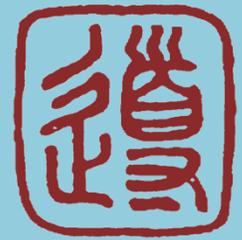


March 2026

Treasure House News



President's Message

I hope you had a chance to stop by our Lunar New Year Celebration. Rain came to greet the first week of Year of the Horse. While many of us see the wet weather as a nuisance, water is actually a symbol of wealth and gods' luck in Chinese culture! Hope this new year brings all of you good health and great fortune.

The museum finally announced the opening of all the galleries. We are able to experience the impact of the complete story behind the exhibition. I am most impressed with the "Village" gallery that has a mix of contemporary and ancient objects on display. What a way to show the rich and diverse history of our community. What is your favorite gallery? I think I am going to take a poll at the next docent council meeting!

Our school tours are going well thanks to all the docents who signed up. We still have spots open for March touring. We appreciate all your help in making our school program successful. Thank you to those who sent tour reviews; these will be gathered and entered into our Docent Blog for future reference. We love to hear from you so please drop a few lines and share your experience.

Enjoy the first month of Spring.

Yvonne

IMPORTANT DATES

March 3 at 10:00 am

Docent Council Board Meeting
(Board members only)

March 10 at 10am

Docent Council Meeting

Lonnie: Collaborative Training

Touring with elementary
school students

Gallery Showcase

The Fenghuang (Bonghwang) or Asian Phoenix

By Annette Drey

The *fenghuang*—called *bonghwang* in Korea—is a legendary bird from East Asian mythology that is often compared to the Western phoenix. While the two may look similar at first glance, their meanings and stories are quite different.

In ancient tradition, the *fenghuang* was originally described as two birds: *feng* and *huang*, representing male and female energy. Over time, these two beings merged into a single, perfect creature symbolizing balance, harmony, and the ideal union of yin and yang. Rather than representing fire or destruction, the *fenghuang* stands for peace and order in the natural and human worlds.

Artists traditionally portray the *fenghuang* as a magnificent composite creature. It has the head of a pheasant, the body of a duck, the tail of a peacock, the legs of a crane, and the wings of a swallow. Its feathers shimmer in vibrant reds, golds, greens, and blues, with long, flowing tail plumes trailing behind it in flight. These colors are not just decorative; they represent important virtues such as kindness, honesty, respect, wisdom, and trust.

According to legend, the *fenghuang* appears only during times of peace and just rule. It is said to emerge when a leader governs with wisdom and fairness, signaling the beginning of a golden age. If greed or cruelty take hold, the bird vanishes. Because of this, sightings of the *fenghuang* were considered powerful omens of harmony and good governance.

In both China and Korea, the *fenghuang* became an important royal symbol. It was closely associated with queens and empresses and used to express the idea that a kingdom was ruled with care, justice, and moral balance.

Although they are often compared, the *fenghuang* and the Western phoenix carry very different meanings. The *fenghuang* (or *bonghwang*) symbolizes peace, balance, and wise leadership, appearing only in already harmonious times. The Western phoenix, by contrast, bursts into flames and is reborn from its ashes, representing survival, renewal, and resilience after destruction. In short, the Western phoenix rises from chaos, while the *fenghuang* appears only when chaos has already passed.

For many immigrant communities, the *fenghuang* is a powerful and meaningful symbol. It often appears on restaurant signs, wedding decorations, and family altars, serving as a reminder that beauty and dignity can endure through displacement and new beginnings. The bird represents resilience and grace in the face of hardship, holding onto one's values during difficult times and striving not just to survive, but to truly thrive.



Asian Highlights

The Four Guardians

By Annette Drey

East, South, West, and North,
Dragon, Bird, Tiger, Tortoise,
Guardian symbols.

kkm

In Chinese cosmology, the **Four Guardians** are symbolic beings that protect the universe by watching over the four cardinal directions: east, south, west, and north. They are called the Four Symbols (*Sì Xiàng*) and come from ancient Chinese astronomy and mythology. Each guardian is linked to a direction, a season, and a natural element, and together they represent balance in nature. These figures often appear in Chinese art, architecture, feng shui, and stories, where they protect both sacred and everyday spaces.



