HER BRUSH

Japanese Women Artists from the Fong-Johnstone Collection

DENVER art MUSEUM

Her Brush

Her Brush

Japanese Women Artists from the Fong-Johnstone Collection

DENVER ART MUSEUM, DENVER

Director's Foreword | ***Christoph Heinrich*** 1

Collector's Note | ***Dr. John Fong*** 4

Introduction | ***Einor Cervone*** . . . 9

New Approaches to Gender and Agency in Japanese Art . . 15

- Shining Light on Art by Japanese Buddhist Nuns | ***Patricia Fister*** 17
- Ōtagaki Rengetsu's Buddhist Poetics: Gender and Materiality | ***Melissa McCormick*** 24
- Finding Gender in Japanese Literati Painting | ***Alison Miller*** 29
- Reading an Archive of Everyday Life | ***Amy Beth Stanley*** 36
- Her Brush, Her Needle: Rethinking the Relationship between Art and Artisanal Work by Women in Early Modern Japan | ***Marcia A. Yonemoto*** 41
- Narratives of Japanese Art History: Where Are the Women? | ***Paul Berry*** 47

Tomoko Kawao—Calligraphy Performance | ***Tomoko Kawao*** 53

Calligraphy, Poems, and Paintings: by Japanese Buddhist Nuns | ***Patricia Fister*** 54

On the Fong-Johnstone Study Collection and the Power of Access | ***Einor Cervone*** 92

Galleries as Sites of Connection: Visitor Experience in *Her Brush* | ***Karuna Srikureja*** 105

Exhibition Catalog 111

- Introduction 113

Inner Chambers 130
Daughters of the Ateliers 135
Taking the Tonsure 138
Floating Worlds 150
Literati Circles 157
Unstoppable (No Barriers) 170
Exhibition Checklist 176
Artists' Biographies 218
Acknowledgments | ***Einor Cervone*** 247
Contributors 251
Additional Resources 254
About 266
Privacy Policy and Terms 270

Various artists, *Poem Slips* (*tanzaku*), 1700–1900s. Paper with pigment, gold, silver, and ink. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.181.4-44.

Director's Foreword

Christoph Heinrich,
Frederick and Jan Mayer Director,
Denver Art Museum

Since an initial gift in 1915, the Denver Art Museum has built an expansive and rich collection of Asian art that allows us to display a versatile array of art from across the continent, and in particular from Japan. With the recent generous gift of Dr. John Fong and Dr. Colin Johnstone, the museum is now able to uniquely emphasize our collection of ceramics and ink paintings by Japanese women artists from the 1600s to the 1900s.

Collected over decades, this extensive collection, including a study collection, consists of about 550 objects and lends itself to a range of exhibitions, research projects, and the study of connoisseurship. Encompassing art by Buddhist nuns, teashop owners, and literati artists among others, the collection allows us to tell a more comprehensive and inclusive story of art in early modern and modern Japan that illuminates the roles and successes of women artists. We hope to bring these artists to the public's attention both through special exhibitions and in our permanent galleries.

The Denver Art Museum is proud to open its doors to students and researchers and is committed to developing educational programs aimed at advancing the field and promoting the study of these underrepresented artists. Experts and students are invited to examine and handle rare and important works alongside a wide range of copies (some made during the artists' lifetime and some later imitations), through programming and object workshops geared at honing skills of connoisseurship.

This larger project prompted by Drs. Fong and Johnstone's gift has led to the museum's first digital publication. Freely available online to anyone interested, the digital catalog furthers the museum's commitments to raising awareness and to equity and accessibility.

I would like to thank Tianlong Jiao (former Joseph de Heer Curator of Asian Art) and Professor Andrew

Maske (Wayne State University) for inviting Dr. Fong and Dr. Johnstone into the museum's orbit and conceiving of an exhibition. Einor Cervone, Associate Curator of Arts of Asia, and the museum's curatorial and exhibitions teams transformed those initial forays and research into a beautiful and engaging exhibition, *Her Brush: Japanese Women Artists from the Fong-Johnstone Collection*. Finally, I am grateful for the support of the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, the Blakemore Foundation, the donors to the Annual Fund Leadership Campaign, and the residents who support the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD).

Calligraphy by Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, Painting by Wada Gesshin 和田月心, 1800–1870, *Stag and Poem*, about 1865–70. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.245.

Collector's Note

Dr. John Fong

Nakayama Miya 中山三屋, 1840–1871, *Chrysanthemums*, mid-1800s. Ink and color on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.218

In one's life, there are instances that come about purely by chance that have a profound impact on one's future. More than forty years ago, my partner and I were introduced by the then-curator of Chinese art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art to the famous Asian art collector and dealer Alice Boney. At the time, I had just completed my psychiatric residency and was a novice collector of Chinese monochrome porcelains from the Qing dynasty. Miss Boney—tall, elegant, sharp-witted—was most cordial and accommodating but quick to state that she did not believe in psychiatry, and she immediately chided me for not being able to speak Chinese. She advised me to rid myself of the monochromes that I had collected and began to show me Qing dynasty porcelains with emperors' reign marks on them, known in the trade as "period porcelains." Despite this unpromising introduction, she became a mentor to both Dr. Johnstone and me, guiding us in collecting while becoming a close friend.

Alice was a woman before her time. During her middle years, she had traveled to Japan in search of Chinese bronzes. Intrigued with Japanese culture, she chose to remain in Japan, although it was a male-dominated society, and became known as a highly respected connoisseur of Asian art, even among Japanese curators and collectors. Traveling throughout India and Southeast Asia, she acquired important works of art and was aware of many artists, then unknown in the West, who would

later be “discovered” and highly sought after. During our meetings, she introduced us not only to porcelains but to paintings, calligraphy, sculpture, and textiles. She freely shared her knowledge as well as her introductions to many scholars and acquaintances. Her generosity was as strong as her personality. Always direct and to the point, she was known for her intense opinions and the acerbic comments she directed to those she held in less favor.

There is no doubt that Alice’s knowledge, taste, and personal opinions had an indelible impact on our collections. During a visit with Laurence Sickman, the late director of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and noted sinologist, and K. S. Wong, a scholar who organized the first Obaku exhibition in the United States, together with curator Stephen Addiss, Alice showed many works by Japanese women artists and calligraphers who were then little known. We were all enthralled by these works and began to seek them out in Japan, even though Japanese dealers and friends found our interest curious.

In her advancing years, Alice was no longer able to travel to seek out art objects, although she continued to remain a formidable businesswoman and collector. However, Dr. Johnstone and I had, by this point, not only continued to collect but had opened a gallery in Philadelphia. Our personal and professional relationship with Alice continued, and we remained close friends (and bridge partners) until her death. Her guidance and friendship were ever present.

Dr. Johnstone and I are thankful to Tianlong Jiao, the former Joseph de Heer Curator of Asian Art, and Christoph Heinrich, the Frederick and Jan Mayer Director at the Denver Art Museum, together with the museum's staff, for their interest in exhibiting and publishing the Fong-Johnstone collection. We are also grateful to Andrew Maske, who sought out a home for the collection and initially conceived of an exhibition, and Patricia Fister, one of the foremost scholars in this field, who published important early research on Japanese women artists and has contributed essays to this publication. We hope that, in the same manner in which Alice Boney inspired us, those who view these works of art will be inspired to learn more about Japanese culture and the talented women artists who were overlooked in their lifetime.

Introduction

Einor Cervone,
Associate Curator of Arts of Asia,
Denver Art Museum

fig. 1 Katō Seiko 加藤青湖, active 1800s, *Sparrows and Bamboo* (detail), about 1872. Ink and color on silk. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.212.

fig. 2 Kō (Ōshima) Raikin 高(大島)来禽, active late 1700s, *Autumn Landscape* (detail), late 1700s. Ink and light color on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.193.

fig. 3 Yamamoto Shōtō 山本緗桃, 1757–1831, *Chrysanthemums* (detail), late 1700s–early 1800s. Ink, color, and gold on silk. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.216.

Why is it that you've never heard of Katō Seiko?

How about Yamamoto Shōtō or Kō (Ōshima) Raikin? It is not that they weren't well known. They were, quite so, both during their own lifetimes and in generations that followed. The brilliance of their work, too, stands the test of time—whether in Seiko's sprightly jubilations of sparrows among verdant blades of bamboo (fig. 1); in the measured steps of a weary countryman, returning home in autumnal twilight over Raikin's brushed steps (fig. 2); or in Shōtō's golden gossamers, malachite pools,

and rushes of ink that give form to her supramundane chrysanthemums (fig. 3).

These are only some of the names whose absence from the ledgers of art history has summoned this project.

The exhibition *Her Brush: Japanese Women Artists from the Fong-Johnstone Collection* (November 13, 2022–May 13, 2023) marks the inauguration of a multipronged project with a twofold objective: representation and accessibility. To achieve these goals, it leverages an expansive collection of calligraphy, painting, and ceramics, largely by women artists from early modern and modern Japan.

This all began with a gift.

In 2018, Dr. John Fong and Dr. Colin Johnstone pledged their collection of over five hundred works of Japanese art to the Denver Art Museum. Tianlong Jiao (Hong Kong Palace Museum), then Joseph de Heer Curator of Asian Art, along with Professor Andrew Maske (Wayne State University), a specialist of Japanese ceramics, conceived of an exhibition focusing on one of the main strengths of the Fong-Johnstone collection: works by women artists dating from the 1600s to the 1900s. In line with the museum's commitment to collecting and exhibiting underrepresented art and artists, the proposal was embraced wholeheartedly.

Research and preparation were underway when all work on the exhibition abruptly ground to a halt

with the pandemic outbreak and curatorial changeover. Themes of artistic volition and inclusivity came to the fore, and a reckoning with an altered cultural landscape made the exhibition all the more relevant. The project as a whole seeks to bring awareness to this long-overlooked group of artists by shifting exhibition priorities and through ongoing commitment to focused programming, academic symposia, and artist engagement.

fig. 4 Kiyohara Yukinobu 清原雪信, 1643–1682, *The Goddess Benzaiten and Her Lute* (biwa), 1660–82. Hanging scroll; ink, color, and gold on silk. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.15.

The Fong-Johnstone collection, which according to the collectors, was itself inspired by the formidable

art dealer Alice Boney (1901–1988), has been little studied and never shown. It holds many mysteries and questions, from identification to authenticity (figs. 4, 5, and 6). It is, therefore, an invaluable resource for the study of connoisseurship. Addressing the steadily narrowing opportunities of in-person access to artworks, the Fong-Johnstone Collection and the Study Collection will ultimately be made fully available for study—both online and in person. It will provide opportunities to delve into questions of authorship and authenticity and to consider the nuances of connoisseurship.

The catalog presents new research, detailed exhibition and object content, and supplemental materials that shed light on the artists and their lives. In response to the dearth of information in Western languages, it also takes a self-reflexive approach, contextualizing the exhibition and considering the subject through a multidisciplinary framework. Leading scholars, artists, and specialists weigh in on the state of the field—past, present, and future.

Patricia Fister, who spearheaded the field in the 1980s and dedicated her career to the study and exhibition of Japanese women artists, has contributed an important essay. "Calligraphy, Poems, and Paintings by Japanese Buddhist Nuns" offers rare insights into artistic production by Buddhist nuns in early modern and modern Japan. A case study by Cervone, "On the Fong-Johnstone Study Collection and the Power of Access," reconsiders questions of authenticity and its spectrum—from homage to forgery. How might we

understand the cultural nuances of authorship? How might a copy shed light on the historical and contemporary demand for a given artist? Interpretive specialist Karuna Srikureja, in her essay, "Galleries as Sites of Connection: Visitor Experience in *Her Brush*", shares and explicates the interpretive strategies and methodologies developed and applied by the Learning and Engagement team at the Denver Art Museum to make *Her Brush* an inclusive, impactful, and relevant experience.

In short essays, scholars and specialists participating in the symposium, "Gender & Voice in Japanese Art" (February 25, 2023), add their voices to the ongoing discourse. Patricia Fister shares her journey and contributions to the study and exhibition of women artists in Japan; Melissa McCormick exemplifies research approaches to word and image in Ōtagaki Rengetsu's art; Alison Miller contemplates gender and identity in Noguchi Shōhin's artistic persona; Amy Beth Stanley addresses historiographical approaches to archival materials and the feminine voice in early modern Japan; Marcia A. Yonemoto questions gendered divides between art and craft, artist and artisan; and Paul Berry offers his thoughts on the current state of the field.

fig. 5 Artist unknown, after Kiyohara Yukinobu 清原雪信 (active 1600s–1700s), *Queen Mother of the West with Attendant and Flowers*, date unknown. Ink, color, and gold on silk. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.148.1-3.

fig. 6 Artist unknown (signed Kiyohara Yukinobu 清原雪信, active 1600s–1700s), *Genji Peeping at the Young Murasaki*, 1600s. Ink and color on silk. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.255.

Finally, this catalog brings the voices of two contemporary artists and their responses to works in the collection. Denver-based Sarah Fukami's contemporary take on portraits of several of the showcased artists is discussed in Srikureja's essay. Beginning March 8, 2023, internationally acclaimed Kyoto-based artist Tomoko Kawao will pursue her multiyear and global *Hitomoji Project: Women* at the Denver Art Museum, with the support of Art Collective SML|k. Kawao's public performance (March 21, 2023) will be recorded in the publication as well.

In short, this ongoing project is both a promise and an invitation. It is the museum's commitment to advancing the field through this collection. And it is an invitation to you—whether you are a student, an educator, a specialist, or simply curious—to explore, contribute, engage, and to make this art your own.

Shining Light on Art by Japanese Buddhist Nuns | ***Patricia Fister*** 17

Ōtagaki Rengetsu's Buddhist Poetics: Gender and Materiality | ***Melissa McCormick*** 24

Finding Gender in Japanese Literati Painting | ***Alison Miller*** 29

Reading an Archive of Everyday Life | ***Amy Beth Stanley*** 36

Her Brush, Her Needle: Rethinking the Relationship between Art and Artisanal Work by Women in Early Modern Japan | ***Marcia A. Yonemoto*** . . . 41

Narratives of Japanese Art History: Where Are the Women? | ***Paul Berry*** 47

SYMPOSIUM PROCEEDINGS

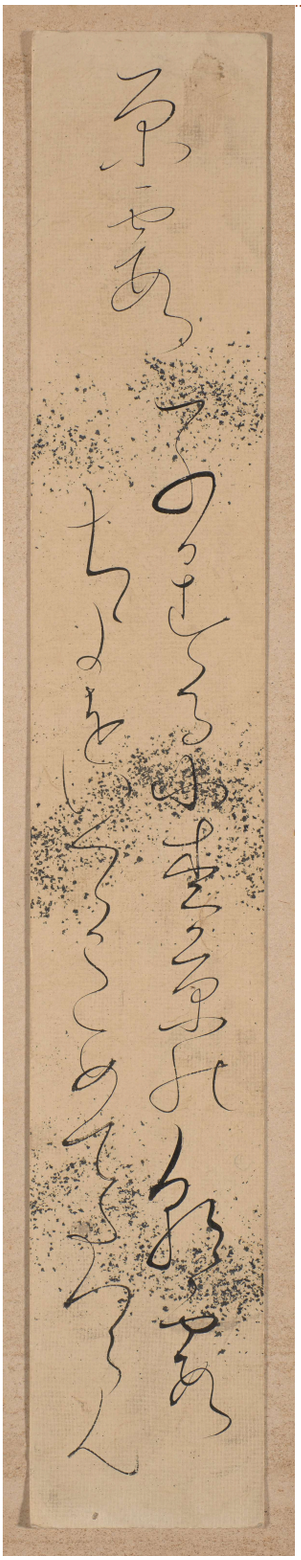
On February 25, 2023, scholars and specialists from various disciplines participated in an international symposium, "Gender and Voice in Japanese Art," at the Denver Art Museum. These short essays by them add to the discourse on

approaches and methodologies in the study, connoisseurship, and exhibition of artwork through the lens of gender and agency.

Murase Myōdō 村瀬明道, 1924–2013, *Breaking Waves in the Pines* (*shōtō*), late 1900s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.155.

Shining Light on Art by Japanese Buddhist Nuns

Patricia Fister



Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Waka Poem*, about 1828 or 1840. Ink on decorated paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.181.3.

I have been engaged in researching women artists for nearly four decades, and in the past twenty-five years, I have focused particularly on Zen Buddhist nuns. This brief overview of my personal journey

recounts some of the obstacles and opportunities I have encountered and considers how they shaped my research approach and philosophy. Imperial convents contain a treasure trove of objects and documents, but like some other institutions and private collections in Japan, they have been reluctant to open their doors to scholars.

When I began in this field, very little was published on Japanese women artists, much less nun-artists, so the first step was gathering source materials. With permission, I photographed the objects and documents I was shown in convents and slowly created a private database. Because most of the convent collections are not cataloged, it has been exciting for me to view them in their "original homes." Studying collections in situ is completely different from studying objects stored in museums or published in books. I have also had the rare opportunity to observe not only how objects are used but also the nuns' attitudes toward them. For example, most present-day abbesses are adamant that Buddhist paintings and sculptures should not be referred to as art but rather be considered as religious objects, leading me to rethink the question of what constitutes art. I now look at objects from a slightly different perspective than I was taught in university art history courses, and I pay more attention to the vocabulary I use when writing about them.

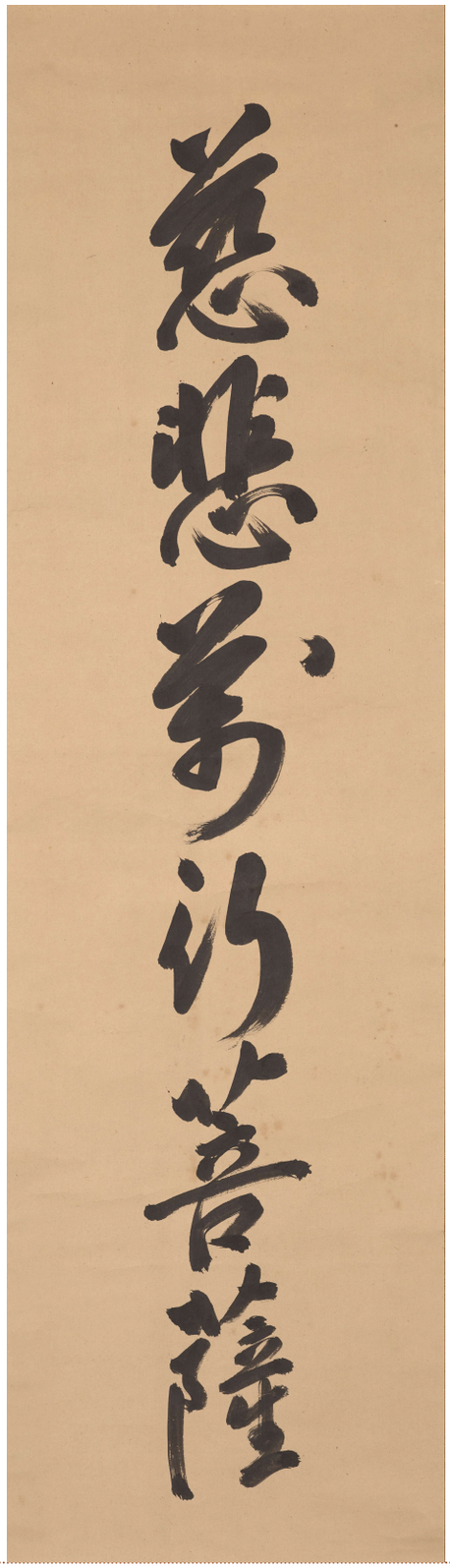
As I surveyed convent collections, I was constantly astounded at the diversity of objects made by imperial nuns, who grew up with culture and art as a vital part of their lives. Among them are *chinsō*

(sculpted and painted portraits of Zen masters), paintings of Buddhist deities and secular subjects, calligraphy, embroidery, and other unique items. Some nuns left writings giving some information about their lives, religious aspirations, and artistic practices. I feel strongly that one needs to build a foundation of works as well as documents to ponder and analyze before drawing any meaningful conclusions.

I am particularly interested in nuns' intentions and the role or function of creating in their lives. At what point in their religious careers did they begin to make things, for what purpose, and for whom were these objects created? What Buddhist doctrines or spiritual goals were the nuns seeking to express? Why did they choose specific models? I believe that the words of the *Lotus Sutra* were integral, for it taught that producing and dedicating art was a way of attaining the Buddha way. Consequently, nuns were inspired to take up a brush, or clay, or even powdered incense to create devotional imagery. The scarcity of biographical information for some of the abbesses of major convents made me realize all the more that the tangible objects they themselves created represent an important part of their legacy.

In the course of my research, I discovered one Kyoto convent that had been "forgotten." I have also tangled with an important thirteenth-century nun, Mugai Nyodai (無外如大), whose identity has become terribly confused: over the centuries her biography was merged with those of two other women. Both the "resurrection" of Zuiryūji (瑞龍寺)

convent as well as an ongoing project to restore Mugai Nyodai's true identity merit further discussion.



Daitsū Bunchi 大通文智, 1619–1697, *Bodhisattva of Myriad Acts of Compassion* (*Jihi Mangyō Bosatsu*), 1600s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.153.

While conducting this research in convent collections, the urgent need for conservation and preservation, too, became evident to me. In fact, in my mind now, it goes hand in hand with research. In other words, it is crucial not just to publish the results of one's studies but to give back as well. As an example, I aided one temple in getting four important portrait sculptures of nuns restored. In turn, fascinating discoveries were made during that conservation process.

Finally, let us briefly consider the role of gender—one of the themes of the Denver exhibition and symposium—in monastic art. I am often asked to define what aspects distinguished the devotional practices and objects made by nuns from those of male clerics. I usually respond by first pointing out the prevalence of Kannon, the Goddess of Mercy, imagery among nun-artists. Needlework, traditionally considered a pastime for women, was also common in Japan's imperial convents, where nuns often sewed their own robes and surplices. The nun Bunchi (文智 1619–1697) created some unique devotional objects by embroidering phrases from Buddhist texts onto silk and mounting them on small plaques. Other nuns used hair to make devotional objects. Arguments have been made that the combination of fragments of women's bodies (hair) with a womanly skill (embroidery) represents a gendered form of religious practice not found among their male monastic counterparts.

Research focused on Buddhist nuns and convents is growing, not so much in art history but in other fields such as history, literature, and religious

studies. All are necessary for us to form a comprehensive picture. The arts of Japanese Buddhist nuns deserve to be more well known than they are, and the Denver exhibition and symposium provide welcome opportunities to introduce a selected body of work to the general public.

Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Moon, Blossoming Cherry, and Poem*, 1867. Ink and color on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.164.

Ōtagaki Rengetsu's Buddhist Poetics: Gender and Materiality

Melissa McCormick

fig. 1 Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Moon, Blossoming Cherry, and Poem*, 1867. Ink and color on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.164.

Poet, painter, and ceramicist Ōtagaki Rengetsu (太田垣蓮月) (1791–1875) and her artwork and status as a Jōdo Buddhist nun challenge assumptions concerning the gender identities of historical subjects. Active for over fifty years as an artist after taking Buddhist vows, Rengetsu, and other nun artists of her era, demands a nuanced approach to gender beyond static notions of "female" and "male." Since she removed physical markers of conventional lay femininity—shaving her head, donning simple robes, taking the name Rengetsu (Lotus Moon)—her identity can be understood through a contextualized lens that accommodates the historically contingent nature of gender categories. Although aspects of her artistic identity and self-expression may seem straightforward, Rengetsu's work often demonstrates an engagement with a Buddhist philosophical tradition that questions the very nature of the self and artistic subjectivity.

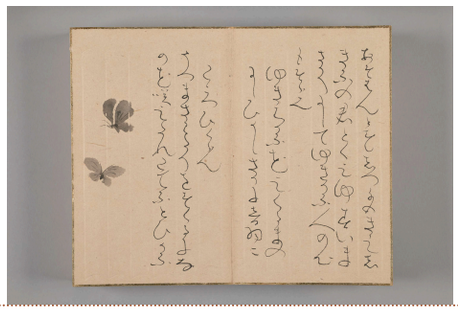


fig. 2 Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Travel Journal to Arashiyama* (*Arashiyama hana no ki*), 1800s. Ink and color on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2021.206.

Close readings of certain works by Rengetsu suggest that she composed her poetry by engaging in an intertextual relationship with past poets that brings these issues of gender and Buddhism to the surface. In particular, Rengetsu looked to the monk-poet Saigyō (1118–1190) and the poet Matsuo Bashō (1644–1694), who himself used Saigyō as a model. An allusion to Saigyō's verse can even be read into Rengetsu's most famous poem, represented in the exhibition *Her Brush* by an elegant poem-picture hanging scroll (fig. 1). Similarly, the role and rhetoric of travel in the work of male predecessors is crucial to Rengetsu's poetry and warrants an examination of her travel journal to Arashiyama, in the exhibition (fig. 2), along these lines. Even beyond poetic allusion and approach, Rengetsu seems to have modelled her poetic persona on these past poets, suggesting among other things a self-fashioning of identity through literary lineage unbound by gender, as least in the poetic imagination.[1]

fig. 3 Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Sake Decanter* (*tokkuri*), 1800s. Glazed ceramic. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2021.196.

While Rengetsu's status as a Buddhist nun differentiated her from lay women and impacted her ability to posit herself rhetorically as Saigyō or Bashō reborn, how did it shape her notion of poetics? Do Rengetsu's works demonstrate, for example, the influence of a Buddhist aesthetic, which would foreground issues of the nonself or the interrogation of phenomenal form? Her ceramics, such as the sake decanter in the exhibition (fig. 3), would seem to project the opposite in their tangible, earthy materiality. And yet Rengetsu's inscriptive practices on certain three-dimensional objects can result in work that projects an air of the insubstantial. Rengetsu's work is ripe for analysis regarding the connection between its haptic qualities and Buddhist materiality. Her incorporation of past poetic personae and Buddhist aesthetics raises compelling questions about the intertextuality and material properties of her artifactual poetics.

1. In addition to Saigyō and Bashō, Rengetsu had nun predecessors to emulate, such as Tagami Kikusha (1753–1826), who studied *haikai* with a teacher in the Bashō lineage and who famously reenacted, in an

inverse manner, the journey that Bashō documented in his *Narrow Road to the North* (*Oku no hosomichi*, 1702). See Oka Masako ed., *Unyū no ama Tagami Kikusha* (Yamaguchi: Kikusha Kenshōkai, 2004); and Rebecca Corbett, "Crafting Identity as a Tea Practitioner in Early Modern Japan: Ōtagaki Rengetsu and Tagami Kikusha," *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal*, no. 47 (2014): 3–27.

Noguchi Shōhin 野口小蘋, 1847–1917, *Cut Flowers and Pine Bough*, late 1800s–early 1900s. Ink and color on silk. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.196.

Finding Gender in Japanese Literati Painting

Alison Miller

Noguchi Shōhin 野口小蘋, 1847–1917, *Cut Flowers and Pine Bough*, late 1800s–early 1900s. Ink and color on silk. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.196.

Where do we locate gender within a work of art? Is it in the subject matter, the maker, the viewer, the larger cultural milieu of production and reception, or is it a combination of these factors? Should the identity of the artist relate to our reception of their work? The objects exhibited in *Her Brush: Japanese Women Artists from the Fong-Johnstone Collection* provide varied answers to these questions. In woodblock prints, women are often the subject of

the image and the male gaze; in ceramics, women were makers but limited in the tools they could use, resulting in different and often innovative forms; and in the realm of *bunjinga* (literally, literati painting), women artists enjoyed greater equality and access than they did in other artistic pursuits.

Although there were women artists working in a variety of media, historically, the majority were active in bunjinga, an art form that emerged in Japan in the early eighteenth century. Owing to the fact that eccentrics were tolerated, welcomed, and appreciated in bunjinga circles more so than elsewhere in the art world, some women found their niche in the literati community of painters. The term bunjinga is used interchangeably with *nanga* (southern painting) in reference to the Southern School of Chinese literati painting in which bunjinga had its roots. Bunjinga in Japan included expanded styles and subject matter and is typically characterized by ink and brushwork on paper or silk, representing subjects such as landscapes, scholarly gatherings, or plant life.

The bunjinga painter Noguchi Shōhin (野口小蘋 1847–1917) was born in Osaka and is often described as a child prodigy, studying poetry and painting from a young age. Her father nurtured her interests but passed away when she was just sixteen, leaving Shōhin to support her mother by selling paintings while the family lived in Nagoya.[1] She trained in the studio of the well-known male landscape painter Hine Taizan (日根対山 1813–1869), became a professor of painting at the Peers' Girls School, a women's university, in 1889,

and was eventually appointed an official artist for the imperial family. Efforts toward gender equality in the Meiji period (1868–1912) meant that she widely exhibited and that her talent was recognized in her lifetime, but her experiences were uncommon for women in the nineteenth century.

Okuhara Seiko 奥原晴湖, 1837–1913, *Orchids on a Cliff*, 1870–80s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.206.

While we do know that Shōhin emphasized her femininity in her professional image, we do not know if she would have wanted to be called a woman artist. Qualifiers of identity can recognize disparities in advantage and provide points of connection, but they can also perpetuate difference. Although Meiji women were afforded greater social mobility and educational opportunities than their predecessors, they were still limited in their professional options, meaning Shōhin's success was unusual. As a result, today we may find in her biography a narrative of triumph and resilience or a fascinating story of success against all odds. Yet a gendered approach is not typically applied to Shōhin's famed male contemporary Tomioka Tessai (富岡鉄斎 1836–1924), who trained under the nun Ōtagaku Rengetsu (太田垣蓮月 1791–1875). The masculinity of Tessai as an artist, the specificity of the male artistic experience, or markers of gender in men's paintings are left as unexamined topics, as is the impact on his work vis-a-vis his training by a woman. Rather, the study of gendered artistic identity remains one-sided.

Ultimately, when considering gender in the context of art and artists, we are left with these essential questions: Where does the value of art lie, and what responsibilities do gatekeepers such as curators, academics, gallerists, and collectors have to change the parameters of how we understand artworks by women? *Her Brush* is specifically about Japanese women artists, celebrating their talent and perseverance and pushing the field to consider new approaches to gender in Japanese art, yet if an

exhibition of all women's works were presented without the qualifier in the title, how would our perceptions change? Would the show be more or less popular without the term *woman* in the title?

