



**PRESS RELEASE:**

May 11, 2011

**For immediate release:**

Through June 24, 2011

**For more information:**

Laura C. Lieberman, 770/949-2787

**UKIYO-E WOODBLOCK PRINTS, FUKUSA & NETSUKE --  
JAPANESE ARTS AT CAC THROUGH JUNE**

**Douglasville, Georgia** – The Cultural Arts Council of Douglasville/Douglas County presents nineteenth century woodblock prints on loan from the permanent collection of the Consulate General of Japan in Atlanta, displayed in conjunction with *fukusa* (ceremonial gift coverings) from the private collection of internationally acclaimed weaver John Riis and *netsuke* (carved ivory belt weights) from the private collection of noted local historian Dot Padgett. The exhibitions will be on view through June 24<sup>th</sup> at the Cultural Arts Center; and there will be a reception on Thursday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, hosted by the Douglas County Chapter of the American Business Women’s Association, from 6 until 8 p.m. This event is free and open to the public.

The Consulate’s forty woodblock prints, presented in the current exhibition, portray the “Pictures of the Floating World,” or *Ukiyo-E*, meaning evanescent pleasures of the afterhours night life of Japanese culture including many scenes from *Kabuki* theatre, the beautiful *geisha* hostesses of the evening, and the great *samurai* warrior heroes. Three of the prints on display were created by Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1798 - 1861), one of the last great masters of the Japanese *Ukiyo-E* style of woodblock prints and painting. The son of a silk-dyer, Kuniyoshi began studying with the great print master Toyokuni at the age of 12 and by 14 was recognized as an independent artist. He began as an illustrator, creating many books of traditional stories, before producing his first great heroic triptychs of samurai warriors as a member of the Utagawa school of printmakers where he competed with a fellow student Kunisada whose work is also included in the exhibition in Douglasville. His first major commission was in 1827, a series of 108 great heroes based on a Chinese legend. As a novelty, his heroes often had tattoos, which became an Edo fashion as a result of his popularity. His warrior prints were unique in that they depicted legendary figures with an added stress on dreams, ghostly apparitions, omens, and superhuman feats. The majority of the pieces in the current show were created by Kunisada (1785-1856) who is best known for his *kabuki* and actor prints and regarded as one of the great illustrators of the Utagawa School. Kunisada, Kuniyoshi and Hiroshige are considered the best representatives of the Japanese color woodcut in Edo (now Tokyo) at the end of the Edo Period (1600 – 1867). Only one print in the Douglasville display is attributed to the great master Hiroshige whose famous prints of the “Tokaido Road” pilgrimage series on loan from the Georgia Museum of Art were presented here in 2007. Other Japanese printmakers included in this year’s show are Yoshitura, Yoshiiku and Shuntei.

The practice of covering gifts placed on lacquered or wooden trays with beautifully woven and embroidered silk cloth or *fukusa* became popular during the Edo period. Gift-giving was a central part of Japanese culture, marking both personal and universal occasions – marriages, births, special birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, and professional advancement. Each gift cover was embellished with beautiful and symbolically appropriate designs – a bride might receive a present covered by an embroidery of a rising sun for new beginnings and cranes for a long life, a newborn might get the design of a rattle covered with lucky charms, and a New Year’s gift might be presented under a pattern of the “Three Friends of the Cold,” pine, bamboo and plum. Wealthy families often owned many *fukusa* and the most well-to-do commissioned famous artists to design them. Their drawings were created in varied textile techniques including stenciling, tie-dyeing, slit-weaving and embroidery. Etiquette demanded the *fukusa* be made of square or oblong pieces of silk, lined and tasseled, and often bearing the family crest of the owner. Although generally these costly textile works of art were intended to be returned to the gift-giver, occasionally the recipients opted to keep the *fukusa*, adding to their own collections.

*Tsurure-ori* (literally “fingernail weaving”) is known as slit-weaving in the West, a tapestry weaving technique introduced from China to Japan about 1400 A.D. The technique is extremely difficult and slow. Weavers would sharpen their fingernails in order to use them to separate the warp from the weft, thread by thread, when creating color shifts in the intricate designs. Silk is used for both the warp and the weft of these fine tapestries as are metallic threads, created with thin sheets of gold or silver laid on mulberry paper and then wrapped around a single silk core thread. Through the great generosity of Atlanta-based master weaver and collector Jon Riis, several examples of *Tsurure-ori*, used exclusively by Japanese aristocrats due to their expensiveness, are included in the current exhibit. Riis, an ardent collector of Asian art and an internationally fiber artist, has exhibited his hand-woven tapestries throughout Europe and Asia. His tapestry work can be found in numerous private and public collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Art Institute of Chicago, The Minneapolis Institute of Art, Indianapolis Museum of Art, The Cleveland Museum of Art, The New York Museum of Art and Design, and The Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Museum of Art. His weavings are currently on display at Galerie Myrna Myers and Galerie Chevalier in Paris.

