



JAPAN INFORMATION  
AND CULTURE CENTER  
在米国日本大使館広報文化センター

# TEACHING TUESDAY

## KŌGEI

The Japanese word *kōgei* (工芸), often translated as ‘craft,’ is a term that developed in Japan during the Meiji period, but existed for much longer. In Japan, the term is used to talk about a distinct art category, representing special cultural character in which art is oriented in everyday living and possesses a strong regional characteristic. What constitutes as *kōgei* can range from bamboo craftwork, to lacquerware, metalwork, and more.

*Kōgei* was originally used to describe an excellence in technique and skills, often across a wide range of activities and events, including but not limited to calligraphy, *sumi-e*, the game *igo*, and even shipbuilding. As the use of the term spread, it was narrowed to specifically mean the craft of persevering of pottery, and eventually traditional artisanal crafts. Originally, there were seven categories of Japanese *kōgei*: ceramics, *urushi* (lacquerware), dolls, woodwork and bamboo, textiles and metalwork. These crafts often have deep cultural and traditional ties to the region in which it originated.

Crafts were first exported to the West under the name *Kōgei* under the Meiji government, giving rise to a new form of *kōgei* began to introduce contemporary styles into the traditional crafts. The JICC will be hosting an exhibition of a variety of *kōgei* craftworks from April 5 until May 6, 2016. Stop by our center in Washington D.C. to see these unique pieces of traditional, yet contemporary, Japanese artwork in person!