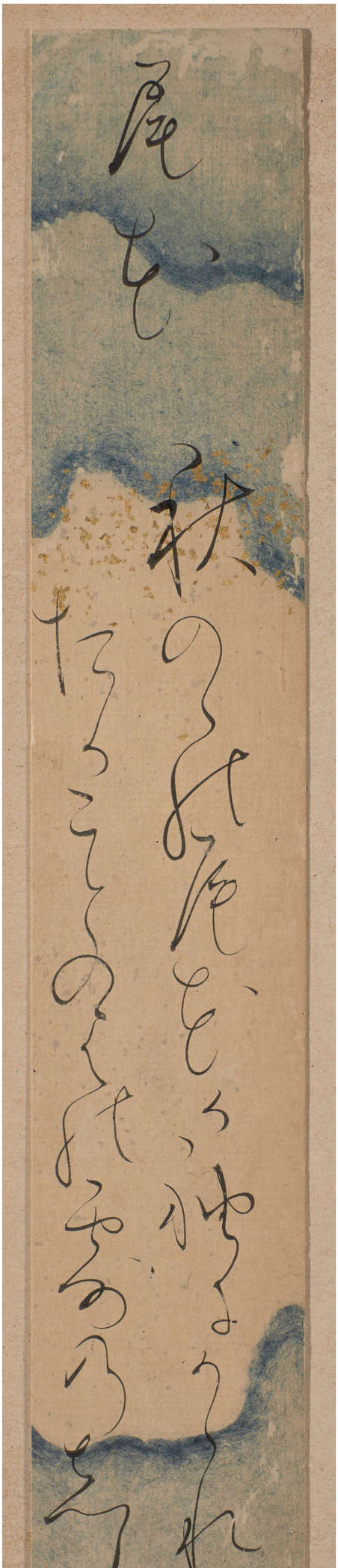
The canon of art history is constantly rewritten, and the value of art is endlessly shifting. Gender as a lens for understanding visual culture is a relatively recent approach in the history of art as a field, and *Her Brush* owes its very existence to this shift. As gender theory focuses less on the male/female binary, we must grapple with what turn the field will take next and what new visual connections and values lie ahead.

1. Patricia Fister, *Japanese Woman Artists* (Lawrence, KS: Spencer Museum of Art, 1988), 165.

Takabatake Shikibu 高畠式部, 1785–1881, *Signboard*, 1863. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.253.

Reading an Archive of Everyday Life

Amy Beth Stanley

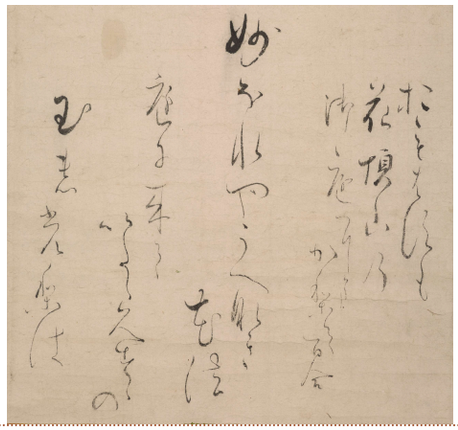


Sakuragi-dayū (The Tayū Sakuragi) 桜木太夫, active mid- to late 1800s, *Poetry Slip* (*tanzaku*) *with Poem on Pampas Grass* (*obana*), mid-1800s. Pigment, gold, and ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.181.2.

In 2008, as a beginning assistant professor at Northwestern University planning my first survey course on the history of the Tokugawa era (1600–1868), I wanted to assign more readings on everyday life in villages. At the time, there were not many primary sources available in English, so I decided to translate some representative documents from the Niigata Prefectural Archives. On their website, I found the "Internet Document Reading Course," a series of transcriptions and explanations of materials in their archive. It was there I first encountered the writing of a woman named Tsuneno, a daughter of a temple family from the tiny village of Ishigami in Kubiki County in Echigo Province. She had run away to the shogun's capital of Edo in 1839, and in the letter that the archive had on display, she wrote to her mother to describe her new life as a maidservant in the theater district. "Everything in Edo is delicious," she said.

Tsuneno's voice was so simple and direct that I could hear it in my head. But it sounded suspiciously modern and straightforward. Could this really be the writing of a nineteenth-century Japanese woman? In my previous reading in Tokugawa history, I had encountered the abject, awkward prose of a post-station prostitute; the elevated, poetic language of samurai women's travel diaries; and the matter-of-fact, efficient lists in merchant wives' household accounts. I was

unprepared for Tsuneno's style, not only how it looked on the page—dashed off, confident—but also its forcefulness.



Yuri of Gion 祇園の百合, 1694–1764, *Waka Poem*, mid-1700s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.186.

I went to the archive in person and read Tsuneno's other correspondence, which was preserved in her family's papers (the Rinsenji *monjo*). I noticed that her favorite word seemed to be "I" (*watakushi*), and her letters often took the form of demands: "send me my clothes," "go get the money I left with my uncle," or "redeem my things from the pawnshop." While she used traditional women's forms, writing in *kana* and ending her letters with the respectful closing *kashiku*, she was never self-effacing. Her writing changed my ideas about how Tokugawa-era women thought about themselves. Never again would I believe that women were so enmeshed in the household system and so deeply embedded in their communities that they did not consider their individual desires. Tsuneno realized that her own ambitions and her family's priorities were different, and though she often felt conflicted, she usually chose to pursue her own goals.

Tsuneno's family's archive contains over two thousand documents in a variety of hands. The men wrote in the epistolary style (*sōrōbun*), using complicated Chinese characters and occasionally referencing Buddhist doctrine. The family's secretary wrote in the same style, and his drafts of outgoing correspondence survive, showing where he crossed out a phrase and reconsidered the wording. One correspondent, a man from the village doing seasonal work in Edo, wrote in a dark, blocky hand and employed a strange orthography, using characters in unexpected ways. Like Tsuneno, who rendered her own dialect in kana, he "spelled" phrases as they must have sounded to him. Meanwhile, Tsuneno's aunt wrote in a graceful and feminine style, and her two sisters wrote in a hand that looks just like hers.

Through this remarkable archive, I encountered not only a variety of forms of writing but also a multitude of perspectives on everyday life. I could see, in these letters, lists, and diaries, how people of different genders and classes kept track of their daily business. I could follow a story of books lent, taxes owed, marriages planned, servants hired, children welcomed, and deaths mourned. Those dispatches from a vanished world were mundane and not always beautiful—there were blots and stains, miswritten characters, torn pages, and worm holes—but they were vital, immediate, and often astonishing.

Installation photograph of tea ceremony objects. Photograph by Eric Stephenson.

Her Brush, Her Needle: Rethinking the Relationship between Art and Artisanal Work by Women in Early Modern Japan

Marcia A. Yonemoto

The exhibition *Her Brush: Japanese Women Artists from the Fong-Johnstone Collection* focuses, commonsensically, on works identified as art,

predominantly by Japanese women, most of whom were identified in their lifetimes as artists. Acknowledging the obvious—that the terms “art” and “artist” are modern, necessarily convenient, and in the English language—I would nonetheless like to reconsider what types of work might fall under the rubric of “art” and what types of people we might call “artists,” particularly in early modern Japan (c. 1590–1868).

Hirata Gyokuon 平田玉蘊, 1787–1855, *Queen Mother of the West and Attendant*, about 1839. Ink and color on silk. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.211.

I am not an art historian but a cultural historian who dabbles in visual sources. This background gives me some license (at least in my own mind) to explore the somewhat arbitrary but nonetheless pervasive boundary between art and artisanal work by women in the early modern period. I propose that querying this boundary gives us insight into how and why artisanal work by women was ubiquitous, while women artists were relatively few. If we look to the types of art represented in *Her Brush*—painting, calligraphy, ceramics—we can note that elite women of the upper levels of the samurai class and of the nobility received instruction in the literary arts, including calligraphy, as a matter of course. With the growth of educational opportunities for commoners beginning in the late seventeenth century, women's literacy and numeracy overall increased significantly over the course of the early modern period. Many of the instructional manuals for women that proliferated from the late seventeenth century on focused not only on literacy and literature but on calligraphy and formal letter-writing as well. In short, the calligraphic arts were well established among elite women from the beginning of the early modern period and spread to the commoner classes gradually over time. However, painting and ceramics remained more specialized pursuits.

But there were other forms of what we might call artistic or artisanal practice that were widely accessible and were, in fact, deemed necessary for women of all classes. From an early age, women were taught certain productive and creative skills

because they were required of a capable homemaker. Sewing, spinning, and weaving were foremost among them, and even women of the elite classes were expected to master these skills, though in practice they might rely on servants to do such work for them. This was because needlework was not just work; its mastery constituted a core virtue for women. Popular instructional manuals for women often invoked the divine origins of needlework, passed down as it was from the Needle Princess (*hari hime*) during the age of the gods. "There is no greater skill for women than sewing," states the *Treasure Chest of the Greater Learning for Women* (*Onna daigaku takarabako*, c. 1716), for it was not simply productive, it was edifying, and its proper practice would "set [a woman's] heart right." Indeed, one could argue that the needle rivaled and perhaps superseded the brush in terms of its importance in fundamentally shaping as well as expressing a woman's character.

Women also took charge of raising silkworms and spinning silk thread, formulating dyes and dyeing fabrics, and making paper and paper goods. They engaged in a host of small craft manufactures, crafting fans, umbrellas and parasols, rosaries (*juzu*), and decorative twisted cord (*mizuhiki*); braiding rope; and creating and sharpening needles. This artisanal work was often done in households, sometimes jointly with men. In rural areas, it was done in the off-season and during downtime from agricultural work.

These artisanal practices required diligence and manual dexterity, but equally importantly, they

demanded a well-honed aesthetic sensibility: an eye for proportion, balance, and symmetry, a measuring gaze that could appreciate symmetrical stitches or an even weave, and a discerning appreciation of pattern and color. Like the barrel makers in Michael Baxandall's classic book *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy*,[1] whose calculating eyes instinctively visualized volume and allowed them to keenly appreciate the material worlds depicted in Renaissance painting, Japanese women artisans learned not only how to look at things but how to *perceive* what was essential in those things in order to make them into something beautiful, something more than an assemblage of constituent parts. Illustrations in instructional manuals show how this sensibility was integral to craft itself: in a section on dyeing fabric in *Kyō hyakunin isshu wabunkō* (an instructional *Hundred Poems for a Hundred Poets* from the Japanese Archive, 1829), an illustration shows two women looking at a printed depiction, on paper, of a completed kimono. One of the women is pointing her finger at the print, indicating, it seems, the color or pattern she seeks to replicate through the dyeing process described in the text itself. *This*, she seems to say, is how it should be—she has absorbed the information, she possesses the skills and materials, she has made her choice, she envisions the outcome. But is she an artist? And is the kimono she will sew out of the fabric she will dye (and perhaps even wove herself) become a work of art? To push the question further, as craft production became more specialized and refined, when did, for example, a fine patterned silk brocade cease to be a useful commodity and

become a piece of art with intrinsic aesthetic value? And who got the credit for that product—the woman artisan who wove it or the male shop owner (perhaps her father or husband) who displayed, marketed, and sold it to discerning customers?

1. Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1972).

Various artists, *Turtles on New Year's Morn*, about 1894. Ink and color on silk. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.202.

Narratives of Japanese Art History: Where Are the Women?

Paul Berry

Various artists, *Turtles on New Year's Morn*, about 1894. Ink and color on silk. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.202.

On the occasion of *Her Brush: Japanese Women Artists from the Fong-Johnstone Collection*, it is appropriate to consider several aspects of the appearance of women as artists in the histories of Japanese art, especially since exhibitions such as this are still rare. Since the 1970s, the study of the art produced by women in Japan has gradually increased, with a variety of articles, dissertations, books, and exhibitions on one or another artist or theme. While the admirable persistence of scholars, curators, and critics has created foundational projects that are the necessary prelude to further developments, it also seems that their total impact on society, museum exhibitions, and popular media presentations of art, while noticeable, remains limited. Although the following topics can only be addressed briefly in this abbreviated essay, these considerations are useful to keep in mind when viewing the works on display.

NUMBERS OF RECORDED ARTISTS

The largest dictionary of Japanese painters and calligraphers, *Dai Nihon shoga meika taikan* (1934), encompasses all periods through the Taishō era (1912–1926).[1] Its 2,792 pages of biographical entries cover approximately 16,000 artists, of which roughly 600 are women, just under four percent. Despite the large number listed, there are many not found in this selection. Examining regional histories uncovers more artists, and from the Meiji and Taishō eras, lists of the members of the studio groups (*juku*) formed by prominent artists reveal many additional women. Yet most of them sank into relative obscurity after their deaths. Their elision from later histories made the profile of women active in the arts even harder to discern.


歲寒三昜
庚戌孟春
細雪寫

Ema Saikō 江馬細香, 1787–1861, *The Three Friends of Winter*, 1857. Ink and light color on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.189.

GENDER ROLES IN RELATION TO THEMES AND STYLES

Gendered categories have long pervaded the production and reception of Japanese art. Speaking in the broadest of generalizations, paintings and techniques perceived as "delicate" or "genteel" rather than bold are often considered "feminine" (*joseiteki*). Traditional themes drawn from Japanese, as opposed to Chinese, culture were deemed most appropriate for women. The assumption that women making figure paintings should paint other women rather than men lasted into the 1930s. Paintings and calligraphy by women have often been praised for their "femininity," leaving the definition of what that may be up to the viewer. Closer examination reveals male artists employing many of the same themes and delicate brushwork that are acclaimed as being "feminine" when executed by a woman. Women as a class have a range of experiences different from their male counterparts, yet much of the differences in style and subject matter can more easily relate to the training they received and the general expectations placed on their work. Women either trained in or electing to study "masculine" brushwork associated with Zen, Kanō school renditions of Chinese themes, or Chinese-referenced literati landscapes and poetry rivaled their male counterpoints in quality.

Installation view of *Her Brush: Japanese Women Artists from the Fong-Johnstone Collection*. Photograph by Eric Stephenson.

CHALLENGES FOR ENACTING CHANGE

Among the many obstacles to making substantial progress in the understanding and appreciation of the arts of women in Japan is the global tendency for almost any topic associated with "women" to become a "women's issue" that is unthinkingly taken to mean of concern to women rather than to "society at large." In this context, "society at large" functions as a coded expression representing the "world of men." As a result of this unreflective attitude in the academic and museum worlds, the vast majority of studies on the artwork of women in Japan have been done by women with only the occasional contribution by men. For a large-scale change in the study of the subject, the notion that it is somehow a subcategory of the larger art world needs to be revised. Only when the study of the art of women moves to the center of the study of art, due to its significance for the impact of gender in all artworks, will new and deeper investigations into the nature of art and society be possible.

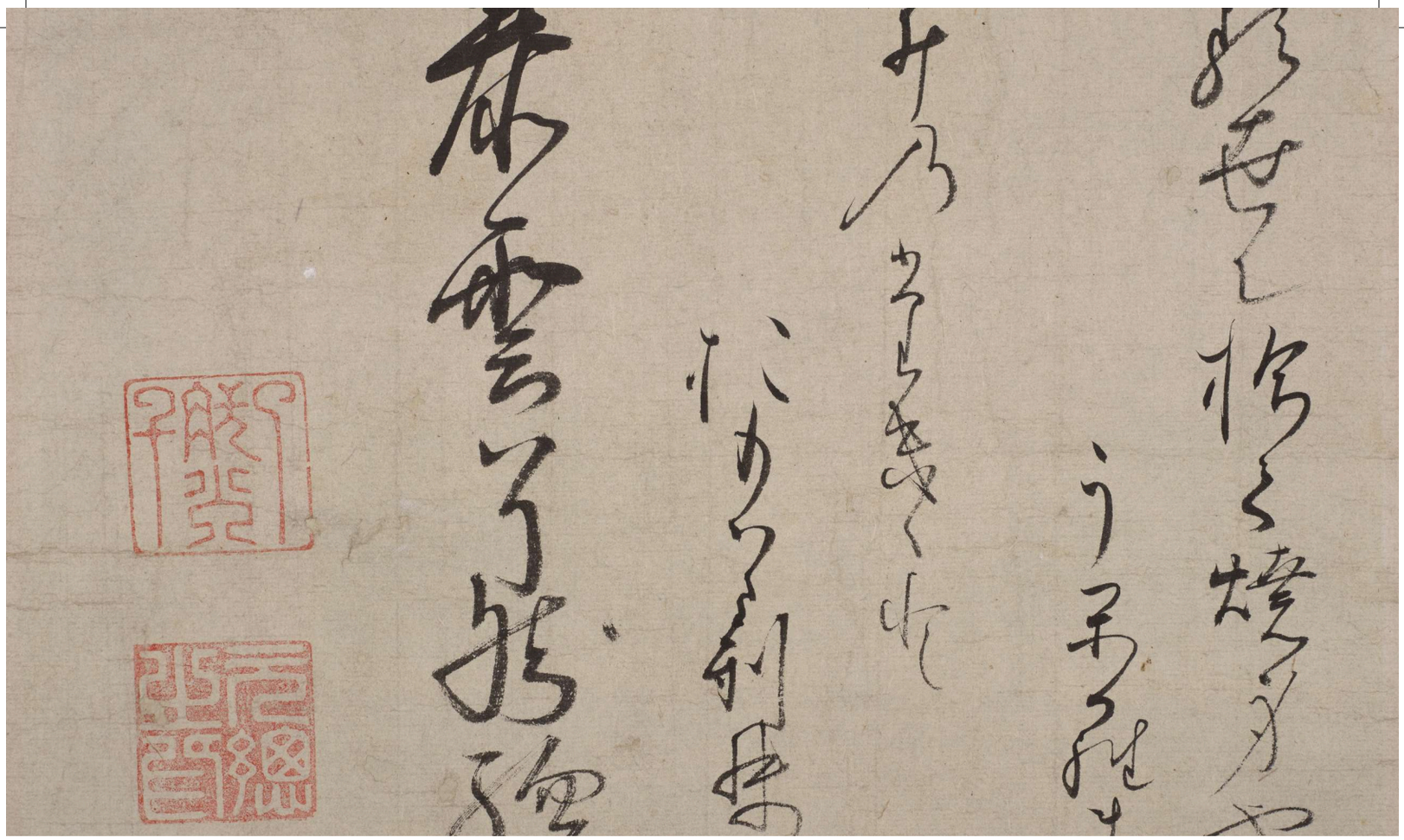
1. Araki Tadashi, *Dai Nihon shoga meika taikan*. 4 vols. (Tokyo: Dai Nihon Shoga Meika Taikan Kankōkai, 1934). There are various later reprints.

Tomoko Kawao—Calligraphy Performance

Tomoko Kawao

https://vimeo.com/823226962/732eb03100

Tomoko Kawao, a Kyoto-based artist, performed her internationally acclaimed calligraphy process at the Denver Art Museum on March 21, 2023. This page will eventually contain an artist's statement.



Ryōnen Gensō 了然元総, 1646–1711, *Poem*, late 1600s–early 1700s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.159.

Calligraphy, Poems, and Paintings by Japanese Buddhist Nuns

Patricia Fister

Why is it that people are fascinated by the idea of nuns creating art? Is it because they expect nuns to express something different from "ordinary" artists, perhaps something spiritual? It was not unusual for Buddhist nuns in Japan to write poetry (*waka*, *kanshi*), names of sacred deities (*myōgō*), or single-

character/single-line Zen maxims and to paint devotional images as well as secular subjects. Less common was the creation of sculpture or ceramics, but examples do exist.

This essay will explore what it meant for nuns in Japan to take up the brush or mold forms from clay. Motivations vary according to their background, religious sect and training, and personalities, just as women took the tonsure for diverse reasons. Some were "placed" in convents when they were young children, but those included in this exhibition all became ordained by their own free will. Some of them renounced worldly life out of pure religious commitment and became heads of temples, while others were only loosely affiliated with religious institutions, choosing not to cut secular ties completely in order to more freely pursue their literary and artistic interests. The Fong-Johnstone collection includes works by nuns affiliated with various Buddhist sects, ranging in date from the seventeenth to the late twentieth century, which provides an opportunity to study a representative sampling of their artistry. Some nuns were quite prolific, and their works can be readily found on the art market. Others were more pious and private in their endeavors, with the result that their works rarely went beyond the walls of their convents or related temples.

EXEMPLARS OF AUSTERITY AND DISCIPLINE: THE ZEN NUNS BUNCHI AND RYŌNEN

Although separated in age by twenty-seven years, the lives of Daitsū Bunchi (大通文智 1619–1697) and

Ryōnen Gensō (了然元総 1646–1711) overlap in several respects. Both were connected with the aristocratic Konoe family (a branch of the Fujiwara clan)[1] and spent their early lives in the imperial palace, although their positions were quite different: Bunchi was the daughter of an emperor, and Ryōnen was the daughter of a lady-in-waiting to an imperial consort. Following social custom, both women entered arranged marriages in their teens. However, they left their husbands, took the tonsure, and committed themselves to rigorous Buddhist practice, studying with reputable Zen masters. Both eventually moved away from Kyoto and established temples elsewhere (Bunchi in Nara, Ryōnen in Edo [now Tokyo]). In the course of their practice and determination to abandon attachments to their female bodies, they engaged in harsh ascetic acts, which I will describe below.

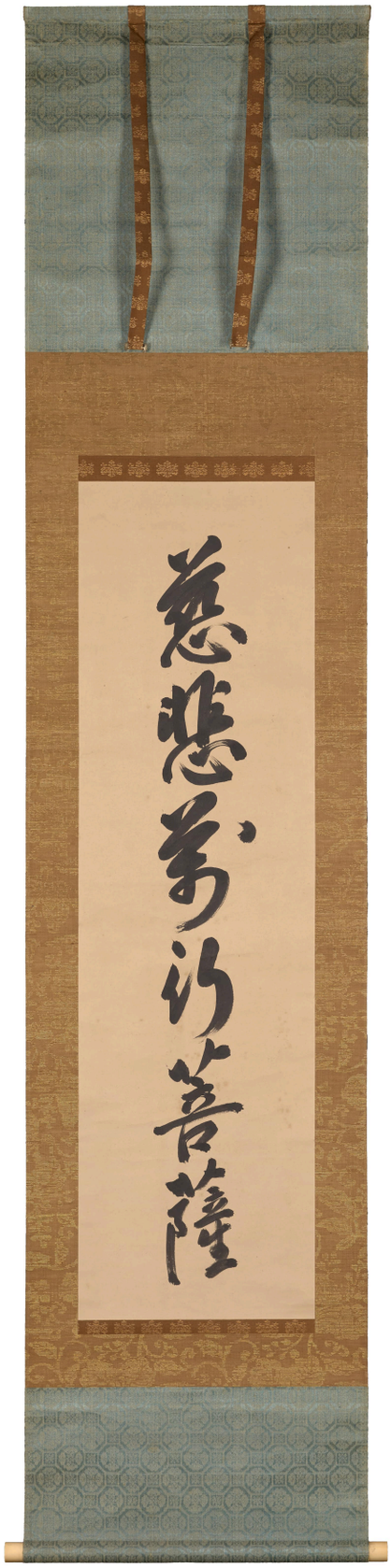


fig. 1 Daitsū Bunchi 大通文智, 1619–1697, *Bodhisattva of Myriad Acts of Compassion* (*Jihi Mangyō Bosatsu*), 1600s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.153.

Bunchi's life has been written about extensively in English, so I will give only a brief account here.[2] She was the first daughter of Emperor Gomizuno-o (1596–1680; ruled 1611–1629), and after a brief arranged marriage to her cousin at age thirteen, Bunchi (her childhood name was Ume no Miya) returned to the palace. Inspired by dharma talks by the Rinzai Zen priest Isshi Bunshu (1608–1646), she entreated her emperor father to allow her to take vows and become Isshi's pupil. She was tonsured at the age of twenty-two, two years after her mother's death (1640), and made the momentous decision to move out of the palace and take up residence in a small temple called Enshōji (Temple of Infinite Light) in northeastern Kyoto, where she spent the next fifteen years immersed in Zen studies and practice. She met with Priest Isshi occasionally, communicating with him primarily by letters until his death in 1646. Ten years later, Bunchi decided to move to Nara and set up a convent there, inspired in part by a dream in which she was told that she would find solace if she lived in the vicinity of the Ise, Hachiman, and Kasuga shrines.[3] An uncle and a fellow disciple of Isshi assisted her with finding land, and in the 1660s, she established a convent called Enshōji south of the old capital of Nara, using the same name as her temple in Kyoto. The "new" Enshōji evolved into a strict training center for women, mostly from aristocratic families, and at one time she presided over a community of twenty nuns. The convent still exists today.

The Fong-Johnstone collection includes a single-line calligraphy by Bunchi (fig. 1), written in semi-cursive script, that reads "*Jihi Mangyō Bosatsu*"

(literally, “Bodhisattva of Myriad Acts of Benevolence/Compassion”), which is a name for Kasuga Myōjin,[4] long regarded as a spiritual protector of Buddhism in Nara and therefore referred to as a bodhisattva.[5] While today we tend to think of Buddhism and Shinto as separate religions because of the forced separation of the two by the Meiji government in the late nineteenth century, in traditional Japan they were inextricably melded together. The written characters of a deity’s name are regarded as sacred; writing the name in this way—as a single line of calligraphy, a form known as *myōgō*—serves as a kind of invocation.[6] The scroll is not signed, but the inscription on the accompanying box records that it is by the hand of Abbess Bunchi.

Bunchi ascribed the successful founding of her convent and teaching activities to the good will of Kasuga Myōjin, and she made daily offerings and prayers and encouraged her pupils to follow this practice.[7] Her written vow (*ganmon*) to the Kasuga deity and a poem titled “Kasuga Shrine” are preserved at Enshōji, along with a small wooden Kasuga shrine constructed by her, complete with an avatar deer bearing an inscribed date of 1655, the year that she moved to Nara.[8]

fig. 2 Shinkei (1649–1706), *Portrait of Daitsū Bunchi*, 1698. Hanging scroll: ink and color on silk. Collection of Enshōji. Source: *Amamonzeki, A Hidden Heritage: Treasures of the Japanese Imperial Convents* (Tokyo: Sankei Shimbun, 2009), pl. 37.

The Buddhism that Bunchi taught at Enshōji was grounded in Rinzai Zen and tempered with elements from Shingon and Ritsu. Her own personal practice was marked by ascetic acts as she struggled to rid herself of worldly attachments and transcend gender. Once she wrote the words of a sutra on a piece of skin peeled or cut off from her hand,[9] and on other occasions she poured oil into her palm and lit it while chanting sutras, perhaps as part of an ordination practice. Such extreme acts are not unknown in Buddhism.[10] Scholar Barbara Ruch has researched examples of self-mutilation carried out by religious women in Japan, who may have been striving to overcome human desires and render themselves

genderless.[11] Bunchi's half-brother Shinkei (1649–1706), prince-abbot of Ichijōin temple in Nara, painted and inscribed a portrait of her in the year following her death. The painting powerfully conveys her fortitude and dedication to the Buddhist dharma (fig. 2). He did not attempt to idealize her but shows her wearing a simple bast-fiber black robe and brown *kesa* vestment draped over her left shoulder. Shinkei sums up her lifelong practice in one of the lines of the poem: "She trampled the great earth to dust and smashed the great void to oblivion."[12]

In addition to calligraphy, Bunchi created paintings of important Buddhist figures (Daruma, Kannon), clay portrait sculptures, and small plaques with embroidered characters. She also made some unique myōgō using her emperor father's fingernail clippings.[13] Most of her works are religious in nature and done mainly for herself and the people or temples with which she was intimately connected. Nearly all remain at her convent, Enshōji, or are in other temple collections; the Fong-Johnstone scroll is a rare example that traveled outside Japan.

The burgeoning interest in Zen practice among Kyoto's imperial family and court nobility may have sparked a similar interest in Bunchi's younger contemporary, Ryōnen Gensō. Ryōnen's mother was an attendant to Empress Tōfukumon'in (1607–1678), the daughter of Shogun Tokugawa Hidetada who married Emperor Gomizuno-o the year after Bunchi was born.[14] As a youth, Ryōnen served Tōfukumon'in's granddaughter Yoshi no

Kimi, but by this time, Bunchi had already left the palace and was living at Enshōji in northeastern Kyoto. Emperor Gomizuno-o and Tōfukumon'in were both fervent pupils of Zen, and by 1650, the emperor was becoming a major patron of the newly introduced (from China) Rinzai Zen school that became known as Ōbaku. There was a kind of "Ōbaku boom," and Ōbaku Zen temples were rapidly established throughout Japan. Ryōnen's two brothers became Ōbaku priests, but at the age of seventeen, she was married to a Confucian scholar-doctor.[15] Ten years later, she left her family and entered the Rinzai Zen imperial convent Hōkyōji, where she was tonsured by one of Emperor Gomizuno-o's daughters, Richū (1641–1689).[16]

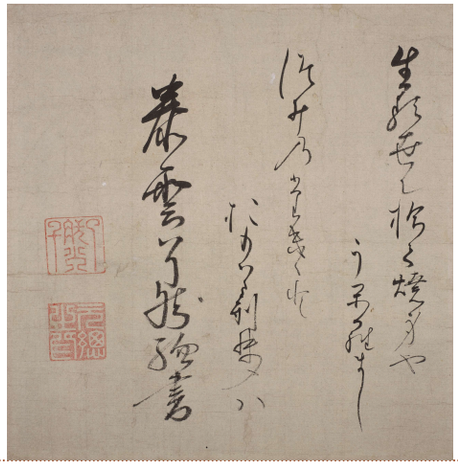


fig. 3 Ryōnen Gensō 了然元総, 1646–1711, *Poem*, late 1600s–early 1700s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.159.

