



# KIMONO

Garment, Canvas, and Artistic Muse

TRAVELING EXHIBITION SERVICE



INTERNATIONAL  
ARTS AND ARTISTS

# KIMONO

## Garment, Canvas, and Artistic Muse



The Japanese kimono is one of the world's most admired garments—an instantly recognizable robe with a tall “T” form. Worn in Japan by women and men for well over 1,000 years, the kimono has been a canvas for spectacular woven, dyed, painted, printed, and embroidered designs by Japan's textile artists. After the late nineteenth century, when Japan opened to foreign diplomacy and trade, kimonos also became beloved in the West, as subjects for painters and inspiration for fashion designers. In recent decades, the influence of the kimono has even reached the work of contemporary artists around the world, who are creating kimono-inspired works in such diverse media as paper, fiber, metal, glass, and ceramic. This exhibition will explore the kimono as a garment in Japanese history and culture, present it as canvas for spectacular design and messaging, and will showcase the extraordinary works of ten international contemporary artists whose works of painting, sculpture, and fiber art have all been inspired in fascinating ways by this iconic garment.

The exhibition is presented in three sections and contains a total of 46 art works, including 20 kimonos, woodblocks prints, a woodblock printed book, and photographs, as well as 19 works of contemporary art made of paper, fiber, metal, ceramic and glass.

1. Pascale Camy, *Kimono de Printemps (Spring Kimono)*, 2019, Bronze plates, waxed cotton ties, lacquered metal rock, an polyester tassels, 74.4” x 71.9” x 19.68”, Photographed by Emmanuelle Grimaud, Image courtesy of Camy, © 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris..

# THE KIMONO AS GARMENT: FORM, HISTORY AND STYLE

This section will explore the evolution of the basic form of the kimono, explaining its relationship with narrow widths of woven cloth, rather than the curves of the human form. Samples of silk and cotton cloth will be on display alongside a diagram showing the overall structure and individual components of the garment. The history of the kimono, from its origins in continental Asia to its evolution into a sophisticated luxury garment, will also be examined. Woodblock prints of women at different points in Japanese history will illustrate some of the main styles of kimonos through the ages. Several different styles of kimonos will also be displayed—including an outer wedding kimono (*uchikake*), long-sleeved kimono (*furisode*), short-sleeved kimono (*kosode*), kimono jackets, and summer kimono. A video showing *kitsuke*, or “kimono dressing,” will also be shown.



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2. Artist unrecorded, *Furisode Kimono with Cranes, Pines and Other Auspicious Designs*, Japan, mid-20th century, Silk with yuzen stencil-dyed designs, 58" x 60", Photographed by Meher McArthur, Image courtesy of International Arts & Artists.  
3. Artist unrecorded, *Furisode Kimono with Design of Cherry Blossoms and Baskets*, Japan, mid-20th century, Silk with yuzen dyed designs, 58" x 60", Photographed by Meher McArthur, Image courtesy of International Arts & Artists.

## THE KIMONO AS CANVAS: DESIGN, SYMBOL AND MESSAGING

The second section will explore the kimono as a canvas for beautiful designs, often incorporating symbolism and messaging that are typically social and seasonal but can also be political and even religious. In this section, a reproduction of an Edo-period kosode design sample book will demonstrate how kimono designs were marketed—as images on the back of the garment, resembling paintings. Finished designs hand-painted, stenciled, or embroidered onto the surface of the silk often rivaled the artistry of actual paintings. Motifs relate to seasons—like cherry blossoms for spring or maple leaves for autumn—or express wishes for long life and happiness, like the pine tree and crane. Color schemes and compositions (and the length of sleeves) often signal the wearer's social and marital status, such as bright colors and bold motifs for a younger woman, and a darker background and more restrained decoration for an older woman.

This section will also feature a spectacular kimono depicting Mount Fuji by Itchiku Kubota (1917-2003), an artist who revived a nearly 500-year-old decorative technique to create breathtaking kimonos, sometimes composing and displaying them as installations. His work elevated the kimono to a work of contemporary art. Finally, two kimonos with unusual decoration—one a silk military propaganda kimono from World War II, and the other a hemp kimono jacket worn by a religious ascetic—demonstrate the breadth of political and spiritual messaging that can be featured on the canvas of a kimono.

4. Kubota Itchiku, *Ohn Fuji Burning Clouds*, 1994, Silk with tsujigahana dyed designs, Image courtesy of International Chodiev Foundation, © Arneb Holding PTE Ltd.



