



Issue 01
05-2019

The
Complete
Shunga
Legacy of
**Katsushika
Hokusai**
(1760-1849)



Issue 01
05-2019



The
Complete
Shunga
Legacy of
**Katsushika
Hokusai**
(1760-1849)

Get our latest
updates on shunga
such as new
articles, contests
and other events at
shungagallery.com



Copyright © 2019

Design and lay out: Haags Bureau
First print: April 2019

No part of this publication may be reproduced and/or published by means of printing, photocopying, microfilm, scan, electronic copy or in any other way, without prior permission from the author and publisher.

References & sources:

- Japanese Erotic Fantasies – Sexual Imagery of the Edo Period by C. Uhlenbeck and M. Winkel.
- The Complete Ukiyo-e Shunga (Vol.1, 7, 13 and 23) by Richard Lane & Y. Hayashi.
- Shunga, the Art of Love in Japan by Tom and Mary Evans.
- Hokusai by Gian Carlo Calza.
- Phaidon Press.
- Scholten Japanese Art.

Issue 01
05-2019

Contents

The Complete Shunga Legacy of Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849)	7
Surimono - Egoyomi (Calendar print)	9
Shunga Books	13
Pining for Love (Kinoue no komatsu)	15
Gods of Intercourse (Mampuku wagojin)	19
Overlapping Skirts (Tsuma gasane) and The Jewelled Merkin (Tamakazura)	21
Oban Series	23
Brocade of the East (Azuma nishiki)	25
Models of Loving Couples (Tsui no hinagata)	27
Plovers Above the Waves (Namichidori) and The Adonis Plant (Fukujuso)	31
The Horny God of Izumo (En musubi Izumo no sugi)	35
Diving Girl Ravished by Octopuses	39
Other shunga prints inspired by Hokusai Octopus design	47

Get our latest updates on shunga such as new articles, contests and other events at shungagallery.com

Issue 01
05-2019

The Complete Shunga Legacy of Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849)

The
Complete
Shunga
Legacy of
**Katsushika
Hokusai**
(1760-1849)

Katsushika Hokusai's talent, mania and perseverance for portraying nature in all its facets was the reason he excelled in all *ukiyo-e* genres including the erotic subject of **shunga**.

This was an important genre of Japanese painting, prints and book illustration, and to which, at the time, no moral stigma was attached. His early work (1780s) at first in *shunga* illustration was executed in a style close to his teacher Shunsho (1726-1792). Unlike his later erotica, these works are often signed and otherwise would have been difficult to distinguish from the work fellow-students in the Shunsho school.

Get our latest
updates on shunga
such as new
articles, contests
and other events at
shungagallery.com



Figure 1

A curious countryman is peeking through a window of a bathhouse where a couple is making love, c. 1805 (From the Rene Scholten Collection)



Figure 2

The Complete Shunga Legacy of **Katsushika Hokusai** (1760-1849)

After Hokusai's training at the Shunsho school, a hiatus of 10 years, we begin to discover unsigned erotic pieces in the characteristic Hokusai style, in the miniature-*surimono* (commissioned print) size called *egoyomi* (calendar print). These small, private editions for the devotees of the time were originally published in sets of twelve prints, enclosed in wrappers or envelopes – usually now lost – which included the title of the set, often the date, and sometimes even the pseudonym of the artist. The printing is extremely subtle, and in materials and techniques they are analogous to *surimono*.

The specific sequence of the 'long' (thirty-day) or 'short' (twenty-nine) months of the coming year was indicated in their composition or through the incorporation of numerals, sometimes in rebus form. Around 1800 the device of *egoyomi*, or 'pictorial calendar prints', was adopted by *shunga* designers.

Some of these miniature *shunga* feature an ingenious flip-up device in which a separately printed little flap is pasted to the print, providing both discreet and indiscreet versions of the same design. This flap was, however, often lost – or removed by unsubtle aficionados (a complete example can be seen in fig. 1 and 2).

