



KAMAKURA

REALISM AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE SCULPTURE OF JAPAN

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Edited by Ive Covaci

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PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD

On the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of Asia Society, we are proud to present the remarkable exhibition "Kamakura: Realism and Spirituality in the Sculpture of Japan." This spectacular presentation of Buddhist sculpture from Japan is a fitting celebration of the passion and commitment inspired in Asia Society founder John D. Rockefeller 3rd by his experience in that country as a young man discovering Asia for the first time, and later through his diplomatic efforts in Japan following World War II.

This exhibition marks the first major show of Kamakura sculpture in the United States in more than thirty years. The Kamakura period (1185–1333) saw the first military government of Japan, with shogunate power centered in the city of Kamakura. The period has also long been considered a high point of Japanese artistic expression, known for its realism and expressive dynamism; Kamakura style is often termed a renaissance in Buddhist art.

This exhibition and catalogue examine more than forty Kamakura masterpieces from private and museum collections in North America and Europe, and one treasure from the Tokyo National Museum. Though there are many superb examples of Kamakura-period art in western collections, "Kamakura: Realism and Spirituality in the Sculpture of Japan" is the first exhibition to bring these works together to illuminate their religious contexts and spiritual significance.

We are thrilled to continue Asia Society Museum's long history of developing exhibitions that explore major areas of Japanese art. From "Designed for Pleasure: The World of Edo Japan in Prints and Paintings, 1680–1860" to "New Way of Tea," Asia Society Museum has been committed to presenting to its audience the most exquisite examples of traditional Japanese art in context.

Asia Society is grateful to many individuals and organizations for their continued involvement with the mission of Asia Society, and their support of this project is acknowledged elsewhere. I do wish to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Interim Vice President for Global Arts and Culture and Museum Director Peggy Loar, who guided our talented museum team during a challenging year of transition and whose leadership contributed to the realization of this exhibition.

We hope that this exhibition and catalogue, along with other Asia Society programs, will lead to a greater awareness of the history and culture of Kamakura-period Japan, and will contribute to a deeper understanding of Japan today.

Josette Sheeran
President & CEO
Asia Society

MUSEUM PREFACE

It is our great pleasure to open Asia Society's sixtieth anniversary year with the landmark exhibition "Kamakura: Realism and Spirituality in the Sculpture of Japan," which showcases more than forty Kamakura-period masterpieces from international museum and private collections. While the Kamakura period (1185–1333) marks the first military government of Japan, with its shogunate power newly centered in the city of Kamakura, the period has also long been considered a high point of Japanese artistic expression. Known for its striking realism and expressive dynamism, it is often described as a renaissance in Buddhist art.

Asia Society Museum's long-standing commitment to presenting the finest cultural works of Japan is apparent in our decades of art exhibitions showing the finest of Japan's traditional and contemporary art, from "Golden Fantasies: Japanese Screens from New York Private Collections" (2004) to the enormously successful "Nobody's Fool: Yoshitomo Nara" (2010).

Considerable research and planning are required to organize an exhibition of this significance, and we have been extremely fortunate to have been able to work with an exciting young scholar of the Kamakura period, Dr. Ive Covaci. Dr. Covaci's commitment to and passion for her subject have resulted in this extraordinary catalogue and exhibition, and we have been honored to work with her.

Exceptional scholars in the fields of Japanese history, art history, and religious studies contributed to this publication or took part in a preliminary planning meeting, and we are grateful for the participation of Hank Glassman, D. Max Moerman, Samuel C. Morse, Nedachi Kensuke, and Haruko Wakabayashi.

Thanks are also due to the many public and private lenders to this exhibition, whose efforts were an important part of the realization of this project and deserve our deep appreciation. This exhibition would not have been possible without the support of major donors, who are listed elsewhere in this catalogue. Dr. Wendy Abraham, Manager, Arts and Culture Program Development Initiatives and Events, worked tirelessly and passionately to solicit the support of our generous friends.

This exhibition could not be realized without the continued commitment of Asia Society's staff. I want to recognize the leadership of Josette Sheeran, President, for her support of the arts and culture within the mission of Asia Society, as well as the exceptional members of the museum team: Dr. Adriana Proser, John H. Foster Senior Curator for Traditional Asian Art, worked closely with Dr. Covaci to guide the organization of the exhibition and publication; Clare McGowan, Senior Registrar and Collections Manager, coordinated the loans and the transport and installation arrangements; and Leise Hook, Museum Publication Coordinator, shepherded the book and interpretive materials. Thanks are due to Nick Pozek, Manager of Museum Digital Strategy; Nancy Blume, Head of Museum Education Programs; Sarah McCaffery, Executive Assistant; Kyung-keun Jang, Asia Society Museum Fellow, and Akasya Benge, Museum Intern; as well as Rachel Cooper, Director of Global Performing Arts and Special Cultural Initiatives; and La Frances Hui, Anne Kirkup, and Rachel Rosado of the Cultural Programs team. Thanks also are due to our copublisher, Yale University Press, including Amy Canonico, Associate Editor, Art and Architecture; Kate Zanzucchi, Managing Editor, Art and Architecture; and Sarah Henry, Associate Art Book Design and Production Manager; Jane Oliver, for her expert editorial assistance with the manuscript; copyeditor Miranda Ottewell; proofreader Alison Hagge; indexer Cathy Dorsey; and Miko McGinty and Rita Jules, for the truly beautiful book design; and to Clayton Vogel for the exceptional exhibition and graphics design. Others at Asia Society who should be thanked for their support include Tom Nagorski, Executive Vice President, and Elaine Merguerian, Director of Communications and Marketing, as well as their team for public relations and marketing; Christine Davies, Shane Williams-Ness, Erin Bradbury, Andrea Frodema, and the External Affairs team for their fundraising efforts; and Dan Washburn, Megan MacMurray, Tahiat Mahboob, and the online team for their contributions to the online presence of the exhibition.

