

HOKUSAI'S LANDSCAPES



THE COMPLETE SERIES

富士三景
凱風
快晴

HOKUSAI'S LANDSCAPES

THE COMPLETE SERIES

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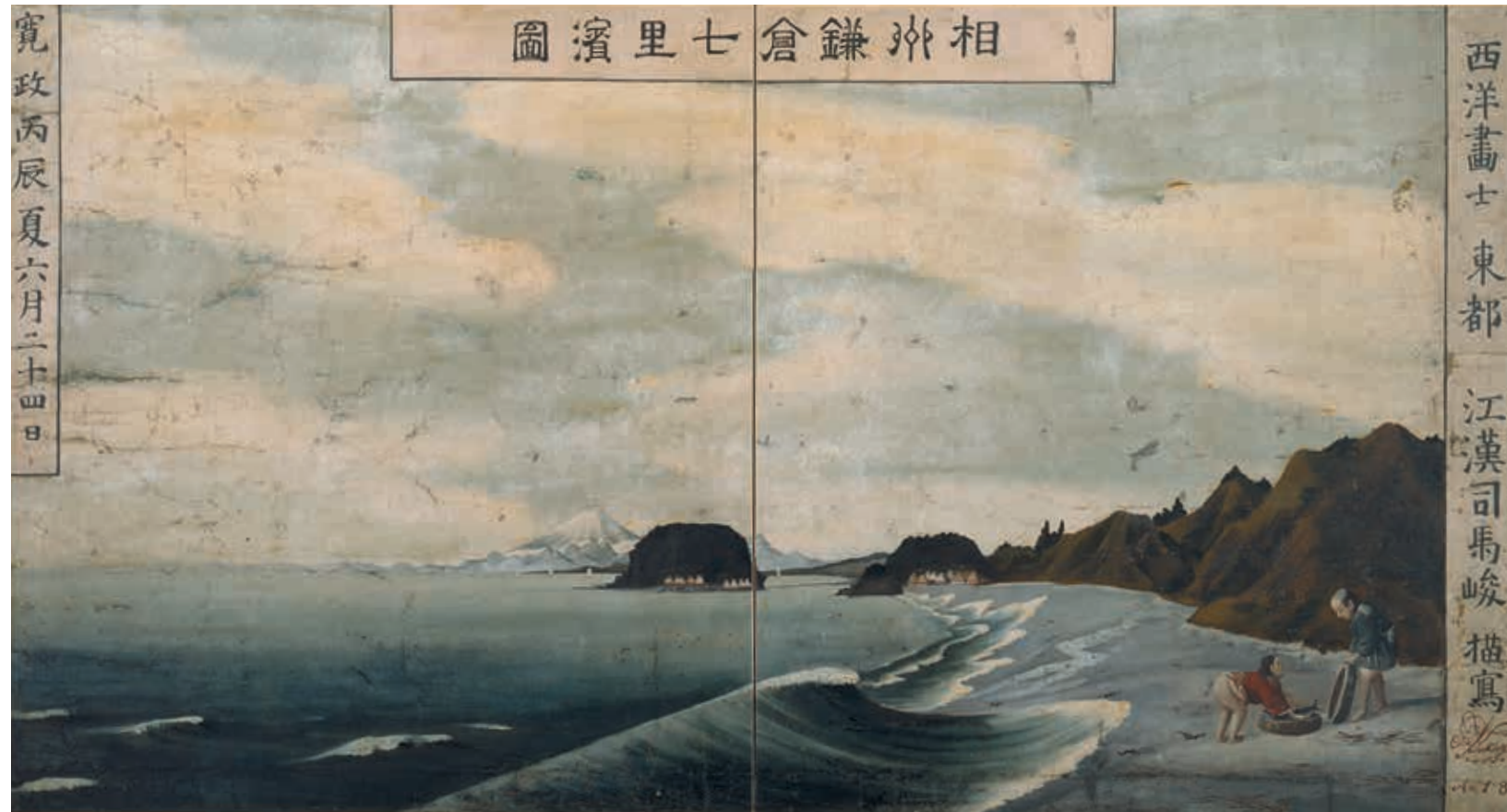
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5 | Shiba Kōkan (1747–1818), *Seven-Mile Beach with Enoshima and Fuji*, about 1790

6 | *Spring at Enoshima*, from the album *Willow Silk*, 1797



7 | Torii Kiyonaga (1752–1815), *A Pilgrimage to Enoshima*, about 1789

beach at Shichirigahama, near Enoshima, was exhibited at the Atago Shrine in Edo from 1796 to 1811 and was clearly a major source of inspiration for Hokusai (figs. 5 and 6).

