

# Conference: Japan – Crosscurrents of Courtly Exchange

14 – 15 February 2023 | Windsor Castle

In collaboration with the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures  
| With support from Japan House, London

To accompany the exhibition 'Japan: Courts and Culture' at The Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace

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## DAY I – Tuesday 14 February

**Ms Rachel Peat, Exhibition Curator, 'Japan: Courts and Culture'**

**Keynote: 'Crosscurrents of Courtly Exchange'**

This paper will introduce the wide-ranging Japanese holdings in the British Royal Collection, which tell the story of 400 years of diplomatic, artistic and cultural exchange. These outstanding works include rare pieces of porcelain and lacquer, samurai armour, embroidered screens and official gifts from the reigns of James I to Her Majesty The Queen. Together, they offer a unique insight into the worlds of ritual, honour and artistry linking Britain and Japan. The exceptional pieces featured in the lecture form the basis of the exhibition *Japan: Courts and Culture* at The Queen's Gallery, London, until February 2023.

Rachel Peat is Assistant Curator of Non-European Works of Art at Royal Collection Trust. She is editor of *Japan: Courts and Culture* (published 2020), the first publication dedicated to Japanese material in the Royal Collection, and curator of the exhibition of the same name at The Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace.

Her role encompasses 13,000 works of art from across the globe, which today furnish 13 current and historic royal residences. She is a contributing author to *George IV: Art & Spectacle* (2019) and a member of the Museum Ethnographers' Group and Royal Studies Network.



**Dr Mary Redfern, Curator of East Asian Collections at the Chester Beatty, Dublin**

**'Assembled for Dinner: (Re)Constructing the Imperial Banquet for Prince Albert Victor and Prince George'**

On 26 October 1881, Queen Victoria's grandsons, Princes Albert Victor and George of Wales, sat down to dine with the Meiji Emperor in the newly-built dining hall of the Akasaka Temporary Palace, Tokyo. The unusually rich description of this event given in the published account of the princes' travels, *Cruise of H.M.S. "Bacchante"*, allows reconstruction of details rarely accessible, from the table setting used to impressions made. Just as the banquet furthered the emperor's friendship with his royal 'cousins', so too did the objects deployed. Delving into archives and collections in Windsor, Arita, London, Stoke-on-Trent, Sandringham and Tokyo, this talk will explore the choreography behind this occasion, its honoured guests, and the objects, food, architecture, and intentions there assembled.

Mary Redfern is Curator of East Asian Collections at the Chester Beatty, Dublin. Having worked with East Asian collections at the National Museum of Scotland and the Victoria and Albert Museum, Dr Redfern completed her

PhD at University of East Anglia on imperial tableware and diplomatic dining in the court of the Meiji Emperor. Her publications include *Tennō no dainingu hōru (Emperor's Dining Hall, 2017)* written with Yamazaki Taisuke and Imaizumi Yoshiko, *Art of Friendship: Japanese Surimono Prints (2017)*, *Edo in Colour: Prints from Japan's Metropolis (2021)* and 'Dinner Table Negotiations: Tableware and the Presentation of Japan at the Enryōkan' (2021).



## **Dr Rosina Buckland, Curator of the Japanese Collections at the British Museum**

### **'Sending images of Japan abroad: Folding screen paintings as diplomatic gifts'**

The external perception of Japan during the 260-year rule of the Tokugawa dynasty is of isolation and the 'closed country' policy. Though relations with the outside world were indeed strictly controlled, the government in reality engaged extensively in diplomatic communication with powers in both Asia and Europe. Furthermore, it participated in the widespread practice of dispatching diplomatic gifts, sometimes presented in person and at other times sent on afterwards. Such exchanges occurred with greater frequency at the beginning and end of Tokugawa rule. The gifts were consistently made to the highest standard, their production forming part of the duties of the artists-in-service to the shogunal court. The works sent included armour and weapons conveying the martial strength of Japan, as a message to deter any attempt at conquest, as well as lacquer vessels, furniture and paintings, intended to demonstrate Japan's high level of cultural attainment. Examples of these gifts survive in a number of museum collections today, although their provenance has often been lost, due to a lack of associated documentation and the physical movement of the objects themselves. This presentation will focus on the gifts sent during the 1850s to 1860s, as the shogunate began to lose its grip on power, and in particular on the messages of the sumptuous folding screen paintings.

