

## Ink and Gold: Art of the Kano

Dorrance Galleries

February 16–May 10, 2015

The Philadelphia Museum of Art will present the first major exhibition outside Japan to be dedicated to the Kano painters, the most enduring and influential school of Japanese painting. Established in the 15th century, the Kano created and upheld standards of artistic excellence in Japan for nearly four hundred years. It developed against the backdrop of one of the greatest periods in Japanese history. *Ink and Gold: Art of the Kano* will focus on the artistic dynasty's leading figures and will be drawn largely from Japanese imperial, national, and private collections, including those of such celebrated cultural landmarks as Nijō-jō and Nagoya castles. The exhibition will feature rare and magnificent works—many distinguished by their stunning use of gold leaf—that are considered treasures in Japan for their high cultural importance and rarity. The exhibition will be seen only in Philadelphia.

The Kano School was significant both for its longevity and for the achievements of some of its most illustrious members, such as its founder, Kano Masanobu (1434–1530), and Kano Tan'yū (1602–1674). It also became an academy, with rigorous training in workshops that fostered the development and preservation of painting traditions. The Kano School arose and then prospered under unique circumstances, first in Kyoto and then in Edo (present-day Tokyo), with the patronage of Japan's military and political elite. With the waning of their power and the opening of Japan to cultural influences from abroad in the late nineteenth century, the preeminent role of the Kano School in Japanese art came to an end.

Timothy Rub, the George D. Widener Director and CEO, stated: "Ink and Gold is a much anticipated milestone, both for this Museum and for the study of a significant chapter in the history of Japanese art. This is the most important exhibition of Japanese art that Americans will see in a very long time, and a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience some of Japan's greatest artistic achievements. The exhibition will be a revelation and a delight to our visitors."

The last exhibition to be devoted to the entire history of the Kano School was seen in 1979 in Tokyo. In Philadelphia, due to their light sensitivity, the works in *Ink and Gold* will be presented in three rotations, offering multiple opportunities to experience the full depth, scope, and variety of the Kano painters' remarkable achievements.

Included are works spanning the entire history of the School. The story begins with the exceptionally rare paintings of Masanobu, who specialized in ink landscapes distinctive for their craggy hills and distant vistas inspired by China, which deeply informed Japanese culture. Among these is a National Treasure, a hanging scroll depicting a famous scholar admiring lotuses in a mist-filled scene. Sets of folding fans made for privileged women or visiting emissaries are also on view. Panoramas of farming across the seasons abound in the exhibition, reflecting an enduring theme based on Confucian ideas that prosperous agriculture results from good government.

Among the highlights of the exhibition are works by Tan'yū. A contemporary of Rembrandt van Rijn, he is among the most admired of all Japanese artists, and was the first Kano painter ordered by the military to open a studio in Edo. His work reflects a striking range of accomplishments. His ink landscapes and scenes of waves breaking in vast seas are rendered with a virtuoso brush. Traveling between Kyoto and Edo (now Tokyo), Tan'yū frequently passed Mount Fuji. He was the first to paint it in a horizontal hanging scroll format, establishing the now familiar convention through which the mountain became a national symbol for the country.

Many of the most dazzling works in the exhibition are those created for public display, especially the large-scale folding screens and sliding doors designed for the residences of Japan's elite in the 16th and 17th centuries, with oversized figures and landscapes. These include Tan'yū's Eagle and Pine Tree (Nijō-jō Castle), Wasteful Payment for an Observation Tower (Nagoya Castle), and scenes of tigers prowling amid bamboo and images from *The Tale of Genji*.

While Tan'yū served the elites of both Kyoto and Edo, artists such as Eigaku (1790–1867) remained close to the culture of Kyoto, rendering courtly subjects on folding screens celebrating music, dance, and poetry, and exulting in nature with paintings of trees and exotic birds. Other Kano artists were also closely associated with Edo. Seisen'in Osanobu (1796–1846) created an elaborate decorative scheme for Edo Castle and other images ranging from Mount Fuji to falconry. His work for the castle was ultimately destroyed by fire, but it is represented in the exhibition through rare surviving sketches.