Although landscape as a subject was important in most schools of Edo-period painting, it was not of great interest to the earlier ukiyo-e artists. Their preeminent themes were the people and scenes of the kabuki theater and the Yoshiwara pleasure district, the two mainstays of the Floating World. Ukiyo-e artists did produce illustrated travel guidebooks and images drawn from classical poetry that sometimes included glimpses of the scenery that inspired the poets. By the 1780s, when Hokusai was an apprentice artist in the Katsukawa studio, popular depictions of beautiful women in fashionable clothes, or of kabuki actors in private life, often showed them on excursions to famous scenic spots with well-developed landscape or cityscape backgrounds, but the landscape remained secondary to the figures (fig. 7).

At around the same time, the perspective prints that had played a small part in the ukiyo-e repertoire since

the 1740s enjoyed a new wave of popularity, thanks to the artist Utagawa Toyoharu (1735–1814). Toyoharu, the founder of the Utagawa school that later came to dominate ukiyo-e, produced numerous uki-e perspective prints showing views of Edo and other famous scenic spots in Japan, and even some views of foreign countries based on European prints and the artist's imagination. Hokusai, although he was a Katsukawa school artist and not a pupil of Toyoharu, was intrigued by uki-e and produced a number of perspective prints himself. He made clever use of this illusionistic technique to create real-looking depictions of fantasy scenes, such as an illustration of a well-known fairy tale in which a Japanese fisherman visits the palace of the Dragon King (fig. 8). The mastery of vanishing-point perspective that Hokusai gained through designing uki-e would stand him in good stead.

Another factor in Hokusai's break with the Katsukawa school may have been his interest in uki-e, which could have been seen as an act of disloyalty because those prints were the specialty of a rival school. He became the

Looking at Hokusai's Prints

CARVED into the printing blocks, as part of the design of each print, are the title of the series plus the title of the individual design. Usually this information is in a rectangle or other decorative shape in one of the upper corners, with the artist's signature nearby. The art names that Hokusai was using at this stage of his life were *litsu* ("one again") and *Manji* ("ten thousand," written with an archaic character that resembles a swastika, a good-luck symbol in Buddhism). Because he had become famous earlier under the name Hokusai, he included opening phrases in the signatures such as "The Former Hokusai" (*saki no Hokusai* . . .) or "Hokusai, changed to . . ." (*Hokusai aratame* . . .).

Two other pieces of information were required by law, although in practice they were often omitted: a round seal with the character *kiwame* ("completed"), indicating that the design for the print had passed inspection by a censor, and the identifying seal or logo of the publisher. The eight color print series in this book were issued by just two

publishing houses: Eijudō, whose proprietor was Nishimuraya Yohachi, and Kinshindō, run by Moriya Jihei. Iseya Sanjirō seems to have taken over the Eijudō from Nishimuraya Yohachi for the last prints published in the *Hundred Poems* series.

For Nishimuraya Yohachi, who seems to have been Hokusai's favorite publisher, the artist often included in his designs small visual jokes that refer to the publisher, either with characters such as the *ei* or *ju* of Eijudō, or with the three-comma symbol that was not only a common good-luck motif but also part of the house's logo.

No dates appear on the prints themselves, and so dating them requires detective work. It is generally agreed that the Fuji series and the waterfalls were the first and second to be issued, probably overlapping each other, and that the unfinished *One Hundred Poems* was the last; the exact dates of the various other series are largely guesswork. They are presented here in a probable sequence.



22 | Viewing the Sunset over Ryōgoku
Bridge from the Onmaya Embankment

The west bank of the Sumida River north of Ryōgoku Bridge had once been the location of the shogunate's official stables (O-umaya, often elided to Onmaya). The ferry whose western terminal was on Official Stable Embankment (Onmayagashi) was officially known as the Onmaya Ferry but was also sometimes called the Fuji View Ferry because in clear weather it offered good views of the mountain. The sun has set and night is falling on the city, indicated by Hokusai's choice of black rather than blue for the sky — this is the only print in the series with a black sky. The boatman admires the twilight view, as does a passenger whose green backpack bears the logo of the publisher. The passenger beside him, however, keeps his back to the sight and concentrates on holding a long pole upright; he is presumably returning from a day of fishing. Other passengers sit quietly or chat with one another. One idly trails a piece of cloth in the water, repeating the action of the boatwoman doing laundry at the far left. The gentle curve of the ferry boat is mirrored in the curve of Ryōgoku Bridge downstream, with the two arcs punctuated by the triangular peak of Fuji above and the round umbrella below.





