



***Shokkan*: Japanese Art through the Sense of Touch**

Travelling Exhibition (in development)

Available 2026 onwards

ROM

Nonomura Ninsei, *Rounded square tea bowl with flowing glaze*, late 17th century

The Exhibition

Many Japanese works of art serve simultaneously as utilitarian objects. They are meant to be used in everyday life as well as appreciated for their beauty and craftsmanship.

This exhibition, the first of its kind, will explore the way Japanese objects engage with the human sense of touch to create *shokkan* - a critical component in the creation, appreciation, and circulation of Japanese art. *Shokkan* is not just about the haptic sensation felt at one's fingertips, but is a combination of human senses, memory, and language.



Three Children, woodblock print, 19th century

The exhibition will showcase a stunning array of Japanese objects including ceramics, furniture, textiles, paintings, and armour. Audiences will engage their senses through interactive touch experiences. Digital media, touchable objects made by contemporary artisans, and commissioned works will allow visitors to engage their senses in the exploration of *shokkan*. Currently in development, here is a sneak peak at the themes and topics.

Experiencing the texture of objects by touching them is an essential part of appreciating Japanese art. The texture of objects becomes paramount, attention is drawn to the surface and the decorative techniques used by artisans.



Woman's summer kimono with design of the full moon and autumn grasses, 1929



Oribe-type tea caddy, 17th - 18th century



Red lacquered suit of armour, early 18th century



Ikeda Kosuke, *Pandemic and (folding) screen* (detail of installation), 2021

Designed to Touch: texture, comfort, protection

Objects that cover or contact the human body are designed and created for comfort, protection, beauty, and status. As they touch human skin, the object's texture becomes essential.

The exhibition also explores how the latest technologies make textiles responsive – interactive and “alive.”



Woman's wedding kimono, 18th century

Designed to Handle: function

A section of the exhibition will explore the significance of tactility in Japanese art and everyday life, showcasing the functionality of art. Paintings were both works of art and functional furnishings; lacquered objects were created for daily use and to be appreciated in one's hands.



Picnic set, 19th century



Suzuri-bako writing set with bridge, late 19th century

Tactile Appreciation: ceremony, ritual, obsession

Visitors learn about the essential role of tactility in the Japanese tea ceremony. Small, hand-held Japanese objects such as tea bowls, netsuke, and incense boxes were sought after by foreign collectors during the *japonisme* phenomenon. The pleasure of touching these objects is evident from years of handling which only makes them more appealing.



Netsuke, various dates

Representing & Imagining Touch: embrace, contact, emotion

Woodblock prints and paintings demonstrate the array of sensuality and human emotion expressed in Japanese art. Contemporary artworks will demonstrate feelings evoked through "imagined touch."



Utagawa Kuniyoshi, *The 108 Heroes of the Popular Tale of Suikoden*, circa 1827-1830



Suzuki Harunobu, *Two lovers: a wakashu and a young woman kiss*, 1768-1770



Kitagawa Utamaro (1754-1806), *Mother and Child*

Lead Curator: Dr. Akiko Takesue

Dr. Akiko Takesue joined the ROM in 2021 as the Bishop White Committee Associate Curator of Japanese Art & Culture. She is responsible for researching and developing the ROM's collection of Japanese art and culture, numbering approximately 10,000 objects and ranging in date from the archaeology of the Jōmon period (10,000–300 BCE) to the present day. While the collection covers most of the significant areas of Japanese art, its strengths lie in woodblock prints of the 18th and 19th centuries, arms and armour, ceramics, utensils for tea practice (the Yamagami Collection), and lacquerware.



About the Exhibition

Availability: Fall 2026 to 2028; 3-4 months per venue

Size: 4,000 sf / 370 m²

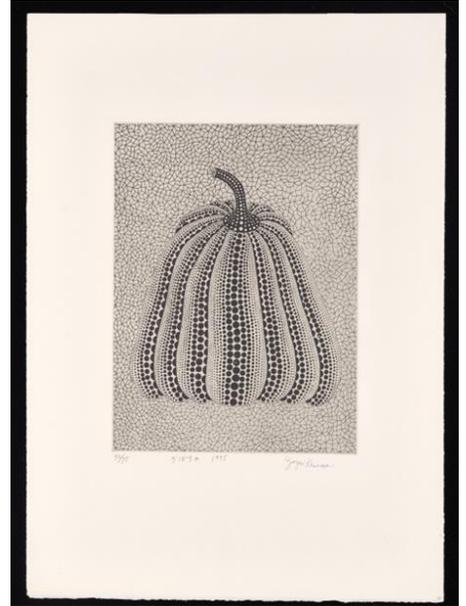
Content Includes:

- Approximately 100 objects from ROM's collections plus international loans and commissioned artwork
- Object mounts and hanging systems
- Text files in digital format (Eng/Fr)
- Digital experiences files (Eng/Fr)
- Tactiles/touchable objects

Fees:

- Fee and Shared Costs upon request
- Shared Costs include: crating; packing; reproduction rights; and final dispersal
- Additional Venue Costs: shipping; casework; ROM couriers for de-/installation; production costs; playback equipment; and all local costs

Catalogue: Available for sale



Yayoi Kusama, *Pumpkin (Black)*, etching on paper, 1995

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