YOKAI: SCENES OF THE SUPERNATURAL IN JAPANESE WOODBLOCK PRINTS OPENS NEXT WEEK!

Exhibition at Asia Society Texas Center includes over 80 works spanning 250 years of artistry

HOUSTON, September 22, 2022 — Asia Society Texas’ (AST) newest exhibition, Yūkai: Scenes of the Supernatural in Japanese Woodblock Prints, revels in the eerie and mystical realms found in Japanese myths and legends. Yūkai — meaning “mysterious apparitions” — take the form of demons, monsters, shape-shifting animals, and trickster spirits, and have been found in folklore, historical texts, paintings, and theatre for centuries. This exhibition, on loan from Scripps College, presents 80 works featuring Edo period woodblock prints and e-hon (picture books) spanning over 250 years. Yūkai: Scenes of the Supernatural opens on Friday, September 30th, and remains on view through December 11, 2022.
In the Edo period (1603-1868), the spread of woodblock printing fostered a highly literate population, spurring publishers to mass-produce woodblock prints and illustrated books depicting scenes of the modern world as well as popular literature and legends. By the 19th century, characters and scenes of the supernatural became hugely popular as books and prints made them accessible to a wide audience. Celebrated artists like Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) and Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (1839-1892) filled their designs with creepy — and sometimes comical — creatures, devilish demons, and grotesque ghosts. Many of their yōkai have inspired depictions in manga and anime today.

The collection of prints on view highlights the complicated and multistep process involved in woodblock printing. Once designed, the image is carved into a block of wood leaving only the outlines of the artist’s design in the block. Additional blocks are carved for each color in the design with registration marks added to ensure the colors align perfectly. Different colored ink is placed on the blocks and transferred to the paper, one after the other to create the brightly colored and intricate designs featured in the exhibition.

On view through December 11, 2022, Yōkai: Scenes of the Supernatural in Japanese Woodblock Prints presents a rare opportunity to see this vast collection and explore the mystical world of Japanese folklore and legend.

Yōkai: Scenes of the Supernatural in Japanese Woodblock Prints Fast Facts

- Dates: Friday, September 30 – Sunday, December 11, 2022
- Admission: Free for Asia Society Members and children 12 and under; $5 Students and Seniors (with ID), $8 Nonmembers
- Hours: Wednesday–Friday, 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.; Saturday–Sunday, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
- Location: Asia Society Texas, 1370 Southmore Blvd, Houston, TX, 77004 (in the Museum District)

Opening Reception Information

- Friday, September 30, 2022; Members-exclusive access: 5:30–6 p.m.; Public hours: 6–8 p.m.
- Admission: FREE!

About Asia Society Texas

Asia Society Texas Center believes in the strength and beauty of diverse perspectives and people. As an educational institution, we advance cultural exchange by celebrating the vibrant diversity of Asia, inspiring empathy, and fostering a better understanding of our interconnected world. Spanning the fields of arts, business, culture, education, and policy, our programming is rooted in the educational and cultural development of our community — trusting in the power of art, dialogue, and ideas to combat bias and build a more inclusive society.
Yōkai: Scenes of the Supernatural in Japanese Woodblock Prints is organized by Scripps College in Claremont, California, with additional works organized by Asia Society Texas for the Houston presentation. Exhibitions and their related programs at Asia Society Texas are presented by Nancy C. Allen, Chinhui Juhn and Eddie Allen, and Leslie and Brad Bucher. Major support comes from The Brown Foundation, Inc., Houston Endowment, and the City of Houston through Houston Arts Alliance. Generous funding also provided by The Anchorage Foundation of Texas, The Clayton Fund, Texas Commission on the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, Wortham Foundation, Inc., Agnes Hsu-Tang, Ph. D. and Oscar L. Tang, and Ann Wales. United Airlines is our official airline partner. Funding is also provided through contributions from the Exhibitions Patron Circle, a dedicated group of individuals and organizations committed to bringing exceptional visual art to Asia Society Texas.