We hope you will enjoy this exhibition and catalogue.

Peggy Loar
Interim Vice President for Global Arts and Culture and
Museum Director

Marion Kocot
Museum Deputy Director

CURATOR'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Asia Society Museum for taking on this project, persevering through the many years of its development, and bringing it to fruition. Adriana Proser, John H. Foster Senior Curator for Traditional Asian Art, first planted the seed for an exhibition of Kamakura art many years ago, and provided invaluable mentorship and guidance to me throughout the exhibition's research, development, and execution. I thank her for the opportunity, for her confidence in the project, and for her myriad efforts in realizing this exhibition and catalogue. My sincere gratitude also is extended to Clare McGowan, Senior Registrar and Collections Manager; without her years of work we would never have been able to bring these stunning objects together.

I also would like to thank Melissa Chiu, former Director of Asia Society Museum, for supporting the project during her tenure, and the members of the Asia Society Museum Advisory Committee for their feedback, suggestions, and direction during initial development of the exhibition. For continued institutional support, I thank Josette Sheeran, President and CEO of Asia Society; Peggy Loar, Interim Vice President for Global Arts and Culture and Director of Asia Society Museum; and Marion Kocot, Deputy Director.

An advisory meeting, made possible by a generous grant from the Toshiba Foundation, was especially productive in the early planning stages of the exhibition. I gratefully acknowledge the scholars who participated in that lively day of discussions: Hank Glassman, D. Max Moerman, Samuel C. Morse, and Haruko Wakabayashi. Thank you also to the many Asia Society Museum staff members from various departments who attended and enthusiastically offered their suggestions and points of view.

In developing the exhibition, I benefited from the advice, scholarship, and time generously shared with Adriana and myself by private collectors and museum professionals across North America and Europe. My sincere thanks are extended to: Peter Nisbet and Timothy Riggs, Ackland Art Museum; Janice Katz, Art Institute of Chicago; Tim Clark, British Museum; Joan Cummins, Brooklyn Museum; Stephanie Wada and Gratia Williams, Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation; Bill Clark; Andreas Marks (now at Minneapolis Institute of Arts) and Sonja Simonis, Clark Center for Japanese Art and Culture; Sinéad Kehoe and Katie Kilroy Blaser, Cleveland Museum of Art; Emily Sano, Larry Ellison Collection; Melissa Moy, Harvard Art Museums; Jennifer Casler-Price, Kimbell Art Museum; Julia Meech; John Carpenter, Metropolitan Museum of Art; Andreas Marks and Matthew Welch, Minneapolis Institute of Arts; Martina Stoye, Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst; Jane Portal, formerly of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Felice Fischer and Kyoko Kinoshita, Philadelphia Museum of Art; Cary Liu, Princeton University Art

Museum; Katharina Epprecht, Rietberg Museum; Xiaojin Wu, Seattle Art Museum; Margaret Glover and Madeleine Viljoen, Spencer Collection, New York Public Library; Hiroshi Sugimoto; Shimatani Hiroyuki, Tokyo National Museum; Li Jian and Nancy Nichols, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; John C. Weber; and Sadako Ohki, Yale University Art Gallery.

Four scholars contributed their expert knowledge and unique perspectives from the disciplines of art history and religious studies in catalogue essays and entries. I am grateful to Professors Hank Glassman (Haverford College), D. Max Moerman (Barnard College and Columbia University), Samuel C. Morse (Amherst College), and Nedachi Kensuke (Kyoto University) for their enthusiasm and long-standing commitment to the project. Moreover, I would like to thank Kristopher Reeves, for his excellent translation of Nedachi Kensuke's essay from the original Japanese; Ayumi Sakamoto, who provided additional help with translation at several points in the project; and Mark Schumacher, for generously contributing photography and for his excellent web dictionary of Japanese Buddhist statuary.

At Asia Society, Marion Kocot and Leise Hook, Museum Publication Coordinator, patiently shepherded the catalogue (and me) through the publication process. In addition to thanking Adriana Proser and Leise Hook for their editorial work, I owe my sincere gratitude to Jane Oliver for her expert and painstaking editing of the catalogue manuscript. On a personal note, my family has been a constant source of support and encouragement throughout the years I have been involved with this project, and I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

Finally, I owe a debt of gratitude to the many scholars, in Japan and in the West, whose pioneering work illuminates the history of these icons, their makers, and the religious world they inhabited, and inspired the research and themes presented in this exhibition and catalogue. In particular, I would like to recognize the influence and legacy of Helmut Brinker (1939–2012), Donald McCallum (1939–2013), and John M. Rosenfield (1924–2013), three giants in the field of Japanese Buddhist art history, who passed away during the years of planning this exhibition. Their work enlivened these beautiful icons for me, and provided the inspiration to bring them together for you in this exhibition and catalogue.