Rosina Buckland is Curator of the Japanese Collections at the British Museum. She received her BA degree from the University of Cambridge and PhD from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. Her publications include *Shunga: Erotic Art in Japan (2010)* and *Painting Nature for the Nation: Taki Katei and the Challenges to Sinophile Culture in Meiji Japan (2013)*. She has previously worked at the British Museum, the National Museum of Scotland and the Royal Ontario Museum (Toronto, Canada). She has just submitted the manuscript for a textbook on arts of the Meiji era and is currently preparing a major exhibition examining the myths and reality of the samurai.



## **Professor Antony Best, Professor in International History, London School of Economics**

### **'Anglo-Japanese Court Relations in the Twentieth Century'**

This paper will look at the evolution of Anglo-Japanese royal relations over the course of the twentieth century. It will show how the royal courts helped to seal the relationship between the two countries during the alliance period and remained a useful avenue for diplomacy up until the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese War in 1937. It will then study the degree to which the ties between the two courts shed light on the slow return to 'normal' diplomatic relations during the post-war era, culminating in 1998 with Emperor Akihito's state visit to Britain.

Antony Best is a professor in international history at the London School of Economics. He has written extensively about the history of Anglo-Japanese relations. His latest book is *British Engagement with Japan: The Origins and Course of an Unlikely Alliance, 1854-1922* (London: Routledge, 2021).



## DAY 2 – Wednesday 15 February

### Royal Collection Trust Conservators

#### ‘Conservation in Conversation’

This panel will explore how Japanese works of art in the Royal Collection were examined, treated and mounted for exhibition at The Queen’s Gallery. Comparing European and Japanese materials and approaches, three specialist conservators will discuss the bespoke treatment undertaken for items of furniture, arms and armour and works on paper. Some works had never previously been on public display; others demanded innovative conservation and mounting. In the process, the panel will share hidden elements uncovered during treatment and new insights into the Japanese holdings in the Royal Collection.

**Michelle Kirk** is Furniture Conservator at Royal Collection Trust. She holds an MA from West Dean College and has worked at the Royal Household since 2017. Her previous experience includes conservation and technical services roles at the V&A and the Royal Pavilion, Brighton.

**Francesca Levey** is Arms and Armour Conservator at Royal Collection Trust. She studied Art History at The Courtauld and worked on Asian arms and armour at the Wallace Collection 2011–16 before undertaking a Masters in conservation at West Dean College. She joined RCT in 2019.

**Kate Stone** is Paper Conservator at Royal Collection Trust. She first joined the Royal Household in 1997 following a BA in Paper Conservation at Camberwell College of Arts. Prior to that, she was a commercial picture framer in South-West England for over a decade. She has also worked at Tate Britain and the National Maritime Museum.



### Professor MUROSE Kazumi, designated Preserver of an Important Intangible Cultural Property (‘Living National Treasure’)

#### ‘Regarding *urushi* (lacquer) in the Royal Collection’

In this paper, Murose Kazumi will present insights on the *urushi* wares in the Royal Collection based on his personal examination and study. Murose Kazumi appears destined to have become an *urushi* (lacquer) artist. His father was the well-known *urushi* artist, Murose Shunji (1911–89) and Murose Kazumi studied *urushi* at Tokyo University of the Arts under the famous master and Living National Treasure, Matsuda Gonroku (1896–1986), and his principal student, Taguchi Yoshikuni (1923–98). Murose’s *urushi* artwork incorporates modern designs inspired by nature and plant life, but which are in fact based on Japan’s rich heritage of *urushi* tradition.

