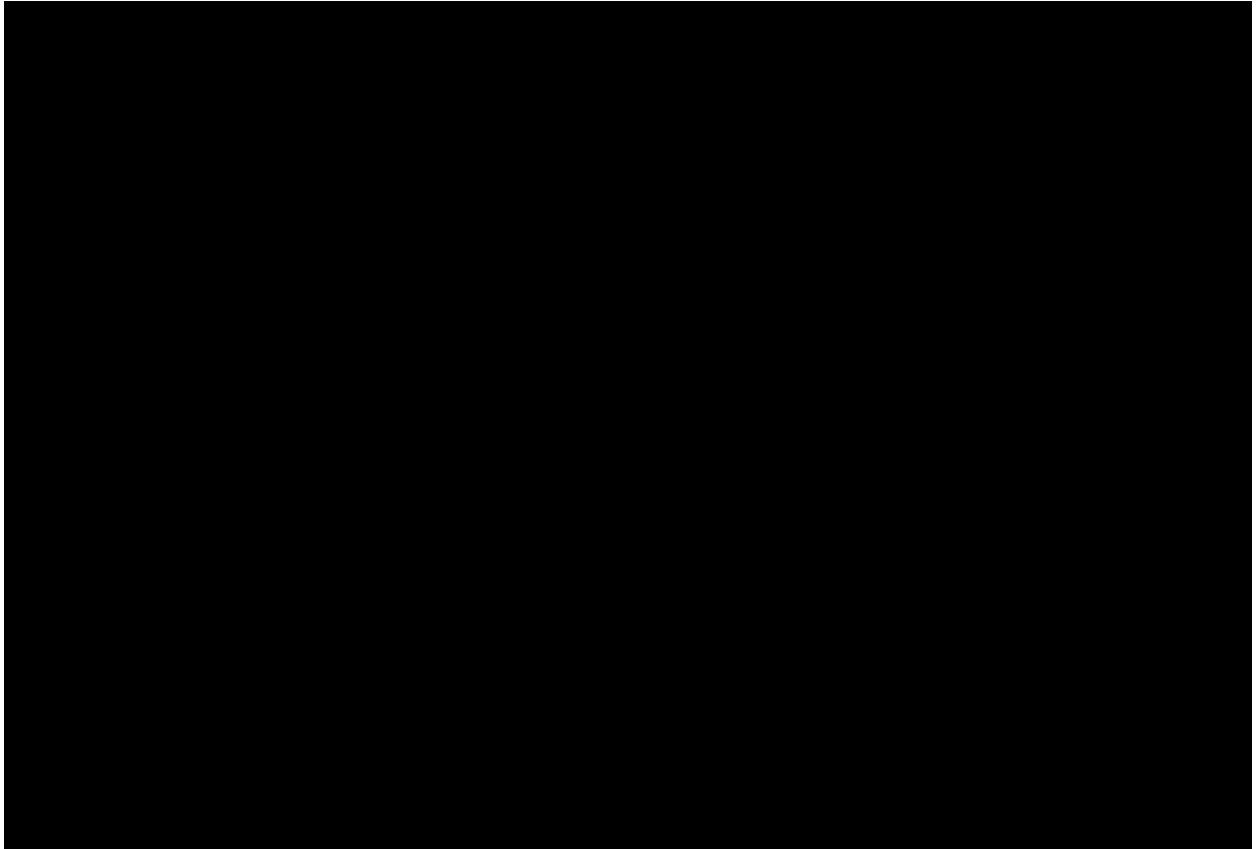


Figure 16 Utamaro Kitagawa, Rooster, chicken, and meadow bunting from *Myriad Birds* (*Momochidori*), 1790, woodblock printed book; ink, color, and mica on paper, 25.1 x 18.2 cm (9 7/8 x 7 3/16 in.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

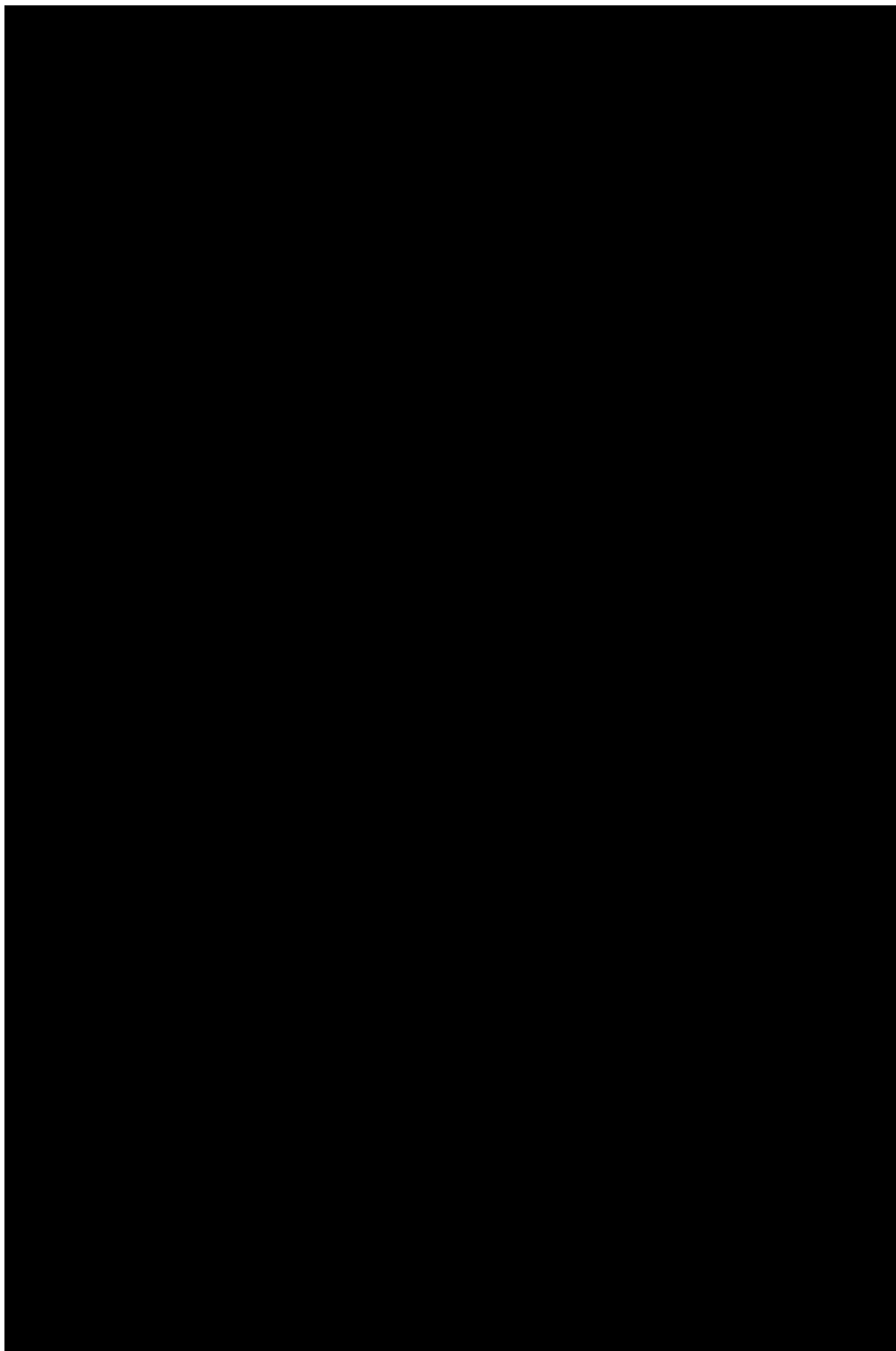


Figure 17 Noël Antoine Pluche, *Schouwtoneel der Natuur*, 1737, ink on paper, Indiana University Bloomington: Lilly Library, Bloomington.

