



**KIMONO**



## INTRODUCTION

Textiles have long been a source of information on a society's culture. Throughout both western and eastern history alike, textiles have possessed the power to signify one's status. The kimono, a traditional, embroidered Japanese garment, has evolved throughout history to become an integral part of the country's culture.

Embroidery traveled along the silk road from China around the second century BC and made its way through Korea to Japan. The isolation of the island allowed for innovative design and style unique to Japan.

The evolution of hand embroidery and the kimono developed over generations. Embroidery was first used in Japan to decorate religious items, however, the Heian Period (794-1192 AD) saw the decoration of textiles to serve a more secular purpose: adorning the vestments of royalty and the wealthy.

During the Edo Period, from 1615 - 1868, and the subsequent Meiji period that lasted until 1912, personal expression flourished. Style and status were conveyed through the wearing of the kimono.

The word "kimono" literally translates to "garment," with *ki* (着) meaning "to wear," and *mono* (物) "thing" or "object." The garment's sleeves began to grow in length during this time, especially among unmarried women, and the Obi, or belt, became wider. Since then, the basic shape

of both the men's and women's kimono has remained essentially unchanged.

Kimonos can range in color, from elaborate compositions to more subtle works. Different styles are crafted for various occasions and seasons. A formal kimono is one of the larger investments a Japanese individual will make during their lifetime. There are precise rules for wearing, storing and cleaning these garments all in an effort to preserve both the material and culture.

The kimono is not complete without the obi as it secures the kimono. Interestingly, obis are quite extravagant and can be more elaborate and expensive than the actual kimono itself. Other accessories include zori or geta (traditional footwear) and tabi (split-toe socks).

The kimonos and obis in this exhibition date from around the 20th century. The presentation brings together a variety of formal and wedding kimonos with numerous obis. The grouping demonstrates the proliferation of embroidery throughout the Japanese peninsula and beyond and affords viewers the opportunity to view a wide stylistic variety of kimonos. They normally took a minimum of two people to weave and embroider over a period of six months to even a year. Each garment tells a story. From the choice of fabric to its coloring and design, these pieces were more than just that clothing. The kimonos served as an integral part of the wearer's identity, each unique and handed down to the next generation.





w e d d i n g

**KIMONO**

Uchikake



## WEDDING KIMONO

Uchikake is a highly formal kimono that is currently worn by a bride. It is supposed to be worn outside the actual kimono and obi, as a sort of coat, and never ties the obi around the uchikake. It is believed that uchikake started to be worn by the high-class samurai family women in the Muromachi era (1336–1573). During the Edo era (1603–1868) uchikake became a more common kimono for the high-class women like the oiran in Yoshiwara, and since then it has been recognized as a wedding kimono.

## KIMONO SYMBOL MEANINGS FLORAL MOTIFS

### CHRYSANTHEMUM (KIKU)

and Spider chrysanthemum with wild tendril petals) is an auspicious symbol of regal beauty, rejuvenation and longevity. Used as the Imperial Seal of Japan, it also represents autumn and is associated with the Chrysanthemum Festival (Kiku-no-Sekku) held on the 9th day of the 9th month.

### PINE TREE (MATSU)

symbolises longevity, steadfastness and wisdom in age. Associated with winter and New Year. Sometimes represented by the pine bark diamond pattern.

### IRIS (KAKITSUBATA)

by a running stream evokes the tenth century 'Tale of Ise'. A far travelling poet arrives at Yatsushashi, sees irises in full bloom and is struck by such longing for his wife left in far away Kyoto that he writes a verse for her beginning each line with a syllable from the flower's name 'ka-ki-tsu-ba-ta'. Signifies protection from evil spirits.

### PEONY (BOTAN)

is known as the 'King of the Flowers' and symbolises good fortune (wealth), high honour (nobility) and ageless beauty.

### PLUM BLOSSOM (UME)

is the first flower to bloom in the spring and is known as the 'Flower of Peace'. A protective charm against evil, it also represents longevity, renewal and perseverance. Identified by rounded petals.

### WISTERIA (FUJI)

signifies love and is also used in many Japanese family crests (Kamon).

### CHERRY BLOSSOM (SAKURA)

with its distinctive notched petals, blooms briefly and is fragile. It symbolises new beginnings, renewal (early Spring), beauty and the transience of life.

### BELLFLOWER (KIKYO)

is a white, five petal flower and the symbol of unchanging love, honesty and obedience.

### PAULOWNIA TREE (KIRI)

is a fast growing tree with foxglove-like purple flowers and the only tree the Phoenix will alight upon. Planted when a baby girl is born, the wood is then used to fashion articles for her dowry. Traditional national symbol, often seen in family crests.





## **KIMONO SYMBOL MEANINGS PATTERNS AND OTHER SYMBOLS**

### SEIGAIHA

is a pattern of overlapping circles, symbolic of waves and the ebb and flow of life.

### SHIPPO

is an infinitely repeating circular design representing the seven jewels or treasures from the Buddhist Sutras.

### HEXAGONS

represent the pattern on a tortoise shell and signify longevity and good fortune. Also traditional inspiration for Samurai armour designs.

### DIAMONDS OR PINE BARK DIAMOND PATTERN

–see Pine Tree (Matsu).

### PEACOCK (KUJAKU)

This bird is associated with love, good will, nurturing, and a kind heart.

### CRANES (TSURU)

are believed to live for a thousand years and inhabit the land of the immortals. Symbolise longevity and good fortune. A pair represent a happy marriage.

### DRUM (TAIKO)

A drum represents joy. Ivy growing over a drum (used to warn of war) signifies.

