

PRESS RELEASE

Date: Friday 30 January 2026

## **Beneath the Great Wave: Hokusai and Hiroshige**

**14 March – 15 November 2026**



*Kanagawa oki nami ura* (Under The Great Wave off Kanagawa) [“Great Wave”] Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849) On loan from a Private Collection. © 2023 Christie’s Images Limited.

The Whitworth presents *Beneath the Great Wave: Hokusai and Hiroshige*, a major exhibition celebrating two of the most influential artists in Japanese art history and the enduring global impact of their work—featuring rarely seen Japanese prints from the Whitworth’s significant collection. Presented alongside key national loans, the exhibition explores how Katsushika Hokusai and Utagawa Hiroshige transformed the art of ukiyo-e during Japan’s Edo period (1603–1868).

By turning their attention to landscape, the artists reimagined how nature, travel and everyday life could be pictured — creating images that would resonate far beyond Japan and help shape the modern visual imagination.

At the heart of the exhibition is *Under the Wave off Kanagawa*, widely known as *The Great Wave*, one of the most recognisable images in the world. More than a masterpiece of 19th-century printmaking, the image has become a global visual icon, inspiring generations of artists and designers and appearing across fashion, graphic design, film, music and popular culture today.

Rather than offering a broad survey of Japanese printmaking, *Beneath the Great Wave* presents an intimate, thematic journey into Japan’s floating world, exploring artistic vision, innovation and the cultural conditions of Edo Japan, at a moment when Tokyo was emerging as a modern city.

# the Whitworth

The exhibition reflects on Edo-period Japan through a lens that resonates strongly with Manchester's own histories of industry, printing and global exchange. As the Whitworth's first survey of its historic Japanese print collection in over a century. Beneath the Great Wave marks a significant moment for the gallery and positions the exhibition as a major northern cultural highlight.

**Darren Pih, Head of Exhibitions and Collections, the Whitworth, said:**

What's exciting for us at the Whitworth is the chance to place Hokusai and Hiroshige within a broader creative context. Alongside works by their contemporaries, the exhibition explores how these artists were part of a vibrant, fast-emerging visual culture. It reveals why images including Under the Great Wave off Kanagawa have had such an enormous global impact, continuing to shape perceptions of Japan to this day. Bringing these works together with our own historic collection allows audiences to see both the richness of ukiyo-e and its enduring legacy.

**Imogen Holmes-Roe, Curator, Historic Fine Art, the Whitworth, said:**

Beneath the Great Wave takes audiences straight into Edo (Tokyo) at the moment it became the world's largest metropolis, revealing how mass-produced prints reinvented visual culture. Ukiyo-e was the pop culture of its day; bold, affordable, everywhere with Hokusai and Hiroshige turning it into a global force through imagery that continues to speak directly to us today.

- ENDS -

**About the Whitworth**

The Whitworth is proudly part of The University of Manchester, operating as a convening space between the University and the people of the city. Founded in 1889 for "the perpetual gratification of the people of Manchester" it continues this mission today in new contexts. The gallery, its park and gardens are home to the collection of over 60,000 works of art, textiles, sculptures and wallpapers and provides a platform for artists from around the world. The Whitworth is driven by a vision to actively seek and manifest connections between art, creativity, and their role in developing a more resilient and caring society through its exhibitions and award-winning civic engagement programme.

Gallery opening times: Tuesday to Sunday 10am-5pm, Thursday late opening until 9pm [www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth)

For all press information, images and interview requests please contact, Emily Gates, Rees and Co via email [Emily.Gates@reesandco.com](mailto:Emily.Gates@reesandco.com) or mobile: 0782777 9170, and Rakhi Sinha Jones, Senior Audiences and Communications Manager at the Whitworth: [Whitworthpress@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Whitworthpress@manchester.ac.uk)

**Listings information**

Beneath the Great Wave: Hokusai and Hiroshige  
14 March 2026 – 15 November 2026

Free entry

<https://www.whitworth.manchester.ac.uk/whatson/exhibitions/beneaththegreatwave>

the **Whitworth**