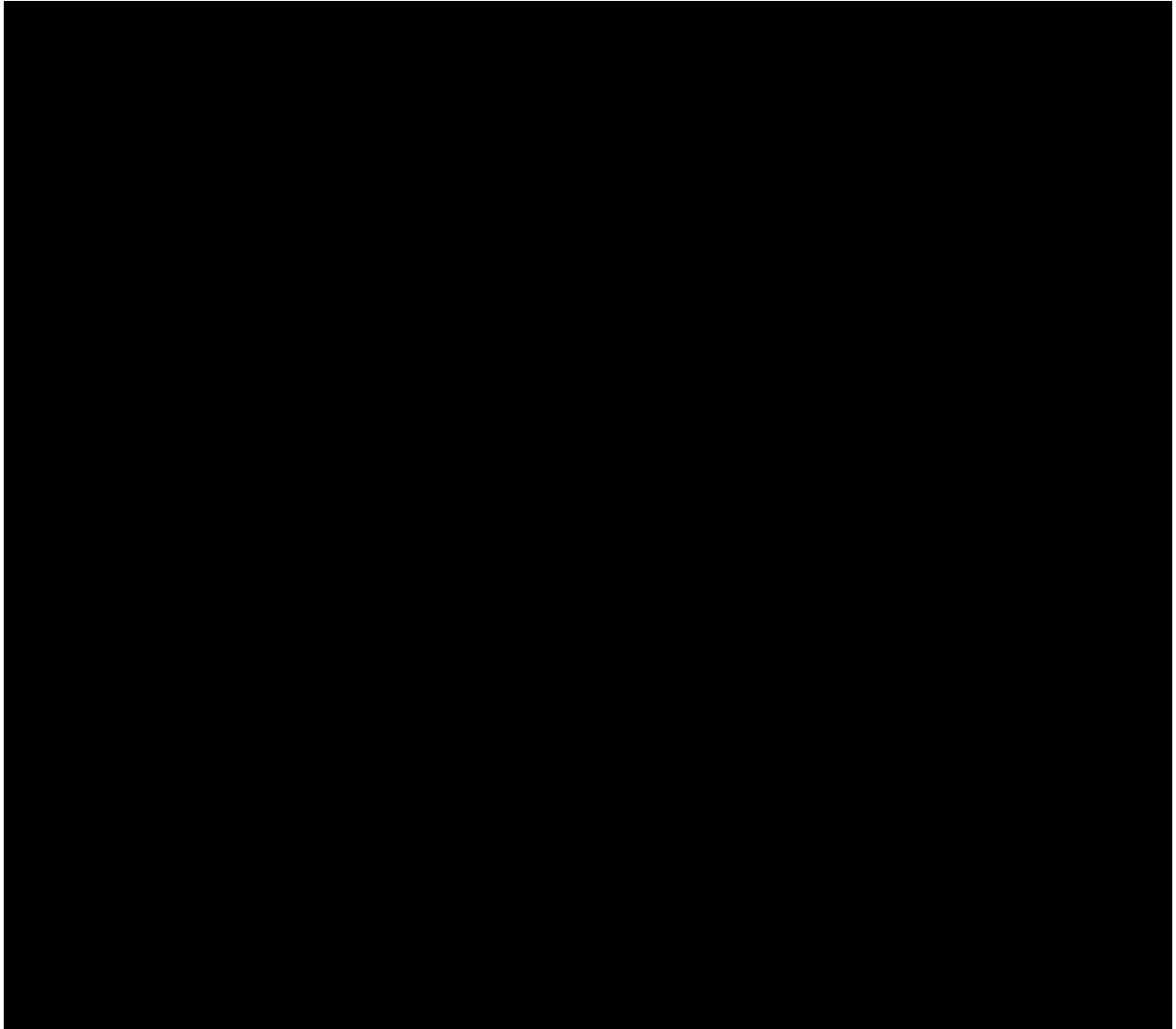


Figure 18 Utamaro Kitagawa, Detail of wasps from *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures* (*Ehon mushi erami*), 1788, woodblock printed book; ink, color, and mica on paper, 25.1 x 18.2 cm (9 7/8 x 7 3/16 in.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

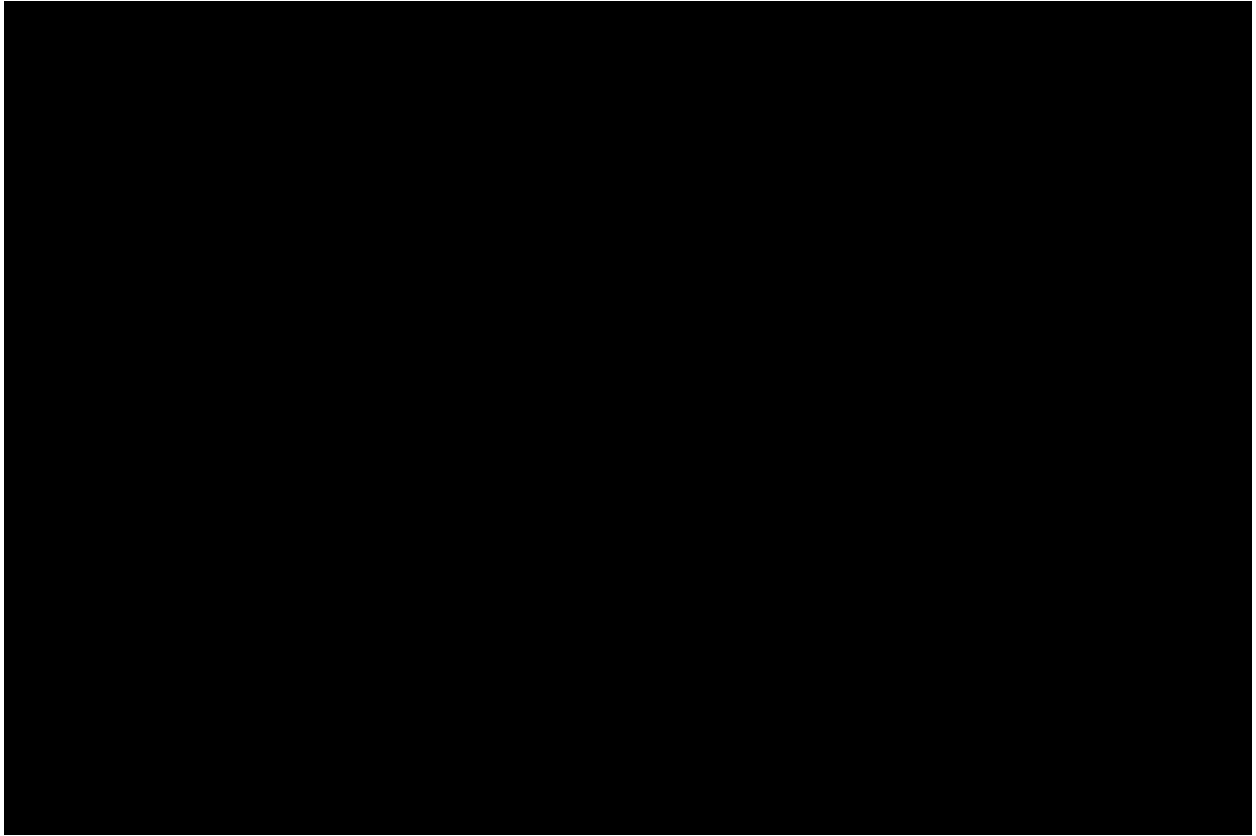


Figure 19 Utamaro Kitagawa, Earwig and mole cricket from *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures* (*Ehon mushi erami*), 1788, woodblock printed book; ink, color, and mica on paper, 25.1 x 18.2 cm (9 7/8 x 7 3/16 in.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figure 20 Utamaro Kitagawa, Spider and cicada from *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures* (*Ehon mushi erami*), 1788, woodblock printed book; ink, color, and mica on paper, 25.1 x 18.2 cm (9 7/8 x 7 3/16 in.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

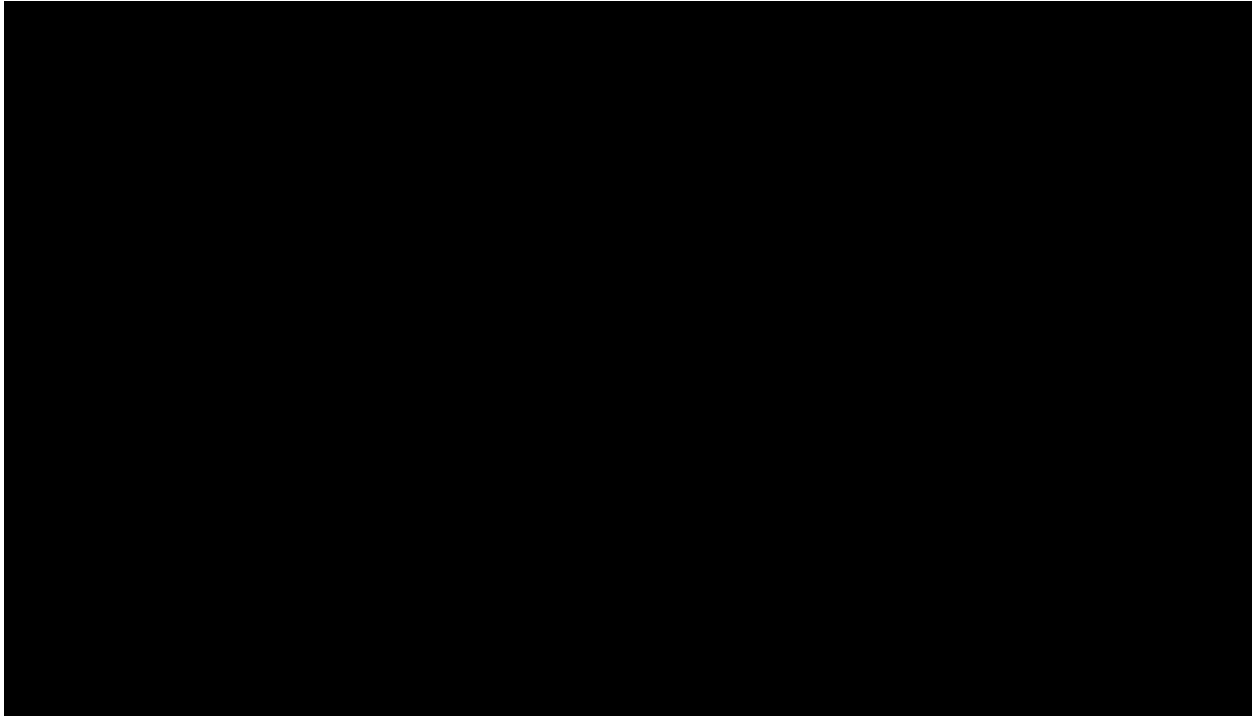


Figure 21 Detail of beach scene from *Gifts of the Ebb Tide* (*Shiohi no tsuto*), 1789, woodblock printed book; ink, color, and mica on paper, 25.1 x 18.2 cm (9 7/8 x 7 3/16 in.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

