

MacCallum More Museum & Gardens Samurai Warrior Statue

Three-quarter scale bronze figure of a Samurai warrior created c. 1890, casting and materials are of the highest quality, showing refined articulation of physical features and ornamental detail, naturalistic simulations of texture, and a profusion of artistic flourishes indicative of a sophisticated Tokyo foundry. The sculpture is comprised of multiple cast bronze components all of which have been assembled with Roman joints. The comparatively thin walled bronze is secured by an interior steel frame (armature) and reinforced with an iron core. Presentational figures of this type were first created for Worlds Fair events such as the Centennial International Exhibition of 1876 which took place in Philadelphia, and Chicago's Columbian Exposition of 1893 and were installed in the government sponsored Japanese Pavilions. They remained popular as Pavilion features throughout the subsequent decades leading up to World War II. This example was likely intended to be exported to the United States for a Worlds Fair or similar venue, but for some reason, remained in Japan until Commander Hudgins acquired it in the mid 20th century.

The base takes the form of a miniature mountainous landscape. Its craggy, swirling contours are accented with leafy vegetation. A waterfall cascades down the center and is straddled colossus-like, by the Samurai figure's broad stance.

The warrior's feet are clad in plain *tabi* (socks) with stacked *waraji* (sandals) secured by interlaced and intricately knotted rope of well defined casting. His calves are dressed in ornate *suneate* (greaves) resembling traditional cloth-covered iron splints with shin plate decoration of a three-horned *Oni* (demon) masks in low relief. The figure's thigh area reveals his *hakama* (cloth pants worn under armor) decorated with a fanciful pattern of a sun-disk medallions radiating flames, possibly the warrior's *mon* (family or clan crest). This pattern reappears on the figure's *shitagi* (cloth shirt worn under armor) most prominently seen at the bend of the right elbow. *Haidate* (thigh guards or cuisses) are cast to resemble traditional construction of leather and iron studded plates and conform closely to the warrior's leg positioning. Broad rectangular *kusazuri* (faulds) overlay the upper leg section and are also cast in intricate detail to resemble flexible iron and laced leather plates, each member hanging integrally from the front and back of the *dō* (cuirass). All protective plates have the appearance of being tied at the waist with a *himo* (sash), the loops of its bow draping gently upon the figure's belly. The Samurai figure stands frontally allowing full view of his decorative *dō* (chest armor or cuirass). The lower abdominal section displays in low relief, a dragon coiled within a field of stylized stones, perhaps suggestive of a cave, while the upper chest section similarly displays a dragon amidst swirling waves. Prominent inclusion of dragons throughout the sculpture refer to Chinese design and mythology and are rooted in the Sino-Japanese dragon as both water deity and symbol of power. *Sode* (shoulder armor or spaulders) are cast to resemble the large rectangular shoulder plates, each segment woven in narrow leather rows characteristic of Edo and earlier period Samurai armor. *Kote* (forearm guards or vambraces) cover the figure's *mon*-patterned sleeves and extend from the wrist to the elbow, bearing decorative patterns of medallions and c-scrolls interspersed with sections of elongated, raised padding.

A bare bladed *tantō* (dagger) hangs, blade down, at the Samurai's proper left hip and has the appearance of being lashed below the hilt by the *himo* (sash) in the *jindachi-zukuri* style. The open grasp of the Samurai's left hand indicates the probability that he carried an additional weapon, likely a *katana* (long sword). The bearded and mustached Samurai peers from beneath the brim of his *kabuto* (helmet) with an expression of intensity, mouth slightly down-turned and eyes set with a narrow gaze at a downward angle of focused severity. His *kabuto* (helmet) is

fitted with a *maedate* (forecrest) in the form of a planar crescent moon flanked by protruding flanges and surmounted by a round *tehen kanamono* (decorative ring).

Held aloft in the palm of the figure's right hand is a massive dragon-handled vessel of lobed amphora form, its dynamic qualities are reminiscent of the grand presentational monuments,

sculptures, and *koro* created by Meiji period bronze masters, namely Sessei Okazaki (1854-1921) of Tokyo (see addendum a). The lower portion of the vessel is of round lobed form, each section cast with a rampant dragon in low relief. The upper section of the vessel swells to broad shoulders and is fitted with a pierced crenulated collar. Its body displays a prominent scene of the Bodhisattva, Quan Yin in high relief within the central reserve. Surrounding reserves offer pictorial scenes of figures in landscapes. The pair of winged dragons that comprise the handles show a particular bravura in craftsmanship and are cast in extraordinarily high relief, ambitious scale, and imaginative expressiveness of almost Gothic quality. Much artistic attention has been given to the beasts' varying skin textures, anatomical detail and flamboyant presence. The lid of the vessel is missing.

On July 1, 2012 high winds toppled the sculpture from its platform causing significant damage, not only worsening existing cracks but also inflicting new ruptures and complete separations most notably at the figure's knees (exposing the corroded interior steel armatures and brittle iron core), the dragon's wings, the *tehen kanamono*, and at Roman joints of the vessel assembly.

Worlds Fair Japanese Pavilion presentational sculptures are greatly prized from both a fine and decorative arts perspective. Collectors seek those examples which are not only superbly cast and large in scale but also, and most importantly, in good condition. Sculptures of this type were originally designed to be kept indoors and many retain their original dark brown patina. Depending on aspects such as size, level of detail, provenance, etc. those with original patinas are considered of the highest retail value. However, examples with so-called "garden patinas" due to exposure to the elements, are comparatively less desirable by potential collectors and placed in a lower price bracket. The MacCallum More example, is considered at the higher value end of the "garden patina" group due to its fine craftsmanship and prominent Samurai figure.