

JAPANESE INK-PAINTING
AND CALLIGRAPHY

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CATALOGUE OF AN EXHIBITION FROM JAPAN

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JAPANESE INK-PAINTING AND CALLIGRAPHY

AN EXHIBITION

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CATALOGUE NOTES

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INTRODUCTION

Chinese writing was introduced into Japan in the sixth century A.D., to open that Island Empire's first era of recorded history. Even though the Japanese soon came to supplement it with systems of shorthand-like syllabaries designed to adapt the writing of the monosyllabic Chinese language to a polysyllabic spoken language of their own, this China-derived calligraphy remains to the present moment essentially ideographic; based for its expression of ideas, that is, upon characters which began as direct pictorial representations and which continue pictorial in spite of their present state of abstraction. Such characters have been written by preference with the same soft-bristled brush, dipped in ink and applied to absorbent silk or mulberry-bark paper, as that in use for painting. The characters mark in even greater degree than the forms of painting a common Oriental tendency to suggest by abstraction and understatement, rather than to define, a given thought.

Since writing has to do with words and words make the raw materials of poetry, it was inevitable that calligraphy as the art of writing should come into association with poetry as close as that with painting, joining with them both to form "the Three Sisters of Oriental Art"--a composite art holding the highest esteem among the Japanese as well as the Chinese people. A work of calligraphy-poetry-painting may assume in Japanese art a variety of formats, but the most common in recent centuries is the kakemono (literally, "hanging thing"), a hanging scroll of silk brocade on which is mounted the typically joint creation. The kakemono is designed to be hung for viewing in that art-alcove of the Japanese house called the tokonoma and rolled up for storing in adjacent cupboards when not in use. In a composition prepared for mounting as a kakemono the calligraphic inscription presenting the poem reads from top downward and from right to left in a series of vertical columns, whereas the picture "reads" in a counter direction, from bottom upward and from left to right, "mounting" vertically in a zigzag progression. The composition thus maintains a hidden balance of opposing eye-movements.

Owing to the demand for spontaneity, directness and brevity of statement which Ch'an Buddhism had helped to inspire in the painting of Southern Sung China (1125-1279), a demand made even more emphatically by the Japanese Buddhist equivalent known as Zen, painters of the Murōmachi (Ashikaga) Period in Japan (1392-1568) turned increasingly away from the polychromy formerly prevailing in favor of suibokuga or sumie, ink-painting in black and white. As in the paintings of Shūbun, "Father of Suibokuga", the new works were affected by the Zen ideal of "sudden enlightenment", a flash of insight after prolonged contemplation. They depended for their effectiveness on extremely simplified washes of tones and forcibly struck-in strokes that bore always intimate relationship to the shapes of the bare spaces, the voids or "nothingnesses", around them. Poetry in Japan was already highly condensed and elliptical, but Zen Buddhism made it even more so, as likewise the calligraphy--though in both cases with some crudity of expression formerly not tolerated in aristocratic circles. In an effort to trace this Zen-inspired art of ink-painting and its associations with poetry and calligraphy, the Japanese authority organizing the

historical part of the present exhibition has selected for loan a succession of significant kakemono starting with a work attributed to Shūbun at the beginning of the fifteenth century A. D., and ending with one by Chokunyū painted in 1898.

The emphasis placed by the twentieth-century Occident on abstraction and non-representational creation in painting has conditioned the Westerner to appreciate the abstractions of Japanese calligraphy as of equal moment with the abstractions of painting. The same emphasis, reaching Japan with works of contemporary Occidental art now eagerly collected and studied there, has operated in the other direction--to quicken into vigorous life a whole new school of Japanese calligraphy. Encouraged by Keisei-kai, both a new school of Japanese calligraphy and a magazine devoted exclusively to the advancement of calligraphy, artists in this field are now creating compositions unprecedented even in Oriental history, compositions that merge the traditional ideograms with forms akin to those of contemporary Western painting. The works of contemporary Japanese calligraphy forming the second part of the exhibition offer evidence of a genuine cultural exchange between East and West.

