

Bunka Gakuen Costume Museum

文化学園服飾 博物館

Shinjuku Bunka Quint Building
3-22-7 Yoyogi
Shibuya-ku
Tokyo 151-8529
東京都渋谷区代々木3丁目22-7 新宿文化クイントビル

General Information

- Open 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Closed on Sunday
- Access: JR Shinjuku Station, 7-min. walk from South exit
- <https://museum.bunka.ac.jp/english/>

This fascinating museum is well worth a visit for those interested in costume and textile history. While the two galleries appear somewhat outdated, the collection is excellent and the textiles are well displayed. The 20,000 items in the collection include all manner of textiles and related accessories from Japan as well as the rest of Asia and the world, from ancient to modern times. The Bunka Gakuen Costume Museum is affiliated to the nearby Bunka Gakuen, a flagship college of fashion that opened in 1923 and began amassing costumes for educational purposes. The museum itself was created in 1979. It has an outstanding ensemble of Japanese costumes and is the only institution with such a wide-ranging collection in the country.

Japanese textiles make up about 50 percent of the collection, with pieces dating from the 8th century up to the 20th century. Especially noteworthy are the extraordinary kimonos from the late Edo period that belonged to the Mitsui, a wealthy merchant family. These very valuable garments display dazzling designs in embroidery, tie-dye and sprinkled gold dust, which make the textiles look like paintings. Nature provides the main motifs and seasonal references abound, such as on a kimono decorated with autumn plants and insect cages or another with snow-covered pine trees skilfully embroidered on its hemline. A mid-19th century kimono in silk decorated with plum trees and spring plants realised in embroidery and gold dust has a blue background that symbolises the coolness in early spring. Other star pieces in the collection are garments that belonged to members of the imperial family; these include magnificent kimonos worn by princesses and formalwear embellished with the imperial family crest in the shape of a chrysanthemum. A manteau de cour from ca. 1895 with embroidered chrysanthemum on satin and velvet belonged to Empress Meiji; although the coat appears like a symbol



Jimbaori (vest) decorated with carpenter's pincers, woven wool fabric, late 18th to mid-19th century



Chanel evening dress, silk, sequins, beads, diamante and embroidery, c 1925

of westernisation because of its shape, it was made in Japan and features typical Japanese motifs. Fascinating examples of military dress include bold battle gear and the elaborate garments worn above the armour or the more restrained sleeveless jackets and trousers that were sported by the military class in public. Flamboyant Noh costumes and workers' garments are also held. Non-Japanese items include Korean ceremonial robes, Chinese traditional costumes, ikats from Indonesia and dresses and textiles from various parts of India and central Asia.



Uchikake (formal outermost robe) with plum tree and the seven plants of spring, embroidery and gold dust on twill ground, late 18th to mid-19th century

There are also traditional garments from South and Central America, as well as Africa. In addition, there is a sizable collection of haute couture by European designers such as Balenciaga and Christian Dior.

Spring exhibitions usually focus on Western clothing while the rest of the year the special displays concentrate on a particular theme, which could be a period, motif or technique. Emphasis is often placed on the comparison of cultures and traditions from around the world. There is limited information in English.

Insight

Those with a particular interest in costumes can visit the Tokyo National Museum [see p. xx] where a small display of textiles and dress is always on view. In Kyoto, the renowned Costume Institute is in fact a research centre focusing on Western clothing and does not house an exhibition gallery. The Bunka Gakuen Costume Museum is therefore the best place to see costumes in Japan.

Hara Museum and Hara Museum ARC

原美術館 ハラミュージアムアーク

Hara Museum of Contemporary Art
4-7-25 Kitashinagawa
Shinagawa-ku
Tokyo 140-0001
原美術館
東京都品川区北品川4-7-25

General Information

- Open 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., until 8 p.m. on Wednesday
- Closed on Monday
- Access: JR Shinagawa Station, 10-min. walk from Takanawa exit
- www.haramuseum.or.jp
- This venue will close permanently at the end of 2020

Hara Museum ARC
2855-1 Kanai
Shibukawa
Gunma Prefecture 377-0027
ハラミュージアムアーク
群馬県渋川市金井2855-1

General Information

- Open 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Closed on Thursday (except in August) and for two months in the winter
- Access: from JR Shibukawa Station, take Ikaho Onsen bus to Green Bokujo-mae (15-min. ride) or taxi (10-min. ride)
- www.haramuseum.or.jp

