

From Shen's Special Collection...

A Small Collection of Prints by Helen Hyde

-Written by April Shen

Helen Hyde (1868-1919) is among early American artists who went to live in Japan in order to study art and Japanese woodblock prints. She also lived many years in San Francisco and elsewhere in California. Her work was exhibited and collected by museums and institutions as well as by private collectors. The book "Helen Hyde" written by Tim Mason and Lyn Mason and published for the Smithsonian Institution Press shows many of her beautiful artworks in woodblock and color etching. Copies of all the prints in this small collection owned by April Shen can be seen in this book and all but one can be seen at the Smithsonian American Art Museum's website among all other prints. ¹

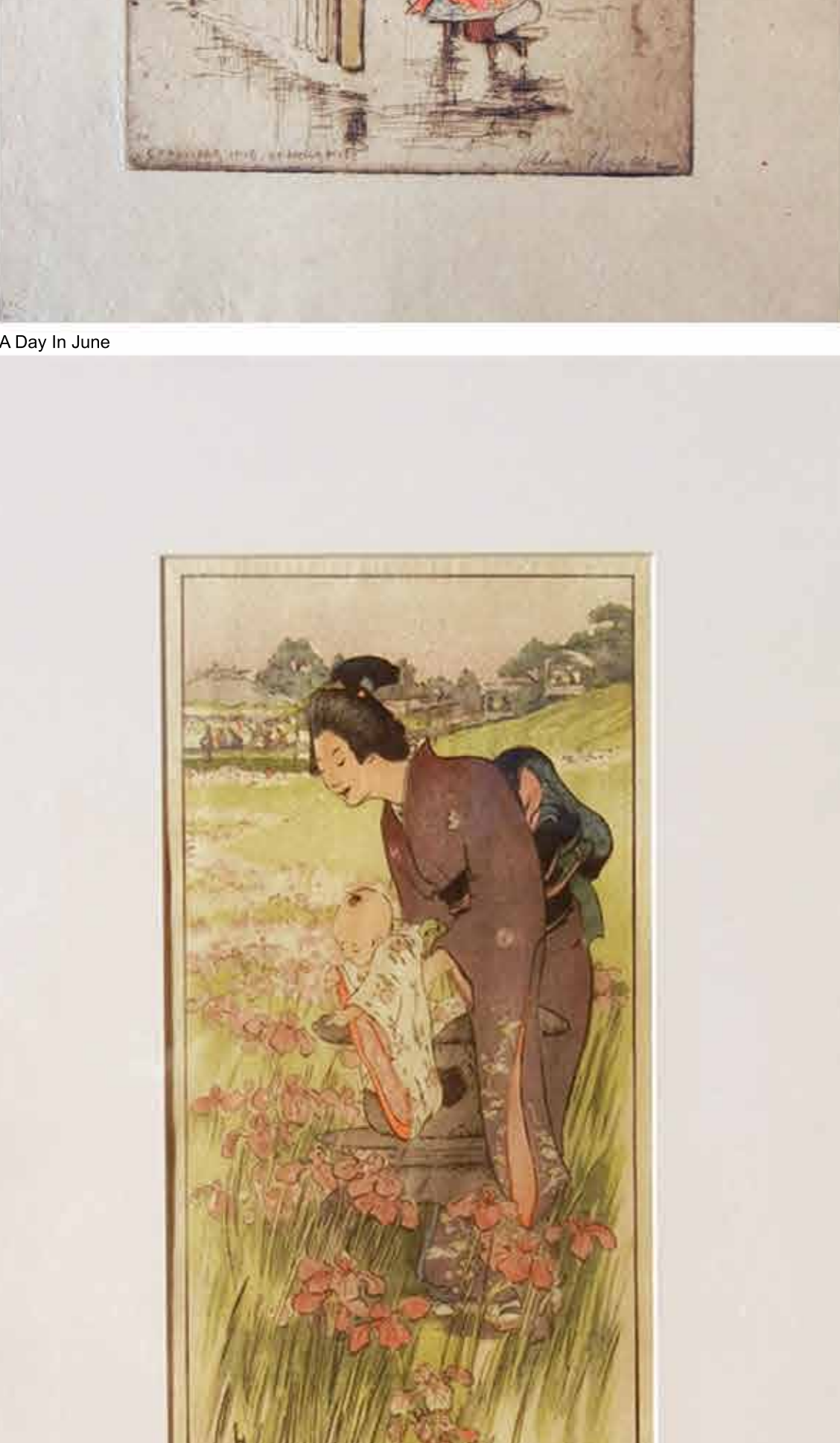
Helen worked a lot on the theme related to children and women. She also brought in the Mexican figure and subject in her prints which is somewhat unusual for Japanese style woodblock prints. Shen's collection of Helen Hyde's artwork currently consists of thirteen different woodblock prints, many are considered her major works, and one rarer color etching "The Bamboo Gate". (Photos shown below)

Almost all her works in this collection are in prime condition and were all purchased from one estate many years ago. At that time, I had already studied and created etching prints and color mono prints when this entire collection was presented to me for purchase. I even owned a very nice small printing press then which I stored at a friend's house and would now-and-then go and use the press to do art work. So, the media style of these woodblock prints (and the subject matter) came to me at a time when it was interesting to me even though I did not know who Helen Hyde was. It was without much thinking, I purchased this entire collection.

