

Remarks by Ambassador HAYASHI Hajime
at the opening of *Kyōsai: The Israel Goldman Collection*
on 15 March 2022

Distinguished Guests,

It is a great pleasure to be with you all this evening. My wife and I have just had the privilege of viewing the exhibition and I have no hesitation in promising you that a real treat lies in store.

Although Kyōsai was long overshadowed by earlier ukiyo-e artists, notably two gigantic figures, Hokusai and Hiroshige, he is now justly celebrated as a pre-eminent artist in his own right and particularly as one who was able to bridge traditional art and popular culture. He lived through turbulent times, which included the collapse of the Tokugawa Shogunate and Japan's opening to the outside world in the latter half of the 19th century. He was a master of many different styles. Humour, wit, and sarcasm quite often featured in his works, as seen in the amusing caricatures with which he captured the changing society that accompanied Japan's modernisation. During this

period, Europeans including Britons started arriving in Japan, and Kyōsai developed friendships with some of the foreign advisers employed by the Meiji Government, such as the British architect Josiah Conder. In fact, Mr Conder became one of Kyōsai's most prominent students and went on to publish a book, *Paintings & Studies by Kawanabe Kyōsai*.

This is the first UK exhibition of Kyōsai's works in nearly 30 years and draws on one of the finest collections of the artist's creations in the world, that owned by art collector Mr Israel Goldman, to whom we all owe a debt of gratitude. At the same time, may I express my profound thanks to Ms Rebecca Salter, President of the Royal Academy, for her tireless efforts to bring this wonderful project to fruition. Ms Salter is herself an accomplished artist who has lived and worked in Japan, has studied traditional Japanese art, has had her works exhibited there and has had a number of books on Japanese artists published. Her experience of Japan has obviously had a profound impact on her impressive professional achievements. For this venture she has been assisted by Dr SADAMURA Koto, lead curator, whose unique skills have been invaluable in the preparations for the exhibition and who deserves our sincere appreciation.

Just as Kyosai's works appealed to a variety of his contemporaries, this exhibition promises to strike a chord with people from varying cultural backgrounds today. I am certain that it is going to be a great success.

Thank you for your attention.