

PRESS RELEASE

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SAM PRESENTS RENEGADE EDO AND PARIS: JAPANESE PRINTS AND TOULOUSE-LAUTREC

Exhibition at the Seattle Asian Art Museum explores the graphic arts and social cultures of two dynamic cities

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SEATTLE - The Seattle Asian Art Museum presents *Renegade Edo and Paris: Japanese Prints and Toulouse-Lautrec* (July 21–December 3, 2023), exploring the shared subversive hedonism of both Japanese ukiyo-e prints and the work of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Through around 90 impressions drawn from the Seattle Art Museum’s Japanese prints collection as well as private holdings of Toulouse-Lautrec’s work, this exhibition offers a revealing look at the renegade spirit in the graphic arts in both late 18th- to 19th-century Edo (present-day Tokyo) and late 19th-century Paris, highlighting the social impulses—pleasure-seeking and theatergoing—behind the burgeoning art production.

The intriguing formal and thematic parallels between these two eras of graphic arts has been explored, but less so the shared sociopolitical connections. The Edo period (1603–1868) and fin-de-siècle Paris both saw rising middle classes that challenged the status quo and expressed antiestablishment attitudes. Bohemian sectors were home to subversive impulses that generated vibrant cultures and new forms of visual art. Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901) is particularly indebted to Japanese prints, in particular to those by Kitagawa Utamaro (1753–1806); he was often referred to as “Montmartre’s Utamaro.”

Renegade Edo and Paris marks the first time that the Seattle Asian Art Museum presents an exhibition comparing Japanese and French art. It is curated by Xiaojin Wu, Luther W. Brady Curator of Japanese Art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, formerly Atsuhiko and Ina Goodwin Tateuchi Foundation Curator of Japanese and Korean Art at the Seattle Art Museum (2012–2022).

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“The graphic allure of these prints is undeniable, and Seattle audiences will no doubt delight in their forms and colors,” says Amada Cruz, Illsley Ball Nordstrom Director and CEO. “Xiaojin’s fresh perspective on their ‘renegade’ origins deepens our understanding and appreciation of these wonderful works. As SAM celebrates its 90th anniversary, it’s thrilling to present this exhibition at its original home in Volunteer Park, an intimate setting perfect for prints.”

“It’s so intriguing that the golden age of graphic art in both Edo and Paris came after a period of social and political turmoil,” says Wu. “As museums across the world return to their collections and local resources for exhibitions after the pandemic, it is so fortunate for Seattle that most devoted collectors of Toulouse-Lautrec’s work and of Japanese prints are right here in the city. Bringing together these two groups of art produced in two metropolises at two exciting times in graphic art history as SAM turns 90 is perfect timing. It fits the cosmopolitan outlook SAM had from the very beginning.”

EXPLORING THE EXHIBITION

Renegade Edo and Paris is organized in four sections: an introductory section that invites visitors into the two cities, followed by three thematic sections.

Floating World in Edo & Bohemia in Paris



Edo-period (1603–1868) Edo (present-day Tokyo) became a magnet for renegades, especially merchants, performers, and artisans.

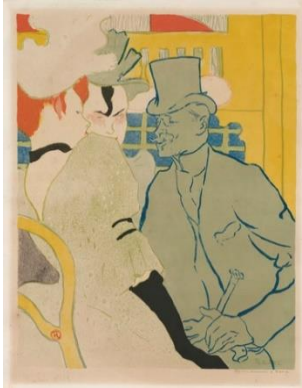
Townsppeople pursued hedonistic lives as a way of defying the state-sanctioned social hierarchy that positioned them at the bottom. Their new pastimes included Kabuki theaters, festivals, and pleasure quarters, the term for licensed red-light districts. This all became subject matter for the woodblock prints

known as ukiyo-e (translated as “pictures of the floating world”), which were produced for popular consumption.

Among the works on view is a pair of six-panel screens from SAM’s collection, *Picnicking under Cherry Blossoms and Boating on the Sumida River* (mid-1700s). These luminous panels depict two seasons: on one side a joyful spring scene with people enjoying music, dance, food, and drink, and on the other, a summer scene on the river, where Edo residents lounge on boats. The screens present an idealized yet telling snapshot of daily life in Edo.

Paris in the late 19th century, like Edo before it, was undergoing substantial changes and experiencing a rise in anti-establishment attitudes. Entertainment venues such as the iconic Moulin Rouge, as well as dance halls, café-concerts, and theatres, emerged in the Montmartre district, the center of bohemian subculture and home to many artists, performers, and sex workers. Meanwhile, Henri Toulouse-Lautrec and his contemporaries searched for fresh and more expressive art forms, and they found much needed novelty in Japanese prints. Many such pictures began arriving in France in the 1860s, which fueled *japonisme*, a fascination for all things Japanese.

Shitamachi & Montmartre



Edo at the time was divided into two areas: Yamanote, set in the hills and reserved for higher classes, and below, Shitamachi (literally, “lower city”), where people traded and sought entertainment. Kabuki, sumo wrestling, music, and dance: all of it could be found in the theaters, teahouses, and pleasure quarters. In this hedonistic atmosphere, many artists also made their home. They created countless images of popular actors and performers, capturing the drama and action of Kabuki theater; idealized beauty of teahouse waitresses were also frequent subjects. Among the prints on view in this section is Utagawa Kunisada’s woodblock print *Confronting the Cherry Spirit* (1834), which ingeniously uses shadow to reflect a stage scene in which warriors confronting a spirit using torch light.

