

The British  
Museum

# Museum explorers journey across Japan



Families  
Ages 6+

The Hamlyn family trails are supported by

**HT** THE HELEN HAMLYN TRUST

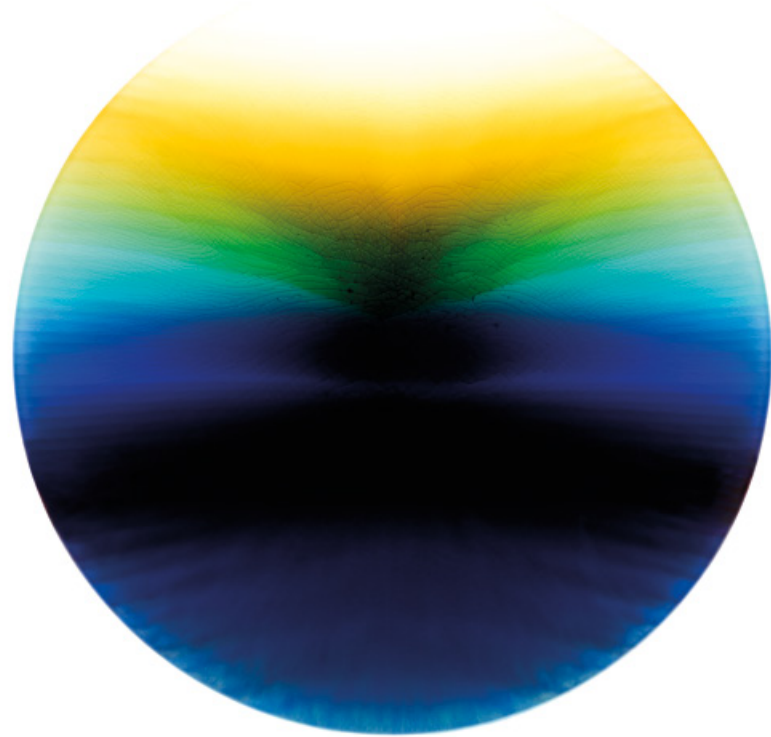
# Welcome

This trail guides you on a journey of exploration and discovery around the Museum. On the way you'll track down some amazing treasures and learn tales of human history. Whichever way you go, and whatever you discover, enjoy yourself! If you ever feel lost, just ask a member of staff for help.

## Useful information for families

- Accessible toilets and baby changing facilities are available. You can breastfeed and bottle feed anywhere on the Museum's grounds but if you would like more privacy, please use the feeding room in the Ford Centre for Young Visitors in The Clore Centre for Education on the Lower floor, Level -1, or one of our baby changing spaces. For details, ask at the Families Desk or Information Desk in the Great Court, or pick up a map of the whole Museum.
- You can leave fold-up pushchairs in the cloakroom free of charge.
- You can find child-friendly food at the cafés. High chairs are available.
- You can use the Ford Centre for Young Visitors to picnic with your family at weekends and during school holidays.

# Museum explorers journey across Japan



The sun is an important symbol in **Japan**. What do you think of when you see the sun in the sky?

The Hamlyn family trails are supported by

**HT** THE HELEN HAMLYN TRUST

The Families Desk, located in the Great Court, is open on weekends and school holidays from 10.00–12.30 and 13.15–16.30

[illegible]

**Discover ancient and modern objects from a fascinating nation as you journey across Japan. You'll need the expert eyes of a historian to track down every object!**



**Your journey starts in Room 92, Upper floor, Level 5. This gallery is at the top of the Museum on the North side. You'll need to go up stairs to access it. If you have a pushchair please use the lift.**



Case numbers can be hard to find – don't be afraid to ask a member of staff for help finding an object

- 1** **Welcome to Japan**  
Room 92
- 2** **Ding dong!**  
Room 93
- 3** **What's your wish?**  
Room 93
- 4** **Metal marvels**  
Room 93
- 5** **Dramatic dance**  
Room 93
- 6** **Buckle up**  
Room 93
- 7** **Creative crafts**  
Room 94
- 8** **Dawn is rising**  
Room 94

# 1 Welcome to Japan



Go to Room 92 on the Upper floor, Level 5

**Kannon**, a Buddhist deity, welcomes you to the Japanese galleries. Kannon is kind and merciful and wants to help people.