32 | Sekiya Village on the Sumida River

Three horses gallop furiously along the road in the direction of central Edo, their riders bending over their necks to urge them on. By law, only high-ranking samurai were allowed to ride horses under their own control, although commoners could travel as passengers on a packhorse led by its driver. The three horsemen are probably couriers in the service of the shogun or one of his daimyō (feudal lords), returning to the city with urgent messages from the provinces. They ride along a road

constructed at the top of an embankment winding through rice paddies, in an area on the northern outskirts of the city known as Sekiya Village along the east bank of the Sumida River below the bridge at Senju (see nos. 17 and 38). To the right is an official notice board where government regulations were posted.



33 | The Coast of Noboto

Noboto was located across the bay from the city of Edo in what is now Chiba City. It was one of the ports from which rice and seafood were shipped to Edo by sea. The two torii gates belong to a Shinto shrine whose name is written with the same characters as the place name but pronounced Nobuto. (Its formal name was changed in 1867 to the Towatari Shrine.) The main deity of the shrine, Ame no Minakanushi no Okami, is also considered to be a manifestation of the Bodhisattva

Myōken, the Buddhist deity of the polar stars. Since Hokusai was a worshipper of Myōken, he may have made a pilgrimage here himself.

A cheerful group of local men, women, and children are digging for clams and other shellfish at low tide near the gates. Hokusai depicted a similar scene, also including the clamdiggers but showing the view from the opposite direction, in another print (no. 72).



49 | Falling Mist Waterfall at Mount Kurokami in Shimotsuke Province

The Falling Mist (Kirifuri) Waterfall was a must-see destination for pilgrims on their way to nearby Nikkō to worship at the Tōshōgū Shrine, the burial place of Tokugawa Ieyasu, founder of the Tokugawa shogunate. It is likely that Hokusai himself had made the pilgrimage, since he drew a realistic sketch of one of the other waterfalls in the area, dated 1831 and published as a book illustration in 1837. The five small figures who admire the falls from various angles are dressed in traveling clothes, with large round hats to protect them from the sun, and are probably pilgrims. Concealed in their gear are three hidden references to the publisher Nishimuraya Yohachi and his firm, the Eijudō: the character *ei* on the hat at the upper right, the character *ju* on another hat at the lower edge of the design, and the familiar trademark on the backpack of the second figure from the left.





One Thousand Pictures of the Ocean

THIS SERIES, often overlooked in discussions of Hokusai's landscape prints because of its small format, includes intriguing examples of his fascination with water in all its forms, and with human activities such as different methods of fishing. The deliberately ambiguous title of the series, *Chie no umi*, can be translated in various ways. *Chie* means "wisdom," a quality often associated with Buddhist deities such as the Bodhisattva Manjusri (Monju Bosatsu in Japanese). Here Hokusai punningly wrote it with characters that can also mean "one thousand pictures." Thus, "The Sea of Wisdom" and "One Thousand Pictures of the Ocean" are equally valid translations; furthermore, this sea or ocean is understood to include all waterways, even inland rivers. Like the title, the series was intended to be open-ended and to include an unspecified number of designs, although only these ten were published in completed form. Two more designs are known in the form of key-block prints for which, it seems, no color blocks were ever carved; and at least one drawing survives.



68 | Fly-Fishing

The one-person fishing method that uses cleverly constructed artificial insects as bait, with casting techniques that give the “fly” natural-looking movements enticing to fish, has been popular for centuries in Asia as well as Europe. In Japan, it is most often associated with mountain streams, but it can also be practiced at the ocean’s shore or on freshwater lakes. Here Hokusai shows a secluded spot perhaps known only to a select few. The anglers use small handheld nets to transfer fish from their lines to the creels carried on their belts. In modern times, fly-fishing has become a very popular recreational sport in Japan, both with Western gear and in the simpler traditional form known as *tenkara*.

69 | Fishing by Torchlight in Kai Province

Fishing at night, using the light of torches to attract fish, was practiced in many parts of Edo-period Japan. For this scene, Hokusai chose the mountainous region of Kai Province (also called Kōshū), probably because its twisting, fast-moving streams provide dramatic visual effects as well as good fishing. Kai Province corresponds roughly to present-day Yamanashi Prefecture, located to the west of Tokyo, with Mount Fuji on its southern border. Today, the region attracts tourists from both Japan and abroad for its excellent fishing, as well as for other outdoor activities such as hiking, climbing, and skiing.





