



STEVE SLY

JAPANESE WORKS OF ART

2020 VISION OF AN  
ENLIGHTENED RULER  
VOL II









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## 2020 VISION OF AN ENLIGHTENED RULER - VOL II

Dear reader

Welcome to the launch of Volume II of my exhibition book  
“2020 Vision of an enlightened ruler”.

Following what has been an unprecedented period since the launch of volume I, and as a consequence of the restrictions imposed upon us, the content of this edition is somewhat less in terms of quantity.

However when I roll out one of my often-used soundbites, “less is more”, I hope you will fully understand my sentiments as you reach the final pages.

In metalwork, which many of you will know is my passion, I feel both honoured and privileged to be sharing with you the monumental vase on plate I4, from the studio of Kiritsu Kosho Kaisha, a company headed up by the highly regarded imperial artist Suzuki Chokichi, his art name Kako.

This actual vase was last exhibited in Boston in 1883 by that company having undoubtedly been manufactured by Kako. Fast forward some 140 years and I am now able to share this historical piece of Japanese metalwork with you.



13 ポストン技術工芸博覧会への起立工商会社  
の出品物 1883年（明治16年）開催

Two further highlights in metalwork must surely be the outstanding pieces by father and son Hagiya Katsuhira and Suzuki Katsuhiro for the Ozeki company, at plates 15 & 16, respectively.

The central panel of the silver Tsuitate (table screen) is signed by the father Hagiya Katsuhira and is a tour de force of mixed metal work from a highly important artist. Whilst the outstanding Ozeki cockerel tray by his son Suzuki demonstrates mixed metal techniques, as well as gold wire cloisonne snowflakes that seem as fresh now as the day they were formed almost 140 years ago.



And if your passion is figural lacquer okimono from the Meiji period can there be anything more dramatic than the fisherman and octopus tussle featured on the outer cover and at plate 9. An artform referred to as “Iki -ningyo” (living doll) due to the incredible realism of the anatomy of these sculptures.

This actual sculpture was recorded by Frank Brinkley in the mid 1890's as a hand-coloured photograph for the publication he edited- “Japan described and illustrated by the Japanese, 1897-98”.



It gives me great pleasure to be able to launch this volume online as a pdf, in print as a limited edition hardback and in person at the stunning Chelsea Old Town Hall, as part of the 70th year celebrations of the Chelsea Antiques Fair in partnership with 2Covet

Thank you for taking the time to visit me at the exhibition or to pick up or download a copy of this publication, I truly hope it brings you much pleasure and enjoyment.

My sincere best wishes

Steve

*“Less is More”*

AN INTRODUCTION TO JAPANESE WORKS OF ART FROM THE MEIJI PERIOD 1868-1912

The artists and artisan craftsmen of Japan, a beautiful and mystical chain of rugged islands in the Pacific Ocean, have been responsible for the creation of Works of Art of such breathtaking technical quality and with such a refined aesthetic taste that they rank amongst the very finest ever produced by human hand. Quite some statement – but undeniably true.

For many centuries Japan had followed an isolationist policy leaving it largely untouched by and unknown to the Western world. It therefore comes as no surprise that, when their artistic output finally emerged onto the global stage from the mid 19th Century onwards at the various Trade Fairs across Europe and the USA, it stunned and enchanted an avid and eager audience.

You may find a brief introduction to the background of how this all came about to be interesting:

Prior to the Meiji Restoration, which commenced in 1868, Japan was a feudal society with a rigid class system with the military Samurai class being the effective controlling elite. The position of the Emperor was largely that of a divine but remote symbolic head of society. The country was divided into many provinces, which were in turn governed and administered by the local dominant Samurai family headed by a Daimyo (Lord) and backed by a great many loyal armed retainers.

This governing structure meant that wealth and to a large degree patronage of the artistic communities were concentrated around the Imperial households in Kyoto and the numerous provincial capitals. For centuries skilled metalworkers, potters, carvers and lacquer artists produced beautiful and refined works for their Samurai patrons and also for the very many and varied religious temples and shrines. Generally speaking the Samurai

possessed highly refined artistic and aesthetic tastes reflected in the beautiful architecture and interiors of their castles and residences and in the artworks that they enjoyed and treasured.

This rigid feudal system survived both periods of peace and of internal upheaval and civil war but it was not until the arrival of the Americans in their heavily armed steamships commanded by Commodore Matthew Perry in 1853 and 1854 that the Japanese were finally forced to face a “modern” Western world bringing with it far superior weaponry and industrial capability. The motives of America were quite simple – to force Japan to sign trade deals and to generally open their ports to American ships and trading delegations.

This situation and how to respond to it created great confusion and disagreement within the Samurai ranks but ultimately lead to the transfer of power from the Samurai Shogunate government back to the Emperor. This restoration of power to the Emperor is known as the Meiji Restoration and heralded the start of the Meiji period. He took the name “Meiji” as his reign name which translates as “enlightened rule” and his restoration to power officially commenced on 3rd January, 1868. Consequently, the Samurai class ceased to exist and were replaced by a new Imperial Army, trained and equipped by Western military advisors.

The newly empowered youthful and visionary Emperor could clearly see that Japan needed to take its place on the global stage and to accomplish that he went on to form a Government more akin to those found in the West and eventually signed various trade agreements, not just with the Americans but with many European powers as well.

Thankfully he was also a great patron of the Arts and his new Governments’ efforts were immediately directed towards encouraging craftsmen from all disciplines to utilise their skills and knowledge in the production of high quality, new and more “fashionable” works of art. The sheer quality of Japanese Art in all its existing forms appealed greatly to many of the early foreign diplomats, travellers and military advisors who were in Japan during the early years of the Meiji Restoration. It was a natural inevitability that demand would rapidly increase for these fabulous things never before seen by the Western World. It therefore followed that the artists who created them would now start to make new and innovative works that were even more desirable to their new customers.

Also, Japan began exhibiting at the various world Trade and Art Expositions, Fairs and Exhibitions. This resulted in a truly remarkable explosion of demand from Europe and the United States who were enthralled and entranced by these superb and previously unseen exhibits. Artists now moved from the brink of poverty (caused by the loss of their Samurai patrons) to a position of having to satisfy an insatiable demand for their wonderful creations. This demand was to continue certainly for the rest of their lives and often for one or two generations of their skilled pupils. Major artists became extremely wealthy individuals and enjoyed an enviable position within this new Japan.

Many workshops and studios were established across all artistic disciplines in order to satisfy this massive demand. Some comprised highly skilled masters with just a few pupils through to far larger operations. However, it is worth noting that a large workforce did not necessarily mean a lower quality although it is

fair to say that demand had to be met across a whole spectrum of price ranges.

I hope this briefest of backgrounds conveys some of the astonishing achievements of these artists during a period of radical change and modernisation now that Japan was no longer just a mystical and fascinating country somewhere in the “Orient”.

I have been dealing in and collecting Japanese Meiji Period Works of Art for the last 40 years and I promise you that handling even a modest work can bring immense pleasure, a masterpiece will leave you speechless!

Thank you for visiting this exhibition whether in person, online or through this publication.

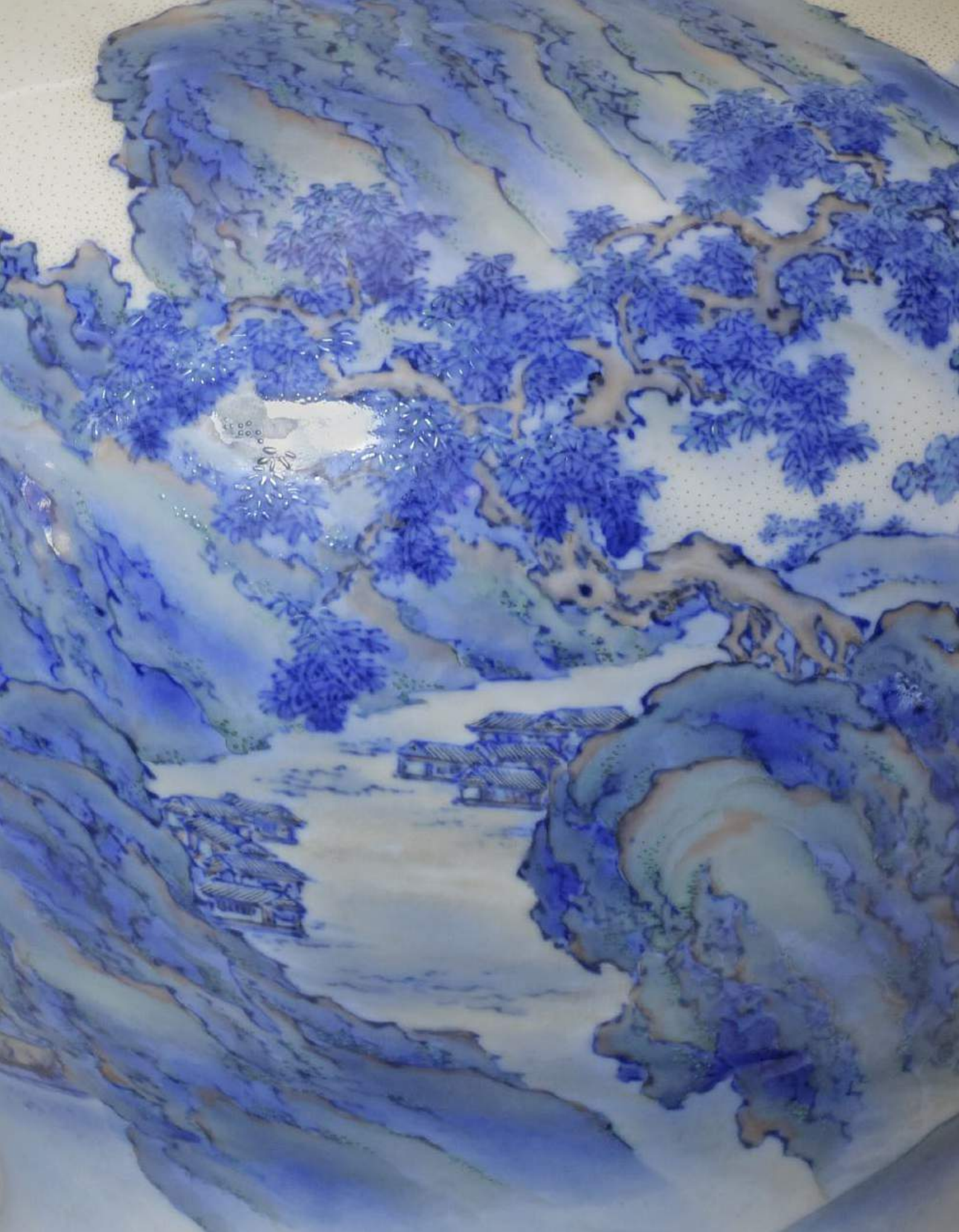
Steve Sly



PRICE GUIDE

- Up to £15,000
- £15,000 - £30,000
- £30,000 - £50,000
- In excess of £50,000





## JAPANESE CERAMICS

Highly skilled Japanese artisans have been producing exquisite Ceramics using a variety of techniques and in widely differing styles for many centuries. Their innovative and highly artistic output, often of staggering quality, has always been greatly treasured not only within the domestic market but also by collectors and connoisseurs worldwide.