It is unclear how long Ryōnen resided at Hōkyōji, but she left to go to Edo (presumably with some sort of introduction), aspiring to study under Tetsugyū Dōki, disciple of the emigrant Chinese priest Mu'an (in Japanese, Mokuan). However, she was refused by him on the basis that her beauty

would be a distraction to the monks in training. Ryōnen then went to see another disciple of Mu'an, Hakuō Dōtai, at the temple Daikyūan. She was again turned away, and since her beauty was an "obstruction," she pressed a hot iron to her face to show her commitment and willingness to destroy her femininity in order to devote herself to Zen practice. Ryōnen was not the first woman to disfigure herself in this manner, as there are stories of earlier Japanese female clerics who similarly scarred their faces.[17] To mark this act of religious determination, she composed the following two poems (a quatrain in Chinese and waka verse in Japanese) and presented them to Priest Hakuō. The second verse is the one that appears in the scroll in this exhibition (fig. 3).

Long ago I played games
at court where we burned
orchid incense;
now to enter the Zen path
I burn the flesh of my
face.
The four seasons flow
naturally one season to
another.
I don't know who it is now
in the midst of this
change.

In this living world,
my flesh is burned and
thrown away.
I would be wretched

if I did not think of it as
kindling that burns away
my sins.[18]

Impressed by her fervor, Hakuō accepted her as a disciple, and she trained under him for several years before he designated her as his dharma heir in 1680. Ryōnen later established her own temple, and the priest who had initially refused her, Tetsugyū, presided at the dedication of her Nyoirin Kannon Hall in 1694. Since the poem in the Fong-Johnstone collection is signed "Taiunji Ryōnen," it must date from after her temple was officially designated as the Ōbaku Zen temple Taiunji in 1701.[19] Ryōnen became famous for the radical act of scarring her face that inspired these poems, and the existence of numerous scrolls by her hand suggests that she received many requests for her potent verses.[20] Like Bunchi, Ryōnen studied poetry and calligraphy from her childhood, and her manner of writing reflects the style prevailing at the court.

fig. 4 *Ryōnen Burning Her Face*, illustration from *Kinsei meika shogadan* [Famous calligraphers and painters of recent ages], vol. 4, 1844. Waseda University Library.

fig. 5 Image by Utagawa Kunisada 歌川国貞, 1786–1864, inscription by Ryūtei Tanehiko **柳亭種彦** (1783–1842), "The Nun Ryōnen (Ryōnen-ni)" from *Famous Women of Past and Present* (*Kokon meifuden*), 1864. Color woodblock print. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.160.

Ryōnen's two verses, accompanied by illustrations of her burning her face (fig. 4), appeared in numerous woodblock-printed books and gazetteers, as well as *ukiyo-e* featuring famous women, such as the print by Utagawa Kunisada (Toyokuni III) (fig. 5). She first became known in the West through Lafcadio Hearn, who wrote a paper titled "The Nun Ryōnen: Fragments of a Japanese Biography," which was read at the meeting of the Japan Society of London on April 13, 1904.[21] Famous for his books on Japan recounting legends and ghost stories, he presented a fictionalized

account of Ryōnen's life, emphasizing her spirit of self-sacrifice.

FREE-SPIRITED POET NUNS: KIKUSHA AND RENGETSU

Unlike the two nuns discussed above, Tagami Kikusha (田上菊舎 1753–1826) and Ōtagaki Rengetsu (太田垣蓮月 1791–1875) did not seek out rigorous religious instruction, nor did they strive to become leaders of temples. Rather, they took Pure Land Buddhist vows after being widowed, which was an accepted way to step away from family and social obligations. Their status as "nuns" gave them the freedom to move around as individuals; both women associated with other poets and painters and devoted themselves to composing poetry and creating art. Kikusha became renowned for her *haikai* and Rengetsu her *waka*. Both were incredibly prolific, and the vast numbers of extant works attest to their popularity during their lifetimes. They have both been the subject of numerous books and exhibitions,[22] and the growing number of English publications is spurring on their global recognition as poets.[23] Moreover, organizations and websites have been established to make their poetry available to a wide audience.[24]

Born in the small village of Tasuki in the province of Nagato (present-day Yamaguchi Prefecture),[25] Kikusha began to seriously study and compose haikai after her husband's untimely death (she became a widow at the age of twenty-four). Childless, she returned to her parents' home and adopted the name Kikusha (1778). At the age of twenty-nine (1781), after taking the tonsure at the

Shin sect Buddhist temple Seikōji in Hagi (Yamaguchi Prefecture), she embarked on the first of what became a lifelong series of journeys throughout Japan. Kikusha had an unquenchable curiosity about the world and a burning desire to meet and interact with other cultural figures and poets. Similar to the famous poet Matsuo Bashō (1644–1694), for whom traveling was a kind of spiritual pursuit, her journeys provided opportunities for self-discovery and refining her literary skills, and she is sometimes referred to as a "Female Bashō." Kikusha traveled all over Japan's main island of Honshu as well as Kyushu; along the way she spent three years in Edo.

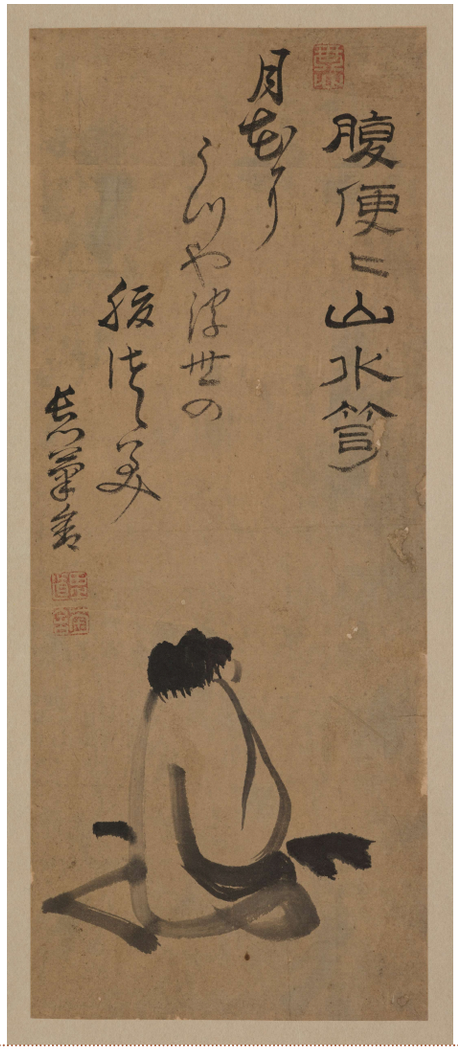


fig. 6 Tagami Kikusha 田上菊舎, 1753–1826, *Hermit/Self-Portrait*, early 1800s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.222.

In addition to composing haikai, Kikusha mastered the fundamentals of ink painting and would frequently record her impressions in simple poem-paintings. She also became interested in Chinese literati culture and, befriending Japanese Confucian scholars and Ōbaku Zen priests, she learned how to compose Chinese poetry (*kanshi*) and to play the Chinese zither (in Japanese, *shichigenkin*). Kikusha did numerous paintings of herself with cropped hair typical of lay nuns, seated in front of her zither.[26] She inscribed the self-portrait in the exhibition (fig. 6) with six Chinese characters

meaning “Satiated with Nature,” followed by the haikai poem below:

> *Moon and flowers*
> *fill this world—*
> *I beat my barrel belly.*[27]

Although she probably received some basic instruction, Kikusha could be described as an amateur painter. Her paintings—always accompanied by poems—comprise a wide range of subjects, including landscapes, flowers and plants, figures, and animals. She was content with creating abbreviated, almost sketch-like works, which suited the brevity of haikai, and her paintings display the same carefree brushwork typical of other Edo period haikai poets. Kikusha’s fame led to many requests for her poem-paintings, which served as a source of her livelihood. The sale of her work is documented in letters from Kikusha to the priest of Senjūji temple in her hometown, who acted as an intermediary, fielding requests and handling transactions.

Kikusha kept diaries recording the places she visited, the people she met, and her own poems as well as the verses of others. Because of these travel records, we have a reasonably accurate outline of her life and the people she met. Her adventurous spirit, boundless energy, and insatiable desire to capture her impressions of the world with brush and ink were extraordinary for a woman of her day. As is true of many of the nuns included here, Kikusha expressed her strong will in her bold and dynamic brushwork.

Rengetsu was born into an entirely different world than Kikusha; instead of the countryside, she grew up in the old cultural capital of Kyoto. The origins of her birth parents are unclear, but she was adopted by the Ōtagaki family, whose head came to hold a high-ranking administrative post at the Pure Land Buddhist temple Chion'in in Kyoto.[28] In her youth, she worked as a lady-in-waiting in the women's quarters at Kameoka Castle in the outskirts of Kyoto.[29] It was there that Rengetsu (her childhood name was Nobu) learned the classical waka poetry and calligraphy that became the foundation for her livelihood.

Rengetsu was married at the age of seventeen and bore three children, all of whom died. After separating from her husband, she remarried and had another child, but lost both her second husband and daughter to illness. At the age of thirty-three, she took the tonsure, adopting Rengetsu (literally, "lotus moon") as her Buddhist name. She took up residence in a subtemple at Chion'in with her adoptive father (who also took vows), and they lived together until his death. Rengetsu then moved to the Okazaki district in eastern Kyoto, where many poets and artists lived. She studied waka with Kagawa Kageki and Mutobe Yoshika and within a few years had established a reputation as a poet. Her name was also included in such compendiums as the *Heian jinbutsu shi* (Record of Heian [Kyoto] Notables),[30] and two volumes of her waka were published during her lifetime.[31] Waka had been the prevailing form of literary expression for aristocratic women from ancient times, and by the Edo period (1615–1868)

women from all walks of life were becoming literate and interested in composing poetry. Rengetsu and Kikusha had the advantage over counterparts from earlier periods of growing up in an age when many famous waka and haikai poets readily accepted and encouraged female pupils.

fig. 7: Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Moon, Blossoming Cherry, and Poem*, 1867. Ink and color on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.164. **fig. 8:** Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Sweets Plate with Painting and Poem*, 1800s. Ink and color on cedar plank. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2021.198.1. **fig. 9:** Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, Page from *Travel Journal to Arashiyama* (*Arashiyama hana no ki*), 1800s. Ink and color on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2021.206.

Like Kikusha, in addition to writing out her poems, Rengetsu also created poem-paintings, combining her waka with simply brushed seasonal motifs such as a branch of cherry or plum blossoms, the moon (fig. 7), eggplants (fig. 8), birds, butterflies (fig. 9), and occasionally animals. The subject matter is not so different from that of Kikusha, but their brush styles are at opposite poles: Kikusha's coarse and dynamic, Rengetsu's delicate and ethereal. Living in Kyoto, Rengetsu was no doubt influenced by the lyrical Maruyama-Shijō tradition of painting, which emphasized nature subjects modeled with soft ink and color washes. She associated with many painters and sometimes inscribed her poems on their paintings. Examples of "joint creations" (*gassaku*) in the exhibition include those done with Tomioka Tessai (富岡鉄斎 1836–1924) and Wada Gesshin (和田月心/ 1800–1870) (figs. 10 and 11).

Rengetsu's unique calligraphic style, featuring elegantly brushed, threadlike lines, is easily identifiable and, judging from the scores of extant works, was highly admired and sought after. She herself loved to write, as expressed in the following verse:

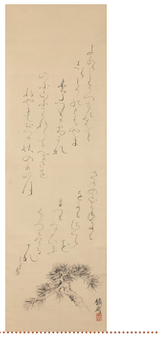


fig. 10
Calligraphy by Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月 (1791–1875), painting by Tomioka Tessai **富岡鉄斎** (1836–1924), *Three Waka Poems and a Pine*, second half of the 1800s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2021.156.

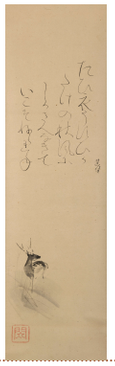


fig. 11
Calligraphy by Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, painting by Wada Gesshin 和田月心 (1800–70), *Stag and Poem*, 1865–70. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.245.

Taking up the brush
just for the joy of it,
writing on and on, leaving
behind

long lines of dancing letters. [32]

fig. 12 Kuroda Kōryō 黒田光良, 1823–1895, *Two Teabowls in the Style of Rengetsu* (*Rengetsu-yaki*), late 1800s. Glazed ceramic. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.259.1-2.

Midpoint in her career, Rengetsu began creating simple ceramic wares on which she either inscribed (with a brush) or incised (with a sharp tool) her poems. She was not the first to write verses on pottery. Half a century earlier, Ogata Kenzan (1663–1743) was producing a wide range of ceramic wares in Kyoto, including some inscribed with Chinese poems, and the literati (*bunjin*) artist Aoki Mokubei (1767–1833) also occasionally inscribed verses on his pottery. Rengetsu crafted most of her vessels by hand rather than by using a wheel and had them fired at kilns in eastern Kyoto. She also cooperated with professional potters, who created the wares and then either had Rengetsu add her waka or inscribed the verses themselves.[33] For example, the inscription on the box for two tea bowls (fig. 12) records that it is by the potter Kuroda Kōryō (1823–1895), who added Rengetsu's waka. "Rengetsu ware," with its sublime synthesis of poetry, calligraphy, and pottery, proved immensely popular, which led to imitations, making

connoisseurship of her pottery a very thorny issue.[34] Excavations reveal that her wares were used by people from all walks of life and were even purchased as a kind of Kyoto "souvenir" and taken to Edo.[35]

The range of Rengetsu's ceramics is well represented in the exhibition: *sencha* teaware, sake vessels, small plates, incense jars, and flower vases. The lotus leaf figures prominently in Rengetsu's work; it was certainly appropriate because of its symbolism in Buddhism and connection to her name.[36] The success of her pottery was linked to her eminence as a poet and her exquisite calligraphy, which gave owners the added pleasure of savoring her waka as well as the drink or food served in the vessels. Sayumi Takahashi has done some interesting research regarding the relationship between the content of Rengetsu's waka and the containers on which the words are written.[37]

Some scholars believe that her mature calligraphy style, displaying slender lines with only subtle variations in thickness, was influenced by the incising of her poems into pottery. For example, Rengetsu often chose to use *kana* script instead of Chinese characters because the simpler syllabary characters were easier to incise and created less excess clay that had to be cleaned away. In order to make her poems easier to incise (and read), she wrote kana forms individually, leaving generous amounts of space around the lines; it is rare to find her linking more than two or three characters together.

fig. 13 Suganuma Ōhō 菅沼大鳳, 1891–1966, *Rengetsu Working in Her Hut*, 1935. Ink and color on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.165.

Whereas Kikusha moved around Japan as she wished, Rengetsu reportedly changed her residence in Kyoto dozens of times to escape from people seeking to meet her and acquire her work. The fact that she was a Buddhist nun added to her celebrity status. Like Kikusha, she was not a full-fledged nun, but the verses of both female poets often embody Buddhist teachings.

Yoshi-ashi
ni
watari
yukuyo ya
muichimotsu

On a reed
traversing
this
transient
world,
not one
single
thing.—
Kikusha[38]

Clad in black robes,
I should have no
attractions to
the shapes and scents of
this world;
But how can I keep my
vows
gazing at today's crimson
maple leaves?—
Rengetsu[39]

Perfectly aware,
not a thought,
just the moon
piercing me with light
as I gaze upon it.—
Rengetsu[40]

Although she took her original vows at a Pure Land temple, Rengetsu associated with clergy from various sects. In her later years, she moved into a

small hut on the grounds of Jinkōin temple northwest of Kyoto at the invitation of the chief priest, Wada Gesshin (also known as Gōzan, 1800–1870). It was here that she lived out the remainder of her life. She was such a celebrated figure in Kyoto that numerous artists did portraits of her. The example in the exhibition by Suganuma Ōhō showing Rengetsu seated in her hut, writing poems on pottery (fig. 13), was probably inspired by Tessai's famous portrait of the wizened old nun in the collection of Jinkōin.

UNCONVENTIONAL NUNS AND THEIR IDIOSYNCRATIC CALLIGRAPHY: JUNKYŌ AND MYŌDŌ

People are immediately captivated when they see the calligraphy and hear stories about Ōishi Junkyō (大石順教 1888–1968) and Murase Myōdō (村瀬明道 1924–2013). Since both women lived into the modern age, tales of personal encounters with them abound. After taking the tonsure, both women eventually settled into small temples on the outskirts of Kyoto. They took up the brush on a regular basis, leaving a large body of work. Their calligraphic styles are dramatically different, reflecting the life circumstances and personalities of the two nuns, one a dancer turned social worker and the other specializing in vegetarian Buddhist cuisine. Both women authored books that include biographical material as well as discussions of their livelihood, and they were the subjects of television and film documentaries.[41]

My first introduction to Junkyō's calligraphy was in an art dealer's shop in Kyoto, where I was shown a

tanzaku poem card on which she had written a waka with gold ink. The writing itself was beautiful, but what amazed me most was hearing that she had done it by holding the brush in her mouth, having lost her arms. I then learned the gruesome details of how she had begun a promising career as a *geigi* dancer in Osaka, but one night, her adoptive father (who was also the proprietor of the teahouse where she lived) came home drunk and, brandishing a sword, killed six of the residents. Junkyō (her childhood name was Yone, geigi name Tsumakichi) survived the attack, but both of her arms were severed. She was seventeen at the time. After recovering from her injuries, she worked for a while in a traveling theatrical group, singing ballads, dancing, and doing comical storytelling. But she found life as a, in her words, "spectacle" unfulfilling, and one day, after watching a canary feed its chicks with its beak, she was inspired to try to write by holding a brush in her mouth. She retired from the stage shortly thereafter and devoted herself to the study of painting and poetry.[42] Since she had never gone to school, Junkyō was illiterate, but she now became an avid student of literature.

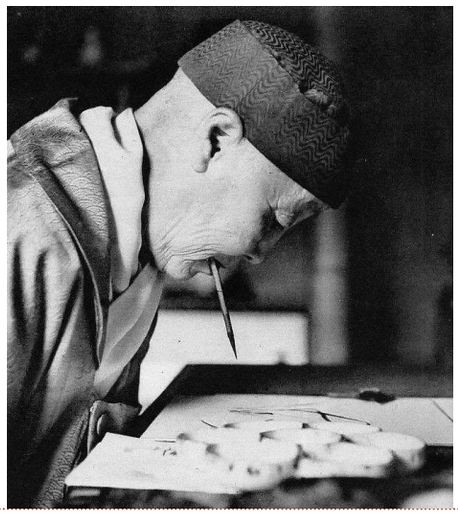


fig. 14 Photograph of Ōishi Junkyō, from *The Mainichi Graphic*, 4 January 1956, published by The Mainichi Newspapers Co., Ltd. Source: Wikimedia Commons

Junkyō married the calligrapher-painter Yamaguchi Sōhei in 1912 and had two children, but after fifteen years they divorced. She supported herself and her children through painting and calligraphy and set up a counseling service for people with disabilities. While she had often sought spiritual solace at temples, in 1933 (at age forty-five) she officially took the tonsure at Kongobūji on Mt. Kōya, adopting the Buddhist name Junkyō. Three years later she moved into the Shingon temple Kanshūji in Yamashina, east of Kyoto, where she continued to counsel and empower people with disabilities, teaching about Buddhism. In 1947, she founded Bukkōin; she lived out her life at this small temple, and through her activities she served as a model. Not only could she write and paint by holding a brush in her mouth (fig. 14), but she raked her own garden and pulled out weeds with her toes. Her tenacity and independence have inspired others and even led to comparisons with Helen Keller, who actually met Junkyō during one of her trips to Japan.

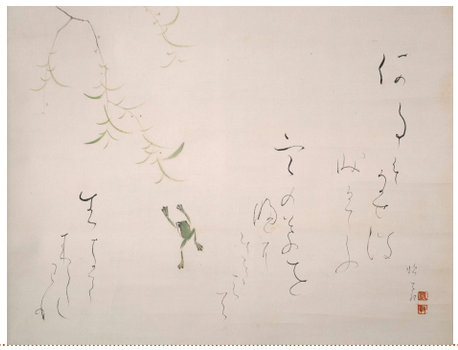


fig. 15 Ōishi Junkyō 大石順教, 1888–1968, *Willow and Frog*, mid-1900s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.157.

fig. 16 Ōishi Junkyō 大石順教, 1888–1968, *Shrimp*, mid-1900s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.158.

I was taken to Bukkōin by the art dealer who initially introduced me to her work and was able to meet her son and daughter-in-law, who showed me various works and photographs and also gave me some books and an unpublished manuscript that included excerpts from Junkyō's diary. I was also given a newspaper clipping that mentioned an exhibition of her work at a museum in Munich in 1966. Nature subjects prevail in Junkyō's oeuvre (figs. 15 and 16), but she also depicted the bodhisattva Kannon (fig. 17) and occasionally other figures. She frequently added the Buddhist maxim "Every day is a good day" to her Kannon paintings; this example is signed "Handless Junkyō." The paintings in the Denver Art Museum exhibition, *Her Brush: Japanese Women Artists from the Fong-Johnstone Collection*, are rather simply brushed, but

other works by Junkyō are surprisingly detailed and colorful and must have taken her a long time to complete. An example is her lovely rendering of birds and grapes inscribed with the poem about being inspired by the canary quoted above (fig. 18). The simplicity of her writing shares some qualities with Rengetsu's. In fact, Junkyō was very much aware of Rengetsu's poetry and calligraphy and reportedly studied her script in her thirties and forties.[43] She did paintings of a woman fulling cloth on which she inscribed a waka by Rengetsu, whom she acknowledges in her inscriptions.[44] While Junkyō's calligraphy does not display the hair-fine brushlines of Rengetsu's, and the rhythmic flow is different, aesthetically the similarities are there, especially because both nuns wrote primarily with the simplified kana script.

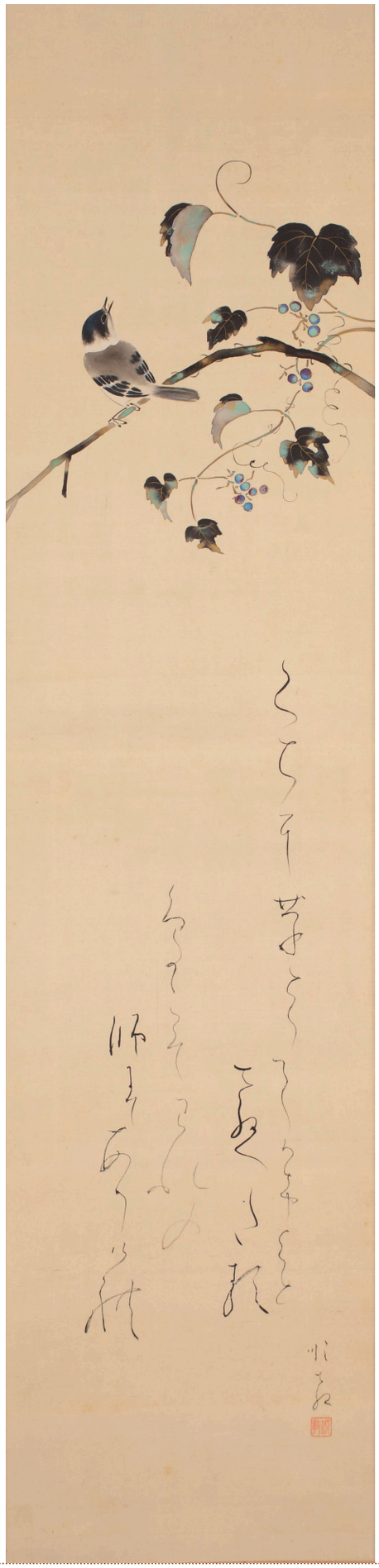


fig. 18 Ōishi Junkyō 大石順教, 1888–1968, *Bird and Grapes*, date not known. Hanging scroll: ink and color on silk, 44½ × 10⅝ in. (113 × 27 cm). Private collection.

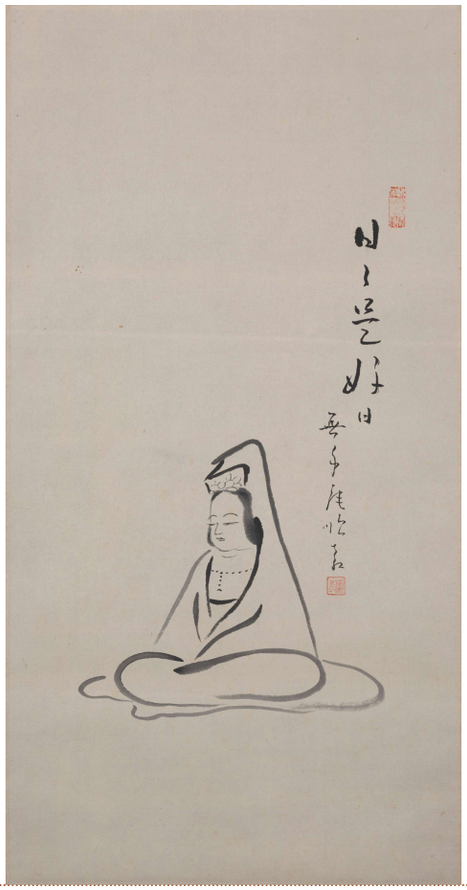


fig. 17 Ōishi Junkyō 大石順教, 1888–1968, *Bodhisattva Kannon* (*Avalokiteśvara*), mid-1900s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.156.

People who met Junkyō described her as “radiant,” “humble,” and “peaceful”; these same qualities emanate from her paintings and calligraphy. In a letter to friends shortly before her death, she wrote that she had suffered much bitterness because her arms were cut off but that the incident enabled her to find the path of Buddha and inner peace. Getting to know others in the limb-loss community had been a special part of her life, and she wanted to thank everyone and tell them to keep up their spirits.[45]

The Zen nun Murase Myōdō also shared a similar path; in 1963, at the age of thirty-nine, she was hit by a car while out shopping, leaving her partially paralyzed. She lost the use of her right, dominant

arm. She then threw herself wholeheartedly into using her left, preparing vegetarian Buddhist cuisine called *shojin ryori,* as well as creating bold, dynamic calligraphy.

Born into the family of a rice merchant in Aichi Prefecture (she was the fifth of nine children), at the age of nine Myōdō entered the Rinzai Zen temple Kōgenji in Kyoto. Her decision was influenced in part by the traditional belief that if one child took the tonsure, other members of the family could be reborn in paradise. At age fourteen, she went to a special school for nuns in Gifu and then continued five more years of training at the Rinzai Zen convent Tenneiji. She returned to Kōgenji in 1943 and did further training at Enkōji convent in Kyoto, then served at two other temples before becoming head of Gesshinji in Ōtsu city, Shiga Prefecture, in 1975. There Myōdō became famous for her vegetarian cuisine, prepared with the deep mindfulness characteristic of Zen discipline. She claimed that while pouring her heart and soul into preparing food, she always kept foremost in mind the people who would eat it. Her goal was to nurture by providing them with something healthy and delicious.

After the car accident, Myōdō was hospitalized for nine months. She suffered severe pain and found it difficult to breathe, but she remembers being encouraged by a doctor who said, "If the Buddha hadn't wanted you to live, you'd be dead. The fact that you are alive is because you are needed."[46] Hearing that gave her strength and renewed her sense of purpose in life. She was determined to live

every day fully, and cooking and preparing food became her spiritual practice. Having lost the use of her right arm and right leg, she trained herself to use her left hand to hold a writing brush, as well as to chop vegetables and grind sesame seeds with pestle and mortar for what became one of her specialties, sesame tofu. Giving by cooking and providing people with a pleasurable dining experience became her passion.

fig. 19 Murase Myōdō (2008), photograph © 2008 by Ikazaki Shinobu. All Rights Reserved.

fig. 20 Murase Myōdō 村瀬明道, 1924–2013, *Breaking Waves in the Pines* (*shōtō*), late 1900s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.155.

fig. 21 Murase Myōdō 村瀬明道, 1924–2013, *Mu* (*Emptiness*) and *Kan* (*Quietude*), late 1900s. Ink on paper with wood frame. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.154A-C.

Regretfully, I never had the chance to meet Myōdō or enjoy her *shōjin ryōri* at Gesshinji. I first learned about this remarkable nun through seeing some examples of her boldly brushed calligraphy in a

charity exhibition of works by contemporary Zen priests in 1997. Her personality, captured in a photograph for the cover of her 2004 book (fig. 19), was the opposite of Junkyō's: brash, outspoken, with a wry sense of humor. This is reflected in her brushwork, exemplified in the hanging scroll *Breaking Waves in the Pines (shōtō)* (fig. 20) and two-sided screen panel comprising the single characters "*mu*" and "*kan*" (fig. 21), which together mean "emptiness/quietude." Myōdō wrote that when she was young, at one point she imagined that she would like to live like Rengetsu, crafting clay pots and composing poetry, but after losing the use of her right arm and leg, she found it impossible. She then persevered, learning how to write calligraphy with her left hand.[47] As she became famous for her cuisine, requests for her brushwork no doubt increased. The majority of Myōdō's extant works were executed with a large brush, which was perhaps easier for her to handle. She once said that calligraphy and cooking are both like "fighting with a real sword" (*shinken shōbu*). "Facing a white sheet of paper, it is you who makes it [the calligraphy or the food] live or die."[48] Interviews (in Japanese) with Myōdō are easily accessible on YouTube. While she is no longer with us, we can still hear her deliver short sermons on "life" and also sense that vivid life in her brushwork.

1. Bunchi's grandmother (Emperor Gomizuno-o's mother) and Ryōnen's mother were both from the Konoe family.

2. See Patricia Fister, "Creating Devotional Art with Body Fragments: The Buddhist Nun Bunchi and Her Father, Emperor Gomizuno-o," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 27, nos. 3–4 (2000): 213–38; Fister, *Art by Buddhist Nuns: Treasures from the Imperial Convents of Japan* (New York: Institute for Medieval Japanese Studies, Columbia University, 2003), 22–3; Fister, "Visual Culture in Japan's Imperial Buddhist

Convents: The Making of Devotional Objects as Expressions of Faith and Practice," in *Zen and Material Culture*, ed. Steven Heine and Pamela D. Winfield (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2017), 164–96; Patricia Fister, et al., *Amamonzeki: A Hidden Heritage: Treasures of the Japanese Imperial Convents* (Tokyo: Sankei Shimbun, 2009), 100, 288–90.

3. This information is included in her written account of the founding of Enshōji, titled *Fumonzan no ki* (Record of Mt. Fumon), 1676. Fumon is the "mountain name" (*sango*) of Enshōji; literally meaning "universal gate" or "gate of Buddhist understanding," it forms part of the title of the *Kannon Sutra*, "Kanzeon bosatsu fumonbon."

