

PRESS RELEASE

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SEATTLE ART MUSEUM PRESENTS HOKUSAI: INSPIRATION AND INFLUENCE

Touring exhibition explores the impact of legendary artist Katsushika Hokusai on artists across time and cultures

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SEATTLE - The Seattle Art Museum (SAM) presents *Hokusai: Inspiration and Influence, from the Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* (October 19, 2023-January 21, 2024). Thanks to the popularity of the instantly recognizable *Great Wave*—cited everywhere from book covers to Lego sets, anime, and even an emoji—Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849) has become one of the most famous Japanese artists in the world. *Hokusai: Inspiration and Influence* explores the fascinating life and enduring legacy of this trailblazing master by pairing more than 100 of his woodblock prints, paintings, and illustrated books with more than 200 works by his teachers, students, rivals, and admirers.

This new approach to presenting Hokusai’s work demonstrates his impact through centuries and around the globe, seen in works by his daughter Katsushika Ōi; his contemporaries Utagawa Hiroshige and Utagawa Kuniyoshi; 19th-century American and European painters, including Henri Rivière and Félix Bracquemond; and modern and contemporary artists such as Helen Frankenthaler, Yoshitomo Nara, and Chiho Aoshima. Each gallery features modern and contemporary works alongside those by Hokusai and his contemporaries for a more dynamic experience.

Hokusai: Inspiration and Influence is on view at the Seattle Art Museum and curated by Sarah E. Thompson, Curator of Japanese Art at the MFA Boston. José Carlos Diaz, SAM’s Susan Brotman Deputy Director for Art, oversaw SAM’s presentation. The exhibition debuted earlier this year in Boston; this is the only West Coast stop for its national tour. It also marks the first time nearly all of these works have been seen outside of Boston or Japan. “We are thrilled to share works from the MFA Boston—home to one of the largest and most significant collections of Hokusai’s works in the world—with Seattle audiences,” says Thompson. Adds Diaz, “Hokusai’s tireless creativity left a massive and

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enthraling body of work. I hope visitors find that the works by Hokusai and his contemporaries are just as fresh as the modern and present-day works.”

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Born to a family of artisans in Edo (present-day Tokyo), Hokusai began his artistic career at the age of six. At 19, he entered the school of Katsukawa Shunshō, where he mastered ukiyo-e, a style of woodblock prints and paintings focused on images of courtesans and kabuki actors who were the celebrities in Japan’s cities at the time. Hokusai later began exploring other styles of art, shifting his focus away from the traditional subjects of ukiyo-e in favor of landscapes and daily life in Japan. Throughout his lifetime, Hokusai is thought to have designed about 3,000 prints. The 100 artworks on view showcase the breadth of subjects the artist tackled, including landscapes as in the *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji series* (1830-31), demons and fairytales as in *The Ghost of Kohada Koheiji* (ca. 1831-32), warriors in combat as in *Watanabe no Gengo Tsuna and Inokuma Nyūdō Raiun* (ca. 1833-35), wildlife as in *Bellflower and Dragonfly* (ca. 1833-34), and more.

The simultaneous evocation of beauty and terror within Hokusai’s print *Under the Wave off Kanagawa* (1830-31)—more commonly referred to as *The Great Wave*—has made it one of the most celebrated images in the art world. A large, central gallery is dedicated to this iconic print, presented alongside works inspired by or directly citing it, including *Stab with Knife* from the series *In the Floating World* (1999) by Yoshitomo Nara (Japanese, b. 1959) and *In Advance* (2018-2022) by Linda Sormin (Canadian, b. 1971). Outside this gallery, the exhibition is organized thematically, with sections focused on Hokusai’s teachers and students, surimono (privately commissioned prints), the origins of Japonisme, landscapes, nature studies, and depictions of heroes and monsters.

