

Shiokawa Bunrin (1808-1877)

White Fox on a Moonlit Night

Japan, Edo period, ca.1850s-60s

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk

Purchase, 2005

(13191.1)

In the mid-nineteenth century, the long-standing literati interest in depictions of moonlit plum blossoms and evening landscapes was expanded to include a wider variety of nighttime scenes. Bunrin, a Shijō-based painter, in particular, developed a reputation for the skillful ink tonalities with which he rendered night scenes.

White Fox on a Moonlit Night evokes a dramatic nighttime atmosphere through a combination of ink washes and broad dark brushstrokes in the trees and grasses. The white fox, believed to be the guardian of the Shinto deity of rice cultivation Inari, is shown by an ancient *sugi* tree (*cryptomeria*), which grew on the grounds of Fushimi Inari in Kyoto. Bunrin cleverly positioned the brilliant white fox against the dark surroundings for a mysterious ambience and a striking graphic effect.

Fujimoto Tesseki (1817-1863)

Old Pine

Japan, Edo period, 1859

Hanging scroll; ink on satin

Purchase, 2005

(13188.1)

Symbolic of fortitude and longevity, pines trees are one of the most enduring painting themes in East Asian culture. The combination of *reishi* mushroom, rock, and pine tree was a popular theme, particularly for paintings given to celebrate the recipient's sixtieth birthday.

These paintings, often large in scale, offered the artist opportunities to demonstrate their bravura brushwork. The energetic brush style and strong calligraphy of this painting are typical of the expansiveness found in many of Tesseki's larger works.

By the mid-nineteenth century, many ink paintings on this theme from the late Ming (1368-1644) and early Qing (1644-1911) periods in China had been imported to Japan. Tesseki's work seems to show an influence from these examples, including the fashion of painting on satin to add a subtle sheen to the ink tonalities.

Kōno Bairei

(1844-1895)

White Fox over Torii Gate

Japan, Meiji period, 1875

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk

Purchase, 2005

(13192.1)

The fox, considered to have magical abilities for purposes both malicious and benevolent, has been long associated with Inari, the Shinto deity of rice. Legends and folk tales abound in Japan about foxes that possess and torment humans, but the subject of a fox leaping over a torii (gateway) is rare.

One belief relates that all the foxes of Japan came as divine messengers of Inari to the deity's shrine in Fushimi, Kyoto. Jumping over torii and haunting humans, they demonstrated their skill as tricksters to obtain various ranks from Inari.

Bairei portrayed the critical moment of the magnificent fox jumping over the gate with consummate skill. Its graceful form is full of energy and tension, while its whiteness is highlighted by the black and red of the gate.

Tsuji Kakō (1870-1931)

Cranes

Japan, Meiji period, ca. 1908

Six-fold screen; ink and color on paper

Purchase, 2005

(13149.1)

A symbol of longevity, the crane is a popular subject in East Asian art. A pair of cranes can specifically signify the wish that a married couple live a long life in harmony. Kakō's screen demonstrates his solid *shasei* (sketching from life) foundation and consummate brush skill grounded in Shijō-School naturalism. However, the whimsical expressions of the cranes distinguish them from those painted by his contemporaries.

In the background, the subtle changes in tonality of gray ink washes create a misty atmosphere. The faint orange brushed in the upper left corner evokes the light of the rising sun, hinting at another auspicious symbol.

Suzuki Shōnen

(1848-1918)

Old Pine

Japan, Meiji period, 1900

Pair of six-fold screens; ink, color, and gold on paper

Gift of Terry Welch, in honor of Stephen Little, 2005

(13147.1-2)

Shōnen received his artistic training from his father, Hyakunen (1825-1891), but developed his own, more dramatic style. *Old Pine* represents Shōnen's powerful artistic vision at its best. With its monumentality and sheer dynamism of brushwork, the painting expresses the aesthetic of the Meiji period.

In both screens, a thick trunk of pine extends from one corner, its form and movement resembling the body of a dragon covered with scales. The faintest ink and color washes of the marshy background create an unexpected lyricism, while washes of gold make the mist sparkle under the rising sun. The inscription matches the auspicious image, praising the strength and loftiness of pine trees as symbolic of longevity.

Yano Kyōson

(1890-1965)

Mother's Breast

Japan, Shōwa period, 1939

Pair of two-fold screens; color on paper

Purchase, 2005

(13151.1-2)

At first glance, this painting represents a delightful scene of a mother dog watching over her mischievous puppies romping beneath *bashō* (banana) plants. However, the mother's vigilant pose, the frayed appearance of the *bashō*, and the torn, discarded flowers on the ground impart a feeling of unease. The ambiguous quality of Kyōson's painting may reflect the uncertainty of wartime Japan during the late 1930s while expressing the artist's hope for future generations.

