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*Lawrence Bickford*

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## **Sumo and the Woodblock Print Masters**

**Lawrence Bickford : Sumo and the Woodblock Print Masters** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sumo and the Woodblock Print Masters:

An in-depth look at one of the most sought-after and intriguing sub-genres of ukiyo-e woodblock prints. This work features over 200 rare prints from a private collection.

From Publishers WeeklyThe spectacle of sumo wrestling presented Japan's woodblock print masters with a challenge: how to set down lightning-fast action in a static medium. The wrestlers' nearly naked bodies also posed problems, and artists were expected to make the faces of both contestants equally visible. The result, as shown in this scholarly yet lively study, was an art of novel design, audacious perspectives and technical virtuosity. Printmakers recorded the rituals preceding matches, ring-entering ceremonies and audiences' preoccupation with food and betting, wrestlers' diversions in teahouses or among courtesans and the shrines and temples that accommodated tournaments. Bickford, a collector of sumo prints, uses 75 color plates and some 125 black-and-white illustrations to provide a sociological commentary on 18th- and 19th-century Japan. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.