Early porcelain from the Arita, Nabeshima, Hirado and Kutani kilns together with the refined outputs of the Kakiemon family found a ready market in the country houses of the European nobility. These early porcelains from the 17th and 18th centuries, often of impressively large size, form a specialist collecting field of their own, but latterly it is the truly breathtaking and superbly enamelled Meiji period earthenware known as “Satsuma” that has come to be the most coveted and highly collected of all Japanese ceramics. It is for this reason that we concentrate our article on Satsuma earthenware.

From a purely technical point of view Japanese “Satsuma” can be described as a dense cream coloured earthenware body having a fine and even crackle glaze usually decorated in over-glaze enamels. From an artistic point of view, it could easily be described as the most intricate enamelled ceramic ever made by man. As the name suggests it was originally produced in the Province of Satsuma under the patronage of the Shimazu family who had been the Daimyo there since 1615.

Its evolution into the finely decorated items that are nowadays so popular with discerning collectors did not really commence until

the mid-19th century and subsequently developed rapidly during the Meiji period. Prior to that Satsuma ware enjoyed a reputation as a fine quality but frequently undecorated glazed earthenware aimed at the Japanese domestic market. However, the aforesaid Daimyo of Satsuma, generally regarded as the most powerful at the time, was instrumental in Japan exhibiting at the first World Fair – the Paris Exposition in 1867 – and this naturally ensured a substantial display of high-quality ceramics from his home Province. This proved to be a strong catalyst for innovation in production, design, and artistic quality.

Japanese art including ceramics unsurprisingly received worldwide acclaim at the Paris Fair and indeed at subsequent exhibitions. This and several other factors quickly contributed to an explosion of interest in the “never before seen” art form that is Satsuma earthenware. Thankfully, the Meiji Emperor was a great patron of Japanese Arts in all their various forms and quickly realised that the foreign currency flowing into the country from the sale of these works would greatly assist in his modernisation programme. Also, many high ranking foreign advisors and their supporting workforces together with a high number of curious and wealthy early tourists were now in Japan. Satsuma ware with its developing designs and superb artistry appealed greatly to this new customer base and demand grew strongly. The continued involvement of the astute and powerful Shimazu family gave further impetus to its production.

ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

The development of Satsuma progressed hand in hand with the rapid modernisation of Japan during the Meiji period.

Early functional domestic pieces often with little or no decoration quickly evolved into a wider range of items of all shapes and sizes. Bowls, koro, vases, and boxes all became subjects for unbelievably intricate and detailed enamelling. They were adorned with finely painted and often idealised scenes from nature or rural everyday life, historical and legendary events, famous places, in fact anything that was shown to appeal to the insatiable foreign market now established both in Japan and worldwide. The lavish use of high-quality gilding gave items a rich and sumptuous appearance. Decorative borders became an art form, again displaying brocades, floral and other designs in a detail that defies belief.

Such was the success of and demand for this dazzling product that kilns, and studios began to spring up outside of Satsuma Province, all producing Satsuma “type” wares. This does somewhat confuse the precise definition of Satsuma, but these outside kilns are generally accepted within the modern collector’s generic definition. Indeed, many of these “outside” studios went on to become some of the most famous for example Kinkozan in Kyoto and Yabu Meizan in Osaka.

Towards the end of the Meiji period and into the Taisho period we can see a significant shift in design and especially the

artistry driven perhaps by two factors. Firstly, in the early 20thC Japanese art forms began to come in for some criticism at the World Trade Fairs. Some critics began to say that it had become too fussy and stale with little innovation in design – too “over-elaborate”. This would have co-incided with a growing realisation that these art works were very expensive to produce and that assumes that studios could even find enough talented painters to sustain production. As a result, the designs and outputs from some studios became much simpler with fewer or often no decorative borders and a sparser “artistic” appearance. This is most noticeable in the late productions of the most famous Yabu Meizan studio where exquisitely detailed works gave way to simple depictions of birds in autumn maple trees and similar. Interestingly this shift in taste can also be seen in the work of the most famous cloisonné maker – Namikawa Yasuyuki.

In Satsuma earthenware we can see an art form that developed from simple (but high quality) domestic wares into breathtakingly detailed exquisitely painted works of art finally reverting to a far more artistically simple product.

In the end it must be left to the personal tastes of the collector to determine what enters his cabinet of treasures!

QUALITY

Satsuma is found in a bewildering range of objects, subjects and qualities and is one of the most popularly collected of Japanese Meiji period art forms.

Interestingly most of the very finest pieces are of a modest size, often around 6 inches in height or frequently less. The finest work did come in larger sizes, but they are the exception and thus rare and highly desirable.

Some makers’ output could vary dramatically in quality from the very finest of pieces destined for the wealthy connoisseur through to lower qualities aimed at more of a mass export market. Many studios had a variety of qualities all in parallel production. The best example is Kinkozan who had a small number of superb artists (the best of which is generally accepted to be Sozan) working in peaceful seclusion producing a very small number of truly exquisite works, probably the most highly detailed and enamelled the world has ever seen. At the same time in another area of the factory were mid-range artisans producing mid-range items, still of fine quality but not as demanding as the aforesaid.

The ideal way to judge quality is to understand what the best pieces look like. Try and study fine pieces by Kinkozan, Meizan, Yabu Meizan, Seikozan, Hankinzan, Ryozan, Shoko Takebe and similar. Look at the detail, the humour and artistry captured in the designs and subjects, the crispness and lustre of the gilding, the

complexity of the borders. Some works will require a magnifying glass to appreciate the supreme ability of the painter.

As always, the best way to judge quality is to handle as much material as possible, visit museums, sales and exhibitions and study the excellent reference books that are available. A lasting relationship with a trusted dealer can prove invaluable in sourcing these increasingly rare objects, It remains my contention however that a few better things are always preferable to a high volume of lesser items.

SIGNATURES

It is a certainty that any signed piece will be far more desirable than the same piece unsigned but thankfully the vast majority of Satsuma is reliably signed. This is a refreshing and reassuring feature of collecting these beautiful works of art.

Some of the finest pieces are often signed not only by the studio but also by the artist who decorated them. These additional signatures or seals can be found on superb works from the Kinkozan studio where the artists mark is often subtly located within the actual design work itself.

I hope you will enjoy looking at our three fine examples from the previously mentioned studios of Yabu Meizan and Kinkozan.



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## SATSUMA VASE

Artist - Kinkozan

Satsuma ware vase from the studios of the highly regarded Kinkozan, this charming two panel vase is finished with a traditional cobalt blue ground interspersed in sensational gilt leaf decoration divided by a central honeycomb band and a similarly gilded floral neck & shoulder detail. The main panels framed within shaped gilt bands and decorated in exquisite detail, the first panel depicts families in pavilions as a backdrop to children playing with puppy dogs, the reverse by contrast a still life scene of a hanging scroll aside an open shelved shodana adorned with Scholars implements including books and a koro, to the foreground utensils are laid out in preparation for a tea ceremony, this delightful vase carries impressed and painted factory seals to the underside as well as dual signed panels.

### Literature:

It is not uncommon for a piece by a Kinkozan commissioned artist such as Sozan to be individually signed on the panels by that particular artist, thus significantly increasing its desirability, it is however rather unusual to note that Kinkozan has added his signature to the panels of this fine example, possibly indicating that he took pride in painting them on this occasion.

### Approximate sizes:

Height: 4 1/2" 11.5 cm

Diameter: 3 3/8" 8.5 cm





## SATSUMA VASE

Artist - Kinkozan

A fine Satsuma vase by the highly regarded Kinkozan studios, this cylindrical shaped vase is predominately decorated in a deep cobalt blue with striking gilt flora, it stands upon an elegantly gilded pedestal base the decoration of which is replicated on the exquisite swagged shoulders, there was in my view only one artist capable of this high quality gilded decoration on a cobalt blue ground, thus rendering this vase instantly recognizable as an example from the higher echelons of the Kinkozan studios varied output. The elaborate shaped front cartouche is decorated with a cockerel and hens among bamboos and native flora, the reverse depicts a lakeside and woodland setting painted in minute detail, an absolute jewel of a vase that has been signed within a very decorative four character signature that reads Kinkozan Zo.

## Approximate sizes:

Height: 5 7/8" 15 cm

Diameter: 3" 7.5 cm







3

### SATSUMA VASE

Artist - Yabu Meizan

Fine quality Satsuma vase by arguably the most coveted Satsuma artist of the Meiji period, Yabu Meizan, this charming vase is predominantly decorated with a landscape as the backdrop to a bustling waterside setting, the artist has captured the scene of working river boats and pleasure craft manoeuvring upon the busy waterways within a continuous scene of buildings and pavilions beneath a mountainous landscape backdrop. The base of the vase decorated with panels of native flora above a formal border, the neck and shoulders adorned with delicately painted opposing bands of pink and gilt flowers below the traditional black dot rim synonymous with works by Yabu Meizan, the vase finished with a gilt band to the rim and a gilt signature to the underside.

#### Provenance:

Russian private collection, the former owner of this magnificent vase thought so highly of it that he or she has had manufactured a purpose built fitted hardwood storage box.