CATALOGUE LIST

I. HISTORICAL SURVEY OF INK-PAINTING AND CALLIGRAPHY IN JAPAN: 1400-1900 A.D.

1. Ekkei Shūbun (fl., 1414-1465), attributed to. Mountain Landscape in Snow.

Lent by Uchida, Inc., Kyōto.
Shūbun was a priest of the Zen Buddhist temple in Kyōto known as Shōkokuji. It was there that he studied painting under the fellow-priest, Josetsu, who influenced him to specialize in the new monochromatic ink-painting called suibokuga, and to crystallize it into a distinctive Ashikaga Period style. About 1458 the great Sesshū is thought to have become the pupil of Shūbun and through his tutelage to have brought suibokuga to its climax of perfection. The restrained washes and terse brushwork of this painting attributed to Shūbun are worthy of a priest animated by the teachings of Zen, but the Chinese character of the landscape is traceable to the influence of the collection of Chinese paintings then being avidly assembled by the Ashikaga shōguns, one of whom (Yoshimitsu) had built Shōkokuji to serve as the family's special funerary temple.

2. Soga Jasoku (fl., 1452-1483), attributed to. Gentleman Scholar in a Mountain Landscape of Southern China.

Lent by Hasegawa Izan, Kyōto.
Jasoku was the artist's pen name; his real family name was Shūyo. Son of a samurai and lay student of Zen, he became as painter an early devotee of Shūbun at Shōkokuji, but in

middle age attached himself to Ikkyū, priest of another large Zen Buddhist establishment in Kyōto, Daitokuji. He himself preferred to live, however, in a hut in the mountains, where he perfected himself as a painter in sumi (black ink), rendering flower, bird, and human-figure subjects as well as landscape. In boldness of expression Jasoku approached his younger contemporary, Sesshū.

3. Ashikaga Yoshimasa (1435-1490). Chinese Mountain Landscape With a Fisherman's Hut.

Lent by Uchida Kiichi, Kyōto.

Yoshimasa was the eighth shōgun of the Ashikaga family which gave its name to the period otherwise known as Murōmachi (1392-1568). Sometimes called "the Lorenzo de' Medici of Japan" because of his munificence as art patron and contemporaneity with the great Florentine banker, Yoshimasa is best known for the garden of his one-time mansion called Ginkakuji ("Silver Pavilion"). Yoshimasa was highly accomplished as painter, poet and calligrapher, but the present work, ascribed to him by virtue of the seal "Tenzan" at the lower left corner, consists of an ink-painted landscape alone, with neither poem nor signature.

4. Unkoku Tōeki (fl., Early 17th Century). Plum Blossoms and a Bird. Laudatory Inscription by Ekkei Reikaku (-1651).

Lent by Matsuda Motohiro, Kyōto.

Tōeki was the second son of Unkoku Tōgan (1547-1618), who called himself a descendant of Sesshū in the fifth generation and founded the Unkoku School of ink-painting. Tōeki strove with some success to maintain the quality of his professed ancestor's art. Still owing much of its inspiration to the Chinese Southern Sung painting of Mu Ch'i and Liang, this work by Tōeki so aroused the enthusiasm of perhaps its first owner, Ekkei Reikaku, that the latter inscribed in a style of calligraphy matching the painter's brushwork a couple of lines of poetic praise. Reikaku is known to have been a priest of Tōfukuji, a Buddhist temple to the southeast of Kyōto. While residing at Tōfukuji, he rebuilt its bath-house.

5. Honnami Koetsu (1557-1637). Poem on Paper With Inlaid Pattern of Maple Leaves.

Lent by Makado Takao, Kyōto.

Though by occupation an inspector of swords, Koetsu is rated as one of the three greatest artists in Japanese history, distinguished alike in painting, in poetry, in calligraphy, in pottery, in lacquerware, in tea-ceremony. His calligraphy, of which we have here an extraordinarily personable example, Koetsu learned from Konoe Ryūzan in what the Japanese call the Ōie style. A rough translation of Koetsu's poem as here inscribed would read as follows:

One autumn night the moon crosses the river coldly
And the sound of a mallet is heard from houses
here and there.

