

Essence of Japan within The Okura Tokyo as the Atelier of Beauty Vol. 2 Heian Room Wall Decorations

Series offering a glimpse of how our treasures are being passed on for the September 12 opening

Since banquet rooms are used for various purposes, and are places where many people gather, they are usually designed without unique characteristics. Yet the Heian Room, the largest banquet room of The Okura Tokyo, is clearly distinctive. That is because the wall decoration motif is taken from the ornamental paper of the national treasure “Kokin Wakashu Preface” from the Okura Museum of Art collected by Kishichiro Okura, the hotel’s founder.

* Details of the Okura Museum of Art on page 5

■ The Heian Room, the Largest Banquet Room at The Okura Tokyo

With approximately 2,000 m² of space, the Heian Room can accommodate up to 2,000 guests in buffet style. To adorn this space, a total of 30 types of wall decorations in 11 patterns based on the “Kokin Wakashu Preface” will be arranged in a folding-screen style.



■ The Challenge of Reproducing the Original Texture: Paper and layout, and the analysis leading to discovery

The most notable characteristic of the original “Kokin Wakashu Preface” is the elegant ornamental paper that makes one forget it is over 1,000 years old. To express the unique texture of the scroll, hand-made Japanese paper from Echizen City, Fukui Prefecture renowned



for the long history of the finest quality and skills among regions producing Japanese paper, is used. The three major materials for Japanese paper are *gampi*, *mitsumata*, and *kozo*. The type of paper selected is made by mixing *mitsumata* with a beautiful sheen, and *kozo* featuring long and robust fibers.

The layout of the wall decorations was based on the composition of the original writing paper, so as not to spoil the atmosphere of the scroll motif, and the visual impression was also considered by spanning the panels across left and right walls.



Moreover, the actual ornamental paper is vertically long, but the walls being decorated are horizontally long, so the patterns had to be extended on both sides. The motif patterns have continuous parts and non-continuous parts, so for the latter, the additions were completed by analyzing the pattern structure, and matching the joining parts.

During the pattern-making process, the original scroll was closely examined, leading to a discovery of patterns that could not be seen in the images in the “Kokin Wakashu Preface” catalog. By analyzing the high-resolution images of the scroll with oblique lighting, the obscure patterns on white background could be distinguished.

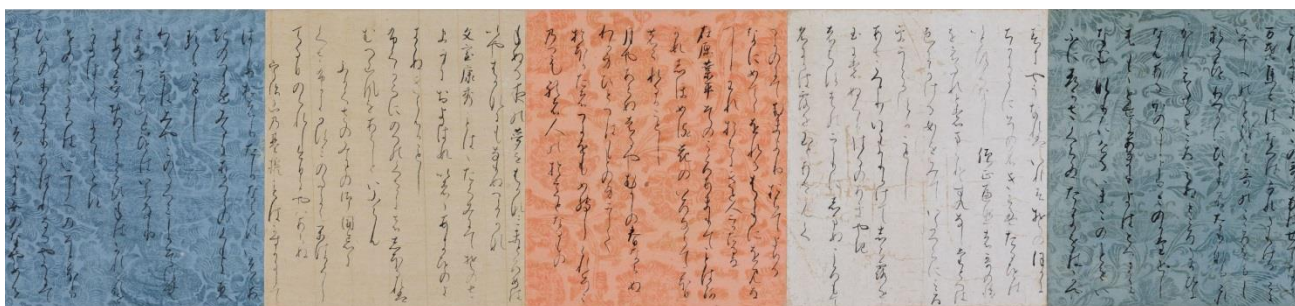
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■ Why the Kokin Wakashu Motif Is Used for the Large Banquet Room

Comment by Okura Museum of Art Curator Director Yuji Takahashi

The patterns to be used for the design of the Heian Room largest banquet hall are from the “Kokin Wakashu Preface,” one of the three national treasures at Okura Museum of Art. The preface by Tsurayuki Kino describing the essence of Japanese poetry is written by Sadazane Fujiwara, the greatest calligrapher at the time, on splendid ornamental paper. We reproduced the paper with today’s cutting-edge technology.

These ornamental papers were decorative writing paper imported from China in the 11th century, made by bamboo film embossed with silk cloth and tinted with pigments such as white, light pink, light blue, and light spring green; then, various other patterns were also introduced by techniques such as mica printing or empty printing.

This type of paper was prized by nobles in the Heian Era, and used for beautiful ornamental books decorated for gifts.



National treasure “Kokin Wakashu Preface” (part)

◆ Design Based on Ornamental Paper Patterns

The patterns on the ornamental paper of the “Kokin Wakashu Preface” originate from Ancient Egypt. The arabesque that came via Greece, and *hosoge* (①、arabesque flower pattern) that appears in the Shoso-in treasures, *gassho*, (②), *unkaku* (③), lion (④), peacock and peony

(⑤), and tortoise shell (⑥) can also be found.

