

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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A Buddhist priest officiated at the traditional ridge-beam ceremony held at the Museum of Modern Art yesterday (April 22, 1954) to celebrate completion of the heavy construction work on a Japanese house now being erected in the Museum outdoor exhibition area.

The house, which will be completed and open to the public early in June, was decorated with large bows and arrows made of painted wood and symbolizing the destruction of evil spirits and with a symbolic tree nailed on top of the roof. Placed at the top of the tree symbol was a circular paper fan decorated with green pine trees and red circles indicating the sun. Five long strips of colored silk hung from the top of the tree; each color selected to symbolize something different. Red was for fire, green for trees and plants, white for metal, black for the earth and yellow for the sun.

The ceremony, which was conducted by Hozen Seki and two robed assistants, was held in the partially finished house in front of the most important column in the house in the tokonoma alcove. The column was decorated with white paper strips symbolizing prayer thoughts. After the ceremony saki was served to a few guests and the Japanese workmen, who were wearing specially designed jackets, were given a meal in honor of their excellent work on the house.

The house, which was first built in Japan by Junzo Yoshimura, was shipped to New York this spring for re-building in the Museum Garden. The exhibition is being sponsored by the America-Japan Society in Tokyo and private citizens.

The following is a summary of the ceremonial proclamation read by Hozen Seki, Buddhist priest:

I humbly declare to the Amita-buddha (the Buddha of Eternal Light and Life) and to the various heavenly beings of the universe:

The people of Japan present this building to America as a token of goodwill and friendship between America and Japan.

The architect, Mr. Junzo Yoshimura, and the chief carpenter, Mr. Heizaimon Ito, together with many others have sincerely and humbly offered their efforts toward the creation of this building.

In the presence of honored guests who witness today this ceremony of installing the ridge-beam, we express our heartfelt gratitude and seek protection from the Universal Compassionate One and all heavenly beings, so that this building shall be enclosed in eternal peace.