ASIAN ART

Celebrating 25 Years

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AUCTION RECORDS AT HONG KONG AUTUMN SALES

Two lots in Sotheby's autumn sales series went for over HK$100 million in the Chinese Works of Art sales in October. The pieces came from two well-known private collections – Dr Wou Kiuan and Sir Joseph Hotung.

A ruby-ground *yancai* 'Trigram' reticulated vase dating to the Qianlong period, from the Dr Wou Kiuan Collection, sold for HK$177,463,000 (US$22.6 million), against an estimate of HK$60-120 million. The vase had been corroborated by contemporaneous court archives and made either in 1743 or immediately thereafter. It is a tangible testament to the unprecedented and unparalleled culmination of technical virtuosity in porcelain production between 1741 and 1743, fuelled by an earlier imperial reprimand from the Qianlong Emperor.

It also comes with an illustrious provenance – from the 'Fonthill heirlooms' of Alfred Morrison (1821-1897) of Fonthill House in Wiltshire, located in the southwest of England. Morrison's outstanding collection comprised not only superb Chinese imperial works of art, but also Western historical documents, paintings, sculptures and other works. In 1861, he bought a substantial group of Chinese porcelains and enamel wares from Baron Loch of Drylaw (1827-1900), to which this vase may have belonged, but he had added Chinese porcelains to his collection already prior to this major purchase and continued to do so afterwards.

Dr Wou Kiuan purchased the vase at Christie's sale of the Morrison collection in 1971, after which it remained in the Wou family for over half a century. The reticulated vase was part of the sale of six masterpieces from the 18th century illustrating the technical mastery in the imperial kilns in Jingdezhen, including a group of enamelled porcelains formerly from the Fonthill heirlooms which have not surfaced the market in around half a century.

A world record for Chinese classical furniture was achieved in the Chinese works of art sale, when a lot from the personal collection of Sir Joseph Hotung, a *huanghuali* folding horseshoe-back armchair, *jiaoyi*, from the late Ming dynasty, sold for HK$124,609,000 (US$15.8 million), well above its pre-sale estimate. The previous world record for a Chinese folding chair at auction, was achieved in May 2021 during the Chinese Works of Art sale at Christie's, Hong Kong, when a folding armchair, from Heveningham Hall in the UK, sold for HK$65,975.000.

Horseshoe-back armchairs, perhaps the most highly sought after of all items of Ming furniture, are among the most striking and most highly celebrated designs created by Chinese carpenters. The folding chair with horseshoe-shaped back was a unique invention of China's furniture makers from around the early 12th century. Conceived to be folded for easy transport, these portable chairs were naturally more prone to damage than other pieces of furniture; few, therefore, could withstand the test of time, making extant examples extremely precious. Jiaoyi, the term for 'folding chairs' in Chinese, literally means 'crossed chair', with reference to their intersecting legs. The sale offered over 400 works of art from Sir Joseph's personal collection and the total achieved for the sale was HK$469,226,800, giving a sell-through rate of 93%.

Ruby-ground yancai 'Trigram' reticulated vase, seal and mark and period of Qianlong, height 31 cm, sold for HK$177,463,000, at Sotheby's Hong Kong in October 2022

Elsewhere in the series, Vietnamese art continued to attract attention with all but one of the 31 Vietnamese works offered in the Modern sales series finding new homes. It was led by Le Pho's masterpiece, *Thé et Sympathie*, in the Modern Evening Auction on 7 October, selling for HK$10.7 million (est HK$3.8-6.8 million). The top three prices achieved in the Modern Day Auction, on 6 October, were Mai Trung Thu's *Melodie* achieving HK$4.78 million and his *The Sewing Box* selling for HK$2.77 million. Vietnamese art was previously offered in dedicated sales of Southeast Asian Art at Sotheby's, but is now presented on the international stage in the Modern Art sales, finding new audiences amongst East Asian and Western collectors beyond the Southeast Asian region.

NEWS IN BRIEF

BROOKLYN MUSEUM, NEW YORK

The museum's floor devoted to the Arts of Asia and the Islamic World, including the newly installed collections of the Arts of South Asia, has reopened to the public in October. The 10-year renovation project celebrates the diversity and encyclopedic scope of the museum's collections across more than 20,000 square feet of space. Renovated for the first time in 40 years, the floor now features nearly 700 objects, including newly conserved and rare works of art. The new home for the Arts of Asia and the Islamic World creates cross-cultural dialogue among collection areas and highlights diverse aesthetic, creative, social, and intellectual accomplishments across Asia and around the Mediterranean, from ancient times to the present day. The renovations created greater flexibility, facilitating the rotation of installation objects to showcase a wider range of materials.

Arts of South Asia and Arts of the Islamic World is the final gallery on the floor to reopen and now able to display artworks from across these collections, which comprise more than 17,000 objects, including sculptures, textiles, paintings, ceramics, drawings, prints, carvings, decorative arts, metalwork, and other artefacts. Previous openings include the Arts of Korea gallery in 2017, the Arts of China and Arts of Japan galleries in 2019, the Arts of Southeast Asia gallery in 2021, and the Arts of Buddhism and Arts of the Himalayas galleries in 2022.

YAYOI KUSAMA'S PUMPKIN RETURNS TO NAOSHIMA

Yayoi Kusama's Pumpkin (1994) was washed away from its location by strong winds and rushing waves caused by Typhoon Lupit on Naoshima Island in August 2021. A new installation of a similar work has now been reinstalled at the original location on

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CONTACT US
The Asian Art Newspaper
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Asian Art Newspaper Ltd, London

EDITOR/PUBLISHER
Sarah Callaghan
the Asian Art Newspaper
PO Box 22521,
London W8 4GT, UK
sarah.callaghan@
asianartnewspaper.com
tel +44 (0)20 7229 6040

ADVERTISING
Kelvin McManus
Commerical Manager
tel +44 (0)7877 866692
kelvin.mcmanus@cksmedia.co.uk

SEND ADVERTISING TO
Asian Art Newspaper
PO Box 22521
London W8 4GT
info@asianartnewspaper.com
tel +44 (0)20 7229 6040

ART DIRECTION
Gary Ottewill, Editorial Design
garyottewill.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS MANAGER
Heather Milligan
info.asianart@btinternet.com
tel +44 (0)20 7229 6040

SUBSCRIPTIONS
AND ADMINISTRATION
Asian Art Newspaper
PO Box 22521
London W8 4GT
United Kingdom
info.asianart@btinternet.com
tel +44 (0)20 7229 6040

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KIM SOUN-GUI

by Olivia Sand

Biennales make a point not only to showcase young and up-and-coming artists, but also to highlight established artists who may have been overlooked so far. The latter is unquestionably the case for Korean artist Kim Soun-Gui (b 1946), who has only recently come to public attention with a major retrospective at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (NMMCA) in Seoul. This exhibition is now on view at the ZKM in Karlsruhe, Germany. Considering the importance of Kim Soun-Gui's oeuvre, it is no surprise to see her work also featured in such important exhibitions as the Carnegie International. Her work is a gift to any curator, as it is so diverse and challenging.

Kim Soun-Gui is a free spirit, which applies as much to her personal life as to her art. Brilliant, creative and innovative, she has gradually opened up her practice, based initially on calligraphy and painting, to photography, installation, participatory performance, sculpture, video, multi-media art, poetry, language, literature and philosophy – and is constantly taking it a step further. A pioneer in many disciplines, Kim Soun-Gui has always been and continues to be eager to take up the challenge to discuss art, society and politics with fellow artists, intellectuals, and philosophers. In the interview below, we revisit some key moments that led her to become the artist she is today.

Kim Soun-Gui © Kim Soun-Gui

Asian Art Newspaper: The exhibition at the ZKM begins with highlights from your first years in France, back in the early 1970s. Surprisingly, it provides very thorough footage of a time when it was neither customary nor easy to film such undertakings. Do you agree?
Kim Soun-Gui: Yes, indeed. A lot is documented, but a great deal also has got lost, which I deeply regret.

AAN: The exhibition was organised as a collaboration between the ZKM in Karlsruhe and the NMMCA where it was first shown in 2019. Is the present exhibition the same as in Seoul?
KSG: The exhibition in Karlsruhe is a little different. In Seoul, the show was even larger, featuring more works, but it was not possible to ship everything to Germany. It was just too complicated and we decided to leave the most fragile pieces behind. Then, with Covid, the project had to be postponed, shipping became even more expensive, and in the meantime, certain pieces had been acquired by institutions or collectors. We therefore decided to focus on a lesser amount of works.

AAN: In your case, it seems essential for institutions to grasp the full dimension of your work in order to collaborate towards an exhibition, as your practice is so diverse.
KSG: Yes, a good understanding of my

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NEWS IN BRIEF

the island in October this year. Benesse Art Site Naoshima, which manages the art site, organised the replacement process that was overseen by Kusama herself. A new pumpkin was unveiled, bearing the same colour, size, and materials as its predecessor, but with a tougher structure to enable it to survive extreme weather conditions. The original work was located at an old pier on the art island of Naoshima in the Seto Inland Sea since 1994 and the bright yellow pumpkin has become a landmark in the area.

GWANGJU BIENNALE, KOREA

The 14th Gwangju Biennale in South Korea, Soft and Weak Like Water, has announced the first participating artists and preliminary details on its curatorial themes, artist selection, artworks, venues and public program. Bringing together around 80 artists from different corners of the globe, the biennale will present over 40 commissioned projects and new works. The biennale is curated by artistic director Sook-Kyung Lee, alongside associate curator Kerryn Greenberg, and assistant curators Sooyoung Leam and Harry C H Choi.

The title takes its inspiration from a chapter of *Dao De Jing*, a fundamental Daoist text, which speaks of water's capacity to embrace contradictions and paradoxes. The Biennale proposes to imagine our shared planet as a site of resistance, coexistence, solidarity, and care, by thinking through the transformative and restorative potential of water as a metaphor, a force, and a method. It invites artists to engage with an alternative model of power that brings forth change, not with an immediate effect but with an endurance and pervasive gentleness that flows across structural divisions and differences. A list of the artists and further information can be found ongwangjubiennale.org.

BHUTAN REOPENS FOR TOURISM

The Tourism Council of Bhutan launched a new website in September to help Bhutan's tourism sector recover from pandemic. The new website, bhutan.travel, will mainly act as an information portal for visitors to Bhutan, where cultural institutions and the 20 *dzongkha* (regions) can post information, including information on visa fees and monument and sacred site fees.

A second website, services.tourism.bt, will offer information on cultural and tourist sites in the country.

TOKYO NATIONAL MUSEUM

Tokyo National Museum's (TNM) 150th anniversary plans are underway with a newly developped show – TNM is the oldest and largest museum in Japan. The exhibition *Tokyo National Museum: Its History and National Treasures* introduces the museum through its collections of masterpieces and historical records, including all 89 National Treasures that it looks after. Approximately 150 artworks and other objects are exhibited in two parts. This type of show has never been attempted before in the museum's 150-year history and promises to be a historic event worthy of their anniversary year.

Part One is called *The National Treasures of Tokyo National Museum* and is devoted to the National Treasures, with a rotation midway through the term of the exhibition. Part Two: *150 Years at Tokyo National Museum* presents the museum's history, which is synonymous with museum history in Japan, through artworks, records, reproduction of exhibitions, and videos from the past. This show will have two rotations midway.

In addition to displaying culturally important artworks, the exhibition aims to introduce the museum to the wider public by using multiple angles, such as its efforts to conserve and programme of exhibiting tangible cultural heritage. The exhibition runs until 11 December.

ASIAN ART CONFERENCE, LISBON

From 24 to 26 November, *Asian Art in the World: Historical Influences on Culture and Society* will be held at three museums in Lisbon: Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, Museu do Oriente, and Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga. The principal aim of this three-day conference is to highlight the important contribution made by Asia to world art and universal civilisation, from the remote ages of the Silk Road and its land and sea routes, to the modern age of globalisation and the huge prestige afforded to the many artistic cultures of Asia in the Western world. More information on aawconference.com.

TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART, OHIO

The museum has named Christine D Starkman consulting curator of Asian art. As Toledo Museum of Art (TMA) continues its efforts to broaden the narrative of art history, Starkman will integrate Asian art into the expansive and global stories the museum seeks to tell. After assessing TMA's holdings, Starkman will focus on new acquisitions of Asian art to draw on collection strengths and complement existing holdings and will contribute to the museum's thinking about its upcoming reinstallation.

DHAKA ART SUMMIT, BANGLADESH

The Dhaka Art Summit (DAS), a triennial event for art and architecture related to South Asia, will return to the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, from 3 to 11 February, 2023. Directed by chief curator Diana Campbell, the sixth edition is called *Bonna*, which is the Bengali word for 'flood', and explores the influences of climate in forming history, culture, and identity. To this end, DAS has invited over 120 local and international artists, architects, and writers to explore these relationships.

Piano Preparé (Prepared Piano), 1985, 2-channel-video (16:9),05:56 min

Concert by John Cage, 1986, video and multimedia, Soun-Gui Kim and her invitees at La Vielle Charité, Marseille, 1986. Photo: Guilaine Benjamin

I-Hua (One Stroke of Painting), 1975-85. Photo: Noh Chi-Wook

approach is essential. Looking back to the show at the NMMCA, although the curators did a wonderful job and did everything in their power to make that exhibition happen, the space meant that there was a lot of back and forth between curators, administration and financing. Ultimately, synchronising all these entities proved to be quite challenging! One needed approval on all steps for various undertakings with the result that, in my opinion, there was a huge loss of time and energy with the outcome still being uncertain. For an artist, this becomes a heavy burden. Also, in general, some curators pretend to understand my work, but ultimately they end up trying to apply a global-aesthetic criteria that currently rules the contemporary art world. I am very far from these criteria and I have always tried to avoid following any type of trends or fashion.

Also, following my experience in regards to exhibitions, curators sometimes tend to see what they want to see. They have their own pre-conceived ideas, determined to put me in the frame of an Asian female artist to tick all their criteria. As an artist, refusing these propositions, you are immediately labelled an anarchist, even more so as I am not a submissive woman, making it impossible for curators to control me. That is why I have not participated in many exhibitions in France, because if the curator's only goal is about finding an image that matches their needs, I say no. Even if I am offered an interesting project, I refuse. In such a context, participating in an exhibition is a complete no-go on my part.

AAN: You are facing challenging circumstances. Today, many institutions are exhibiting and promoting female artists.
KSG : This is precisely the type of judgement I want to avoid.

AAN: The curator of the NMMCA exhibition referred to you as 'the missing link' between art in Korea from the 1950s/60s and contemporary artists. Do you agree?
KSG: In Korea, there is an artistic structure that brings together the most important artists and, basically, they are world famous and established artists. In my case, I have been out of that circuit, never wanting to be part of it. When I was young, back in 1975, I was extremely famous in Korea because I was avant-garde. I had conceptual discussions with many cutting-edge and avant-garde artists and our debates always ended in my favour. I was very noisy, defended my views and my ground, hoping for society to change when it came to art. I was not an easy artist to deal with and, looking back, I probably scared off some institutions. I think it was easier for people in Korea to accept me when I came back in the mid-1970s with an etching exhibition – more in tune with what a female artist was supposed to do as opposed to my earlier performances and installations. Then, in the following decades, as the Korean economy developed, a young generation prospered that also impacted the arts creating a new dynamic for artists, who were then also very active internationally. Within this impulse of movement and change, my name was completely forgotten. I have been going back to Korea on a regular basis, but so far, I have remained outside art circles.

