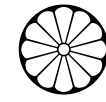


**LAURA BORDIGNON**  
JAPANESE WORKS OF ART





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1 **MIYAO EISUKE** 宮尾柴助

A bronze figure of Fujiwara no Yasumasa playing the flute, depicted as a youthful standing figure with upswept *nihongami* hairstyle and dressed in a loosely draped kimono, decorated with gilt blossoms and borders. He plays the flute with a contemplative expression, a *tachi* hangs at his waist. The figure finely worked and finished with a rich brown patination stands on a lacquered hardwood base decorated with *hō-ō* (phoenix) and foliate scrolls, signed within a rectangular gilt plaque Miyao Ei 宮尾柴助 (Miyao Eisuke), Meiji period 1868-1912.

Fujiwara no Yasumasa (958-1036) was a nobleman of the Heian court, celebrated for his poetry and accomplished flute playing. According to legend, Yasumasa was ambushed one night on the Ichihara moor by the outlaw Hakamadare Yasusuke, who intended to kill him; however, so moved was he by the beauty of Yasumasa's music that he was unable to draw his sword. This episode became a popular subject in Japanese art and was famously depicted in numerous woodblock prints by Yoshitoshi.

The Miyao Company founded by Miyao Eisuke with premises in Tokyo and Yokohama produced fine bronze sculptures and is also recorded exhibiting carvings in wood in the second National Industrial Exposition (Naikoku Kangyo Hakurankai 内国勸業博覧会) of 1881. The workshop's output is most often associated with large-scale bronze figures of warriors and subjects drawn from Japanese myth and legend which proved particularly appealing to Western audiences of the period.

Miyao Eisuke captivated foreign markets with the skilful recreations of a Japanese past that was vanishing into memory at the very time these pieces were made.

REFERENCE:

*The Golden Age of Japanese Okimono: The Dr. Kanter Collection*, by Laura Bordignon, ACC Woodbridge 2010, Metalwork no. 241, 258, 260, 262, 264, 266.

*Meiji no Takara 明治の宝: Treasures of Imperial Japan, the Nasser D. Khalili Collection*, the Kibo Foundation 1995, Metalwork Part II, no. 108.

Height: 30cm (11.8 in.)  
Width: 16cm (6.3 in.)  
Depth: 12cm (4.7 in.)



2 | **UNSIGNED**

A pair of gold lacquered vases with an unusual tulip-shaped form, each inset with four *kinji* lacquer panels meticulously executed in Shibayama style with inlays of mother-of-pearl, coconut shell, and coral. The vases are richly worked with *hiramaki-e* and *takamaki-e* embellishments depicting lively festival scenes, *karako* boys (Chinese), chrysanthemums, lilies, peonies, butterflies, cranes, and various birds.

The waisted necks are adorned with interlacing *karakusa* motifs, emblematic of longevity and prosperity, while the bases display narrow geometric bands of floral motifs, late Meiji period 1868-1912.

REFERENCE:

Shibayama 芝山象嵌細工  
is the term used to describe the mosaic-like inlay technique used to decorate Japanese objects such as vases, inro, dishes, incense burners, cabinets and panels.

*Hiramakie* 平蒔絵  
a flat sprinkled lacquer technique where the design is raised above the ground only by the thickness of its coats of lacquer.

*Takamakie* 高蒔絵  
a high sprinkled lacquer technique where the lacquer is built up by applying many layers.

*Kinji* 金地  
a lacquer ground with sprinkled gold powder, which has been polished to a high gloss finish.

Height 25cm (9.8 in.)  
Width 18.5cm (7.3 in.)  
Depth: 9.5cm (3.7 in.)



A majestic bronze eagle naturalistically modelled with its wings folded closely to the body and its head slightly inclined conveying alert vigilance. The bird is perched on a gnarled root wood base with knot-like formations providing a visual contrast to the finely worked surface of the bronze. The plumage is finely rendered, each feather individually carved and layered. The beak, eyes and talons are inlaid in *shakudō* and gilt, signed on a rectangular plaque Masatsune chū 政常鑄 (cast by Masatsune), Meiji period 1868-1912.

The artist Masatsune was a highly accomplished sculptor, particularly renowned for his depictions of birds, in which close observation of nature is combined with exceptional technical refinement.

The eagle (*washi* 鷲), admired for its commanding presence and formidable strength, is a potent symbol of majesty and power in Japanese art and shares much of its symbolic resonance with the hawk. Both birds were closely associated with martial virtues and were favoured subjects in sculpture, painting, hanging scrolls, and folding screens. During the Meiji period, such imagery became especially popular as emblems of the warrior class, embodying ideals of authority, vigilance, and dominance.

## REFERENCE:

For related bronze bird sculptures see: *The Golden Age of Japanese Okimono: The Dr. Kanter Collection*, by Laura Bordinon, ACC Woodbridge 2010, Metalwork, no. 248.

*Meiji no Takara 明治の宝: Treasures of Imperial Japan, the Nasser D. Khalili Collection*, the Kibo Foundation 1995, Metalwork Part II, no. 104-105

Height: 38cm (14.9 in.)  
Width: 47cm (18.5 in.)  
Depth: 38cm (14.9 in.)



A pair of bronze oviform tapering vases with applied mythical mask handles, finely worked in gold and *shakudō* on a *nanako* ground. The lobed panels depict Yoshitsune and other figures standing by the Gojō Bridge, while the reverse presents a serene scene of geese gathered by a reeded stream, with others shown in flight overhead. The bodies and concave necks are richly decorated with *hō-ō* (phoenix) birds in flight among clouds, rendered in gold and interspersed with trailing leafy tendrils and paulownia blossoms. The rims are encircled by continuous geometric key bands, and each vase is signed within a rectangular gilt plaque Miyao Ei (Miyao Eisuke) 宮尾柴助, Meiji Period 1868-1912.

