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View of Mountains and Boat on Lake. One of a pair of hanging scrolls.

Tanomura Chikuden

Not on display

Title/Description: View of Mountains and Boat on Lake. One of a pair of hanging scrolls.

Artist/Maker: Tanomura Chikuden (Artist)

Born: 1820 c. - 1835 c.

Object Type: Scroll painting

Materials: Fibre, Ink, Paper, Silk

Technique: Painting

Measurements: h. 210 x w. 136 mm

Accession Number: 689a

Historic Period: Edo period (AD 1600-1868)

Production Place: Asia, East Asia, Japan

School/Style: Bunjinga, Nanga

Tanomura Chikuden's (1777-1835) landscape painting is one of a pair of scrolls in the collection. Using inks on paper, Chikuden has painted a scene of natural beauty composed of hills and lakes (J. *sansui*). The partner scroll is a poem brushed in black ink on paper expressing the author-poet's wonder at a rural idyll (object number: 689b). The two works may once have been pages in a painting album that were removed and mounted for display in a Japanese home. The hanging scroll format carries prestige and these works would have been hung on special occasions in a ceremonial alcove or 'tokonoma'. [1].

Chikuden has used a monochrome palette to depict an idealized scene that borrows heavily from Chinese landscape paintings. Viewed from an elevated position the scenery appears calm and tranquil. Drama is found in the rocky peaks and ridges that rise upwards to fill the upper-right corner of the composition. Two large residencies, painted in minimalist strokes, nestle between trees at the foot of mountains. In the foreground, trees line the edge of a lake or bay, where a narrow boat floats close to the shore. These visual tropes resonated with Japanese literati (J. *bunjin*) artists, working in the 'Southern Painting' or Nanga style.

The painting is tightly executed with short, rapid brushstrokes. These oval dabs of ink have been termed 'Mi' dots after the much admired Chinese scholar-amateur painter Mi Fu (Mi Fei, 1051-1107). Chikuden has applied slightly dryer black ink on top of a wetter grey using a sideways angled brush, and left areas of the paper blank to suggest sky, water and mist.

Chikuden has created the illusion of three-dimensional space by dividing the composition into foreground, middle ground and background. However, the restricted use of line and tonality produces a shallow depth of field. At the bottom of the painting, the composition dissolves into clusters of abstract dots and dashes, which further enhance the scene's dream-like quality. The painting has been signed in black brushwork with Chikuden's studio name 'Den Ken' (丹青) and sealed 'Kyūjō' (久生). [2]

The Nanga movement occurred at a time when the transmission of foreign goods and ideas was tightly controlled by the ruling Tokugawa Shogunate. During this period of isolationism (J. *sakoku*), all traded goods had to enter Japan through Dejima, a manmade island situated in the Bay of Nagasaki. As travel bans prevented Japanese people from visiting China, Nanga artists partially received their education in Chinese painting from imported illustrated books and copies of paintings.

The two most influential Chinese woodblock-printed books that provided instruction on brushwork and composition were 'Manual of Eight Categories of Paintings' and 'Mustard Seed Garden Painting Manual'. 'Manual of Eight Categories of Paintings' (Ch. *Bazhong Huapu*; J. *Hasshu Gafu* 八種画法) was first published in China between 1621-1628, and reprinted in Japan in 1672. [3] 'Mustard Seed Garden Painting Manual' (Ch. *Jieziyuan Huazhuan*; J. *Kaishien Gaden* 芥子園畫傳) was first published in Jinling, China (modern-day Nanjing) in 1679 by Li Yu (1611-1680) with illustrations by Wang Gai (1645-1710), and reprinted in Japan in 1748. [4] The first generation of Japanese Nanga artists held these titles in high esteem, and faithfully imitated components of these works.

Born in Bungo province (modern-day Ōita prefecture in Northern Kyūshū), Chikuden inherited the post of physician from his father and conducted official administrative work until 1812. Disillusioned by the Bungo government's refusal to reform its severe taxation system, he resigned on the pretext of ill health. Liberated from his official duties, Chikuden went on to develop a wide artistic network and pursued a successful career as a painter and poet. [5]

Vanessa Tothill, June 2020

[1] Lawrence Smith and Yutaka Mino in Steven Hooper, ed., *Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection: Catalogue* (Newhaven; Norwich: Yale University Press in association with University of East Anglia, 1997), vol. 3, cat. no. 128, p. 176.

[2] Referencing Hooper, p. 176.

[3] British Museum (object number 1979,0305,0.17.1)

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1979-0305-0-17-1 [accessed 16 June 2020]

[4] <https://www.sainsbury-institute.org/info/the-mustard-seed-garden-manual-of-painting> [accessed 16 June 2020]

[5] Miyeko Murase, *Japanese Art: Selections form the Mary and Jackson Burke Collection* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975), pp. 282-83.

Further Reading

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