#### Literature:

Yabu Meizan 1853-1934 was a leading figure in the manufacture of Satsuma wares producing high quality items in lower volumes than many of the larger factories of the late 19th early 20th c, his early works won multiple prizes at the various world expositions from Paris 1889 through to San Francisco 1915, his pieces were in such demand at the time and have subsequently continued to command high prices, with the finest items now residing in the worlds leading Japanese works of art collections and museums. Following the first world war period Yabu continued to decorate blanks, but now in higher volume with much simpler decoration of sprigs of maple or birds within autumnal foliage, he continued until his death in 1934 aged 80.

#### Approximate sizes:

Height: 7 1/8" 18 cm

Diameter: 3 1/4" 8.5 cm





## CERAMIC LANDSCAPE VASE

Artist - Miyagawa (Mazuku) Kozan

A large scale ceramic landscape vase by the studio of the highly regarded Imperial artist Miyagawa (Makuzu) Kozan, in this particular instance the vase would most likely have been manufactured by the Kozan studio during the late Meiji period, circa 1910, a period leading up to the death of Miyagawa Kozan in 1916, and the continued production by his adopted son Hanzan, soon to inherit the title Makuzu Kozan II. This striking large scale vase is predominately decorated in various tones of underglaze blue interspersed with lighter autumnal greens and browns to create a magnificent landscape scene, the artist has also used a combination of textures and gilt splash upon the buildings, foliage and craggy rock faces to further enhance the three dimensional appearance. The dramatic yet delightful vase rests upon its original hardwood stand and has been signed in a six character signature within a double concentric circle that translates to read Makuzu Kozan Sei, the seal was most commonly used around the 1910-15 period, the vase travels in its original storage box (Tomobako) that itself is inscribed to read "blue landscape vase with colour by Makuzu Kozan Sei".

### Literature:

Miyagawa (Makuzu) Kozan (1842-1916) was a Japanese ceramist and was one of the major potters of the Meiji Period, his kilns were based in Yokohama. He went on to win many prizes and gold medals at the various expositions, eventually receiving the recognition his works deserved in 1896 by becoming one of only a handful of Imperial artists (Teishitsu gigeiin), many of his works can be found in the worlds leading collections and museums.

### Approximate sizes:

Height: 15" 38 cm (inc stand)

Diameter: 13 1/4" 33.5 cm







## JAPANESE OKIMONO

Okimono can be loosely translated as “object for display” or “standing object” but is more easily understood if described as a “decorative sculpture”. The subject matter can be absolutely anything, figural, animal, mythical, floral, avian....and that is one of the immense pleasures that Okimono gives us!

Mention the word Okimono and we immediately imagine an ivory object, but the word also encompasses wonderful works of art that are commonly carved from many native Japanese woods, various metals, alloys, marine ivory and lacquer. In addition, Okimono are also frequently fashioned from more than one material, a commonly encountered example is ivory in conjunction with boxwood.

Prior to the Meiji Restoration the art of carving anything substantial was largely restricted to sculptures of a religious nature. These were produced by highly skilled artists whose family tradition often went back countless generations. Their work was mostly destined for the many Shrines and Temples throughout the land although doubtless special commissions were received from both the Imperial Household and governing Samurai families.

Historically any carvings of a “non-religious” nature tended to be Netsuke – the miniature works of art designed to hold an item securely in the Obi of traditional Japanese clothing. These small but beautiful works of art are generally too small to be classified as Okimono and in any event were primarily functional.

And so, we arrive at the Meiji Restoration with Japan having a well-established history of superb carvers going back hundreds of years. Many carvers were active all over Japan but with a higher concentration naturally around the major towns and cities.

The Meiji period ushered in some dramatic changes that had an equally dramatic effect on artist carvers. Japan was fast becoming “Westernised” in nearly every way. This not only affected the structures of government and society but everyday life as well. Western styles of dress became highly fashionable for both men and women. Many temples and shrines were closed as religious beliefs and customs changed. These were exciting vibrant times for many especially in the new capital Tokyo, but conversely unsettling and worrying times for others.

The decline in traditional dress had the effect of drastically reducing the demand for Netsuke which had no place on the new Western clothing. Likewise, the closing of temples had a marked effect on the religious carvers as demand plummeted. These artists found themselves in a similar position to the metalworkers of the age – becoming somewhat redundant.

However, at the same time Japan's participation in numerous worldwide art Expositions, Fairs and Exhibitions was showcasing the remarkable talents of Japanese craftsmen. The western world was amazed at the incredible quality and refinement on show within the glittering halls and pavilions of these spectacular



events. Interest and demand skyrocketed both in Japan and abroad for nearly all the Japanese arts including carvings.

Those interested in Netsuke could enjoy a ready supply of high-quality old treasures now surplus to requirements and many fine collections were formed during the Meiji period. However, such was the demand for carvings generally that a new market opened up at just the right time for the many carvers who had concerns for their future. Netsuke production moved swiftly and seamlessly into Okimono carving. In reality the only real differences between the two are that generally Okimono are larger and don't need the himotoshi or holes to hold the intro cords.

As demand for these “new” carvings grew so did the number of artists producing them. New “schools” of carving emerged where talented pupils were taught by experienced masters, the most notable of these was the Tokyo School of Art that opened in 1889. The most famous and talented carver that ever lived, Ishikawa Komei, became a professor at this school teaching a new generation of carvers in a somewhat different style. The output from this school were often large one-piece figural ivory okimono of staggering realism and detail.

Other schools and studios concentrated on smaller intricate pieces, often more akin to the style of netsuke. Sometimes it can be difficult to say definitively whether a piece is a large late netsuke or a small okimono!

Demand continued to increase dramatically and to fill it more and more carvers emerged. The Government continued to encourage and support the industry as the flow of foreign currency into Japan was helping the modernisation programme.

A major drawback, however, was that the finest of these works of art could literally take years to complete so it was inevitable that in order to meet the demand, quality eventually began to deteriorate in favour of rapid production. Thankfully, masterpieces did continue to be made by the truly dedicated artists who in turn became famous and often wealthy as a result.

## MATERIALS

In my experience excluding bronze and other metal sculptures (which are cast rather than carved) I would say that roughly 75% of Okimono are carved from elephant ivory. This is viewed as a contentious issue in some countries nowadays. In my view it is important to remember that these fabulous works of art (not just Japanese but Chinese, European, Indian etc) were produced over a hundred years or more ago in an age when little regard was paid to conservation and conscience. Standards and beliefs were vastly different to our modern enlightened attitudes. I believe we should enjoy these superb works of art for what they are – treasures from a long-lost time and a long lost place – Meiji era Japan.

Of the remaining 25% I would say 15% are fashioned from various woods and the remaining 10% comprising marine ivory, lacquer and more seldom used materials. These figures are not to be treated as 100% accurate but merely as a guide to what the collector can expect to encounter.

As mentioned, bronze and other metals are used to produce Okimono but here the production method is totally different. The most employed process for metal is the “lost wax” method whereby the subject is carved in wax and then cast from a mould taken from the wax model.

As with all works of art, Japanese Okimono come in a wide range of subjects, sizes and qualities.

They vary from the very finest pieces destined for the wealthy connoisseur (and these are truly breathtaking) through to superb middle range pieces and on to a lower quality product destined for more of a mass export market.

A few tips to look out for are the details and expression that are conveyed in faces – the presence of teeth in an open mouth, obvious humour or suffering or anger or old age. Also, the realism of feet, toenails, tendons etc. Hands are notoriously difficult to carve so look for fingernails, power in a man's grip or delicacy in a ladies. Hidden musculature beneath clothing or the delicacy of decoration on Kimono.

As with any work of art It is almost a certainty that any signed piece will be far more desirable than the same piece unsigned but thankfully the vast majority of Okimono of all types, styles and subjects are reliably signed. This is a refreshing and reassuring feature of collecting Okimono. Reference books on the subject are available but none could ever hope to cover the many hundreds, possibly thousands, of artists of all schools and qualities who plied their trade during this remarkable explosion of carving.

Certainly pieces by artists such as Ishikawa Komei, Hokyudo Itsumin, Masanao of Yamada, Masakazu of Nagoya and similar, together with their star pupils were rare and very expensive when they were made! These masterpieces represent the pinnacle of this art form and are sought by wealthy collectors world-wide. They therefore justifiably command higher prices.

However, in my opinion there are many high quality works that sit just below the finest pieces and represent staggering value for money. Thankfully, it is still possible to form a collection of superb work by these numerous artists for an outlay that looks very modest bearing in mind the time it took to produce them and the sheer quality and artistry.



## MIXED METAL EGRET OKIMONO

Artist - Sano Takachika

Fine quality silvered bronze & mixed metal okimono depicting a pair of Egrets, the finely cast & chiselled egrets stand upon a rustic wood base, one bird holding a fish in its beak whilst the mate stoops before it. The remarkable attention to detail is best captured in the plumage particularly to the rear of the birds, the legs and beaks formed as shibuichi and shakudo with the eyes picked out in gilt, the birds are located on pegs to the carved wood simulated rock pool base and each are signed by Takachika in a rectangular seal to the underside. A most charming rendition of a pair of egrets in their natural habitat.

### Literature:

A few examples of work by this artist are recorded in well known worldwide collections, two examples can be found in the Khalili collection, Meiji No Takara Treasures of Imperial Japan, metalwork volume II, plate 120 displays a hawk koro on perch and plate 121 shows a very similar decorated pigeon koro on stand, the volume also suggests a snake and eagle koro on a tree trunk is recorded in the well-known collection of Michael Tomkinson at plate 72.

The artist Sano Takachika was a master of hammering, metal carving and chiselling and a recorded member of the Tokyo chokokai (Tokyo association of carvers and sculptors) he is known to have exhibited at many of the expositions of the period including the Japan art society spring exhibition of 1894 where he exhibited gold and silver figures of a heron and a crow.

### Approximate sizes:

**Height:** 9" 23 cm

**Length:** 16 3/4" 42 cm

**Depth:** 6 1/4" 16 cm





## BRONZE DRAGON OKIMONO

Artist - Kazumi / Gyokuryuken Sanmi

Exceptional quality cast bronze okimono of a writhing Dragon clutching a rock crystal flaming pearl within his claws, another large rock crystal sphere rests upon his back, the bronze is heavily cast and finished in exquisite detail, the dragons eyes rendered in gilt and shakudo alloys for menacing effect, the underside is equally finely detailed and carries a shaped silver tablet artist signed Sanmi Zo which also translates to read Kazumi, a fabulous okimono.