Get our latest updates on shunga such as new articles, contests and other events at shungagallery.com

It will be obvious that this kind of 'play-print' (adult toys, so to speak) is not susceptible to easy reproduction, and the tactile joy of flipping must be left to the reader's imagination. This device – termed *shikake-e* or 'trick-picture', and sometimes a feature of later *shunga*

The
Complete
Shunga
Legacy of
**Katsushika
Hokusai**
(1760-1849)

books as well – is always most ingeniously contrived (and provides vivid evidence that Japanese dexterity in export markets should not have been so unexpected).

One cannot claim that these minuscule calendar prints (sometimes, only one of the set includes the actual date) are important works of art: merely that they are of higher quality, more enjoyable and creative than most of the greeting cards one sees nowadays. Such colourful little adult toys cater to people's latent voyeurism and delight in games. They are not ostentatiously erotic. With a set of these playful gems in hand, one is all too readily transported to another and more leisurely age, when the erotic was merely one of humanity's natural pleasures.

It must be commented that the influence of the woodblock-carver increases in proportion to the miniaturization of a tableau. In the absence of signature, with such tiny prints (smaller than a postcard) absolute authentication of the artist is not easy. To weed out the works of pupils (Sori III and Shinsai for the early ones, Hokusai II, Taito II and Eisen for the later) is not a simple task, even for the specialist.

Get our latest
updates on shunga
such as new
articles, contests
and other events at
shungagallery.com

Issue 01
05-2019

Shunga Books

The
Complete
Shunga
Legacy of
**Katsushika
Hokusai**
(1760-1849)

With most of Hokusai's shunga books, however – to which we now turn – there is rather more certainty of authorship. And like most of the artist's more impressive erotica these are clustered together in the years c. 1812-21. The master was now in his mid-fifties: perhaps his own sexual powers declining; or perhaps simply a rejuvenation of youthful passion; but, above all, no doubt, stimulated.

Get our latest
updates on shunga
such as new
articles, contests
and other events at
shungagallery.com



Figure 3



Figure 4

The
Complete
Shunga
Legacy of
**Katsushika
Hokusai**
(1760-1849)

Hokusai's first datable book is *Kinoe no komatsu*, c.1814. Like all of the later Hokusai shunga books, it was issued in three slim volumes with five or so double-page colour plates to each fascicle. As is customary, the text takes the form of a novelette recounting the erotic adventures of various heroes and heroines. The complicated plots – and Hokusai's probable involvement in their composition – must form the subject for a later study (he was fond, for example, of vividly employed erotic onomatopoeia); we can here only cite a few characteristic illustrations. Off course, *Pining for Love* is most famous because of the > *Diving Girl Ravished by Octopuses* - design but it includes more masterful scenes as well like for instance the lesbian intermezzo (see fig. 3) with its deliberate composition and use of colour and also the Chinese Couple (see fig. 4).

It is important to emphasize that there had been no tradition of nude art in the Far East. The naked form appeared only incidentally: in scenes of disaster and pillage, or of bathing, for example, but with hardly any erotic connotations; and in *shunga*, where the situations were erotic but the nudity was not. (To be sure, at periods of government 'reforms' semi-nude depictions sometimes flourished briefly in *ukiyo-e*, in reaction to the bans) Nor was there any long tradition of sketching from life – or one of the nude per se. Thus, not having studied anatomy or the originals in any systematic manner, the Japanese artist was at a disadvantage in attempting to depict the human form; and Hokusai was certainly one of the pioneers in this category, as he was in many others.

Get our latest
updates on shunga
such as new
articles, contests
and other events at
shungagallery.com

The
Complete
Shunga
Legacy of
**Katsushika
Hokusai**
(1760-1849)

Indeed, this opportunity to attempt a new genre, a new approach to the human form, may well have been one of his principal stimuli to such elaborate erotic productions. There was, in fact, no particular stigma – social or legal – attached to erotic art at the time, nor to the artists who produced it. This was but another assignment. Yet with Hokusai, each new commission meant a chance to explore new worlds of graphic meaning, well above and beyond the requirements of the particular task in hand.

