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Japanese Erotica

Many of the images in these books are explicit, some are shocking. Therefore, this list is not illustrated but we have provided links to our web page where illustrations will be found.

1. EROTICA, ANON. *Shiki no en* [*The Four Seasons of Lust*]. 16 double-page & four single-page color-printed woodcuts. 13; 11; 9 folding leaves. Three vols. Small 8vo, orig. speckled semi-stiff boards (boards rubbed), orig. block-printed title labels on upper covers, new stitching. [Japan, probably Edo]; manuscript inscription dated "1832" at end of each volume.

\$3750.00

First edition and very rare; we do not find this book listed in WorldCat or in the Union Catalogue of Japanese Books. The Preface is signed by Akikei (or Akikage) Higashikuni.

This work is an erotic version of *Shiki no en*, an 18th-century group of songs on the four seasons of love from the Yamada ryu school of the Japanese harp (*koto*). The poems of Haku Rakuten (or Bai Letian, 772-846), the Chinese poet of the mid-Tang dynasty, are sources for the songs along with Japanese *waka* poems. Haku Rakuten "became the favorite poet of Heian times...He was the Chinese poet to whom allusions, and from whom recollections, were most frequent in Heian Japan. His verses were often used for *kudai waka*, and he epitomized Chinese poetry."—Earl Miner et al., *The Princeton Companion to Classical Japanese Literature*, p. 160.

The first color-printed woodcut depicts a woman preparing to play the *koto*. There follows a series of erotic double-page woodcuts: kabuki actors, young samurai, Chinese characters, and women of various social classes are shown engaged in sex through the changing seasons. It is fascinating to see the various rooms and their furnishings, the participants' costumes, and the landscapes in the background.

The fine woodcuts were clearly created by a member of the Utagawa school, however, we are unable to establish their artistic authorship.

Very good set, but with some thumbing. The second and third volumes have some worming touching several of the woodcuts.

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2. EROTICA, ANON. *Karitaku zensei kurabe* [*Popularity & Comparison of Beauties in the Temporary Quarters*]. Seven double-page (one of which has flaps & folds out into a four-panel scene) and two single-page woodcuts, all finely color-printed, and nine double-page black & white woodcuts. One color-printed title-page pasted down on inner upper wrapper, 24 folding leaves. Small 8vo, orig. color-printed upper wrapper, with embossing, decorated lower wrapper, new stitching. [Edo]: Preface dated 1864.

\$4250.00

First edition and very rare; we find no copy in WorldCat. The Preface was written by Tanekiyo Ryusuitei (1823-1907), using his pen name "Insuitei."

Following one of the frequent fires in the famous pleasure quarters of Yoshiwara, often started by the prostitutes in an effort to free themselves, many brothels temporarily re-established themselves in other locations throughout Edo. This book was issued as sort of a guide to the newly relocated brothels and very much reflects the changes that *shunga* books were going through during the end of the Edo period.

The first double-page woodcut depicts the exterior of a thriving brothel in Edo, with many prostitutes within looking out to the numerous passing men and women on the bustling street. This opens up into a four-panel image of the interior of the brothel, showing men being entertained and engaging in several sexual activities. The following six double-page woodcuts depict the "star" prostitutes, all engaged in sex, with the names of the brothels where they worked. All the rooms shown are very luxuriously furnished with silk screens, ornate fabrics, and beautiful furniture. These woodcuts are all printed in richly saturated colors, including silver and gold pigments, and with complex embossing.

The cult of sex organs, where phalluses are objects of veneration and worship, is also exhibited here in a most uncommon image. The final color-printed woodcut — single-page — depicts an altar inside the brothel where a phallus is the center of worship. Envelopes containing cash, left by clients, are piled in front. See Suzuki Kenko's most fascinating "Popular Cults of Sex Organs in Japan: Guardian Deities, Auspicious Objects and Votive Paintings" in Timothy Clark et al., eds., *Shunga. Sex and Pleasure in Japanese Art* (British Museum: 2013), pp. 364-67.

The text section contains nine very interesting double-page black-and-white woodcuts showing elaborate scenes of entertainment, men and women having "intimate moments," the aftermath of sex with copious dribbling secretions, used napkin wipes on the floor, etc. These scenes can be described as "action-packed."

Fine and fresh copy. One black-and-white woodcut has two small holes.

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3. EROTIC TANZAKU CARDS. Ten *tanzaku* (tall narrow cards for printing poetry), each consisting of two panels of thick paper joined at head, the upper card with an erotic color-printed woodcut, the lower with printed *kyōka* poetry. Ten cards (181 x 50 mm.), all preserved in the orig. folded color-printed wrapper, entitled on upper panel *Furyu e tanzaku* [*Elegantly Illustrated Tanzaku Cards*]. [Japan: Meiji Era].

