

Met exhibit looks at Japan's fine craft of bamboo basketry

By Katherine Roth
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Bamboo is getting attention these days as a versatile and sustainable material for housewares, so the timing is good for a Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibit that explores Japan's ancient craft of basketry.

"Japanese Bamboo Art: The Abbey Collection" is devoted to masterworks, including a half dozen works by two artists designated as Living National Treasures in Japan. To highlight the works' virtuosity and context, they have been displayed alongside paintings, ceramics, bronzes, kimono, and other pieces from different genres.

The exhibit also explores other traditional Japanese arts that are entwined with bamboo basketry, such as ikebana flower arranging and the tea ceremony. Bamboo is so central to Japanese culture that the Japanese and Chinese character for bamboo is part of over a thousand other characters, including those for many items traditionally made of bamboo, such as flutes, writing brushes, boxes, and baskets.

The Met's show, organized by Monika Bincsik, assistant curator in the department of Asian art, tells the story of bamboo through almost 100 works dating from the late 19th century to the present. It focuses on the refined beauty and technical complexity of Japanese basketry. The exhibit will remain on view through February 4, 2018.

Although the oldest Japanese baskets date to the 700s and were mainly used as offering trays and holders for lotus petals,



there was little focus on Japanese bamboo art in the western world until relatively recently, Bincsik says. Most of the works featured in this show are taken from the Diane and Arthur Abbey Collection, and most have never before been shown to the public. More than 70 of the works on exhibit were recently promised as gifts to the Met.

The show opens with a dramatically curvaceous floor-to-ceiling sculpture by master craftsman Tanabe Chikuunsay IV. With its voluptuous shape, the site-specific piece is woven out of rare tiger bamboo, which is mottled with dark spots.

The introductory section shows how bamboo was used for hundreds of years for everyday utensils as well as refined containers. It was a craft generally honed by specific families, with expertise handed down from one generation to the next. Some leading bamboo artisans created

their own schools, many still active today.

But it was not until the late 19th century, the exhibit explains, that bamboo craftsmanship began to be recognized as, first, a veritable Japanese decorative art and, later, as a bona fide art form. Later masters such as Iizuka Rokansai created innovative works that were the foundation for contemporary bamboo art.

The show includes textiles passed from bamboo basketry mentors to their students as a sort of diploma, or graduation gift, signalling an apprentice's elevation to the rank of skilled craftsman. These precious textiles were passed down time and again over generations.

Most of the exhibit is organized geographically into three major Japanese regions; Kansai (mainly Kyoto and Osaka), Kanto (mainly Tokyo), and the southern area of Kyushu.

Highlights include "Basket for Trans-

BAMBOO BASKETRY. "The Gate," a piece by Tanabe Chikuunsay IV, is seen at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The artwork is part of an exhibit called "Japanese Bamboo Art: The Abbey Collection," which is on view through February 4, 2018 at the New York museum. (Photo/The Metropolitan Museum of Art via AP)

porting Tea Ceremony Utensils," made in the late 1800s by Hayawaka Shokosai I. He is believed to be the first bamboo craftsman to sign his work, paving the way for increased recognition of the works of individual masters.

"Moon Reflected on Water" was made in 1929 by Sakaguchi Sounsai. It was the first bamboo work accepted into a government-sponsored art exhibition, that year.

Another major work is "Offering or Fruit Tray with Intersecting Circles Design," made in about 1947 from smoked timber bamboo by Shono Shounsai, who in 1967 became the first Living National Treasure of bamboo art.

There are baskets that incorporate ancient arrows, still revealing their red or black lacquer. A vase called "Dragon in Clouds" by Iizuka Shokansai is twisted out of a single stick of bamboo. Another work, "Woman," made in 2004 by Nagakura Ken'ichi, is also formed from a single stick of bamboo, and resembles a sculpture by Giacometti.

One takeaway from the show is that the possibilities of bamboo may turn out to be as vast and limitless as the form is ancient.

The exhibit will not travel beyond New York, but is accompanied by a slim but detailed publication, *Japanese Bamboo Art: The Abbey Collection*, with text by Bincsik and photos (Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bulletin, Spring 2017).

Hawai'i prepares for 'unlikely' North Korea missile threat

By Jennifer Sinco Kelleher
The Associated Press

HONOLULU — Hawai'i is the first U.S. state to prepare the public for the possibility of a ballistic missile strike from North Korea.