Get our latest
updates on shunga
such as new
articles, contests
and other events at
shungagallery.com



Figure 5
 'Lad with Ladies' from the series The Gods of Intercourse, c.1821



Figure 6
 'Post-rape scene' from the series The Gods of Intercourse, c.1821

The
 Complete
 Shunga
 Legacy of
**Katsushika
 Hokusai**
 (1760-1849)

The other major work among the Hokusai's *shunga* books will be found in the *Gods of Intercourse (Mampuku wagojin)*, datable to 1821. The printing is (at least in the early editions) of the finest quality and the illustrations, too, are uniformly excellent. Unlike the previous work, this one features a number of multiple scenes: double pairs of couples, onlookers, and the like. The technique had appeared earlier in classical *shunga* scrolls, and Hokusai adapts it to fill each frame to the limit in complex composition. Such a scene is that of fig. 5, where the young hero pleasures a matron at right, as another plays with herself at left. Again the combination of kimono-patters and minuscule calligraphy will doubtless seem too busy for the Western viewer: the fault of the medium, not the artist. From the same volume, a figure (see fig. 6) features one of the heroines of the novelette, lying exhausted at the roadside after being violently raped. The tableau is not all that different from the *Diving Girl Ravished by Octopuses* image and conveys a curious sense of quietude following outrage.

Get our latest
 updates on shunga
 such as new
 articles, contests
 and other events at
shungagallery.com

Overlapping Skirts (Tsuma gasane) and The Jewelled Merkin (Tamakazura)

The
Complete
Shunga
Legacy of
**Katsushika
Hokusai**
(1760-1849)

Two lesser known *shunga* books of the period by Hokusai are *Overlapping Skirts* (see fig. 7) and *The Jewelled Merkin* (see fig. 8). Both books are not in the same league as his other books in authority and style (and the second suggests Eisen, who sometimes imitated Hokusai at this period); but given the intervention of the woodblock carver they cannot, for the present, be so readily removed from the Hokusai canon.



Figure 7
From the series *Overlapping Skirts*, c.1820



Figure 8
From the series *The Jewelled Wig*, c.1820

Get our latest
updates on shunga
such as new
articles, contests
and other events at
shungagallery.com

Issue 01
05-2019

Oban Series

The
Complete
Shunga
Legacy of
**Katsushika
Hokusai**
(1760-1849)

Hokusai's remaining – and more major – *shunga* oeuvre are in the album format: sets of twelve prints, usually in the larger, *oban* size, plus brief texts. Bound in accordion fashion, the plates are easily dismantled and many are thus scattered through the worldwide collections.

Get our latest
updates on shunga
such as new
articles, contests
and other events at
shungagallery.com



Figure 9
'O-Kama and Saiza' from the series Brocade of the East, c.1812

The
Complete
Shunga
Legacy of
**Katsushika
Hokusai**
(1760-1849)

The first *oban* album of this period, c.1812, unsigned but in Hokusai's distinctive style, is the *Brocade of the East (Azuma nishiki)*. The album commences with a brief preface featuring elegant calligraphy, summarizing the classical themes of sexual love – from the China of Yang Kuei-fei to the Japan of Prince Narihira – and of their depiction in ukiyo-e from the shunga albums of Moronobu to the master of the present work (who is not, however, cited by name). The preface is signed with the facetious pseudonym Jokotei ('Skirt-chaser'), possibly indentifiable with the minor novelist Jujitei Sankyu – or, with the young Eisen.