### SCROLLS

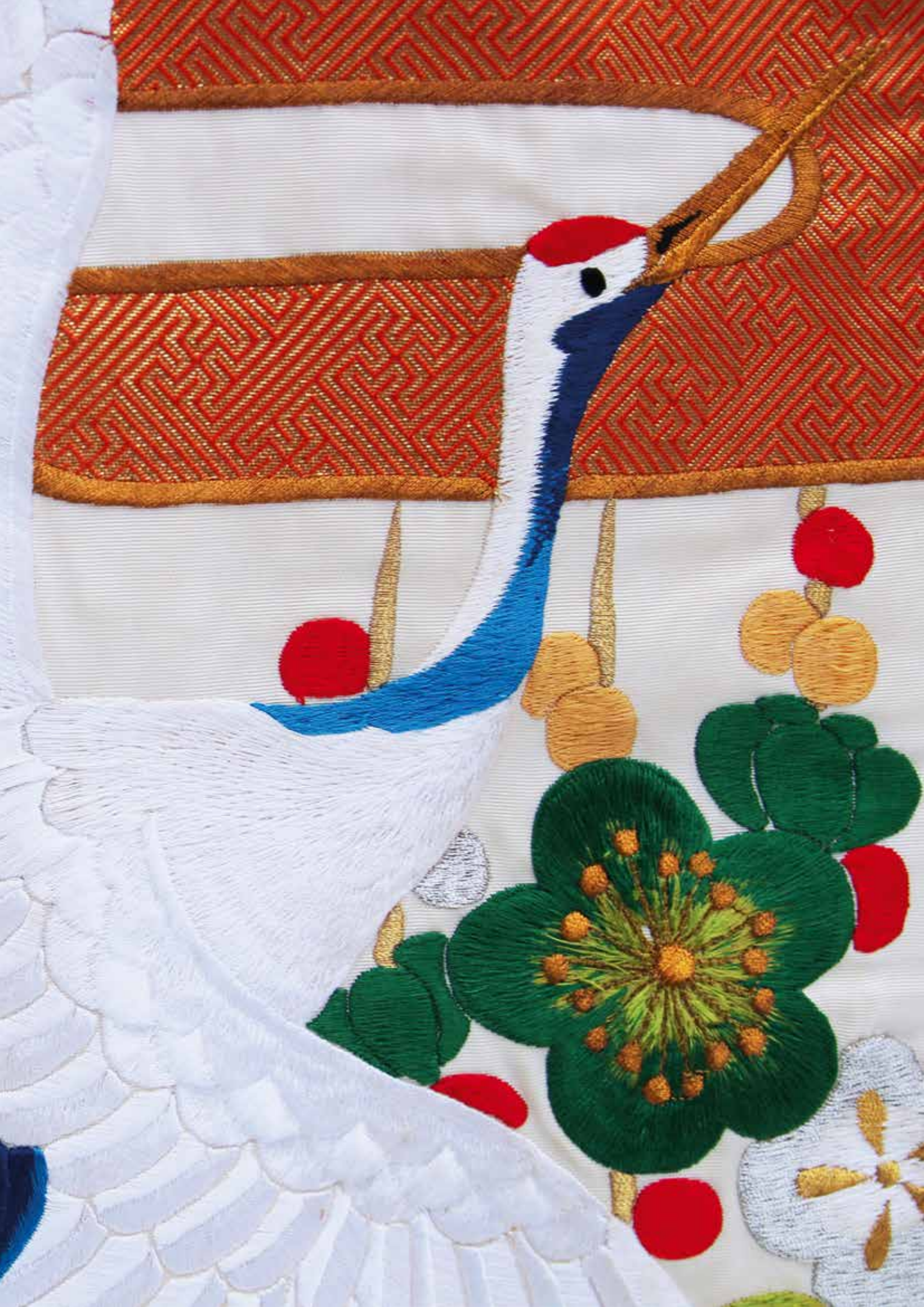
represent learning, knowledge and a cultured life. One of the Myriad Treasures.

### MOUNTAINS (YAMA)

depict sacred places between heaven and earth. Birds flying over mountains signify overcoming life's challenges.

### RIVER (KAWA)

or winding stream represents continuity and the future.



UCHIKAKE, WEDDING KIMONO WITH GLOWINGLY RADIANT EMBROIDERY





EMBROIDERED, ANTIQUE WEDDING KIMONO





EMBROIDERED WEDDING KIMONO







EMBROIDERED, ANTIQUE WEDDING KIMONO





ANTIQU EMBROIDERED PHOENIX AND HAND GOLD-PAINTED UCHIKAKE WEDDING KIMONO





UCHIKAKE WEDDING KIMONO EMBROIDERED WITH SILK IVORY AND GOLD  
THREAD





SUMI-E HANDPAINTED, ANTIQUE WEDDING KIMONO







TRADITIONAL RED UCHIKAKE WEDDING KIMONO WITH CRANES





VINTAGE EMBROIDERED JACQUARD UCHIKAKE WEDDING KIMONO





SHIROMUKU PURE-WHITE WEDDING KIMONO. WORN FOR THE PART OF THE WEDDING CEREMONY, SYMBOLIZING THE PURITY OF THE BRIDE COMING INTO THE MARRIAGE. THE BRIDE MAY LATER CHANGE INTO A RED UCHIKAKE AFTER THE CEREMONY TO SYMBOLIZE GOOD LUCK