Murose Kazumi was designated a Preserver of an Important Intangible Cultural Property (‘Living National Treasure’) for the *maki-e* (sprinkled picture) technique by the Japanese Government in 2008. He spends considerable time restoring ancient *urushi* works and helping to survey *urushi* collections from all periods. He cares passionately about fostering the next generation of *urushi* artists as well as promoting Japanese traditional craft (*kōgei*) and its preservation. In the UK his work is represented in the British Museum and the V&A.



**Ms Despina Zernioti CMG, Director, Museum of Asian Art, Corfu**

**‘The creation of a national Museum of Asian Art in the Palace of St Michael and St George, Corfu’**

This paper will examine the background to the creation of the first national museum of Asian art in Greece. Based on the collection of Gregorius Manos (1850–1928), a Greek diplomat and avid collector of a wide range of Japanese, Chinese and Korean arts, the museum opened in 1928 as the Sino-Japanese Museum of Corfu inside the imposing Palace of St Michael and St George on Corfu Island. Originally it housed 9,500 objects. Today the museum is among Greece’s most visited institutions, boasting a series of galleries that encompass multiple Asian cultures and communities, past and present.

Ms Zernioti CMG is Director of the Palace of St Michael and St George and since 2006 has been Director of the Museum of Asian Art, Corfu, Ministry of Culture. She is a trained archaeologist and conservator of antiquities. She has curated numerous exhibitions in Corfu and abroad, including highlights of the Museum of Asian Art’s Edo-period collection at the Edo Tokyo Museum (2009) and at Maison de la Culture du Japon à Paris (2011).



**Professor Nicole Coolidge Rousmaniere, Research Director, Sainsbury Institute**

**‘Vessels of influence: ceramics in the Royal Collection’**

The Royal Collection contains an impressive array of Japanese ceramics from multiple Japanese kilns dating from the 17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century. This paper will examine the range, provenance, and historical meaning of a selection of porcelain from this important collection. Drawing on John Ayers’ magisterial three volume publication *Chinese and Japanese Works of Art in the Collection of Her Majesty The Queen* (2016) and current research in Japan, the ceramics are placed in context revealing how these beautiful examples of porcelain were used in diplomatic exchange.

Nicole Coolidge Rousmaniere, PhD, is the founding Director and currently Research Director of the Sainsbury Institute and Professor of Japanese Art and Culture at the University of East Anglia, Norwich. She wrote *Vessels of Influence: China and the Birth of Porcelain in Medieval and Modern Japan* with Bloomsbury Academic in 2012 and translated Professor Tsuji Nobuo’s *A History of Art in Japan* with Tokyo University Press in 2018, among her other publications. She was lead curator for the *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* exhibition in 2007 and the *Citi Exhibition Manga* 2019, both held at the British Museum.



**Professor ARAKAWA Masa’aki, Professor of Japanese Art History, Gakushuin University, Tokyo**

**‘Historic Japanese ceramic collections in western Europe, focusing on the Kakiemon style’**

This paper, given in Japanese with consecutive translation, will present the results of numerous surveys conducted by the speaker in western Europe over the last 30 years. Focusing on the brightly coloured

and perfectly formed Kakiemon style of porcelain fired from 1670–90s in Arita, the lecture will set the stage for the collecting of Japanese porcelain among European elites in the later 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Arakawa Masa'aki is a Professor of Japanese Art History in the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Letters, Gakushuin University, Tokyo. He specialises in the history and collecting practices of Japanese decorative arts and has conducted numerous surveys of historic Japanese collections in Europe. His many publications include *The Life of Itaya Hazan* (Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 2001), *Ko-Karatsu: Yakimono Renaissance* (Shinchosha, 2004) (co-author), *A View on Japanese Ceramics* (Kadokawa Sensho, 2004) and *How to Enjoy Ceramics* (Ikeda Shoten, 2009) [all publications are written in Japanese].