

# Hymn to Beauty

## THE ART OF UTAMARO

ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES  
13 FEBRUARY – 2 MAY 2010



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## 1 喜多川歌麿 絵本虫撰

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**Picture-book: selected insects** 1788

illustrated *kyōka* anthology, 2 volumes, colour woodblock with slight mica; inv no 6120-04.626, bl 1-15; inv no Jap 210 (text)

Each of the 15 double-page illustrations of the two albums features two *kyōka*, or 'crazy verses', by noted poets of the day and an exquisite composition of two kinds of insects or amphibians amongst plants and flowers. The different creatures are used as a metaphor to express sentiments of love.

Sumptuously illustrated and expensively printed *kyōka* anthologies like this one were a new niche market that Utamaro and his publisher, Tsutaya Jūzaburō, explored in the mid 1780s. They were commissioned by and circulated exclusively among the numerous literary circles in Edo (modern Tokyo). The four illustrated anthologies included in the show demonstrate Utamaro's profound knowledge of traditional painting styles and iconography that are not related to the floating world.

## 2 喜多川歌麿 蘇調夷

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**The young god Ebisu** 1789

illustrated *kyōka* anthology, 1 volume, colour woodblock with brass dust; inv no 6110-04.351, bl 1-5; inv no Jap 205 (text)

## 3 喜多川歌麿 銀世界

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**The silver world** 1790

illustrated *kyōka* anthology, 1 volume, colour woodblock with brass dust; inv no 6110-04.352, bl 1-5; inv no Jap 200 (text)

## 4 喜多川歌麿 普賢像

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**Statue of Fugen** 1790

illustrated *kyōka* anthology, 1 volume, colour woodblock with brass dust; inv no Jap 215

## 5 喜多川歌麿 婦女人相十品

煙草の煙を吹く女

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**'Woman exhaling smoke from a pipe', from the series Ten classes of women's physiognomy** c1792-93

*ōban*, colour woodblock print with white mica ground; inv no 6100-E1001

This print is one of the earliest examples of an *ōkubi-e* (literally, 'large-head picture' or bust portrait) that employs a mica ground to enhance the iconic power of the image. The 'close-up' view enabled Utamaro to capture a fleeting facial expression and mood, imbuing his subject with a psychological depth rarely seen before in the portrayal of women in Japan. The use of the term 'physiognomy' in the set's title is somewhat exaggerated, because the images are more an illustration of diverse female types than a study of individual character.

## 6 喜多川歌麿 扇屋内蓬萊仙

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**Miyahito of the Ōgiya** c1793-94

*ōban*, colour woodblock print with white mica ground; inv no 6100-19.131

The novelty of the first bust portraits series such as *Ten classes of women's physiognomy* may have led to considerable commercial success and Utamaro continued to exploit the iconic power of this format in his prolific production of *bijinga* ('pictures of beautiful women') throughout the 1790s. The majority of his subjects are high-ranking courtesans, celebrated geisha or shop-girls renowned for their seductive beauty. Portraits of aloof courtesans such as Miyahito served as publicity for the woman herself and for the establishment with which she was affiliated.

The oblong poem-slip contains a *kyōka* by Sono'ō no Momokichi which puns on the fact that Miyahito's name is written with the same characters as the mythical Chinese Mount Penglai (Island of the Immortals).

## 7 喜多川歌麿 難波屋おきた

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**Okita of the Naniwaya teahouse** c1793

*ōban*, colour woodblock print with white mica ground; inv no 6100-43.181

Together with the geisha Tomimoto Toyohina and Ohisa, the daughter of the owner of the rice-cake shop Takashimaya, Okita was one of three celebrated Edo beauties of the Kansei era (1789-1801). She was the 'attraction' of the Naniwaya teahouse, where she worked as a waitress.



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Utamaro and his contemporaries created numerous designs of her and other renowned beauties – so-called ‘billboard girls’ – representing them as icons of beauty and fashion. While high-ranking courtesans are usually depicted with idealised faces, shop-girls and geisha are portrayed with distinctive facial features. Okita is easily identifiable by her aquiline nose and narrow eyes.

