

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

111 South Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60603
t 312.443.3626 f 312.443.0193 www.artinstituteofchicago.org

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MEDIA CONTACTS:

Erin Hogan
(312) 443-3664
ehogan@artic.edu

Chai Lee
(312) 443-3625
clee4@artic.edu

THE ART INSTITUTE UNVEILS NEW GALLERIES OF JAPANESE ART

*** The Roger L. and Pamela Weston Wing and Japanese Art Galleries ***

Open to the Public on September 26, 2010

Striking New Space Designed by wHY Architecture and Planning

Third Phase of the Art Institute's Ambitious Renovation Project

Following nine months of comprehensive renovations, on **September 26, 2010**, the Art Institute of Chicago will reopen its suite of **Japanese Art Galleries**—now housed in the new **Roger L. and Pamela Weston Wing** of the museum—with a striking installation that newly presents one of the finest collections of Japanese art in the country. Occupying some 6,500 square feet on the museum's first floor, the expanded Japanese art galleries at the Art Institute represent the first major reinstallation of the East Asian art collection in nearly two decades and are made possible by the generosity of Roger and Pamela Weston.



“The opening of the Weston Wing and the new Japanese art galleries is a milestone in the multi-year reinstallation project that the Art Institute is undergoing,” said James Cuno, President and Eloise W. Martin Director of the museum. “The movement of several collections into the Modern Wing last year has allowed us to better demonstrate our commitment to the arts of Asia by reworking existing galleries and creating new galleries for their display. We are more than fortunate

that Roger and Pamela Weston share this commitment to our collection of Japanese art; these galleries simply would not exist without them.”

Renovations to the Art Institute's Galleries of Japanese Art were supervised by **wHY Architecture and Planning** who also redesigned the museum's new galleries for prints and drawings as well as for European decorative arts. One of the principals of wHY, Kulapat Yantrasast, was a close associate of Pritzker Prize-winning architect Tadao Ando, whose “Ando Gallery” will remain a signature element of the new installation. wHY's previous work at the museum and Yantrasast's relationship with Ando ensure that the newly expanded Japanese art galleries in the Weston Wing will both respect the history and tenor of the Art Institute and celebrate the distinctive aesthetic character of Japan. Occupying the same site as the previous Japanese galleries on the first level of the museum, the new configuration of galleries offers 55% more space to display the collection. Within the galleries, movement was designed to be free flowing, giving the visitor views of several



rooms at once while also providing carefully placed focal points.

Upon entering the Weston Wing, visitors are presented with a long expanse of galleries with an enticing view of a *tokonoma* alcove at the back. Fluid display spaces that contain art from different chronological eras are created by a series of “peninsula” cases that shape the

visitor's experience of the collection. The initial gallery (Gallery 102) features pre-Buddhist art of the Jomon (12,500–300 BCE) to Kofun (mid 3rd- 6th century A.D.) periods, presenting the story of Japanese art from the earliest of the Art Institute's holdings. Due to previous space limitations, works from these periods had never been given their own permanent area. Continuing on from this first room, visitors will find a large gallery displaying religious art, including Buddhist and Shinto paintings and sculpture (Galleries 103 and 104). The rare eighth-century dry-lacquer bodhisattva attributed to the Todaiji workshop in Nara has found a new home here, as has a newly acquired placid female Shinto deity of the twelfth century.

Arts related to the Japanese practice of ritualized tea service, or *chanoyu*, will be on view at the end of this axis (Gallery 106). While not modelled on any particular location in Japan, the creation of this area is inspired by the great tea rooms of the 1620s that show the influence of Kobori Enshu (1579–1647), a tea master, garden designer, architect, poet, and calligrapher. The *tokonoma*,

staggered shelves, and other architectural features of these tea rooms allowed imperial and daimyo aesthetes to display their burgeoning collections of tea utensils, an approach replicated in the new Art Institute galleries with shelves that feature wares from the seventeenth century to the present day, including recent museum acquisitions of contemporary ceramics and bamboo baskets. At this point, visitors can turn right into a gallery that features rotations of the Art Institute's renowned collection of Japanese woodblock prints or left into an entirely new room with a display of items such as kimono, textiles, lacquer, and metalwork, together with paintings from the Edo period (165-1868) to the present day. Such a display of a variety of artwork from the most vigorous era of artistic production in Japan allows visitors to better understand the dialogue between arts of all media. The experience ends with the contemplative space designed by Ando and completed in 1992 (Gallery 109), attached to the rest of the Japanese art galleries now for the first time.

The unveiling of the Weston Wing begins the third phase of the most ambitious renovation and reinstallation project in the museum's history. Refurbished galleries for Textile Arts are scheduled to open to the public in November 2010, and new galleries for the museum's collection of African and Indian Art of the Americas are slated for a February 2011 opening.

About Roger L. and Pamela Weston

Roger L. Weston was chairman, president, CEO, and majority shareholder of GreatBanc, Inc., a Chicago-based multibank holding company that he founded in 1986 and that was later acquired by Citizens Bank in 2006. As of 1997, he was chairman of Minotaur Fine Arts, Ltd., a gallery that specializes in 19th- and 20th-century American and European paintings, sculptures, prints, and tapestries in Las Vegas, Nevada. Mr. Weston became a life trustee of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2009; at the museum, he also serves as the Vice Chair of the Art Institute's Committee on Asian and Ancient Art, and is a Jade Member of the Asian Art Council. Mr. Weston and his wife, Pamela, reside in Winnetka, Illinois.

Image: Japan, Head of a Warrior, 6th century. Earthenware 25.5 x 15.5 x 12.2 cm (10 x 6 1/8 x 4 3/4 in.) Purchased with Funds Provided by the Weston Foundation; Alyce and Edwin DeCosta and the Walter E. Heller Foundation Fund; Robert Allerton Trust.

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