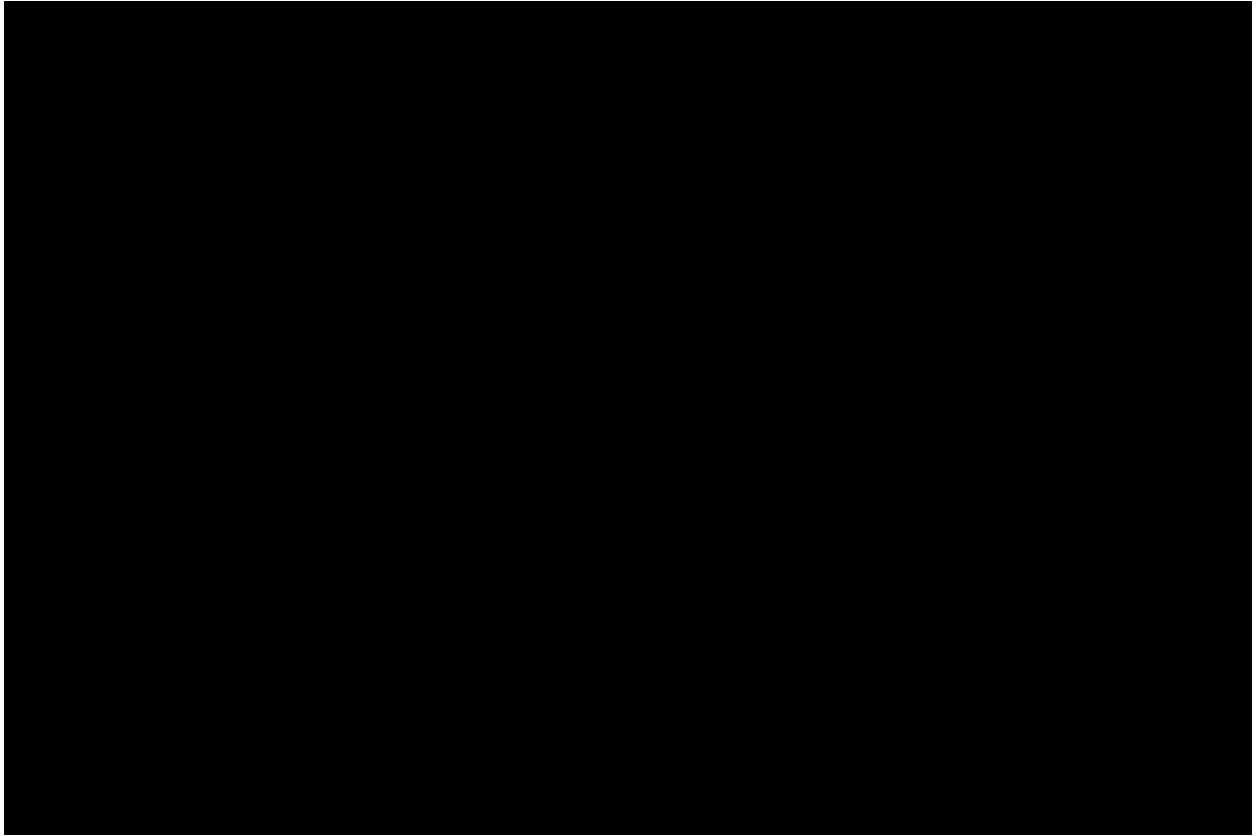


Figure 22 Utamaro Kitagawa, Conch shells and seaweed from *Gifts of the Ebb Tide* (*Shiohi no tsuto*), 1789, woodblock printed book; ink, color, and mica on paper, 25.1 x 18.2 cm (9 7/8 x 7 3/16 in.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

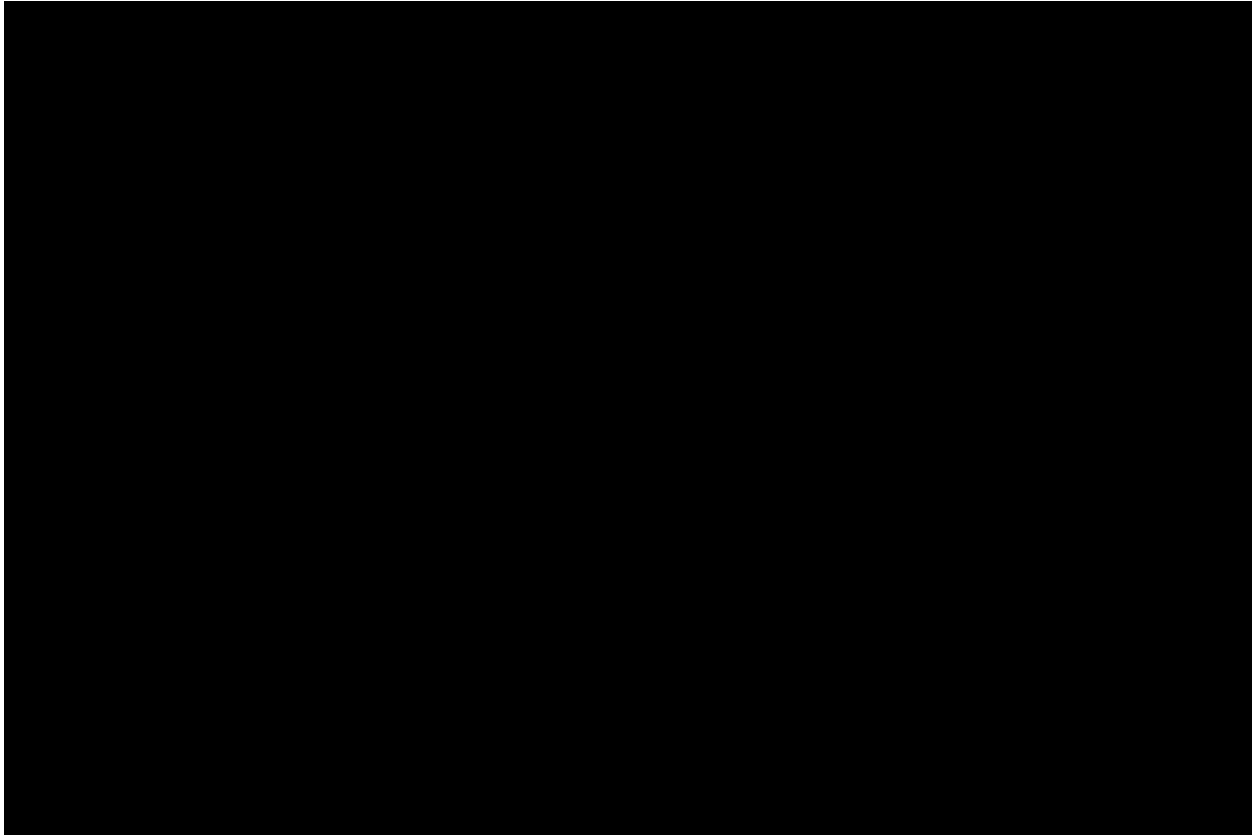


Figure 23 Utamaro Kitagawa, Abalone shell and seaweed from *Gifts of the Ebb Tide* (*Shiohi no tsuto*), 1789, woodblock printed book; ink, color, and mica on paper, 25.1 x 18.2 cm (9 7/8 x 7 3/16 in.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