The **Azure Dragon of the East** (*Qīnglóng*) represents spring, renewal, and growth. It is connected to the wood element and stands for rising energy and new beginnings. In the night sky, it matches a group of eastern constellations. In Chinese culture, dragons are powerful but kind creatures linked to good fortune and imperial power. As a guardian, the Azure Dragon protects life as it begins and grows.

The **Vermilion Bird of the South** (*Zhūquè*) is linked to summer, warmth, and the fire element. Often compared to a phoenix, it symbolizes beauty, change, and prosperity. Its bright red color reflects heat and strong energy. In art and legend, the Vermilion Bird represents joy and abundance, guarding the season when nature is at its fullest.



The **White Tiger of the West** (*Báihǔ*) is associated with autumn and the metal element. It signifies strength, courage, and protection. Fierce and vigilant, the tiger represents justice and military power and is believed to ward off evil spirits. As a guardian, it protects the season of harvest and transition.

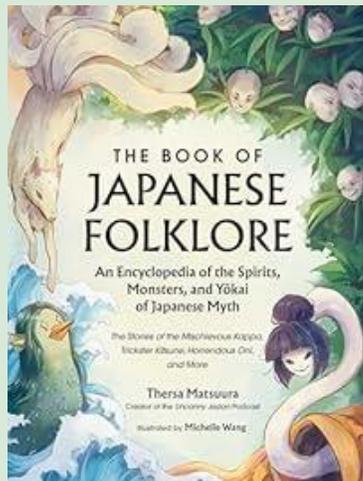
The **Black Tortoise of the North** (*Xuánwǔ*) represents winter and the water element. It is often shown entwined with a snake and symbolizes endurance, wisdom, and long life. Because tortoises are linked with survival and stability, this guardian offers powerful protection.



Together, the four guardians form a balanced system that links directions and seasons. They reflect the Chinese belief that harmony among natural forces sustains cosmic energy. In feng shui, a traditional magnetic compass called the Luo Pan is used to find these directions and align spaces to create balance between human life and the natural world. As the artist explains his installation: we must ultimately become our own compass, guiding ourselves along our own individual path.

Library Corner

By Annette Drey

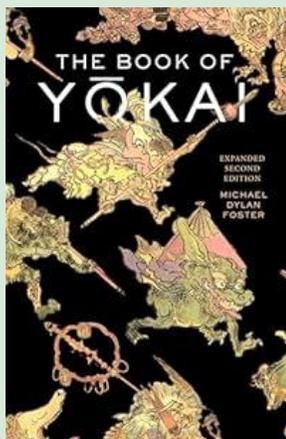


The Book of Japanese Folklore: An Encyclopedia of the Spirits, Monsters, and Yokai of Japanese Myth: The Stories of the Mischievous Kappa, Trickster Kitsune, Horrendous Oni, and More

by Thersa Matsuura
Call number: 398.20952

The Book of Japanese

Folklore is a comprehensive reference to Japan's rich world of myths, legends, and folk beliefs. Organized alphabetically, it explores yokai, spirits, heroes, rituals, and regional traditions, explaining their origins and cultural meanings. Accessible yet scholarly, the encyclopedia connects ancient storytelling to everyday life, showing how folklore has shaped Japanese history, religion, art, and popular culture.



The book of Yōkai: Mysterious Creatures of Japanese Folklore

by Michael Dylan Foster
Call number: 398.20952

The Book of Yōkai by Michael Dylan Foster explores Japan's rich tradition of yōkai—mysterious creatures, spirits, and monsters from folklore. Blending history,

mythology, art, and pop culture, the book traces how yōkai evolved from ancient beliefs and oral tales into illustrated scrolls, literature, manga, and anime. Foster shows how yōkai reflect social fears, humor, and imagination, revealing their enduring role in shaping Japanese cultural identity.