EDO PERIOD EMBROIDERED GOLD CRANE UCHIKAKE KIMONO

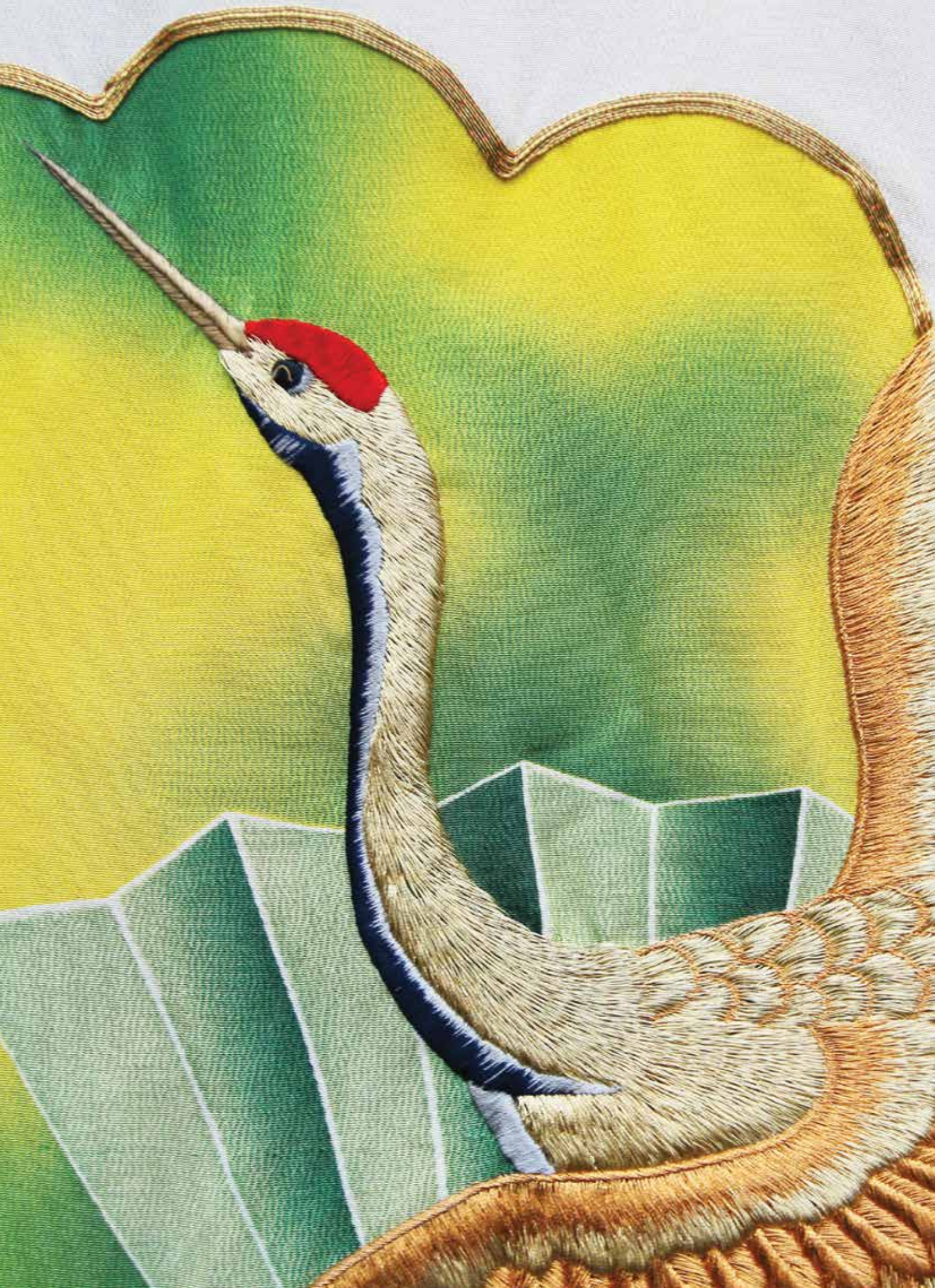






UCHIKAKE KIMONO WITH THE FAMILY CRESTS ON THE SHOULDER AND EMBROIDERY WITH SILK IVORY GOLD THREAD





SILK PAINTED AND EMBROIDERED UCHIKAKE WEDDING KIMONO





MEIJI PERIOD HAND PAINTED FLOWERS UCHIKAKE KIMONO





EDO PERIOD PINK CHERRY BLOSSOM UCHIKAKE KIMONO







EDO PERIOD YUZEN HAND PAINTED UCHIKAKE KIMONO









BLACK TOMESODE KIMONO THE FAMILY CREST IS DYED ON THE SHOULDER



Tomesode is the most elegant and formal kimono for married women. Tomesode in modern times refers to kimono with patterns only on the left and right bottom, which was called Edo zuma in the Edo period and was popular among geisha. Tomesode used to be worn with shiro habutae kimono (white, thin and soft kimono worn as an underwear) .



