

***Bingata* Paper Stencils**

Bingata textiles are created using a paste-resist dyeing technique. It involves applying a resisting agent, usually made of rice, to keep the dye from coloring certain areas of fabric. This paste is applied in one of two ways: by freehand (*tsutsugaki*) or through a stenciling technique (*katazome*).

Stencils used to print garment patterns were often designed by royal court painters. The stencils were made by binding several layers of paper coated with persimmon tannin for stiffening, onto which designs were drawn and then cut. For intricate patterns, a fine net of strong thread was placed between the paper sheets to maintain the integrity of the design.

Bingata

Originally produced under noble and upper-class patronage, *bingata* involved paste-resist dyed designs and colors that were strictly regulated; for example, dragon and phoenix motifs could only be worn by royals, and the color yellow was reserved for nobility. The textiles themselves were produced by one set of craftsmen and dyed by another, meaning multiple hands played a role in their production.

Although Yanagi may have been unaware of *bingata*'s history and traditional usage, he nevertheless promoted it as *mingei* for the beauty of its handmade craftsmanship, its use of natural materials, and its reflection of local traditions. He particularly admired *bingata* textiles for their "fundamental honesty," expressed in their reliance on the process of stencil dyeing to create patterns.

Okinawan Textiles

Yanagi made several visits to Okinawa, which he admired for the preservation of its cultural traditions at a time when modernization threatened to undermine traditional Japanese society. “Okinawans possess a richness of artistic inheritance in arts and crafts,” he wrote, “such as to put cultural values above economic ones.”

Among the Okinawan textiles Yanagi particularly admired were *bingata* and *kasuri*, both known for their vibrant colors and innovative patterns. Since the 14th century, Okinawan artisans have assimilated materials and techniques from Southeast Asia, China, and Japan into their woven designs, creating remarkable and attractive garments unique to the region.

Brown Striped *Bashōfu* Kimono

Japan, Meiji period (1868-1912), early 20th century

Banana fiber

Gift of the Christensen Fund, 2001

(11041.1)

This brown-striped, child-sized kimono is made of *bashōfu*, a textile made from fibers of the *bashō* plant, a variety of banana. *Bashō* grows well in Okinawa, and the fine snow-white threads obtained from the plant's inner-stalk create a breathable, easily-dyed fabric suitable for Okinawa's climate. One kimono requires threads from about sixty plants, each of which takes two or more years to mature.

Kasuri Kimono

Japan, Meiji period (1868-1912), late 19th century
Cotton

Gift of Mr. Mochin Gaza, 1961
(2917.1)

Kasuri Kimono

Japan, 19th century
Cotton

Gift of Mr. Mochin Gaza, 1961
(2918.1)

Kasuri Kimono

Japan, 19th century
Banana fiber, indigo

Gift of Mr. Mochin Gaza, 1961
(2919.1)

***Bingata* Textile**

Japan, Meiji period (1868-1912)
Banana fiber

Gift of Mr. Charles I. Otsuka, 1965
(3363.1)

Okinawan Mortuary Urns

Among all the sites he visited in Okinawa, none impressed Yanagi more than the cemeteries. “Even the tombs of the common people are extraordinarily fine in shape,” he claimed, referring to Okinawan funeral urns that took the form of houses. In addition to accommodating the bones of the deceased, these voluminous ceramic vessels served as the dwellings for the spirits who, according to Yanagi, “have entered upon true life” through death.

“However humble ordinary dwellings may be, dwellings for the spirits at least must be decent structures,” wrote Yanagi. These vessels exemplify this dictum. Their brilliant colors and decorations (especially on the lids) express efforts to properly accommodate the spirits of the dead. Yanagi believed such a joyous union between faith and crafts was lacking in objects made for the modern world.

Mortuary Urn

Japan, late 18th-early 19th century
Glazed earthenware

Gift of the Ryūkyū Governmental Museum, 1961
(2888.1)

Mortuary Urn

Japan, Meiji period (1868-1912), late 19th-early 20th century
Glazed earthenware

Gift of the Ryūkyū Governmental Museum, 1961
(2889.1)

Pair of Mortuary Urns

Japan, Meiji period (1868-1912), late 19th-early 20th century
Glazed earthenware

Purchase, 1989
(5854.1-2)

***Mingei* and Ainu Culture**

The Ainu people are indigenous to Hokkaido, the Kuril Islands, and parts of Sakhalin, although they once inhabited Japan's main islands, possibly as far south as Kyushu in prehistoric periods. Ainu are culturally and linguistically distinct from the rest of the Japanese people.