This statue of Kannon was made about 1930 and is a replica of a famous statue from the seventh century

How many different ways of being kind can you think of?

An act of kindness might help someone or cheer them up. Choose one to do today.

What sort of help do you think you might need as you journey through Japan?

Perhaps you could imagine Kannon supporting and helping you during your adventure.





## 2 Ding dong!



Go to Room 93 and find Case 5

These bells were **buried in hillsides**. Originally, bells like these would have been able to ring, but later they were designed to be more decorative and too large to be rung. It's thought the bells belonged to the community, and were not owned by one person.



No one knows exactly why these bells were buried – archaeologists have studied them but it remains a mystery!

These bells might have been buried in rituals to help farmers' crops grow well.

Have you ever thought of something as your 'lucky charm'? What was it and why?

Can you name any other things people do or say for luck?

Some people cross their fingers or say 'break a leg'. How many different ways can you think of?

### 3 What's your wish?



Find the statue of Kichijōten in Case 5

Cultures are always influencing each other and trading not just objects, but also ideas. **Kichijōten** is a Buddhist deity who was developed from an Indian Hindu goddess.

**Can you pronounce this Buddhist deity's name?**

Sound it out:

Ki – chi – jō (long 'o') – ten.

**Can you copy her pose?**

Kichijōten is a kind deity – her right arm is held out as if in welcome and her left hand holds a wish-granting jewel.

**If you could have one wish granted, what would it be and why?**

Talk to your group about your wishes. Are any of the wishes similar?



