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Threads exhibition



The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford presents the first exhibition devoted to the art of Meiji textiles ever held outside Japan. **Threads of Silk and Gold: Ornamental Textiles from Meiji Japan** introduces the spectacular ornamental textiles that were made for the Western market during Japan's Meiji era (1868–1912). This was the famous period of 'Japonisme', which saw the European Impressionist painters exploring themes and styles taken from Japanese art, and Victorian rooms filled with Japanese decorative arts and crafts. The Meiji era was an extraordinarily rich artistic period. As well as prints, ceramics, lacquerware and metalwork, Japanese artists produced exquisite embroideries, sophisticated resist-dyed silk and velvet panels, grand tapestries, and appliqué work that entranced Western audiences with their innovative designs and brilliant craftsmanship. These textiles ranged in size from large-scale wall hangings and folding screens to small panels in western-style picture frames. Ornamental textiles made in Kyoto became some of Japan's best-known export items: no fashionable Victorian home was without its Japanese hangings; they were displayed to great acclaim at international exhibitions; and they were often presented as diplomatic gifts from the Japanese imperial household and government. The makers of Meiji textiles, seeking to modernize traditional modes of visual representation, aspired to create 'paintings in silk thread'. Sometimes they replicated specific western pictures. More often, they collaborated with contemporary Japanese painters to create dazzling new images that more than ever before realised the aesthetic potential of silk thread as an artistic medium. Threads of Silk and Gold comprises some 40 examples of the highest-quality Meiji textiles from the newly acquired collection of the Kiyomizu-Sannenzaka Museum in Kyoto. Pieced together from around the world, this outstanding collection is one of the finest and most comprehensive of its type in existence. Also on display will be some superb pieces from the Ashmolean's own collections. Download [press release in English](#) Download [press release in Japanese](#)

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