Minamoto no Yoshitsune 源義経 (1159-1189) ranks among the most celebrated warriors in Japanese history. He later became the subject of enduring legend, appearing prominently in folktales, including the well-known account of his youthful defeat of the giant warrior monk Benkei at Gojō Bridge in Kyoto. He was the general of the Minamoto clan and became a legend because of his bravery and benevolence. Many stories and *kabuki* plays celebrate the exploits of Yoshitsune especially the literary classic *Heike Monogatari*, the Tale of the Heike, the epic struggle between the Heike and Taira clans to seize control of Japan at the end of the 12th century.

The Miyao Company founded by Miyao Eisuke with premises in Tokyo and Yokohama produced fine bronze sculptures and is also recorded exhibiting carvings in wood in the second National Industrial Exposition (Naikoku Kangyo Hakurankai 内国勸業博覧会) of 1881. The workshop's output is most often associated with large-scale bronze figures of warriors and subjects drawn from Japanese myth and legend which proved particularly appealing to Western audiences of the period.

Miyao's pieces are distinguished by their intricate ornamentation, achieved through meticulous gilding, resulting in finely crafted bronzes with deep, lustrous brown patinas.



REFERENCE:

*The Golden Age of Japanese Okimono: The Dr. Kanter Collection*, by Laura Bordinon, ACC Woodbridge 2010, Metalwork no. 241, 258, 260, 262, 264, 266.

*The Dragon King of the Sea: Japanese Decorative Art of the Meiji Period from the John R. Young Collection*, by O. Impey, M. Fairley, Ashmolean Museum Oxford, 1991.

Height: 38cm (14.9 in.)  
Width: 24cm (9.4 in.)  
Depth: 13.5cm (5.3 in.)



## UNSIGNED

A *Yūzen-Birodo* cut velvet depicting the Tōshō-gū Shinto shrine set within a pine tree forest, presented in its original gilt wood frame bearing the printed label of *J.B. Bennett & Son, 50 Gordon Street, Glasgow, Painters and Decorators by special appointment to HM Queen Victoria with a silk patterned design mount, Meiji period 1868-1912.*

The Tōshōgū Shrine 東照宮 located in Nikkō, Tochigi Prefecture is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The *Yūzen-Birodo* 天鵝絨 technique was developed in 1868 by the Kyoto textile firm Nishimura Sōzaemon 西村総左衛門. The velvet was produced by weaving threads over fine metal wires laid parallel to the woof and subsequently cutting them to form the pile, a process that creates a pronounced chiaroscuro and three-dimensional effect. The earliest known example of *Yūzen-Birodo* was displayed at the Second National Industrial Exhibition in Tokyo in 1881.

## REFERENCE:

*Threads of Silk and Gold, Ornamental Textiles from Meiji Japan*, by H.T. McDermott and C. Pollard, The Oxford Ashmolean Museum Catalogue Exhibition, 2012, pp. 160-169.

For related textile example see: *Splendors of Meiji, Treasures of Imperial Japan*, by J. Earle, the Kibo Foundation 2002, no. 280, p. 393.

Height: 96cm (37.8 in.)  
Width: 83cm (32.6 in.)



A cloisonné enamel vase of elegant baluster form, intricately worked in fine silver wire and richly decorated with a dense floral composition of chrysanthemum blossoms and daisies in full bloom. The flowers are rendered in delicately shaded enamels, with softly graduated white, pale green, and yellow petals set amid lush green foliage, creating a strong sense of depth and naturalism. The blossoms appear to float against a deep cobalt blue ground. The neck and foot are encircled by formal geometric borders of stylised motifs in turquoise, white, and pale brown enamels, defined by silver wire and enhanced by applied silver mounts at the rim and foot. The harmonious interplay between the naturalistic floral decoration and the restrained ornamental borders exemplifies the refined aesthetic of Japanese cloisonné.

The foot rim bears the mark *Jungin* 純銀, denoting 'pure silver,' and the base carries the silver *yūsen* mark of Andō Jūbei 安藤重兵衛, Taishō period 1912–1926.

Founded in 1880 by Maeda Matsukichi 前田松吉, the Andō Cloisonné Company later flourished with the participation of Andō Juzaburō, known as Andō Jūbei I 安藤重兵衛 (1876–1953). By the early 1890s, the workshop had attained considerable prestige, evidenced by commissions from the Imperial Household in 1891 and 1892. The firm went on to receive multiple awards at major international expositions during the Meiji and Taishō periods including the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago (1893), the Exposition Universelle in Paris (1900), the Glasgow International Exhibition (1901), the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis (1904), the Japan–British Exhibition in London (1910), and the Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition in Philadelphia (1926).

## REFERENCE:

*The Art of Japanese Cloisonné Enamel: History, Techniques and Artists, 1600 to the Present*, by Frederick T. Schneider, North Carolina, 2010, p. 241 no. 4.

*Meiji no Takara* 明治の宝: *Treasures of Imperial Japan, the Nasser D. Khalili Collection*, the Kibo Foundation 1995, Enamel Vol. III, no. 53.

Height: 31cm (12.2 in.)  
Width: 15cm (5.9 in.)  
Depth: 20cm (7.8 in.)



A bronze group of a mother bear with her cubs realistically modelled with fine fur textures and facial expressions. The rich dark brown patina has black undertones which enhances the sculptural depth.