Paralleling the admiration of African sculpture by modernist artists in Europe, Yanagi believed Ainu crafts demonstrated a living spirituality that was lost in modern industrial society. He held a special exhibition of Ainu art and craft in his *Mingei* Museum in 1941, noting that, despite their "primitive" nature, "there is always truth and sincerity" in Ainu crafts. While Yanagi's own ideas on Ainu art and religion may have been misinformed by his view of Ainu culture as "primitive," his exhibitions of Ainu crafts served to attract mainstream attention to Ainu culture for the first time.

***Attush* (Sakhalin-Style Ainu Outer Robe made from elm-bark fiber)**

Japan, Meiji period (1868-1912)

Elm-bark fiber, cotton

Purchase, Academy Volunteers Fund, 1991
(6183.1)

Traditional *attush* were worn as formal clothes when they were appliquéd or embroidered. However, despite the appliqué and embroidery on the *attush* exhibited here, it was not made for a formal occasion, but rather for a non-Ainu Japanese customer.

Close observation reveals that the sleeves are constructed like a Japanese kimono. Ainu robes always have tapered sleeves (*mojiri*), which is one of the most important differences between Ainu garments and their Japanese counterparts. Both Ainu robes exhibited here have patterns similar to mathematical parentheses ({}), called *ayus* (“having a thorn”). *Ayus* are always arrayed in multiples, forming continuous lines. The designs have spiritual significance, and traditionally are believed to protect from evil spirits and diseases.

***Chikarkarpe* (Ainu Cotton Robe)**

Japan, Meiji period (1868-1912), c.1900

Cotton

Purchase, 1987

(5618.1)

Cotton is not native to northern Japan or Hokkaido. By the early 19th century, the Ainu were acquiring large volumes of cotton or old cotton robes (kimono) through trade with Japan's mainland. *Chikarkarpe* was made from second-hand men's cotton kimonos imported from Honshū. The designs were never exactly replicated, since that would have been considered an insult to the *kamuy*, important Ainu spirits.

Ōtsu-e

Ōtsu-e (“pictures from Ōtsu”) are folk paintings and prints produced in and around the town of Ōtsu, located near Kyoto. During the Edo period (1600-1868), they were created in large numbers as souvenirs for passing travelers and pilgrims. Some of the first *Ōtsu-e*, dating to the early 17th century, served as inexpensive Buddhist devotional paintings, but by the 18th century *Ōtsu-e* had expanded to include secular themes.

As examples of folk art, Yanagi felt *Ōtsu-e* deserved the same level of appreciation reserved for fine oil paintings. He admired their anonymous, handmade quality, their use of natural materials such as coarse brown paper and mineral pigments, and the unschooled painting style common to *Ōtsu-e*, which he felt expressed a degree of honesty not to be found in “fine art” paintings.

Neko to Nezumi (Cat and Rat)

Japan, Edo period (1615-1868), late 18th-early 19th century

Ink and color on paper

Gift of John Gregg Allerton, 1960

(2811.1)

Inscription:

“Damasarete / Mada sono ue ni / Sei dashite / Odori te mōte / Soshite toraruru.”

Translation:

“Poor silly rat! Deceived by the cat, it dances merrily to entertain the cat, and is finally caught by her.”

Many *Ōtsu-e* were produced as admonitions to ordinary folk against excesses, most commonly alcohol. Here a cat has persuaded a rat to drink sake, so that it can be captured when it is drunk, as is evident from the inscription. The moral message warns people of the dangers of excessive alcohol consumption as well as heedlessness in general.

Chōchin Tsurigane (Lantern and Temple Bell)

Japan, Edo period (1615-1868), late 18th -early 19th century

Ink and color on paper

Gift of John Gregg Allerton, 1960

(2817.1)

Inscription:

“Tsurigane no / Omoki wa karuku / Chōchin no / Karuki o omoku /
Nasu wa saru-jie.”

Translation:

“It would take a monkey’s brain to think the heavy bell light and the
light paper lantern heavy.”

A monkey is shown carrying a heavy bronze temple bell and a paper lantern, one on either end of his burden pole. The lantern outweighs the bell, suggesting the topsy-turvy way of the world and the false values set on things by mankind.

Benkei

Japan, Edo period (1615-1868), early 19th century

Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper

Gift of John Gregg Allerton, 1952

(1688.1)

Benkei, one of the most popular legendary heroes in Japan, was a witty warrior-priest accredited with mythical strength. Here, he mightily raises a heavy temple bell above his head. *Ōtsu-e* of Benkei were often used as charms against robbery.

