



Photos by Nina Tasi

A Day at the Boston MFA with Hokusai

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Great news: Trips are back for AIL members! On April 5, thirty AIL members traveled from New London to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts to take in the special exhibition, “Hokusai: Inspiration and Influence.” The MFA has more than a hundred thousand works of Japanese art, most collected by three eccentric Bostonians in the 1870s and 1880s: Edward S. Morse, Ernest F. Fenollosa and William Sturgis Bigelow, who was responsible for most of the works in the Hokusai exhibit. Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) is best known for his *ukiyo-e* and scenic woodblock prints including the iconic “Great Wave.” His work has had a major and enduring impact on the world art and commercial scene — witness today’s Lego recreation of “The Great Wave” (pictured above, middle).

The day before the field trip, attendees met in Lethbridge Lodge with Jon Keenan, professor of ceramics and East Asian art history at Colby-Sawyer. Professor Keenan talked about Hokusai’s life and prepared us for the works we would see in the exhibit. He explained the meaning of *ukiyo-e* (“art of the floating world”) and the process of making woodblock prints. Jon even brought several of Hokusai’s pieces from the college’s collection for up-close examination. The prints are rarely on public view to ensure the preservation of the colors, which fade over time when exposed to light.

On the day of the outing, AIL members met early in the morning in the parking lot at The New London Barn Playhouse and boarded a comfortable coach bus for the trip to the MFA in time for their pre-reserved entry into the Hokusai exhibit. After viewing the exhibit, the group was free to enjoy lunch at the cafeteria and further explore the museum. A tired but happy group met at 3 p.m. for the trip back to New London. Long-time AIL member Debbie Perkins summed up the experience well: “Our MFA Boston day was delightful; it almost felt like climbing out from under a heavy COVID rock.”

Thanks go to Nina, Sarah and Professor Keenan for ensuring the success, from start to finish, of this exceptional learning experience.

Another field trip — to sail on the Gundalow in Portsmouth — is planned for June. Be sure to watch for details and the opportunity to sign up!