The mother bear sits upright with a strong yet gentle posture with her front paw planted firmly on the ground. The three cubs surround her in playful and affectionate poses. One cub has climbed onto her back with its small paws hanging down, the second cub nestles closely against her side while looking upwards, and the third cub stretches forward near her front legs. The composition captures a moment of familial affection and harmony in nature, blending realism with a gentle emotional warmth characteristic of many Japanese animal sculptures. It is signed on a square plaque Asakura Yoshiharu chu 朝倉義春鑄 (cast by Asakura Yoshiharu), Meiji period 1868-1912.

Among the Ainu, the indigenous people of Hokkaido and northern Japan, the bear is regarded as a sacred being. It is believed to be a God manifested in animal form, possessing profound spiritual power. The bear is known as Kim-un Kamuy キムンカムイ meaning "God of the Mountains."



Height: 29cm (11.4 in.)  
Width: 30cm (11.8 in.)  
Depth: 22cm (8.6 in.)



A pair of cloisonné enamel oviform vases with everted necks finely worked in silver wire with a continuous scene of egrets wading through a lotus pond amid spatterdock (kouhone 河骨), flowers and tall reeds. The birds are rendered with elegant restraint, their white forms standing in refined contrast to the rich midnight blue ground. The composition is balanced while evoking the quiet movement of water and marshland.

The feet of the vases are encircled by bands of geometric floral motifs applied with silver mounts. The bases are signed with the engraved four-character mark Aichi Hayashi Ko (Kodenji) 愛知林小, late Meiji period 1868-1912.

Works by Hayashi Kodenji are celebrated for their technical refinement and sophisticated designs, reflecting the high standards of Japanese cloisonné production during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Scenes of egrets and lotus, long associated in Japanese art with purity, renewal, and seasonal change were especially favoured subjects.

Hayashi Kodenji I (1831-1915) was one of the most important cloisonné artist of his era. In the 1880s he founded the Shippō-chō enamellers guild and later opened a school to teach emerging cloisonné artists. It is thought that he worked for the Shippo Kaisha in Nagoya around 1880-1881. In 1903 he opened a showroom in Nagoya and worked for over 40 years with his son Hayashi Kodenji II (Sugumon). He was recognised at the World Expositions by winning many medals and awards: in 1893 at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, in 1889 at the Exposition Universelle in Paris, and in 1904 at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis. In 1902 he was awarded the most prestigious Medal of the Green Ribbon in Japan. The business continued to thrive through the years under the successive leadership of Kodenji III (Hayashi Tomijirō) and Kodenji IV (Kurakichi).



## REFERENCE:

*Japanese Cloisonné:  
The Seven Treasures,*  
by G. Irvine, Victoria  
& Albert Museum,  
2006, p. 82.

Height: 15.3cm (6 in.)  
Width: 8cm (3.1 in.)  
Depth: 4cm (1.6 in.)



A finely carved wood study of a rat rendered in a naturalistic manner, shown standing upright on its hind legs with its head inclined slightly downward with its forepaws raised to its mouth as it consumes a small bean. Careful attention has been given to the anatomical features such as the rounded ears, defined limbs, and the long tapering tail which curves elegantly across the surface of the feather. The wood has a rich brown patina with a smoothly polished surface. The rat is positioned upon a large feather brush with a cylindrical handle and is signed with incised characters by Hōsei 鳳聲, Meiji period 1868–1912.

Mori Hosei (1868–1933), was an artist of the Tokyo School, active approximately between 1900 and 1929. He studied under Takamura Koun (1852–1934), a prominent sculptor of the period. Mori Hosei worked proficiently in both wood carving and metalwork adopting the naturalistic style and technical discipline characteristic of the Tokyo School academic tradition. A bronze sculpture entitled *Reclining Girl* is held in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. His oeuvre is also recorded in the 1908 (Meiji 41) register of the Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties.

In Japanese iconography, the rat (nezumi 鼠) is the messenger of Daikoku, one of the Seven Gods of Good Fortune, and occupies the first position in the East Asian zodiac cycle. It is frequently represented feeding upon chestnuts, rice, turnips, or pomegranates, motifs that collectively signify prosperity, fertility, and material abundance.



Height: 10cm (3.9 in.)  
Width: 47cm (18.5 in.)  
Depth: 16cm (6.2 in.)



A cloisonné enamel vase delicately worked in silver wire with seasonal flowers: gentians, cherry blossom, chrysanthemum, iris, plum, and peony symbolising the four seasons. It is applied with silver rim and foot on a pale celadon ground. The base bears the silver *yūsen* mark of the Ikoma Studio 生駒 of Osaka, Taishō period 1912–1926, and is accompanied by a hardwood stand.

The *tomobako* wood storage box inscribed Shiki soka zu, Shippo Kabin, Osaka, Ikoma kinsei 四季草花圖, 七寶花瓶. 大阪, 生駒謹製 (cloisonné vase with design of seasonal flowers and plants respectfully made by the Ikoma Studio, Osaka with the seal Ikoma 生駒). And also with paper label inscribed Shiki soka zu, Shippo kabin 四季草花図, 七宝花瓶 (a cloisonné vase with design of seasonal flowers and plants).

The motif of seasonal flowers carried deep resonance in Japanese aesthetics, reflecting both the cyclical nature of time and the transience of beauty, a central theme in Japanese art and literature. Each flower evoked particular associations: gentians are associated with autumn, cherry blossoms signifying the fleeting brilliance of spring, chrysanthemums symbolising Imperial virtue and longevity, plum blossoms heralding renewal, irises linked to protection and vitality, and peonies embodying wealth and elegance. Collectively, these motifs celebrated the harmonious rhythm of the natural world.