JACQUARD, ANTIQUE, CASUAL KIMONO







ANTIQUE STENCIL DYED KIMONO



VINTAGE HOUMONGI KIMONO



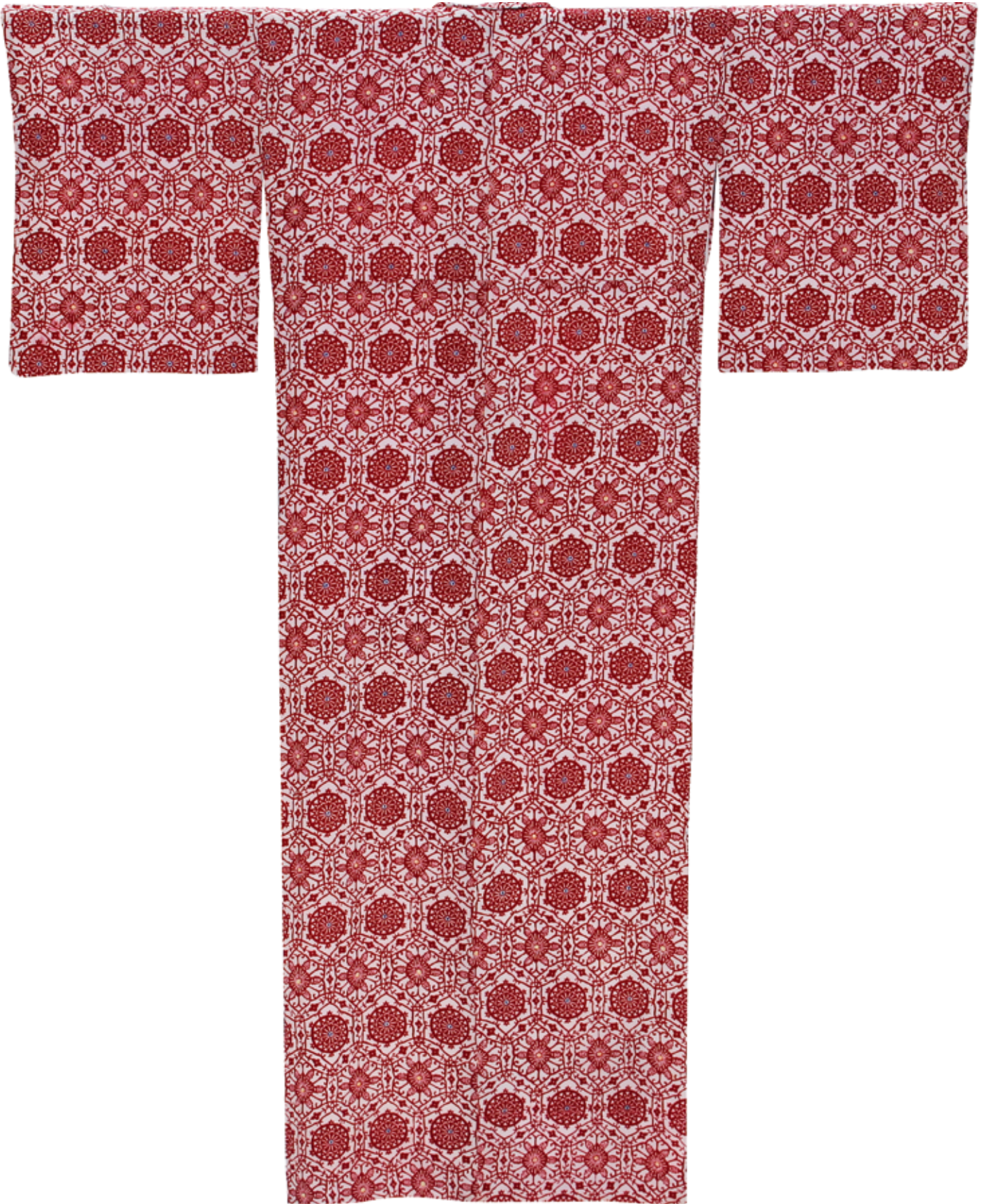
VINTAGE MEISEN KIMONO



Instead of tie-dyeing, the silk was woven on mechanized looms and while on the loom, before been woven, the yarns were stenciled printed to give the ikat effect. The Meisen technique was very popular at the beginning of the 20th century and fell out of favor only when Japanese women started wearing western clothes after the second world war.



ANTIQUÉ STENCIL DYED KOMON KIMONO



Antique stencil dyed Komon Kimono has an all-over repeat pattern and are known as town wear, that is, an everyday wear kimono. Komon kimonos and iro-muji kimonos are becoming more and more rare, as they are not made much anymore.









A VINTAGE SILK DAMASK HŌMONGI KIMONO



Hōmongi literally translates as visiting wear. Hōmongi is distinguished in their motif placement - the motifs flow across the back right shoulder and back right sleeve, the front left shoulder and front left sleeve, and across the hem, higher at the left than the right.



TSUMUGI IS A DAILY OR WORKING KIMONO THAT IS WOVEN BY AN UNEVENLY SPUN SILK THREAD





ANTIQUE STENCIL DYED CASUAL KIMONO

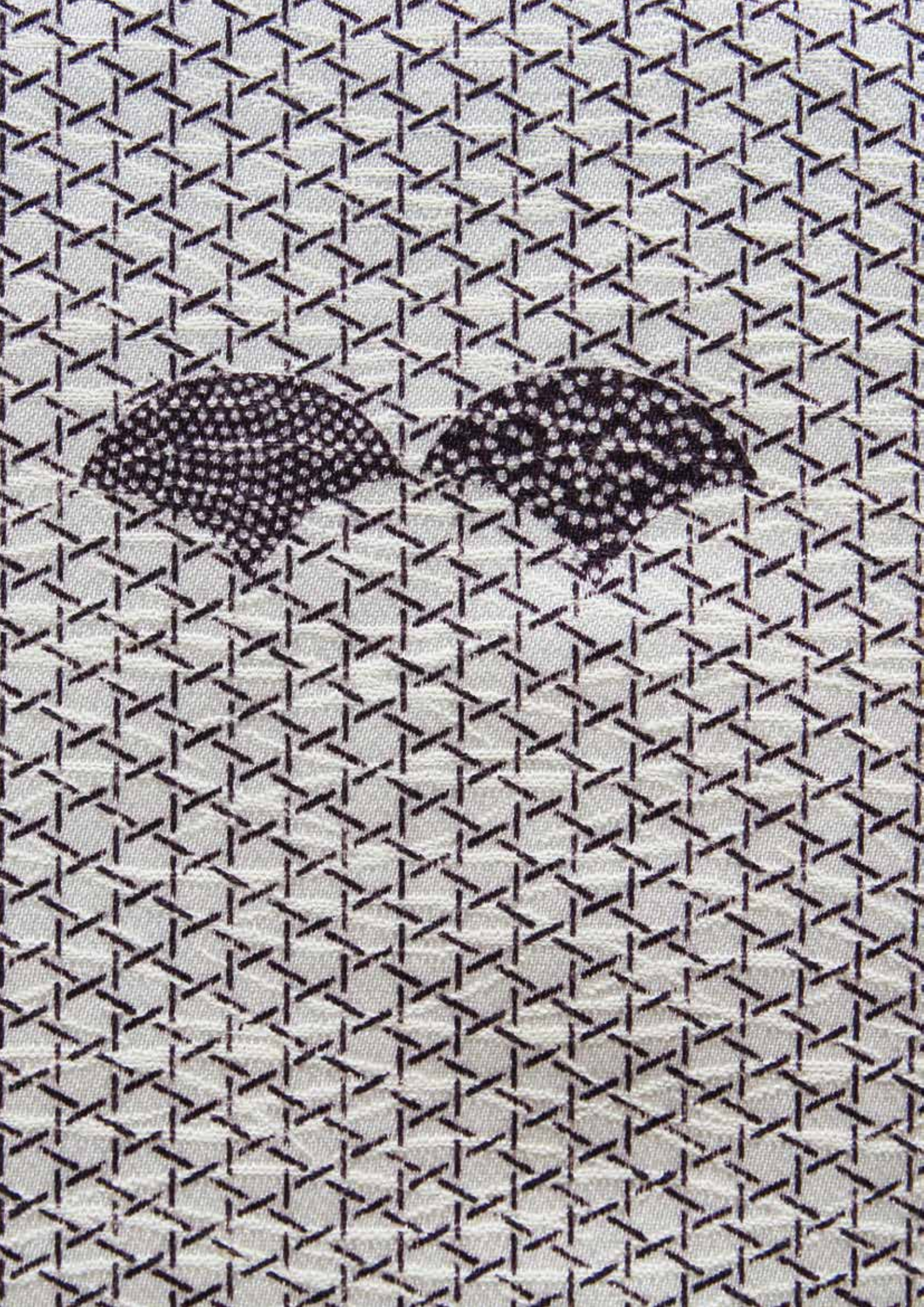




YUKATA-CASUAL COTTON SUMMER KIMONO



From roughly the mid-1980s onwards, the Japanese began to produce a wide variety of bright colors, large motifs, and loud patterns, responding to a demand for a more casual modern kimono that could be worn to a summer festival.





