# 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 twocoloured 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

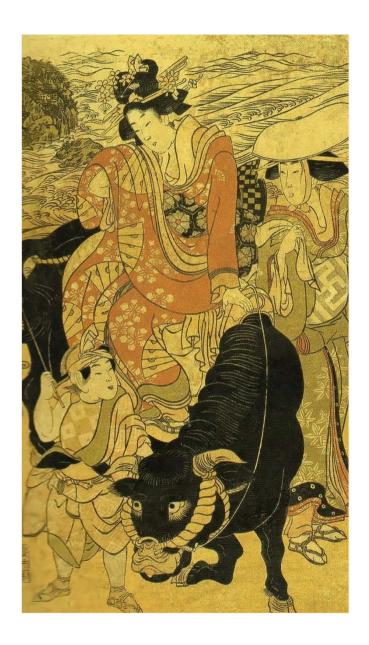
Woodblock print 37.5x26 sm.



#### Kitagawa Utamaro

Taking away the fiancée
Part of the triptych View of Enoshima

Woodblock print 39 x26 sm



### **UTAGAWA TOYOKUNI**

# Utagawa Toyokuni referred to as Toyokuni I

On the Terrace

Woodblock print 39 x19 sm

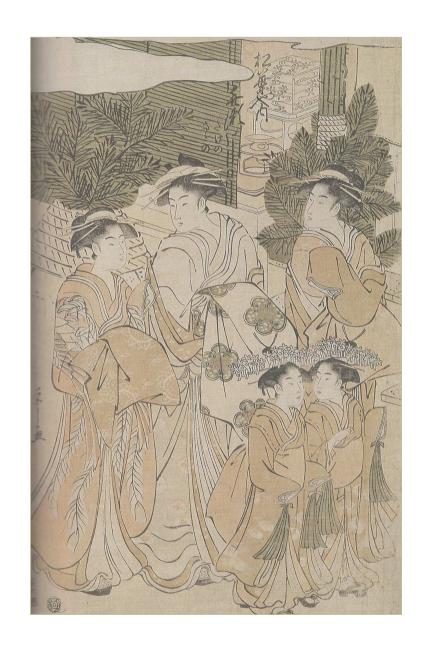


### HOSODA EISHI

#### Hosoda Eishi

From the series: Matsubaya ca. 1788

Woodblock print 37x24.5 sm.



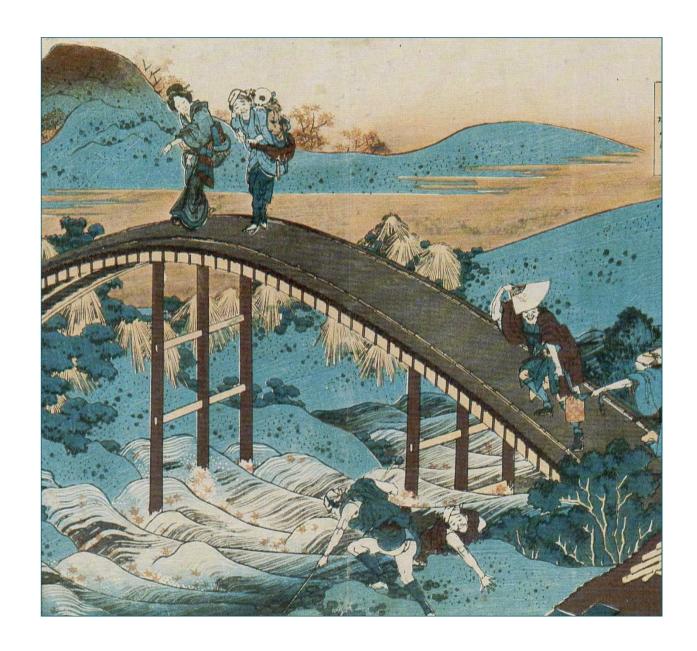
### KTASUSHIKA HOKUSAI

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

### Utagawa Hiroshige know as

#### Andō Hiroshige

From the series:

The Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō

5<sup>th</sup>, Totsuka 1833/1834

Woodblock print 25x37 sm



#### Andō Hiroshige

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

21<sup>st</sup>, Okabe 1833/34 35x24sm



#### Andō Hiroshige

From the series: Famous Places of Kyōto 1834

Woodblock print 35x24sm



### UTAGAWA TOYOKUNI - II

# 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

#### Kikukawa Eizan

Owen – One of the Three Famous Geishas 1835

Woodblock print 37x25 sm.



### ISHIKAWA TOYONOBU

#### Ishikawa Toyonobu

Two Women under an Umbrella?

Woodblock print 43.5x26 sm.



### OCHIAI YOSHIIKU

#### 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 sm



#### THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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