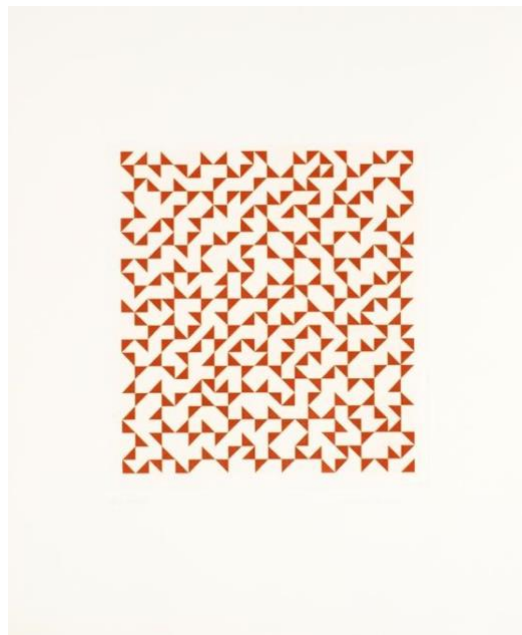
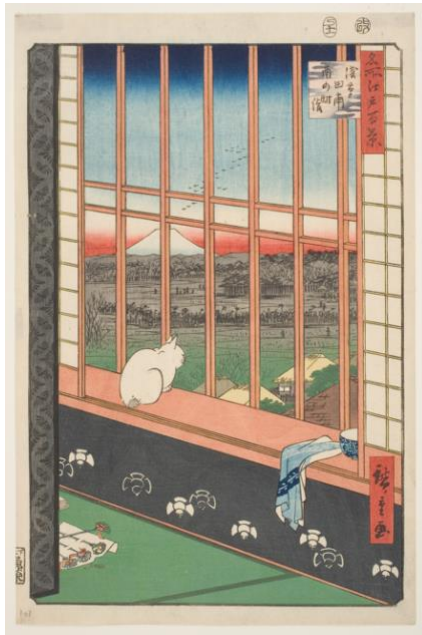


BLANTON MUSEUM 与 ART

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Blanton Museum Spring Exhibitions Feature Japanese Woodblock Prints and Groundbreaking Works by Anni Albers



The Floating World: Masterpieces of Edo Japan from the Worcester Art Museum
and *Anni Albers: In Thread and On Paper* open February 2024

AUSTIN, TX— December 12, 2023—The Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin presents [*The Floating World: Masterpieces of Edo Japan*](#) and [*Anni Albers: In Thread and On Paper*](#). Both open on February 11, 2024, and will remain on view through June 30, 2024.

The Floating World focuses on *ukiyo-e*, a popular art genre from Japan's Edo period (1601-1868) that depicts the era's urban lifestyle. This vivid exhibition includes more than 130 woodblock prints and scrolls from the Worcester Art Museum's acclaimed collection of Japanese art.

Anni Albers: In Thread and On Paper showcases the nimbleness that Albers—widely considered the most important textile artist of the 20th century—demonstrated in moving between mediums and techniques. The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation organized this in-depth exhibition, which highlights her inventive explorations of design, weaving, and printmaking.

“The Blanton is uniquely positioned to present to Austin audiences exhibitions that span centuries, cultures, and artistic styles,” said Director Simone Wicha, “and I can’t wait for our community to experience these two extraordinary shows. The Floating World and Anni Albers—along with the accompanying public programs—will enable visitors ranging from University students and school groups to Blanton Members to engage with exquisite artworks while learning about the history and craft of printmaking and weaving, popular artforms still practiced today.”

The Floating World: Masterpieces of Edo Japan

The Floating World marks the first time the Worcester Art Museum is touring its famed collection of Japanese prints, the first collection of its kind in the U.S. It’s also the first dedicated exhibition at the Blanton spotlighting Japanese art in more than fifteen years.



Katsushika Hokusai, Fuji at Gotenyama, from the iconic series Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji

The exhibition spans the history of *ukiyo-e* (“pictures of the floating world”). These highly popular woodblock prints and paintings emerged during the Edo period and illustrated *ukiyo* (“the floating world”), a Japanese term used to describe the pleasure-seeking lifestyle that was embraced in the urban districts.

Following previous centuries of conflict and war, Edo-era Japan was characterized by relative peace and rapid economic growth. With no wars to be waged, members of the ruling class turned their attention to patronizing artists, merchants, entertainers, and courtesans in growing cities like Tokyo (then called Edo), Kyoto, and Osaka. These diverse classes co-mingled and championed leisure activities, popular entertainment like *kabuki* theater, and decadence, often living above their means in pursuit of ephemeral pleasures.

