

# Japanese Art—Gallery Partial Rotations, Summer 2019

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## Upcoming in Japanese and Korean Art

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First rotation: Dec. 14, 2019–June 13, 2020

Second rotation: June 20–Dec. 12, 2020

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## Gallery 219: Art of the Samurai

The samurai—members of the warrior class—came to prominence in Japan in the 1100s, when a weakened imperial government led to the rise of bands of warriors who took over large areas of farmland and the management of local government in the provinces. Military leaders eventually came to rule over much of Japan, supported by a network of samurai. Powerful military families, provincial barons, and warriors jostled for control of the country for the next 400 years, until the Tokugawa family established a military dictatorship centered in what is now Tokyo, then called Edo. In an effort to provide social stability, the Tokugawa developed four social classes—samurai, farmers, artisans, and merchants. Of these, only the samurai could carry weapons. In a time of peace, though, most of the samurai served as civil bureaucrats, their weapons mere status symbols. In 1868 the Tokugawa were overthrown, bringing an end to military rule, Japan's feudal class system, and the samurai's privileged position.

Japan, Edo period (1603–1868)

**A Show of Horsemanship**, second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century  
Six-panel folding screen: ink, color, and gold on paper  
Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. 62.77

During the Edo period (1603–1868), eighteen military techniques were considered essential for the training of a proper samurai. Foremost among these were archery, sword fighting, and horsemanship. Wealthy warriors commissioned lavish folding screens that illustrated their favorite soldierly pastime. For this six-fold screen, the artist depicted a portion of a high-ranking warrior's estate as seen through golden clouds. To the right, a sizable mansion is shown complete with painted folding screens and sliding doors. The spectators, seated on green tatami mats and the wooden planks of the veranda, lounge casually in



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colorful and elegant robes. The focus of the screen, however, is the four horsemen who gallop about in the open courtyard.

Japan, Edo period (1603–1868)

**Campaign coat (jinbaori), 19<sup>th</sup> century**

Paper, wool, silk, metallic thread

Gift of funds from Kaywin Feldman in memory of Ed Spencer  
2012.33.1

Japan, Edo period (1603–1868)

**Campaign coat (jinbaori), 19<sup>th</sup> century**

Paper, wool, silk, metallic thread

The Shared Fund 2012.33.2

In earlier times, samurai wore jackets and trouser suits made from richly colored and patterned silk, beneath relatively little armor. But in the 16th century the style of armor changed to cover more of the body, and these elaborate undergarments were concealed. As a result, high-ranking lords began to wear surcoats over their armor. These garments were often made of luxurious, sometimes imported materials. Flamboyant designs and glaring color choices signaled the rank and identity of the wearer and created an imposing appearance on the battlefield.



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Japan, Edo period (1603–1868)

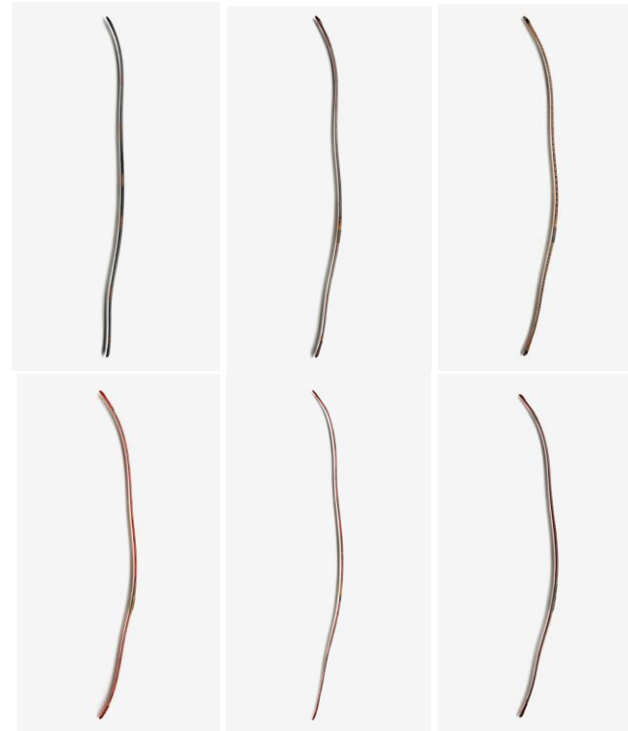
**Six longbows**, 19th century

Laminated and lacquered bamboo

The Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the  
Mary and Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke  
Foundation 2017.46.2-7

Although the sword is the iconic weapon of the samurai, mastery of the longbow was also a highly regarded skill, and expert archers were the stuff of legends. Longbows were the main weapon during the Heian (784–1185) and Kamakura (1185–1333) periods and became formally accepted as a military weapon in 1252. During battle, samurai first shot arrows from horseback before they resorted to sword fighting. In the 1300s, long swords and spears became the weapons of choice for the main offensive, and guns were subsequently introduced in the early 1500s. Archery eventually evolved into a more formal and ceremonial tradition.

Longbows are asymmetric and measure over seven feet long with a range of 160 to 330 feet, depending on the arrow. The bow is gripped below the center allowing the shooter to stand upright or kneel and, most importantly, shoot from horseback. Bows were made of bamboo that was lacquered in black, red, or gold and also decorated comparably to the sheaths of swords.



