

PRESERVATION OF JAPANESE
CULTURAL LEGACY IN BULGARIA:

**COLLECTION OF UKIYO-E JAPANESE
PRINTS IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY
FOR FOREIGN ART**

Center for International Research in Education and Culture
& Sofia University



UKIYO-E WOODBLOCK PRINT

National Gallery for Foreign Art in Bulgaria

Ukiyo-e woodblock prints and paintings

- *Ukiyo-e* (浮世絵) lit. (*pictures of the floating world*) referring to secular life: evanescent world, impermanent, fleeting beauty and a realm of entertainments
- *Ukiyo-e* prints and paintings are among the most widely known and admired arts of the Edo period (17-19 c.)
- With the rise of the merchant class during the 17th century, there followed a demand for images of contemporary urban life in a new style reflecting the lives of the commoners.
- *Ukiyo-e* was entirely dominated by the aesthetic requirements of the new social class in Japanese society.
- The response of *Ukiyo-e* artists to the patrons of *Ukiyo-e* resulted in subjects more specific to their own experience and distinct from the ostensibly more refined tastes of the ruling elite.

Themes

- Portraits of actors particularly popular among the avid fans of the Kabuki theater
- Famous beauties of the day, geishas, courtesans from the pleasure quarters
- Daily life of the commoner class (customs, manners, festivals, entertainments and erotic scenes)
- Historical, military, legendary stories
- Travel scenes
- Landscapes and nature
- Ukiyo-e reflected the burning issues of the day as well as the rapidly changing fashions, likes and dislikes of townsmen
- The Kabuki theater announced its forthcoming performances with Ukiyo-e theater posters

Novelty in artistic expression

- *Ukiyo-e* is one of the notable achievements of the Edo and Meiji periods, and at its best, the finer graphic art ever produced in the woodblock medium anywhere in the world
- The full significance of *Ukiyo-e* rests in both their visual effectiveness and their cultural significance
- Designs: crude and primitive or of utmost refinement and imagination
- Clear outlines and unique foreshortening of the figures
- Rich ornamentation
- Uncomplicated subjects
- Variety of psychological moods
- Exquisite balance between nature's form and man's emotional presence in it
- Collective work - result of a collaboration among artists, block cutters, printers, and publishers.

First contacts with Europe

- It was only in the 60s of the 19th century this unfamiliar form of Japanese art established its first contacts with Europe
- The interest towards Japan aroused for the first time by Ukiyo-e, marked the beginning of a systematic study of the Japanese history, traditions and aesthetic doctrines
- Under the spell of the unexpected beauty and figurativeness of the artistic thinking of Japan in Ukiyo-e, the cultural circles in Europe rediscovered their own rich potential in establishing new trends in art
- Japonisme - a term generally used to describe the taste for and artistic appropriation of Japanese style and Japanese-inspired artworks of European artists in 19 c.

Ivan Milev (1897 – 1927)



Mandolin player, 1924



*Portrait of Anna Kamenova,
1924*

Ukiyo-e in National Gallery for Foreign Art

- More than 70 woodblock prints
- The collection reflects the principal stages in the development of this genre – from the monochrome and two-coloured prints to the polychrome works of the greatest artists.
- Slides arranged by chronology of authors



KITAGAWA UTAMARO

ca. 1753 –1806

Kitagawa Utamaro

birthname Kitagawa Ichitarō

Festivity

1870

From the series Hinagata

Woodblock print 39x26 sm



Kitagawa Utamaro

Water

c. 1803

Woodblock print 37.5x26 sm.



Kitagawa Utamaro

Taking away the fiancée

Part of the triptych View of Enoshima

Woodblock print 39 x26 sm



UTAGAWA TOYOKUNI

1769 – 1825

Utagawa Toyokuni

referred to as Toyokuni I

On the Terrace

Woodblock print 39 x19 sm





HOSODA EISHI

1756 – 1829

Hosoda Eishi

From the series:
Matsubaya
ca. 1788

Woodblock print 37x24.5 sm.



KTASUSHIKA HOKUSAI

1760 – 1849

Katsushika Hokusai

Poem by Ariwara
Narihira,

From the series
One hundred poems
told by the nurse
c. 1835-36

Woodblock print 25x37 sm



UTAGAWA HIROSHIGE

1797 – 1858

Utagawa Hiroshige
know as
Andō Hiroshige

From the series:
The Fifty-three Stations
of the Tōkaidō

5th, Totsuka

1833/1834

Woodblock print 25x37 sm



Andō Hiroshige

From the series:
The Fifty-three Stations
of the Tōkaidō

21st, Okabe

1833/34

35x24sm



Andō Hiroshige

From the series:
Famous Places of Kyōto
1834

Woodblock print 35x24sm



UTAGAWA TOYOKUNI - II

1756 – 1864

Utagawa Toyokuni II

also known as Toyoshige

Woman

Woodblock print 36x25 sm.



UTAGAWA KUNISADA

1786-1865

Utagawa Kunisada

known also as Utagawa Toyokuni III

Alone

Woodblock print 36x26 sm.





KIKUKAWA EIZAN

1787 – 1867

Kikukawa Eizan

Owen – One of the Three Famous Geishas 1835

Woodblock print 37x25 sm.



ISHIKAWA TOYONOBU

1711 – 1785

Ishikawa Toyonobu

Two Women under an Umbrella

?

Woodblock print 43.5x26 sm.



OCHIAI YOSHIKU

1833 – 1904

Ochiai Yoshiiku

also known as Utagawa Yoshiiku

Fight

?

Woodblock print 36x25



NATIONAL ARCHEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

- *Andō Hiroshige (1797 – 1858) – 10 prints on silk
- *Katsushika Hokusai (1760 – 1849) – 15 prints
- *Shigenobu (1829–1869), Hiroshige II – 2 prints

Andō Hiroshige

Birds and Flowers

Woodblock print on silk 15.5x21.5 cm



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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