Docent Spotlight

By Richard Ewell

Daniel Grosz was born and raised in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where he completed medical school. He completed a fellowship in child and adolescent psychiatry in



New York and moved to the San Fernando Valley in the early 1990s to be closer to his wife Claudia's siblings. They have one daughter who lives nearby with their son-in-law and two granddaughters. In the early 2000s Daniel's sister and her family moved from Germany to be closer to them. His mother, who still lived in Argentina, moved here as well.

Daniel still works part-time as the medical director of a large agency providing mental health services to underprivileged families. In addition, he is involved in clinical research, studying new medications for psychiatric disorders. Other than helping clients with mental health challenges, he enjoys music and traveling. For several decades he has been a Latin music songwriter aficionado and has had a few songs recorded by Latin singers, but none famous enough to allow him to quit his day job.

He has traveled to many different countries. About twenty years ago Daniel and Claudia visited Thailand and he instantly fell in love with Asian culture, art, food, and religious beliefs. For a while he even became a Bollywood expert. Since then, they have returned to visit Asia several times and he wondered if he was Asian in a previous life. He became a PAM docent three years ago and is happy to have found like-minded people with whom he can share his interest in Asian culture.



Long-Tailed Tortoise (*Minogame*; 蓑亀)

By Bruce Cristol

In Japanese mythology, the long-tailed tortoise (*minogame*) is a manifestation of Chinese beliefs of the tortoise as ancient, mythical creatures representing longevity, wisdom, good luck, and stability. While not as prominent as other mythical creatures, the tortoise holds cultural significance in Japan including stories associated with magical properties, the creation of the world, holding secrets of heaven and earth and the ability to act as guardians.



Minogame are portrayed with long strands of algae growing from their shells, reminiscent of the long beards of sages and wise men. The algae drape down from their shells and resembles a farmer's straw raincoat, *mino*, from which they get their name. They are believed to be extremely long-lived, from 1,000 - 10,000 years.



The *minogame* frequently appear in paintings and on sculpture and handicrafts. The sculpture above appears in our current “Mythical Creatures” exhibit.

Minogame are considered very auspicious creatures throughout East Asia, most specifically Vietnam and Thailand, where they are also symbols of long life and prosperity and are frequently depicted in paintings, sculpture, and handicrafts.

In Japan, the *minogame* is a frequent subject in ukiyo-e prints, such as those by Katsushika Hokusai, Hiroshige Utagawa and in traditional crafts like netsuke. While sharing ancient origins, the *minogame* has developed its own specific role in Japanese folklore, most famously in the tale of *Urashima Tarō*, where a tortoise rewards a fisherman hero who rescued him by taking him to the underwater Palace of the Dragon King. (Check our library!)



“Mino” means
raincoat,
“Game” or
“Kame”- turtle,
Long-lived yokai.

kkm

Scene from the story, *Urashima Tarō*

Moving On

By Fran. De La Rosa



Kinesthetic learning involves acquiring skills and knowledge through physical movement, hands-on activities, and active engagement with others that makes learning a full-body experience. The museum's current exhibition, "Mystical Creatures: The Stories We Carry", offers myriad opportunities to practice kinesthetic learning techniques. They are not only engaging but also offer an alternative way of understanding for many of our visitors. Even a single activity within a tour can benefit many visitors.

Movement does not have to be large or complicated; something as simple as standing and sitting, using pencils and paper, or doing simple mindful movements can help some learners understand and remember information at a higher rate, as well as help to maintain focus.

The following are simple engagement strategies that can help kinesthetic learners (and others) get the most from a tour.

See, Think, Me, We (recommend using clipboard/paper/pencil)

- See: look closely/what do you notice?
- Think: what thoughts do you have?
- Me: how does this connect to me?
- We: how does this connect to the world?

Possible use with: [Dragon's Landing](#)

See, Think, Make, Discuss (recommend using clipboard/paper/pencil)

- See: look closely/what do you notice?
- Think: how does this connect to the theme?
- Make: create something to explore your thoughts
- Discuss: share your work and explain your thoughts

Possible use with: [Mythical Creatures theme](#)

More practices such as these can be found at Harvard's Project Zero: [Harvard School of Education](#)

Tai Chi Animal Poses

The following animals are represented in the current exhibition: Crane, Tiger, Snake, Deer, Dragon). You might consider using Tai Chi movements to calm a squirrely group or provide a moment to regroup. You can find examples of these on YouTube or ask Susan Sides for guidance. This activity does not have to take a lot of time, but is definitely worth the effort.

