Nashville’s Frist Center Presents *Samurai: The Way of the Warrior*
November 4, 2016–January 16, 2017

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (September 8, 2016)—The Frist Center for the Visual Arts presents *Samurai: The Way of the Warrior*, a dramatic and historical exhibition that examines the traditions of this legendary warrior class and how their political dominance for nearly seven hundred years profoundly affected Japanese art and culture. Drawn from the rich holdings of the Museo Stibbert, a museum primarily devoted to arms and armor in Florence, Italy, the exhibition will be on view in Nashville from November 4, 2016, through January 16, 2017, in the Frist’s Ingram Gallery.

Featuring more than ninety elaborately ornamented functional and decorative objects created between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, this dynamic exhibition provides insight into the life of these warriors and investigates their moral, cultural, and aesthetic codes. “The Stibbert’s Japanese collection is considered one of the oldest, largest, and most important outside of Japan,” says Frist Center curator Katie Delmez. “In this exhibition, our visitors will have a rare opportunity to see firsthand the fine craftsmanship and remarkable creativity harnessed to make these utilitarian works of art.”

With a selection of nine full suits of armor, twelve expressive helmets (*kabuto*), and numerous decorated swords (*katana*) and sword fittings, along with a monumental sixty-foot handscroll, sumptuous standing screens, and lacquer wares, *Samurai: The Way of the Warrior* showcases the skill of medieval and early modern Japanese artisans. “While functional in its ability to protect the wearer, armor for the elite samurai was also very visually striking, intricately constructed with materials such as bearskin, buffalo horn, horsehair, ivory, lacquer, and silk,” says Delmez. “The armor was designed to express the individuality and power of the warrior and, when not in use, was often displayed in his home.”
Samurai, a term that roughly translates as “those who serve,” refers to the elite warriors who played an important role in Japanese politics and society from the late twelfth century until the mid-nineteenth century. Shōguns, or supreme military leaders, governed Japan as de facto rulers until 1867 when the military government was abolished and the emperor returned to power. The values emphasized by the samurai included loyalty, courage, honor, and personal cultivation. During prolonged periods of peacetime and stability, the samurai increased their attention to aristocratic pastimes such as poetry, music, and tea ceremonies. This exhibition includes luxurious objects such as lacquered calligraphy and smoking boxes, an incense tray, a mother-of-pearl inlaid processional riding saddle and stirrups, and a gilded folding chair that was part of a bridal trousseau for a member of the Tokugawa shōgunate clan.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the film series “Samurai and Cinema” will offer an eclectic selection of full-length influential Japanese samurai films. This program, representing a collaboration between the Frist Center, Belcourt Theatre, International Lens at Vanderbilt University, and Light + Sound Machine at Third Man Records, will offer screenings at four locations around Nashville. Visit fristcenter.org/film for more information.

As part of the Frist Center’s presentation of the exhibition, an education gallery will allow visitors to test their knowledge of samurai history at interactive electronic game stations.

Exhibition Credit

This exhibition was organized by Contemporanea Progetti SRL with the Museo Stibbert, Florence, Italy.

Sponsor Acknowledgment

Platinum Sponsor: The HCA Foundation on behalf of HCA/TriStar Health

Supporting Sponsor: The Nissan Foundation

This exhibition is supported in part by the Friends of Asian Art, Metro Nashville Arts Commission, the Tennessee Arts Commission, and the National Endowment for the Arts.
Public Programs

Friday, November 4
6:30 p.m.
Frist Center Auditorium
Free
First come, first seated

Opening Lecture: “The Arms and Armor of the Samurai” presented by Thomas D. Conlan, professor of East Asian studies and history, Princeton University

Join us for the opening lecture of Samurai: The Way of the Warrior, delivered by Thomas D. Conlan, professor of East Asian studies and history at Princeton University. In discussing the remarkable objects on display, Dr. Conlan will explain what the arms and armor of the samurai reveal about Japan’s wars between 1200 and 1700. He also will speak of the way these functional yet beautiful objects illuminate much about Japanese culture and society, reflecting the wealth, status, aesthetics, and beliefs of their owners.

Dr. Conlan has focused his research on the samurai, exploring how processes such as warfare determined the politics, ideals, and social matrix of Japan from the tenth through the sixteenth centuries. His publications include State of War: The Violent Order of Fourteenth-Century Japan and Weapons and Fighting Techniques of the Samurai Warrior, 1200–1877 AD.

Thursday, November 17, or Saturday, November 19
9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.
Eduator Workshop
Samurai: The Way of the Warrior

$25 Frist Center members; $30 not-yet-members
(all materials, gallery admission, parking validation, continental breakfast, and lunch included)

Registration required by November 14. Select either November 17 or November 19, and visit fristcenter.org/educator to reserve your place. Space is limited to 20 participants each day. Questions? Call 615.744.3355.

Learn about the role of samurai in Japanese politics and society. Go on a curator-led tour of Samurai: The Way of the Warrior and take part in writing and art-making activities related to the exhibition.