### Literature:

It is worth mentioning that the larger sphere is an original almost clear rock crystal ball and not a glass copy, it was not machine made and as such is not 100% circular giving it a unique charm as an object, rock crystal spheres are highly revered in Asia and can sometimes be found as the focal point on bronze stands, often rising from crashing waves.

Kazumi the alternate name of Gyokuryuken Sanmi was a well recorded Meiji period artist making all manner of okimono in silver and bronze, whilst seemingly specializing in Dragons. One particular silver Dragon okimono by Kazumi realised an eye watering \$128,000 in Bonhams New York sale of March 2013.

In 2020 vision of an enlightened ruler - plate 20, we featured a pair of silver entwined dragons by the artist Kazumi also known as Gyokuryuken Sanmi, these have now found their way into a USA collection.

We also featured a cast silver incense burner of a Shi Shi Dog - plate 26.

### Approximate sizes:

Length: 9" 23 cm  
Height: 4" 10 cm  
Depth: 6" 15.3 cm





## SILVER CARP OKIMONO

Artist - Tansho

A magical pair of cast silver carp upon an oval black lacquered base, the carp finely rendered from pure silver with mixed metal eyes picked out in shakudo, shibuichi and gold, the fish have been sculpted in fine and realistic detail, in particular the scales and fins, and overall the balance of the fish are a perfect lifelike rendition. The fish are positioned upon an oval black lacquer base where they display to the best effect, each carp signed to the underside Tansho, and bearing the jungin pure silver mark, come complete with signed Tomobako.

**Approximate sizes:****Length of carp:**

11 1/4" 28.5 cm

8 3/4" 22 cm

**Base:**

17 1/2" 44.5 cm

12 1/2" 32 cm







8  
BRONZE DOG OKIMONO

Artist - Kaniya Kuniharu

Charming heavy quality bronze okimono of a chin dog by the highly acclaimed multi award winning metalworker of the period, Kaniya Kuniharu 1852-1934. The delightful chin dog is cast in a seated pose and chiselled in exquisite detail, his eyes picked out in mixed alloys to striking effect against the deep bronze patination of the fur. The subject of this very realistic bronze okimono was the favoured dog of the Imperial families, this particular study is signed with the artists name to the underside.

**Literature:**  
"Kaniya Kuniharu (1852-1934) was one of the foremost craftsmen in cast bronze of the Meiji period. He had been taught by two particularly eminent artists, Takamura Koun (1852-1934) and Otake Norikuni (b.1852). Koun, a master of wood sculpture, had been appointed Professor of sculpture at the founding of the Tokyo art school in 1889.

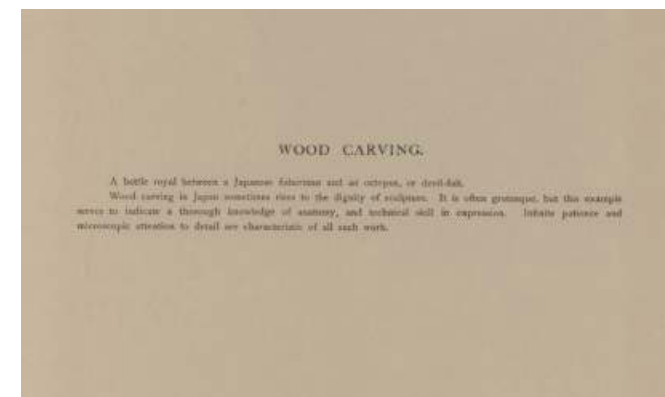
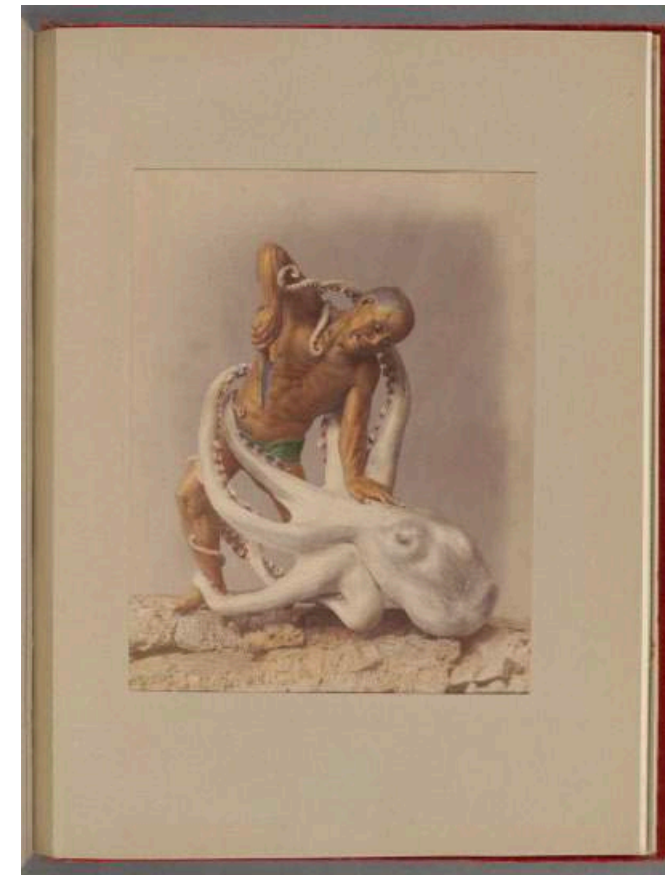
Kuniharu won several awards at the expositions of the Meiji period including a first prize in 1894, he is featured in the Dr Naseer Khalili collection, metalwork II- page 99, as well as Splendors of Imperial Japan, Arts of the Meiji Period from the Naseer Khalili collection, p370 and p372, nos.263 and 264.

Kuniharu himself was one of the founding members of the Tokyo Chukin Kai (Tokyo Cast Metal Association) together with Oshima Joun (1858-1940). He successfully exhibited at both national and international exhibitions, winning many prize medals, including at the Paris exposition of 1900.

**Approximate sizes:**  
**Height:** 6 1/4" 15.5 cm  
**Width:** 9.0" 22.5 cm  
**Depth:** 5.0" 12.5 cm  
**Weight:** 3.24 kg







## LACQUER SCULPTURE

### Iki Ningyo (living doll)

As part of this exhibition we are delighted to offer this quite dramatic carved wood and lacquered figural group depicting a battle between a Japanese fisherman and a large octopus, or devil fish as it was also known, these types of ware were known as Iki Ningyo (living doll). The artist has captured the battle in staggering lifelike detail, every muscle on the fisherman being strained as he battles to kill his quarry, the octopus tentacles entwined upon every limb of its captor, only the safety net of the knife will surely render the fisherman the winner of this battle, the images speak for themselves.

#### Literature:

Remarkably we have been able to trace this exact sculpture to a publication edited by Frank Brinkley (1834-1912) a famous ex-military man, journalist and promoter of Japanese language and the arts of the Meiji period. Brinkley not only taught the Japanese military his naval skills but also worked for the Emperor Meiji in other capacities promoting Japan.

In 1881 until his death in 1912 his business as the owner of the Japan mail, soon to be known as the Japan Times, was essentially part funded by the government due in part to its staunch pro Japanese stance, this publication was the most widely read by the English-speaking population in Asia.

Brinkley's book entitled: Japan, described and illustrated by the Japanese. Boston: J.B.Millet Company, 1897-1898. Imperial edition.

As well as the hand-coloured plate of the group resting upon a cork ground you will note a paragraph from Brinkley describing what he sees whilst exclaiming the incredible skill of the artists carving such pieces.



Iki Ningyo

These incredible lifelike studies of everyday people and scenes of Japan were known as Iki Ningyo which literally means living doll, such was the skill of these artists to replicate the anatomical form in such fine detail. Originally life size studies were used in the domestic market at shrines and as part of fairs & travelling exhibitions. The emerging wealthy tourists and early visiting dignitaries to Japan soon became the new eager audience, thus creating demand for smaller more intricate models of characters going about their daily lives, rickshaw pullers and market traders were some of the more common models. Museums in Europe and the USA were inspired to commission life size studies of people, including Samurai, with a pair of 224 cm high Sumo wrestlers now residing in the Sheffield Museum, having been gifted to them in 1891 by a patron emigrating to Japan.

Some 125 years since this publication I am absolutely thrilled to be able to offer this rare item to the market as part of this year's exhibition.

Approximate Sizes: (excluding base)

Length:	18"	46 cm
Height:	19 1/2"	49.5 cm
Depth:	10"	25.5 cm







## JAPANESE METALWORK

Without doubt, the exceptional metalwork produced by Japanese master craftsmen during the Meiji period is my absolute passion. I find the gorgeous artistry, attention to meticulous detail, use of precious metals and unique alloys and the sheer unbelievable quality to be truly breathtaking.

The history of fine metalwork in Japan goes back many hundreds of years and whilst it is impossible to recount the full story in these few words, a brief summary is useful in seeing how this art form evolved.

Prior to the Meiji Restoration in 1868 Japan was a feudal society with a rigid class system, the military Samurai class being the effective controlling elite. The position of the Emperor was largely that of a divine but remote symbolic ruler. The country was divided into many provinces, which were in turn governed by the local dominant Samurai family headed by a Daimyo (Lord) and backed by a great many loyal retainers.

This governing structure meant that wealth and to a large degree the artistic communities were concentrated around the Imperial household in Kyoto and the numerous provincial capitals. Going back a thousand years, fine metalwork was required by the Samurai in the adornment of their revered swords and in the manufacture of lavish armour. It was also required

by numerous temples and shrines for the production of religious sculpture, incense burners and similar. Generally speaking, the Samurai possessed great artistic refinement and taste reflected in the beautiful architecture and interiors of their castles and residences and the artworks therein.

From this brief background we can see that highly advanced metalworking skills developed and evolved over a long period and to a level not seen elsewhere in the world.

It is not possible to detail all the techniques and unique features of the craft but the main ones that set them apart from anything encountered elsewhere are worth highlighting.

Bronze casters had the ability to make items in meticulous detail and of a staggeringly large scale, from small incense burners to massive religious images and temple bells.

Iron and steel workers were masters of producing the revered Samurai weaponry together with elaborate armours.

