

THE MONROE TOWNSHIP
CULTURAL ARTS
COMMISSION
Presents



**Lectures on Japanese Lacquer,
Woodblock Prints and Netsuke & Intro**

Presented by Joel S. Greenberg

Sponsored by
Monroe Township Cultural Arts Commission

October 4, 11, and 18, 2011
7:00 – 9:00 pm

Monroe Township High School
200 Schoolhouse Rd.
Monroe Township, NJ 08831

To Register Call: 732-521-2111 Ext. 5227

Lectures on Japanese Lacquer, Woodblock Prints and Netsuke & Inro

A series of three lectures will be presented relating to art forms that the Japanese developed to levels of sophistication and craftsmanship unparalleled even to modern times. The lectures will discuss and describe Japanese woodblock prints, Japanese lacquer, and Japanese inro/netsuke. Each lecture/discussion will start with the historical context of the subject, including the political and technological and economic forces that propelled the art form, and the technical process used to create the resulting art form. Numerous examples will be used to illustrate the range of art forms within each of the three discussed areas. Since many of the images used to illustrate the art form will relate to historical events or mythology, the significance of the illustrated art will be discussed in terms of pertinent myths and history.

Lecture 1: Japanese Woodblock Prints

A print is a two-dimensional work of art that involves transferring an image from one surface, the printing plate, onto another surface. Japanese woodblock printing utilizes woodcuts as the printing plates. This technique has a long history dating to the 8th century. The lecture/discussion will focus on the historical context and the evolution of the woodblock printing process; the printing process and the production team will be described, as will the important tools of the trade. Various woodblock styles [including *Ukiyo-e*, *Nagasaki-e*, *Yokohama-e*, *Meiji-e* and *Shunga*] will be described and examples of each will be presented and discussed. Finally, the impact of Japanese woodblock prints on Western art and the impact of Western art on Japanese woodblock prints will be discussed.

Lecture 2: Japanese Lacquer

When Japan finally opened its doors to the outside world in the mid-19th century [after the arrival of Admiral Perry's "black ships"], there emerged one of the most skillful, exquisite, and remarkable art forms ever developed by any country: that of Japanese miniature lacquer art. This lecture/discussion will describe and discuss this Japanese lacquer art form. Emphasis will be placed on lacquer from the *Edo* and *Meiji* periods during which the Japanese lacquer industry reached its zenith. The lecture will start with a description of lacquer including the collection and refining process, its unique properties and the early history of Chinese and Japanese techniques. Emphasis will be placed upon the Japanese developed *Maki-e* [i.e., sprinkled pictures] techniques. A number of *Maki-e* techniques, including *Hiramaki-e*, *Takamaki-e*, *Togidashi*, *Nashiji*, *Kirikane* and *Shibiyama* will be described and discussed. These techniques will be placed in context by illustrating their use on a typical *Suzuribako* [box for writing equipment]. In addition, this will include a discussion of typical contractual arrangements, the construction of the wooden box, and the implements [water bottle, ink cake, ink stone and brushes] included in the box.

Lecture 3: Japanese Netsuke and Inro

Japanese traditional clothing, the kimono, have no pockets. Small items of necessity were normally carried by tucking them inside the wide sash [*obi*] of the woman's kimono, by suspending them from the narrow obi of the man's kimono, or by placing them in the kimono's large sleeves. It was common practice to carry these small items in boxes, pouches and purses attached to cords thrust through the obi, such articles being referred to generically as *sagemono*. Netsuke developed out of necessity: men had to carry things [such as seals, medicine, tobacco] as they went about their daily affairs. This was accomplished by passing a cord and a toggle [the netsuke] under the obi with the toggle

resting atop the obi and the *sagemono* suspended from the other end of the cord. This lecture will discuss both the netsuke and inro. First, the historical context of these art forms will be discussed. This will be followed by a discussion of materials utilized for creating netsuke and the various types of netsuke [*manju*, *ryusa*, *kagamibuta*, *sashi* and *katabori*]. Typical netsuke subjects will be discussed as will related mythology and historical events. This will be followed by a discussion of construction of inro and use of Japanese lacquer techniques. Typical inro will be presented and discussed as will depicted mythology.