

FASCINATION PAPER

REMBRANDT TO KIEFER

Exhibition Facts

Duration	21 March – 29 June 2025
Opening	20 March 2025 6.30 pm
Venue	Column Hall The ALBERTINA Museum
Based on an idea by	Ralph Gleis
Curators	Katharina Hövelmann Elsy Lahner Eva Michel
Works	appr. 140
Catalogue	Available for EUR 45,90 (English or German, 260 pages) on-site at the museum Shop as well as via https://shop.albertina.at/en/
Contact	Albertinaplatz 1 1010 Vienna T +43 (0)1 534 83 0 presse@albertina.at www.albertina.at
Opening Hours	Daily 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. Except Wednesday and Friday 10 a.m. – 9 p.m.
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THE FASCINATION OF PAPER

FROM REMBRANDT TO KIEFER

11.12.2025 – 22.3.2026

“Alongside the Louvre and the British Museum, the ALBERTINA houses one of the world's largest collections of art on paper: drawings, prints and watercolours. Next year, we will be celebrating our 250th anniversary – an ideal occasion to dedicate a major exhibition to this rich treasure trove spanning 600 years of art history. *Fascination with Paper* focuses on the collection, which comprises over a million objects, and showcases great art treasures as well as the astonishing diversity of paper as a material: from foldable sundials to drawings and sculptures to artistic playing cards”, says Ralph Gleis, Director General of the ALBERTINA.

With this extraordinary exhibition in the Bastei Hall, the ALBERTINA is dedicating itself to the medium that characterises its collection like no other. *Fascination Paper* focuses on the material itself for the first time and, with around 140 exhibits, highlights its diverse artistic applications and manifestations.

The visual, haptic and structural properties of paper have always inspired artistic exploration. Invented in China around 2000 years ago, paper is not only a two-dimensional image carrier for drawings and prints, but also opens up a wealth of possibilities for artistic design, as it can be cut, torn, embossed, folded, layered or unfolded in space.

The exhibition draws exclusively from the rich holdings of the ALBERTINA and, in a dialogue spanning different eras and collections, shows paper in all its versatility, diverse qualities and dimensions. Historical and contemporary positions meet across the centuries. Well-known masterpieces are juxtaposed with newly discovered, rarely or never before seen works, opening up new perspectives on the collection. In ten technical and thematic chapters, arranged like a parcours, the exhibition invites visitors to discover this fascinating world of paper.

Cut, Structure, Unfolding

The exhibition begins with the chapter *From Cut*, featuring a wide variety of objects made from cut paper. A late medieval devotional image depicting the Sacred Heart of Jesus is displayed alongside an equally small work by Lucio Fontana: both are united by the cut in the paper, which physically captures the material and expands it spatially. Japanese katagami, which were used to transfer filigree patterns onto fabrics, are juxtaposed with various paper cut-outs. Birgit Knoechl uses this technique to cut paper into impressive large three-dimensional objects that seem to grow out of the wall.

The chapter *Impressive and memorable* presents objects in which the paper has been embossed by pressing it against a frosted or perforated metal plate or using tools. Late medieval cut-outs and more recent works by Hans Bischoffshausen, Lucio Fontana, Alena Kučerová, Sol Lewitt, Antoni Starczewski, Rebecca Salter and Günther Uecker illustrate these techniques.

Unfolding in Space brings together oversized and three-dimensional works, including impressive monumental prints composed of several individual sheets, Albrecht Dürer's and Albrecht Altdorfer's *Ehrenpforte* (Triumphal Arch) and Titian's *Untergang des Pharaos im Roten Meer* (The Drowning of the Pharaoh in the Red Sea), as well as one of the few surviving original models from Adolf Loos' studio. A sensational new discovery are extremely rare 'model building sheets' by Dürer's contemporary Georg Hartmann, who created feather-light templates for astrolabes, pocket sundials and globes out of paper.

Alongside objects by Heimo Zobernig and Tillman Kaiser, a Japanese leporello, which tells the famous Japanese story of Prince Genji in colourful woodcuts, spreads out across 26 metres of the room. Liddy Scheffknecht's pop-up construction *Living Room* and Angela Glajcar's impressive floating *2014-061 Terforation* are among the contemporary works that were specifically acquired to deepen the individual chapters. Peter Sandbichler developed his expansive intervention *Ornamentale Verschränkung* especially for the exhibition.