These all have auspicious meanings, symbolizing happiness, prosperity, longevity, and protection from calamity.

① **Hosoge (arabesque flower pattern)**

Imaginary flower, integration of all beautiful flowers



② **Gassho Arabesque**

Facing lotus flowers bearing seed



③ **Unkaku**

Flying crane and auspicious clouds



④ **Lion Arabesque**

Lively lions that protect kings and Buddha



⑤ **Peacock and Peony Arabesque**

Peacock, a lucky bird of ancient India, and peony, the king of all flowers



⑥ **Tortoise Shell**

A unique tortoise shell pattern including tortoises





The original “Kokin Wakashu Preface” scroll was created with attention to the combination of ornamental paper color and the patterns. The ornamental writing papers with auspicious patterns fascinated the Heian nobles and were widely passed down over the ages. The paper has a remarkable characteristic of revealing different patterns depending on the lighting, and is a befitting design for the Heian Room where many guests gather.

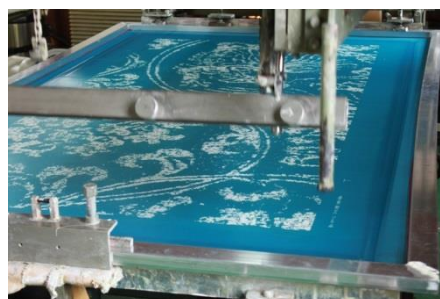
We would be delighted if guests can enjoy a moment of elegance and glamor, contemplating the “Kokin Wakashu” that has been loved by people for over 1,000 years, and of the Japanese aesthetics found in the composition of the scroll’s writing paper.

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■ Techniques for Reproduction: Authentic impression at 20 times magnification

The original “Kokin Wakashu Preface” is a small scroll about 20 centimeters square. The biggest challenge in reproduction was magnifying the small design to a 3.65 x 4.33 m size. Repeated efforts were made to obtain a faithful reproduction that conveys the same visual impression as the original.



This art was created by overprinting one color per block using silkscreen. So the completed pattern was decomposed into single-color blocks with a maximum size of 2 x 1 m, then the films were made, and printed. During this decomposing process, the challenge was to accurately express the original blurring and wrinkles on the completed paper image, as well as the graduations of color brightness. This was solved by printing some patterns with two blocks, and in some cases even three to achieve the details of the textures. The design for each panel consists of 10 sheets of 2 x 1 m films, and a total 300 sheets are necessary for the whole Heian Room.



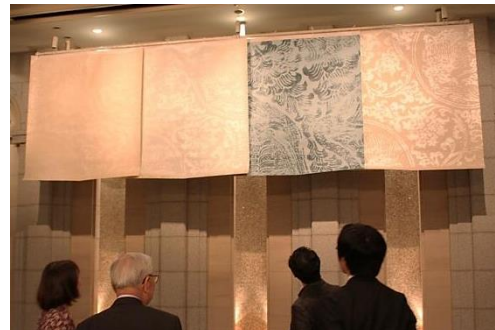
■ Trial and Error for Color Pattern Reproduction: 500 sheets tested to reach the final 30 with the right coloring and pattern appearance

To make the final selection of the 30 panels, 15 patterns each for the left and right walls of the Heian Room, were tested over a period of two and a half years by combining 11 patterns on different background colors. In the beginning, verification was carried out by comparing 30



cm square miniature samples with 2 m square

actual size samples of the major motifs to grasp the balance of the pattern expression and color. Then, 35 cm square actual-size patterns were verified for all 30 panels. With actual-size patterns, it was necessary to see the entire panel to make a proper assessment. Even when a color had been chosen, there could be a completely different impression when the parts were pasted together and displayed as a large image. Therefore, repeated



trials were made by simulating the completed images, a process that required the craftsman's intuition and skill. Along with the fine-tuning for each motif, repeated block and color adjustments were made to attain the closest impression to the original scroll when the sheets were arranged side by side, and the design for the 30 panels was finalized.

Okura Museum of Art

The Okura Museum of Art was established in 1917 by Kihachiro Okura, a successful businessman during the Meiji to Taisho Era. It was the first incorporated foundation art museum in Japan. The museum's collection consists of approximately 2,500 works of art, including three national treasures, 13 important cultural properties, and 44 important art objects. These were mainly Japanese and Oriental antiquities collected by Kihachiro throughout his life, and Japanese antiquities and modern paintings collected by the succeeding son, Kishichiro Okura.

The museum has been closed for renovation since April 2014, and after five years, will reopen when The Okura Tokyo opens. The 1928 building designed by the architect Chuta Ito is now registered as a tangible cultural property.

Media related inquiries

Hotel Okura Tokyo Co., Ltd Public Relations: Matsumoto/Oguri/Hattori
〒105-0001 2-10-4 Toranomon, Minato-ku, Tokyo TEL: 03-3224-6731 (direct)
E-mail:pr@tokyo.hotelokura.co.jp