

# Japanese engravings from the Abbey of Montserrat

Japanese engravings are not often found in the West, but within the set of sixteen engravings that arrived in Montserrat as a donation from the Catalan bookseller Just Cabot in 1962, there are some of great interest and quality, highlighting the figure of the artist Ando Hiroshige (1797-1858). It is a representative collection of the important works of the Ukiyo-e school that painted everyday life subjects, mainly women known for their beauty or popularity in Kyoto environments, "Kabuki" theatre actors as well as typical landscapes.

Ukiyo-e means "painting of the floating world" and its art is based on the philosophy of "mono-no-aware", the nostalgia of things. It's painful to see

how things change every day, and the painting becomes a way to capture this change.

During the Edo Period (1615-1848), Japan was closed to all outside influence and this painting of the floating world emerged.

Ukiyo-e is one of the most representative schools of Japanese art, and it is the expression of the life of a people who put their heart into the simple things of everyday life, such as love, nature, or people.

Text by P. Fernando García Gutiérrez (1928-2018)

After its restoration, this collection of engravings will be presented for the first time in Montserrat.

## SHOWCASE 1

**KOKUBA (1771 – 1844)**

**Two figures, one of whom is dancing with a tambourine and the other is seated.**

N.R. 11714

**SHIGENOBU YANAGAWA (1787 – 1832)**

**Two men in an interior**

N.R. 11713

**ATSUKAWA SHUNSHO (1726 – 1792)**

**Kabuki theatre actor**

N.R. 11711

**TSUKIOKA YOSHITOSHI (1839-1892)**

**Warrior Nita Shiro**

N.R. 11723

**TSUKIOKA YOSHITOSHI (1839 -1892)**

**Warrior climbing a mountain**

N.R. 11722

**UTAGAWA SADAHIRO (1830-1851)**

**Woman in kimono**

N.R. 11721

**UTAGAWA YOSHITORA (c. 1836-1882)**

**A bridge with Mount Fuji in the background**

N.R. 11718

**UTAGAWA TOSHIDAMA**

**Woman reading in an interior**

N.R. 11710



## SHOWCASE 2 — ANDŌ HIROSHIGE

Andō Hiroshige (Edo, 1797 – 1858) is one of the most significant artists in the history of Japanese art. His style is very personal, with a special sense of composition, serenity, and the way of interpreting nature, despite still having some influence from Hokusai. His primary work is the series *53 stations of the Tokaido* (1831), however, his other series are also recognized, including *Famous Views of Edo* (1850) and *Famous Scenes of Kyoto*. The eight engravings by Hiroshige that are housed in the collection of the Montserrat Museum rank among his finest works.

### THE BRIDGE OVER YOSHIDA RIVER

N.R. 11709

festivity of the city, which has become the new capital of Japan.

### LANDSCAPE

N.R. 11720

### LANDSCAPE

N.R. 11712

### A VILLAGE OF FISHERMEN NEAR THE SEA

N.R. 11717

It is one of the views of the Tokaido path, which was a route that went from Edo to Kyoto. Hiroshige reproduced 53 points on this route, where he used to rest. In this instance, we observe a number of huts that provide a place to rest or procure sustenance, exhibiting the traditional construction method of wooden walls and a Japanese cypress bark roof, adorned with reeds.

### STREET WITH HANGING CANVAS

N.R. 11719

Since ancient times, the art of dyeing fabrics in Japan has been highly developed, but it stood out in a special way during the 18th and 19th centuries. It can be seen in this street with freshly dyed stretch fabrics, where the great chromaticism and originality of the composition stand out.

### NIHONBASHI

N.R. 11715

This engraving is a part of the '*53 Stations of the Tokaido*' series, and it is probable that it represents the initial station or stop along the way. The Nihonbashi Bridge is situated in the center of Tokyo, crossing one of the canals that traverse the city. The towers in the background were constructed around the outer wall of the Imperial Palace. Mount Fuji appears further away. It is an idealized view, but with real elements and soft tones that suggest early morning light when the route would start. Hiroshige's ability to express the hours of day and night through hues of color is a talent that not all artists from the Ukiyo-e school possess.

### RYOGOKU BRIDGE

N.R. 11724

It is a night scene that shows a usual place of entertainment. This work is part of Hiroshige's famous series "*Famous Views of Edo*".

### EDOMEISA

N.R. 11716

This engraving shows one of the most popular places to relax in Edo, now Tokyo. The artist employs the technique of "open walls" to allow us to observe the interior of the buildings, thereby conveying the lively ambience of the locale. This work is a part of the series titled "*Famous Places of Edo*", which depicts the