Numerous local “schools of metalwork” developed in and around these major centres whose sole function was to produce the elaborate fittings that adorn Samurai swords. These fittings were miniature works of art in their own right, often exhibiting meticulous detail and superb artistry. Many different alloys



unique to Japan were used which could be patinated to a variety of colours. These included a glossy blue/black called Shakudo which incorporated pure gold, another called Shibuichi which included silver and could exhibit a range of colours from olive green through to pale grey. To fully understand this art form it is necessary to actually look at the fabulous items as words alone cannot possibly convey the skills involved.

When the Meiji Restoration came about, the vast majority of these skilled artisans suddenly found themselves without their main source of income – the ruling Samurai class. This resulted both from the edict banning the wearing of swords in 1876 and then the subsequent de-structuring of the feudal/class systems as Japan adopted a more “modern” system of government. Both Samurai and their artists found themselves virtually redundant.

Thankfully, the Meiji Emperor was a great patron of the Arts and his Governments’ effort was directed towards encouraging metalwork masters to utilise their skills and knowledge in the production of new and more “fashionable” works of art! The sheer quality of Japanese metalwork in all its existing forms appealed greatly to many of the early foreign diplomats, travellers and military advisors who were in Japan during the early years of the Meiji Restoration. It was a natural inevitability

that demand would rapidly increase for these fabulous old things never seen by the Western World. It therefore followed that the artists who created them would now start to make different works that were even more desirable to their new customers. Instead of sword guards and other sword fittings they now turned their attention to lavish boxes, vases, koro, sculptures, spectacular chargers and similar.

Also at this time Japan started to exhibit at the various world Trade and Art Expositions, Fairs and Exhibitions. This resulted in a truly remarkable explosion of demand from Europe and the United States who were enthralled and entranced by these superb and previously unseen exhibits.

Many workshops and studios were subsequently established in order to satisfy this massive demand. Some comprised highly skilled masters with just a few pupils through to far larger operations. However, it is worth noting that a large workforce did not necessarily mean a lower quality although it is fair to say that demand had to be met across a whole spectrum of price ranges.

Further innovations involved metalworkers and enamellers combining their skills to produce elaborate works employing the full range of metal alloys together with vivid enamels often on an item crafted from pure silver. The effect could be truly stunning.

Among the major acknowledged artists were Kano Natsuo, Unno Shomin, Hagiya Katsuhira, Suzuki Chokichi, Unno Moritoshi, Yamada Motonobu and, of course, Shoami Katsuyoshi who together with their pupils, were instrumental in driving quality and progress. These talented artists were frequently commissioned by the Imperial Household, the Government, and exclusive privately owned outlets such as the Ozeki Company. Their work is both very rare and of commensurate value.

Again, space does not permit a full listing of all makers, schools, or larger manufacturers but some of the more frequently encountered ones are as follows:

The Komai Company specialised in the production of iron works of art richly inlaid and damascened with pure gold and other various alloys all in meticulous detail. Designs frequently featured famous beauty spots, shrines and palaces together with tranquil scenes from nature.

The Nogawa Company specialised in a wide range of works of art using precious metals and alloys. Vases, boxes, dishes and similar are all encountered usually employing precise mixed metal inlay on a patinated bronze body. Designs again feature beautiful vignettes from nature or landscape. Some exceptionally fine artist signed work emanated from this manufacturer.

The Miyao Company specialised in producing patinated and gilded bronze sculptures, mostly figures, especially Samurai. These spectacular works on their elaborate gilded wooden stands came in sizes that ranged from few inches to true life-size!

Two other makers – Yoshimitsu and Gyoko also produced works similar to the Miyao company. Gyoko was a well recorded artist specialising in Samurai as well as native Bird Okimono, artists such as Sano Takachika, Masatsune, Hidenao and indeed Hasegawa Issei also tended to excel at creating spectacular renditions of birds of prey and other native species.

Genryusai Seiya was a bronze caster producing very high quality Okimono including figural sculptures but also of all sorts of animals, both domestic and highly exotic thanks in part to the opening of a Zoo in Tokyo!

In truth it would take a large book to fully discuss all the various techniques and makers but I hope this briefest of backgrounds conveys some of the astonishing achievements of these artists, some of which are represented and available to you in this publication.

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*Handling even a modest work can bring immense pleasure,  
a masterpiece will leave you speechless!*

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10

## DAMASCENED IRON BOX

Artist - Komai company

Damascened iron box by the Komai company of Kyoto, the lid of the box is most unusually decorated with a scene of a horse outside a stable block with more traditional scenes of mount Fuji and lakes in the distance, the exterior of the box is finely decorated with a plethora of butterflies in mixed alloys including copper, the interior has been further decorated with gilt chrysanthemums, this splendid box stands upon shaped bracket feet and carries the full Komai dragonfly seal mark to the underside, thus dating it circa 1900.

**Height:** 2 1/4" 6 cm

**Length:** 6 3/4" 17.3 cm

**Depth:** 3 1/4" 8 cm





11  
LARGE MIXED METAL VASE

Attr - Ikeda Gomei Company

This large scale high quality lidded vase on stand superbly demonstrates the various metalwork techniques carried out by the Kaga school craftsmen of the mid Meiji period circa 1890, and in particular the flush metal inlays. The main body of the baluster form vase depicts a pheasant and hen perched upon a prunus blossom tree, the birds and floral decoration heavily onlaid and carved from numerous alloys, predominantly gold, silver, shakudo and shibuichi, the reverse of the main body depicts a bird in flight amidst trailing flora, the huge body rests upon and swivels 360 degrees inside its base, the two tier base is affixed with five elephant mask supports, and is itself a masterclass in mixed metal inlays with five different geometric honeycomb style patterns to the lower section alone, further stylized decoration to the upper curved section and gold inlaid Greek key banding of the borders, the neck and handles are also exquisitely and painstakingly inlaid with various gold and silver geometric patterns and stylized decoration, once again finished with an inlaid gold Greek key border. The highly decorative mixed metal inlaid lid is surmounted by a large eagle pinning down a monkey. This fine quality, highly decorative and imposing vase displays the finest skills of the former sword fitting makers of the mid Meiji period.

**Literature:**  
Although unsigned, we can firmly attribute this vase to the Ikeda Gomei Company, a commissioning agent and retailer originally based in Kobe. An almost identical vase (possibly its pair) can be found in “Barry Davies Oriental Art” Masterpieces of Meiji Metalwork, 1991 exhibition catalogue - plate 7.

**Approximate sizes:**

**Height:** 25" 63.5 cm  
**Width:** 12" 30.5 cm  
**Depth:** 10 1/4" 26 cm  
**Weight:** 17.3 kgs







12

## MIXED METAL PLANTER

Artist - Kanazawa Doki Kaisha

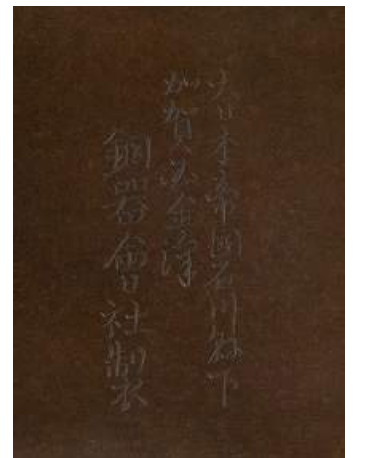
A sumptuous quality mixed metal planter on its original pierced hardwood stand, the bronze planter is what is generically termed Kanazawa or Kaga school as it came out of the Kanazawa Doki (bronze) company in the Kaga region during the earlier part of the Meiji period, circa 1880. The heavy gauge rectangular vessel is designed as a planter or bonsai dish and is decorated with mirror image flush inlays of flora to each side, the floral panels inlaid with gold, shakudo, shibuichi, silver and copper alloys to the highest possible standard imaginable, these tranquil panels housed within an outer border of continuous mythical beast, the planter is fully signed to the underside "Dai Nihon Teikoku, Ishikawa Ken ka, Kaga Koku, Kanazawa Doki Kaisha Sei" which translates to suggest it was made by the Kanazawa bronze company, Kaga, Ishikawa Prefecture, Great Imperial Japan. This incredibly heavy vessel rests upon its elaborate pierced hardwood stand, a scarce high quality item demonstrating the skills of the early Meiji period swordsmiths during a transitional period in their lives, the vessel preserved in staggering condition throughout.

### Literature:

The Kanazawa bronze company was founded by the government in 1877 following the success of the Vienna worlds fair in 1873, its aim to promote the now redundant sword fitting makers and other skilled metalworkers ability to produce exceptional quality wares for display at the national and international expositions of the late 19th c. The company was headed up by its president Jyunnya Hasegawa leading a group of exceptional metalworkers including Koji Yamakawa to significant success at the major expositions of that time, including receiving the highest accolade at the first national exhibition in 1877.

### Approximate sizes:

Length: 9" 23 cm  
Height: 7" 18 cm (inc stand)  
Depth: 5 1/4" 13.5 cm







13

### MIXED METAL VASE ON STAND

Attr - Kanazawa Doki Kaisha

A mid Meiji period bronze and mixed metal vase on stand, the vase rests upon a three legged base inlaid in fine detail with silver and mixed alloy bands of stylized decoration and flora beneath heads of mythical birds, between each leg is suspended a gilt bronze bird on mixed metal chains, the main body of the inset heavy bronze vase is manufactured in low relief to resemble a landscape backdrop upon which the artists have inlaid a multitude of flora and fauna including sumptuous quality onlaid insects and butterflies. The stand out feature has to be the charming mixed metal children having great fun catching crickets for their cages. The decoration is richly damascened particularly upon the clothing worn by the children, the base and shoulders of the vase further inlaid with geometric formal decoration and mythical birds and beasts.

#### Literature:

Although unsigned the vase can be firmly attributed to the works of the Kanazawa Doki Kaisha, a manufacturing company formed in the Kaga province in around 1873, clearly at this time following the Meiji restoration the former sword fitting makers at the Kanazawa Doki Kaisha had excelled at turning their metalwork skills to the creation of lavish goods now aimed at the new found export market.

