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KIMONO



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GUSTAFSON GALLERY
Colorado State University

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This kimono is thought to have been worn by a wealthy merchant's daughter around the turn of the century. It was the third underlayer of a kimono ensemble, worn to a formal occasion. The surface has been dyed using all natural dyes – madder for the rose to red shades, and indigo for the blue and green areas. The designs have been applied using the Yuzen method. In Yuzen technique the design is outlined in a paste resist, then hand painted. When the patterned areas are finished they are covered with the paste resist while the background color(s) are applied. Embroidery has been used to highlight certain areas in the plum blossoms and on the crane wings. Many of the felicitous symbols are present. Crane which was believed to have a life-span of 1,000 years symbolized long life. Cherry blossom meant courage, as it was one of the first flowers to bloom often when there was still snow on the ground. Pine symbolized long life, strength and constancy. Bamboo was a symbol of upright character which would bend (but not break) in the face of adversity. And mandarin ducks who mated for life, were the symbol of marital felicity. This kimono has five family crests located two in front and three across the upper back; the presence of these crests is an indication that this was a formal kimono.



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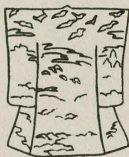
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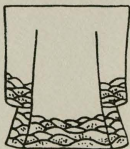
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Long and prosperous life is a recurring theme in this kimono, which was worn loosely and untied as an over garment in a wedding by the bride. The figured satin fabric is woven in a pattern of hexagons containing a chrysanthemum within each geometric shape. The hexagon pattern is meant to represent tortoise shell; tortoises were believed to have lived 10,000 years, and so were a symbol of longevity. The chrysanthemum was both a symbol of the Imperial Family and of fall (or again, long life). In this case chrysanthemum would have referred to the long life of the wearer. The cranes are symbolic of long life, and because they are embroidered in gold were probably also symbolic of long prosperity. The embroidered cherry blossoms were symbolic of spring, courage, and probably the youth of the bride. The fact that both cherry and embroidered chrysanthemum blossoms were used in this piece is likely an indication of a circular reference to time, that is, wishing the bride good fortune from the springtime through the autumn of her life.



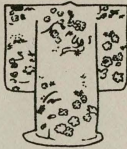
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Cherry blossoms, summer maple, and miniature bamboo grass are seen covering the overlapping hills of this landscape inspired summer kimono. The hills, blossoms and foliage are applied to the silk crepe fabric using the Yuzen method of resist and paint. Some of the cherry blossoms are embroidered with white silk thread, which creates the impression of morning dew or mist. This design continues around to the inside of the lower part of the kimono. An occasional leaf or blossom is couched with gold thread. The family crests in the upper part of the kimono indicate that this was a garment intended for a formal occasion; they also appear to resemble stars in a pre-dawn sky. The deep blue-purple dye was applied after the landscape was painted and then covered up with resist to block that area from the background dye. The long sleeves indicate that this robe belonged to a young, unmarried woman. The hem of this garment is lightly batted which gives it a beautiful drape when worn. It is estimated that this kimono was produced before the turn of the century.



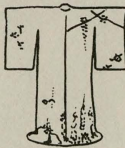
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Because of its long sleeves, this bright and colorful kimono is thought to have been worn by a young girl at New Year's festival. The fabric is a figured satin woven with the design of paulownia blossoms. An extravagant variety of flowers appears to be held together with ribbons seen at the waist area. Present are pomegranite, cherry, iris, and peony blossoms; designs of bamboo and maple foliage are also included. At the hem and the bottom of the sleeves appear to be swirling waves with boats carrying flowers. The blossoms have been hand painted onto the surface, some areas may have been stenciled. There is gold and silver couching on top of some of the blossoms and leaves, and some of the blossoms are embroidered with silk floss.



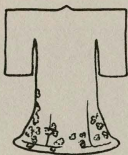
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It is estimated that this summer kimono was produced during the 1930's because of the gold and silver thread which has been woven into the silk crepe fabric. The pale green and cream background colors plus the presence of wisteria indicate that this garment was intended to be worn in the summer as an outer kimono, and the absence of family crests at the shoulder indicate that this was not a garment for a formal occasion. The incomplete geometric shapes at the lower right sleeve are based on an old Chinese design. The ornamentation is concentrated at the shoulders and hem, leaving an undecorated space in the center area of the kimono for an obi to fill.



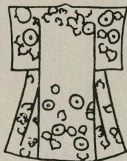
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Produced before the turn of the century, this kimono could have been made for export to Europe or to the United States. It resembles those modeled by caucasian women painted by Monet and Whistler. The fabric is a figured silk satin which has been embellished with chrysanthemum blossoms and autumn grasses at the lower edge. The designs have been applied using the Yuzen method, and some of the blossoms have been embroidered with gold thread. There are crests in the upper area, an indication of formality. The kimono is lightly batted underneath with loose silk fibers, which would indicate that it was a winter garment; the hem is heavily batted. It appears to have been dyed with safflower. Because of its red color it was probably a winter underkimono, if it was worn by a Japanese; or if worn by a westerner it was worn as a single garment.



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Hydrangeas are the blossom featured in this summer kimono. The fabric is a light silk leno weave, the kimono is unlined, and both the background colors and the blossom colors contribute to the feeling of coolness. The stems and leaves appear to have been applied using the Yuzen method; the blossoms, however, look to have been hand-painted directly without the use of resist first. This style of decoration was popular in the 1950's as seen in Japanese kimono magazines. Because of the subdued color and design, it appears to have been intended for a mature woman around the age of 40 perhaps. The midsection is left unembellished to make room for the contrasting obi.