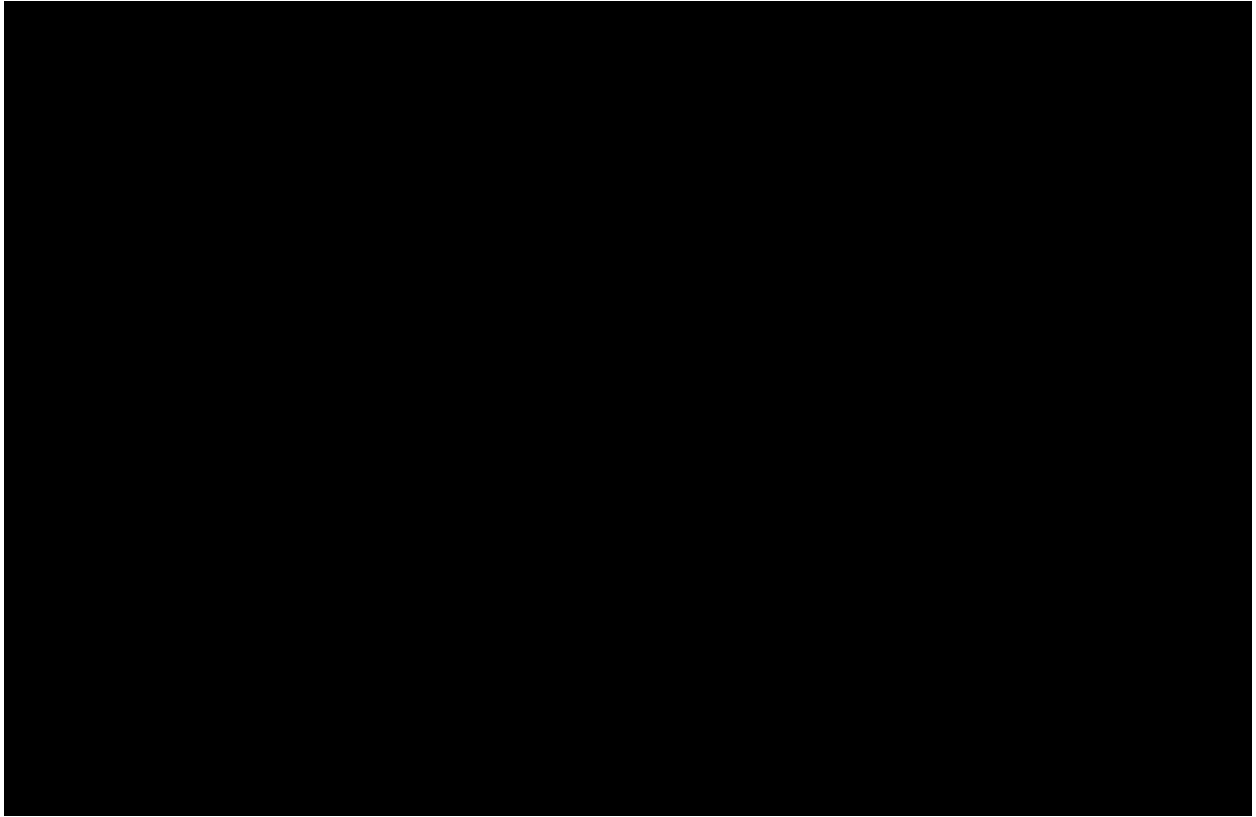


Figure 24 Utamaro Kitagawa, Detail of abalone shell and seaweed from *Gifts of the Ebb Tide* (*Shiohi no tsuto*), 1789, woodblock printed book; ink, color, and mica on paper, 25.1 x 18.2 cm (9 7/8 x 7 3/16 in.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

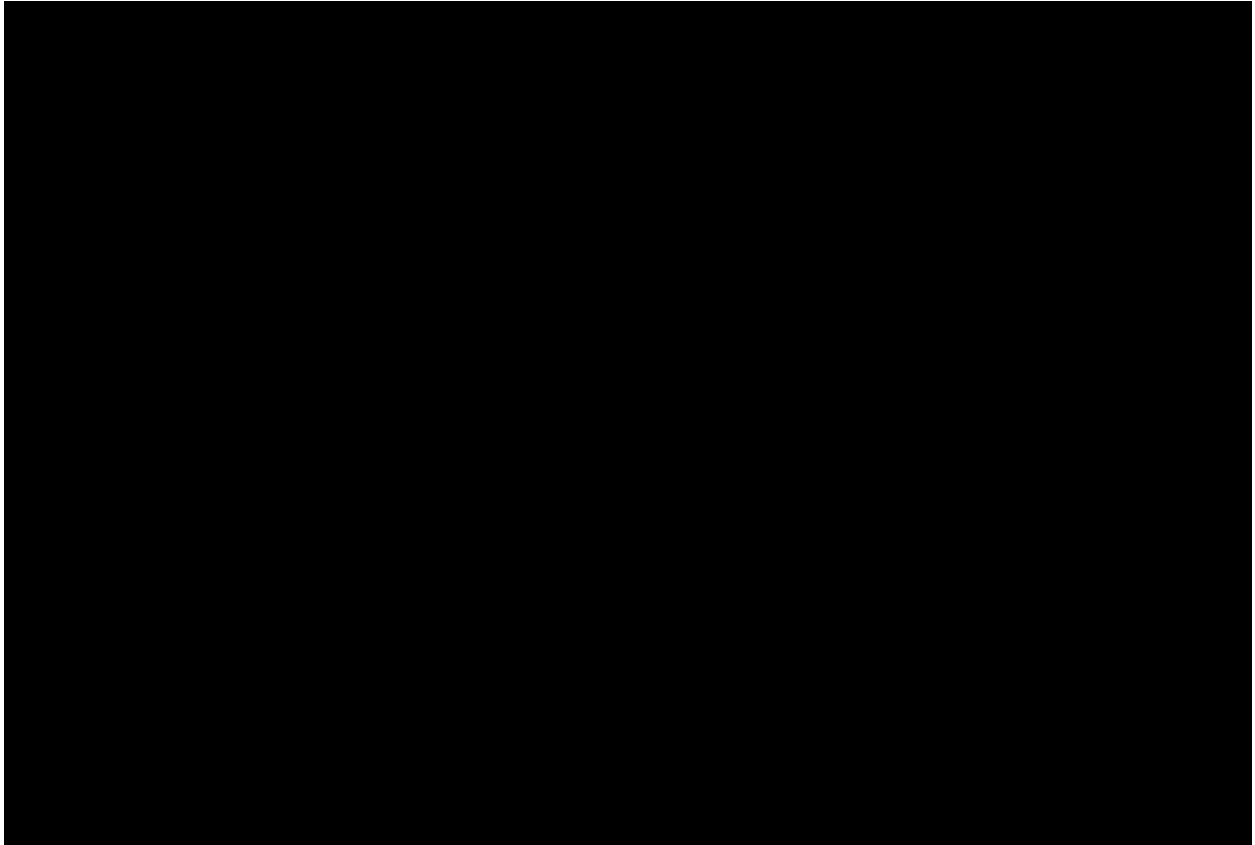


Figure 25 Utamaro Kitagawa, Woodpecker and Japanese grosbeak from *Myriad Birds* (*Momo chidori*), 1790, woodblock printed book; ink, color, and mica on paper, 25.1 x 18.2 cm (9 7/8 x 7 3/16 in.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

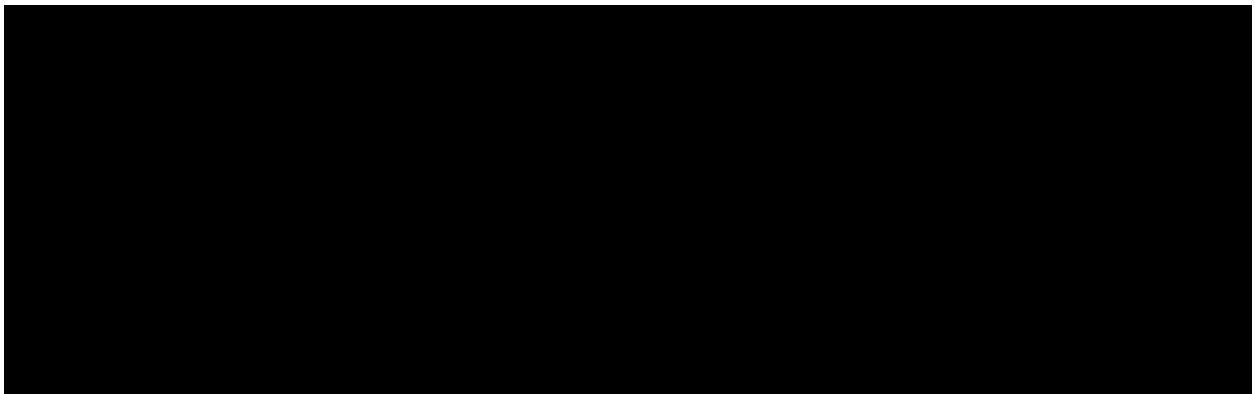


Figure 26 Kanō Eitoku, *Birds and Flowers of the Four Seasons*, ink, colors, gofun, gold and gold leaf on paper, Wikimedia Commons,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kan%C5%8D_school#mediaviewer/File:Birds_and_flowers_of_the_four_seasons.jpg