4. Kasuga Myōjin refers to a conglomerate of Shinto divinities at Kasuga, also called Kasuga Daimyōjin (Great Resplendent Kasuga Deity). There is a large shrine devoted to Kasuga Myōjin near Kōfukuji temple in Nara city, and branch shrines were also established throughout Japan.

5. According to the *Kasuga Gongen genki*, Kasuga Myōjin was first referred to as a bodhisattva in an oracle dated 937 and is regarded as a *manifestation* of Shaka Nyorai. Royall Tyler, *The Miracles of the Kasuga Deity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 25, 103.

6. There is also a Kasuga *myōgō* scroll at Enshōji. Suenaga Masao and Nishibori Ichizō, *Bunchi jo-ō* (Princess Bunchi) (Nara, Japan: Enshōji, 1955), 213.

7. *Fumonzan no ki.* Collection of Enshōji.

8. For a photograph of the shrine, see Fister, *Art by Buddhist Nuns*, 47.

9. Ibid., 64–5.

10. See James A. Benn, "Where Text Meets Flesh: Burning the Body as an Apocryphal Practice in Chinese Buddhism," *History of Religions* 37, no. 4 (May 1998): 295–322; James Baskind, "Mortification Practices in the Ōbaku School," in *Essays on East Asian Religion and Culture*, ed. Christian Wittern and Shi Lishan (Kyoto: Kyōto Daigaku Jinbun Kagaku Kenkyūjo, 2007), 149–76.

11. Barbara Ruch, "Burning Iron against the Cheek: A Female Cleric's Last Resort," in *Engendering Faith: Women and Buddhism in Premodern Japan*, ed. Barbara Ruch (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2002), lxv–lxxvii.

12. Translation by Norman Waddell. For the entire poem, see Fister, *Amamonzeki: A Hidden Heritage*, 100.

13. Fister, "Creating Devotional Art with Body Fragments," 216–20; Fister, *Art by Buddhist Nuns*, 54–5.

14. Bunchi's mother was Yotsutsuji Yotsuko (1589–1638), another wife of Emperor Gomizuno-o. Ryōnen's father was Katsurayama Tamehisa. For more information about Ryōnen's life in English, see Fister, *Art by Buddhist Nuns*, 26–7; Ruch, "Burning Iron against the Cheek."

15. Matsuda Bansui (1630–1703). The match was reportedly arranged by Yoshi no Kimi's brother, Konoe Iehiro (1667–1736). Accounts differ, but they seem to have had two to four children.

16. Ryōnen's brother Daizui Dōki (1652–1717), who studied under the Chinese Ōbaku priest Gaoquan (in Japanese, Kōsen), taught the imperial princess, who entered Hōkyōji ten to fifteen years after Ryōnen and eventually succeeded Richū as abbess.

17. Two examples are the Rinzai nun Mugai Nyodai (1223–1298) and the Sōtō nun Eshun (active in the 1300s).

18. Translations of both poems are by Barbara Ruch in Fister, *Art by Buddhist Nuns*, 81. The characters for the poem are:

    生る世に　捨て焼く身や　うからまし　つみのたきぎと　おもハざりせバ

    Ikeru yo ni / sutete yaku mi ya / ukaramashi / tsumi no takigi to / omowazariseba

19. Ryōnen's temple Taiunji has not survived, and the artifacts were scattered.

20. I know of four examples: one is preserved at Manpukuji and the others in private collections in Japan and the United States. For illustrations, see Patricia Fister, "Sannin no kinsei nisō to Ōbaku" [Three Edo-period Nuns and Ōbaku], *Ōbaku bunka* 118 (1999): 90; Fister, *Art by Buddhist Nuns*, 80–1.

21. Published in *Transactions and Proceedings of the Japan Society, London* 6, no. 3 (1904): 374–88. Reprinted as a book in 1906.

22. *Tagami Kikusha: Kinsei joryū bunjin no sekai* (Shimonoseki Shiritsu Chōfu Hakubutsukan, 1995); *Un'yū to ama: Tagami Kikusha* (Yamaguchi Prefectural Museum, 2003); *Black Robe, White Mist: Art of the Japanese Buddhist Nun Rengetsu* (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 2007); *Ōtagaki Rengetsu: Poetry and Artwork from a Rustic Hut* (Kyoto: Nomura Art Museum, 2014); Michifumi Isoda, *Unsung Heroes of Old Japan* (Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation for Culture, 2017).

23. Verses are included in the following books: Makoto Ueda, ed., *Far Beyond the Field: Haiku by Japanese Women* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Hiroaki Sato, ed. and trans., *Japanese Women Poets: An Anthology* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2008); John Stevens, trans., *Lotus Moon: The Poetry of the Buddhist Nun Rengetsu* (New York:

Weatherhill, 1994); *Ōtagaki Rengetsu: Poetry and Artwork from a Rustic Hut* (Kyoto: Amembo Press, 2014).

24. The Kikusha Commemoration Society (Kikusha Kenshōkai), headed by Oka Masako (the eleventh-generation poet in Kikusha's lineage), organizes events such as trips to places Kikusha visited and also supports publications of her poetry (www.kikusha.com). The society also publishes a journal, *Kikusha kenkyū nōto,* with articles related to Kikusha. The Rengetsu Foundation, based in Kyoto, has created an English website with a database of her poems (in both English and Japanese) and a digital archive of some of her work (www.rengetsu.org).

25. For more details on Kikusha's life in English, see Fumiko Yamamoto, "Chiyo and Kikusha: Two Haiku Poets," in Fister, *Japanese Women Artists, 1600–1900*, 55–68; Fister, *Kinsei no josei gaka-tachi*; and Rebecca Corbett, "Crafting Identity as a Tea Practitioner in Early Modern Japan: Ōtagaki Rengetsu and Tagami Kikusha," *U.S.–Japan Women's Journal* 47 (2014): 3–27.

26. Two examples are included in the catalog accompanying the 2003 exhibition at the Yamaguchi Prefectural Museum, *Un'yū to ama: Tagami Kikusha*. See Oka Masako, ed. *Un'yū to ama: Tagami Kikusha.* (Hōhokuchō, Japan: Kikusha Kenshōkai, 2003), plates 53 and 139.

27. The characters for the title and poem are: 腹便々山水笥
月花に　うつや浮世の　腹つづみ.

    Tsuki hana ni / utsu ya ukiyo no / haratsuzumi

28. I am grateful to Paul Berry for pointing this out to me.

29. For further information in English on Rengetsu's life, see Fister, *Japanese Women Artists, 1600–1900*, 144–46.

30. Beginning in the year 1838.

31. *Rengetsu Shikibu nijo waka shū* (1868) and *Ama no karamu* (1870). The former volume is a compilation of poems by both Rengetsu and her poetess friend Takebatake Shikibu (高畠式部 1785–1881), who is also represented in the Fong-Johnstone collection.

32. Translation by John Stevens. Stevens, *Lotus Moon*, 108.

33. These potters include Kuroda Kōryō (1823–1895), Tamaki Ryōsai (dates unknown), and Issō (dates unknown).

34. Excavations of kiln sites in Kyoto confirm that "Rengetsu ware" (Rengetsu-yaki) by other potters was being produced during her lifetime. Several reports have been published by Chiba Yutaka from the Center for Cultural Heritage Studies, Kyoto University (formerly

Center for Archaeological Operations). Chiba Yutaka, "Kōko shiryō to shite no Rengetsu-yaki," *The Annual Report of the Center for Archaeological Operations* 2001 (2006): 311–26; "Rengetsu-yaki o mohōshita tōki ni tsuite: Kyoto Daigaku Byōin kōnai AE19-ku SK15 shutsudo shiryō," *The Annual Report of the Center for Cultural Heritage Studies* 2016 (2018): 123–54. I am grateful to Richard Wilson, professor in the Department of Art and Archaeology at International Christian University, who informed me of the excavations many years ago and provided me with some of the data.

35. Chiba Yutaka, "Kōko shiryō to shite no Rengetsu-yaki," 322.

36. Some scholars believe the lotus motif was developed for Rengetsu by Kuroda Kōryō. See Mitsuoka Tadanari, "Rengetsu-ni no tōgei," in Koresawa Kyōzō et al., *Rengetsu* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1971). Karen Gerhart, who visited descendants of Kuroda living at Jōrakuji in Kyoto in March 1986, told me that they still possess molds with lotus designs believed to have been used by Kōryō.

37. Sayumi Takahashi, "Beyond Our Grasp? Materiality, Meta-genre and Meaning in the Po(e)ttery of Rengetsu-ni," *Proceedings of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies* 5 (Summer 2004): 261–78.

38. *Yoshi-ashi* has the double meaning of "reed" and "good and/or bad (evil)." Kikusha undoubtedly had both meanings in mind when she composed this poem, which appears on a simply brushed picture of Bodhidharma. Poem translated by author.

39. Translation by John Stevens. Stevens, *Lotus Moon*, 68.

40. Ibid., 77.

41. Books by Ōishi Junkyō: *Horie monogatari: Tsumakichi jijoden* (1930), *Mute no shiawase* (1949; multiple reprintings); *Tana kokoro* (1952), and *Kokoro no te* (1961). A television drama based on her life, "Namida hanagasanaide kudasai: Ōishi Junkyō-ni no shogai" (Please don't shed tears: the life of nun Ōishi Junkyō) aired in 1981, and there is also a documentary produced in 2011 titled "Ten kara mireba" (Looking from heaven).

    Books by Murase Myōdō: *Gesshinji no ryōri* (1983); *Aru chisana zendera no kokoro michiru ryōri no hanashi* (2003); *Honmamonde ikinahare: "Gomadōfu tenkaichi" no anjusan ichidaiki* (2004/2009); and *"Akanjin" nande zettai inai* (2008). Television specials include *Shinshin komoru amadera no ryōri* (March 17, 1988), *Kokoro no jidai* (July 3, 2005), and *Seikatsu hotto mōningu: Kono hito ni tokimeki!* (November 21, 2008). Myōdō also served as the model for the heroine of the serial morning television series *Honmamon*, which aired from October 2001 to March 2002.

42. She studied painting with Wakabayashi Shōkei and poetry with the priest Fujimura Eiun, from Jimyōin in Osaka.

43. Conversation with Junkyō's son and his wife at Bukkōin, July 1986. I was also shown some examples of poems written on tanzaku by Junkyō that did indeed recall Rengetsu's style.

44. Before her signature, Junkyō wrote, "In admiration of (or honoring) Rengetsu." For a photograph of one example, see Ōishi Junkyō-ni Itoku Kenshōkai, ed., *Ōishi Junkyō-ni isakushū* (Tokyo: Shunshūsha, 1984), plate 6. Fulling is a technique of pounding washed clothes to smooth out wrinkles (like ironing) and also brings out the glossiness and softness of the fabric.

45. This letter is in the collection of Bukkōin.

46. Murase Myōdō, *Honmamonde ikinahare: "Gomadōfu tenkaichi" no anjusan ichidaiki* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunshū, 2009), 20.

47. Murase Myōdō, *Gesshinji no ryōri* (Tokyo: Bunka Shuppan Kyoku, 1983), 233.

48. Ibid., 156.

On the Fong-Johnstone Study Collection and the Power of Access

Einor Cervone

fig. 1a Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Incense Box* (*kōgō*) *in the Shape of a Tortoise*, 1800s. Ceramic with gold and lacquer repair (*kintsugi*). Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2021.164A-B.

fig. 1b Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Incense Box* (*kōgō*) *in the Shape of a Tortoise* (detail), 1800s. Ceramic with gold and lacquer repair (*kintsugi*). Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2021.164B.

A slapdash fissure stretches into a grimace beneath two burrowed cavities—a pair of gaping eyes—pressed into groggy *shigaraki* clay (fig. 1). Simple, coarse, unglazed. Almost insignificant. But then, a

metallic glimmer draws the eye. Gold and lacquer *kintsugi*, lovingly applied to mend a crack, discloses how treasured a possession this tortoise-shaped *kōgō* (incense box) must have been. Notwithstanding its undeniable charm, how was its earthy material, hastily pressed onto a mold, valued above gold? Turning it over, three finger-wide grooves drag vertically from chin to tail. Through them, a signature emerges: Rengetsu (fig. 1b).

Oscillating between mass production and prized rarity, this tortoise kōgō sneers at such proscriptive divides as those of professional and literati art. Rengetsu (Lotus Moon) was the ordained name of the Buddhist nun and artist-cum-celebrity Ōtagaki Rengetsu (太田垣蓮月 1791–1875). Her painting, calligraphy, and ceramics were so coveted that she could barely keep up with demand. She did not have her own kiln, relying instead on local networks. She churned out deceptively simple and heartachingly captivating ceramics. Her idiosyncratic style, unpolished and whimsical, came to be known as Rengetsu-style pottery, or *Rengetsu-yaki*.

The market—forever attentive—swiftly responded to this demand in kind with a flood of copies and forgeries already in the artist's own lifetime. This plethora of Rengetsu-yaki wares has long

challenged art historians and connoisseurs in assessing the artist's oeuvre. At the same time, these idiomatic works hold an equally important key to better understanding the artist, her life, and her work.

fig 2 Artist unknown, copy after Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Set for Sencha Tea*, date unknown. Glazed ceramic. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.262.1-7

fig 3 Artist unknown, copy after Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Teabowl*, date unknown. Glazed ceramic. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.177.

fig 4 Artist uknown, *Incenser In the Style of Ōtagaki Rengetsu*. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.169a-b.

Emulations of Rengetsu's signature style range from outright forgeries (e.g., figs. 2–3) to pieces that, as art historian Paul Berry has remarked, were never intended to deceive but instead were a nod to her work—an homage to the artist. Such, for

instance, is this later incenser bearing an underglaze poem by Rengetsu and crowned with reticulated metal openwork (fig. 4). Its smooth and clear-overglazed surface indicates it was thrown on a wheel. It thereby does not attempt to imitate Rengetsu's hand-built process. It is not a forgery; neither is it an authentic work by Rengetsu herself. It is an "honest copy." It lives in the liminal space, somewhere on the richly gradated spectrum of idiomatic artmaking (a forthcoming video will feature a discussion of two Rengetsu-yaki teabowls by the artist Kuroda Kōryō (黒田光良 1823–1895).

Belying the elaborate role of copying in East Asian art, the very classification draws an implicit bias in Euro-American art-historical discourse. Granted, some copies are forgeries made explicitly to be passed off as authentic. The act of copying, though, is more nuanced. It is intrinsic to the artist's technical maturation. It is a way of constructing and finessing one's artistic voice, of capturing an admired master's technique—even their spirit. It weaves a visual dialogue with one's predecessors, artistic lineages, and visual culture—whether contemporaneous or historical. Producing a copy can be an expression of appreciation, a claim to having mastered (or even surpassed) said precursor, or anything in between.

Dismissing idiomatic art can be likened, perhaps, to removing archeological artifacts from an excavation site without taking stock and documenting the context within which they were found. In the case of Rengetsu, the legacy that emanated from and orbited her lode star can shed light not only on her reception throughout the ages but on her practice as well. Take, for instance, these two hanging vases (*hana-ike*) (figs. 5–6). Both are Rengetsu-yaki, fashioned into bulbous gourds, wonky and humorous. At first glance one might be tempted to attribute both to the artist. Looking closely, though, the cracks begin to show.

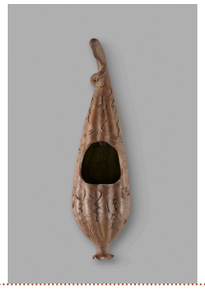


fig 5 Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Hana-ike Hanging Flower Vase in the Shape of a Hechima Gourd* (*Lone Pine*), 1800s Ceramic. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2021.184.

fig 6 Artist uknown, copy after Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Hana-ike Hanging Flower Vase in the Shape of a Hechima Gourd* (*Friendless Plover*), date unknown. Ceramic. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.173.

The two hana-ike are inscribed with poems by Rengetsu, reading, respectively:

A lone pine awaits me its needles chestnut brown— were someone here to greet me I'd present a souvenir from Miyako happily saying: "Here!"

くりいろの
あれはの松の
人ならば
都のつとに
いざといはましを

Having left my hometown sleeping on a pillow of waves as I travel a far-flung island . . . how sad the cries of a friendless plover.

ふるさとを
はなれ小島の
浪まくら
ともなし千鳥
鳴音かなしも

We will refer to the first hana-ike as *Lone Pine* and to the second as *Friendless Plover*. While both poems were indeed composed by Rengetsu, the calligraphy reveals a discrepancy in style and technique. The poem gracing *Lone Pine* is rendered in a confident hand with elegant *kana* and lithe curves. The stylus pushed through the soft clay, parting it smoothly, leaving clean and crisp ridges that are further accentuated by the darkened edges from the firing process (fig. 7).

The calligraphy on *Friendless Plover*, however, is more belabored and uncertain. The kana drags and tears at the clay, leaving a rugged trail in its furrows. It is weighed down by forced flourishes and overly accented curlicues (fig. 8), and it lacks the balanced cadence of *Lone Pine*.

fig. 7 Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Hana-ike Hanging Flower Vase in the Shape of a Hechima Gourd* (*Lone Pine*) (detail), 1800s Ceramic. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2021.184.

fig. 8 Artist uknown, copy after Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Hana-ike Hanging Flower Vase in the Shape of a Hechima Gourd* (*Friendless Plover*) (detail), date unknown. Ceramic. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.173.

fig. 9 Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Hana-ike Hanging Flower Vase in the Shape of a Hechima Gourd* (*Lone Pine*) (detail), 1800s Ceramic. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2021.184.

fig. 10 Artist uknown, copy after Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Hana-ike Hanging Flower Vase in the Shape of a Hechima Gourd* (*Friendless Plover*) (detail), date unknown. Ceramic. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.173.

Nowhere does this discrepancy emerge more clearly than in the incised signatures. The lightness and natural undulation of line in *Lone Pine* (fig. 9) contrasts sharply with the clunky *kanji* on *Friendless Plover* (fig. 10).

Once again, the objects' backs disclose important information (figs. 11 and 12). Placed side by side, it is evident that the cut-out apertures, intended to accommodate a hook for hanging, were not handled with the same attention.

fig 11 Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Hana-ike Hanging Flower Vase in the Shape of a Hechima Gourd* (*Lone Pine*) (detail), 1800s Ceramic. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2021.184.

fig 12 Artist uknown, copy after Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Hana-ike Hanging Flower Vase in the Shape of a Hechima Gourd* (*Friendless Plover*) (detail), date unknown. Ceramic. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.173.

Friendless Plover bears a rectangular cutout with rugged, uneven edges. This haphazard and unpolished treatment is in line with Rengetsu's style; however, here lies a clue: hana-ike are functional wares. They were intended to be hung in a *tokonoma* (display niche) and often contained flower arrangements (*ikebana*). The hook cutout therefore was not a forgiving element in the ware

and would have needed to be smoothed out and leveled, so as not to snag or hang askew. *Lone Pine*'s hook aperture fulfills these requirements with a clean, oval finish. It hangs naturally and perfectly balanced.

Finally, gathering both objects and turning them in one's hands, studying their haptic qualities, their textures, and balance—one, ponderous and unwieldy, weighed down by poorly distributed matter; the other, as if fashioned for your hand alone, perfectly balanced, buoyant, almost. As if lending one's ear to a whisper, handling an object can divulge its innermost secrets.

When assessed on its own, *Friendless Plover* can certainly pass as a genuine work by Rengetsu. It is only by scrutinizing it against comparable works from the artist's oeuvre and within the broader context of its production that incongruities begin to emerge. Ultimately, visual observation alone cannot offer complete and accurate information for gauging a work of art. In order to arrive at the most accurate conclusions, one must take into account tactility, weight, balance, and distribution of clay—sometimes even sound and smell—as these all hold vital information.

In recent decades, opportunities to access this type of information have been steadily decreasing. As

James Watt, Curator Emeritus at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, once shared in a conversation some years ago, while past generations of curators and scholars enjoyed access to museum storerooms, learning with their hands, eyes, and noses by reviewing roomfuls of artworks, it is rarely the case today. Indeed, most art history students will get to handle no more than a handful of artworks in their training. Those pursuing academic careers will likely be poorly equipped to approach questions of connoisseurship.

The sobering realization that this coming generation of scholars will have little access to artwork has been the force behind the Fong-Johnstone Collection and Study Collection initiative. The gift, numbering more than five hundred objects—both copies and originals—will be made available to specialists, educators, and students. The Denver Art Museum is committed to leveraging the collection to raise awareness, offer accessibility, and advance the study of connoisseurship in its two focus areas: Ōbaku Zen painting and women artists from early modern and modern Japan. This is done with the conviction that, together, idiomatic and original artworks can help shed light on a more complete story of art history.

fig. 13a Artist unknown, copy after Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Set of Four Plates*, dates unknown. Ceramic. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2021.200.1–4.

fig. 13b Artist unknown, copy after Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Plate (bottom)*, date unknown. Ceramic. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2021.200.3.

And so, three inexplicable grooves on a late set of Rengetsu-yaki plates may speak not only to the artist's centuries-long fame but also divulge a recognition of the powerful statement they make (fig. 13). By drawing three fingers across the clay—a stylized nod to pressing the material into the mold and the scraping off excess clay—Rengetsu acknowledges her medium of choice and at the same time she commemorates her intimate touch of the clay. The later set mimics the famous detail seen on the mold-pressed tortoise kōgō, but it does so on the back of the plates and over an impression of a slump mold's coarse fabric. In other words, opposite to where it should have been placed. This misunderstanding of the process and intent inadvertently exposes the set of plates to be

a copy, foiling an attempt to replicate the artist's personal touch.

And is it not that, ultimately, that draws us to this mystery? The artist's touch. Her mark.

Galleries as Sites of Connection: Visitor Experience in *Her Brush*

Karuna Srikureja

Her Brush opens with these questions: “How do we leave our mark?” “How is art a reflection of our personhood?”

These are not questions that one might find on a pop quiz—they are deeply personal and belie a

straightforward answer. The inclusive pronoun “we” collapses the distance between the questioner and the questioned, humanizing the museum voice and offering some authority back to the visitor. These questions prime visitors to enter *Her Brush* not to simply absorb information but to reflect, feel, and be an active participant in their experience. The exhibition design makes use of dramatic lighting, creative object display, and multiple textures and materials to create an immersive, evocative space that engages the senses and imagination. The invitation to participate is reinforced throughout the exhibition. Visitors are encouraged to open tanzaku boxes and collect artists’ biographical slips stored within them, make their own *tanzaku*, and even leave trails of digital ink on the exhibition walls through an interactive projection.

This approach is characteristic of the Denver Art Museum (DAM), which has been at the forefront of the movement toward visitor-centered museums for decades. Since the early 1990s, the DAM has employed a team-based approach to exhibition design built on the partnership between a curator and an educator (originally called a master teacher, now an interpretive specialist), championed by the then-director of education, Patterson Williams. This marriage of pedagogical and visitor-centered expertise with art-historical scholarship results in exhibitions that consistently push the boundaries of what it means to be a welcoming and accessible resource to the public.

Children enjoying an activity in the *Her Brush* gallery, 2022. Photograph by Eric Stephenson.

With this institutional inheritance in mind, curator Einor Cervone and I were presented with a challenge in *Her Brush*. This exhibition had the potential to be incredibly alienating to a general audience: it explores a large swath of Japanese history (1600s–1900s) across varied genres and social realms, often diving into the cultural nuances that allowed women to pursue artistic careers. Despite this, the story we hoped to tell is an exceedingly human one. It is a story about resilience, self-actualization, and the universal drive to create. But how to tell this story when these artworks have become so far removed from the conditions that created them? This is the central challenge of art interpretation, which the noted philosopher and educator John Dewey articulated in his seminal *Art as Experience* (1934). To Dewey, "[The] task is to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience."[1]

The interpretive elements we created present art-historical detail *in the service of* personal connection. Biographical focus moments, for example, bring together an artist's words, work, signature, and story and encourage visitors to see each artist as an individual with unique experience instead of the nebulous notion of the invisible hand.

fig. 1 A visitor in front of the interactive video projection in the last gallery of *Her Brush*, 2022. Photograph by Eric Stephenson.

While we wanted to privilege the artists' experiences, we recognized the limitations of our own familiarity with their circumstances. Several of the highlighted artists in the exhibition dealt with challenges related to trauma, gender, and national and religious identity. While the exhibition team approached these artists' experiences through a historical lens, many visitors face related challenges today and would bring their own vulnerabilities and preconceived notions to the exhibition. To help us navigate these key issues, we convened a group of local stakeholders. This group of community consultants included people from a range of backgrounds, including a disability rights lawyer, a Zen-based psychotherapist, Denver-based Japanese nationals, and Japanese American artists. The goal was not co-curation but rather gaining a nuanced understanding of the priorities and concerns of vulnerable communities represented in the exhibition. We sought to craft an approach that framed these historical stories in a way that was sensitive to our twenty-first-century cultural climate.

This sense of personal connection, to be sure, must be made available to audiences of all backgrounds and circumstances. Like all exhibitions at the DAM, *Her Brush* is almost fully bilingual, with texts in both English and Spanish. Cognizant of the large variety

of ways in which individuals process information, we strove to create an embodied, sensory exhibition experience. An interactive activity in the final gallery translates visitors' motions into ink strokes projected onto the wall, inviting them to literally embody an artist (fig. 1). The goal was for visitors to understand the connection between the body, artmaking, and self-expression and to experience the intimacy, joy, and physicality of creating and sharing art with others.

figs. 2–6 Sarah Fukami, Artist Slips, depicting Tokuyama (Ike) Gyokuran 徳山(池)玉瀾, Ōishi Junkyō 大石順教, Ono no Ozū (or Ono no Otsū) 小野お通, Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, and Noguchi Shōhin 野口小蘋, 2022.

We made special effort to welcome kids and families into *Her Brush*. Denver-based artist Sarah Fukami developed five collectable "artist slips" placed in tanzaku boxes around the exhibition (figs. 2–6). On the back is a brief account of the artist, written in the first person, and a prompt leading to the next slip. A take-home folding screen bears six slots: five for the collectable artist slips and one for a slip produced by the visitor. An artmaking corner midway through the exhibition allows everyone to place themselves within this artistic lineage.

Ultimately, art museums exist at the nexus of learning and leisure; visitors therefore generally do

not view the museum-going experience with the same goals of mastering content as one would expect from, say, a lecture or a book. It is with this conviction that we approached the exhibition interpretation and visitor experience for *Her Brush*. By adding emotional relevance to historical content, by enhancing narrativity, we allow information—otherwise inaccessible, intimidating, even—to ring salient and memorable.

1. John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Minton, Balch & Company, 1934), 2.

Exhibition Catalog

..... 113

..... 130

..... 135

..... 138

..... 150

..... 157

Exhibition Checklist

..... 170

..... 176

Installation of *Her Brush: Japanese Women Artists from the Fong-Johnstone Collection*. Photograph by Eric Stephenson.

Introduction

How do we leave our mark?

How is art a reflection of our personhood?

A mirror into our soul?

This exhibition traces the pathways that Japanese women artists forged for themselves in their pursuit of art.

Follow them into some of the realms within which they found their artistic voices—such as courts and castles, Buddhist convents, and literati circles (intellectual cliques).

The artists shuttled through these realms, rendering their borders porous—no small feat at a time marked by rigid societal stratification, stringent gender roles, and class expectations.

We refer here to their gender identity as women. But it is possible that if asked today, some of them may have identified differently.

We cannot speak for them, but we hope to amplify their voices and celebrate how they left their indelible mark on the world through art.

Joys of Calligraphy

"Taking up the brush just for the joy of it, writing on and on, leaving behind long lines of dancing letters."
—Ōtagaki Rengetsu

「なにごとを
なすとはなしに
たはむれに
かきながしたる
水莖のあと」
太田垣蓮月

Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Sake Decanter* (*tokkuri*), 1800s. Glazed ceramic. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2021.196.

Ōtagaki Rengetsu did not use a pottery wheel since it was considered unsuitable for women. Instead of

emulating wheel-thrown pottery, she embraced the idiosyncrasies of hand-building.

Every aspect of this work reveals her personal mark. The pockmarked surface records her fingers' movement. She inscribed it with her own poetry, written in Hiragana (also known as women's script).

Making a Mark

Turning to the sister arts of painting, poetry, and calligraphy (together called the Three Perfections) for artistic expression was an act of self-assertion. One's brushwork (whether in calligraphy or painting) reflected one's true nature.

You will find the designation *joshi* in the signature of several artists in the exhibition. It is made of two *kanji* characters:

女 (pronounced "jo") woman

史 (pronounced "shi") author

Today this gendered honorific is outdated. Recently, it has even been used as a derogatory term. But artists who referred to themselves as joshi used it

to identify themselves as women of culture—as women and as artists.

Left to right, the characters read “pines” and “waves”. Murase Myōdō 村瀬明道, 1924–2013, *Breaking Waves in the Pines* (*shōtō*), late 1900s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.155.

Notice the forceful calligraphy in Murase Myōdō’s *Breaking Waves in the Pines*. It splinters and breaks—like waves or rugged pine bark—into white streaks. Myōdō created this powerful work using her left, nondominant, hand. At thirty-nine, an accident rendered her right side paralyzed. Resolute to continue pursuing her passions, she taught herself to use her left hand.

Takeuchi Shōran 武内小鸞, active late 1700s–early 1800s, *Bush Warbler on a Plum Branch*, early 1800s. Ink and color on silk. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.215.

Katō Seiko 加藤青湖, active 1800s, *Sparrows and Bamboo*, about 1872. Ink and color on silk. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.212.

Kō (Ōshima) Raikin 高(大島)来禽, active late 1700s, *Autumn Landscape*, late 1700s. Ink and light color on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.193.

From an early age Kō (Ōshima) Raikin studied Chinese painting, poetry, and calligraphy and later took an active role in literati circles, intellectuals who shared a passion for Chinese art. *Autumn Landscape*, with its abbreviated strokes, schematized rendering of foliage, and color washes, reveals her familiarity with Chinese painting manuals, especially *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, popular in Japan at the time.

