

University of Arizona Museum of Art (UAMA)

## The Faithful Samurai: Kuniyoshi Woodblock Prints

*The UA Museum of Art hosts an exhibition highlighting the famous Japanese story of loyalty, honor and revenge. On view at UAMA from October 26 through January 7.*

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Tucson, Arizona, October 15, 2006-** The University of Arizona Museum of Art presents *The Faithful Samurai: Kuniyoshi Woodblock Prints* from October 26, 2006 to January 7, 2007. This traveling exhibition illustrates one of the most famous stories of revenge in Japanese history, outlining the exploits of the courageous 47 Rōnin samurai who avenged the death of their master in the early eighteenth century. Their story, the *Chūshingura*, or “Treasury of Loyal Hearts,” illustrates and defines the Japanese concept of loyalty, providing a supreme example of the samurai ideals of courage, commitment and sacrifice. The exhibition tells this tale through stunning triptychs, warrior prints, and bust portraits by the Japanese printmaker Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797-1861). The museum will host an opening reception on October 26, 2006 from 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. The public is invited and admission is free.

Kuniyoshi is the artist most closely associated with the visual history of this samurai legend. Kuniyoshi, who began his career as a textile-dyer, became obsessed with the *Chūshingura*. Similar to other artists of his day, Kuniyoshi mixed the traditional genre of the warrior print with the visual conventions of the kabuki stage. Three of Kuniyoshi’s print series have been chosen for this exhibit. The first series features full-length action portraits of the individual Rōnin heroes. The second series depicts the sacrifices and struggles of family members and friends left behind after the tragic events unfolded. The final series presents twelve surprisingly western-style bust portraits of selected Rōnin heroes. Throughout his career, Kuniyoshi, an artist whose work portrayed Japanese history and legend, produced more than 1,600 single-sheet prints and 360 triptychs. Of these works, 12 series and 20 triptychs are devoted to the *Chūshingura*.

In addition to the Kuniyoshi woodblock prints, visitors to *The Faithful Samurai* exhibition will experience an array of artifacts, swords, and costumes. They can also enjoy a display on the techniques of woodblock printing and a description of the Japanese print tradition.

### The museum will host three events in conjunction with this exhibition:

**Opening Reception:** October 26, 2006, from 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., UAMA – The opening reception will feature a martial arts demonstration by the Yama Kawa Dojo Ken Jutsu.

**Author’s Lecture and Book Signing by Dr. David Weinberg:** November 2, 2006, 5:30 p.m. Harvill Bldg. Rm. 204 – Dr. Weinberg, collector and author of *Kuniyoshi: The Faithful Samurai*, will present a lecture on woodblock printmaking and his research about the artist.

**Samurai Theatre Fest:** November 4, 2006, noon to 4:00 p.m., UAMA – This family event will include traditional Japanese dance performances by the *Mari Kaneta Suzuyuki-Kai Traditional Dance and Taikoda Group*, scenes from the *Chūshingura* play performed by professional actors from the acting troupe *ShareMore Children’s Productions*, tours of the museum exhibits, and hands-on origami activities for children.

The works in this exhibition are on loan from the David R. Weinberg Collection. A collector of Japanese woodblock prints for over 20 years, Dr. Weinberg is an international educator and scholar. He is an active member of the Michigan Oriental Art Society, which held an exhibition of the prints in fall 2003 at the Alfred Berkowitz Gallery, University of Michigan, Dearborn, to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the events of the 47 Rōnin. The guest curator for *The Faithful Samurai* is David Pepper, an independent curator based in Canada who has worked on a number of Japanese exhibitions.

*The Faithful Samurai: Kuniyoshi Woodblock Prints* is organized by the Michigan Oriental Art Society and toured by ExhibitsUSA. The purpose of ExhibitsUSA is to create access to an array of arts and humanities exhibitions, nurture the development and understanding of diverse art forms and cultures, and encourage the expanding depth and breadth of cultural life in local communities. ExhibitsUSA is a national division of Mid-America Arts Alliance, a private, nonprofit organization founded in 1972.

Celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the University of Arizona Museum of Art encompasses one of the premier collections of European, early American and twentieth-century art in the Southwest. The museum also presents changing exhibits that feature the work of distinguished as well as emerging artists. UAMA is one of the only twelve museums in Arizona accredited by the American Association of Museums (AAM) and one of only 750 museums of the 16,000 museums nationwide that has earned this highest award for excellence in the museum field.

**Media contact:** Gary Nusinow, UAMA Marketing Director  
(520) 621-9507, [garyn@email.arizona.edu](mailto:garyn@email.arizona.edu), [artmuseum.arizona.edu](http://artmuseum.arizona.edu)

**Credits:** ExhibitsUSA is generously supported by the Altria Group Inc.; James H. Clement, Jr.; the Cooper Foundation; DST Systems Inc.; Edward Jones; the William Randolph Hearst Foundation; the Helen Jones Foundation; the William T. Kemper Foundation, Commerce Bank, trustee; the Richard P. Kimmel and Laurine Kimmel Charitable Foundation Inc.; Land O' Lakes Inc.; Mrs. Tom Lea; Adair Margo Gallery Inc.; the National Endowment for the Arts; the National Endowment for the Humanities; SBC Missouri; the Society of North American Goldsmiths; Sonic, America's Drive-In; Sterling Vineyards; the Summerlee Foundation; the Courtney S. Turner Charitable Trust; Valmont Industries; the Woods Charitable Fund; and the state arts agencies of Arkansas, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas. **UAMA credits:** Hansen, Partners