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PRESS RELEASE
KABUKI. THEATRE, PRINTS, FAN CULTURE
23.10.2026–2.5.2027

With its spectacular fusion of dance, music and finely honed dramatic skills, kabuki has been captivating audiences since the early 17th century. Its plays tell of love and jealousy, treacherous murders and family dramas, loyalty and honour. Beyond the stage, kabuki theatre also gave rise to a brand-new stardom culture, where the attention of the public centred on the (male) actors who played both male and female parts. At the same time, an urban visual culture emerged in the major cities of Japan, with the colour woodblock print as its dominant medium.

The exhibition *Kabuki. Theatre, Prints, Fan Culture* assembles colour woodblock prints from over three centuries and various collections. It not only provides in-depth insights into the world of kabuki theatre, but also reveals the diversity of artistic expression in Japanese woodblock printing.

Artists such as Tōshūsai Sharaku (active 1794–1795) and Utagawa Kunisada (1786–1865) were masters at capturing the charisma of famous actors, immortalising their striking poses and dramatic moments on stage in artistic images; in the 20th century Natori Shunsen (1886–1960), a representative of *shin hanga*, was among those who created impressive actor portraits. The works of these artists still fascinate us today and preserve the fleeting moments of kabuki as presented on the stage.

This exhibition also turns a spotlight on Tōshūsai Sharaku. On display are a total of 13 prints by this artist, who was both famous and shrouded in mystery; only in 1909 were more Sharaku prints presented together in a single exhibition in Munich! The large number of his prints shown in *Kabuki. Theatre, Prints, Fan Culture* provides an excellent opportunity to explore the legacy of this important artist.

However, the fascinating world of kabuki is revealed not only through the medium of the prints. Also on display are exquisite textiles that showcase the extraordinary splendour and craftsmanship of the stage costumes. Excerpts from contemporary kabuki productions make an actual theatre experience part of the visit to the exhibition. In this way the aesthetics and staging of kabuki are approached from various directions, and the interplay between theatre, visual art and fan culture over the centuries is brought to life.

Since Japanese colour woodblock prints are light-sensitive, the majority of the works on display will be exchanged halfway through the period of the exhibition. This will protect the delicate paper prints and enable a larger number of them to be presented.

Our thanks go to

FREUNDESKREIS Museum Fünf Kontinente e.V.

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The exhibition will be accompanied by a publication

Klaus Friese, Hans Bjarne Thomsen and Uta Werlich (eds.), with contributions by Ryo Akama, Annegret Bergmann, Klaus Friese and Hans Bjarne Thomsen and introductory words by Uta Werlich: *Kabuki. Schauspiel, Drucke, Fankultur,* Schnell und Steiner Verlag, Regensburg 2026.

Opening times
Tue–Sun, 9.30am–5.30pm
For times on public holidays see www.museum-fuenf-kontinente.de

Admission charges for the special exhibition
Adults €8, reduced €5.
All admission charges can be found on our Website

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