

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Spectacular Artistry, Pageantry and Tradition of Samurai Culture to
Come to Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in April 2024**
*Samurai Armor from the Collection of Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Offers
Rare Encounters with Stunning Works of Art*



Nimaitachido Tōsei Gusoku Armor, Muromachi period, ca. 1400 (helmet bowl), mid-Edo period, 18th century (armor); Attributed: Myōchin Yoshimichi (helmet bowl), Myōchin Munenori (armor), iron, shakudō, lacing, silver, wood, gold, brocade, fur, bronze, brass, leather. © The Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Museum, Dallas. Photo: Brad Flowers

Richmond, Virginia — The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) will present *Samurai Armor from the Collection of Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller* — a spectacular exhibition featuring one of the world’s largest collections of stunning Japanese samurai armor — from April 20 to August 4, 2024. *Samurai Armor from the Collection of Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller* will offer visitors a rare personal encounter with samurai artistry and tradition spanning more than 700 years of Japanese history.

For more than three decades, collectors Ann and Gabriel Barbier-Mueller have been amassing their astounding collection of exquisitely crafted samurai regalia. The exhibition is organized by [The Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Museum, Dallas](http://TheAnn&GabrielBarbier-MuellerMuseum.com).



Efu No Tachi Sword, early Edo period, 1660–70, Signed: Bishū Osafune jū Yokoyama Kōzuke Daijō Fujiwara Sukesada (Yokoyama Kōzuke Daijō Fujiwara Sukesada residing in Osafune in Bizen province), bronze, stingray skin, wood, lacquer, nashiji, gold. © The Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Museum, Dallas. Photo: Brad Flowers

At VMFA, *Samurai Armor from the Collection of Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller* will showcase more than 140 examples of attire and objects, including 17 full suits of armor, weapons and equestrian equipment, and around 50 helmets and masks, all made between the 14th and 19th centuries.



Yokohagido Tōsei Gusoku Armor, early to mid-Edo period, 17th century (helmet bowl), 18th century (mask and armor); Signed: Jōshū no jū Saotome Ienari (Saotome Ienari living in Hitachi province) (helmet), Ichiguchi Yoshikata (mask), iron, leather, gold, wood, lacing, fur, hemp. © The Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Museum, Dallas. Photo: Brad Flowers

“This is a rare chance to see these remarkable works of sheer artistic excellence that reflect samurai culture and legacy. Every object is unique and bears the maker’s exceptional skills, discipline, reverence for tradition and profound sense of honor. I encourage all to experience this once-in-a-lifetime exhibition at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts,” said Director and CEO Alex Nyerges.

Samurai, whose name means those who serve, were the highly respected Japanese military elites who rose to power in the 12th century. Samurai emulated Japanese courtiers, adopted aspects of Buddhism and Confucianism, conceived their own distinct culture and practiced a code of conduct called *bushido*. Since A.D. 1185, when the shogun, or military general, established the first Japanese military government, the samurai class continued to dominate the country’s politics and society until A.D. 1868, when imperial rule was restored.

“To see many suits of samurai armor in one place is an impactful experience,” said VMFA’s Curator of East Asian Art Li Jian. “*Samurai Armor from the Collection of Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller* is one of the most important and extensive collections of its kind outside Japan, and VMFA is delighted to share these amazing works of masterful creativity and technique with Virginians.”

Iron, leather, brocade and precious and semiprecious metals were often used to produce suits of Japanese armor. The results were both strikingly beautiful and remarkably functional.

Many of the objects in *Samurai Armor from the Collection of Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller* are from the Edo period (A.D. 1615–1868), a time of relative peace under the Tokugawa shogunate, headquartered in Edo, today’s Tokyo. The samurai retained their privileged status but served as bureaucrats and civic leaders rather than active warriors during the Edo period. Armor became a symbol of pageantry and prestige, reflecting political and social status and religious or secular values.

Full suits of armor were traditionally handed down from father to son, and older parts were often repurposed into new armor. In these suits of armor, the oldest components are usually the helmet bowl and the chest armor.

The legend of the samurai endures, and their influence remains deeply embedded in Japanese culture. Today, the samurai is a symbol of epic stature, whose tales of prestige and valor are depicted in *anime* cartoons, books, films, *manga* comics and video games.

VMFA will offer a variety of exhibition-related public events, programs and classes for all ages from April to August 2024. Lectures include an opening talk about the collection by Director of The Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Museum Jessica Liu Beasley on April 18, 2024.

A talk titled *Lethal Beauty: Design Elements in Samurai Suits of Armor* will be presented on June 13, 2024, by Dr. Andreas Marks, the Mary Griggs Burke Curator of Japanese and Korean Art and Director of the Clark Center at the Minneapolis Institute of Art.

Curator Li Jian's talk on June 5, 2024, *The Samurai Collection Connection*, will explore connections between works in VMFA's permanent collection and this special exhibition. Among the many programs planned during the run of the exhibition is a shibori textile workshop, a drumming performance by River City Taiko, an Intro to Manga class for youth and two screenings of *Kagemusha* by master film director Akira Kurosawa. The complete list of public events and programs can be found at www.vmfa.museum.

