

Harvard / News Release Art Museums

Major Gift of Japanese Art Promised to the Harvard Art Museums by Robert and Betsy Feinberg

Feinbergs also to fund new art study center opening at the museums in fall 2014



Suzuki Kiitsu, [Cranes](#), Japanese, Edo period, mid-19th century. Pair of two-panel folding screens; ink and color on gold paper. Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Promised gift of Robert S. and Betsy G. Feinberg. Photo: John Tsantes and Neil Greentree.

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The Harvard Art Museums announce a promised gift of approximately 300 Japanese works of art from the collection of Robert and Betsy Feinberg. The majority of their gift comprises screens and hanging scrolls on silk and paper from the Edo (1615–1868) and Meiji (1868–1912) periods. Every major school and painter of the Edo period is represented, and works by 18th-century Kyoto painters, such as Yosa Buson, Ike no Taiga, Soga Shōhaku, Maruyama Ōkyo, and Nagasawa Rosetsu, are a special strength. The gift also includes books, handscrolls, fans, sculpture, and a lantern. The Feinbergs’ collection will have an important place within the Harvard Art Museums permanent collections of Asian art, and their gift reinforces Harvard University’s status as a center for the study of Japanese art, especially the history of Edo period art. The couple will also fund the art study center for the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, which will open in the new Harvard Art Museums facility in the fall of 2014.

“The Feinbergs’ transformational gift of works of art enriches our current holdings of Asian art and will inspire and train future generalists and specialists in Japanese art,” said Thomas W. Lentz, Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Harvard Art Museums. “Their endowment of an art study center further ensures a dynamic environment for teaching and prolonged thinking and learning.”

“The Feinberg Collection consists of many remarkable paintings that embody surprising and unusual perspectives on the cultural history of Japan’s early modern era,” said Yukio Lippit, Professor of History

of Art and Architecture, specializing in Japanese art, at Harvard University. “It will enable new course offerings at every level of the curriculum and help train future scholars and curators in the field of Japanese art. We feel incredibly fortunate.”

The Feinbergs’ interest in Japanese art has its beginnings in 1972, when the couple, visiting the Metropolitan Museum of Art, purchased a \$2.00 poster of a 16th-century screen painting depicting a Portuguese ship arriving in Japan. Shortly after, Betsy’s sister Amy Poster, then Assistant Curator of Japanese Art at the Brooklyn Museum, took the couple to see Japanese paintings at the museum and arranged for them to visit a Manhattan art dealer. Those experiences opened a completely new world to the couple, and without any idea of forming a collection, they slowly began to discover and to purchase Edo period paintings. The works in the resulting collection tell a comprehensive story of Edo art and depict multiple cultural narratives with religious and secular themes. Each of the period’s schools (Kanō, Nanga, Maruyama/Shijo, the Eccentrics, and Rinpa) is reflected, as are several genres, such as Nanban and *ukiyo-e*.

“To acknowledge and to thank Harvard College for my four undergraduate years that were an extraordinary, life-changing experience, Betsy and I are delighted to bequeath our collection to the Harvard Art Museums,” said Robert Feinberg (Harvard Class of 1961). “Through their outstanding exhibition, storage, and conservation facilities, the museums will be able to use our gift to help become one of the major American academic centers for the study of Japanese art. We’re also pleased that the museums will be able to lend our art to other institutions, most especially to museums in Japan that will make objects available to Japanese scholars and the Japanese public.”

The Feinbergs’ promised gift will arrive at Harvard over the coming years in several distributions, after traveling to museums in Japan, France, and the United States. Ninety-three artworks from the collection have been touring Japan in an exhibition titled *The Flowering of Edo Period Painting: Japanese Masterworks from the Feinberg Collection*. Venues include the Edo-Tokyo Museum (May 21–July 15, 2013), the Miho Museum (July 20–August 18, 2013), and the Tottori Prefectural Museum (October 5–November 10, 2013). After touring Japan, the exhibition will be on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (February 1–August 31, 2014). A smaller exhibition of approximately 35 works from the collection will also appear at the Musée Cernuschi in France (September 19–December 11, 2014). When the new Harvard Art Museums facility at 32 Quincy Street opens in fall 2014, a selection of paintings will be displayed in the relocated permanent galleries of the Arthur M. Sackler Museum. After

the opening, works from the Feinbergs' collection will be sent on a regular basis for display and for teaching purposes until the full collection comes to reside at Harvard.