# THE KIMONO AS INSPIRATION FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

The final section includes 19 works by ten artists, all made of diverse artistic media but inspired by the kimono, illustrating how widely this garment has spread across the globe and beyond the world of dress and fashion. Maria Papatzelou, based in Thessaloniki, Greece, crafted two large *washi* paper kimonos and painted them exquisitely with lotuses and other spiritual motifs in a celebration of the universality and transformational power of this garment. Fiber artist Michael F. Rohde, based near Los Angeles, was inspired by a visit to Japan and by his interest in traditional textiles to weave wall hangings with abstracted kimono forms using wool, linen, and silk. Miya Ando, a Japanese artist residing in New York, works in anodized aluminum, piecing together light, reflective, and elegant wall hangings with a soft gradation of colors.

French artist CAMY also works in metal plates, but they are larger plates of bronze and steel with a rich, organic patina, evoking samurai armor. Hung on traditional kimono frames, her seasonal metal kimonos have a strong connection to nature. Georgia-based sculptor Gordon Chandler also recycles materials, but in his case, those are large, discarded steel drums with dazzling natural patinas of color that he opens out flat and cuts into kimono forms. An American artist based in Prague, Karen LaMonte has created remarkable sculptures in cast glass and molded clay that depict a woman dressed in a kimono, but with the wearer no longer present, thereby raising profound questions about identity and the act of wearing.

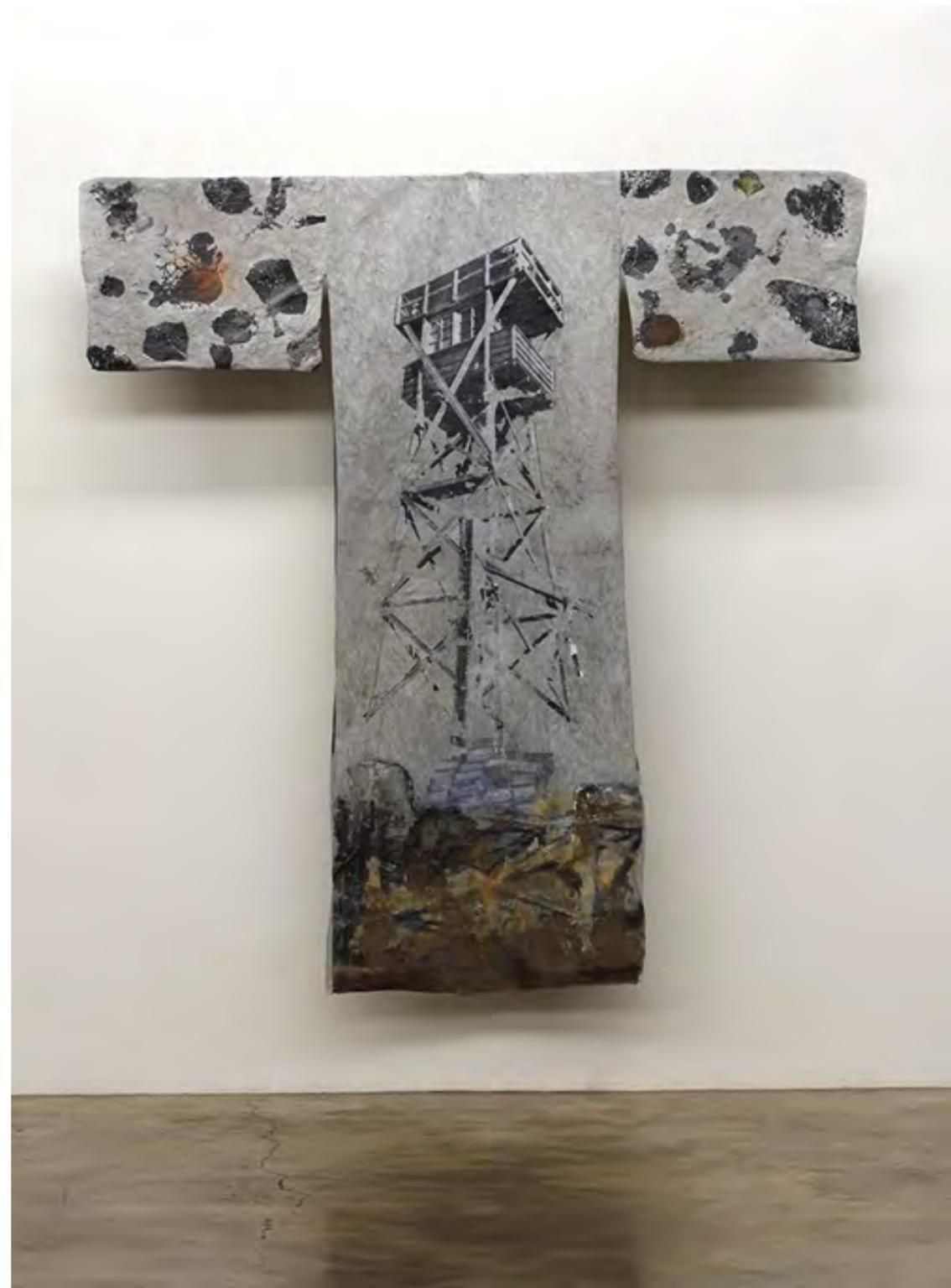
The kimono form has been used to tell stories about the Japanese American experience. Peter Liashkov, a Russian Jewish immigrant born in Argentina and now living in the Los Angeles area, chose the kimono form to honor the many thousands of Japanese Americans interned at Manzanar War Relocation Camp during World War II. Japanese American artist Reiko Fujii created a kimono for her daughter made up of glass photographs honoring her Japanese and Czech ancestors while Kristine Aono's thought-provoking sculptures—with an American flag, cherry blossoms and rope—reflect her experiences of the kimono being used as a tool for exoticizing, stereotyping, and limiting Japanese American women. Finally, Na Omi Shintani, also Japanese American, has deconstructed two kimonos, cutting holes into them to form skeleton kimonos that suggest her loosening ties to her cultural heritage.



