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**IN THE MOMENT:  
JAPANESE ART FROM THE LARRY  
ELLISON COLLECTION**

Asian Art Museum debuts Ellison's Japanese art collection, coinciding with 2013 America's Cup

**SAN FRANCISCO, May 21, 2013**—This summer, as the America's Cup Challenger Series takes to San Francisco Bay, the Asian Art Museum presents an exhibition of Japanese art from the rarely seen collection of Larry Ellison, Oracle CEO and owner of ORACLE TEAM USA, defender of the 2013 America's Cup.

*In the Moment: Japanese Art from the Larry Ellison Collection*, on view June 28–Sept. 22, 2013, introduces more than 60 exceptional artworks spanning 1,100 years. The exhibition comprises of works by noted artists of the Momoyama (1573–1615) and Edo (1615–1868) periods, along with other important examples of religious art, lacquer, metalwork and armor. Highlights include a 13th–14th-century wooden sculpture of Prince Shotoku; a 16th-century bronze goose-shaped incense burner; six-panel folding screens dating to the 17th century by Kano Sansetsu; and 18th-century paintings by acclaimed masters Maruyama Okyo and Ito Jakuchu.

*In the Moment* explores the dynamic nature of art selection and display in traditional Japanese settings, where artworks are often temporarily presented to reflect a special occasion or the change of seasons. Each new arrangement of art creates a unique viewing experience, altering the collector's physical surroundings and relationship to the natural world and other people—a transient experience properly savored “in the moment.”

The exhibition is curated by Dr. Laura Allen, the museum's curator of Japanese art, and Melissa Rinne, associate curator of Japanese art, in consultation with Dr. Emily Sano, director

*Tigers* (detail), by Maruyama Okyo (Japanese, 1733–1795), Edo period (1615–1868), 1779. Pair of hanging scrolls; ink and light colors on paper. Courtesy of the Larry Ellison Collection.

MORE

emerita of the Asian Art Museum and art consultant to the Larry Ellison Collection of Japanese Art.

"This exhibition offers a rare glimpse of an extraordinary collection," said Jay Xu, director of the Asian Art Museum. "We aim to present it in a fresh and original way that explores traditional Japanese principles governing the relationship of art to our surroundings and social relationships."

Public access to the Ellison collection has until now been extremely limited. Most of the artworks are kept at Ellison's private California residence, a Japanese-style home surrounded by a traditional seasonal garden. Ellison's practice of rotating the objects on view in his home in temporary displays inspired the exhibition's organization and major themes: the effect of changing natural light on the art-viewing experience; the custom of temporary art displays according to seasons and occasions; and the role of personal taste in the selection process. These themes are presented in the museum's three special-exhibition galleries on the ground floor. Visitors are encouraged to begin their exhibition journey in Lee Gallery, followed by Hambrecht Gallery and Osher Gallery.

#### **Lee Gallery: Changing Light Levels**

Lee Gallery introduces the experience of viewing art at varying light levels, an important consideration when observing art in traditional Japanese settings. Before the advent of electricity, people experienced folding screens and hanging scrolls under fluctuating natural light or by flickering candlelight. Artists in Japan painted with an awareness of variable lighting conditions and their effect on perception. Visitors to Lee Gallery will experience how painted folding screens appear under a three-minute cycle of changing light, adjusted to mimic the passage of one day, from early morning to high noon, then dusk and back to morning. On view is a dramatic pair of folding screens depicting **waves and rocks**, attributed to Hasegawa Togaku and dating to the 17th century, each nearly 6 feet high and 12.5 feet wide (cat. no. 11). Viewers will notice how the screens' reflective gold-leaf surfaces modulate and soften under changing light, altering the mood of the painted coastal scenery. Benches in the gallery allow visitors to sit at the same height as the screens, approximating the way a person seated on straw mats would see them in a traditional Japanese residence.

#### **Hambrecht Gallery: Temporary Art Displays**

Unlike oil paintings—a more common medium in the West—which often stay on view for years at a time, many Japanese paintings are shown only for brief intervals—as little as a few hours or up to a few months—before being returned to storage. The selection of artwork in Hambrecht Gallery illustrates the way changing art displays are related to social customs: the desire for surroundings appropriate to seasons, special occasions and social gatherings. Seasonal artworks in this gallery include a hanging-scroll painting of a **mynah bird in a persimmon tree**, by Ito Jakuchu (cat. no. 28), and a pair of 17th-century folding screens depicting **waka poems over autumn grasses and morning glories with scattered fans** (cat. no. 13).

Other artwork in the gallery incorporates fauna, which often serves as a metaphor for aspects of human nature. For example, cranes are believed to mate for life and are associated with

marital fidelity. Artwork like the pair of folding screens with **pin**es, **bamboo**, **plum**, **cranes and turtles** by 17th-century master Kano Sansetsu (cat. no. 19) might have been set out to celebrate a marriage, the birth of a child, or other important life events.

Hambrecht Gallery showcases religious art made for Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, not for residential display. Some religious art was put on temporary display while others remained on view for years, decades or even centuries as objects of regular worship and ritual practice. A massive painting portraying the **death of the Buddha** (cat. no. 8), shown in this gallery, was taken out of its box and unrolled for display one day each year to honor the anniversary of the historical Buddha's death. The 13th–14th-century wooden sculpture of **Prince Shotoku at age two** (cat. no. 5) may have been enshrined in a special hall where Buddhist monks conducted ceremonies on the anniversary of Shotoku's death.

