CONTENTS

Volume 32, Number 3, Spring 2000

FEATURES

DEPARTMENTS

COVER IMAGE: GOLD FIBULA, 4TH CENTURY BC. PHOTO: BRIAN BOYLE, ROM.

CULTURE, ART AND DESIGN 36

LIFE ON EARTH 24

PEOPLES OF CANADA 48

LIFE ON EARTH 13

mocking the macaroni

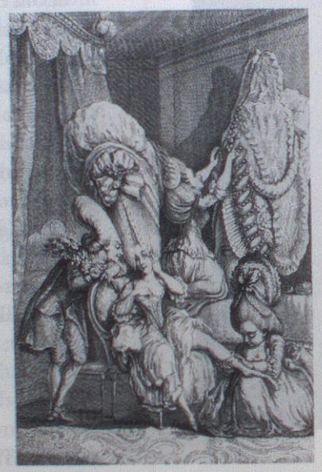
Fashion Victims of 18th-century England

By Peter McNeil

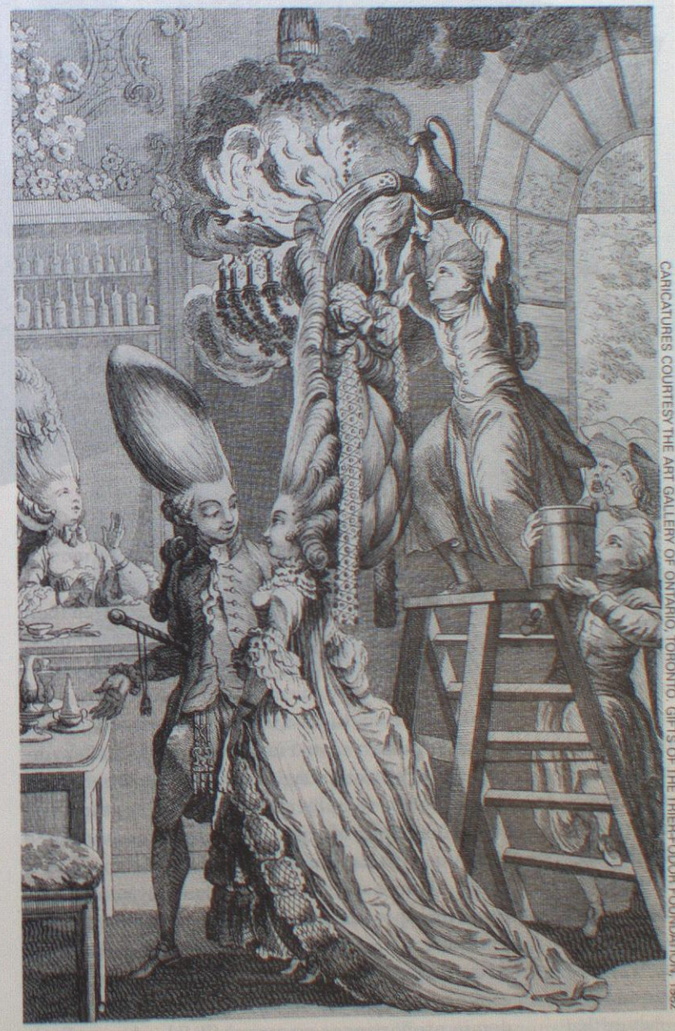
COURTESY THE GARDINER MUSEUM OF CERAMIC ART

In the mid-18th century, all the fine and decorative arts were informed by one another, and the theatre played an important role in creating and disseminating stereotypes such as the macaroni. The Nymphenberg porcelain figure representing Octavio, shown right, from the collection of The Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art in Toronto, typifies the characteristics of the mincing fop who had long featured on the English stage. The macaroni built upon an earlier prototype, the "fribble."

Octavio, modelled by F. A. Bustelli, hard-paste porcelain, Germany, Nymphenburg, c. 1755 – 60, 18 x 9.7 x 7.6 cm



THE AXIOM THAT fashion has its price was never more true than for the ultra-chic men of 1760–1780 England called "macaronies." These well-to-do and well-travelled young men, characterized by their flamboyant French court dress worn in everyday life, formed a significant part of contemporary culture and, in their heyday, were a highly topical social type.



