

BOOKS

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Classic Tokyo landscapes

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Hiroshige

One Hundred Famous Views of Edo

Text by Melanie Trede & Lorenz Bichler

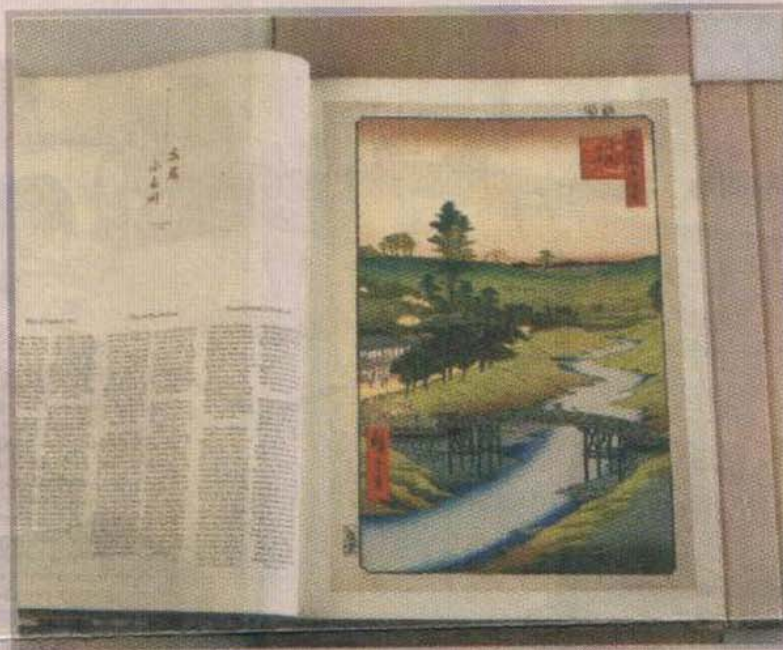
Taschen, \$150

MORE than just another pretty book, this sumptuous silk-wrapped volume offers the series of renowned woodblock prints by Japanese artist Utagawa Hiroshige depicting landscapes of his hometown, Edo, now Tokyo, in the mid-1800s.

Printed on acid-free paper, each view is a luminous rendition of time and place from the unique visual perspective of this artist whose work inspired James Abbott McNeill Whistler and Vincent van Gogh, among others.

Hiroshige (1797-1858) was born in Edo, lived there until his death, and immortalized every aspect of its landscape and culture in this famous series, which is considered one of the great achievements in Japanese art.

His colorful depictions of the bustling city, which was renamed Tokyo in 1868, include the rivers and mists, cranes and crows, trees, mountains and sunsets that so eloquently framed Edo's simple, man-made structures and the everyday lives of its people.



ANNE CUSACK *Los Angeles Times*

EXQUISITE: Hiroshige's mid-1800s images have been reprinted in an elaborate book.

Nature dominates each view, an overwhelming and immutable force to which viewers can relate even these hundreds of years later.

The text is an absorbing introduction to the woodblock genre of the time, known as ukiyo-e, or "pictures of the floating, fleeting world" — a reference to the transitory nature of life and all its earthly pleasures. Theaters, teahouses and brothels — all of which flourished in the bustling hub at mid-19th century — are captured in a style that expresses both their existence and their

irrelevance in the larger universal scheme. The brilliantly tinted reproductions are taken from a rare complete set of the first print run of the Edo series in Ota Memorial Museum of Art in Tokyo.

For art history enthusiasts with coffee tables big enough, this exquisitely produced book — bound with basting stitches like books of the time, and starring a magnificent swooping crane on its silken cover — might be a worthwhile indulgence. It's a great record of Hiroshige, his city, his art form and his era.

— BETTIJANE LEVINE