The Hara Museum in Tokyo is located in a terrific 1930s building that was once the residence of the Hara family. When it opened in 1979, it was one of the very first museums in Japan to focus on and collect contemporary art, introducing the work of Western artists such as Jackson Pollock, Robert Rauschenberg and Yves Klein. Now the museum has a wider scope and displays an exciting cross-section of works by leading and upcoming artists from Japan and around the world. Three to four exhibitions are organised every year in rooms that have retained their original proportions and some of their original features, like the sleek dark wooden floors and an elegant black stone staircase. In its elegant interior the museum has over the years featured the work of some of Japan's most renowned living artists, some of whom have left a permanent and intriguing trace at the Hara. Sugimoto Hiroshi arranged his *Art Brooms* in

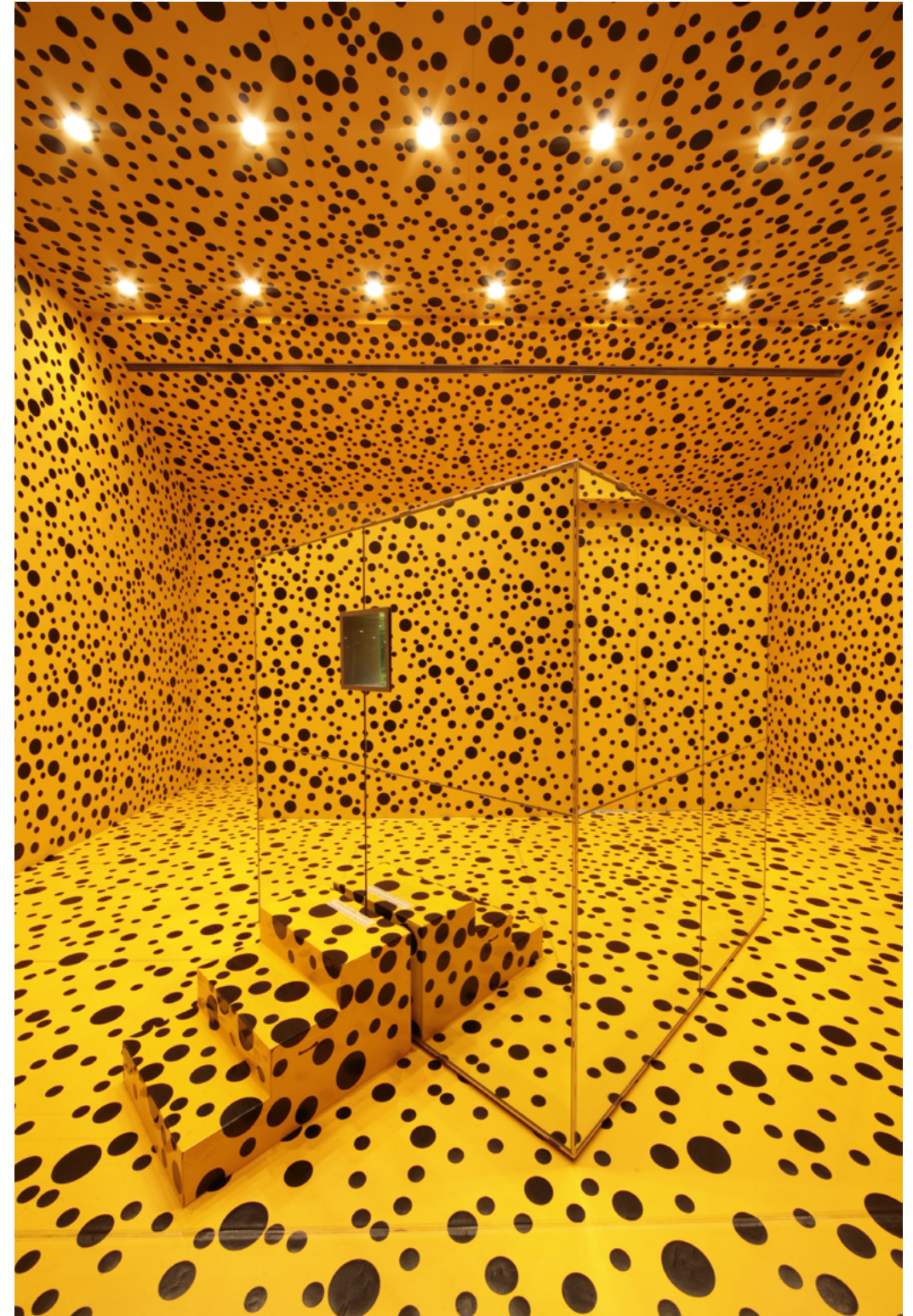


Hara Museum, Tokyo

bamboo in the back garden while Suda Yoshihiro and Miyajima Tatsuo, respectively, have placed their now iconic flowers and digital screens in a darkroom and in a bathroom, turning narrow spaces into works of art. When Nara Yoshitomo decided to turn an unused room into a studio, the museum enthusiastically embraced the idea and today the artist regularly visits and uses the room, which the public can see. This illustrates not only how much this museum, still run by its founder and chairman Hara Toshio, is close to artists but also how it has maintained some of its homelike atmosphere.

The museum is relatively small but it has tremendous character thanks to its Modernist features. Built in 1938 by Watanabe Jin, it is one of the very rare private buildings of the period still standing in Tokyo, displaying influences from the Bauhaus with its curved shape, ribbon windows, roof terraces and cladding in white ceramic tiles. There is a delightful garden with a café.

When the Hara Museum in Tokyo became too small for its growing collection of postwar and contemporary art, an outpost was built in the mountains of Shibukawa, about two hours from the capital. There, architect Isozaki Arata realised one of his most approachable buildings, with a barn-like structure clad in dark cedar wood contrasting starkly against a verdant background. Pyramid-shaped roofs let natural light flood the simple white interiors. Accommodating works and installations often too large for the Tokyo venue, three galleries are arranged around an open lobby, so that visitors can clear their minds and admire the landscape between each viewing. Behind a black curtain is *Midnight Sea* (2006), a mesmerising animated video by Tabaimo, with unfurling waves endlessly reflected into mirrors. Beautifully drawn, the waves are inspired by traditional Japanese prints, yet they seem to turn into sea creatures or human organs, an unsettling dimension often present in Tabaimo's work. Kusama Yayoi, arguably Japan's most famous living artist, also features in the collection, which includes one of her first infinity mirror rooms. Created in 1991, the box-like construction is



