



MEDIA RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA

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***Kimono*: NGV-exclusive exhibition celebrates the artistry and elegance of the iconic Japanese garment and features 30+ never-before-seen acquisitions**

Kimono | NGV International, St Kilda Road | 4 June – 5 October 2025 | Ticketed



24 April 2025: Featuring rare and hand-crafted kimono from the Edo period to today, ***Kimono*** is a brand-new, NGV-curated exhibition that explores the timeless elegance and enduring appeal of this iconic Japanese garment. Celebrated throughout the world for its meticulous craftsmanship and sophisticated sense of style, the kimono has had an indelible influence on global art, design and fashion culture since Japan opened its borders to the world in the mid-nineteenth century.

Opening June 4, 2025, at NGV International, the exhibition *Kimono* comprises more than 70 breath-taking garments made from the world's finest silk, embellished with gold and silver embroidery and featuring beautiful scenes of flowers, the seasons and auspicious motifs – all presented within a dazzling exhibition design that

compliments and amplifies the kimono's sense of restrained luxury and functional simplicity. Drawn primarily from the NGV Collection, the works on display include 30+ never-before-seen kimono new to the NGV Collection, as well as 150+ paintings, posters, wood block prints, magazines and decorative arts.

Showcasing the ongoing evolution of the kimono in contemporary culture and the latest trends within Japan, the exhibition presents the work of historical artisans alongside contemporary Japanese kimono designers, including **Hiroko Takahashi, Jotaro Saito, Rumi Rock, Robe Japonica** and more. Revealing the global appeal of the kimono, the work of international fashion houses and designers also feature, including **Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto, John Galiano, Comme des Garçons, Alexander McQueen** and more.

Highlights include Australian-premiere of 2025 designs by acclaimed contemporary kimono designer **Jotaro Saito**, hand-chosen especially for Melbourne audiences. Saito is descended from a family of textile artisans in Kyoto. Since his debut at the age of 27 as one of kimono's youngest designers, Saito has developed a reputation for lavishly decorated yet strikingly modern kimono ensembles, highlighting the ways in which kimono designs continue to adapt to contemporary life, culture and tastes. For NGV audiences, Saito will present designs from his most recent collection, *Dark Romantic*, which features garments embellished with hand stencilled and hand painted traditional yuzen techniques.

Seven newly acquired Edo-period silk and ramie kimono – adorned with wisteria tendrils, maple leaves, falling snow and other motifs – offer a glimpse into the style and sophistication of the samurai and merchant classes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Highlights include a traditional red wedding kimono decorated in bamboo, pine and crane motifs using a special Japanese tie-dye technique, known as shibori. Illuminating an Australian Japanese story the exhibition also includes a white wedding kimono gifted by the Melbourne-based family of the late Funiko Saito, who once worked as the official embroiderer to the Japanese imperial family.

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Further highlights are two colourful and vibrant ensembles designed by the late Japanese fashion icon **Issey Miyake**, who in 2016 collaborated with the estate of graphic designer **Ikko Tanaka** to reproduce his striking poster designs on haori coats and accessories. Realised in Miyake's signature pleated fabric, the garments feature Tanaka's graphic faces rendered in bright block colours reminiscent of wood block prints. Works by **Yohji Yamamoto** showcase the designer's exploration of Japanese garment typologies, enmeshing these with Western tailoring techniques.

Demonstrating the explosive and dynamic influence of Japanese culture on the West during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries (a period known art historically as *Japonisme*), the exhibition also includes examples of early twentieth-century Western fashion inspired by the kimono's iconic design and silhouette, including a Coat manufactured by **Liberty & Co**, an Evening coat by Parisian couturier **Callot Soeurs** and Day coat by Parisian-couturier **Paul Poiret**. Also drawing attention to the resurgence of Japanese influences from the 1980s onwards, the exhibition features more recent garments by **John Galiano**, **Alexander McQueen**, **Givenchy**, **Zambesi** and **Rudi Gernreich** that reference the design vocabulary of the kimono. Also, on display is work by Sydney-based fashion designer **Akira Isogawa**, whose practice draws on the form and decoration of the kimono.