8

喜多川歌麿 五人美人愛敬競  
松葉屋内喜瀬川

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?–1806)

**‘Kisegawa of the Matsubaya’, from the series *Comparing the charm of five beauties*** c1795–96

*ōban*, colour woodblock print; inv no 6100-03.564

A government edict of 1796 banned the inclusion of courtesans’ names on *ukiyo-e* prints, prompting artists to devise other means of identifying their subjects. One popular method was to employ rebuses, where words or phrases are represented by pictures. The pine needles (*matsuba*), arrow (*ya*), the tip of a pipe (*kiseru*) and river (*kawa*) in the round cartouche in the upper right corner thus reveal the illustrated beauty as Kisegawa of the Matsubaya.

9

鳥文斎栄之 風俗江戸紫 盃  
Chōbunsai EISHI (1756–1829)

**‘Sake cup’, from the series *Contemporary Edo fashion*** 1790s

*ōban*, colour woodblock print; inv no 6093-19.126

10

一楽亭栄水 松葉屋内粧ひ

Ichirakutei EISUI (active c1790s–1800)

***Yosooi of the Matsubaya*** c1795

*ōban*, colour woodblock print; inv no 6095-19.126

11/12

一楽亭栄水 美人五節句 扇屋内柄さ  
松葉屋内染之助

Ichirakutei EISUI (active c1790s–1800)

**from the series *Beauties at the five annual festivals*** c1795

*ōban*, colour woodblock print



8

**‘Tsukasa of the Ōgiya’**

inv no 6095-01.344

**‘Somenosuke of the Matsubaya’**

inv no 6095-09.2

Very little is known about Ichirakutei Eisui, who was a pupil of Chōbunsai Eishi. The influence of Utamaro is very evident in Eisui’s work, as in these two examples from his best-known series, which matches five famous courtesans of the day with the five seasonal festivals. The fan-shaped cartouche in the upper left of each print contains the name of the courtesan and her child attendant (*kamuro*). This is bordered by a flower that provides a clue to the festival illustrated.

The morning glories appearing in the cartouche of cat no 11 is a reference to the Tanabata festival, which is celebrated on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month. In cat no 12, the irises in the cartouche and the iris leaves that secure Somenosuke’s hair are hints that this scene refers to the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, the celebration of the Boys’ Day festival.

13

喜多川歌麿 錦織歌麿形新模様  
白うちかけ

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?–1806)

**‘The white surcoat’, from the series *New patterns of brocade woven in Utamaro style*** c1796–98

*ōban*, colour woodblock print; inv no 6100-01.342

In this set of three prints showing full-length portraits of seated beauties, Utamaro introduces a technical innovation through the minimal use of contour lines. Only the women’s faces are delineated with thin vermilion lines while the garments are rendered in the ‘boneless’ mode traditionally used in paintings of birds and flowers, which juxtaposes areas of colour without defining outlines.

The series is also famous for the text within each handscroll-shaped title cartouche. In it, Utamaro criticises his contemporaries. In this example he also praises his own work as worthy of the same fee as the highest-ranked courtesan.



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#### 14/15/16

鳥文齋栄之 青楼美人六花仙 越前屋唐土  
静玉屋志津加 扇屋花扇  
Chōbunsai EISHI (1756–1829)  
**from the series *Six renowned beauties in the Yoshiwara*** 1790s  
*ōban*, colour woodblock print

#### 'Morokoshi of the Echizenya'

inv no 6093-19.119

#### 'Shizuka of the Shizutamaya'

inv no 6093-19.117

#### 'Hanaōgi of the Ōgiya'

inv no 6093-19.118

Hailing from a high-ranking samurai family, Eishi was first trained as a painter in the orthodox style of the Kano school. In the mid 1780s, he resigned from his position as an official to pursue a career as an *ukiyo-e* artist, specialising in depictions of beautiful women.

In this representative series, six renowned courtesans are paired with flowers illustrated in the cartouche: the voluptuous sensuality of Morokoshi of the Echizenya is likened to the wild lily (cat no 14); Shizuka of the Shizutamaya is characterised as a gentle beauty like a wild pink (cat no 15); and the sumptuous robes and hairstyle of Hanaōgi of the Ōgiya, and the decoration of her furniture, correspond to the peony, traditionally a symbol of luxury (cat no 16). The series' title alludes to the 'Six Immortal Poets', the masters of classical Japanese poetry mentioned in the 10th-century imperial *Anthology of Japanese verse ancient and modern*, thus hinting at the literary achievements of these women.