ANTIQUE STENCIL DYED, JACQUARD, CASUAL KIMONO



PROPERTY OF WOO FAMILY CHARITABLE FOUNDATION, INC.



ANTIQUÉ KOMON KIMONO



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ANTIQUE STENCIL DYED, JACQUARD, CASUAL KIMONO





ANTIQUE STENCIL DYED, JACQUARD, CASUAL KIMONO







ANTIQUÉ STENCIL DYED, JACQUARD, CASUAL KIMONO





ANTIQUE STENCIL DYED, JACQUARD, CASUAL KIMONO



**SUMI - E PAINTING**



**SHUSU**



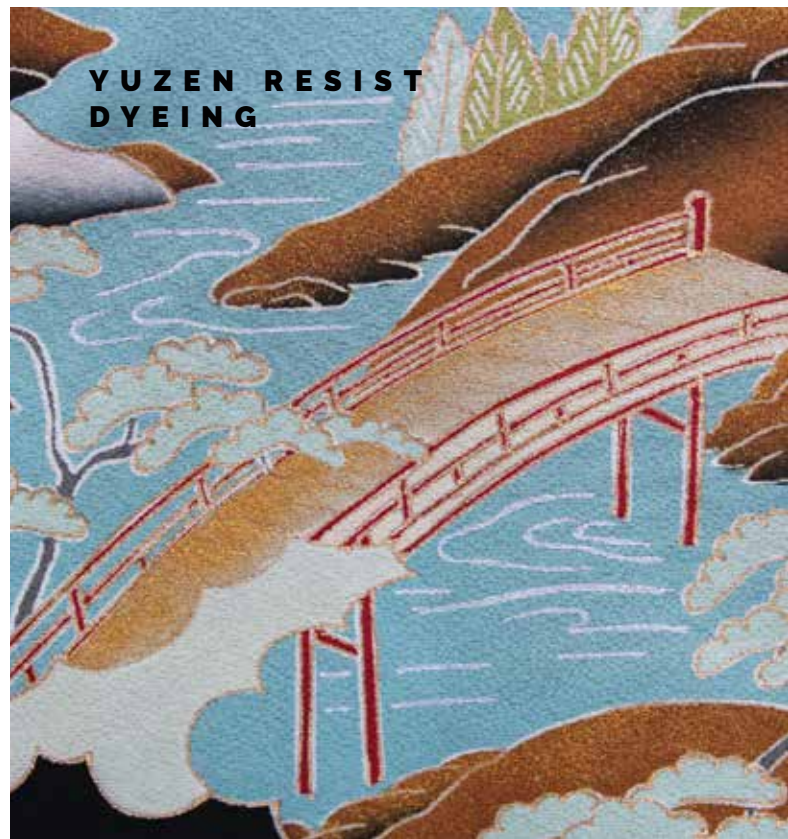
**JACQUARD**



**KATAZOME**



**YUZEN RESIST DYEING**



**EMBROIDERY**



## TECHNIQUES

### SUMI-E PAINTING

Free-hand painting with indelible inks and brushes is also a time-honored Japanese method of fabric decoration. It appears on kimonos, but even more frequently on the pictorial linings of men's short black haori jackets.

### SHUSU

Gold and silver threads are made of foil applied to thin membrane or paper strips which are wrapped around silk threads. These metallic threads cannot be stitched through the silk fabrics, so they are traditionally "couched": laid on the fabric surface and stitched down with fine silk threads. Motifs may be outlined with gold couching or entire motifs may be formed with metallic yarns placed side by side.

### JACQUARD

The Taishō period (1912-1926) was one of confidence and optimism in Japan. Industrial development was stimulated by the First World War, economic prosperity being matched by political democratisation. Power-operated spinning machines and jacquard looms introduced from Europe had speeded up production and lowered costs, while chemical dyes allowed for the creation of dazzling colours. In the early 20th century new types of silk and innovative patterning techniques were also developed, making relatively inexpensive, highly fashionable garments available to more people than ever before. These vibrant kimono styles remained popular until the 1950s.

### KATAZOME

These fabrics are produced with stencils. Rice paste is pressed through the elaborately cut, heavy, oiled stencils onto the fabric; then after drying, the fabrics are immersed in the dye pots. This process has often been used with indigo blue on cotton for summer yukata kimono or for futon covers. Sometimes wax has been used instead, as in batiks made elsewhere.

### EMBROIDERY

Japanese artisans have used embroidery to create opulent effects on kimono especially lavish wedding kimono. With silk floss and variations on the "long and short stitch" or satin stitch, hira-nui, they have built up entire motifs, as in the feathers below. Some forms have even become three-dimensional.

### YUZEN RESIST DYEING

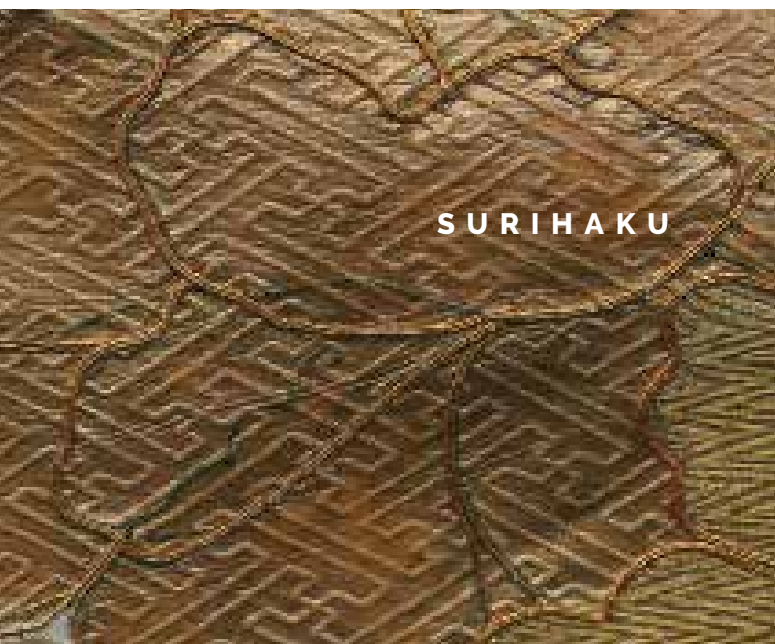
With a dyeing technique invented in 17th century Kyoto, a mixture of rice paste and soybeans has been used to draw delicate free-hand linear motifs on white silk. An artist squeezes the paste through a funnel-shaped container much like a small pastry bag. After this paste resist dries, he paints the areas on both sides of the lines with brushes, using the desired dye colors. Delicate shaded effects can be created, and the rice paste outlines prevent the dye from seeping into surrounding areas. Even broad expanses of the background color are dyed in this manner by hand painting.



