

INTO THE REALM OF THE UNEXPLORED SENSES

The prints on show here are instructive in a variety of ways that go beyond their appeal in terms of the pure pleasure of looking, of an expedition into the realm of the unexplored senses; as access into another culture's ideas of beauty, before the course of modernization brought them closer and closer to western preconceptions; as objects of relevance within the scholarly discourse on cultural history, since we see reflected in these works the self-awareness, the desires, hopes, and sometimes even the fears of each society and epoch; as studies on urbanism in Edo in the Age of Enlightenment, when the city was the great capital of that cultural environment; as iconography of glamour and prominence; and as seismographic documents of violent conflicts, as indeed was the war between Japan and China at the dawn of the modern movement.

The MAK collection of Japanese color woodcuts encompasses around 4,200 prints and is among the large and qualitatively valuable outside the land of their origin. Part of the fundamental agenda of this museum is to redefine its own collections within the contemporary context and present them as a challenge to the public. This is hardly possible when confronted with the enormous amount of material within the "Gutenberg Galaxy" (Marshall McLuhan) through the medium of a conventional catalogue. Hence a representative selection, a visual anthology is shown here and the complete catalogue is now accessible for the first time to all of the global public who are interested at www.MAK.at – thus within the virtual galaxy.

Peter Noever