Yayoi Kusama, *Mirror Room (Pumpkin)*, 1991, Hara Museum ARC

Ota Memorial Museum of Art

太田記念美術館

1-10-10 Jingu-mae
Shibuya-ku
Tokyo 150-0001
東京都渋谷区神宮前1-10-10

General Information

- Open 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
- Closed on Monday
- Access: Meiji Jingu-mae Station, 3-min. walk from exit 5 or JR Harajuku Station, 5-min. walk from Omotesando exit
- www.ukiyo-e-ota-muse.jp

The Ota Memorial Museum of Art is one of the few museums in Japan to continuously show *ukiyo-e*, the Japanese woodblock prints of the Edo era. Opened in 1980, it houses the considerable collection of the late Mr. Ōta, which numbers 14,000 prints dating from 1680 to 1880, as well as paintings and illustrated books. *Ukiyo-e*, literally “pictures of the floating world”, are fascinating images of Japan and the vibrant popular culture that developed during the Edo period.

The interior is intimate and features traditional elements such as tatami floors, wood and an interior rock garden in miniature. The collection offers an impressive panorama of *ukiyo-e* and with works by Moronobu, Harunobu, Kuniyoshi, Utamaro, Hokusai, Hiroshige, as well as a host of lesser-known names, almost every *ukiyo-e* artist that was active in the capital during the Edo period is represented. This imagery became widespread at the end of the 17th century (Moronobu being the first named individual maker) and full colour printing became possible in 1765. The museum holds a group of works by Sharaku, an enigmatic artist who was active for just under a year, from May 1794 to January 1795, during which time he produced prints of kabuki actors, the celebrities of their day, as well as warriors and sumo wrestlers. His close-ups emphasise the features and expressiveness of his subjects. In a different vein, the pictures of beautiful women by Utamaro, the pioneer and acknowledged master of the genre, are remarkable for their unique combination of elegance and sensuality. Utamaro explored feminine diversity through the depiction of varied poses, occupations, costume and physiognomy in his series *Customs of beauties around the clock* (1795 to 1800). In the early decades of the 19th century the focus of many artists turned to landscape, a vogue that was encouraged by the availability of Prussian blue, the world’s first synthetic pigment. As prints offer wonderful



Utagawa Kuniyoshi, *Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji from the Eastern Capital: Distant View from the Shōhei-zaka Slope*, woodblock print, c 1844

depictions of daily life, the displays may highlight fashion; entertainment in the capital; the city’s famous spots; its pleasure quarters, the Yoshiwara; as well as scenic sites in the countryside.