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**Kuniyuki**, active 17th century

Japan, Edo period (1603–1868)

**Pair of war stirrups**, 17th century

Iron alloy with silver inlay

The John R. Van Derlip Fund 85.13.1-2



During the Edo period (1600–1868), only warriors of middle or high rank were permitted to own horses. Regional warlords and guards of Japan’s military government used riding equipment ornamented in a manner appropriate to their social position. This pair of deluxe stirrups features a design of blossoming wisteria made of inlaid silver. Inscriptions, also in silver inlay, on each of the buckle-brackets, give the name of the maker as a metalsmith named Kuniyuki, who is known to have worked in the town of Kanagawa in modern-day Ishikawa prefecture.

Japan, Edo period (1603–1868)

**Helmet in the Shape of a Dragonfly**, 17th century

Iron, lacquer, wood, leather, gold, pigments, silk, and papier-mâché

The James Ford Bell Foundation Endowment for Art

Acquisition and gift of funds from Siri and Bob Marshall

2012.31.1a-c



During the 1400s and 1500s, Japan’s feudal clans vied for supremacy, amassing vast armies to ensure their dominion and to conquer weaker neighbors. High-ranking lords began to embellish their helmets with sculptural forms so they could be easily located on the battlefield. These “exotic helmets” (*kawari kabuto*) allowed leaders to choose and display symbolic motifs that reflected some aspect of their personality or that of their collective battalions. This helmet

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takes the shape of a giant dragonfly, an insect symbolic of focused endeavor and vigilance because of its manner of moving up, down, and sideways while continuing to face forward.

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Japan, Edo period (1603–1868)

**Red-and-blue-laced Suit of Armor from the Kii Tokugawa Family**, early 17th century  
Iron, leather, lacquer, silk, wood, gold leaf, gold powder, and bear fur

**Helmet by Saotome Iechika**, active late 17th–early 18th century

Japan, Edo period (1603–1868)

Iron, gold, wood, and lacquer

The Ethel Van Derlip Fund 2009.60a-s

This elaborate suit of Japanese armor is a lightweight, form-fitting type designed to protect the body in close combat. With a face mask, forearm sleeves, thigh and shin guards, and bear-fur boots, every inch of the wearer's body is protected. Craftspeople laced together hundreds of lacquered metal and leather plates with red and blue silk cords to create a distinctive appearance, as well as flexibility. The suit may have belonged to Tokugawa Yorinobu (1602–71), the feudal lord of Kii Province, a leading fiefdom of premodern Japan.



Japan, Muromachi period (1392–1573)

**Blade with Engraved Snake for a Long-sword (*koto katana*)**, 16th century

Steel and gold paint



Japan, Edo period (1603–1868)

**Mounting with Dragon Decoration and Tiger and Lion Hilt Ornaments**, mid-18th century

Wood, lacquer, *shakudō*, *shibuichi*, silver, gold, ray skin, and silk

Ōmori Terumasa, 1705–1772

Japan, Edo period (1603–1868)

Sword Guard with Dragon amidst Waves, mid-18th century

*Shakudō*, *shibuichi*, and gold

Gift of Mrs. Stanley Hawks 78.69.1a-f

Sword manufacturing was introduced to Japan from the Asian mainland. The earliest known types of swords were straight and mostly 23 1/2 to 27 1/2 inches in length.

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They were made of bronze and used for stabbing as well as striking. Higher-ranking warriors on horseback carried *tachi*, swords that hung from the belt with the cutting edge facing down. The 1300s saw the development of a new type of sword called *uchigatana*, which warriors carried in the belt with the cutting edge facing up. *Uchigatana* were better suited for foot soldiers and became the sword most commonly used by the samurai, the warrior class, who needed a weapon suited to changing battle conditions. With its curvature near the tip, the blade offered a faster response time, enabling the warrior to draw and strike in a single motion. *Uchigatana*-type swords with a blade length of approximately 23 1/2 to 28 1/2 inches came to be known as *katana*, and shorter blades as *wakizashi* (average 20 inches). To use both swords for fighting was uncommon, and on the battlefield it was customary to carry a *katana* and a more practical short dagger (*tantō*) with a blade length between 6 and 12 inches.

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Japan, Edo period (1603–1868)

**Helmet with ornament bearing seed syllable for Fudō Myōō**, 17th century

Unknown artist, Japan

Iron, gilt copper, deerskin, silk, and lacquer

MARY GRIGGS BURKE COLLECTION, GIFT OF THE MARY AND JACKSON BURKE FOUNDATION 2015.79.438A-E

With its wide-spreading laced neck guard (shikoro) and curving face protectors (fukikaeshi), this helmet is typical of the type used with Japan's classic armor for mounted warriors, o\_yoroi, constructed by lacing metal or leather pieces together. The heraldic front pieces of this example are particularly dramatic, with extremely long kuwagata (stylized long blades). The central disk is emblazoned with the Sanskrit characters for the Buddhist deity Fudo\_ Myo\_-o\_, "the immovable king of brightness." Thus, the owner of this helmet hoped that the fierce implacability of this demigod would accompany him into battle.



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**Kamisaka Sekka**, Japanese, 1866 – 1942

**Kusunoki Masashige before the Battle at Minato River**, c.1918

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk

Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Art & Culture 2013.29.57

The warrior Kusunoki Masashige (1294–1336) was mythologized in Japan, long after his death, as the perfect example of samurai loyalty. During the Battle of Minato River, in 1336, he fought for the Emperor against the Ashikaga clan rebels. When the Emperor ordered Masashige and his forces into a position that Masashige knew was hopeless, he still obeyed, which led to their death. Kamisaka Sekka depicted him here in battle armor, surrounded by attendants preparing for the fight.

