Text for Gallery Guide for:

Masterpieces of Japanese Art
February 14 to August 30, 2015
Cincinnati Art Museum

Rediscovered Treasures

Welcome to *Masterpieces of Japanese Art,* the first exhibition of over one hundred Japanese artworks selected from the important yet little-explored permanent collection of the Cincinnati Art Museum. The Art Museum, one of the oldest in the United States, has an extensive collection of over three thousand Japanese objects, including paintings, screens, prints, ceramics, lacquer and metal wares, ivory carvings, arms and armor, dolls, masks, cloisonné, textiles, and costumes.

The Art Museum's Japanese art collection provides not only a glimpse into six centuries of Japanese aesthetics, but also a unique regional perspective. By documenting the importance of the collection and delving into its historical significance and ties to Cincinnati's community of collectors, this exhibition intends to provide a new resource to the community for years to come.

Cincinnati's Japanese Mania in the Nineteenth Century

Artworks for this section: Figure 1: *Amaterasu,* 2004.1130, Gift of Jeanann Gray Dunlap
Figure 2: *Sutra,* 1985.12, J. J. Emery Fund
Figure 3: *Admonition Drum,* 1913.706–7, William Watts Taylor

In the late nineteenth century, Cincinnati became the flourishing cultural center of the Midwest. As a result the Art Museum's Japanese collection chronicles Cincinnati's Japanese Mania *(Japonisme)* or fascination with all things Japanese. Contributions of a large and tightly knit group of local leaders formed the core of the collection. Contributors included Alfred Taber Goshorn (1832–1915), the first director of the Cincinnati Art Museum, and Maria Longworth Nichols Storer (1849–1932), founder of the Rookwood Pottery Company.

Alfred Traber Goshorn was also the director-general of the International Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia (1876) and the organizer of the Thirteenth Cincinnati Industrial Exposition (1886). Through these expositions many Americans were introduced to Japanese art for the first time. The Cincinnati exposition featured a Japanese Village to further spur the city's growing *Japonisme* fever. Many of the earliest gifts of Japanese art to the Art Museum, including those from Goshorn and members of the Women's Art Museum Association (WAMA) were collected before the official opening of the Art Museum in 1886. Also testifying to the city's early interest in Japanese art were the frequent sales and exhibitions of Japanese art in the 1870s and 1880s by local art galleries.

Between 1880 and 1900, the Art Museum received several substantial gifts from the city's major collectors of Japanese art. Of special significance were 47 ceramics and 66 sword fittings from

Dr. Charles Muscroft (1820–1888, figure #20) and more than five hundred pieces of Japanese ceramics from the Rookwood Pottery (figure #10).

The collection entered another period of major growth in the first half of the twentieth century with significant gifts from William Watts Taylor (1847–1913, figure #3), John W. Bookwalter (1837– 1915, figure #20) and Robert Blum (1857–1903, figures #4–7, 11–13). In the 1950s and 1960s, with the joint efforts of Philip Rhys Adams, the Art Museum Director (1945–73), John J. Emery, President and Chairman of the CAM Board of Trustees (1945–76, figures #1, 9, 22) and Mr. and Mrs. Thomas O. Dunlap (figure #2), the collection gained further depth through purchases and gifts. The collection has continued to grow since then.

Painting (three sections)

Hanging Scrolls – artworks for this section:

Figure 4: *Female Ghost*, 1906.5, Robert Blum
Figure 5: *Flying Cranes*, 1906.13.1-2, Robert Blum
Figure 6: *Actor with Black Mask and Bells,* 1906.14, Robert Blum

Comprised of handscrolls, hanging scrolls and screens, Japanese painting is a major strength of the Art Museum's Asian art collection. The Art Museum owes a debt of gratitude to Ernest Fenollosa (1853 – 1908), the renowned American scholar of Japanese art, who guided the purchases of one of the Art Museum's major donors, Joseph C. Thoms (figure #8). Fenollosa moved to Japan in 1878 to teach at Tokyo Imperial University. He worked in Japan from 1878 – 1890 and again from 1897 – 1900. During those years Fenollosa did much to preserve Japanese art both in Japan and later in the U.S. as curator at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Many Japanese paintings are mounted on luxurious silks and displayed as hanging scrolls. Collectors show them during the appropriate season or for a tea ceremony, then roll them up and store them in special wooden boxes. There are four hanging scrolls from the collection of Robert Blum in this exhibition (figures # 4–6).

Donor Highlight: Robert Blum, a native Cincinnati painter, visited Japan from 1890 to 1892 on a commission from *Scribner's Magazine* to illustrate Sir Edwin Arnold's series of articles on Japan, titled "Japonica." While in Japan, Blum fell in love with Japanese art and built a sizable collection. One of the first gifts of Japanese paintings to the Art Museum was a group of twenty-three paintings from his estate. Blum also donated exquisite *Nō* masks (figures #11–13).