[Tickets](#) to the exhibition *Samurai Armor from the Collection of Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller* are now on sale: \$15 for adults, \$12 for seniors 65+, and \$10 for youth ages 7–17 and college students with ID. Museums for All participants can purchase tickets to this special exhibition at the reduced price of \$2 each with a limit of four tickets per Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card. Tickets are free for VMFA members and children ages 6 and under. As a participant of Blue Star Museums, VMFA also provides free tickets for all active duty, National Guard and Reserve military personnel and their immediate families.

The exhibition catalogue, *Art of Armor: Samurai Armor from the Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Collection*, is published by The Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Museum in association with the Yale University Press. The catalogue, which features 112 full-color images and essays by L. John Anderson, Sachiko Hori, Morihiko Ogawa, Thom Richardson, John Stevenson and Stephen Turnbull, will be available to purchase in the [VMFA Shop](#).

For more information about the exhibition *Samurai Armor from the Collection of Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller*, visit www.vmfa.museum.

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Sponsorship Information

Samurai Armor from the Collection of Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller is sponsored by Lettie Pate Whitehead Evans Exhibitions Fund; William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust; Julia Louise Reynolds Fund; Fabergé Ball Endowment; Ellen Bayard Weedon Foundation; Nancy and Wayne Chasen; Francena T. Harrison Foundation; Denise Berthiaume and Jack McKeown; Birch Douglass; Nancy and Peter Huber; Ikebana of Richmond; Troutman Pepper; Mike and Sally Hunnicutt; Junko and Joseph Liesfeld, Jr.; Arnel Manalo; Michelle and John Nestler; Barbara Basl Stokey; White Trivas Family Foundation; and Tom Williamson and Janet Brown.

About Ann and Gabriel Barbier-Mueller

The son and grandson of art collectors, Gabriel Barbier-Mueller has been fascinated by samurai armor since adolescence and acquired his first piece in the early 1990s. During the following three decades, he and his wife, Ann,



Sōmen (full-face mask), Edo period, 1710, Signed: Hōei shichi kanoetora reki hachigatsu kichinichi Bukō ni oite Myōchin Munenaga nijūhachisai kore saku (made by Myōchin Ki no Munenaga at the age of 28 on an auspicious day of the eighth month of Hōei [1710] in Edo), iron. © The Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Museum, Dallas. Photo: Brad Flowers

have continued to expand their collection, which now consists of more than a thousand works, admiring the sculptural quality of the objects and the compelling feats of imagination that went into their creation. They established The Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Museum: The Samurai Collection, in Dallas, Texas. Since 2011, objects from their collection have traveled throughout Europe, Canada, Chile and the United States.

All works featured in the exhibition are from the Ann and Gabriel Barbier-Mueller collection. This exhibition represents only a fraction of their remarkable holdings and is developed from the collectors' wish to share these works and the samurai culture from which they emerged.

About The Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Museum: The Samurai Collection

The Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Museum: The Samurai Collection has been selectively amassed by Ann and Gabriel Barbier-Mueller and their children over the past 35 years. The museum is located in Dallas' Harwood District at the historic St. Ann's School. Centuries of craftsmanship are represented in the collection, with objects dating from the seventh to 19th centuries. Samurai masterpieces, including suits of armor, helmets, masks, horse armor and weaponry, are on display in the museum, traveling exhibition and the lobbies of Harwood International developments. To date, The Samurai Collection has garnered more than 1.5 million visitors worldwide. The museum in Dallas is free and open to the public, and the current exhibition can be found at www.ironmensamurai.com. Select pieces from the collection were most recently on display at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta and have traveled to 15 cities worldwide.

About the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Virginia, is one of the largest comprehensive art museums in the United States. VMFA, which opened in 1936, is a state agency and privately endowed educational institution. Its purpose is to collect, preserve, exhibit and interpret art, and to encourage the study of the arts. Through the Office of Statewide Partnerships program, the museum offers curated exhibitions, arts-related audiovisual programs, symposia, lectures, conferences, and workshops by visual and performing artists. In addition to presenting a wide array of special exhibitions, the museum provides visitors with the opportunity to experience a global collection of art that spans more than 6,000 years. VMFA's permanent holdings encompass nearly 50,000 artworks, including the largest public collection of Fabergé outside of Russia, the finest collection of Art Nouveau outside of Paris and one of the nation's finest collections of American art. VMFA is also home to important collections of Chinese art, English silver, and French Impressionist, Postimpressionist, British sporting and modern and contemporary art, as well as renowned South Asian, Himalayan and African art. In May 2010, VMFA opened the James W. and Frances G. McGlothlin Wing I after a transformative expansion, previously the largest in its history. A new expansion, the McGlothlin Wing II, is planned to open in 2028. Comprising more than 170,000 square feet, it will be the largest expansion in the museum's history and will make VMFA the fifth largest art museum in the United States.

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is the only art museum in the United States open 365 days a year with free general admission. For additional information, telephone (804) 340-1400 or visit www.vmfa.museum.

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