\$2500.00

Ten erotic cards, issued together, each in the *tanzaku ban* format, and accompanied by their original color-printed wrapper. *Tanzaku* cards were popular in the Meiji era (1868-1912); see Rosina Buckland's "Erotic Art of the Meiji Era (1868-1912)" in Timothy Clark et al., eds., *Shunga. Sex and Pleasure in Japanese Art* (British Museum: 2013), pp. 454-55.

The upper panel of each is very finely color-printed with saturated inks, embossing, and rich use of metallic pigments, revealing the Japanese printer's art at its best. They all depict men and women engaged in a series of sexual acts. The woodblock-printed lower panels feature the conversations of

the couples while engaged in their sexual acts and *kyōka* poems, which are rich in sexual innuendos and racy double-meanings.

The original wrapper that contains the ten cards has also been very finely color-printed, again with saturated colors and embossing.

In fine condition.

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4. KITAO, Shigemasa or Masayoshi, artist. From labels on upper covers: *Wakayagi zoshi* [*Stories of Youthful Vitality*]. 21 double-page & 6 single-page woodcuts. 14; 13; 12 folding leaves. Three vols. 8vo, orig. decorated wrappers, orig. block-printed title labels on upper covers (label on the first volume partly defective), new stitching. [Japan]: Preface dated 1804.

\$6500.00

First edition of this rare *shunga* book; it is an example of *kaidaibon* (book with new title). It is based on the *Ehon kontan makura* [*Illustrated Pillow Book from the Heart*] of 1783, which, in turn, is a “parody of the ancient Chinese legend of *The Dream at Handan* (J. *Kantan no yume*)...the hero Lu Sheng (J. Rosei) had experiences with many different women. However, this turns out to be a dream which had taken place merely in the time that it takes to toast some chestnut cakes.”—Asano Shugo, “*Shunga* and the Rise of Print Culture” in *Shunga. Sex and Pleasure in Japanese Art* (British Museum: 2013), p. [108].

The woodcuts in *Ehon kontan makura* have been attributed to Shigemasa Kitao (1739-1820), and we believe the woodcuts in our edition are also by Shigemasa or his disciple Masayoshi Kitao (1764-1824).

The fine black-and-white woodcuts depict the story of a young samurai visiting a tea house in the countryside. He asks the owner for a meal, and she replies that she doesn’t have anything suitable for him, but there are a number of young ladies (pictured in the first double-page woodcut) who might be good substitutes. The remainder of the images show the samurai and various women engaged in numerous sexual positions.

From the pictures and the text we learn that the tea house was actually a brothel. The text in each volume is headed with witty titles, each with sexual double-meanings.

Nice set, but there is some carefully repaired worming touching the images throughout. WorldCat lists only one copy, at the Nichibunken, Kyoto.

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Everything You Wanted to Know About Sex

5. KOIKAWA, Shozan, artist. *Jitsugokyo esho* [*Joyful Entertainment Gathered & Explained, Disguised as a Textbook*]. Nine double-page, one single-page, & several woodcut illus. in the text, all color-printed, and a number of black & white woodcuts throughout the text. One preliminary leaf pasted-down on the inside upper wrapper, 19 folding leaves, one leaf of ads at end pasted-down on the inside lower wrapper. Small 8vo, orig. wrappers decorated with the characters for “Kiraku” in *hiragana*, orig. block-printed title labels on upper cover, new stitching. “Ukiyo”: Kirakudo, [late Edo].

\$4500.00

First edition of this playful parody of a serious sex manual, with illustrations by Koikawa (1821-1907), one of the leading *shunga* artists of the late Edo and early Meiji periods. The Preface was written by Tanekiyo Ryusuitei (1823-1907). The book represents a new kind of *shunga* book to capture the reader’s imagination. This is a very rare book with no copy in WorldCat.

It is immediately obvious that the book is imitating a textbook because of the label containing the table of contents affixed to the upper cover. Yet, when one reads the table of contents, it is clear that

the book is concerned with all aspects of sex for pleasure and entertainment, not for reproductive purposes. The layout of the book is in the *oraimono* (educational books) format, printed with bold calligraphic columns of text in *kanbun* style with reading marks, and in between these columns, the same text in *hiragana* appears, for those who could not understand the scholarly *kanbun* style.