The exhibition also explores Hokusai’s impact on popular visual culture. On view is a large-scale recreation of the *Great Wave* in LEGO® Bricks by certified master builder Jumpei Mitsui. In the same space, a reading nook is filled with contemporary manga, anime, and art catalogues. SAM Shop will be adjacent to the galleries, featuring related books, manga, stationary, art-making materials, and various gift items from Japan available for purchase.

Hokusai: Inspiration and Influence also offers in-gallery interpretative experiences to enhance the experience. Create a “digital” woodblock print inspired by the colors and forms of the historical works. Take the audio tour available via smartphone produced by MFA Boston and featuring insights from Thompson; her collaborator Kendall DeBoer, Curatorial Assistant in the Department of Contemporary Art; and others. And stop by a table to handle woodblocks and woodcarving tools and learn how the works were made.

PLANNING A VISIT

Museum Hours

- Closed Monday and Tuesday
- Wednesday–Sunday 10 am–5 pm
- Holiday hours on the website

Admission Prices

- Adults: \$29.99 (advance), \$32.99 (day of)
- Seniors (65+), Military (with ID): \$24.99 (advance), \$27.99 (day of)
- Students (with ID), Teens (15-18): \$19.99 (advance), \$22.99 (day of)

- Children (14 and under): FREE
- SAM members: FREE

Free & Discounted Options

- First Thursdays: Free to all
- First Fridays: \$5 admission for seniors (65+)
- Complete list of discounts available: [Discount Access Programs](#)

Details are subject to change. For the most up-to-date information on planning a visit, go to seattleartmuseum.org.

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

A fully illustrated 168-page catalogue published by MFA Publications, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, will be available for purchase at SAM Shop (\$30). Also titled *Hokusai: Inspiration and Influence, from the Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* (ISBN: 978-0878468904), the paperback catalogue is a comprehensive study of the artist's practice and global impact. The book looks at Hokusai from the viewpoint of fellow artists who incorporated his lessons into their own work, including Hokusai's own students, his contemporary rivals, and his many posthumous admirers from the late 19th century to the present.

EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION AND SUPPORT

The exhibition is organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Exhibition organized by

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Image captions: *Under the Wave off Kanagawa (Kanagawa-oki nami-ura)*, also known as the *Great Wave*, from the series *Thirty six Views of Mount Fuji (Fugaku sanjūrokkei)*, about 1830–31 (Tenpō 1–2), Katsushika Hokusai, Japanese, 1760–1849, woodblock print (nishiki-e); ink and color on paper, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, William Sturgis Bigelow Collection, Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. *White Fujiyama Ski Gelände*, from the series *In the Floating World*, 1999, Yoshitomo Nara, Japanese, born 1959, color Xerox print of reworked woodcut, Courtesy of Yoshitomo Nara Foundation and Pace Gallery, © Yoshitomo Nara, photo: courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

ABOUT SEATTLE ART MUSEUM

As the leading visual art institution in the Pacific Northwest, SAM draws on its global collections, powerful exhibitions, and dynamic programs to provide unique educational resources benefiting the Seattle region, the Pacific Northwest, and beyond. SAM was founded in 1933 with a focus on Asian art. By the late 1980s the museum had outgrown its original home, and in 1991 a new 155,000-square-foot downtown building, designed by Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates, opened to the public. The 1933 building was renovated and rededicated as the Asian Art Museum in 1994, and it reopened on February 8, 2020, following an extensive renovation and expansion. SAM's desire to further serve its community was realized in 2007 with the opening of two stunning new facilities: the nine-acre Olympic Sculpture Park (designed by Weiss/Manfredi Architects)—a “museum without walls,” free and open to all—and the Allied Works Architecture designed 118,000-square-foot expansion of its main, downtown location, including 232,000 square feet of additional space built for future expansion. The Olympic Sculpture Park and SAM's downtown expansion celebrated their tenth anniversary in 2017.

From a strong foundation of Asian art to noteworthy collections of African and Oceanic art, Northwest Coast Native American art, European and American art, and modern and contemporary art, the strength of SAM's collection of approximately 25,000 objects lies in its diversity of media, cultures, and time periods.