The sculpture of Kichijōten was carved from a single block of wood



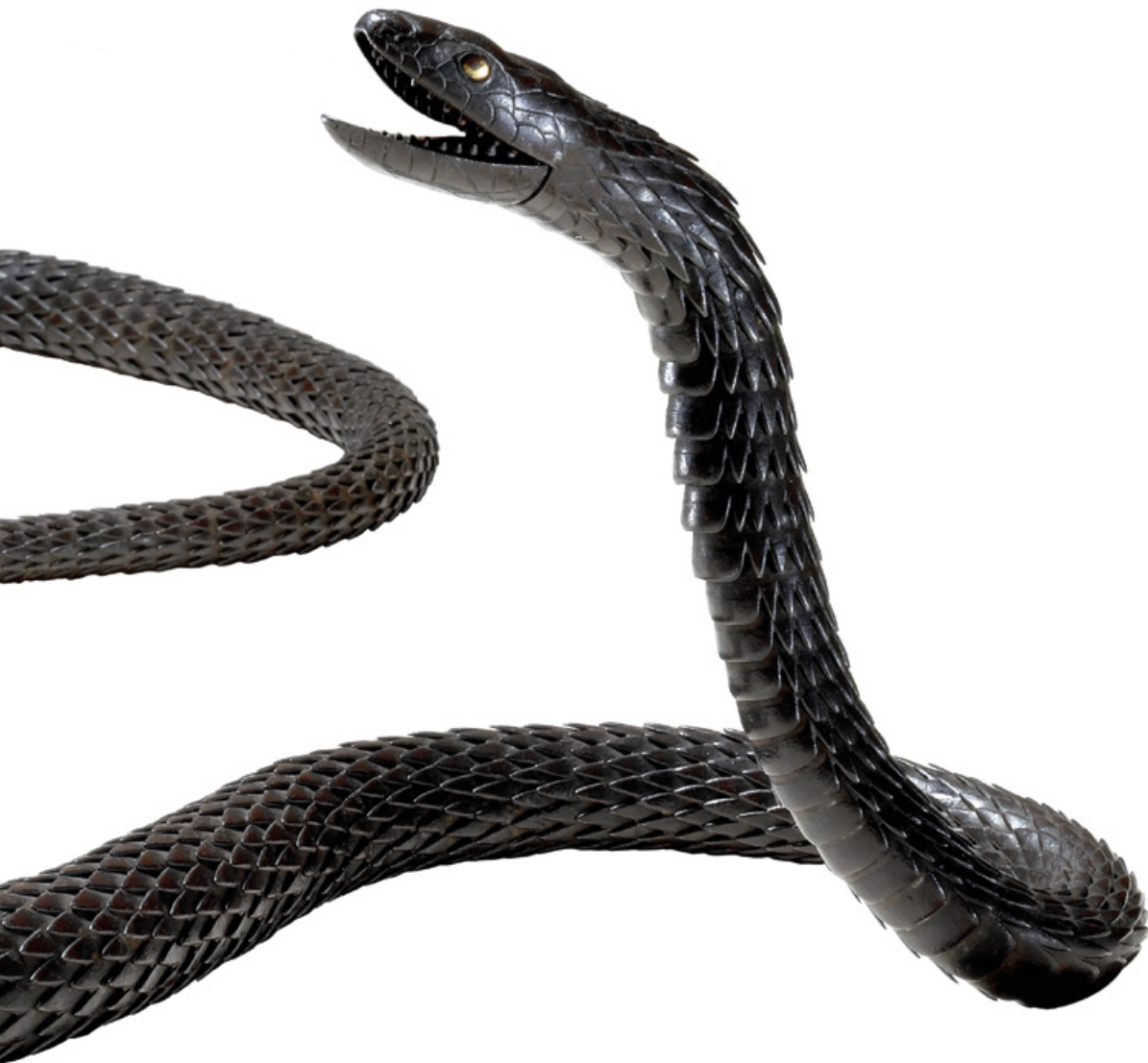


## 4 Metal marvels



### Find Case 9

The islands of Japan used to have great quantities of iron, copper, gold and silver. Metalworking has been an important skill on the islands from ancient times and is still evolving today.

