

Dr Julie Nelson Davis is associate professor of the history of art at the University of Pennsylvania. Davis received her PhD from the University of Washington in Seattle, and taught at Oberlin College before joining the Penn faculty in 2002. Her recent book *Utamaro and the spectacle of beauty* (2007) offers a new approach to the status of the artist and the construction of identity, gender, sexuality and celebrity in the Edo period.

Dr Gary Hickey has studied traditional Japanese printmaking in Japan and worked as curator at the National Gallery of Victoria and the National Gallery of Australia. He curated *Beauty & desire in Edo period Japan* (1998) and the Japanese art in the 2001 exhibition *Monet & Japan*. He is a director of the International Ukiyo-e Society. At the University of Queensland he convenes the museum studies program and subjects on Japanese art.

Dr Takeshi Moriyama is a lecturer in the Asian studies program, and a fellow of the Asia Research Centre at Murdoch University, Perth, specialising in early modern Japanese history, particularly popular culture and the publishing industry.

Amy Reigle Newland is an independent scholar of Japanese woodblock prints and has worked extensively as an author and editor in that field. Some of her recent publications include *Japanese erotic fantasies: sexual imagery of the Edo period* (2005; editor); *The Hotei encyclopedia of Japanese woodblock prints* (2005; editor); *Japanese warrior prints, 1646–1905* (2007; editor) and *Golden journey: Japanese art from Australian collections* (2009; co-author/co-editor).

Dr Toby Slade lectures at the University of Tokyo researching Asian modernity and the history and theory of fashion. His book *Japanese fashion: a cultural history* (2010) details the entire sweep of fashion and clothing in Japan from the earliest times to today.

Dr Khanh Trinh is curator of Japanese art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and curator of *Hymn to beauty: the art of Utamaro*. She received her PhD from the University of Zurich for the thesis on the 'True view' landscapes by the Edo period painter Tani Buncho (1763–1840). She is former curator of Japanese art at the Museum of East Asian Art, Berlin, now part of the Asian Art Museum, the principal lender to the exhibition.

Hymn to Beauty

THE ART OF UTAMARO



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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. Asian Art Museum, National Museums in Berlin. Inv No 6101-00.893. Photography: Jürgen Liepe

PROGRAM

Saturday 13 February 2010 • Domain Theatre, lower level 3

The ukiyo-e woodblock print is one of the most recognisable of Japan's diverse art forms, and Kitagawa Utamaro (1753?–1806) is its quintessential exponent. Already celebrated as a master of the ukiyo-e print during his lifetime in late 18th-century Japan, he was introduced to the West at the turn of the 20th century as a painter of the 'Green houses' (Yoshiwara pleasure quarters).

Utamaro achieved his first breakthrough in the late 1780s as an illustrator of sumptuously printed poetry anthologies and erotica. With the introduction of bust or half-length formats to the popular genre of *bijinga* (pictures of beautiful women) in the early 1790s, he revolutionised the way women were portrayed in Japanese visual arts. His sensuous and insightful portraits of women from all walks of life – aloof courtesans, diligent housewives, affectionate mothers and passionate lovers – have enjoyed unabated popularity in Japan and worldwide.

Hymn to beauty: the art of Utamaro features around 80 prints from the renowned collection of the Museum of Asian Art, National Museums in Berlin. The symposium will reveal the life and times of this luminary artist.

BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

\$90 / \$80 members, conc

\$60 full time student

tel 02 9225 1878 or

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In conjunction with the exhibition
Hymn to beauty: The art of Utamaro
13 February – 2 May 2010

9.30am Coffee & registration

10am Welcome Jackie Menzies, head curator of Asian art, Art Gallery of NSW

10.10am This was Edo c1800: the lively, colourful and fragile metropolis of Utamaro's day

Takeshi Moriyama

Everyone is a child of their day, and the artist Utamaro was no exception. He lived in the metropolis of Edo at the start of the phenomenal development in its urban popular culture. This lecture showcases Utamaro's Edo as inhabited by the shogun and a million people around 1800. What did Edo look like? What did Utamaro see on the street and what inspired his art? What social, political and cultural conditions affected his life and work?

10.50am Utamaro: art between commerce and censorship

Khanh Trinh

Whether naturalistic depictions of flora and fauna, sensuous portraits of beautiful women or endearing scenes of family life, Utamaro's prints are appreciated today for their elegant composition, sophisticated colouring and outstanding craftsmanship. While these are undoubtedly the principal elements that ensured an artist's commercial success, imaginative power and ability to adapt to the shifting market demands and to the increasing government censorship were also factors that significantly shaped the careers of ukiyo-e artists like Utamaro in the late 18th to early 19th centuries.

11.20am Morning tea

11.50am Utamaro and the cultivation of 'brocade prints'

Gary Hickey

A pair of triptychs created by Utamaro around 1803 depicts the production process of a form of woodblock print known as *nishiki-e*, or 'brocade print'. In choosing this subject Utamaro acknowledged the role the medium played in the creation of his masterpieces. As one of the luminaries of the Edo world of artists and writers Utamaro was able to utilise the finest materials and the best craftsmen in the creation of his prints. This lecture reveals how the sophistication of the woodblock printing process provided Utamaro with a means of enhancing his elegant designs.

12.30pm Utamaro's 'pictures of beauties' and other social physiognomies

Julie Nelson Davis

This lecture takes a closer look at Utamaro's 'pictures of beauties' and considers how they created a new kind of catalogue of feminine beauty in late 18th-century Japan. By reconsidering the ways in which Utamaro presented female 'physiognomies', we explore how ukiyo-e artists and their audiences assessed and appraised 'beauty' according to social and cultural precepts. By extending the practices of connoisseurship to describe the types of women in Edo, Utamaro, his publisher and their circle were reinscribing period ideas of masculine sophistication, while at the same time skirting censorship restrictions imposed upon ukiyo-e and its subject matter.

1.30pm Lunch & exhibition viewing

2.30pm Fashion in Utamaro's Edo

Toby Slade

Essential to the way fashion was conceived in Utamaro's Edo was the concept of *iki* or chic refinement. Evocatively portrayed in Utamaro's work and later formally described by academic Kuki Shuzo, *iki* attempts to give philosophical meaning to the sensibility, lifestyle and fashions of Edo Japan. Analogous to dandyism, though open to women too, *iki* was an extension of fashion to life itself. It valued impermanent beauty and the freedom from all kinds of necessity. Its erotic allure came from maintaining a state of unfulfilled tension between man and woman.

3.10pm Allure à la japonaise: the reception of ukiyo-e prints in 19th-century Europe

Amy Newland

In the preface to his seminal work of 1891, *Utamaro, le peintre des maisons vertes* (Utamaro, the painter of the 'Green houses'), the French collector of ukiyo-e Edmond de Goncourt (1822–96), writes that he is about to publish the first volume of a 'truly intimidating' series on Japanese artists. De Goncourt's publication represents an early attempt at cataloguing the work of Utamaro in a Western language, and reflects the enthusiasm of Westerners for him and other ukiyo-e masters of the late-18th and early-19th century.

3.50pm Closing remarks

Join us for a glass of wine and further discussion