

WORKS IN THE
EXHIBITION



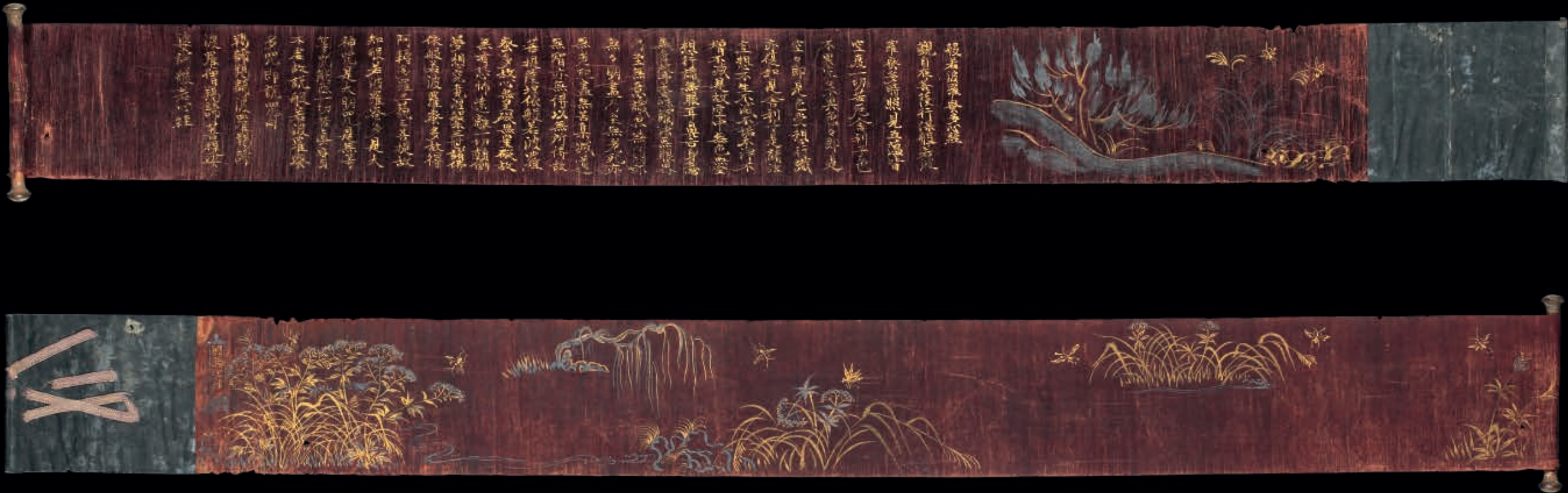
20 *Heart Sutra (Hannya Shingyō)*
Japan
Late Heian or Kamakura period, 12th–13th century
Handscroll; gold and silver pigment on paper
with reddish purple dye
H. 1⅞ x W. 19 in. (4.6 x 48.4 cm)
John C. Weber Collection

This diminutive sutra scroll likely functioned as a personal amulet that was kept in a bag and hung around the neck of an aristocratic woman. Commissioning a sutra was considered to be a means of gaining merit, and the faithful believed the text on this scroll, the *Heart Sutra*, could have protective and healing power. The full and original Sanskrit name of the sutra is *Prajnaparamita-hrdayam Sutra* (Japanese: *Hannya Shingyō*), which translates from Sanskrit as “The Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom,” abbreviated as the *Heart Sutra*. This brief and easily memorized scripture, which concerns emptiness of self and all phenomena, is one of the most popular sutras in the Buddhist world.

This sutra begins with a long frontispiece of grasses and plants delineated in gold and silver pigments. The text follows in tiny, spindly but elegant characters in block script (*kaisho*) written in gold on paper dyed with a reddish purple colorant, brazilwood, a dye extracted from the wood of a variety of leguminosae plants found in Asia, such as *Caesalpinia sappan* or *Caesalpinia echinata*. This conclusion is based on the identification of the dye molecule brazilin following analysis of a microscopic sample by surface-enhanced Raman spectroscopy in the Department of Scientific Research at The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The back of the scroll is also painted in gold and silver with grasses, a willow tree, a stream, and insects. There is a preliminary, short sheet of indigo-dyed paper that serves as a protective cover. AP

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Fabio Rambelli, *Buddhist Materiality: A Cultural History of Objects in Japanese Buddhism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 89ff.



