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## Children's Books and Stamps: Studies in Design

### Gyo Fujikawa

by Phyllis Van Orden

The appeal of Gyo Fujikawa's work is evident in the results of Linn's annual United States Stamp Popularity Polls. Two of her commemoratives, the blue and pink "United States-Japan Treaty" of 1960 (Scott 1158) and the emerald, pink, and black "Beautification of America," issued in 1966 (Scott 1318), and one of her definitives, the brightly colored "Red Rose" of 1993 (Scott 2490) were rated as best design. The range of colors and hues which is evident in these three stamps is also found in her books for children. She uses gouache, an opaque watercolor paint, sometimes called body color, to achieve these effects. Gouache produces a less wet-appearing and more strongly colored picture than ordinary watercolor.

motional work for the movie "Fantasia." The Studios later sent her to New York City where she designed many 25-cent Disney books. Her time at Disney was followed by a period in which she did pharmaceutical advertising before doing free-lance work full-time.

Doris Dunewaid, an editor at Grosset & Dunlap, asked Fujikawa to illustrate a new edition of Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*, published in 1953, which led to her writing and/or illustrating more than 40 books for young children. Many were best sellers, including *Oh, What a Busy Day!* and *Mother Goose*. She was one of only a few illustrators of that era who featured children of diverse background. Her last books were published in 1990.

Fujikawa's illustrations, whether in books or on stamps, make full use of the range of hues and colors, from pastel shades associated with spring, to the summer-laden rich colors of flowers in their prime. In assessing the art of children's books, Diana Klemin wrote "Observant, loving, [and] humorous, Gyo Fujikawa lets her imagination play with the theme in delicate colors with an exquisite touch."<sup>1</sup>

In 1987, the United States Postal Service (USPS) asked Fujikawa to submit some color sketches of a red rose, for possible use as a Love stamp. Fujikawa, who was then 79, bought some roses, consulted color photographs, and made seven sketches, in definitive and commemorative sizes, of generic roses, using gouache (opaque watercolor). However, she wasn't asked at the time to do a finished version of any of them.<sup>2</sup>

Four years later, in 1991, Jack Williams at the USPS called and asked her to provide a finished painting for one of the definitive-size sketches. By this time Fujikawa could no longer paint due to glaucoma damage to her eyes. She assumed that was the end of the issue. In 1993, however, she received a copy of the first-day



**A two-page spread from *Mother Goose*, published in New York by Grosset & Dunlap (1968) and illustrated by Gyo Fujikawa.**

Fujikawa was born in 1908 in Berkeley, California and died in Manhattan in 1998. She attended the Chouinart Institute, the famed private art school in Los Angeles that folded into CalArts in the 1970s. Her early career started in 1939 at the Disney Studios where she did pro-

presentation folder of the "Red Rose" stamp, which accredited her as its designer. John Boyd, typographer, had used computer programs to make color adjustments. The resulting stamp closely resembled Fujikawa's finished painting.

Fujikawa's stamps and many of her books continue to bring pleasure to today's viewers.

**Endnotes**

1. Diana Klemin, *Art of Art of Children's Books* (New York: C. N. Potter, [1966], page 38.
2. George Amick, *Linn's U. S. Stamp Yearbook 1993* (Sidney, Ohio: Linn's Stamp News, 1994), page 304.

**Children's Books Mentioned**

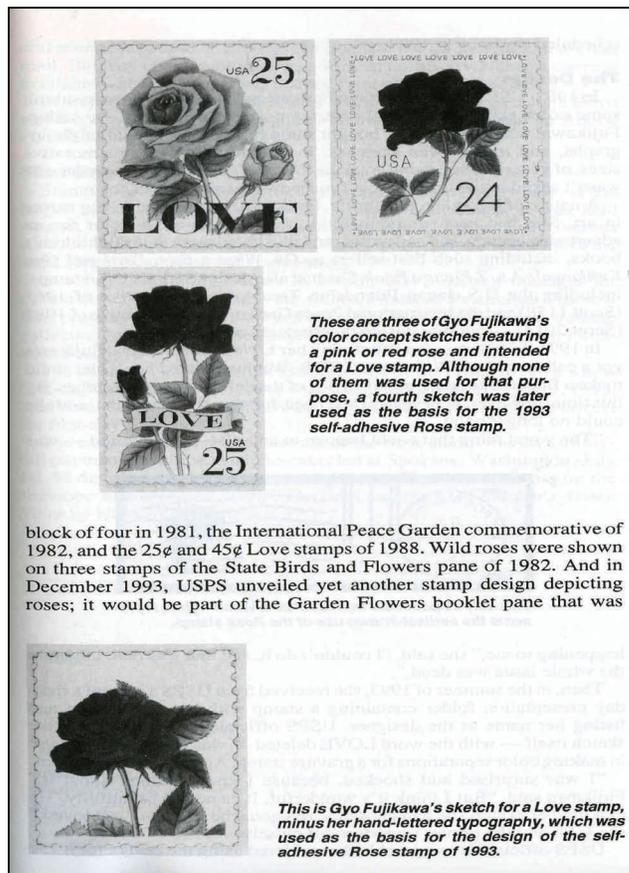
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McDowell, Edwin. "Gyo Fujikawa, 90, Creator of Children's Books." *New York Times*, Monday, December 7, 1998, A22.

*The Postal Service Guide to U.S. Stamps*. 28<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: United States Postal Service, 2001.



**A page from Linn's U. S. Stamp Yearbook 1993, by George Amick (Sidney, Ohio: Linn's Stamp News, 1994) concerning Fujikama's rose stamps**

**Stamps Designed by Gyo Fujikawa**



**Scott 1158 (28 September 1960), issued to commemorate the centennial of the U.S.-Japan Treaty of Amity and Commerce.**



**Scott 1318 (5 October 1966), issued as part of Lyndon B. Johnson's "Plant for a more beautiful America" campaign. The design features the Jefferson Memorial, the Tidal Basin, and cherry blossoms in Washington, D.C.**



Since 1932, nestled on the U.S. and Canadian borders of North Dakota and Manitoba in a symbol of friendship, lies a “One of a Kind” International Peace Garden. Reflecting pools and dazzling colorful floral displays of over 150,000 flowers splash across the grounds of the formal Garden’s terraced walkways. This 30 June 1982 issue [Scott 2014] marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Garden.



Scott 2492, a 32-cent self-adhesive definitive stamp, “Pink Rose,” issued in 1995 and available in booklet panes of 20, and in booklet panes of 15 the next year.



Scott 2490, a 29-cent self-adhesive definitive stamp, “Red Rose,” issued in 1993 and available in booklet panes of 18.



Scott 3049, a 32-cent self-adhesive definitive stamp, “Yellow Rose,” issued in 1996; the 1997 version is Scott 3054.