

Exhibition: *Kimono for a Modern Age*

On View: July 5–October 19, 2014

Location: Pavilion for Japanese Art



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Kimono for a Modern Age features more than 30 dazzling kimono from the permanent collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) on display for the first time in the museum's Pavilion for Japanese Art. The exhibition is part of the 25th anniversary celebration of the Bruce Goff–designed building.

Sharon S. Takeda, senior curator and head of LACMA's Costume and Textiles Department and curator for *Kimono for a Modern Age* says, "We are excited to devote an entire exhibition in the Pavilion for Japanese Art to kimono from the first half of the 20th century. The vivid colors and bold graphic patterns, which include both traditional and modern motifs, will not only delight and surprise the viewer, but will shed light on the artistic and cultural changes that took place in modern Japan."

Exhibition Overview

Kimono for a Modern Age is on view in the east gallery of the Pavilion for Japanese Art, which typically showcases screen and scroll paintings. The garments will be shown in *tokonoma*—or traditional viewing spaces—as trios that relate in terms of motifs, themes, or approach to the graphic layout of patterns.

Cross-cultural enrichment of art, design, fashion, and technology between Japan and the West began during the Meiji period (1868–1912). Technology from Europe, such as synthetic dyes and textile manufacturing techniques, contributed to the development of Japan as a major producer and exporter of silk thread and textiles. The Japanese began wearing clothing styles from the West, while Westerners wore exotic kimono.

In the Taishō period (1912–26), a majority of urban women were still wearing kimono; however, synthetic dyes developed in Europe began to broaden and intensify the color palette of Japanese traditional dress.

By the early Shōwa period (1926–89), vibrant and dynamic designs inspired by art movements such as Art Deco, Surrealism, and Abstract Expressionism, as well as patterns commemorating an important arctic expedition and the beginning of space exploration, appear on kimono.

Cresting waves, with dots illustrative of sea foam, appeared in 17th- and 18th-century Japanese paintings, woodblock prints, textiles, and decorative arts. The ways that Japanese artists captured the beauty and power of nature with a simple stylized line or form, as seen on *Woman's Unlined Kimono (hitoe) with Waves and Dots*, inspired artists in the West and informed Western art movements such as Art Nouveau.

The starlike geometric design on *Woman's Kimono with Abstract Hemp-Leaf Pattern* resembles the popular abstract hemp-leaf (*asa no ha*) pattern. Bright primary colors and strong black lines modernize the traditional pattern, transforming it into a dramatic geometric composition with a three-dimensional effect. The vertical stripes can be interpreted as the fast-growing and long, strong stalks of the hemp plant, which is an auspicious motif signifying vigor and resilience.

The dramatic starlike design on *Woman's Kimono with Geometric Pattern* evokes the red sun rays depicted on the “rising sun flags” that symbolized good luck during the Edo period (1615–1868). This motif was adopted as Japan's national flag in 1870.

Woman's Kimono with Mountain Landscape is strikingly different from the traditional landscape designs popularly depicted on Japanese garments during the Edo period. Instead of a nostalgic nod to the past, this vividly colored landscape looks to modern aesthetics inspired by 20th-century art movements of the West, such as Fauvism, a style that favored vibrant, bold colors over naturalistic hues.

LACMA Costume and Textiles Collection

With more than 25,000 objects in its holdings, LACMA's Costume and Textiles Department is internationally recognized as one of the premier collections in the world. Its encyclopedic collection represents more than 100 cultures and 2,000 years of human creativity in the textile arts, from ancient American textiles to contemporary couture. The museum's 2010 major exhibition, *Fashioning Fashion: European Dress in Detail, 1700–1915*, traveled to the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin and the Musée de la Mode et du Textile/Les Arts Décoratifs in Paris. Upcoming projects include installations of Art Deco textiles, children's quilts, and a groundbreaking exhibition in 2016, *Reigning Men: Fashion in Menswear, 1715–2015*, which will explore the history of menswear from the 18th century to the present.

About LACMA

Since its inception in 1965, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) has been devoted to collecting works of art that span both history and geography, in addition to representing Los Angeles's uniquely diverse population. Today LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection that includes over 120,000 objects dating from antiquity to the present, encompassing the geographic world and nearly the entire history of art. Among the museum's strengths are its holdings of Asian art; Latin American art, ranging from masterpieces from the Ancient Americas to works by leading modern and contemporary artists; and Islamic art, of which LACMA hosts one of the most significant collections in the world. A museum of international stature as well as a vital part of Southern California, LACMA shares its vast collections through exhibitions, public programs, and research facilities that attract over one million visitors annually, in addition to serving millions through digital initiatives such as online collections, scholarly catalogues, and interactive engagement. LACMA is located in Hancock Park, 30 acres situated at the center of Los Angeles which also contains the Page Museum and La Brea Tar Pits and the forthcoming Academy Museum of Motion Pictures. Situated halfway between the ocean and downtown, LACMA is at the heart of Los Angeles.

Location: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90036 | 323 857-6000 | lacma.org

Image captions:

Left: *Woman's Unlined Kimono (hitoe) with Waves and Dots*, Japan, early Shōwa period (1926–89), c. 1930, Costume Council Fund, photo © 2014 Museum Associates/LACMA

Left, center: *Woman's Kimono with Abstract Hemp-Leaf Pattern*, Japan, early Shōwa period (1926–89), c. 1935, Costume Council Fund, photo © 2014 Museum Associates/LACMA

Right, center: *Woman's Kimono with Geometric Pattern*, Japan, mid-Shōwa period (1926–89), c. 1940, Costume Council Fund, photo © 2014 Museum Associates/LACMA

Right: *Woman's Kimono with Mountain Landscape*, Japan, mid-Shōwa period (1926–89), c. 1950, purchased with funds provided by Jacqueline Avant, photo © 2014 Museum Associates/LACMA

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