**KASURI**



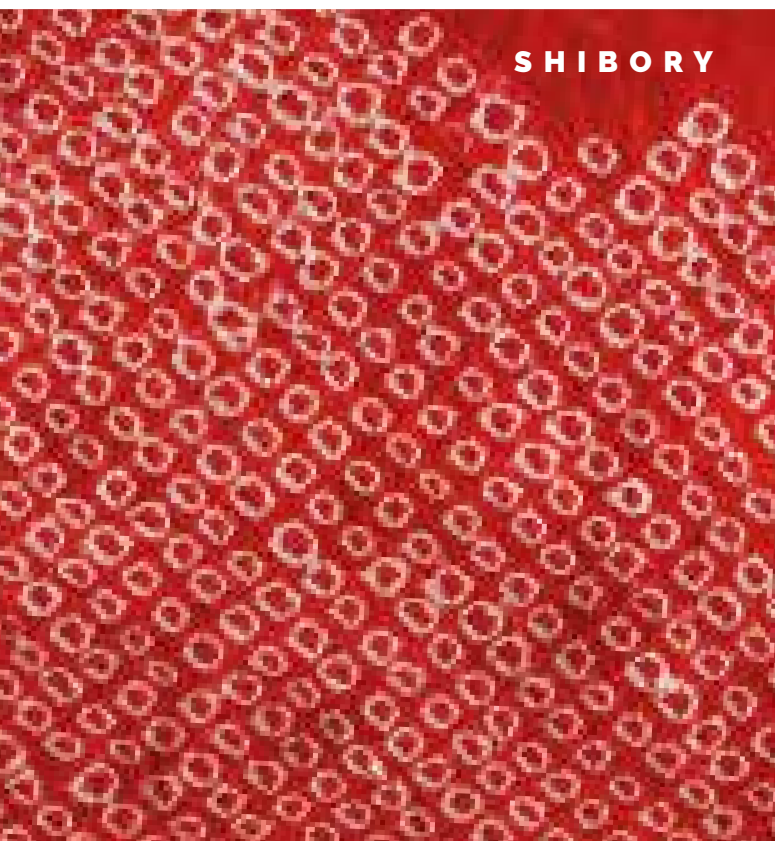
**GOLD LEAF  
DECORATION**



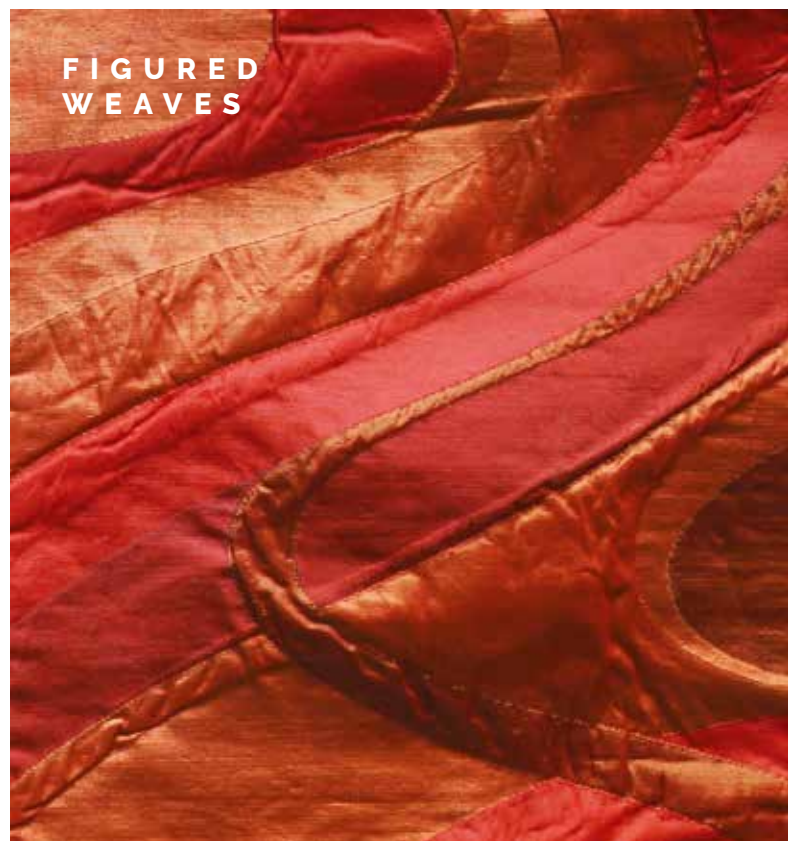
**SURIHAKU**



**SURIHAKU  
PATTERN**



**SHIBORY**



**FIGURED  
WEAVES**

## TECHNIQUES

The three main techniques for decorating kimono are tie-dyeing (shibori), paste-resist dyeing (yūzen), and embroidery (shishū).

### KASURI (IKAT)

Ikat fabrics are made by selectively binding and dyeing parts of the warp or weft threads, or even both, before the fabric is woven. It is an arduous and exacting process. For either silk or cotton fabrics, the threads are stretched on a frame (below), selected design areas are bound, then the hanks of bound threads are immersed in the dye pots.

### GOLD LEAF DECORATION

In many cases, detailed parts are painted with gold, and broad parts are covered with gold leaf. To put gold leaf on a kimono is called gilding. Gilding has various techniques, whose common skill is called "surihaku", "impressing of gold foil." It is a method to apply gold foil with some glue and dry it to remove unnecessary parts, and one of the most gorgeous finishes can be expected.