AAN: Ultimately, you found your way back into that circle, or rather the other way around, institutions reconnected with you.
KSG: In preparation for the exhibition at NMMCA, for the first time, curators took ample time to look at my work. I have a very large studio in the outskirts of Paris and after thoroughly reviewing my work, they felt an exhibition was long overdue. As for myself, I was wondering why they suddenly felt the urge to exhibit my work. They were surprised to discover a female artist that was completely outside of their art circle, not only in Korea, but also in France – and who had a strong body of work, both in terms of quality and quantity.

AAN: You have not chosen the easiest path since, commercially and career wise, you did everything that one should not do. Do you agree?
KSG: Absolutely. Earlier in my career, I was crazy about the idea of making videos. After teaching for 10 years to keep me financially afloat at the École Nationale d'Art Décoratif in Nice, the École Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Marseille, and the École Nationale Supérieure d'Art de Dijon, I acquired a camera in 1982. Around that time, I also received the first grant to be awarded for research on video, which today would be the equivalent of approximately 100,000 euros. I bought a video camera with some of this money. Back in those days, the entire equipment amounted to the price of a small apartment! I nevertheless went for a video camera, but then came the question how to supply the camera with electricity? I ended up going to my neighbour asking for help. Then, I had no petrol to drive around, so I was up and about carrying my equipment on a cart. The years from 1980 to 1992 were very difficult, even more so as I was a single women with financial uncertainties. It was complicated, but I nevertheless continued working and moving forward with my research. That was the most important to me, but at the same time, it was also a huge challenge, especially as my equipment broke down and I had no specific technological knowledge to fix it. I kept at it for the simple fact that I am extremely passionate about what I am doing. My practice is an essential pillar of my life.

AAN: You created the multi-media art department at the École Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Marseille. Is the department still working?
KSG: I was asked to teach drawing, which I accepted under the condition I could also create a multi-media department which included photography, video, cinema, sound and sculpture. I am not sure how things stand at this point, because starting the early 1990s, the school began to change with students selecting their activities according to the needs of the galleries and the market. The commercial aspect has impacted the school and I am therefore not sure the spirit of the department I created was maintained, as I stopped teaching around 2010.

> *By refusing work, I was immediately labelled an anarchist*

Saekdong 2, 1969, oil on canvas, 128.5 x 128 cm, MMCA Collection

AAN: Looking at your trajectory, one wonders why you decided to stay in France instead of going to New York or Düsseldorf, cities that were most avant-garde when it came to experimentation in contemporary art? What motivated your choice?
KSG: When I was a student at university, Korea was a very poor country and ruled by a military government. Back then, going abroad to study was simply out of the question. However, I always wanted to go to France: in my mind, the idea of art was linked to the city of Paris. As I graduated, there was the possibility of a scholarship to the US. Out of curiosity, I took the exam and got accepted. However, I had no intention of going to the US. Instead, I wanted to go to Paris, which in my opinion is where the birth of Western civilisation lies. I then took part in a competition for a scholarship by the French government inviting young artists to France. I won the scholarship and have stayed in France ever since.

Although I was extremely creative with regards to my practice, I was terrible at how to go about selling my work. Three years into my scholarship, I did not want to go back to Korea because I wanted to travel around the world. I took the exam to be certified to teach in France, allowing me to have a steady income and support myself. Looking back, I must admit that it was laziness on my part not to go and see dealers in view of a possible collaboration. However, I also did not want to become a gallery artist since the commercial aspect of it somehow scared me. I deliberately stayed in France, since in Germany there was a language barrier, although I did teach in Hamburg. In addition, I feel a deep connection to Western philosophy and I have always kept excellent relationships with the French philosophers, many of whom have become friends. It is a joy to exchange and take on new research together with them. That is basically why I stayed in France.

AAN: You began deconstructing painting in Korea, even before you left for France. What made you realise that you did not want to limit your practice to the size of a frame hanging on the wall?
KSG: I think it is my nature. I have been painting since I was seven years old, evolving all sorts of painting. I managed to get into the National University in Seoul and started to look into poetry and sound. I also became involved with the French language department there and spoke French long before going to France. I realised that, as an artist, I was absolutely not made to work within a frame. In the third year of my art curriculum, I almost set the school on fire, because I wanted to achieve more depth with the colours I was using. I therefore added oil, determined to burn parts of the surface, but that did not go well! I was intrigued, first by a black surface, later by a white surface and then, suddenly, I started to cut things out, hanging them on the wall, and hanging them outside. This is how I came to deconstruct paintings in what I called a 'situation plastique' – a situation created by the relations of time and space.

Before leaving Korea in 1971, I took part in an exhibition of young artists and people could not make sense or discover the meaning of these pieces hanging outdoors. Things were completely different when I arrived in France, where the movement 'Support Surface' was very strong. While I was part of an exhibition involving various international and French artists, people could not understand that an Asian artist, on top of it a woman, was behind these pieces that shared the same spirit as Support Surface. I had long exchanges and debates with the French artists involved in the movement. I tend to think I was slightly stronger, mainly because I had the advantage of having been so involved with Eastern and Western philosophy. I was able to defend my space.

AAN: Were there any movements that were eager for you to join their undertaking?
KSG: I was asked on several occasions to join Fluxus, but I was too fond of my independence. Nam June Paik was looking for younger members, but I refused. In addition, various groups also asked me to be part of their endeavour, but I wanted to remain my own master, even at the risk of being forgotten.

AAN: What impact did Nam June Paik (1932-2006) and John Cage (1912-1992) have on your practice? Perhaps, there was also an impact the other way around, something of interest to Nam June Paik and John Cage?
KSG: Our relationship was based on numerous exchanges. I met John Cage by accident in a lecture, asking him a question which led to three continuous hours of Q&A. Then, he asked me to work together with him and I spontaneously stayed for his workshop for an extra week. Upon his return to the US, he spoke about me to Nam June, and I subsequently met him a year later in Paris while he was creating a performance with Charlotte Moorman. As to John Cage, up until his death, I had a very long and fruitful collaboration with him. John Cage is clearly the artist I respect the most, I learned a great deal from him.

AAN: You indicated that John Cage had been the most important artist for you. Why?
KSG: When I met John Cage, I was very fond of the writings of Wittgenstein, whom I was studying at university. In addition, I am very passionate about Asian philosophy, especially Buddhism and Taoism. When I discovered John Cage was having a lecture, I immediately thought I had to meet him in order to discuss Wittgenstein. I knew John Cage by name, but nothing further. We had a thorough discussion and it lasted a very long time. We had a fantastic conversation and, somehow, we were on the same wavelength. We had numerous things in common which made our exchange so rich. In addition, John Cage was an artist who really made his philosophy the leitmotiv of his life. Some artists have their practice, but live a completely different life. John Cage was the opposite, as his thoughts and life were in complete harmony and his artistic approach was shared by many. In a way, he created an extraordinary community around him. As to Nam June Paik, I knew him less, since I did not have a chance to interact with him that much. Nevertheless, he was brilliant, a fantastic human being even though philosophically, I did not have the exchanges or share a common approach as I did with John Cage.

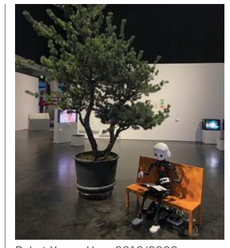
Lazy Clouds at ZKM, Karlsruhe, installation view. Photo: Olivia Sand

AAN: In 1986, you organised a multi-media festival in France. What was the legacy of that festival? Did it set new milestones?
KSG: In Marseille, there is a cultural building called La Vielle Charité. It is large and ideal as a contemporary art centre; and I was invited to do a solo show there. At the time, I was very passionate about creating exchanges with other people and I suggested to the organiser that I also stage an international festival. The shop where I had bought my camera sponsored me, and I managed to get a small budget.

As to the logistics, I had to keep it simple with my guests spending the night in a tent I had rented on the beach. Some of my students had a limited amount of rooms for artists coming from abroad. I had booked John Cage in a small hotel close to La Vielle Charité, where he stayed up most of the night chasing mice in his room! It was nevertheless a wonderful experience. John Cage presented two works, *Empty Words* and *Mirage Verbal*, the latter being based on an unpublished letter that Alexina 'Teeny' Duchamp (1906-1995) had given him. In terms of multi-media, it was a major first event in Marseille. At the time, nobody believed John Cage was going to attend. It became a milestone for Marseille, creating a dynamic for the city which was far behind in terms of contemporary art.

AAN: Throughout your career, you have been writing poetry which has consistently been at the centre of your practice. What is your approach?
KSG: I usually do not write any subjective poems, starting with 'I'. It is neither descriptive nor representative, but it has a lot to do with language – everything is important, every discovery is precious, every work or comma is meaningful. Therefore, poetry remains one of the pillars of my practice. In the 1980s, however, people did not think much of poetry, as everybody was out following a business-oriented mindset, determined to make money. Poetry was considered an anecdote in the greater scheme of things. However, I continued writing poetry, regardless of what trends were popular, or what people thought.

AAN: How do you see the future of multi-media art? What is the next logical step in your practice?
KSG: In the continuation of an earlier series called *Foolish Photography and Foolish Calligraphy*, I would like to create a piece based on a very advanced programme with the latest technology, but where ultimately nothing would work. Basically, it would be a piece at the fringe of stupidity, at the opposite of efficiency, but somehow still working. In French, I would call it *Poesie Digitale*, or *Digitale Poesie*, I have not decided yet. My problem is that I need to rely on a technician or an engineer. We are dealing with something rather complex and I am not able to create the programme by myself.



Robot Yeong-Hee, 2019/2022, Lazy Clouds, at the ZKM, Karlsruhe. Photo: Olivia Sand

AAN: Apart from your solo show at ZKM, your work can currently also be seen at Carnegie International. What are you showing?
KSG: The piece included in the Carnegie exhibition, *Stock + Garden*, is from 2008, and revisits the earlier interactive installation *Stock Exchange*. I created Stock + Garden almost 20 years ago, but I have always brought it up to date, keeping the idea that the stock market has become the supreme value of our society, dictating the pace of our lives. In the future, beyond developing what I refer to as my 'stupid project', I also want to further investigate the qualities of sound, which I find fascinating. Sound has no frame, no limit. I need to work on its technical aspect first, as I am not familiar with it yet.

AAN: Looking back at your journey since the 1970s, leaving Korea for France was a bold move at the time. Would you agree?
KSG: Absolutely. Back then, I did not fulfil what was expected of me. I was supposed to stay in Korea, get married, and lead a normal life. The most I could have hoped for was to teach philosophy, but not much more. In Korea, as a young woman, I did not want to accept my family's money, therefore, I taught children in order to have a small income. I followed my path towards independence, passing the exam for university in order to be the best student, which would allow me not to have to pay for my studies. The only thing I took were the $100 my mother gave me in order to pay for my cab ride once I reached Paris, to go from the airport into the city. I left Korea because I wanted to be like a cloud, floating free. I was longing to do what I wanted, and I had no intention of going back to a society that I considered closed. I think that as I left for France, my family somehow realised that it was not just goodbye, it was farewell.

AAN: You left Korea because you felt the environment was too traditional, not allowing you to fully express yourself artistically. Today, Seoul has become an attractive hub for the contemporary art world. Would you now reconsider spending time there?
KSG: Even today, Korea would not be my preferred environment. I find Korea presently rather scary as it is highly commercial, very business oriented, and booming economically. I would feel lost in that environment. I would rather be at the countryside, although much of the countryside has been taken over by an agricultural drive for export. The only place that is not affected by commercial activity is the Buddhist temple, the one place where the world is almost the same as it used to be.

Art Gallery of Western Australia and Asian Art

Exterior of the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth. Photo: Frances Andrijich

by Michael Young

An unexpected curatorial initiative by Australia's most remote art gallery – the Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA) in Perth, will see its future focus turned toward Asia, courtesy of a relatively new gallery director and the philanthropy of a local retired Malaysian businessman. Two years ago, Colin Walker was recruited as the gallery's new director and immediately set about turning his gaze toward Asia. 'Our future is north and into Asia', he said, perhaps a little defensively, when Asian Art Newspaper caught up with him by telephone recently. It may seem bullish, but Asia is unequivocally in his sights, as indeed is harnessing the tools of social media to pull into the gallery a younger demographic – one that sees the world through the fast-paced platforms of Instagram, Tik Tok, Snapchat and a plethora of similar social media sites, to address the gradual decline in visitor numbers. Walker's enthusiasm for social media is boundless and he mentions a young Malaysian woman, who visited the gallery recently, and then posted a short video on Tik Tok of her visit. The video attracted 230,000 views in a couple of days. Walker was more than impressed and saw it as something he needed to replicate. 'User-generated content is how messages get across to young communities. This is the way to keep ourselves relevant,' he explained.

Originally from Liverpool, in the UK, Walker – who curiously has limited actual gallery experience – settled into his new role just as Covid-19 began to roil the world and it has not all been plain sailing for him since. Also, he inherited a critical and damning auditor-general's report from 2018 on conditions at the gallery: lack of storage space; poor record keeping; conservation failings; and a poor online outreach programme. These were just some of the report's critical findings that cast a cloud over the future well-being of the gallery's collection of 18,500 artworks.

Untitled from the series Cui Cui (2005) by Rinko Kawauchi, C-type print, 30.5 x 25.4 cm. Courtesy the artist © Rinko Kawauchi

Walker has not been shy in coming forward to address the criticisms in the report either. On route to recalibrating the gallery's future, one of Walker's immediate initiatives was to shed the gallery's ties with corporate sponsors, such as the fossil fuel industry, in favour of generating money from donors, philanthropists, and trusts.

Enter local Malaysian-born businessman Simon Lee AO, who lived in Perth for many years and is now enjoying retirement in Singapore and who, in 1994, established an eponymous philanthropic foundation that aligns itself with 'cultural investment in the community'. Lee's foundation was a perfect fit with Walker's new philosophy and talks between the two led to the establishment of the Simon Lee Foundation Institute of Asian Contemporary Art at the gallery to promote inspirational, ground-breaking contemporary Asian art over a five-year period.

Grand Amour, Meimei's Flying (2018) by Lin Zhipeng (aka No 223), archival pigment print. Courtesy of the artist © Lin Zhipeng (aka No 223)

The first thing that Walker ticked off his to-do list was the transformation into a bar and popular meeting place of the brutalist gallery's rooftop space. 'It is now the largest rooftop bar in Perth,' Walker said with some pride. It has proven a hit with the younger demographic and he has seen healthy visitation numbers. The bill however for the transformation was a whopping AUS$10 million.

