

Kimono's evolution reflects changing Japan

By Katherine Roth

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — It's difficult to imagine a more eloquent symbol of Japan than the deceptively simple, T-shaped kimono. Traditional yet ever changing, the kimono ("thing to wear," in Japanese) has evolved dramatically over the past 150 years.

Its story encompasses the evolution of weaving, dyeing, and embroidery techniques, as well as Japan's aesthetic, social, and even political history.

"Kimono: A Modern History," on view through January 19, 2015 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, is a tour de force in textiles.

When entering the galleries, viewers see an elegant red kimono that a wealthy woman donated to a temple, where it was recycled and patched together to make a kimono for an aging priest.

"There's a wonderful paradox there, and it's a sort of introduction to the story of the kimono," said John Carpenter, curator of Japanese art, who organized the exhibit with Monika Bincsik, also of the museum's Asian Art department.

Based on the book of the same name by Japanese textile expert Terry Satsuki Milhaupt, who died in 2012, the show is dedicated to Milhaupt's memory and coincides with the posthumous publication of her book (Reaktion Books) earlier this year.

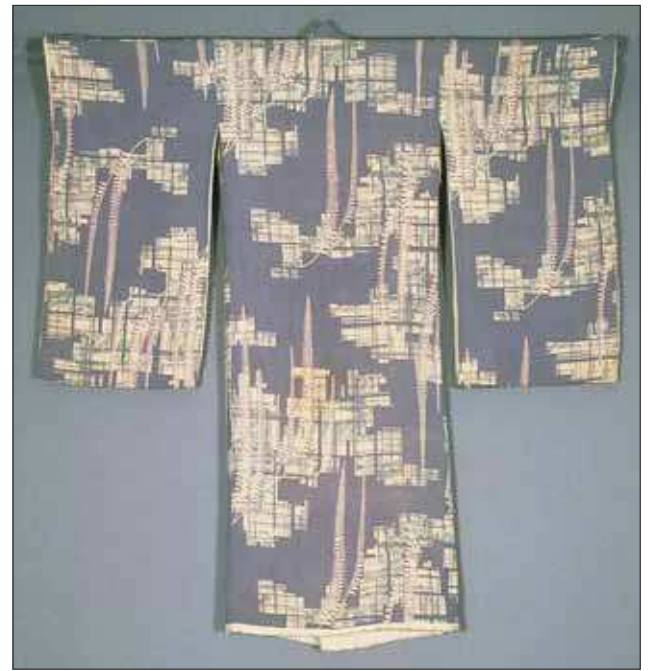
The exhibit consists of more than 50 kimono, half on loan and half from the museum's own collection, as well as almost 200 fabric samples, screens, scrolls, lacquer works, ceramics, illustrated books, and other objects.

It includes glittering, gold-embroidered, 18th-century *noh* robes; cartoon-like, monster-faced, firefighter kimono done with freehand resist dyes in reds and yellows on indigo; political propaganda kimono printed with startling symbols of war; children's kimono — including one cherished by Frank Lloyd Wright; and, finally, contemporary pieces featuring the futuristic *shibori* pleats of Issey Miyaki as well as the rips and angular shaping of Yohji Yamamoto. Highlights also include three breathtaking kimono made by designers designated as National Living Treasures by the government of Japan.

The exhibit begins in the Edo period (1615 to 1868), when the design, material, and style of garments reflected a person's role as samurai, farmer, craftsman, or merchant. In addition to the grand textiles embroidered in gold that one might expect, there are thick, quilted firefighters' robes decorated with bright designs depicting heroes and mythical beasts. Farmers' robes, meanwhile, were mostly of recycled fabric scraps woven together, or patchwork jackets.

At this time, the kimono was an everyday garment. But its design and function were to change.

In the Meiji period (1868 to 1912), when Japan looked to western countries in a quest for rapid modernization, the textile industry — and the kimono — were transformed.



TEXTILE TRANSFORMATION. Pictured at left is a Noh Costume (Nuihaku) with Scattered Crests, Edo period, second half of the 18th-19th century, from Japan, made of silk embroidery and gold leaf on silk satin. At right is a Child's Kimono with Wisteria and Trellis, Japan, Meiji period, early 20th century, made from stencil paste-resist dyed crepe silk (kabe chirimen). The child's kimono was owned by — and likely inspired works by — Frank Lloyd Wright. Both pieces are included in "Kimono: A Modern History," an exhibit on view through January 19, 2015 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. (AP Photos/Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Japanese began using western woolen and velvet materials, while Japanese silks became popular in the west. Japanese also began using western chemical dyes and new weaving technologies, combining them with traditional stencil-dyeing techniques to create *kata-yuzen*, a sophisticated, stencil paste-resist dyeing technique.