CARICATURES COURTESY THE ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO, TORONTO. GIFTS OF THE TRIER-FODOR FOUNDATION, 1982

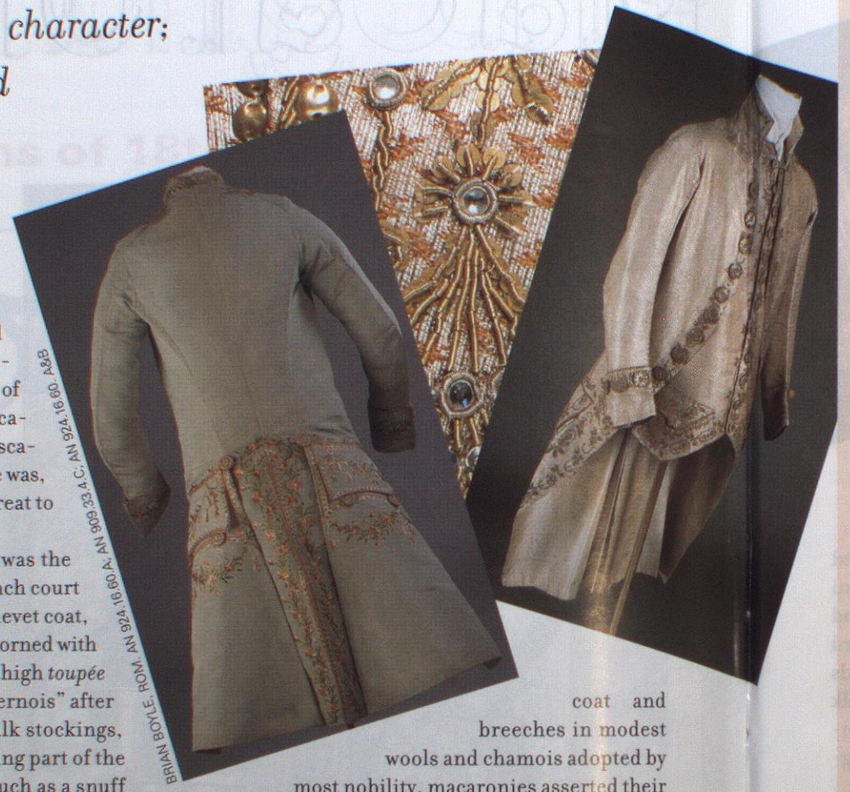
1993 ENGAGEMENT CALENDAR, POMEGRANATE CALENDARS AND BOOKS

Left: The caricatures are 18th-century French etchings and engravings on laid paper by an anonymous artist. Typical of the period is the mocking focus on elaborate coiffures. From left to right: *La Brillante Toillete de la Déesse du Gout*, c. 1770; *Le Diner misterieux*, c. 1770; *L'Incendie des Coeffures*, c. 1770.
Above: The macaroni love of the colour green has links forward to the time of Oscar Wilde's "green carnation" circle.

As well as spotting "real" macaronies on the streets—figures including the explorer Sir Joseph Banks, the politician Charles James Fox, the society painter Richard Cosway, and former Black slave "Soubise"—people could view macaroni caricatures in shop windows, read macaroni joke books, watch macaroni types in plays, mingle with them at masquerades, and inspect

"Vanity was the beginning and the end of Sir Walter Elliot's character; vanity of person and of situation."

Jane Austen, Persuasion.



BRIAN BOYLE, ROM. AN 924.16.60.A-.AN 909.33.A.C; AN 924.16.60. A&B

porcelain figure groups of their assemblies. But life as a macaroni wasn't all glamour: the mode of dress provoked ridicule among contemporaries and accusations of Papism in the streets; some of the French fabrics favoured by the macaronies were illegal and subject to confiscation if detected at customs; and the style was, in the end, deemed unhealthy and a threat to masculinity itself.

The look that inspired such vitriol was the newly fashionable short and tight French court dress consisting of elaborate silk or velevet coat, waistcoat, and breeches, dress sword adorned with a large tassel, red high-heeled shoes, high *toupée* wig, and a tiny hat of a type called "Nivernois" after the French ambassador in London. Silk stockings, spotted or striped, were a distinguishing part of the ensemble as were aristocratic props such as a snuff box or a huge cane. Paint, powder, and scent were applied liberally. The macaroni "persona" was also marked by an emphasis on performative and mannered gestures and postures.