Handscroll – artworks for this section:

Figure 7: *Animal Scroll*, 1906.4, Robert Blum (three details)

Handscrolls are drawn horizontally and typically used to illustrate continuous landscape scenes or narratives with or without text. The viewer unrolls a section of about twelve inches to admire the painting and read the text and then rolls up that section to reveal the next. One outstanding example is the *Animal Story Scroll* by Ogawa Haritsu (1663–1747). This handscroll illustrates two traditional Japanese folk tales but portrays the poets of the original story as bush warblers and frogs.

Artworks for this section – folding screens:

Figure 8: *Presentation of a Prince,* 1982.6, The Thoms Collection
Figure 9: *Ox Cart Screens,* 1964.720-1, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John J. Emery (across two pages)

While many Japanese paintings are mounted on scrolls others are displayed on folding screens. These screens were used to decorate the public and private rooms of wealthy collectors from the eighth century onward. Ranging from two to five feet tall and often found in pairs, painted screens were changed seasonally. A folding screen from Joseph C. Thoms (1839–1919, figure #8), *Presentation of a Prince,* depicts an episode from the first chapter of the *Genji Monogatari (The Tale of Genji)*. This screen is the only surviving work attributed to the late sixteenth century female artist, Chiyo Mitsuhisa, the daughter of Tosa Mitsunobu and wife of Kanō Motonobu. Recognizing its importance, the National Research Institute of Cultural Properties, Tokyo, funded this screen's restoration work in 2013.

Donor Highlight: Joseph Thoms was a successful Cincinnati businessman and philanthropist. Thoms visited Japan in 1897 and with the advice of Ernest Fenollosa, acquired a large group of Japanese paintings and screens. Mrs. Muriel H. Davidson donated most of the Thoms collection to the Art Museum in honor of her grandfather. This includes the hanging scrolls *Deer* by Azuma Toyo and *Woman Reading a Letter* by Katsushika Hokusai.

Since the twelfth century, Japanese artists have been fascinated with *Genji Monogatari* and have produced folding screens, hand scrolls, illustrated albums, woodblock prints and in modern times, *manga* (cartoons) and *anime* (animated films). *Genji Monogatari* was written in the early eleventh century by Murasaki Shikibu, a lady in waiting in Japan's Imperial court in Kyoto. Murasaki wrote it to entertain the ladies of the court. The fifty-four chapters of the book, considered to be the first modern novel in Japanese literature, followed the life of Hikaru Genji (Shining Genji or the Shining Prince), the son of the emperor, and a low-ranking but beloved concubine. The tale concentrates on Genji's romantic life and describes the customs of the aristocratic society of the time.

Ceramics

Artwork for this section: Figure 10: *Teapot*, 1898.171, Gift of the Rookwood Company

Japanese ceramics are admired all over the world. Since the twelfth century, hundreds of kilns have produced exquisite works in stoneware, earthenware, and porcelain. The development of the tea ceremony inspired artists to create unique works with distinctive shapes, glazes and brushwork. The Art Museum's ceramic collection includes approximately 800 pieces from a wide variety of nineteenth century kilns. Maria Longworth Nichols Storer (1849–1932), founder of the Rookwood Pottery Company in 1880, was a major contributor to this collection.

In 1887 Storer hired a Japanese decorator, Kitaro Shirayamadani (1865–1948), a painter from Kanazawa. Shirayamadani not only created a "Japanese Rookwood" style, but also helped the art pottery collect more than five hundred Japanese ceramics directly from Japan. Rookwood originally collected these works, mostly teapots, sake bottles, and sake cup stands, for study purposes; they later donated them to the Art Museum in 1898 and 1900.

Donor Highlight: Storer's strong interest in Japanese ceramics led her to Edward Morse, the noted scholar and collector of Japanese ceramics. In 1886, Storer sponsored Morse's lecture in Cincinnati and she purchased 672 pieces of Japanese ceramics from his collection which she loaned to the Art Museum to display. This large collection was later returned to her heirs, but its influence on Rookwood pottery is undeniable.

Nō Masks

Artworks for this section: Figure 11: *Maijo* (Old Man), 1921.251, Robert Blum
Figure 12: *Ghost*, 1921.254, Robert Blum
Figure 13: *Oto* (Female), 1921.253, Robert Blum

Nō is a classical Japanese drama known for very slow movements and traditional chant-based musical accompaniment. This unique art form combines mime, dance, chanting, music, and costume. Patronized by the Ashikaga shoguns in the late fourteenth century, the *Nō* drama, like tea ceremony, calligraphy, and ink painting, is closely linked to Zen aesthetics and philosophy. The masks worn by the principal actors play a central role in the performance.