As western design concepts increasingly influenced the Japanese kimono, they became bolder and brighter, while Japanese design began inspiring 19th-century western artists and designers.

A young girl's silk kimono decorated with a pattern of wisteria flowers and trellises was acquired by Wright on a visit to Japan in around 1905. Its modernity is striking, and it likely inspired some of the architect's subsequent works.

"It almost looks architectural, and you can see how it inspired him," Carpenter said.

To preserve traditional crafts in the face of such rapid modernization, the Japanese government began designating some experts as Imperial Household Artists and, later, Living National Treasures. Featured in the exhibit are works by stencil-dyer Keisuke Serizawa as well as yuzen-dyer Kako Moriguchi and his son, Kunihiko Moriguchi. These were precious kimono to be hung as art and not worn.

In the Taisho period (1912 to 1926), kimono became brighter and bolder still as department stores promoted new looks to appeal to the masses. Traditional Japanese motifs were combined with new western design concepts

to create dazzling kimono, many inspired by the Art Nouveau and Art Deco movements.

Designs became more graphic in following decades, especially in unlined summer kimono, which were often resist-dyed or embroidered. A man's under-kimono from the 1930s features cameras and train tickets, and is displayed alongside a woman's kimono decorated with images of piano keys and libretti from two songs. One kimono even features Mickey Mouse.

Inexpensive, ready-to-wear kimono woven from pre-dyed yarn were so easily mass-produced that customers began to expect new designs every year. At the same time, improved dyeing techniques meant more sharply delineated designs and color gradations.

During World War II, the kimono's symbolism as a national costume made it a perfect vehicle for war propaganda, particularly a kimono for boys and an under-kimono for men. Battleships and bomber planes took hold as motifs.

Although kimono are now worn mainly for formal occasions, the show ends with works by leading fashion designers, and makes the case that designers, both Japanese and western, continue to create clothing inspired by kimono, pushing the art form further still. The kimono seems not so much a disappearing traditional garment but an evolving form that adapts to changing lifestyles and textile techniques.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art is located at 1000 Fifth Avenue in New York. To learn more, visit <www.metmuseum.org>.

Only two of four state Supreme Court races contested

OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — While four state Supreme Court justices are seeking re-election this year, only two face opponents in the November election.

Justices Debra Stephens and Charles Johnson face nominal opposition in their bids for re-election.

The nonpartisan court races have not generated high-profile campaigns, which is a bit of a surprise considering the court has been involved in controversial efforts to force the state legislature to adequately fund public schools.

Justice Mary Yu is running unopposed on the November 4 ballot to fill out the two years remaining in the term of retired Justice James Johnson. Yu is a former King County Superior Court judge who was appointed to the high court by governor Jay Inslee in May. Yu is the first openly gay justice, as well as the first Asian American, to serve on the Supreme Court.

Justice Mary Fairhurst, who has served on the court since 2003, also faces no opposition in her bid for a third six-year term.

Johnson, seeking a fifth term,



UNCONTESTED RACE. Washington state Supreme Court Justice Mary Yu is applauded by court members as she acknowledges the gallery after being sworn in to the bench on May 20, 2014 in Olympia, Washington in this file photo. Yu is running unopposed on the November 4 ballot to fill out the two years remaining in the term of retired Justice James Johnson. She is the first openly gay justice, as well as the first Asian American, to serve on the state Supreme Court. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson, File)

points to top bar ratings and a long list of endorsements on his campaign website.

He is opposed by Pierce County attorney Eddie Yoon, who does not have a campaign website. Yoon has raised no money, but has paid for newspaper advertising.

Yoon teaches at a law school in South Korea and also served as an

assistant prosecutor in Tacoma in the late 1970s. He contends the present justices lack personality.

Stephens, who joined the high court in 2008, is seeking a second six-year term. The Spokane native is the only current justice from Eastern Washington.

Stephens wrote the majority opinion in the court's 2012 school-

funding decision, which is known as the McCleary case. Her campaign website lists top bar ratings and many endorsements. She has been rated "exceptionally well-qualified" to be a justice.

Her opponent is John "Zamboni" Scannell, a disbarred attorney whose nickname comes from a previous job driving the Zamboni ice machine at the Seattle Center. He has been deemed "unqualified" by the Washington State Prosecutors Association.

Even if he wins, Scannell likely would face a challenge because of his disbarment. The state Constitution says "No person shall be eligible to the office of judge of the supreme court, or judge of a superior court, unless he shall have been admitted to practice in the courts of record of this state."

Stephens wrote the 2010 opinion disbaring Scannell for obstructing a Washington State Bar Association investigation, including an allegation that he did not adequately inform clients of a potential conflict of interest.

Scannell has raised no money, state records show.

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