MIKE LYON
Kyoto Woodcuts
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GALLERY EZOSHI
Kyoto, Japan
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I wish to acknowledge and thank Go Yamao for offering to show my work and for sharing the printing of this catalog; Jerry Vegder, John Teramoto, and Go Yamao for their thoughtful essays about my work; John Teramoto for translating Mr. Yamao’s essay into English; Yoshiko Uchida, senior lecturer in Japanese at the University of Chicago for translating the English portions of this catalog into Japanese, for her assistance in formatting the Japanese portions, and for her enduring patience.
Students of art history rarely get the opportunity to know the true personalities of great artists. In fact, with the exception of men like Leonardo, Michelangelo and Rubens in the West or Santo Kyoden in Japan, nearly all of them seem rather one dimensional. The same thing that makes them great flattens them out to history. There are a few exceptions: Ingres, who created some of the world’s most memorable paintings of female nudes and some of the finest portraits ever, was also a virtuoso violinist. Mike plays the violin. Not as well as Ingres I am sure, but Mike got a late start. Kuniyoshi had a great sense of humor, both political and base. So, does Mike. He also shares an obsessive love of the female form with Utamaro and Degas. But could Utamaro craft beautiful furniture like Mike’s? And Degas never married and certainly never had a wife with a graduate degree from Harvard. Neither Rubens nor Goya earned black belts in karate or owned their own dojo!

Visually Mike’s aizuri-e prints are stunners. If, as Irving Berlin wrote, “a pretty girl is like a melody” then Mike’s women are like sonatas and seen collectively are downright symphonic.

Every true artist has his supporters and his detractors. In France in the eighteenth century one could like either Rubens or Poussin, but not both. Some people detest the nudes which are Mike’s forte. Some people especially detest female nudity in this feminist age. Others long for a more traditional approach to woodblock printing. But time and technique wait for no man. When Harunobu produced the first nishiki-e there undoubtedly were those who clung to the old ways of hand coloring --- but not for long. When Utamaro and Sharaku produced elegant prints with mica backgrounds conservatives decried them for their sheer decadence. Publishers and artists were punished for this and for their other presumptions. Nearly every age has its own way of doing things and the majority clings to those concepts with near zealot religiosity while others are apostates and lead us down new paths. Innovation is a threat and Mike is an innovator.

Despite the near death of traditional Japanese printmaking in the late 19th century it survived. But not all artists wanted to or could follow the same path and hence we saw the rise of the sosaku hanga. Now perhaps we see in Mike a refinement and merging of both traditions with an injection of new techniques and technologies.

Picasso invented a technique in the 1950’s for the production of linocuts. One curator noted that he “subverted the accepted technique (of printing each color from a separate block) by reworking the same block.” His technique is reductive. This process leaves us nothing of the original block. No one had ever done this before. No one had ever thought of it.
Now Mike marries Picasso’s innovation with his own digital photography, a skillful use of computers and the most up to date tools to produce supremely beautiful prints. The shortcuts he takes along the way are made up for by the sweat of his brow in the final stages and his consummate understanding of his media. I am particularly partial to the aizuri-e. Rich, lush, velvety cyan blues permeate some of his finest images.

Scientists tell us that vision is not the strongest of all of our senses. This may or not be true. But what I know is that a personal one on one experience with many of Mike’s prints leaves an indelible mark on the memory. Linger a few moments over such images as *Jessica Reclining* (catalog 13), *Lily: Study in Pink and Blue* (catalog 4), and *Sarah Reclining* (catalog 5) and you will understand what I am saying.

The year is 2004 and Mike is a young 53. His work is getting better and more ambitious. We have much to look forward to.

Jerry Vegder  
Ukiyo-e Prints  
Port Townsend, Washington
Introduction

Mike Lyon’s woodblock prints beg to be approached from a variety of different avenues. Lyon employs the latest tools and techniques in his production process including digital photography, electronic image editing, and most recently computer guided cutting tools -- but in the end he produces each impression by traditional Japanese means -- wood, pigment, paper, rubbing pad, physical exertion, and ultimately his eye and sensibility.

