Heroine Koharu by Chikamatsu Monzaemon



Woodblock Print depicting Heroine Koharu

"*Bijin-ga, which means 'beautiful person,' is a generic term for pictures of beautiful women in Japanese art, especially woodblock print making. The image from the Chikamatsu series shown here – Heroine Koharu – conforms precisely to this Bijin-ga tradition*"

The series commonly known as Supplements of "The Complete Works of Chikamatsu Monzaemon" is comprised of 18 Japanese woodblock prints by assorted artists. Each design illustrates a scene or character from famous works by the renowned Japanese author Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1623-1724), who was considered the “Japanese Shakespeare.”



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These prints were produced between 1922 and 1926, and the contributing artists include some of the most noted artists of the period, such as Kitano Tsunetomi, Ishikawa Toraji, Kikuchi Keigetsu, Yamamura Toyonari, and Kaburagi Kiyokata. Important female painters of the period, Shima Seien and Uemura Shoen, also contributed designs for the series.

The blocks for the prints from this series were carved by Yamagishi Kazue and printed by Nishimura Kumakichi. Designs from the series are illustrated both in *The New Wave – Prints from the Robert O. Muller Collection*, and *The Female Image: 20th Century Beauties in Japanese Prints*. Many of the designs in the set have a printed grey border, reminiscent of the brocade borders found on hanging scrolls. In addition, many of the designs have deluxe highlights, including gofun, mica, and metallics. Of all the prints in the series, those most desired by collectors and consequently considered the most valuable, are the prints depicting Japanese beauties in what is called the Bijin-ga tradition. Bijin-ga, which means 'beautiful person,' is a generic term for pictures of beautiful women in Japanese art, especially woodblock print making. The image from the Chikamatsu series shown here – Heroine Koharu – conforms precisely to this Bijin-ga tradition.