



# Kimono: A Modern History

By Terry Satsuki Milhaupt

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What is the kimono? Everyday garment? Art object? Symbol of Japan? As this book shows, the kimono has served all of these roles, its meaning changing across time and with the perspective of the wearer or viewer.

*Kimono: A Modern History* begins by exposing the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century foundations of the modern kimono fashion industry. It explores the crossover between ‘art’ and ‘fashion’ in this period at the hands of famous Japanese painters who worked with clothing pattern books and painted directly onto garments. With Japan’s exposure to Western fashion in the nineteenth century, and Westerners’ exposure to Japanese modes of dress and design, the kimono took on new associations and came to symbolize an exotic culture and an alluring female form. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the kimono industry was sustained through government support. The line between fashion and art became blurred as kimonos produced by famous designers were collected for their beauty and displayed in museums, rather than being worn as clothing. Today, the kimono has once again taken on new dimensions, as the Internet and social media proliferate images of the kimono as a versatile garment to be integrated into a range of individual styles.

*Kimono: A Modern History*, the inspiration for a major exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, not only tells the story of a distinctive garment’s ever-changing functions and image, but provides a novel perspective on Japan’s modernization and encounter with the West.

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## Editorial Review

### Review

“The gorgeous, vividly colored, and visually witty designs of the traditional Japanese garment referred to in modern times as kimono, things to wear,’ are the subject of this groundbreaking study. Through her insightful analysis of textile design, fabrics, dyes, designers, workshops, and distribution systems, the late Terry Satsuki Milhaupt has offered insights into the complex cultural and social history of modern Japan, with an emphasis on the shaping of national identity through the encounter with the West. Contextualizing the history of kimono in an era of rapid industrialization, this profusely illustrated volume also charts the evolving status and roles of women in Japanese society.”

(John T. Carpenter, Metropolitan Museum of Art)

“The kimono has long been a symbol of Asian femininity and Japan’s national identity. In the profusely illustrated *Kimono: A Modern History* (Reaktion), Terry Satsuki Milhaupt, one of the world’s leading experts in Japanese textiles, offers insights into the culture of modern Japan as well as the evolving status of women. . . . Is the kimono art? Is it fashion? It’s both, and much more.”

(*Boston Globe*)

“*Kimono: A Modern History* is a well-researched and engaging analysis of the multifaceted history of the kimono. Terry Satsuki Milhaupt’s examination of the local and global elements of the kimono and its enduring legacy into the twenty-first century is an important addition to the literature on Japanese art and design.”

(Sharon S. Takeda, Los Angeles County Museum of Art)

### About the Author

**Terry Satsuki Milhaupt** (1959–2012) was an independent art historian based in New York, a guest curator and an internationally recognized expert on Japanese textiles. She contributed essays to numerous exhibition catalogues and publications, including the *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion* (2010).

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