## REFERENCE:

*The Art of Japanese Cloisonné Enamel: History, Techniques and Artists, 1600 to the Present*, by Frederick T. Schneider, North Carolina, 2010, p. 246 no. 74.

Height: 21cm (8.2 in.)  
Width: 15cm (5.9 in.)  
Depth: 9.5cm (3.7 in.)



A bronze crow naturalistically modelled with its wings folded against its body and perched upon a gnarled pine trunk. The composition has finely detailed pine needles and cones worked in *shakudō* and copper, while a cicada is shown ascending the textured surface of the tree. Each feather is meticulously detailed and the eyes are inlaid in glass, imparting a lifelike alertness to the bird's gaze. The bronze is signed within an oval plaque beneath the tail and on the pine trunk Mitani 美谷, Meiji period 1868-1912.

In Japanese mythology, the crow (*karasu* カラス) occupies a significant symbolic role. Crows are traditionally regarded as creatures endowed with supernatural or divine attributes and are frequently understood to function as messengers of the Gods. Their presence in art may therefore allude not only to keen intelligence and vigilance but also to spiritual guidance and auspicious intervention.



REFERENCE:

For related bronze works see: *The Golden Age of Japanese Okimono: The Dr. Kanter Collection*, by Laura Bordignon, ACC Woodbridge 2010, Metalwork no. 244, 245, 246.

Mitani, Frederick Backeland *Imperial Japan, the art of the Meiji Era*, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Ithaca, New York 1980. Catalogue no. 106.

Height: 41cm (16.1 in.)  
Width: 20cm (7.8 in.)  
Depth: 16cm (6.2 in.)



A bronze inlaid *koro* (incense burner) finely worked in gold, *shakudō* and copper using *taka-zōgan* and *hira-zōgan* relief inlay techniques. Raised on four legs cast as dragon masks, the body is inset with four panels worked in rich brown tones with scenes of geese among reeds, egrets soaring above a lotus pond, a *daimyō* (feudal lord) accompanied by two retainers, and a fishermen alongside a large octopus.

The neck is decorated with a geometric pattern punctuated by roundels enclosing auspicious motifs, while the remaining surface of the vessel is embellished with flying cranes, stylised scrollwork, and archaic designs.

The *koro* stands on a circular base enriched with stylised floral and scrolling motifs. The domed cover is surmounted by a finial in the form of a crouching young boy wearing an ornate robe, restraining a small dog that has caught a bird. Signed within a rectangular gilt plaque Miyao zō 宮尾造, Meiji period 1868–1912.

Founded by Miyao Eisuke, the Miyao Company operated from premises in Tokyo and Yokohama, where it produced finely crafted bronze sculptures. The firm is also recorded as having exhibited carvings at the second Naikoku Kangyo Hakurankai (National Industrial Exposition) in 1881. Its output is especially associated with monumental bronze figures of warriors and scenes drawn from Japanese myth and legend, subjects that held particular appeal for Western audiences of the time. Miyao's works are distinguished by their elaborate ornamentation, achieved through gilding, resulting in high-quality bronzes with deep, lustrous brown patinas.



## REFERENCE:

*The Golden Age  
of Japanese Okimono:  
The Dr. Kanter Collection,*  
by Laura Bordignon,  
ACC Woodbridge 2010,  
Metalwork no. 241, 258,  
260, 262, 264, 266.

*The Dragon King of the Sea:  
Japanese Decorative Art of  
the Meiji Period from the  
John R. Young Collection,*  
by O. Impey, M. Fairley  
Ashmolean Museum  
Oxford 1991.

Height 55cm (21.6 in.)  
Width: 21.5cm (8.4 in.)  
Depth: 21.5cm (8.4 in.)



A silk panel executed in the *Oshi-e* technique, depicting an animated rural scene in which figures move through the stages of cotton production. Artisans are shown harvesting cotton in the fields, while others kneel beneath a thatched shelter, carefully ginning the fibre separating the soft lint from its seeds, in preparation for spinning. The scene captures the rhythm of communal work, with artisans, women, and children along with observing adults. The careful posture of workers kneeling or bending, along with baskets and tools set aside all convey the collective life of the village.

The costumes are exquisitely detailed through the careful use of pattern and colour; muted greens, ochres, and browns predominate, harmonising with the earthy tones of the landscape. Mounted in a wooden frame with a gold silk surround, late Meiji period 1868-1912.

*Oshi-e* 押絵 (lit. "pressed picture"), also known as *kiritori zaiku*, is a relief technique in which motifs are cut from a preparatory drawing, applied to a backing, and padded with paper or silk wadding before being covered in brocade, damask, silk, or crepe. Fine gold and silver threads are often applied to heighten detail and texture. Few examples of this labour-intensive art form survive today.

The origins of *Oshi-e* likely date to the Muromachi period (1392-1573), when it emerged in Kyoto among aristocratic women before spreading more widely throughout Japanese society. Demanding exceptional patience and precision, particularly in the rendering of garments, facial expressions, and architectural setting, *Oshi-e* was regarded as a lady's accomplishment, alongside embroidery, ikebana, and the tea ceremony. During the Meiji period, *Oshi-e* works and related textile arts were increasingly produced for export, appealing to Western audiences fascinated by Japanese craftsmanship.



## REFERENCE:

For related textile works see: *Threads of Silk and Gold: Ornamental Textiles from Meiji Japan*, by H.T. McDermott and C. Pollard, Oxford Ashmolean Museum Catalogue Exhibition, 2012, pp. 178-183.

Height: 54cm (21.2 in.)  
Width: 83cm (32.6 in.)



