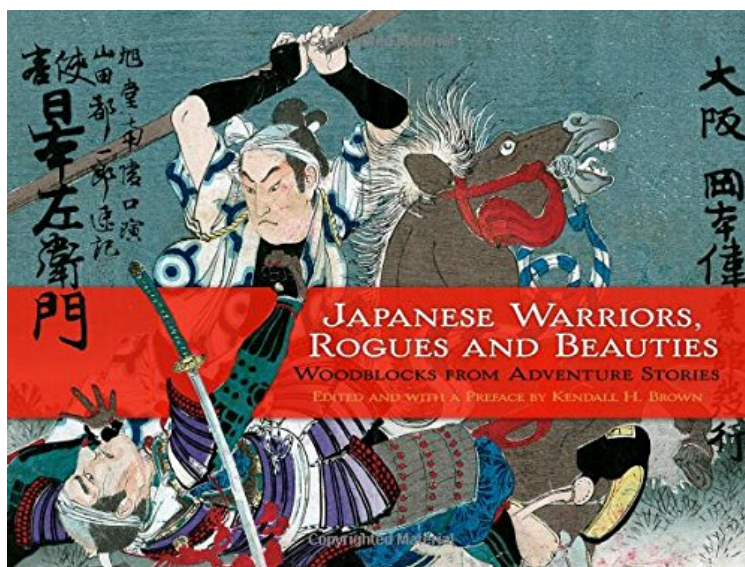


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Japanese Warriors, Rogues and Beauties: Woodblocks from Adventure Stories (Dover Fine Art, History of Art)

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Heroes, villains, and damsels in distress abound in these richly colored, dramatic images from the Japanese equivalent of dime-store novels. These illustrations were selected from woodblock-printed covers and frontispiece illustrations from 64 popular books published in Osaka from 1898 through 1903. They include samurai and strong men, demons and detectives, courtesans, sumo wrestlers, and other vivid characters in scenarios ranging from romantic to grotesquely violent. Printed in the color woodblock method in use since the late eighteenth century, they provide a link between an ancient storytelling tradition and the beginning of mass-published popular literature. Created during the Meiji era (1868-1912), when Japanese society was changing dramatically with the influx of Western technology and values, these images appealed to a wide audience of newly literate readers. Their scenes of retribution and sacrifice reflect a modern consciousness of Japanese history and a longing for an idealized vision of the past, marked by traditional values of loyalty, filial piety, self-sacrifice, and chivalry. Long considered a disposable form of popular culture, these books were not carefully preserved or collected. This collection, assembled by an expert on Japanese art,

offers a rare glimpse of a newly rediscovered art form.