The exhibition highlights Japan's recent kimono revival and current fashion trends through works by innovative new designers like **Robe Japonica**, **Modern Antenna**, **Tamao Shigemune**, **Rumi Rock** and **Y&SONS**. The selection includes the latest in Harajuku street fashion, cute "kawaii" styles, playful gothic and new dandyism. The exhibition also celebrates the transformative achievements and influence of twentieth-century masters, who are rightly recognised as national treasures in their native Japan. This includes brightly coloured kimono designed by **Serizawa Keisuke**, whose mastery of resist dying techniques created bold and graphic kimono patterns that became especially popular in New York and Paris.

Also on display are three elaborate kimono costumes from *noh* and *kyogen* theatre, classical forms of Japanese drama combining stylised movement, masks and music. Made from magnificent brocade fabric with scintillating silver and gold thread, these extravagant costumes are characteristic of the beautiful kimono worn in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by Japanese nobility. The garments are displayed alongside material swatches, performance masks and lacquerware, offering Australian audiences a rare insight into Japan's revered theatre culture.

Minister for Creative Industries, Colin Brooks said: 'Hot on the heels of the record-breaking blockbuster exhibition Yayoi Kusama, the NGV is gearing up to celebrate Japanese culture and artistry once more with this incredible fashion and design showcase. Part of an exciting line up of exhibitions for the NGV this winter, Kimono is set to attract visitors from near and far to Melbourne, providing a boost to our economy and yet another reason to visit Australia's most popular gallery.'

Tony Ellwood AM, Director, NGV said: 'Kimono – and the timeless sense of style they embody – are true icons of global fashion culture and an instantly-recognisable symbol of Japan. Featuring exquisite, hand-crafted kimono worn by Japanese shogun, samurai, merchants and stage performers, this exhibition narrates the garment's rich history with sophistication and flare through more than 60 works from the NGV Collection, bringing this area of our holdings together for the very first time.'

Following a loose chronology, the exhibition explores key themes and periods in kimono fashion history, such as childrenswear, modernism, the seasons and the macabre. The exhibition showcases the breadth of materials used for textile production throughout Japanese history, including silk, cotton, hemp, metallic thread, paper, elm bark, banana tree fibre and deer leather. The exhibition also draws attention to the diverse skills mastered by traditional artisans, including shibori tie-dye, rice paste resist designs and indigo blue dyeing techniques.

Kimono is on display from 4 June – 5 October 2025 at NGV International, St Kilda Road, Melbourne. Entry fees apply. Tickets and information are available via the NGV website: [NGV.MELBOURNE](https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/exhibitions/kimono)

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IMAGES:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/5v0niu4qg3gdafvcy8u4i/AAxHgFaEy9W5TVLpbm5zPDU?rlkey=ie40uhdoltkf493he422sbxqg&st=dosy1zyc&dl=0>

IMAGE CAPTION (clockwise from top left): *Japanese, Uchikake Kosode with windy seashore and fishing scene*, late 18th century, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Purchased with funds donated by Janet Whiting and Phil Lukies, 2024; *Japanese, Child's kimono with boy's day design*, 1925-1935, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Purchased with funds donated by Berris Aitken, 2023; *Japanese, Uchikake Furisode wedding kimono with pine, bamboo, plum, and cranes*, early – mid 19th century, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Purchased with funds donated by Michael and Emily Tong, 2024; **Alexander McQueen, London (fashion house), Alexander McQueen (designer), Gown, belt and sandals (Dégradé)**, 2007 (The blue lady (La Dame Bleue) collection, spring-summer 2008), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Gift of Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family through the Australian

Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2021, © Alexander McQueen; **Japanese**, *Hitoe kosode, kimono with themes alluding to eight Noh theatre plays* late Edo period, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Purchased with funds donated by Jennifer Lempriere and Michael Pithie, 2024; Liberty & Co., London (manufacturer and retailer), *Coat*, 1910, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Gift of Krystyna Campbell-Pretty and the Campbell-Pretty Family through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2018

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