At the launch of the foundation earlier this year, two special commissions by Asian artists were unveiled. One by the increasingly popular Bangkok-based, Australian-educated, endurance performance artist Kawita Vatanajyankur is *Mental Machine: Labour in the Self Economy*. Vatanajyankur uses her body as a shuttle to weave extraordinarily large complex structures with rope until she is virtually entrapped in a sprawling web that references the struggles Thai women endure in their home country's patriarchal society. The live performance pulled in 400 people over several days.

In the short term, Walker said the older generation of die-hard gallery visitors would be sacrificed in favour of his favoured young demographic. 'The older audience, who expect to see works by 19th-century landscape artist Hans Heysen on the walls, are not the connected voices anymore. The Heysen works will go up again, but they will be in conversation with Indigenous and Asian works. I have moved on to a more discursive conversation,' he stated.

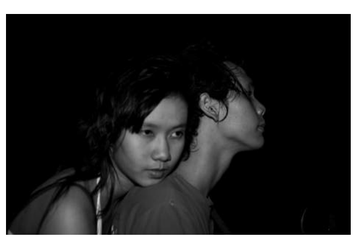
> *The gallery's future focus is now north and facing towards Asia*

Walker sees the gallery as uniquely positioned both geographically and culturally, to foster a deeper engagement with contemporary Asian art. There is, he said, a large Asian diaspora living and working in Western Australia.

One immediate beneficiary of the new relationship between the foundation and AGWA was Rachel Ciesla, who has been hired as a dedicated contemporary Asian art curator – although she is called a 'lead creative' for the five-year programme, paid for by the Simon Lee Foundation. Ciesla has much riding on her shoulders, but if the first year's programme can be used as a template, it looks as though the institute will be a success. 'Our 22/23 programme reflects our commitment to supporting Asian artists while offering audiences some of the most inspiring art of today,' Ciesla told journalists at the Asian Art Foundation's recent launch.

The gallery's first group show of Asian artists is *I Have Not Loved Enough*, which opens 18 November and runs through to 23 April 2023, and draws heavily on Ciesla's background in photography and moving-image work, but also draws in painting and sculpture. Other artists involved include Daisuke Kosugi, Japanese born, but who lives in Norway, Taiwanese Hai-Hsin Huang, Japanese photographer Lieko Shiga, Shanghai/New York based Chinese photographer Pixy Liao, Japanese photographer Rinko Kawauchi, South-Korean video artist Sejin Kim, Chinese Tao Hui, who focuses on video and installation and Lin Zhipeng aka No 223, a writer and photographer based in Beijing, all exploring how deeply enmeshed our bodies, and the subjective forces of love and desire, are within the formations of globalisation, colonialism, technology and capitalism, an arena in which Ciesla's photographic skills seem to excel. It may sound a touch obscure and academic, but more precisely Ciesla's thinking identifies how each artist's work observes the social structures that bind or separate people, and how these structures determine how people ought to behave.

At the top of this artist cohort is Lieko Shiga, who in 2011 was working as a photographer in the small coastal village of Kitakama in northern Japan documenting the local community when it was struck by the Tohoku earthquake and *tsunami*. Sixty locals died and most of the village was destroyed. In the months that followed, Shiga rescued from the devastation over 30,000 photographs that had been washed ashore. She washed and dried them and created a discursive installation – a silent 'In Memoriam' to those who had lost their lives – called *Rasen Kaigan* (Spiral Coast), from 2008–2012. The work was shown at Brisbane's 2015/16 Asia Pacific Triennial to great acclaim. At AGWA, she is showing an earlier series *Blind Date* (2008), photographs of young Thai couples on date-nights in Bangkok, where young women cling dreamily to their beaus upfront on motorbikes in a touching demonstration of fleeting sentimentality as their eyes engage with Shiga's camera, but somehow do not see. The series is a wonderful cross-over between documentary and pure art photography.



Untitled 7 from the series Blind Date (2008) by Lieko Shiga, chromogenic print, 60 x 90 cm. Courtesy the artist © Lieko Shiga

The Woman Who Clicks the Shutter (2018) by Pixy Liao, C-print, 200 x 150 cm. Courtesy the artist © Pixy Liao

Aching sentimentality is also very much on display in Rinko Kawauchi series *Cui Cui* (2005), where somehow inconsequential fragments of the world – misty shots of flowers – the remnants of half-eaten water melon, etc, along with actual portrait of relatives that chillingly construct the pathos of relationships and of how memories fade and reinvent themselves over the passage of time. Rinko has been photographing her family for 13 years – family gatherings for New Year's Holidays, an older brother's wedding, grandfather's death, the birth of a new life, and so on. The camera elevates their ordinariness into a collective family identity which really amounts to a disturbing *memento mori*.

Identity is something that American-Chinese photographer Pixy Liao dwells on in her self-portraits known as *Experimental Relationships*, which are now entering their second decade and, to date, have been seen in several countries. Even though Chinese she could be considered an honorary Japanese, living between New York and Shanghai, with Moro her Japanese boyfriend.

She met Moro at art school in the US and simply asked him if she could photograph him. He said yes, and it appears that he has hardly left her side since then. The two of them role-play in heavily contrived tableau-vivant performance pieces that subvert the male-female power dynamic. But there can be no doubting who wears the trousers in this relationship – and it is not Moro – even though he is often seen pressing the camera shutter. The portraits are often risqué while being asexual. So critical is Moro as Liao's muse one can only hope that everything in their relationship is rock solid. 'I hope so,' Liao quietly said on the phone from Shanghai recently.

If one needs confirmation of Walker's confidence in the relevance that social media plays in the lives of today's young, one needs to look no further than Chinese photographer Lin Zhipeng (aka No 223), a leading figure of new Chinese photography, whose popularity has grown exponentially through social media. Blogger, writer, and content creator, his work focuses on the relaxed approach the young Chinese generation has to intimate nudity, a staple feature in his work. Zhipeng's photographs are shot in lush saturated colour and occupy a space somewhere between the mannered elegance of Chinese movie auteur Yang Fudong's still photographs from the 1990s and the sad superficiality of the late Chinese photographer Han Ren's richly coloured eroticism. Zhipeng's subjects however possess an emotional ambiguity that seems to say, take them or leave them, this is life.

Part of Walker's challenge at AGWA will be in guiding the gallery's future across a state that is ten times the size of the UK with a population that – according to the 2021 Australian census – is 2.7 million people, 80 per cent of whom live in the southwest corner, where Perth is located. Even so, Walker remains adamant that the gallery's future is one of looking north and into Asia even though the first Asian landfall from Perth is somewhere in the region of 2,617 kilometres away. Which is a mere snip when you consider Sydney is 3,290 kilometres, or thereabout, in the opposite direction.

● I Have Not Loved Enough, from 18 November to 23 April 2023, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, artgallery.wa.gov.au

Famous rabbits of today, anonymous, circa 1868-1877, Meiji period. All images from the collection of the Edo-Tokyo Museum

Looks Annoying (1888) from the series Thirty-two Aspects of Customs and Manners by Tsukioka Yoshitoshi, Meiji period, colour woodblock print

Eastern Customs, Variations of Happiness, The Mice of Prosperity (1890) by Hashimoto Chikanobu, Meiji period, colour woodblock print published by Takekawa Unokichi

New Year's Eve Foxfires at the Changing Tree, Oji from the series100 Famous Views of Edo by Utagawa Hiroshige, circa 1857, Edo period, colour woodblock print

Large elephant newly imported from Malacca (1863) by Ryoko, Edo period, colour woodblock print

A JAPANESE BESTIARY

A fondness for pets and other animals knows no limits or boundaries, as can be seen in this exploration of the residents of Edo's connection to animals and nature during the 18th and 19th centuries through Japanese prints. The exhibition marks the 25th anniversary of Maison de la culture du Japon in Paris. Co-organised with the Edo-Tokyo Museum, it brings together more than a 100 works to evoke the history of these relationships with animals that also reveal the unqiue culture in which this coexistence came into being. Shuko Koyama, curator and conservator at Edo-Tokyo Museum, draws attention to the fact that an enormous variety of animals can be found found on a diverse range of materials, including ukiyo-e, historical documents and books, as well as textiles, daily utensils, toys and other decorative items.

The Edo period (1603-1868) heralded a long period of peace for Japan that brought stability and prosperity to its citizens. This new chapter in the history of the country started with Tokugawa Ieyasu's defeat of the Toyotomi forces in the Siege of Osaka (1614-15), when a new reign name of Genna (1615) was declared and the turbulent era of war experienced during the Momoyama period (15680-1600) ended. The rise of the Tokugawa shogunate (1603-1867) also resulted in a shift of power to a new city – Edo. Although the capital remained with the emperor in Kyoto and kept its place as the bastion of traditional Japanese culture, Edo soon challenged its royal neighbour in trade, entertainment and this commercial success also saw a burgeoning merchant class. Edo expanded rapidly and soon became a very large city – its population rose, at the beginning of the 18th century, to one million inhabitants.

Alongside this growing city, all kinds of animals coexisted with the population – domestic animals and livestock, as well as a range of wild beasts living in the uncultivated spaces on the outskirts of the city. One foreign resident in Edo, the American zoologist Edward S Morse

Two-fold screen depicting a quail singing contest, circa 1751-1799, Edo period

(1838-1925), commented, 'During my many rickshaw rides, I noticed how carefully the drivers avoided cats, dogs and chickens on the road. I have so far never witnessed any manifestation of anger or mistreatment towards animals'.

The exhibition opens with this quote from Morse, who had arrived in Japan, in 1877, to teach at the University of Tokyo. He is surprised by the kindness with which the Japanese treated animals and notes that city dwellers carefully went around the dogs and cats lounging in the middle of the road so as not to disturb them; and that they call them using the honorific suffix 'san'. A work in the exhibition by the artist and designer Georges Bigot (1860-1927), who lived in Japan for 17 years from 1882, shows daily life in Japan at that time and humorously illustrates this cohabitation between animals and humans.

This understanding between humans and animals is also depicted on a screen (a replica) that accurately records the appearance of the city of Edo and its suburbs in the 17th century. In addition to numerous scenes representing the shogun Iemitsu pursuing stags and wild boars, or hunting falcons, there are also monkey tamers, stray dogs fighting, working oxen and sacred horses from Shinto monasteries. The original screens, created in 1634, are now in the National Museum of Japanese History.

Animals used for work are also portrayed in Edo-period art, such as horses, oxen, and dogs. A section in the exhibition explores the different roles of animals in connection not only to the elite samurai life, but also animals used for work by peasants in agriculture, as well as their place in the life of the merchant classes.

> *"The citizens of Edo lived with a deep connection to nature and the seasons"*

The domestication of animals became increasingly popular as the long period of stability gave the citizens of Edo the time and leisure to enjoy life; all types of cultural activities boomed and, in the home, people were happy to surround themselves with their pets. These include, in addition to small dogs and cats, birds such as nightingales and quail, as well as insects such crickets and locusts, which were appreciated for their song. In response to popular demand, many ukiyo-e prints and reference books on how to deal with all types of domestic pets were published during the period. Edo was a city surounded by hills and rivers – and open to the sea – enabling the inhabitants to live with a deep connection to nature. As nature was so important, various seasonal rites and festivals marked the course of the year and the changes of season offered many opportunities to admire the superb natural landscapes nearby. Within this admiration of nature, the life of wild animals was included as a familiar feature and they were closely tied to religious beliefs and the rituals of the annual calendar.

The space outside the city limits, where the wild animals roamed, was where the samurai class regularly practised hunting and honed their equine skills. Falcons were used in the art of hunting to capture wild birds such as cranes, geese, and ducks. Larger animals, such as deer and wild boar, were also hunted on a large scale, usually organised by the shogun.

Certain wild animals were also associated with religious beliefs, as can be seen in a print by Utagawa Hiroshige, *New Year's Eve Foxfires at the Changing Tree at Oji*. Here, foxes gather at the large, old *enoki* (hackberry) tree on New Year's Eve to prepare to pay homage at the Oji Inari shrine, the headquarters of the Inari cult in eastern Japan (Kanto). The cult centres on the god of the rice field, for whom the fox serves as

The Butcher by Georges Bigot, 1883, Meiji period, from a volume of copperplate engravings, 30 x 27.1 cm

messenger. On the way to Oji, the foxes have set a number of *kitsunebi* (foxfires), which farmers count to predict the upcoming rice harvest. Hiroshige's print successfully conveys the mysterious atmosphere of the rite as the procession of foxes bearing fires approaches from the distant, dark forest under a starry sky.

From the beginning of the 17th century, when Edo was rapidly becoming more urban, the population began to look for new attractions to entertain themselves. One such event was the exhibition of rare animals, including peacocks and parrots, which had been brought by boat from China or Holland. The animals were displayed in specific places – the ancestors of zoos – with shops nearby offering food and drink to visitors. With the development of trade with the West, the number of imported animals increased considerably over time, with the fashion for 'exotic' animals experiencing an unprecedented boom. By the start of the Meiji era in 1868, Japan had begun to build modern facilities based on the Western models to cater to the public demand for zoos, aquariums, and racetracks.

This craze for animals was also reflected in their depiction on clothing and everyday objects. Animal symbolism had been in use for centuries, but during the Edo period all kinds of animals were widely used as decorative motifs to symbolise success, happiness, good health and good luck. Animals are frequently depicted on kimonos and accessories, as well as on everyday personal objects. It was during the Edo period that further developped animal patterns and motifs on kimonos. as well as symbols of natural subjects such as the four seasons, to be used as auspicious image. A favourite image was the crane, which still is the most popular bird depicted on a kimono, as it is believed to live for a thousand years and to inhabit the land of the immortals, therefore symbolising both longevity and good fortune.

Animalsmotifs were also important in a domestic setting. The very high infant mortality during the Edo period helps to explain the manufacture of many protective talismans and amulets used personally and in the home, intended to ward off the bad luck with the symbolism and design reflecting the beliefs attached to different animals. One such print in the exhibition to guard against infection or plague shows a red-eyed rabbit/horned owl by Utagawa Kuniyoshi.

Today, as in the past, toys in the shape of animals were very popular, as with other objects, animals evoked the spirit of a season and was associated with auspicious events. During the Edo period, decorative motifs representing animals began to evolve, showing a greater freedom of design and richer variations of styles. However, towards the end of the 19th century, Japanese culture in connection with the animal world began to fade and the emphasis was increasingly placed on the *kawaii* (cute) side of pets. The traditional portrayal of animals can still be widely seen in Japan in many different forms, but there is a battle to be won against Hello Kitty.

