

Special exhibition

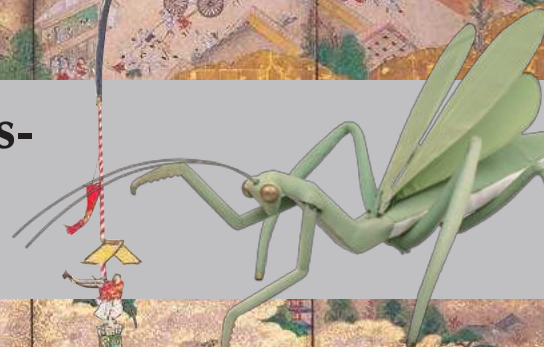
GION FESTIVAL

March 24 [Tues.] – May 17 [Sun.], 2020 in KYOTO



Valuable cultural properties from all floats-

**Tapestries from East and West, Warriors, Scrolls,
Screens and more under one roof!**



Folding screens depicting the Gion Festival, Hosomi Museum

Opening hours / Tuesday to Thursday and Saturday, Sunday: 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Friday: 10:00 a.m. – 7:30 p.m.

*Last admission until 30 minutes before closing time

Closed / Mondays (Except for May 4), May 7

Admissions / Adult ¥1,500, high school and university students ¥1,100,
Junior high school and primary school students ¥500

THE MUSEUM OF KYOTO

Sanjo-Takakura, Nakagyo-ku, Kyoto 604-8183
<http://www.bunpaku.or.jp/en/>



Picture scroll depicting the Gion Festival by Reizei Tamechika, Kokugakuin University Museum



The float procession of the Gion Festival has long been a popular summer tradition in Kyoto. Countless people have been captivated throughout its history by the magnificent floats embellished with their wide variety of decorative items including ornaments from overseas, elegant metal fittings, and a great number of artifacts featuring historical events and legends.

The Gion Festival's origin dates back to the middle Heian period, over 1,000 years ago. It derives from a ritual conducted to drive out an evil god that threatened the peace and security of the then-capital of Japan, Kyoto. In the course of its long history since, the festival has undergone various changes and the floats became part of it around 700 years ago. What brought about this change was the enhancement in aesthetic consciousness occurring at the time called *furyu* – the trend of inventively adding a touch of gorgeousness to things to astonish people. Beautifully decorated floats marching in the procession of the Gion Festival, attended by music, greatly aroused enthusiasm in the spectators who gathered along the streets. This movement was made possible by the townspeople engaged in the commercial and industrial businesses leading the economy of Kyoto, who later came to be known as “Cho-shu.” Their passion, inflated by the trend of *furyu*, boosted further development of the float procession of the Gion Festival into an even more lavish event and created the foundation of the festival we see today.



Restoration assumption figure of the partitioned tapestry, Rearmost brocade (Niwatori-hoko Preservation Society), Brocade for a Nagahama Festival float (Ho-o-yama Uoyamachi-gumi) and Front brocade (Araretenjin-yama Preservation Society), Nationally designated Important Cultural Property



Armor, Nationally designated Important Cultural Property, Jomyo-yama Preservation Society

With the beginning of the Edo period after the turbulent 16th century, the Gion Festival entered a new stage. Unlike in the past when the floats were made anew almost every year, the floats began to conform to a style but also express their individuality with increasingly gorgeous and luxurious mounted ornaments. The spirit of *furyu*, supported by the economic growth and technical innovation in the capital city Kyoto and passed down within the Cho-shu, exerted its cultural impact and began to embody itself in the floats in the form of ultimate beauty in crafts. Expressions of this *furyu* spirit can be seen in, for example, the ornamental brocades of the floats featuring the dyeing technology typical of the Nishijin area in Kyoto, the artisan skills of the metalworkers working in the capital city used abundantly in the creation of sophisticated metal fittings, and the paintings on the floats created by the first-class artists active in the art world of Kyoto at the time. The passion of the Cho-shu developed the Gion Festival floats into ‘moving art museums.’



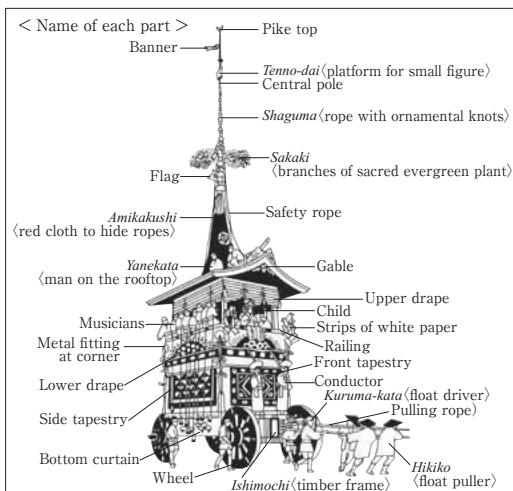
Decorative metal corner fittings, Niwatori-hoko Preservation Society

This exhibition is themed on the passion of the people, reflected onto the Gion Festival floats. While preserving the styles of float procession developed by the Cho-shu who supported the spirit of *furyu*, people continue to decorate the floats even more magnificently and convey the culture to the next generation, culminating into this epic story: the Gion Festival of Kyoto, now recognized worldwide as the archetypical festival of Japan. The essence of the float procession, the highlight of the festival, lies in the sincerity of the people who realized and preserved its splendid decorations over the generations. It is our sincere hope that you will fully enjoy the beauty of the Gion Festival floats through this extensive collection.



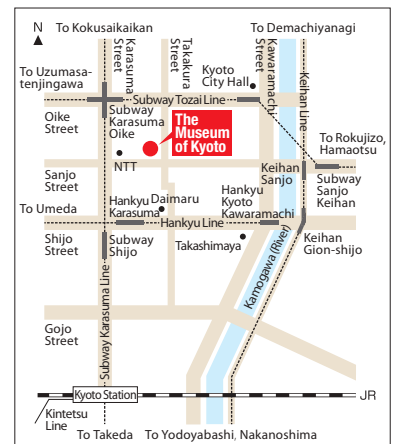
Kosode robe, Nationally designated Important Cultural Property, Ashikari-yama Preservation Society

In closing, please allow us express our heartfelt gratitude to all those who made this exhibition possible, and especially to the preservation societies of each float.



- Weight: 9.05 tons
- Height: 26.7 meters from ground to pike top
- 7.5 meters from ground to rooftop
- Wheel: 1.9 meters in diameter
- Roof: 3.7 meters in length, 2.3 meters in width
- Number of float pullers: 40 – 50 persons

Known as a leading festival of both Kyoto and the whole country, the Gion Festival has survived to this day after centuries evolving along with the history of Kyoto. The sumptuous Yamahoko floats decorated with fine arts and crafts from Japan, East Asia, the Middle East, and Europe are admired as “moving museums,” and are designated as National Important Tangible Folk Cultural Properties in addition to being inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The Gion Festival is a quintessential urban Japanese festival. Urban festivals generate many distinctive cultural traditions as they develop in close association with the city's inhabitants.



<http://www.bunpaku.or.jp/en/>
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