77 | Old View of the Eight-Part Bridge at Yatsunashi in Mikawa Province

Two prints in the series, identified as “old views” (*kozu*), are imaginary views of bridges that no longer existed in Hokusai’s time but were known from classical poetry. In the ninth century, the author of *Tales of Ise* — probably the courtier and poet Ariwara no Narihira (825–880 CE) — was sent into exile from Kyoto to eastern Japan. On his journey he paused at a place called Yatsunashi (“Eight Bridges” or “Eight-Part Bridge”), near what later became Chiryū Station on the Tōkaidō,

and wrote a famous poem about the irises growing there. Flat plank bridges zigzagging through blossoming iris have been a feature of Japanese art and real-life Japanese gardens ever since. Hokusai’s imaginary reconstruction of the long-gone original bridge includes a raised section not usually seen in images of Yatsunashi.



78 | Old View of the Pontoon Bridge at Sano in Kōzuke Province

The Pontoon Bridge at Sano (*Sano no funabashi*) is mentioned in the eighth-century anthology *Man’yōshū*, as well as in later poems by such noted poets as Izumi Shikibu (born in 976 CE) and Fujiwara Teika (1162–1241). It is not the Sano crossing mentioned in one of Teika’s most famous poems, although the two were sometimes confused by later commentators. This Sano is located on the Tori River, in what is now Takasaki City in Gunma Prefecture. Hokusai may have been aware of the stone stele at the site, inscribed with the *Man’yōshū* poem, that had been

erected by the priest Ryōō in 1827. The former bridge was also the subject of a local legend that became the basis of the Nō play *Funabashi*. It was said to be haunted by the ghosts of a pair of lovers from opposite sides of the river, who died when the bridge collapsed beneath them as they were trying to reach each other.

It is uncertain whether Hokusai’s depiction of the pontoon bridge is based on an older image or is purely his own invention.

The Chinese poet Cui Guofu (about 678–about 755) was known for his skill in writing ballad-like verses in the manner of folk songs, a style of poetry known as *yuefu* that was enjoying a new wave of popularity during his lifetime. The poem illustrated here is written in the voice of a wealthy, carefree young man enjoying life to the fullest, as he rides home on a beautiful spring day after a night spent with a courtesan in the pleasure quarters of the Tang capital of Chang'an. According to the poem, his elegant accoutrements originally included a horsewhip decorated with precious coral, but he lost it along the way (or perhaps left it deliberately as a souvenir for his lover); and so when his white stallion's pace is too slow for his liking, he breaks off a willow switch and uses that instead. In Hokusai's interpretation, the young man's vigorous, passionate approach to life is amusingly contrasted to the much more relaxed attitude of the fisherman sitting casually on the bank.



The Nō play *Hakurakuten* (the Japanese pronunciation of a pen name for the poet Bai Letian, or Bai Juyi) playfully presents a fantasy contest between Chinese and Japanese poetry, which of course is won by Japan. In the play, the Tang-dynasty poet Bai Juyi (772–846) decides to visit Japan. No sooner does his ship arrive in Japanese waters than he meets two fishermen and engages in a poetry match with them. Bai Juyi immediately composes a rather prosaic couplet (actually the work of the Japanese playwright, Zeami) — displayed in this print on a scroll held by a servant — that describes the clouds as a white sash around the waist of the mountain, just as seen in the background of the print. The elderly fisherman promptly caps it with a Japanese poem full of clever wordplay, gently poking fun at the Chinese verse. He is eventually revealed to be the god of Sumiyoshi, the patron of Japanese poetry, and Bai Juyi sails back to China in defeat.



102 | Poem no. 6, by Chūnagon
Yakamochi (Ōtomo no Yakamochi,
718–785)

When I see the whiteness
of frost that lies
on the bridge the magpies spread,
then do I know, indeed,
that the night has deepened.

The poem refers to a story from Chinese mythology that became the basis for the Japanese festival of Tanabata, on the seventh day of the seventh month. Today it is a summer festival, but by the old lunar calendar it was celebrated in autumn, when frost was a real possibility. In the mythological tale, two stars, the Ox Herd and the Weaving Maid, are lovers separated by the River of Heaven (the Milky Way). Once a year, magpies form a temporary bridge, allowing the couple to cross the heavenly river and be together for a single night.

In keeping with the origin of the story, Hokusai's illustration is set in China, as shown by the style of the ships, the costumes of the men on board, and the exotic rock formations of the coast. He may have been thinking of a famous Chinese poem that also mentions magpies, presumably the birds that the men are pointing to. The poem was composed by the powerful warlord Cao Cao (155–220) during the Battle of the Red Cliffs, a great naval engagement on the Yangtze River in 208–9 CE. Many centuries later, Cao's poem was quoted in an even more famous poem by the Song-dynasty poet Su Shi (1036–1101), describing a boat trip with friends to the site of the historic battle. Hokusai, who had a good knowledge of Chinese literature, would have been familiar with both poems.

