



Australian Galleries in association with Gallery East

JAPANESE PICTURE BOOKS & PRINTS

250 Years of Japanese Illustrated Books and Woodblock Prints

MEDIA RELEASE

Exhibition Dates: 30 April - 19 May 2019
35 Derby Street Collingwood VIC 3066
Open 7 days 10am to 6pm

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For three hundred years until the end of the 19th Century, woodblock illustrated books were the creative medium for painters of all the major art schools. Little known outside Japan, these superlative volumes are now recognized as the finest illustrated books in the history of world graphic art.

This exhibition includes three illustrated books by Katsushika HOKUSAI, (1760 – 1849) one of the great draftsmen of world art and the most highly regarded Japanese artist in the West. His long life was devoted to a constant and daring exploration of design and painting. He is responsible for many of the great masterpieces of Ukiyo-e, including *The Great Wave*, the *15 Volume Manga* (volume 7 is included in the exhibition) and his illustrated 3 volume book, *100 Views of Fuji*, of which two individual sheets are also included in the exhibition.

Japanese woodblock prints of the 18th and 19th Centuries record an exotic, vibrant, colourful and highly sophisticated society in a form which constitutes a significant element in the history of world graphic art. The imagery takes the viewer into a world of Kabuki plays and actors, courtesans and beautiful women, heroes of legend, historical battles, and the Japanese landscape.

Erotica was also a legitimate subject for Ukiyo artists and the exhibition includes master works by the mid 18th Century artist, Shigamasa as well as one of the most famous erotic images in Japanese art, Hokusai's *The Dream of the Fisherman's Wife*.

The design and the colour woodblock printing technique had an extraordinary and lasting influence on Western art and graphic design. This long and rich heritage of print making experienced a renaissance both between the World Wars and into the modern era. The art form is well suited to the Japanese temperament which prizes excellent and precise craftsmanship, respect for materials, artistic sensitivity and an eye for composition, balance and colour. Japanese prints of all periods have been collected ever since Japan opened to the West in the mid-19th Century and continue to resonate with collectors, artists and the viewing public today.

Japanese Picture Books & Prints is current until 19 May 2019.

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