This gallery also presents information on art handling and storage practices. Traditionally, Japanese art not on view is rolled, folded or put in boxes and placed in storehouses called *kura*. In traditional *kura* and modern museum storage, custom-made wooden boxes provide added protection for individual works.

#### **Osher Gallery: Personal Choices**

Osher Gallery explores how changing displays of art express personal tastes and aesthetic and literary interests. Ellison favors paintings of plant life, wildlife, legendary battles and classic romances. His favorite piece in the collection is a remarkable pair of folding screens depicting a **dragon and tiger** (cat. no. 21), by one of the greatest artists of the Edo period, Maruyama Okyo (1733–1795).

Collectors also consider the importance or appropriateness of works from various stylistic traditions when selecting objects for display. This collection focuses on three traditions: works by members of the Kano school; Rinpa artists; and individual masters in 18th-century Kyoto.

The Kano school is a hereditary lineage of painters who worked as official painters for Japan's military rulers in the 16th–19th centuries. Characteristics of Kano-school paintings include bird and flower images in an ink-and-color style derived from Chinese models, and figure scenes from classical Japanese and Chinese literature. Examples of art from the Kano school include Edo-period folding screens portraying **battles from *The Tale of the Heike***, painted by Kano Jinnojo (cat. no. 17), and **scenes from *The Tale of Genji***, depicted by Kano Soshu, dating to the Momoyama period (cat. no. 16).

Rinpa painters worked for the imperial court, merchants and warriors from the early 17th to mid-19th centuries. The paintings emphasize seasonal plants, like the 18th-century folding screen of **maize and cockscomb** (cat. no. 32). Other characteristics include strong surface design and patterns of simplified, curving forms, often silhouetted in color, as found in **one of the Seven Lucky Gods Jurojin, deer, and cranes**, a set of three Edo-period hanging scrolls by Suzuki Kiitsu (cat. no. 34).

Kyoto-based artists developed innovative modes of expression from 1750 to 1800. Many worked for patrons of varied social standing, most often newly prosperous merchants.

Characteristics include novel and idiosyncratic images of birds and animals, often using ink alone or a combination of ink and light colors, as seen in the **young cat sleeping under flowering saxifrage** (cat. no. 23) and **tigers** (cat. no. 22); both are hanging scrolls by Maruyama Okyo.

In keeping with the Japanese tradition of temporary art display, the Asian Art Museum will replace four of the screens in this exhibition with new works from the Ellison collection on Aug. 19. Visitors are encouraged to plan a return visit.

The Asian Art Museum will serve as the only venue for the exhibition.

### **MEDIA PREVIEW**

A media preview for *In the Moment: Japanese Art from the Larry Ellison Collection* will be held on Wednesday, June 26, 2013. Doors open at 10 a.m. and remarks begin at 10:30 a.m. Please RSVP by Friday, June 21, to [pr@asianart.org](mailto:pr@asianart.org) or 415.581.3713.

### **PUBLICATION**

The exhibition will be accompanied by a substantive, richly illustrated catalogue, edited by Laura W. Allen, Melissa M. Rinne, and Emily J. Sano. Hardcover and Softcover, 10.25 x 11.5 in., 176 pages. Available at the Asian Art Museum store in early June. Hardcover: \$50.00; Softcover: \$35.00; 415.581.3600 or [shop@asianart.org](mailto:shop@asianart.org).

### **EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION**

The exhibition is organized by the Asian Art Museum in collaboration with Lawrence J. Ellison and curated by Dr. Laura Allen, the museum's curator of Japanese art, and Melissa Rinne, associate curator of Japanese art, in consultation with Dr. Emily Sano, art consultant to the Larry Ellison Collection of Japanese Art. Presentation at the Asian Art Museum is made possible with the generous support of Union Bank and Japan Foundation. Media sponsors: NBC Bay Area, San Francisco Examiner and San Francisco magazine.

### **ABOUT THE ASIAN ART MUSEUM**

The Asian Art Museum—Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture is one of San Francisco's premier arts institutions and home to a world-renowned collection of more than 18,000 Asian art treasures spanning 6,000 years of history. Through rich art experiences, centered on historic and contemporary artworks, the Asian Art Museum unlocks the past for visitors, bringing it to life while serving as a catalyst for new art, new creativity and new thinking.

Information: 415.581.3500 or [www.asianart.org](http://www.asianart.org)

Location: 200 Larkin Street, San Francisco, CA 94102

Hours: The museum is open Tuesdays through Sundays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. From February through September, hours are extended on Thursdays until 9 p.m. Closed Mondays, as well as New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

General Admission: FREE for museum members, \$12 for adults, \$8 for seniors (65+), college students with ID, and youths (13–17). FREE for children under 12 and SFUSD students with ID. Admission on Thursdays after 5 p.m. is \$5 for all visitors (except those under 12, SFUSD students, and members, who are always admitted FREE). Admission is FREE to all on Target First Free Sundays (the first Sunday of every month). A surcharge may apply for admission into special exhibitions.

Access: The Asian Art Museum is wheelchair accessible. For more information regarding access: 415.581.3598; TDD: 415.861.2035.

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