5. Kristine Aono, *Rope Kimono*, 1996, Rope, fabric, DesignCast plaster, wire mesh, Japanese and North American maple leaves, wood, polystyrene, pigment, 58" x 48" x 24", Photographed by Jakrarat "Oi" Veerasarn, Image courtesy of Kristine Aono, © Kristine Aono.



6. Peter Liashkov, *Manzanar Kimono*, 2014 Print transfer, acrylic, ashes on propylene fabric, 11" x 6", Photographed by Ellen Gianportone, Image courtesy of Ellen Gianportone, © Peter Liashkov.





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7. Maria Papatzelou, *Kawakami Mythical Dream*, 2021, Japanese handmade paper (washi), pigments, aquarelle pencils, monoprinks, collage with old Japanese maps and sumi-e painting, 62.9" x 59.8", Photographed by Maria Papatzelou, Image courtesy of Maria Papatzelou, © Maria Papatzelou.



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8. Maria Papatzelou, *Second Skin*, 2020, Japanese handmade paper (washi), pigments, gold leaf, collage with maps and aquarelle and pencils, Photographed by Maria Papatzelou, Image courtesy of Maria Papatzelou, © Maria Papatzelou.

## About the Curator

# Meher McArthur

Meher McArthur is an Asian art historian specializing in Japanese art, with degrees from Cambridge University and London University's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). She was Curator of East Asian Art at Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena, CA (1998-2006) and for over a decade has curated traveling exhibitions for International Arts & Artists (IA&A), most recently *Washi Transformed: New Expressions in Japanese Paper* (2021-2024). Her most recent exhibition *SHIKI: The Four Seasons in Japanese Art* opened at the Sturt Haaga Gallery at Descanso Gardens in February 2023. She was Creative Director for the Storrier Stearns Japanese Garden, Pasadena (2014-2020), Academic Curator for Scripps College, Claremont (2018-2020) and Art and Cultural Director for JAPAN HOUSE Los Angeles (2020-2022). Her major publications include *Gods and Goblins: Folk Paintings from Otsu* (PAM, 1999), *Reading Buddhist Art* (Thames & Hudson, 2002) and *The Arts of Asia* (Thames & Hudson, 2005), *Confucius* (Pegasus Books, 2011), *Folding Paper: The Infinite Possibilities of Origami* (IA&A, 2012), *New Expressions in Origami Art* (Tuttle, 2017), *Washi Transformed: New Expressions in Japanese Paper* (IA&A, 2021) and *An ABC of What Art Can Be* (The Getty Museum, 2010).



9. Michael F. Rohde, *Nobility*, 2003, Hand-dyed wool on linen wrap, 47.5" x 36.5", Photographed by Andrew Neuhart, Image courtesy of the artist, © Michael F. Rohde.



I.



II.

FRONT Miya Ando, *Mofuko (Formal Mourning Kimono)*, 2024, Dyed Anodized Aluminum, Steel Rings, 71" x 48.4" x 1.5", Image courtesy of Miya Ando, © Miya Ando.  
 BACK I. Karen LaMonte, 踊り子 Odoriko (Dancer), 2011, Ceramic, glazed, gold leaf, 124 cm x 68 cm x 40 cm, Photographed by Martin Polak, Image courtesy of Karen LaMonte, © Karen LaMonte. II. Karen LaMonte, 美人 Bijin (Beautiful Person), 2013, Cast glass, 134 cm x 55 cm x 67 cm, Photographed by Martin Polak, Image courtesy of Karen LaMonte, © Karen LaMonte.

## EXHIBITION SPECIFICATIONS

### Number of Works

46 objects

### Organized by

International Arts and Artists, Washington, DC

### Curator

Meher McArthur

### Requirements

Moderate Security;  
2500 - 3500 square feet

### Participation Fee

Please inquire

### Shipping

IA&A makes all arrangements;  
exhibitors pay outgoing shipping costs within the contiguous US

### Booking Period

12 weeks

### Tour

Summer 2025 – Summer 2029

### Contact

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