

Hokusai and Japonisme

Exhibition Period: 21 October 2017 - 28 January 2018

Venue: The National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo
7-7, Ueno-Koen, Taito-ku, Tokyo, 110-0007, JAPAN

Curator of the exhibition: MABUCHI Akiko, Director of the National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo
Organized by: The National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo, and The Yomiuri Shimbun

The *ukiyo-e* master of the late Edo period, Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), is an artist renowned and loved throughout the world. By studying European art styles entering Japan from the Netherlands via the island of Dejima, Hokusai acquired command of novel art techniques unknown in *ukiyo-e* and rose to popularity. As an artist who ceaselessly explored daring new directions, he created powerfully imaginative works that revolutionized Japanese art.

In the late 1850s, when Japan ended its seclusion policy and Westerners began visiting the country, many had already seen Hokusai's works. This owed, above all, to his 15-volume *Hokusai Manga* collection of block-printed sketches, which was already in use as a source of illustrations for books about Japan. Western visitors purchased Hokusai's *ukiyo-e* prints, art manuals, and illustrations as souvenirs and took large quantities of his work back to their countries, where it entered circulation in the local markets. Western interest in Japanese art was hardly limited to Hokusai, yet he enjoyed overwhelming popularity, along with Hiroshige.

Japanese art captured the admiration of Western artists pursuing innovative new styles of expression and, as a result, the "Japonisme" craze was born. Hokusai, among all Japanese artists, most frequently served as a reference for this style. Works of Japonisme sourced in his *Hokusai Manga*, *One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji* landscape picture book, and *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji* woodblock prints appeared in great numbers.

Hokusai's art had a dramatic impact, first, on the artists of Impressionism such as Monet, Degas, and Cézanne, and later on such Post-Impressionist artists as Seurat, Toulouse-Lautrec, Van Gogh, and Les Nabis. Across the entire Western sphere—Germany, Australia, Spain, England, America, and Eastern and Northern Europe—Hokusai's methods were explored and researched, and they gave momentum to new creation in painting, print art, sculpture, posters, and the decorative arts.

This exhibition will examine several aspects of Japonisme in 6 sections with the aim of showing how particular characteristics of Hokusai's art contributed to the development of modern Western art. Some 200 works of Western art and some 30 color woodblock prints and 60 woodblock-printed books will be exhibited. (Some objects may be rotated during the exhibition period. Exhibition lineup may change as circumstances require.).
(Text by Akiko Mabuchi)