


Museums Worcestershire Make-athon Challenges

Japanese Art: Design your own kimono

Learn about Japanese prints and have a go at designing your own kimono 

Discover: 5 facts about colour, design and symbolism in Japanese prints:

1. The colour was in the form of watercolour, gouache or Sumi ink. This was mixed with a Nori paste (glue) which helped to bind the colour and add a brilliance or glow to the print.
2. The colour dyes were taken from plants. It was believed that the colour dye would keep the spirit of the plant alive and maintain the medicinal properties of the plant.

For example, blue came from indigo. The Indigo plant was used to treat stings and bites, and so if you wore blue it would protect you from insect stings and snake bites. Red was a colour linked to youth and glamour (taken from the Safflower).

3. The colour was printed on to Japanese paper known as Washi – this was often made from the inner bark of the mulberry tree and gave a lovely texture to print on.
4. Flowers and plants often appeared in the design of prints. Peonies, Wysteria and Hollyhocks were firm favourites – these plants represented the seasons.

The Pine, Bamboo and the Plum were known as the 3 friends of winter, representing evergreen, growth and spring renewal.

5. Birds were also used a lot. The crane, a beautiful and elegant bird, was believed to live for a 1000 years and to rest with the immortals. And so, the crane was often used in designs to represent a long and good life.



Explore:

Listen to our YouTube video about the prints <https://youtu.be/tahRF6hpXUg>

Create:

Many of our lovely prints show a beautiful lady dressed in a kimono. Kimono means 'the thing to wear' and the fabric choice of the kimono demonstrates the fashion of the time as well as the social status and wealth of the wearer. There are also many symbolic messages in the kimono patterns.

Look at these beautiful Kimono patterns in our Japanese prints, and have a go at designing your own on the next page!



To find more exciting make-athon ideas visit www.museumsworcestershire.org.uk/collections/activities/

