

## **From Geisha to Diva comes alive online at Kelowna Art Gallery**

**April 16, 2020 – Kelowna, BC:** The fascinating life of Ichimaru (1906-1997), one of the most famous geishas of the 20th Century, is told through a collection of her rare and magnificent kimono and personal effects in a new exhibition at the Kelowna Art Gallery.

*From Geisha to Diva: The Kimono of Ichimaru* gives visitors a glimpse into the beautiful and complex world of geisha. It is told through the eyes of Ichimaru who rose from rags to riches and captivated the Japanese public's imagination during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The only problem is that like most other cultural institutions, the Kelowna Art Gallery is temporarily closed to the public.

Beyond its doors, lies a stunning collection of 32 kimono, 12 obi, a number of decorative combs, fans, hairpins, umbrellas, books, LP records, and Ichimaru's personal shamisen. These are accompanied by a selection of woodblock prints, paintings, and scrolls. Together, they help to draw the curtains back on the complexities of geishas and the vital role they played within Japanese society.

"Our team had only just completed installing this ambitious exhibition, when all of the preventive measures to combat the spread of COVID-19 were put in place," says Nataley Nagy, Executive Director at the Gallery. "Since then, we have dreamt up ways to bring this exhibition to life in people's homes. We hope that by sharing these video tours, art activities, photos, and exhibition resources, people can virtually explore what they might have experienced in person."

The first two video tours in a series of four are available now on the Gallery's website. The videos are all kept to under five minutes long and explore bite-sized selections from the exhibition. The first one answers the questions, "What is a Geisha?" and "Who was Ichimaru?" while visually transporting the viewer into the exhibition.

Education Coordinator of Adult Programming, Victoria Verge, takes viewers on a fascinating look inside Geisha style in the second video, offering a closer examination of Ichimaru's katsura (or wig), along with her combs, hairpins, and other fashion accessories.

Feeling more creative? A step-by-step video that shows viewers how to create their very own origami kimono will have people folding like a pro in no time.

The Gallery's website [www.kelownaartgallery.com](http://www.kelownaartgallery.com) is where one can go to find this and other exhibition-related content.

*From Geisha to Diva: The Kimono of Ichimaru* is organized and circulated by the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria and curated by Barry Till, Curator Emeritus of Asian Art. It is generously supported by Oland Baxter.

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### **Media Inquiries**

Joshua Desnoyers | Marketing and Events Coordinator

### **Kelowna Art Gallery**

1315 Water Street | Kelowna, BC | V1Y 9R3

250-762-2226 ext. 305

[josh@kelownaartgallery.com](mailto:josh@kelownaartgallery.com) | [kelownaartgallery.com](http://kelownaartgallery.com)