

OBJECT
of the **month**

August 2020



Japanese (Edo period, 1615–1868), *Scenes in and around Kyoto*, early 18th century, ink, color and gold on paper. Gift of Mrs. Virginia W. Kettering. 1976.272

BEGIN TRANSCRIPT

Hello, my name is Fabienne. I'm a Museum Guide at the Dayton Art Institute.

Today I would like to share this Japanese screen, called a byōbu. Byōbu translates as "a wind wall," or a "draft stopper." This byōbu is four feet high and almost nine feet long—wow!

These screens were introduced into Japan from China in the 8th century. It is made from a wooden lattice onto which paper is glued and then painted. So, lightweight and easy to move around.

This byōbu is titled "Scenes from around Kyoto." The artist is not known. It is painted in the Kanō School style using everyday scenes and gold leaf. Here, we're shown a birds-eye view, almost map-like, of the city of Kyoto, and there's two very important events taking place in this painting.

Over here, on the left side, is the first important event and we only catch a glimpse of it. We believe it is the Emperor Go-Mizunoo visiting shogun Tokugawa [Iemitsu] in his newly renovated Nijō Castle in 1626. It's shown as a rather small procession, partially obscured by clouds, for such an important emperor and

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compared to the rest of the painting, it's given very little attention. This might have been a subtle hint by the shogunate to reinforce his position as de facto ruler over the country in place of the emperor.

Meanwhile, over on the right side of the painting, we see the center of town and a parade is taking place—how exciting! The Gion Festival: it's still celebrated every July. There are floats and lively spectators lining the streets. We see city officials seated on an elevated stage, observing the festivities, just like we would do today. Along the side streets, we see merchants selling their wares and people browsing and running errands. Up on the top left, we see farmers working in their fields, unable to attend the city parade.

Screens like this were made as souvenirs for visitors. Most of those visitors were the new, wealthy merchant class.

Imagine this byōbu in your house, reflecting the warm glow of candlelight... a fond memory of your trip to Kyoto.

If you would like to see this beautiful screen in person, you can find it in the Asian collection, gallery 106, in the Dayton Art Institute or you can learn more online at daytonartinstitute.org.

Thank you for joining me today.

END TRANSCRIPT

Click [here](#) for full multimedia presentation.

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