Height: 24" 61 cm

Diameter: 8 1/4" 21 cm





14

## MONUMENTAL MIXED METAL EXHIBITION VASE

Artist - Suzuki Chokichi

Company - Kiritsu Kosho Kaisha

Massive early Meiji Period 1868-1912, circa 1882, bronze and mixed metal floor standing baluster vase fully signed by the Kiritsu Kosho Kaisha, a government sponsored company formed in Tokyo in 1874 and soon to be headed up by the illustrious Suzuki Chokichi, his art name Kako The vase stands upon a traditional footed base with ribbed decoration repeated on the shoulders and top rim, the main body of the vase is formed from a mixture of alloys to produce stunning autumnal effects that are instantly recognisable as works produced by Chokichi during his early years at the company, rich tones of red, black and nutty brown interspersed with green give rise to a most charming alloy upon which Chokichi has applied lavish mixed metal foliage and floral displays, with the use of alloys such as gold, silver, copper and shibuichi to name a few. The main central band of the vase has been hand planished to offer a different texture, on this occasion Chokichi has demonstrated flush inlay techniques with the use of shibuichi, silver, copper and two colours of gold, portraying paulownia and associated foliage. Finally, as if that were not enough painstaking work the vase terminates with a pair of bands to the foot and neck rims, each decorated with stylized floral mon in lavish gold, silver and copper. A simply breathtaking example of the skills of one of the most highly revered Japanese metalworkers of the Meiji period.





**Exhibitions:**

This vase was exhibited at the 1883 Boston exposition upon the stand of the Kiritsu Kosho Kaisha company, it stood opposite another vase, this time decorated with an Owl in flight that we now know to be housed in the famous collection of Professor Naseer D Khalili, Treasures of Imperial Japan, Metalwork Vol 1 - plate 3.

Almost 140 years later I feel both privileged and honoured to be able to host such an important piece of documented Japanese history in this year's exhibition catalogue, and I very much look forward to finding a suitable home to preserve this magnificent vase for future generations.

When studying all the highly skilled techniques on this mammoth project it is easy to understand why Chokichi's company was instrumental in the rapid growth of the emerging export market and the subsequent huge demand for Meiji period metalwork. His success eventually rewarded with the rare accolade of Imperial artist (Teishitsu Gigeiin) to the emperor Meiji, himself a patron of the arts of this magical period.

**Approximate sizes:**

**Height:** 36" 91 cm  
**Width:** 17" 43 cm



13 ポストン技術工芸博覧会への起立工商会社  
の出品物 1883年（明治16年）開催







15

## MIXED METAL TSUITATE

Artist - Hagiya Katsuhira

Silver & mixed metal table screen by one of the leading artists of the late Edo early Meiji Period, Hagiya Katsuhira, the main frame of this delightful Tsuitate (table screen) is manufactured from silver in the form of bamboo, the central panel has been cleverly formed as sprays of bamboo offering a pierced double sided aspect into which is housed a sensational quality mixed metal roundel, depicting the seven lucky gods at sea upon the Takarabune (treasure ship). The artistry and metal work is simply breathtaking and fully demonstrates metalwork skills of Katsuhira during the latter years of Edo as a Mito school master, as well as reinforcing his new found ability to cross over into the emerging export market, working on commission for such forward thinking companies as Ozeki.

### Literature:

Hagiya Katsuhira was born in 1804 as Terakado Yasuke, he took his name from a combination of the Mito masters who taught him and subsequently went on to become one of the most eminent Mito school artists and tutors, with many of his works now residing in the worlds most recognized museums and collections.

In 1844 Katsuhira began working directly for the Mito clan where he took on the role of Goyo or official artisan for the Mito Tokugawa Daimyo, this role would have undoubtedly given Katsuhira special privileges including the ability to wear swords in public places, a privilege usually reserved for the Samurai classes, he went on to teach such famous artists as Unno Shomin and Kano Natsuo, amongst others, with one of his two sons (Suzuki) Katsuhiro, achieving the status of head craftsman to the Suzuki family, and thus adopting their name, Hagiya died at the age of 83 in 1886.

See Plate 18 - 2020 Vision of an enlightened ruler - for a mixed metal panel by this artist.

See plate 16 - 2020 Vision of an enlightened ruler Vol II - for a mixed metal panel by the artists son, Suzuki Katsuhiro for the Ozeki Company.

### Approximate sizes:

Height: 9" 23 cm

Width: 8 1/4" 21 cm

Depth: 3" 7.5 cm









## MIXED METAL TRAY

Artist - Suzuki Katsuhiro

Company - Ozeki Company

Outstanding mixed metal and enamel tray, artist signed by Suzuki Katsuhiro I (1827-1886) for the world renowned Ozeki Company. The solid silver and shibuichi tray is a tour de force combination of mixed metal and enamel work, the lobed panel stands upon four sensational quality mixed metal feet decorated with moths.

The central shibuichi section is decorated in relief with a group of mixed metal cockerels, the outer lobed section is formed from hand planished silver interspersed with gold wire cloisonne enamel decorated snowflakes of varying size, colour and design, these give the panel an interesting and very contemporary balance.

The artist has signed the panel Suzuki Katsuhiro above Katsuhiro in a gold seal, the all-important Ozeki company gold seal can be found on the underside.





**Literature:**

This artist Katsuhiro was one of two sons of the luminary craftsman Hagiya Katsuhira, one of the leading metalworkers of the Edo/Meiji period, born in 1804 as Terakado Yasuke, Hagiya took his name from a combination of the Mito masters who taught him, and subsequently went on to become one of the most eminent Mito school artists and tutors, with many of his works now residing in the worlds most recognized museums and collections. In 1844 Katsuhira began working directly for the Mito clan where he took on the role of Goyo or official artisan for the Mito Tokugawa Daimyo, this role would have undoubtedly given Katsuhira special privileges including the ability to wear swords in public places, a privilege usually reserved for the Samurai classes, he went on to teach such famous artists as Unno Shomin and Kano Natsuo, amongst others, with one of his two sons (Suzuki) Katsuhiro achieving the status of head craftsman to the Suzuki family and thus adopted their name.

Hagiya died in 1886 at the age of 83, remarkably his son Suzuki Katsuhiro I, the artist responsible for producing this remarkable panel, had passed away a month earlier aged just 48.

See 2020 Vision of an enlightened ruler - plate 18 for a work in our collection by Suzuki Katsuhiro's famous father.

**Ozeki Company:**

'The Musashiya company, operated by Ozeki Yahei and his son Sadajiro, were perhaps the most successful of the concerns selling high-quality decorative art during the Meiji era, Ozeki was especially well known in the west as a broker for the highest quality metalwork objects.

Ozeki commissioned works from such leading metalworkers as, Unno Moritoshi, Yamada Motonobu, Kaneyasu Masatoshi, Suzuki Katsuhiro amongst other recognised artists, all of which appeared in exhibitions under the brand name Ozeki.

The astonishing work on Ozeki pieces may have seemed over-elaborate to Japanese tastes at that time, on the other hand, this is an indication of Ozeki's success as a businessman, he had a firm grasp of western tastes. Ozeki remained in business throughout the Meiji period and into the subsequent Taisho era (1912-1926).

**Approximate sizes:**

- Length:** 8" 20 cm  
**Depth:** 6 1/4" 15.8 cm  
**Height:** 1 1/8" 2.7 cm





17

## LARGE MIXED METAL VASE

Attr - Jomi Eisuke

A fascinating bronze & mixed metal vase of complex curved form rising from a rectangular base to a circular neck band, thus giving the overall perception of a sewn and tied treasure sack, the front elevation depicts the most unusual subject of hunters on horseback chasing tigers in a mountainous backdrop, another group can be seen at rest playing musical instruments and feasting, whilst hunters carry their quarry in the distance across from a meandering river.

The reverse of the vase depicts a sensational quality silver bird plucking what appears to be a praying mantis from a lakeside setting, the curved sides are adorned with phoenix (ho-ho) within a ring of stylized flora above a flight of bats and groups of interesting scholars implements, the four panels rising up to a geometric gilt banded neck, each pseudo stitched corner applied with a stylized flower in the form of a moth. A simply fascinating vase of high complexity which rather frustratingly has not been signed, I do however feel that similar styles and types of this quality metalwork lend themselves to pieces by the highly regarded Meiji period artist Jomi Eisuke (1839-1899).

### Literature:

Eisuke was a metalworker based in Kyoto, he exhibited successfully at the various expositions of the period including Philadelphia 1876, Paris 1878, 1881 and 1900 and Chicago 1893.

### Approximate sizes:

Height: 15 3/8" 39 cm

Width: 8 1/2" 22 cm

Depth: 5 1/4" 13 cm





## TANTO – DAGGER

Artist - Kansai

The saya of this Meiji period mounted tanto is decorated with red autumnal maple leaves, perhaps indicating the annual spectacle of falling leaves near the shrine at Arashiyama (Kyoto) or the Aridoshi shrine in Osaka, and, may also give meaning to Hagakure, the book of the Samurai (the hidden leaves) giving practical and spiritual guidance to warriors. The opulent mixed metal fittings are further decorated with various stories relating to shrines and indicating that the tanto was possibly commissioned by or presented to a priest or other high ranking official. The gold and shakudo decorated fan on the kurikata is signed in tiny script by Kansai, (see literature below for further information and likely attribution), along with the other mixed metal mountings, all of which carry messages within the decoration. The kozuka blade is in our researchers opinion unreliably signed by an Edo period master Nagasone Kotetsu ii (active 1670-1690), the kozuka blade itself looks to fit the Edo period, as does the blade of the tanto, although unsigned the tang is mounted within a fine ray skin handle (tsuka) bound beautifully with a pair of Shi Shi dogs (Temple guardians) within the grip.

**Literature:**

The suggested artist for the opulent mounts Kansai is also known as Katsurano Bunyu (Katsurano Fumio 1868-1940), who studied under Kano Natsuo at the age of 22, in Edo (Tokyo). See pages 66 and 541 in the Toso Kinko Jiten by Wakayama Takeshi for biography.

**Kozuka:** The artist Nagasone Kotetsu's signature is on the kozuka blade although the blade might have been made by a later Edo period sword-smith, for example Minamoto no Kiyomaro who often emulated the blades of the past great masters, furthermore I am reliably informed that two of the Kanji characters on the blade of the kozuka are written incorrectly, although many similar examples of this signature have been recorded.





The Fittings: Mixed metals and alloys of gold, silver, shakudo and shibuichi.