Bernard Leach (1887-1979)

The English potter Bernard Leach, recognized as one of the founders of the 20th century British studio pottery movement, was also a key member of the *mingei* movement. He studied ceramics in Japan under Ogata Kenzan IX, and his lifelong friendship with Yanagi Sōetsu developed through their shared admiration of folk ceramics and tea wares. Leach integrated many *mingei* ideals into his own practice, including an adherence to simplicity, functionality, and the beauty of naturalness.

Leach helped introduce Yanagi's "folk craft" aesthetic philosophy to the rest of the world through his writings. *The Potter's Book*, published in 1940, interpreted the basic tenets of *mingei* theory to suit the working circumstances of 20th century British potters. He also compiled and adapted Yanagi's writings in *The Unknown Craftsman* (1972), now regarded as the most significant English publication on *mingei*.

Hamada Shōji (1894-1978)

Founder of the *mingei* “folk craft” movement Yanagi Sōetsu wrote, “Artist-craftsmen serve as a bridge between the present age and the next flowering of the art of the people,” entrusting socially conscious artists such as Hamada Shōji to keep alive folk craft traditions in danger of being forgotten. In other words, if Yanagi represented the theoretical arm of *mingei*, then Hamada represented its successful practice.

After training at a technical school, Hamada traveled to St. Ives in England to collaborate with potter Bernard Leach, where the two constructed a traditional Japanese kiln. Returning to Japan after three years, Hamada settled in Mashiko, a village northeast of Tokyo known for its traditional pottery production. Over the next fifty years, Hamada combined the traditional techniques he learned from Mashiko potters with aesthetic approaches reflecting Yanagi’s *mingei* ideal. He was designated a Living National Treasure in 1955.

Hamada Shōji (1894-1978)
Mashiko Ware Bowl with Kaki Glaze

Japan, 20th century
Glazed stoneware

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Robert M. Browne, 1991
(6510.1)

Hamada Shōji (1894-1978)
***Mashiko* Ware Lidded Box with *Kaki* Glaze**

Japan, 20th century
Glazed stoneware

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Robert M. Browne, 1991
(6512.1)

Hamada Shōji (1894-1978)
Mashiko Ware Press-molded Vase
with *Kaki* and *Seiji* Glaze

Japan, 20th century, ca. 1960
Glazed stoneware

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Robert M. Browne, 1991
(6515.1)

Hamada Shōji (1894-1978)

Mashiko Ware Plate with Kaki and Seiji Glaze

Japan, 20th century

Glazed stoneware

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Robert M. Browne, 1991
(6533.1)

Kawai Kanjirō (1890-1966)

Kawai Kanjirō, one of the most eclectic artists associated with the *mingei* “folk craft” movement, was a prolific ceramic artist whose style was inspired by folk craft traditions from around the world. Kawai’s wide range of production, from small sake cups to large free-standing sculptures, is demonstrated in this display.

Kawai was deeply influenced by his mentor Yanagi Sōetsu, founder of the *mingei* movement, but was not always able to follow him. For example, Yanagi wrote, “When the work of an artist has developed properly, he need not worry about recognition by others, and naturally his work needs no signature.” Kawai believed this dictum, but was aware of its challenges. “When can I create what is truly my own?” he wrote. “When I can, there should be no need to stamp my seal as I do now to distinguish my work from that of others.” Only late in his career did Kawai stop signing his works, having finally decided he’d reached the stage where “my work itself is my signature.”

Kawai Kanjirō (1890-1966)
Hand Holding a Lotus Bud

Japan, 20th century
Stoneware

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Robert M. Browne, 1991
(6537.1)

Kawai Kanjirō (1890-1966)
Hexagonal Dish with White Glaze

Japan, 20th century, ca. 1940
Glazed stoneware

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Robert M. Browne, 1991
(6538.1)

Kawai Kanjirō (1890-1966)
Tea Bowl with Pink Glaze

Japan, 20th century, ca. 1945
Glazed stoneware

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Robert M. Browne, 1991
(6539.1)

Kawai Kanjirō (1890-1966)
Sake Cup

Japan, 20th century, ca. 1956
Glazed stoneware

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Robert M. Browne, 1991
(6542.1)

Kawai Kanjirō (1890-1966)
Sake Cup with Turquoise Glaze

Japan, 20th century, ca. 1956
Glazed stoneware

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Robert M. Browne, 1991
(6543.1)

Kawai Kanjirō (1890-1966)
Sake Cup with Turquoise and White Glaze

Japan, 20th century, ca. 1956
Glazed stoneware

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Robert M. Browne, 1991
(6544.1)

Shimaoka Tatsuzō (1919-2007)

Shimaoka Tatsuzō was part of the second generation of artists and craftsmen inspired by Yanagi's *mingei* theories. Born into a family of rope-makers, he apprenticed under Hamada Shōji. Like his teacher, he founded his studio and kiln in the village of Mashiko, helping to preserve and enrich local pottery traditions. For his efforts, he was named a Living National Treasure in 1996.

