

## Press Release

The Brooklyn Museum presents *Hiroshige's 100 Famous Views Of Edo (feat. Takashi Murakami)*, a Rare Collection on View for the First Time in Nearly Twenty-Four Years

Drawn from the Museum's collection, the exhibition presents some of the world's finest prints by the famed Japanese artist, paired with 121 new paintings by artist Takashi Murakami reimagining Hiroshige's masterpieces.

On view April 5–August 4, 2024



Utagawa Hiroshige (Japanese, 1797–1858). *Plum Estate, Kameido* (Kameido Umeyashiki), no. 30 from *100 Famous Views of Edo*, 11th month of 1857. Woodblock print, 14 3/16 x 9 1/4 in. (36 x 23.5 cm). Brooklyn Museum; Gift of Anna Ferris, 30.1478.30. (Photo: Brooklyn Museum)

*Hiroshige's 100 Famous Views of Edo (feat. Takashi Murakami)* presents one of the Brooklyn Museum's greatest hidden treasures, a complete set of 118 prints by the famed Japanese print designer, on view for the first time in more than two decades. The print series will be displayed alongside a special installation of new paintings by Japanese artist Takashi Murakami, created in direct response to Hiroshige's designs. Murakami has created a new version of each print in Hiroshige's *100 famous Views of Edo*, and they will be unveiled for the first time in this presentation at the Brooklyn Museum. The pairing of Hiroshige's views with contemporary work will invite viewers to experience this celebrated series in new ways.

Unlike most presentations of Hiroshige's series, which often celebrate the splendor of the prints and their influence on European artists, the Brooklyn exhibition focuses on the distinctive urban landscape of Edo (modern-day Tokyo) and the environmental changes to the city in the 165 years since Hiroshige depicted it. Additional objects from the Museum's rarely seen collection of Japanese folk art and household objects offer an immersive look into the lives of everyday people in Hiroshige's Edo. Taking the viewer in a more art historical direction, Murakami reinterprets Hiroshige's iconic designs, considering their impact on European art and Japanese pop culture imagery.

"Hiroshige's series is a loving tribute to a city, rendered with an insider's knowledge. The exhibition celebrates the formal qualities of the prints, which were radical in their own time, but it also decodes details in the *Views* to reveal the distinctive characteristics of Edo's many neighborhoods. Hiroshige's original audience would have enjoyed the prints for their ability to capture the beauty and culture of a city they knew well. It can be difficult to imagine that these bucolic landscapes would turn into Tokyo, but our aim is to help understand that transition by rooting the *Views* in real life," says Joan Cummins, Lisa and Bernard Selz Senior Curator, Asian Art.

The prints, which are vividly rendered with many printing "extras"—including hand-wiped shading, metallic inks, and embossing—move through each season as exemplified with the delicate cherry blossoms in *Suijin Shrine and Massaki on the Sumida River*, the wintry dusk visible through snow-covered trees in *Meguro Drum Bridge and Sunset Hill*, the lush gardens in *Horikiri Iris Garden*, and the vibrant autumn leaves in *Maple Trees at Mama, Tekona Shrine and Linked Bridge*.

The exhibition also brings together historical and contemporary works of art that highlight the socioeconomic and environmental narratives visible in Hiroshige's prints. Complementing the prints are everyday objects of the period, which help visualize the way ordinary people lived, drawn from the Museum's large collection of Japanese material culture. Ranging from furniture, advertising signs, and banners to cooking utensils and elegant lacquered serving vessels, many of the objects are similar to those depicted in the prints, and all were made for the classes of townspeople shown in Hiroshige's views. Also included from the collection are costumes to demonstrate the range of styles and materials seen on Edo streets, including a selection of men's jackets and a straw cape worn as a raincoat. These garments represent the rigid class differences of Hiroshige's time, with examples worn only by the samurai class, as well as those worn by working-class delivery men.

The tension between the natural and man-made environments of Edo remains a throughline in the exhibition, which notes the strengths and flaws of city planning throughout the years, offering comparison with other major cities (including New York). Other concerns visible in Hiroshige's imagery were specific to mid-nineteenth-century Japan: social and economic stratification, environmental challenges posed by Edo's watery location, and the constant threat of earthquakes and fires. Photographs by contemporary photographer and Tokyo resident Álex Falcón Bueno accompany some of the prints, capturing the exact locations depicted by Hiroshige. Bueno's works address the obvious differences between the physical environments of the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries—Hiroshige's *Views* are barely recognizable in modern-day Tokyo—as well as some surprising similarities.

Takashi Murakami has responded to the series by creating new versions of every print in Utagawa Hiroshige's *100 Famous Views of Edo*. Murakami's treatment of the subjects and compositions in Hiroshige's prints offers a different link to the present. Although he is

celebrated for his pop sensibility, Murakami has always had a strong interest in Japanese art history, referencing the styles and imagery of historical paintings in his work throughout his career. However, it is only recently that he has turned his focus to the lively subjects and graphic styles of Japanese color woodblock prints. Whereas his previous work has sampled from multiple print sources to create complex compositions, for this project, Murakami looks to Hiroshige's individual print designs, creating brand-new imagery that will debut in this installation.

Murakami also analyzes Hiroshige's legacy and impact on European modernism, looking to nineteenth-century artists such as Vincent Van Gogh and Auguste Renoir, artists who were profoundly influenced by Hiroshige and the tradition of Japanese block prints. Van Gogh even copied two of the compositions from the *100 Famous Views of Edo* series himself in 1887. Through this lens, Murakami reminds us that artistic legacies can be multi-pronged, and that visual culture morphs every time it reaches new audiences.

*Hiroshige's 100 Famous Views of Edo (feat. Takashi Murakami)* is organized by Joan Cummins, Lisa and Bernard Selz Senior Curator, Asian Art.