Kyōson was a proponent of the literati movement in Osaka, and sought to integrate modern sensibilities into his art. He explored many styles and genres to break the monotony of the ink landscapes usually associated with literati painting. *Mother's Breast* reveals his close observation of nature, including his family pets, and displays the combination of unassuming brushwork with a refined color scheme typical of his style.

Haruki Nanmei

(1795-1878)

Immortal's Pavilion in Spring Daybreak

Japan, Edo period, 1853

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk

Purchase, 2005

(13185.1)

Son of Haruki Nanko (1759-1839), an illustrious literati painter in Edo, Nanmei's paintings were admired for their refined, elegant expression. Combining a complex composition and striking colors in the blue-green tradition, Nanmei created here a dazzling landscape full of soaring peaks and rich vegetation.

A stream courses through a tunnel-like opening in the foreground. Just above, two figures are seen on their way to the palatial structure nestled in the forest in the middle distance.

Representing a popular literati theme, this painting symbolized the yearning to retire from public life and to live in idyllic contentment. Such a painting would have been enormously appealing to the cultured members of the samurai class who patronized Nanko's art.

Nakabayashi Chikutō (1776-1853)

Cranes and Pine Trees

Japan, Edo period, 1830s

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk

Purchase, 2005

(13175.1)

Chikutō represented the conservative trend in Japanese literati painting in the early nineteenth century. He studied the works of Chinese masters from the Yuan (1271-1368) and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties, and wrote many treatises and instructions on painting, setting forth the orthodox doctrine.

This painting represents Chikutō's mature work, characterized by light forms and sensitive brushwork. Typical of his style, the rocks are square or rectangular, while mountain surfaces show feathery, horizontal texture strokes.

Although not specified by the artist's inscription, the painting makes a clear reference to Mt. Hōrai, the legendary mountain-island of the immortals in the distant eastern sea. Chikutō's exquisite coloring combined with a soft brush style achieves ethereal beauty in perfect harmony with the otherworldly theme.

Hirai Baisen

(1889-1969)

Mt. Hōrai

Japan, Shōwa period, ca. 1930

Hanging scroll; color on silk

Gift of Terry Welch, in honor of Stephen Shanaman, 2005

(13211.1)

Mt. Hōrai is one of three mythical mountain-islands, traditionally believed to exist in the East China Sea. The elusive paradise was forbidden to ordinary humans, but Daoist immortals were able to reach it by riding on cranes. In Japanese painting, Hōrai symbolized longevity, often incorporating other emblems of long life, such as the pine, crane, and tortoise.

Baisen's rendition is stunning in its austerity. The mythical peak emerges from a foreboding darkness and soars upward like a fortress. Reducing the brushwork to fine texture strokes and subtle outlines, Baisen represented the entire landscape in an unusual combination of ink and yellow-ochre with a most effective use of gold highlights.

Maeda Mokuhō

(1853-1918)

Landscape Inspired by a Poem on Zhongshan

Japan, Taishō period, 1913

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk

Purchase, 2005

(13206.1)

Mokuhō studied ancient Chinese styles of calligraphy by examining ink rubbings of bronze vessels and stone stele that preserved the writings of antiquity. His research inspired him to develop a new calligraphy style and influenced the brushwork and themes in his painting. Although best known as a calligrapher, Mokuhō produced a wide variety of paintings, including dramatic landscapes and depictions of ancient bronze vessels.

Bizarre peaks and unusual rock forms were traditionally believed to express the mysterious power of nature, encouraging painters to create landscapes of fantastic imagery. The use of bold, thick outlines in this striking composition reflects Mokuhō's notion of applying strokes from regular and clerical styles of calligraphy to his painting. The inscription is a poem by Shen Yue (441-513) on the ideal of reclusion in nature.

Anonymous Emperor

Japan, Edo period (1615-1868), 19th century

Porcelain, papier-mâché, wood, hair, silk, cotton, metal, pigments

Gift of Ryukichi Tsuji of Akita, Japan, 2002

(11826.1)

Anonymous

Empress

Japan, Edo period (1615-1868), 19th century

Porcelain, papier-mâché, wood, hair, silk, cotton, metal, glass, pigments

Gift of Ryukichi Tsuji of Akita, Japan, 2002

(11826.1)

The third day of the third month marks one of the most important annual festivals in Japan, known as *hina matsuri* (Doll Festival) or *momo no sekku* (Peach Festival). This celebration finds its origins in ancient Chinese ceremonies dating to the Zhou dynasty (ca.1050 B.C.-256 B.C.), in which female shamans (*wu*) would purify their communities of negative influences by driving them away on flowing water. The custom entered Japan by the Heian period (794-1185), when in a ceremony known as *hina nagashi* (“doll floating”) dolls symbolizing the negative energies of the past winter were set adrift on boats to the sea, giving a fresh start to the new spring. The ancient spring lustration ceremony was a time when the young people of a community could interact more freely than usual, and not surprisingly today the third day of the third month has become best known as Girls’ Day, which together with Boys’ Day on the fifth day of the fifth month, is a time when the children of Japan are celebrated.

