



Elegant Perfection: Masterpieces of Courtly and Religious Art from the Tokyo National Museum (Museum of Fine Arts, Houston)

Melissa McCormick, Tokyo National Museum

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As the oldest and largest museum in Japan, the Tokyo National Museum houses a vast collection of culturally important artworks. *Elegant Perfection* highlights twenty-six masterpieces from this esteemed collection, and together these objects tell the story of the country's artistic development from the prehistoric Jōmon era through the 19th century. Essays by experts at the Tokyo National Museum offer insights into how Buddhist art evolved in Japan, and how the aesthetics valued by Japanese courtly society, initially influenced by Chinese Tang culture, gradually became more distinctly Japanese. Melissa McCormick contributes an essay that demonstrates the connections between the realms of courtly and religious art in Japan.

The featured works include exquisite examples of painting, sculpture, calligraphy, metalwork, ceramics, and lacquerware. Among them are an 11th-century inscribed poetry compilation, lacquered musical instruments, Edo-period ceramics produced for tea ceremonies, and Buddhist sculpture, painting, and ritual objects. This publication offers a rare opportunity to discover the history and significance of these treasured works of art.

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