The fine color-printed double-page and single-page woodcuts show men and women engaged in a wide variety of sexual acts, oftentimes using sex toys. The images are visually very strong but expressed with wit and pleasure. The printers have used saturated colors and some embossing.

The text describes sex for relaxation and laughter, with black & white woodcut illustrations. These illustrations depict ancient Chinese ointments for sexual vitality; women's "honeypots"; the inevitable secretions caused by sex; a list of newly coined words to describe sexual acts; a wide variety of sex toys including dildos, rings with nubbles to be worn around the penis, *ben wa* balls, etc.; *Noh* masks for sexual role play; lyrics for sexy songs; pills for prolonging sexual vitality; calligraphic pictographs with sexual allusions; etc.

Fine copy.

• Timothy Clark et al., eds., *Shunga. Sex and Pleasure in Japanese Art* (British Museum: 2013), pp. 23, 245, & 287.

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An Erotic Parody

6. KUNISADA UTAGAWA, artist; HANAGASA BUNKYO, author. *Koi no Yatsufuji*; text title: *Nanso satomi hakkenden* [*Love of Yatsufuji; Biographies of Eight Stray Dogs from Kazusa*]. 15 double-page & 2 single-page color-printed woodcuts. .5, 16, .5; 12.5; 12.5 folding leaves. Three vols. 8vo, orig. pink semi-stiff embossed boards, orig. block-printed title labels on upper covers, new stitching. [Japan: 1830-44 but probably about 1837].

\$5500.00

First edition of this rare *shunga* book, a parody by Hanagasa Bunkyo (1785-1860), of the famous pioneering and influential *Nanso satomi hakkenden*, a fantasy novel by Kyokutei (or Takizawa) Bakin (1767-1848). In this work, Hanagasa has used the pen name Kyokutori Shujin.

"*Shunga* books (*shunpon*) often created an explicitly erotic version of a popular work; the targets ranged from classical tales, through popular literature, theatre and art, to educational textbooks and religious icons. The range of parody is wide and it is difficult to generalize about intentions or reception, but we can document the constant imperative to create *shunga* versions of non-*shunga* works, as a distinctive sub-genre — in effect, an underground 'shunga discourse'." —C. Andrew Gerstle, "Shunga and Parody" in *Shunga. Sex and Pleasure in Japanese Art* (British Museum: 2013), p. [318].

This is a thoroughly naughty *shunga* book with depictions of bestiality (a princess and her dog husband engaging in "doggy" sex), an erect dog seducing his princess wife-to-be, lesbianism, several peeping Toms, rape (the dog is disguised as a young samurai), a tattooed intruder reaching out to a fleeing half-naked woman whose lover has been subdued, a samurai diddling his lover, a palace rooftop battle with three women whose private parts are exposed, two servants (the man is diddling his female colleague) watching their master and mistress having sex, etc. The illustrations are full of subtle and complex references to the original work of Bakin, their identification a most rewarding task.

The printers of this work have used many of their most important skills: complex color printing, richly saturated colors, ample use of metallic pigments, and much embossing. The image of the dog having sex with his princess is particularly effective. The embossing really gives the impression of hair.

An examination of several digital copies reveals considerable variation of the illustrations. The copy listed by the Union Catalogue of Early Japanese Books has five more double-page woodcuts than our copy. The Metropolitan Museum of Art has the third volume only, and that lacks one double-

page woodcut when compared to the copy in Japan.

There is some worming throughout, which, luckily, is mostly confined to the blank margins.

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Kuniyoshi Makes a Comeback

7. [KUNIYOSHI UTAGAWA, artist]. [*Shunshoku*] *Karine no yume* [monogatari] [*Dreams While Napping at a Temporary Brothel*]. 17 double-page & four single-page woodcuts, all color-printed. 12; 11; 10 folding leaves. Three vols. 8vo, orig. embossed & color-decorated semi-stiff boards (boards a little rubbed & soiled), orig. block-printed title labels on upper covers, new stitching. [Edo: ca. 1846].
\$5500.00

First edition and very rare; there is no copy listed in WorldCat. Kuniyoshi (1798-1861), was “one of the great Ukiyo-e artists of the nineteenth century.”—Hillier, *The Art of the Japanese Book*, p. 890. Kuniyoshi also had a substantial output of erotic books as well.

During the Tenpo Reforms of 1841-43, one of Kuniyoshi’s prints was confiscated due to its politically charged content; he was fined, and his reputation as an artist suffered. By the time of the publication of the present book, the repressive conventions of the Tenpo Reforms had relaxed, and Kuniyoshi regained his prominence as an artist.

