

## **Kanō Isen'in (1775-1825)**

### ***The Three Vinegar Tasters***

Japan, Edo period (1615-1868), ca. 1802-1816

Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper

Gift of George H. Kerr in Honor of Sir George Sansom, 1958  
(6156.1)

As an official painter for the Tokugawa government, Isen'in was called upon to paint a wide variety of subjects, ranging from the elegant landscape on display nearby to this Buddhist theme. Three figures, the historical Buddha Shakyamuni, Confucius, and the Daoist sage Laozi, are shown tasting vinegar, each with pursed lips in response to the sour taste. This served as a parable for the fundamental suffering of ignorance, one of the "Four Noble Truths" of Buddhism, which, like the sourness of vinegar, affects all people in the same way, despite the differences in their beliefs.

## **Kanō Isen'in (1775-1825)**

### ***Landscape***

Japan, Edo period (1615-1868), ca. 1802-1816

Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper

Gift of George H. Kerr in Honor of Sir George Sansom, 1958  
(6157.1)

Kanō Isen'in was the seventh generation head of the Kobikichō branch of the Kanō School, one of the three branches that directly served the Tokugawa shoguns during the Edo period. Here he uses subtle brush strokes to combine various stock elements into a convincing landscape, following the method developed by Kanō Tan'yu (1602-1674), who secured the place of the Kanō School as painters in residence to the shogunate two centuries earlier. Like Tan'yu before him, Isen'in derived his brushwork from ancient Chinese precedents, lending an air of cultural authority and stability to the official style promoted by the government.

Like many leading painters of the Kanō School, Isen'in was granted the Buddhist title *hōgen* (literally “eyes of the Dharma”) as an indication of his high status; his use of *hōgen* in the signature to this painting allows us to date it to the time he held the title, from 1802 to 1816.

## **Kanō Seisen'in (1796-1846)**

### ***Hotei***

Japan, Edo period (1615-1868), ca. 1819-1834

Hanging scroll; ink on paper

Gift of Ann and Dougal Crowe, 2006

(13508.1)

Like his father Isen'in, whose works are also on display in this gallery, Seisen'in was hereditary leader of the Kobikichō branch of the Kanō School, one of three branches that directly served the Tokugawa shogunate. In honor of his prominent position, he was granted the Buddhist title of *hōgen* (literally “eyes of the Dharma”), and his use of the title here allows us to date the painting to between 1819 and 1834.

The Chinese monk Budai (*Hotei* in Japanese) was believed to have lived in the tenth century. A popular figure in folklore, his name comes from the cloth bag that he carried, which features in one of the Zen *kōan* riddles associated with him. Budai was often shown as a portly figure, representing the prosperity and contentment that come from Buddhist teachings. Commonly known as the “fat Buddha,” it was believed that rubbing Budai’s belly would bring good luck.

## **Kanō Kōi (ca. 1569-1636)**

### ***White-robed Kannon***

Japan, Edo period (1615-1868), 17<sup>th</sup> century

Hanging scroll; ink on paper

Gift of Aileen Miyo Ichiyo, 1982

(5009.1)

Kanō Kōi played an important role in the Kanō School at the beginning of the Edo period, raising Kanō Tan'yu and his two brothers, who in turn founded the three main branches of the school in Edo that directly served the Tokugawa shogunate. Although he was largely eclipsed by his illustrious pupils, Kōi was in part responsible for developing the light style emphasizing subtle brushwork that characterized the Kanō School throughout the Edo period.

Here Kōi depicts the Bodhisattva Kannon (Avalokiteshvara in Sanskrit) dressed in a white robe, sitting on a rock in the midst of water that represents Kannon's island home of Potalaka. The white-robed manifestation of Kannon became popular in China during the Song dynasty (960-1279), spreading to Japan where it remained one of the most enduring subjects in Buddhist art.

**Attributed to Tosa Mitsunobu (1434-1525)**

***Copy of the Kōzanji Chōjū Giga (Frolicking Animals)***  
***Scroll***

Japan, Muromachi period (1392-1573), 16<sup>th</sup> century

Handscroll; ink on paper

Gift of the Robert Allerton Fund, 1954

Gift of Yamanaka Jirō, 1956

(1951.1 and 2212.1)

This delightful sketch is a copy of a famous painting from the Heian period (794-1185), kept in Kōzanji temple in Kyoto. The Academy's scroll once bore an inscription (now lost) by the great early Edo-period leader of the Kanō School, Kanō Tan'yu (1602-1674), attributing it to Tosa Mitsunobu, who in turn was one of the most important painters of the Tosa School that served the emperor.