Making prints was a collaborative effort requiring the participation of an artist, a block-carver, a printer and a publisher, the latter being responsible for the financing and coordinating of the production as well as the choice of format. Aiming to capture the public’s hopes and dreams, and responsive to the latest fashions, woodblock prints were cheap (about the price of a plate of noodles) and relatively quick to produce; when a design was successful, it was often reissued many times. The quality of an impression can be seen in details such as crisp sharp lines and the pattern left by the grain of the wood block on the sheet. The same artists who designed prints also created paintings for more affluent clients since they were more costly, examples of which can also be seen here.

Because the works are fragile and sensitive to light they must be rotated regularly. As a result there is no permanent display and themed exhibitions change every month. These rotate around the three main aspects of the collection: major artists, the work of little-known artists and the mores of Edo (modern-day Tokyo). The museum offers a good introduction to *ukiyo-e*; the collection is wide and varied and includes representative masterpieces. While Ōta’s taste was rather conservative, with a focus on views of Edo and landscapes, the depth of the collection is remarkable. There is ample information in English.

While there

The Ota Memorial Museum of Art is located in the back alley of Tokyo’s main fashion district. From there it is a short walk to the Meiji Jingu, a Shinto shrine dedicated to Emperor Meiji. A huge gate carved out of cypresses marks the entrance of the thickly wooded park. Following the wide gravel path that cuts through it, visitors should look for the inner garden famous for its countless irises that bloom in June.



Utagawa Kuniyoshi, *Young woman who looks like an old lady*, woodblock print, c 1847-49

Sankeien Garden

三溪園

58-1 Honmokusannotani
Naka-ku
Yokohama
Kanagawa Prefecture 231-0824
神奈川県横浜市中区本牧三之谷58-1

General Information

- Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Closed on 29, 30 and 31 December
- Access: from JR Negishi Station, take city bus 58, 99 or 101 to Honmoku (10-min. ride), then 10-min. walk
- www.sankeien.or.jp

Although not strictly speaking a museum, the wonderful Sankeien garden, with its many historic architectural properties that have been designated Important Cultural Properties, is an ideal place to discover Japanese architecture in an enchanting setting. Surrounded by hills, the Sankeien is perfectly situated in a forested area where not a single modern building mars the view. The 175,000 square metre garden is dotted with 17 buildings, from a 15th century pagoda to a 1917 tearoom, which visitors can admire while strolling in the exceptionally beautiful garden that comprises ponds, streams and countless tree species.

Hara Sankei, who made his fortune in the silk trade, gathered houses, tearooms and Buddhist buildings from Kyoto, Kamakura and elsewhere, bringing them together on his estate to preserve them. While still living in the large house located on the left after the garden's entrance, he opened part of the garden to visitors in 1906; the rest of the garden was opened in 1958. Sankei designed the garden, positioning the buildings in harmony with the landscape and their original surroundings. He was also an avid art collector and a patron of painters. The Sankei Memorial, housed in a modern building comprising three galleries, is dedicated to his memory and displays works by artists he used to collect as well as calligraphy in his own hand. Not much information is provided in English in the memorial but it is outside where visitors will want to spend their time, and English descriptions can be found in front of every building. For conservation reasons, it is not possible to enter most of the edifices but visitors can get a very good look inside through their many doors and windows.

The Rinshunkaku villa, built in 1649 for a member of the Tokugawa clan, is a beautiful example of early Edo architecture made of three connected halls in a zigzag arrangement, with coffered ceilings that are different in every room

