



February 8 - April 26, 2009
Presented by the Canton Museum of Art
in cooperation with ArtsinStark

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Japanese Blockbuster KIMONO to Open in Canton

KIMONO AS ART: The Landscapes of Itchiku Kubota will open at the Canton Museum of Art on February 8, after a successful first stop at the San Diego Museum of Art, where it earned the honor of being voted the "best art event of 2008" by the San Diego Tribunes's art critic, Robert Pincus. This is only the second time the exhibit has visited the U.S. The first U.S. visit was to the Smithsonian in 1995, where it sold more catalogues than any other show in Smithsonian history.

KIMONO AS ART: The Landscapes of Itchiku Kubota is being held at the Canton Museum of Art and is presented in cooperation with ArtsinStark. The exhibit is sponsored by the Timken Foundation of Canton, and the financial support of more than 30 companies and individuals, (see sponsor listing). Japanese Master Itchiku Kubota used specially made kimono as the canvas for his landscapes, celebrating his reverence for nature. Featured in the exhibit, will be 40 over-sized silk kimono, including the panoramic tapestry *Symphony of Light* made up of 30 kimono, plus 10 other kimono including pieces from his *Mt. Fuji Series* and individual works. Each work is approximately 7 feet tall and 5 feet wide, and takes a full year to complete. The exhibit will also feature a video presentation of Kubota's life and work.

M.J. Albacete, Executive Director of the Canton Museum of Art, calls KIMONO "phenomenal, exquisitely beautiful, and transcending anything the textile community has ever seen." According to ArtsinStark CEO, Robb Hankins, "experiencing KIMONO will be like seeing Japan for \$10 (cost of admission)." Then adds, "If you miss KIMONO in Canton and you can always fly to Japan and see it for about \$2,500."

Artist's Background:

Born in 1917, Itchiku Kubota (Itch-i-ku Ku-bot-ta) began learning the art of dyeing at the age of 14. When he was 20, he encountered a 350-year-old silk textile in the Tokyo National Museum. He was fascinated by its extraordinary beauty, design complexity and saturated colors. Frozen in place, Kubota studied it for three hours. "In a sudden moment," he said, "I encountered a source of boundless creativity which revealed to me my calling." The remnant before him was a rare example of the lost art of Tsujigahana*, which made use of a simple, subtle dye technique that had been lost over the centuries. Kubota promised himself that he would rediscover its secret. Then World War II broke out, and he found himself fighting in North Korea. He was taken prisoner by the Russians and put in a Siberian prisoner-of-war camp. Upon his release in 1951, he devoted his life to finding the lost dyeing process.

It was not, however, until 1977, when he was 60 years old, that he finally developed his own dyeing and decorating techniques that involve complex tie-dyeing and ink drawing, often on textiles woven with gold or silver threads. His labor-intensive secret methods, produced a rich layering of texture, ink drawing and color subtly suggestive of French Impressionism, an artistic style he particularly loved. His first exhibit in Tokyo was a huge success. Since then, Kubota has won international acclaim for his creativity and dedication to this extraordinarily laborious craft, and has exhibited throughout Japan and in Europe.

Kubota's dream was to live to the age of 100 – the time it would take to complete a series of 75 kimono that would hang side by side to form a monumental tapestry of the four seasons called *Symphony of Light*. Before his death on April 26, 2003, he completed the first 30 pieces, "Autumn" and "Winter." The anniversary of Master Kubota's death, April 26th, also happens to be the last day of the exhibit in Canton. Since his passing, his family, a team of apprentices, and his son, Satoshi Kubota, carry on the tradition of creating these extraordinary works of art. In an enormous gesture of generosity the Kubota family has agreed to let Itchiku Kubota's Kimono come to the United States for a second time.

The process:

Plain silk provides the foundation for each kimono. A brush and Aibana ink are used to apply the background pattern on the silk. To protect parts of the fabric from absorbing dye, vinyl thread is used, creating small head-like shapes. Each bulge is wrapped three times and then double knotted. In the most delicate part of the process, each small bulge is individually colored using a flat brush. The intricate color combinations and patterns for the final kimono must be memorized and colored correctly through the process to ensure the desired outcome. Each colored bulge is wrapped in vinyl and bound with thread to maintain its color. The textile piece is then steeped in dye. Some portions may then be uncovered or re-wrapped for additional dyeing to create layers and depth of color.

In order to fix the dye, the silk is steamed for 40 to 90 minutes. To create a particular color, the fabric may be rinsed as many as 15 times. The silk is only able to absorb a limited amount of dye, so repeated dyeing is essential to produce the rich colors. Long bamboo pieces, known as shinshi, are inserted horizontally to stretch the silk and keep it from shrinking as it dries. This step must be repeated after each rinse. The thread is carefully removed from the fabric to avoid damaging the silk. The fabric is then embroidered, gilded or hand-painted and then hemmed.

Events:

In Canton, 100 volunteers teamed up with the Museum and the ArtsinStark to create an 80-event cultural celebration that is offering up everything from Japanese tea ceremonies to bonsai tree demonstrations to sumo wrestling. A complete listing of related events can be found at www.kimonoexhibit.com.

More information:

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www.kimonoexhibit.com

The Canton Museum of Art

1001 Market Avenue North
Canton, Ohio 44702

Exhibit hours:

M-Sat. 10AM to 5PM

T, W & Th 10 AM to -9PM

Sun. 1to 5PM.

Admission:

\$10 for adults

\$7 for children 5-12 yrs, seniors over 60 yrs and students with ID.

Free for children under 12, with adult

Free for Canton Museum of Art members.

Parking is available on site, parking fees may apply. Hotels, fine dining and arts & entertainment venues are less than 10 minutes away; many are within walking distance

*Tsuji-gahana: In the early 20th century, Japanese dealers/collectors gave the name Tsuji-gahana to a group of textiles from the 15th and 16th century that has survived, mainly in fragments. They generally consist of a combination of tie-dyeing and ink painting. However, some late 16th/early 17th century examples also incorporate gold or silver leaf glued on the surface of the silk. It is generally believed that the Tsuji-gahana method of textile dyeing flourished in medieval Japan. It was an outgrowth of the shibori tie-dyeing method which immersed portions of cloth repeatedly in dyes to create multi-colored designs. Tsuji-gahana craftsmen developed their process to include the use of ink brushes to produce fine lines and shadows and added embroidery and gilding. The result of this intricate work was richly-colored patterns which had previously been impossible. Tsuji-gahana kimono were highly prized among Japan's aristocracy.

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