

v.  
Peak Production  
1830-1852



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飾  
北  
斎

## Katsushika Hokusai

1760–1849

**Kirifuri Waterfall at Mount Kurokami in Shimotsuke Province  
(Shimotsuke Kurokami-yama, Kirifuri no taki), c. 1832**

From the series *A Tour of Waterfalls in Various Provinces (Shokoku taki meguri)*:  
published by Nishimuraya Yohachi. Woodblock print (nishiki-e);  
ink and colour on paper. Vertical oban; 38.4 × 26.1 cm / 15<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.  
Minneapolis Institute of Art. Bequest of Richard P. Gale.

Two groups of pilgrims have paused to admire the beauty of a waterfall in the mountains. They are north of Nikkō on the path to the Toshōgū, the mausoleum of the first Tokugawa shōgun, Ieyasu (1543–1616), which was a popular travel destination in the 19th century. One of three famous waterfalls in this area, the cataract shown here is called the Kirifuri (lit. falling mist), referring to the spray that falls widely in two stages over a total drop of 75 metres (246 feet). Hokusai envisions only the lower part of the falls as they are broken up by the rugged rocks to spread in a dynamic pattern across the entire width of the composition.

The eight waterfalls in the series *A Tour of Waterfalls in Various Provinces (Shokoku taki meguri)* are believed to have been produced in about 1832. After achieving remarkable success with Hokusai's most celebrated landscape series, *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji (Fuji sanjūrokkei)*, the publisher Nishimuraya Yohachi must have been eagerly looking for a project that would be similarly successful, whilst also competing with Hiroshige's popular brand-new series of views of the post stations along the Tokaidō (p. 375, cat. 122). Somehow the idea was born to publish a series of views of waterfalls, of which Japan has many and for which its people have a great fondness, and to depict them in vertical instead of horizontal format. As with the Mount Fuji series, blue was used for the outlines (keyblock), anticipating higher sales as this catered to the current taste.

The shades of blue alongside the white, unprinted areas of the falling stream dominate the composition and take the form of the exposed roots from some enormous tree. The rocks gradate from brown at the bottom to yellow at the top, which is technically rather difficult to achieve in and around the areas showing the water and proof that this is the work of a skilful printer.