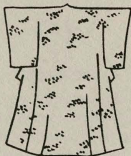
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Chrysanthemums, cherry blossoms, and orchids have been superimposed onto a white silk fabric using the Yuzen technique. Large areas appear to have been covered with gold leaf. The very long sleeves indicate that this kimono was intended for a young girl, and it is estimated that it was produced between 1910 and 1930. There are no family crests at the upper area indicating that although dressy, this was not a formal kimono. There is a horizontal seam line a little above where the waist would be, which is where a tuck was taken to shorten the kimono.



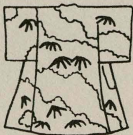
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A fine-lined water pattern has been applied to this kimono using the Yuzen technique. The fabric is a silk leno weave. The kimono is unlined indicating that it was intended to be worn during the hot summer months. There are no family crests indicating that this is not a formal kimono. The length of the sleeves would indicate that this kimono was intended for a matron of at least 30 years.



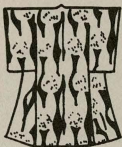
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The motifs of bamboo and ginkgo leaves have been applied to this kimono using the shibori tie dye process. The white satin fabric is woven with a shibori design as well. In this dyeing process parallel rows or scattered clusters of spots, each centered with a smaller dot of the background color, is produced by tightly wrapping and tying each spot to be reserved before dyeing. This kimono is short and was intended to be worn as an underkimono, also the use of bright red color was typically reserved for undergarments, or for the lining of outer kimono. Red was symbolic of life itself, and just a flicker of it would be seen as the woman walked or perhaps moved her sleeve.



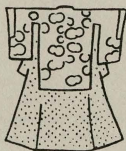
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The fabric in this kimono is a figured satin woven in the flax pattern. The roundels containing various combinations of spring flowers have been applied using a stencil. These areas were covered with resist when the pink colors were separately applied in this opposing wave pattern. Seen above the waist area is a horizontal seam resulting from a tuck being taken to shorten this kimono. The length of the sleeves indicate that this was a garment worn by a young girl.



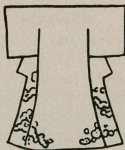
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This red underkimono with contrasting grey checked bottom is dated in the early 1900's. The grey fabric is likely to have been recycled from another kimono. The white floral roundels in the upper red area have been dyed with safflower. The method of dyeing was one in which the fabric was folded and placed between two board stencils, and held in that bound configuration while the dye was forced through. Each motif is a mirror image of the one above it. The grey fabric was patterned using stencil and paste resist in alternating processes.



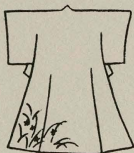
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The five crests at the shoulder indicate that this kimono is a formal garment. The surface designs were applied to the silk crepe fabric by means of the Yuzen method of applying dye, and by embroidery. Some of the blossoms are grouped into hexagonal shapes (reference to tortoise shell meaning long life), and these hexagonal shapes appear to be shaped into several fans. Fans were considered felicitous symbols, because a fan expands into plenty. A Buddhist symbol of the horn of plenty is present, along with maple leaves, pine, paulownia, cranes, and peonies. This kimono is lined in red silk which dates it as having been produced before the 1930's. Some areas appear to have been covered in gold leaf at one time.



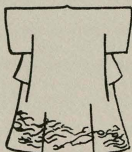
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This kimono is a very sophisticated summer garment made from silk fabric of leno weave. The presence of family crests indicates that it was a formal kimono. The pattern of grasses at the bottom left was created by the application of gold and silver leaf.



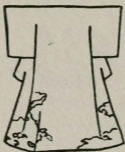
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Ocean waves crashing onto rocks form the surface embellishment on this formal kimono. The designed area continues around to the front of the kimono. The rocks, trees, and water were done using the Yuzen method of dyeing, and some of the edges of the rocks and crests of the waves have been embroidered with gold and silver thread. The five crests at the shoulder area indicate that this was a garment for a formal occasion. The fabric of this kimono is a medium weight silk crepe faille.



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The red lining in this kimono dates it as having been produced before the 1930's. The crests indicate that it was a formal garment. The design at the bottom appears to be pine trees growing out of rocky cliffs. The undyed areas give the appearance of an unusual light source. There are random areas which have been embroidered with gold thread. The ocean waves are depicted by a pattern of fine lines which are undyed. This kimono might have been worn to a wedding occasion by an older guest.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The term kimono means *wearing thing* and can apply to any article of clothing, although it is generally understood to mean the traditional Japanese garment exhibited here. Japanese design motifs are usually inspired from nature, and all have a symbolic meaning. Each kimono has a different combination of several or many of the traditional motifs which create infinite variations on the themes of the long life, friendship, character strength, courage and beauty.

The exhibit KIMONO is the result of a collaborative effort between administration, faculty and students in the Department of Design, Merchandising, and Consumer Sciences in conjunction with the scholarly expertise of Mary Louise Maxson. Many of the kimono in this exhibit have been generously loaned to the Collection by Mrs. Maxson, and her assistance with interpreting the design symbolism, methods of surface embellishment, and dating the kimono have been invaluable. I would like to thank the Historic Costume Collection Curator Linda Carlson for conceiving the initial concept and for her continued encouragement, and to thank Dr. George Morgan for his enthusiastic support of this endeavor. Jack Curfman has been a creative delight to work with and is responsible for the handsome exhibit design.

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Diane Sparks Knoll