● A Japanese Bestiary, Living with Animals in Edo-Tokyo, from 9 November to 21 January, 2023, Maison de la culture du Japon, Paris, mcjp.fr

CLAY AS SOFT POWER

Storage jar, Muromachi period, late 14th-15th century,
stoneware with natural ash glaze, Cleveland Museum of Art,
John L Severance Fund, 1973

Shigaraki jar (tsubo), Edo period, 17th century,
stoneware with natural ash glaze and gold lacquer repairs, Mary Griggs Burke
Collection, gift of the Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation, 2015.
Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art

This is the first exhibition to examine the important role that Shigaraki ware ceramics played in supporting American-Japanese diplomatic relations after the Second World War. Shigaraki ware originate from one of Japan's six ancient kilns and are characterised by earthy tones, rough clay surfaces, and natural ash glazes. These objects, which began entering American museum collections in the 1960s, have become staples of Japanese art installations across the US. Despite this, the story of how Shigaraki ware ceramics catalysed cultural exchange between the US and Japan and helped reframe Japan as a peaceful, democratic, ally has not been told in depth. Bringing this history to the fore, the show also explores the influence of Shigaraki ware on contemporary artists in both countries and its ongoing popularity among today's collectors.

Shigaraki ware storage jar,
late 16th/early 17th century,
stoneware with natural ash glaze,
University of Michigan Museum of Art,
museum purchase made possible
by the Margaret Watson Parker
Art Collection Fund, 1986.
Photo: Jeri Hollister and Patrick Young,
Michigan Imaging

Featuring approximately 50 historic and contemporary objects by 25 artists, the works are drawn from UMMA's holdings as well as public and private collections internationally. It also highlights a new commission by Takahashi Yoshiko (b 1988), the first woman to carry on her family's studio name, Takahashi Rakusai. Visitors will also be able to hold and touch Takahashi's work – a critical aspect to truly understanding the beauty and essence of Shigaraki ware.

The first of three sections is Re-Presenting Japan: Shigaraki Ware in Postwar Collecting and Exhibitions. Until the 1940s, most Americans associated Japanese ceramics with delicate and ornate porcelain. After the Second World War, as part of its effort to reshape international perceptions, Japan began celebrating the modesty and austerity of its folk-type wares, including the naturally glazed wares of Shigaraki, one of Japan's oldest kiln sites, which has been in operation since the 13th century. Americans were introduced to these works, in part, through the efforts of James Marshall Plumer (1899-1960), a professor of East Asian art at the University of Michigan, and the philanthropist John D Rockefeller III (1906-1978), who worked in postwar Japan to support public and private interests. Their efforts and collaborations led to the creation of several important exhibitions in the US, including Japanese Pottery Old and New at the Detroit Institute of Arts, which was organised by Plummer in 1951 and included rustic Japanese wares for the first time. The circulation of these works through exhibitions also spurred active collecting of Shigaraki ware among American museums between the 1960s and 1980s.

Large Shigaraki storage jars created between the 14th to the early 17th centuries, often paired with screen paintings, became an archetypal presentation of Japanese art. The proliferation of these objects helped to shift the image of Japan from a recent war enemy to an important ally in the Cold War era. In the show, this history is explored through several objects, including a Storage Jar, from the Muromachi period, late 1300s to 1400s, an important example of the earliest Shigaraki works, on loan from the Cleveland Museum of Art. Other objects in the section were included in major early museum displays and in Louise Allison Cort's 1979 book *Shigaraki: Potters' Valley,* which served as the first scholarly book on the history, techniques, and production of Shigaraki ware.

The second section, explores cultural exchange and American ceramic artists working in postwar Shigaraki, and looks at the exchange of ideas between the US and Japan. Equally important to shifting Japan's image was the active exchange of artists and artistic approaches. Between the 1960s and 1980s, government agencies, universities, and foundations encouraged and supported American ceramic artists' travel to and study at traditional kiln sites in Japan. Artists often chose to go to Shigaraki, because of its close proximity to the urban centre of Kyoto. In turn, Japanese artists were given opportunities to lecture, give presentations, and build woodfired kilns in the US, deepening the creative exchange between the two countries. American artists were often moved by the creation process, techniques, and philosophies behind Japanese wares, and their presence in Japan, in turn, encouraged more Japanese people, especially women, to become independent artists.

Clay as Soft Power includes objects by such ceramics luminaries as Peter Voulkos and Kenneth (Ken) Ferguson, both of whom participated in the residency program at the Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park in the 1990s. It also includes works by artists with ties to Michigan, including John and Susanne Stephenson and Georgette Zirbes, who were trained in Shigaraki in the 1960s. John Stephenson first encountered contemporary Japanese ware during a 1957 presentation by Bizen ware artist Kaneshige Toyo at the University of Michigan. Stephenson, who was then a student at Cranbrook Academy of Art, was so inspired that he and his wife, fellow ceramicist Susanne Stephenson, travelled to Japan in 1962 to research and learn about woodfired kilns producing unglazed ware. While in Kyoto, they were introduced to contemporary artist Takahashi Rakusai III and began working for his studio. In addition to a diverse selection of objects, this section of the exhibition includes archival photographs, and correspondence between American and Japanese artists.

Crushed Vessel (2014) by Fujimoto Hide,
stoneware with natural ash glaze, collection of Carol and Jeffrey Horvitz.
Photo: Julia Feathergill Photography © Fujimoto Hide

The final section looks at the rise in popularity of Shigaraki ware and its position in private collections. Over the past 20 years, contemporary Japanese ceramics has emerged as a popular medium for American collectors and Shigaraki ware is a significant part of this trend. Collectors who are actively expanding their private holdings are working with American dealers, who have extensive networks and relationships with Japanese artists, deepening collector knowledge of the medium and diversifying the range of artists that are being collected. While American collectors have become increasingly important to the market for contemporary Shigaraki ware, they are also supporting the development of exhibitions and lending works that expand public understanding of the history and contemporary relevance of these objects.

This contemporary activity is particularly important to the incorporation of women artists into the narratives of ceramics and the legacy and trajectory of Shigaraki ware, including Takahashi Yoshiko, who is being commissioned to create a new work and will also show a Shigaraki Vase from 2010. Other important contemporary Japanese artists included are Koyama Kiyoko, Otani Shiro and Kohyama Yasuhisa.

Natsu Oyobe, Curator of Asian Art at UMMA says of the exhibition, 'It explores Shigaraki ware through a new lens, one that captures the critical social and political importance to these objects across two countries. It is particularly exciting to add a layer of scholarship and understanding to objects that are often encountered in museum contexts, inviting visitors to think about and engage with them in a different way. It is also an opportunity to celebrate contemporary artists continuing the Shigaraki ware's legacy, especially women artists, who have historically had less access to develop their skills. Clay as Soft Power is a step in bringing their voices more actively into the conversation as interest in Shigaraki ware continues to grow'.

The exhibition is accompanied by a major catalogue, with essays by Oyobe; Louise Allison Cort, Curator Emerita of Ceramics at the National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution; and Kazuko Todate, a professor and independent curator who specializes in craft history, ceramic history, and craft theory.

● Clay as Soft Power: Shigaraki Ware in Postwar America and Japan, from 12 November to 7 May, 2023, University of Michigan Museum of Art, Michigan, umma.umich.edu

Felling yew trees on Mt Kurai to make ceremonial shaku, ceremonial sceptres © Takayama City

The woods of Gifu Prefecture

WATCH
Kengo Kuma talking about using chidori in his design for a museum

THE CARPENTER'S LINE

Nestled in the heavily wooded region in central Japan, Hida district in Gifu Prefecture has been producing master carpenters for centuries. The city of Takayama has maintained a vibrant woodworking tradition for over 1,300 years, developing in that time an international reputation for its highly skilled carpenters. First recorded in the 8th century, the woodworking skills of these craftspeople were provided to the imperial capital in place of taxation, such was the importance placed upon the carpentry techniques originating in Hida. The current exhibition at Japan House, in London, looks at this long heritage with exhibits ranging from a 17th-century Buddhist carved figure to interactive examples of joinery typical of Japan today, as well as modern chair design with international influences. Related objects on view are examples of *Hida-shunkei* (lacquerware), *kumiko* and *chidori-goshi* latticework, *shaku* (ceremonial sceptre) and *netsuke*.

The forests of the region are made up of a mixture of broadleaf trees, conifers with *hinoki* (cypress) and *sugi* (Japanese cedar, *Cryptomeria japonica)* being the most common. There are also over 350 varieties of broadleaf trees, including beech, oak, walnut, cherry, chestnut, birch and the Japanese broadleaf magnolia.

The area was originally one of Japan's 66 provinces, occupying the northern part of present-day Gifu Prefecture and was featured as one of the famous views created by Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858) in the series *Famous Places in the Sixty-odd Provinces (Rokujuyoshu meisho zue)* published in 1853.

Bodhhisatva by the itinerant monk Enku, mid/late 17th century. Courtesy Takayama Museum of History and Art

Japan's oldest collection of poems, the *Man'yoshu* (Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves), compiled during the 7th and 8th centuries, includes a poem praising the precision of the ink-line makers made by Hida's master carpenters. The master carpenters from the region were also sent to work under the Ritsuryo system, during the Nara (710-194) and Heian (794-1185) periods, in the offices of the *Shurishiki*, who were tasked with the construction and restoration of residential palace buildings, or to the *Mokuyryo*, who were tasked with harvesting trees, preparing lumber, and constructing buildings. In practice, they probably also produced a wide variety of objects from ritual implements to tables, chairs, and other furniture to be used by the court.

Expert carpenters from Hida are known as *Hida no Takumi* (Masters of Hida). The first known usage of the term can be traced back to the *Yoro Ritsuryo Code*, a legal document from the 18th century, when the government established a tax code requiring peasants to pay a rice tax on their fields, a resource tax paid in silk or other materials, and a labour tax. However, the ancient Hida Province, during the Heian and Kamakura periods, was exempt from both the material and standard labour tax in exchange for sending carpenters to the imperial capital in Nara, where they were required to work more than 330 days a year and were not allowed to return home until they had satisfied their quota. During the 8th century, the government oversaw the construction of a succession of capital cities which included a large number of temples and shrines that required specialised carpenters. Over a span of 500 years, it is believed that more than 40,000 master carpenters from Hida participated in the construction of important buildings such as the temples of Yakushi-ki and Todai-ji, and Heijo Palace.

Hida Ichinomiya Minashi Shrine, Takayama City, Gifu Prefecture

In Japan, religious statues were often made out of wood, a readily available material. Enku (1632-1695) was a Buddhist priest from Mino province (now in present-day Gifu Prefecture) known for the wooden Buddhist images he carved during his extensive travels. He entered the priesthood at the age of 32 and travelled the country, where he visited small towns and hamlets without temples or statues and carved for people Buddhist images from whatever wood he could. His early statues were painstakingly carved using classical techniques, however, during the 30 years of his travels, Enku increasingly prioritised speed and quantity, cutting blocks of wood into unostentatious statues with unfinished ends and knots. He is thought to have produced as many as 120,000 statues over the course of his life. Despite their rough-hewn appearance, the statues, with their simple, gentle smiles, have been cherished for generations. Today as many as 5,000 of Enku's statues can be found in regions throughout Japan.

Carpenters and other craftspeople were a favourite subject matter for the artist Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), whose prints are a good reference for carpenters' tools used at the time. In 1808, an illustrated book about a master carpenter from Hida, written by Ishikawa Masamochi (pen-name Rokujuen) and illustrated by Hokusai, was published under the title *Hida no takumi monogatori* (the Tale of a Hida Craftsman).

By the 19th century, the technique of *ichii ittobori* – the use of chisels to produce wood sculptures that emphasise the grain and hue of Japanese yew – had been refined. Yew is characterised by its attractive grain and colour, which matures into a rich brown with a distinct lustre. Carvers use the natural variations in the wood – the light-hued outer sapwood (*shirata*) and the reddish inner heartwood (*akata*). This carving technique was perfected by master carpenters Matsuda Sikenaga (1799-1871), who studied under Hirata Suketomo (1809-1847), the renowned netsuke sculpture from Takayama. Sukenaga is also known for his *netsuke* carving of the basket ferry over the river between Hida and Etchu Provinces, subject matter also chosen by Hiroshige for his series *Famous Places in the Sixty-odd Provinces.*

Hida Province: Basket Ferry (Hida, kagowatashi) by Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858) from the series Famous Places in the Sixty-odd Provinces (Rokujuyoshu meisho zue), 1853, colour woodblock print, oban

No 1 Chair by Hida Sangyo, 1920s, beechwood, modelled on a Thonet bentwood chair, the first product created by the wood furniture company established in Hida in 1920

Shaku (2019), ceremonial sceptre, yew wood, produced by Hida Ichinomiya Shrine. Courtesy of the Takayama Museum of History and Art

The Takayama Festival is held twice a year in spring and autumn

The GC Prostho Museum Research Centre designed by Kengo Kuma & Associates © Daici Ano

Shaku (ceremonial sceptres) are also made using long, thin, pieces of yew. Held in the right hand, they form an integral part of formal life in the Heian period (794-1185) and are still occasionally used today. They are cut from the heartwood of the yew and left to dry for a year. Mount Kurai, in Hida, is home to an ancient forest of yew and at its base lies the Hida Ichinomiya Minashi Shrine, the region's foremost shrine dedicated to Minashi no Kami (the deity of the river's source). Shaku from Mount Kurai have been cherished for over 1,000 years due to the quality of the forest's wood and the highly skilled Hida craftsmanship that produces a perfectly straight grain. It is still customary to present yew shaku from Mount Kurai to commemorate momentous occasions such as the enthronement of the Emperor, or the Shikinen Sengu ceremony at Ise Jingu (Shinto shrine) in Mie Prefecture. The shaku displayed in the exhibition was made with several others, one of which was chosen and presented by Minashi Shrine to the Imperial Household Agency in 2019 for use at the Daijosai Investiture Service and other ceremonies accompanying the enthronement of the current emperor, Naruhito (b 1960), and the commencement of the Reiwa era.

Basket ferry, netsuke, carved by Matsuda Sukenaga, 1830, Japanese boxwood (Buxus microphylla). Courtesy of Tsuda Chokoku

Illustration from The Tale of a Hida Craftsman by Rokuhuen, illustrations by Katsushika Hokusai, six volumes early 19th century, Edo period. Courtesy Takayama Museum of History and Art

The technique of *kumiko* latticework, which uses strips of wood to produce decorative geometric patterns without glue or nails has been popular in the Hida region (and throughout Japan) since ancient times. The patterns are made by creating a lattice frame (*jigumi*) into which smaller pieces of wood are fitted. Straight, tight-grained conifers, such as Japanese cedar, hinoki (cypress) and *hiba arborvitae* (*Thujopsis dolabrata*) are the most commonly used woods. The lattice is created using grooves and joinery (straight and angle joints) as opposed to using glue or nails. This process is a careful repetition of fine, 1/100 mm adjustments. If part of the design is off by even 0.1 mm, it will affect the entire lattice, ruining the pattern.

Jumping into our modern world, in 2010, the Hida-based furniture company, Nissin Furniture Crafters, produced a kumiko lattice 'flower transom' *(hana-ranma)* for the restoration of Nagoya Castle's Honmaru Palace in Aichi Prefecture. The origins of kumiko dates back to the mid-7th century during the rise in temple construction. Horyu-ji in Nara is the world's oldest wooden structure and the temple's main hall *(kondo),* and five-storey pagoda, still have their original kumiko latticework railings, which serve both practical and decorative purposes. Beginning in the 8th century, prototypes of modern *shoji* (screens) began to replace textile partitions in aristocratic residences. In the 10th century, kumiko partition decorations evolved further with the rise in popularity of the tea ceremony and the art of flower arranging.

