

Press Release

Japanese Jewels: Imperial Silver Bonbonnières

November 5, 2025

The University Museum and Art Gallery, The University of Hong Kong is delighted to present *Japanese Jewels: Imperial Silver Bonbonnières*, an exhibition of precious boxes that illustrate a well-documented tradition in Japan, which rose to prominence during the Meiji era and became formalised in imperial ceremonies. These containers, often made from pure silver and adorned with gold inlays and enamel, regularly display motifs that symbolise auspicious elements such as longevity, prosperity, and harmony. The story of Japanese imperial bonbonnières is a story of both creation and reception—of the master artisans who made them and the carefully selected recipients who received them. Makers like Kobayashi, Miyamoto, or Muramatsu upheld court traditions through exacting craftsmanship, while recipients, from nobles to foreign envoys, engaged in a socially meaningful system of imperial recognition.

The opening of the exhibition was held at UMAG on November 4. Officiating guests included the Consul-General of Japan in Hong Kong, Ambassador Miura Jun, the collector Mr. Robin Markbreiter and UMAG Director Dr Florian Knothe.

Stylistically, Japanese silver bonbonnières exemplify artefacts shaped by encounters with European court practices, refined through technical and aesthetic adaptation, and ultimately transformed into powerful symbols of modern Japanese sovereignty. They demonstrate how a foreign object type, reinterpreted through national traditions of craftsmanship and ceremonial use, became an enduring component of Japan's imperial identity. Their evolution from Meiji modernisation to Reiwa minimalism tells a larger story about the material culture of power, the visual language of the Japanese court, and the role of objects in mediating historical memory. Though modest in scale, the bonbonnière encapsulates the convergence of courtly patronage, artisanal expertise, symbolic visual culture, and ritual within modern Japanese history.

All silver boxes on display are part of the Nancy and Robin Markbreiter Collection. This exhibition has been made possible through their generous support and the patronage of the Consulate-General of Japan in Hong Kong.



Details of the Exhibition

Period: November 5, 2025 (Wednesday) to February 8, 2026 (Sunday)

Opening Hours:

9:30 am–6 pm (Tuesday to Saturday)

1 pm–6 pm (Sunday)

Closed on Mondays, Public and University Holidays

Venue: 2/F, Fung Ping Shan Building, UMAG, HKU, 90 Bonham Road, Pokfulam, Hong Kong

Tel/Email: (852) 3917 5500 (General Enquiry) / museum@hku.hk

Admission: Free admission; In light of the HKU Tourist Flow Management Scheme, please enter via the ground floor of the Fung Ping Shan Building

Website: <https://umag.hku.hk/exhibition/japanese-jewels-imperial-silver-bonbonnieres/>

Connect with UMAG on Social Media:

Facebook: http://bit.ly/umag_facebook

Instagram: @umag_hku, #UMAG, #JapaneseJewels, #SilverBonbonnieres

YouTube: http://bit.ly/umag_youtube

LinkedIn: http://bit.ly/umag_linkedin

rednote: [香港大學美術博物館 UMAG](#)

About UMAG

UMAG was founded in 1953 as the Fung Ping Shan Museum. It was originally established as the Fung Ping Shan Library in 1932 in honour of its benefactor. For more information on UMAG, please click [here](#).

Media Enquiries

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Captions

For more images and exhibit captions, please click [here](#).

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