#### 17B

鳥文齋栄之 七賢人略美人新造揃 越前屋  
内もみじ  
Chōbunsai EISHI (1756–1829)

**'Momiji of the Echizenya', from the series *Seven beautiful younger courtesans (shinzō) likened to the Seven Philosophers in the Bamboo Forest*** c1795

*ōban*, colour woodblock print; inv no 6093-19.122. Not in catalogue



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#### 18

喜多川歌麿 松葉屋内瀬川  
Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?–1806)  
***Segawa of the Matsubaya*** 1790s  
*ōban*, colour woodblock print; inv no 6101.09.62

#### 19

鳥高齋栄昌 若那初模様 松葉屋内喜瀬川  
禿おなみ・めなみ  
Chōkōsai EISHŌ (active c1790s)

**'Kisegawa of the Matsubaya with kamuro Onami and Menami', from the series *New Year's fashion designs*** 1790s  
*ōban*, colour woodblock print; inv no 6095-16.38(34a)

#### 20/21

鳥高齋栄昌 青楼模様合 扇屋内滝川禿お  
なみ・めなみ 扇屋内花扇禿吉野・竜田  
Chōkōsai EISHŌ (active c1790s)

**from the series *Competition of patterns of the 'Green houses' (Yoshiwara)*** 1790s  
*ōban*, colour woodblock print

#### 'Takigawa of the Ōgiya with kamuro Onami and Menami'

inv no 6095-16.38(34b)

#### 'Hanaōgi of the Ōgiya with kamuro Yoshino and Tatsuta'

inv no 6095-16.38(34c)

Following the long-running print set *Models of fashion: new designs as fresh young leaves* by the *ukiyo-e* artist Isoda Koryūsai (1735–90), images of high-ranking courtesans parading the latest hair and kimono fashions, as in these examples, became extremely popular. Released in the New Year season, these prints acted as guides to fashion and primarily targeted a female audience. The courtesans are usually depicted in the company of their retinue, consisting of at least of two child attendants, who wear matching robes and whose presence enhances the aloof beauty and standing of the courtesan.

Chōkōsai Eishō was an important and prolific pupil of Chōbunsai Eishi.

#### 22

喜多川歌麿 青楼十二時続 戌ノ刻  
Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?–1806)  
**'Hour of the dog (8–10 pm)', from the series *The twelve hours in the 'Green houses' (Yoshiwara)*** c1794

*ōban*, colour woodblock print with metal fillings; inv no 6101-00.893



Organised according to the 12 double hours of the zodiacal clock, each image in this set affords a glimpse into the daily routine of a Yoshiwara courtesan. Even though viewers may be left with the impression that they have been granted an 'insider's view' of the very private moments of a courtesan's life, in reality, the images reflect little of the harshness – the 'sea of suffering' – that typified these women's lives. Utamaro's prints are not meant as documentary records, but as images that market desire.

## 23

喜多川歌麿 青楼雪月花 玉屋内花紫  
Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

'Hanamurasaki of the Tamaya', from the series *Snow, moon and flowers in the 'Green houses' (Yoshiwara)* 1793

*ōban*, colour woodblock print; inv no 6103-19.138

## 24

喜多川歌麿 五節の花合せ  
Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

*Contest of flowers for the five festivals*  
c1800

*ōban*, triptych, colour woodblock print; inv no 60060(1)-19.209

From the Kansei era (1789–1801) onwards, elegant pastimes such as the tea ceremony and flower arranging, formerly the exclusive domain of the court and military aristocracy, became fashionable among commoners.

Cat nos 24–27 are testimony to the popularity of the theme of *ikebana* (flower arrangement) in *ukiyo-e* prints and to Utamaro's imaginative power in refreshing the time-honoured genre of *bijinga* with contemporary trends.

## 25

喜多川歌麿 高名美人見立忠臣蔵  
十二枚続 四段目花扇

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

'Hanaōgi in Act 4', from the series *The Chūshingura drama parodied by famous beauties: a set of twelve prints*  
c1796

*ōban*, colour woodblock print; inv no 6103-19.140

## 26

喜多川歌麿 松葉屋瀬川

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

*Segawa of the Matsubaya* c1801–04

*ōban*, colour woodblock print; inv no 6101-03.562

## 27

喜多川歌麿 海老屋内大井

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

*Ōi of the Ebiya* c1800

*ōban*, colour woodblock print; inv no 6101-19.139

## 28

鳥文斎栄之 正月飾り

Chōbunsai EISHI (1756–1829)

*New Year's preparations* late 1780s

*ōban*, diptych, colour woodblock print; inv no 6820(1)-19.214

## 29

栄松斎長喜 座敷万歳

Eishōsai CHŌKI (active c1790s–early 1800s)

*Manzai dance in a teahouse* late 1790s

*ōban*, triptych, colour woodblock print; inv no 60060(2)-09.16

The comical *manzai* dance originated as part of the New Year's ritual at the imperial palace and developed over time into a more folkloric form, in which two male entertainers went door-to-door offering songs, dances and music in exchange for rice or money.