Hokusai here (see fig. 9) presents a variation on his favored composition, with the maiden resting her head and arm on a lacquered box at left, as her young lover commences to mount her from the rear. Interestingly enough – alone of the plates in the album – the scene depicts a famous couple from the contemporary *kabuki* stage (and even earlier, from the puppet theater): O-Koma and Saiza. (A pair also immortalized in a famous Yoshitoshi diptych: the hairdresser Saiza suddenly struck by O-Kama's beauty, as she however, seem to have been made for literary purposes, but simply to take advantage of the current popularity of these two characters in contemporary kabuki. Compositionally the scene is again adroitly unified – though O-Kama's face does not much mirror the passionate content of her conversation.

Get our latest
updates on shunga
such as new
articles, contests
and other events at
shungagallery.com

Models of Loving Couples (Tsui no hinagata)



Figure 10
'Festive lovers' (Sheet 2) from the series
Models of the Loving Couples, c.1814

The
Complete
Shunga
Legacy of
**Katsushika
Hokusai**
(1760-1849)

The most famous of these albums is *Models of Loving Couples (Tsui no hinagata)* dating from c.1814. Each plate of the album is filled with the forms of amorous couples; the compositions, enhanced by bold yet tasteful colouring, are often striking, with the texts (comprising the participants' conversation) rather less obtrusive than in the smaller books. Each plate of the album is filled with the forms of amorous couples; the compositions, enhanced by bold yet tasteful colouring, are often striking, with the texts (comprising the participants' conversation) rather less obtrusive than in the smaller books.

The word *tsui* can be interpreted as 'couple' or 'male and female pairs'. It is also possible that Hokusai intended a wordplay as the word *tsui* (written here *tsuhi*) can also be pronounced *tsubi*, an archaic term for 'vulva'. One of the plates in the work is signed 'Shishoku Ganko'. This has been interpreted as a pseudonym for Hokusai, even though this theory cannot be substantiated.

In this tightly filled frame (fig. 10), a geisha and her secret lover meet at festival time – he is sporting a half-opened fan and cape, regalia for performance of the Lion Dance. The tension of the situation is well expressed by the girl's passionate kiss (in Japan, reserved for intimate contact only), and in the strategic placement of the man's hand. (The reader unfamiliar with the Orient may require time to differentiate the participants' various appendages, but it is worth the effort).

Get our latest
updates on shunga
such as new
articles, contests
and other events at
shungagallery.com

The
Complete
Shunga
Legacy of
**Katsushika
Hokusai**
(1760-1849)

As is customary in *shunga*, the sex organs are depicted in exaggerated size: an artistic device that is perhaps a vestige of ancient phallic worship, perhaps symbolic of the protagonists' highly aroused state; and certainly, an aid to focusing the composition.

Richard Lane on this Hokusai design: "I would myself certainly consider this the masterpiece of the album: its composition is impeccable, its lovers' powerful emotions at their peak – a fact most forcefully apparent even to the casual viewer. The scene represents, in fact, that true acme of erotic pleasure: when overpowering passions and expectations fill the entire bodies of the protagonists, making their subsequent 'climax' more an afterthought than a main event.[...] (The Complete Ukiyo-e Shunga (Vol. 13) by Richard Lane).

Get our latest
updates on shunga
such as new
articles, contests
and other events at
shungagallery.com

Plovers Above the Waves (Namichidori) and The Adonis Plant (Fukujuso)

The
Complete
Shunga
Legacy of
**Katsushika
Hokusai**
(1760-1849)

From the late 1810s, Hokusai's *shunga* style turns even more to massive figures and monumental compositions, filling – and sometimes reaching beyond – the frame of the print. His major work of this later period is popularity known, from the pattern on its decorated cover, as *Plovers Above the Waves (Namichidori)*, c.1828. This significant production exists in several editions, but the earliest is probably that issued under the title *The Adonis Plant (Fukujuso, a New Year's Symbol)*, c.1822. This album is characterized by its adult nature: there are hardly any scenes of young, romantic love, and indeed, there is a preponderance of matrons – including widows and unfaithful wives – at dalliance with their husbands or lovers.