This culture was represented in the *ukiyo-e* style, which began as painted scrolls and screens that represented everyday life; to meet demand, mass-produced woodblock prints emerged in the 1760s. Print artists and designers, who often drew inspiration from the public’s fascinations and interests, depicted the urban population, particularly celebrity actors and courtesans—and later in the period, popular landscapes, folktales, and historical events.

“The technical skill and imaginative design of Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints have inspired artists around the world for centuries,” said Holly Borham, the Blanton’s Associate Curator of Prints, Drawings, and European art and managing curator of the exhibition. “These prints were avidly collected by Japan’s urban residents in the early modern era and continue to captivate viewers with their appealing portrayals of celebrities, mythic figures, and iconic landscape views.”

Entertainment: *Kabuki* Theater and Celebrations

The Floating World is divided into four sections based on common subjects in *ukiyo-e* art. Part one focuses on the earliest and most quintessential subject in *ukiyo-e*: entertainment, particularly community celebrations and theatrics. Celebrity actors from *kabuki* theater, the most popular form of entertainment in the floating world, are featured in prints produced as advertisements for performances or limited-edition souvenirs for fans. Others depict scenes from plays or dramatize well-known stories in triptych prints that could be collected as a set. Printmakers further capitalized on consumers’ desire to see more of their favorite actors by supplying an offstage glimpse or behind-the-scenes peek into their private lives.



Master of multi-colored woodblock prints Torii Kiyonaga depicts Ichikawa Danjuro V, one of the most famous kabuki actors of all time, and his family visiting a shrine.

Like *kabuki* theater, annual festivals, devotional ceremonies, and parades were open to all classes and genders, and so became a popular subject for *ukiyo-e* designers. Previously aristocratic past times like picnics, boating, and hunting could also be enjoyed by a wider public in this period. “Pleasure boating,” for example, to enjoy fireworks, festivities, and sake in the company of friends was a particularly popular *ukiyo-e* subject matter.



Rare triptych print depicting a night scene from Osaka's famous Tenjin festival in which a group of young men and women revel in "pleasure boats."

Poetic Pictures

Literary production and consumption flourished in the Edo period, and the proliferation of mass-produced woodblock prints enabled people to access Japan's rich literary tradition. Part two of the exhibition details how *ukiyo-e* drew from the vast and growing literary canon and catered to the highly literate population. Artists referenced myths of famous warriors and star-crossed lovers as well as historical events, often modernizing the scenes to speak to modern audiences. Several examples of *surimono*, limited edition prints privately commissioned by poetry enthusiasts for special occasions, exemplify prints inspired by prose or poetry. Over the course of the Edo period, *ukiyo-e* became more complex, both in technique and subject matter. To the delight of consumers, artists used literary devices like puns and parodies in their designs—and even made references to other *ukiyo-e* artworks.



In this surimono, a rooster is confused by the realism of the rooster painted on the screen. The three poems included offer humorous narrations of the “stand-off” between them.

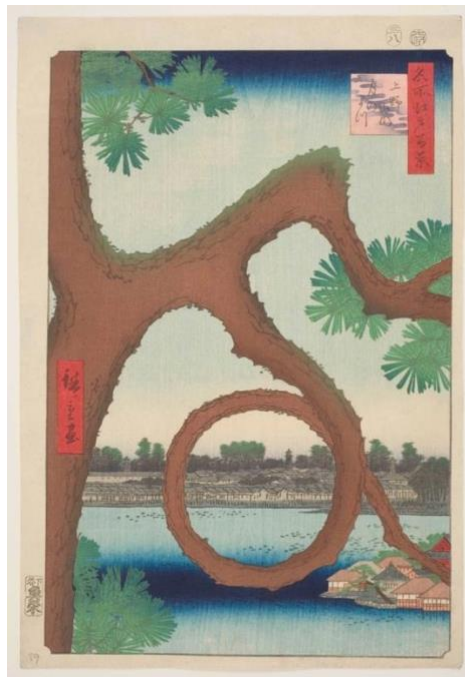
Landscapes and the Natural World

Nature became another prominent theme in *ukiyo-e*. The impermanence of flora, fauna, and landscapes had special resonance with the ethos of the floating world. Part three of the exhibition shows how artists strove to capture the momentary beauty of their subjects, and often focused on the passage of seasons, the blooming of flowers, and fleeting glimpses of animals.

