

Exhibition Introduction

by

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The Hashibara Museum is well known for the Bizen-to *meito* collection of Hayashibara Ichiro. On this occasion we present the exhibition entitled *Ono Yoshimitsu's world of juka choji—Pursuing Koto Bizen* and *The Ayumi Chronology*: a display of the excellent skills of modern swordsmith Ono Yoshimitsu. He is well known for his reproduction of the famous unsigned Ichimonji school national treasure *tachi* known as the *Yamatorige*, the beauty of which cannot be measured. Charmed by the *Yamatorige*, Ono san began his pursuit of skill by whole-heartedly stepping into the world of *Koto-Bizen*, and has produced many wonderful swords for this exhibition.

From the past until now, among the world's weapons there have been many swords. However, among these only the Japanese sword holds a sense of beauty. This sense was not only held in swords. During the very turbulent time of the Genpei wars of the late Heian period it can be said that there was beauty in death. Warriors wore elegantly laced armour, inserted a solitary flower in their quiver amongst their arrows, and they would anoint themselves in incense smoke. It was around this time the sword began to change to suit contemporary warfare with the shape continually evolving in a quest for the ultimate beautiful fighting weapon. This was not a beauty of decoration, but of intrinsic qualities. Over the centuries many changes have appeared within this beautiful tradition as various *hada* and *hamon* were developed. Within Japanese swords, Bizen-to are the most famous—even now it is said that if you do not know anything about Bizen-to you cannot speak about Japanese swords. We at the Hayashibara Research Laboratories and The Kashima Research Room hope that the flame of the Bizen tradition never dies.

This exhibition has been carefully constructed with these sensibilities in mind.

Okuma Ritsuji

October, 1991