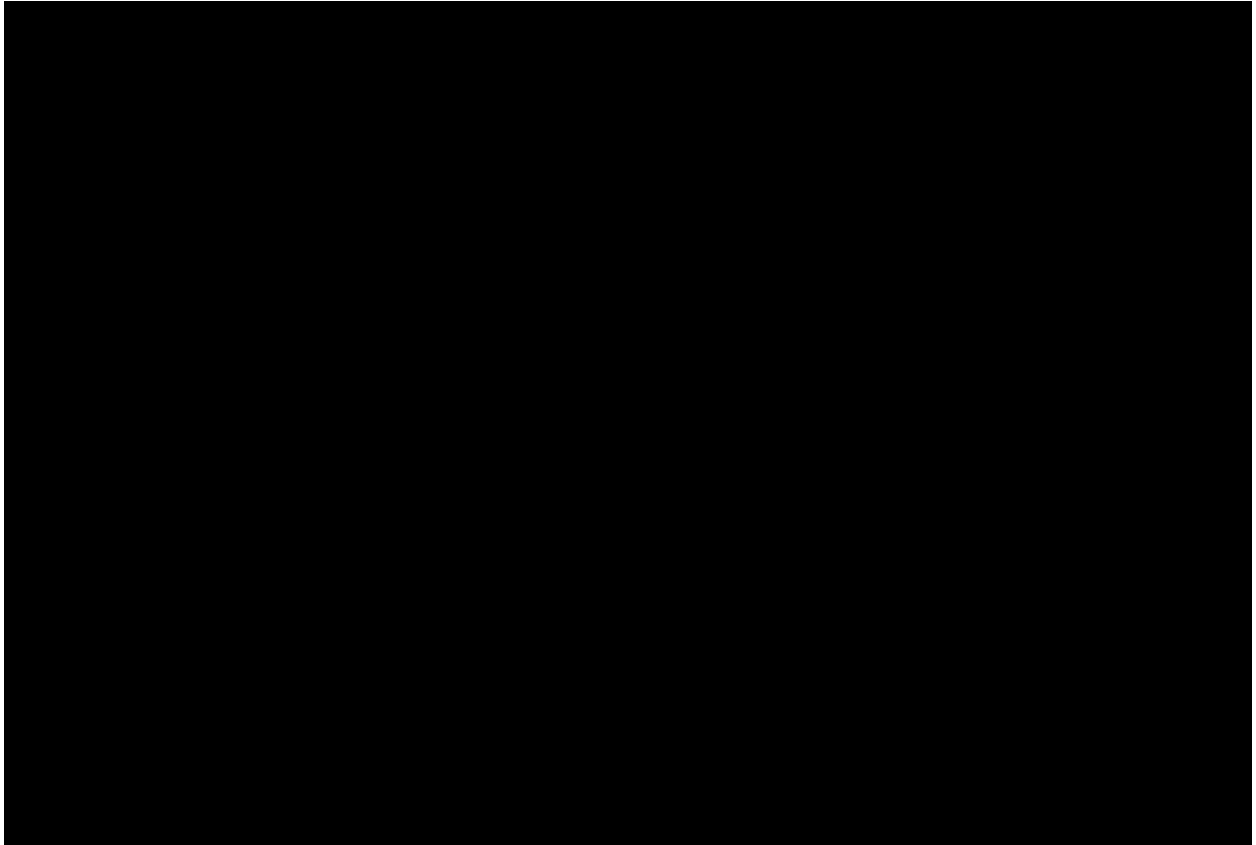


Figure 27 Utamaro Kitagawa, Wren and snipes from *Myriad Birds* (*Momo chidori*), 1790, woodblock printed book; ink, color, and mica on paper, 25.1 x 18.2 cm (9 7/8 x 7 3/16 in.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

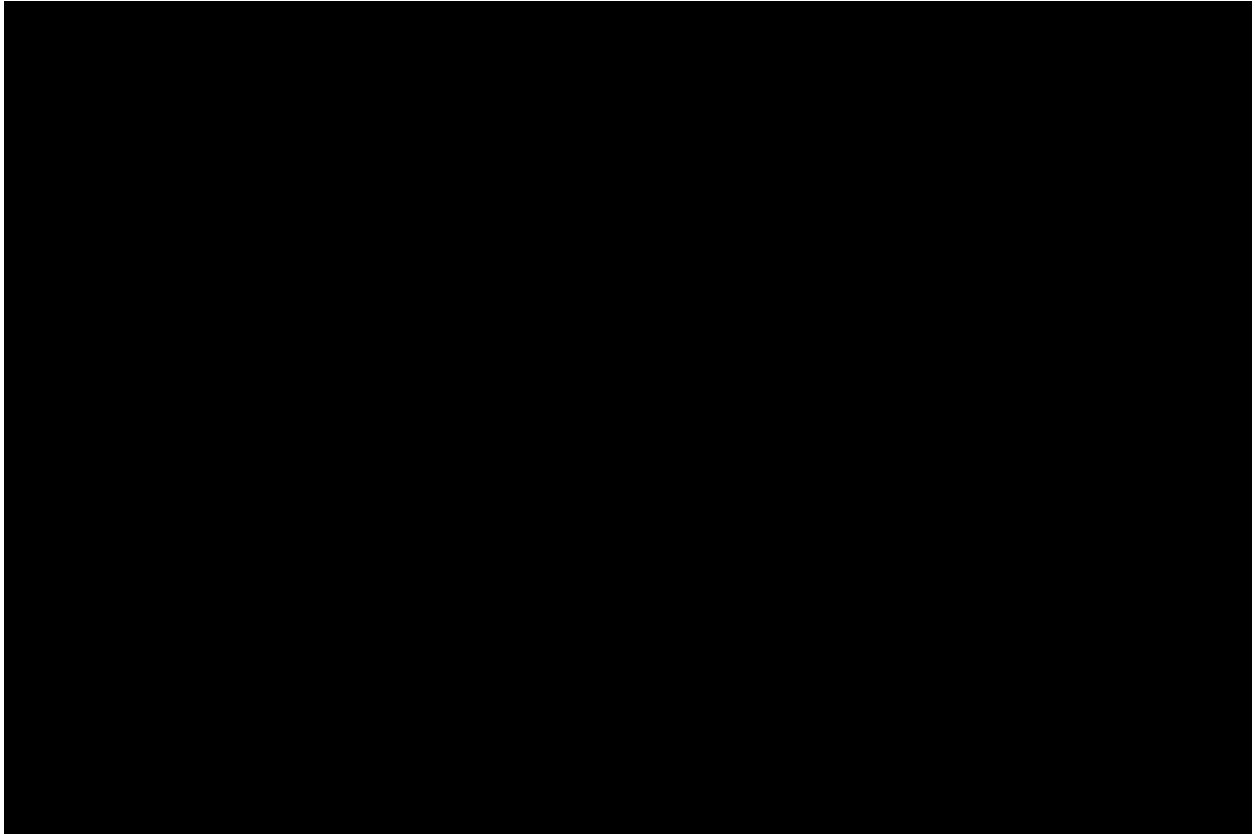


Figure 28 Utamaro Kitagawa, Copper pheasants and wagtail from *Myriad Birds* (*Momo chidori*), 1790, woodblock printed book; ink, color, and mica on paper, 25.1 x 18.2 cm (9 7/8 x 7 3/16 in.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

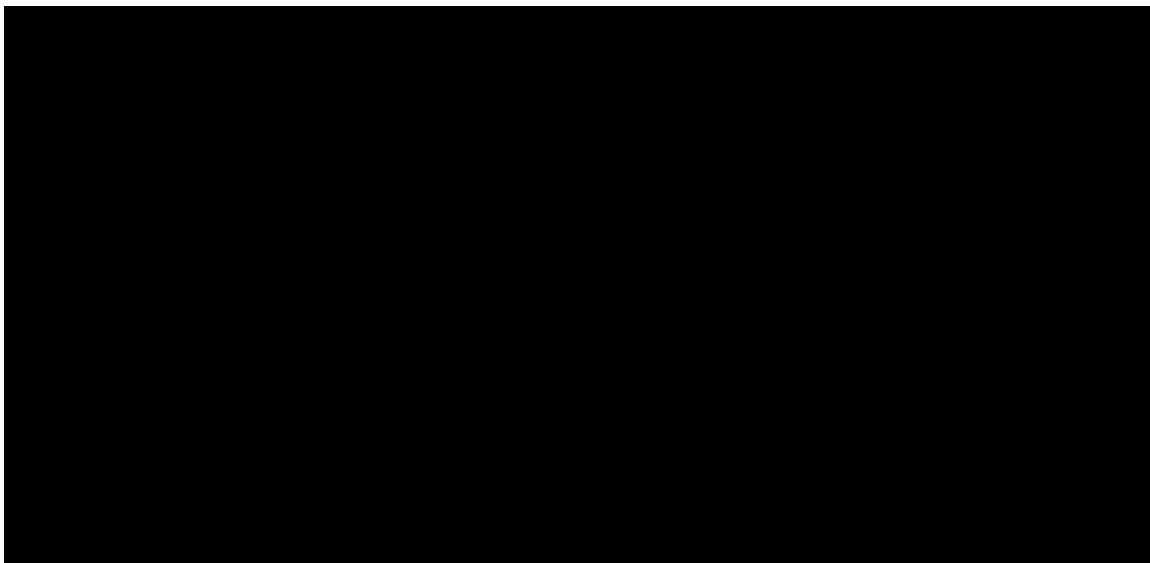


Figure 29 Kanō school, *Roosters and Chickens in a Bamboo Grove*, 17th Century, pair of six-panel folding screens; ink, colors, gofun, gold and gold leaf on paper, 339 x 164.5 cm (133.5 x 64.8 in.), Erik Thomsen, New York.