In the mid-19th century, *meisho-e* (“famous place pictures”)—which depicted emblematic landmarks like Mount Fuji—were popularized by the most celebrated artists of the genre, Utagawa Hiroshige and Katsushika Hokusai (widely known for *The Great Wave Off Kanagawa*). Some of the most internationally acclaimed series in the history of the Japanese print tradition belong to this period, such as Hokusai’s *Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji* and Hiroshige’s *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*. When *ukiyo-e* were later exported abroad, many Western artists collected and were inspired by these landscape prints, including Vincent Van Gogh, Claude Monet, and Frank Lloyd Wright.



First edition of one of Hokusai's most iconic images from Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji, depicting Mount Fuji from different locations and various seasons.



Print from Hiroshige's iconic series One Hundred Famous Views of Edo, which was commissioned in the wake of natural disasters in the capital and divided by seasons, chronicling the rebuilding process.

***Bijin-ga* and the Pleasure Quarters**

The last section of the exhibition features *bijin-ga* or “pictures of beautiful women.” It includes painted scrolls and prints that captured the glamorized and often eroticized beauty ideals and fashion of the licensed pleasure quarters—brothel districts that also contained tea houses, theaters, and shops. A main subject of fascination for urban populations, courtesans are depicted as attractive and sophisticated, often shrouding the harsh realities of their living conditions in the brothels. Two other residents of the pleasure quarters, *geishas* and *wakushu* (young male entertainers) are also depicted in refined settings that defined the visual culture of early modern Japan.



(left) Women Holding a Paper Lantern by Utagawa Kunisada, the most prolific and commercially successful ukiyo-e artist; (right) Geisha Looking at Her Reflection in a Hand Mirror by Keisai Eisen, a specialist in bijin-ga. Vibrant prints like this could serve as décor, or as more detailed alternatives to the made-to-order fashion catalogues circulating the floating world.

The Floating World: Masterpieces of Edo Japan is organized by the **Worcester Art Museum** with support from the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS:

Saturday, March 9, 2024, 5 p.m.

Art with an Expert talk with Sarah Thompson, Curator of Japanese Art at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston. These hour-long talks by distinguished art professionals are part of the Blanton's Second Saturdays program. More info at blantonmuseum.org/SecondSaturdays

Saturday, March 9, 2024, 3:30–5 p.m. and 6–7:30 p.m.

Master print demo and printmaking activity at the Blanton's Second Saturdays with Daryl Howard, an Austin-based printmaker trained in traditional *ukiyo-e* printmaking. More info at blantonmuseum.org/SecondSaturdays

Friday, April 26, 2024, 6:30–10:30 p.m.

B Scene

Austin's art party celebrates *The Floating World* with live music, food, drinks, dancing, art tours, and late-night hours. More info at: blantonmuseum.org/b-scene

Date TBD

Blanton Live: Conversations for Now

Part of the Blanton Live speaker series, artists and creative thinkers dive into the influences Edo era Japanese art has had on pop culture and the arts—from manga and anime to contemporary painting, street art and zines. More info at blantonmuseum.org/live

Dates and times are subject to change.

Anni Albers: In Thread and On Paper

Curated by Fritz Horstman, Education Director of the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, and comprising more than 100 objects, largely drawn from the foundation's collection, *Anni Albers: In Thread and On Paper* explores the groundbreaking work Anni Albers (Berlin, Germany, 1899–Orange, Connecticut, 1994) produced from the 1950s through the end of her life. It explores the visual and material connections that drove her evolving studio practice, as her abstract designs found expression in drawings, prints, textile samples, fabrics, and rugs. One of Albers's working looms, a wallpaper based on her designs, and photographs of the artist are also included—as well as an interactive “triangle table,” in which visitors can make Albers-inspired designs using triangle tiles.

“Anni Albers employed a wide range of materials and processes in her long career. Despite that, her output was remarkably consistent. Visitors to this exhibition will see certain design ideas expressed in multiple media separated by decades. For example, repeated triangular motifs that she first used in the 1950s, recur again and again up until the 1980s. I'm excited for visitors to be able to create similar patterns of their own on a hands-on triangle table,” said Horstman.

“Anni Albers is one of modernism’s major figures and this exhibition will complement the Blanton’s collection strength in 20th-century art of the United States,” added Claire Howard, Associate Curator of Collections and Exhibitions and managing curator of the exhibition. “After redefining weaving as a fine art form early in her career, *Anni Albers: In Thread and On Paper* demonstrates that Albers’s commitment to innovation persisted in her later experimentation with printmaking and her commercial designs.”