World and Cosmos

The chapter *The World at a Glance* ranges from historical maps such as the *Plan de Turgot* of Paris or a newly discovered map of Hallstatt to Henriette Leinfellner's artistic appropriation of aeronautical maps. *The Distance Up Close* opens up a view of space and reflects the centuries-old fascination with the universe. In addition to Albrecht Dürer's impressive star charts, Jean-Dominique Cassini's depiction of the moon, Anselm Kiefer's large-format woodcut *Der gestirnte Himmel über mir und das moralische Gesetz in mir* (The Starry Sky Above Me and the Moral Law Within Me) and Jochen Höller's galaxy, an apparatus made of cardboard by Wendelin Pressl invites visitors to observe the surface of the moon.

Perception, Identity and Movement

In the chapters *Many Parts – One Whole* and *Different Than It Seems*, close observation is required. The alphabet of the master E.S. is composed of many figures, like the lettering of Payer Gabriel, while for the Colombian artist Johanna Calle, it is exactly the opposite: the printed letters form the motif of a tree. Optical illusions such as Peter Flötner's picture puzzles or Thomas Demand's photographs based on paper models of seemingly real rooms test our perception and question its reliability.

The chapter *No Day Without a Line* focuses on artistic discipline and passion for the line. Claude Mellans' depictions with only one line or Martina Krestas' circles illustrate the temporal moment of artistic creation.

The chapter 'Me in Paper' understands the medium as an expression of identity and self-referentiality. Rembrandt created more self-portraits than any other artist, depicting himself in a wide variety of

clothing and facial expressions. For the first time, almost all of his etched self-portraits are united on a single wall. Physical and autobiographical traces and signs, such as Yves Klein's *ANT 88* or Anna Barriball's *Mirror*, turn paper into a place of self-experience.

In *Paper in Motion*, fascinating objects invite visitors to interact with them – from rare moral or anatomical folding pictures to a rotating caricature of the church. Visitors are welcome to try out replicas. Replicas of zoetropes, rotating drums with viewing slits, can be set in motion. In Tone Fink's *Achselzuckgewand* (Shrug Robe), which was worn for processions, the movement is already implied in the title.

Fascination on 260 pages

Like the exhibition, the accompanying exhibition catalogue is divided into ten chapters. Each chapter is introduced by a short text that explains the perspective on the objects and highlights connecting aspects of the respective groups. The individual works are discussed in depth in short articles by the three curators and other curators and staff members of the ALBERTINA.

The lavishly illustrated publication impresses with many previously unpublished works of art and special effects such as fold-out pages, a turntable, and katagami, whose filigree and haptic quality can be traced in laser-cut reproductions. A video installation is made comprehensible through its presentation on transparent paper in the catalogue, and a model kit of a late medieval paper sundial can be recreated and used for personal enjoyment.

In this way, the catalogue also conveys new perspectives on paper as a material: it helps to broaden the view of the collection and to awaken the fascination of visitors and readers not only for paper as a medium for drawing and printmaking, but also for its qualities as a material that can be used in a variety of artistic ways.

Artists:

Albrecht Altdorfer, Ottomar Anschütz, Anna Barriball, Stefano della Bella, Hans Bischoffshausen, Louis Bretez, Johann Theodor de Bry, Johanna Calle, Thomas Demand, Hans Rudolf Manuel Deutsch, Burhan Doğançay, Albrecht Dürer, Anthonis van Dyck, Tone Fink, Peter Flötner, Lucio Fontana, Utagawa Fusatane, Angela Glajcar, Conraad Goltzius, Georg Hartmann, Utagawa Hiroshige, Wenzel Hollar, Jochen Höller, Tillman Kaiser, Avish Khebrehzadeh, Toba Khedoori, Anselm Kiefer, Yves Klein, Birgit Knoechl, Marcus Krafft, Martina Kresta, Alena Kučerová, Utagawa Kunisada I / Toyokuni III, Utagawa Kunisada II / Toyokuni IV, Utagawa Kuniaki II, Toyohara Kunishika, François Langot, Henriette Leinfellner, Sol Lewitt, Adolf Loos, Israhel van Meckenem, Master E. S., Claude Mellan, Eadweard Muybridge, Jost de Negker, Upper Rhenish Master, Jean Patigny, Payer Gabriel, Otto Piene, Jacob Anton Premblechner, Wendelin Pressl, Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn, Ugo Rondinone, Rebecca Salter, Peter Sandbichler, Liddy Scheffknecht, Eva Schlegel, Greta Schödl, Swabian Master, Antoni Starczewski, Günther Uecker, Victor Vasarely, Tiziano Vecellio, Hanns Wallner, Ochiai Yoshiiku, Tsukioka Yoshitoshi, Heimo Zobernig, Franz von Zülow

