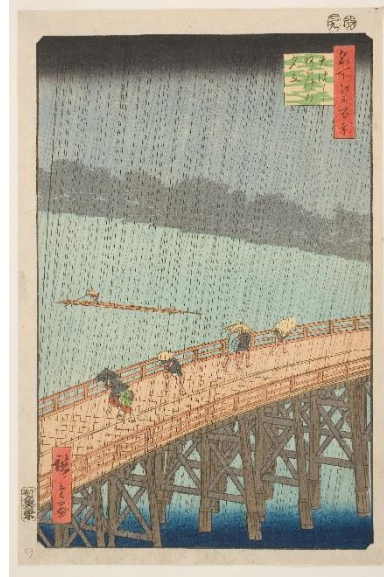


WORCESTER ART MUSEUM

Worcester Art Museum to Debut Works from America's First Japanese Print Collection of Its Kind, Opening November 26
48 of the 50 Japanese Prints Featured in *The Floating World: Japanese Prints from the Bancroft Collection* Have Never Been Seen Before



Worcester, MA — August 2 — This fall, the [Worcester Art Museum](https://www.worcesterart.org/) (WAM) will present *The Floating World: Japanese Prints from the Bancroft Collection*, an exhibition of 50 Japanese prints from the Museum's collection, 48 of which will be displayed for the first time. On view November 26, 2022-March 5, 2023, the exhibition will take a comprehensive look at the diverse *ukiyo-e* genre through the lens of John Chandler Bancroft (1835-1901), one of the earliest and most significant collectors of Japanese prints in the United States. Bancroft's collection of over 3,700 Japanese woodblock prints was bequeathed to WAM in 1901 and is considered the Museum's first major collection. Illustrating the breadth of this transformative gift, *The Floating World* will feature works ranging in size, material, date, and subject matter, including works by renowned artists like Utagawa Hiroshige, Katsushika Hokusai, and Utagawa Kunisada. The exhibition is curated by Dr. Rachel Parikh, Associate Curator of the Arts of Asia and the Islamic World and Fiona Collins, Curatorial Assistant of Asian Art.

Organized chronologically and by artist, *The Floating World* illustrates the evolution of *ukiyo-e* artworks throughout Japan's Edo period (1603-1868). Through these works, visitors will gain insight into the complexity and breadth of *ukiyo-e*, or "pictures of the floating world," an artistic genre that sent lasting ripples of influence throughout the world. The exhibition will be a chance to see this impact firsthand, including Hiroshige's featured *Sudden Shower over Shin-Ōhashi Bridge and Atake* (1857), which inspired Vincent van Gogh's *Bridge in the Rain (after Hiroshige)* (1887). Similarly, these works significantly

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shaped the work of American artist John La Farge, who collected Japanese prints alongside Bancroft starting in the 1860s.

Created in a period of economic growth, *ukiyo-e* prints often depict scenes of leisure and arts, highlighting the ability of the working class to participate in the entertainment culture of urban centers like Edo (Japan). Born from book illustrations, *ukiyo-e* prints tell stories, often presented as intricate tableaus of everyday life portraying courtesans, kabuki actors, sumo wrestlers, dwellings, and landscapes. Intricate and colorful, these artworks were produced using innovative and collaborative processes involving planning, designing, carving, and hand-pressing.

“*The Floating World* is a landmark opportunity for the Worcester Art Museum to facilitate a deeper understanding of one of the most culturally rich periods of world history,” said Matthias Waschek, the Jean and Myles McDonough Director of the Worcester Art Museum. “Through these never-before-seen works, our visitors will recognize the enduring relevance of themes found in *ukiyo-e* prints, including pride, resilience, and humor. We are thrilled to draw these through lines using WAM’s Bancroft Collection, which is not only one of our most comprehensive collections, but also the nation’s earliest and among the most influential collections of Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints.”

The Floating World solidifies WAM as one of the foremost locations of Japanese *ukiyo-e* print scholarship in the country. Bancroft’s collection makes up nearly 10% of the Museum’s collection of approximately 38,000 objects from around the world. Assembled thoughtfully over decades, this collection of predominantly first-edition woodblock prints demonstrates the vastness of a Japanese art genre that has commonly been overgeneralized by traditional Western art history practices. The Bancroft Collection is also notable for the quality and well-preserved condition of the prints, which will be evident to visitors to the exhibition.

This exhibition is part of the Worcester Art Museum’s 2022-2023 exhibition and programming schedule that connects people, communities, and cultures through the experience of art.

About the Worcester Art Museum

The Worcester Art Museum creates transformative programs and exhibitions, drawing on its exceptional collection of art. Dating from 3000 BCE to the present, these works provide the foundation for a focus on audience engagement, connecting visitors of all ages and abilities with inspiring art and demonstrating its enduring relevance to daily life. Creative initiatives — including pioneering collaborative programs with local schools, fresh approaches to exhibition design and in-gallery teaching, and a long history of studio class instruction — offer opportunities for diverse audiences to experience art and learn both from and with artists.

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The Worcester Art Museum, located at 55 Salisbury Street in Worcester, MA, is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10am to 4pm. Admission is \$18 for adults, \$14 for seniors 65+ and for college students with ID. Admission is free for Museum Members and children ages 0-17. On the first Sunday of each month, admission is free for everyone. Museum parking is free. Tickets may be purchased in advance at worcesterart.org.

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Images (left-right):

Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), *Yōrō Waterfall in Mino Province (Mino no Yōrō no taki)*, about 1833, Woodblock print; ink and color on paper, Bancroft Collection, Worcester Art Museum. 1901.739

Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858), *Sudden Shower over Shin-Ōhashi Bridge and Atake (Ōhashi Atake no yūdachi)*, 1857, 9th month, Woodblock print; ink and color on paper, Bancroft Collection, Worcester Art Museum. 1901.59.1275