An American working in the United States, for decades Lyon has been a serious and dedicated student of various aspects of Japanese art and culture. He is also an avid collector of Japanese woodblock prints, or ukiyo-e. Because his works obviously conflate both Japanese and Western artistic traditions, I want to discuss them as such here. Moreover, as a personal response to Mike Lyon’s indigo prints, I wish to slant this essay in a more historical, rather than contemporary, direction.

From the very earliest stages of contact between Japan and the West in modern times (late 19th Century), Japanese art has exerted an influence on European and American artists, and the reverse was also true. Paintings by Edouard Manet (1832-1883) and Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) provide visual evidence of their fascination with ukiyo-e prints. Jean Millet (1814-1875) and Henri Rousseau (1844-1910) collected Japanese prints at every opportunity. Japanese sensibilities affected the art of the American James Abbot McNeill Whistler (1834-1903).

Striking out for novel compositional modes and playing with new artisitic visions, Japanese artists such as Kuniyoshi (1797-1861), Hokusai (1760-1849), and Shiba Kokan (1747-1818), to name a few, incorporated the use of Western perspective and modeling in some of their works. But other than early Christian icons painted in Japan at the turn of the sixteenth century before its rulers closed Japan off to the outside world, paintings of a truly Western ilk did not appear in Japan until after the reopening of its doors almost 300 years later.

Returning the discussion to woodblock prints, artists like Yoshida Hiroshi (1876-1950) and Kawase Hasui (1883-1957) created wonderful images that, as one author described it, were Western watercolors in a Japanese format. The perspective, drawing, and compositions were certainly familiar to Western eyes, but the sentiment remained distinctly Japanese. Along with Yoshida and Hasui, the American printmaker Helen Hyde (1868-1919) and the Frenchman Paul Jacoulet (1896-1960) were creating yet another wonderful blending of traditions in their novel contributions to the world of Japanese printmaking by dealing with traditional Japanese subjects using traditional Japanese tools and techniques, yet producing works with a distinctive foreign flavor. Mike Lyon’s prints certainly are an extension of this tremendous legacy.

Historically, the nude figure was never a traditional subject matter in Japan, but naked bodies can certainly be found in Japanese paintings and prints—especially in Edo period erotic prints. Emphasis, however, lay more on the physical and psychological interaction of the parties pictured and also involved the intended effect upon the
viewer. Portrayal of women in daily activities, whether bathing or nursing a child, also had voyeuristic connotations in which robes were dropped to the waist, long legs displayed, or their totally nude bodies entered a tub.

Looking at related images in Lyon’s prints, his models are undeniably recognizable as contemporary. In *Dana Seated* (catalog 3) with her erect seated posture or *Rachel* (catalog 9) with a lilt in her stance, the idea of “now” is augmented through hairstyle and a difficult to define yet definitely perceptible modern attitude. The latter comes across yet more engagingly in *Jessica* (catalog 6) or the reclining nude (catalog 12) with head propped on her bent arm and her gaze fixed on the viewer (although we may have seen those eyes before in a painting by Manet).

On the other hand, there are elements that certainly transcend the boundaries of time. The portrait of the young man (catalog 14) takes one back to classical antiquity as does the woman with outstretched arms (catalog 7) who could be a miniature figurine from ancient Babylon. Lyon’s wonderful print of *Mother and Child* (catalog 1) captures a scene repeated since the dawn of man.

The emergence of indigo prints, or in Japanese called ai-e (eye-eh), is often attributed to the passage of sumptuary laws that forbade the creation of polychrome prints, but evidence indicates that artists like Hokusai were already making indigo prints before the promulgation of the ban. Indigo dyed textiles were at one time limited to the aristocracy. Later however, the situation was entirely reversed, and indigo became the color associated with the common working man. Popularly associated with folk textiles, the color is deeply ingrained in the Japanese mind, and its selection was a conscious choice for Lyon.