Exhibition Texts

Cut Out

Cutting into paper creates new material and visual perspectives. The material becomes permeable, takes on new forms, or becomes sculptural, thus changing our perception.

Lucio Fontana's cut into the canvas is probably the most widely known artistic attempt to add a physical dimension to painting and expand a picture's space. The artistic treatment of paper with knives and scissors was already practiced in the late Middle Ages in devotional images of the "Sacred Heart," in which the cut figuratively represents the wounded heart of Jesus Christ.

In Wolfgang Rixner's masons' guild book, cut-out spaces between drawn vaults and windows make fifteenth-century architectural design solutions appear more three-dimensional.

So-called katagami, dyeing stencils from Japan, were used to transfer filigree patterns onto fabric. Their decorative ornamentation inspired European Art Nouveau artists like Franz von Zülow.

Hanns Wallner and Birgit Knoechl also employed the artistic practice of paper cutting. While Wallner experimented with the surface, as was fashionable in the nineteenth century, Knoechl's work takes paper into the third dimension. The diversity of approaches illustrates how the art of paper cutting runs through historical periods.

The World at a Glance

For centuries, artists have sought to make the world comprehensible by mapping it in scaled-down representations on paper.

Johannes Stabius's representation of the earth as a sphere in correct perspective, which first appeared as a print by Albrecht Dürer in 1515, was groundbreaking.

The eighteenth century brought innovations in cartography. Accurate surveys became the basis for drawing maps, and bird's-eye views of cities became highly popular. Two places depicted at roughly the same time: the metropolis of Paris and Hallstatt, a small lakeside Austrian town nestled in the mountains. The huge Plan de Turgot of Paris from 1739, with preparatory work going back to 1734, is world-famous today, whereas the map of Hallstatt, created between 1735 and 1739, remained completely unknown to researchers. While the goal was to document all buildings precisely and in perspective, idealizations were accepted. With these maps, the self-confident and expanding municipalities of the eighteenth century proudly presented their cities.

The contemporary artist Henriette Leinfellner works primarily with aeronautical navigation maps as her source material. In her series of photo-etchings entitled Spazio incognito, she colors unidentifiable sections of maps or juxtaposes them with contrasting color fields. In this way, cartography, a constantly evolving field, merges with artistic practice.

So Distant and yet so Close

The infinity of the universe has always been a source of fascination and longing for humanity, which places its existence and history in relation to the cosmos.

In 1515, Albrecht Dürer published the first printed stellar charts of the northern and southern night skies, which were distributed in several editions and testify to a growing interest in astronomy and astrology.

This fascination with the cosmos continued unabated into the twentieth century. Anselm Kiefer's work *The Starry Sky Above Me and the Moral Law Within Me* deals with philosophy, cosmology, and astrology. This large woodcut addresses the theme of humanity's place in the infinite vastness of the universe.

Otto Piene, cofounder of the ZERO movement, the "zero hour" in art, experimented with igniting paint in his fire pictures, thereby visualizing the inherent power of the element of fire as a self-propelling process and relating the artistic act to the cosmos.

The moon has always held a great fascination for humankind, and its exploration and mystification are frequent sources of artistic inspiration. An eloquent example is Giovanni Domenico Cassini's impressively vivid representation of this distant celestial body. Wendelin Pressl's *Apparatus for Viewing the Surface of the Moon from 2022* offers a glimpse of its characteristic crater landscape, while Jochen Höller creates galaxies from cut-out letters.