The Doll Festival took its present form during the Edo period (1615-1868), when girls began to collect sets of dolls that were displayed on tiered platforms during the celebrations surrounding the third day of the third month. Often quite elaborate, these sets represent the imperial court of the Heian period, complete with emperor, empress, and an extensive retinue of courtiers. The Academy is fortunate to have three sets of dolls for the Doll Festival from the Edo (1615-1868) to the Meiji (1868-1912) periods, collected by the Tsuji family in the early twentieth century and donated to the museum in 2002.

Anonymous

Archer on Horseback

Japan, Edo period (1615-1868), 19th century

Porcelain, papier-mâché, wood, hair, fur, paper, silk, cotton, pigments

Gift of Ryukichi Tsuji of Akita, Japan, 2002

(11826.1)

This doll of an archer on horseback was not part of the standard set of dolls for *hina matsuri*, and probably was intended for a different purpose. While dolls of this type were popular during the Edo period, the Academy's example is distinguished by its exceptionally high quality, reflecting labor-intensive construction techniques and a careful attention to detail. It is thought that the doll would have been made in Kyoto.

The horse has an articulated head, which most likely was originally designed to move from side to side when the doll was pulled forward on its wheeled stand.

Anonymous

Drummer

Japan, Edo period (1615-1868), 19th century

Porcelain, papier-mâché, wood, leather, hair, silk, cotton, pigments

Gift of Ryukichi Tsuji of Akita, Japan, 2002

(11826.1)

Like the other two dolls in this case, this drummer is not part of the standard set of dolls for *hina matsuri*. Probably made in Kyoto, it perhaps depicts a performer of *gagaku*, an ancient form of court music introduced from China in the seventh and eighth centuries that still survives today.

The inside of the base contains a wind-up mechanism (no longer functioning) that would have caused the musician to move and strike the drum.

Anonymous

Kintoki Scattering Beans

Japan, late Edo (1615-1868) to early Meiji (1868-1912) period, 19th century

Clay, gofun, papier-mâché, paper, wood, hair, silk, cotton, felt, pigments

Gift of Ryukichi Tsuji of Akita, Japan, 2002
(11826.1)

Kintoki, otherwise known as Kintarō, is a popular figure from Japanese folklore believed to have been active in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Of superhuman strength, he is the subject of numerous demon-quelling stories that inspired Noh and Kabuki dramas during the Edo period. Here Kintoki is shown exorcising two terrified demons by throwing beans at them. The vigorous, but somewhat naïve, modeling of this grouping suggests that it would have been made in Osaka or Nagoya.

As a symbol of strength and bravery, Kintoki was associated with the Boys' Day festival on the fifth day of the fifth month, and this complex assemblage of three dolls is more likely to have been the prized possession of a boy to be displayed on this day, rather than by a girl during *hina matsuri*.

Anonymous

Gagaku Dancers

Japan, Meiji period (1868-1912)

Porcelain, papier-mâché, wood, leather, hair, silk, cotton, pigments

Gift of Ryukichi Tsuji of Akita, Japan, 2002

(11826.1)

These charming figures with butterfly wings are dancers for the ancient court music known as *gagaku*. Of exceptionally high quality, they were probably made by a workshop in Kyoto. Although *gagaku* dancers such as this are not commonly found in modern sets of dolls for *hina matsuri*, they were popular inclusions in *hina matsuri* groupings from the Meiji period through the first part of the twentieth century. The figures in red kimonos are intended to represent adult dancers, while the figures in white are children.

Anonymous
Gagaku Dancers

Japan, Meiji period (1868-1912)

Porcelain, papier-mâché, wood, leather, hair, silk, cotton, pigments

Gift of Ryukichi Tsuji of Akita, Japan, 2002
(11826.1)

Anonymous

Miniature Palanquin

Japan, Edo period, 19th century

Lacquered wood, bronze, gold, silk, pigments

Gift of Ryukichi Tsuji of Akita, Japan, 2002

(11826.1)

This remarkable palanquin, made as part of a set of miniature dowry items to be displayed with *hina matsuri* dolls, is a masterpiece of late Edo-period lacquer. It is accurate down to the smallest details, including exquisite paintings in a classical court style on the interior walls.