and paintings by the finest artists of the Kano school (now replaced with high-quality copies due to conservation concerns). A summer villa, it was a place for relaxation and its monochrome decoration, as well as the waves carved above the sliding doors, were intended to be "refreshing". Continuing onwards, visitors discover the Chōshūkaku, a two-storey structure built in 1623 by the third shogun in the compound of the Nijō Castle in Kyoto and the Tōkeiji sanctum, the hall of a Zen temple erected in 1634 in Kamakura and famous for welcoming women who wanted to escape their marriage. This grand building is in the Chinese style (as the Zen doctrine originally came from China) with tiled floors and an elaborate roof, and features typical Zen windows in the shape of a bell. Farther away, the imposing Yanohara house, built during the Edo period in Gifu Prefecture in central Japan, is the only building visitors can enter freely at all times. The property of a rich farmer who became the village head, the house comprises various rooms with massive beams and a floor of fine timber. Two formal rooms with tatami floors were reserved for samurai and officials visiting the village and never used by the owner of the house. The upper floor, accessed via a steep staircase, was kept for raising silkworms. One of the largest of its type still extant, the house was built according to local tradition with the help of the villagers who erected the roof with its thick layer of thatch. Inside a fire is kept burning every single day of the year to protect the wood against insects and humidity and the house is beautifully cared for, its shiny dark timber cleaned daily.

The Sankeien is beloved by Japanese visitors, who go there in great numbers at the weekend to enjoy the garden in all seasons, hold tea ceremonies and take wedding photos. As a result visitors may very well see several ladies in kimono and maybe a bride and groom in traditional wedding costume. A great number of events is organised all year round at the Sankeien, from flower shows to installations in conjunction with the Yokohama Triennale. During such events the houses are occasionally open to the public.

While there

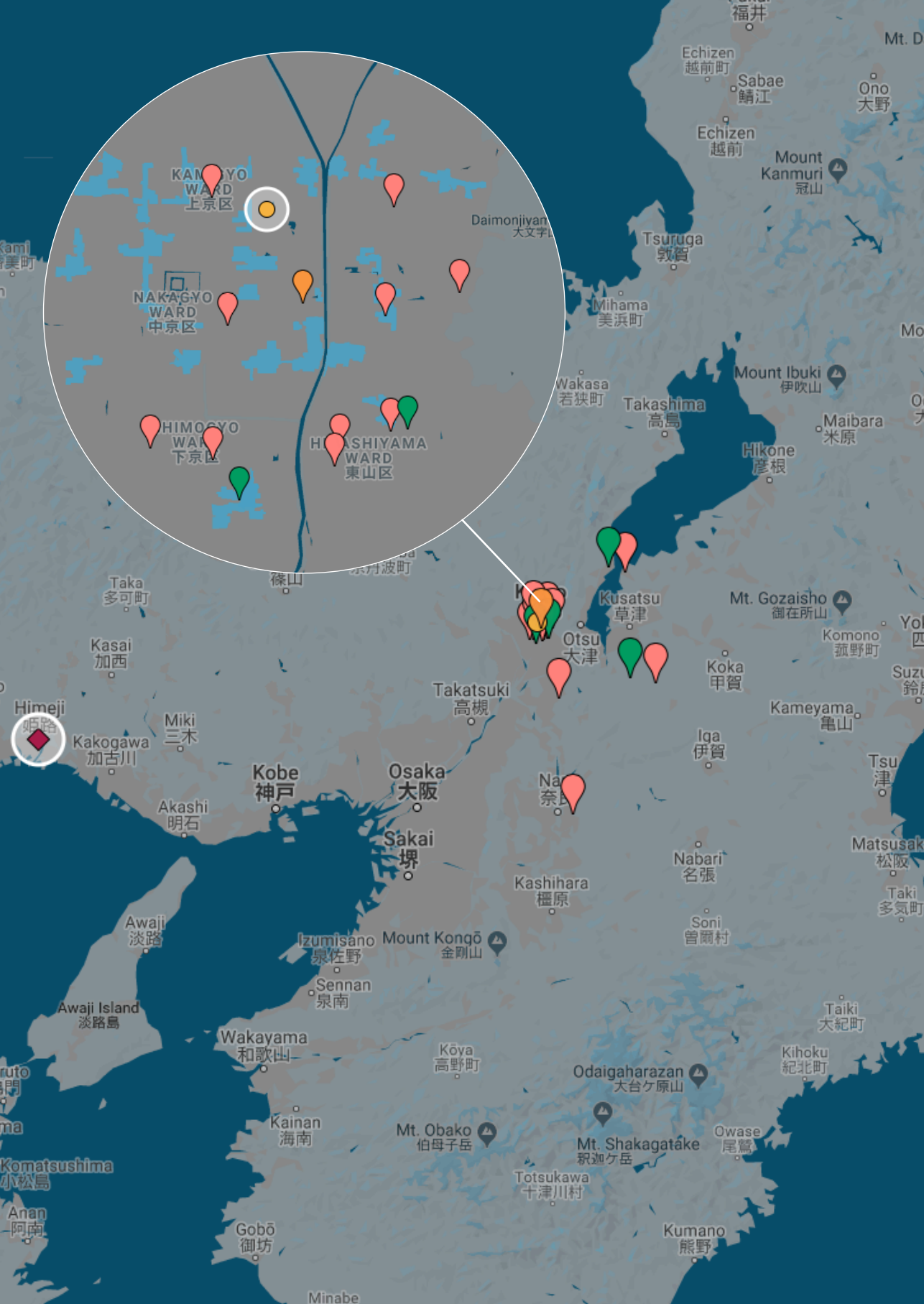
Visit the Rinkaen restaurant, a mere five-minute walk from the garden entrance. Run by a grand-daughter of Hara Sankei, the restaurant serves delicious traditional Japanese food (it has one Michelin star) in a 600-year-old building that used to be the residence of a Shinto priest.