### SURIHAKU

Sometimes, along with colored dyes, gold or silver metallic foil is applied to the fabric surface, creating lavish effects. Rice paste is first applied to the fabric in design areas either drawn freely, or stenciled. Then metallic leaf is pressed onto the partially dried rice paste. The foil falls away in surrounding areas. In the past, surihaku decoration was widely used on dramatic Noh theatrical costumes, and its use continued on lavish formal kimono and

ceremonial uchikake wedding kimono.

### SHIBORI

These fabrics are tie-dyed. Most often, areas are patterned by tightly wrapping tiny sections of the lightweight white silk with thread. When the fabric is dyed, the wrapped areas remain white, forming a pleasant, slightly irregular repeat pattern of tiny circles. An entire surface covered in this way is called kanoko shibori. The fabric may be allowed to retain its characteristic puckered surface. Shibori techniques can also be produced by clamping, stitching or folding the fabrics in various ways to produce unusual patterning.

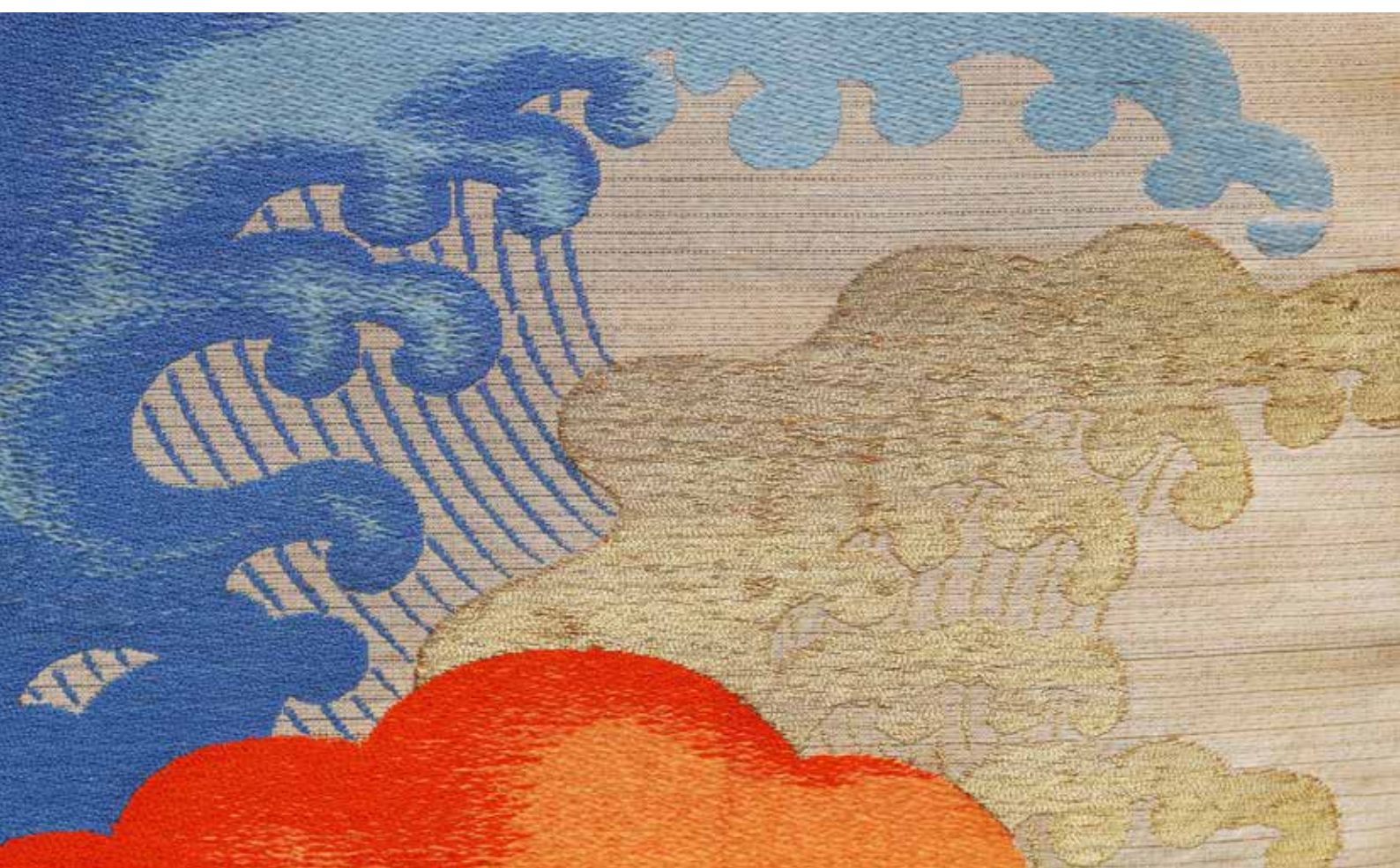
### FIGURED WEAVES

Historically draw looms, and more recently jacquard looms, have been used to produce a variety of weaves with stunning tone-on-tone patterning. Damasks, brocades and twills are among the structures employed. White wedding kimono often exploit the possibilities of these techniques, and obi designs have employed an even wider range of complex weaves. Brocade designs have been woven with contrasting colors or materials such as metallic or lacquered threads.









## ANTIQUE JACQUARD, OBI

Japanese women, instead, wear a kimono with an obi-usually, a wide, stiff, brocaded, 15-foot long piece that wraps around the waist several times and ties in an elaborate bow in the back. They rarely match these to the kimono, but rather choose contrasting colors and patterns.





