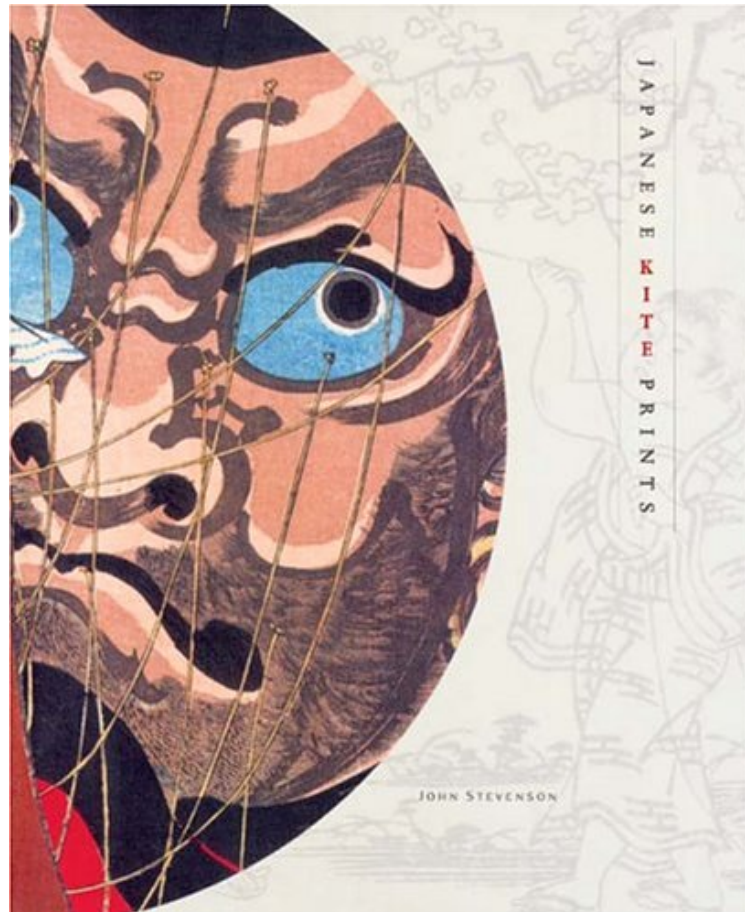


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## Japanese Kite Prints: Selections from the Skinner Collection

*John A. Stevenson*

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**John A. Stevenson : Japanese Kite Prints: Selections from the Skinner Collection** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Japanese Kite Prints: Selections from the Skinner Collection:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A nice book but not exactly what the title suggests.By T. GoodThis is a beautiful book but wasn't exactly what I had thought it was going to be. I was expecting more of a collection of the actual designs that have appeared on kites (only a few are included) but it was mostly a collection of woodblock prints that have an image of a kite somewhere in the image. In some cases, this is a really tiny view of a kite in the background. As a study of Japanese art it is a wonderful book, but as a collection of actual kite prints I believe the title is misleading. I have yet to read the text yet, I expect it will be informative. It is wonderfully bound and printed and is a nice coffee table book but if you are looking for a collection of actual prints of the designs on Japanese kites it is my opinion you should look for a different book.And if you happen to find a just such a book, I would appreciate it if you could drop me a line with the title!7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Informative, engaging study of kites in Japanese cultureBy Henry BerryFlying kites was a part of the traditional culture of the major Japanese city of

Edo (present-day Tokyo). Also a center for traditional Japanese printmaking, it was natural that kites and kite-flying would often be depicted on prints. Stevenson, who has spent much time in Asia, treats the intertwined subjects of kites and prints with a historical overview that includes frequent discussions of particular kites and prints. "These kites [depicted in a print] must be large: the kite the young men are flying requires two to control the line, with a third looping the line into a basket." Besides depicting ceremonial or recreational kite-flying, prints could also use kites symbolically, as when one artist suggests that confetti falling from a kite could be seeds being scattered over a field by farmers hoping for a good harvest. Such symbolisms indicate the meaningful place held by kites in the culture, almost as if they were religious or ritualistic objects. Stevenson's narrative and analyses for newcomers to the subject or advanced students complemented by colorful prints and details of them, including a number of large fold-outs, brings this somewhat specialized subject to life. With the author's special interest in kites as a part of Asian culture and his many years living in Asia, the subject seems second nature to him. He writes about it both naturally and knowledgeably, as if one were listening to an absorbing lecturer.

Color woodblock prints vibrantly convey the popular urban culture of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Edo, now called Tokyo. In a book that brings together two of Edo's most colorful traditions, prints and kites, John Stevenson celebrates the charm and significance of the mass-produced but often elegant broadsheets known as ukiyo-e. The term means "pictures of the floating world," a pun on a Buddhist concept of the fleeting world of desires that is, coincidentally but poetically, appropriate for a study of kites borne on the wind. Edo artists experimented with woodblock-printing techniques during the eighteenth century as kite-flying became increasingly popular. Each influenced the other: kite-makers copied woodblock-print designs to decorate their creations of bamboo, cloth, and paper, and printers used images of kites in their designs. The prints from the Skinner Collection illustrated in this book are products of Tokugawa Edo (1603–1867) and Meiji Tokyo (1868–1912). They record highlights of the Kabuki theater, brothels, and Sumo wrestling, enthusiastically presenting star actors and celebrity courtesans and vignettes of everyday life. These images capture for us the character of life as it was lived and imagined by the printmakers and kite-fliers of Old Japan. It seems that everyone thrills to the sight of a kite straining upward into the sky, and woodblock prints are perhaps the most accessible form of traditional Japanese visual culture; kite aficionados and lovers of Japanese art alike will be delighted by this study.

From Publishers Weekly In order to enter the Drachen Foundation's Skinner Collection, a Japanese woodblock print must contain a depiction of a kite, whether airborne or earthbound. These 96 selections from the Seattle-based collection by Stevenson, former acting curator at the Seattle Art Museum, stretch almost 1,300 years, from A.D. 713 to the present, and are absolutely buoyant and arresting. Beautifully printed on glossy stock, one to a page with facing page text, the reproductions are sharp, allowing one to take in the expressive curves of calligraphy as well as the vivid yellows and reds and deep blacks and blues of the ink. Kites fly at New Year's festivals, appear with Kabuki actors on ad-like posters, sail between a watchtower and Mt. Fuji, trail behind geisha and servant, carry men to "pleasure quarters" and (in a recent print) extol the virtues of condoms. Stevenson's text is spare and informative—even someone with no knowledge of ukiyo-e, or "images of the floating world," as Japanese woodblock prints are called, will be soon be aloft. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "This volume is indispensable for collectors and connoisseurs of Japanese woodblock prints."?Choice