

SAMPLE LESSON PLAN, written for the docent corps at the University of Michigan Museum of Art



Minagawa Gekka (1892-1987)

Black haori with flaming chrysanthemum designs

black damask silk with tie dye and wax resist patterns and metallic thread embroidery
Japan, Showa Era (1926-1989), ca. 1945-1950

83 cm x 124.46 cm (32 11/16 in. x 49 in.)

2005/1.351

Gift of Howard and Patricia Yamaguchi

Background: Haori

A haori is a short kimono-like jacket which opens at the front. Although small ties are often sewn into the side panels, most haori are worn open over a longer kimono or shirt. Until the late 19th century, haori were worn primarily by men. Today, they are paired with jeans or formal attire, depending on the style and fabric of the haori, and worn more often by women. Prior to the Meiji Era (1868-1914), women and men tended to wear gender-specific clothing, with ground-length kimono for women and haori jacket and hakama (a wide-legged pantlike garment, sometimes cut like a skirt with a split down the center) for men.

In 1852 at the end of the Edo Period, American naval officer Commodore Matthew C. Perry and his fleet entered Japanese waters. By 1868, the beginning of the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese had been forced to sign a trade agreement favoring the Americans. The Meiji Restoration, also called the Meiji Era, brought the Japanese emperor back to power for the first time in over 1200 years. When Emperor Meiji began his reign, Japan underwent a state-sanctioned modernization process that led to the adoption of meat-eating (a grave offense in Buddhist culture) and Western dress for men. Women began to wear the haori as outer jackets for their kimono. They were not encouraged to adopt Western dress to the same extent as men were, but neither were they restricted from it. Women who wore Western clothes, worked outside the home, danced with men in a Western fashion and bobbed their hair were called “Mogaru” or “Mogu”, short for Modern Girl. They were occasionally frowned upon socially, and during World War II a return to more traditionally feminine values such as staying home and taking care of children was emphasized.

After the war ended, the Occupation brought an American ideal of womanhood to Japan. In the 1950's, when women started to wear modern Western clothing most of the time, the haori was the Japanese equivalent of the female “power suit.” This particular haori was designed for a highly successful Japanese woman who owned a real estate business in the mid-20th century in Tokyo. She and her daughters owned matching outfits from premier clothing retailers, including handmade works from artists like Gekka.

Background: Minagawa Gekka

Minagawa Gekka, one of the most idiosyncratic artists of modern Japanese art, singlehandedly revived a tradition of wax-resist fabric dyeing. With this technique, he created a vast number of complex, intricate works, of which UMMA owns seven. In addition, he reintroduced embroidery utilizing metallic thread and persisted in displaying nontraditional motifs in his work, including birds of paradise and the chrysanthemum¹ shown in this work.

He studied at the Kansai Art Institute and maintained his career in Kyoto. He first became well known in 1927 when he presented his work at the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts exhibition. For the next 60 years he continued to revitalize and introduce new methods of fabric art. His works include screens, banners and ceiling panels for Buddhist temples. Until his death, he aspired to become an “artist,” even though in Japan his chosen field was often relegated to the less-heralded field of crafts.

¹ The chrysanthemum was adopted as the symbol of the Emperor in the 8th century CE. It is interesting to note that this haori, with its flaming chrysanthemum design, was made shortly after Emperor Hirohito renounced his claim of godhood. This haori could then be read as a subtle political statement; however, more research into this haori would be required in order to confirm this theory. Chrysanthemums in general are considered symbols of death and as a result was not a commonly used motif. Instead, cherry blossoms and plum blooms were more frequently used on clothing and in art.

Technique

Gekka's work centered on traditional techniques. Although his work is thoroughly modern in scope and turned away from traditional subject matter such as cherry blossoms, cranes and bamboo, his work in general was grounded in traditional methods.

To begin, it is important to know the difference between two major forms of dyeing fabric.