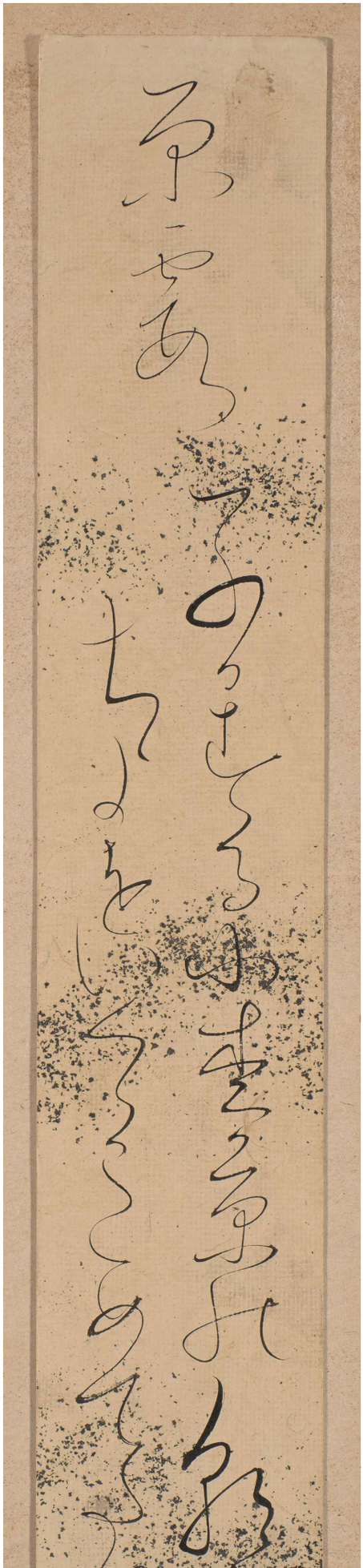
Tomioka Tessai, *A Posthumous Portrait of Ōtagaki Rengetsu* 太田垣蓮月. Source: Tokuda Kōen, *Otakagaki Rengetsu* 大田垣蓮月 (Tōkyō: Kodansha, 1982).

ŌTAGAKI RENGETSU 太田垣蓮月 (1791–1875)

Ōtagaki Rengetsu was a fixture in the art world of her day. She was a revered colleague and mentor of both male and female artists. So admired for her poetry, calligraphy, painting, and ceramics, forgeries appeared already in her lifetime.

Despite her popularity, much of her life remains a mystery. Purportedly the illegitimate daughter of a samurai and a courtesan, her given name at birth was Nobu. She was then adopted by the Ōtagaki family. Starting at age seven, Rengetsu served as a lady-in-waiting at the castle of a *daimyo* (feudal lord), where she trained in various arts.

Following the loss of her husband and children to illness, she became a Buddhist nun. It was then that she chose the name Rengetsu (Lotus Moon).

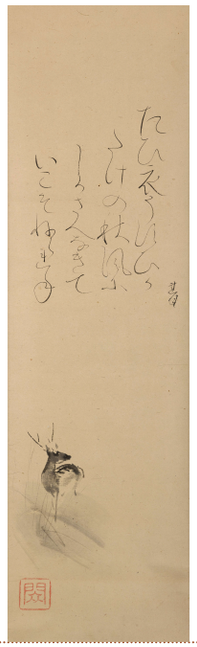


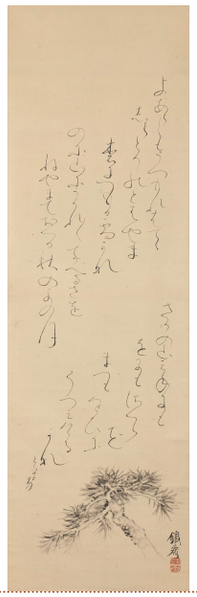
Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Waka Poem*, about 1828 or 1840. Ink on decorated paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.181.3.

This poetry slip (*tanzaku*) is a rare work, likely composed in Rengetsu's forties judging from the signature on the back, shown here. Her poem celebrates the New Year. It alludes to the practice of gathering pine saplings during the New Year festivities, symbolizing longevity.

On this first Day of The
Year of the Rat,
even the mist covering
this field of pine saplings
gives a hazy sense of
a long life to come.

RENGETSU'S LEGACY





Left: Calligraphy by Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, Painting by Wada Gesshin 和田月心, 1800–1870. *Stag and Poem*, about 1865–70. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.245. Right: Calligraphy by Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月 (1791–1875), painting by Tomioka Tessai **富岡鉄斎** (1836–1924), *Three Waka Poems and a Pine*, second half of the 1800s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2021.156.

Kuroda Kōryō 黒田光良, 1823–1895, *Two Teabowls in the Style of Rengetsu* (*Rengetsu-yaki*), late 1800s. Glazed ceramic. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.259.1-2.

Kuroda Kōryō 黒田光良, 1823–1895, *Teabowl in the Style of Rengetsu* (*Rengetsu-yaki*) (detail), late 1800s. Glazed ceramic. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.259.1.

Kuroda Kōryō 黒田光良, 1823–1895, *Teabowl in the Style of Rengetsu* (*Rengetsu-yaki*) (detail), late 1800s. Glazed ceramic. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.259.1.

The interior of both of these teabowls is inscribed with poems by the nun-artist Ōtagaki Rengetsu. While the signatures also read "Rengetsu," they were not made by her. And yet, they are not forgeries. (Though, owing to her fame, she was often faked.)

They were made as a tribute by her collaborator and admirer Kuroda Kōryō. After her death, he even took the name "Rengetsu II" and continued her legacy. His seal appears on both bowls.

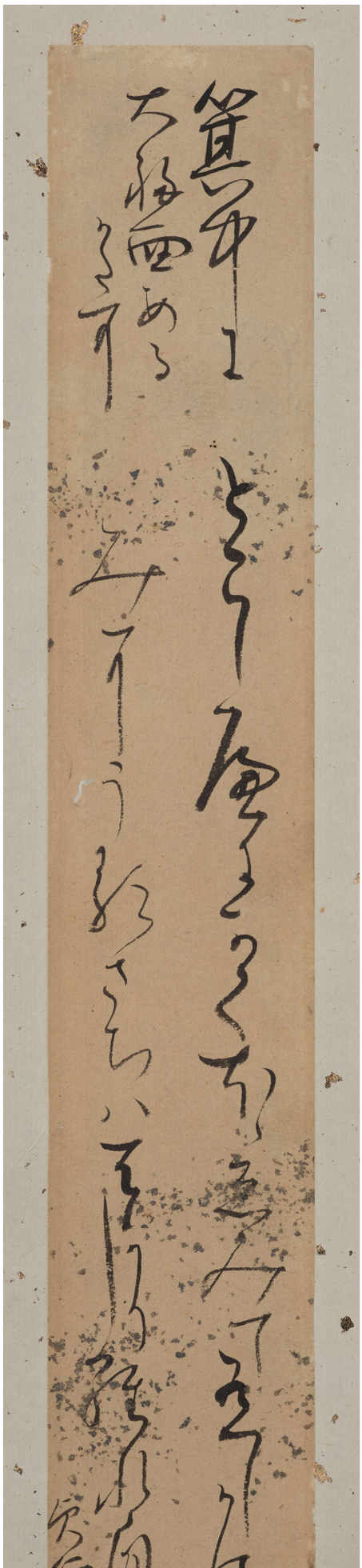
Unidentified artist, Signed Mirei 美嶺, *The Three Obediences* (*Sanjū*), 1700s–mid-1800s. Ink and color on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.146.

“The Three Obediences—I’ve had none all my life.” — Ema Saikō

「三従総欠一生涯」
江馬細香

In this folk painting, an aged woman clutching Buddhist rosary beads crouches on a mat.

Overhead hang the characters: The Three Obediences (Sanjū 三従), a Confucian code of propriety stating that a virtuous woman is beholden to her father, husband, and, finally, son. This social tenet originated in China and grew popular throughout East Asia, including Japan. It captures the challenges imposed by strict gender roles and expectations.



Miwa Teishin 三輪貞信, 1809–1902, *Waka* Poem on Poetry Slip (*tanzaku*), late 1800s. Ink on decorated paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.182.

Like others in the exhibition, Miwa Teishin shuttled through various social realms in her life. Born the daughter of an artist, she became a famed *geigi* dancer. Then, leaving the profession to marry, she opened a school. Following her husband's death, Teishin took the tonsure, becoming a nun.

This animated calligraphy is of a *waka* poem she composed:

Forever
you have been
smiling as if
the happiness bestowed
upon you is known in
heaven.

Installation of Inner Chambers

Inner Chambers

The Inner Chambers (*ōoku* 大奥) are the secluded areas where women primarily resided within the courts and castles of the upper class. The term became synonymous with women and reveals the gender segregation of early modern Japan's elite.

Daughters born into elite and wealthy households studied the fundamentals of the Three Perfections (painting, poetry, and calligraphy). They were not expected to become artists. Their artistic education was intended to prepare them to be proper companions for their male counterparts.

Yet sometimes exceptionally talented and driven women continued to cultivate these skills, paving their own paths as independent artists. Some, like Ono no Ozū, even served as teachers in the Inner Chambers, transmitting their knowledge in the arts to future generations.

ONO NO OZŪ 小野お通 (1559/68–before 1650)

Not much is known for certain about Ono no Ozū, not even her name (possibly pronounced Otsū). Apparently born to an aristocratic family and orphaned as a child, she was raised in Kyoto where

she exhibited extraordinary talent in poetry, painting, calligraphy, and music. Ozū served as a lady-in-waiting, tutoring women in the Inner Chambers both for shoguns and for the imperial house. She likely served all three of the warlords known as Japan's Great Unifiers (Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and Tokugawa Ieyasu). Generations of noblewomen emulated Ozū's graceful style of calligraphy. She is known today as one of the greatest women calligraphers of premodern Japan.

Ono no Ozū (or Ono no Otsū) 小野お通, 1559/68–before 1650, *The Deified Sugawara Michizane Crossing to China* (Totō Tenjin), early 1600s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.152.

Attributed to Oda Shitsushitsu 織田瑟瑟, 1779–1832, *Blossoming Cherry Tree*, early 1800s. Ink and color on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.213.

Oda Shitsushitsu was a descendent of the famous feudal lord Oda Nobunaga, first of Japan's Three Great Unifiers. This pedigree gave her access to a fine education. She studied under Mikuma Rokō (died about 1801), herself an important artist of the Mikuma school, which exclusively painted cherry blossoms (*sakura*).

The dabs of malachite—a costly mineral green pigment—painted in a technique of blending colors (*tarashikomi*) recall the decorative Rinpa school, which catered to the wealthy merchant class and aristocracy.

Artist unknown, Signed Kiyohara Yukinobu 清原雪信, 1643–1682, *Genji Peeping at the Young Murasaki*, 1600s. Ink and color on silk. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.255.

The painting depicts a scene from the *Tale of Genji,* the world's earliest novel, written in the early 1000s by court lady Murasaki Shikibu. Here, Prince Genji peeks into the Inner Chambers and spies the young Murasaki, who will eventually be his greatest love. This anonymous early painting bears a forged signature of the professional painter Kiyohara Yukinobu, whose work is also included in the exhibition—a testament to her popularity.

Installation of *Her Brush: Japanese Women Artists from the Fong-Johnstone Collection*. Photograph by Eric Stephenson.

Daughters of the Ateliers

Painting traditions in Japan were commonly passed down in the form of apprenticeships or from father to son. Some lineages like the Kanō school of painting endured for centuries. These professional painters subsisted through the patronage of wealthy clients.

Artists in this section emerged from such artistic families and, thanks to their talent and tenacity, became sought-after artists and continued their family's artistic legacy while creating their own distinctive interpretations.

Kiyohara Yukinobu 清原雪信, 1643–1682, *The Goddess Benzaiten and Her Lute (biwa)*, 1660s–80s. Ink, color, and gold on silk. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.150.

Some, like Kiyohara Yukinobu, chose to sign their works with the term *uji-me* (literally, daughter of the clan), identifying themselves as upholders of their family's artistic school.

Famous during her lifetime, Kiyohara Yukinobu was a professional painter like her great uncle, Kanō Tan'yū, who led the Kanō school of painting in his time. Signing her works with "Brush of Yukinobu,

Daughter of the Kiyohara Clan," she identified with the family's atelier.

The figure strumming a lute (*biwa*) is Benzaiten, patron-goddess of music and wisdom in Buddhism. The delicate treatment of the facial features, wooden instrument, and textiles contrasts with the broader, bolder brushstrokes of the landscape, as was characteristic of the Kanō school.

Installation of *Her Brush: Japanese Women Artists from the Fong-Johnstone Collection*. Photograph by Eric Stephenson.

Taking the Tonsure

Taking the tonsure is the ceremonial shaving of one's hair to join a Buddhist monastic order. It was a symbolic act of leaving one's past behind. In fact, becoming a nun literally translates to "leaving one's home" (*shukke* 出家).

Tonsure did not mean, however, relinquishing one's autonomy. On the contrary, it offered a form of liberation from societal expectations, such as the Three Obediences (of a woman to her father, husband, and son). It also enabled nuns to travel freely in times of state-imposed restrictions, which especially impacted women. Above all, it allowed them the freedom to pursue their art.

Women from all walks of life took the tonsure, from princesses (like Daitsū Bunchi) to entertainers (like Ōishi Junkyō). Still, this was an extremely difficult path to take and often entailed unimaginable determination.

Leaving their old names behind, taking new names as ordained nuns, these artists crafted new identities for themselves.

"Not
coiffuring
my hair

「髪を結ふ
手の隙明て

would
leave my
hands free
to spend
my time at
the desk."
—Kaga no
Chiyo

炬燵哉」
加賀千代

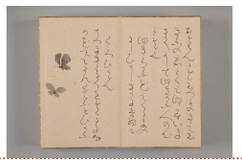
Suganuma Ōhō 菅沼大鳳, 1891–1966, *Rengetsu Working in Her Hut*, 1935. Ink and color on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.165.

The nun-artist Ōtagaki Rengetsu is seen here brushing a poem onto her ceramics. Her elegant surroundings, more like a scholar's study than a nun's hut, alludes to her literati background and affiliation.

This is an imagined portrait done sixty years after Rengetsu's death. Depicting her with feminine and manicured features, Suganuma Ōhō constructed quite a different portrait from the wizened likeness by her student, collaborator, and close friend Tessai.

"I took leave of this floating world. The day I thought I wished to see every famous nook and corner under the heavens and pay homage to every shrine and temple, I just took to the road, all by myself."
—Tagami Kikusha

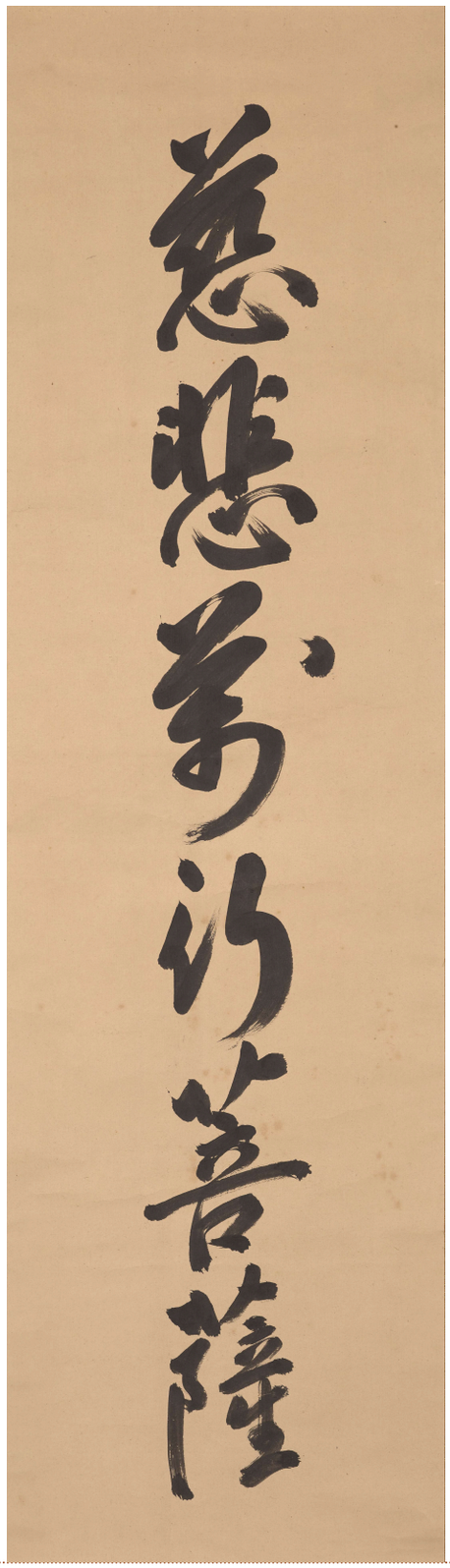
「浮世に暇あく身と成ぬれば、
天が下の名にあふくまぐま神社仏閣を拝詣せばやと思ひ立日を
ひとり旅路におもむきぬ」
田上菊舎



Click on the image to see more pages from the Travel Journal.

Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Travel Journal to Arashiyama* (*Arashiyama hana no ki*), 1800s. Ink and color on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2021.206.

This travel journal recounts Ōtagaki Rengetsu's visit to Arashiyama, a district to the west of Kyoto. Freely brushed poetry is occasionally punctuated by offhand and charming illustrations. Simple forms outline a cluster of flowers. A few lines gather into a *torii*, a traditional Japanese gate, overtaken by vegetation. This account offers a rare and intimate glimpse into the artist's personal musings. It must not have been a long trip since Rengetsu left a good part of the album blank.

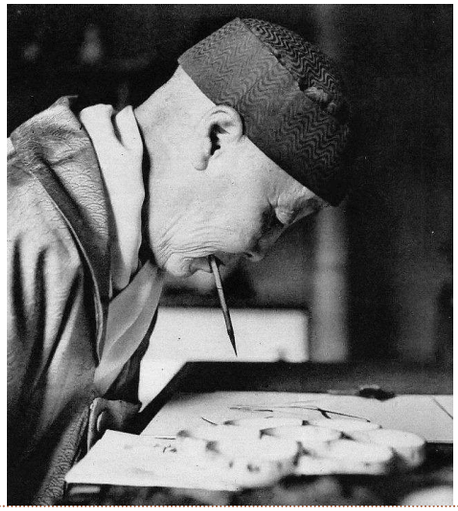


Daitsū Bunchi 大通文智, 1619–1697, *Bodhisattva of Myriad Acts of Compassion* (*Jihi Mangyō Bosatsu*), 1600s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.153.

Princess Umenomiya, daughter of Emperor Gomizuno-o (1596–1680), took the tonsure at age twenty-two, changing her name to Bunchi. She later founded a temple, which functioned as a training center for women.

The calligraphy reads "Bodhisattva of Myriad Acts of Compassion," the Buddhist name for the principal deity of a Shinto shrine in Nara. By writing this *myōgō* (names of Buddhist deities as invocations), Bunchi performed a devotional act, accumulating karmic merit.

ŌISHI JUNKYŌ 大石順教 (1888–1968)



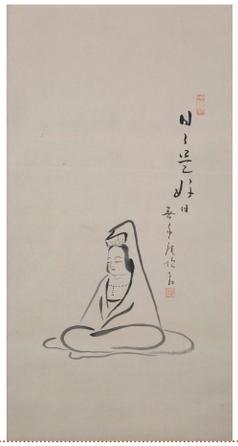
Photograph of Ōishi Junkyō. From *The Mainichi Graphic*, 4 January 1956, published by The Mainichi Newspapers Co., Ltd. Source: Wikimedia Commons

In her youth, Ōishi Yone was establishing her career as a *geigi* dancer. Her stage name was Tsumakichi. When she was seventeen, her adoptive father went on a murderous rampage, killing six members of the teahouse where she worked and severing both her arms.

After a long journey to recovery, she observed a bird feeding chicks with its beak. Inspired, she learned to paint and write calligraphy using her mouth. She deftly maneuvered the brush with her lips in astonishing control.

At the age of forty-five, she took the tonsure as a Buddhist nun, adopting the name Junkyō. Junkyō

later founded a Buddhist temple where she devoted herself to art, Buddhism, and counseling people with disabilities, advocating for independence and resolve.



Ōishi Junkyō 大石順教, 1888–1968, *Bodhisattva Kannon* (*Avalokiteśvara*), mid-1900s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.156.

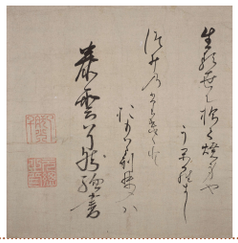
RYŌNEN GENSŌ 了然元総

Image by Utagawa Kunisada 歌川国貞, 1786–1864; Inscription by Ryūtei Tanehiko 柳亭種, 1783–1842, "The Nun Ryōnen (Ryōnen-ni)" from *Kokon meifuden* [Famous women of past and present], 1864 edition. Color woodblock print. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.160.

Born into an aristocratic family as the daughter of a lady-in-waiting, Ryōnen Gensō spent her early years in the Inner Chambers. At the age of seventeen, she married a courtier. Ten years later, she took the tonsure and became a Buddhist nun.

Wishing to join as a disciple of a famous Ōbaku Zen monk, she traveled to Edo (Tokyo). However, the monk turned her away on the pretext that her beauty would distract male disciples.

In a stark show of determination, she used a searing iron to disfigure her face. Only when proving this degree of devoutness to her faith was she finally accepted into the order.



Ryōnen Gensō 了然元総, 1646–1711, *Poem*, late 1600s–early 1700s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.159.

This poem was written shortly after this turning point. It reads:

"In this living world,
my flesh is burned and
thrown away.
I would be wretched
if I did not think of it as
kindling that burns away
my sins.

Installation of *Her Brush: Japanese Women Artists from the Fong-Johnstone Collection*. Photograph by Eric Stephenson.

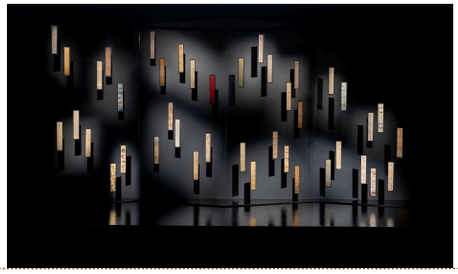
Floating Worlds

Starting in the Tokugawa period (or Edo period, 1615–1868), the Floating World (*ukiyo*) referred to the state-sanctioned pleasure quarters, or urban entertainment districts, which catered to male patrons who frequented the teahouses, brothels, and theaters. The term alludes to the hedonistic and ephemeral nature of this realm.

As was the case when becoming a nun, entering this sphere—whether as a musical performer (*geisha*), an actor, or a sex worker—meant leaving behind one's name and constructing a new persona. Entertainers often cycled through several stage names, inventing and reinventing themselves time and again.

Being well-versed in the Three Perfections (painting, poetry, and calligraphy) was a coveted trait in women of the Floating World, adding to their allure. Some, however, transcended the strict confines of the pleasure quarters (sometimes even undoing their indentured servitude), becoming important artists and leaving their lasting mark.

Eternal art in a floating world.



Various artists, *Poem Slips* (*tanzaku*), 1700–1900s. Paper with pigment, gold, silver, and ink. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.181.4-44.

These poetry slips (*tanzaku*) were written by women and men occupying different social realms, including pleasure quarters, aristocracy, and monastic orders. Written in private or in gatherings, tanzaku were saved, exchanged, and sometimes discarded. These floating tanzaku therefore existed in a space between art and ephemera.

This display is a reinterpretation of the traditional mounting in a scattered arrangement (*chirashigaki*). A modern example bears the poetry of Takabatake Shikibu, a literati artist whose works appear in the next section.

Takabatake Shikibu 高畠式部, 1785–1881, *Seven Waka Poems*, 1800s. Ink on decorated paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.226.

Ōhashi-dayū (The Tayū Ōhashi) 大橋太夫, active 1700s, *Two Poems*, mid–1700s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.183.

Ōhashi is the stage name of Ritsu, born to a wealthy samurai family and trained in various arts as a child. When her family lost their fortune, they sold her to a brothel. With her talent and dazzling looks, she quickly rose to the highest rank of *tayū* (Grand Courtesan) in Kyoto's Shimabara pleasure quarter. Although highly admired, she remained beholden to her clients and patrons.

Her poems here read:

Last night's affair,
this morning's parting.

Which will be
the seed of love?

So you say, though . . .

The dawn has come.
My hands wring out my
sleeves, making the
pools
overflow with my tears.

Takabatake Shikibu 高畠式部, 1785–1881, *Seven Waka Poems*, 1800s. Ink on decorated paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.226.

Three Women of Gion 祇園三女 (1600s–1700s)

“The Star
Festival—
Off to hear
good

「七夕や
良き歌聞きに
梶が茶屋」
宝井其角

poetry
at lady
Kaji's
teahouse."
—Takarai
Kikaku

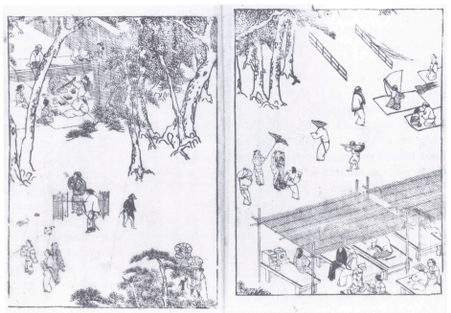


Illustration by Mikuma Katen (三熊思孝), 1730–1794, *Matsuya Teahouse*, from the *Kinsei Kijin* 近世畸伝, woodblock edition of 1788. Courtesy DIAL.num - Vitrine numérique des bibliothèques de l'UCL. Public Domain.

Kaji, Yuri, and Machi were owners of a famous teahouse in Gion called Matsuya where many of Kyoto's lovers of art and poetry would meet. Together, these three remarkable women formed a matriarchal artistic lineage.

Kaji of Gion was a gifted poet-calligrapher and the first owner of the Matsuya teahouse. She later adopted Yuri and trained her in poetry as well.

Yuri of Gion established herself as a renowned calligrapher and painter in her own right.

Machi of Gion, Yuri's daughter, is best known by her later name, Tokuyama (Ike) Gyokuran, and was a formidable literati painter, calligrapher, and poet. Her work is included in the following section, dedicated to literati circles.

Yuri of Gion 祇園の百合, 1694–1764, *Waka Poem*, mid-1700s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.186.

Installation of *Her Brush: Japanese Women Artists from the Fong-Johnstone Collection*. Photograph by Eric Stephenson.

Literati Circles

United by a shared appreciation for China's artistic traditions, intellectuals and art enthusiasts formed literati societies (*bunjin*). For them, art was a form of

social interaction. In their gatherings, they composed poetry, painted together, and inscribed calligraphy for one another.

Literati painting (*bunjinga* 文人画) prioritized self-expression over technical skill. Following this understanding of the brushstroke as an expression of one's true self, these artists constructed—and conveyed—their identity and personhood through art.

As in other realms explored in this exhibition, literati circles included women from different social backgrounds. But perhaps more so than any other social context, literati circles were accepting of women participants. Many prominent women artists in Edo and Meiji Japan flourished within these intellectual cliques.

Tokuyama (Ike) Gyokuran
徳山(池)玉瀾,
1727–1784,
Blossoming Plum,
mid-1700s. Ink on
paper. Gift of Drs.
John Fong and Colin
Johnstone,
2018.208.

Tokuyama (Ike) Gyokuran is one of the Three Women of Gion, and perhaps the most famous of them all. This knotted plum, together with bamboo, chrysanthemum, and orchid, make up the Four Gentlemen (*shikunshi*), all common subjects for literati paintings.

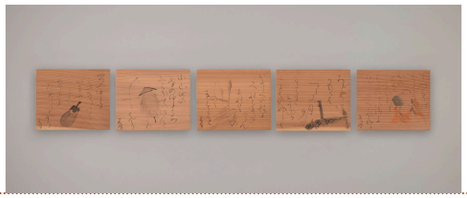
Gyokuran and her husband, the accomplished artist Ike Taiga, were on such equal footing that they would wear one another's clothes, paint together, and neglect their housekeeping chores.

Tokuyama Gyokuran and Ike Taiga in Their Studio (detail), in Ban Kōkei 伴蒿蹊 and Mikuma Katen 三熊花顛,*Kinsei kijinden*, vol. 4 (1788), 8. National Diet Library Digital Collections, via Wikimedia Commons. Public domain.

Various artists, *Turtles on New Year's Morn*, about 1894. Ink and color on silk. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.202.

This collaborative work (*gassaku*) was signed by different literati artists during an artistic gathering. Three of them—Atomi Gyokushi (1859–1943), Noguchi Shōhin (1847–1917), and Nakabayashi Seishuku (1829–1912)—are women.

Turtles, and especially the long-tailed *minogame*, are symbols of longevity. As the sun rises on the New Year, these perky turtles come to celebrate and commemorate the occasion.



Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Sweets Plates with Paintings and Poems*, 1800s. Ink and color on cedar planks. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2021.198.1-5.

These small plates, painted for a literati gathering, were used for sweets to complement the *sencha* (green leaf tea) ceremony. These abbreviated paintings and poems burst with humor and personality. Their creator, the nun-artist Ōtagaki Rengetsu, was a central figure in Edo literati circles. She also produced other tea ceremony paraphernalia, as exhibited here.

Maker unknown, *Lidded Wooden Box* (*tomobako*) *with Inscription by Priest Kōen of the Jinkō-in temple*, 1800s. Wood. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, RA.2021.198.

This group of plates is also rare for its impeccable documentation. Their original box bears an inscription of authenticity by Priest Kōen of the Jinkō-in temple, where Rengetsu once lived.

Ema Saikō 江馬細香, 1787–1861, *The Three Friends of Winter*, 1857. Ink and light color on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.189.

The Three Friends of Winter, namely pine, plum, and bamboo, are a common subject of literati painting (*bunjinga*). But here, Ema Saikō creates an unconventional composition. From the crevice of a garden rock, wildly twisting pines intertwine and loop around bamboo and frenzied plum blossoms that jut out in all directions. Immortality mushrooms (*reishi*), sprouting in the foreground, allude to the subject of resilience in old age. Saikō painted this only four years before her death.

Takabatake Shikibu 高畠式部, 1785–1881, *Bamboo and Poem*, 1861. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.224.

Takabatake Shikibu 高畠式部, 1785–1881, *Mountain Studio in Early Spring*, 1800s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.225.