> *For centuries, Hida has been at the centre of woodworking excellence*

Another woodworking speciality practised in Hida is *chidori-goshi* (plover lattice), which uses a sophisticated and complicated technique to produce decorative latticework. When Ryoshu-ji temple was built in Mumaya in Shokawa (present-day Shokawacho, Takayama) in the late 15th to early 16th centuries, leftover wood was used to construct a hall dedicated to the Bodhisattva Jizo. The door of the unfinished Jizo Hall still displays a famous example of chidori-goshi decoration. Wooden pieces are joined so that they appear to have been woven together, like threads. This pattern is created by cutting corresponding notches two-thirds of the way through the upper face and underside of overlapping boards to produce a complicated series of lap joints. Chidori has also been used in contemporary architecture, interior design, and furniture production. The GC Prostho Museum Research Centre, in Aichi, was designed by Kengo Kuma & Associates in 2010, using a chidori structure that was built by today's Hida craftsmen.

Japanese lifestyles underwent dramatic changes during the early decades of the Showa period (1926-1989). It is possible to trace the shifting times through everyday furniture and advertisements from the period. The influence of the iconic bentwood Thonet chair (designed in 1850s in Vienna) also filtered through to furniture design in Hida. The creation of No 1 Chair by Hida Sangyo, a furniture company founded in 1920, established the firm's reputation, which continues today. Examples of the company's No 1 and No 7 Chairs can be found in the exhibition. Changes in living styles continued throughout the decade and the first stacking chair, made in a bentwood design, was launched in 1932. At the time, it was more typical for families in domestic settings to sit on tatami mats at low floor tables, however, in restaurants, the chair enjoyed immediate success. Various popular designs were produced over the next decades, including the Cascada chair in 1961, the C66 chair in the 1950s, all included in the exhibition.

The extraordinary skills of Hida craftspeople that over centuries have built the famous shrines and temples still seen in the ancient capitals of Nara and Kyoto today, also live on in the region's festivals. It is the culmination of several of these craft techniques that can be seen in the creation of *yatai*, the large, ornate festival floats that are paraded around the town at the spectacular Takayama Festival each year. The festival, which takes place twice a year in spring and autumn, is thought to have originated in the late 16th, or early 17th century and is considered one of the three most beautiful festivals in Japan. The floats incorporate the finest carpentry and sculpture, lacquerwork, as well as metal fittings, dyed textiles, paintings, animated dolls and other trappings. The evolution of the floats is said to have begun in 1804 by when they had attained their basic form and structure. Around this time, the floats became important symbols of community, and people with closely integrated social and economic livelihoods formed units called *yatai-gumi*, or 'float teams', which rallied around the floats and maintained them. Today, these annual festivals maintain the links between people, craft, and nature – providing an enduring legacy for Hida.

● The Carpenter's Line runs until 29 January, 2023, Japan House, London, japanhouse.org

BEGUILING BENI

Safflower Red in Japan

WATCH
In Search of Forgotten Colours featuring Sachio Yoshioka, the fifth-generation head of the Somenotsukasa Yoshioka dye workshop in Fushimi, southern Kyoto, Japan

Kuchi-beni, Painting the Lips by Utamaro, Kitagawa (1753-1806), woodblock print, ukiyo-e, 36.3 x 24.8 cm, New York Public Library

The main area for growing benibana (safflowers) is Yamagata Prefecture

Beni-mochi 'patties' ready to be used in the dyeing process

Coloured child's kimono
late 19th-early 20th century, hemp, dyed with beni (safflower), 86.04 × 87 cm, Minneapolis Institute of Art

Surihaku, noh costume, 1775-1825, silk, warp-float faced 7:1 satin weave patterned with impressed gold leaf, lined with silk, plain weave, dyed with beni (safflower), 173.1 × 137.2cm, purchased with funds provided by Robert Allerton Art Institute of Chicago

> *"The use of beni in Japanese culture has a long history"*

The use of safflower (*Carthamus tinctorius*) in Japanese culture has a long and rich history. From early times, it is has been referred to in songs and poems, used to dye textiles, and chosen to colour woodblock prints. Originating in the Middle East, the safflower (*benibana* in Japanese) spread into India and later along the Silk Road into China. It was from China that the safflower is thought to have entered Japan between the 2nd to 5th centuries; and was widely cultivated in Asia and Europe by the 13th century. In Japanese legends and poems, it is referred to by such names as *kurenai* and *suetsumu-hana* – the former is a shortening of *kure-no-ai*, the indigo plant known in the Wu dynasty (222-280), indicating that it probably entered Japan at this time.

The earliest use of the safflower dye in Japan was first seen in Nara period (710-784) in Heijokyo, the ancient capital, as it was mentioned in the *Manyoshu* (the oldest anthology of Japanese poems, written between 600 to 759), as well as being used in works of art for the Nara court featuring Chinese motifs of flower and birds. These objects are preserved in the Shosoin in Todaiji temple.

It was also used widely by the ladies of the Heian court (794-1185) as a rouge and lipstick, but the real height of popularity for the dye in Japan was not seen until the late 18th and 19th centuries during the Edo period (1603-1868), with its explosion of fashion, art, and culture.

With the development of chemical dyes in the Meiji period, the demand for all natural dyes declined. Red from safflower is still used today in cosmetics and textiles, but to a much lesser extent. Today, Yamagata prefecture, in northern Japan, is the region where most safflower cultivation now takes place. The fresh orange/yellow petals are made into patties *(beni-mochi)* and oxidise to a deep red. They were historically transported to Kyoto to be made into rouge or used for dyeing textiles in this form, used in such traditional textiles as *beni-itajime shibori*. Recently, there has been renewed interest in benibana, not only as a natural dye for textiles and cosmetics, but also in traditional medicine for blood circulation.

The florets of safflower create a wide range of hues – from the first pressing that produces yellow, to the second pressing that produces a cherry red to pink. The plant is a tender annual with spiny leaves and composite flower heads containing the many yellow to orange disk petals. Once the beni-mochi are crushed into a paste, it is washed with water to remove the non-lightfast yellow chromophores (molecules). The red colourant, primarily carthamin, is then extracted in an alkaline bath. The deepest reds are only obtained through several initial washings to remove all of the water-soluble yellows.

Since the Heian period, fabrics dyed with safflower red have been worn close to the skin to evoke physical healing power.

As an important dye used in the creation of textiles and clothes over centuries, safflower has been recorded in the textiles stores in the Shosoin in Nara, which have survived from the 8th century. A scientific study conducted on these Nara textiles discovered that they have the oldest scientifically confirmed presence of safflower red on historic textiles. The Shosoin examples chosen for research included the red carpet laid inside the workshop hall at the Todaiji Temple in Nara, used for the inauguration of the statue of the Great Buddha in the temple in 752; a red undergarment and a gown with a tie-dyed design worn by craftsmen in the Todaiji Temple; and embroidered shoes belonging to Empress Komyo (701-760). Comparison of the spectra to documented references identified that safflower red was found in the red or orange areas of the textiles.

Court women during the Heian period wore a complicated costume with 10, 12, 15 or even 20 layers of garments at a time, called *juni-hito* (12 layers). The layered colour palette would have included safflower-dyed fabrics that would have symbolised many things, with colours linked to the seasons, compass directions, virtues, as well as showing a connection to the guardian spirits of nature (*kami*). In the later Edo period and into the Meiji period, an under layer (*shitagi*) was worn under the top layer *(uwagi)* – together this set of garments was called *kasane*. This was made up of two or three layers with most of the shitagi hidden from view. Visible outer red layers (made with natural and or chemical dyes) were worn by women in their youth, but after marriage these shades of red appear only in undergarments and can be seen to symbolise a 'hidden' affirmation of life

Safflower was used for colour in printing, too. From the 1740s to about 1765, the first block printed colours in Japanese prints appeared to create simple two- or three-colour images. Called *benizuri-e* (crimson printed pictures), they are an early type of ukiyo-e that were usually printed in red (beni), blue, or yellow, occasionally with the addition of another colour, either printed or added by hand. Sometimes these colours were over-printed to create the secondary colours purple, orange, and green. From 1765 onwards, the skills required to use the *kento* registration system reached a level where several colour blocks could be expertly printed and full-colour *nishiki-e* or 'brocade prints' such as those designed by Suzuki Harunobu (1725–1770) became the standard. Examples of beni colouring used in prints include *Actor Ichikawa Danzo III as Adachi Hachiro* from 1762 by Torii Kiyomitsu I (1735-1785) and *Actors Matsumoto Koshiro IV as Ukita Sakingo and Sawamura Sojuro III as the Ghost of Takao* by Torii Kiyonaga (1752-1815).

The colour red has been fashionable in beautification rituals for centuries. In this application, it has been considered a rare and precious colour for centuries and was used sparingly on the lips and cheeks. Both the 8th-century *Kojiki* (Records of Ancient Matters) an early Japanese chronicle of myths, legends, and semi-historical accounts and anecdotes and the *Nihon Shoki* (Chronicle of Japanese History) reveal that even in ancient times, it was documented that specific beauty customs of painting the face with red pigments, were already in existence. Besides being used as lipstick and blusher, the colour red was sometimes also used to enhance the outer corners of the eyes and nails.

One unusual make-up style that became popular in the 19th century was *sasa-iro beni* (bamboo grass red), which was in high demand during the Bunka and Bunsei eras (1804-1830), at the end of the Edo period. The upper lip is painted red, while the lower one appears green. This was achieved by using beni that also turns an iridescent green (from red) when thickly applied. Beni, at the time, was a product as expensive as gold and this fashion was, it is said, initiated by geisha who covered their lips daily to show off this luxury. The dye was bought in cups (*benizara* or *benichoko)* that were coated inside with this precious substance. To use, it was wiped with a finger, or a wet brush, to spread on the lips in successive layers. After use, the bowl was placed upside down on the dressing table to prevent oxidation.

By the late 19th and 20th centuries, the red for cosmetics was extracted in small quantities from the safflower used by textile dyers, making it an extremely expensive product. *Beni-ya* were the companies that produced the paste for rouge and lipsticks and were mainly found in and around Kyoto. The processes of pounding safflower by kneading, and rubbing the petals to make an alkaline solution from ash as well as an acid solution using *ubai* (smoked Japanese apricot) continued for centuries in workshops until the decline of the craft in the first quarter of the 20th century. The situation was exacerbated by the availability of cheaper synthetic imported dyes. However, true beni cosmetics are still made by a few specialists companies and are readily available to buy today in Japan.

- A small display on the culture of beni and its link to fashion is on show at the V&A Museum in London until 31 March, 2024
- The Isehan Honten Beni Museum is devoted to the world of beni. In Tokyo, it is run by Isehan Honten, the last remaining beni shop that continues traditions that date back to the Edo period
- The Kahoku Benibana Museum is located in Yamagata Prefecture
- Plant Dye Identification in Japanese Woodblock Prints by Michele Derrick, et al, 2017

DOWNLOAD
pdf on Evidence of Safflower Red on Ancient Japanese Textiles Stored in the Shosoin by Rikiya Nakamura, et al

Actor Ichikawa Danzo III as Adachi Hachiro (1762) by Torii Kiyomitsu I, published by Urokogataya Magobei, 30.2 x 14.2 cm, and example of benizuri-e with a three-colour palette, commonly made between 1740s to 1765

Actors Matsumoto Koshiro IV as Ukita Sakingo and Sawamura Sojuro III as the Ghost of Takao, with chanters Tomimoto Itsukidayu and Tomimoto Awatayu and accompanist Sasaki Ichishiro (1788) by Torii Kiyonaga, published by Nishimuraya Yohachi, 38.8 x 26.8 cm. This is a good example of full-colour printing, nishiki-e, using beni – characteristic of prints made from 1781 to 1801

White Powder Bien Senjoko by Keisai Eisen, 1815-43 © POLA Research Institute of Beauty and Culture, from the exhibition Secrets of Beauty, held at the Maison de la Culture du Japon, Paris, in 2020

Collection of beni containers, Isehan Honten Beni Museum, Tokyo. Photo: Ryoichi Toyama




Netsuke of a Fox Disguised as a Buddhist Priest, signed Tomokazu, 18th century, ivory, gift of Mrs Virginia W Kettering, Dayton Art Institute
Netsuke of the Mythical Figures Ashinaga and Tenaga, signed Yasuaki, late 19th/early 20th century, ivory, pigment, coral, metal, inlay, gift of Mrs Virginia W Kettering, Dayton Art Institute
Netsuke of a Scene with a Shape-shifting Tanuki, 19th century, ivory, gift of Mrs Virginia W Kettering, Dayton Art Institute
Netsuke of a Sambaso Dancer, late 19th/early 20th century, ivory, wood, inlay. gift of Mrs Virginia W Kettering, Dayton Art Institute,

NETSUKE
and the Art of Little Wonders

During the Edo period (1615-1868), in the 17th to 19th centuries, *netsuke* were worn as part of a carrying system that originally formed part of a male *kimono* ensemble by members of the samurai class, as well as men from the *chonin* (townspeople) class. As the kimono was secured with an *obi* (sash), in order to carry small, personal, items *sagemono* (collective term for 'hanging things', such as purses, smoking utensils, writing cases, medicine carriers and seals) they were suspended on cords that hung from the obi. The purpose of netsuke was to help suspend these objects, including *inro* (small, nested container for medicine) from the obi of a man's pocketless kimono, acting as a counter-weight for sagemono.

Sagemono were connected through a single cord that was threaded through a cord channel on one side of the suspended container and then through two holes *(himotoshi)* in the netsuke. This then threaded through the other side of the container and was knotted on the underside of the container. A decorative bead, *ojime* (sliding bead), moved along the cord between the netsuke and sagemono, allowing the user to open and close the container securely. The wearer would slip the netsuke underneath so it then dangled over the obi, allowing the sagemono to hang suspended between waist and hip. In order to access the contents, say of the inro, the wearer simply slipped the netsuke behind the obi to liberate the ensemble. By sliding the ojime toward the netsuke, the contents of the container were easily accessible.

Netsuke can be classified into five general types – *manju, ryusa, kagamibuta, sashi* and *katabori*. Manju are round and flat (like the rice cake which has the same name) and decorated with etching or relief carving. Ryusa are classed as a variety of manju, hollowed out with deeply carved openwork. The kagamibuta (mirror lid) is also usually round in shape and comes in two parts: a decorated lid, typically metal, and a bowl of ivory or wood that can also be

Netsuke of Fujin (wind god), 19th century, wood, gift of Mrs Harry L Munger and Mrs Julia B McCoy, in memory of their aunt, Mrs Martha Perrine, Dayton Art Institute

> *Netsuke were a way to make a subtle and often humorous fashion statement*

elaborately carved. Sashi netsuke are long and often have cord holes at one end, and was worn inside the obi. Perhaps the most interesting and most popular form is the katabori – figural netsuke. This form uses people or animals, usually carved in three-dimensions, including the bottom.