- Wax-resist – a method first found in Japan in the 8th century. Wax would be applied to fabric before the initial dyeing process. Any areas covered by wax would remain undyed, and could either be dyed in another color later or remain the original color of the fabric.
- Yuzen – Another dyeing process similar to wax-resist, but using rice paste. The paste itself can be dyed, and the color transferred onto the fabric.

Gekka was skilled in both forms. The wax-resist technique was much older than the yuzen method, but both could be used to make complex, intricate works. The Chinese originally brought examples of wax-resist dyed fabrics to Japan in the 8th century but the style was not popular until Gekka's time. Some wax-resist work had been created in the 19th century, but again on a very small scale. Gekka had learned about wax-resist dyeing by studying ancient Chinese fabrics, then developing it for himself. In addition, since he worked and lived in Kyoto, where Japan's brocade industry was located, he was able to adopt their use of metallic thread for his own purposes. In addition to metallic thread, he also sometimes worked with modern sequins.

The raw fabric for this haori was almost certainly commissioned from a weaver. Its flowercart pattern, a favorable feminine symbol, would have only been visible when the fabric was viewed at an angle. Gekka drew in the chrysanthemum pattern and the family crest, using wax-resist to keep these areas undyed while he colored the rest of the haori. At the time he was dyeing the main portion of the jacket black, he also colored a broad swath of it in a pinkish-salmon color. Next, the wax was removed and the chrysanthemums were painted. Last, Gekka added metallic thread and silk embroidery to the chrysanthemums.

Themes and Ideas for Teaching

1. What is the difference between an artist and a craftsperson?
2. What does it mean for a woman to wear a suit? Is she in power? Is she more like a man? Why is a suit different from other types of clothing, such as a t-shirt and jeans?
3. Does the haori mean something different when it is on display in a museum, as opposed to when it is worn?
4. At the time this haori was made, Japan was mostly Westernized, and Japanese women were starting to wear clothes that were similar to what American women

- were wearing at the same time. Why would a Japanese woman choose to wear a haori instead of Western clothes? When would she wear it?
5. What is the haori made of? Why not something more durable (like cotton) or cheaper (like nylon or polyester)?
 6. Why would an artist revive an outdated or extinct technique?

Activities for Teaching

Pre-visit activities/Preparation/Planning activities/Homework

Have students describe an item in their wardrobes and write or draw something to the effect as to how it makes them feel. When would they wear it – a sunny day, a party, to school, to visit their grandparents?

Museum Activities

If the museum is displaying the haori: visit the museum and compare it to other kimono on display. Also, if there are actor prints on display, discuss the difference between a work on paper replicating a design and a work on fabric. If this is part of a PowerPoint presentation: Have multiple examples of kimono available, including actor prints; obi and kimono swatches. These can either be contrasted with other forms of dress or appreciated by themselves. If handheld objects are desired, such as for a younger audience, yuzen pattern origami paper is available at Hollander's or Michigan Book and Supply.

Post-visit activities

Suggested follow-up activities include the idea of national identity or personal identity as expressed through clothing.

Web resources

http://www.sfusd.k12.ca.us/schwww/sch618/japan/Flowers/Japanese_Flowers_Bonsai.html - a list of Japanese flowers and their meanings. Although the article is on ikebana, the flower information is pertinent to family crests (mon) which are featured on kimono, including this haori.

<http://www.japanesekimono.com> - An overview of the history of kimono, types of kimono and other fun facts.

