

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

No. 55
FOR RELEASE:
Saturday, June 3, 1961
PRESS PREVIEW:
Friday, June 2, 1961

A Japanese art virtually ignored in Japan and in the western world is the subject of an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art from June 3 through July 16. "Japanese Vernacular Graphics," consisting of maps, illustrated books, and other graphic material executed by anonymous draftsmen and printers over the past 250 years, is selected from the collection of Bernard Rudofsky, who acquired the material during a two-year stay in Japan as a research professor.

A directory of inns, a program for a wrestling match, a booklet of directions for etiquette during ceremonial processions, an accordion-pleated travel guide, hand-painted village maps, a social register, a libretto, and instructions for cutting silk are among the handwritten and painted items, colorful woodcuts, and lithographs selected from Dr. Rudofsky's collection.

Among the outstanding examples of vernacular graphic art in the exhibition are the Japanese maps, which, unlike ours, furnish far more than topographic information. They are a combination of Duncan Hines and Dun and Bradstreet. Distances between villages are indicated as well as resting places of pilgrims and emperors and credit ratings of landlords and townships. There are maps of shrines, temples, hunting grounds, and reclaimed farm land.

As a rule, old Japanese maps have no top and bottom; being unfolded on the floor, they read from border to center. Elevations and plan often melt into each other; symbols range from abstract to naturalistic, and calligraphy blackens the sky. Roads often brush the supernatural, listing days particularly auspicious for travel and those to be shunned.

Dr. Rudofsky is an architect, engineer, visiting critic at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Yale University, lecturer, and author. He has been guest director of several Museum of Modern Art exhibitions, including the controversial "Are Clothes Modern?". At present he is preparing exhibitions for the Museum on "Roads" and "Stairs".

The exhibition has been organized by Mildred Constantine, Associate Curator of Graphic Design of the Department of Architecture and Design and has been installed by Dr. Rudofsky. "Japanese Vernacular Graphics" has been made possible through the cooperation of the Japan Society. It will be sent around the country by the Museum's Department of Circulating Exhibitions, which was aided by a grant from the CBS Foundation, the organization through which the Columbia Broadcasting System makes charitable contributions.

For additional information and photographs contact Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York 19, N. Y. CI 5-8900.