While there were quite a few western artists during the early 20th century whose artworks were influenced by Japanese art ^{2,3}, one artist came to my mind right away was Henri Matisse ⁴ (1869-1954). I had a deep impression since at a very young age of some of his artwork with very flat, almost non-dimensional kind of shapes, though bold and full of emotion. While Matisse's work was also influenced by Middle-Eastern art ⁵, his seemingly free style work, though carefully executed in shape and structure, struck me how he surpassed these forms to reach a fully expressed internal landscape which is contrary to many of Helen Hyde's work. Matisse was also a lithographer. While Helen came from a fully trained western art background, she eventually chose to subside into the quiet and the more formal and delicate form of the Japanese style woodblock print while she still made other etching work. Her courageous move to Japan at the time to fully engage herself as an artist in Japan for many years to daringly pursue her dream in a way is a fine example for many of her peer female artists.

1. <http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/results/index.cfm?rows=10&q=&page=1&start=0&q=name:%22Hyde%2C%20Helen%22>
2. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/jpon/hd_jpon.htm
3. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/join/hd_join.htm
4. <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/public/page/themes/impressionismandpostimpressionism>
5. <http://www.henri-matisse.net/artofmatisse.html>

The Bamboo Gate



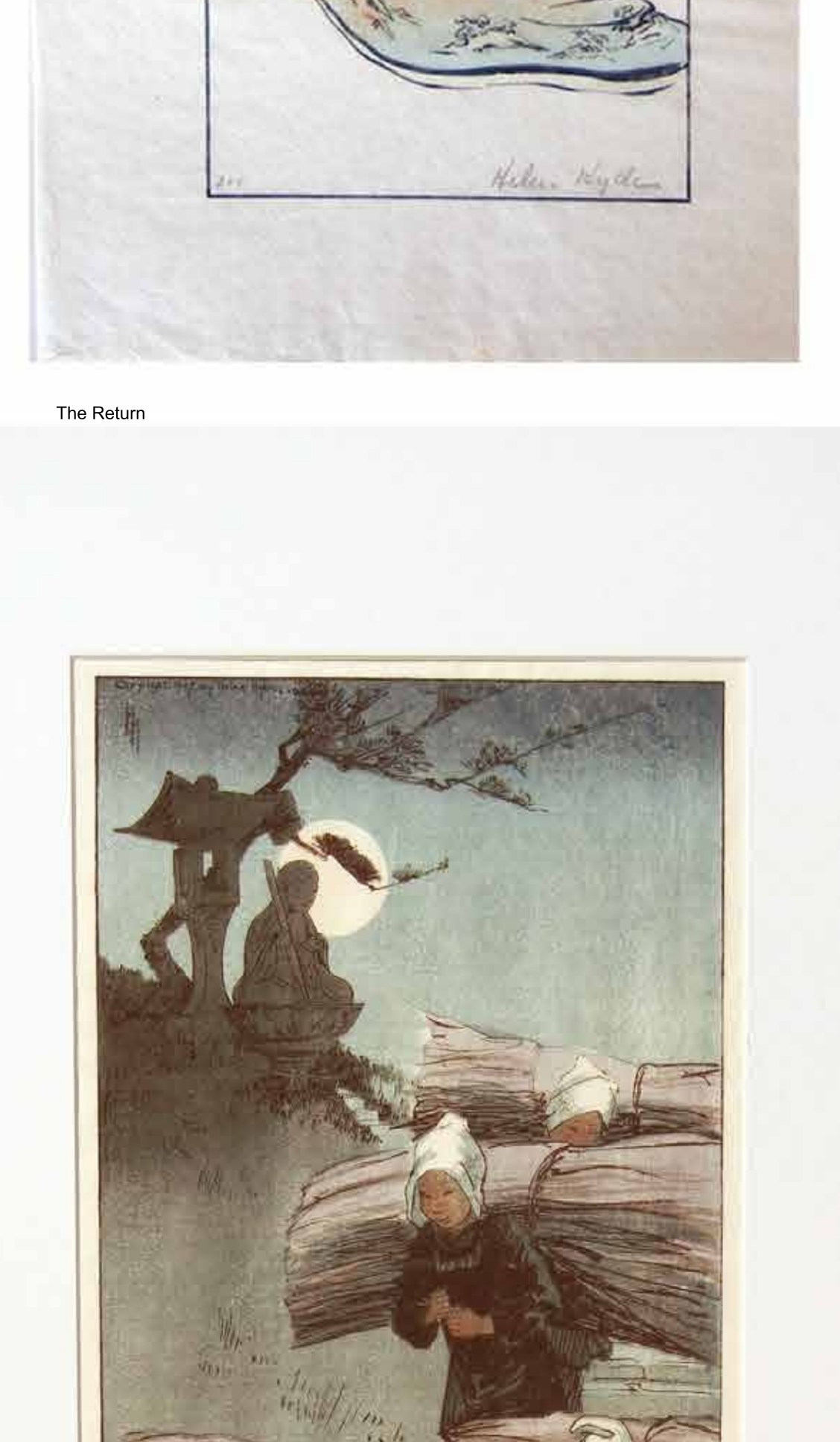
A Day In June



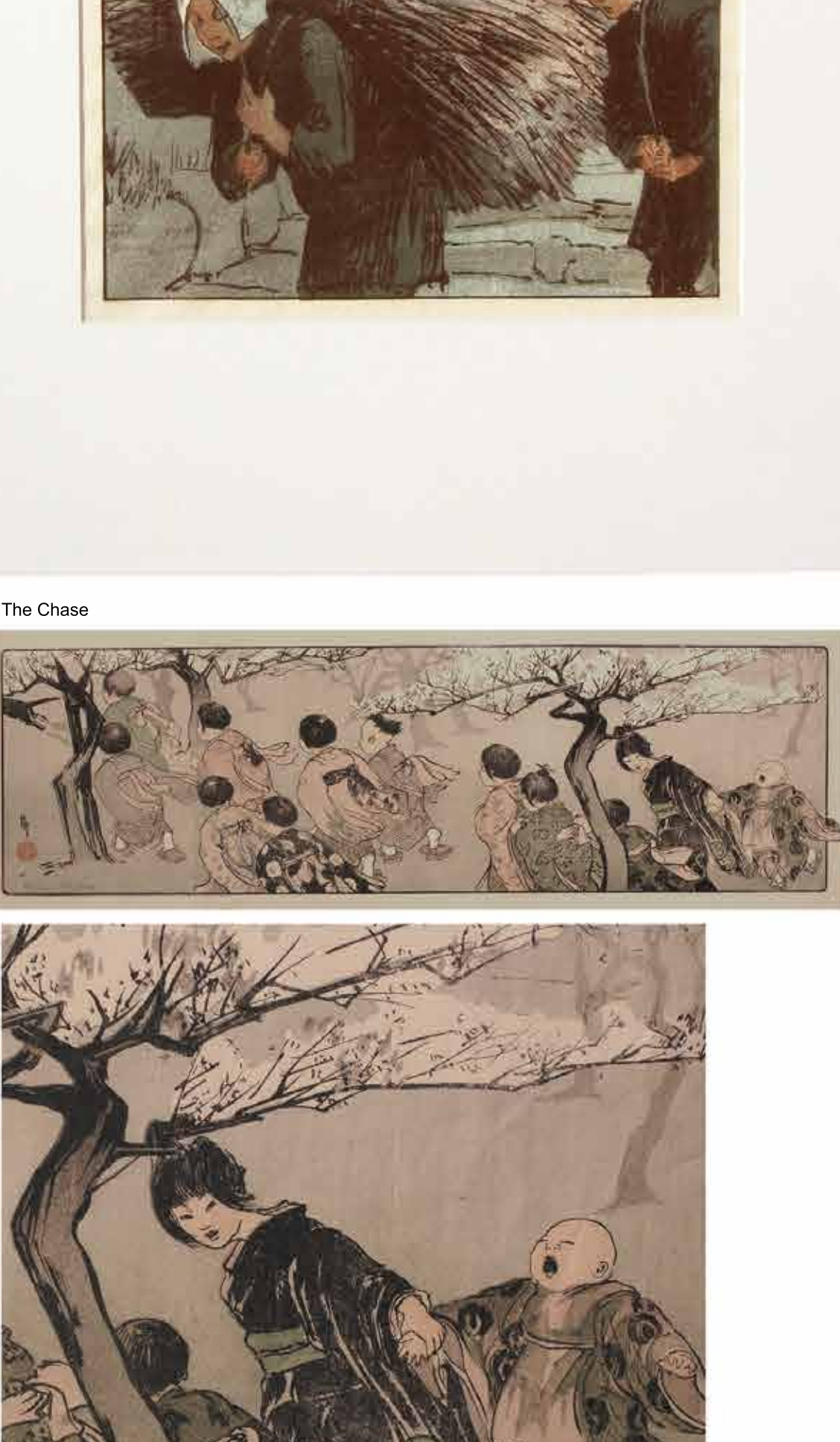
A Mexican Coquette



The Mirror



The Return



The Chase



The Family Umbrella



Daikon and the Baby



Over the Garden Wall



The Unwilling Dancers



The Sacred Calf in the Bazaar at Agra



Mount Orizaba

The Bath