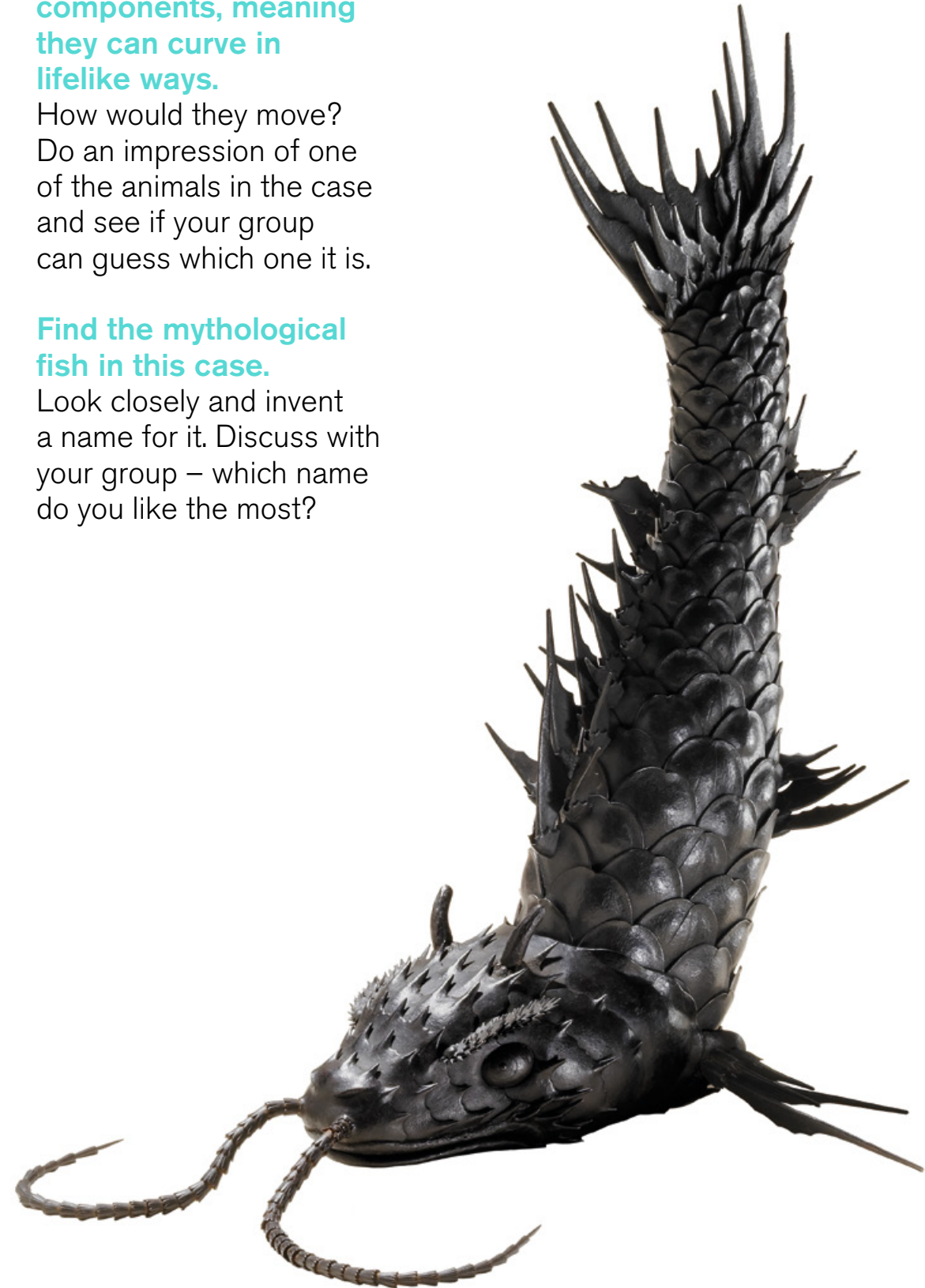


These animals are made of individual metal components, meaning they can curve in lifelike ways.

How would they move? Do an impression of one of the animals in the case and see if your group can guess which one it is.

### Find the mythological fish in this case.

Look closely and invent a name for it. Discuss with your group – which name do you like the most?



## 5 Dramatic dance



### Find Case 6

During traditional Japanese dances known as *bugaku*, performers would often wear elaborate masks and intricate costumes to bring stories to life.

**Find this mask and look closely at all the detail.**

What does this mask tell you about the character it portrays? Discuss with your group.

**Imagine you were performing your own story.**

What would the mask you wear look like? Can you act like the character your mask represents?





## 6 Buckle up



### Find Case 21

These small figures are called **netsuke**. Originally men would attach *netsuke* to their bag and hang them over the sash around their waist to stop the bag from falling.



Many of the figures in this case are inspired by nature because *netsuke* artists take inspiration from the world around them

Find and point to these animals. Who can find them all first?

- ☐ Pigeon
- ☐ Hare
- ☐ Toad
- ☐ Octopus
- ☐ Horses
- ☐ Goat
- ☐ Goldfish

Look closely and choose your favourite.

What do you like about it?  
Did anyone in your group choose the same *netsuke*?

Imagine that you are a *netsuke* artist.

If you could design your own *netsuke*, what animal would you choose? What does this animal mean to you?



## 7

## Creative crafts



Go to Room 94 and find Case 13

This metal vase is shaped like a **sponge gourd**. The inscription on the vase tells us that it was made by Shōami Katsuyoshi. He began learning the skills of metalworking at the age of 13.

Look very carefully  
at this busy vase.  
Can you see:

- ☐ Two birds?
- ☐ A beetle?
- ☐ A hungry snake?
- ☐ A hole for placing flower arrangements?

About 50 species of  
snakes live in Japan,  
three of which are  
**poisonous**.

Do you know how many  
species of poisonous  
snakes live in the UK?

Answer: Only one – the adder



A sponge gourd is a  
type of vegetable that  
produces clusters of  
striking yellow flowers



## 8 Dawn is rising



### Find Case 15

Find the large dish called *Dawn*. This dish uses three main colours to illustrate the rising sun of dawn. It was created by the artist Tokuda Yasokichi III, who is known as a **'Living National Treasure'** in Japan.