Stylistically, the album is characterized by massive, stunning figures, which literally fill each sheet from corner to corner – what space remains being filled with the participants' vividly phrased sexual conversation. In the better-known and more luxuriant edition of this album – *Plovers Above the Waves* – the woodblocks are recarved and the text is deleted, being replaced by an opulent background of mica dust; hand-colouring is added here and there, and the vulva details are also hand-applied (whether by Hokusai or assistant is unclear).

Here (see fig. 11) a more mature couple – husband and pregnant wife – are seen at passionate foreplay: the woman urging the playful man to get on with the main act – forthwith directing him in the details of every desired variation of penetration.

Get our latest
updates on shunga
such as new
articles, contests
and other events at
shungagallery.com



Figure 11
'Suckling Lover' from the series 'Plovers Above the Waves' (Sheet 3), c.1828,
sumizuri-e, hand-colored with mica'



Figure 12
'Bathhouse Rape' (Sheet 7) from the series The Adonis Plant, c.1822.

The
Complete
Shunga
Legacy of
**Katsushika
Hokusai**
(1760-1849)

This is another of the most effective designs in the set displaying a lot of erotic power. Suckling scenes are rather frequent in Hokusai and one is reminded immediately of the charming illustration of matron and young lover in > *Manpuku wagojin*.

Richard Lane: “ (fig. 12) What a strange way to commence a *shunga* album! – this is real **Hokusai** ! A reclining voluptuous and mature female holds her plump aggressive little boy in her arms; her skirt in disarray and her private parts on full display.

Many are the connoisseurs who have enjoyed tis famous print for its unusual theme and masterful, wave-patterned kimono (the shadowy plover-pattern perhaps the inspiration for the later, ‘Nami-chidori’ nickname for the album); but I suspect there are few who have bothered to read the text: the mother – á la Molly Bloom of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* – reminisces on the sexual pleasures of the night before: first reacting a full list of the ten most common types of phallus and finally concluding her own husband’s is the best of all: the result, the doubtless, of her prayers to Buddha.

Whether this monologue is spoken aloud or not, we do not know. But we are suddenly awakened from our reverie as the child pipes up: “When I get big, I’m going to be a great lover too: teach me how to do it like Mommy and Daddy did last night!...” [...] (The Complete Ukiyo-e Shunga (Vol.23) by Richard Lane).

Get our latest
updates on shunga
such as new
articles, contests
and other events at
shungagallery.com

The Horny God of Izumo

(En musubi Izumo no sugi)

The
Complete
Shunga
Legacy of
**Katsushika
Hokusai**
(1760-1849)

The first edition of the *The Horny God* album is so rare that up to now only Hokusai expert Dr. Richard Lane has seen the set in its totality. The prints are in the smaller *chuban* size and date from 1822. Again, its visuals are characteristic of Hokusai's final stage of *shunga* production. The protagonists are depicted in increasingly massive fashion, as though sculpted from blocks of wood or marble, and here Hokusai foreshadows one of the trends of modern sculpture, while admittedly considerably reducing the passionate content of his *shunga*.

One may well inquire here as to what drove Hokusai to such increasing extremes in the depiction of sex at this period? Obviously, the commissions were there: ukiyo-e artists did not paint just for fun, nor publish for their own amusement. But there is more to this remarkable interval of erotic activity than a simple job to be done. One thinks here, inevitably, of Picasso (who was, incidentally, an avid collector of Japanese *shunga*), and of his similar burst of erotic energy in his later years; and, without wishing to go any further into psychoanalysis than I have already, I think it will be clear that, at least, one of the keys to Hokusai's personality is to be found in his *shunga* of this surprising decade. Scholars who shy from this difficult theme will do so only at the risk of missing half their man.