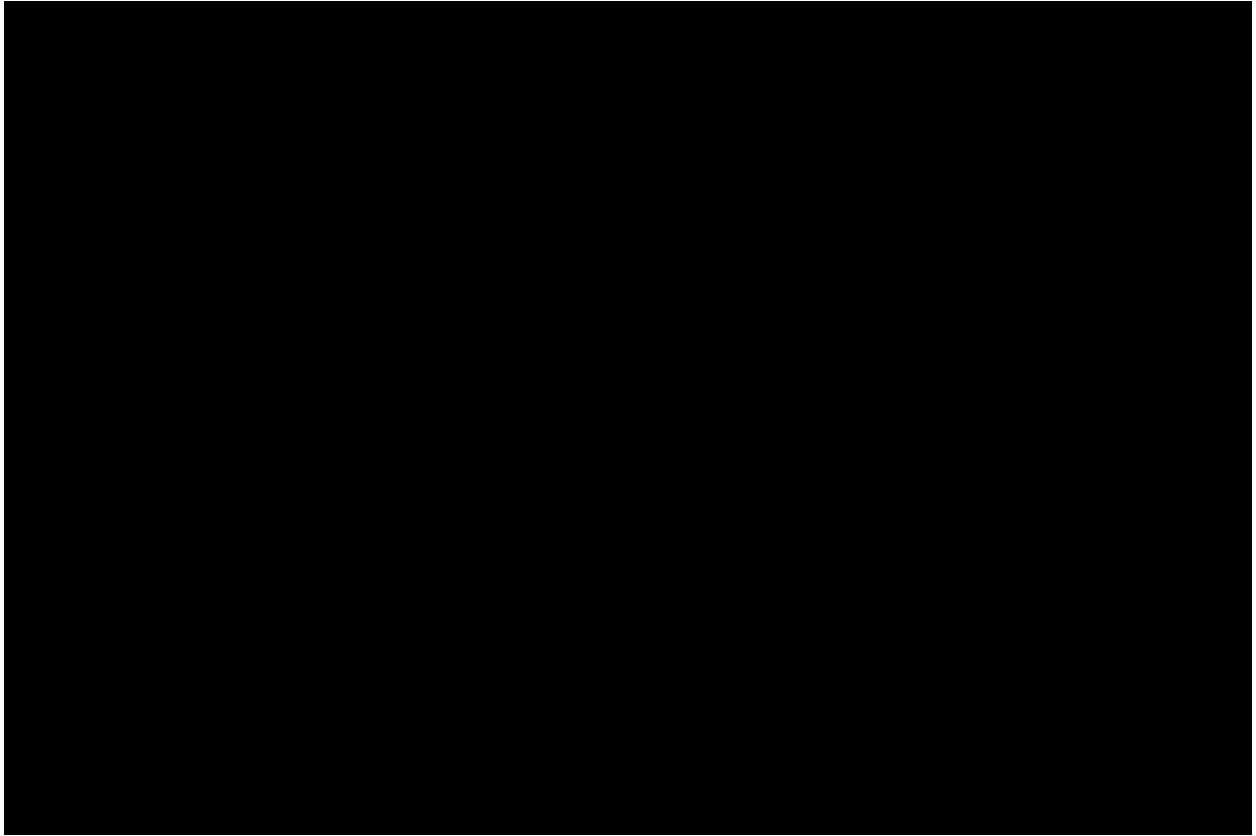


Figure 30 Utamaro Kitagawa, Dragonfly, butterflies, and peonies from *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures* (*Ehon mushi erami*), 1788, woodblock printed book; ink, color, and mica on paper, 25.1 x 18.2 cm (9 7/8 x 7 3/16 in.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

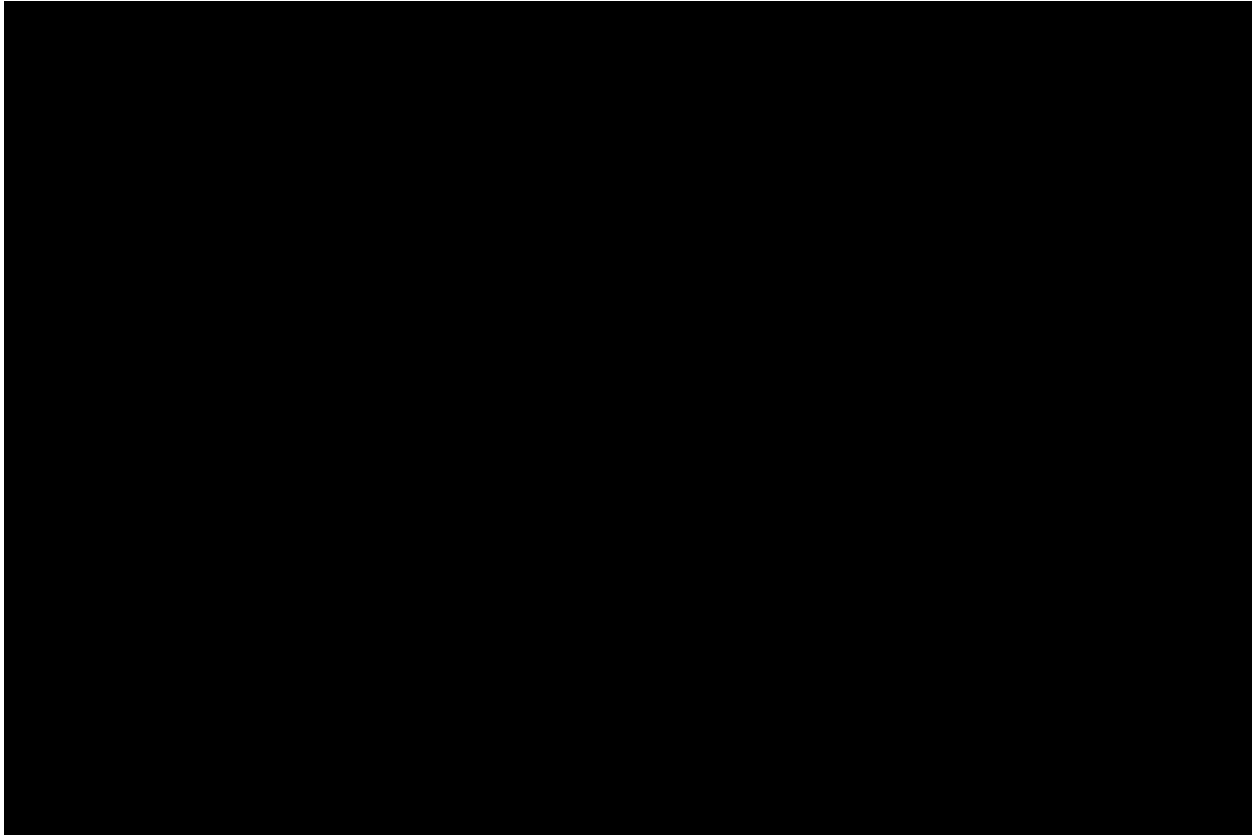


Figure 31 Utamaro Kitagawa, Lightning bugs and tree cricket from *Picture Book of Crawling Creatures* (*Ehon mushi erami*), 1788, woodblock printed book; ink, color, and mica on paper, 25.1 x 18.2 cm (9 7/8 x 7 3/16 in.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