Anni Albers photographed by artist John T. Hill

Born Annelise Fleischmann in Berlin in 1899, Albers’s early desire to be an artist led her in 1922 to the Bauhaus, the famous German school of art and design. Most women at the Bauhaus, including Albers, were placed in the weaving workshop. It was there that her genius with threads first started to show itself, as she created masterful designs for textiles and rugs, and eventually ran the workshop for a short period. After the school closed in 1933 under pressure from the Nazis, Albers and her husband, artist Josef Albers, accepted teaching positions at Black Mountain College in North Carolina. There, Anni began to focus on “pictorial weavings,” which she intended to transcend weaving’s commercial connotations and move into the realm of art. In 1949, Albers became one of the first female artists and the first textile artist to have a solo exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The following year, the couple moved to Connecticut, where they would live for the rest of their lives. The exhibition focuses on this later period of her life in Connecticut, where Anni Albers would transition from weaving to printmaking.

Highlights from *Anni Albers: In Thread and On Paper*:

Connections series

Albers made her first prints in 1963 and by 1969 she transitioned entirely from weaving to printmaking.

Foregrounding this transition from weaver to printmaker, the exhibition begins with *Connections*, a series of nine silkscreen prints from 1983 in which Albers recreated images from every decade of her long career. One print from the series, *Smyrna Knüpftteppich*, reinterprets a 1925 rug design Albers originally created as a Bauhaus student. The large rug, produced posthumously, hangs near the print. In the sections that follow, the exhibition demonstrates the fluidity with which Albers shifted between mediums.



Originally created as a rug pattern, the design is just as effective in this print, Smyrna-Knuepftteppich [Smyrna Knotted Rug], from the Connections portfolio.

Textile samples & loom

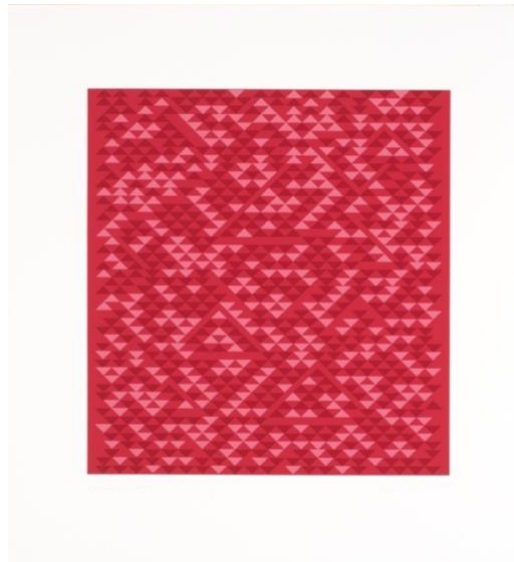
A selection of textile samples in the first gallery of the exhibition demonstrates the extensive variety Albers produced, including industrial fabrics, curtains, and even one fabric designed for an evening coat. Since Albers did not leave behind many studies for her weavings, samples provide insight into her experiments with structure and material. It is likely that Albers made the textile samples on the eight-harness Structo Artcraft 750 loom that will also be on view in the exhibition. The loom, which Albers eventually donated to a local college after giving up weaving, represents the strict vertical and horizontal matrix of weaving that Albers worked both with and against throughout her career and across mediums.



Textile samples like this one were essential to Albers's working practice.

Triangle compositions

Throughout her career, Albers first drafted ideas on graph paper, many examples of which are included in the exhibition. She often experimented with diagonals and dense patterns of triangles, which are hard to produce on a loom. For Albers, repeating triangles, appearing simultaneously ordered and random, represented pure abstraction. She became preoccupied by triangular motifs for nearly two decades, beginning with *Study for Camino Real*, made in 1967 in preparation for a commission for the Hotel Camino Real in Mexico City. A dynamic installation of sixteen works further explores arrangements of triangles, including three etchings from Albers's *Triangulated Intaglio* series.



The composition in Study for Camino Real appears both ordered and random.

Created by the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation in collaboration with Christopher Farr Cloth, a wallpaper based on Albers's 1976 print *Triangulated Intaglio VI* is the backdrop for photographs of Albers featured in the exhibition, including one by celebrated French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson.

At a "triangle table" in the exhibition's resource area, visitors can arrange white triangle tiles on a large, gridded table to create their own designs, similar to the way that Albers drafted designs on graph paper.



Visitors use the "triangle table" as part of the exhibition at Syracuse University Art Museum.

Commercial collaborations

The exhibition underscores how fluidly Albers transitioned between making art and designing functional, commercial objects throughout her career. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Albers produced several designs for textile companies. The maze-like pattern in the fabric *Red Lines on Blue*, designed for Modern Masters Tapestries, utilizes the same linear design seen in the print *Triangulated Intaglio VI* and reproduced in the wallpaper designs. For Sunar Textile Company, Albers created fabrics that capitalized on machine embroidery and acid etching, new technologies at the time.

