

Call for papers

Making Knowledge: Books, Prints, and Manuscripts in Japan

An International Symposium

UCLouvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium – July 1–2, 2027

From the seventeenth century onward, Japan produced knowledge across a range of formats — manuscripts, paintings, single-sheet prints, and illustrated books — each with its own audiences, production logics, and modes of circulation. These formats did not exist in isolation: images, motifs, and ideas moved between manuscript and book, between painting and print, between regions, and between genres, shaped at every stage by artists, publishers, and readers.

This symposium approaches these formats not as fixed objects but as sites of continuous exchange. We ask how knowledge — practical, moral, aesthetic, literary, or otherwise — was produced, curated, circulated, and perceived across manuscript, print, illustrated book, and painting, and what the relationship between these media can reveal about how knowledge moved and changed hands in early modern and modern Japan.

The symposium closes by turning to what happened when this circulation crossed borders: how manuscripts, prints, illustrated books, and paintings produced within these domestic networks were later selected, collected, and recontextualized abroad, extending the same questions of curation and circulation onto a transnational and transhistorical stage.

We welcome contributions addressing, among other topics:

- The relationship between different media in producing and disseminating knowledge
- Text-image relations across genres and formats
- The commercial and artistic networks behind the production of visual knowledge
- The transregional circulation of pictorial conventions and motifs
- Readers, audiences, and the reception of visual and textual knowledge
- The collecting, canonization, and transnational circulation of Japanese books, prints, manuscripts, and paintings

We welcome proposals from scholars working in art history, book history, literary studies, history, and related fields, at any career stage.

How to propose a paper:

- Submit your proposal as a Word file (not PDF)
- Send it to freya.terryn@uclouvain.be
- The deadline for proposals is December 4, 2026.

Each proposal must include the following, in this order:

- Title
- Abstract (max. 250 words)
- 3-4 keywords
- Name of the speaker
- CV (max. 100 words), as well as professional status and affiliation (e.g. PhD candidate, UCLouvain)
- Contact information (e-mail address)

All submitted proposals will be anonymized and reviewed by the scientific committee.

Notification of acceptance will be sent by December 23, 2026.

Please note that the symposium will be held in person. Speakers are expected to present their papers on site. We encourage speakers to seek travel funding from their home institutions. Modest travel subsidies for junior scholars (PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers) may become available; details will follow.

Contact:

- Dr. Freya Terryn (freya.terryn@uclouvain.be)

Scientific Committee

- Dr. Freya Terryn (UCLouvain)
- Prof. Dr. Doreen Mueller (Leiden University)
- Prof. Dr. Magali Bugne (Université libre de Bruxelles)
- Prof. Dr. Kanako Goto (Université de Liège)