28 Namikiri Fudō Myōō

Japan

Kamakura period, 13th century

Wood with pigment, lacquer, cut gold leaf,
inlaid crystal eyes, and gilt-copper fittings

H. 19½ x W. 14 in. (49.5 x 35.6 cm)

John C. Weber Collection

The sculptor of this wooden image of Fudō Myōō has depicted him in fierce splendor with fangs, blue body, red hair, a bronze sword in his right hand, and a bronze lasso in his left. His dynamic stance with feet firmly planted on a rock, right leg bent and left leg angled but held firmly straight, exudes power. The loose folds of his garments, lovingly embellished with cut gold leaf, appear to blow in the wind. The combination of strength, movement, and attention to detail are all elements for which Kamakura-period sculpture is celebrated.

Legend has it that Kūkai (Kōbō Daishi, 774–835), founder of Shingon Buddhism in Japan, was given a statue of Fudō Myōō when he was in China. He brought the sculpture with him when he sailed back to Japan. His ship encountered a violent storm and, in fear, Kūkai prayed to the statue, upon which Fudō wielded his sword to cut the waves and calm the sea. This story is believed to be the origin for the production of images of Namikiri Fudō (Fudō cutting through waves) in Japan. AP

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Philip L. Nicoloff, *Sacred Koyasan: A Pilgrimage to the Mountain Temple of Saint Kobo Daishi and the Great Sun Buddha* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2007), 16.



48 Tea Container
Japan
Momoyama–Edo period, 17th century
Stoneware with underglaze iron-oxide-painted decoration (Mino ware, Oribe type); ivory lid
H. 4¼ in. x W. 2⅝ in. (10.8 x 6 cm)
John C. Weber Collection

The tea master Furuta Oribe (1544–1615), for whom Oribe ware is named, was a former military general who catered his style of tea to the military class. Shun’oku Sōen (1529–1611), the chief abbot of Daitokuji, instructed Oribe in Zen Buddhism, which had a profound impact on the style of tea he developed. Oribe embraced the misshapen (even damaged), quirky qualities that bring to mind eccentric Zen paragons like the monk Hotei, shown in cat. no. 38. This approach led him to reject the subtle and rustic aesthetic favored by his predecessors. He also welcomed elements of the new into the appreciation of tea: he took the unprecedented steps of hanging calligraphy by living Zen masters, such as his teacher Sōen, in the *tokonoma*

alcove of the tearoom and of serving tea and the tea meal in recently made ceramics. This delightfully imperfect tea container is of a type called Black Oribe (*kuro Oribe*) after the dominant black glaze. The potter threw the small vessel on the wheel and then used a spatula to modify the surfaces on the lower half of the body. He then used overlapping iron and ash glazes, as well as iron pigment in what appears to be a loosely painted fishing net or mountain or roofline to add character to the surface. To enhance the design, he etched lollipop-like pendant motifs. The potter marked the unglazed bottom of the container with what appears to be the character *ue* (上), “above” or “top,” but its significance in this context is unclear. AP

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Miho Museum, *A New Yorker’s View of the World*, 252, pl. 85.
Samuel C. Morse, *Fashioning Tradition: Japanese Tea Wares from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Northampton, MA: Smith College Museum of Art, 2007), 30, no. 49.
H. Paul Varley and Kumakura Isao, eds., *Tea in Japan: Essays on the History of Chanoyu* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1995), 139.

49 Five Serving Dishes (*mukōzuke*) with Persimmon Design
Japan, Gifu Prefecture
Late Momoyama–early Edo period, early 17th century
Stoneware with underglaze iron-oxide design and copper-green glaze (Mino ware)
Each, H. 3⅞ x W. 2¼ x DIAM. 2½ in. (9.8 x 5.7 x 6.4 cm)
John C. Weber Collection

These deep, rectangular serving dishes (*mukōzuke*) exude a delight in the unconventional with their resemblance to traditional Japanese metal weights. The dishes are partially coated with glaze that drips so much that it obscures parts of the design of brown persimmon and stripes in underglaze iron oxide. Scholars have pointed out the influence of the textile industry on Mino wares. This set brings to mind the tie-dyed textiles popular in Japan in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with contrasting bold and lighter colors, geometric patterns, and imagery derived from nature that sometimes is painted by hand.