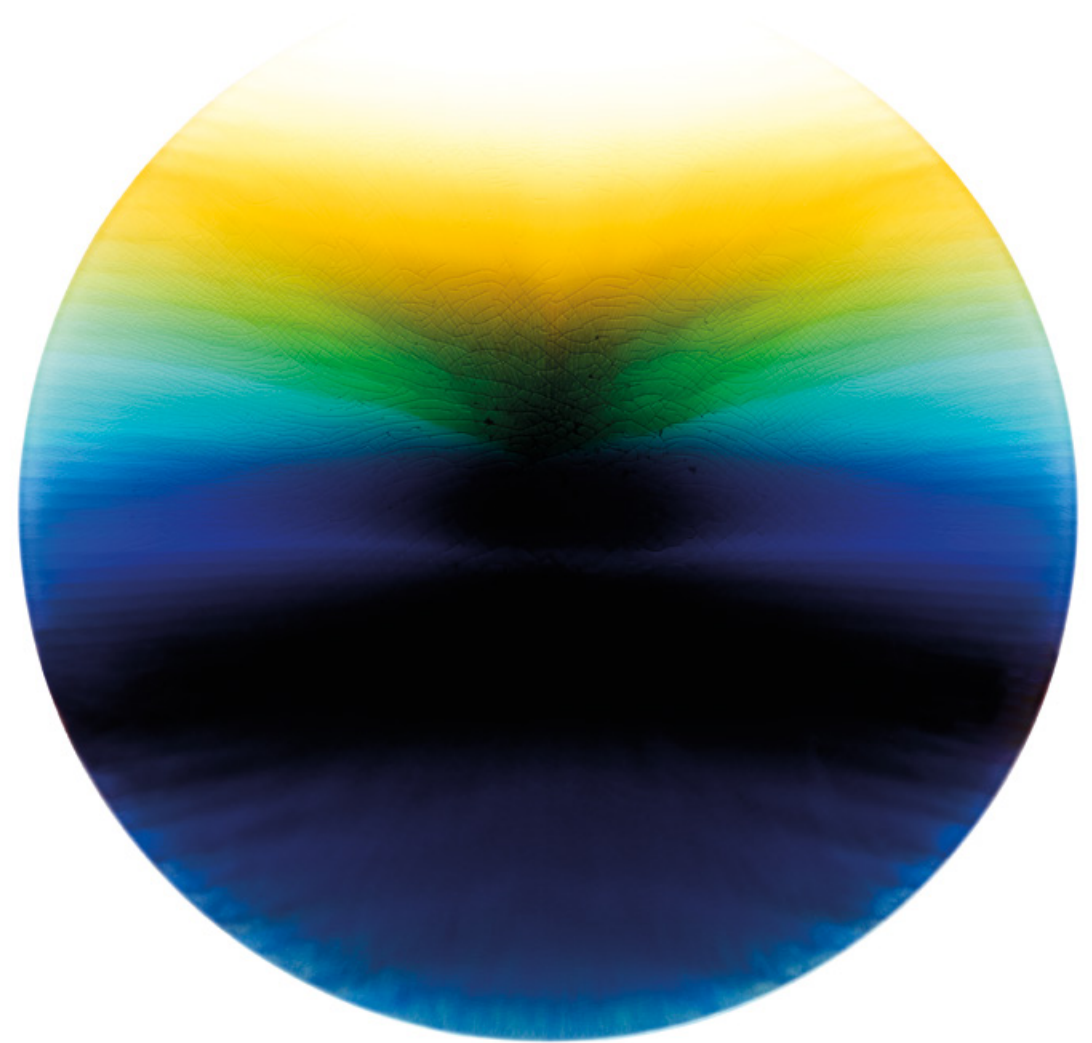
**'Living National Treasure'** is a special title given to people who preserve the cultural history of Japan through practising traditional skills and techniques

### What's your favourite time of the day?

What three colours do you associate with it? Talk to your group about your answers.