The section shown here parodies a Buddhist ceremony. To the left, a monkey dressed in the sumptuous robes of a priest performs a ritual for a frog Buddha with a mandorla and throne made from leaves. Behind him, a fox and a hare chant from scriptures, while other animals grasp prayer beads, and two "pilgrims" arrive at the right. Behind the frog Buddha, an owl perched in a tree looks on with an expression suggesting disdain for the whole affair.

**Shibata Zeshin (1807-1891)**

***Jurōjin, Deer and Tortoises in a Landscape***

Japan, Meiji period (1868-1912), 1889

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk

Gift of the James Edward and Mary Louise O'Brien Collection, 1978  
(4644.1)

The god of longevity, Jurōjin, derived from the ancient Chinese stellar deity Shouxing, who was worshiped as early as the third century BC. He was one of many popular deities absorbed into the Buddhist pantheon as the religion spread through East Asia. By the fifteenth century, Shouxing was already depicted as an elderly man with an extended cranium (suggesting not only divine wisdom but also male potency), frequently accompanied by a white deer. Both deer and tortoises were symbols of longevity, and the latter were believed in some cases to live as long as ten thousand years. Here, Zeshin placed the figures in an abbreviated landscape, appropriately dominated by a pine tree, which also represented longevity and constancy, since its needles remained green throughout the winter.

## **Shibata Zeshin (1807-1891)**

### ***Shōki Quelling Two Demons***

Japan, Meiji period (1868-1912), ca. 1872-1891

Hanging scroll; ink, color and lacquer on paper

Gift of the James Edward and Mary Louise O'Brien Collection, 1977  
(4600.1)

The Chinese deity Zhong Kui (Shōki in Japanese) is said to have appeared to the Tang dynasty (618-906) emperor Xuanzong in the eighth century, in order to rescue him from a small demon that caused him to fall ill. Terrifying in appearance, Zhong Kui made a strong impression on the emperor, who commanded the court artist Wu Daozi to make a painting based on the emperor's description immediately afterward. This began a tradition of making images of Zhong Kui as protective talismans that endures to this day. Although not of Buddhist origin, like many other popular deities Zhong Kui was absorbed into the Buddhist pantheon as the religion adapted itself to East Asian culture.

A symbol of bravery and loyalty, Shōki became associated with the annual Boys' Day Festival celebrated on the fifth day of the fifth month in Japan, when banners portraying the god would be hung around the house, and paintings such as this would be displayed.

One of the most prolific artists of the Meiji period, Shibata Zeshin was a master of lacquerware design as well as painting. He also used black lacquer in his paintings such as this, and is considered to be one of the preeminent lacquer painters in Japanese history.

## **Shibata Zeshin (1807-1891)**

### ***Otafuku***

Japan, Meiji period (1868-1912), ca. 1872-1891

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk

Gift of the James Edward and Mary Louise O'Brien Collection, 1978  
(4670.1)

Otafuku derives from the ancient Shinto deity Ama no Uzume no Mikoto, who helped to convince the ancestral goddess of the Japanese imperial line Amaterasu, the goddess of the sun, to return to the world when she fled to a cave and refused to come out. The goddess of mirth, Otafuku's name literally means "big breasts," and she is commonly depicted as a symbol of matrimonial harmony and prosperity in the home.

Although there was an effort to separate Buddhism and Shinto (*shinbutsu bunri*) in the Meiji period when the latter was established as the state religion of Japan, there was a strong syncretic tendency to combine the two belief systems dating back to the earliest introduction of Buddhism into the country. Deities such as Otafuku transcended the boundaries between these two religions, and were popular with adherents of both faiths.



## **Shibata Zeshin (1807-1891)**

### ***Sōbojo Teaching Ushiwaka-maru***

Japan, Meiji period (1868-1912), 1889

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk

Gift of the James Edward and Mary Louise O'Brien Collection, 1977  
(4586.1)

Sōbojo was king of the Tengu, mischievous nature spirits with long, beak-like noses. A feared swordsman, Sōbojo took an interest in the young Ushiwaka-maru and trained him in the martial arts. In turn, Ushiwaka-maru, whose adult name was Minamoto no Yoshitsune, and his servant Benkei (who reportedly also associated with Tengu as a child) became great warriors, and are ranked among the most famous heroes in Japanese history. Benkei was a *yamabushi*, a Buddhist monk who retreated from civilization into the mountains to pursue ascetic practices; the *yamabushi* are traditionally believed to have a special connection with Tengu.

In this painting, Zeshin shows Sōbojo, his identity revealed by his long nose and frightful claws, watching over Ushiwaka-maru as he reads a text, presumably on military strategy.