The term "macaroni" first appears in 1764 in a letter written by author Horace Walpole in which he discusses gambling losses among visiting sons of foreign aristocrats at London's "Maccaroni [sic] club, which is composed of all the travelled young men who wear long curls and spying-glasses." Walpole is referring to the young noblemen who had taken the Grand Tour of Europe, and indeed the name macaroni may have derived from the taste for noodles encountered abroad, but it also referred to a form of burlesque poetry that merged Latin and vernacular forms. It was in this aristocratic sub-culture that macaroni style originated.

Derived from contemporary French and Italian fashion, macaroni finery was downright lavish compared to the garments typically worn in England at the time. By wearing the high-style court garments in everyday life rather than the more comfortable frock coat and breeches in modest wools and chamois adopted by most nobility, macaronies asserted their pre-eminent wealth and privilege over the imported Hanoverian court. This raised the ire of many Englishmen who viewed the macaroni's adoption of court dress in everyday life as a throw-back to those periods of English history when Francophile and Jacobite sympathies were strong. England was uncompromisingly Protestant in complexion in the 18th century, and colourful display of any kind tended to be associated with Roman Catholic pomp and Bourbon autocracy.

Macaronies were further scorned by contemporaries for espousing continental mores rather than unpretentious English values. The original macaronies frequented the club-land of St. James's Square, where gaming was highly fashionable and losses reached epidemic proportions—macaroni Charles James Fox's stakes of £3000 in one sitting were public knowledge. Gambling was associated with French manners and became the focus of much critical literature.

But despite, or perhaps because of this poor reputation, the macaroni's chic proved enticing to many young men, and the style reached beyond the wayward

Waistcoats Made the Man

COURTESY VICTORIA ART GALLERY, BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL. LOANED TO THE ASSEMBLY ROOMS, BATH / BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

ELABORATE WAISTCOATS WERE A DEFINING MARK of the macaroni. Among the ROM's large collection from the period, one waistcoat (shown at right), is intriguing from both a technical and a historical perspective. Its intricate luxury is classic macaroni. Both brocaded and embroidered, it incorporates a winding band brocaded in pink silk and silver *frisé* with floral sprays brocaded in coloured silks and chenilles and embroidered with silver *filé*, sequins, and coils of silver wire.

This particular waistcoat almost exactly matches the one depicted in Thomas Gainsborough's portrait *Captain William Wade*, 1771 (above), which hangs in the Bath Assembly Rooms. Its elements correspond with all the details that became the subject of exaggeration in caricature. As Master of Ceremonies in Bath from 1769 to 1777, Wade was responsible for enforcing rules of dress and decorum in the ultra-fashionable resort. Gainsborough paints Wade in a red velvet suit with lavish gold-embroidered waistcoat, black silk wig-bag, nosegay, *toupée* wig, and fine lace. Wade adopts the aristocratic posture of a balletic turned foot and arms akimbo. His face registers considerable *hauteur*. The "pose" of the macaroni is very much in evidence.

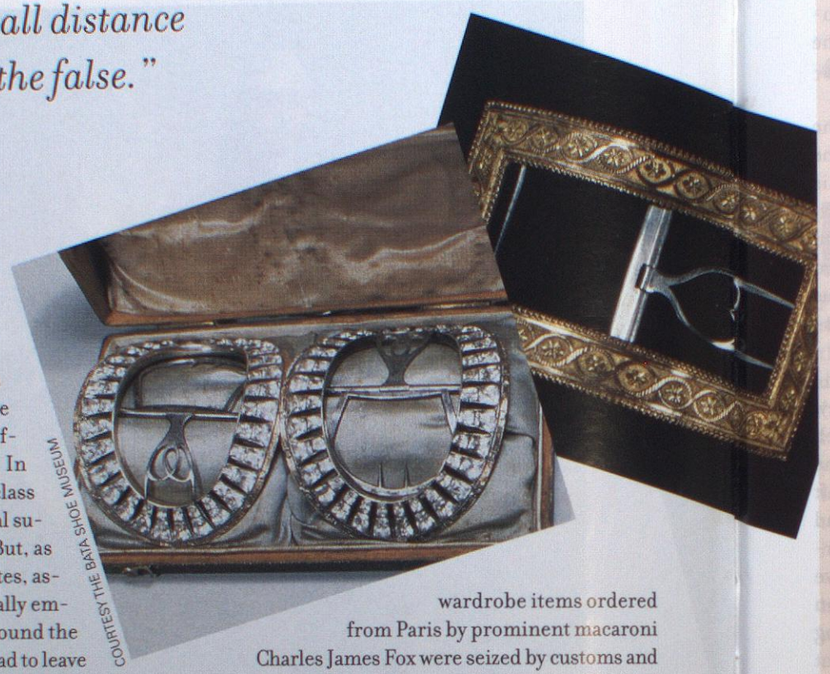
BRIAN BOYLE, ROM. GIFT OF MRS SIGMUND GOETZE AN 920.28.10