Yanagi believed that artists had a role to play in the preservation of crafts, through the promotion of traditional methods and aesthetics. Shimaoka was successful in doing this for *mingei* pottery not only among his countrymen but also among non-Japanese. He developed a relationship with Honolulu resident Robert Browne, who played a vital role in promoting *mingei* ceramics and the artists that made them in Hawaii.

Shimaoka Tatsuzō (1919-2007)

Tea Bowl

Japan, 1956

Glazed stoneware with inlaid slip

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Robert M. Browne, 1991
(6556.1)

Shimaoka Tatsuzō (1919-2007)

Vase

Japan, 1956

Glazed stoneware

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Robert M. Browne, 1991
(6557.1)

Shimaoka Tatsuzō (1919-2007)

Vase

Japan, 1963

Glazed stoneware with inlaid slip

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Robert M. Browne, 1991
(6561.1)

Shimaoka Tatsuzō (1919-2007)
Pouring Spout

Japan, 1953

Glazed stoneware with inlaid slip

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Robert M. Browne, 1991
(6562.1)

Shimaoka Tatsuzō (1919-2007)
Incense Container

Japan, 1963
Glazed stoneware

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Robert M. Browne, 1991
(6566.1)

***Mingei* and the Tea Ceremony**

“Japan may well be a paradise for potters,” claimed Yanagi, remarking on what he considered the special regard for ceramics in his native country. He especially admired the intuition of medieval Japanese tea masters, whom he lionized for their discernment in collecting and cherishing ordinary types of pottery made by unknown craftsmen. Yanagi’s own criteria for selecting folk crafts included simplicity of design and functionality, both characteristics that harken back to the preferences evident in implements for the early tea ceremony.

Joseon Dynasty Pottery

Yanagi's admiration of pottery from Joseon-dynasty Korea instigated his search for objects of similar aesthetic quality in Japan. Among the various types of Joseon-period pottery he collected, Yanagi was closely drawn to those with simple lines and sparse decoration. The selection of Joseon-dynasty pottery in this exhibition, including examples of white porcelain, *buncheong* stoneware, and iron glaze ware, reflect the qualities of simplicity and austerity that Yanagi favored.

Most importantly, Yanagi believed that the austerity of Joseon pottery exerted a sense of "sadness" and "loneliness" that evoked an emotional response. He felt the pottery reflected Korea's tragic history of foreign invasions and the melancholy spirit of its people. Though thoroughly subjective, Yanagi's interpretation of Joseon-period pottery helped mold his conviction that folk crafts expressed the essential qualities of the people that made them.

Faceted Bottle

Korea, Joseon dynasty (1392-1910), 19th century
Glazed stoneware

Gift of Damon Giffard, 1951
(1241.1)

Brush Holder

Korea, Joseon dynasty (1392–1910), 19th century
Glazed stoneware

Gift of Lt. General Oliver S. Picher, 1956
(2225.1)

Water Dropper

Korea, Joseon dynasty (1392-1910), late 18th-early 19th century
Glazed stoneware

Purchase, 1934
(4048)

Bottle with Dished Mouth

Korea, Joseon dynasty (1392-1910), 17th-18th century
Glazed stoneware (*buncheong* ware)

Gift of Damon Giffard, 1947
(476.1)

Lidded Jar

Korea, Joseon period (1392-1910), 18th-19th century
Glazed stoneware

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Robert M. Browne, 1980
(4882.1)

Wine Bottle

Korea, Joseon dynasty (1392-1910), 19th century
Glazed stoneware

Gift of Damon Giffard, 1947
(504.1)

Bottle

Korea, Joseon dynasty (1392-1910)
Glazed stoneware

Gift of Damon Giffard, 1947
(502.1)

Shigaraki Ware Jar

Japan, Muromachi period (1336-1573), 16th century
Stoneware with natural ash glaze

Bequest of Milton Cades, 1996
(8282.1)

Karatsu Ware Cup

Japan, Edo period (1615-1868), 17th century
Glazed stoneware

Gift of Lt. General Oliver S. Picher, 1956
(2234.1)

Seto Ware Oil Dish

Japan, Edo period (1615-1868), ca. 1780-1840
Glazed stoneware

Gift of Mrs. Philip E. Spalding, 1937
(4614)

Seto Ware Plate

Japan, Edo period (1615-1868), ca. 1780-1840
Glazed stoneware

Gift of Mrs. Charles M. Cooke, 1933
(3828)