

## Stunning 17<sup>th</sup>-century Japanese garments, international haute couture and costumes from Star Wars come together in a major V&A exhibition on kimono fashion

Gallery 39 and North Court, V&A  
29 February – 21 June 2020  
[vam.ac.uk/kimono](http://vam.ac.uk/kimono) | #KyotoToCatwalk



On 29 February, the V&A opens Europe's first major exhibition on kimono. The ultimate symbol of Japan, the kimono is often perceived as traditional, timeless and unchanging. *Kimono: Kyoto to Catwalk* counters this conception, presenting the garment as a dynamic and constantly evolving icon of fashion.

The exhibition reveals the sartorial and social significance of the kimono from the 1660s to the present day, both in Japan and in the rest of the world. Rare 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century kimono are displayed for the first time in the UK, together with fashions by major designers and iconic film and performance costumes. The kimono's recent reinvention on the streets of Japan is also explored through work by an exciting new wave of contemporary designers and stylists.

Highlights of the exhibition include a kimono created by Living National Treasure Kunihiro Moriguchi, the dress designed for Björk by Alexander McQueen and worn on the album cover *Homogenic*, and original Star Wars costumes modelled on kimono by John Mollo and Trisha Biggar. Designs by Yves Saint Laurent, Rei Kawakubo and John Galliano reveal the kimono's role as a constant source of inspiration for fashion designers. Paintings, prints, film, dress accessories and other objects feature throughout the exhibition, providing additional context to the fascinating story of the style, appeal and influence of the kimono. Almost 300 works are featured, including kimono especially made for the show, half drawn from the V&A's superlative collections and the rest generously lent by museums and private collections in Britain, Europe, America and Japan.

*Kimono: Kyoto to Catwalk* begins in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century when a vibrant fashion culture emerged in Japan. The increasingly wealthy merchant classes demanded the latest styles to express their affluence, confidence and taste, while leading actors and famous courtesans were the trend-setters of the day. The simple structure of the kimono focused attention on the surface, allowing for the creation of sumptuous patterns using sophisticated techniques. The first section of the exhibition explores these designs and shines a light on a fashion-conscious society not dissimilar to today's, in which desire for the latest look was fed by a cult of celebrity and encouraged by makers, sellers and publishers.

Kimono were first exported to Europe in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, where they had an immediate impact on clothing styles. Foreign fabrics were also brought to Japan and incorporated into kimono. Rare survivors from this early period of cultural exchange, including garments made in Japan for the Dutch and kimono tailored from French brocade and Indian chintz, are on display to reveal the fluid fashion relationship between East and West that resulted from the global trade network.

The late 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a worldwide craze for Japanese art and design. Kimono bought from department stores such as Liberty & Co. in London were worn by those wishing to express their artistic flair. Japan responded by making boldly embroidered 'kimono for foreigners', while the domestic market was transformed by the use of European textile technology and chemical dyes. The kimono's biggest impact on western fashion came in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when designers such as Paul Poiret, Mariano Fortuny and Madeleine Vionnet abandoned tightly-corseted styles in favour of loose layers of fabric that draped the body. This was part of a broader fascination with East Asia which can be discerned in jewellery and dress-accessories of the period, particularly those created by the celebrated French firm of Cartier.

The final section of the exhibition shows how the kimono has continued to inspire fashion designers around the world. The potential of the garment to be translated and transformed is seen in designs by Thom Browne, Duro Olowu and Yohji Yamamoto. The kimono's timeless, universal quality has also made it the ideal costume for film and performance. The display includes the outfit worn by Toshirō Mifune in *Sanjūrō*, Oscar-winning costumes from *Memoirs of a Geisha*, and the Jean Paul Gaultier ensemble worn by Madonna in her video *Nothing Really Matters*. Japan itself is currently witnessing a resurgence of interest in kimono. Jōtarō Saitō designs kimono couture for the catwalk, Hiroko Takahashi seeks to bridge the divide between art and fashion, and more casual styles are created by small, independent studios such as Rumi Rock and Modern Antenna.

