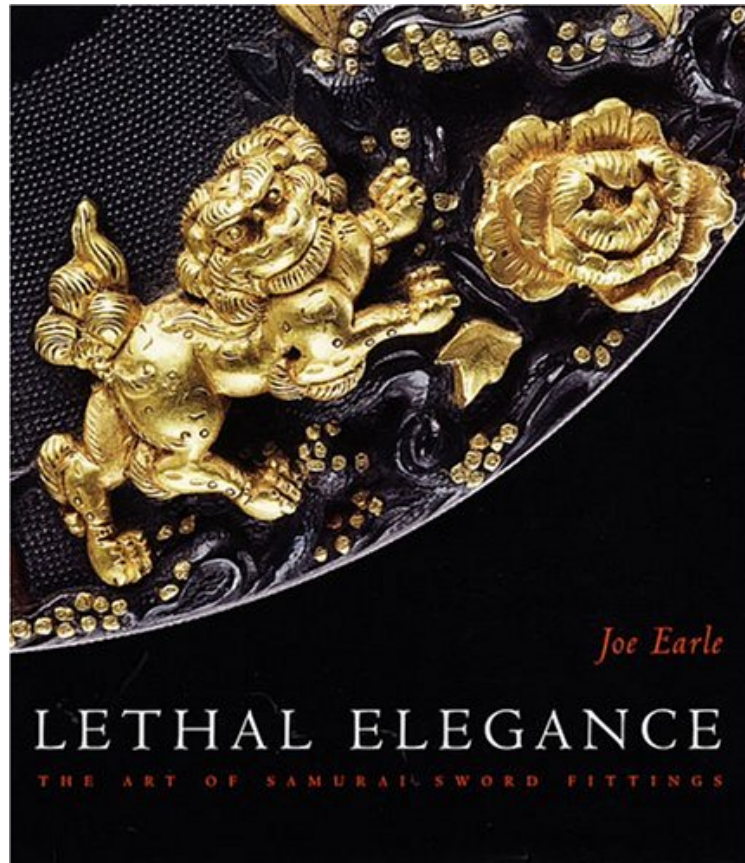


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## Lethal Elegance: Samurai Sword Fittings

*Joe Earle*

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**Joe Earle : Lethal Elegance: Samurai Sword Fittings** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Lethal Elegance: Samurai Sword Fittings:

As the "soul of the samurai," the sword is famously both the symbol and instrument of Japanese military prowess. Less known, at least in the West, is its role as a fashion accessory or status symbol. And more than the weapon itself, it was the sword's metal fittings--from the hand guard to the small decorative plates on the hilt--that reflected the complexities of samurai life. Some fittings were meant to convey the honor and self-control expected of a samurai while on official duty, while other, more flamboyant ones reflected his leisure-time persona as "man about town." Later, when the wearing of swords spread beyond the samurai class, both the decorative function of the fittings and the variety of their designs sharply increased, leading to some of the most sophisticated and accomplished metalwork ever created. Lethal Elegance presents 150 of these remarkable sword fittings, and is one of the few books in a Western language to focus on the visual presentation, rather than the function or culture of the sword. It discusses the many effects achieved with different alloys, the evolution of fittings in relation to changes in warfare, the symbolism of

particular motifs, and standards for connoisseurship. Nearly all these fittings were once owned by trained swordsmen, and the weapons they ornamented could surely inflict fatal wounds. But their extraordinary variety and beauty, lavishly illustrated and carefully presented by Joe Earle, also reveal them as marvels of self-expression and personal style.