

JAPANESE ART SOCIETY OF AMERICA



CATALOG 61 | FALL/WINTER 2023

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Fifty Years of Japan*

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Happy Quinquagenary, JASA! All year long we've been celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Japanese Art Society of America, culminating with the gala opening of our 50th anniversary exhibition, *Meiji Modern: Fifty Years of New Japan*, on October 3 at the Asia Society Museum in New York City. I hope you enjoy the wonderful photographs at the end of the newsletter of the reception and dinner for lenders and supporters, and the opening events including a special lecture by Japanese Art Curator Rosina Buckland of the British Museum.

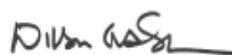
If you haven't visited the show yet, please go see it – and more than once! The selection of objects is so rich and fascinating, it deserves multiple viewings. The exhibition is at the Asia Society Museum until January 7, 2024, and then moves to the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago, March 21 – June 9, and finally to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, July 7 – September 15. Some objects will only be on view in selected venues, so plan to visit all three museums if you can!

One review called *Meiji Modern* a “perfect exhibition”, engaging both scholars and non-specialist visitors who are “thrilled to discover beautiful art they didn't know and to learn its history in labels that are both clear and serious.”

Of course, *Meiji Modern* – like all our activities – is only possible because of the extraordinary generosity of you, our members. Altogether, we have raised more than \$800,000 from members, foundations and other supporters to cover exhibition expenses. Now, we are expanding our 50th anniversary fundraising to secure our future as the premier membership organization in North America dedicated exclusively to education and appreciation of the arts of Japan. I hope we can continue to count on your critical support as we move forward with our exciting plans.

I wish you a very happy holiday season and all the best for 2024. And of course, I look forward to seeing you at an upcoming JASA event!

Warm regards,



Wilson Grabill
President, JASA



The *Meiji Modern* catalog cover features detail from a remarkable pair of screens, *Painting of a Cuckoo, 1911*, by Yamaga Seika (1885-1981), lent to the exhibition by JASA members Anne and John Collins (left) of Whitefish, MT.

You can order catalogs on the JASA website,
www.japaneseartsoc.org.

They make excellent holiday gifts!

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

It is JASA's great pleasure to welcome these new and returning members:

(If no country is indicated, the address is in the USA)

Mr. Daniel McOwan | Hamilton, Victoria, AUSTRALIA

Dr. Akiko Takesue | Toronto, Ontario, CANADA

Dr. Silvia Vesco | Mogliano, Veneto Treviso ITALY

Ms. Katina Huston | Alameda CA

Ms. Margaret Edwards | Lafayette CA

Mr. Hillel Krauss | Los Angeles CA

Mr. Daniel Sneider | Palo Alto CA

Dr. Lynne L. Brewer | Piedmont CA

Ms. Leslie Selcow | San Francisco CA

Mr. Leonard Stathakis | Santa Monica CA

Dr. Afshine Emrani | Tarzana CA

Mr. Christopher Wells | Sharon CT

Mr. Matthew Edlund | Sarasota FL

Ms. Pauline M. Sugino | Honolulu HI

Ms. Saira Chambers | Chicago IL

Ms. Minori Egashira | Chicago IL

Ms. Taylor Stewart | Chicago IL

Mr. Elizabeth Emery | Montclair NJ

Mr. Jon R. Gray | New York NY

Ms. Kumiko Makihara | New York NY

Mr. Shig Ogyu | New York NY

Mr. Philip Rosenfeld | New York NY

Ms. Martha Sermier | New York NY

Mr. Roland Trope | New York NY

Ms. Deborah Schallert | Portland OR

Ms. Erin Schoneveld | Ardmore PA

Ms. Katherine Tugusheva | Holland PA

Ms. Holly I. Ryan | Leetsdale PA

IMPRESSIONS WINS AN OZZIE!

A what? The Ozzie Awards is the most prestigious recognition program in the publishing community, recognizing excellence in editorial content and design across print and digital media. The awards, are recognized industry-wide, receiving applications in the thousands annually from publications around the globe. Categories range in topics from articles, essays, and full issue magazines, to blogs, podcasts, and video content to cover design, graphic design, illustration, photography, and more. Impressions won in the category for design of a single magazine issue from a non-profit or Professional Association for Part One of the double issue of Impressions #44. Congratulations to editor Julia Meech and her fabulous team.



JAPANESE ART SOCIETY OF AMERICA NEWSLETTER

P. O. Box 394
Lexington, MA 02420

— IN MEMORIAM —

The Japanese art community recently lost two giants of scholarship this year, as well as a passionate collector.