Eishōsai, or Momokawa, Chōki was Utamaro's fellow student in the studio of Toriyama Sekien. His *bijinga* are strongly influenced by Utamaro.

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鳥高斎栄昌 盆踊り

Chōkōsai EISHŌ (active c1790s)

*Bon dance in a teahouse* 1790s

*ōban*, triptych, colour woodblock print; inv no 60060(2)-04.398

A group of lightly dressed geisha – exhibiting different degrees of inebriation – dance in a circle in an upper-floor room of a teahouse. Summer dances invite an association with the celebrations of the seventh month of the lunar calendar, known as *obon*, which honour the departed souls of one's ancestors. This scene might also refer to the lantern festival, one of the important events in the annual calendar of the Yoshiwara. Starting in the 1730s, teahouse and brothel proprietors decorated their establishments with lanterns in the seventh month in memory of the very popular courtesan Tamegiku (d1726). Over time, this practice evolved into a competition among the various houses, and the colourful display became a spectacle that attracted large crowds of visitors to the quarter.



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鳥高齋栄昌 芸妓

Chōkōsai EISHŌ (active c1790s)

**Two geisha** 1790s*hashira-e*, colour woodblock print; inv no 60030(1)-00.890

32

鳥高齋栄昌 屋根船の芸妓

Chōkōsai EISHŌ (active c1790s)

**Two geisha on a roofed boat** 1790s*hashira-e*, colour woodblock print; inv no 60030(1)-10.29

33

喜多川歌麿 青楼仁和嘉笑顔競二の替り

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**Competition of the smiling faces at the Niwaka festival in the 'Green houses' (Yoshiwara)** c1800*ōban*, colour woodblock print; inv no 6100-28.125

The Niwaka festival began in the Kyōhō era (1716–36) in celebration of Kurosuke Inari, the fox-deity patron of the Yoshiwara. It would become one of the most important events in the district's annual calendar. The festival took place in the eighth month, when elaborate floats paraded geisha, courtesans and their attendants through the quarter. The women and girls dressed up in elaborate costumes, and staged plays and dances to the great amusement of Edo townspeople. The vibrant, exotic Niwaka procession became a popular subject for *ukiyo-e* prints from the mid 18th century onwards as can be seen in the works of Utamaro and his contemporaries Chōki and Eishō displayed here.

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栄松齋長喜 青楼俄全盛遊

Eishōsai CHŌKI (active c1790s–early 1800s)

**The most beautiful plays of the Niwaka festival in the 'Green houses' (Yoshiwara)**

1790s

*ōban*, colour woodblock print; inv no 6097-43.182

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鳥高齋栄昌 青楼俄万歳

Chōkōsai EISHŌ (active c1790s)

**Manzai dance during the Niwaka festival in the 'Green houses' (Yoshiwara)** 1790s*ōban*, colour woodblock print; inv no 6095-19.127

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喜多川歌麿 雪の棧橋

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**Landing-stage in the snow** c1800*naga-ōban*, colour woodblock print; inv no 60060(1)-00.892

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鳥文齋栄之 道行

Chōbunsai EISHI (1756–1829)

**'Lovers eloping'** late 1780s*hashira-e*, colour woodblock print; inv no 60030(1)-06.15

Tragic tales of ill-fated lovers, who desired unity in death rather than separation in life, intrigued playwrights from the late 17th century onwards, and captured the imagination of *ukiyo-e* print designers in the mid 18th century and after. It was popular in prints to portray the lovers as they made their way to the site of their intended double suicide. In this example, Eishi skilfully exploited the elongated format of the 'pillar print' to convey the couple's shared passion and desperation in their last moments.