Opposite page, left: This English men's coat of the 1770s is made in the favourite macaroni colour green and embroidered in detail. Inset: Detail of English men's embroidered waistcoat of the 1770s. Opposite page, right: This English or French men's suit from c.1780 shows the oversized buttons favoured by the macaroni. Above: A gold silk lampas waistcoat, French c. 1760–70, from the ROM's collection, almost exactly matches the one depicted on Gainsborough's painting of Captain William Wade, shown left.

In sidebar:
Captain William Wade
(d. 1809)
(oil on canvas)
by Thomas Gainsbourough
(1727 – 88)

"It was difficult at a small distance to tell the real from the false."

Charles Dickens, The Pickwick Papers



COURTESY THE BATA SHOE MUSEUM

sons of the aristocracy. In a society with increasing access to cheaper versions of fashionable goods, macaroni affectations came to be adopted by courtiers who were not high-born but could nonetheless afford copies of the expensive fashions. In class-conscious England, this middle-class adoption of the perquisites of their social superiors rankled with some onlookers. But, as the writer Samuel Johnson's case indicates, aspects of the macaroni pose were eventually embraced by even less affluent men who found the fashion alluring. As the young Johnson had to leave London each weekend for lack of a decent suit, it is evident that elements such as the hairstyle were sufficient to mark one out as macaroni. Throughout the later 1760s and 1770s, popular culture would associate the term with any man who aped foreign fashion and manners, no matter what his class or occupation.

Interest in elaborate clothing would have been further stirred by the Royal Wedding of the future Louis XVI and the Archduchess Maria-Antonia (Marie-Antoinette), which was held in Paris in May 1770 and attended by a number of English macaronies. During the era of macaroni style, the large-patterned brocades of the 1740s and 1750s were replaced by smaller effects. In many cases naturalistic decoration of plants and flowers crept up the edges of the coat, which might also be sprigged all over with buds, insects, and leaves, with buttons embroidered *en suite*. Fine embroidery was expensive and sought after, but the most luxurious fabrics were often those incorporating woven motifs, the most magnificent of which originated in France and Italy. Foreign embroidery and fabrics were banned in England (See "Made in England," *Rotunda* Spring 1998), although this may have made them doubly irresistible to the macaroni. Because French clothing was illicit, it may have provoked fury on the streets of London for reasons of mercantile patriotism in addition to the broader questions of status and display. In 1770, new wardrobe items ordered from Paris by prominent macaroni Charles James Fox were seized by customs and burned. It is not known if he was also fined the standard £200 penalty. Macaroni Walter Stanhope's diary records his dismay at the seizure of a pair of plum-coloured silk breeches from Paris, part of a suit that was to be embroidered in silver. No similar silk could be found in England to match the top, so the suit was wasted.

Some macaronies derived such pleasure from the pursuit of fashion that it was almost an end in itself. The competition in ostentation was most decidedly feverish. Macaroni Lord Bolingbroke wrote, probably in jest, in a letter requesting a Paris suit:

> *A small pattern seems to be the reigning taste amongst the Macaronis at Almack's, and is, therefore, what Lord B. chooses. . . As to the smallness of the sleeves, and length of the waist, Lord B. desires them to be outré, that he may exceed any Macaronis now about town, and become the object of their envy.*

A suit of such small-patterned fabric can be found in the ROM's textile collections, a garment made of silk brocade in a diaper weave with tinsel threads brocaded in golden brown, probably dating from the late 1770s to early 1780s. The suit features over-sized buttons, a mark of macaroni dress in the late 1770s when huge steel or jewelled buttons were fashionable. Shoe buckles at that time also became hugely mannered. Both the ROM and The Bata Shoe Museum hold excellent examples of massive steel and paste "Artois" buckles. In the late 1770s, macaroni fashions became progressively tighter and more mannered, and sartorial accoutrements such as buttons and buckles were manipulated and scrambled in ways that suggested the clothing had become self-referential, almost parodic.

