

events & information

Amulet makers to cross swords in Yokohama

The katana is a very resilient object, both physically and culturally. Even after the dissolution of the samurai class and the passing of strict blade control laws, the famous curved Japanese sword wasn't forgotten, thanks to the efforts of artisans, hobbyists and historians. Everyday people did their part as well to keep the katana in the public consciousness by continuing to uphold the centuries-old custom of gifting *omamorigatana* amulets.

An exhibition dedicated to these "protective katana" will take place from March 5 to 10 in the Art Gallery on the seventh floor of the Yokohama Takashimaya department store.

Born from a warrior culture that viewed the katana as a symbol of strength, these smaller, dagger-sized versions of the forged weapon have been presented to newborns to ward off bad luck since the 12th century.

The upcoming exhibition organized by the All Japan Swordsmith Association is actually a competition where swordsmiths from all over the country try to outdo each

other in crafting the most beautiful blades, scabbards and more to win the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Award. At the end of the event, some of the swords, all of which can be exported overseas, will be available for purchase.

Even those guests not looking to buy anything are sure to appreciate the elegant and majestic beauty of these guardian swords that connect Japan's past to its present. While the practice of gifting *omamorigatana* to babies has waned over the years, the amulets still make appearances at traditional weddings, funerals and similar events.

From timelessly elegant to exquisitely ornamental, the *omamorigatana* sword amulets fit any and all occasions, which is one of the secrets of their resilience.

The Yokohama Takashimaya store is a 1-minute walk from Yokohama Station. For inquiries, contact Japan Sword Co. at 03-3434-4321 or <http://www.japansword.co.jp/>.



A sword made by Koji Manzoku is shown next to an unidentified black lacquer scabbard decorated with cherry blossoms.