

# 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 | SACKLER**  
THE SMITHSONIAN'S MUSEUMS OF ASIAN ART



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