Although many Douglas County residents know Dot Padgett as an enthusiastic local historian and former staffer of President Jimmy Carter, few realize that she has been collecting *netsuke* for decades. A fascinating sampling from her collection completes the Cultural Arts Center’s exploration of unusual Japanese art forms. The first artistic *netsuke* were created at the end of the sixteenth century, but their origins are much older. Basically they began as utilitarian objects in cultures where the traditional dress was a loose cloak or robe tied with a belt or sash, a garment without pockets. The *netsuke* served as a weight or toggle to close a hanging object from slipping through the sash. In Hungary this might be a hunting knife, in Mongolia a tinder box, and in Japan a tobacco pouch and later a purse. The first record of Japanese *netsuke* use appears in the eighth century. The first decorative *netsuke* were lacquer ware boxes holding a *samurai*’s pipes, flint and tobacco. With the rise of the merchant class during the Tokugawa, Meiji and Taisho periods, *netsuke* evolved into elegant miniature figurative sculptures carved of ivory, stag horn and wood. Animals, especially those prominent in Japanese astrology, were very popular as were mythological characters. Padgett’s collection includes many fine carvings along these lines – the two pangolin (exotic scaled anteaters, the nesting hen with chicks, and an elegant goddess) but among the most charming pieces are simply delightfully detailed depictions of people enjoying everyday life – a child standing by an elderly man and the two boys playing acrobatically. Equally disarming are the figures with two faces; the Japanese, inventors of the bobble-headed doll, like the simple trick of a happy face being interchangeable with an angry one, and a number of Padgett’s pieces illustrate this. Another unique testament to the carver’s skill is the odd carving of a man with a sack whose eyes pop out on long stalks. *Netsuke* were intended as touchstones and amusements for their owners, and this collection fascinates and tempts every viewer with how pleasant it must be to fondle the warm ivory details of each miniature art work.

The mission of the Cultural Arts Council of Douglasville/Douglas County is to nurture, guide and stimulate the enjoyment of and participation in the arts among Douglas County residents by providing an atmosphere conducive to the arts, broadening the spectrum of quality exhibits and performances available to the community, and fostering individual interactions with the arts through a wide range of satellite organizations. The Cultural Arts Council and its exhibitions at the Cultural Arts Center are supported in part by the City of Douglasville, the Douglas County Board of Commissioners, and Georgia Council for the Arts, which is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Cultural Arts Center of Douglasville/Douglas County is located at 8652 Campbellton Street in historic downtown Douglasville, Georgia, about 20 miles from Atlanta and just off I-20 west (exit 36). Hours of operation are Mondays through Fridays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For directions and more information, please contact the Cultural Arts Council at 770/949-2787 or visit our web site, [www.artsdouglas.org](http://www.artsdouglas.org).

**THE CULTURAL ARTS COUNCIL OF DOUGLASVILLE/DOUGLAS COUNTY**  
8652 Campbellton Street  
Douglasville, Georgia 30134  
Phone 770/949-2787 Fax 770-949-5788  
[www.artsdouglas.org](http://www.artsdouglas.org)

**PRESS RELEASE:**

May 11, 2011



**For immediate release:**

Through June 24, 2011

**For more information:**

Laura C. Lieberman, 770/949-2787

**CALENDAR LISTINGS: EXHIBITS**

**TITLE** UKIYO-E WOODBLOCK PRINTS, FUKUSA & NETSUKE

**PLACE** The Cultural Arts Center of Douglasville / Douglas County  
8652 Campbellton Street  
Douglasville, Georgia 30134

**DATES** May 5 – June 24, 2011

**RECEPTION** Thursday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>  
6 until 8 p.m.

**GALLERY HRS:** Mondays – Fridays, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

**COST:** Free and open to the public

**CONTACT:** Laura C. Lieberman, 770-949-2787

***THE CULTURAL ARTS COUNCIL OF DOUGLASVILLE/DOUGLAS COUNTY***

8652 Campbellton Street  
Douglasville, Georgia 30134  
Phone 770/949-2787 Fax 770-949-5788  
[www.artsdouglas.org](http://www.artsdouglas.org)