Particular colour schemes were favoured by the macaroni, most notably green and pink. Horace Walpole wrote in 1775: "If I went to Almack's and decked out my wrinkles in pink and green like Lord Harrington, I might still be in vogue." That same year,

Fashion was in the Wig-Bag

BRIAN BOYLE, ROM, GIFT OF THE ROM MEMBERS COMMITTEE AN 971.164A

A SPECTACULAR SUIT from the ROM's collection is this rare ermine-trimmed and partly fur-lined French ribbed silk suit dating from c. 1780 (also shown at right). One very interesting detail is the attached black satin wig-bag with large ribbon rosette to prevent pomade and powder from staining the silk. The elaborate decoration of the wig-bag indicates the energy invested in such details of men's dress. The bag is weighed with husks to keep it flat and was probably stitched on at a later date, when the suit may have been used for fancy dress or as a theatre costume. The cut of surviving suits contributes much to understanding the swagger of macaroni dress.

BRIAN BOYLE, ROM

Opposite page: Macaroni shoe buckles, like these examples from The Bata Shoe Museum, became hugely mannered in the late 1770s. The massive steel and paste ornaments were known as "Artois" buckles. Above: This English or French coat c. 1780 made of silk with ermine trim would have satisfied the macaroni lust for finery. It also shows the detail of a black silk wig-bag, which was likely added at a later date.

Matrimonial Magazine noted a "most *unseasonable* rage for GREEN CAPES," a fad alluded to by Samuel Johnson, in a letter describing his new coat:

> *This day I had a new great Coat which am exceedingly pleas'd with; it is a light colour with a light green collar, made in the new fashion; the colour of the Coat depends on one's own fancy but the green capes are almost universal . . .* "

A humble half-waistcoat in the ROM's collection is of great historical interest because it indicates provincial adaptations of urban sophistication. In that favoured macaroni colour, green, it shows the patterning of stripes, which was so often caricatured.

Within costume history macaroni style tends to be approached from the realm of caricature. This is not surprising considering that as the style began to flourish, so the genre of satire was emerging in the world of arts and letters. The macaroni became a favoured target. Spoofs frequently focused on the distinctive hairstyle, which rose to a lofty *toupée* in the front and included a huge club wig or pigtail behind, generally wrapped in a silk wig-bag (a bag, held in place with ribbons, which contained the tail of the wig so its pomade would not stain the fabric of the suit) and garnished with a massive bow. The coiffures of the macaroni's French counterpart, the *petit-maître*, received the same contemptuous treatment.

The macaroni's ornate waistcoat was likewise singled out for ridicule. Though the waistcoat was historically considered a prestigious item of couture, maintaining a link with ancien-régime dress well into the 19th century, the over-elaborate version came to epitomize, at least in 18th-century sources, a vain and fashionable man.

By virtue of their flamboyant dress and behaviour, macaronies were sometimes viewed by perplexed onlookers as men who were attracted to the same sex. Indeed, there are links forward from the macaroni love of the colour green to Oscar Wilde's circle (the green carnation) and the New York "pansy" of the 1930s when green suits were the badge of the homosexual. In the early 1770s, macaronies were frequently discussed in the middle-class press as an indeterminate or "amphibious" gender. Although macaronies were not by definition interested in same-sex contact, the popular press perpetuated that view by describing several prosecutions for sodomy as a direct consequence of "macaroni" behaviour. The 1772 case of military commander Captain Robert Jones was reported to result from "shocking vices . . . imported from France and Italy" and linked specifically to macaroni tastes.

The late 18th century was a time of rapid transformation of gender roles, and the fussiness of macaroni dress inspired discussion of English definitions of male behaviour. The style eventually fell out of favour in England for a complex mix of social factors from politics to Rousseauan philosophy to medicine. The very cut and silhouette of male court garments was criticized by Rousseau and other philosophes as enfeebling, threatening the potency of the male population. The constraints of court dress, the argument went, denied the "natural" man and were symbolic of the control imposed by a debilitated and effeminate court society.

These philosophers made connections between the enervating luxury of a decaying Imperial Rome and the state of contemporary French society. Laid over this critique was an attack on the role of women at court, who, it was claimed, had made men into lapdogs and imposed a society obsessed with the fashionable and the inane. Aristocratic dress, with all its ostentatious trappings, was a feminized practice at odds with masculine democracy, the philosophes argued.

