

Timon Screech (SOAS, London): **Re-engaging with *Shunga***

The academic field of shunga studies is not old, and indeed can be said to have begun only in the late 1990s, when legal change made it possible to published historical erotic for the first time: previously, period images had been severely regulated, in identical terms to modern pornography. A series of lavish books appeared, but no scholar sought to do more than sort out oeuvres and establish a canon. There was no enquiry into why these pictures existed in such numbers, how they were used, nor, peculiarly, given that many investigators were art historians, why they looked as they do. *Shunga: katate de yomu edo no e*, which appeared in Japanese in 1998 and then in an expanded and footnoted English version the following year (as *Sex and the Floating World*), sought to address matters of use, and also to analyse pictures visually, for the first time.

The Japanese edition has remained in print and now sold over 30,000 copies. There is also a Polish translation. The English went out of print in 2008, but will return this year in a Second Edition, with corrections, extra images, and a new chapter and index. Now, more than a decade after publication, it is high time to reprise the field, and seek out future directions for study.