Donald Was Our Teacher

by Julia Meech, Editor of *Impressions*

Donald Jenkins (1931–2023) opened up the glorious world of ukiyo-e prints and paintings for many of us in the early 1970s. His exhibition of the Primitives, as the early eighteenth-century artists were then known, at The Art Institute of Chicago in 1971, included a two-day symposium that attracted collectors and aficionados from around the world. Mary Griggs Burke, whose first purchases of Japanese art were ukiyo-e paintings, funded the catalogue.



Donald Jenkins at the opening of the exhibition “The Ledoux Heritage: The Collecting of Ukiyo-e Master Prints,” autumn 1973, Japan Society, New York. Courtesy of Jennifer Glowacki.

Two years later, in 1973, Donald, who was still at the Art Institute, made his debut in New York by reassembling some sixty-two prints that had once belonged to the famed New York collector Louis Ledoux, who died in 1949. For that memorable exhibition at Japan House Gallery, the gallery director, Rand Castile, noted that Donald’s task was difficult, and “only a scholar of wisdom, insight, and patience could have selected, found and catalogued so well a body of works dispersed nearly twenty-five years ago.” 1973 was my first year living in New York, where I had taken a job in the department of Asian art at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. I recall the excitement of that opening night, attended by every major collector in the city and beyond. It was an event!

In 2008, Donald came to New York from Portland to deliver the keynote address at Asia Society for the opening of “Designed for Pleasure: The World of Edo Japan in Prints and Paintings, 1680–1860.” For the catalogue of that exhibition, organized by the Japanese Art Society of America (JASA) and Asia Society, our JASA editorial team called upon Donald to write the introductory essay, which is an outstanding testament not only to his erudition but also his ability to communicate his enthusiasm for the subject in language both elegant and engaging.

As the editor of *Impressions*, the journal of the Japanese Art Society of America, I relied heavily on Donald over the years to review new publications on ukiyo-e prints. He had wide expertise and was a careful reader who valued consistency and quality. His first review appeared in 1980, before I was involved with the journal. Discussing an exhibition catalogue of surimono, he was a tough critic, noting flaws and calling out “poor editing and careless design.” Between 2002, when I became editor of *Impressions*, and 2018, Donald generously contributed eleven reviews, as well as an obituary for Oliver Statler, much of whose print collection went to the Art Institute in 1974.

In 2018, Donald’s final submission to *Impressions* was an essay about a two-volume, woodblock-printed book dating from 1907, in the Portland Art Museum. It is the work of the Meiji-period artist best known for his oil paintings, Asai Chu, in collaboration with his friend, the poet Ikebe Yoshikata. In 1989, at the time the museum purchased the book, Donald had already honed his expertise in twentieth-century prints with the ground-breaking exhibition “Images of a Changing World,” but was curious to learn more about the transition period between the heyday of ukiyo-e artists and the modern masters. As if on cue, a young Kyoto dealer, Scott Johnson, stopped by to sell the museum the pair of 1907 volumes. By 2018, Donald was retired but still passionate about this unusual book. It was a subject he had been thinking about for a long time and he unraveled its mysteries and the unique circumstances of its production for our readers with his hallmark humor and painstaking scholarship. Donald was unique.

Ellen P. Conant by Jennet Conant, with assistance from James Conant and Kathryn Whalen.

Ellen P. Conant, a distinguished historian of Asian art, died on Tuesday, October 3, 2023, at home in Hanover. She was 102 years old.

Mrs. Conant was born in Orange, N.J., and attended Hunter High School in New York City. She received a B.A. from Hunter College with a major in art history and classical archaeology in 1942. She then pursued a Master’s Degree at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. In order to do field research in Europe, she joined the Red Cross, which was slated to send its last contingent of nurses to Italy early in 1947. Shortly before departure, however, her group was redirected to Yokohama, Japan, where Mrs. Conant was assigned to an Information Desk on the Ginza in Tokyo. She became enamored of Japanese art, and in 1949 signed another two-year contract and was sent to Kyoto, where she joined the Kyoto Folk Art Association and formed lasting friendships with many Japanese potters, artists and craftsmen. Although fascinated by Japan, Mrs. Conant finally made her way to Europe in 1950, and went on to finish her M.A. in June 1951 with a thesis on Italian Renaissance artist Andrea del Verrocchio.

In the fall of 1951, she registered for a PhD in Asian Art History at Bryn Mawr College under the tutelage of Professor Alexander C. Soper. As there were no established courses in Asian art at the time, she applied to the newly-created Fulbright Program and was selected as a member of the first contingent of Fulbright scholars to be sent to Japan. Following three months of intensive Japanese language instruction, she completed her PhD exams and returned to Japan, where she enrolled at the University of Kyoto in November 1953. She became very involved with the Folk Art Movement, and established close friendships with the painter Takeuchi Seiho, as well as leading print artists such as Onchi Koshiro and Tokuriki Tomikichiro. She also managed to spend a month in Korea, which was then off-limits to foreigners at the time.