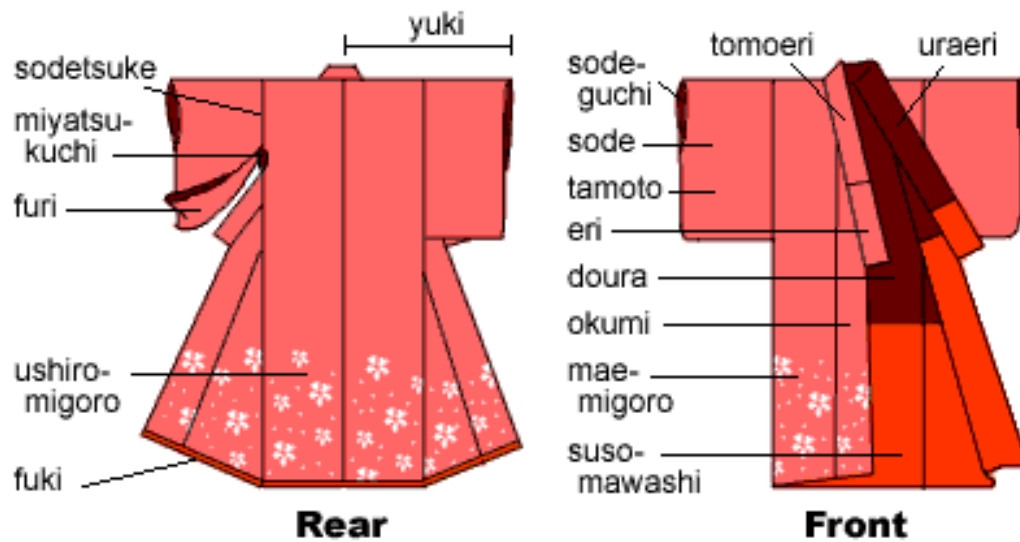
<http://www.japan-zone.com/culture/kimono.shtml> - a user-friendly approach to Japanese traditional clothing, with a visual timeline of changing kimono styles and a chart for identifying parts of a kimono.

<http://www.marlamallett.com> - a fabulous site dedicated to textiles, with a complete section on Japanese kimono and haori. While commercial, the owner is a former University professor who specialized in fiber arts.

Other resources:

Oyobe, Natsu, Ph.D, "Recent Museum of Art Acquisition: Colorful Japanese Haori". In *The University of Michigan Museums of Art and Archaeology Bulletin*, The University of Michigan Museums of Art and Archeology, Vol. XVI, 2005-2006, pg. 104-7

Parts of a Kimono



yuki - sleeve length	ushiromigoro - rear main section	uraeri - inner collar	doura - upper lining
sodetsuke - armhole seam	fuki - hem guard	sode - sleeve	okumi - front panel below the collar
miyatsukuchi - opening below armhole	sodeguchi - sleeve opening	tamoto - sleeve pouch	maemigoro - front main section
furi - sleeve below armhole	tomoeri - overcollar	eri - collar	susomawashi - lower lining

Kimono Through the Ages

	Pre-Nara Japan. Here, clothes were still highly influenced by China. Much of what we associate with Japan today (kanji script, Buddhism, short poetry) was not invented yet.
	Nara Period. By this time, Korean scribes had taught the Japanese how to write kanji, Chinese characters that represented entire words. The Japanese eventually used them for their sound as well as their meaning. Also, Buddhism had been introduced to Japan and became a prominent religion.
	Heian Period. Poetry ruled. Both men and women wrote poetry, and were schooled in the arts of calligraphy and flower arranging. The world's first novel, the Tale of Genji, was written around 1000 CE. Women in particular dressed in multiple layers of clothing, and due to social custom were not to allow any part of their bodies save their hands and faces to be visible.
	Kamakura and Momoyama Period. After the Emperor's armies lost the Onin War in 1285, the first shogun, or military ruler, led Japan. The last shogun was deposed in 1868. Between 1285 and 1603, numerous internal wars were fought. The tea ceremony was also invented at this time, and the famous Silver Pavilion, where the first tea ceremonies were held, was built in the 1480's and still stands today.
	The Edo Period. In 1603, Tokugawa Ieyasu united Japan for the first time since 1366. His government rebuilt the Tokaido Road connecting Kyoto to Edo (Tokyo) and promoted Confucian values. Peace reigned until 1868, when the last shogun was ousted and Emperor Meiji restored to power. Western clothing began to be worn in Japan shortly afterward by men.