



MEDIA RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA

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Japanese Modernism

NGV International | 28 February – 4 October 2020 | Free entry



Japanese Modernism is an exclusive exhibition by the National Gallery of Victoria showcasing over 190 multi-disciplinary works created during the first half of the 20th century, featuring Asian Art Deco paintings, prints, design and fashion.

Created during a culturally formative period in Japan between the catastrophe of the 1923 Kanto earthquake and the devastation of

World War II, the exhibition will present traditional Japanese motifs juxtaposed with modern designs, highlighting two rare large-scale works by exceptional yet under-recognised women artists and leading avant-garde designers and illustrators of the era.

Showcasing rare paintings and colour woodblock prints, street posters and magazine designs, *Japanese Modernism* will also highlight innovative fashion - including kimonos for women and men displaying playful contemporary designs - as well as accessories embracing Art Nouveau and Art Deco design elements. Interior design will be presented across beautifully-crafted glassware, lacquerware and bronzeware, with over 100 pieces of Japanese cut glass on display, with geometric and nature motifs inspired by Japanese traditional design.

“The culmination of a five-year collecting period by the NGV, *Japanese Modernism* offers exclusive insight into an era of Japanese art that is yet to be widely discovered by Australian audiences. With all of these works being exhibited in Australia for the first time, this vibrant collection of modernism captures the spirit of a rapidly evolving country and its exuberant youth,” said Tony Ellwood AM, Director, National Gallery of Victoria.

In the 1920s and 30s, Japan underwent major redevelopment and its cities were filled with department stores (including the iconic Mitsukoshi), cafés, teahouses, movie theatres, ballroom dance halls and modern transportation, catering to a new generation of urban pleasure seekers. With an increase in international travel, the influence of new technologies from abroad and a lively consumer culture took hold of the country. In Tokyo, the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Imperial Hotel - which survived the devastation of the city’s great Kanto earthquake in 1923 - provided the backdrop for the reconstruction of a modern capital that delivered a new-found sense of optimism to its younger generation.

In 1924, Japanese publisher Hoshino Seki (of the Gahōsha publishing house) commissioned *The Great Taisho earthquake and fire*, a set of 36 colour prints created by six different artists, depicting scenes from the aftermath of the earthquake. Three years later, the fast-paced development of Japan’s capital was celebrated by graphic artist Hisui Sugiura in his iconic work *The first subway in the East 1927*, which paid tribute to the opening of the first subway in Tokyo and Asia.



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In 1935, Japanese artist Taniguchi Fumie created her trailblazing work *Preparing to go out* (Yosoou hitobito). Taking inspiration from the 17th century Matsuura screens, the artist created a large sixfold screen capturing changing attitudes towards women, consumerism and fashion in the early 20th century. Despite making huge progress in her artistic practice during the 1930s, Fumie had her burgeoning career cut short after she evacuated to the countryside to escape the final bombing raids of World War II. Leaving Japan in the early 1950s, Fumie was never known to paint again and eventually settled in Los Angeles, where she found work as a waitress, seamstress and maid.

With life progressing at a rapid pace, women relocated from rural areas to the cities to secure jobs and a liberated lifestyle. This transformation of Japan's social norms led to the first generation of financially independent women and female artists being recognised in Japan's traditionally male dominated art world. The self-assured, highly fashionable women of the modern era were captured in many artworks of the time including *Tea and coffee salon, Sabō* 1939 by Saeki Shunkō and *Waiting for Makeup* 1938 by Negishi Ayako.

***Japanese Modernism* will be on display at NGV International from 28 February – 4 October 2020. Free entry. Further information is available via the [NGV website](#).**

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IMAGES: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/e1ell1ovl6wdx3/AADU64cwoHYAMBTBFimiPMpva?dl=0>

IMAGE CAPTION

Taniguchi Fumie

Preparing to go out (Yosoou hitobito) 1935

ink and colour on silk

176.8 × 364.0 cm

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased with funds from the Estate of Kevin and Eunice McDonald and NGV Foundation, 2019

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