

The Museum of Modern Art

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RECENT JAPANESE POSTERS FROM THE COLLECTION

Through April 16, 1990

An exhibition of Japanese posters from the past twenty years is on view at The Museum of Modern Art through April 16, 1990. Organized by Christopher Mount, cataloguer, Department of Architecture and Design, RECENT JAPANESE POSTERS FROM THE COLLECTION features exemplary work by twenty-two prominent contemporary designers. Drawn entirely from the Museum's design holdings, the exhibition is made possible by a grant from Japan Air Lines.

Since the early 1970s, Japan has emerged in the forefront of graphic design, producing some of the most exuberant, inventive, and fascinating posters in the world. The country's mastery of the poster form combines the legacy of its venerable printmaking tradition with the distinctive artistic sensibility of its designers. As Japan has strengthened its ties to the West, some designers have borrowed popular images from foreign cultures, while others continue to depend on traditional motifs. All the works display a characteristically Japanese emphasis on two-dimensionality and precision, as well as exquisite craftsmanship.

RECENT JAPANESE POSTERS FROM THE COLLECTION consists of seventy-five posters by three generations of artists, including Shigeo Fukuda, Yusaku Kamekura, Kazumasa Nagai, Makoto Saito, Koichi Sato, Ikko Tanaka, and Tadanori Yokoo. The broad variety of styles represented ranges from bold and colorful to elegant and refined. Posters by Yokoo, for example, are extremely complex and feature multiple layers of images. Sato's posters possess an almost

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spiritual quality. More conservative designers like Tanaka create elegant works for cultural events using simple calligraphy and the Noh theater mask. Other, primarily younger, designers--including Akihiko Tsukamoto and Akira Inada--are strongly influenced by the Pop Art movement of the 1960s.

Coinciding with the Year of Design in Japan, the exhibition reveals the unusually high level of artistic expression typical of the country's designers. By applying sophisticated printing techniques to one of their oldest traditional art forms--the woodblock print--contemporary designers produce posters with colors and surfaces that are surprisingly rich for a temporal and commercial object. Although some of the posters in this exhibition advertise such products as cosmetics, most are self-promotional or for cultural activities, commissions which allow the designers their greatest creative freedom.

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For further information or photographic materials, contact the Department of Public Information, 212/708-9750.