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The Art of Transformation

Illuminating Japan's Industrial Revolution with *Nishiki-e* Prints

September 15-November 20, 2009

When Commodore Perry's black ships anchored at Edo Bay in 1853, Japan's era of seclusion came to an abrupt end. Almost overnight, the island nation was inundated with western ideas, goods, and technology. Railway and postal services were established and Western-style factories were built. More people moved to the cities and, with increasing leisure time and disposable income, Japan's modern society began to take shape.

A key architect of this emerging modern society, **Eiichi Shibusawa** recognized that strong international relations were another essential component to the country's modernization. A dynamic force in the industrial world, he helped to establish hundreds of enterprises, social welfare and education organizations. When the focus of his nation building efforts shifted from economic modernization to Japan's place in the international community, he devoted his extraordinary energies to building positive relationships with nations he saw as important actors on the world stage. In 1909, he led the first delegation of Japanese businessmen to the United States, where they were warmly welcomed by leaders in every field.

In celebration of the centennial anniversary of that historic exchange, over 50 color woodblock reprints from the Shibusawa Memorial Foundation will be on display, revealing the foundations of the nation's modern infrastructure, industrialization, and urbanization. Historic images and articles highlighting the Japanese Commercial Commission's trip to the United States will accompany these vibrant works of art in capturing the dynamic encounter of cultures that took place during the Meiji and Taisho eras of Japan.

Japan Information & Culture Center, Embassy of Japan • Lafayette Centre III • 1155 21st Street NW • Washington DC, 20036

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