Warning: This report contains sexually explicit images. Shunga. Erotic Art in the Tokugawa Era. Rachael Redjou EAST/LIBR 302. Winter 2016. From the beginning of the 17th century to the end of the 19th century, hundreds of erotic prints called “shunga” (春画 - “spring pictures”) were being designed, printed, published, and consumed throughout Japan. By the time of the Tokugawa, there had been a long history of erotic art and secular sexual expression in Japan, which meant that shunga was nothing new. Prehistoric societies had developed phallic worship in connection with their reliance on agriculture and Japan's creation myths are based on human-like sexual procreation. Can hardcore pornography ever be considered art? Not in the West, where the definition of high versus low art has long banished graphic depictions of sex to the realms of dirty men in mackintoshes and decadent connoisseurs of the perverse. When it comes to Shunga, in contrast, the pictures are too direct to be suggestive, what they communicate is not the hint of pleasure but the excitement and the ecstasy of the act itself as the couples writhe amidst their opened garments and the sense of fulfilment afterwards. The Tokugawa government never approved the art but never totally suppressed it, although a 1722 ban on publication of salacious material did drive artists and publishers to remove their name from their works. Preview — Shunga by Monta Hayakawa. Shunga: Japanese Erotic Art. by. Monta Hayakawa (Contributor)  A collection of Japanese eroticism by Ukiyo-e artists. A new volume in the Traditional Patterns series, this book features Shunga, a type of Ukiyo-e that is made using the finest Japanese woodblock print techniques and portrays the erotic expressions of men and women; and the pleasure, the pain, and the beauty of the human body. This Japanese erotic art was made by all Uki A collection of Japanese eroticism by Ukiyo-e artists.