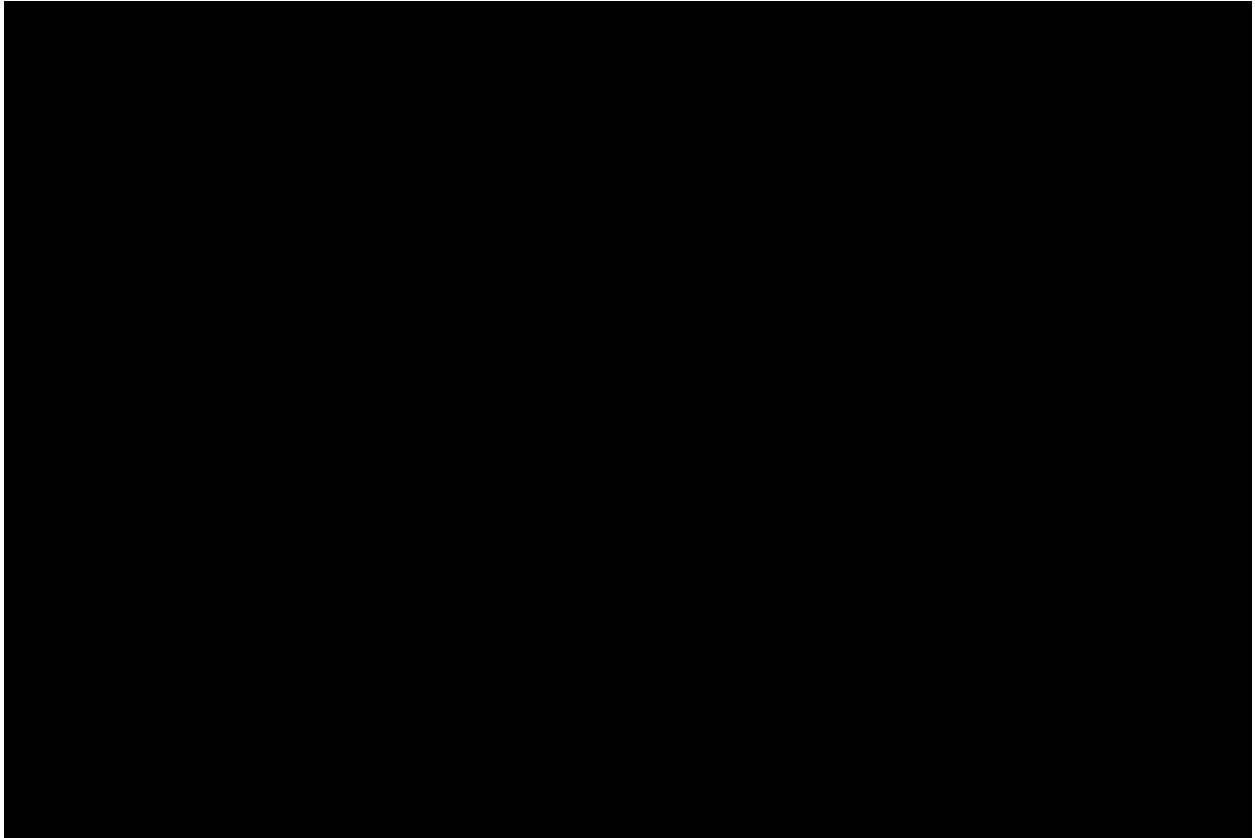


Figure 32 Utamaro Kitagawa, Penduline tit and Japanese bush warbler from *Myriad Birds* (*Momo chidori*), 1790, woodblock printed book; ink, color, and mica on paper, 25.1 x 18.2 cm (9 7/8 x 7 3/16 in.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figure 33 Noël Antoine Pluche, *Schouwtoneel der Natuur*, 1737, ink on paper, Indiana University Bloomington: Lilly Library.

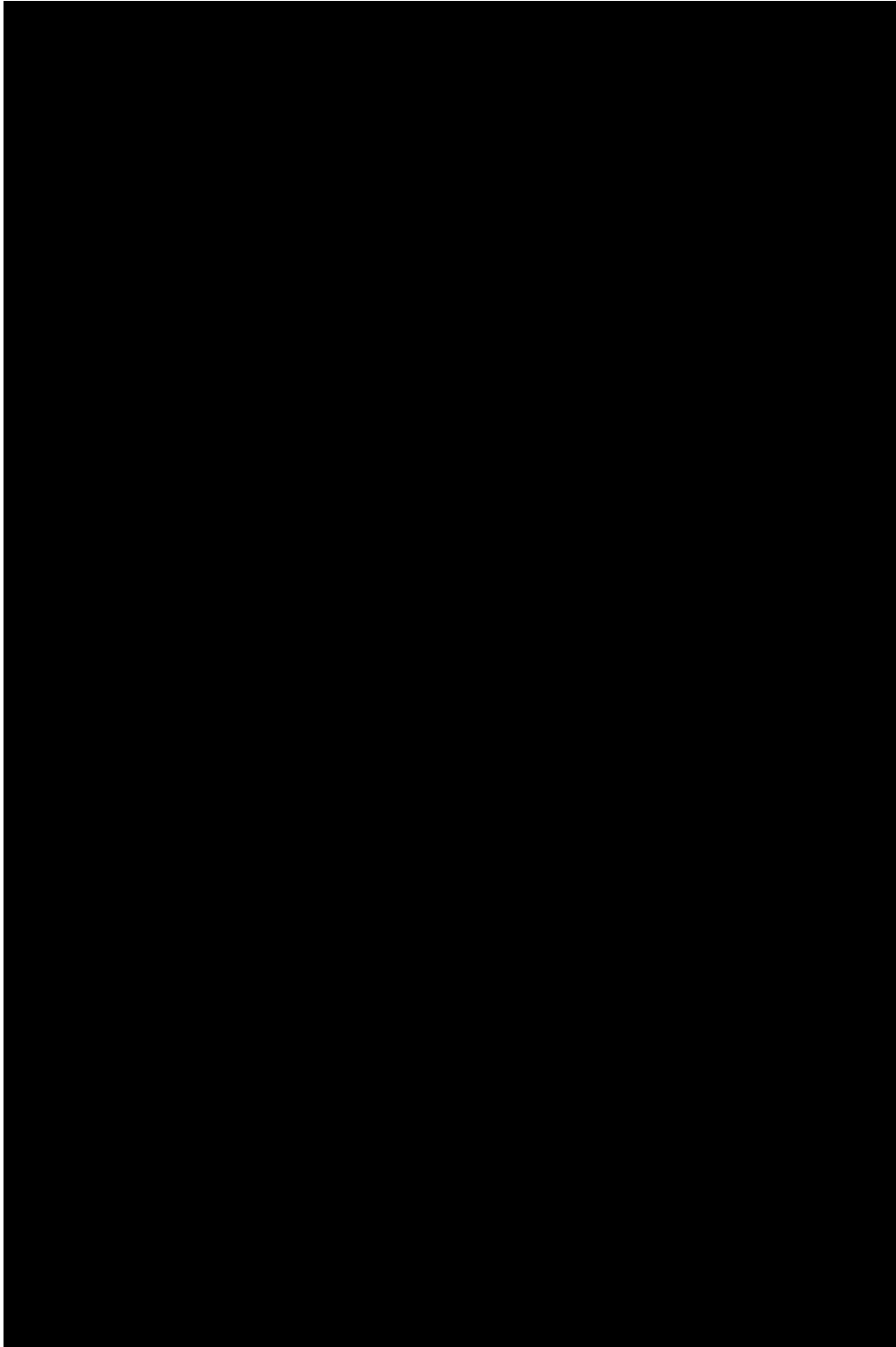


Figure 34 Noël Antoine Pluche, *Schouwtoneel der Natuur*, 1737, ink on paper, Indiana University Bloomington: Lilly Library.

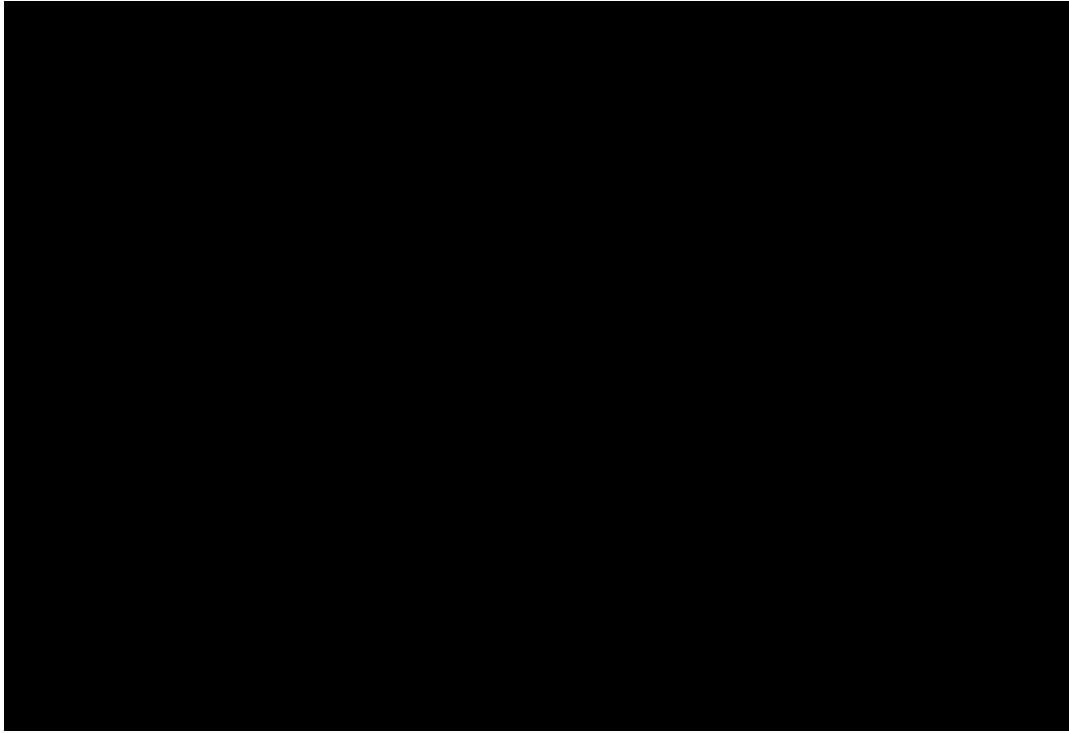


Figure 35 Anonymous, *The Shell Screen*, 1798, woodblock print; ink and color on paper, 136 x 200 cm, Hotei, gift of J.H.W. Goslings.