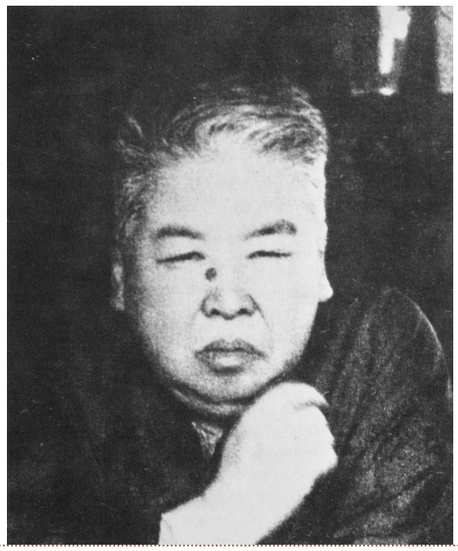
After Nonoguchi Ryūho 野々口立圃, 1595–1669, *Haibun and Haiga of Crickets*, mid-1600s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2020.570.

These paintings belong to the genre of *haiga*, an abbreviated and swiftly executed painting

accompanied by an equally brief form of poetry called *haikai*, or haiku.

Nonoguchi Ryūho was one of the progenitors of the haiga form. Takabatake Shikibu, a poet-painter who exhibited talent at an exceedingly young age, continued producing art well into her nineties. In haiga, text becomes an aesthetic element, offsetting, complementing, and balancing the image.

Okuhara Seiko 奥原晴湖 (1837–1913)



Okuhara Seiko **奥原晴湖**, 1912. Photographer unknown. Source: Patricia Fister, *Japanese Women Artists, 1600–1900* (Lawrence, KS: Spencer Museum of Art/Harper & Row, Publishers Inc., 1988), fig. 16.

Okuhara Seiko 奥原晴湖, 1837–1913, *Flowering Plants of the Four Seasons*, 1898. Ink and color on paper mounted on cabinet doors. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.247A-B.

The tip of her brush
can wipe away
one thousand armies.
—Writer for Postal News,
1875

Okuhara Seiko (born Ikeda Setsu) was born into a high-ranking samurai family from Koga. Arriving in Edo (Tokyo), Seiko almost instantaneously garnered a large following and established a studio, which became a vibrant hub for literati painters, poets, and calligraphers.

Despite an 1872 prohibition of women cropping their hair, Seiko did just that (habitually carrying a "doctor's note" citing a "medical condition") and wore male attire. In art as in life, Seiko found a unique artistic identity with bold individual brushwork, which caused a sensation in Edo's literati circles and beyond.

One of the period's most influential literati artists, Seiko founded a school and had hundreds of followers belonging to all walks of life—from government officials and geisha to roaming samurai.

Noguchi Shōhin 野口小蘋, 1847–1917, *Fan with Scene of Autumn Mountains and Mist*, late 1800s–early 1900s. Ink and light color on paper with bamboo support. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.195.

Noguchi Shōhin 野口小蘋, 1847–1917, *Fan with Summer Scene*, late 1800s. Ink and color on silk with bamboo and lacquered wood support. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.201.

Noguchi Shōhin 野口小蘋 (1847–1917)

Portrait of Noguchi Shōhin **野口小蘋** in *Bunbu kōmeiroku* ***文武高名録***, a compilation of famous people and important literary figures published in 1893. Courtesy Hathi Trust Digital Library, digitized by Google.

> *Good wife, wise mother.*
> *—Popular aphorism in*
> *Meiji-era Japan*

Noguchi Shōhin burst onto the literati art scene right at the tail end of Okuhara Seiko's heyday. She exhibited remarkable talent from an early age and later enjoyed imperial patronage, becoming the first woman artist to be appointed Official Artist of the Imperial Household in 1904.

Shōhin cultivated a public persona as a paragon of womanhood, complying with the "good wife, wise mother" paradigm (*ryōsai kenbo*), which gained traction at the turn of the century. Like Seiko, Shōhin used the expressive qualities of literati painting as a vehicle of self-expression and

identity-construction. But unlike Seiko's maverick and masculine comportment, Shōhin's persona leveraged her femininity.

Together, Shōhin and Seiko represent two wildly different visions of what it meant to be a literati artist.

Noguchi Shōhin 野口小蘋, 1847–1917, *Cut Flowers and Pine Bough*, late 1800s–early 1900s. Ink and color on silk. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.196.

Okuhara Seiko 奥原晴湖, 1837–1913, *Orchids on a Cliff*, 1870–80s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.206.

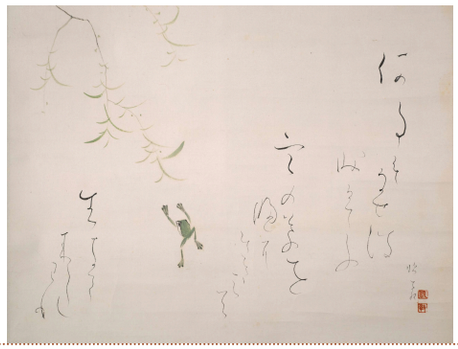
Installation of *Her Brush: Japanese Women Artists from the Fong-Johnstone Collection*. Photograph by Eric Stephenson.

Unstoppable (No Barriers)

Each of the works in this section addresses the subject of perseverance, overcoming personal and societal obstacles, and shattering the glass ceiling.

These artists dared to leave their enduring mark through art.

A visitor in front of the interactive video projection in the last gallery of *Her Brush*, 2022. Photograph by Eric Stephenson.



Ōishi Junkyō 大石順教, 1888–1968, *Willow and Frog*, mid-1900s. Ink on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.157.

In this painting, Ōishi Junkyō borrows an anecdote from the life of the courtier Ono no Tofu (894–964) to express resilience and tenacity. Having failed to get a promotion seven times, the courtier was all

but ready to quit. Dejected, he noticed a frog trying to reach a willow branch. Seven times, the frog leapt and failed. But then, mustering its strength, it jumped again—finally reaching the branch. Inspired, he persevered and on that eighth time succeeded, ultimately becoming an important statesman.

Yamamoto Shōtō 山本緗桃, 1757–1831, *Chrysanthemums*, late 1700s–early 1800s. Ink, color, and gold on silk. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.216.

Petal by petal, this blossoming cluster of chrysanthemums unfolds against a subtle ink wash on plain silk. In lyrical gradations, the monochromatic ink merges with the dabs of green and pools at the edges of the leaves, vesting them with grace and beauty.

Little is known of Yamamoto Shōtō's background, but her enduring mark survives though her own art and her legacy: her children followed her path, and her granddaughter, Yamamoto Suiun (active 1800s), became an accomplished painter.

Takabatake Shikibu 高畠式部, 1785–1881, *Signboard*, 1863. Ink on paper, Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.253

In Takabatake Shikibu's time, signboards such as this commonly posted governmental edicts. In a veiled critique of unjust rules and restrictions, Shikibu asserts that nature and reason will ultimately prevail.

Flowering branches
must not be broken off.
So says the signboard.
But with whose

permission
does the storm blow over
it?

Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月, 1791–1875, *Moon, Blossoming Cherry, and Poem*, 1867. Ink and color on paper. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.164.

Being a nun, Ōtagaki Rengetsu could travel freely despite state-imposed restrictions on unaccompanied women travelers. Still, innkeepers commonly refused nuns lodging. The poem reflects her endurance as she found (and created) beauty despite the inn turning her away and having to spend the night unsheltered:

The inn refuses me,
but their slight is a
kindness.
I make my bed instead
below the cherry

blossoms
with the hazy moon
above.

Exhibition Checklist

All works in the exhibition are gifts of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone.

INTRODUCTION

Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月
1791–1875
Sake Decanter (*tokkuri*)
1800s
Glazed ceramic
5½ × 6 in. (14 × 15.2 cm)
2021.196
1

Kō (Ōshima) Raikin 高(大島)来禽
Active late 1700s
Autumn Landscape
Late 1700s
Ink and light color on paper
12⅞ × 8½ in. (32.7 × 21.6 cm)
2018.193
2

Takeuchi Shōran 武内小鸞
Active late 1700s–early 1800s
Bush Warbler on a Plum Branch
Early 1800s
Ink and color on silk
37½ × 14½ in. (95.3 × 36.8 cm)
2018.215
3

Katō Seiko 加藤青湖

Active 1800s

Sparrows and Bamboo

About 1872

Ink and color on silk

49⅜ × 16⅛ in. (125.4 × 41 cm)

2018.212

4

Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月

1791–1875

***Waka* Poem**

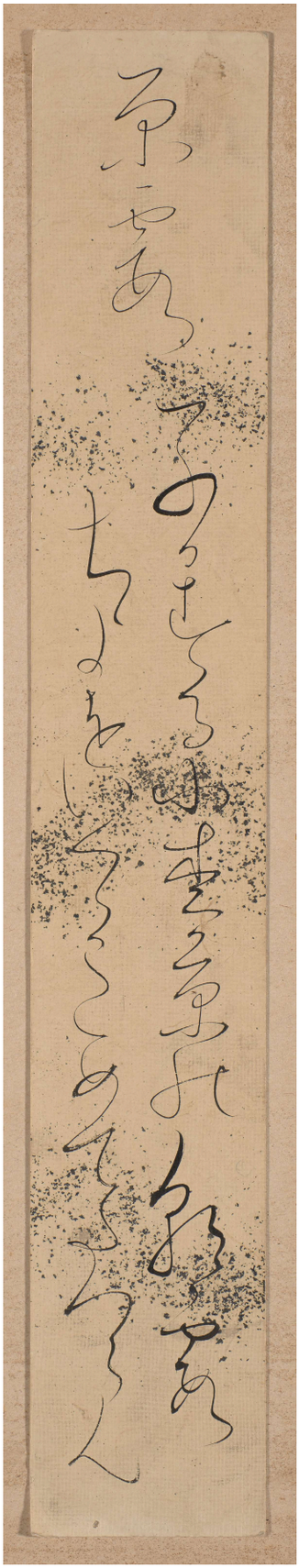
About 1828/9 or 1840/41

Ink on decorated paper

13¼ × 2¼ in. (33.7 × 5.7 cm)

2018.181.3

5



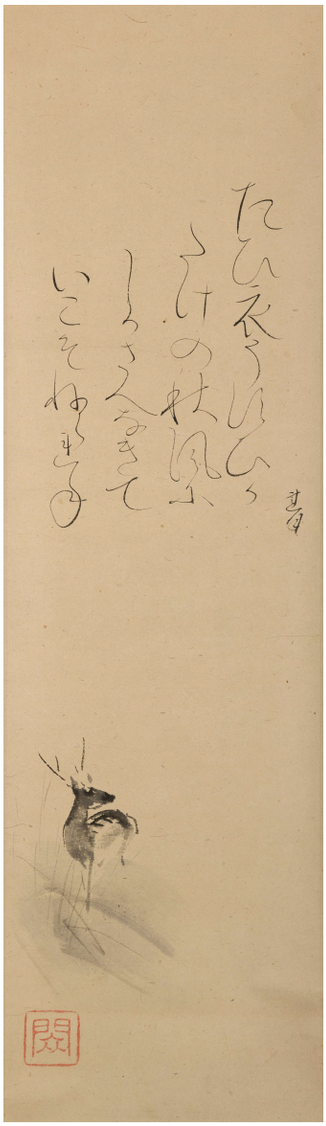
Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月
1791–1875
Two Poems on *Uchiwa* Fans
1800s
Ink on paper with bamboo ribbing, wood handles, silk tassels, and mica
Blue fan 14⅞ × 9½ × ¼ in. (37.8 × 24.1 × 0.6 cm), Beige fan 15 × 9⅜ × ¼ in. (38.1 × 23.8 × 0.6 cm)
2018.166.1-2
6

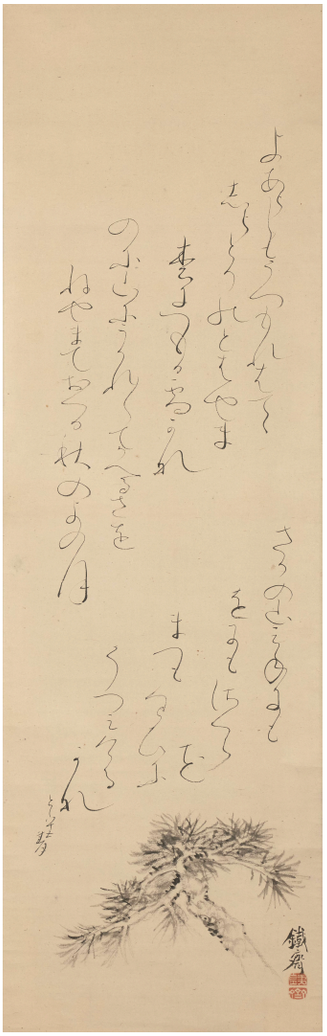
Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月
1791–1875
Incense Container (*kōgō*) in the Shape of a *Tanuki* (raccoon dog)
1800s
Glazed ceramic
2¼ × 2½ in. dia. (5.7 × 6.4 cm. dia)
2021.199A-B
7

Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月
1791–1875
Incense Box (*kōgō*) in the Shape of a Tortoise
1800s
Ceramic with gold and lacquer repair (*kintsugi*)

¾ × 1⅝ × 2¼ in. dia. (1.9 × 4.1 × 5.7 cm dia.)
2021.164A-B
8

Calligraphy by Ōtagaki Rengetsu
太田垣蓮月
1791–1875
Painting by Wada Gesshin
和田月心
1800–1870
Stag and Poem
About 1865–70
Ink on paper
26¾ × 7 ¾ in. (67.9 × 19.7 cm)
2018.245
9





Calligraphy by Ōtagaki Rengetsu
太田垣蓮月
1791–1875
Painting by Tomioka Tessai
富岡鉄斎
1836–1924
Three *Waka* Poems and a Pine
1850–1900
Ink on paper
38¼ × 12 in. (97.2 × 30.5 cm)
2021.156
10

Kuroda Kōryō 黒田光良
1823–1895
Two Teabowls in the Style of Rengetsu (*Rengetsu-yaki*)
Late 1800s
Glazed ceramic
Each 1⅞ × 4½ in. dia. (4.6 × 11.4 cm dia.)
2018.259.1-2
11

Unidentified artist

Signed Mirei 美嶺

The Three Obediences (*sanjū*)

1700–mid-1800s

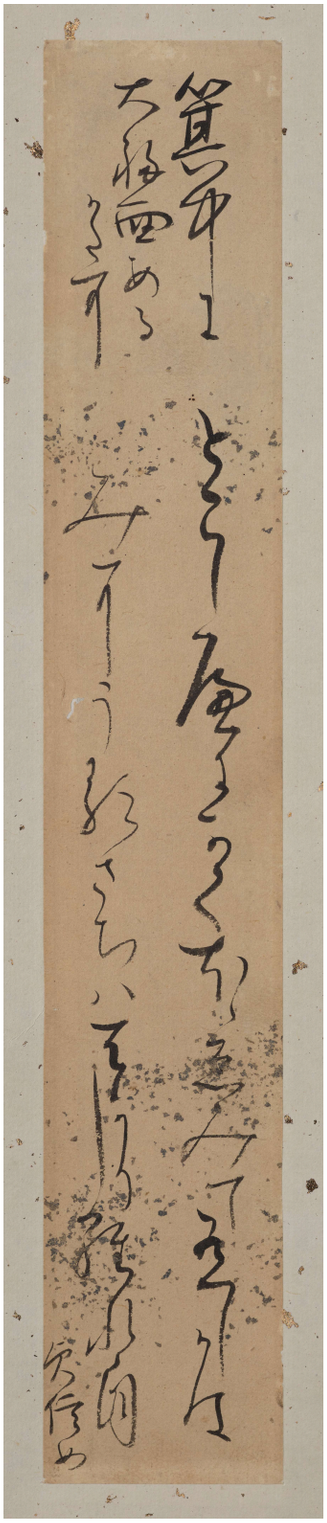
Ink and color on paper

29⅛ × 9¾ in. (74 × 24.8 cm)

2018.146

12

Miwa Teishin 三輪貞信
1809–1902
Waka Poem on Poetry Slip (*tanzaku*)
Late 1800s
Ink on decorated paper
14¼ × 2⅜ in. (36.2 × 6 cm)
2018.182
13



Murase Myōdō 村瀬明道
1924–2013
Breaking Waves in the Pines (*shōtō*)
Late 1900s
Ink on paper
12⅝ × 23⅞ in. (32.1 × 60.6 cm)
2018.155
14

Kamei Shōkin 亀井少琴
1798–1857
Blossoming Plum
About 1850
Ink on paper
52¼ × 19 in. (132.7 × 48.3 cm)
2018.192
15

INNER CHAMBERS

Artist unknown
Signed Kiyohara Yukinobu
清原雪信
Active 1600s–1700s
Genji Peeping at the Young Murasaki
1600s
Ink and color on silk
15¼ × 21½ in. (38.7 × 54.6 cm)
2018.255
16

Ono no Ozū (or Ono no Otsū)
小野お通
1559/68–before 1650
The Deified Sugawara Michizane Crossing to China (Totō Tenjin)
Early 1600s
Ink on paper
25⅜ × 12¾ in. (64.5 × 32.4 cm)
2018.152
17

Yamazaki Ryūjo 山崎龍女
Active early 1700s
Hotei and His Bag of Treasure
Early 1700s

Ink on paper
17⅛ × 22 in. (43.5 × 55.9 cm)
2018.185
18

Tachihara Shunsa 立原春沙
1818–1858
Blossoming Plum
Mid-1800s
Ink and color on silk
41 × 14⅛ in. (104.1 × 35.9 cm)
2018.214
19

Nakayama Miya 中山三屋
1840–1871
Chrysanthemums
Mid-1800s
Ink and color on paper
54¼ × 12 in. (137.8 × 30.5 cm)
2018.218
20

Nakayama Miya 中山三屋

1840–1871

Blossoming Plums

Mid-1800s

Ink on paper

35½ × 10½ in. (90.2 ×26.7 cm)

2018.221

21

Attributed to Oda Shitsushitsu

織田瑟瑟

1779–1832

Blossoming Cherry Tree

Early 1800s

Ink and color on paper

45⅞ × 20⅞ in. (116.5 × 53 cm)

2018.213

22

DAUGHTERS OF THE ATELIER

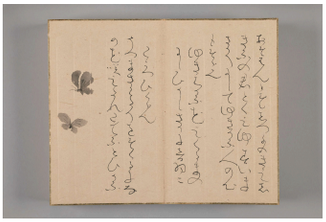
Kiyohara Yukinobu 清原雪信
1643–1682
The Goddess Benzaiten and Her Lute (*biwa*)
1660–82
Ink, color, and gold on silk
32⅝ × 14⅛ in. (82.9 × 35.9 cm)
2018.150
23

Nakabayashi Seishuku 中林清淑
1829–1912
Blossoming Plum and Bamboo
1893
Ink on paper
54¼ × 13¼ in. (137.8 × 33.7 cm)
2018.194
24

Hirata Gyokuon 平田玉蘊
1787–1855
Queen Mother of the West and Attendant
About 1839
Ink and color on silk
44⅞ × 16½ in. (114 × 41.9 cm)
2018.211
25

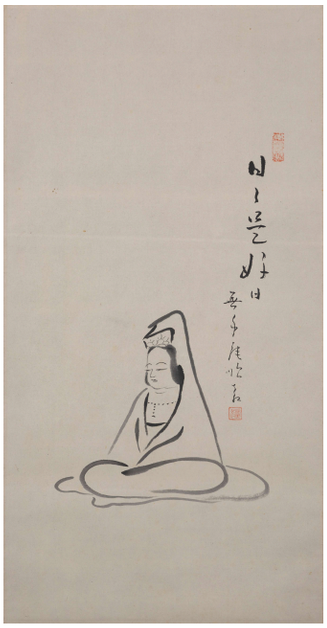
TAKING THE TONSURE

Suganuma Ōhō 菅沼大鳳
Active early 1900s
Rengetsu Working in Her Hut
1935
Ink and color on paper
45⅛ × 16⅞ in. (114.6 × 42.9 cm)
2018.165
26



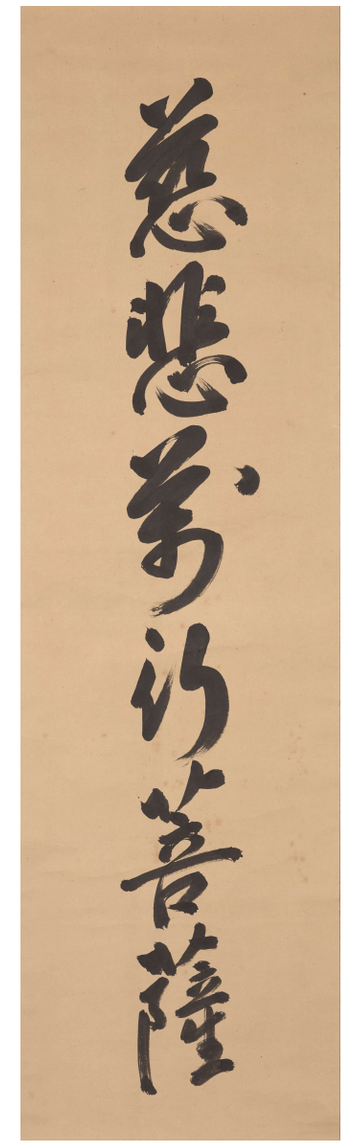
Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月
1791–1875
Travel Journal to Arashiyama (Arashiyama *hana no ki*)
1800s
Ink and color on paper
1¼ × 4¼ × 6½ in. (3.2 × 10.8 × 16.5 cm)
2021.206
27

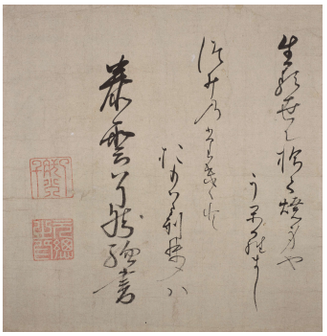
Ōishi Junkyō 大石順教
1888–1968
Bodhisattva Kannon (Avalokiteśvara)
Mid-1900s
Ink on paper
25⅝ × 13⅜ in. (65.1 × 34 cm)
2018.156
28



Ōishi Junkyō 大石順教
1888–1968
Shrimp
Mid-1900s
Ink on paper
6¼ × 13¾ in. (15.7 × 34.9 cm)
2018.158
29

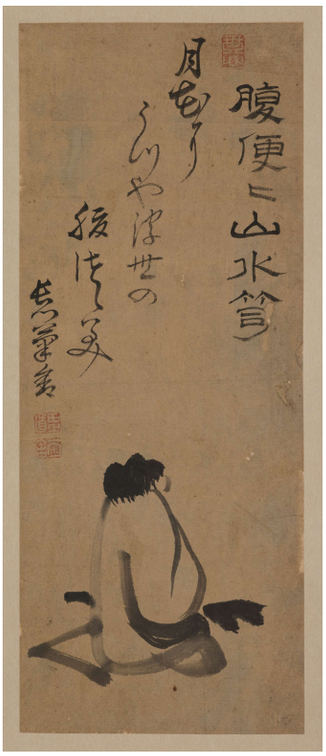
Daitsū Bunchi 大通文智
1619–1697
Bodhisattva of Myriad Acts of Compassion (Jihi Mangyō Bosatsu)
1600s
Ink on paper
38¾ × 11 in. (98.4 × 27.9 cm)
2018.153
30





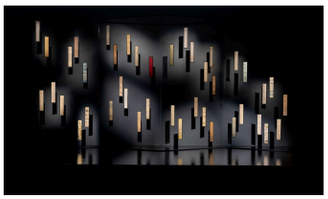
Ryōnen Gensō 了然元総
1646–1711
Poem
1701–11
Ink on paper
11¼ × 11 in. (28.6 × 27.9 cm)
2018.159
31

Image by Utagawa Kunisada
歌川国貞
1786–1864; Inscription by Ryūtei Tanehiko 柳亭種
1783–1842
“The Nun Ryōnen (Ryōnen-ni)”
from *Kokon meifuden* [Famous women of past and present]
Ryōnen Gensō 了然元総, 1646–1711
1854 edition
Color woodblock print
14⅞ × 9¾ in. (37.8 × 24.8 cm)
2018.160
32



Tagami Kikusha 田上菊舎
1753–1826
Hermit/Self-Portrait
Early 1800s
Ink on paper
11½ × 4⅝ in. (29.2 × 11.7 cm)
2018.222
33

FLOATING WORLD



Various artists
Poem Slips (*tanzaku*)
1700–1900s
Pigment, gold, silver, and ink on paper
Each approx. 13 × 2 in. (33 × 5 cm)
2018.181.3-44
34

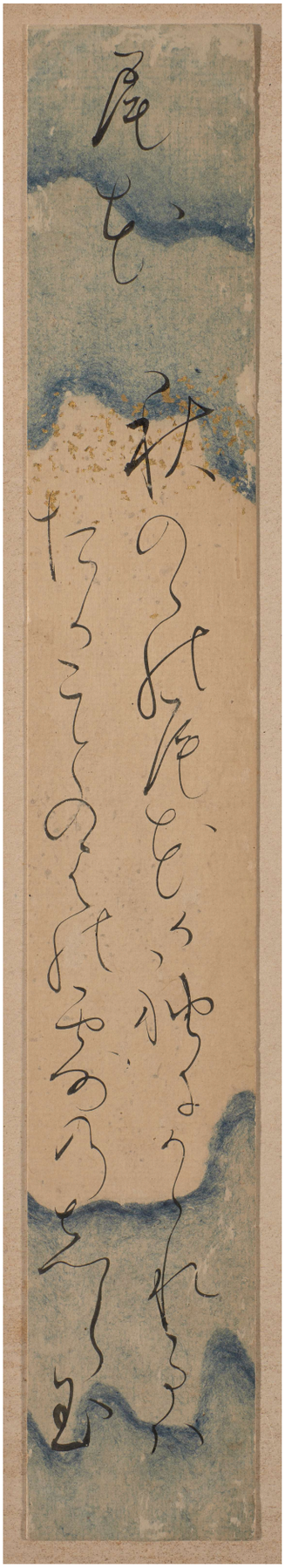
Artist Unknown
Poetry Slip Box (*tanzaku*) with God of Longevity (Juro–jin) and Deer
1800s
Lacquer, wood, gold, silver, and cinnabar
15⅝ × 3½ × 1½ in. (39.7 × 8.9 × 3.8 cm)
2018.184.1A-B
35

Attributed to Takabatake Shikibu
高畠式部
1785–1881
Seven *Waka* Poems
1800s
Ink on decorated paper
Overall 28 × 71 × ¾ in. (71.1 × 180.3 ×1.9 cm)

2018.226

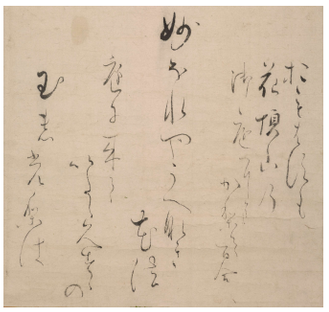
36

Sakuragi-dayū (The Tayū Sakuragi)
桜木太夫
Active mid- to late 1800s
Poetry Slip (*tanzaku*) with Poem on Pampas Grass (*obana*)
Mid-1800s
Pigment, gold, and ink on paper
13½ × 2¼ in. (34.3 × 5.6 cm)
2018.181.2
37



Ōhashi-dayū (The Tayū Ōhashi)
大橋太夫
Active 1700s
Two Poems
Mid-1700s
Ink on paper
7½ × 36⅝ in. (145.4 × 96.5 cm)
2018.183
38

Yuri of Gion 祇園の百合
1694–1764
***Waka* Poem**
Mid-1700s
Ink on paper
11⅛ × 11⅞ in. (28.3 × 30.2 cm)
2018.186
39



Kaji of Gion 祇園梶子
Active late 1600s
***Waka* Poem**
Late 1600s–early 1700s
Ink on paper
13⅜ × 2⅜ in. (34 × 6 cm)
2018.181.1
40

Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月
1791–1875
Sake Flask
1800s
Glazed ceramic
5¼ × 3 in. dia. (13.3 × 7.6 cm dia.)
2018.175
41

Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月
1791–1875
Sweets Dish in the Form of a Lotus with Poem
1800s
Glazed ceramic
1¾ × 6 in. dia. (4.4 × 15.2 cm dia.)
2021.205
42

LITERATI CIRCLES

Tokuyama (Ike) Gyokuran
徳山(池)玉瀾
1727–1784
Blossoming Plum
Mid-1700s
Ink on paper
52¾ × 18⅜ in. (134 × 46.7 cm)
2018.208
43

Various artists
Turtles on New Year's Morn
About 1894
Ink and color on silk
18⅞ ×12¾ in. (47.9 × 32.4 cm)
2018.202
44

Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月
1791–1875
Teapot for *Sencha*
1800s
Ceramic
1¾ × 4¼ in. dia. (4.4 × 10.8 cm dia.)
2021.163A-B
45

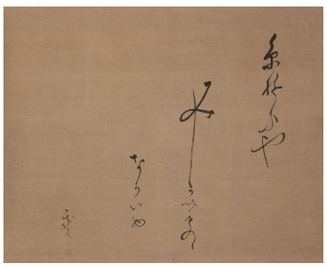
Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月
1791–1875
Set of Five *Sencha* Cups
1800s
Glazed ceramic
Each approx. 1⅜ × 2 in. dia. (3.5 × 5.1 cm dia.)
2021.170.1-5
46

Unknown maker
Lidded Wooden Box (*tomobako*) with Inscription by Priest Kōen of the Jinkō-in temple
1800s
Wood
4¼ × 7¼ × 6¼ in. (10.8 × 18.4 × 15.9 cm)
RA.2021.198
47

Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月
1791–1875
Sweets Plates with Paintings and Poems
1800s
Ink and color on cedar planks
Each 5¼ × 6½ × ¼ in. (13.3 × 16.5 × 0.6 cm)
2021.198.1-5
48

Tomioka Haruko 富岡春子
1847–1940
Bodhisattva Kannon (Avalokiteśvara)
1926
Ink on paper
14 × 12¾ in. (35.6 × 32.4 cm)
2018.251
49

Kaga no Chiyo 加賀千代
1703–1775
Haiku (*hokku*) Poem
About 1755–75
Ink on paper
13⅞ × 17½ in. (35.2 × 44.5 cm)
2018.217
50