Get our latest updates on shunga such as new articles, contests and other events at shungagallery.com

This striking tableau (fig. 13), the last of the set, features a vigorous, attractive widow who calmly determines the residual sexual powers of her three admirers. All are shown with their penis supporting two heavy strings of Chinese coins.



Figure 13
Meiji impression of Hokusai's *The Horny God of Izumo* (Sheet 12), c.1890.
The blue frame featuring birds and flowers was not part of the first edition published in c.1822.

The
Complete
Shunga
Legacy of
**Katsushika
Hokusai**
(1760-1849)

This device was not only to attest to the men's capability in sex, but also to their condition as gigolos. Their complaints are laid bare in the text: "I've never seen such an insatiable woman. Seven times, and she still wants more; I've had enough...I feel dizzy". To which this redoubtable lady dryly comments, "You fellows are too young to give up so easily... after I finish a smoke, I'll give each of you tow more tries to prove your manhood".

And withal – as though to emphasize this resolute woman's powers of determination – her long smoking-pipe insistently pokes its red-hot bowl towards the array of reluctant, albeit well-rewarded, phalli. This is not, indeed, the usual image of the Yamato-nadeshiko, or demure Japanese female: an image which should, obviously, be tempered by that common saying of a generation or two ago: "Since the end of the War they've become much stronger: ladies' stockings – and Japanese womanhood" (Richard Lane).

Get our latest
updates on shunga
such as new
articles, contests
and other events at
shungagallery.com



Figure 14
'The dream of the fisherman's wife'

The
Complete
Shunga
Legacy of
**Katsushika
Hokusai**
(1760-1849)

Although Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) is most widely known for his great landscape prints (e.g. '36 Views of Mount Fuji') and *Manga Sketchbook* series, moreover his output of shunga was rather small in relation to his total production, they still can be ranked above the level of the erotic work of his contemporaries.

Hokusai started his active career in 1778 at the Shunsho school where he specialized himself in prints of stage scenes and illustrations for popular novels. His first erotic pictures are very similar to those of his master but in 1795, after Shunsho's death he developed his own aesthetic style. Hokusai's depiction of the human figure became more elongated adding an otherworldly expression imbued with a message of violent and impulsive action. The overwhelming impression these erotic works give is one of disquietness and disturbance.

One of Hokusai's greatest achievements in the erotic woodblock genre is his *Pining for Love* (Kinoue no komatsu), three book volumes (including 15 double color illustrations) published in 1814, which reflects his new type of human figure and containing his excellent masterpiece *Diving Girl Ravished by Octopuses* (aka. 'Dream of the Fisherman's Wife'). A design that stands in a class of its own. Despite the substantial quantity that has been written about this work, it remains one of those images which require neither advocacy nor analysis in order to illuminate its enigmatic effect.

Get our latest
updates on shunga
such as new
articles, contests
and other events at
shungagallery.com

The
Complete
Shunga
Legacy of
**Katsushika
Hokusai**
(1760-1849)

“Among the pictures is the terrifying plate of the nude form of a woman draped over seaweed-strewn rocks, swooning with pleasure. She is in such a state of abandon, sicut cadaver, that it is not at all easy to tell whether she is a victim of drowning or if her body is in truth alive. A huge octopus, with ghaslty pupils like black quarter moons, sucks at her nether regions, while another smaller octopus avidly devours her mouth”

(Edmond de Goncourt - 'The Art of Hokusai in Book Illustration, p.170).

“In Hokusai’s most famous shunga, a large octopus performs cunnilingus on a woman abalone diver or ama, and a smaller one, perhaps his offspring, kisses her and fondles one of her nipples with a tentacle. This print is testimony to how our interpretation of an image can be distorted when seen in isolation and without understanding the text. A recent study by Danielle Talerico (2001: 24-42) explains that this image was initially considered by Western collectors and scholars like Edmund de Goncourt, Jack Hillier and Richard Lane to represent a rape scene. Talerico’s study shows that an Edo audience would have associated the image with the story of Tamatori. In the legend, the abalone diver Tamatori sacrifices her life to save the Emperor by cutting open her breast, where she hides the jewel she has stolen from the Sea-Dragon King in his underwater Dragon Palace. The Sea-Dragon King is accompanied by all nature of sea creatures, including octopuses. The dialogues between the two creatures and the diver express mutual sexual enjoyment (see Talerico 2001: 37, for a complete translation)”.