Memorable Impressions

Impressive works of art in relief on paper are created through embossing, by making impressions from a punched or perforated metal plate, or with the aid of tools.

In the fifteenth century, the so-called metalcut or dotted print saw a brief heyday in the Upper Rhine region: dot-sized punches hammered into the printing plate left white dots on the paper, while the unpunched areas of the plate printed the color. This relief printing technique was used to create impressive images, such as *St. George's Battle with the Dragon*, dating from around 1440.

More than five hundred years later, Czech artist Alena Kučerová employed a related technique in an avant-gardist approach, making prints from perforated metal plates. Like in the late medieval metalcut, she built her images using dots as pictorial means.

Polish artist Antoni Starczewski impressed his grid-like motifs onto paper from a printing plate, translating traditional printmaking into relief-like works. A reduced, material-based use of paper is also characteristic of the artists of the international ZERO group. Joining this movement, which had been founded in Düsseldorf, Günther Uecker pressed nailheads into the paper. By contrast, Hans Bischoffshausen (in his series *Papier sculpté*) and Lucio Fontana (in his *Tagli*) used such tools as screwdrivers to scratch ridges into the paper from the back, causing the surface on the front to fray softly and bulge out in relief.

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Not What It Seems

Visual illusions of all kinds are part of the concept here, and viewers are encouraged to look closely.

Fake news and manipulated photographs—apparent truths and tricks of the senses have become part of our everyday lives. Art has always been about representation and translation into an image. In these works, however, visual illusions are an essential component. The concept of trompe l'oeil (French for “deceiving the eye”) dates back to ancient times. With the development of perspective during the Renaissance, paintings with optical effects saw a resurgence: Peter Flötner's picture puzzles reveal their hidden images only from a very specific angle; in a Netherlandish engraving, the entire sheet of paper appears to become a window. In Op Art, such as in Victor Vasarely's Zebras, the exploration of disorienting optical effects becomes the subject itself. Burhan Doğançay and Toba Khedoori also play with the illusion of surfaces and forms in their works. Thomas Demand recreates photographic source images out of paper and cardboard with deceptive realism. Having photographed these models, he destroys them. What remains are large-format photographs of scenes that appear real, yet call into question the reliability of our perception.

Unfolding in Space

Here, paper transcends its traditional form—we encounter it in oversized formats, unfolding and occupying space.

Today, paper can be produced in almost any thickness, color, and texture. However, technical limitations still exist as to its dimensions. These confines were even narrower in the preindustrial era, when paper was produced manually in a laborious process. For their monumental woodcuts, artists would put several sheets together to create a large-format work. François Langot's engraving, based on Anthony van Dyck's famous *Crowning with Thorns*, is composed of nine parts and corresponds in size to the original painting. The color woodcuts telling the Tale of Prince Genji form a strip of paper twenty-six meters long. Georg Hartmann's sundials and the sixteenth-century celestial globe, on the other hand, only reveal their functions as three-dimensional utensils when precisely folded and glued together. The model of Adolf Loos's Villa Rufer translates a visionary spatial concept into a vivid form made of paper and cardboard. Paper also opens up new avenues of expression in contemporary art. Angela Glajcar tears sheets of paper by hand and then arranges them in such a way that they will create sculptural objects. Peter Sandbichler's installation at the entrance to the exhibition consists of modules made of folded cardboard packaging. In Tillman Kaiser's *Oben Offen*, the paper forms a large geometric bud, while Heimo Zobernig's toilet-paper rolls seem to spread out on the wall like vegetation. Liddy Scheffknecht has devised a spatial structure that opens like an oversized pop-up card.

The Self in Paper

How is the self expressed? The works brought together here explore the concept of self-image. Paper becomes a surface for self-observation, the search for vestiges, and questioning identity.

For centuries, artists have used self-portraits as a means of introspection, self-expression, and analysis. Self-portraits are not just about depicting one's likeness, but also about exploring one's own body, existence, and identity.