Following one of the frequent fires in the famous pleasure quarters of Yoshiwara, often started by the prostitutes in an effort to free themselves, many brothels temporarily re-established themselves in other locations throughout Edo. Our book depicts a series of brothels dispersed through the greater Edo area.

The double-page color-printed title contains a popularity chart of prostitutes with a facing image of two cats mating on the ground and a bird in the sky pursuing another bird.

The first double-page woodcut depicts prostitutes behind a latticed window in a brothel named Maizuruya, relocated to Kamakura, with bustling men and women passing by on the street. The next double-page woodcut depicts a busy stairwell and hallway in the brothel. In this image are particularly effective silhouettes of figures behind a *shoji* sliding door.

These are followed by a series of fine colored woodcuts of men and women (including many “star” prostitutes, known as *oiran*) engaged in sex in various brothels, featuring a peeping Tom, a fight scene involving a jealous man breaking up an intimate moment between a geisha and another man (who has just ejaculated), secret encounters, a brutal rape scene of a tied-down woman and four hoodlums, a courtesan masturbating her blue-collar client, etc.

The color printing throughout is rich, with ample use of saturated colors, metallic pigments including gold, and some embossing.

Fine set, with some minor thumbing.

• Timothy Clark et al., eds., *Shunga. Sex and Pleasure in Japanese Art* (British Museum: 2013), p. 245.

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A Blockbuster & a Tearjerker

8. TANISHI KINGYO, author. *Keiseikai toranomaki* [or] *Tosei toranomaki* [*Pledged in Love to One, Bought by Another: A Guide*]. One double-page black & white woodcut. 48 folding leaves. Small 8vo, orig. green wrappers (wrappers a little tired), orig. block-printed title label on upper cover (label soiled), new stitching. [Edo]: Preface dated 1778.

\$1950.00

First edition of this rare *sharebon*, stories revolving around humor and entertainments in the

pleasure quarters, most popular in the 1770s and 1780s. This novel, a real “tearjerker,” is one of the masterpieces about the Yoshiwara pleasure quarters (see Cecilia Segawa Seigle, *Yoshiwara: The Glittering World of the Japanese Courtesan*, p. 141). The novel was a blockbuster of its time, focusing on the irreconcilability of romantic love and societal norms (see J. Scott Miller’s review of Jonathan E. Zwicker’s *Practices of the Sentimental Imagination: Melodrama, the Novel, and the Social Imaginary in Nineteenth-Century Japan* [Harvard University Asia Center: 2006], online resource).

Tanishi Kingyo (fl. 1770s-80s), whose name can be translated “River Snail Goldfish,” was a practicing physician in Edo. He is one of the founders of the *ninjobon* genre.

The double-page woodcut depicts the courtesan Segawa and her true love, Gogo.

Very good copy, preserved in a *chitsu*.

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The Only Surviving Complete Set?

9. UTAMARO KITAGAWA [or] EIZAN KIKUKAWA, artist. *Ehon makura jikishi* [*Tale of Sexual Vitality*]. 21 double-page & 6 single-page woodcut illus., all color-printed. 14; 13; 13 folding leaves (incl. text & illus.). Three vols. 8vo, orig. blue wrappers, decorated with gold (somewhat rubbed, gold decoration largely oxidized), orig. block-printed title labels on upper covers, each with mica sprinkles, new stitching. [Japan: ca. 1806].

\$17,500.00

First edition and very rare; no copy is located in WorldCat (but there is an incomplete copy listed in the private collection of Mitsuru Uragami by the Ritsumeikan University’s ARC database). Our copy seems to be the only surviving complete set.

The artistic authorship of this finely illustrated *shunga* book is uncertain: responsibility has been attributed to both the great Utamaro and his disciple Eizan Kikukawa. We note that Mr. Uragami, a collector of Utamaro, attributes our book to that artist.

The 21 double-page woodcuts all show men and women engaged in sexual acts, mostly consensual but several clearly forced. In this work, the printer has employed nearly every resource available to him: saturated colors and metallic pigments. The faces and legs of the women are color-printed in both a rich white and, occasionally, a delicate pink to suggest sexual flushing. The delicate hairlines of both the men and women are finely depicted and, occasionally, color-printed with mica, and mica also gives their black hair a sparkling effect. The women’s lips are composed of three colors of pink. The outlines are printed in *usuzumi*, a pale gray pigment, enhancing the adjacent colors. Throughout, the women’s toes are coiled in ecstasy.

In very good condition, preserved in a *chitsu*. There is some thumbing throughout and one image in the third volume has a small water splatter. Vol. I has a small wormhole, repaired throughout, in the gutter but touching all the images.

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