Ive Covaci

FUNDERS OF THE EXHIBITION

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Philadelphia Museum of Art
Seattle Art Museum
Tokyo National Museum
John C. Weber
Yale University Art Gallery

NOTE TO THE READER

For Japanese names, the surname is cited first, followed by the given or the artist's name. This does not apply, however, to those who publish in the West and/or who have opted to use the western order of their names. In discussion, Japanese artists and historical figures are referred to in the form most commonly cited, usually by the given or art name. Shunjōbō Chōgen, for example, is known as Chōgen.

Japanese is rendered in the modified Hepburn romanization system. The macron is used to indicate a long vowel in Japanese (Fudō Myōō), except where the Japanese name or term has entered the English lexicon (shogun). Names and terms are provided in the Japanese kanji system in the glossary.

In the text, Sanskrit names and words are transcribed without diacritical marks. Diacritical marks appear in the Sanskrit version of terms cited in the glossary for the reader's reference.

Japanese Historical Periods

Asuka period	538–710
Nara period	710–794
Heian period	794–1185
Kamakura period	1185–1333
Nanbokuchō period	1336–1392
Muromachi period	1392–1573
Momoyama period	1573–1615
Edo period	1615–1868
Meiji Restoration	1868–1912



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ENLIVENED IMAGES

BUDDHIST SCULPTURE OF THE KAMAKURA PERIOD

Ive Covaci

When you think about an object carved from wood or drawn in a picture as if it were a living being, then it is a living being.

— Myōe (1173–1232)

Who would call this a mere wooden image of a deity? . . . How could it not possess the majesty of a living body?

— Eison (1201–1290)

The vigorous, expressive, and beautiful sculptures of Kamakura-period (1185–1333) Japan display an uncanny realism. Face to face with the masterworks illustrated in this catalogue and presented in the associated exhibition, we can identify with the thirteenth-century Japanese monk Eison, who describes an icon he has just dedicated as possessing the “majesty of a living body.” Works of the Kamakura period, often described as a sculptural renaissance, possess naturalistic proportions and a sense of movement, life-like facial expressions with eyes of inlaid crystal that reflect light, and realistic drapery.¹ With many extant signed and dated works, art historians have been able to trace individual sculptors’ styles and to tell us much about the master artists and their patrons. At the beginning of this period, sculptors looked back to art of the Nara period (710–794), which is also characterized by a high degree of naturalism. Technical and stylistic innovations in the twelfth century allowed sculptors to depart from the more abstracted and idealized sculpture of the Heian period (794–1185) to create statuary that exudes the immediacy of the deity in more approachable, humanlike form (see cat. no. 3).



What Eison means by “the majesty of a living body” goes far beyond the idea of formal, external resemblance to earthly beings. As religious icons, these images were enlivened by their function as objects of ritual and devotional focus. Whether installed as the *honzon* (principal icon) of a temple hall, as the focus of a discrete esoteric ritual, or as a vehicle for personal devotions, the material image is transformed into an embodiment of divine presence during the act of worship.² This sense of embodiment is enhanced by the practice of depositing sacred relics, texts, and even miniature images within the hollow interior of many sculptures. Such forms of enlivenment have received a great deal of scholarly attention in the past decade in both Japan and the West, and this exhibition and catalogue draw extensively on recent work in the fields of Japanese art history and religious studies.³

This essay intends to outline historical conditions of the Kamakura period and to introduce the three sections of the exhibition: “Form and Presence” examines stylistic and technical developments in Kamakura sculpture; “Ritual and Devotional Contexts” centers on enlivenment through worship; “Empowering Interiors” interprets the practice of making sacred deposits in statues. The subsequent essays in this volume by leading scholars of Japanese art and religion explore significant aspects of these topics. Samuel C. Morse explains the development of the innovative Kei school of sculptors. Hank Glassman discusses religious pluralism in art combining belief in the *kami* (native gods) and the buddhas. Nedachi Kensuke shows how the practice of copying miraculous images served as a means of transferring sanctity between icons. Although the treatment of icons as

FIGURE 1. Detail from *Night Attack on the Sanjō Palace*, from the *Illustrated Scrolls of the Events of the Heiji Era* (*Heiji Monogatari Emaki*). Second half of the 13th century. Handscroll, ink and color on paper. Image H. 16 $\frac{1}{4}$ x W. 275 $\frac{11}{16}$ in. (41.3 x 700.3 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Fenollosa-Weld Collection, 11.4000.

This illustrated handscroll from the Kamakura period depicts one of the tumultuous events of the mid-twelfth century, the Heiji Disturbance of 1159, when a warrior-aristocrat alliance staged a coup, kidnapping the retired emperor and reigning emperor and burning the palace.