6. Kanō Tsunenobu (1636-1713). Set of Three Kakemonos (Sampakutsui). Jurōjin, Summer Landscape, and Winter Landscape.

Lent by Uchida, Inc., Kyōto.

Oldest son of Kanō Naonobu, of the second generation of the Kanō family, Tsunenobu had for pen name Yoboku and for nickname Ukon. He was as famous an artist as his father, achieving even such important commissions as the painting of the fusuma and the amado (sliding screens or doors, composed respectively of paper and of wood) for the Imperial Palace in Kyōto (the Shishinden and the Sendo). Tsunenobu was further noted for his poetry. This set of three kakemonos, the center one featuring Jurōjin, he among the Seven Gods of Luck (Shichi Fukujin) who presides over the wisdom of old age, and the two flanking scrolls devoted to seasonal landscapes, represents a type of painting very popular during the Tokugawa Period (1615-1867). The abbreviated calligraphic style in which Tsunenobu rendered each painting was that which he preferred.

7. Hakuin Zenshi (1685-1768). Kwannon Bosatsu (the Bodhisattva Kwannon).

Lent by Uchida Kiichi, Kyōto.

Born in Shizuoka Prefecture, Hakuin's family name was Nagasawa. During his youth he suffered from ill health and disillusionment and finally entered the Zen Buddhist priesthood. After pursuing his studies of Buddhism in various places he returned to his home town to live the rest of his life in an abandoned and ruinous temple known as Shōinji. His knowledge of Buddhism and his Zen Buddhist teachings became famous throughout Japan and it is said that a whole village grew up among those who came to learn from him. Hence his honorific title "Zenshi", meaning "High Priest". Hakuin employed his poetry, calligraphy and painting as a means of teaching. Amateurish though he was at these three arts, and even at times, childish, he found in the mental discipline of Zen and his own fervent, straightforward spirit sources of strength for significant artistic achievement. The Bodhisattva Kwannon performs in Buddhism the same merciful role with respect to human souls as the Virgin Mary does in Roman Catholic Christianity. Though officially neither male nor female in Buddhist theology, Kwannon is here depicted by Hakuin as a kindly old dowager within whose halo the boldly struck-in calligraphy accentuates her heavenly importance.

8. Sengai Zenshi (1751-1837). Jurōjin and New Year's Poem.

Lent by Uchida Kiichi, Kyōto.

In both his life and his art Sengai much resembled Hakuin of the preceding generation. Though born in Gifu Prefecture, he served with the Zen priesthood of Shōfukuji in Hakata, Fukuoka Prefecture, and at length retired to Kyōhakuin. As a hater of fame and riches Sengai turned like Hakuin to poetry, calligraphy, and ink-painting as means

of effective teaching and achieved in all three arts the same peculiar personal quality as had his predecessor. The haiku poem here inscribed reads roughly in English as follows:

Today is New Year's Day and now in this year
How old is Jurōjin?

As the god of the wisdom of longevity among the Seven Gods of Luck, Jurōjin is properly here accompanied by a tortoise, said by the Japanese to live ten thousand years. Jurōjin's face has been painted by Sengai as having been reddened by the sake (rice wine) which Japanese are accustomed to drink in honor of New Year's Day. The artist has in fitting token of his individuality as a Zen Buddhist priest affixed his seal to the tortoise's back.

9. Ike no Taiga (1723-1776). Mountain Landscape and Poem.

Lent by Makado Takao, Kyōto.

Born in Kyōto, Taiga became a precocious master of calligraphy at the tender age of seven. He began his career by making and painting fans which he peddled himself. Too careless in money matters to make a success at this, however, he became a wanderer, traveling widely to study painting under various artists. Ryū Rikyō, whom he met in 1736, and Gion Nankai, whom he met probably about 1752, influenced him to become a master of the Bunjinga School (School of "Literary Men", or accomplished Gentleman Scholars). Content to live in poverty, Taiga was fond of making trips to famous mountains for the purpose of painting them in ink. He developed a personal style of nervous, heavy strokes and stipple-like shadings. The poem composed by him and inscribed on this landscape painting is rated as one of the masterpieces of Taiga's later life. It reads in rough translation:

Nothing is more pleasant than a talk in the woods,
Remote from the town, where there are few people.