Film Series: “Samurai and Cinema”

Bold, powerful, deadly—these words epitomize the samurai of the silver screen. Inspired by the historical caste of warriors, samurai films tell human stories with rousing action and adventure. Exemplifying the archetype of a noble warrior, these characters continue to captivate audiences, whether they appear in stately period films or kitschy slashers.

Join us for an eclectic series of influential Japanese samurai films at four locations around Nashville. The Frist Center’s “Samurai and Cinema” partners are Belcourt Theatre, International Lens at Vanderbilt University, and Light + Sound Machine at Third Man Records. Please visit fristcenter.org/film for a full list of screenings and prices.

This series is presented in conjunction with the exhibition Samurai: The Way of the Warrior, on view at the Frist Center from November 4, 2016, through January 16, 2017.
Wednesday, November 9
7:30 p.m.
Film Series: “Samurai and Cinema”
*Yojimbo* (1961)

International Lens
Sarratt Cinema, Vanderbilt University (2301 Vanderbilt Place)
Free
Introduction by Yoshikuni Igarashi, professor of history, Vanderbilt University Asian Studies Program

The incomparable Toshiro Mifune stars in Akira Kurosawa’s visually stunning and darkly comic samurai story. To rid a terror-stricken village of corruption, wily master-less samurai Sanjuro turns a range war between two evil clans to his own advantage. This exhilarating genre-twister remains an influential and entertaining film. Directed by Akira Kurosawa. NR. Japanese with English subtitles. Blu-ray. 110 minutes.

Thursday, November 17
8:00 p.m.
Film Series: “Samurai and Cinema”
TBD

Third Man Records

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November Date TBD
Time TBD
Film: *Harakiri* (1962)

Belcourt Theatre

Following the collapse of his clan, an unemployed samurai arrives at the manor of Lord Iyi, begging to be allowed to commit ritual suicide on the property. But when the samurai inquires about a younger samurai who arrived before him, things take an unexpected turn. Winner of the Cannes Film Festival’s Special Jury Prize, directed by Masaki Kobayashi and starring the great Tatsuya Nakadai is a fierce evocation of individual agency in the face of a corrupt and hypocritical system. Directed by Masaki Kobayashi. NR. Japanese with English subtitles. 133 minutes.

Friday, December 9
7:00 p.m.
Film Series: “Samurai and Cinema”
Film: *The Hidden Fortress* (1959)

Frist Center Auditorium
Free
First come, first seated
139 minutes. NR. 35 mm. Japanese with English subtitles.

Experience the adventure of one of Akira Kurosawa’s most beloved films. *The Hidden Fortress* stars Toshiro Mifune as a general guarding his defeated clan’s princess as the two make their way across enemy territory, accompanied by a pair of bumbling, conniving peasants and pursued by a menacing enemy.
Friday, January 13
7:00 p.m.
Frist Center Auditorium
Free
First come, first seated

One of the most thrilling movie epics of all time, *Seven Samurai* tells the story of a sixteenth-century Japanese village whose desperate inhabitants hire seven warriors to protect them from invaders. Considered the masterpiece of acclaimed director Akira Kurosawa, this film features legendary actors and riveting action, weaving philosophy and entertainment into an unforgettable tale of courage and hope. 207 minutes. NR. 35 mm. Japanese with English subtitles. *Seven Samurai* is unrated and appropriate for ages 13 and up.

Thursday, December 1
Noon
Meet at the exhibition entrance
Admission required; members free

*Samurai: The Way of the Warrior* celebrates the exemplary artistry and highly skilled craftsmanship of medieval and early modern Japanese artisans. Featuring more than ninety objects ranging in date from the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries, this dynamic exhibition showcases the lives of these warriors and investigates their moral, cultural, and aesthetic codes. Join Katie Delmez to explore how the samurai profoundly affected the art, craft, and design produced during this era.

### MEDIA CONTACTS
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High-Resolution Images Available

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**About the Frist Center**
Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, the Frist Center for the Visual Arts is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit art exhibition center dedicated to presenting and originating high-quality exhibitions with related educational programs and community outreach activities. Located at 919 Broadway in downtown Nashville, Tenn., the Frist Center offers the finest visual art from local, regional, national, and international sources in a program of changing exhibitions that inspire people through art to look at their world in new ways. The Frist Center’s Martin ArtQuest Gallery features interactive stations relating to Frist Center exhibitions. Information on accessibility may be found at fristcenter.org/accessibility.

Gallery admission is free for visitors 18 and younger and to members; $12 for adults; $9 for seniors and college students with ID; and $7 for active military. College students are admitted free Thursday and Friday evenings (with the exception of Frist Fridays), 5:00–9:00 p.m. Discounts are offered for groups of 10 or more with advance reservations by calling 615.744.3247. The galleries, café, and gift shop are open seven days a week: Mondays through Wednesdays, and Saturdays, 10:00 a.m.–5:30 p.m.; Thursdays and Fridays, 10:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m.; and Sundays, 1:00–5:30 p.m., with the café opening at noon. For additional information, call 615.244.3340 or visit fristcenter.org.

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