In 1956, Mrs. Conant organized a path-breaking exhibition of modern Japanese ceramics which was shown at the Art Institute of Chicago. She then reluctantly returned to the U.S. to work on her PhD, and accepted a position at the University of Georgia, where she began teaching courses in Asian and Western art. She was a member of the College Art Association’s first panel on Asian art, and was approached by World House Galleries’ Alfred R. Krakusin, who convinced her to arrange an

exhibition of modern Korean art. It was on that trip to Seoul that Ellen met Theodore R. Conant, a documentary filmmaker with the United Nations Information Services, who offered his services as a photographer. They were married weeks later on August 26, 1957. The successful Contemporary Korean Paintings exhibition, the first international exhibition of Korean art, opened in New York City in January 1958.

Upon her return to the U.S. in 1960, Mrs. Conant and her family settled in the Boston area, where she accepted a position at Wellesley College and was also engaged to teach Asian art at Mount Holyoke. However, most of Mrs. Conant's career was spent in the capacity of an independent scholar, encompassing innumerable symposiums, exhibitions, lectures, and publications. She also works as an independent consultant for auction houses, especially Sotheby's. A pioneer scholar in Meiji art history, she directed and curated a famous exhibition "Nihonga, Transcending the Past: Japanese-Style Painting 1868-1968" at the St. Louis Art Museum in 1995, and authored a subsequent overview of Meiji art history,

Challenging Past and Present: The Metamorphosis of Nineteenth Century Japanese Art, in 2006. She was a long-time visiting scholar at Dartmouth College and Columbia University, and an Associate in Research at the Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies at Harvard University. Over five decades, she doggedly pursued a reexamination of the career of the famous Japanophile Ernest F. Fenollosa. At the age of 101, she completed her final publication: an autobiographical essay entitled, "The Implausible Origins of Becoming an Asian Art Historian." It appeared in Alisa Freedman's collection, Women in Japanese Studies: Memoirs from a Trailblazing Generation

Elise Wessels by Susan L. Peters, editor

The collector, patron, and founder of the Nihon no hanga museum passed away on June 7, 2023, at age 80. She began collecting Japanese prints in the 1980s and, with the advice of experts and her own taste, her collection had grown into an almost complete survey of Japanese prints from the first half of the 20th century.

In 2009 she opened the private museum in Amsterdam named Nihon no hanga (literally: 'Japanese prints'). "What's the point if I can't share this beauty with others?" she said in a 2014 interview with the magazine Dutch glory. The most important thing, she said in the same conversation, is "that we can keep the art in our country up to standard and that we can all enjoy it."

On the occasion of her 80th birthday, Wessels donated 1,100 prints from her print room to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam in October 2022. A donation that made the Rijksmuseum's collection of Japanese work on paper one of the most important in Europe, says director Taco Dibbits. True collector that she was, after this donation was made, she began collecting contemporary Japanese prints. It was written in an October press release from the Rijksmuseum that "thanks to the donation of Elise Wessels's collection all the major Japanese print artists of the early 20th century are now represented in the Rijksmuseum collection by their most important works. With this donation, the Rijksmuseum now holds more than 5,000 Japanese prints, albums and illustrated books."

The Nihon no hanga, which has been in existence for 14 years, has mounted its final exhibition. In part the exhibition will show the last project that the Rijksmuseum planned with Elise Wessels before her sudden passing, marking the hundred-year remembrance of the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923. The disaster was recorded in various ways, from photographs to woodblock print series, magazines to paintings. This exhibition will also be a tribute to this extraordinary collector and patron of the arts. To celebrate and honor Wessels, a selection of her favorite woodblock prints and objects will be on display.

HOLLIS IS LEAVING THE BUILDING

After more than 40 years at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Japanese Art Curator Hollis Goodall has retired.

Hollis began her career at LACMA in the Registrar's Office as the Assistant Registrar for Incoming Loans (1981-83) and the Assistant Registrar for Exhibitions (1983-84) before becoming the Assistant in the Far East Art Department (1984-86). She took a two-year hiatus as a Japanese Ministry of Education (Monbusho) Research Fellow at the University of Kyoto (1986-88) and returned to LACMA as a Curatorial Assistant in the Japanese Art Department (1988-1990). Hollis ascended the curatorial ladder as Assistant Curator (1990-97), Associate Curator (1997-2007), and Curator (2007 to present) by conceptualizing and implementing nearly 300 permanent collection and loan exhibitions in the Pavilion for Japanese Art.

