

[Special Exhibition]

# BEHIND, BENEATH, and INSIDE:

## Unseen Faces of Treasured Objects

お宝の  
うら!  
なか!  
そこ!

### Introduction

A armor, swords, Noh masks, lacquer boxes, folding screens, illustrated handscrolls, and other works presented in exhibitions are usually displayed so that visitors can see the "front" or "face" of the object.

Pieces that have been created with an abundance of care and luxury are often also ornately decorated on the back or inside and are sometimes bound together with other works. In some cases, the back of an object is marked with information essential to understanding the piece, such as the artist's signature.

This exhibition presents the backs and insides of various artworks and considers the processes and meaning of the work done on these unseen surfaces.

It will also look behind the scenes of museum exhibitions to reveal how cultural properties are stored and preserved and introduce the storage techniques for the various implements passed down in the daimyo family.

\*Outside:  
folding fans  
and aoi crests  
scattered.



\*Inside:  
autumn flowers  
and grasses  
waving  
in the wind.



July 24 (Sun.)



September 11 (Sun.)  
2022

The Main Building of the  
Tokugawa Art Museum

No.58  
Box for *Tsuzumi* Hand Drum for  
Noh play, maki-e lacquer.  
Edo period, 17th c.

## Chapter 1 Amazing Hidden Mechanisms and Devices

Hidden within the works presented here are all kinds of clever devices that are difficult to detect simply by looking at the surface of the piece. For example, there is a document with completely unrelated text written on the reverse side of the paper, a painting created from applying pigment to the back side of the silk, a lacquer work created from a base of fruit peel beneath the lacquer surface, and a work of mother-of-pearl inlay with pigment painted on the undersides of the thin slices of shell. Recognizing these devices can lead to a deeper understanding of the works, not only in terms of how they are made, but also in terms of the creators' aims and the circumstances of their production.

Also, with intricately constructed weapons, such as armor and firearms, it is only by fully dismantling the objects and examining every detail of both the front and back of each piece that we can fully understand how they work.

As our first step in appreciating the hidden sides of these works, let's take a look at the surprisingly little-known devices and mechanisms behind them.

## Chapter 2 Turn it Over! A Treasure Trove of Information

Information such as the name of the artist and the date and place of production can often be found on the work itself. An example that immediately comes to mind is paintings, which often bear the signature and seal of the artist in a corner of the painting. Craft objects such as textiles and furnishings, on the other hand, rarely display such information visibly on the outside, but they do often have the artist's name and/or the year of production marked on the back or the inside. This may reflect a difference in the way that we appreciate paintings, for which the name of the artist adds to the prestige of the work, as opposed to craft objects that are actually used in our daily lives.

In the case of these craft items, the artist's name and other written inscriptions on the work are called *mei* 銘. In some cases, these *mei* are inscribed personally by the artist, while in other cases, they are inscribed by later generations.

\*The name of socks maker is written on the back of leather in black ink.



No.23  
Tabi Socks, white leather.  
Edo period, 17th c.



\*Tokugawa Ieyasu is believed to have actually worn the socks because the bottoms of the socks are kept dirty. His foot size was approximately 23 cm.

No.40 (exhibited from 8/17 to 9/11)  
Fan for warrior commander,  
design of dove and a dragon.  
Owned by the 1st Owari Lord Tokugawa Yoshinao.  
Edo period, 17th c.



## Chapter 3 Gorgeous and Exquisite Inside and Out

Ornamentation has been an indispensable component in the formation of Japanese culture and art. Treasures that were beautifully adorned for solemn dedication to the gods and buddhas, magnificent armor worn by warriors fighting to the death on the battlefield, and lavish furnishings commissioned by feudal lords and court nobles—such items were beautifully decorated not only on the surface but also on their backs, their insides, and sometimes even on their undersides, elevating their surroundings to something truly out of the ordinary. Some of them are even embellished to the point of complete disregard for practicality.

Among the furnishings of the daimyo residences, even painted screens, which were usually only decorated on one side, were adorned with paintings on both front and back for special occasions such as weddings or formal visitations by the shogun. This section presents the incredible world of ornamentation on all surfaces but the front.

## Chapter 4 Storage Secrets — Behind the Display

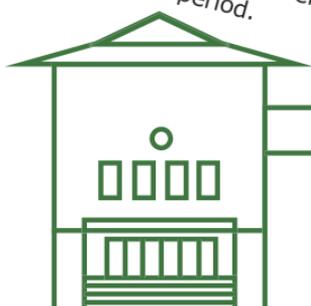
Normally, when works of art are displayed at the museum, they are removed from their storage boxes and exhibited on their own. However, the storage box may also contain information about the artist and the history of the work that is indispensable for understanding the piece. Furthermore, storage boxes are also important accessories that show how carefully a work has been passed down through the generations, since additional boxes are made, or additional decoration applied, each time the work changes hands.

The Tokugawa Art Museum has also inherited storage methods unique to the daimyo household, including storage boxes specially designed to fit oddly-shaped items, such as commanders' battle flags and battle arrows, as well as chests for storing hundreds of pieces, such as swords and Noh masks, together in one place. Storage boxes for artworks are also introduced in this "behind-the-scenes" look at exhibition display.

No.81  
Chest of Drawers for  
Noh Masks, brown lacquer.  
Edo period, 17th-18th c.



*\*Over 150 Noh and Kyōgen masks have been kept in specialized chests of drawers in the Owari Tokugawa Family. The Museum preserves them, masks as well as chests, as they were in the Edo period.*



© The Tokugawa Art Museum  
1017 Tokugawa-cho, Higashi-ku,  
Nagoya, 461-0023  
TEL: 052-935-6262 / FAX: 052-935-6261