Returning once more to the interplay between East and West that has spawned so many innovative movements in art, Mike Lyon’s figure studies in blue and gray recall the tonal figure treatments of artists like Thomas Dewing (1831-1958) and Whistler, who themselves were deeply enamored with Japanese art. The interplay of highlights, multiple gradations of blue and white imbue the figures with a luminescence that can quickly fade to darkened caverns. The soft, vibrant outlines of his forms—at times emphasized through contrast with hard edges—contribute to this sense of aura. Moreover the contoured patterns reminiscent of a geological formation, or the rippling edges of a pool of liquid light create fascinating visual effects. Lastly, the overprinting of wood grain adds to the sense of an outward radiating aura.

The ability to evoke auras of the past in contemporary imagery imparts to works additional depth that resonates beyond the immediate presentation of form and meaning. When manipulated ineptly, nostalgia can easily lead to saccharin kitsch. It is preferable when that evocation emerges in and of itself from the object rather than in the manner of a calculated conceit. As beautiful modern images, Mike Lyon’s indigo woodblock prints make no pretense to antiquity. Yet they certainly are in possession of elements that impart to them aspects of timelessness. We look forward to where this fortuitous blend of cultural sentiments expressed through skilled hands and seen through penetrating eyes will lead next.

John Teramoto, PhD
Associate Curator of Asian Art
Indianapolis Museum of Art
A First Encounter with Mike Lyon

The first time I met Mike Lyon was in my gallery in the beginning of May 2003. I was on the second floor in the process of installing an exhibition titled, *Kabuki as seen in Ukiyoe -- Commemorating 400 Years of Kabuki*.

Mike's visit came just as I was hanging masterpieces and rare works by Okyo, Sharaku, Utamaro, Hokusai, Toyokuni, and Hiroshige. His questions revealed a considerable knowledge of ukiyoe. Then Mike and his father, who had accompanied him, proceeded to purchase several prints. The prints that they selected showed that both father and son possessed a fine sense of taste.

It became clear to me why when I learned that Mike is a print artist, and his father is a glass artist.

The next day I saw some examples of Mike's work for the first time. I was surprised at how accomplished they were. Of the several works I saw that day, all depicted commonplace subjects seen by a practiced eye and then expressed through the woodblock print medium.

The coloring took its key from ukiyoe aizuri prints.

I am amazed how these images that could simply be commonplace and ordinary become truly unique works of art through Mike.

That he uses paper made by Iwano Ichibei, accorded the status of Living National Treasure of papermaking, exhibits careful mindfulness.

Everything is brought to completion through Mike's models and forms.

I feel I have encountered a man and his work from whom great things can be expected for a long time to come.

Go Yamao, owner
Gallery Ezoshi
Kyoto, Japan
Woodblock Prints
2002 - 2004
*Mother and Child* • 15 x 10 inches (39 x 26 cm) • July 20, 2002

Three blocks (basswood, oak, and birch) were reduced by carving and printed in 24 separate steps using prepared water colors on 52 sheets of handmade gampi paper.
Blue Shoes • 15 x 10 inches (39 x 26 cm) • August 17, 2002

Three basswood blocks were reduced by carving and printed in 19 separate steps using prepared water colors on 50 sheets of hosho paper handmade by Yamaguchi Kazuo.
A single basswood block was reduced by carving and printed in 18 separate steps using water color and sumi on 100 sheets of hosho paper handmade by Yamaguchi Kazuo.
Lily: Study in Pink and Blue  •  9 x 6 inches (23 x 15 cm)  •  August 26, 2003

Two basswood blocks were reduction-carved and printed in 20 separate steps (one reduced and printed 9 times from pale blue to black and the other reduced and printed 11 times from pale pink to deep blue) using prepared water colors and sumi on 70 sheets of hosho paper handmade by Yamaguchi Kazuo.
Sarah Reclining • 16 x 22 inches (41 x 56 cm) • August, 2003