Anna Jackson, curator of *Kimono: Kyoto to Catwalk* at the V&A, said: 'From the sophisticated culture of 17<sup>th</sup> -century Kyoto to the creativity of the contemporary catwalk, the kimono is unique in its aesthetic importance and cultural impact giving it a fascinating place within the story of fashion.'

- ENDS -

### Notes to Editors

- The exhibition *Kimono: Kyoto to Catwalk* runs from 29 February – 21 June 2020. Tickets are £16
- The exhibition has been curated for the V&A by Anna Jackson and Josephine Rout. It is accompanied by a major new V&A publication.
- The exhibition will be on view at the Museum of World Culture, Gothenburg, Sweden: 19 Sept 2020 to 10 Jan 2021, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam: 12 February – 9 May 2021, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal: 12 June – 17 October 2021 and beyond.
- The exhibition is the latest in the V&A's series of revelatory fashion exhibitions and follows *Mary Quant* (2019-2020), *Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams* (2019), *Balenciaga: Shaping Fashion* (2016 – 2017), *Undressed: A Brief History of Underwear* (2016 – 2017), *Shoes: Pleasure and Pain* (2015 – 2016), *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty* (2015) and *Club to Catwalk: London Fashion in the 1980s* (2013 – 2014).

- The V&A has been collecting Japanese art and design since it was founded in 1852 and now holds one of the world's most significant collections, including important holdings of Japanese textiles and dress.

### **Social Media**

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### **About MUFG**

As a company with a deep Japanese heritage which dates back 360 years, MUFG is proud to partner with the V&A as they celebrate Japanese culture during an important year for the country.

Our sponsorship of the Kimono exhibition, which showcases an iconic piece of Japanese tradition, provides a perfect link between our Japanese heritage and our longstanding presence and commitment to clients in the UK.

MUFG is one of the world's leading financial groups, with a global presence spanning around 2,700 offices in more than 50 markets. Our services including corporate and investment banking, commercial banking, trust banking, securities, asset management, and more. More information: <https://www.mufgemea.com/>

### **About GRoW @ Annenberg**

GRoW @ Annenberg is the philanthropic initiative led by Gregory Annenberg Weingarten, a Vice President and Director of the Annenberg Foundation. GRoW is dedicated to supporting humanitarian efforts across the globe, as well as innovative projects in health, education, the arts, the environment and civic & cultural life.

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### **About Shiseido**

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Shiseido is proud to sponsor the Kimono exhibition, sharing the pathway of heritage to modernity at the V&A. More information: [www.shiseido.co.uk](http://www.shiseido.co.uk)

### **About Yoshikimono**

YOSHIKIMONO, established 10 years ago, is a Japanese kimono brand created by YOSHIKI who was born the first son of a kimono merchant and who has a strong mission to introduce Japanese kimono to the whole world. Debuted in Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week TOKYO in 2015 as a grand finale brand, YOSHIKIMONO also headlined in Amazon Fashion Week TOKYO

2016. YOSHIKIMONO is always conscious of both protecting the past and introducing new things, therefore the brand theme is “fusion of tradition and innovation”. Today, YOSHIKI’s view of the world “stillness and motion” is gaining more and more international attention.

### **About Japan Centre Group**

Established in 1976, Japan Centre is a well-loved destination for all things Japanese, with a passion for delivering a rich variety of quality authentic Japanese goods to shoppers in the UK and beyond. Japan Centre has three London locations in Westfield London, Westfield Stratford City and Leicester Square as well as an online store. Japan Centre is proud to sponsor the Kimono exhibition and helping new audiences discover the delights of Japanese culture at the V&A. More information: [www.japancentre.com](http://www.japancentre.com)

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**For further PRESS information about *Kimono: Kyoto to Catwalk* please contact Kate Morais on [k.morais@vam.ac.uk](mailto:k.morais@vam.ac.uk). A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from [pressimages.vam.ac.uk](http://pressimages.vam.ac.uk)**