A spectacular bronze of three koi carps swimming through stylised and swirling waves. One carp raises its head upward, breaking through the surface, while the others twist and turn alongside it. The scales and fins are finely carved, and the sinuous movement of the fish's bodies mirror the rolling rhythm of the surging water, creating a dynamic visual tension. The lightly raised tails seem to part the waves, and the flowing wave lines rise and fall with graceful continuity, giving the whole work a refined elegance. This work not only presents the aesthetic beauty of koi carps but also conveys auspiciousness and the spirit of striving forward. The bronze surface has been finely polished with a rich brown patination and the eyes inlaid in *shakudō* and gold, making the koi carps appear strikingly alive, fully demonstrating the exceptional craftsmanship of Meiji-period metalwork. The piece is signed in chiselled characters Joun 如雲, Meiji period 1868-1912.

The *tomobako* wood storage box inscribed: Yuuri okimono (asobu koi), Joun saku 遊鯉置物, 如雲作 (okimono of koi carps swimming leisurely, by Joun).

The koi carp (nishikigoi 錦鯉) holds a strong symbolic significance in both Chinese and Japanese cultures, representing perseverance, strength, and the capacity to overcome adversity. This symbolism derives from the legend of the carp leaping over the Dragon's Gate waterfall (Koi no takinobori 鯉の滝登り) a metaphor for overcoming difficulties and achieving success. It tells the story of thousands koi fish swimming upstream the Yellow River against strong currents, the ones that reach the top of these huge waterfalls transform into dragons.

In Japan, the carp is further associated with the Boys Festival called Tango no Sekku 端午の節句, during which carp-shaped streamers are displayed expressing hopes that children will grow healthily and face challenges bravely.

Ōshima Joun (1858-1940) was born Katsujirō into a family of metal casters. From childhood he studied casting techniques under his father, Ōshima Takajirō, and mastered the lost-wax casting method.

REFERENCE:

Published in *Meiji Arts - A Consciousness of Inheritance: Selections from the Museum 50 of Taiwan*, National Taiwan University Research Center Cultural Heritage Preservation and Development, 2016, pp. 168-170.

*Taiwan 50 Art Museum Collection*, Taiwan 50 Art Museum, 2024, pp. 101-102.

Height: 19.5cm (7.6 in.)  
Width: 91cm (35.8 in.)  
Depth: 37cm (14.5 in.)





In 1877 Joun inherited the business and adopted the name by which he is known, working under the *gō* Ichijōken. Within a short period, the workshop expanded under his direction, and by 1879 comprised a team of eleven craftsmen.

He also taught at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts (Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō 東京美術学校) for forty-two years, instructing in metal casting and wax modelling. His works are characterised by highly detailed craftsmanship regardless of size, with especially graceful and flowing lines. In addition to his expertise in wax casting, he often used inlay techniques, adorning his works with gold, silver, and *shibuichi* (copper-silver alloy).

He was a member of innumerable committees and panels of judges at exhibitions and competitions. Works by the artist are held in the collections of the Tokyo National Museum (Tōkyō Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan 東京国立博物館) Ueno Park, Taitō ward, and the Tokyo National Museum of Modern Art (Tōkyō Kokuritsu Kindai Bijutsukan 東京国立近代美術館).

From 1878 (Meiji 11) he participated in world expositions such as those in Paris, gaining recognition from the Western art world and admiration from collectors. In 1900 (Meiji 33), his work *Sparrows among Rice Sheaf* 稲穂群雀 won the gold medal at the Paris Exposition Universelle. At the same event he also exhibited a bronze group of *Carp swimming* (see Fig. 1) which is now in the collection of the Tokyo University of Fine Arts Museum (Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Daigaku Bijutsukan) 東京藝術大学大学美術館 where is regarded as a masterpiece.

Ōshima Joun's masterful rendition of carps received notable praise from Professor Jiro Harada as recorded in the *Japanese Art and Artists of Today-V. Metal-work*, the Studio 1910, p. 101.