Exhibition highlights at LACMA include *Chinese Wind: Influence of China on the Arts of Japan* (1993); *Shin-hanga: New Prints in Modern Japan* (1996) co-curator with Kendall Brown; *Drawing Ukiyo-e: Sketches by Japanese Print Masters* (1996); *Hirado Porcelain of Japan from the Kurtzman Family Collection* (1997) co-curator with Rob Singer; *Faces of Battle* (2006); *Word/Poem/Picture* (2007); *Hosoe Eikoh and Butoh: Photographing Strange Notions* (2008) co-curator with Charlotte Cotton; *Living in the Moment: Japanese Prints from the Barbara S. Bowman Collection* (2015); and the recent *Sam Francis and Japan: Emptiness Overflowing* (2023), co-curator with Leslie Jones and Richard Speer in BCAM.

In addition to her LACMA exhibition catalogues, Hollis has contributed to publications for other institutions including the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, the San Diego Museum of Art, and the Munakata Museum in Kamakura, Japan. She has lectured extensively including at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco; Japan Society, New York; Hammer Museum; Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena; Antiquarian Society of Southern California; New York University; University of Kansas; California State University, San Diego; Cal Poly Pomona; Hamilton Art Gallery, Melbourne; and the Art Gallery of Victoria, Australia.

Hollis also made great strides in building the museum's collection of Japanese art. She has built strong relationships with dealers and collectors that have resulted in significant gifts, in particular traditional woodblock and contemporary prints, *sōsaku hanga* (creative prints), contemporary ceramics, and modern paintings and objects. Among her most important acquisition successes, Hollis has recently secured the donation of a group of early to mid-20th century objects and *Nihonga* paintings, a collection that will transform the museum's holdings in that area.

Replacing Hollis is Rika Hiro, the new Associate Curator for Japanese Art. Welcome!

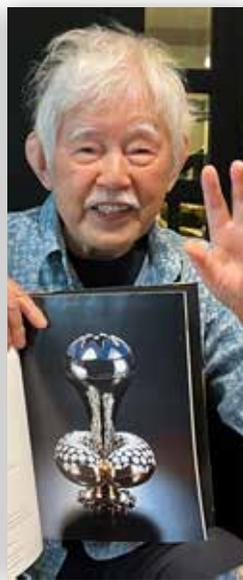
IN THE WORLD OF CERAMICS

Kishi Eiko is a winner of the prestigious 36th Kyoto Art Culture Award. This important honor is a milestone achievement for the artist, who has also won other prizes for her bold sculptural work throughout her career. The Kyoto Art Culture Award is given to those who have made a major contribution to Kyoto's culture through artistic activities. Her work has been seen internationally, including at the Joan B. Mirviss Gallery in New York City.

The clay artist Yanagihara Mutsuo is now 88 years young and still going strong. One of his flower vessels is on view and in the forefront in the Victoria and Albert Museum's Lydia and Manfred Gorvy Gallery, room 142. The NYC gallery Dai Ichi Arts will showcase a collection of his work in 2024.



Blue Vase by Yanagihara Mutsuo



Yanagihara Mutsuo



Kishi Eiko - Shinsho fukeo 2011

MEIJI MODERN: FIFTY YEARS OF NEW JAPAN



As mentioned in the President's Letter, the Asia Society Museum hosted a gala dinner and opening in New York on Oct 2-3 for JASA's 50th anniversary exhibition, *Meiji Modern: Fifty Years of New Japan*. At the dinner, JASA President Wilson Grabill (left) thanked Asia Society for their partnership in the project, and co-curators Chelsea Foxwell and Bradley Bailey (shown below, with Asia Society Vice President Yasufumi Nakamori) shared insights into organizing and presenting the exhibition. Photos are all courtesy of Asia Society.

(Editor's Note: in order to be sure we included as many photos as possible of the opening celebration, there isn't a listing of Japanese art exhibits. Please view the Japanese Art Calendar that is sent out monthly by JASA's Membership Coordinator Cheryl Gall.)













ON THE COVER

JASA's beautiful 272-page full-color exhibition catalogue for *Meiji Modern: Fifty Years of New Japan* takes a fresh look at the art of this seminal period (1868-1912), through a vivid selection of approximately 175 objects drawn from public and private collections across the United States, including newly discovered prints, photographs, textiles, paintings, and craft objects.

ON THE BACK COVER

ASM Meiji Modern • Photo by Bruce M. White



Meiji Modern

FIFTY YEARS
OF NEW JAPAN