

The Beauty of Swords and Their Ornate Mountings: The Sword Collection of the Kosetsu Museum of Art

The Kosetsu Museum of Art currently has a collection of approximately fifty swords, which were amassed by the founder of the Asahi Shimbun newspaper company, Murayama Ryōhei (1850–1933). Born into a samurai family in town of Tamaki in Kishū domain (today Tamaki town, Watarai County, Mie prefecture), Murayama was influenced by his father, who excelled in sword appraisal, and developed a strong interest in swords. In his youth, he purportedly traveled to Ise to visit swordsmiths and began collecting swords. At one time, he is said to have collected as many as eight hundred swords.

While seeking advice from experts for other artworks, Murayama never relied on others when it came to swords, referring solely to his own aesthetic sensibilities. His collection predominantly consisted of ancient swords from the Kamakura to Muromachi periods, from the 12th to 16th century, attesting to his favoring temper patterns of a sword blade with simple, strong straight lines (*suguha*). Additionally, Murayama prized swords that retained their original form and condition, with minimal alterations made in later periods.

This exhibition features the swords cherished by Murayama, alongside their decorative fittings (*koshirae*) and ornate mounting accessories (*tōsōgu*). We hope you enjoy the distinct “beauty” of the shimmering, iridescent steel, the diverse and vibrant decorations of the fittings, and the intricate and colorful mounting accessories.

Admission

Adults

¥ 1200 (¥ 1000*)

High school and university students

¥ 700 (¥ 500*)

Elementary and junior high school students

¥ 400 (¥ 200*)

*For groups of 20 or more



Cloud-shaped sword guard (*tsuba*) with cloisonné design of floral lozenges and scattered crests
Edo period, 19th century



Important Art Object

Short sword (*tantō*)

Signed Kunimitsu

Kamakura period, 13th century



Important Cultural Property

Long sword (*tachi*)

Signed Masatsune

Heian period, 12th century



Black-lacquered short sword mounting (*tantō koshirae*) with sprinkled metal design (*makie*) of peonies
Edo period, 18th century



Mounting for long sword (*tachi koshirae*) with sprinkled metal design (*makie*) of hollyhock and nine-planet crests on gold pear-skin ground, wrapped with cord
Edo period, 18th-19th century