### Remember your colours and get creative at home!

Using the three colours you've chosen, can you recreate your own multicoloured masterpiece?







# You have completed the journey across Japan trail!

You can find even more interesting objects from Japan in other parts of the Museum:

- ☐ Imagine wearing the silk slipper from Japan in Case 14 in Room 1
- ☐ Discover the earliest Japanese coins in Case 9 in Room 68
- ☐ Compare the Japanese watch in Room 39 to a modern day watch



## Head back to the Families Desk to receive a stamp!

What an adventure that was. You've travelled across a nation, explored ideas and skills, and found out lots of fascinating things about Japan. Of all the things you discovered, which was your favourite?

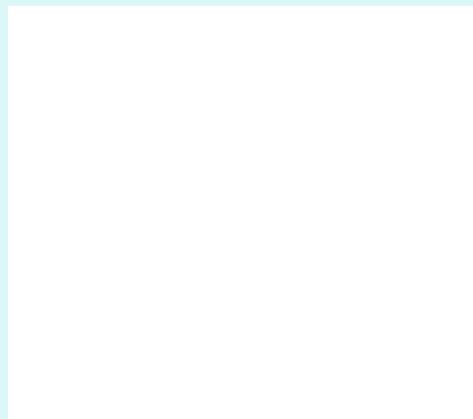
Name \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Favourite object \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## At home

Other things you could do when you get home:

- ☐ Perform your own *bugaku* dance. Choreograph it and teach it to your friends!
- ☐ Make your own *netsuke* – get creative with some modelling materials.
- ☐ Find out how to say 'hello' and 'goodbye' in Japanese.

Complete your journey across Japan when you get home by drawing your idea for the other side of this mask.

## Trails in the Museum explorers series

### Ages 6+

- Africa around the world
- Ancient Britain
- Ancient Egypt
- Ancient Greeks
- Fantastic creatures
- Journey across Japan

### Ages 3+

- Colour and shape
- Time to count

You can find out more  
about our family activities  
at [britishmuseum.org](https://britishmuseum.org)

**See you at the British  
Museum again soon!**

Cover: Tokuda Yasokichi III (1933–2009),  
*Reimi (Dawn)*. Glazed porcelain dish, 1992.

- 1 Niiro Chunosuke (1868–1954),  
reproduction of statue of a seventh  
century AD Kudara Kannon. Japan,  
1931–32.
- 2 Dotaku (bell) made of bronze. Japan,  
200 BC–AD 250.  
  
Dotaku (bell) made of bronze, Japan,  
200 BC–AD 250.
- 3 Wooden figure of Kichijōten, carved in  
'ichiboku zukuri' style. Japan, 11th century.
- 4 Articulated figure of a snake made of  
gilded iron by Myochin Muneyoshi.  
Japan, about 1750–1850.  
  
Articulated iron catfish by Myochin  
Munemitsu. Japan, about 1701–1850.
- 5 *Bugaku* mask, lacquered and gilt wood  
and hair, Japan, 17th century.
- 6 *Netsuke* goldfish made of boxwood,  
Japan, 19th century.  
  
*Netsuke* hare with loquats, made of  
ivory by Yamaguchi Okatomo, Japan,  
late 18th century.  
  
*Netsuke* pigeon, made of ivory by Ohara  
Mitsuhiro in Japan, mid 19th century.  
  
*Netsuke* octopus and pot, made of ivory by  
Ohara Mitsuhiro, Japan, mid 19th century.
- 7 Hanging flower vase in the form of a gourd  
entwined with vine, Shoami Katsuyoshi.  
Japan, late 19th century.
- 8 Tokuda Yasokichi III (1933–2009), *Reimi*  
(*Dawn*). Glazed porcelain dish, 1992.

At home activity: *Bugaku* mask, lacquered  
and gilt wood and hair. Japan, 17th century.

**The British Museum**  
Great Russell Street  
London WC1B 3DG  
[britishmuseum.org](https://britishmuseum.org)

© 2023 The Trustees of the British Museum

The Hamlyn family trails are supported by

**HT** THE HELEN HAMLYN TRUST