Inventing Utamaro: A Japanese Masterpiece Rediscovered

On view April 8, 2017–July 9, 2017, Freer|Sackler

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In 2014, the Okada Museum of Art in Hakone, Japan, made an announcement that startled the art world. The new arts center revealed it had found a long-lost painting attributed to Kitagawa Utamaro (1753–1806), a legendary but mysterious Japanese artist.

Titled Fukagawa in the Snow, the immense work is from a set of three that idealize famous pleasure districts in Edo (now Tokyo). The trio reached the Paris art market in the late 1880s and was quickly dispersed. Museum founder Charles Lang Freer acquired Moonlight Revelry at Dozo Sagami in 1903. Cherry Blossoms at Yoshiwara passed through several hands in France until the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford, Connecticut, purchased it in the late 1950s. And Fukagawa in the Snow had been missing for nearly seventy years before it resurfaced in Hakone.

For the first time in well over a century, these paintings reunite in "Inventing Utamaro" at the Freer|Sackler, the only location to show all three original pieces. Contextualizing them within collecting and connoisseurship at the turn of the twentieth century, the exhibition explores the many questions surrounding the paintings and Utamaro himself.

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Moon at Shinagawa (also known as Moonlight Revelry at Dozō Sagami)

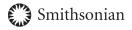
Kitagawa Utamaro (1753–1806)
Japan, Edo period, ca. 1788
Painting mounted on panel; color on paper
Freer Gallery of Art
Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1903.54



Cherry Blossoms at Yoshiwara
Kitagawa Utamaro (1753–1806)
Japan, Edo period, ca. 1793
Painting mounted on panel; color on paper
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art
Hartford, Connecticut
The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection
Fund, 1957.17

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Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery



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Snow at Fukagawa Kitagawa Utamaro (1753–1806) Japan, Edo period, ca. 1802–6 Hanging scroll; color on paper Okada Museum of Art Hakone, Japan