Typically, *Nō* masks are grouped into five broad categories: gods, men, women, ghosts, and demons. Each mask has a name, which indicates its character, age, rank and form. *Nō* masks are made of Japanese cypress and layered with paint mixed with deer-hide glue. The masks here each represent a different character and are all exquisitely carved masterpieces.

Caption: 1921.251
This mask portrays a *maijo* (an old man) and was typically used to represent the fishermen and woodcutters who appear in the first act of many *Nō* plays. In the second act, however, these men turn out to be gods, wraiths, or tormented souls.

Caption: 1921.254
This male ghost mask may have been used for the *Nō* play *Uto*, in which the ghost of a man dances out the misery he must suffer as retribution for his previous ill deeds. This fine mask, which skillfully evokes the pain and despair of a forsaken spirit, was carved by Zekan Yoshimitsu (?–1616), the founder of the Ōno Deme line of *Nō* mask makers. He achieved great success through his ability to create masks that capture the true essence of the characters' subtle emotions.

Caption: 1921.253
This is a *kyōgen* mask of an *oto* (an adult female) intended to convey the charm of a female character. *Kyōgen* plays are comic interludes played between acts in a *Nō* performance in order to relieve the tension of the drama. *Kyōgen* masks typically portray nameless characters and ordinary people, including men and women, deities, demons, and spirits of animals and plants.

Netsuke

Artworks for this section: Figure 14: *Netsuke,* ivory, 1996.316, Margaret Pogue Fisk Netsuke Collection
Figure 15: *Netsuke,* ivory, 1996.317, Margaret Pogue Fisk Netsuke Collection

Since traditional Japanese clothing had no pockets, people carried small personal items in *inro* (pouches or compartmented boxes) hung from the sash of their kimono or robe. *Netsuke* are toggles attached by a cord to the pouch or box to hold the case in place and keep it from slipping through the sash.

From the seventeenth century on, *netsuke* were in great demand and came to be appreciated as a specialized art. *Netsuke* needed to be strong, lightweight and smooth so as not to snag fine cloth. Most were made of ivory, wood, horn or lacquer— materials strong enough to withstand daily use. They are often decorated with interesting and whimsical motifs, including literary, theatrical and folk characters; deities and demons; the twelve animals of the zodiac; and flora and fauna.

Ox-cart

Artwork for this section: Figure 16: Ox Cart Model, 1911.1371, Gift of Mrs. Etsu Sugimoto

During the Heian Period (794 – 1185) ox carts were used only by the Japanese nobles. Their lacquer work decorations and fabric hangings sometimes announced the rank and aesthetic achievements of the occupant. They are closely associated with the court life and *Genji Monogatari*. This model might have been created for a wealthy family to display in their home.

Donor Highlight: Etsu and Matsuo Sugimoto owned a Japanese novelty store called The Nippon, located in downtown Cincinnati. They brought this beautifully handcrafted ox-cart model to Cincinnati from Japan. In 1911, Etsu donated it to the Art Museum after Matsuo passed away and the shop was closed. Etsu later chronicled the twelve years of her life in Cincinnati in her book, *A Daughter of the Samurai*.

Suit of Japanese Armor

Artwork for this section: Figure 17: Armor 1892.2783, Museum Purchase

Japanese armor was a collaboration between artists and craftsmen using iron, steel, gold, silver, lacquer, textiles and leather. Together they created light, flexible yet strong armor for ceremonies and for battle. The chest plate and helmet often carried the family crest and provided space for narrative and symbolic designs. Note the gold sun and the splashing silver wave on the breast plate. Japan is known as the Land of the Rising Sun and is a nation of islands surrounded by oceans.

While the armor is highly decorated, the suit was constructed for use in battle for a high-ranking member of a samurai family. Both halves of the chest armor have a luxurious gilt lining, an

indication of the high rank of the owner. The small brocade bag on the left hip may have held materials to stanch battlefield wounds.

Donor Highlight: This is one of two suits of Japanese armor the Art Museum purchased in 1892 from Dr. Adeline Kelsey. The doctor's trips to Japan and brief sojourn in Cincinnati tell a touching tale of how she helped two young Japanese women obtain their medical degrees in the late-nineteenth century.

Dr. Kelsey first went to Japan as a medical missionary in 1885. She worked for five years as a doctor and teacher in a girls' school in Yokohama. Two of her students, Kaku Sudo (1869–1963) and Hana Abe (1873–1922), wanted to become doctors. Kelsey brought them to Cincinnati in 1891 to attend the Laura Memorial Woman's Medical College, one of the few U.S. medical schools that accepted female students at the time. Laura Memorial later became the composite Department of Medicine of the University of Cincinnati.