Dr. Felice Fischer, the Museum's Luther W. Brady Curator of Japanese Art and Senior Curator of East Asian Art, stated: "Our fascination with the Kano actually began with artists represented in our own collection who were active in the final years of this remarkable dynasty. We wanted to explore their roots. We had done exhibitions that looked at the rebels and the renegades. As we now turn our attention to the academy, I am sure it will open people's eyes."

## Curators

The exhibition is organized by Felice Fischer, the Luther W. Brady Curator of Japanese Art and Senior Curator of East Asian Art, and Kyoko Kinoshita, Project Associate Curator.

## Location

Dorrance Galleries, first floor

## Catalogue

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, co-published by Yale University press and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

## Support

This exhibition is made possible by the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, Toshiba Corporation, Toshiba International Foundation, and The Japan Foundation, with additional generous support provided by Maxine S. and Howard H. Lewis, Joan and John Thalheimer, the Estate of J. Welles Henderson, Barbara B. and Theodore R. Aronson, Andrea M. Baldeck, M.D., Marguerite and Gerry Lenfest, Sueyun and Gene Locks, and Cecilia Segawa Seigle Tannenbaum. The accompanying publication is supported in part by The Women's Committee of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

The exhibition is organized by the Philadelphia Museum of Art and co-organized by the Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan with the special co-operation of the Tokyo National Museum. International transportation is sponsored by Japan Airlines.

## The Kano School of Painting

What had begun as a family studio in Kyoto became a thriving guild by 1615, a time when powerful shoguns, military leaders arising from an array of warring regional states, unified the nation of Japan. Patronized by the military government and ruling class, each generation of Kano artists copiously passed its artistic secrets to the next. Under the Tokugawa Shogunate, which officially established its seat in Edo, Kano artists adorned public halls with glittering scenes evocative of power and authority. They would fill leaders' private spaces with intimate contemplative scenes, masterfully brushed in ink, to convey an aura of cultivation. The Kano School prospered until the collapse of the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1867.

## Kano Paintings in the Philadelphia Museum of Art

The late Kano works in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art reflect a fusing of traditional elements with Western influences that followed the arrival in Japan of Commodore Perry in 1853. These works were bequeathed to the Museum by Mrs. Moncure Biddle, daughter of the American artist and educator Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1908), whose twelve-year stay in Japan dramatically changed the way Westerners and Japanese alike thought about Japanese art. He became a friend of the Kano painter Hōgai, acquiring his painting *Two Dragons [in Clouds]*, which is on view in the exhibition. Their friendship contributed to a final flowering of the Kano school before it faded during the Meiji Restoration. With its unprecedented loans, *Ink and Gold: Art of the Kano* will introduce American audiences for the first time to the full breadth of Japan's longest-lived and most influential school of painting.

#### Admission:

Ink and Gold: The Art of the Kano is free with Museum admission. The rotation schedule is February 12-March 15; March 17- April 12; April 14-May 10, 2015. Visitors who wish to experience all three rotations may purchase a \$25 ticket providing three-day admission upon presentation of the ticket stub. For information, call: [215-235-SHOW \(7469\)](tel:215-235-SHOW).

#### Exhibition hours

Tuesday through Sunday: 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Wednesdays and Fridays until 8:45 p.m.

#### Social media

Facebook: [philamuseum](#); Twitter: [philamuseum](#); Tumblr: [philamuseum](#); YouTube: [PhilaArtMuseum](#); Instagram: [@philamuseum](#)

The Philadelphia Museum of Art is one of the most important museums in the United States, with a collection of more than 227,000 works of art. The Museum's many galleries present painting, sculpture, works on paper, photography, decorative arts, textiles, and architectural settings from Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the United States. Its facilities include a landmark main building; the Ruth and Raymond G. Perelman Building; the Rodin Museum; and two historic houses in Fairmount Park, Mount Pleasant and Cedar Grove. The Museum offers a wide variety of activities for public audiences, including special exhibitions, programs for children and families, lectures, concerts, and films.

For additional press information contact the press office at [pressroom@philamuseum.org](mailto:pressroom@philamuseum.org) or 215-684-7860. For general information, call 215-763-8100 or visit [philamuseum.org](http://philamuseum.org).