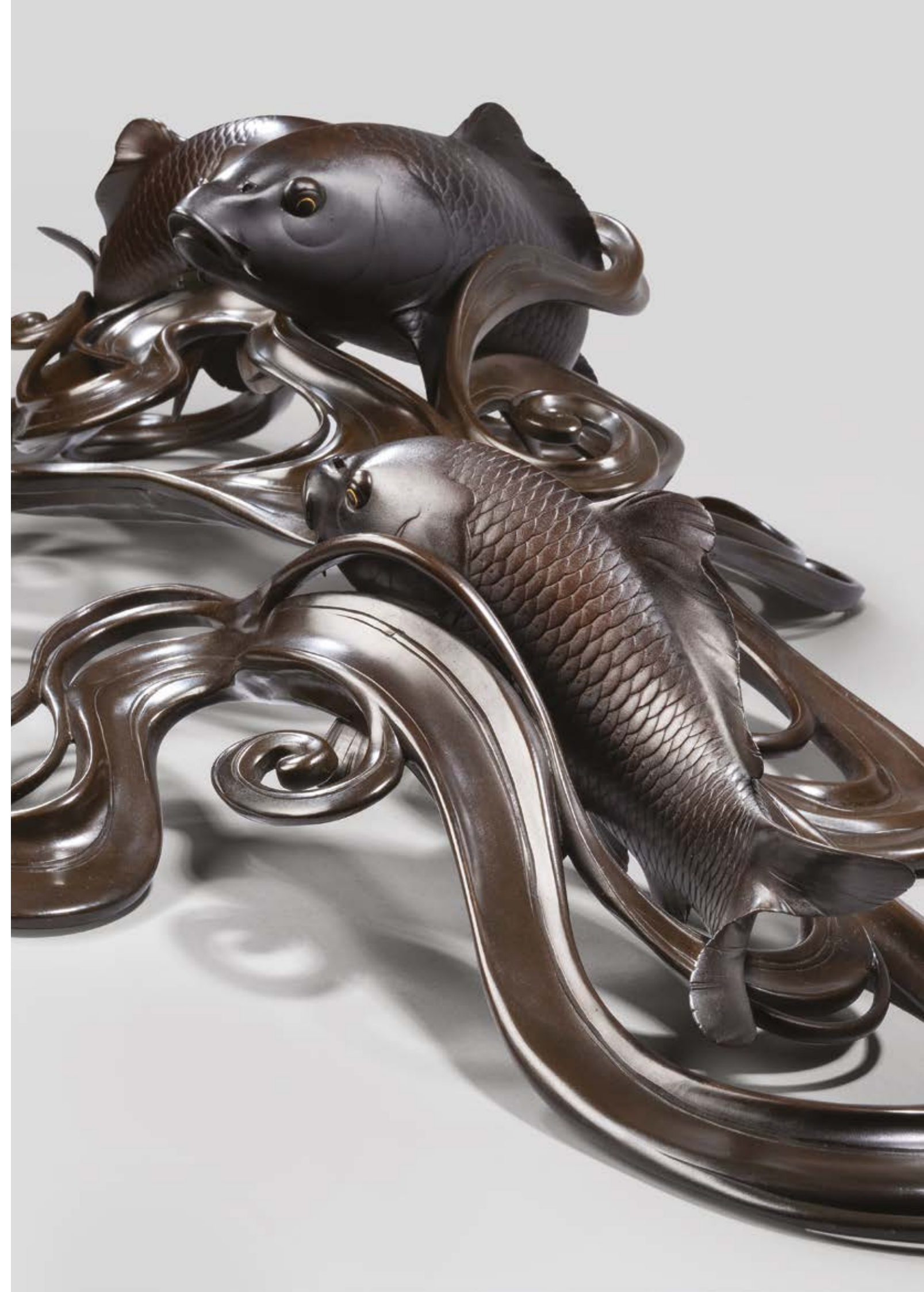
This work bears a close resemblance to the piece he exhibited in Paris.



#### BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCE:

Figure 1. Ōshima Nyoun, *Carp Ornament*, Collection of the Art Museum, Tokyo University of the Arts 東京藝術大学美術館

Source: Commemorative Exhibition of the 2005 Japan International Exposition - The Art of the World Expositions, Nikkei Inc., 2004, p. 113, Plate I-286.



A cloisonné enamel vase of elongated baluster form with a narrow neck, decorated with a writhing dragon in flight above blue crushing waves with white droplets of foam against a black ground densely worked with silver-wire cloud scrolls. The dragon's sinuous movement is accentuated by surrounding flames and finely detailed scales, claws, whiskers, and horns. The neck with a stylised floral motifs and the foot with a band of lappets applied with silver rims.

The base signed on a silver tablet Kyoto Namikawa 京都 並河 (Namikawa Yasuyuki) late Meiji period 1868-1912.

The dragon (tatsu 辰/ryū 龍) is one of the twelve Zodiac signs and is a water deity symbolic of power, wealth and prosperity. The mythological animal has three claws on each foot, while the Chinese dragon has four or five claws. Dragon motifs are found in Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines and are often represented holding the sacred jewel in their fore claw, suggestive of the many legends that enrich Japanese mythology.

Namikawa Yasuyuki (1845-1927) is regarded as one of Japan's foremost cloisonné enamel masters, celebrated for elevating shippō to unprecedented artistic and technical sophistication.

Shippō 七宝 lit. "seven treasures", refers to the highly refined art of cloisonné enamel, renowned for its jewel-like brilliance and intricate decoration. The technique involves shaping fine metal wires into delicate compartments (*cloisons*) on a copper, silver, or bronze base, which are then filled with coloured enamel pastes. Through repeated firings and meticulous polishing, artisans achieve a luminous surface distinguished by exceptional depth and clarity encompassing serene landscapes, floral and fauna subjects, geometric and symbolic motifs.

Namikawa Yasuyuki began his career as a samurai under the Tokugawa shogunate before turning to cloisonné production in the early Meiji period, a time of rapid modernisation and global cultural exchange. Establishing his Kyoto studio in 1873, Namikawa rose to prominence by the 1880s with a team of skilled artisans and a dedicated showroom for private clients. He was particularly admired for his innovations in colour gradation and for developing techniques that produced remarkably smooth, glass-like finishes.

His works often feature elegant botanical and ornithomorphic designs inspired by traditional Japanese aesthetics, combined with innovative compositions that appealed to international audiences. He exhibited widely at world expositions, earning global accolades including eleven awards between 1876 and 1904 and prestigious commissions from the Imperial Household Agency. In 1896, he was appointed *Teishitsu Gigeiin* (Artist-Craftsman to the Imperial Household), one of the highest honours for an artist of the period. By the late 19th century, his Kyoto workshop had become a center of excellence, establishing Namikawa as a key figure in transforming Japanese cloisonné into a celebrated art form worldwide.

REFERENCE:

*The Art of Japanese Cloisonné Enamel: History, Techniques and Artists, 1600 to the Present*, by Frederick T. Schneider, North Carolina, McFarland, 2010, p. 251 no. 138.

*Meiji no Takara 明治の宝: Treasures of Imperial Japan, the Nasser D. Khalili Collection*, the Kibo Foundation 1995, Enamel Vol. III, no. 6.

Height: 28cm (11 in.)  
Width: 11cm (4.3 in.)  
Depth: 4cm (1.5 in.)