Also included in the exhibition are two of the four large tapestries architect Phillip Johnson commissioned Albers to design in the 1980s for the lobby of AT&T's headquarters in Manhattan, as well as the preliminary study for the eight-panel ark covering she was commissioned to design in the mid-1950s for Temple Emanu-El in Dallas, Texas, which is still in place today.



Red Lines on Blue, *designed for Modern Masters Tapestries*

Anni Albers: In Thread and On Paper is organized by The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS:

Saturday, April 13, 2024, 3 p.m.

Art with an Expert talk with Fritz Horstman, exhibition curator and Education Director of the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation. These hour-long talks by distinguished art professionals are part of the Blanton's Second Saturdays program. More info at blantonmuseum.org/SecondSaturdays

Saturday, April 13, 2024, time TBD

Interactive weaving demonstration by Austin-based textile artist Zanny Cox at the Blanton's Second Saturdays. More info at blantonmuseum.org/SecondSaturdays

Dates and times are subject to change.

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About the Blanton Museum of Art

Founded in 1963, the Blanton Museum of Art holds the largest public collection in Central Texas with more than 21,000 objects. Recognized as the home of Ellsworth Kelly's *Austin*, its major collecting areas are modern and contemporary U.S. and Latin American art, Italian Renaissance and Baroque paintings, and prints and drawings. The Blanton offers thought-provoking, visually arresting, and personally moving encounters with art.

Featured images:

(right) Utagawa Hiroshige, *Asakusa Rice Fields and Torinomachi Festival*, from the series *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, 1857, 11th month, color woodblock print, 13 1/4 x 8 3/4 in., Worcester Art Museum, John Chandler Bancroft Collection; (left) Anni Albers, *Triangulated Intaglio IV*, 1976, single-color copper plate etching on paper, 13 x 11 7/8 in., The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, 1994 (photo: © 2023 The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York)

Additional image captions:

Katsushika Hokusai, *Fuji at Gotenyama*, from the series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*, 1830–32, color woodblock print, framed: 17 1/8 x 23 1/8 x 1 in., Worcester Art Museum, John Chandler Bancroft Collection

Torii Kiyonaga, *Ichikawa Danjuro V and his Family*, 1782, color woodblock print, framed: 23 1/8 x 17 1/8 x 1 in., Worcester Art Museum, John Chandler Bancroft Collection

Harukawa Goshichi, *Picture of Osaka Tenjin Festival, Cooling off by Naniwa Bridge*, 1818–1820s, color woodblock print, framed: 23 5/8 x 38 5/8 x 1 1/4 in., Worcester Art Museum, John Chandler Bancroft Collection

Totoya Hokkei, *A Live Rooster and a Painted One*, circa 1825, color woodblock print, framed: 20 3/8 x 15 3/8 x 1 in., Worcester Art Museum, John Chandler Bancroft Collection

Katsushika Hokusai, *South Wind, Clear Sky or Red Fuji*, from the series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*, circa 1831, color woodblock print, framed: 17 1/8 x 23 1/8 x 1 in., Worcester Art Museum, John Chandler Bancroft Collection

Utawaga Hiroshige, *Moon Pine, Ueno*, from the series *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, 1857, 8th month, color woodblock print, framed: 23 1/8 x 17 1/8 x 1 in., Worcester Art Museum, John Chandler Bancroft Collection

(left) Utawaga Kunisada, *Utawaga Kunisada I, Woman Holding a Paper Lantern*, 1844, color woodblock print, 38 5/8 x 19 5/8 x 1 1/4 in., Worcester Art Museum, John Chandler Bancroft Collection; (right) Keisai Eisen, *Geisha Looking at Her Reflection in a Hand Mirror*, 1830–35, color woodblock print, 38 5/8 x 19 5/8 x 1/4 in., John Chandler Bancroft Collection

John T. Hill, *Anni Albers*, n.d., gelatin silver print, The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, 1976

Anni Albers, *Smyrna-Knuepfteppich*, from the portfolio *Connections*, 1925/1983, screenprint on paper, 20 1/8 x 15 1/8 in. The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, 1994, © 2023 The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Anni Albers, Textile sample, n.d., cotton, 7 1/2 x 6 1/4 in., The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, 1994 (photo: © 2023 The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York)

Anni Albers, *Camino Real*, 1967–69, screenprint on paper, 16 x 15 in., The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, 1994, © 2023 The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Visitors in *Anni Albers: Work with Materials* at Syracuse University Art Museum, 2022

Anni Albers, *Red Lines on Blue*, designed for Modern Masters Tapestries, 1979, wool, 66 x 72 in., The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, 2001, © 2023 The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York