Attributed to Nonoguchi Ryūho
野々口立圃
1595–1669
***Haibun* and *Haiga* of Crickets**
Mid-1600s
Ink on paper
9⅞ × 18¼ in. (25.1 × 46.4 cm)
2020.570
51

Takabatake Shikibu 高畠式部
1785–1881
Mountain Studio in Early Spring
1800s
Ink on paper
12¼ × 17⅞ in. (31.1 × 45.4 cm)
2018.225
52

Takabatake Shikibu 高畠式部
1785–1881
Bamboo and Poem
1861
Ink on paper
12⅝ × 17½ in. (32.1 × 44.5 cm)
2018.224
53

Ema Saikō 江馬細香

1787–1861

The Three Friends of Winter

1857

Ink and light color on paper

46⅝ × 11 in. (118.4 × 27.9 cm)

2018.189

54

Kamei Shōkin 亀井少琴

1798–1857

Bamboo

1821

Ink on silk

27¾ × 12¼ in. (70.5 × 31.1 cm)

2018.191

55

Hashimoto Seikō 橋本青江
1821–1898
Orchids
Mid-1800s
Ink on paper
56¼ × 14⅞ in. (142.9 × 37.8 cm)
2018.190
56

Okuhara Seiko 奥原晴湖
1837–1913
Orchids on a Cliff
1870–80s
Ink on paper
53⅞ × 13¼ in. (136.8 × 33.7 cm)
2018.206
57

Okuhara Seiko 奥原晴湖
1837–1913
Flowering Plants of the Four Seasons
1898

Ink and color on paper mounted on cabinet doors
Each 8⅞ × 12⅞ in. (22.5 × 32.7 cm)
2018.247A-B
58

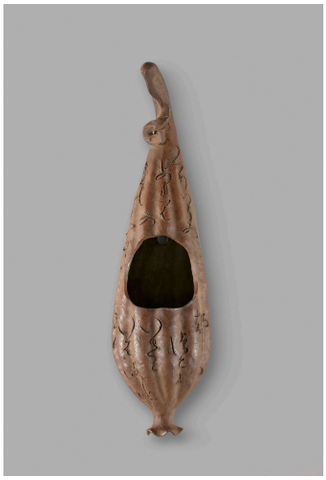
Noguchi Shōhin 野口小蘋
1847–1917
Cut Flowers and Pine Bough
Late 1800s–early 1900s
Ink and color on silk
49 × 17 in. (124.5 × 43.2 cm)
2018.196
59

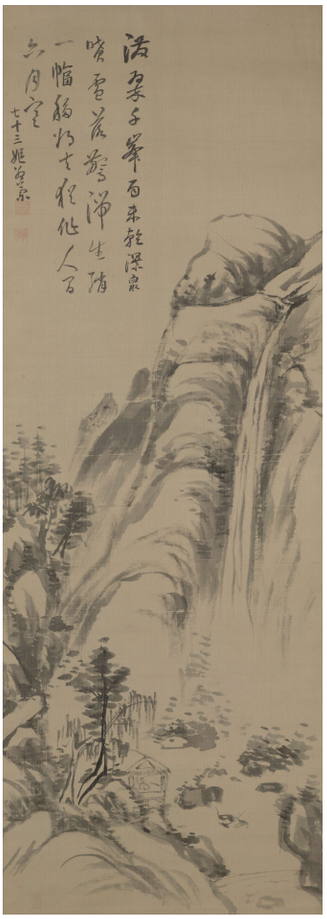
Noguchi Shōhin 野口小蘋
1847–1917
Fan with Scene of Autumn Mountains and Mist
Late 1800s–early 1900s

Ink and light color on paper with bamboo support
9¼ × 15¼ × ½ in. (23.5 × 38.7 × 1.3 cm)
2018.195
60

Noguchi Shōhin 野口小蘋
1847–1917
Fan with Summer Scene
Late 1800s
Ink and color on silk with bamboo and lacquered wood support
9 × 14¼ × ½ in. (22.9 × 36.2 × 1.3 cm)
2018.201
61

Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月
1791–1875
Hanging Flower Vase (*hana-ike*) in the Shape of a Hechima Gourd
1800s
Ceramic
11 × 4½ in. dia. (27.9 × 11.4 cm dia.)
2021.184
62



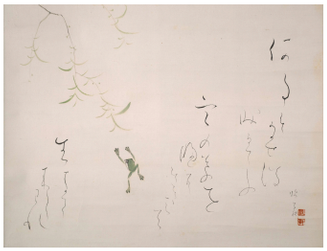


Yanagawa (Chō) Kōran
柳川(張)紅蘭
1804–1879
Summer Landscape
1876
Ink on paper
41¾ × 14¾ in. (106 × 37.5 cm)
2018.207
63

UNSTOPPABLE (NO BARRIERS)

Murase Myōdō 村瀬明道
1924–2013
***Mu* (Emptiness) and *Kan* (Quietude)**
Late 1900s
Ink on paper with wood frame
Mu 13 × 23⅞ in. (33 × 60.6 cm),
Kan 15¼ × 23⅞ in. (38.7 × 60.6 cm)
2018.154A-C
64

Ōishi Junkyō 大石順教
1888–1968
Willow and Frog
Mid-1900s
Ink on paper
15 × 19¾ in. (38.1 × 50.2 cm)
2018.157
65



Yamamoto Shōtō 山本緗桃
1757–1831
Chrysanthemums
Late 1700s–early 1800s
Ink, color, and gold on silk
9⅛ × 7⅜ in. (23.2 × 18.7 cm)
2018.216
66

Takabatake Shikibu 高畠式部
1785–1881
Signboard
1863
Ink on paper
11 × 11½ in. (27.9 × 29.2 cm)
2018.253
67

Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月
1791–1875
Moon, Blossoming Cherry, and Poem
1863
Ink and color on paper
14⅝ × 18¼ in. (37.1 × 46.4 cm)
2018.164
68

Artists' Biographies

Compiled from research conducted by Andrew Maske

Daitsū Bunchi 大通文智

1619–1697

Born Princess Ume no Miya, Daitsū Bunchi was the eldest daughter of Emperor Gomizuno-o (後水尾天皇 1596–1680). She was a devout Buddhist and at the age of twenty-two, after a short-lived arranged marriage at thirteen, became an ordained nun of the Rinzai Zen sect. She took up residence in Enshōji (Temple of Infinite Light), a small temple in northeastern Kyoto, where she spent the next fifteen years. In the 1660s, Bunchi established a convent, named Enshōji as well, south of Nara, which offered Buddhist training to women devotees. Her personal religious practice was marked by asceticism. In addition to calligraphy, Bunchi's surviving works include clay portrait

sculptures, small plaques bearing embroidered characters, and Buddhist figure painting.

Ema Saikō 江馬細香

1787–1861

Ema Saikō was a celebrated literati painter, calligrapher, and writer of *kanshi* (Chinese poetry). Born to a wealthy family of scholars, her talents in the arts of painting, poetry, and calligraphy were recognized from an early age. Saikō began her training with the Buddhist monk-painter Gyokurin (玉潾 after 1751–after 1814) at the age of thirteen, and she later studied with prominent literati artists including Rai San'yō (頼山陽 1780–1832) and Uragami Shunkin (浦上春琴 1779–1846). She was a central member of several kanshi societies—Hakuō sha, Reiki gin sha, and Kōsai sha—serving as the head of the latter two. Her verses were widely published, and her home in Ōgaki became a destination for literati from around the country.[1] Later in life, Saikō was honored with an invitation to Ōgaki Castle, in recognition of her painting.

Hashimoto Seikō 橋本青江

1821–1898

Hashimoto Seikō was a literati artist known for her calligraphy and painting in the *bunjinga* style (literati painting). Seikō's oeuvre consists primarily of landscapes and paintings of plum, bamboo, chrysanthemum, and orchid (collectively known as the Four Gentlemen). She was particularly fond of depicting the latter, which she is said to have cultivated herself. While there are conflicting accounts, Seikō was most likely born to a wealthy family in Osaka. She studied calligraphy with Shinozaki Shōchiku (篠崎 小竹 1781–1851) and painting with Okada Hankō (岡田 半江 1782–1846). Seikō traveled widely throughout Japan, participating in literati circles and mentoring several students, including Kawabe Seiran (河辺青蘭 1868–1931). Her name is listed in the *Kokon Nanga yōran* (古今南画要覧 Compendium of Nanga painters, past and present), published in 1853. Seikō continued to paint well into her seventies.[2] But later in life, her mental health declined, and she died in poverty.

Hirata Gyokuon 平田玉蘊

1787–1855

Hirata Gyokuon was a famed professional painter most closely associated with the Maruyama-Shijō school. She was one of only twenty-two women

artists commemorated in the publication by Shirai Kayō (白井 華陽 d. 1836), *Gajō yōryaku* (畫乘要略 Brief overview of the annals of painting [1831]). Born to a well-to-do cotton merchant family in today's Onomichi, Hiroshima Prefecture, Gyokuon studied painting with literati artist Fukuhara Gogaku (**福原 五岳** 1730–1799) and later with Hatta Koshū (八田 古秀 1760–1822), a painter of the Shijō school. Following the death of her father, Hirata Gohō (平田五峰), himself a painter, Gyokuon (the second of four daughters) turned to painting to support her family. Her close relationship with the literati artist Rai San'yō (頼山陽 1780–1832) resulted not only in many collaborations but in widespread rumors of romance, which caused a sensation. Her many extant works reveal mastery of a broad range of subjects, including figure paintings in the meticulous brushwork popular in China during the Ming and Qing periods as well as bird-and-flower paintings and other natural subjects, genre scenes, and large-scale murals for temples.

Kaga no Chiyo 加賀千代

1703–1775

Fukuda Chiyo was born in the province of Kaga during Japan's prosperous Genroku era (1688–1704). She composed her first *waka* at age

seven, and her poems soon became known throughout Japan. She was best known as “Chiyo of Kaga” (Kaga no Chiyo) rather than by her full name. Chiyo became a nun in 1755 and was acclaimed for her *haiga*, abbreviated paintings that often incorporated haiku inscriptions (a similarly brief, yet profound, form of poetry). Chiyo’s most famous poem, “Morning Glory,” has been quoted and reproduced countless times, both in Japan and abroad. In fact, Chiyo’s hometown of Hakusan has made the morning glory its official flower in her honor.

A morning glory, taking over my bucket. Must get water elsewhere then.	*朝顔に つるべ取られて もらい水*	asagao ni tsurube torarete morai mizu.

Kaji of Gion 祇園梶子

1600s–1700s

Kaji’s poetic talents were evident already in childhood, with examples of *waka* (a classical form

of poetry) compositions surviving from her early teens. At the turn of the eighteenth century, she established the Matsuya teahouse in Kyoto's entertainment district, Gion. The simple teahouse, comprising long wooden benches under thatched eaves, attracted a literary clientele, largely thanks to her renown as a poet and calligrapher. Kaji is said to have occasionally gifted her guests poetry slips (*tanzaku*) inscribed by her as a souvenir. A collection of Kaji's waka poetry, *Kaji no ha* (Mulberry [or Kaji] leaves [or pages]) was published in 1707 by Miyazaki Ameishi (d. 1758). While she never married, Kaji adopted a gifted child, Yuri, who ultimately went on to manage the teahouse and became a famous poet and calligrapher in her own right.[3] They, along with Yuri's daughter, Gyokuran, came to be known as the Three Women of Gion.

Kamei Shōkin 亀井少琴

1798–1857

Kamei Shōkin was born into a prosperous family of Confucian scholars who served the daimyo of Fukuoka. At the age of nine, her calligraphy was shown at a local exhibition; at eighteen, she published a volume of ninety-four verses. Shōkin was listed in the 1831 *Gajō yōryaku* (Summary of painting criticism) and in the 1853 *Kokon Nanga yōran* (Compendium of Nanga painters, past and

present). She was likely self-taught, turning to painting copybooks, which were prevalent in the Edo period.[4] Shōkin and her husband, Kamei Raishu (亀井雷首 1789–1852), an artist and a student of her father's, produced many collaborative works (*gassaku*), with Shōkin executing the painting and Raishu adding a poetic inscription. Although she rarely traveled, her fame spread, with Nanga painters, poets, and calligraphers traveling to her in Kyushu. After Raishu's death, in 1852, Shōkin ran the family school. Of the twenty enrolled students, seven were girls.[5]

Katō Seiko 加藤青湖

Active 1800s

Little is known about the artist Katō Seiko. An inscription on her painting in the collection of the Denver Art Museum, *Sparrows and Bamboo*, dates the work to 1872 and indicates she produced it in Kyoto. Her few surviving works depict bird-and-flower subjects and reveal mastery of the boneless (Japanese, *mokkotsu*; Chinese, *mogu* **沒骨**) style of painting.

Kiyohara Yukinobu 清原雪信

1643–1682

Kiyohara Yukinobu was a prolific painter active in Kyoto in the early Edo period and a descendent of the centuries-long Kanō artistic lineage. Her mother, Kuni (**国**), was the niece of Kanō Tan'yū (狩野 探幽 1602–1674), one of the major artists of the Kanō school of painting. Her father, Kusumi Morikage (久隅守景 c. 1620–1690), was Tan'yū's disciple. Yukinobu displayed rare talent from an early age and likely studied directly with Tan'yū. She married a fellow painter and student of Tan'yū's, Kiyohara Morihiro (dates unknown). As part of the extended Kanō school, Yukinobu carried out commissions from the ruling warrior class, gaining fame and recognition in her own time.

As a professional painter, Yukinobu was trained in *yamato-e* (Japanese painting, a genre dating back to the Heian period) as well as Chinese academic styles (landscapes, bird-and-flower, and paintings of beauties), gracefully merging and alternating between the two in her works. Her extant paintings boast a wide range of subject matter and an evident focus on female figure paintings, both historical and mythological, from Japan's and China's lore.

Kō (Ōshima) Raikin 高(大島)来禽

Active late 1700s

Kō (Ōshima) Raikin was a Kyoto poet and a painter in the Chinese academic style. She specialized in bird-and-flower subjects and landscape paintings. Serving as a lady-in-waiting in the household of a Confucian scholar, she was well versed in Chinese poetry, calligraphy, and painting. Raikin often collaborated with her husband, the painter and seal carver Kō Fuyō (高芙蓉 1722–1784), adhering to Chinese Qing dynasty models.

Kuroda Kōryō 黒田光良

1823–1895

Kuroda Kōryō was a Kyoto potter and a follower and collaborator of Buddhist nun-artist Ōtagaki Rengetsu (太田垣蓮月 1791–1875). After Rengetsu's death, Kōryō continued making works in her style, assuming the name Rengetsu II (二代 太田垣連月).[6] In his practice, Kōryō used wheel throwing, molding, as well as a combination of the two.

Miwa Teishin 三輪貞信

1809–1902

Miwa Teishin was a Late Edo–Meiji period poet, calligrapher, and Buddhist nun. She was born in Kyoto to the ceramicist Aoki Mokubei (青木木米 1767–1833), making a name for herself as a *geiko*

dancer in Kyoto's Gion entertainment district. She later left the profession and married. After her husband's death, Teishin became a nun. She studied poetry and calligraphy with Kagawa Kageki (香川景樹 1768–1843) and Ōtagaki Rengetsu (太田垣蓮月 1791–1875), and in 1894 published a volume of poetry titled *Yomogi ga tsuyu* (蓬がつゆ Artemisia in rain). Teishin was the founder of a private school called the Kōfūsha.

Murase Myōdō 村瀬明道

1924–2013

Murase Myōdō was born to a rice merchant in Aichi Prefecture as the fifth of nine children. At nine, she entered the Rinzai Zen temple Kōgenji in Kyoto and spent the next several years training at various convents. She returned to Kōgenji in 1943, eventually becoming head of Gesshinji in Ōtsu city in 1975. There, Myōdō became famous for her vegetarian cuisine, prepared with the deep mindfulness characteristic of Zen discipline. In 1963, at the age of thirty-nine, Myōdō was hit by a car and left paralyzed on the right side of her body. She learned to write calligraphy with her left, nondominant hand. The majority of Myōdō's extant works are executed with a large brush.

Nakabayashi Seishuku 中林清淑

1829–1912

Nakabayashi Seishuku was a literati painter in Kyoto specializing in ink painting of plum blossoms and bamboo. The third daughter of the well-known literati artist Nakabayashi Chikutō (中林竹洞 1776–1853), she participated in the literati circles of the time. She produced collaborative works (*gassaku*) with prominent artists including Noguchi Shōhin (野口小蘋 1847–1917) and Okuhara Seiko (奥原晴湖 1837–1913).[7] She was recorded in the 1880 *Meika shoga shunju jo* (名家書画春秋帖 Spring and autumn album of calligraphy and painting by the masters).

Nakayama Miya 中山三屋

1840–1871

Nakayama Miya was a Buddhist nun, poet, painter, and loyalist who traveled widely and was a central figure in literati circles. Born in Kyoto to a shogunate retainer, by the age of six or seven she had recited her classical *waka* poems at adult competitions.[8] She soon began training with Kagawa Kagetsune (香川景恒 1823–1865/1866), son of Kagawa Kageki (香川景樹 1768–1843), who taught Ōtagaki Rengetsu (太田垣蓮月 1791–1875) and Takabatake

Shikibu (高畠式部 1785–1881). Her mother died when she was twelve, and she took the tonsure at fourteen. As a nun, Miya traveled freely, keeping a diary of her meetings with more than four hundred poets, artists, collectors, and poetry lovers. In 1871, while traveling in Kyūshū, she fell ill and passed away at the young age of thirty-one.

Noguchi Shōhin 野口小蘋

1847–1917

Noguchi Shōhin was one of the foremost Meiji literati painters. Her work was included in major exhibitions around the world, and she was named an official artist of the imperial household, the highest formal recognition for a Japanese artist. She was born in 1847 to a physician in Osaka. From the age of four, she showed an affinity for brushwork, and she began taking lessons from the painter Ishigaki Tōsan (石垣 東山 1804–1876) at eight. In 1862, when she was sixteen, her father died, and Shōhin supported her family with her painting.

Shōhin and her mother settled in Kyoto in 1867, where she became the student of the prominent Nanga painter Hine Taizan (日根対山 1813–1869). She also gained the attention of the budding statesman Kido Takayoshi, who invited her to

observe the enthronement ceremony of the Meiji emperor in 1868 with him and his family.[9] In 1871, Shōhin relocated to Tokyo, and in 1873, she was commissioned to paint eight *fusuma* (sliding door) panels for the sleeping quarters of the Japanese empress.

In 1875, she went to the town of Kōfu, where she met Noguchi Masaakira, and they were married in 1877. A few years later, after a failed business venture, they moved to Tokyo, where Shōhin's artistic talents again became her family's main source of support. In 1889, she was appointed Professor of Painting at the Peeresses' Girls School (which later became part of the educational institution Gakushūin University). That same year, her work was exhibited at both the Fourth Exposition Universelle in Paris and the Japan Art Association (Nihon bijutsu kyōkai) exhibition, receiving an honorable mention at the latter. In 1893, one of her landscape paintings won a prize at the Chicago World's Fair. In 1899, she was asked to instruct female members of the imperial court in painting, including imperial consort Fusako. In 1901, Shōhin was asked to paint fusuma panels for the imperial palace, and around 1904, she was named an official artist of the imperial household. Shōhin passed away in February 1917 at the age of seventy-one.

Nonoguchi Ryūho 野々口立圃

1595–1669

Nonoguchi Ryūho is considered the progenitor of the *haiga* genre of painting, wherein a simple yet evocative picture is paired with a short poem like a haiku,[10] and *haibun*, a combination of prose and poetry (prosimetric composition).

Oda Shitsushitsu 織田瑟瑟

1779–1832

Oda Shitsushitsu was a painter of the Mikuma school of painting, which focused on cherry blossoms (*sakura*). A descendant of the sixteenth-century warlord Oda Nobunaga (織田信長 1534–1582), one of Japan's Three Great Unifiers, Shitsushitsu had access to education in the arts from a young age. She studied with painter Mikuma Rokō (三熊露香 active late 1700s), herself a pupil of Shijō school founder Matsumura Goshun (松村月渓 1752–1811).

Ōhashi-dayū (The Tayū Ōhashi) 大橋太夫

Active 1700s

Ōhashi-dayu ("Grand Courtesan" Ōhashi) was known not only for her beauty and grace but for her elegant calligraphy. Active in the mid-eighteenth century, Ōhashi was raised in a fairly well-to-do warrior-class family and trained in music, poetry, tea ceremony, and incense appreciation. Her father lost his commission, however, and she was sold to the Shimabara pleasure quarters in Kyoto to help repay her family's debts. She was eventually able to leave and marry a man who shared her love of the classical arts.[11] After his death, she became a Buddhist nun.

Ōishi Junkyō 大石順教

1888–1968

Ōishi Junkyō had begun a promising career as a *geigi* dancer in Osaka, but at age seventeen, she survived a brutal attack wherein both of her arms were severed. After recovering from her injuries, she worked in a traveling theatrical group, singing ballads, dancing, and performing comical storytelling. One day, after watching a canary feed its chicks with its beak, she was inspired to try to write by holding a brush in her mouth. She retired from the stage shortly thereafter and devoted herself to the study of painting and poetry.

Junkyō married the calligrapher-painter Yamaguchi Sōhei (山口草平 1882–1961) in 1912 and had two children. The couple later divorced, and Junkyō supported herself and her children through painting and calligraphy. She also offered a counseling service for people with disabilities. In 1933, at age forty-five, she officially took the tonsure at Kongobūji on Mount Kōya. Three years later, she moved into the Shingon temple Kanshūji in Yamashina, where she continued to counsel people with disabilities and teach about Buddhism. In 1947, Junkyō founded the small temple of Bukkōin, where she lived the rest of her life.

Okuhara Seiko 奥原晴湖

1837–1913

Okuhara Seiko was born to an upper-level samurai family in Koga, north of Edo (now Tokyo). Seiko studied literature, calligraphy, and the martial arts and was a student of painter Hirata Suiseki (枚田水石 1796–1863). The Koga domain did not allow women to move elsewhere except with a family member, so Seiko was nominally adopted by an aunt who lived in an adjacent domain. Not coincidentally, that domain had no such movement restrictions on women, so a mere three days after arriving at the aunt's home in the spring of 1865, Seiko departed for Edo.

Seiko soon began attracting followers and, in 1871, established the school Shun'yōgakujuku, with a dormitory for women pupils. The prominent Meiji statesman Kido Takayoshi (木戸孝允 1833–1877) patronized Seiko, and in 1872, he arranged for the artist to have an audience with the Japanese empress, making Seiko the first female artist to do so.

Notedly, when the Meiji government issued an edict in 1871 that men had to cut their traditional topknots, Seiko took the opportunity to cut their own hair short as well. Seiko was also known for wearing dark kimono typical of men's apparel.[12] While the signature in the artist's earliest paintings bears the feminine suffix *-joshi* (女史 woman scholar/artist), Seiko soon chose to omit it.

Ono no Ozū (or Ono no Otsū) 小野お通

1559/68–before 1650

Not much is known for certain about Ono no Ozū, not even her name (possibly pronounced Otsū). Apparently born to an aristocratic family and orphaned as a child, she was raised in Kyoto, where she exhibited extraordinary talent in poetry, painting, calligraphy, and music. Ozū served as a lady-in-waiting, tutoring women in the Inner Chambers both for shoguns and for the imperial

house. She likely served all three of the warlords known as Japan's Great Unifiers (Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and Tokugawa Ieyasu). Generations of noblewomen emulated Ozū's graceful style of calligraphy. Her calligraphy was so admired that copybooks of her script were produced and circulated throughout the remainder of the Edo period.[13] She is known today as one of the greatest women calligraphers of premodern Japan.

Ōtagaki Rengetsu 太田垣蓮月

1791–1875

Ōtagaki Rengetsu was a Buddhist nun and a major figure in Kyoto's artistic circles, renowned for her *waka* poetry and ceramics. In her youth, she worked as a lady-in-waiting in the women's quarters at Kameoka Castle, where she learned classical waka poetry and calligraphy. She took Pure Land Buddhist vows at age thirty-three after being widowed and losing all of her children.

Rengetsu's name was included in the *Heian jinbutsu shi* (Record of Heian [Kyoto] notables), and two volumes of her waka were published during her lifetime. She associated with many painters and sometimes inscribed her poems on their paintings. Examples of such joint creations (*gassaku*) include

those done with Mori Kansai (森寛斎 1814–1894), Tomioka Tessai (富岡鉄斎 1836–1924), and Wada Gesshin (和田月心 1800–1870). Midpoint in her career, Rengetsu began creating simple ceramic wares on which she either inscribed her poems with a brush or incised them with a stylus. Her wares were immensely popular in Kyoto, Edo (now Tokyo), and beyond.[14]

Although she took her original vows at a Pure Land temple, Rengetsu associated with clergy from various sects. In her later years, she moved into a small hut on the grounds of the Jinkōin temple northwest of Kyoto at the invitation of the chief priest, Wada Gesshin (also known as Gozan), where she lived until her death at age eighty-four. Over her decades-long career, she generated thousands of works of calligraphy, painting, and ceramics.[15] It has been said that at the peak of her popularity in the late 1800s, most households in Kyoto owned at least one example of her work.[16]

Ryōnen Gensō 了然元総

1646–1711

Ryōnen Gensō was the daughter of a lady-in-waiting to Empress Tōfukumon'in (東福門院 1607–1678), and she herself served the empress's granddaughter. She married at seventeen but left

her family after ten years and entered the Rinzai Zen imperial convent, Hōkyōji. She eventually went to Edo (now Tokyo), aspiring to study under Tetsugyu Dōki (鐵牛道機 1628–1700). However, she was refused by him on the basis that her beauty would be a distraction to the monks in training. She was also turned away from the temple Daikyūan by the head priest, Hakuō Dōtai (白翁道泰 d. 1682). In a pious act of determination, she pressed a hot iron to her face to devote herself to Zen practice. Taken by her fervor, Dōtai accepted her as a disciple, designating her as his dharma heir in 1680. Gensō later established her own temple, and the priest who had initially refused her, Dōki, presided at the dedication of her Nyoirin Kannon Hall in 1694.

Ryūtei Tanehiko 柳亭種

1783–1842

Ryūtei Tanehiko was the author of *Nise Murasaki inaka Genji* (A fake Murasaki and country Genji), released in serial format between 1829 and 1842 and one of the most popular examples of Japanese fiction of the nineteenth century.

Sakuragi-dayū (The Tayū Sakuragi) 桜木太夫

Active mid- to late 1800s

Sakuragi (Sakuragi-dayū) was a famous Tayū (grand courtesan) in the Shimabara pleasure quarters in Kyoto, renowned for her calligraphy and poetry. Active during the mid- to late 1800s, Sakuragi-dayū trained with the *waka* poet No-se Haruomi (能勢春臣 1808–1862). She was also a poetic collaborator and friend of Ōtagaki Rengetsu (太田垣蓮月 1791–1875). During the period just prior to the Meiji Restoration, she developed a relationship with Itō Hirobumi (伊藤博文 1841–1909), who later became Japan's first prime minister. Upon hearing of Itō's assassination in 1909, she became a Buddhist nun.

Tachihara Shunsa 立原春沙

1818–1858

Trained in the Nanga style, Tachihara Shunsa chose to focus primarily on bird-and-flower subjects during her career. Born to a family of Confucian scholars, she studied with the scholar-artist Watanabe Kazan (渡邊崋山 1793–1841). At twenty-five, Shunsa became an attendant for the wife of the Kaga daimyo, whom she served as a painting instructor for seventeen years in Edo (now Tokyo). Shunsa was commissioned to produce sliding-door paintings (*fusuma-e*) for the courts and castles.

Tagami Kikusha 田上菊舎

1753–1826

Tagami Kikusha was born into a samurai family in Nagato province (now Yamaguchi Prefecture), at the southwestern tip of Honshu Island. She became a widow at twenty-four, at which point she immersed herself in the study and composition of *haikai*. At twenty-nine, in 1781, after taking the tonsure at the Shin sect Buddhist temple Seikōji in Hagi, she took to traveling. Throughout the next four decades, Kikusha traversed the length of Japan, meeting poets and honing her artistic skills. She became known for her *haiga* painting, *chanoyu* (tea ceremony), mastery of the seven-string zither, as well as Chinese verse (*kanshi*) and *waka* composition.

Takabatake Shikibu 高畠式部

1785–1881

Takabatake Shikibu was a poet and calligrapher active in Kyoto. She was the adopted daughter of an Osaka physician and studied *waka* poetry with the poet Kagawa Kageki (香川景樹 1768–1843). Shikibu became known for her painting, sculpture, and music, as well as poetry and calligraphy. After the death of her second husband in 1841, she

traveled independently and dedicated her time to artmaking. Shikibu was listed in the *Kōto shoga jinmei roku* (Record of famous poets and painters in the imperial).[17] She was active well into her nineties.

Takeuchi Shōran 武内小鸞

Active late 1700s–early 1800s

Takeuchi Shōran grew up in Nagato province (present-day Yamaguchi Prefecture) and was active in Kyoto. Although she was very prolific, her birth and death dates remain obscure. Shōran was a student of Maruyama Ōzui (円山応瑞 1766–1829) and Kishi Ganku (岸駒 1749–1839). Earlier in her career, she specialized in *bijin-ga* (paintings of beautiful women), later painting primarily bird-and-flower subjects.

Tokuyama (Ike) Gyokuran 徳山(池)玉瀾

1727–1784

Tokuyama (Ike) Gyokuran was a renowned literati poet and painter and the youngest of the Three Women of Gion, three generations of poets and calligraphers who ran a famous teahouse in the entertainment quarter Gion in Kyoto. She was born in Kyoto, where her mother, Yuri, and her

grandmother, Kaji, before her ran the Matsuya, which was frequented by artists and scholars. She was trained in painting from the age of ten by the literati painter Yanagisawa Ki'en (1703–1758). The Nanga painter Ike Taiga (1723–1776) was a patron of the teahouse, and he and Gyokuran soon developed a close relationship, becoming life partners, although it is unclear whether they formally married.[18] They lived a bohemian lifestyle. Each became renowned for their work, and they produced many collaborative works (*gassaku*).