Turn-of-the-century Paris was also divided into two spheres, except there the higher classes lived in the lower part of the city while bohemia flourished in the hills of the Montmartre neighborhood. Dancers, singers, prostitutes, and artists filled the dance halls and café-concerts; Lautrec made this lively scene his subject. On view are many of his posters, including the iconic *Moulin Rouge: Le Goulue* (1891), positioning the famed cancan dancer against the silhouette of a crowd. The influence from Edo-era Japanese prints can be seen in his use of profile views, contoured lines, and flat shapes.

Pleasure Quarters



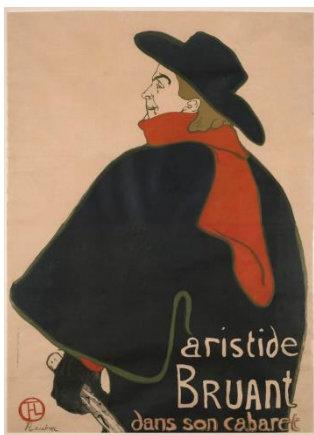
In Edo, a large migration of samurai into the city from all parts of the country led to a booming sex work industry. Licensed brothel districts such as Yoshiwara were enclosed by walls and moats, and men would leave after a night’s revelry, which can be seen in a print by Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858). On average, more than 3,000 women worked in these quarters at any given time. They were valued for culturally constructed notions of beauty, including accomplishments in music, dance, calligraphy, and poetry. On view are examples by Utamaro, who specialized in portrayals of women in these “pleasure quarters”; they presented idealized images of sex workers commissioned by brothel owners as marketing materials.

In Paris, brothels were also licensed, but the prostitutes were not ranked, promoted, or educated. Lautrec was interested in presenting these women in a more natural way, with intimate scenes from their daily lives and unadorned bodies. He borrows an idiom from Utamaro, using mirrors as a way to reflect the subject’s emotions. Though his subjects are not identified, they stand out for their individuality.

Celebrity Culture

Another connection between the cities was their rising celebrity cultures of actors and musicians that directly challenged the aristocracy. For the first time, people were known widely not due to their birth or rank, but for their talents.

Actors, musicians, and performers in both Edo and Paris were featured in numerous prints and posters, which were widely circulated and collected.



In Edo, celebrated Kabuki actors could be recognized in prints due to their family crests or characteristic expressions. Katsukawa Shunsho's (1726–1792) portrayals of famed actor Ichikawa Danjuro V featured his small eyes and large nose. In a print where the actor plays a samurai, Shunsho portrayed him with crossed eyes—a signature expression the artist used for *aragoto* (“rough stuff”) roles.

Lautrec also focused on memorable qualities when portraying dancers and actors, even exaggerating their physical features. He easily grasped the characteristics that made them stand out: La Goulue's squinty eyes and red topknot, singer Aristide Bruant's black hat and red scarf, dancer Jane Avril's bonnet and erratic movements, and dancer Yvette Guilbert's black-gloved arms and thrust-out chin.

PLANNING A VISIT

Museum Hours

- Closed Monday–Thursday
- Friday–Sunday 10 am–5 pm
- Holiday hours on the website

Admission Prices

- Adult: \$14.99 advance / \$17.99 day of
- Senior (65+), Military (with ID): \$12.99 advance / \$15.99 day of
- Student (with ID), Teen (15–18): \$9.99 advance / \$12.99 day of
- Children (14 and under): FREE
- SAM members: FREE

Free & Discounted Options

- Free Last Fridays: Free to all
- 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 104-page softcover catalogue with 70 color illustrations published by the Seattle Art Museum will be available for purchase at SAM Shop (\$30). Also titled *Renegade Edo and Paris: Japanese Prints and Toulouse-Lautrec* (ISBN: 978-0932216076), the catalogue is distributed by the University of Washington Press and features original contributions by Xiaojin Wu and Mary Weaver Chapin, curator of prints and drawings at the Portland Art Museum.

EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION AND SUPPORT

Renegade Edo and Paris: Japanese Prints and Toulouse-Lautrec is organized by the Seattle Art Museum.

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Image captions: *Delivering a Letter*, from the series *Elegant Five-Needled Pine*, 1797–98, Kitagawa Utamaro, Japanese, 1754–1806, woodblock print; ink and color on paper, 13 1/4 x 10 in., Collection of Allan and Mary Kollar, *Moulin Rouge*, 1891, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, French, 1864–1901, color lithograph, 74 13/16 x 45 7/8 in., Spencer M. Hawes Collection, *Yoshida on the Tōkaidō*, from the series *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji*, ca. 1830–32, Katsushika Hokusai, Japanese, 1760–1849, woodblock print; ink and color on paper, 10 x 14 3/4 in., Gift of Mary and Allan Kollar, in honor of the 75th Anniversary of the Seattle Art Museum, 2010.47.1. Photo: Colleen Kollar Zorn, *The Englishman at Moulin Rouge*, 1892, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, French, 1864–1901, color lithograph, 18 1/2 x 14 3/4 in., Collection of Allan and Mary Kollar, *Shizuka of the Tamaya House*, from the series *A Complete Set of the Great Beauties of the Present Day*, 1794, Kitagawa Utamaro, Japanese, 1754–1806, woodblock print; ink and color on paper, sheet: 15 x 9 3/4 in., Gift of Mary and Allan Kollar, in honor of the 75th Anniversary of the Seattle Art Museum, 2017.23.4. Photo: Scott Leen, *Aristide Bruant in his Cabaret*, 1893, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, French, 1864–1901, color lithograph, 52 3/4 x 38 in., John and Joyce Price Collection

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.