

Kabuki 歌舞伎

The 19th Century Japanese Ukiyo-e

29 February – 19 April 2020

Art Museum RIGA BOURSE / Great Exhibition Hall
Doma laukums 6, Riga, Latvia

From 29 February to 19 April 2020, the exhibition *Kabuki 歌舞伎. The 19th Century Japanese Ukiyo-e* will be held at the Art Museum RIGA BOURSE in Riga (Doma laukums 6), featuring the actors of kabuki theatre in coloured woodblock prints or ukiyo-e from Japan's Edo period. The works are from the collection of the Latvian National Museum of Art.

Sword fights and other tense subjects, ghosts, human-size rats, expressive make-up and gestures emphasizing the emotions of the actors, and colourful costumes are only a small part of the world that can be viewed in the works of this exhibition. It is life as performed by kabuki actors, in Japan's Edo period (1603–1868).

There are about 380 exhibits in the collection of Japanese graphics at the Latvian National Museum of Art, with the largest number being ukiyo-e – a genre of graphics, which can be literally translated as the “pictures of the floating world”. Ukiyo-e masters mainly portrayed kabuki theatre actors, beautiful women, sumo wrestlers, warriors, scenes from history and folk tales, travelling scenes, landscapes, nature and animals, as well as works of erotic nature. In this way, they revealed the energy-filled popular culture of the Edo period, which flourished in the largest Japanese cities. The works in the museum collection mostly relate to the kabuki theatre theme.

Kabuki is a traditional form of Japanese theatre which was created and matured in the Edo period and combined singing, music, dance, and drama. Along with the noh and bunraku theatres, kabuki is recognized as one of the three main forms of classical Japanese theatre and is included in the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Kabuki initially developed as a theatre which expressed the interests of the middle class or merchants with the actors presenting their performances on everyday themes, historical events and the resolution of moral ethical issues. The portrayals by the kabuki theatre actors were the most highly demanded among the fans of the ukiyo-e artists and actors.

The works of three productive and commercially successful artists from the 19th century can be seen at the exhibition – Utagawa Kunisada (歌川国貞, 1786–1865), who was also one of the leading trendsetters in his field, Kunisada's student and active portrayer of kabuki actors, Toyohara Kunichika (豊原国周, 1835–1900) and Utagawa Kuniyoshi (歌川国芳, 1797–1861), one of the last great Japanese ukiyo-e masters.

The visitors of the exhibition have the possibility to discover more about the various elements of kabuki theatre by watching the film *歌舞伎 KABUKI. Japan's Classical Theatre* (1964), this documentary is from the collection of Science Film Museum in Japan.

Text by Kristīne Milere



Embassy of the Republic of Latvia
in Japan

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#KabukiUkiyoe

Art Museum RIGA BOURSE / Doma laukums 6, Riga, Latvia

OPENING HOURS:

Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, Sundays 10.00–18.00, ticket office 10.00–17.45

Fridays 10.00–20.00, ticket office 10.00–19.45

Closed on Mondays

The museum is closed on all public holidays: 1 January, Good Friday, Easter, Midsummer Eve and Day (23–24 June), Christmas (25–26 December), 31 December.

ADMISSION:

Reduced individual admission fee for groups of 10 or more people.

Free admission for the person in charge of the group.

Adults: 3,50 EUR

Schoolchildren, students, seniors: 2,00 EUR

Family ticket (1–2 adults with 1–4 children or family having many children): 5,00–7,00 EUR

Free admission for LNMA Annual ticket holders.

Free entry is also for: pre-school children; orphans or children not under parental care (valid status identification card required); children with a disability up to 18 years, 1st and 2nd group disabled persons (valid status identification card required) and one person accompanying either a child with a disability up to 18 years or a 1st or 2nd group disabled person; pupils of Latvian art schools or professional secondary art schools (valid status identification card required); full-time students of the Art Academy of Latvia (valid status identification card required); students attending institutions of professional secondary education or colleges who are studying or receiving training in visual or applied art, design, cultural history, museology, architecture, restoration as part of their studies or training (on submission of a written application to the museum director at least one day earlier); employees of Latvian museums (valid status identification card required); members of the International Council of Museums (ICOM, valid status membership card required); members of the Latvian Artists' Union (valid status identification card required); *Friend of the LNMA* card holders; media representatives who are covering museum events (valid status identification card required); group (no less than 10 persons) leaders – guides or teachers; everyone on the international event *Museum Night* from 19.00; all visitors to the permanent display on the last Sunday of every month and on International Museum Day – 18th May.

PRESS IMAGES (please request if needed in a larger resolution)

1. Utagawa Kunisada (歌川国貞, 1786–1865).
Scene from the play *Favourite Willow Cord Twitching* (柳絲引御撰), dance *Sanbasō Marionette* (操り三番叟). Actor Arashi Rikaku (嵐璃珪) in the role of old man Sanbasō. 1853.
Paper, colour woodblock print. Collection of the Latvian National Museum of Art. Publicity photo
2. Utagawa Kunisada (歌川国貞, 1786–1865).
Possibly a scene from the play *Date Clan Adorns the Dolls of Soga Clan* (伊達彩曾我雛形). Actor Nakamura Utaemon (中村歌右衛門) in the role of warrior Arajishi Otokonosuke. 1815.
Paper, colour woodblock print. Collection of the Latvian National Museum of Art. Publicity photo
3. Utagawa Kunisada (歌川国貞, 1786–1865).
Scene from the play *Three Kichisaburōs Go Shopping at the New Year in the Pleasure Quarters* (三人吉三廓初買). Right side: actor Kawarazaki Gonjūrō (河原崎權十郎) in the role of samurai (rōnin)

Obō Kichisa. Left side: actor Ichikawa Kodanji (市川小團次) in the role of Buddhist monk Oshō Kichisa and actor Ichimura Uzaemon (市村羽左衛門) in the role of sword seller Jūzaburō. 1860.

Paper, colour woodblock print. Collection of the Latvian National Museum of Art. Publicity photo

4. Toyohara Kunichika (豊原国周, 1835–1900).

Possibly a scene from the play *Pictures of Our Home at Kagamiyama* (加賀見山旧錦絵).

Right side: actor Onoe Fujaku (尾上芙雀) in the role of young samurai Motome and actor Arashi Izaburō (嵐栄三郎) in the role of Hamano-o.

Centre: actor Bandō Hikosaburō (坂東彦三郎) in the role of lady-in-waiting Tsubone Iwafuji.

Left side: actor Onoe Kikugorō (尾上菊五郎) in the role of attendant Ohatsu. 1871.

Paper, colour woodblock print. Collection of the Latvian National Museum of Art. Publicity photo