(p. 161 in 'Japanese Erotic Fantasies' by C. Uhlenbeck and M. Winkel)

Get our latest
updates on shunga
such as new
articles, contests
and other events at
shungagallery.com

The
Complete
Shunga
Legacy of
**Katsushika
Hokusai**
(1760-1849)

“This illustration, of a woman with two octopuses, twin incubi, has lost none of his power to disturb (...) Despite the considerable amount that has been written about this work, all attempts to interpret and elucidate it end up by revealing more about the writer than about the original work. It remains one of those designs which require neither advocacy nor analysis in order to work its mysterious effect”.

(p.249 in ‘Shunga, the Erotic Art of Love in Japan’ by Tom and Mary Evans)

“...On the right, a large octopus ravishes the girl with androit cunnilingus, while a smaller octopus (his son?) assists earnestly at the left. Yet however bizarre the concept, the effect is neither comic nor pornographic; in this fantasy of a passionate shell diver, we discover a new facet of Hokusai’s genius and a consummate work of erotica”.

(Richard Lane - ‘Love’s Labour’s Found: The Erotic Art of Hokusai)

“The most beautiful Japanese erotic print that I know is truly frightening: it is of a Japanese woman mounted by an octopus; with its tentacles, the horrible beast sucks the tips of her breasts and rummages in her mouth, while its head drinks from her lower parts. The almost superhuman expression of agony and sorrow - which convulses this long, graceful female figure with aquiline nose - and the hysterical joy - which emanates at the same time from her forehead, from those eyes closed as in death - are admirable”.

(J.K. Huysman - 1889)

Get our latest
updates on shunga
such as new
articles, contests
and other events at
shungagallery.com

The
Complete
Shunga
Legacy of
**Katsushika
Hokusai**
(1760-1849)

While Hokusai's Octopus print is the most appraised erotic image in the history of Japanese art (most probably universal) it was not the debut of these three protagonists. In c.1786, Hokusai's teacher Shunsho designed a B & W book illustration, from the book series *Chiyo-dameshi*, which already depicted a diving girl and two horny octopuses (see illustration!). The giant octopus uses one of his tentacles to penetrate the girl's vagina while giving tongue with the small octopus watching from a distance. In the composition of Shunsho's image the three are shown in an 'establishing shot' and therefore the viewer is less involved with the events taking place especially when you compare it with the close-up composition of Hokusai's masterpiece.

Get our latest
updates on shunga
such as new
articles, contests
and other events at
shungagallery.com



Figure 15
Katsukawa Shunsho (1726-1792), *Chiyo-dameshi*, c.1786



Figure 16
Utagawa school, c.1840



Figure 17
Utagawa school, c.1855

Issue 01
05-2019

Other shunga prints inspired by Hokusai Octopus design

The
Complete
Shunga
Legacy of
**Katsushika
Hokusai**
(1760-1849)

Get our latest
updates on shunga
such as new
articles, contests
and other events at
shungagallery.com

Katsushika Hokusai's talent, mania and perseverance for portraying nature in all its facets was the reason he excelled in all ukiyo-e genres including the erotic subject of shunga.

This was an important genre of Japanese painting, prints and book illustration, and to which, at the time, no moral stigma was attached. His early work (1780s) at first in shunga illustration was executed in a style close to his teacher Shunsho (1726-1792). Unlike his later erotica, these works are often signed and otherwise would have been difficult to distinguish from the work fellow-students in the Shunsho school.