

April 13 – May 26 2024



Special Exhibition

The Legend of Sesshū Birth of a Master Painter

Sesshū (1420–1506?) is widely acknowledged to be one of the most pivotal figures in the history of Japanese art. The fact that an unprecedented six of his paintings have been designated National Treasures underscores the profound admiration he commands in modern Japan. Yet, this recognition is not based solely upon the excellence of his artworks; it also stems from the ways in which Sesshū's reputation evolved over time.

This exhibition traces perceptions of Sesshū during the early modern period (late sixteenth through late nineteenth century) to examine how the enduring reverence for this "saint of painting" was shaped. During the Momoyama period (1573–1615), the Unkoku and Hasegawa schools proudly identified themselves as artistic successors of Sesshū. In the Edo period (1615–1868), artists of the preeminent Kano school eagerly integrated Sesshū's techniques into the very foundation of their own signature painting style. Sesshū's artistic charisma inspired not only these major schools of Chinese-influenced ink painting (*kanga*), but also influenced a diverse range of painters working outside these traditions, who learned from Sesshū's works in order to chart new frontiers in Japanese painting.

Conceptualizing the reception of Sesshū's legacy is inherently complex and requires a nuanced understanding that synthesizes multiple perspectives. Through an exploration of the manifold ways in which Sesshū was perceived and interpreted over time, this exhibition seeks to shed light on the intricate journey that culminated in Sesshū's emergence as a legendary "saint of painting."



Important Cultural Property
Birds and Flowers of the Four Seasons (right screen)
By Sesshū Tōyō (1420–1506?)
Kyoto National Museum



Mount Fuji, Miho no Matsubara, and Seiken-ji Temple
Attributed to Sesshū Tōyō (1420–1506?),
inscription by Zhan Zhonghe (dates unknown)
Eisei Bunko Museum, Tokyo

June 18–August 4 2024

Special Viewing Commemorating the Completion of Conservation

Dōmaru Armor with Blue Lacing

This fifteenth-century *Dōmaru Armor with Blue Lacing* has long been renowned for its refined coloration and classical appeal, as evidenced by its inclusion in the book of celebrated artworks, *Shūko jissshu (Collected Antiquities in Ten Categories)*, published in the year 1800 by the daimyo connoisseur Matsudaira Sadanobu. Armor is inherently a composite art form, comprising not only metal fittings, but also silk braided cords, woven silk textiles, lacquer, and leather. As some of these organic materials exhibited pronounced signs of degradation, the conservation of this armor was essential for it to be passed on to future generations. It is being exhibited for the first time following the completion of a monumental conservation project.



Gallery 1F-5



Important Cultural Property
Dōmaru Armor with Blue Lacing
Kyoto National Museum

June 18–August 4 2024

Feature Exhibition Commemorating the 430th Memorial of Toyotomi Hidetsugu

Toyotomi Hidetsugu and Zuisen-ji Temple

Toyotomi Hidetsugu (1568–1595) was born as the nephew of the military ruler Toyotomi Hideyoshi. He gradually rose to the position of *kanpaku* (chief adviser to the emperor); however, over time, Hidetsugu grew apart from his powerful uncle and was eventually forced to commit suicide. Calamity also befell Hidetsugu's wife and children: they were executed on the Sanjō Kawara riverbank in Kyoto along with all his other family members. The temple of Zuisen-ji was built on their execution site to mourn the souls of Hidetsugu and his family. This exhibition commemorates the 430th memorial of Toyotomi Hidetsugu's death by showcasing artworks related to his family, which are still preserved at Zuisen-ji to this day.



Pair of Cranes, Bamboo, and Plum
By Itō Jakuchū (1716–1800)
Idemitsu Museum of Arts, Tokyo
(on view April 30–May 26, 2024)



Tale of Lord Hidetsugu (detail)
Zuisen-ji Temple, Kyoto



Galleries 1F-2,3,4

October 8–December 1 2024

Special Exhibition

Hōnen and Pure Land Buddhism

The Japanese priest Hōnen (also known as Hōnen-bō Genkū, 1133–1212) was the founder of the Jōdo Shū, Japan's first Pure Land school of Buddhism. He lived amid a turbulent era spanning from the end of the Heian period (794–1185) to the beginning of the Kamakura period (1185–1333). During this age of upheaval, Hōnen gained widespread support by advocating that anyone, regardless of their rank or circumstances in life, has the potential to attain salvation and be born into the Pure Land paradise of Amida (Amitābha) Buddha after death. Hōnen taught that the means of achieving this is to repeatedly chant the prayerful invocation *Namu Amida Butsu* ("I take refuge in Amitābha Buddha"), known as the "nenbutsu."

This exhibition celebrates the 850th anniversary of the founding of Jōdo Shū through an exploration of the history of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism, beginning with Hōnen's founding of the school and extending through to the creation of various denominations by his disciples and the establishment of their respective doctrines. The exhibition also examines how Jōdo Shū grew and expanded significantly through the patronage of the Tokugawa shogunate during the Edo period (1615–1868). This historical journey will be traced through precious artworks, including numerous National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties associated with this school of Pure Land Buddhism.



National Treasure
Illustrated Biography of Master Hōnen (Hōnen Shōnin e-den), Volume 6 (detail)
Chion-in Temple, Kyoto
(on view Oct. 8–Oct. 20, 2024)



Important Cultural Property
Standing Amida (Amitābha) Buddha
Jōdo Shū (on view Oct. 8–Nov. 4, 2024)

August 7–September 8 2024

Feature Exhibition Commemorating the Acquisition of the Ueda Collection

The Artistry of Esoteric Buddhist Iconography

The medical doctor Ueda Osamu began acquiring Esoteric Buddhist iconographic drawings following World War II. Over time, he amassed one of the largest private collections in Japan. To commemorate the recent donation of the majority of this valuable collection by Ueda's family, the museum will exhibit a selection of these masterpieces, many of which have never been shown to the public before. Primarily composed of works dating from the Heian (794–1185) to Kamakura (1185–1333) periods that are distinguished by their clear provenances and high historical and artistic value, the Ueda Collection elegantly captures the allure of Esoteric Buddhist art.



Nilakanthaka Dhāraṇī and Iconographic Drawings of the Forty-Two Armed Figure
Kyoto National Museum



Galleries 1F-2, 3

January 2–February 2 2025

Feature Exhibition

Serpentine Delights Celebrating the Year of the Snake

Every January, the Kyoto National Museum presents a New Year's exhibition featuring the Chinese zodiac theme of that year. In honor of the Year of the Snake, the zodiac sign for 2025, the museum will showcase a variety of snake-themed artworks. This exhibition is designed to be enjoyed by visitors of all ages.



Textile with Lions, Snakes, and Flowering Plants
Kyoto National Museum



Gallery 1F-2

February 15–March 23 2025

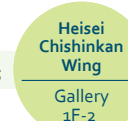
Feature Exhibition

Celebrating the Japanese Doll Festival

The Kyoto National Museum's annual exhibition of Japanese dolls features a variety of *hina* dolls traditionally displayed for the Doll Festival (*Hina Matsuri*) on March 3. The exhibits include lavish model palaces that were popular in the Kansai region, as well as various other dolls (*ningyō*) made in Kyoto.



Hina Dolls, Kyōho bina Type, known as Ōuchi bina
Kyoto National Museum



Gallery 1F-2

* Exhibition dates are subject to change, and visitor numbers may be limited. Please check www.kyohaku.go.jp and the Kyoto National Museum's Twitter feed (@KyotoNatMuseum) for the latest information.