Tomioka Haruko 富岡春子

1847–1940

Tomioka Haruko's paintings are rather rare, although she collaborated with her husband, literati painter and Ōtagaki Rengetsu's student Tomioka Tessai (富岡鉄斎 1836–1924) on various works by contributing calligraphy.

Tomioka Tessai 富岡鉄斎

1836–1924

When Tomioka Tessai was seven, his father died, and he was sent to be a page at a Shinto shrine. At eighteen, he was taken in by Ōtagaki Rengetsu (太田垣蓮月 1791–1875), who became his primary

mentor. With her as an advisor, he studied painting and calligraphy with several noted artists. In 1861, he made a trip to Nagasaki to learn from both Japanese and Chinese artists there, and around this time, he opened a painting school in Rengetsu's home.

Utagawa Kunisada 歌川国貞

1786–1864

Utagawa Kunisada, one of the most popular designers of his day and the most prolific print artist of all time, illustrated women with especially dramatic or tragic stories in his series of woodblock prints *Kokon meifuden* (Famous women of past and present).

Wada Gesshin 和田月心

1800–1870

Wada Gesshin was the head priest of the Jinkōin Temple in the northern part of Kyoto. He had been a professional painter known as Wada Gozan, but he took Shingon Buddhist orders with his sons following his wife's death. The artist and nun Ōtagaki Rengetsu (太田垣蓮月 1791–1875) moved to the temple when she was seventy-five and produced many collaborative works with Gesshin

until his death in 1870. Generally, Gesshin executed the painting, and Rengetsu provided a poem in her calligraphic hand.

Yamamoto Shōtō 山本緗桃

1757–1831

While there is no surviving record of where Yamamoto Shōtō trained or with whom, nineteenth-century sources record that she painted flowers, animals, and the Four Gentlemen (plum, bamboo, chrysanthemum, and orchid). Shōtō was married to Confucian scholar Yamamoto Hokuzan (山本北山 1752–1812). Her granddaughter, Yamamoto Sui'on, became a celebrated painter.

Yamazaki Ryūjo 山崎龍女

Active early 1700s

Yamazaki Ryūjo is best known for her colorful paintings of beautiful women, though she was also adept at Zen ink painting.

Yanagawa (Chō) Kōran 柳川(張)紅蘭

1804–1879

Yanagawa (Chō) Kōran was a celebrated poet and painter in Kyoto's literati circles. She lived a bohemian lifestyle with her husband, the artist Yanagawa Seigan (梁川星巌 1789–1858). She was listed in the 1830 *Heian jinbutsushi* (Who's who of Kyoto) as a literati artist. A collection of her poems was published in 1841, and one of her bamboo paintings was featured in the 1837 woodblock-printed book *Hyaku meika gafu* (Paintings and calligraphy by one hundred artists).

Kōran was an ardent imperial loyalist and was even imprisoned for several months. Nevertheless, she stayed in Kyoto, continuing her artistic activities and opening a school teaching Chinese poetry to girls. She died in 1878, having lived to see Japan enter the modern era.

Yuri of Gion 祇園の百合

1694–1764

Yuri, one of the Three Women of Gion, was a prolific poet and owner of the Matsuya, a teahouse in Kyoto known for its literary clientele. In the first half of the eighteenth century, Yuri took over ownership of the teahouse run by her adopted mother, Kaji (祇園梶子 1600s–1700s). She was a prolific poet and a student of the courtier Reizei Tamemura (冷泉為村 1712–1774). After her death, the scholar

and famed calligrapher Rai San'yō (頼山陽 1780–1832) wrote a biography of her, calling her "a model of womanhood."[19] In 1727, a book containing 159 of her poems was published under the title *Sayuriba* (Leaves from a small lily). She raised her daughter, Machi, as the third generation of Matsuya poets. Machi eventually gained the name Gyokuran (徳山(池)玉瀾 1727–1784) and became one of the most important Japanese women artists of all time.

1. Patricia Fister, *Japanese Women Artists, 1600–1900* (Lawrence, KS: Spencer Museum of Art/Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1988), 102.
2. Patricia Fister, *Kinsei no josei gakatachi: Bijutsu to jendaa* [Japanese women artists of the Kinsei era] (Kyoto: Shibunkaku Shuppan, 1994), 152.
3. Stephen Addiss, "The Three Women of Gion," in *Flowering in the Shadows: Women in the History of Chinese and Japanese Painting*, ed. Marsha Weidner (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990), 241–63.
4. Fister, *Kinsei no josei gakatachi*, 72.
5. Fister, *Kinsei no josei gakatachi*, 72.
6. Katō Tōkurō, *Genshoku tōki daijiten* [Color encyclopedia of ceramics] (Kyoto: Tankōsha, 1972), 1020.
7. Fister, *Japanese Women Artists*, 180.
8. Fister, *Japanese Women Artists*, 40.
9. Fister, *Japanese Women Artists*, 166 and 181n26.
10. Stephen Addiss, *Haiga: Takebe Sōchō and the Haiku-Painting Tradition* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), 14.
11. Fister, *Japanese Women Artists*, 71.

12. Martha Jane McClintock, "Okuhara Seiko (1837–1913): The Life and Arts of a Meiji Period Literati Artist" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1991), 46.

13. Fister, *Kinsei no josei gakatachi*, 32.

14. Yutaka Chiba, "Kōko shiryō to shite no Rengetsu-yaki," *The Annual Report of the Center for Archaeological Operations* 2001 (2006): 322.

15. John Stevens, *Lotus Moon: The Poetry of Rengetsu* (Buffalo, NY: White Pine Press, 2005), 121.

16. Melanie Eastburn, Lucie Folan, Robyn Maxwell, et al. *Black Robe, White Mist: Art of the Japanese Buddhist Nun Rengetsu* (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 2008), 12.

17. Mori Senzō, *Kinsei jinmeiroku shūsei*, vol. 3, 249, quoted in Fister, *Japanese Women Artists, 1600–1900*, 143.

18. Kyoko Kinoshita, "The Life and Arts of Tokuyama Gyokuran," in *Ike Taiga and Tokuyama Gyokuran: Japanese Masters of the Brush*, eds. Felice Fischer and Kyoko Kinoshita (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art in association with Yale University Press, 2007), 40.

19. Published in Burton Watson, *Japanese Literature in Chinese*, vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 162–67.

Acknowledgments

Einor Cervone

There have been quite a few key players in bringing this project to fruition. Some, I have never met. Dr. John Fong and Dr. Colin Johnstone, whose generous gift sparked this endeavor, credit the keen-eyed Alice Boney (1901–1988) as the instigator of their collecting journey. She was the first to introduce them to works by Japanese women calligraphers, painters, and ceramicists. Boney, an intrepid and adventurous art dealer, flouted all challenges and norms in her globetrotting through Japan, India, Thailand, Hong Kong, and elsewhere. Elegantly navigating a world dominated by men, she carved a space for herself in the art market of the 1930s and continued to dominate it for over six decades.

Patricia Fister has done the same on the academic stage, spearheading a field completely her own. This current project remains profoundly indebted to her robust research and groundbreaking 1988 exhibition, *Japanese Women Artists 1600–1900*, which laid the

foundation for the study in the English language of art and gender in early modern and modern Japan. Her scholarship reverberates through every corner of the gallery. We owe Fister's involvement to Andrew Maske (Wayne State University) and Tianlong Jiao (Hong Kong Palace Museum), then Joseph de Heer Curator of Asian Art at the Denver Art Museum. They proposed and facilitated the transformative Fong-Johnstone gift and initiated the exhibition. Maske's groundwork, moreover, informs much of the exhibition text. We would also like to thank Sadako Ohki, Masato Takenouchi, and Shitong Jiao for their initial transcriptions and translations of the inscriptions on various art works as well as Professor Jia Chen of Jilin University for the transcriptions of Chinese calligraphic inscriptions.

Our secret weapon, Patricia Graham, researched the objects tirelessly and enlisted an army of specialists who, in turn, worked around the clock and around the world to make this exhibition possible, despite its demanding timeline. These formidable scholars include Paul Berry, Martha J. McClintock, and several anonymous contributors. I am indebted to Hollis Goodall, Yurika Wakamatsu, and Kit Brooks for their words of advice, direction, and support. We are humbled by the enthusiastic participation and encouragement of speakers in the forthcoming scholarly symposium (February 25, 2023), including Melissa McCormick, Marcia A. Yonemoto, Amy Beth

Stanley, and Alison Miller, as well as Paul Berry and Patricia Fister, who will add their knowledgeable voices to the discourse. John Todd, Senior Associate at WOJR: Organization for Architecture, graciously offered his time and expertise, inspiring the design concept for the 2022 exhibition. A special thanks goes to the internationally renowned calligrapher Tomoko Kawao for the beautiful calligraphy that graces the exhibition design and for agreeing to start the North American leg of her global, multiyear *Hitomoji Project: Women* in Denver. Kawao's stay is made possible thanks to the generous support of artist and activist Sammy Lee and Studio SML | k, which continues to push the envelope of how art can change us.

Now come those whom I have grown to know closely since joining the work on this exhibition. First and foremost is project manager and exhibition designer Eric Berkemeyer, who did not buck at any outlandish vision or bizarre pipe dream thrown his way. He made the impossible possible, translating impalpable notions into a mesmerizing gallery design and overseeing all the moving parts of exhibition planning. I am grateful for Christoph Heinrich, Frederick and Jan Mayer Director, and Chief Curator Angelica Daneo for their foresight and faith in this project and for the support of my wonderful department colleagues, Hyonjeong (HJ) Kim Han, Joseph de Heer Curator of Asian Art, and Douglas Wagner, Curatorial Associate. Interpretive Specialist Karuna Srikureja has taught me

so much about the art of speaking to a diverse body of visitors. Lindsay Genshaft and Ariana Robles have made this exhibition relevant and fun for our youngest visitors. Clara Ricciardi's translations continue to bring this material to a wider audience. The indefatigable editors, Valerie Hellstein and Leslie Murrell, separating wheat from chaff, crafted meandering sentences into cogent thoughts.

Arianna Flory, Curatorial Assistant at Large, has saved the day time and again. It seems like the mantra of our IT team, Derek Sava, Levy Smith, Cordelia Taylor, and Tim Taylor is forever "this has never been done before. Let's do it." Our talented photographers, Christina Jackson and Eric Stephenson, have brought out the beauty and captured the spirit of the artwork. McGinty Co.'s and Jenn Goodrich's graphic design gave form to formless notions. The installation team has worked tirelessly behind the scenes. Without you, an exhibition is nothing more than some doodles in a notebook. Darcy Christ, Matt Popke, and the publications team have translated this complex and multifaceted enterprise into an arresting digital publication. Finally, I am grateful for my family, Dan and Damian, for their support and love.

This list is by no means exhaustive. *Her Brush* is the fruit of dedication and hard work of this extended family I am now fortunate to call my colleagues at the Denver Art Museum.

Contributors

Paul Berry

Independent scholar and former professor at Kansai Gaidai University and University of Washington

Einor Cervone

Associate Curator of Arts of Asia, Denver Art Museum

Patricia Fister

Professor Emeritus, International Research Center for Japanese Studies and Director of Research, Medieval Japanese Studies Institute/Center for the Study of Women, Buddhism, and Cultural History

Dr. John Fong

An osteopathic physician and former director of a state psychiatric hospital, a hospital reviewer for the National Institutes of Mental Health, and a forensic psychiatrist in Pennsylvania and Delaware.

Patricia Graham

Research Associate, Center for East Asian Studies, University of Kansas

Christoph Heinrich

Frederick and Jan Mayer Director, Denver Art Museum

Tomoko Kawao

Internationally acclaimed *shodō* artist based in Kyoto

Andrew Maske

Professor of Museum Studies and Director of Gordon L. Grosscup Museum, Wayne State University

Melissa McCormick

Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Japanese Art and Culture, Harvard University

Alison Miller

Associate Professor of Art History and Director of Asian Studies, The University of the South

Karuna Srikureja

Interpretive Specialist for Arts of Asia, Denver Art Museum

Amy Beth Stanley

Wayne V. Jones II Research Professor in History, Northwestern University

Marcia A. Yonemoto

Professor of History, University of Colorado, Boulder

Additional Resources

Addiss, Stephen. *Haiga: Takebe Sōchō and the Haiku-Painting Tradition*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995.

Addiss, Stephen. "The Three Women of Gion." In Weidner, *Flowering in the Shadows*, 241–63.

Akiyama, Terukazu. "Women Painters at the Heian Court." In Weidner, *Flowering in the Shadows*, 159–84.

Arai, Naomi. "Nanga-ka Noguchi Shōhin o michibiita hitobito" [People guiding or supporting Noguchi Shōhin]. *Higashi Ajia bunka kōhō kenkyū* [Journal of East Asian cultural interaction studies] 8 (March 31, 2015): 57–73.

Baskind, James. "Mortification Practices in the Ōbaku School." In *Essays on East Asian Religion and Culture*, edited by Christian Wittern and Shi Lishan,

149–76. Kyoto: Kyōto Daigaku Jinbun Kagaku Kenkyūjo, 2007.

Benn, James A. "Where Text Meets Flesh: Burning the Body as an Apocryphal Practice in Chinese Buddhism." *History of Religions* 37, no. 4 (May 1998): 295–322.

Bernstein, Gail Lee, ed. *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600–1945*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

Berry, Paul, and Michiyo Morioka, eds. *Literati Modern: Bunjinga from Late Edo to Twentieth-Century Japan*. Honolulu: Honolulu Academy of Arts, 2008.

Bose, Melia Belli, ed. *Women, Gender and Art in Asia, c. 1500–1900*. New York: Routledge, 2016.

Brodell, Ria. *Butch Heroes*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018.

Chance, Frank. "In the Studio of Painting Study: Transmission Practices of Tani Bunchō." In *Copying the Master and Stealing His Secrets, edited by Jordan and Weston, 60–85.

Chiba, Yutaka. “Kōko shiryō to shite no Rengetsu-yaki.” *The Annual Report of the Center for Archaeological Operations 2001* (2006): 311–26.

Chiba, Yutaka. “Rengetsu-yaki o mohōshita tōki ni tsuite: Kyotō Daigaku Byōin kōnai AE19-ku SK15 shutsudo shiryō.” *The Annual Report of the Center for Cultural Heritage Studies 2016* (2018): 123–54.

Chino, Kaori. “Gender in Japanese Art.” In *Gender and Power in the Japanese Visual Field*, edited by Joshua Mostow et al., 17–34. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003.

Cogan, Gina. *The Princess Nun: Bunchi, Buddhist Reform, and Gender in Early Edo Japan*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2014.

Corbett, Rebecca. “Crafting Identity as a Tea Practitioner in Early Modern Japan: Ōtagaki Rengetsu and Tagami Kikusha.” *U.S.–Japan Women's Journal* 47 (2014): 3–27.

Eastburn, Melanie, Lucie Folan, Robyn Maxwell, et al. *Black Robe, White Mist: Art of the Japanese Buddhist Nun Rengetsu*. Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 2008.

Fischer, Felice, and Kyoko Kinoshita, eds. *Ike Taiga and Tokuyama Gyokuran: Japanese Masters of the*

Brush. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art in association with Yale University Press, 2007.

Fister, Patricia, et al. *Amamonzeki, A Hidden Heritage: Treasures of the Japanese Imperial Convents*. Tokyo: Sankei Shimbun, 2009.

Fister, Patricia. *Art by Buddhist Nuns: Treasures from the Imperial Convents of Japan*. New York: Institute for Medieval Japanese Studies, Columbia University, 2003.

Fister, Patricia. "Creating Devotional Art with Body Fragments: The Buddhist Nun Bunchi and Her Father, Emperor Gomizuno-o." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 27, nos. 3–4 (2000): 213–38.

Fister, Patricia. *Japanese Women Artists, 1600–1900*. Lawrence, KS: Spencer Museum of Art/Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1988.

Fister, Patricia. *Kinsei no josei gakatachi: Bijutsu to jendaa* [Japanese women artists of the Kinsei era]. Kyoto: Shibunkaku Shuppan, 1994.

Fister, Patricia. "Sannin no kinsei nisō to Ōbaku" [Three Edo-period nuns and Ōbaku]. *Ōbaku bunka* 118 (1999): 78–94.

Fister, Patricia. “Tagami Kikusha: Bohemian Nun, *Haikai* Poet, and Poet-Painter.” *Simply Haiku* 2, no. 6 (November–December 2004): http://www.simplyhaiku.com/SHv2n6/features/Fister_feature_pop.html.

Fister, Patricia. “The Life and Art of Chō Kōran.” In Weidner, *Flowering in the Shadows*, 265–93.

Fister, Patricia. “Visual Culture in Japan’s Imperial Buddhist Convents: The Making of Devotional Objects as Expressions of Faith and Practice.” In *Zen and Material Culture*, edited by Steven Heine and Pamela D. Winfield, 164–96. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Fister, Patricia. “Women Artists in Traditional Japan.” In Weidner, *Flowering in the Shadows*, 219–40.

Isoda, Michifumi. *Unsung Heroes of Old Japan*. Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation for Culture, 2017.

Itō, Hiromi. *Ōishi Junkyō no sekai*. Tokyo: Bunka Shobō Hakubunsha, 1997.

Jordan, Brenda G. and Victoria Louise Weston, eds. *Copying the Master and Stealing His Secrets: Talent and Training in Japanese Painting*. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2003.

Kaibara, Ekken. *Onna Daigaku: A Treasure Box of Women's Learning*. Edited by L. Cranmer-Byng and Dr. S. A. Kapadia. Weston Super-Mare, UK: Nezu Press, 2010.

Katō, Kiichi. *Ryokan, Teishin-ni no kana o yomu* [Reading *kana* script of Ryokan and the nun Teishin]. Edited by Umezu Noboru. Niigata-shi, Japan: Kōkodō Shoten, 2000.

Katō, Kiichi. *Ryokan to Teishin-ni* [Ryokan and the nun Teishin]. Niigata-shi, Japan: Kōkodō Shoten, 2017.

Katz, Janice. *Japanese Paintings in the Ashmolean Museum*. Oxford, UK: Ashmolean Museum, 2003.

Kinoshita, Kyoko. "The Life and Art of Tokuyama Gyokuran." In *Ike Taiga and Tokuyama Gyokuran: Japanese Masters of the Brush*, edited by Fischer and Kinoshita, 33–51.

Kobayashi, Tatsuo. *Jomon Reflections: Forager Life and Culture in the Prehistoric Japanese Archipelago*. Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books, 2004.

Lillehoj, Elizabeth. *Art and Palace Politics in Early Modern Japan, 1580s–1680s*. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2011.

McClintock, Martha J., and Victoria J. Weston. "Okuhara Seiko: A Case of *Funpon* Training in Late Edo Literati Painting." In *Copying the Master and Stealing His Secrets: Talent and Training in Japanese Painting*, edited by Jordan and Weston, 116–46.

McClintock, Martha Jane. "Okuhara Seiko (1837–1913): The Life and Arts of a Meiji Period Literati Artist." PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1991.

Mitsuoka, Tadanari. "Rengetsu-ni no tōgei." In *Rengetsu*, edited by Koresawa Kyōzō et al. Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1971.

Morris, Ivan. *The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964.

Mostow, Jonathan, Norman Bryson, and Maribeth Graybill, eds. *Gender and Power in the Japanese Visual Field*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003.

Murakami, Sodō. *Rengetsu-ni zenshū*. Kyoto: Rengetsu-ni Zenshū Hanpukai, 1927. Reprinted 1980.

Murase, Myōdō. *Gesshinji no ryōri*. Tokyo: Bunka Shuppan Kyoku, 1983.

Murase, Myōdō. *Honmamon de ikinahare: "Gomadōfu tenkaichi" no anjusan ichidaiki*. Tokyo: Bungei Shunshū, 2009.

Nagao, Akira. *Shinpi naru otome no gaka no monogatari: Shinshū Matsushiro-han, Onda Rokuin no ansologi* [A story of mysterious women painters: in Matsushiro-han in Shinano province, anthology of Onda Rokuin]. Nagano-shi, Japan: Daiichi Kikaku, 2004.

Nimura, Janice P. *Daughters of the Samurai: A Journey from East to West and Back*. New York: Norton, 2015.

Nishiyama, Matsunosuke. *Edo Culture: Daily Life and Diversions in Urban Japan, 1600–1868*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997.

Noguchi, Iku. *Watashi no haha* [My Mother]. Self-published, 1929.

Ōishi Junkyō-ni Itoku Kenshōkai, ed. *Ōishi Junkyō-ni isakushū*. Tokyo: Shunshūsha, 1984.

Oka, Masako, ed. *Un'yū to ama: Tagami Kikusha*. Hōhokuchō, Japan: Kikusha Kenshōkai, 2003.

Ruch, Barbara. "Burning Iron against the Cheek: A Female Cleric's Last Resort." In *Engendering Faith:*

Women and Buddhism in Premodern Japan, edited by Barbara Ruch, lxv–lxxvii. Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2002.

Sato, Hiroaki, ed. and trans. *Japanese Women Poets: An Anthology*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2008.

Schireson, Grace. *Zen Women: Beyond Tea Ladies, Iron Maidens, and Macho Masters*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2009.

Shōno, Hisato. *Keishū Kamei Shōkin den* [Accomplished woman: chronicles of Kamei Shōkin]. Fukuoka, Japan: Kiyō bunkō and Nōko Museum, 1992.

Shiba, Keiko. *Literary Creations on the Road: Women's Travel Diaries in Early Modern Japan*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2012.

Shimonoseki City Chōfu Museum. *Tagami Kikusha: Kinsei joryū bunjin no sekai*. Shimonoseki, Japan: Shimonoseki Shiritsu Chōfu Hakubutsukan, 1995.

Slatkin, Wendy. *Women Artists in History: From Antiquity to the Present*. 3rd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentiss-Hall, 1997.

Stevens, John, trans. *Lotus Moon: The Poetry of the Buddhist Nun Rengetsu*. New York: Weatherhill, 1994.

Stevens, John. *Lotus Moon: The Poetry of Rengetsu*. Buffalo, NY: White Pine Press, 2005.

Stevens, John. *Rengetsu: Life and Poetry of Lotus Moon*. N.p.: Echo Point, 2014.

Suenaga, Masao, and Nishibori Ichizō. *Bunchi jo-ō* [Princess Bunchi]. Nara, Japan: Enshōji, 1955.

Sugimoto, Hidetarō. *Ōtagaki Rengetsu*. Kyoto: Tankōsha, 1976.

Sung, Hou-mei. *Masterpieces of Japanese Art: Cincinnati Art Museum*. London: D Giles, 2014.

Sze, Mai-Mai, ed. and trans. *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972.

Takahashi, Sayumi. "Beyond our Grasp? Materiality, Meta-genre and Meaning in the Po(e)ttery of Rengetsu-ni." *Proceedings of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies* 5 (Summer 2004): 261–78.

Tsunoda, Ryūsaku, trans., and L. Carrington Goodrich, ed. *Japan in the Chinese Dynastic*

Histories: Later Han through Ming Dynasties. South Pasadena, CA: PD and Ione Perkins, 1951.

Ueda, Makoto, ed. *Far Beyond the Field: Haiku by Japanese Women*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

Vaporis, Constantine. "Lordly Pageantry: The Daimyo Procession and Political Authority." *Japan Review* 17 (2005): 3–52.

Vincentelli, Moira. *Women and Ceramics: Gendered Vessels*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2000.

Wakamatsu, Yurika. "Painting in Between: Gender and Modernity in the Japanese Literati Art of Okuhara Seiko (1837–1913)." PhD diss., Harvard University, 2016.

Walker, John, and Kazuya Ōyama. *Ōtagaki Rengetsu: Poetry and Artwork from a Rustic Hut*. Kyoto: Amembo Press, 2014.

Walthall, Anne. *The Weak Body of a Useless Woman: Matsuo Taseko and the Meiji Restoration*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Watson, Burton. *Japanese Literature in Chinese*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1975.

Weidner, Marsha, ed. *Flowering in the Shadows: Women in the History of Chinese and Japanese Painting*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990.

Wright, Diana E. "Female Combatants and Japan's Meiji Restoration: The Case of Aizu." *War in History* 8, no. 4 (October 2001): 396–417.

Yamamoto, Fumiko. "Chiyo and Kikusha: Two Haiku Poets." In Fister, *Japanese Women Artists, 1600–1900*, 55–68.

Yanase, Kazuo. *Takabatake Shikibu no kenkyū* [Research on Takabatake Shikibu]. Obuse-chō [Aichi-ken], Japan: Self-published, 1961.

Yasumura, Toshinobu. *Edo no keishū gakaten zuroku* [Exhibition catalogue of outstanding women painters of the Edo period]. Tokyo: Itabashi Art Museum, 1991.

About

This digital catalog accompanies *Her Brush: Japanese Women Artists from the Fong-Johnstone Collection*, organized by the Denver Art Museum, November 13, 2022–July 16, 2023.

This exhibition is made possible through the generous gift of the John Fong and Colin Johnstone collection. Support is provided by the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, the Blakemore Foundation, the donors to the Annual Fund Leadership Campaign, and the residents who support the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD).

Citations:

Chicago:

Her Brush: Japanese Women Artists from the Fong-Johnstone Collection. Denver: Denver Art Museum, 2023. publications.denartmus.org/her-brush.

MLA:

Her Brush: Japanese Women Artists from the Fong-Johnstone Collection. Denver Art Museum, 2023, publications.denartmus.org/her-brush.

Copyright

Published by the Denver Art Museum
100 West 14th Avenue Parkway
Denver, CO 80204
denverartmuseum.org

The Denver Art Museum is located on the homeland of the Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Ute people, along with many people from other Indigenous nations that call this place home. Learn more about our commitments

to better represent, elevate, and support Indigenous cultures and people, past and present, on our website.

Managing Editor Valerie Hellstein

Editor Leslie Murrell

Curatorial Assistants Arianna Flory and Douglas Wagner

Digital Publication Consultant Matt Popke

Digital Catalog Designer Darcy Christ

Photographers Christina Jackson, Eric Stephenson, and Jeff Wells © Denver Art Museum

Manager of Rights and Reproductions Renée B. Miller

This publication was created using Quire™, a multiplatform publishing tool created by the J. Paul Getty Trust and customized for the Denver Art Museum by Darcy Christ.

Home page image Yamamoto Shōtō **山本緗桃** (1757–1831), *Chrysanthemums* (detail), late 1700s–early 1800s. Ink, color, and gold on silk. Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.216.

Privacy Policy and Terms

The Denver Art Museum (the "DAM") is committed to protecting the privacy of its visitors, members, and donors in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

You agree that your use of the website is subject to the following Terms and Conditions.

These Terms and Conditions may be modified at any time and from time to time; the date of the most recent changes or revisions will appear on this page. Continued access to the website by you will constitute your acceptance of any changes or revisions to the Agreement. If you do not agree with the Terms and Conditions, please do not use this website.

The materials contained on the website are provided by the Denver Art Museum as a service to you for your use on an "as is, as available" basis. You

acknowledge that you are using the website at your own risk. The Denver Art Museum assumes no responsibility for errors or omissions in these materials. The Denver Art Museum makes no commitment to update the information contained herein. The Denver Art Museum makes no guarantees, and expressly disclaims any and all representations or warranties, express or implied, regarding the website, including without limitation the accuracy, completeness, or reliability of text, graphics, links, products and services, and other items accessed from or via the website or that the website will be uninterrupted, error-free, or free of viruses or other harmful components. No advice or information given by The Denver Art Museum or any other party on the website shall create any warranty or liability.

WEBSITE

All information gathered from you in connection with your use of this website (the "Site") is governed by this privacy policy, and by using the Site or communicating with us by email, you agree to its terms and conditions. The DAM is committed to protecting your privacy. We do not systematically collect or record names, addresses, phone numbers, gender identity or other personally identifying data (the "Personal Data") from visitors to

the Site, unless such data is voluntarily submitted by visitors for the purposes outlined below.

INFORMATION COLLECTED ON THE SITE

The DAM may compile and provide aggregate statistics about our visitors, customers, sales, traffic patterns and related site information to third parties, but these statistics will not include any Personal Data.

We may combine information you give to us online or at the DAM. We may also combine this information with publicly available information and information we received from or have cross-referenced with our third-party vendors such as information collected from cookies and other technologies to improve your user experience, to communicate with you about products or events that may be of interest to you, or for other promotional purposes.

DAM has implemented Google Analytics Advertising Features including remarketing with Google Analytics, Google Display Network impression reporting, Google Analytics demographics and interest reporting, and integrated services that require Google Analytics to collect data for advertising purposes, including the collection of data via advertising cookies and

identifiers. DAM and third-party vendors use first-party cookies (such as the Google Analytics cookie) or other first-party identifiers, and third-party cookies (such as Google advertising cookies) or other third-party identifiers together. Visitors can opt-out of the Google Analytics Advertising Features via Google Analytics' currently available opt-outs for the web.

LINKING

The DAM Site may include links to websites operated by third parties over which we have no control. Once you leave the DAM Site, the DAM Privacy Policy will not apply, and you access such sites at your own risk.

EMAIL NEWSLETTER

We may record your email address if you email us, submit an online form that contains your email address, register for classes or events, purchase a membership or make a donation online, or opt to receive email notices of DAM programs, news, and events. We will never share your email address. You may opt out of the email newsletter at any time by following the link in every newsletter footer or by emailing info@denverartmuseum.org and referencing “Remove from Email Newsletter” in the subject line.

USER-GENERATED CONTENT

The Denver Art Museum may reach out to use a video or image you share on social media when you tag the DAM's official social accounts. With your approval, you agree that you own all content and information you post or share using the Site (Facebook/Instagram/Twitter) (referred to as "User Content"). You grant to the Denver Art Museum a license to reproduce, display, perform, distribute, modify, and otherwise use your User Content in connection with the Site and for other marketing purposes, including without limitation in Denver Art Museum email, website, social media, print advertisements, and additional promotional communications. Get more information here.

If you have any questions about these Terms & Conditions or want to withdraw your consent to use your images at any time, please feel free to email us at getsocial@denverartmuseum.org.

CHANGES IN THIS PRIVACY POLICY

We reserve the right to modify this privacy statement and these terms and conditions at any time. Please visit this page periodically to check our current policy.