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**Wheels within Wheels:  
The Yomo-ren *Kyôka* Circle and Hokusai's  
“Book Cart and Porcelain Vase with Plum Branches” *Surimono***

*Surimono* 摺物 (“printed stuff”) commonly refers to sets of luxurious privately published prints, most often distributed among *kyôka* (“mad verse” or “crazy verse”) poetry groups during the Edo period (1600-1868). Usually printed with a few poems with an accompanying illustration, *surimono* were exchanged between members or given as New Year greeting cards. Just as the poems themselves, which were judged for their humor and wit, *surimono* prints were filled with puns and inside jokes. The poets commissioned the accompanying illustrations from some of the most renowned print designers of the day, who were often themselves members of such groups. The artists’ understanding of *kyôka*, not to mention their involvement in these poetry groups, allowed them to design illustrations that cleverly engaged the inscribed poems, creating yet additional layers of connotations. The sense of exclusivity that underlies a *surimono* production mirrors the salon-like quality of the Edo literati milieu, making it difficult for a modern viewer to pick up the nuances embedded in these prints.

This talk is a case study of a *surimono* print known as *Book Cart and Porcelain Vase with Plum Branches* (Duel Collection, Arthur M. Sackler Museum), illustrated by Katsushika Hokusai 葛飾北斎 (1760-1849), and accompanied by a preface, and a poem by a *kyôka* poet Shikatsube no Magao. Through careful visual and textual analyses, supported by contextual study of Shikatsube no Magao’s *kyôka* group, this study will decipher the coded celebratory message that personalizes the familiar poetic motifs of book cart and plums. As Iwasaki Eiko points out, poetry circles such as Magao’s provided space for knowledge-based networks where people socialized across social class and pedigree. The reading presented in this talk not only reveals the intricate form of communication that characterized early modern cultural circles and distinguished *surimono* from other types of contemporary woodblock prints, but it demonstrates the way in which the visual culture contributed to the construction of this virtual space of interaction.