

*Aldrich Textile Gallery Rotation (Kesa)*, February 23, 2018-July 29, 2018

The *kesa* is the main outer garment traditionally worn by Japanese Buddhist monks, nuns, and priests. Frequently draped over the left shoulder, *kesa* are usually constructed as a rectangular patchwork, with a central field made up of five, seven, or nine or more vertical strips of fabric sewn together. The robe's formality increases with the number of these columns.

In the 1910s and 1920s, Lucy Truman Aldrich assembled one of the most important collections of *kesa* in the United States, and later gave these items to the RISD Museum.

## CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Japanese

*Kesa*, 1750-1850

Silk compound weave with gilt paper

Gift of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 35.309A

This technically elaborate *kesa* with nine columns was meant for formal occasions. The four corner squares (*shiten*) feature the guardians of the north, south, east, and west, also called the *shiten*. This *kesa* represents the Buddhist cosmos: the central column stands for the Buddha and the corner squares represent the four guardian kings. The textile from which this *kesa* was made resembles those used for Nō theater costumes.

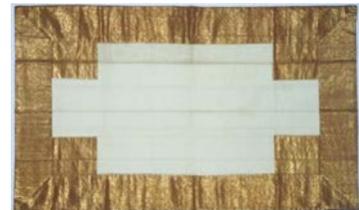
Japanese

*Zagu*, 1750-1850

Silk compound weave with gilt paper

Gift of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 35.309B

The matching cloth with a white center is a *zagu* used for seated meditation or sleeping. When not in use the *zagu* is worn over the shoulder, rather like a stole known as an *ohi*. The *zagu* varies from the *ohi* in that it does not have patched panels. Both the *zagu* and the *ohi* have appliquéd corner decoration.



Japanese

*Kesa*, 1680-1786

Silk twill weave with gilt paper

Bequest of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 55.402

Golden floral patterns of scrolling lotuses are common on *kesa*. Such patterns are often seen on dark-blue grounds in textiles imported from China during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644); this example, however, was made in Japan at a later date. The lining, inscribed in ink, explains that a mother gave this *kesa* to a temple in remembrance of her deceased daughter.



# RISD MUSEUM

Japanese

*Zagu*, 1680-1786

Silk with gilt paper

Bequest of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 55.403

The earliest *kesa* were assembled from small, irregularly shaped pieces of cloth that mimicked discarded rags, but later examples frequently were made of brilliantly colored luxury textiles patterned with gold, threads, as in this example.