

Abstract: Eighty-nine eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Japanese woodblock prints from the collections of the Carnegie Museum of Art and the Library of Congress were surveyed to determine their sensitivity to visible light using a micro-fading tester developed at the Research Center on the Materials of the Artist and Conservator. When possible, the reflectance data collected by the micro-fading tester were also used to identify the natural organic colorants used on these objects. Japanese woodblock prints are considered to be light-sensitive objects, but surprisingly wide ranges of fading behavior were found. Yellow areas were created with the most light-sensitive colorants, while blue areas proved to be relatively stable to visible light. Further examination of the data showed that medium values of a colorant will fade faster than their light and dark counterparts and that the prior fading history of a colorant has little effect on its light sensitivity. The reasons for specific colorant/color use by Japanese woodblock printers are also explored.