Although many materials have been used in the creation of netsuke, including horn, bone, metal, lacquer, black coral, ceramics, mother-of-pearl, tortoiseshell, animal teeth, amber, semi-precious and hardstones, glass, and nuts, around 80 percent were made out of either some sort of ivory (elephant, walrus, stag antler and boar tusk) or wood. Popular woods used by the carvers included boxwood (*tsuge)*, fruitwoods, cypress, and other conifers. Carvings styles and subject matter can also often be classed, as the schools tended to specialise in favourite subject matter and styles of carving. Groups of netsuke carvers developed in different regions of Japan, notably in Osaka, Kyoto, Nagoya, Iwami, and later in Edo itself.

Various carving techniques were used to created different visual effects, such as enhancing the illusion of depth, recreating intricate textile patterns, and hair. Netsuke are often inlaid with other materials, such as tortoisehell, coral, amber, shell, or metal to create the desired effects, such as eyes and other facial features. Ivory could also be stained, or painted, again used to enhance the overall design effect, create shadows, texture and contours.

Ivory first seems to have been used in the creation of netsuke during the 17th century, as a by-product of the *shamisen* (stringed instrument) industry, where the plectrum used for plucking the instrument was usually made out of ivory. As the popularity of netsuke and ojime grew in the 18th and 19th centuries, better quality ivory was also chosen for the luxury objects with the finest quality ivory coming from Siamese (Thai), or Annamese (Vietnamese) tusks.

As the status of Edo and its citizens rose, inro and netsuke also developed as a form of conspicuous consumption within a culture that imposed a rigid four-tiered social system with *samurai* at the top, followed by farmers who tilled the land, artisans who crafted material goods, and the merchants at the bottom (artisans and merchants classes were collectively referred to as chonin). Given that the merchants were economically better off than many members of the socially superior samurai class inro and netsuke allowed merchants to display their wealth without breaking any sumptuary laws that regulated the size of houses they could build or style of luxurious fabrics they could wear. These objects were often made of expensive, rare materials and bore the signature or seal of the carver or maker, become more markers of wealth rather than practical carrying devices.

One netsuke in the display depicts a 'trickster' animal, a *tanuki* – a popular choice for carvers. Other similar types of animals were the fox and the *kappa*, a vampire-like animal. The kappa and fox were messengers of the Shinto gods, with the kappa representing the river god and the fox the god of rice and agriculture – Inari. Although these animals were affiliated with the gods, their behaviour was often destructive. The fox was primarily a trickster and was feared the most because its spirit could possess a human and assume their form. The tanuki was also a shape-shifter and played malicious, sometimes deadly, jokes. Another popular netsuke subject, a fox disguised as a priest, probably takes its inspiration from the play *Tsurigitsune* (Trapping of the Fox), that was part of a *kyogen* repertoire performed repeatedly from the 1700s through the 1900s. It tells the tale of a fox that assumes the guise of the priest Hokuzosu to escape its hunters.

Netsuke were also a way to make a subtle and often humorous fashion statement. People outside of the ruling samurai class, including the increasingly wealthy merchants, due to the sumptuary laws were restricted in how much luxury they could display. However, through such practical items such as netsuke, a certain degree of show and opulence was possible thus allowing netsuke to develop into imaginative works of art – intricately carved miniature sculptures that could fit in your palm.

This exhibition, at the Dayton Art Institute, explores these 'little wonders' and their remarkable variety of subject matter that they depict from the popular culture of the time, from characters in folk tales and scenes of everyday life to monsters and a menagerie of animals.

● Until 12 February, 2023, Dayton Art Institute, Ohio, daytonartinstitute.org

Netsuke of a Shamisen Player, late 19th/early 20th century, ivory, inlay, gift of Mrs Virginia W Kettering, Dayton Art Institute

Trio of prints by Kawase Hasui (1883-1957), 1935, Showa era, depicting views of the the Azalea Garden at Hakone with Mount Fuji in the background, estimates (each) range from £1,500-£2,000, Bonhams London

Bonhams

PATIENT DETAIL, PERFECT DESIGN JAPANESE ART ACROSS THE CENTURIES

Bonhams, 3 November, London

The sale features more than 400 lots executed in a wide variety of media and styles. The largest works are two screen paintings, one brings to life a bustling traditional Japanese urban scene and the other is an imaginative vision of the world beyond its shores – a pair of Kano School six-panel screens, mid17th-18th century, (est £20-30,000), depicting a fantasy landscape of Tartar warriors hunting and hawking in the mountains of northeastern Asia.

A rare trio of prints by Kawase Hasui (1883-1957) feature an iconic sightseeing view – the Azalea Garden at Hakone with Mount Fuji in the background.

Also in the sale is a woodblock print by the enigmatic and sought-after master Sharaku (est £80-100,000), active for only just over a year in 1794-5, little is still known about this artist. It features Daidozan, an eight-year-old wrestler, parading at the opening ceremony for a *sumo* tournament.

The craft of *maki-e*, decoration with precious metal flakes and powders sprinkled onto lacquer, is represented by several dozen pieces dating from the 18th century to the pre-war period, including a miniature box and cover by Shibata Zeshin (1807-1891), widely considered the greatest lacquerer of all time, (est £5-6,000).

Masterpieces from the Meiji era include a vase by Namikawa Sosuke (1847-1910) of Tokyo depicting a pair of egrets, a perfect example of his acute observation and skilled technique (est £30-40,000).

CHINESE CERAMICS & WORKS OF ART

Bonhams, 30 November, Hong Kong

Imperial turquoise-ground underglaze-blue and copper-red 'dragon' moonflask, bianhu, Qianlong seal mark and of the period, est HK$1-25 million, Bonhams Hong Kong

The highlight of Bonhams Hong Kong ceramics sale is The Liddell Moonflask, which will be offered on 30 November, and has an estimate of HK$18-25 million. The name 'moonflask', *baoyueping*, meaning 'embracing the moon', is inspired by its flat-sided but full-bodied form which resembles a full moon. This type of vessel has a long history dating back to the Song and Yuan dynasties, when ceramic flasks of a similar shape would be tied to the side of a horse saddle. During the Ming dynasty, it evolved into a highly decorative ware, the style of which was later reproduced during the Kangxi and Yongzheng periods. However, it was not until the reign of the Qianlong Emperor, who admired styles from the past, when the moonflask regained dominance. New shapes and styles were invented as the Imperial kiln experimented with new firing approaches, building a legacy of not just underglaze-blue and copper-red moonflasks, but also a handful of coloured-glazed (such as yellow and lime-green) examples. Among them, the colour turquoise is the rarest of all. This moonflask was originally acquired by Captain Charles Oswald Liddell in China, where he lived and conducted business from 1877-1913.

For nearly four decades, Liddell had formed his collection by purchasing mostly from two significant sources: the collection of Prince Chun, the last Regent of the Qing dynasty; and from the collection of the private secretary and adviser to statesman Li Hong Zhang. Liddell, who had a discerning eye, understood from early on the distinction between the extraordinary Imperial porcelain and the export Chinese wares decorating the interior of many great English country houses at the time.

His collection, which was then carried back to the UK and exhibited, was highly regarded as one of the earliest English collections to represent a true 'Chinese taste'.

Mallams

CHINESE WORKS OF ART

Mallams, 9 November, Cheltenham

Pair of Chinese hardwood chairs, £6-10,000, Mallams

The twice-yearly Asian Art sales comprise of Chinese ceramics, jade, paintings, textiles, furniture and works of art ranging from Song, Yuan, Ming, Qing and Republic dynasties together with Japanese ceramics, woodblock prints, furniture, and works of art ranging from Edo and Meiji periods together with ceramics, textiles and works of art from South East Asia. Included in the sale is Part II of the Hicks Collection of textiles and works of art, as well as a private collection of Chinese furniture, ceramics and works of art from Hazelwood House, Shanghai, circa 1930.

Chinese polychrome porcelain vase, Republic period, est £700-1,000, Mallams

Pair of Korean celadon vases, Goryeo, 12th/14th century, est £600-800, Mallams

Highlights include a Republic-period vase with a provenance of being purchased by the vendor's father in Shanghai circa 1935/1940 after travelling to China to join the International Police Force in the late 1920s, a pair of Korean celadon vases from Hazelwood House in Shanghai from 1930s, and a pair of Chinese hardwood chairs, also from Hazelwood House in Shanghai.

Christies

CHINESE CERAMICS AND WORKS OF ART

Christies, 29 November, Hong Kong

Featured in this sale are two single-owner sales: classical Chinese furniture from the Tseng Collection and The Chang Wei-Hwa Collection of Archaic Jades from the Qin and Han Dynasties. The furniture sale is offering 28 lots of *huanghuali* furniture from the late Ming dynasty with some of the lots previously acquired from the famous Museum of Chinese Classical Furniture in Renaissance, California, whose collection sold at Christie's New York in September 1996. Highlights include a huanghuali circular incense stand, *xiangji* (est HK$ 6-10 million) and a single plank *huanghuali* recessed trestle-leg table, *qiaotou'an* (est HK$8-12 million).

The Chang Wei-Hwa Collection offers 73 lots of archaic jades from the Qin (221-206 BC) and Han (206 BC- AD 220) dynasties. Highlights include a carving of a mythical beast, *bixie* (est HK$8-12 million) and a white jade reticulated 'phoenix' plaque (est HK$2.2-3.5 million).

Ceramic highlights from the sale include a carved 'dragon' celadon-glazed *meiping* (est HK$40-50 million), a pair of *doucai* waterpots, Yongzheng period (est HK$12-15 million), an early Ming-dynasty blue and white fruit bowl, Xuande six-character mark (est HK$8-12 million). Other lots include a pair of Qianlong-period (1736-1795) *cloisonné* enamel peacock censers (est HK$2-3 million), and an imperial *rianhuang* rectangular seal also from the Qianlong period, estimated at HK$2-3 million.

Pair of cloisonné enamel 'peacock' censers, Qianlong period (1736-1795), length 44.1 cm, est HK$2-3 million, Christie's Hong Kong

Carved 'dragon' celadon-glazed meiping, Qianlong six-character seal mark in underglaze blue and of the period (1736-1795), height 33 cm, est HK$50-80 million, Christie's Hong Kong

Huanghuali circular incense stand, xiangji 17th century, height 97 cm, top panel diam. 41 cm. est HK$6-10 million, Christie's Hong Kong

FROM BEIJING TO VERSAILLES

A family's journey from China to Paris in the 20th century is told through the sale of the VWS Collection in Paris this December. It begins in the turbulent times of the late 19th/early 20th centuries in Russia's Far East. In 1896, the Russian Empire began the construction of a railway line using a concession from the Qing-dynasty government from Imperial China aiming to link China with the seaport of Vladivostok and Port Arthur, which was then an Imperial Russian leased ice-free port. The line consisted of three branches, from Harbin to Manzhouli, Suifenhe, and Beijing. The Chinese Eastern Railway (CER), as it was known, was administrated from St Petersburg, from the city of Harbin, which grew into a major railway hub.

The CER created a shortcut to the Trans-Siberian Railway, which started in the nearby Siberian city of Chita. Russians flocked to the border town of Harbin to take advantage of the rapidly developing area. Roughly 20,000 Russians had settled there by the early 1920s and the town became the focus for anyone wanting to seek out their fortune. By the time the Japanese had arrived in Harbin in 1932, most Jewish people had left for Shanghai, where they were joined by European Jewish people fleeing from Poland, Austria, and Russia.

This family's journey began in 1903, as the Chinese Eastern Railway, the eastern branch of the Trans-Siberian Railway wanted by Russia, was completed. Fleeing, like others, a climate of political persecution and anti-Semitism in the Russian Tsarist Empire, the family settled in Harbin, the most northerly city in China and started to develop its businesses from 1906 onwards. A Jewish community was already developing in the area and would have seemed a natural choice. Like many others, the family was attracted to Harbin then a major economic and cultural centre in Manchuria. The cosmopolitan city was already home to a large Jewish community. In Harbin, the father, a cultured, open-minded and multilingual man, felt at home and his early successes in business earned him respect in the community.

However, after fleeing the persecution found in European Russia, the Russia of the Far East was already beginning to be caught-up in messy international politics and the threat of war. In 1898, construction of the 880km spur line, most of which would become the South Manchuria Railway began in Harbin, leading southwards through Eastern Manchuria, along the Liaodong Peninsula, to the ice-free deep-water port at Port Arthur (Lushun City in China, Ryojun in Japanese), which Russia was fortifying and developing into a first-class strategic naval base and marine coaling station for its Far East Fleet and Merchant Marine. The Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) was fought largely over who would possess this region and its excellent harbour, as well as whether it would remain open to traders of all nations. Later conflicts were also partially due to the geopolitical sensitivity of the area – 1929 Sino-Soviet Conflict, and the Second Sino-Japanese War of 1937–1945.

It is to this turn-of-the-century diaspora that the collector's family belongs, from their first move to Harbin and later south to Shanghai, forced by the Japanese invasion of Manchuria to find a new, safer home in Shanghai. Inquisitive and cultured, the collector had a gift for languages and quickly met success in business. He arrived in Shanghai in the 1930s and began to collect Chinese jade, porcelain and snuff bottles. His thriving business took him and his family all over Asia, especially Hong Kong, as well as to North America. Wherever the family would settle around the world, fine Chinese art always followed, like a bridge between East and West. The collector's son also contributed to expanding the collection, acquiring works from renowned English art dealers such as Spink & Son. The collection is marked by the great number of extraordinary white, yellow and pale celadon jades, the imperial quality of which is a testament to the collector's keen eye and in-depth knowledge of the medium.

This collection of artworks have remained, by descent, with the family heirs ever since. Rescued from historical events, these objects are like a bridge between the East and the West. Seemingly following the advice of historians, the collector is an example of the discipline of a traditional collecting philosophy, as described by the contemporary French historian Ivan Jablonka (b 1973): 'Investigating, journeying, discovering, crossing, wandering, meeting, collecting testimonies and documents, the desire to devote oneself and to learn how to look at things'.

This collection, originally started in Shanghai in the 1930s is characterised by the quantity and quality of the white, yellow, and pale celadon jades, whose imperial quality testifies to his particularly discerning and knowledgeable eye. Many of the jade pieces in this collection date from the Qianlong period, a highpoint of Chinese culture. With so many masterpieces, the collection on offer will potentially impress even the most demanding connoisseurs. In 1963 and 1964, a few pieces from the collection were offered at auction in London, the remaining entire collection (about 300 lots) will be offered for the very first time on the market in December, with an estimated total sale value of Euro 7 million.

