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Beyond the Floating World: Viewing Japanese Prints with Smith Faculty

October 9, 2026–
April 4, 2027



Sekino Jun-ichiro. Japanese (1914–1988). *Bin-gata*, 1975. Woodblock print in eleven colors on moderately thick, slightly textured, cream paper. Gift of Lucio and Joan Noto

NORTHAMPTON, MA – The Smith College Museum of Art (SCMA) opens [*Beyond the Floating World: Viewing Japanese Prints with Smith Faculty*](#), an exhibition bringing together 35 Japanese woodblock prints selected by eight Smith College faculty members. On view October 9, 2026–April 4, 2027, the installation explores how works of art can generate connections across disciplines, inspire new questions, and become active resources for teaching and learning.

Faculty participants from art history, East Asian studies, history, and chemistry selected works from SCMA's collection based on their teaching, research, scholarship, and personal experiences. Seen together, their selections offer multiple ways of approaching Japanese prints and demonstrate how close looking can create unexpected intersections across fields of study.

Japanese woodblock prints have long been a strength of SCMA's Asian art collection. Today, the museum holds more than 700 Japanese prints dating from the 18th through the 21st century. As an important resource for teaching at Smith, the collection gives faculty and students opportunities to study original works of art together through firsthand observation, extending learning beyond the classroom and into the museum.

"Discussing and selecting Japanese prints from the SCMA collection with faculty members was an illuminating experience. The questions and stories we shared showed how Japanese prints can contribute to discussions in various disciplines," said Clara Cho Wun Ma, Jane Chace Carroll Associate Curator of Asian Art at SCMA.

The exhibition grew out of a Japanese Print Study Day organized by SCMA in the fall of 2025. The intensive faculty program brought participants together with museum staff and two specialists in Japanese prints for sustained, close looking and conversations. Guest speakers were Sarah Thompson, Terrie and Bradley Bloom Curator of Japanese Prints at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and Jennifer Perry, Mary and James Wallach Family Conservator of Japanese Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

During the study day, participants examined prints firsthand, shared expertise from different disciplines, and considered ways the collection could inform future teaching, research, and scholarship. Faculty participants included Marnie S. Anderson, Payal Banerjee, Kimberly Kono, Sujane Wu, Elizabeth Jamieson, Yanlong Guo, Yuri Kumagai, Yuko Mizutani, Elizabeth "Betsy" Rock, and Atsuko Takahashi.

"Faculty and staff really benefited from these curated-looking exercises with the help of two experts in the field. It also fostered great conversations among participants, and the exchange of ideas created the perfect lead-in to the installation that organically

grew out of the study day,” said Henriette Kets de Vries, Cunningham Center Manager and Associate Curator of Prints, Drawings and Photographs at SCMA.

The project reflects SCMA’s role as a teaching museum and its commitment to making the collection an accessible resource for faculty and students across academic disciplines. The study day was designed not only to deepen participants’ knowledge of Japanese prints but also to encourage collaborative learning, foster new relationships with the collection and plant seeds for future teaching, installations and programming.

“The impetus for the study day grew from many years of academic, interdisciplinary class visits to the museum in which sustained looking, visual analysis, and interpretation of Japanese prints sparked curiosity and deep critical thinking, leading to lively group dialogue and active collective learning with art in the museum,” said Charlene Shang Miller, Educator for Academic Programs and the Museums Concentration at Smith College Museum of Art.

Rather than presenting a single interpretation of Japanese printmaking, *Beyond the Floating World* makes visible the range of ideas that can emerge when people approach the same collection from different disciplines and experiences. Visitors are invited to consider what draws each faculty member to a particular work and how an artwork might prompt questions about history, literature, materials science, culture, artistic practice, and personal experience.

The exhibition also highlights the museum collection as a laboratory for inquiry. Through direct encounters with original objects, faculty and students can look closely together, test ideas and make connections that may not emerge through reproductions alone.

Related Programs

September 24, 2026 | 12:15–1:15 p.m.

Virtual Event | Free and Open to All

[SCMA Conversations: Exploring Together: Japanese Prints Project at SCMA](#)

November 6, 2026 | 9:30-11:30 a.m.

SCMA Playdates

Early Childhood Program

November 7, 2026 | 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

[Friends of the Museum Exhibition Tour: *Beyond the Floating World*](#)

December Second Friday: Multiples
December 11, 2026
Exhibition Reception, 5 p.m.–6 p.m.
Art Making, Multiples: 4–7 p.m.
Gallery Talk with artist Annie Bissett, 6–7 p.m.

Image: Sekino Jun-ichiro. Japanese (1914–1988). *Bin-gata*, 1975. Woodblock print in eleven colors on moderately thick, slightly textured, cream paper. Gift of Lucio and Joan Noto

About SCMA / Smith College Museum of Art

As a teaching museum affiliated with Smith College, the Smith College Museum of Art (SCMA) connects people to art, ideas, and each other. SCMA collects, researches, presents, and preserves an expansive collection of art in the service of learning, teaching, and critical dialogue, fostering an inclusive and accessible environment that welcomes diverse perspectives and inspires imagination.

Open year-round Tuesday through Sunday, 11 a.m.–4 p.m., SCMA invites the public to explore four floors of galleries and the shop. Visitors encounter a world-class collection that spans ancient times to the present and encompasses the arts of Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe. The Cunningham Center for the Study of Prints, Drawings and Photographs houses one of the region's most comprehensive collections of works on paper.

In 2023, generous gifts from Smith College alumnae Jan Fullgraf Golann '71 and Jane Timken '64 enabled SCMA to eliminate admission fees. Later that year, SCMA received support from the Art Bridges Foundation through its Access for All initiative, which provided additional resources to expand access to art, including extended hours, innovative programming, and student outreach.

An accredited member of the American Alliance of Museums, SCMA is a founding member of Museums10, a regional cultural collaboration, and is also a member of the College Art Association and the New England Museum Association.

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High-resolution images provided upon request.