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喜多川歌麿 風流五葉の松 お駒・才三郎

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**'Okoma and Saizaburō', from the series *Elegant five-needled pine*** c1797–98*ōban*, colour woodblock print; inv no 6101-28.392

Between 1797 and his death in 1806, Utamaro produced at least eight print series on tragic love, often employing the same characters. Rather than show Kabuki actors in the roles or scenes from puppet dramas in the recounting of the lovers' tales, he depicts the couples using the format of the bust portrait as a visualisation of their state of mind. In these compositions, props and staging elements are dispensed with, and the blank background serves to heighten the dramatic tension and erotic appeal.

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喜多川歌麿 小姓吉三郎

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**Koshō Kichisaburō** c1800*ōban* (left sheet of a diptych), colour woodblock print; inv no 6101-28.94

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晩器 お七・吉三

BANKI (active c1800s–10s)



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#### **Oshichi and Kichisa(burō)** c1800

hashira-e, colour woodblock print; inv no 60030(1)-06.299

The tragic love story of Yaoya Oshichi and Koshō Kichisaburō is based on a true story from 1683. The greengrocer's daughter Oshichi falls in love with Kichisaburō when her family is evacuated after a fire to the temple where he is a servant. The clandestine liaison between the two lovers ends abruptly when Oshichi's family returns to their home. Pining for Kichisaburō, Oshichi sets her parents' new home alight in the hope that the family would once again be moved to Kichisaburō's temple. The fire is soon extinguished with no major damage, but Oshichi is sentenced to death for arson.

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喜多川歌麿 見るが徳栄華の一睡  
若者の夢

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**'The young man's dream', from the series Profitable visions in daydreams of glory**

c1801-02

ōban, colour woodblock print; inv no 6103-28.390

This series, of which five designs are known, is a parody of the 16th-century Chinese tale *The Handan dream*. This particular print refers to the story of the humble scholar Lu Sheng, who travels to the capital to sit the difficult civil examinations. He falls asleep on a magic pillow and dreams about the vicissitudes of 50 years in the career of a high-ranking government official. However, the daydream of the young man in Utamaro's print involves no ambition for high office; rather, in an interesting twist, he dreams of passing time with a high-ranking courtesan.

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喜多川歌麿 音曲恋の操 夕霧・伊左衛門

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**'Yūgiri and Izaemon', from the series Manipulations of love with musical accompaniment** c1801-02

ōban, colour woodblock print; inv no 6101-03.563

Utamaro ingeniously combines pairs of lovers in this series of nine designs. One couple is portrayed as full-length puppets, the other acts as the puppeteers. The play performed here recounts the troubled relationship between Yūgiri, a high-ranking



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courtesan from Osaka, and her paramour Fujiya Izaemon, who is disinherited because of their relationship. Using the puppets as stand-ins, the young couple enact their own love story.

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桃川子興 お菊・幸助

Momokawa SHIKŌ (active late 1790s - early 1800s)

**Okiku and Kōsuke** c1795-1801

ōban, colour woodblock print; inv no 6097-00.904

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桃川子興 東風俗五節句合 重陽

Momokawa SHIKŌ (active late 1790s - early 1800s)

**'Chrysanthemum festival', from the series Customs and manners of the five seasonal festivals in Edo** c1800

ōban, colour woodblock print; inv no 6097-28.70

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喜多川歌麿 針仕事

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**Needlework** c1794-95

ōban, colour woodblock print; inv no 6103-00.891

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喜多川歌麿 台所

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**Kitchen scene** c1794-95

ōban diptych, colour woodblock print with metallic pigments and mica; inv no 6820(1)-04.414

Perhaps in response to the various government edicts of the Kansei era (1789-1801) aimed at moral reform, publishers increasingly turned away from images of courtesans towards those of townswomen going about daily chores like cooking, childminding and sewing. Through graceful brushwork, great attention to detail and elaborate printing techniques, Utamaro transforms these ordinary scenes of daily life into a visual spectacle. He also instils the women of middle-class households with poise and an understated eroticism that matched the stars of the Yoshiwara.