JAPANESE, ANTIQUE JACQUARD, OBI





JAPANESE, ANTIQUE JACQUARD, OBI







JAPANESE, ANTIQUE PASTE-RESIST DYING JACQUARD OBI





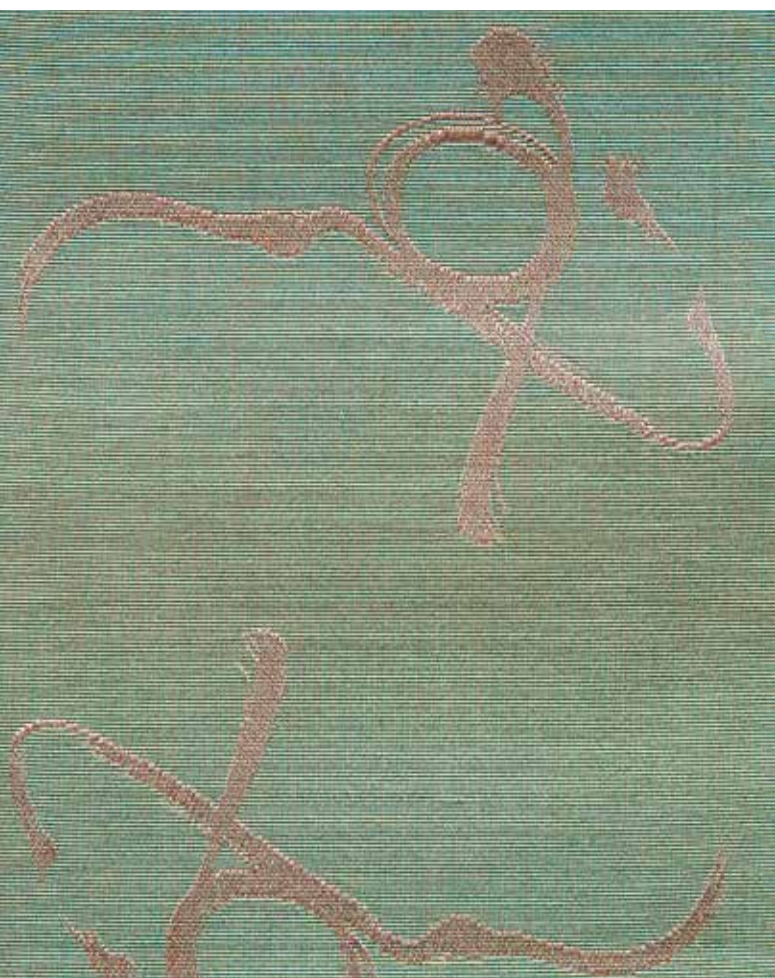
JAPANESE, ANTIQUE JACQUARD, OBI





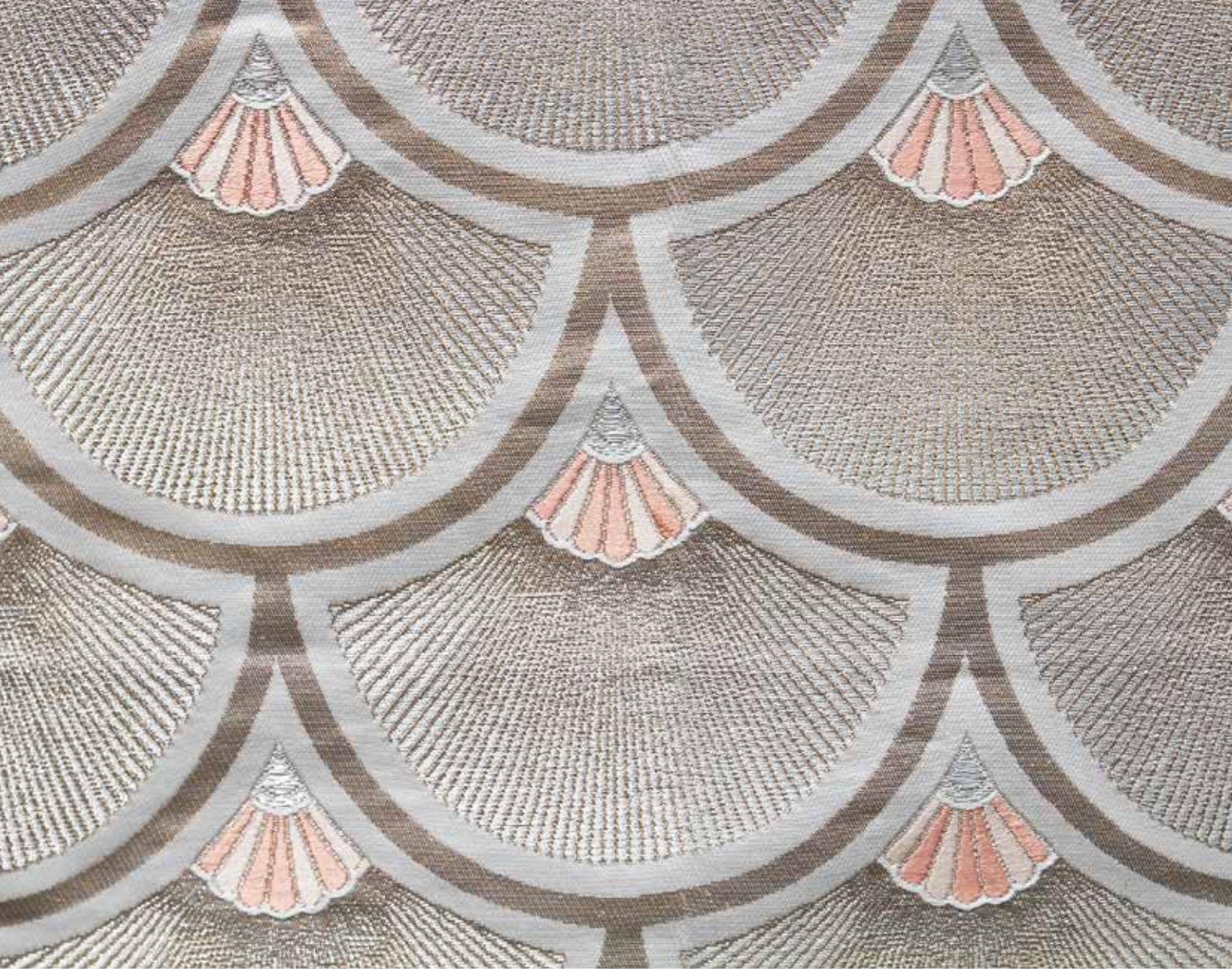
JAPANESE, ANTIQUE JACQUARD, OBI





JAPANESE, ANTIQUE JACQUARD, OBI







JAPANESE, ANTIQUE JACQUARD, EMBROIDERY OBI





JAPANESE, ANTIQUE JACQUARD, OBI







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Time periods

Edo (1603–1868)  
Meiji (1868–1912)  
Taishō (1912–1926)  
Showa (1926–1989)  
Heisei (1989–Present)