“We are thrilled that the Feinbergs have chosen to share their extraordinary collection with us, as the works are of the highest caliber and are a perfect complement to our existing holdings of classical Japanese paintings and Edo period woodblock prints,” said Melissa A. Moy, Alan J. Dworsky Associate Curator of Chinese Art at the Harvard Art Museums. “The addition of the Feinberg collection will allow countless generations of students and visitors at Harvard to experience the full range of Japan’s rich artistic tradition, from the medieval to early modern periods.”

The new art study center that will bear the Feinbergs' name is one of five study spaces that will make up an expansive new Art Study Center in the new Harvard Art Museums facility. The Art Study Center includes a study center for each of the three museums (Fogg, Busch-Reisinger, and Arthur M. Sackler) as well as two seminar rooms for teaching. A central feature of the new building, the Art Study Center will provide access to thousands of works of art from the vast collections of the Harvard Art Museums. Its distinctive areas for study and research will offer students, faculty, and the public unique environments for learning through the close examination of original works of art. The Feinberg art study center will allow visitors to view objects from the collections of Asian, ancient, and Islamic and later Indian art that are not on display in the galleries.

Dr. Robert Feinberg (Harvard Class of 1961, Oxford DPhil '65), son of Harry Feinberg, the founder of Duron Paints & Wallcoverings, began work at his father's company in 1976 after leaving his position as Assistant Professor of Bio-Organic Chemistry at The Rockefeller University in New York. He was chairman and chief executive officer of Duron upon his retirement in 2004. Betsy Feinberg (Connecticut College [for Women] Class of 1966, Hunter College MS '75) is a former teacher of the visually impaired in private practice as well as at Montgomery County Public Schools and the Ivymount School in Potomac, Maryland. She volunteers with and is on the boards of several blind and low-vision organizations, such as Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind, Aid Association for the Blind of the District of Columbia, and Learning Ally. The couple have dedicated themselves to studying and collecting Japanese art for over 40 years. They currently reside in Bethesda, Maryland.

About the Harvard Art Museums

The Harvard Art Museums, among the world's leading art institutions, comprise three museums (Fogg, Busch-Reisinger, and Arthur M. Sackler) and four research centers (Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, the Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, the Harvard Art Museums Archives, and the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis). The Fogg Museum collection comprises Western art from the Middle Ages to the present; the Busch-Reisinger Museum is dedicated to the study of art from the German-speaking countries of central and northern Europe, and is the only one of its kind in North America; and the Arthur M. Sackler Museum collection is focused on Asian, ancient, and Islamic and later Indian art. Together, the collections include approximately 250,000 objects in all media. The Harvard Art Museums are distinguished by the range and depth of their collections, their groundbreaking exhibitions, and the original research of their staff. Integral to Harvard University and the wider community, the museums and research centers serve as resources for students, scholars, and the public. For more than a century they have been the nation's premier training ground for museum professionals and are renowned for their seminal role in developing the discipline of art history in this country. www.harvardartmuseums.org

In June 2008 the historic building at 32 Quincy Street, formerly the home of the Fogg and Busch-Reisinger museums, closed for a major renovation and expansion project. In order for the Harvard Art Museums to conduct the final phases of the project, including the installation of the galleries in the new facility, the Arthur M. Sackler Museum's galleries at 485 Broadway closed on June 1, 2013. When complete in the fall of 2014, the project will unite our three museums in a single state-of-the-art facility designed by architect Renzo Piano. www.harvardartmuseums.org/renovation

Events and News

Programs and events continue to be offered in the lecture hall of the Arthur M. Sackler Museum at 485 Broadway and at a number of other campus venues. www.harvardartmuseums.org/calendar

Keep up with what's happening at the Harvard Art Museums as we prepare for the opening of our renovated facility in the fall of 2014 in *Index*, our multimedia magazine. *Index* is available in fall, spring, and summer print editions (find copies on campus at the Arthur M. Sackler Museum and the Holyoke Center), with weekly updates in an expanded digital version on our website.

www.harvardartmuseums.org/index

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