The medical discourse of the time further contributed to the embattled macaroni's demise. The new discussion of masculine health, initiated by French doctors and scientists and promoted in England in the late 18th century, was influential in encouraging a shift away from those favoured macaroni fabrics, silk and velvet, which were characterized as unwashable, impervious to air circulation, and hence unhealthy. A move towards the greater use of woolen broadcloth and cotton was encouraged as being more hygienic. Marrying Rousseauan notions of freedom and ease of movement to new medical ideas about the circulation of the blood and the free functioning of the pores, French doctors such as Des-Essartz, Vandermonde, and Clairian criticized paint, powder, and luxury in general. Clairian went so far as to submit that court dress compressed the male sexual organs and diminished their size.

In England, Walter Vaughan merged science with anxiety over the male social role in *An Essay, Philosophical and Medical Concerning Modern Clothing* (1792). Vaughan laments, "Alas! if our venerable ancestors were but raised from the dead to see their posterity disguised so hideously with paint, powder, and several other articles of dress, they might be led to ask 'Where is a Man?'"

The notion of moderation was thus embraced as the essential of English male attire. Fanny Burney had already noted in 1775 that the word macaroni was no longer the "ton"; the very name had lost its cachet. By the 1780s the style was vanquished. The macaroni was consigned to the role of bit player in the novels of Jane Austen and Charles Dickens, portrayed as an ailing and ridiculous fop generally resident in Bath, and completely at odds with youthful male fashionability. ❦

If you are interested in reading further about men's costume throughout history, contact http://users.aol.com/nebula5/costume.html. See "Male Attire."

CULTURE, ART AND DESIGN

THE DYEING GAME

A custom dye job and nimble needlework restore an 18th-century kimono to its original splendour

Left: This beautiful *furisode* was restored for display in the ROM's new Herman Herzog Levy Gallery.
Below: The padded hem had been degraded by exposure to bright lights.

TOP: BRIAN BOYLE, ROM BOTTOM: ESTHER MÉTHÉ, ROM

AGNES KRIPPENDORF AND ESTHER MÉTHÉ

DISTINGUISHED BY its long sleeves, which can articulate a subtle semaphore of amorous significance, the *furisode* is a style of kimono that became popular in Japan during the late Edo period (1603–1867). Though it was considered chic apparel for young women as well as for entertainers, who have a tendency to push the boundaries of fashion in any culture, this kimono would have been considered highly inappropriate attire for a married woman.

Before the ROM's beautiful 18th-century example could join the Far Eastern paintings, works on paper, and textiles on display in the Herman Herzog Levy Gallery, it required treatment for damage. Agnes Krippendorf, an intern on temporary placement at the ROM, undertook the work in the Museum's textile conservation laboratory under the supervision of Esther Méthé.

The ROM's *furisode* was made principally from a soft damask known as *rinzu*, typical of the Edo period. The fabric first appeared as an import from China, but was soon copied by Japanese weavers. It is distinguished by a motif of orchids and chrysanthemums, called *rangiku*, set against a key-fret pattern, known as *sayagata*. The white material was further embellished using a resist-dyeing method called *shibori*.

In this technique, pattern areas are reserved through pleating, compressing, or stitching. When the fabric is immersed in the dye bath, the reserved areas are untouched by colour. Two different types of *shibori* were employed on the ROM's kimono: *kanoko* (fawn spot) *shibori*, produced the clusters of white circles with red dots that comprise the bamboo foliage, plum blossoms, and pine trees; and *bōshi* (capped) *shibori* was used to reserve the larger area of the white pine trees and plum blossoms.

Gold-thread embroidery had been applied to enhance the *shibori* patterns. Silk-core threads were wrapped with gilded paper, paired, and then couched to outline the white plum blossoms and the edges of the pine trees. The gold thread was also used to create blossoms. Stems and floral details were stitched in red and green silk floss.

The trio of pine, bamboo, and plum motifs is called *shōchikubai*—or the "Three Friends of Winter"—because the pine and bamboo remain green in winter and the plum can blossom in the snow. Individually, each has a specific meaning: the pine symbolizes longevity and consistency; the bamboo, rectitude and resilience; and the plum, harmony and happiness. Together they represent happiness and good fortune. Since the late Edo period *shōchikubai* motif has typically been used for wedding garments.

When the Museum's kimono was removed from storage, we could see that the fabric had suffered severe degradation along the padded