A powerful bronze hawk with silvered body rendered with striking naturalism, perched upon a gnarled tree stump and poised to take flight. The bird leans forward with wings partially extended, suggesting a moment of focused tension. The beak, eyes and talons inlaid in *shakudō* and gilt, while the details of the feather work carefully rendered in *kebori*. It is signed beneath the tail on a rectangular plaque Masatsune chū 政常鑄 (cast by Masatsune), Meiji period 1868-1912.

The artist Masatsune was renowned for his mastery of avian subjects, and his work exemplifies his ability to combine technical virtuosity with dynamic composition.

The hawk (taka 鷹), long regarded in Japan as an auspicious symbol of strength and power, was especially admired by the warrior class for its fearsome qualities. The practise of falconry (takagari 鷹狩) in Japan is believed to date back to the 4th century. Hawks, falcons and eagles were closely associated with the nobility and Samurai elite, serving as potent symbols of wealth, status, and martial authority. Alongside archery and swordsmanship, falconry was regarded as a favoured pursuit through which the elite demonstrated military discipline and prowess.



## REFERENCE:

For related bronze works see: *The Golden Age of Japanese Okimono: The Dr. Kanter Collection*, by Laura Bordinon, ACC Woodbridge 2010, Metalwork, no. 248.

*Meiji no Takara 明治の宝: Treasures of Imperial Japan, the Nasser D. Khalili Collection*, the Kibo Foundation 1995, Metalwork Part II, no. 104-105.

Height: 53cm (20.8 in.)  
Width: 34cm (13.3 in.)  
Depth: 21cm (8.2 in.)



17 **YOSHIYUKI** 美幸

An inlaid silver vase of elegant ovoid form with a slender tapering neck, the body finely worked in mixed metals including gold, silver, *shakudō*, *shibuichi*, and copper. The surface is decorated with a delicately observed naturalistic scene depicting a sparrow on the ground among grasses, flowers, and violet foliage, attentively watching a small procession of ants crossing its path. The bird is rendered with exceptional realism, its plumage articulated through subtle contrasts of metal alloys and finely chased details.

The vase is signed on the body in chiselled characters Yoshiyuki koku 美幸刻 (carved by Yoshiyuki) and bears the mark *Jungin* 純銀, denoting 'pure silver' to the underside, together with the swallow-in-flight trademark of the Hattori Company, Taishō period 1912–1926.

The sparrow (*suzume* 雀), a familiar motif in Japanese decorative arts, is traditionally associated with happiness, domestic harmony, and prosperity. The ants orderly procession symbolises order and collective harmony.

The artist Yoshiyuki is recorded as having worked for the K. Hattori Company, one of Japan's foremost producers and retailers of luxury goods in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Founded in 1881 by Kintarō Hattori 服部金太郎, the Hattori Clock and Jewellery Store supplied high-quality silverware and decorative objects for both the domestic and export markets, selling them through its prestigious department store in Tokyo's Ginza district. In 1924, the company established a watchmaking factory under the name Seiko, which later developed into the world's largest watch manufacturer.



Height: 24cm (9.4 in.)  
Width: 11cm (4.3 in.)  
Depth: 5.5cm (2.1 in.)



A bronze *minogame* with silvered feathery tail swept to one side standing atop a naturalistically cast rock base with dark green moss-like patination. The surface is further enriched with gold lichen and fungi motifs subtly integrated into the rocky texture. A juvenile smaller turtle is shown climbing upon its carapace, their shells intricately patterned emphasising realism within a mythological subject.

It is signed with chiselled characters on the turtle's underside Ryūki 龍起 and on the base within a square plaque Ryūki tsukuru shirusu (Ryūki zoki) 龍起造記 (made by and with the seal of Ryūki), Meiji period 1868–1912.

The *tomobako* wood storage box inscribed: Ganjo no kame, okimono, Koson 巖上之亀, 置物, 香村 (turtles on a rock, okimono, in the collection of Koson).

The artist Nogami Ryūki (1865–1932) was a graduate from the Tokyo School of Fine Art and exhibited several bronze works of turtles at the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle. He studied bronze casting under one of the most notable metal craftsmen of the Meiji era, Ōshima Joun 大島如雲, who was a professor at the Tokyo School of Fine Art.

He worked for the Imperial Household Agency and was mentioned in the *Japanese Art and Artists of Today-V. Metalwork*, the Studio 1910. The bronze statue of Kusunoki Masashige near the Imperial Palace and the bronze statue of Saigo Takamori at Ueno Park, both in Tokyo, were also made by Nogami Ryūki.

The *minogame* 蓑亀 (美濃亀) is a mythical turtle that can live many thousands of years with a long feathery tail made of seaweed, and is a symbol of longevity and happiness.

## REFERENCE:

For related works  
see: *The Golden Age  
of Japanese Okimono:  
The Dr. Kanter Collection*,  
by Laura Bordinon,  
ACC Woodbridge 2010,  
Metalwork no. 242.

Height: 27cm (10.6 in.)  
Width: 37cm (14.5 in.)  
Depth: 27cm (10.6 in.)



A cloisonné enamel vase of baluster form, finely worked in silver wire with a tranquil scene of temples nestled among mist shrouded mountains. Pine covered slopes rise through drifting veils of clouds, while a waterfall cascades into the depths below. In the foreground figures cross a bridge spanning a stream, all set against a softly graduated celadon ground and applied with silver mounts. The work reflects the mastery of pictorial cloisonné techniques adapted here to a quieter, more contemplative aesthetic, characteristic of early twentieth-century Japanese decorative arts. The floating, atmospheric space recalls traditional Chinese paintings and also reflects the Japanese *nanga* aesthetic associated with Tani Bunchō. The base bears the silver *yūsen* mark of Andō Jūbei 安藤重兵衛, Shōwa period c.1940.