The dishes were made in wooden molds. The thick copper-green glaze that pools down their sides was exploited intentionally by Oribe potters, who knew how difficult it was to control. Behind what at first glance appears unusual and flawed is painstaking method. AP

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Miho Museum, *A New Yorker’s View of the World*, 248, pl. 83.
Miyeko Murase, ed., *Turning Point: Oribe and the Arts of Sixteenth-Century Japan* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2003), 170–71.
Nicole Coolidge Rousmaniere, ed., *Kazari: Decoration and Display in Japan, 15th–19th Centuries* (New York: Japan Society, 2002), 145, cat. no. 44.
Trede and Meech, *Arts of Japan*, 113, pl. 28.



61 *Competition Between Poets of Different Eras*
Japan
Muromachi period, 14th–15th century
Two handscrolls; ink, color, gold and silver on paper
Scroll 1, H. 13 x L. 663 in (33.1 x 1683.5 cm)
Scroll 2, H. 13 x L. 624 in. (33.1 x 1585.7 cm)
John C. Weber Collection

This impressive pair of scrolls includes one hundred lauded Japanese poets, whose poems and images appear in anthologies and works by artists and calligraphers. These scrolls are thought to be the earliest paintings to include all of Japan’s One Hundred Immortal Poets. Moving in the traditional order of

right to left, the composition squares off pairs of poets in competition beneath their representative poems. All the painting and calligraphy is set against a blank background. The poets wear formal and colorful garments. Their faces are individualized, more evidence of the attention and effort the artist gave to the scrolls. The painter is unknown but the well-established literary theme, interest in costume, and style featuring bright colors and gold are typical characteristics of the fifteenth-century Tosa school of painters that served the imperial court and the shoguns.

Many of the one hundred representative poems concern themes and emotions associated with notions of impermanence. For example, Murasaki Shikibu, the

eleventh-century author of *The Tale of Genji*, competing with Ōshikōchi no Mitsune (859–925) in a second round with the theme of autumn vases, recites:

As their song fades
do insects in the hedge
also find sadness
in autumn partings
one cannot prevent?

Translation by Richard Bowring, *Murasaki Shikibu: The Diary and Poetic Memoirs; A Translation and Study* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), 217. AP

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Mori Tōru, “Jidai fudō uta-awase-e ni tsuite” (Portraits of poetry contests of different periods), *Kobijutsu* 8 (March 1965): 25–57.
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Detail of cat. no. 61, Scroll 1

66 Kubo Shunman (1757–1820)
Courtesans Promenading under Blossoming Cherry
Japan
Edo period, 1781–89
Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk
H. 16 $\frac{3}{4}$ x W. 24 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (42.2 x 63 cm)
John C. Weber Collection

This painting is a study of impermanence on several levels. The setting is the Yoshiwara pleasure quarter in Edo, which by the late seventeenth century had acquired the moniker the Floating World. Pictures of the Floating World (*ukiyo*) were so named because of the transient (floating) but intensely pleasurable nature of what they show on the surface. Images of the beautiful women of the pleasure quarter, such as the painting here, were luxury commissions by wealthy merchants and other well-placed persons from in-demand painters of the day. This composition presents the three stages of the top-ranked courtesan's career: from elaborately clad child attendant, to teenage apprentice (in red), to star crowned by hairpins. Time is fleeting for each of them; they will age and their allure will fade or be replaced by a younger version of themselves. Kubo Shunman stresses the theme of transience by including the branch of a blossoming cherry tree shedding its quickly fading petals over the head of the high-ranking courtesan on the left, whose robes, perhaps ironically, include the archaic Chinese character for longevity (*shou*), along with other auspicious characters.

This backdrop provides the setting for what appears to be an imaginary confrontation between two rival courtesans and their attendants out for obligatory promenades in their finery. The playful use of layers of symbolism came easily to Shunman, a cultured fiction writer, poet, painter, and woodblock-print artist. He has signed the painting *Kubo Shunman ga* (painted by Kubo Shunman). A red *kaō* (abstract monogram) follows the signature. AP

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