**Kurikata:**  
Chinese style fan, one of the auspicious symbols.  
The fan handle signed in tiny script by Kansai.



**Kakure:**  
Two rats sitting on the Shinto paper ribbons  
(Noshi). The rats are messengers of God Daikoku.



**Kakure-gasa:**  
Man with broken umbrella probably represents  
Kino Tsurayuki approaching the Aridoshi shrine  
in Osaka.



**Kojiri:**  
Decorated with traditional lantern (toro) made of  
stone, wood, or metal, like many other elements  
of Japanese traditional architecture it originated  
in China where they can still be found in Buddhist  
temples and Chinese gardens.



**Kozuka handle:**  
The subject matter of the kozuka:  
Moso (Meng Zong in Chinese) who  
is a Chinese paragon of filial piety,  
and lived in the 3rd century AD. On  
the reverse of the kozuka, a bamboo  
grove is aptly pictured. In the depths  
of winter. When his mother was ill  
and expressed a strong desire to  
eat stewed bamboo shoots, Moso  
bravely went out to dig in the snow.  
Moso is often depicted as one of  
twenty four Paragons of Filial Piety.





## JAPANESE KORO (INCENSE BURNERS)

Incense is first thought to have arrived in Japan in the 6th century at the same time as Buddhism and has remained a constant part of Japanese culture right up to the present time. Its uses have evolved over the centuries, originally used as part of Buddhist spiritual ceremonies and meditation which still remains the case to this day. It was latterly adopted by the Samurai in the 16th century, they would use certain incense fragrances as a way of purifying their bodies and minds prior to battle.

The fragrant agarwood, imported from places like Vietnam and Korea together with sandalwood from India, are the main ingredients used in Japanese incense. Japanese incense suppliers divide the wood into many categories depending on the region that the wood was obtained from and that woods particular properties.

The different agarwood trees and regions provide alternate and often superior fragrances, some with such a high oil content that it can be worth more per ounce than gold. Sandalwood originates primarily in India although can be found in China and Indonesia, these trees require around 60 years to produce their signature fragrance, only then can it be deemed as acceptable for use in “Kodo”, the practise of incense burning as a pastime in Japan, ranking alongside such important events as the tea ceremony and Ikebana (flower arranging).

Of course many other medium are burnt today including pre formed tablets and sticks, these offer the industrial volumes required to fulfil the demands of modern Japan and Asia as a whole.

Although the modern Japanese society may be blissfully unaware of the ancient tradition of Kodo.

The ten benefits derived from participating in Kodo are as listed below.

- » Sharpens the senses,
- » Purifies the body and the spirit,
- » Eliminates pollutants,
- » Awakens the spirit,
- » Heals loneliness,

- » Calms in turbulent times,
- » Is not unpleasant, even in abundance,
- » Even in small amounts is sufficient,
- » Does not break down after a very long time
- » A common use is not harmful.

Even today, there is a strong relationship and holistic approach in Kodo between fragrant scent, the senses, the human spirit, and nature.

The vessels featured in this production were extensively produced as export wares to fulfil the insatiable appetite of the emerging western market for such objects, following the opening of Japan, and the subsequent national and international expositions of the late 19th early 20th century, a period now known as the Meiji restoration.

Koro, although originally utilitarian objects, manufactured from modest and relatively inexpensive readily available materials such as timber, lacquer, pottery and iron, had now found a new overseas market, a market where the likes of Suzuki Chokichi and Ozeki Sadajero, to name just two of the leading pioneers, recognised a demand for objects that were to become increasingly lavish, and were to be created in so many different styles and forms that the wealthy connoisseurs of the western world found simply irresistible.

Koro now form part of some of the world's finest Meiji period collections, ceramic, enamel, monumental life size bronze statues, opulent mixed metal vessels of all shapes and sizes, hanging boats, as well as more refined bejewelled animals and birds cast from silver and precious metals, many of these now recognised as having been manufactured by the greatest artists of the time.

It would be reasonable to suggest that incense burners or koro should be considered a unique artform, indeed they have proved to be a very collectable subject matter in their own right.

I hope you enjoy the selection of incense burners in this production, you will note the varying interesting forms and lavish materials used to create them.



19

## IRON DRAGON KORO

Artist - Tozan Katsunobu

Impressive iron and mixed metal koro (incense burner) fully signed by Tozan Katsunobu, the hand beaten globular iron vessel has been predominately decorated with a coiled silver dragon wrapping itself around the entirety of the vessel, the beasts eyes, claws and stylized flames highlighted in gold. The koro rests upon its stylish iron and silver stand, the vessels interior is silver lined with a delightful pierced inner lid for the release of incense. The lid of the incense burner is fitted with an exceptional quality silver & mixed metal decorated tiger captured in an aggressive pose upon a rocky outcrop. A super quality incense burner fully signed Tozan Katsunobu and sealed Tozan.

### Approximate sizes:

Height: 7 1/4" 18.5 cm

Diameter: 5 1/4" 13.5 cm







## 20 IRON KABUTO KORO

Most unusual iron and mixed metal koro in the form of a Samurai helmet (Kabuto), the unknown artist has used his metalworking skills to create a perfectly functional silver lined incense burner (koro) in the form of what I interpret to be a 14th century Nara school style of helmet. The iron delicately hand-beaten to form the helmet plates and neck guard, the stud work finely detailed in gilt, with silver banding between the plates protecting the extremities. To the front of the helmet a mixed metal flaming dragon explodes into life above another dragon, this time writhing across the peak. The interior is silver lined with a delightful pierced inner lid for the escape of incense through the gilt decorated finial above.

**Literature:**  
Although unsigned, to me this koro instantly represents a transitional period, and a perfect example of a former sword fitting maker now turning his incredible skills to the manufacture of goods aimed at the emerging export market. Sadly many of these artisans remained unrecorded, and simply worked for the larger well known schools or manufacturing studios of the late 19th century. A most unusual piece of Meiji restoration metalwork that perfectly demonstrates a synergy between the artists former and newfound ways of life.

**Approximate sizes:**  
**Height:** 5 3/4" 14.5 cm  
**Width:** 6 1/2" 16.5 cm  
**Depth:** 6 1/4" 16 cm





21

## MIXED METAL KORO

Artist - Ozaki Sadamasa

Charming silver and mixed metal incense burner (koro), the silver lined vessel stands upon tall slender legs inlaid with delicate gold flowers, the main body is carved with stylized rising clouds of deep shakudo patination, perfectly contrasting the carved silver body. The focal point depicts birds amidst trees and flora, unusually a pair of owls rest upon a branch, with more commonly seen Manchurian cranes, little egrets and wading birds surrounding the entire circumference. The decoration all formed from mixed alloys including gold, silver, shibuichi, copper and shakudo, each painstakingly laid onto the silver body. The neck of the vessel is further inlaid with geometric Greek key pattern to match the delicate mixed metal inlaid handles, the lid carved with stylized clouds beneath a gold and silver chrysanthemum finial. The artist Ozaki Sadamasa has signed the koro in a gold signature seal to the underside.

### Approximate sizes:

Height: 7 1/4" 18.5 cm

Diameter: 4 1/4" 11 cm







22

## LARGE SHAKUDO KORO

Attr - Kashima Ippu

Outstanding shakudo and mixed metal koro (incense burner) this large and exceptionally rare koro is predominately formed from hand beaten sheets of shakudo, a highly revered alloy containing a percentage of gold that had been perfected in the 16th century by Japanese sword fitting makers. The artist has decorated this opulent vessel with two opposing panels, the first of Manchurian cranes stood aside a flowing river amidst native foliage, the reverse as a pair of quail foraging within a floral landscape with butterflies in flight, each panel housed within gold and silver brocade borders giving the appearance of tied silk ribbons. The koro stands upon four silver mounted shakudo legs each decorated in gold floral swags, this floral theme continues around the central panels, the handles and lid of the vessel.

Each scene painstakingly framed in gold or silver wired nunomezogan technique, some finely stippled to portray a nanako ground, the neck is further decorated to each side with an opposing pair of phoenix (ho-ho birds) in flight. A not insignificant gold and silver Imperial chrysanthemum adorns the lid which fits snugly upon a silver lined interior, and is finely pierced to the underside with a pair of phoenix in flight, this piercing intended to allow the escape of incense. The sides of the vessel are quite remarkable in that they are decorated with what can loosely be described as a pair of mythical kirin clambering upon stylized trailing foliage, a most unusual subject matter almost resembling a more European armorial crest, the nunomezogan work is once again sensational in every respect, as indeed is each and every aspect of this outstanding piece of Meiji period metalwork.



**Literature:**

A vessel such as this formed from solid hand beaten shakudo is quite unique in terms of its proportions and subject matter, there appears no record of a shakudo vessel of this scale in any of the better known collections, auction records or readily available research books, undoubtedly it was a special commission or destined for one of the international expositions, and in my view there were only a handful of artists capable of producing such a vessel at the time this was manufactured.

One of the better known artists producing larger scale high quality items using nunomezogan techniques were Kajima Ikkoku I & II, their pieces were as incredibly lavish as this, although were usually decorated upon iron or bronza, as were the works of the Tekkodo company.

The other artist that comes to mind is Kashima Ippu 1828-1900, he is recorded as being the zogan worker on a collaborative bronze koro that sold at Christies in May 2012, the main subject matter of cranes aside a flowing river is the same, although not uncommon, however the scrolling vine work to the body and handles are remarkably similar to the decoration on our koro, as is the mythical kirin type creature within the scrolling vines in the lower front panel. From that example and dateline I think we may make a tentative attribution. For the sheer brilliance of the metalwork skills we could similarly plump for Yamada Motonobu, Ishi Masao or Unno Moristoshi, although these artists were not recognized in the very specialist nunomezogan techniques that this magnificent koro displays.