A laminated cherry block was reduced by carving and printed in 18 separate steps using dry pigment and sumi on 40 sheets of hosho paper handmade by Yamaguchi Kazuo.
Jessica • 15 x 10 inches (39 x 26 cm) • September 19, 2003
A single cherry block was reduced by carving and printed in 19 separate steps using dry pigment, pigment suspension, and sumi on 24 sheets of hosho paper handmade by Yamaguchi Kazuo.
Jessica Turning  •  11 x 8 inches (28 x 20 cm)  •  October 21, 2003

A single basswood block was reduced by carving and printed in 11 separate steps using dry graphite pigment and sumi on 52 sheets of hosho paper handmade by Yamaguchi Kazuo.
A single Spanish cedar block was reduced by carving and printed in 17 separate steps using dry graphite pigment and sumi on 32 sheets of handmade Inomachi paper.

_Jessica Prone_  •  6.25 x 10.5 inches (16 x 27 cm)  •  November, 2003
A single cypress block was reduced by carving and printed in 15 separate steps using dry graphite pigment and sumi on 24 sheets of hosho paper handmade by Yamaguchi Kazuo.
16 cherry blocks were carved and printed using dry pigment and charcoal on 32 sheets of hosho paper handmade by Iwano Ichibe.
Fixing Hair • 21.75 x 7.35 inches (55 x 19 cm) • January 5, 2004

A single basswood plank was reduced by carving and printed in 23 separate steps using dry pigment and neri-zumi on 28 sheets of hosho paper handmade by Iwano Ichibe.
Jessica Reclining (facing)  •  7 x 22 inches (18 x 56 cm)  •  February 3, 2004

A Spanish cedar block was reduced by carving and printed in 17 separate steps using dry pigment and neri-zumi on 24 sheets of hosho paper handmade by Iwano Ichibei.
Jessica Reclining (rear) • 7.5 x 31.2 inches (19 x 79 cm) • February 29, 2004
A Spanish cedar block was reduced by carving and printed in 16 separate steps using dry pigment and neri-zumi on 24 sheets of hosho paper handmade by Iwano Ichibei.
Max • 10 x 7.5 inches (26 x 19 cm) • March 26, 2004

10 cherry blocks were printed using dry pigment and neri-zumi on 24 sheets of hosho paper handmade by Iwano Ichibe.
Shannon & Danielle • 15 x 10 inches (39 x 26 cm) • April 25, 2004
18 cherry blocks were printed using dry pigment and neri-zumi on 24 sheets of hosho paper handmade by Iwano Ichibe.
Anthony • 30 x 21 inches (76 x 53 cm) • April 29, 2004

15 cherry blocks were printed using dry pigment and neri-zumi on 13 sheets of hosho paper handmade by Iwano Ichibe.
Mia  •  22 x 15 inches (56 x 38 cm)  •  May 5, 2004
A Baltic birch block was reduced by carving and printed in 19 separate steps using dry pigment and neri-zumi on 24 sheets of hosho paper handmade by Iwano Ichibe.
Sarah  •  21 x 30 inches (53 x 76 cm)  •  May 15, 2004
19 cherry blocks were printed using dry pigment and neri-zumi on 12 sheets of hosho paper handmade by Iwano Ichibe.
Sarah Reclining • 10 x 15 inches (26 x 39 cm) • May 26, 2004

22 cherry blocks were printed using dry pigment and neri-zumi on 24 sheets of hosho paper handmade by Iwano Ichibei.
Elizabeth and Rod • 15 x 10 inches (39 x 26 cm) • June 25, 2004
24 cherry blocks were printed using dry pigment and neri-zumi on 25 sheets of hosho paper handmade by Iwano Ichbei.
Shannon and Danielle (seated) • 15 x 10 inches (39 x 26 cm) • June 30, 2004
24 cherry blocks were printed using dry pigment and neri-zumi on 24 sheets of hosho paper handmade by Iwano Ichibei.
Sarah Reclining (pink robe) • 7.75 x 22 inches (20 x 56 cm) • June 28, 2004
16 cherry blocks were carved and printed using dry pigment and neri-zumi on 24 sheets of hosho paper handmade by Iwano Ichibei.
*Jessica on Dark Drapery* • 10 x 15 inches (26 x 39) • July 2, 2004