Qigong Five Animals

These five animals are represented in Qigong practice: Tiger, Deer, Bear, Monkey, and Crane. Qigong movements, like Tai Chi, are simple, mindful practices that focus the mind and settle energy to prepare for learning. Instructions for these movements can be found on YouTube, or a complete, simple instruction can be found here:

[Five Animal Qigong Preparation](#)

Possible Use: calming movement between tours or if needed at the beginning of the tour; in Wetlands Room (Deer, Crane)

These are but a few of the many activities available to help all learners succeed. Even a simple pencil-and-paper activity will engage and enliven a tour. Keep in mind that not every stop needs to have an activity. Choose judiciously, and you will be rewarded.



Docent Heroes March 2026

**Thank you, Docent
Educators!**

Yvonne Lee Rose Lee Lorenzo Vargas

**Melissa Patton Jane Hirschowitz
Annette Drey**

Susan Sides Randy Quinton Lisa Koizumi

**Daniel Grosz Ana Soulriver Kathy Wales
Evelyn Wu**



Docents on the Go



**Many thanks to the docents who
volunteered at USC PAM's annual
Lunar New Year celebration. Once
again it was a big success with
over 2,000 visitors.**

**Randy Quinton Yvonne Lee
Jon Sides**

**Susan Sides Lorenzo Vargas
Annette Drey**

**And former docent Julian Ponce was
also there to help.**

Around Town

By Maureen Nyhan

The THN welcomes your input! Please send any local or online activities you think USC PAM Docents might be interested in! You may send them directly to Maureen: moho1234@gmail.com

City of Pasadena ART NIGHT



DATE: Friday, March 13, 2026 | 6:00 PM 10:00 PM

LOCATION: Various

INFO: [City of Pasadena Art Night](#)

JACC in coordination with USC Museums

Moveable Feast - Kulapat Yantrasast in conversation

In a far-ranging conversation, Kulapat Yantrasast and Paul Holdengräber will dive into an exchange about curiosity, collaboration and the future of architecture, spanning from Asia to Los Angeles.

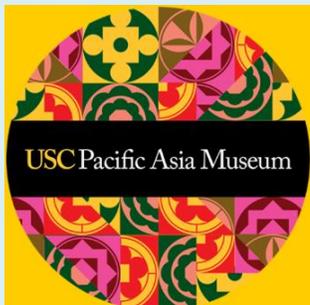
DATE: Thu, Mar 12, 2026 | 7:00 - 9:00 pm

LOCATION: Japanese American Cultural Center
244 S. San Pedro Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012

PRICE - \$10.00

[Info and RSVP](#)

USC PAM



Free Second Sunday: Mythical Creatures

DATE: Sunday, Mar 08, 2026 | Opening Hours

LOCATION: 46 N Los Robles Ave, Pasadena, California 91101

PRICE - Free

Japan Foundation Los Angeles



Exhibit: "KAMI KAMUY" presents an immersive synthesis of sculpture and sound that explores the spiritual convergences spanning the Pacific Rim.

DATE: March 05 – April 09, 2026

(Opening reception on March 05 | 7:00 pm)

TIME: Mon-Fri 12:00 – 6:00 pm, Sat. 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

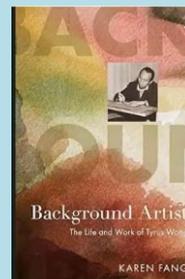
LOCATION: Steam Gallery at The Japan Foundation, Los Angeles

5700 Wilshire Blvd, Ste 100, Los Angeles, CA 90036

PRICE – Free

INFO - [Spirit Worlds Exhibits](#)

ONLINE:



Replay of SDSU presentation by Karen Fang, Author of "Background Artist: The Life and Work of Tyrus Wong"

[Tyrus Wong Presentation](#)