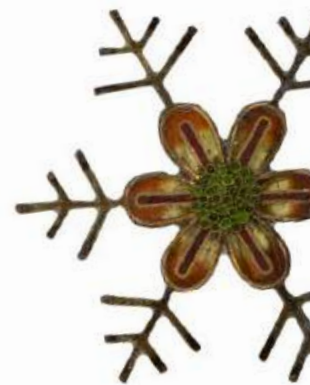
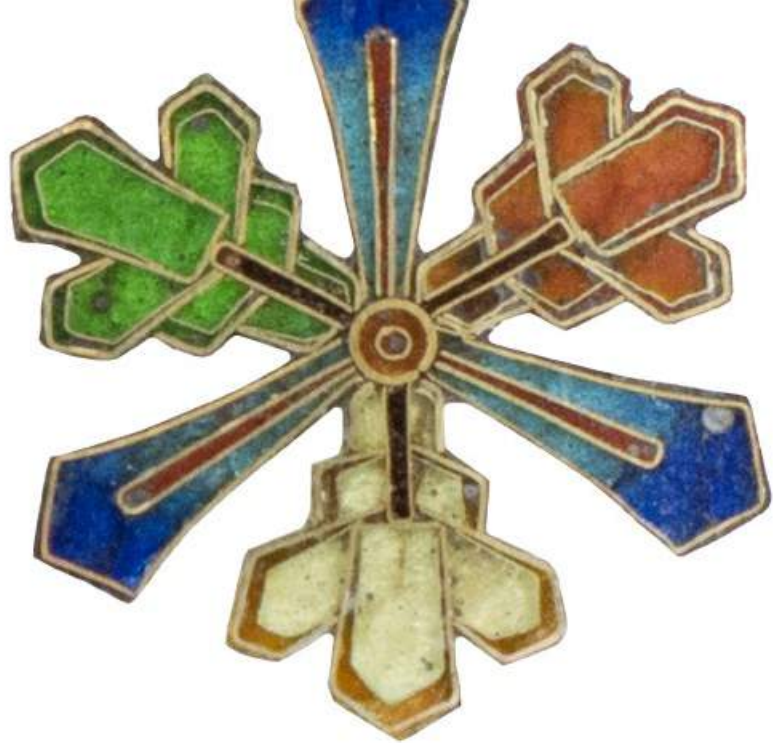
In summary unless the Koro surfaces in a historic exhibition catalogue we may never know for sure which metalwork master or masters produced it, this will not alter its scarcity and I am delighted to bring it to the market as a major part of this year's exhibition.

**Approximate sizes:**

**Height:** 14 5/8" 37.3 cm  
**Width:** 10 1/4" 26 cm  
**Depth:** 5 1/2" 14 cm







## JAPANESE ENAMELS

It would be difficult to argue the facts that Japanese cloisonné of the late 19th and early 20th centuries was certainly the last, if not the greatest, of the Japanese arts.

Originating in Europe sometime in the 11th century B.C, cloisonné had undergone numerous transitions and name changes, prior to arriving in Japan in the 17th century as a decorative, but poorer quality representation, of finer Chinese works.

It was not until 1838 that an artist known as Kaji Tsunekichi literally re-invented the art of making cloisonné, and produced the first free standing items. Such were his skills that soon the Japanese were copying Ming period Chinese wares to an incredible standard, many of which had and would continue to fool experts in the oriental market, but it wasn't until almost 30 years later that better known artists like Hayashi Kodenji the first (one of four) started to produce wares for export, firstly out of the port of Yokohama, there was a sudden explosion of interest

in this new found product and it was shown at the world's first exposition in Paris in 1867, the first cloisonné factory opened in Nagoya in 1870 followed by factories in Kyoto and Yokohama, some of the better products went on to win medals at the many worldwide expositions, the government quickly embraced the opportunities these wares could produce for the economy and its standing in the world markets, the village of Toshima literally turned into a micro City overnight, it had numerous artisans working in tiny workshops and newly built factories, so much so it became known as cloisonné City, with around 125 kilns and literally hundreds of workers feeding the west's insatiable appetite for Japanese enamel wares.

It was in 1871 that a certain Namikawa Yasayuki left his position as Samurai to begin to learn and perfect cloisonné production, without doubt Yasayuki went on to become the absolute master cloisonné maker, his works have rightly been recognised as such,



with surviving examples becoming the cloisonné connoisseur's most wanted pieces of Japanese enamel, rarely were his items produced in a large scale (usually under 30 cm) and never in the mass produced manner of other artisans working in that period. He developed new coloured enamels including black and translucent, and firing techniques that completely transformed Japanese cloisonné enamel, the previous early and middle period, muddy looking and often Chinese influenced wares were now redundant. Along with Yasayuki's new enamels came his drawings, designs and decoration, now with an eye for the Japanese taste. Finished with highly polished enamels that had never been seen before, Yasayuki worked in a small workshop in Kyoto employing about a dozen or so artisans, he apparently oversaw everything that left his workshop, including giving each piece its final polish before placing it in its Tomobako for its onward journey to the lucky recipient, often the Imperial household, it was noted that a worker could sit with a bowl of

his favourite pebbles and painstakingly polish one single piece for many months, it is therefore not difficult to understand why a perfect piece of Namikawa's cloisonné work is so highly desirable over a century later.

Another huge step forward in what was fast becoming the "Golden age" of Japanese cloisonné was the ability to produce Musen or Wireless cloisonne, this was first invented in 1889 by an artist working in Tokyo called Namikawa Sosuke (no relation to Yasayuki), Sosuke had dreamed of painting tranquil scenes using enamel but without wires, he eventually came up with a technique of removing the wires (cloisons) after decorating but before final firing, this resulted in him fulfilling his dream of producing exquisite shaped plaques or trays, usually decorated with native birds and flora or landscape scenes of lake Biwa or Mount Fuji, once again these are very highly desirable to the world's many cloisonné collectors.

During this Golden Era the two most famous and long standing factories were founded, firstly the Ando factory of Nagoya founded by Ando Jubei in around 1881 followed by the Inaba Company of Kyoto in 1887, the opening of the Inaba factory sadly coincided with the closure of the Nagoya cloisonné company.

Many other techniques were re-invented and perfected by the numerous household names that we know of today, including importantly the Moriage technique, introduced by Kawade Shibataro in conjunction with Ando Jubei, this involved the stacking of enamels to form a raised kind of "in relief" finish, and Plique -à-Jour (a glass like translucent finish first used in France in the 15th Century) another technique practised and further perfected by the two previously mentioned artists.

In summary the number of cloisonné artists and factories are too numerous to fully list, with many still unknown in what transpired to be a magical period, "The Golden Age" defined

as the thirty years (1880-1910) in which artists of varying skill levels, transformed a product that had been made for around three thousand years into one of the finest arts Japan has ever produced.

As with most works of art, cloisonné is available in different qualities and at varied price levels, some of the cheaper and higher production pieces in the lower hundreds of £ budget would rarely be signed but should be enjoyed as quality decorative objects in their own right, together with the mid-range pieces in the higher hundreds to lower thousands bracket, once again mostly unsigned but should continue to give much pleasure and yield sound returns if purchased from reliable sources at the outset, in our opinion, perfect pieces of Japanese cloisonné are still grossly undervalued, when you consider the dozens of man hours each piece took to manufacture.

*It is therefore probably very apt that the Japanese name for cloisonné is "Shippo "Which literally means "Seven treasures "and no better words could be used to describe pieces made during that Golden Age.*

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23  
TOMEI CLOISONNE KORO

Attr - Kumeno Teitaro

A charming cloisonne enamel koro, this delightful squat vessel stands upon three enamelled feet, the main body decorated with a flight of sea birds worked in traditional silver wire technique upon a translucent (Tomei) enamel ground, the translucent enamel graduated in colour and representing crashing waves to great effect, a style of work also generically known as tsuiki-jippo, the silver lined body is fitted with a woven silver lid for the purpose of escaping incense, a magical example of this technique in outstanding condition.

**Literature:**  
The most prominent artist perfecting this technique in the latter Meiji period circa 1900-1910 would have been Kumeno Teitaro 1865-1939, as such we can attribute this piece to him with some degree of confidence.

**Height:** 3 1/4" 8.3 cm  
**Diameter:** 4" 10.2 cm





## CLOISONNE ENAMEL VASES

Attr - Hayashi Kodenji

To conclude this year's Japanese works of art exhibition I am delighted to offer this outstanding quality pair of cloisonne enamel vases firmly attributed to one of the leading manufacturers of the golden age, having undoubtedly been manufactured at the Nagoya studios of Hayashi Kodenji I, 1831-1915 & Hayashi Kodenji II, 1859-1922. The deep blue enamel ground is brought to life with an opposing pair of wisteria trees within meadows of delightful cascading native flora, the trees worked in traditional and flattened silver wire to great effect, the floral displays picked out in remarkable detail with delicate cloisons of varying enamel colours, once again finely worked in traditional and flattened silver wires. The silver base and rims surmount more formal borders and further demonstrate the overall complexity and quality of these vases, a fabulous addition to your cloisonne enamel or Japanese works of art collection.

**Literature:**

Hayashi Kodenji I 1831-1915 was one of the pioneer craftsman of the early Meiji period, working out of studios in Nagoya, Kodenji was instrumental in taking his wares to a wider audience, his marketing skills and determination to open up new overseas sales channels literally helped launch Japanese Cloisonne enamel production as well as the other highly regarded artists coming to the fore, onto the world stage.

It is recorded that Kodenji would have literally walked his wares to the port of Yokohama seeking out those foreign traders and routes to overseas markets. As early as the Paris expositions of 1867 & 1878 and Vienna 1873, Japanese cloisonne enamels were receiving glowing acclaim and winning medals. Following Hayashi I came the other most famous makers Namikawa Yasayuki and Namikawa Sosuke (who were not related), the trio going on to win numerous gold medals at the various expositions of the period, with the two Namikawa artists so instrumental in pioneering new enamel colours and wireless techniques, eventually being rewarded in 1896 with the highest possible accolade as artists to the Imperial household (Teishitsu Gigei-in). Quite how Kodenji was overlooked is beyond belief when you study the workmanship of some of his finest pieces, many of which are now residing in the world's leading museums and private collections.

It is probably fair to say that today's enlightened enamel collectors would certainly rank him alongside the other two as the trio of luminary artists of that golden age of cloisonne manufacture.

**Height:** 5 7/8" 15 cm

**Diameter:** 3" 7.5 cm





## 2020 VISION OF AN ENLIGHTENED RULER - VOLUME II



EXHIBITION – 20th-26th SEPTEMBER  
CHELSEA OLD TOWN HALL, KINGS ROAD, SW3 5EE.  
[www.chelseaantiquesfair.co.uk](http://www.chelseaantiquesfair.co.uk)

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