16 cherry blocks were carved and printed using dry pigment and neri-zumi on 16 sheets of hosho paper handmade by Iwano Ichibe.
Rod • 30 x 21 inches (76 x 53 cm) • August 5, 2004

16 cherry blocks were printed using dry pigment and neri-zumi on 12 sheets of hosho paper handmade by Iwano Ichibe.
Lily and Sarah (Spring becomes Summer) • 9 x 8 inches (23 x 20 cm) • August 17, 2004
32 cherry blocks were carved and printed using dry pigments on 48 sheets of hosho paper handmade by Iwano Ichibe.
木版画
2002-2004

謝辞

この展示会開催及びカタログ制作にあたり、次の方々には大変お世話になった。紙面に私の作品を展示することを進めてくれ、このカタログの印刷費用を分担してくれた山尾剛氏、私の作品に対して大変懇願深いエッセイを寄せてくれたジェリー・ウェグダー氏、ジョン寺本氏、山尾剛氏、また、山尾氏のエッセイの英語訳を引き受けてくれたジョン寺本氏、そして、このカタログの英文和訳及び日本語テキスト書式を辛苦強く手伝ってくれた内田淑子氏（シカゴ大学東アジア研究科上級講師）にこの場を借りて、心から感謝の意を表したい。
マイク・ライオンと作品との出会い

マイク・ライオンに初めて出会ったのは、二〇〇〇年五月の初頭。私の画廊でした。丁度二階で『歌舞伎四〇〇年記念展』の飾り付けをしていった時でした。

そしてマイクは、カワイイの浮世絵の知識で質問をしてきました。彼の父はギャラスアートィストと聞くに及んで、「その作品は本当に二人共センスのある選び方でした。」

翌日、私はマイクの作品を初めて観ました。

数点観たモチーフは全て日常的なショットです。

カメラライクにも似たモノを捉える観察眼。

それらのありふれたものに驚くばかりなのです。

浮世絵の画刷り（アイズリー）をヒントの色彩感覚。
人間国宝の和紙職人、岩野市兵衛の和紙を求めて摺りあげる入念な心意気。

全部がマイクの型に完成しているのです。

私は久々に大物を予期させる人物と作品に出逢ったのです。
ふたたび、芸術の世界に多くの刷新的な進展をもたらした東洋と西洋の相互関係的話を戻ると、
マイク・ライオンのブルーとグレーを使った人物画はデューノングングが作る人物画の色調に通じるものがある。彼ららもまた日本美術に深く魅惑された芸術家であるが、相互に影響し合うハイライト、ブルーとホワイトの多彩なグラデーションは人物をルネサンスで染め上げ、瞬時に洞窟の闇に消えていく。彼の人物像のソフトで生き生きした輪郭が、時に力強いラインでコントラストを強調しつつ、この独特の霧雰囲気を醸し出していると言えよう。また地質構造を思わせる体のラインや光のブールの水際の波のよう、心胸の観光を思わせるもかかわらず、彼の作品は時間を越した過去を自らに添える要素を残さず、作品そのものに新しい顔をしてはいる。ノスタルジアは作品を吉ったものとして、作品そのものから表現出来なければなりません。現代的な画像に過去のオーロラを喚起する能力は、単なる形や意匠の表現を超えたものを見せる力があると、ノスタルジアは作品を吉ったものとして、作品そのものから表現出来なければなりません。
アメリカの版画作家・ハイド・ヘレン・ハイド (1868–1910) やフランスのジャック・パウル・ラキュール (1886–1930) も西洋と日本の伝統が見事に溶け合った作品を創造している。日本の伝統的な道具と技術を用い、日本の伝統的なテーマを扱いながらも独自の異国感を表現したと言える。なぜなら、日本の伝統を受け継ぎ拡張させるものととらえているからだ。

江戸時代の春画には確かな裸体が見られる。しかししながら、その絵を見る者に意図された効果も関係している。女性の日常物、例えば水浴や授乳の描写では膝までおろされた着物やあらわな両足、または全裸でまさにたちらいに入るものなど、のぞき趣味的なものもある。