10. Tani Bunchō (1765-1842). Mountain Landscape in Fog.

Lent by Uchida, Inc., Kyōto.

Bunchō lived in Edo, (now known as Tōkyō), where he devoted himself to a study of the paintings of both Sesshū and Tanyū and eventually emerged as a master artist in his own right. Known as "the saint of modern painting", people at the height of his career crowded about his gate in an effort to buy his pictures. He was a very learned man, writing several books on art and combining many styles eclectically in his own creative work. This painting was done by him in the spring of 1813 when at the age of fifty he was changing his manner from the vari-colored compositions of his youth to the monochromatic ink paintings of his later years. It bears witness to Bunchō's strength of brushwork.

11. Kushiro Unzen (1759-1811). Mountains Landscape With Gentleman-scholar.

Lent by Makado Takao, Kyōto.

Unzen was born in Shimabara, Nagasaki Prefecture, on the island of Kyūshū. He was accustomed to make frequent visits to the port of Nagasaki, where he learned to paint under Chinese artists of the Nanga or Bunjinga (Literary Men's) School. The present picture reflects Chinese painting both in subject and in style. Unzen lived a lonely life and died at the early age of fifty-three on a journey to Izumosaki in Niigata Prefecture.

12. Sakai Hōitsu (1761-1828). Harvest Moon and Poem. (On fan-shaped paper).

Lent by Takagi Genkō, Kyōto.

As a painter the artist signed himself "Hōitsu" and as a poet "Keison". Though the second son of Lord Sakai, daimyō of Himeji in Harima Province, he renounced his noble heritage for a career as artist. Successive student of the Kanō, the Tosa, and the Maruyama schools, Hōitsu eventually ended up as a devoted follower of Kōrin. Under this ultimate allegiance Hōitsu succeeded through his art in establishing a standard of aristocratic taste for the serene but boldly decorative. The poem as composed and written here by Hōitsu himself reads somewhat as follows:

Owing to the fact that the moon is very beautiful
Even the cuckoo cries softly in its throat so as
not to disturb it.

With his picturesque calligraphy Hōitsu matches perfectly both the sentiment of the poetry and the delicate grace of the rendering of the autumn moon.

13. Mochizuki Gyokusen (1834-1913). Mt. Kamenō at Arashiyama.
Poem composed and inscribed by the Nun Rengetsu (1781-1875).

Lent by Makado Takao, Kyōto.

Gyokusen learned to paint under his father Tamagawa in Kyōto. He gained sufficient renown as an artist to be received at the Imperial Palace and commissioned by the Emperor to paint pictures on its fusuma (sliding paper doors). Rengetsu's family name was Ōtagaki and her father was a Jōdō Buddhist priest of Chionin in Kyōto. The daughter married and had four children, but her husband and all of her offspring died early, whereupon she became a Buddhist nun and took the name of Rengetsu. While under the nunnery's discipline Rengetsu perfected an art of pottery on the wares of which she inscribed with an elegant hand poems of her own composition. When Gyokusen was thirty-eight years old and "Sister" Rengetsu eighty-one, the two artists collaborated in creating the present composition. Gyokusen painted as obscured by mist and rain the famous mountain Kamenō ("Tortoise Tail") at Ara-

shiyama (where the Hozu River rapids end not far from Kyōto). Then Rengetsu wrote in her most refined calligraphy the poem composed by her on the theme of the tail of the tortoise, emblem of longevity. The poem can be translated approximately as follows:

Because water is running down Mt. Kamenō
The river should likewise be a million years old.

14. Tanomura Chokunyū (1814-1907). Chinese Mountain Landscape With Fisherman's Hut and Calligraphic Commentary.

Lent by Makado Takao.