Chōshūkaku, 1623



Naniwa room in the Rinshunkaku villa, 1649, Important Cultural Property



KYOTO & SURROUNDINGS

- 1 Kawai Kanjiro Memorial Museum
- 2 Kiyomizu Sannenzaka
- 3 Kyoto National Museum
- 4 Mirei Shigemori
- 5 Namikawa Cloisonné Museum
- 6 Nomura Museum, Kyoto
- 7 Ryukoku Museum
- 8 Sumiya House
- 9 Tea ceremony Museums
- 10 Ōnishi Seivemon Museum
- 11 Raku Museum
- 12 Sagawa Art Museum
- 13 Byodo-in
- 14 Nara National Museum
- 15 Miho Museum

Kiyomizu Sannenzaka Museum

清水三年坂美術館

3-337-1 Kiyomizu
Sanneizaka kita-iru
Kiyomizudera-monzen
Higashiyama-ku
Kyoto 605-0862
京都市東山区清水寺門前産寧坂北入清水3丁目337-1

General Information

- Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Closed on Monday and Tuesday
- Access: from Kyoto Station, take bus 100 or 206 to Kiyomizumichi stop, then 7-min. walk
- www.sannenzaka-museum.co.jp/index_e.html

This small private museum is the embodiment of its founder's passion for the arts of the late Edo and Meiji periods. The collection which Murata Masayuki has been gathering for the past 30 years is one of the finest and most comprehensive of its type in existence. Murata opened the museum in 2000 with the desire to shed light on this somewhat less known period of the arts in Japan and to display works that had left the country in vast quantities to be sold in the West. Murata still avidly scours the art market for the best examples of craftsmanship, and for visitors this is an opportunity to see a forever expanding collection – pieces can be put on display just weeks after they have been acquired. The purpose-built museum was designed to resemble the area's traditional houses.

The Meiji period was a particularly rich artistic moment. As the feudal system collapsed, imperial sponsorship replaced that of the shogun and helped keep centuries-old traditions alive. It coincided with the reopening of the country and its highly successful participation in international exhibitions. This resulted in works being exported in large quantities for Western audiences entranced by their innovative designs and brilliant craftsmanship. The museum's collection concentrates on five main areas – lacquer, cloisonné, metalwork, Satsuma ware and ivory carving. A display featuring important pieces illustrating all these categories is always on view on the ground floor. In addition, there is an enviable ensemble of fine embroideries, smoking utensils and inros.

Murata endeavours to acquire works that were made for the emperor or the court by imperial court artists. Among them is the versatile Shibata Zeshin (1807-1891), the first to receive the prestigious appointment. His exquisite creations in lacquer are bold and innovative, at times simulating the texture and appearance of patinated bronze,



Entrance of the Kiyomizu Sannenzaka Museum

rusted iron or wood. The collection also illustrates the survival of many of Japan's traditional metal-working techniques previously used to great effect to create arms and armour for the samurai, until an edict forbade the wearing of swords in 1876. Made in a broad range of coloured alloys, the incense burners, incense containers, vases and jars are animated with insects and flowers. Cloisonné enamelling is another highlight. The technique involves the placing of intricate wires to delineate decorative areas (cloisons in French, hence cloisonné) into which enamel paste is applied before the object is fired and polished. There are also pieces of Satsuma ware, a type of lavishly decorated ceramic that was taken to new heights by Kyoto artisans after it became prized in the West. The group of ivory carvings includes striking works by Andō Ryokuzan (1885-1959), with their subtle life-like colouring, and startling articulated life-size objects such as a spiny lobster by Yamazaki Nankai, who was active in the late Meiji period. There is also an extensive collection of netsuke as well as ivory carving, the latter often created for the overseas market.