● On 13 to 14 December, Christie's Paris, christies.com. Catalogue available

The collector and his family in China in the 1930s
© Christie's Images Limited 2022

White jade 'longevity' bowl and cover, lian, Qiang dynasty, est Euro 300-500,000
© Christie's Images Limited 2022

"This story begins in 1903 with the rise of Harbin as a railway hub"

A collection of Qing dynasty snuffbottles from the VWS Collection, to be auctioned on 13 and 14 December, 2022
© Christie's Images Limited 2022. Photo: Claude Germain

Large celadon jade figure of a seated Buddha, Qing dynasty, 18th/19th century, est Euro 60-80,000
© Christie's Images Limited 2022

White jade 'Eight Immortals' square box and cover, Qing dynasty, est Euro 50-70,000
© Christie's Images Limited 2022

Large, pale celadon jade vase and cover, Qing dynasty, est Euro 120,180,000
© Christie's Images Limited 2022

CREATIVE SPLENDOUR
Japanese Bamboo Baskets

This exhibition of a series of installations of 20th-century Japanese baskets from the 19th century to the present ,on loan from the Thoma Foundation, survey the outstanding accomplishments of Japanese basket makers from three regions of Japan: the Kansai region, which encompasses the ancient capital, Kyoto; the Kanto region, which stretches westward from Tokyo; and the southernmost island of Kyushu. The exhibition demonstrates the specific techniques and styles of cutting and weaving bamboo that are particular to each of these geographic regions.

Maeda Chikubosai II (1917-2004), is perhaps best known for his layered structures and complex surfaces. He was born in the Hirai section of Sakai, where all of the Maeda clan lives and was apprenticed to his father, a well-known craftsman. After the Second World War, he began to show his work in various exhibition around Osaka. In 1953, his first piece was accepted in the Nitten (the arts exhibition first established in 1907) in 1952, and in 1959 at the Japan Traditional Crafts Exhibition. In addition to modern baskets made from round strips of bent-and-gathered bamboo, the artist produced baskets for the sencha tea ceremony, continuing this Osaka basketry tradition. He was honoured as a Living National Treasure for bamboo craft by the Japan government in 1995.

Another of the artists in the exhibition is Higashi Takesonosai (1915-2003). Born in Kyoto, he began to exhibit works at the annual Nitten exhibitions in 1952. Beginning in 1990, he also submitted works to the Traditional Art Crafts Exhibitions. He is best known for his unique structural compositions made with parallel construction.

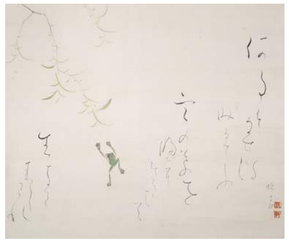
● Until 2 January, 2024, San Antonio Museum of Art, Texas, samuseum.org

Untitled, no date by Maeda, Chikubosai II (1917-2003), madake, rattan, 11.5 x 7.5 x 7.5 in, collection of Carl & Marilynn Thoma, © Artist or artist estate, courtesy of the Carl & Marilynn Thoma Foundation. Photo: Textile Arts

Dawn, no date (1926-89), by Higashi, Takesonosai (1915-2003), madake, 13.25 x 7.6875 x 7.6875 in, collection of the Carl & Marilynn Thoma Foundation © Artist or artist estate, courtesy of the Carl & Marilynn Thoma Foundation. Photo: TAI Gallery

HER BRUSH
Japanese Women Artists

Taking a nuanced approach to questions of artistic voice, gender and agency, this exhibition explores, through more than 100 works of painting, calligraphy, and ceramics from 1600s to 1900s, female artists in Japan. Many of the artworks are on view for the first time to the public. Tracing the pathways women artists forged for themselves in their pursuit of art, Her Brush explores the universal human drive of artistic expression as self-realisation, while navigating cultural barriers during times marked by strict gender roles and societal regulations. These historical social restrictions served as both impediment and impetus to women pursuing artmaking in Japan at the time.



Willow and Frog by Oishi Junkyo, mid-1900s, ink and colour on paper, gift of Drs John Fong and Colin Johnstone. Photo © Denver Art Museum

The exhibition is organised into seven sections representing different realms in which artists found their voice and made their stamp on art history. Artists in the exhibition include Kiyohara Yukinobu (1643-1682), Otagaki Rengetsu (1791–1875), and Okuhara Seiko (1837-1913) as well as relatively unknown yet equally remarkable artists like Oishi Junkyo (1888-1968), Yamamoto Shoto (1757–1831) and Kato Seiko (fl. 1800s).

An introduction space presents the two major themes of the exhibition: artists' pathways to art, and art as agency. Each gallery evokes a different cultural context, within and through which artists pursued their art. Whether being born into a family of professional artists or becoming a nun for the freedom to produce art, the groupings do not pigeonhole the artists as identities. Instead, they highlight how women navigated their personal journeys as artists. In the exhibition, many of the artists can and do appear in more than one section, shuttling through these spheres, despite the strict limitations imposed on them by the time's gender roles and class hierarchies.

● Her Brush: Japanese Women Artists from the Fong-Johnstone Collection, from 13 November to 13 May, 2023, Denver Art Museum, denverartmuseum.org

Breaking Waves in the Pines (Shoto), by Murase Myodo, late 1900s, hanging scroll, ink on paper, gift of Drs John Fong and Colin Johnstone. Photo © Denver Art Museum

SHOJI HAMADA

How a young potter's visit to a tiny village in East Sussex shaped the course of the craft movement in both Britain and Japan is the theme of this exhibition. In 1921, Shoji Hamada (1894-1978), a key figure in the Mingei Japanese folk-art movement, travelled with his friend Bernard Leach (1887-1979) to the village of Ditchling from St Ives in Cornwall. It focuses on the cultural exchange between the East and the West at this key moment in the emergence of the studio pottery movement.

On display are over 70 ceramics ranging from traditional British slipware to rich *tenmoku*-glazed jugs, iron-brush decorated plates and *sgraffito* etched jars, including 25 pieces by Hamada. Hamada spent three years living in England and a major theme of the exhibition will be his experience of the village of Ditchling and its resulting impact on his life and work.

It begins with early works created by Leach as a result of his stay in Japan between 1909 and 1920. It was here Leach met Hamada and pottery became his focus. Leach studied religiously under mentor Ogata Kenzan VI for two years, in the artist colony of Abiko, learning traditional techniques that had been passed down for centuries. Kenzan's work is represented in the exhibition by a pot with black-and-white sgraffito decoration, featuring a pattern typical of his work, derived from 12th-century traditions in Korea and Japan.

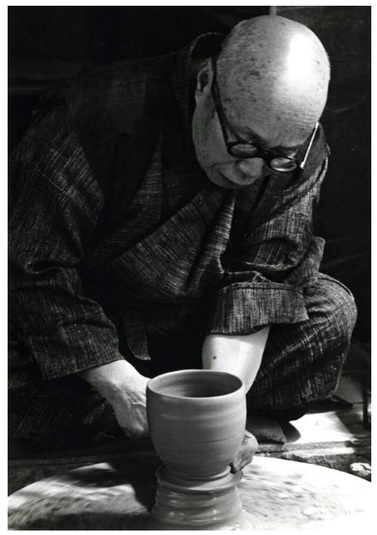
Earthenware bottle with four lug handles, circa 1920-23, engobe and transparent glaze, by Sho ji Hamada. Courtesy of The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

In 1920, Hamada and Leach moved to St Ives, where they set up their pioneering pottery studio. Collaborative works from this period, including a raku dish with a brushed decoration of a ship in iron oxide, will be displayed alongside solo works by Leach. These showcase Leach's passion for Japanese traditions, including a plate decorated with cherry blossoms and mountains.

The Leach Pottery is known for having the first traditional Japanese climbing kiln in the West. The original blueprint for the three-chambered kiln, built by potter Tsurunoske Matsubayashi, is displayed alongside Leach's own sketch for a second, unrealised kiln.

Contemporary works by Shoji Hamada's grandson Tomo Hamada, that show Hamada's continued legacy on both Eastern and Western ceramic tradition, will also be on display. Tomo Hamada's work uses clay from Mashiko and is decorated with the ancestral glazes his grandfather was fond of, reddish brown *kaki*, creamy *nuka*, cobalt blue and green *seiji*.

● Shoji Hamada: A Japanese Potter in Ditchling, until 16 April, 2023, Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft, near Brighton, East Sussex, ditchlingmuseumartcraft.org.uk



Shoji Hamada, date unknown, by kind permission of the Hamada estate

Eight Beauties of Korea folding screen, 1900-1950, attributed to Chae Yong Shin, ink and colour on cotton © OCI Museum of Art

HALLYU!
The Korean Wave

This exhibition celebrates the colourful and dynamic popular culture of South Korea, following its early origins to its place on the global stage today. The Korean government's belief that its investment in culture would produce a robust economy was a gamble that has paid off. From K-pop costumes a to K-drama and cinema props and posters, the phenomenon, kmown as *hallyu* (Korean Wave) is explored through photography, sculpture, fashion, video and pop culture ephemera. Also on show is *Mirage Stage* by Nam June Paik. Hallyu rose to prominence in the late 1990s, rippling across Asia before reaching all corners of the world and challenging the currents of global pop culture today.

It also looks at the makings of the Korean Wave through fandoms, and underlines its huge cultural impact on the beauty and fashion industries. On show are around 200 objects across four thematic sections, including transformational technology and digital displays.

● Until 25 June, 2023, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, vam.ac.uk. Catalogue available.

Mirage Stage by Nam June Paik. Seoul, South Korea, 1932 - Miami, USA, 2006 © Nam June Paik Estate

Yayoi Kusama, courtesy of Ota Fine Arts, Victoria Miro, and David Zwirner. Photo: Yusuke Miyazaki © Yayoi Kusama

YAYOI KUSAMA
1945 to Now

M+, the new contemporary art museum in Hong Kong's Kowloon Cultural District is now showing its first special exhibition of the work of Yayoi Kusama, to coincide with the museum's first anniversary.

Yayoi Kusama: 1945 to Now is the largest retrospective of renowned artist Yayoi Kusama in Asia outside Japan, featuring more than 200 works from major collections from museums and private collections in Asia, Europe, and the United States, the M+ Collection, as well as from the artist's own collection. Co-curated by Doryun Chong, deputy director, curatorial and chief curator, M+, and Mika Yoshitake, independent curator, the exhibition introduces a new interpretative approach to Kusama's over seven-decade career and invites viewers to discover the transformative power of art. The retrospective highlights the core aesthetic elements of Kusama's work and foregrounds her recurring philosophical questions about life and death and her longing for interconnectedness. The exhibitionalso explores how Kusama has become a global cultural icon who creates vital and influential work to this day.

Organised chronologically and thematically, and spanning from Kusama's earliest work to her most recent output, the exhibition features a wide range of paintings, installations, sculptures, drawings, collages, moving images, and archival materials. The exhibition examines Kusama's practice as it developed in Japan, the United States, Europe, and beyond through six themes: Infinity, Accumulation, Radical Connectivity, Biocosmic, Death, and Force of Life.

Self Portrait (2015) by Yayoi Kusama, acrylic on canvas, 145.5 × 112 cm, Collection of Amoli Foundation Ltd © Yayoi Kusama

The show is also presenting three brand-new works for the first time. *Death of Nerves* (2022) is a large- scale installation commissioned by M+. Installed in the lightwell that connects the museum's ground floor and the basement levels and draping down to the Found Space on the B2 level, the work can be viewed from multiple vantages throughout the M+ building. *Dots Obsession—Aspiring to Heaven's Love* (2022), in The Studio, is an ambitious immersive environment that includes one of the artist's signature mirrored spaces, and two large sculptures titled Pumpkin (2022) can be seen in the Main Hall on the ground floor.

● From 12 November to 14 May, 2023, M+, Hong Kong, mplus.org.hk

UNDERDOGS AND ANTIHEROES

Onoe Matsusuke IV as Komori Yasu in the play Nasake Ukina no Yoroguchi by Yamamura Toyonari, from the magazine Shin Nigao, 1915, Taisho era, woodblock print, ink and color on paper, 17.3 × 11.4 cm

To inaugurate a new gallery devoted entirely to works on paper, the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art is showing a selection of Japanese prints focusing on the captivating stories and urban legends of individuals who lived on the fringes of society in early modern Japan. Key subjects in theatre, literature, and visual arts reveal antiheroes and underdogs whose virtues are often embodied by their rejection of societal norms, making them misfits and moral exemplars at the same time.

The exhibition takes a look at different types of antiheroes and underdogs that were seen in early modern Japanese society. From scenes of tattooed firemen brawling with rival groups to those of sumo wrestlers enjoying a feast under cherry blossom trees, the exhibition features subjects that are not commonly associated with traditional Japanese print culture but were nevertheless central to the interests of an early modern public. *Sumo* wrestlers were celebrated and respected even though they lived outside of the traditional class system. Like other ancient rituals, sumo first appears in one of Japan's national epics, the 8th-century *Kojiki*, and evolved into a national sport. Its popularity peaked in the late 18th century, eventually eclipsing even that of *kabuki* theatre, the early modern period's most influential form of entertainment.

● Underdogs and Antiheroes: Japanese Prints from the Moskowitz Collection, until 29 January, 2023, National Museum of Art, Washington DC, asia.si.edu

Mu Chun and Xue Yong (Shosaran Boku Shun, Byotaichu Setsu Ei) Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1798-1861), from the series One Hundred and Eight Heroes of the Popular Water, woodblock print, circa 1827-1830, Edo period, 37.8 x 25.6 cm

JUXTAPOSING CRAFT

In Stockholm, an exhibition of Japanese crafts, a selection of historical and contemporary objects from the Nordic countries and Japan are placed side by side. In their juxtaposition, the visitor is invited to uncover a greater story about the objects, look back at history, and see how knowledge fluctuates over time.

The objects are also used to uncover a way of relating to craft today and how we care and encourage craft in the future.

This project has been an ongoing process over the course of several years, in which curators Rebecca Ahlstedt and Anna Senno of Undeni, have been given access to explore the collections of the National Museums of World Culture with the aim to find new perspectives towards the historical objects. Also on display is a large-scale installation by the artist Toshimasa Kikuchi (b 1979) and a piece by Chiharu Nishijima (b 1951).

● Until March 2023, Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm, ostasiatiskmuseet.se

Japanese crafts on show this autumn at the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm

GOYO AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Renowned for his bijin-ga (pictures of beautiful women), Goyo Hashiguchi (1880-1921) was a luminary of the *Shin Hanga*, or 'new print' movement. While he died before he could see the development of modern *bijin-ga*, Goyo set a tone and a standard for the genre through his intimate and technically brilliant woodblock prints. At his death, his entire artistic career spanned 15 years, of which only the last five were spent producing prints. He completed a total of only 14 prints during his lifetime. The exhibition *Goyo and His Contemporaries* pairs all 14 of Goyo Hashiguchi's lifetime designs with those of other modern masters of the bijin-ga genre– Kiyoshi Kobayakawa (1897-1948), Kotondo Torii (1900-1976), and Shinsui Ito (1898-1972). From blushing contours to shimmering mica, naturalistic form to tangible textiles, together their work defined the genre for the modern era.

