

PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TOKYO, MARCH 4, 2014 -- The first-ever large-scale retrospective on early Japanese photographer Shimooka Renjō opens today at the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography and runs through May 6.

Shimooka Renjō (1823-1914) was a pioneer of photography in Japan who worked mostly in Yokohama, yet until recent years few photographs have been positively attributed to him and little information on his life and work has been available in English. This exhibit, which brings together over 250 of his works, including paintings, will be of interest especially to those who collect or curate old Japanese photographs. Renjō had many foreign customers in Yokohama and it is believed that many of his photographs are as yet unidentified in collections outside of Japan.

The exhibition catalog is published by Kokushokankokai Inc., with full English translation. More information in English at <http://syabi.com/e/contents/exhibition/index-2144.html>.

Exhibit title: A retrospective on Shimooka Renjō, 100 years after his death.

Period: Tuesday, March 4 - Tuesday, May 6, 2014

Closed: Monday, or Tuesday when Monday is a national holiday

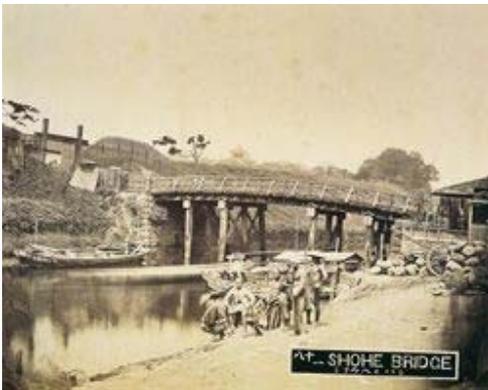
Admission : Adults ¥700 / College Students ¥600 / High School and Junior High School Students, and those over 65 ¥500

Press inquiries, including requests for images, to the museum's PR staff. Email: press-info@syabi.com. Telephone +81 (0)3-3280-0034.

Press images:



Shimooka Renjō, "Woman arranging plum branches" c.1863-1876, Albumen print. Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography Collection.



Shimooka Renjō, "Shohe Bridge" (Shōheibashi) from Shimooka Renjō/Usui Shuzaburō Album. 1868. Albumen print. JCIJ.

This photograph is believed to have been made at the same time that his student Yokoyama Matsusaburō was photographing Edo Castle, and is representative of Renjō's landscape photographs of Edo. It was included in Asahi Graph's 1925 special issue, "100 Years of Photography." The method he used to caption the photographs is very distinctive.



a) photograph envelope for Renjō studio
c.1868-1875, Numazu City Archives of
Meiji History Collection



b) stamp on the backing for a *carte-de-visite* photograph. C.
1863, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography Collection.

Renjō designed this mark after having a dream about a thatched-roof cottage under Mt. Fuji flanked by two trees, and a serpent looking into a pot. He heard from a missionary that the serpent is credited with teaching humans about chemistry, which pleased him greatly since chemistry is the basis of photography. The envelope on the right is from around the time his studio was located on Bentendōri. The backing on the right is from after he moved to Ōta-machi, also in Yokohama. Note how the lines are much finer compared to the mark on the envelope.



left) Shimooka Renjō, "Three craftsmen drinking." c. 1862-1876



right) Shimooka Renj, "Girl with umbrella." Albumen prints,
c. 1862-1876, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography Collection.



Shimooka Renjō, "The Four Accomplishments: Zither, Chess, Calligraphy and Painting." 1912. Color on paper. Kanagawa Prefectural Modern Art Museum Collection.

This is four-fold screen painting bears a stamp indicating that it was painted when Renjō was 91. Yet the lines are strong and his brushwork steady, making it clear that Renjō's kept his abilities as a painter even into his very last years.



Shimooka Renjō, "Portrait of Kimura Masanobu." 1862. Ambrotype. Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography Collection