



Tokyo Station

Date

1945

Primary Maker

Onchi Koshiro

Medium

woodblock print; ink and color on paper

Description

Japan nationalized its railroads in 1906, a year after winning its war against Russia and thereby emerging as a new power on the world stage. The Japanese saw the construction of Tokyo Central station, which began in 1908, as symbolic of that power. It opened on December 18, 1914, with much pomp and ceremony. An enormous three-story building with domed octagonal pavilions at either end and a towering central pavilion, it faced west toward the imperial palace and the business district. The new station replaced Ginza as the "doorway to Tokyo." The central or "imperial" rotunda had a marble floor, a stained-glass ceiling, and a trio of murals (now lost) entitled Transportation, Encouraging Industry, and Industrial Productivity. They were painted by the Western-style Japanese artist Wada Eisaku (1874-1959) and his pupils at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts. Onchi depicts the front entrance of this

monumental edifice, which managed to survive the September 1923 earthquake. His composition, clearly influenced by modern photography, is full of motion and captures the hustle and bustle of the terminal. A slim flapper or moga (modern girl), her bobbed hair covered by a cloche, is walking out of the frame at the lower left. At the lower right we see the partial shadow of a man wearing a fedora hat. Onchi's familiarity with avant-garde photography derived from books he designed as well as from his own experiments with the medium. In addition, around the time the artist was designing this print, he was working in styles that ranged from biomorphic and cubist abstraction to updated ukiyo-e.

Dimensions

20 x 28 cm (7 7/8 x 11 in.)