To pay for their tuition, Dr. Kelsey sold the Art Museum two suits of Japanese armor and a piece of Japanese brocade, all dated to the nineteenth century. Also, through the assistance of the Art Museum, Kelsey and her two protégés created a special exhibition in January 1893 to sell the objects of Japanese art to pay for Sudo and Abe's tuition. The exhibition included more than forty Japanese bronzes, swords, lacquer wares, and musical instruments. Kelsey had received most of the collection as gifts in appreciation of her charity work in Japan. Thanks to Kelsey's assistance, in 1896 both Sudo and Abe graduated and they returned with Kelsey to Japan where they founded the Negishi Hospital near Yokohama

Swords and Sword Fittings

Artworks for this section:
Figure 18: Sword Fittings, (numbers subject to change), Gift of the Heirs of John W. Bookwalter
Figure 19: Long Sword, L501.1891, Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Hinkle

This pair of swords consists of a *katana* (long sword) and *wakizashi* (short sword), which would have been carried together by a samurai; they are known collectively as *daishō* (large and small). The blade of the short sword is a fine example of a style that features a flat, ridgeless blade with *hirazukari* (a triangular cross section). The scabbards of both swords are decorated with two distinct patterns on each side: one side features a lacquered pattern of clouds representing the sky during the day; the other side is polished lacquer with sprinkled gold foil representing a myriad of stars in the night sky. The sterling silver *tsuba* (sword guard) is in the shape of a dragon. A small utility blade also decorated with a small dragon next to Mount Fuji is fitted on the outside of the scabbard of the short sword.

The blade of the long sword was made by the first generation of the Masatoshi family, Etchu (no) kami Masatoshi (active late sixteenth–early seventeenth century), a swordsmith of the Mishina school of swordsmithing in Kyoto.

The group of sword fittings represented here is selected from the Art Museum's collection of over three hundred pieces. It includes *tsuba* (guards), *fuchi* (encircle hilt), *kozuka* (utility knife

handles), and *kashira* (hilt caps) made with various metals with overlay and inlay. The majority of the collection was donated by John W. Bookwalter (1839–1915) in 1909.

Japanese Friendship Doll

Artwork for this section: Figure 20: Miss Okinawa, 1929.27, Gift of Committee on World Friendship Among Children

A Japanese Friendship Doll, Miss Okinawa, was created for a doll exchange program between the United States and Japan. The program was initiated by Dr. Sidney Gulick (1860–1945), an American missionary who lived in Japan from 1888 to 1913. In 1926, he formed the Committee on World Friendship Among Children in order to promote peace and goodwill between the two nations in a time of rising tensions. A year later, the committee sent 12,739 dolls to Japan in time for *Hina Matsuri*, the annual doll festival in March. Japan reciprocated by commissioning the best doll-makers in Japan to make fifty-eight friendship dolls, each representing a specific prefecture, city, or region of Japan. Miss Okinawa was made by the famous master Ota Tokuhisa (no dates).

Kimono

Artwork for this section: Figure 21: *Kimono,* 1964.783, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John J. Emery

The kimono is the traditional Japanese garment for men and women and translates as "thing to wear." Kimono are T-shaped full-length robes with straight sides that fall to the ankle. They have long, wide sleeves and are wrapped around the body and secured by a wide sash that is tied in the back, called an obi.

The Japanese typically classify kimono by the style of the *sode*, or sleeves. This *furisode* (swinging sleeves) would have been worn by a young unmarried woman. Because kimono are constructed from large expanses of straight-edged pieces of fabric, they offered Japanese artists a perfect canvas for artistic expression. Layers of embellishment decorate this piece. The fabric itself is woven with a subtle pattern of auspicious symbols, including coins, clouds, and scrolls. The more apparent ornamentation includes *shibori* (resist dyeing), embroidered *kiri* (paulownia) leaves and flowers, and colorful phoenixes in flight. Both the phoenix and the paulownia tree were originally associated with the imperial household.

Sumo

Artwork for this section: Figure 22: *Sumo Mawashi*, L496.1891, Lent by Charles Hinkle

Sumo wrestling remains a popular traditional sport in Japan. The wrestlers wear a thick wrapped loincloth called a *mawashi* for both training and competition. It measures approximately two feet wide and up to 29.5 feet long and is folded and wrapped to form the garment. Depending on the rank of the wrestler, the *mawashi* can be made of cotton or silk. During the Edo period (1615–1868), the ceremonial silk *mawashi* worn by higher-ranked wrestlers typically included a large

apron that was often decorated with embroidery and tassels. Today, wrestlers only wear the embroidered *mawashi* during the ring-entering ceremony at the beginning of a tournament. This ceremonial nineteenth century *mawashi* is made of dark blue silk decorated with two large embroidered golden butterflies and two Japanese characters, which literally mean "mountain man," an appropriately masculine ring name. The apron purportedly belonged to a defeated wrestler, who, in a fit of dejection, disposed of this *mawashi*.

Back page acknowledgement:

Donated in Memory of Frank and Margaret Linhardt