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Publishers of Japanese Woodblock Prints: A Compendium

Andreas Marks

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Japanese woodblock prints exemplified by such iconographic images as Hokusai s *Great Wave*, Hiroshige s Heavy Rain on Ohashi bridge, or Utamaro s enticing beauties, constitute one of the most important and influential art forms in art history. Today, the names of these artists themselves are celebrated throughout the world, and yet very little is known about the publishers of these artworks, despite the fact that they played a crucial role in the production, visual appearance and actual distribution of the works within the highly commercial world of Japanese printmaking. It was the publisher who gauged the markets, commissioned the artists and took on the risks of production. Once a design was completed by an artist, it was the publisher who coordinated the production process, farming out the work to the block carvers and printers, and also managed the distribution of the prints in the appropriate markets. This volume champions the publisher the enabler without whom the great artworks which influenced painters like Monet, Toulouse-Lautrec, Van Gogh and others, would never have been produced. *Publishers of Japanese Woodblock Prints: A Compendium* focuses on the production process of Japanese woodblock prints with an emphasis on the role of the publisher. This publication presents over 1,100 publishers, with comprehensive lists of publications by a total of 572 artists and facsimiles of over 2300 publisher seals, spanning a time period from the 1650s to the 1990s. The publisher entries include details on the residence of a publisher, his clientele, the period of his commercial activity as well as a list of issued print series in chronological order. This listing offers insight into the status and versatility of a publisher, as well as indicating the publisher s specialities, favoured artists and the particular strategies pursued. With almost 600 pages of information on the publishers of Japanese woodblock prints, this publication is an essential reference work for scholars and collectors of Japanese prints alike."

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