イギリスの著者・デヴィッド・ウッドワード (1877–1963) の「衣装の世界」は、身体的、心理的なやりとしに置かれる。また、その絵を見ると、その表現手法は主に描かれた人々の身体的・心理的なやりとしに置かれる。また、その絵を見ると、その表現手法は主に描かれた人々の身体的・心理的なものがある。

これに反して、明らかに時の境界を越えている要素もある。着物の着用は禁制令発布以前にすでに謎絵を制作していたようである。しかししながら、後の時代になると事情は全く変わり、謎絵は伝統的なものに戻された。

若い男性の肖像（カタログ①）は、あの女性（カタログ②）の曲げた腕に支えられた頭や見せる上半身を模したような、腕を広げた女性（カタログ③）のまっすぐに座った姿勢や（カタログ④）や横たわる裸体画（カタログ⑤）もまた同様である。ライオンの見事な母と子の版画（カタログ⑥）は人類の謎絵を連想させる謎絵は日本人の心に深くしみ込んでいる。
序文

マイケル・ライオンの木版画作成には様々な変化があったイベントを必要とする。ライオンの作品は、その作品制作にデジタル写真撮影、コンピュータによる画像編集、また中で最新技術と言えるコンピュータ認識の影刻システムなど先進技術を駆使してい るが、最終段階においては日本の伝統的な用具である木、紙、ぼれんが用いられ、骨の折れ手作業と何にもまして彼の細やかな感性と目が必要とされている。

近代（十九世紀後半）において日本と西洋の接触が始まった初の初期の段階から、日本美術はヨーロッパやアメリカの芸術家に影響を及ぼし、またその反対も起こった。

新しい芸術的視点を抱き、今までにない新奇な構図の取り方によって、今日の日本の構図とその反対が見られる。そして、日本が外国に対して国を閉ざす以前である十六世紀の変わり目に日本で描かれた初期キリスト教のイコンは別として、真に西洋型の絵画が日本に現われるのは、それからおよそ三〇〇年後に日本が再び国を開いてからのことになる。
今年は〇〇四年、マイクは四〇歳。まだまだ人生は長いし、野心も旺盛だ。今後の活躍が楽しみである。

米国ワシントン州ポートタウンゼンドにて
浮世絵師　ジェリー・ウェグダー　

「 Lexus」作家、デザイン、ジャーナリストのジェリー・ウェグダーは、浮世絵に感銘を受け、自身の作品に浮世絵の影響を反映させることに取り組んだ。彼の作品は、浮世絵の技法を現代の表現に変換し、新たな物語を紡ぎ出すことにより、伝統と現代の融合を可能にした。
マイク・ライオンは多くの側面を持つ男である。愛すべき夫・父親であり、スポーツマン、家具職人、美術収集家、そして、ひたむきですばらしい芸術家である。この多面性こそ彼の特性であり、彼を知る人が一様にあげる点と言えよう。このように多方面で成功を遂げる人物はそうはいない。

日本では山東京伝などは例外として、偉大な芸術家は概して一面的といえる。彼らを偉大とさせる才能が、同時に他の側面を覆い隠しているのだ。確かに例外はあるが、アングルは、また、バイオリンの名手でもあった。マケーニンは、また、歌謡やダガに見られような女性美に対する取り組むかのような愛着をもっている。しかし、歌謡やダガに見られような女性美に対する取り組むかのような愛着をもっている。また、ラムベーンの名手でもあった。マイクもパイオリンを愛する者とプサンを愛する者がいたが、どちらも好む者はいなかった。マイクは、また、歌謡やダガに見られような女性美に対する取り組むかのような愛着をもっている。しかし、歌謡やダガに見られような女性美に対する取り組むかのような愛着をもっている。また、ラムベーンの名手でもあった。
雷音マイク
京都木版画

美術店　絵草子
京都市東山区新門前通梅本町253
平成16年10月18日－10月31日