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喜多川歌麿 婦人手業拾二工 髪結

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**'Hairdresser', from the series Twelve types of women's handicraft** c1798-99

ōban, colour woodblock print; inv no 6101-28.393



## 48/49

喜多川歌麿 女織蚕手業草 一、二、三  
四、五、六

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**from the series *Women engaged in sericulture*** c1798-1800

*ōban* triptych, colour woodblock print

## ‘Numbers 1-3’

inv no 60060(1)-16.38(33a)

## ‘Numbers 4-6’

inv no 60060(1)-16.38(33b)

## 50

喜多川歌麿 当世風俗通 屋舗風

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**‘The style of a feudal lord’s household’, from the series *Guide to contemporary style*** c1800-01

*ōban*, colour woodblock print with white mica; inv no 6100-10.205

This series of five bust portraits illustrates five women of different ages, marital status and occupations. The woman in this sheet is identified by her white head-covering as a member of a *daimyo* (feudal lord’s) household. She holds a fan inscribed with the haiku: ‘Fireflies light/the road to Uji/you don’t need a torch’. It is signed ‘Kinshō’, the poetry name of the Kabuki actor Ichikawa Yaozō III.

## 51

喜多川歌麿 風俗美人時計 巳ノ刻

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**‘Hour of the snake (9-11 am)’, from the series *Customs and manners of beauties around the clock*** c1800

*ōban*, colour woodblock print with white mica ground

inv no 6101.00.895

## 52/53/54

喜多川歌麿 名所風景美人十二相 髪結  
乳のみ 人形

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**from the series *Famous places: twelve aspects of beauty*** c1804

*ōban*, colour woodblock print

## ‘Dressing hair’

inv no 6100-28.126

## ‘Breastfeeding’

inv no 6100-03.561

## ‘Doll’

inv no 6100-19.132

## 55

喜多川歌麿 酩酊の七変人

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

***Seven strange men blind drunk*** c1801-03

*ōban*, triptych, colour woodblock print; inv no 60060(1)-28.107

This triptych is an anomaly in Utamaro’s body of work in that all but one figure – the young woman leaning on the sake keg in the right print – are pictured with vulgar facial expressions and a clear lack of social decorum. Their plain robes and the unrefined furnishings indicate a setting in a popular inn, not necessarily within the licensed pleasure quarters. By contrast, the title of the work alludes to the classical theme in Chinese and Japanese painting of the seven scholar sages who retreat to a bamboo grove in protest against the corrupt government of the Jin Dynasty (265-420).

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石峰 釣り

SEKIHŌ (active early 1800s)

***Fishing*** 1810s

*ōban*, triptych, colour woodblock print; inv no 60060(2)-28.95

The overwhelming success of the Utamaro style is clearly demonstrated by the activity of many print designers in the early 1800s. Sekihō, about whom little is known, belonged to this group of followers. His name suggests an affiliation to Juka Sekijō (active 1780s-1808), who began his career under Utamaro’s teacher, Toriyama Sekien, and who worked in an Utamaro mode. Fishing was a favourite pastime of Edo’s younger set, as were boat excursions, shell gathering and the catching of fireflies.

## 57

喜多川歌麿 山姥と金太郎 糸まき

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

***Yamauba and Kintarō: spinning spool*** c1796-99

*ōban*, colour woodblock print; inv no 6103-28.389

## 58

喜多川歌麿 山姥と金太郎 木馬

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

***Yamauba and Kintarō: hobbyhorse*** c1796-99

*ōban*, colour woodblock print with blind-printing; inv no 6103-03.560



59

喜多川歌麿 山姥と金太郎 柿むき

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**Yamauba and Kintarō:****peeling persimmons** c1796-99*ōban*, colour woodblock print; inv no 6103-08.208

60

喜多川歌麿 山姥と金太郎 凧

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**Yamauba and Kintarō: the kite** c1800-03*ōban*, colour woodblock print; inv no 6103-03.565

These two legendary figures – the mountain witch Yamauba and the strong-boy Kintarō – were a favourite subject in popular fiction and visual arts from the mid 18th century onwards. Utamaro seemed to be particularly attracted by this topic, as he designed no less than 40 prints of Yamauba with Kintarō between 1796 and 1804. Cat nos 57-60 testify to Utamaro's creative imagination in depicting the rusticated beauty and her vivacious toddler in various playful scenes. In Utamaro's images, Kintarō is characterised as an ordinary child subjected to the usual inventory of frustrations, amusements and joys brought by a mother – in this case, his foster mother Yamauba – thus fusing the folkloric world with everyday life.