Combing the Hair (1920) by Goyo Hashiguchi, colour woodblock print

Goyo Hashiguchi was born in Kagoshima Prefecture to a *Shijo*-style painter. He began his career in Kano painting at age 10, moving to Tokyo in 1899 to study with the leading painter Gaho Hashimoto. However, Goyo soon shifted to Western-style painting under the tutelage of Seiki Kuroda at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, where he graduated at the top of his class in 1905. Shortly thereafter, the prominent Shin Hanga publisher Shozaburo Watanabe convinced him to try his hand at printmaking. Watanabe published Goyo's first woodblock print, *Nude after Bathing in* 1915, yet their collaboration ended there. Unlike many Shin Hanga artists, Goyo Hashiguchi established his own workshop. From 1918, Goyo oversaw each stage of the printing process.

The artist's sensitive portrayal of women in a delicate, serene, and infinitely graceful mode led to his immediate popularity. His standards were so high that he rarely allowed his editions to run more than eighty prints. This decision resulted in some of the most technically superb woodblock prints of the period. On 24 February, 1921, complications from an inner ear infection and meningitis cut Goyo's career tragically short. At his death, he left designs in various stages of completion. Members of his family completed these designs following his death.

● From 3 November to 22 December, Ronin Gallery, 32 West 40th Street, New York, roningallery.com

RASHEED ARAEEN
Islam & Modernism

Aligning with the themes from his newly released book, *Islam & Modernism,* Araeen's exhibition of the same name visually argues for the influence of Islamic art in his oeuvre. Araeen is contemplating the problem of how to assert his Muslim identity both within his practice and within the broader doctrines of modern art. He asks, 'Why should [modernism] be Eurocentric, representing the achievement of only white artists, when many other cultures have contributed to it? This question has been raised, and is still being raised, by many who have been excluded from it'. Critical theorists like Okwui Enwezor have thoughtfully diversified the category of modernity, yet the canon of modern art continues to struggle against a European origin story. By looking at an artist like Araeen, can we find an alternative narrative, one that looks to the architecture (and even name) of the Ka'ba and iconoclasm of Islamic art first and Cezanne's contemplation of geometry second?

Islam & Modernism by Rasheed Araeen, Gallerie Continua

Known for his pioneering work in Minimalist and Conceptual Art in the 1960s and 70s, Araeen has provided an alternative voice and non-Western interpretation of European idioms for decades. His continually evolving practice is reflected within the current exhibition, introducing neon sculpture to his visual vocabulary of painting and wall structures. Concurrent with the exhibition opening will be a celebration of Araeen's newest book, detailing his new take on a long and storied career.

● Until 19 November, Aicon Gallery, New York, aicongallery.com

JIAN YOO
A Special Presentation

Tradition is the fountain of South Korean artist Jian's Yoo's work; it is both a source and a force propelling her into new territory. Working in the precise and fine medium of nacre (mother-of-pearl) lacquer inlay, Jian's broad practice ranges several distinct yet equally creative ranges. Each range can be defined by how closely it hews to tradition in form, technique, imagery, and process. This body of work featured focuses on Jian's most spectacular series, which bridges historical and contemporary work to the extent that it might be considered an inter-generational collaboration. To properly understand the cultural value of this work, one must first know the circumstances in the artist's life that lead to its creation.

In 1978, when Jian's father founded his Seoul studio, Yoosung Crafts, it was heady times for traditional nacre inlay, with a strong and sophisticated domestic market for this heritage craft form. In this rewarding environment, the work reached a new pinnacle of artistry and skill. Rich and elaborate panels of traditional scenes, icons and imagery were produced by his more than 100 artisans. Historical panels were also collected, with the intent of transforming new and old alike into folding screens, wall hangings, or furniture. When the global force of modernization reached full strength in South Korea in the late 1980s, new homes and lifestyles became less sympathetic to traditional forms and techniques. Nacre inlay, always a sought-after luxury, had also become exorbitantly expensive, inspiring low quality commercial imitations which tarnished its appeal. As the market receded, Jian's father changed his focus, and hundreds of stunning panels were left sealed in storage along with a vast trove of high quality, wild- harvested nacre. As an endangered and protected material, new nacre is farmed, and lacking the variety, size, thickness, color, sheen and depth of the wild material. The hundreds of historical panels and raw nacre that Jian's studio now preserves, is a valuable resource in today's world, and it is from this trove that the body of work on show comes.

Moonlit 50 by Jian Yoo, vase, mother of pearl, fibre reinforced plastic (carbon, stone powder and polycoat), 48 x 46 cm

● Until 20 December, at Culture Object, New York, cultureobject.com

ADEL ABDESSEMED
Out, Out, Brief Candle

Many contemporary artists establish a link between history or literature and some of their works, drawing inspiration from the past. Few are the artists interacting with our present history, stating their views through their art, not afraid to take a stand, even if at the risk of being at the centre of controversy or fierce discussions. Adel Abdessemed (b 1971, Algeria) is clearly part of the latter group, as he has never been reluctant to speak out, make statements that he felt had to be made. This should be pointed out at a time when courage, in all its forms, is a quality that is scarce, even more so in the art world.

His latest works continue his investigation of the world we live in, zooming in on the migration issue and the present conflict in Ukraine. Tonight No Man Will Sleep, a sculpture depicting the artist himself with a burning globe on his shoulder, accurately summarises the present state of the world. The conflict in Ukraine is of concern to everybody, a crisis making the headlines on a daily basis and documented through footage and numerous photographs.

Olivia Sand

● Until 26 November, Gallerie Continua, Paris, galleriecontinua.com

Tonight no man will sleep (2022) by Adel Abdessemed, courtesy the artist and Gallerie Continua © Adel Abdessemed, Paris ADAGP 2022

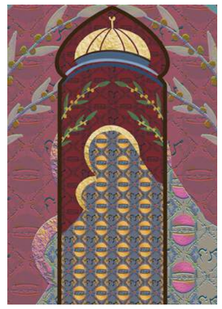
Islamic Arts Diary

By Lucien de Guise

MORE THAN THE MADONNA

Women in traditional Islamic art are rarely visible unless they are part of a Mughal or Persian romantic situation. One of the few exceptions is Mariam, known to the Western world as the Blessed Virgin Mary. In keeping with Muslim custom, the Birmingham-based contemporary artists Farwa Moledina prefers to put the Arabic honorific 'a.s.' equivalent of 'blessed' after her name. The same applies to three other women whose role in Islamic culture is almost as important as Mariam. These extra individuals who have been promised paradise are Aasiya, Khadijah and Fatimah. Together they are the inspiration for a remarkable work of art on display at a gallery that doesn't receive enough attention, in an English city whose artistic resources are equally overlooked. *Women of Paradise* (2022) is on display at the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham.

Farwa Moledina's work consists of four wooden frames, hinged together, encasing digitally printed textiles and embroidery. The arched shape of the frames resembles the mihrab prayer niches in the walls of mosques that indicate the direction of prayer. In appearance, rather than function, they are not so different from the niches in which statues of the Madonna might be found in a church. The textiles and embroidery are composed of patterns that relate to the identities of the women represented. For example, one of the least known of the four women, Aasiyah (the adoptive mother of Moses, or Musa in Arabic) is made from images of rivers, baskets, pyramids and Qur'anic verses relevant to her story.



Women of Paradise – Maryam (a.s.) (2021) by Farwa Moledina, digital illustration, 30.5 x 40.7 cm © Courtesy the artist

Women of Paradise – Fatimah (a.s.) (2021) by Farwa Moledina, digital Illustration, 40.5 x 50.1 cm © Courtesy the artist

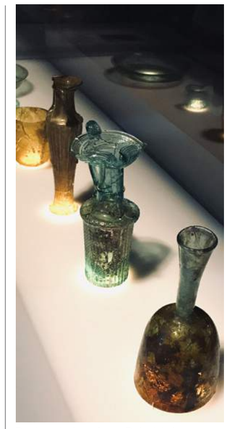
The patterns will be familiar to viewers acquainted with elements of Islamic design such as recurrence, symmetry and abstraction. Islamic art at its most timeless encourages reflection of the self and the universe, and the exploration of what lies beneath the visual surface of this world. In the work's textiles and embroidery, shapes are placed within other shapes until a pattern begins to emerge. These multi-layered compositions are an invitation to examine preconceived notions of women within Islamic tradition. The Ikon Gallery – whose very name presents a conundrum – has been encouraging this sort of engagement with the public for almost 60 years. It is exciting to see dialogue with the Islamic world that involves a home-grown artist from Birmingham. Intriguingly, this exhibition finishes soon after the Christian special month dedicated to Mary came to an end.

● Women of Paradise at the Ikon Gallery ends 13 November

RESTORING UNITY

From Birmingham to Bloomsbury is a huge leap in terms of popular exposure. At the British Museum another small exhibition has just ended. As with the work of Farwa Moledina it perhaps didn't receive as much attention as it deserved. One important element of the display also seems to have been ignored by the museum: the continuity of culture in the eastern Mediterranean from Roman times until well into the era of Muslim dominance.

The works are arranged in one showcase and show ancient glass in many different manifestations, all derived from a common sense of form following function. The other thing they all have in common is that they are survivors of a recent tragedy. In August 2020, a massive stockpile of ammonium nitrate exploded in Beirut. An impressive projection in the gallery gives some of the feel of a catastrophe in which at least 218 people died and 300,000 were displaced. A few kilometres away from the scene of the blast, at the Archaeological Museum at the American University of Beirut, a case displaying 74 glass vessels was destroyed. These shards were mixed with those from the case and surrounding windows. The story of the restoration of eight of these vessels is a powerful expression of the grief, solidarity and recovery of the people of Lebanon. A collaboration between the AUB and the British Museum shows the UK giving back to the worldwide community, in terms of time and expertise at least.



Restored glass from Beirut brings home a message of hope

Staff from the Archaeological Museum worked with British Museum conservators to restore Roman, Byzantine and Islamic examples, which are now whole again – give or take some new additions to pieces that will never be found. Ranging from the first to the ninth century, the bowls, flask, beaker, jug and cup bear witness to the rich cultural heritage of a region that has experienced many different religions. Now that the exhibition is over, the vessels will return home to Beirut, where they might encourage some of the unity that this ancient land has been missing for a long time.

CREATIONS GREAT AND SMALL

In London, where so many of the Lebanese and other diasporas have settled, there is a profusion of wares from the Middle East for sale. This is still the capital of the Islamic-art market. In some ways it is good to see more of the standard wares for sale at the big three auction houses. The bread-and-butter of the market is what collectors are likely to display in their homes, as they did a century ago. There are, of course, the exceptional lots that will bring in the publicity, but it is often the less expensive offerings that have the more immediate appeal.

At Christie's, for example, with most of the lots estimated in the thousands of pounds, it is conspicuous when you encounter 'a rare imperial Mughal pashmina carpet, circa 1650'. With an upper estimate of £3,500,000, this is a huge amount for a carpet – even with Sterling as low as it is. The design is stunning and the feel divine; it is made of pashmina after all. The lengthy catalogue essay is filled with wonder, plus a useful quote from the likeable Emperor Jahangir, who appears to have been inspired by a Kashmiri holiday to commission this carpet: 'Kashmir is a garden of eternal spring… The red rose, the violet and the narcissus grow of themselves; in the fields, there are all kinds of flowers and all sorts of sweet-scented herbs more than can be calculated'. From this time onwards, floral carpets became the future.

Imperial Mughal pashmina carpet, Northern India, circa 1650. Courtesy of Christie's

For around one thousandth of the price of this carpet, Christie's has an engaging fragment from Islamic Spain. In silk, rather than pashmina wool, it also has links to the Metropolitan Museum, where the carpet above was displayed in an important exhibition. With the 15th-century silk-lampas fragment it is a wild beast and not flowers that provides the focus. Probably an heraldic lion of the Nasrid dynasty, it hints at the coming together of the Muslim and Christian worlds that happened in the Iberian Peninsula over many centuries.

At Sotheby's there are similar extremes of pricing and publicity. At one end of the spectrum is a painted folio from the greatest-ever compilation of Persian illuminated paintings, the *Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp* (formerly known as the Houghton Shahnameh). Painted circa 1530, it is among the world's true masterpieces, despite being just one page of a dispersed book, probably by the legendary Mirza 'Ali. The catalogue essay is almost a book in itself and, as with Christie's, comes with plenty of scholarship and some useful quotes. The painting features the heroic Rustam reclaiming his horse, which the poet Firdausi described as being: 'Like saffron petals, mottled red and gold; Brave as a lion, a camel for its height, An elephant in massive strength and might'.

The provenance of this work is almost as impressive as the painting. For centuries it was owned by the Ottoman sultans before becoming part of the Rothschild collecting dynasty for more than 50 years. For me, one of the most exciting but least discussed aspects of the work is that it was exhibited at the Musée des arts décoratifs, Paris in 1903. The title of the show was the *Exposition d'art Islamique,* which would make this among the earliest examples of the term 'Islamic art' being used.

Qur'an, Sub-Saharan West Africa, second half 19th century. Courtesy of Sotheby's

At the same sale, again for a thousandth of the Persian star lot (£6,000,000 upper estimate) is a Sub-Saharan Qur'an. These have become more collectable in recent years, and there is another one for sale at Christie's. Now that African culture is so widely admired, there should be more research on these manuscripts. Most of the analysis so far is of the paper, which is interesting enough but only tells a small part of the story of Islam in what used to be called 'Black Africa'. Usually arranged unbound in a leather case, they have an energy that is absolutely irrepressible and a world away from the fussy refinement of Ottoman examples in particular. As they are already in the form of loose leaves they will no doubt one day be 'dispersed' in the same way as the Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp.

At Bonhams, the lots that have received the most attention are by no means the most expensive. Instead, they relate to that most enigmatic category of Englishmen: the aristocrat who becomes so sympathetic to Islam he converts to that faith. Rowland George Allanson Allanson-Winn, 5th Baron Headley (1855-1935) was one of these. Later known as Shaikh Rahmatullah al-Farooq, he was serious enough to undertake the Hajj pilgrimage at a time when it was still no easy ride. Various items of his are for sale, mainly relating to his journey to Mecca. Significantly, he founded the British Muslim Society in 1914. Its purpose was as relevant then as it would be now – to show how Islam was not antagonistic to Christianity. This former boxing blue from Cambridge was made of tough stuff for any era, undertaking his pilgrimage at the age of 68. He was offered the kingship of Albania, which was looking for a Muslim ruler. Lord Headley turned it down as, quite sensibly, he feared that he would become an assassination target.

A signed photograph of Lord Headley by C Vandyk, London, between 1923 and 1935.Courtesy of Bonhams

ASIAN ART IN COLOGNE

An important Ming period bronze figure of Bixia Yuanjun, Goddess of the Morning Clouds China, (1368-1644), bronze and lacquer, height 59.3 cm
Out of a group of Chinese bronzes from the collection of a former member of the German medical corps, active in Tsingtao, China 1906–1909

LEMPERTZ
1845

AUCTIONS

9 December China, Tibet / Nepal, India, Southeast Asia, Japan
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T +49-221-92 57 29-74 asian@lempertz.com