



UTAGAWA HIROSHIGE

Inside Kameido Tenjin Shrine (No. 65 Kameido Tenjin keidai), from the series One Hundred Famous Views of Edo (Meisho Edo hyakkei), 1856 (7th month), 1856

Polychrome woodblock print; ink and color on paper

Gift of Carolyn Getz Bartholomew in memory of her great-aunt, Mary Ainsworth (1867-1950), noted Quad City collector of Japanese wood-block prints, 2014.6.1

Inside Kameido Tenjin Shrine



Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858) Utagawa Hiroshige, also known as Ando Hiroshige, was a Japanese landscape woodblock artist. He was born in Edo, Japan, which is modern day Tokyo. Hiroshige was fond of sketching as a child and had artistic career ambitions, but when he was twelve years old both of his parents died and he took over his father's post as a fire warden. The work hours allowed Hiroshige some free time and he dedicated this time to studying under the woodblock artist Toyohiro. Hiroshige was officially adopted into the Utagawa School of woodblock print artists in 1812 and given the name Utagawa Hiroshige. He continued to serve as a fire-watchman until 1823, at which time he was able to transfer the position to his son and fully devote himself to art.

A product of its time

Hiroshige's early career shows evidence of his classical training in the Utagawa School, which was the most popular and famous woodblock print school during the 19th century. Its founding artist, Toyoharu, embraced the Western style of deep perspective and applied it to traditional Japanese forms and subject matter, such as kabuki actors, beautiful women, mythic parodies, and warriors. These were created for book illustrations, actor prints, and other common forms of publication. It wasn't until around 1830 that Hiroshige began to break from this tradition and develop what would become his artistic forte: landscapes.

Take a closer look

Hiroshige is considered to be one of the last great ukiyo-e masters of the color woodblock print (ukiyo-e translates to "pictures of the floating world"). He captured the essence of a scene and translated it into a balanced composition. This, as well as his ability to reduce a landscape or scene to a few simple, highly decorative elements, was eventually recognized by Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artists in Europe. Most notably, Hiroshige is known for his scenes of snow and rain—so much so that he is called "The artist of rain, snow and mist."

Did you know?

This artwork is part of Hiroshige's last great landscape series before his death and is considered among the top works he created. It's estimated that he created more than 5,000 prints and that upwards of 10,000 copies have been made from his woodblocks. The scholar Edward F. Strange best described Hiroshige's career: "Outside his own little circle of friends and customers Hiroshige was a man of small importance in Japan. The cultured classes knew him not; and it is only since his work has begun to gain its great and growing reputation in Europe and America, that he is beginning to be appreciated in his own country."

On your own

www.hiroshige.org.uk

<http://ukiyo-e.org>

www.artelino.com/articles/hiroshige.asp