61

喜多川歌麿 当世子供六哥撰 在原業平

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**'Ariwara Narihira', from the series Contemporary children as the Six Immortal Poets** c1800*ōban*, colour woodblock print; inv no 6101-09.4

62/63

喜多川歌麿 風流子宝合 乳 大からくり

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**from the series Elegant comparisons of little treasures** c1802*ōban*, colour woodblock print**'About to breastfeed'**

inv no 6101-19.136

**'Peepshow'**

inv no 6101.04.420

Cat nos 62 and 63 belong to a series dealing with the interactions between young children and their mothers, elder sisters or

nursemaids. In almost all cases, the children in the set are male. Expected to perpetuate and bring honour to the family line, boys were viewed as 'little treasures'. Although women in the Edo period were popularly categorised as either *yūjo* ('women for pleasure' or prostitutes) or *ji-onna* ('real women' for procreation and domestic drudgery), Utamaro renders the motherly figure in these images as alluring as the women of the Yoshiwara pleasure district.

64/65

喜多川歌麿 児戯意乃三笑 十艶名 六子情

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**from the series Three laughs at children's playful spirits** c1802*ōban*, colour woodblock print**'Tō Enmei (Tao Yuanming)'**

inv no 6101-19.135

**'Riku Shisei (Lu Xiujing)'**

inv no 6101-19.134

Cat nos 64 and 65 are from a set of three prints illustrating children's games. The title is a parody of the Chinese allegory of 'The three laughs at the Tiger ravine'. Featuring three figures – mother, older sister and young brother – each of Utamaro's images parodies the Chinese tale only in terms of the number of people involved, without bearing any allegoric messages. They are playful, innocent scenes which could have been observed in everyday life and which would have caused the viewer to smile. The Chinese names are written with punning characters: 'Kōkei' ('Tiger Ravine') means 'children's playful spirits', 'Tō Enmei' means 'ten voluptuous names', and 'Riku Shisei' means 'six child emotions'.

66/67

喜多川歌麿 二葉草七小町 あふむ小町 かよい小町

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**from the series Little seedlings: the Seven Komachi** c1803*ōban*, colour woodblock print**'Parrot Komachi'**

inv no 6101-19.137

### 'Komachi and the suitor'

inv no 6101-28.391

Cat nos 66 and 67 are part of a series of that shows children's antics in a parody of the seven famous episodes in the life of mid-9th-century poetess Ono no Komachi. Cat no 66 refers to an incident in which Komachi demonstrates her formidable wit by 'parroting' a poem sent to her by the emperor. Cat no 67 parodies the episode when the poetess tests the sincerity of her suitor, Fukakusa. She promises to spend one night with him if he could sleep 100 nights outside her door. Fukakusa withstands the elements for 99 nights, but gives up on the 100th.

### 68

喜多川歌麿 新形五色染 ほうずき  
Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**'A winter cherry', from the series  
Five newly-dyed patterns** c1804

*ōban*, colour woodblock print with white mica; inv no 6100-10.12

### 69

喜多川歌麿 喜多川歌麿二代  
子供見立秀吉

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806) or  
UTAMARO II (active early 1800s-31)

**Parody of Hideyoshi's conquest of Korea**  
c1810s

*ōban* triptych, colour woodblock print; inv no 60060(1)-13.704

### 70

喜多川歌麿 絵本笑上戸

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1753?-1806)

**Picture-book: the laughing tippler** c1803

illustrated erotic book (*shunpon*), 3 volumes, colour woodblock;  
Art Gallery of New South Wales; Asian Collection Benefactors' Fund  
2009; acc no 312.2009.1-3

Published around 1803, this three-volume set is perhaps the last of Utamaro's erotic books printed in colour. Each of the three volumes opens with a single-page bust portrait of a woman, followed by seven double pages illustrating scenes of sexual intimacy. It ends with a close-up view of the genitalia of the woman portrayed at the beginning. Volume 1 is dedicated to the virgin woman and her sexual fantasies, volume 2 to the married woman and volume 3 to the courtesan. The expression *warai jōgo* in the book's title refers to someone who laughs when inebriated. It is also a pun on the term for erotic imagery, *warai-e* (literally, 'laughing picture').

Hymn to beauty: the art of Utamaro  
Art Gallery of New South Wales  
13 February – 2 May 2010

All works (except cat no 70) are from  
the collection of the Asian Art Museum,  
National Museums in Berlin

An exhibition catalogue is also available:

**Utamaro: hymn to beauty**

Essays by Khanh Trinh, Alexander Hofmann  
and Rhiannon Paget

Published by Art Gallery of New South Wales  
168 pages, 137 colour and 30 b&w reproductions,  
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