Chokunyū so won the esteem of his teacher in painting, Tanomura Takeda, that the master followed the Japanese custom of adopting the apprentice and bestowing on him the master's family name. Chokunyū added to this his pen name of Kotosanjin. Early in the Meiji Era (1868-1911) Chokunyū came to Kyōto and established a school of painting over which he presided the rest of his life. Winner of numerous prizes and frequent juror of exhibitions, the artist became an influential leader in Kyōto's world of painting during the Meiji Era. He painted only in sumi (black ink) in his later years. The present work not only exemplifies this later art; it also bears witness to the fact that Chokunyū retained his creative vigor to a very advanced age: it was painted by him in 1898 at the age of eighty-five, nine years before his death.

II. WORKS OF CALLIGRAPHY BY CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE MASTERS FROM KEISEI-KAI, TŌKYŌ

(The catalogue notes in this section are based on comments by the artists themselves.)

1. Suikin Amano (1905-). A Poem by Bokusai.

This work is designed to suggest the elegance and refinement characteristic of the art of the Heian Period (794-1185).

2. Nanko Ishii (1924-). Noble Play (written in archaic style).

The artist intended to achieve an effect of neatness and formality.

3. Kado Ishida. Equivalence.

The form is determined by the colorful nature of the character.

4. Undō Inamura (1925-). Vicissitude (written in the cursive style).

Here are two characters rhythmically written to indicate mutation of time and space.

5. Sokyū Ueda (1900-). Mild Wind.

The artist says of this work that it is "written as mildly as a spring wind blows".

6. Setsuson Uno (1913-). Cleared Mist (written in the cursive or running style).

This work is intended as a composition in time and space through the arrangement of the characters.

7. Nanshi Endo (1926-). Fringe Area.

The artist describes this creation as an expression of the carefree atmosphere of a fringe area.

8. Tomoya Endo (1929-). Goodness.

Here there is rhythmic expression arising out of the form of the character itself.

9. Gaboku Ogawa (1914-). Joie de Vivre.

This work is intended to express ecstatic love of existence deriving from the artistic recurrent consciousness of personal participation in the ever-flowing stream of life.

10. Ranzan Kudo (1921-). Agony.

The artist has expressed the intricacies of pain through free brush-work.

11. Koto Kobayashi (1905-). Angular Work of Art.

Here is an expression of simplicity and stability.

12. Shyukyo Sasano (1922-). Self Portrait.

This work may be described as a calligraphic self-portrayal with the primitive beauty suggested by the initial character.

13. Setsugai Sakamoto (1920-). Scarlet Flower Left Unscattered.

The artist has intended to express delicate inner feeling.

14. Bakuzan Sakai (1925-). Song by Ujo Noguchi.

The form of the composition is determined by the rhythm of the song.

15. Chikukei Shibuya. Poem.

This kakemono is intended to reveal the beauty of delicate, curved lines.

16. Zuisen Sugitani (1900-). Stability.

The artist sought to express spiritual stability or resignation which enables people to remain self-possessed even in the midst of confusion (the idea is developed from the character).

17. Chikusan Takahashi (1896-). A Chinese Poem.

The artist offered no comment.

18. Tanichi Takezawa (1908-). Written Whisperings.

Expression of the warmth of intimate conversation is the aim of this creation.

19. Kasetsu Tairaku (1931-). Love.

Expressing the feeling of love through variations in light and dark and in straight and curved lines, the artist has endeavored to avoid the literal expression which this character has by changing the form of the character.

20. Bokuzan Hirakawa (1907-). Rest (Green Shade).

The green shade of a tree screens people from the hot summer sun. The calligrapher intended to convey the feeling of relaxation in the writing of the two characters.

21. Shota Hitai (1916-). A Poem by Janzabro Nishiwaki.

Here is a work intended to show the rhythm of the poem with a precise brush.

22. Chyokaku Yamamoto (1927-). Enjoyment.

The artist tried to suggest the feeling of pleasure by combining the two characters.

23. Kiesen Sone (1906-). Cicada.

The cicada chirps all through the summer and this noise increases the summer heat. The cicada's vitality is suggested.

24. Taro Kishimoto (1928-). Flower.

The Universe is in a state of flux. The artist intended to compare the world's mutability to a flower's perishability.

25. Tomotake Ichimura (1929-). Love.

The artist has tried to make a new approach to classical expression.

26. Tomin Hagihara (1915-). Figure.

The work displays an abstract treatment of this character.

