

# Phoenix Art Museum

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## **Japanese Storytelling Through Wild Masks and Intricate Prints** *Artwork from Noh Theatre on Display at Phoenix Art Museum*

PHOENIX (July 2, 2014) – The *Quiet Rage, Gentle Wail: Prints and Masks of Japanese Noh Theatre* exhibition is on view at [Phoenix Art Museum](#) until November 16 and explores Noh, the traditional Japanese theatre form that incorporates music, dance and drama. Noh theatre was established in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and its dramas explore profound human emotions through subtle and symbolic performances that tell stories adopted from well-known myths, historical events and classical literatures. On display are 22 Noh masks, a pair of two-panel screens and 38 prints that depict Noh actors on stage.

The exhibition spans a variety of media related to Noh theatre to lend a multi-dimensional approach to appreciating its aesthetics: simplicity, nuance and the distaste for realism. The pre-modern and early modern era masks vary in depiction from a quiet woman to a wrathful demon, but the artistry lies in understanding ways the actor can play with light and the mask's tilt to portray a variety of emotions. In addition to human figures some of the masks were used for divine, demonic and animal roles of Noh theatre. Displaying many masks together illustrates the broad range of Noh characters and how each mask with its emblematic expression comes alive during a masterful performance.

*Phoenix Art Museum's Curator of Asian Art Janet Baker, Ph.D. said, "Noh is an elegant and restrained form of theatre that moves very slowly. There are moments in the drama where the actors actually stand still, allowing the audience to appreciate the beauty of their pose, as well as their costume and mask." Baker added, "These are the moments captured in the prints by Kōgyo and his followers, who studied Noh theatre in depth in order to portray it so beautifully in these images."*

In addition to the masks are wonderful prints produced by the publishing house of Daikokuya Heikichi who, aiming to revive the tradition of fine Japanese woodblock prints, commissioned painter Tsukioka Kōgyo (1869-1927) to capture the quintessential moments of Noh drama in his work. Done on high-quality paper with silver and gold accents, the prints show that the woodblock carvers and printers masterfully recreated the delicate touch of brushwork by Kōgyo. The exhibition also includes prints by Kōgyo's daughter Tsukioka Gyokusei (1908-2009) who carried on this tradition.

James K. Ballinger, The Sybil Harrington Director at Phoenix Art Museum, said, "This exhibition draws upon two wonderful recent gifts to Phoenix Art Museum from

members of our community. It demonstrates how our museum's growth comes from local collectors who are dedicated to this institution and its future." Ballinger added, "In 2009 Sherri Beadles and Gene Koeneman generously donated some Noh prints and a year later Roger Dunn gave us additional prints, a pair of two-panel screens and the masks to further strengthen our Asian art collection."

*Quiet Rage, Gentle Wail: Prints and Masks of Japanese Noh Theatre* was organized by Phoenix Art Museum. The exhibition is part of the three-year grant project, *Japan in Global Context*, organized by Arizona State University and funded by the Japan Foundation. The exhibition will be at Phoenix Art Museum until November 16, 2014. For further information about the exhibition including exhibition-related public programs please visit [phxart.org/exhibition/nohmask](http://phxart.org/exhibition/nohmask).

### **About Phoenix Art Museum**

Phoenix Art Museum is the largest art museum in the southwestern United States providing access to visual arts and educational programs. Top exhibitions are shown alongside the museum's collection of over 17,000 objects of American, Asian, European, Latin American, Western American, modern and contemporary art, photography and fashion design. Phoenix Art Museum hosts photography exhibitions through its landmark partnership with The University of Arizona's Center for Creative Photography. Visitors can also enjoy the PhxArtKids gallery, the Dorrance Sculpture Garden, the Thorne Miniature Rooms of historic interiors and a collection of works by renowned Arizona artist Philip C. Curtis. For additional information please visit [phxart.org](http://phxart.org) or call 602-257-1880.

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