



### **Cherry Blossom Viewing**

***Ikeda Sho\_en. ( also referred to as Sho\_en Ikeda) 1888-1917***

**1910**

**G. 253**

*Painting-Hanging Scroll/ Ink and colors on silk. Japanese. 2005.35*

#### **Key Questions:**

Take a moment to look carefully at this scroll.

1. How would you describe the subject matter of this scroll?
2. What seems realistic in this painting? What do you notice that is not realistic?
3. Now, think about a Western-style scene with a similar theme. What are some key differences that you might notice between the two styles of painting?

#### **Artist:**

Ikeda Shoen's family descended from an elite Samurai family. Her father was educated at Rutgers ( railroad engineering) and her mother was a Western-style painter. Attractive, talented and fashionable, she attracted much attention in the male-dominated profession of painting. At 22, she married another handsome painter, Ikeda Terukata. The two became like rock stars, the Brangelinas of Tokyo's urbane society. She synthesized Japanese and Western painting traditions and after joining the atelier of Gyokudo, she began to frequently win prizes at her exhibitions. During her lifetime, Shoen was regarded as one of the most respected female painters of Eastern Japan. Shoen died at the age of 31 of tuberculosis, ( her husband also died very young, at 38)so there are relatively few examples of her art available. Paintings produced towards the end of her life, considered the height of her career, are particularly sought-after. She specialized in images of women and their elegant pastimes. This one is of three splendidly dressed women on a boat ride enjoying the blossoming cherry trees.

### **Key Points:**

In 1868, with the Meiji Restoration, Japan embarked on a program of modernization. The country opened up to the outside, a rail line linking all major cities was built, and the people studied and adopted Western technologies. The desire to modernize was reflected in the arts. Japanese artists went abroad to study in the west, and Western artists were encouraged to come to Japan to offer instruction. A new style of painting was promoted that combined elements of Western painting, such as perspective, and shading, with traditional techniques such as water-based pigments on paper or silk.

Our work here refers back to Ukiyo or “Floating World” art, which described the urban lifestyle, especially the pleasure-seeking aspects of the Edo period of Japan, when the country was virtually isolated from the rest of the world. This culture developed in Yoshiwara, the licensed red-light district of Edo (Tokyo). It was the site of brothels, tea houses, kabuki theatres frequented by the growing middle-class. Famous Japanese woodblock prints known as ukiyo-e , or pictures of the Floating World, often depicted people of the world itself, such as geishas, kabuki actors, sumo wrestlers, samurai and prostitutes. In addition, ukiyo-e showed the traditional Japanese love of nature and had an enormous impact on landscape painting all over the world.

A woodblock print image is first designed by the artist on paper and then transferred to a thin, partly transparent paper. Following the lines on the paper, now pasted to a wooden block usually of cherry wood, the carver chisels and cuts to create the original in negative – with the lines and areas to be colored raised in relief. Ink is applied to the surface of the woodblock. Rubbing a round pad over the back of a piece of paper laid over the top of the inked board makes a print.

Japonism is a term for the influence of the arts of Japan on the west. From the 1860’w, ukiyo-e, Japanese wood-block prints, became a source of inspiration for many European Impressionist painters, and eventually for Art Nouveau and Cubism. Artists were especially affected by the lack of perspective and shadow, the flat areas of strong color, and the compositional freedom of placing the subject off-center. Japonism mostly involved Western artists using elements of Eastern styles in works showing their own culture.

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Paula Sanan