Murata wishes for visitors not only to enjoy the arts of the period but also to get a better understanding of the techniques involved: therefore tools employed by the craftsmen are presented, magnifying glasses are available to examine the works closely and there are videos (with English subtitles) on various aspects of the collection. The ground floor consists of a display illustrating the main areas of the collection while the gallery upstairs is dedicated to special exhibitions that change every three months.

While there

The Kiyomizu Sannenzaka Museum is located on the Sannenzaka slope that leads to the celebrated Kiyomizu Temple. This steep lane, which has been trodden for centuries by pilgrims, offers the appearance of a vibrant street from before the modern era. It is evocative, busy and lined with two-storey houses now mostly occupied by tourist shops.



Namikawa Yasuyuki, Vase with design of flowers and butterflies, metal cloisonné, late 19th century-early 20th century

Kyoto National Museum

京都国立博物館

527 Chaya-cho
Higashiyama-ku
Kyoto 605-0931
京都市東山区茶屋町527

General Information

- Open 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday; 9:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Friday and Saturday
- Closed on Monday
- Access: from Shichijo Station on the Keihan Line, 6-min. walk
- www.kyohaku.go.jp/eng

With its splendid collection, tastefully displayed in the new wing opened in 2014, the Kyoto National Museum is the best place to see the most precious art works created in the ancient capital during over a millennium.

Passed the entrance gate, visitors will face an arresting juxtaposition of architectural styles. On one side stands a grand red-brick building in the French Renaissance style, the original museum inaugurated in 1897 under the name Imperial Museum of Kyoto, now open only for occasional events. On the other side is a new wing designed by Taniguchi Yoshio to house month-long thematic exhibitions from the museum's extensive permanent collection, as well as major special exhibitions twice a year. A neat rectangular edifice in glass, steel and limestone, it contrasts sharply with the earlier building yet it avoids competition. In deference to the past, both buildings are of the same height. The façade displays Taniguchi's trademarks including asymmetrical design, translucence and reflection in a pool of water.

Aptly for the latest addition to an institution of this stature, the space feels expansive and the interior design is sleek. The display area is completely shut off from natural light and dimly lit to protect the treasures on view. Presentation is airy (all the vitrines were designed by Taniguchi and his studio in order to harmonise with the whole). Galleries are tall and roomy, refreshingly open plan, while open staircases between levels afford multiple views and fresh perspectives. Visitors can circulate freely throughout the three floors, or take an elevator to the top and follow a suggested route downwards.

About half of the collection has been acquired by the institution while the rest is on long-term loan from temples. The display is divided into sections:



Meiji Kotokan Hall

sculpture, calligraphy, textiles and costumes, lacquer ware, metalwork, illustrated handscrolls, Buddhist paintings, medieval paintings, Momoyama and Edo period paintings, Chinese paintings, ceramics, and archaeology. Items are exhibited in rotation so it is not possible to give an indication of what might be displayed but some masterpieces are invariably on show. The collection illuminates Kyoto's immensely rich cultural history, with pieces dating mostly from the Heian through to the Edo period. Having enjoyed patronage from the imperial court, military rulers, Buddhist temples, Shinto shrines and affluent merchants, the city has supported an extraordinary number of artists and craftsmen. Chinese arts are also represented since they have been preserved in Japanese temples and collections for centuries and have had a major influence on Japanese arts and tastes.

In the spring and autumn the new wing is entirely taken over by a special exhibition of particular importance; in any case visitors will consistently find displays of a high standard. English information is widely available in the museum and on its website, exhibitions catalogues are partly bilingual. The museum at night is a beautiful sight, with Taniguchi's new wing glowing like a lantern.

While there

The Kyoto National Museum is located in an area rich with cultural sites. The closest, and one of the most striking, is just across the street from the south gate. Sanjusangen-do is a temple dedicated to Kannon, the bodhisattva of mercy. Its extraordinary main hall contains 1,001 golden statues of the deity.



Heisei Chishinkan Wing