The state's Emergency Management Agency has announced a public education campaign about what to do. Hawai'i lawmakers have been urging emergency management officials to update Cold War-era plans for coping with a nuclear attack as North Korea develops nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles that can reach the islands.

Starting in November, Hawai'i will begin monthly tests of an "attack-warning" siren the state hasn't heard since the end of the Cold War in the 1980s. The wailing siren will be tested on the first working day of each month, after a test of an "attention-alert" steady tone siren with which residents are already familiar.

Informational brochures, along with TV, radio, and internet announcements will help educate the public about the new siren sound and provide preparedness guidance. "If they're not educated, they could actually be frightened by it," agency executive director Toby Clairmont said of needing several months to introduce the new siren.

Because it would take a missile 15 minutes — maybe 20 minutes — to arrive, the instructions to the public are simple: "Get inside, stay inside, and stay tuned," said Vern Miyagi, agency administrator. "You will not have time to pick up your family and go to a shelter and all that kind of stuff. ... It has to be automatic."

He stressed that his agency is simply trying to stay ahead of a "very unlikely" scenario, but it's a possibility that Hawai'i can't ignore.

Hawai'i is an important strategic outpost for the U.S. military. The island of Oahu is home to the U.S. Pacific Command, the military's headquarters for the Asia-Pacific region. It also hosts dozens of Navy ships at Pearl Harbor and is a key base for the Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps.

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority supports preparing for



EMERGENCY PREPARATION. Jeffrey Wong, the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency's current operations officer, shows computer screens monitoring hazards at the agency's headquarters in Honolulu. Hawai'i is the first state to prepare the public for the possibility of a ballistic missile strike from North Korea. (AP Photo/Jennifer Sinco Kelleher)

With that in mind, Miyagi reiterated, "Hawai'i is still safe."

Hawai'i residents, who already face hazards including from tsunami and hurricanes, are familiar with disaster preparedness. Because it's currently hurricane season, residents should already have an emergency kit that includes 14 days of food and water.

"It also works for this type of scenario," said Lt. Col. Charles Anthony, spokesman for the Hawai'i State Department of Defense.

Hawai'i officials surveyed 28 U.S. states and cities about what they're doing for the North Korea threat. "They think it's too soon," Clairmont said.

But counterparts in California have contacted him asking for guidance now that they are starting to look at a similar effort, Clairmont said.

AP writer Audrey McAvo contributed to this report.

Airbnb host who cancelled reservation over race fined \$5,000

By Michael Balsamo
The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — An Airbnb host who cancelled a reservation and told the guest, "One word says it all. Asian," has agreed to pay a \$5,000 fine and attend a college course in Asian-American studies, officials with the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing say.

The guest, Dyne Suh, had booked the home as part of a ski trip with her fiancé and friends in Big Bear in February. When she was close to the house, Suh messaged host Tami Barker through the Airbnb app, but the host cancelled the reservation after a dispute over additional guests.

Barker told Suh in a series of messages that she wouldn't rent to her if she were the last person on earth. "One word says it all. Asian," one of the messages said.

When Suh told Barker that she would complain to Airbnb, Barker wrote, "It's why we have Trump ... I will not allow this country to be told what to do by foreigners."

Suh, who posted an emotional video about the incident on YouTube, said she'd agreed to pay \$250 per night to

rent the home and later asked Barker if two other friends could also stay at the house, which Barker agreed to. Suh sent Barker screenshots of text messages where she agreed to the additional guests, but Barker cancelled the reservation.

As part of an agreement with state officials, Barker also agreed to personally apologize to Suh and perform community service at a civil-rights organization.

A message left at a number listed for Barker was not immediately returned. Her attorney, Edward Lee, said his client was "regretful for her impetuous actions and comments" and is pleased to have resolved the matter.

Suh said in a statement posted on Facebook that she was pleased the settlement included Barker's agreement to attend an Asian-American studies course and hoped the settlement would encourage others to report discrimination.

"I hope that more victims of discrimination will feel encouraged to come forward with their own stories," Suh wrote. "Your pain is not insignificant and you are not alone."

Associated Press writer Janie Har in San Francisco contributed to this report.

