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# \*Images Available Upon Request

## **Cincinnati Art Museum presents*Transcending Reality: The Woodcuts of Kōsaka Gajin***

**February 11, 2017–May 7, 2017**

**CINCINNATI —** The Cincinnati Art Museum will present a special collection of Japanese woodcut prints from the late 1940s and early1950s in the exhibition [*Transcending Reality: The Woodcuts of Kōsaka Gajin*](http://cincinnatiartmuseum.org/transcendingreality)*,* February 11–May 7, 2017.

The first solo exhibition of Gajin’s work in the United States, *Transcending Reality* showcases the beauty of Japanese landscape and architectural monuments in more than 50 monochromatic woodcuts from the Cincinnati Art Museum’s Howard and Caroline Porter Collection of Twentieth Century Japanese Prints, the largest repository of Gajin’s late woodcuts outside of Japan.

Cincinnati Art Museum Curator of Prints Kristin Spangenberg lends her expertise as lead curator for this exhibition. Mary Baskett, the museum’s former curator of prints (1965-71), has shared her ongoing research on the artist for this exhibition. Spangenberg and Baskett worked to strengthen the Howard and Caroline Porter Collection into what is now a major collection of 20th century Japanese prints.

“*Transcending Reality* aims to take a closer look at Gajin’s unconventional approach to the woodcut print, representing the artist’s perceptions rather than reality,” says Spangenberg. “Although the majority of Gajin’s prints were created later in his life, the unique qualities of his artworks set him apart from his contemporaries—and deem him worthy of recognition.”

Gajin’s life and artistic journey were far from ordinary. He was born Kōsaka Masanosuke on May 10, 1877, in Kyoto. The art name Gajin was adopted after World War II. He studied Japanese-style painting as a teenager, and struck out as an independent artist in 1899. In 1907, he moved to Tokyo where he studied Western-style painting.

In 1922 at the age of 45, Gajin made his first woodcut prints and joined the pioneering *sōsaku-hanga* (creative print) artists, who were motivated by the desire for self-expression. His early woodcuts were destroyed by Allied bombings in Tokyo during World War II. Gajin evacuated to Sendai where the loss of his artwork became the catalyst for new work well into his 60s. He died in 1953 at the age of 76.

*Transcending Reality* showcases Gajin’s extensive late woodcuts, focusing on historic and modern architecture, scenic places, and the natural world in the tradition of Utagawa Hiroshige. His views of scenic places take advantage of rhythmic relationships and contrasting forms, while his interpretation of the natural world verges on abstraction.

In addition to Gajin’s woodcuts, *Sōsaku-Hanga Contemporaries of Gajin*will display a compilation of three portfolios created by the Nihon Hanga Kyōkai (Japanese Print Association).

In 1918, a group of Tokyo artists banded together to form the Nihon Sōsaku-Hanga Kyōkai (Japanese Creative Print Association), reorganized as the Nihon Hanga Kyōkai (Japanese Print Association) in 1931. The association published the portfolios after the end of World War II, reflecting nostalgia for a pre-militarized Japan and setting the tone for the *sōsaku-hanga* movement’s post-war triumph.

The first portfolio *Scenes of Last Tokyo*, published in 1945 as a partial reissuing of the previously published *One Hundred Views of New Tokyo* (1929-32), features Tokyo landmarks, many of which had been destroyed in the war. The second portfolio *Native Customs in Japan* was released in 1946 and reflected Japan’s customs at a time when the country was expected to develop into a peaceful democracy. The third and final portfolio *A Selection of Women’s Customs* *in Japan*, designed to appeal to the Allied soldiers and civilian workers during the occupation, will be on view in G213 beginning February 28, 2017.

Featured alongside *Transcending Reality* is [*Dressed to Kill: Japanese Arms and Armor*](http://cincinnatiartmuseum.org/art/exhibitions/upcoming-exhibitions/dressed-to-kill/)*,* an in-depth look at Japanese Samurai culture and arts from the 16th–19th centuries. Joint tickets allow entry to both special exhibitions.

All ticketed exhibitions are free for museum members. Non-members may purchase tickets at [cincinnatiartmuseum.org](http://www.cincinnatiartmuseum.org) or at the art museum. $10 ticket for adults; $5 for children ages 6–17 and college students with ID. Other discounts available.

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**About the Cincinnati Art Museum**

The Cincinnati Art Museum is supported by the generosity of individuals and businesses that give annually to ArtsWave. The Ohio Arts Council helps fund the Cincinnati Art Museum with state tax dollars to encourage economic growth, educational excellence and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans. The Cincinnati Art Museum gratefully acknowledges operating support from the City of Cincinnati, as well as our members.

General admission to the Cincinnati Art Museum is always free. The museum is open Tuesday–Sunday, 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. with extended Thursday hours until 8 p.m. [cincinnatiartmuseum.org](http://cincinnatiartmuseum.org)