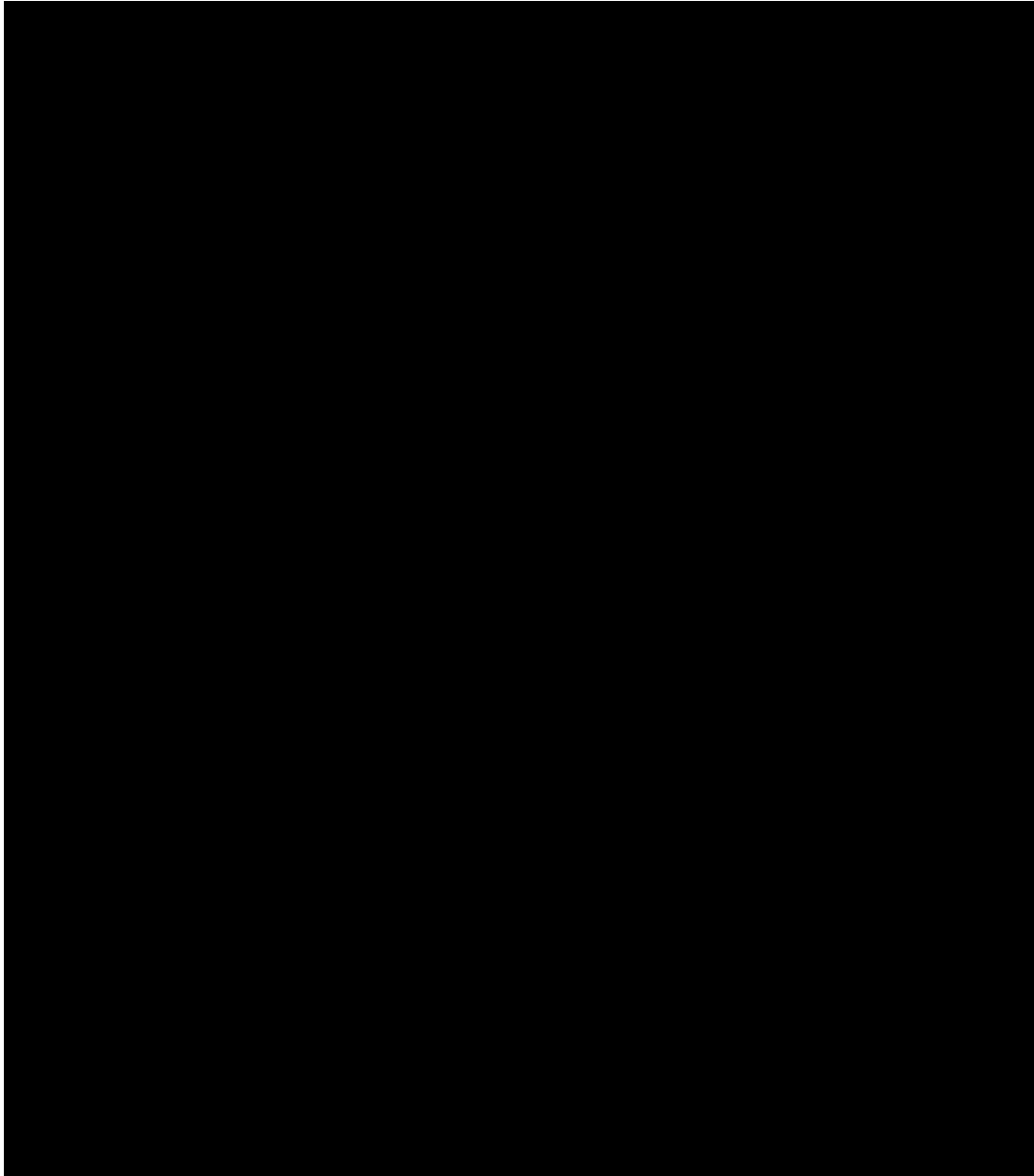


Figure 36 Toyota Hokkei, *A set of shells (Kaitsukushi)*, 1821, woodblock print; ink and color on paper, 206 x 182 cm, W.J.G. van Meurs; bequest J.A. Bierens de Haan.

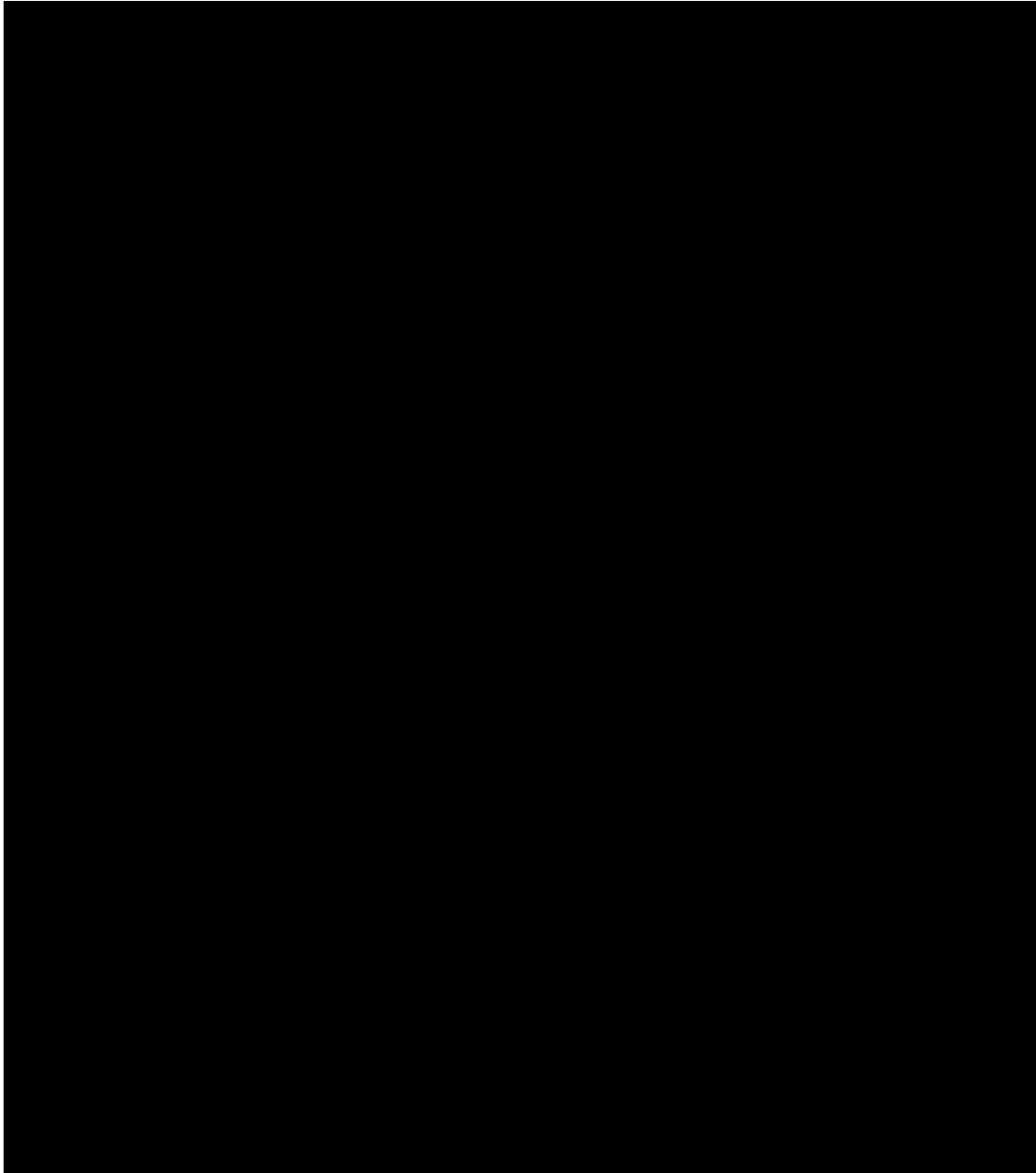


Figure 37 Hōtei Gosei, *Shinobazu Pond* (*Shinobazu no ike*), c.1809-c.1813, woodblock printed book; ink, and color on paper, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.