The Andō Cloisonné Company was founded in 1880 by Maeda Matsukichi 前田松吉 and later expanded through the involvement of Andō Juzaburō, known as Andō Jūbei I 安藤重兵衛 (1876–1953). By the early 1890s, the company had already achieved notable recognition, with several of its works purchased by the Imperial Household in 1891 and 1892. Throughout the Meiji and Taishō periods, Andō emerged as one of Japan's leading enamel workshops, receiving medals at numerous international expositions, including the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago (1893), the Exposition Universelle in Paris (1900), the Glasgow International Exhibition (1901), the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis (1904), the Japan–British Exhibition in London (1910), and the Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition in Philadelphia (1926).

## REFERENCE:

*The Art of Japanese Cloisonné Enamel: History, Techniques and Artists, 1600 to the Present*, by Frederick T. Schneider, North Carolina, 2010, p. 241 no.4.

*Meiji no Takara 明治の宝: Treasures of Imperial Japan, the Nasser D. Khalili Collection*, the Kibo Foundation 1995, Enamel Vol. III, no. 53.

Height: 25.5cm (10 in.)  
Width: 17.5cm (6.8 in.)  
Depth: 9.5cm (3.7 in.)



A pair of *shibuichi* wild geese naturalistically rendered, one goose stands alert with its neck extended and head held gracefully aloft, while the other lowers its head in a quieter gesture suggestive of rest. The surfaces are finely engraved and carved to convey the nuanced texture of the feathers. Subtle tonal variations in the metal adds to the birds' realism.

The artist's signature, Seimei saku 清明作 (made by Seimei), is chiselled into the bronze, Shōwa period c. 1940.

The *tomobako* wood storage box inscribed Oborogin sei (rogin sei), Kari, okimono 鴈銀製, 雁, 置物 (Geese Okimono made in oborogin). Yamazaki Seimei saku 山崎清明作 (made by Yamazaki Seimei) with the seal Seimei 清明.

The artist Yamazaki Seimei lived in Kyoto and was active in the Shōwa period.

The wild goose (kari 雁) motif frequently appears in paintings and folding screens, where it symbolises the autumn season and a happy marriage.

## REFERENCE:

Japanese metalwork was unique for its use of many alloys that could be patinated with acids and other solutions to achieve specific colour finishes.

Professor Jiro Harada (*Japanese Art and Artists of Today-V. Metal-work*, the Studio 1910, p. 97), reported over 70 different alloys including *shibuichi* (or rogin) typically 75% copper and 25% silver, patinates to grey-green.

Height: 28cm (11 in.)  
Width: 31cm (12.2 in.)  
Depth: 21cm (8.2 in.)

Height: 12cm (4.7 in.)  
Width: 24cm (9.4 in.)  
Depth: 9cm (3.5 in.)



An iron damascene dish exquisitely worked in gold and silver *nunomezōgan* against a rich matte black ground. The surface is animated with a detailed procession scene depicting a *daimyō* (feudal lord) being carried in a palanquin beneath spreading pine trees, accompanied by attendants in formal attire. The delicate metal inlay contrasts strikingly with the dark iron ground, demonstrating the precision for which Kyoto damascene work is renowned. The reverse is signed *Nihon koku Kyoto jū Komai sei* 日本國京都住駒井製 (made by Komai, Kyoto, Japan) and bears the distinctive dragonfly mark, Meiji period 1868–1912.

The Komai Company of Kyoto was established in 1841 by Komai Seibei. Under the direction of his son, Komai Otojiro I 駒井音次郎, the workshop achieved international acclaim, producing some of the finest examples of damascene, gold and silver inlay on iron in both traditional Japanese and Western-inspired designs. The company continued its production of high-quality metalwork until 1941.

Komai works were exhibited internationally, including at the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition in Portland, Oregon (1905), exhibitions in St. Petersburg (1908), London and Brussels (1910), and Vienna (1913), underscoring the firm's global reputation during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.



## REFERENCE:

*Meiji no Takara* 明治の宝:  
*Treasures of Imperial Japan,*  
*the Nasser D. Khalili*  
*Collection, the Kibo*  
 Foundation 1995,  
 Metalwork Part I,  
 Vol. II, no. 36.

Diameter: 18.5cm (7.2 in.)



A bronze group modelled as three turtles, the two smaller turtles animatedly climbing atop the larger one. The bronze has a warm brown patina and is finely carved with lifelike texturing details. The eyes are inlaid in *shakudō* and gilt, signed in a square plaque Ryūki 龍起, Meiji period 1868–1912.

The artist Nogami Ryūki (1865–1932) was a prominent artist of the Meiji period. A graduate of the Tokyo School of Fine Art, he studied under Ōshima Joun, one of the most celebrated metalworkers of the era. He gained international recognition by exhibiting bronze works, notably turtles, at the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle. He worked for the Imperial Household Agency and was mentioned in the *Japanese Art and Artists of Today-V. Metalwork*, the Studio 1910. The bronze statue of Kusunoki Masashige near the Imperial Palace and the bronze statue of Saigo Takamori at Ueno Park, both in Tokyo, were also made by Nogami Ryūki.

The turtle (kame 亀) is symbolic of longevity and good fortune. This dynamic family grouping conveys not only these auspicious meanings but also a sense of familial unity.



## REFERENCE:

*The Golden Age of Japanese Okimono: The Dr. Kanter Collection*, by Laura Bordinon, ACC Woodbridge 2010, Metalwork no. 242.

Height: 10cm (3.9 in.)  
Width: 23cm (9 in.)  
Depth: 16cm (6.2 in.)



