



SAMURAI MUSEUM
BERLIN



Sylwia Makris: Yu (Courage) Woman, from the series "The 7 Virtues", 2021

large format photos on canvas

© Sylwia Makris

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Samurai Museum Berlin to open on 8 May 2022

**AN INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCE BRINGS OVER 1,000 YEARS
OF JAPANESE WARRIORS' HISTORY AND CULTURE TO BERLIN**

On 8 May 2022, the Samurai Museum Berlin will open in Auguststraße in Berlin Mitte. The museum houses one of the largest collections of authentic samurai artefacts outside Japan. On 1,500 square metres, visitors to Europe's first museum of samurai art can immerse themselves in the legendary world of Japanese warriors. More than 1,000 exhibits from the Peter Janssen Collection narrate the culture and history of the samurai. Interactive, multimedia installations showcase the exhibits through innovative technologies, taking visitors on a spectacular journey through time.

Fascinating armour, elaborate swords, and legendary masks—outstanding objects illustrate the emergence of the samurai as a warrior caste and their varied development through the centuries—from the late Kofun period around 500 to the early Meiji period in the 19th century. The museum presentation designed by Ars Electronica Solutions provides a playful experience of the distant epoch.

Visitors enter the **Samurai Museum Berlin** through a front gate imported from Japan that once adorned the residence of a high-ranking samurai. The multimedia journey begins with an interactive 3D model of Japan that examines the country's history in a global context. Masks, weapons, and armour are shown in 360° representations. Thanks to digital techniques, visitors get closer to the exhibits than ever before. Dynamic projections bring battle scenes to life, and multimedia installations illustrate the art of sword-making. A unique feature of the Samurai Museum Berlin is the original

Nō theatre: it was built by traditional carpenters in Japan and shipped to Berlin. Nō is a form of classical Japanese theatre from the late 14th century with masks, ritualized movements, and musical accompaniment. Two further original architectural elements housed in the new museum are a torii, which in Japanese architecture marks the entrance to a Shintō shrine, and a teahouse. Visitors are accompanied by the shape-shifting fox Kitsune, a symbolic guide that playfully invites to interact with the exhibits and imparts knowledge.

"By opening my collection at the Samurai Museum Berlin to visitors of all ages and backgrounds, I want to share my enthusiasm for Japanese culture and samurai history across the generations," explains collector Peter Janssen, the museum's founder. *"We want this to be a place of vibrant knowledge mediation and to make tangible connections between cultures, space, and time. While promoting curiosity and an understanding of different cultures, we invite to an open dialogue between people and cultures."*

The myth and influence of the samurai on Japanese society are examined from different perspectives such as everyday life, arts and crafts, or martial arts.

The exhibition covers various topics, such as the position and role of women, mythology and faith, the art of war and weaponry, the legend of the ninja, and ritual art forms like Japanese calligraphy,



the tea ceremony, and Nō theatre. Alongside the interactive permanent exhibition, an area for temporary exhibitions is dedicated to contemporary art, building a bridge to the present, with a focus on the influence of the samurai on contemporary culture within and outside Japan.

"We are a living museum. The interaction of historical objects with innovative media technology enables a wide-ranging experimental approach to the myth of the samurai and Japanese culture. Discovering, experiencing, trying out, and understanding intertwine. Here, pop cultural discourses are continued, and topics like manga, anime, or gaming offer exciting starting points for discussion and debate. We want to provide visitors with an active and intense experience of art that also creates references to the present," museum director Alexander Jöchel points out, emphasising the museum's profile.

Black-laced armour of the Katō clan

late Edo period (18th–19th century), iron, gold, crystal, copper-alloy, lacquer, silk, brocade, leather, wood, unsigned

© Samurai Museum Berlin, Photo: Manfred-M. Sackmann



Hashimoto Sadahide (1807–1878/79):
Takeda Katsuyori assisting at Kiso and Soma during the Battle at the Shiojiri Pass, with a distant view of beaming Lake Suwa

publisher: Yamamotoya Heikichi
 signature: Gountei Sadahide ga

© Samurai Museum Berlin, Photo: Norbert Artner

THE PETER JANSSEN COLLECTION

Over the past 30 years, entrepreneur Peter Janssen has compiled one of the world's most comprehensive collections of Japanese samurai art dating from the 6th to the 19th century. In terms of its variety and scope, the collection is unique outside Japan. It includes not only weapons and armour, but also textiles, paintings, woodblock prints, tea ware, and Buddhist sculptures.

It all began with a passion for martial arts and Japanese culture, shaped at a young age by personal friendships. It is this enthusiasm that is still driving Peter Janssen today and has often brought him to Japan.

What began in 1985 with a sword blade bought at a Berlin flea market has grown into a collection comprising more than 4,000 objects today: over 70 suits of armour, 200 helmets, 200 masks, 160 blades and numerous pieces of sword fittings. In addition, there are outstanding unique objects from different spheres of life in samurai culture. And the collection continues to grow, resourceful and with great expertise, Peter Janssen keeps on searching out new objects.

Since 2017, the collection was open to the public at the "Samurai Art Museum" in Berlin Zehlendorf. There, selected exhibits were on display. Driven by Peter Janssen's desire to share his unique collection with a broad public, it was decided to move to a larger exhibition space in a central location and to rely on innovative mediation methods –thus the Samurai Museum Berlin came into being. Here, in the heart of Berlin, the objects will come to life in contemporary exhibition formats and enthral visitors.



Nô mask of a young woman

19th–20th century, cypress wood, minerals, seashell pigment (gofun)

© Samurai Museum Berlin, Photo: Norbert Artner

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