Rembrandt used self-portraits to explore himself in different roles, studies of facial expressions, and stages of life. In the case of Eva Schlegel, her own reflection in a mirror on the ceiling became the starting point for a large-size drawing of herself viewed from an unusual perspective. For Anna Barriball, a shiny layer of graphite, the frottage of a mirror, enables a form of self-reflection. Yves Klein's "Anthropometries" do not depict classical portraits either, yet they express physical presence. Avish Khebrehzadeh's video installation refers to the Iranian artist's origins and identity in her search for protection and security. Greta Schödl has literally inscribed her self into the paper by using the constant repetition and modification of her handwritten name as a strategy of self-manifestation. For Ugo Rondinone, his monumental landscape drawing, titled after the very day on which it was made, becomes an act of self-assurance and existential self-assertion.

No Day Without a Line

“Nulla dies sine linea”—no day without a line—was the artistic principle of the Greek painter Apelles, as recorded by the Roman writer Pliny the Elder. The following works combine artistic discipline, consistency, and dedication to establish a fascinating unity carried entirely by the line.

Claude Mellan elevated the line to an artistic concept: both his *Head of a Satyr* and his *Vera Icon* are composed of a single, modulated spiral line.

Markus Kraffter’s accurate rendering of Adam and Eve in his pen-and-ink drawing is likewise astonishing, demonstrating incredible scrupulousness. The meticulous lines, complemented by tiny microscript writing invisible to the naked eye, betray the level of concentration and time required.

Martina Kresta spends weeks or even months working on her circular lines, which she draws without the aid of tools on huge sheets of paper, one at a time. Here she drew the ink line clockwise, starting from the outside and working her way in, until she had used up twenty-seven ink pens. The exhaustion of the material marks the end of the drawing process.

Paper in Motion

With these objects, interaction with the work is an integral part of the concept in order to reveal their full content.

Lift-the-flap prints reveal their content only when parts are opened and closed. In addition to moral lessons, such works also have a scientific background, such as the anatomical illustration of the organs of the female body. Due to the sensitivity of the material and its wear and tear from use, such lift-the-flap pictures are extremely rare. For the same reason, playing cards are among the rarest items in graphic collections, as they were also destroyed over time by their being used, through which the paper was set in motion.

Another form of movement is rotation. Hans Rudolf Manuel Deutsch’s rotating disc is an unusual satirical image ridiculing the Church. In a so-called zoetrope, strips of paper with motifs of movement are set in rotation in a cylindrical drum: a nineteenth-century precursor to film. Tone Fink, on the other hand, gives paper the shape of imaginative garments to be worn on the body and moved, in performances and processions.

In all these works, the playful movement of the paper provides surprising insights. Paper thus moves in two ways: It is rendered mobile and, at the same time, mobilizes the viewer to interact.

Many Parts—One Whole

These artworks are composed of individual elements that only reveal their meaning when viewed as a whole.

The famous figure alphabet by the Master E. S. features letters composed of playfully intertwined animals, human figures, and imaginative scenes. What was once used to decorate initials in illuminated manuscripts takes on an entertaining life of its own in these ABCs. Johanna Calle also focuses on characters. Having typed a text on twenty old notary sheets, she has put them together to form a tree. Only upon closer inspection do the densely placed filigree letters become visible. The artist duo known as Payer Gabriel, on the other hand, has hidden tiny figures viewed from a bird's eye perspective in the words "back soon," meticulously executed in colored pencil. Stefano della Bella's work, which at first glance appears to be an abstract geometric pattern, reveals formations of small riders in show fights and horse ballets when viewed up close. The engravings with Christian motifs, which are barely the size of a thumbnail, are also worth a closer look through a magnifying glass. These prints of small, engraved silver pendants from a chaplet are among the smallest objects in the ALBERTINA's collection.

Supporting Programme

Short lectures *15 minutes*

On three evenings, there will be 15-minute short lectures in which the themes of the exhibition will be explored in greater depth and individual works will be presented in more detail by the artists and other speakers.

Wednesday, 18 February 2026

Wednesday, 4 March 2026

Wednesday, 18 March 2026

Each at 6.30 p.m. in the Musensaal of the ALBERTINA

ALBERTINA Kids Podcast

A special podcast for children by and with Matthäus Bär will be released to accompany the exhibition.

Available to listen to on Spotify or via QR code in the exhibition.

Press Images

The following images are available free of charge in the Press section of www.albertina.at.
Legal notice: The images may only be used in connection with reporting on the exhibition.



Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn
Self-Portrait with Eyes Wide Open, 1630
Etching and drypoint
5.3 × 4.7 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna



Anonymous
The Sacred Heart, before 1470
woodcut, colored
7.4 × 6.1 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna



Lucio Fontana
L'épée dans l'eau, 1962
Etching
14.7 × 11.2 cm
© Fondation Lucio Fontana, Milano / by SIAE /
Bildrecht, Vienna 2025



Birgit Knoechl
OUT OF CONTROL_REVISITED - THE AUTONOMY OF GROWTH_0IV, 2006-2008/2020
Indian ink on paper
355 × 458 × 155 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna. Acquired 2012 with funds from the gallery support
Photo: © Thomas Gorisek



Anselm Kiefer
The Starry Sky Above Me and the Moral Law Within Me, 1997
Woodcut, emulsion,
acrylic, and shellac on paper, collage on canvas
268 × 398 × 6 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna
© Anselm Kiefer
Photo: © Ulrich Ghezzi



Titian
The Submersion of Pharaoh's Army in the Red Sea
1549
Woodcut from twelve plates
121 × 220.7 cm (composed of twelve sheets)
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna



South German engraver, late fifteenth century (Ace of Spada)
Engraving
12 × 6.2 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna



Dutch or German artist
Girl in the Window, ca. 1590
Engraving
41.2 × 28 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna



Angela Glajcar
2014-061 Terforation, 2014
Paper, torn, bracket made of metal and plastic
160 × 120 × 600 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna. Donation Sasa Hanten, Cologne/Vienna
Photo: Max Brucker



Adolf Loos (studio)
Model for the Rufer House, 1922
Cardboard, paper, plywood, glass
58 × 49 × 50 cm
ALBERTINA, Vienna
Donated by Sasa Hanten, Cologne/Vienna
© Angela Glajcar. Photo: Max Brucker



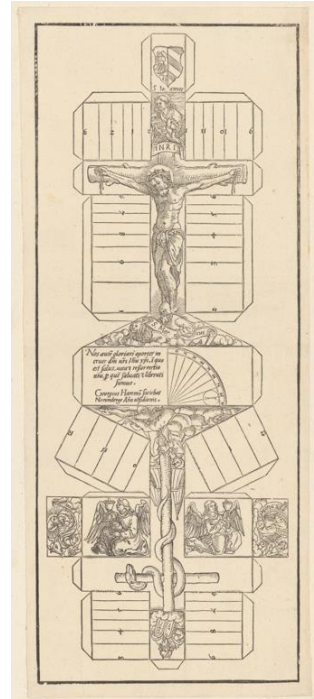
Thomas Demand
Podium, 2000
C-print/Diasc
296 × 177.5 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna – The
ESSL Collection
Photo: Courtesy the artist and Matthew
Marks Gallery / Sprüth Magers / Esther
Schipper, Berlin / Taka Ishii Gallery



Johanna Calle
Perimetros (Ceiba), 2013–14
Typescript on old notarial paper
single sheet: 83 × 41.3 cm,
overall dimensions: 249 × 415 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna
© Johanna Calle, Courtesy Galerie Krinzinger
Photo: J.P. Gutiérrez. Copyright Archivos Pérez & Calle



Günther Uecker
 Untitled, 1989
 Embossed print
 69 × 50 cm
 The ALBERTINA Museum
 © Bildrecht, Wien 2025



Georg Hartmann
 Cruciform Sundial, 1529
 Woodcut
 45.9 × 19.2 cm
 The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna



Anonymous
Katagami (dyeing stencil), nineteenth century
 Impregnated paper, cut
 30.8 × 41.6 cm
 The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna



Utagawa Fusatane, Utagawa Hiroshige, Utagawa Kuniaki II., Utagawa Kunisada I./Toyokuni III.,
Utagawa Kunisada II./Toyokuni IV., Toyohara Kunishika, Ochiai Yoshiiku, Tsukioka Yoshitoshi
The Tale of Genji

Here: Utagawa Kunisada I./Toyokuni III

Prinz Genji Surrounded by Women in an Interior with a View of the Sea

Color woodcuts in thirty-four triptychs, folded as a leporello, 1850s–60s

Single sheet: each 36 × 24.5 cm, unfolded: each 36 × 26 m

The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna