

THE ESSENCE OF ITŌ JAKUCHŪ'S COLORFUL REALM OF LIVING BEINGS

by

LENORE ROSE SNOWDON

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## THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

Student: Lenore Rose Snowdon

Title: The Essence of Itō Jakuchū's Colorful Realm of Living Beings

This Thesis has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in the Department of the History of Art and Architecture by:

Akiko Walley	Chairperson
Charles Lachman	Member
Nina Amstutz	Member

and

Scott L. Pratt	Dean of the Graduate School
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Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Graduate School.

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

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Title: The Essence of Itō Jakuchū's Colorful Realm of Living Beings

This thesis focuses on the *Colorful Realm of Living Beings*, a set of thirty-three hanging scrolls by an Edo-period painter named Itō Jakuchū (1716 – 1800). The *Colorful Realm* was already considered a masterpiece during Jakuchū's lifetime. This thesis investigates the fundamental question of what made the *Colorful Realm* effective. The unifying concept is the “essence” of painting in eighteenth-century Kyoto. This study demonstrates that, as a painter immersed in intellectual circles and a devout Buddhist, Jakuchū integrated elements that tapped into ideas about the “essence” of painting in Buddhist, bird-and-flower, and literati painting traditions in the *Colorful Realm* to produce a set of paintings not simply beautiful, but also fully animated and perfectly appropriate for Buddhist rituals.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Lenore Rose Snowdon

### GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene  
Southern Oregon University, Ashland  
University of New Mexico, Gallup

### DEGREES AWARDED:

Master of Art, History of Art and Architecture, University of Oregon, 2016  
Bachelor of Art, Interdisciplinary Studies, Southern Oregon University, 2014  
Associate of Art, Liberal Arts, University of New Mexico, 2012

### AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Japanese Art History

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Laurel Award Intern, Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, University of Oregon, September  
2016-December 2016

Graduate Employee (Teaching Fellow), University of Oregon, September 2015-June  
2016

Jack and Susy Wadsworth Collection of Postwar Japanese Prints Intern, Jordan Schnitzer  
Museum of Art, University of Oregon, July-September 2015

### GRANTS AWARDS AND HONORS:

Kerns Scholarship, Research Travel Grant, University of Oregon, 2015

Leon Mulling Award, Scholarship, Southern Oregon University, 2012 – 2014

### PUBLICATIONS:

Snowdon, Lenore. "Amano Kunihiro," in *the Jack and Susy Wadsworth Collection of Postwar Japanese Prints*, edited by Anne Rose Kitagawa and Akiko Walley. Eugene: Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, 2015.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This essay is organized as a catalogue to a hypothetical exhibition, *The Essence of Itō Jakuchū's Colorful Realm of Living Beings*. The centerpiece of this project is the *Colorful Realm of Living Beings* (*Dōshoku sai-e*, 動植綵絵; hereafter *Colorful Realm*), a set of thirty-three hanging scrolls by renowned Japanese painter, Itō Jakuchū (伊藤若冲, 1716 – 1800). Completed during the Edo period (1603 – 1868) between circa 1757 – 1766, the *Colorful Realm* includes a triptych with Buddhist deities, and thirty “bird-and-flower” paintings that depict an array of birds, insects, sea creatures, and flowers, plants, and trees in rich colors and detail. The thirty-three hanging scrolls in the *Colorful Realm* are done on silk using some of the most expensive pigments of the period. Upon completion, they were donated to Shōkokuji temple (相国寺) in Kyoto, which Jakuchū patronized.

The eldest son of an affluent greengrocer, Jakuchū enjoyed a successful and prolific artistic career. Colorful bird-and-flower painting was one of his specialties. The *Colorful Realm* has long been considered to be Jakuchū's magnum opus in this genre, but the sheer number of scrolls made the set challenging to research holistically, and nearly impossible to exhibit in total. In 2012, the entire set of the *Colorful Realm* was exhibited for the first time outside of Japan at the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. However, as this exhibition was arranged in part to celebrate the conservation done on the set, it did not include any other works to contextualize the set.



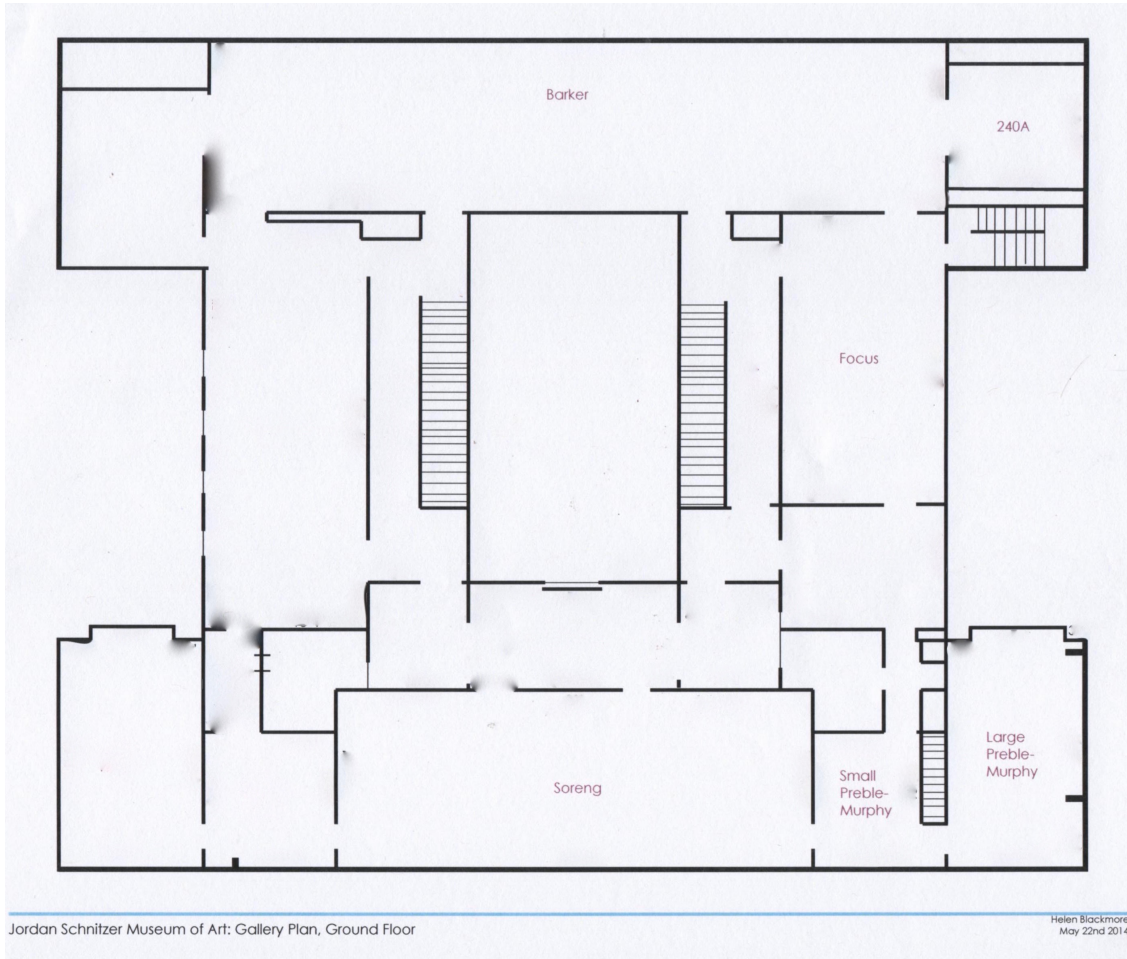
This project envisions an exhibition where the *Colorful Realm* is placed within the religious and cultural ideals shared by Jakuchū’s circle of friends and acquaintances, which included men who not only patronized him, but also more importantly in many respects groomed Jakuchū as a sophisticated and contemporary artist. The unifying theme of this exhibition is “essence.” In this project, the English word “essence ” is selected as a translation for several loosely overlapping ideas people developed to define what made a particular work a good painting. This exhibition demonstrates that the ideas of the “essence” of a painting—initially developed in China and later adapted by the intellectual community in Japan—impacted Jakuchū’s choice of motifs and technique in the *Colorful Realm*.

The exhibition (and by extension this catalogue) is divided into five chapters. After the second chapter introduces Jakuchū and the *Colorful Realm*, the remaining three focus on three distinct ideas about the “essence ” in Buddhist painting, bird-and-flower painting, and literati painting. The concepts of what makes a painting good (or in the context of Buddhist icons, efficacious) in these three traditions are not necessarily mutually exclusive. However, they developed at different times and emphasize different elements of a painting as its essence. As a painter fully immersed in the intellectual circles of the Edo period and a devout Buddhist, Jakuchū integrated the ideas about the spirit of painting in these three traditions to produce a set of paintings not simply beautiful, but also fully animated and perfectly appropriate for Buddhist rituals.

In order to provide scope to this project, this exhibition is designed to take place in the exhibition rooms within the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art (JSMA) at the University of Oregon (Fig. 1). The pieces were selected with a careful consideration of

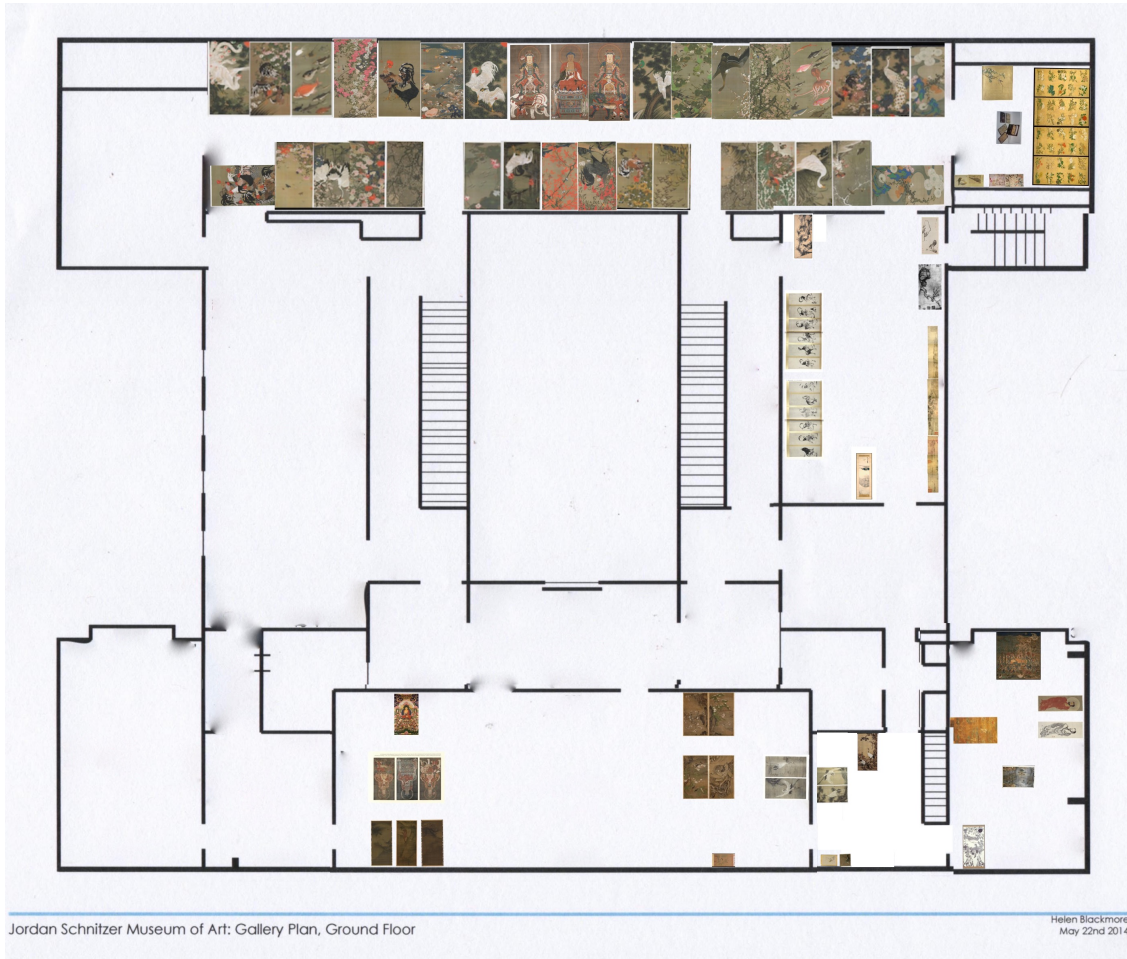
the exhibition space, so that they would fit within the available gallery space of the museum in a coherent and aesthetically pleasing way. Furthermore, whenever possible, I made an effort to incorporate works of art from the JSMA collection.

Because this is a hypothetical exhibition, the conceptual and aesthetic concerns took precedent over other practical aspects, such as budget, in the selection of pieces. Beside the thirty-three hanging scrolls in the *Colorful Realm*, all of which will be exhibited in the museum's main special exhibition space, the Coeta and Donald Barker Gallery, I selected representative works from collections in both Japan and United States. To adhere to the current division of space within the JSMA, Chinese works will be exhibited in the Betty and John Soreng Gallery designated for Chinese art, while the Japanese works will be exhibited in the Fay Boyer Preble and Virginia Cooke Murphy Galleries for Japanese art. Because the discussion on the literati ideals is transregional, involving works from both China and Japan, I decided to use the Focus Gallery, reserved primarily for special installations. As a subsection to the literati ideals more specific to Japan, the Barker Gallery's sub-space, 240A, will exhibit sampling of art and artifacts relate to the increased interest in natural sciences in eighteenth-century Japan (Fig. 2).



**Fig. 1:** Helen Blackmore, *2F Gallery Floor Plan, Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art*. 2014.

Courtesy of Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art.



**Fig. 2:** *Exhibition Layout.* Modified from Helen Blackmore, *2F Gallery Floor Plan,* Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art. 2014.

## CHAPTER II

### JAKUCHŪ'S WORLD

#### **Jakuchū's Life:**

The Edo period (1603 – 1868) was an era of great cultural production and sophistication. During this time, the Tokugawa, the ruling warrior family, moved the center of political power eastward from the imperial capital, Kyoto, to Edo (present Tokyo). Despite this transition, Kyoto remained active as a cultural and religious hub. The city was a site for rapid new developments in painting, calligraphy, and poetry; rituals and theatrical performances; theology, and philosophy. The distance from the political capital of Edo allowed Kyoto artists to practice their art without much interference from the strict regulation of the Tokugawa government.<sup>1</sup>

Innovations in cultural production continued in Kyoto even after the Tokugawa government began to enforce an isolation policy (*sakoku*, 鎖国). Literally “chained country,” the *sakoku* policy was a set of edicts that strictly controlled trade with foreign, namely European countries, and the importation of foreign goods. Lack of international travel and the long period of relative peace and stability within the country allowed an urban class of wealthy merchants to develop. The members of the warrior class became reliant upon the merchant class for goods and entertainment. In addition to the Buddhist

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the cultural history of Kyoto, see: Yukio Lippit, “Jakuchū's Kyoto,” in *Colorful Realm: Japanese Bird-and-Flower Paintings by Itō Jakuchū* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2012); Anna Beerens, *Friends, Acquaintances, Pupils and Patrons – Japanese Intellectual Life in the Late Eighteenth Century: A Prosopographical Approach* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2006); Yoko Woodson, “Introduction,” in *Traditions Unbound: Groundbreaking Painters from Eighteenth-Century Kyoto* (San Francisco: Asian Art Museum, 2005), 15.

clerics, nobles, and warriors, this new urban population of educated commoners became the patrons and producers of art. The scarcity of imported goods also increased the demand for Chinese cultural products amongst these groups.<sup>2</sup>

One of the painters who flourished in Kyoto during this time was Itō Jakuchū (伊藤若冲, 1716 – 1800).<sup>3</sup> Born in Kyoto to a family of wealthy green grocers, Jakuchū ran his family store, the Masuya (枿屋), for nearly twenty years after his father's death in 1738. He maintained a close relationship with this community well into adulthood. Though Jakuchū began studying painting in his twenties, he did not devote his life to aesthetic pursuits until 1755, when he passed management of the Masuya on to his younger brother.

Jakuchū was a master of monochromatic and polychromatic painting. The *Colorful Realm of Living Beings* (*Dōshoku sai-e*, 動植綵絵, hereafter *Colorful Realm*), produced between 1757 and 1766, is widely regarded to be Jakuchū's masterpiece.<sup>4</sup> The set of thirty-three hanging scrolls includes thirty bird-and-flower paintings (*kachō ga*, 花鳥画) and a triptych depicting the Śākyamuni Buddha (J: Shaka, 釈迦, hereafter Shaka) and his bodhisattva attendants, Mañjuśrī (J: Monju, 文殊, hereafter Monju) and

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<sup>2</sup> For more information about *sakoku* and its impact on Japanese cultural production during the Edo period, see Beerens, "Itō Jakuchū," in *Friends, Acquaintances, Pupils and Patrons*, 76.

<sup>3</sup> For significant studies on Jakuchū in English, see: Beerens, "Itō Jakuchū," in *Friends, Acquaintances, Pupils and Patrons*, 76; Lippit, *Colorful Realm*; Money L Hickman and Yasuhiro Sato, *The Paintings of Jakuchū* (New York: Harry N. Abrams 1989); Yusuke Shiro Saraya, ed., *Homage to All Creatures Great and Small: The Visionary World of Itō Jakuchū* (Tokyo: Yusuke Shiro Saraya, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> *Dōshoku sai-e* (*Colorful Realm*) was the title chosen by Jakuchū to encompass the first twenty-four bird-and-flower paintings and the Shaka triptych. In today's scholarship, this title is typically used to refer only to the thirty bird-and-flower paintings. However, because I believe the triptych to be an integral part of this set, in my thesis, I will use *Colorful Realm* to refer to the complete set of thirty-three paintings.

Samantabhadra (J: Fugen, 普賢, hereafter Fugen).<sup>5</sup> The bird-and-flower paintings are a remarkable menagerie of life, depicting more than one hundred species of animals, including twenty-five varieties of bird, seventy types of insects, frogs, lizards, and other squalid animals, as well as freshwater and seawater fish. In addition to animals, the set also portrays more than twenty species of trees, flowers, and other plants. Jakuchū donated the set to the Buddhist temple, Shōkokuji (相国寺), for the enhancement of its ritual practices, most likely inspired by the encouragement of his friend and mentor Daiten Kenjō (大典顯常, 1719 – 1801).<sup>6</sup>

### **Defining the “Essence”:**

The exhibition, *The Essence of Itō Jakuchū’s Colorful Realm of Living Beings*, explores the essential artistic and philosophical ideas that informed the subject matter and particular appearance of the *Colorful Realm*. The overarching framework of this exhibition is the loosely defined concept of the “essence” that encompasses ideas about what animates a painting in three distinct East Asian painting traditions: Buddhist; bird-and-flower; and literati painting. This exhibition demonstrates that the *Colorful Realm* was in fact a brilliant harmonization of independent, but overlapping ideas that create a richly vibrant, seemingly secular, yet profoundly spiritual set of paintings.

This exhibition is inspired by an essay by Yukio Lippit included in the catalogue, *Colorful Realm: Japanese Bird-and-Flower Paintings by Itō Jakuchū*, that accompanied

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<sup>5</sup> Unless otherwise noted, this thesis will use conventional Japanese transliterations of the names of Buddhist deities.

<sup>6</sup> Lippit, “Dedicatory Inscription,” in *Colorful Realm*, 129.

the 2012 exhibition in the National Gallery of Art (Washington D.C.) he curated. The 2012 exhibition was the first time the entire thirty-three scrolls from the *Colorful Realm* were exhibited in the United States. Lippit's main catalogue essay, "*Colorful Realm of Living Beings: Juxtaposition, Naturalism, and Ritual*," is equally groundbreaking. Rather than simply considering the *Colorful Realm* as a set of decorative paintings, Lippit approached it through three lenses: juxtaposition, naturalism, and ritual. By doing so, Lippit successfully presented a more nuanced view of Jakuchū that was firmly rooted in the cultural and devotional climate of his time and place (Edo-period Kyoto) instead of merely repeating the popular perception of the painter as a genius "eccentric."<sup>7</sup>

This exhibition follows Lippit's approach, but shifts the perspectives from the historical circumstances to painting theories that would have determined some of the choices Jakuchū made for the *Colorful Realm*. The unifying theme of this exhibition is "essence," which is the English word selected to translate several loosely overlapping ideas about what made a particular work a good painting. The three painting traditions it focuses on—Buddhist, bird-and-flower, and literati—relate to the use, subject matter, and audience of the *Colorful Realm*.

Before we move into the discussion of essence of painting specific to each of the three traditions (which will be explored in the subsequent chapters), it is important to first understand the philosophical foundation for these painting theories in China, which in

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<sup>7</sup> Lippit, "Colorful Realm of Living Beings: Juxtaposition, Naturalism and Ritual," in *Colorful Realm*, 134-169. For the section on juxtaposition, Lippit explained Jakuchū's tendency to juxtapose subject matter traditionally considered to be high (or elegant) and low (or vulgar) that we can observe in the *Colorful Realm* as quintessentially Edo period style. In his discussion of naturalism, Lippit considers the centrality of Jakuchū's relationship with the Shōkokuji monk, Daiten, in the establishment of his reputation as a "naturalist" painter, while placing his painting practices within the general rise in interest toward natural sciences at this period. Finally, Lippit clarifies the ritual context the *Colorful Realm* was used upon its completion through Jakuchū's dedicatory inscription (one of the few primary documents about this set) and historical precedence.



turn were adapted in Japan by the Edo period. Generally speaking, the Chinese painting philosophy was informed by the understanding of the essence of living beings (or in some cases life force) in: Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism (also Taoism). Although as institutions, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism competed against each other throughout their history in China, their basic beliefs, ritual practices, and ethos were in many ways inseparably intertwined. One shared concern was the question of what one might call the “inner essence” of things.

The oldest of these three philosophies is Confucianism, which emerged in China’s Eastern Zhou Dynasty (771 – 256 BCE). In Confucian teaching, “inner essence” is often explained through the idea of *qi* (氣). According to Confucian thought, *taiji* (太極) is the absolute, all-encompassing force that balances the universe.<sup>8</sup> *Taiji* is the whole formed by the dualistic forces of *yin* (陰) and *yang* (陽). Humans, as beings with an inherently good, benevolent nature, are the receptacles for the elements of *yin* and *yang*.<sup>9</sup> Through respectable behavior and the investigation of things (C: *gewu zhizhi*, 格物致知), humans, like the eternal cosmos, maintain a balance of *yin* and *yang*.<sup>10</sup> This internal vitality is known as *qi*. Through this internal balance, man mirrors the universe. The Confucian value of *qi* is thus integrally connected to the practitioner’s inner essence.<sup>11</sup>

Buddhism, on the other hand, was introduced to China in the Han Dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE) and blossomed as a religious institution during the period of the Six Dynasties (220 – 589 CE). According to Buddhist teaching, all living things have

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<sup>8</sup> David Gedalecia, “Excursion into Substance and Function: the Development of the *T’i-yung* Paradigm in Chu Hsi,” *Philosophy of East and West* 24 (1974): 443-451.

<sup>9</sup> Wing-tsit Chan, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 461.

<sup>10</sup> Chan, “The Book of Mencius” in *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, 63.

<sup>11</sup> *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s.v. “qi”, accessed October 08, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/qi-Chinese-philosophy>.

“Buddha nature” (C: *foxing*, J: *busshō*, 佛性), or the potential to attain the ultimate awakening.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, in Daoism—which also became established as an organized institution in the Six Dynasties period—it was believed that an infinite, ultimate property, known as Dao (道), fills and unites all things in the universe.<sup>13</sup> The virtues of Dao, including humility, spontaneity, and tranquility, all exist within humans. These values exist within all things in their “true forms” (C: *zhenxing*, 真形).<sup>14</sup> The innermost property of anything is Dao, and is thus the most pure part of the thing. According to Shih-shan Susan Huang, “true form” can apply to a deity, an icon, a mountain, a purified self, an internal organ, a talisman, or a picture.” A Daoist’s inner Dao is reflected by their *shen* (神), the consciousness of the virtuous devotee that indicates a mindful nature. Thus, the devotee’s *shen* expresses their true form, the manifestation of Dao, which in turn places the devotee’s soul within the greater cosmos.

The ideas of “inner essence” in the Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism are clearly distinct from each other; yet agree fundamentally that there in fact is something that can be considered as “essence” that animates all living beings. In the most general sense, the painting theories in China developed around the discussion of how a painted work captures this “essence” of living beings, and *whose* essence it should capture: that of the subject or the painter himself. By exploring the ideas concerning the essential quality that animates an image in Buddhist, bird-and-flower, and literati paintings, this

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<sup>12</sup> For the purpose of consistency, the characters for relevant names and terms will be provided first in English transliteration, followed by their Chinese or Japanese character. When the discussion is about topics that are exclusively Chinese or Japanese, only the relevant term will be provided.

<sup>13</sup> Chan, “The Natural Way of Lao Tzu,” in *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, 136.

<sup>14</sup> Shih-shan Susan Huang, “True Form Charts,” in *Picturing the True Form: Daoist Visual Culture in Traditional China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 135.

exhibition demonstrates how Jakuchū integrated the ideas about the essence of painting in these three traditions to produce a set of paintings that was not simply beautiful, but also fully animated and perfectly appropriate for Buddhist rituals.

PLATES: ITŌ JAKUCHŪ, *THE COLORFUL REALM OF LIVING BEINGS*

Set of thirty-three hanging scrolls; ink and color on silk. Edo period: c. 1757-1766. The Museum of the Imperial Collections.

1. *Peonies and Butterflies* (*Shakuyaku gunchō zu*, 芍薬群群図). Edo period, c. 1757.

Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 142.0 x 79.8 cm. From: Yukio Lippit, *Colorful Realm: Japanese Bird-and-Flower Paintings by Itō Jakuchū* (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2012), 4.



Believed to be the earliest painting in the *Colorful Realm* set, this painting depicts a lively scene of seven kinds of butterflies swooping amongst peony blossoms. Negative space dominates the upper half of the composition, while the peonies frame the bottom edge of the pictorial space, directing the viewer's gaze to the colorful butterflies, flitting energetically through the sky and petals. The peonies are depicted in different stages of life, as buds, full blossoms, and deteriorating florets.

If this is the earliest painting of the set, then it is intriguing that *Peonies and Butterflies* is the most similar to the classic mode of Chinese bird-and-flower paintings in the *Colorful Realm*. This composition allows the viewers to focus on the central motif.

The butterflies are carefully positioned in interlocking diagonal lines. The blank background and the verticality of peonies almost create a sense of stillness, so if one focuses on any individual butterfly, it may appear to be suspended midair, motionless. However, through a series of intersecting diagonals, this painting perfectly captures the silent unsteady fluttering of these winged creatures, filling the painting with their vital energy, the *qi* (J: *ki*), as inspired by Confucian philosophy.

2. *Plum Blossoms and Small Birds* (*Baika shōkin zu*, 梅花小禽図). 1758. 142.0 x 79.8 cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 8.



Eight small Japanese White-Eye birds appear perched on a large plum tree in full bloom, by the bank of a stream. One can trace the birds' diagonal sightlines across the composition, which animates the painting with energy and dynamism. The birds are painted in a naturalistic and highly detailed manner, with careful attention paid to their colors, feathers, and expressive eyes. The branches of the plum tree extend to the upper edge of the painted surface with unnatural curves and twists. Unlike the birds, Jakuchū depicts the plum tree not from life, but following the pictorial conventions established in China and Japan, evoking an idea of a plum tree, rather than a life-like depiction of any single tree. The

stream and earth in the foreground are presented through carefully administered, abstract brushstrokes. Plum trees are a motif closely associated with literati painting in China. Here, Jakuchū incorporates the fast and bold brushstrokes and generally muted colors typically associated with the literati mode into more detailed bird-and-flower mode (see Chapter V for further discussion).

3. *Mandarin Ducks in Snow* (*Setchū en'ō zu*, 雪中鸳鸯图). 1759. 142.0 x 79.8 cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 12.



As it is clear from the title, the focus of this painting is a pair of male and female mandarin ducks in a winter landscape. The male duck perches atop a snow-covered embankment, while the female dives into the water, only her tail and wings visible. Three other birds—from left to right, a Brown Thrush, Narcissus Flycatcher, and Red Turtle Dove—perch in the snow-covered branches that extend downward, directing the viewers' gaze.

Mated pairs of ducks are a popular winter motif in Chinese and Japanese bird-and-flower painting, symbolizing endurance and faithfulness. The ducks are painted with careful attention to detail using opaque paint. Unlike *Plum Blossoms and Small Birds* (Plate 2), no motif or brushwork can be explicitly

tied to literati tradition in this painting. However, certain details seem to match well with Jakuchū's reputation as an eccentric. For instance, the willow branches heavy with ice hang down vertically in an unnaturally rigid way, while a narrow snow-capped pillar-like rock at the right foreground blends in with the riverbank in the background, playing with perspective. The free movement of falling snow is expressed through splattered white paint, reminding the viewer of the artist's hand. The combination of hyper-realistic birds and stylized depiction of the natural elements that surround them creates tension, capturing not only the spirit of his avian subjects, but also artist's own literati-like humor.

4. *Autumn Millet and Sparrows* (*Shūtō gunjaku zu*, 秋塘群雀图). 1759. 142.8 x 80.1 cm.

From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 16.



A flock of fifty-four sparrows, almost identical in their appearance, fly downwards in a diagonal formation from the top of the composition to bottom left. Their bodies are aligned nearly identically: heads and beaks pointing down, and their wings fully outstretched. A lone, white sparrow gleams in the center of the flock. At the bottom of the composition, nineteen additional sparrows flit through the dried millet stalks and blue chrysanthemums. The painting generally has an S-shaped composition: the

majority of motifs are clustered to either the left bottom side or the top right. There is a distinct difference in the way the sparrows in the bush and in flight midair are portrayed. The ones in the bush are energetic, harking back in technique to the traditional Chinese academic mode of painting.

The sparrows in flight, on the other hand, may be a combination of several different modes of painting. When one focuses on individual bird, its body and wings appear anatomically correct, but rigid to the point of being almost didactic, reminiscent of the scientific illustrations that were widely circulated in the eighteenth-century Kyoto (see Chapter V for further discussion). In their original context, such illustrations were considered naturalistic and capable of capturing the essence of the subject. However, in this painting, any sense of naturalism is defied by the flock's stylized uniform flight pattern.



5. *Sunflowers and Rooster* (*Himawari yūkei zu*, 向日葵雄鷄図). 1759. 142.3 x 79.7 cm.

From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 21.



In this work, a multicolored rooster appears, standing on one leg, beneath a patch of sunflowers. The glorious sunflower stalks seem to lean over the rooster unable to support the weight of their own flower heads. The twisting vines of the blue and white morning glories snake in and out of the sunflowers. The rooster is portrayed raising its head proudly to the right. Its plumage is ornate and vivid, richly colored with opaque pigments. Looking closely, one realizes that the sunflowers are depicted in four stages of

life: budding, early-blossoming, full bloom, and decay. The details in the flowers' leaves also seem to remind the viewer of transient nature of life: new leaves unfurl, fresh leaves get sunspots, and old leaves are eaten away by insects.

Jakuchū's familiarity with a more naturalist mode of painting shows in the careful attention he pays to the rooster's feathers. He displays a clear awareness of the construction of feathers and common feather colors and patterns. However, the painting is not without certain elements of exaggeration: the rooster extended its neck long, looking slightly upward, while turning its head sharply toward the right, twisting its body.

With this dramatic gesture, Jakuchū perfectly captures the character of the proud majestic fighting bird.

6. *Hydrangeas and Fowl* (*Ajisai sōkei zu*, 紫陽花双鶏図). 1759. 142.9 x 79.7 cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 24.



A mated pair of fowl and a small sparrow is depicted amongst hydrangeas, peonies, camellias, and ferns. Blue and white hydrangeas spread across the top of the composition, their opaque colors stark against the silk background. Peonies and camellias wrap around a twisted stone with holes. The rooster and hen are captured mid-dance, the rooster stares intently at the hen, which covers her face almost bashfully. At the top of the painting, a lone sparrow appears hanging upside down from a thin hydrangea branch, observing the dance.

Like *Sunflowers and Rooster*, the painting shows Jakuchū's clear awareness of nature, particularly in his depictions of the fowls' plumage, the peonies, and the camellias. The hydrangea blossoms, on the other hand, seem much more stylized. The four petals are arranged in a diamond shape without any shading. The opaque and flat petals of the hydrangeas and the hyper-detailed and more naturalistic mode employed for birds and

other plants contrast the other painted forms, allowing the motifs in the foreground—especially the rooster and hen amid their courting ritual—to pop out in what may appear at first glance a very busy composition.

7. *Rooster and Hen* (*Taikei shiyū zu*, 大鷄雌雄図). 1759. 142.3 x 79.1 cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 28.



*Rooster and Hen* depicts a mated pair of chickens in an otherwise empty composition. The rooster, sporting a brilliant red triple crown, is richly colorful with dappled shades of brown, white, and black. His feathers are crisp with clean edges. The hen is almost completely black with a few small white spots on the back of her neck.

What the hen lacks in color, she makes up in texture and modeling. The different layers of her feathers are shaded to give her entire body three-dimensionality. Many of her feathers have

highlights to capture the shimmering quality of deep black. *Rooster and Hen* is unusual within the *Colorful Realm* set for its complete lack of background, except for a consistent wash of light *sumi* ink. Yet Jakuchū skillfully anchors the fowl in the composition through the positioning of their legs with a thin black diagonal line behind the rooster's legs, to indicate the location of the ground.

The simplicity of the composition allows the rooster and hen to take center stage, highlighting the remarkable color, patterns, and overall detail of the fowls' plumage. By doing so, Jakuchū seems to showcase his deep knowledge of the rooster and hen's natural forms. The painting's simple setting makes the birds' dramatic stances even more theatrical. Both rooster and hen twist their heads opposite their bodies and splay their toes out dynamically, perfectly capturing what one may imagine Jakuchū understood to be the inner qualities of these otherwise common domestic birds: proud and dignified.

8. *Plum Blossoms and Moon* (*Baika kōgetsu zu*, 梅花紅月図). C. 1759 – 1761. 142.3 x 79.7 cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 32.



This is the only painting in the *Colorful Realm* set that depicts the moon, though there are several other nighttime scenes. A twisted, knotted plum tree is depicted in full bloom, partially obscuring the full moon. As it is clear from works such as *Roosters, Hens, and Chicks* (Plate 54), Jakuchū was accomplished in literati-style monochromatic painting, though it is not included in the *Colorful Realm* set. *Plum Blossoms and Moon*, however, does exhibit qualities perhaps inspired by literati conventions. For instance, the

plum tree in this painting is similar to early literati-mode ink paintings done in the

Northern Song. The ink wash used to express the darkness of night, and the technique of using negative space to emphasize the brightness of the moon are both techniques also typically seen in a literati painting. Not to mention a plum tree was one of the most popular motifs of painting in the literati mode.

9. *Old Pine Tree and Peacock* (*Rōshō kujaku zu*, 老松孔雀图). C. 1759 – 1761. 142.9 x 79.6 cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 36.



A regal white peacock is portrayed perched on a rock covered with blue moss beneath a pine tree, surrounded by large blossoming red, white, and pink peonies. The peacock is white with gold, blue, and green tail feathers. Each of the peacock's feathers is remarkably detailed and layered, from the top of its head to the tip of its tail. Jakuchū used multiple layers of shell-white and gold pigment to give the feathers three-dimensionality. The peonies, pine branches, and stones are also detailed, with careful attention paid to each

element.

This painting is an assortment of traditional Chinese auspicious symbols. Peacocks and peonies were associated with the grandeur of Chinese emperors while nebulous “scholar’s rocks” and pine trees were symbols of an educated individual. In this

respect, this painting harks back to a conventional symbolic significance of bird-and-flower painting. Jakuchū's choice of composition to position the shimmering peacock at the center of other auspicious natural motifs is also in keeping with this convention.

10. *Hibiscus and Pair of Chickens* (*Fuyō sōkei zu*, 芙蓉双鷄図). C. 1759 – 1761. 143.4 x 79.9 cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 40.



chickens.

The composition of the *Hibiscus and Pair of Chickens* follows the convention of Chinese bird-and-flower painting. The hibiscuses are mostly clustered to the right side of the picture plane along with the blue stones, creating a pocket of open space in the background toward the left. The leaves and flowers perfectly frame the fowl, directing

*Hibiscus and Pair of Chickens* can be considered a culmination of Jakuchū's early experimentation in incorporating a hint of literati sensibility to more traditional modes of bird-and-flower painting. The painting depicts a pair of fowl mid-dance atop what appears to be a hill. They are shaded by hibiscus bush growing around a rock covered in blue-green moss. Similar in concept to the *Hydrangeas and Fowl*, a small bird—possibly a Siberian Bluechat—appears perched in the hibiscus, gazing at the

the viewers' eyes to the dancing birds. Just as in the earlier *Plum Blossoms and Small Birds* (Plate 2), some aspects of this painting are done in bold monochromatic brushstrokes reminiscent of a literati (or even Zen) painting. For instance, Jakuchū delineates the ground beneath the rooster and hen in rapid and rhythmic upward strokes. Here, too, although the details of the feathers betray Jakuchū's careful study of nature, he seems to disregard the anatomical accuracy, presenting the two birds in acrobatic body positions and theatrical stances, capturing the vitality of the birds as they dance.

11. *Old Pine Tree, White Rooster, and Hen* (*Rōshō hakkei zu*, 老松白鷄図). C. 1759 – 1761. 142.6 x 79.7 cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 44.



*Old Pine Tree, White Rooster, and Hen* depicts a mated pair of white chickens perched in a dark pine tree. The rooster opens its beak, presumably crowing at the red sun in the upper right corner. The background is almost completely filled by pine branches. The dark color of the pine needles emphasizes the brilliance of the white and red contrast of the fowl and sun. As seen in many of the bird-and-flower paintings in the *Colorful Realm* set, Jakuchū pays careful attention to the texture and modeling of his avian

subjects, dedicated to rendering their plumage in a naturalistic manner. Here, Jakuchū

creates a strong bottom left to top right diagonal line through the careful placement of the pine branch and the posture of the chickens, which draws the viewer's attention to the brilliant red sun in the upper right corner.

12. *Old Pine Tree and Cockatoos* (*Rōshō ōmu zu*, 老松鸚鵡圖). C. 1759 – 1761. 142.6 x 79.7 cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 48.



A pair of cockatoos, accompanied by a green parrot, appears in a pine tree above an embankment that seems to slope over a cascading body of water in the bottom left. The cockatoos are painted very much like Jakuchū's other white birds, with layers of shell-white pigment and gold, giving their bodies texture and three-dimensionality. Their bodies do not show overt signs of abstraction. The crooked pine tree resembles those that appear in traditional bird-and-flower paintings, somewhat stylized but with

carefully textured trunk and needles.

The accompanying parrot exhibits a stark contrast to the pair of cockatoos in the level of naturalism. The body of the parrot is painted flatly, without modeling. The relative stillness of the birds and the pine tree seems to accentuate the swift brushstrokes



used for the hill behind, functioning to hint the height of the waterfall and by extension that of the pine tree.

**13.** *Goose and Reeds* (*Roga zu*, 芦鷺図). 1761. 142.6 x 79.5 cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 53.



A white goose with a bulbous bill is depicted standing on an embankment with overgrown reeds. The goose's body is painted like Jakuchū's other white birds, with layers of white and gold pigment, each feather delicately defined. Its brilliant white plumage and yellow beak stand out against the otherwise muted composition. The bird's profile is static and smooth, curving gently.

The goose's still body contrasts sharply with the reeds in the background. The reeds are painted in monochromatic ink in a rough and speedy way, more in line with literati- or Zen-mode paintings. Alternating wet and dry brushstrokes are used to delineate the sweeping leaves and stalks. The color of the base silk that shows through the thin layer of black wash gives a green hue to the body of water. The variation in the thickness of brushstrokes creates a sense of depth. The light ink wash is applied to the embankment just at the bottom right corner, which effectively separates the foreground and

background. There is a darker hue of wash applied to the body of water along the edge of the embankment, clarifying that the patch of darkest spot of ink immediately to the front of the goose is a small cliff. Because the number of colors is limited, in this painting we can observe Jakuchū's effective use of light and dark tones. At the top of the composition, Jakuchū leaves the outline of the reeds as negative space to present the shadowy presence of their large tips, while clustering the lower leaves of the reeds in darker shades of gray around the body of the goose to accentuate the brightness of its white body.

14. *Nandina and Rooster* (*Nanten yūkei zu*, 南天雄白鷄図). C. 1759 – 1761. 142.6 x 79.9 cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 56.



In this painting, a *shamo* (軍鷄) rooster accompanied by a small orange bird, appear standing on an embankment surrounded by red nandina berries and chrysanthemums. *Shamo* roosters originated in Thailand and were introduced to Japan through Korea as fighting roosters.<sup>15</sup> In this painting, the rooster stands dramatically, legs splayed and head high. Its beak opens to reveal a tongue outstretched. The nandina berries hang down like grapes from narrow branches. The stems of the

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<sup>15</sup> Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 57.

chrysanthemums are abbreviated at parts, making them appear floating against the silk background.

The painting clearly distinguishes this rooster from others in the *Colorful Realm* set, particularly in terms of the shape and color of its feathers, and the distinctive shape of its crest, revealing Jakuchū's intimate knowledge of the bird's specific breed. Many of the bird-and-flower pieces in the *Colorful Realm* set exhibit play with colors and shapes. For instance, in this painting, circles appear repeatedly across motifs from the nandina berries, spots on the rooster's body, to the round shape of the chrysanthemum flowers. This echoing of geometric shape creates visual intrigue. It also demonstrates that, contrary to popular perception, Jakuchū was not a simple "naturalist." Even when he incorporated naturalistic elements, his interests often lay not in presenting his creatures as they are in life, but in creating a sense of cosmic unity through manipulation of details.

15. *Plum Blossoms and Crane* (*Baika gunkaku zu*, 梅花群鶴図). C. 1761 – 1765. 141.8

x 79.7 cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 60.



Five white cranes with red crests appear at rest in front of a blooming plum tree. Mouths agape, the cranes crowd the composition, conveying not only the sound but also the body heat of the birds. The almost-transparent petals of the plum blossoms seem to mirror the delicate, white color of the cranes' feathers. Similarly, their long sharp beaks and twiggy legs mirror the jagged plum branches. In fact, the cranes stand so close to each other that it is difficult to ascertain which pair of legs is attached to which bird.

Similarly the cranes' beaks blend in with the plum tree branches, creating a playful disorientation and echoing of motifs often associated with so-called "eccentric" painters of the Edo period.

16. *Palm Trees and Roosters* (*Shuro yūkei zu*, 棕櫚雄鷄図). C. 1761 – 1765. 142.7 x

79.7 cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 64.



In this painting, a pair of black and white roosters stands in a dark palm tree grove. The roosters are exchanging intense gaze as if they are about to engage in a cockfight. As seen in many of Jakuchū's bird-and-flower paintings, the roosters are painted carefully, with dedicated attention to detail. The palm fronds radiate out from hollow centers like fireworks.

The palm tree grove does not appear frequently in bird-and-flower paintings. The composition is different from other paintings in the *Colorful Realm* set in its emphasis of depth in space as some of the palm trees clearly recede into the background. In addition to the faint black wash that we have seen in many of the pieces from this set, the painting has a second application of dark green wash. Rather than creating shading, this second layer of green pigment provides texture to the ground and allows the black and grey rooster to stand out against the background.

17. *Lotus Pond and Fish* (*Renchi yūgyo zu*, 蓮池遊魚図). C. 1761 – 1765. 142.6 x 79.7 cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 68.



*Lotus Pond and Fish* is one of the most intriguing compositions in the *Colorful Realm* set. It depicts an underwater scene with nine sweetfish (*ayu*), swimming amidst lotuses and reeds. As seen in *Palm Trees and Roosters* (Plate 16), Jakuchū applies a wash of green pigment to the entire painting in addition to black, giving the entire painting a cool, moist ambiance. Each fish is painted with smooth gradients of gray and green, with subtle dappling to indicate scales. The lotus pads and flowers are painted with

similar sensitivity.

The painting employs multiple vantage points of the embankment as though the viewer is lying on their stomach overlooking the pond. The viewer is simultaneously seeing both the surface of the pond and the underwater world. While the sweetfish are depicted from the side—as if to observe them from the side of a fish tank—the vantage point for the lotuses drifts from the side (left and right edges of the painting) to almost straight down from above (top).

In bird-and-flower context, lotus is a summer plant. However, because lotus is also one of the most important symbolic motifs in Buddhism, this painting is one of the

few in the *Colorful Realm* set that can be interpreted as a Buddhist work on its own. Just as majority of plants and flowers in this set, Jakuchū paints his lotuses in all stages of life, budding, blooming, and decaying. In this case, the representation of the multiple stages of life would have invoked an additional layer of meaning, for the life cycle of the lotus is a popular Buddhist motif.<sup>16</sup>

**18. Peach Blossoms and Small Birds (*Tōka shōkin zu*, 灯花小禽図).** C. 1761 – 1765.

142.6 x 79.4 cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 72.



Three white doves and two blue  
Flycatchers appear perched in a blossoming peach  
tree. Two of the white doves, near the top of the  
tree, wrap around each other. The third lone dove  
peers up at the mated doves, around the trunk of  
the tree. The Flycatchers are positioned in a top  
left to bottom right diagonal. There are four  
different kinds of peach flowers blooming on the  
single tree: solid white; light pink; light pink with  
darkened centers; and dark pink with darkened  
centers. Compositionally, one could understand

this painting to be balanced in a loose quadrant. The top left, right, and bottom right  
quads each contain a single variety of flower and at least one avian subject. The bottom

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<sup>16</sup> Patricia Jane Graham, *Faith and Power in Japanese Buddhist Art: 1600-2005* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 169. Miyeko Murase and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Japanese Art: Selections from the Mary and Jackson Burke Collection* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975), 168.

left quad omits birdlife, instead hosting three different kinds of flowers. Despite the smallness of the birds and its use of delicate, transparent colors, when observed closely, this painting is in fact quite theatrical. The birds exchange gazes following clear sightlines: the two blue Flycatchers are looking at the lone dove, which gazes up at the pair of doves, and one of the pair of doves gaze down at the lone dove. The crisscrossing sightlines express something a little more than just liveliness of the individual birds; they suggest tension and a potential for drama.

19. *Golden Pheasants in Snow* (*Setchū kinkei zu*, 雪中錦鷄図). C. 1761 – 1765. 142.3 x 79.5 cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 76.



This painting depicts a mated pair of pheasants in a cypress tree above a camellia bush. Like other examples in the *Colorful Realm* set, the two birds appear in the foreground. The background hill is only suggested by a faint diagonal highlight. The brilliant red breast of the male pheasant acts as the focal point of the composition, attracting the viewers' attention. The snow-laden branches that seem to frame the two birds further accentuate this centripetal nature.



Just as many other pieces in this set, *Golden Pheasants in Snow* also includes some elements that at first glance seem to defy nature. For instance, at the bottom left, Jakuchū creates curious snow bank with openings almost like windows that reveal unblemished camellia blossoms. Although there is no denying that this is very much stylized, the particular appearance of snow begins to make sense when we consider that camellias typically bloom in late winter into early spring. The snow seems to cling heavily onto the cypress trunk and its branches most likely because it is meant to be spring snow full of moisture. Behind what appears like an embankment of snow at the bottom left corner peers the edges of the undulating cypress trunk. So, what seemed like windows are in fact openings created by the snow that accumulated on the cypress trunk.

20. *Chickens (Gunkei zu, 群鶏図)*. C. 1761 – 1765. 142.6 x 79.7 cm. From: Lippit,

*Colorful Realm*, 80.



Thirteen fowl, twelve roosters and one hen, are depicted congregating on what appears to be a grass field against a blank background. The composition features a wide variety of feather textures and patterns, some of which have not been explored in previously mentioned pieces. One example of this would be the stark black and white tail on the brown rooster at the center of the composition who looks to the right of the painting with his beak opened. Instead of flora, Jakuchū presents the chickens' dynamic bodies

and feather patterns as the sole compositional interest. Their brilliantly red crests punctuate the zigzag line created by the orientation of the fowl, which animates the entire scene.

21. *Roses and Small Bird* (*Bara shōkin zu*, 薔薇小禽図). C. 1761 – 1765. 142.6 x 79.7

cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 84.



In this painting, a small, yellow and grey bird appears amongst three different kinds of roses that grow around a porous scholars' rock. The bird, though not in the center of the composition, is clearly the focal point of the scene. Its yellow head stands out against the faint ink wash and compliments the pink of the roses. The dark pink roses, *kōshinbara*, frame the bird. The bird looks upward in an exaggerated way, balancing itself on just one leg. Its left leg appears completely tucked under its body.

Scholars have noted the potential significance of this bird's gaze, as it looks directly at Jakuchū's signature and seals. Some scholars suggest this yellow bird is an avatar for Jakuchū himself.<sup>17</sup> It is notable that the bird and Jakuchū's signature are the only vertical elements in the otherwise very curved and rounded composition.

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<sup>17</sup> Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 85.

22. *Peonies and Small Birds* (*Botan shōkin zu*, 牡丹小禽図). C. 1761 – 1765. 142.7 x 80.0 cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 88.



Two black and white birds appear amongst a sea of peonies, small *kodemari* blossoms, and an unusual rock formation. The composition is one of the fullest in the *Colorful Realm* set, with almost no empty space. Although Jakuchū does apply ink wash to the background, it is so faint that it is nearly invisible. The peonies are done using three different painting techniques: the white peonies are done with grey, white, and yellow pigments, using opaque white as highlight to delineate the petals; the pink peonies are painted very similarly, but with more clearly defined outlines; finally the red peonies are outlined using black lines. As a result, the individual flowers can be discerned even in this dense composition.

The small white *kodemari* flowers in the background do not have any outlines, but instead defined by the faint wash applied to the space around them. The small black and white birds are painted in opaque colors. Since they are so small, the birds' details are limited to the edges of their wings and tail. They are outlined in a light grey pigment, counter-balancing the vibrant environment that surrounds them.

23. *Pond and Insects* (*Chihen gunchū zu*, 池辺群虫図). C. 1761 – 1765. 142.3 x 79.7 cm.

From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 92.



The painting presents an energetic scene of swamp life, including sixty-seven different kinds of insects, ten frogs, dozens of tiny tadpoles, four lizards, and one large snake. The vibrant forms of animal life are mirrored by the active blossom, fruition, and decay of the painting's plant life. We have already seen many allusions to the cycle of life in the *Colorful Realm* through different stages of plants. This painting seems to express the same idea in a different way: the gourds are being eaten by the caterpillars, snails,

beetles, and ants; the insects also devour each other; in the upper right corner, a spider prepares to feast on an unlucky moth, while another insect appears already wrapped and drained toward the left; and finally, at the lower right corner, an army of ants attack and eat an earthworm. The painting is in fact filled with the vitality of life, accentuated by the presence of death. Jakuchū artfully captures the bustling, hectic nature of living by establishing an invisible network through intersecting gazes among his subjects, allowing the viewers to jump from one creature to another in a frenzied manner.

Just as we saw in *Peonies and Butterflies* (Plate 1), while the composition of *Pond and Insects* exudes kinetic energy, Jakuchū paints individual creatures carefully,

generally statically, and naturalistically, in a style akin to illustrations of biological specimens. The insects are depicted in a rigid manner, with wings and legs outstretched. Seven of the ten frogs are painted identically; they sit in water face left with one front leg and the back exposed. The tadpoles seem to have the same body position, swimming toward the right of the pond. They are distinguished subtly, however, by shading and intensity of the black used for their bodies.

24. *Shells (Baikō zu, 貝甲図)*. C. 1761 – 1765. 142.2 x 79.7 cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 96.



This painting presents over 146 different kinds of shells and sea life strewn across sand and water. What one can presume to be the tideland is painted in an abstract way, with pooling seawater on each of the four sides of the painting. The sea foam emerges from the pool of seawater in white and grey curled tendrils.

Scholars suggest this menagerie of sea life may have been inspired by the scientific collection of Jakuchū’s close friend, Kimura Kenkadō (木村兼葭堂, 1736 – 1802).<sup>18</sup> As it is explained in Chapter V of this catalogue, “Literati Spirit,” Kenkadō was an avid scholar

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<sup>18</sup> Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 97.

of Chinese and Western studies and was particularly dedicated to the study of natural sciences. Kenkadō's expansive collection of shells was stored in an elaborate lacquered box inlaid with shell fragments (Plate 55). The motifs on the box are not unlike those Jakuchū painted in *Shells*.<sup>19</sup>

**25. Old Pine Trees and White Phoenix** (*Rōshō hakuhō zu*, 老松白鳳図). C. 1765 – 1766.

141.8 x 79.7 cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 100.



A white phoenix appears perched on a pine tree entwined with blossoming Chinese bellflowers. Like Jakuchū's other white birds, its plumage is resplendent, extremely detailed and textured through application of many layers of gold and white pigments. Although it is a mythical bird, the phoenix is painted anatomically in a plausible way, its neck, back, and wings all adhere to natural laws. Following convention, its tail and eye betray the supernatural presence, clearly differentiating it

from a depiction of, for instance, a peacock. The tail bends behind the bird's back seemingly without any spines, while its eye makes up almost three-fourths of the creature's skull. On a branch above the phoenix, there is a grey warbler. The small

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 97.

warbler has gradient, soft colors and is quite detailed, with clearly defined feathers and delicate textures. The presence of this bird seems to ground this painting in the actual natural world, giving the phoenix a real-life presence.

26. *Wild Goose and Reeds* (*Rogan zu*, 岩雁图). C. 1765 – 1766. 142.6 x 79.3 cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 104.



*Wild Goose and Reeds* is one of the most dynamic paintings in the *Colorful Realm* set. A goose dives down towards frozen water, its beak open and eyes wide. Jagged reeds spear up the right side of the composition, reaching to the top. The cracked ice to the left of them creates a striking geometric pattern. The rest of the background is dark empty sky. The goose is, like many members of Jakuchū's flock, very beautiful and detailed. The reeds and the snow are modeled with layered pigment. Compared to the sense of stillness and quietness presented in the earlier *Goose and Reeds* (Plate 13), this painting is full of movement and even sound, such as the sound of the flapping of the goose's wings, the opened beak indicative of a cry, and the cracking of the ice. This painting is a night scene just as the *Goose and Reeds*. Unlike its counterpart, a viewer may find



something unsettling, even ominous, about the way in which this goose as it flies (or falls?).

27. *Various Fish (Shogyo zu, 諸魚図)*. C. 1765 – 1766. 142.6 x 79.4 cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 108.



Eighteen freshwater and seawater fish appear swimming across the composition diagonally from the top right to bottom left. Only sparse underwater plants are included in the background to indicate the setting. The fish are painted in profile, except for the angler, which is viewed from above, and the octopus, which appears frontal. The central motif is the octopus, as it is the largest among the underwater creatures, and is also captured from the front. This octopus is the only creature that gazes at both the direction from which the school of fish presumably came from, and the direction it is heading, while simultaneously facing the viewers. An additional baby octopus is depicted clinging on to one of the tentacles extended to the left, suggesting the rapidness of the current. The presentation of other fish mimic encyclopedic illustrations that became popular in the Edo period. The fact that the painting includes freshwater and seawater fish that could only swim together in a book also support this impression.

28. *School of Fish* (*Gungyo zu*, 群魚図). C. 1765 – 1766. 142.3 x 78.9 cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 112.



Although there is no evidence that they were conceived of as a pair within the *Colorful Realm* set, this painting complements the previously discussed painting of the fish with octopus (Plate. 27) very well. It features eighteen different types of seawater and freshwater fish again swimming diagonally from the top right to bottom left. Like its counterpart, Jakuchū paints fish in this piece seemingly without any considerations for their actual sizes. For example, the white squid at the top left corner appears

almost as large as the hammerhead shark to its right. In this painting, the manipulation of sizes gives a sense of extreme depth.

The central motif of this painting is the large red sea bream, which outsizes all the other fish. Similar to the octopus in the previous piece, the sea bream is painted with a vibrant warm color. The pinkish-orange body of the sea bream is saturated with many layers of pigment, further accentuating its prominence. The layers of color also give three-dimensionality to the fish's scales. Colors such as pink, white, and blue are used to highlight other elements of the composition without detracting the viewers' attention

from the sea bream. Like *Various Fish*, the sea creatures in this painting are also presented like scientific specimens.

**29.** *Chrysanthemums and Stream* (*Kikka ryūsui zu*, 菊花流水図). C. 1765 – 1766. 142.7 x 79.1 cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 116.



Four brown, male sparrows are depicted amongst three different kinds of chrysanthemums. The stems of the chrysanthemums seem to be tangled around a rock in brilliant blue, green, and ochre colors. The rock and chrysanthemums extend diagonally from what is presumably the grass along the riverbank. A translucent grayish-blue stream snakes across the composition.

The impressive white chrysanthemums that extend up to the top of the painting dominate the composition. Except for these white flowers, whose petals are painstakingly drawn to appear soft and three-dimensional through the use of gradation, the rest of the motifs are done in relatively stylized matter. This particular stylization actually references the Rinpa (琳派) mode rather than Chinese precedent. Deriving from the painting styles established by Tawaraya Sōtatsu (俵屋宗達, d. c. 1640) and Ogata Kōrin (尾形光琳, 1658 – 1716), the Rinpa mode was considered to

be uniquely Japanese by Jakuchū's time.<sup>20</sup> The Rinpa mode often utilized stylized designs with vivid colors and gold leaf to create decorative images. Some artists working in the Rinpa mode published style manuals and pattern books, which both inspired and supported the popularity of this style in the Edo period.<sup>21</sup>

**30.** *Maple Trees and Small Birds* (*Kōyō shōkin zu*, 紅葉小禽図). C. 1765 – 1766. 142.3 x 79.7 cm. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 120.



In this painting, a maple tree in full fall colors is depicted arched over a small hill with two small blue birds flit amongst its branches. The birds are painted in a thick layer of opaque blue pigment. There is little detail found on their feathers.

The recent conservation (between 1999 and 2005) revealed that the back of the silk support for this piece was almost entirely painted with a bright yellow pigment. The practice of painting the back of the silk is known as

*urazaishiki* (裏彩色; literally “coloring from the back”). First used in religious painting, this “undercoloring” technique had the practical purpose of stabilizing the pigment

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<sup>20</sup> For more information on Rinpa, see John T. Carpenter, *Designing Nature: the Rinpa Aesthetic in Japanese Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 11.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

applied on the front side of silk, which could otherwise easily flake off. Because of the relatively loose weaving of silk, a viewer could see (or sense) the color applied to its back, allowing a painter to use this technique for aesthetic effect, for instance to enhance a particular color by applying it to the front and the back, or give a subtle glow to a Buddhist icon by applying gold from the back, etc.<sup>22</sup> In *Maple Tree and Small Birds*, this technique infuses the painting on the front side with a subtle warm tone, lightening even the layer of ink wash applied to the background.

Undeniably, the central motif of the painting is the maple tree in brilliant fall color. The yellow applied to the back makes the red pigment used for the maple leaves all the more bright and saturated. Scholars suggest Jakuchū also applied these techniques to create the illusion of sunrays piercing through autumn leaves.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 102.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

31-33. *Shaka Triptych* (*Shaka sanson zō*, 釈迦三尊像). C. first half of the 1760s. 215.0 x 110.8 cm (each). Jōtenkaku Museum. From: Lippit, *Colorful Realm*, 124-125.



The thirty bird-and-flower paintings in the *Colorful Realm* were accompanied by a set of three scrolls of Buddhist deities: Shaka at the center, flanked by the images of his two attendants, Bodhisattvas Fugen (left) and Monju (right). Jakuchū states as following in the dedicatory inscription for the *Colorful Realm* set: “Upon viewing Zhang Sigong’s incomparably skilled and marvelous paintings of Shaka, Monju, and Fugen, I felt inspired to copy them. So I rendered the three deities in a triptych, along with twenty-four color paintings of the realm of living beings.”<sup>24</sup> The inscription indicates that first of all it was Jakuchū’s initial plan to prepare the bird-and-flower paintings to accompany this triptych. It also relays that the triptych is a copy of a Chinese original. The original triptych Jakuchū studied was most likely imported from China and stored in a Zen temple in

<sup>24</sup> For a full translation and introduction to this inscription, see Lippit, “Dedicatory Inscription,” in *Colorful Realm*, 129. The full translation of this inscription is also included in Chapter III of this catalogue (“Buddhist Essence”).

Kyoto called Tōfukuji. This Chinese triptych unfortunately no longer survives (See Plate 36 for a reconstruction created by Ōta Aya; further discussion is found in Chapter III).

The central icon of this triptych is the historical Buddha, Shaka. Shaka is depicted in a frontal view, seated cross-legged on a hexagonal pedestal. A disciple appears on each side of the pedestal. The background is empty colored just with a faint ink wash. Shaka's face is lightly modeled around his nose and mouth.

In a typical format of a Buddhist icon, the two bodhisattva attendants generally appear symmetrical to each other. Fugen to the left (or Buddha's right) is depicted seated cross-legged on his sacred animal, white elephant, led by an attendant. His right hand is raised to his chest gently holding the stem of a lotus in full bloom. He comes with an elaborate crown on his head with seven Buddhist deities at the front, adorned with an intricate vine motif and three wish-granting jewels. Monju on the other hand sits cross-legged on his sacred animal, Chinese lion. He holds his attribute, *nyoi* (如意) scepter, in his raised left hand. Although there are notable differences in details, the composition and arrangement of the robes of the two bodhisattvas are overall very similar.

CHAPTER III  
BUDDHIST ESSENCE

**Jakuchū's Buddhist Dedication:**

In modern scholarship, the *Colorful Realm* has been predominantly examined as a generic set of bird-and-flower paintings. It is, however, critical that we consider the bird-and-flower paintings together with the Shaka triptych, as Jakuchū himself donated the *Colorful Realm* to be used in Buddhist ceremonies. When Jakuchū donated the nearly completed *Colorful Realm* to Shōkokuji in 1765, he attached a dedication that expressed how he would like the set to be used:

I have always devoted myself conscientiously to painting and attempted to render the flowers of plants and trees, and the aspects of birds and insects. [To do so] I have gathered many kinds of materials, and, as a consequence, have developed the skills of a master. Upon viewing Zhang Sigong's incomparably skilled and marvelous paintings of Shaka, Monju, and Fugen, I felt inspired to copy them. So I rendered the three deities in a triptych, along with twenty-four color paintings of the realm of living beings. From the outset, frivolous motives and the desire for worldly acclaim have played no part in this undertaking. I have humbly donated them to Shōkokuji monastery in the hope that they will aid in the enhancement of ritual and be preserved for posterity. Moreover, I fervently pray that I will be interred in the monastery precincts and rest there even after a century has passed and nothing more than my bones remain. To this end, I have humbly offered an insignificant donation to support temple operations, and hope that this will make possible the observance of my memory with candles and incense.<sup>25</sup>

The dedicatory inscription makes clear that Jakuchū's two primary hopes for the *Colorful Realm* were for it to: enhance ritual practices at Shōkokuji; and be used in

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<sup>25</sup> Unless otherwise noted, emphasis mine. Translation is quoted from Lippit, "Dedicatory Inscription," in *Colorful Realm*, 129.



commemorative rites for himself and his family. Ultimately, both of these goals were achieved. The set was first used in ritual context in 1769, when Shōkokuji performed its Kannon (觀音, S: Avalokiteśvara) repentance ritual or *Kannon senpō* (觀音懺法). All thirty-three of the paintings were displayed again in 1770, on the thirty-third anniversary of Jakuchū's father's death.<sup>26</sup>

In both instances, the belief in the thirty-three manifestations of the Bodhisattva Kannon seemed to play a key role. According to the twenty-fifth chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, “the Universal Gateway of the Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds,” the Bodhisattva Kannon manifested himself in thirty-three different forms, tailored to the spiritual state of the devotee in need of saving, spanning from a Buddha to a woman.<sup>27</sup> The Kannon repentance ritual is centered on the thirty-three manifestations of the Bodhisattva Kannon and the commemorative rites for Jakuchū's father were carried out on the thirty-third anniversary of his death. Given that (as Lippit astutely points out) the *Colorful Realm* is a set of thirty-three scrolls, it is safe to assume the centrality of the Kannon devotion and of the *Lotus Sutra* as the source for the belief in his thirty-three manifestations in the conceptualization of this set.<sup>28</sup>

As a Buddhist icon to be used in rituals, the choice of bird-and-flower as a central motif is rather unusual. Lippit hypothesizes that the living creatures in the *Colorful Realm* set can in fact be understood as arhats attending the Buddha's sermon (represented by the central Buddha in the triptych).<sup>29</sup> Although Lippit's speculation is plausible, the question still remains: If that was the case, why did Jakuchū not simply paint the arhats? The

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<sup>26</sup> An extensive discussion of the ritual context for the *Colorful Realm* can be found in Lippit, “Juxtaposition, Naturalism, and Ritual,” in *Colorful Realm*, 155-158.

<sup>27</sup> Burton Watson trans., *The Lotus Sutra*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 187.

<sup>28</sup> Lippit, “Juxtaposition, Naturalism, and Ritual,” in *Colorful Realm*, 160.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

central triptych to the *Colorful Realm* alone can testify that Jakuchū was fully capable, and in fact quite accomplished, in painting Buddhist icons. When the bird-and-flower paintings in the *Colorful Realm* are considered within the original Buddhist ritual context, we realize that their inclusion can be interpreted through the idea of Buddha nature in all living beings as explained in the *Lotus Sutra*.

### **The Idea of Buddha Nature in the *Lotus Sutra*:**

The *Lotus Sutra* was written in India between 50 – 150 CE. A monk from Kucha (present Aksu Prefecture, Xinjiang, China) named Kumarajiva (344-413 CE) completed the most popular Chinese translation of the *Lotus Sutra* in 406. The sutra was introduced to Japan by the seventh century and remained a widespread scripture, particularly after the Heian period (794 – 1185), due to the popularity of Tendai (天台) Buddhism.<sup>30</sup> The primary purpose of the *Lotus Sutra* was to expound the remarkable benefits of reading and worshipping the sutra, and the dangers and punishments for slandering, disobeying, or otherwise neglecting it. In its process of self-promotion, it establishes one of the most inclusive notions of the salvation of sentient beings presented in series of memorable parables, making this sutra particularly popular and extremely influential. Related to the *Colorful Realm*, the *Lotus Sutra* presents its interpretation of the Buddha nature in three key ways: its descriptions of the assembly; its focus on the salvation of nonhuman beings; and the use of animals and plants in its parables.

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<sup>30</sup> Saichō (最澄, 767 – 822) introduced Tendai Buddhism when he returned from his yearlong study in China in 805. The central teaching of this school of Buddhism was based on the teachings of the *Lotus Sutra*. Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis, *Japanese Mandalas: Representations of Sacred Geography* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 106.

## The Salvation of Sentient Beings in the *Lotus Sutra*:

The *Lotus Sutra* opens with a description of the assembly at Vulture Peak (Ryōjusen, 靈鷲山, S: Gr̥dhra-kūṭa) to hear the Buddha's sermon. In the *Lotus Sutra*, the Vulture Peak is revealed to be where the eternal body of the Shaka resides. Unlike other pure lands of Buddhas, the Vulture Peak is in the realm of sentient beings. According to scriptures, the Buddha chose the Vulture Peak as his abode out of his great compassion for sentient beings. In the *Lotus Sutra*, the assembly gathered at the Vulture Peak is comprised of bodhisattvas and the living beings (*shujō*, 衆生) from the six realms of existence, or *rokushu* (六趣): (1) *naraka-gati* (*jigoku shu*, 地獄趣), those reborn into hell; (2) the *preta-gati* (*gaki shu*, 餓鬼趣), those reborn as a hungry ghost; (3) *tiryagyonigati* (*chikushō shu*, 畜生趣), those reborn as an animal; (4) *asura-gati* (*ashura*, 阿修羅趣), those reborn as a malevolent nature spirit; (5) *manuṣya-gati* (*ninshu*, 人趣), those reborn as a human; and (6) *deva-gati* (*tenshu*, 天趣), those reborn into deva existence.<sup>31</sup> The "Introduction" chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* states:

At that time the monks, nuns, laymen, laywomen, heavenly beings, dragons, yakshas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kimnaras, mahoragas, human and nonhuman beings in the assembly, as well as the petty kings and wheel-turning sage kings- all those in the great assembly, having gained what they had never had before, were filled with joy and, pressing their palms together, gazed at the Buddha with a single mind.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *Dictionary of Buddhism*, s.v. "rokushu, 六趣," accessed August, 2015, <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=六趣>.

<sup>32</sup> Watson trans., *The Lotus Sutra*, 6.

This passage is from a scene when the audience of living beings and other Buddhist deities amass to listen to the Buddha preach. The list of sentient beings gathered at the Vulture Peak clarifies that the Shaka's compassion is inclusive, extending not just to humans, but also nonhumans including animals and other living beings.

This type of description of the Buddha's assembly is a common rhetorical trope in Buddhist scriptures. However, the *Lotus Sutra* is particular in its emphasis on the salvation of nonhuman sentient beings. For example, in Chapters One and Five, the *Lotus Sutra* teaches that nonhuman beings (*hinin*, 非人), including plants and animals, are capable of attaining enlightenment. In Chapter One, the Bodhisattva Miroku (彌勒, S: Maitreya), describes the all-encompassing nature of the Buddha's compassion toward sentient beings in the six realms of existence, stating:

The beam of brightness from between the eyebrows  
illuminates the eastern direction  
and eighteen thousand lands  
are all the color of gold.  
From the Avichi hell  
Upward to the Summit of Being,  
Throughout the various worlds  
The living beings in the six paths,  
The realm to which their births and deaths are tending,  
Their good and bad deeds,  
And the pleasing or ugly recompense they receive –  
All these can be seen from here.<sup>33</sup>

In Chapter Five “Parable of Medicinal Herbs,” the Buddha uses a parable to expound the salvation of all living beings. He uses herbs and other plants as metaphors for living beings and rain as a metaphor for the Buddha's teaching. The sutra states:

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<sup>33</sup> Watson trans., *The Lotus Sutra*, 7.

Once these living beings have heard the Law, they will enjoy peace and security in their present existence and good circumstances in future existences, when they will receive joy through the way and again be able to hear the Law...It is like the rain falling from that great cloud upon all the plants and trees, thickets and groves, and medicinal herbs. Each, depending upon its species and nature, receives its full share of moistening and is enabled to sprout and grow.<sup>34</sup>

This passage explains that the Buddha's teachings fall upon all sentient beings equally, but they are received differently depending on "species and nature." The sprouting and growth of plants refer to the sentient beings' striving toward enlightenment. Because this passage does not seem to doubt that all plants will eventually sprout and grow, it may be understood as a hopeful message that all sentient beings will eventually attain enlightenment.

Although in the context of the *Lotus Sutra*, the Buddha is merely using a metaphor to explain the equality and universality of Buddha's preaching, historically, this passage has been taken much more literally as a promise of salvation for nonhuman sentient beings. Shimizu Yoshiaki employs the belief in the salvation of sentient beings based on the *Lotus Sutra* as one key perspective in interpreting Jakuchū's eighteenth-century ink painting, *Vegetable Parinirvāna* (*Yasai nehan-zu*, 野菜涅槃図, Plate 42). Jakuchū's *Vegetable Parinirvāna* is a monochromatic painting of the death of the radish. Without negating the innate humor of this painting deriving from the replacement of the reclining Buddha with a radish, Shimizu analyzes the cultural and doctrinal foundations that allowed this painting to be recognized as a *parinirvāna* scene and as a Buddhist painting. In his discussion, Shimizu argues that the replacement of the Buddha with

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<sup>34</sup> Watson trans., *The Lotus Sutra*, 99.

radish works in part due to the prevailing belief in the salvation of nonhuman sentient beings based on the *Lotus Sutra*.<sup>35</sup>

As opposed to plants in the *Lotus Sutra*, which are nonhuman, but not necessarily actively associated with defilement, animals appear in the sutra for two primary purposes: as indicators of impurity, or even wickedness; and as signifiers for the promise of redemption. The inclusion of the promise of the salvation of animals and other impure creatures is an important theme within the sutra because the rebirth into the animal realm was understood to be undesirable, reflecting one's poor karma. The *Lotus Sutra* states:

He [Shaka] sees living beings feared and consumed by birth, old age, sickness and death, care and suffering, sees them undergo many kinds of pain because of the five desires and the desire for wealth and profit. Again, because of their greed and attachment and striving they undergo numerous pains in their present existence, and later they undergo the pain of being reborn in hell or as beasts or hungry spirits.<sup>36</sup>

In this passage, being reborn as “beasts” is a result of having “greed and attachment and striving.”

In addition to this general use of the “animal realm” as one of the six realms of existence filled with suffering, the *Lotus Sutra* also mentions animals more specifically to indicate wickedness or evilness. According to Chapter Three, “Simile and Parable”:

He [a wealthy man with three sons] urged his sons to heed him,  
explaining the many dangers and perilous,  
the evil spirits and poisonous creatures,

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<sup>35</sup> Yoshiaki Shimizu, "Multiple Commemorations: the Vegetable Nehan of Itō Jakuchū," in *Flowing Traces: Buddhism in the Literary and Visual Arts of Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 112-115. Shimizu argues: "...the blurring of the human, animal, and plant worlds was occurring freely in Japanese verbal and pictorial arts well before the seventeenth century."

<sup>36</sup> Watson trans., *The Lotus Sutra*, 3.

the flames spreading all around,  
the multitude of sufferings  
that would follow one another without end,  
the poisonous snakes, lizards and vipers,  
as well as the many yakshas  
and kumbhanda demons,  
the jackals, foxes and dogs,  
hawks, eagles, kites, owls,  
ground beetles and similar creatures,  
driven and tormented by hunger and thirst,  
truly things to be feared.<sup>37</sup>

This renowned parable of the “burning house” tells the story of a wealthy father with three sons. Wicked animals attack and devour the father’s house, causing it to catch fire. The wealthy father, a symbol for the Buddha, calls to his sons in the house, promising them rewards of a cart for each of them, pulled by a goat, deer, and an ox, to encourage them to leave the burning house with haste.<sup>38</sup> Once they were safely out of the house, the father gave the three of them a single cart pulled by a white ox more magnificent than any of the three carts he promised.<sup>39</sup> This parable describes how the Buddha uses the expedient means to lead sentient beings out of the world of suffering. In the verse above, jackals, foxes, dogs, hawks, eagles, kites, owls, and insects are all used as signifiers of wickedness and danger of this world.

However, the *Lotus Sutra* provides hope for even those who were reborn into the beastly existence. The potential for nonhuman beasts to attain enlightenment is best articulated in the famous episode of the Dragon daughter that appears in Chapter Eight of the *Lotus Sutra*, “Devadatta.” In this episode, the princess of the Dragon King attains enlightenment in front of the dubious assembly despite the fact that she is a defiled,

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<sup>37</sup> Watson trans., *The Lotus Sutra*, 66.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 62-79.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 62 -79.

female, nonhuman being. However, due to her innate qualities and diligent practices, she is able to become a Buddha in a blink of an eye.<sup>40</sup> Historically in Japan, the “Devadatta” chapter was widely read, particularly among women. The Dragon daughter’s instantaneous attainment of Buddhahood is a hopeful message for women, who were considered to be incapable of attaining enlightenment due to the defilement. The Dragon daughter, additionally, was not just female, but also nonhuman. By making the episode about a nonhuman creature, the *Lotus Sutra* lowers the standards for awakening—which naturally has the effect of promoting the power of its teaching—promising that all living beings have the potential to attain Buddhahood, humans and nonhumans alike. This emphasis on the salvation of nonhuman creatures in the *Lotus Sutra*, which in turn guarantees the salvation of human beings, help us interpreting Jakuchū’s choice to produce a set of Buddhist iconic paintings featuring bird-and-flower motifs.

### **The *Colorful Realm* as the Vulture Peak:**

As introduced earlier, the centerpiece of the *Colorful Realm* is the Buddha triptych consisting of a painting of the Shaka at the center, sitting upon a lotus pedestal, flanked by Bodhisattvas and Bodhisattva Fugen nt (Plates 31 – 33). Lippit already argues that the living creatures in the *Colorful Realm* may represent the members of the assembly before the Shaka akin to what is described in the *Lotus Sutra*. He writes: “it is as if the finalization of the series’ destiny and destination as ritual objects in Shōkokuji emancipated the artist to reimagine the *Colorful Realm* as something that would far transcend the scripted pairings of bird-and-flower practice and instead constitute a

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<sup>40</sup> Watson trans., *The Lotus Sutra*, 187.



magnificent assemblage of sentient things, gathering to bear witness to a sermon for the ages.”<sup>41</sup> The fact that the total number of scrolls in the set is thirty-three itself could be a strong enough evidence to support Lippit’s observation.

It is also worth noting that there are precedents to using bird-and-flower paintings as a way to represent Buddhist pure land in the context of Amida Buddhism. For instance, Bettina Gyger-Klein argues convincingly that the set of two gold leaf folding screens, *Flowers, Birds, and Insects* (Muromachi period, c. 1333 – 1573) were used as a backdrop during funerary rites as a representation of the Amida’s Western Pure Land, which was described in scriptures as being golden with birds and flowers.<sup>42</sup> Although Jakuchū himself sought guidance from Daiten in Zen practices, his family temple was an Amida-sect temple.<sup>43</sup> There is a good chance that Jakuchū was familiar with the use of bird-and-flower paintings in a Buddhist ritual context. Jakuchū’s dedication does not explicitly mention his father, but the timing of his donation of this set indicates that hanging the *Colorful Realm* during the commemorative rite for his father would have been in accord with Jakuchū’s hope of how the set would be used. The contemporaneous use of birds-and-flower folding screens in a funerary context makes it possible to imagine how the participants of the Shōkokuji’s Buddhist rites would have understood the *Colorful Realm* as an appropriate work to set the paradisiac space within the Buddha hall.

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<sup>41</sup> Lippit, “Juxtaposition, Naturalism, and Ritual,” in *Colorful Realm*, 163.

<sup>42</sup> Bettina Gyger-Klein and Carolyn Wheelwright, *Japanese Kinbyōbu: The Gold-Leafed Folding Screens of the Muromachi Period (1333-1573)* (Zurich: *Artibus Asiae*, 1984). Gyger-Klein argues that after the introduction and popularization of Jōdo sect sutras, Japanese gardens began to similarly reflect paradisiac imagery. These gardens featured the symmetrical palaces described in the sutra, but were carefully composed, featuring Japanese birds, animals, plants, and flowers. Thus, the “Pure Land” (or Jōdo) gardens were designed to meet literary needs, which were then reflected in the use of bird-and-flower screens done in Japanese (*yamato-e*) mode with distinctly Japanese species of birds in the Amida-related funerary rituals.

<sup>43</sup> During the Edo period, the Tokugawa government enforced a policy that required families to register with local Buddhist temples. As a result, these temples became responsible for family events, most importantly the funerals.

PLATES: BUDDHIST ESSENCE

34. *The Medicine Buddha (Bhaiṣajyaguru) with Bodhisattvas of the Sun and Moon and Twelve Guardian Generals*. Ming Dynasty, c. 1477. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk. 242 x 105.6 cm. The Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art. From: <http://jsma.uoregon.edu> (accessed October 15, 2016).



The Medicine Buddha (C: Yaoshi Rulai, J: Yakushi Nyorai, 藥師如來) appears in his Emerald Pure Land, surrounded by bodhisattvas and guardian figures. The Medicine Buddha sits atop a lotus pedestal, holding a small medicine pot. Around the Buddha's canopy, heavenly beings appear, flying in an indigo-colored sky filled among auspicious clouds in pink, yellow, and green. The two attending bodhisattvas seem to hold the tip of a rising cloud, on top of what appears the sun and moon. The twelve guardian

figures surround the Buddha's pedestal, seemingly waiting for his instructions. The painting is a masterful polychromatic Buddhist icon. Each figure is delicately delineated with a consistent black outline and given a sense of three-dimensionality through the use of subtle gradients on their faces, hands, and robes.

This painting represents a common composition of a Buddhist devotional painting. Just as in many religious paintings, the central deity is depicted larger than the attendant figures. Appropriate as a centerpiece of a Buddhist ritual, the Buddha appears in frontal view. Reflecting the Buddhist worldview, the twelve guardian figures are more animated—full of vitality and openly exhibiting their emotions—an indication that they are not yet free of their attachments. When they are taken collectively, the Buddha triptych and the thirty bird-and-flower paintings in the *Colorful Realm* seem to mirror this general hierarchal arrangement of the central Buddhist deity and his attendants.

35. Liang Kai (梁楷, c. 1140 - c. 1210). *Shaka Descending the Mountain After Asceticism and Snowy Landscape*. Southern Song Dynasty, 13<sup>th</sup> century. Set of three hanging scrolls, ink and color on silk. *Śākyamuni*: 117.6 x 52.0 cm, *Snowy Landscape* (left): 110.3 x 49.7 cm, *Snowy Landscape* (right): 110.8 x 50.1 cm. The Tokyo National Museum. From: <http://www.emuseum.jp> (accessed October 15, 2016).



*Shaka Emerging from the Mountains* depicts Shaka descending from the mountains after years of ascetic practices. Scriptures explained that Shaka left the mountains upon realization that one cannot attain awakening with the methods of asceticism practiced by the mountain hermits. Once he descended from the mountain, he meditated by the river, leading to his eventual attainment of Buddhahood. The motif of Shaka descending from the mountains, which was very popular within the Zen communities, thus depicts the moment just before Shaka become the historical “Buddha.” The painting is largely monochromatic. An ink wash covers the entire painting, darkened around the edges of the figures. The rocks, trees, and other geographic forms are painted

in calligraphic brushstrokes. Shaka is the only motif within the painting with any color. His body is delineated by a consistent black outline. There is also a hint of shading that provides a sense of three-dimensionality.

Liang Kai was a Chinese painter during the Southern Song Dynasty (1127–1279 CE). He studied at the royal painting academy established by Emperor Huizong (徽宗, 1082 – 1135) in the Northern Song period.<sup>44</sup> He later left the academy to become a Chan monk. Liang Kai is widely known for his spontaneous and free ink painting, but he was also an accomplished painter in a more academic mode.<sup>45</sup> More relevant to this exhibition, Liang Kai's works became extremely popular in Japanese painterly circles beginning in the Muromachi period (1336 – 1573) when they were collected by the generations of Ashikaga shogun, and had a profound impact in the development of Chinese-style paintings in Japan. The painting, *Shaka Emerging from the Mountains*, has been confirmed to have originally belonged to the Ashikaga collection. Intriguingly, it was initially imported as a stand-alone hanging scroll, but after it entered the Ashikaga collection, it was paired with two landscape paintings of wintery landscape, also attributed to Liang Kai. This exhibition includes two works by Jakuchū (one polychrome and one monochrome; Plates 38 and 39) that may indicate his awareness of Liang Kai's works.

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<sup>44</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s.v. "Liang Kai", accessed October 13, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Liang-Kai>.

<sup>45</sup> Helmut Brinker, "Shussan Shaka in Sung and Yuan Painting," *Ars Orientalis* 9 (1973): 26.

36. *Shaka and his attendants, Bodhisattvas Monju and Fugen*. Reconstruction by Ōta Aya of the triptych *Jakuchū* copied for the *Colorful Realm*. From: Lippit. *Colorful Realm* (2012), 179. [Center] *Seated Shakyamuni Buddha*. Late Yuan or early Ming Dynasty, 14<sup>th</sup> century. Hanging scrolls, ink, color, and gold on silk. 293.50 x 136.0 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, John L. Severance Fund. [Left and right] *Bodhisattvas Monju* (right) and *Fugen* (left). Yuan dynasty, 14<sup>th</sup> century. Pair of hanging scrolls, ink, color, and gold on silk. Seikadō Bunko Art Museum.



In the accompanying inscription to the *Colorful Realm* set, *Jakuchū* says: “Upon viewing Zhang Sigong’s

incomparable skilled and marvelous paintings of Shaka, Monju, and Fugen, I felt inspired to copy them. So I rendered the three deities in a triptych...”<sup>46</sup> The triptych *Jakuchū* speaks of unfortunately does not survive. This ensemble of the Shaka and two attending bodhisattvas is an imagined reconstruction proposed by Ōta Aya to give an idea of the original works *Jakuchū* could have seen.

Zhang Sigong (張思恭, n.d.) is thought to be a Chinese painter from sometime between the Song and Yuan Dynasties. Zhang’s popularity in Japan was not necessarily

<sup>46</sup> Lippit, “Dedicatory Inscription,” in *Colorful Realm*, 179.

born of his own artistic prowess, but instead provoked by the use of his signature on numerous imported Chinese and Korean Buddhist paintings.<sup>47</sup> Japanese connoisseurs also attributed many unsigned works to Zhang. Thus, the original triptych Jakuchū copied may not have been by Zhang at all, but simply attributed to him for the sake of notoriety.

37. Artist unknown. *Death of Buddha (Parinirvāna)*. Kamakura period, c. 14<sup>th</sup> century. Hanging scroll, ink, color, and gold on silk. Hanging scroll, ink, color, and gold on silk. 330.2 x 196.9 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. From: metmuseum.org (accessed October 15, 2016).



This painting depicts the scene of the Buddha's *parinirvāna* (*hatsu nehan*, 般涅槃), or the moment of his ultimate awakening. Following convention, the scene takes place in a grove of *sāla* trees. The Buddha's body reclines on a platform, his right

arm cushioning his head. Shaka's mother, Lady Maya (J: Maya bunjin, 摩耶夫人),

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<sup>47</sup> Lippit, "Goryeo Buddhist Painting in an Interregional Context," *Ars Orientalis* 35 (2008): 199.

mournfully descends to see her son. Behind the Buddha, distraught guardian deities, gods, and nature spirits weep desperately. Buddha's disciples appear seated toward the head of the Buddha also in a sob. At the outer edges of this group, bodhisattvas observe the scene contemplatively. Lesser sentient beings, including lay followers, birds, animals, and other mythical beasts, are depicted in dramatic gesture of sadness.

Painting of the *parinirvāna* scene was hung during the anniversary of the Buddha's death on the fifteenth day of the second month. These *parinirvāna* paintings were often oversized, allowing the devotees present to simulate being part of the Buddha's assembly at the moment of his passing. As D. Max Moerman explains, this participation in a scene "dissolve[d] this distance between worshipper and icon."<sup>48</sup>

The example selected is a particularly appropriate piece for this exhibition because it includes a large menagerie of animals in the foreground, closest to devotees attending the ceremony. Mimi Hall Yiengpruksawan points out that few Chinese depictions of the *parinirvāna* scene include animals. The increased interest in representing the animal realm began in thirteenth and fourteenth-century Japan.<sup>49</sup> This interest in the animal realm also coincide with the increased popularity of the *Lotus Sutra* and the familiarity with the belief in the presence of Buddha nature even in plants and animals (discussed in more detail in Chapter III, "Buddhist Essence").

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<sup>48</sup> D. Max Moerman, "Dying like the Buddha: Intervisuality and the Cultic Image," *Impressions* 29 (2007): 29.

<sup>49</sup> Mimi Hall Yiengpruksawan, "The Interstitial Buddha: Picturing the Death of Śākyamuni," *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin* 2007 (2007): 60.



38. Artist unknown. *Lotus Sutra Tableau* (left) and detail (right). Kamakura period, 13<sup>th</sup> century. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk. 137.7 x 76.5 cm. The Nara National Museum. From: [Narahaku.go.jp](http://Narahaku.go.jp) (accessed October 15, 2016).



This painting illustrates key scenes from the *Lotus Sutra*. The scene of the Shaka seated amidst a mountain landscape, preaching the *Lotus Sutra* to his assembly, dominates the top half of the painting. Bodhisattvas, humans, and heavenly kings congregate at his feet, listening raptly. Six rays of light appear shooting out of the Buddha's head. At the end of each ray, one of the existences from the "six realm of existence" (hell, hungry ghosts, animals, human, fighting demons, and heaven) is represented. This detail corresponds to the scene in Chapter One of the *Lotus Sutra* in which rays of light from Shaka's *ūrṇā* illuminate every realm of existence.<sup>50</sup> However, the linear connection between the Buddha and sentient beings from each of the six realms

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<sup>50</sup> Watson, trans., *The Lotus Sutra*, 4.

of existence also works well to remind the viewers of the essential teaching of this sutra: all sentient beings possess the Buddha nature, thus are capable of attaining enlightenment. In this painting, the animal realm is represented by a horse. The acknowledgement of the animal realm in standard pictorialization of the *Lotus Sutra* episodes (which naturally derives from the significance of animals in the sutra's teaching) still would have provided a platform in which for the viewers to recognize Jakuchū's *Colorful Realm* as a type of depiction of a *Lotus Sutra* theme.

**39.** Frontispiece to the copy of Chapter Eleven: "Beholding the Precious Stupa." *Heike nōkyō* (Taira Family Sutra). Heian period. Ink and colors on decorative paper. 1162. 26.1 x 361.3 cm. Itsukushima Shrine. From: *Art Treasures from Itsukushima Shrine (Heike nōkyō to Itsukushima no hiho)* (Kyoto: Kyoto National Museum, 1972) 5.



The Taira Family Sutra (J: *Heike nōkyō*, 平家納経) is a twelfth-century copy of the *Lotus Sutra* in thirty-four hand scrolls made by the members of the Taira family (presently in the collection of the Itsukushima Shrine).<sup>51</sup> The section exhibited is a frontispiece to the copy

<sup>51</sup> Ryuchi Abe, "Revisiting the Dragon Princess: Her Role in Medieval Engi Stories and Their Implications in Reading the Lotus Sutra," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 42 (2015): 28.

of the “Devadatta” chapter. It depicts three women, flying on clouds towards the Buddha seated in front of a Chinese-style palace structure on swirling white clouds. The Shaka is surrounded by a group of attendants. An array of musical instruments appears above the palace building in the background.

This painting represents one of the most popular episodes in the *Lotus Sutra* about the attainment of Buddhahood by a young daughter of a Dragon King. In this episode, the Dragon King’s daughter attains Buddhahood in front of an assembly skeptical of her potential to be enlightened because she is a young, non-human, female.<sup>52</sup> She explains the swiftness of her transformation by offering a jewel to the Buddha (which he promptly accepts), stating that her achievement of Buddhahood will be swifter than this instant exchange. The painting presents this dramatic moment of the Dragon Daughter about to make her offering of the jewel.

The Taira Family Sutra is not only one of the most exquisite Buddhist artifacts of the Heian period, but also by far the most carefully and thoughtful planned dedicatory sutras remaining. It is a testament to the level of wealth and intellect of the leading warrior family of the period, as they rise to the pinnacle of their political power. In this scroll, the exterior front cover is profusely ornamented with images of grotesque monstrous mythical sea creatures (*makara*) done in green, yellow, and red pigments on gold and silver background, reminding the viewer of the treacherous—not to mention defiled—ocean where the Dragon daughter came from. Beginning in the medieval period, it was popularly believed in Japan that all sentient beings—not just humans and heavenly deities, but even non-human creatures, such as animals and plants—have a Buddha nature, thus capable of attaining awakening.

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<sup>52</sup> Watson, trans., *The Lotus Sutra*, 187.

**40 and 41.** Itō Jakuchū. *Shakyamuni Descending from the Mountains*. Edo period, 18<sup>th</sup> century. Miho Museum. From: *Celebrating Two Contemporary Geniuses: Jakuchū and Buson* (Tokyo: Suntory Museum of Art and Miho Museum, 2015), 96-97. [Plate 39] Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk. 154.2 x 54.9 cm. [Plate 40] Hanging scroll, ink on paper. 152.7 x 58.3 cm.



These two paintings were not produced as a set. However, for the purpose of this exhibition, they are introduced together because their similarities in composition and differences in modes of painting provide insight into Jakuchū's concept of the difference between an iconic Buddhist images and more Zen-modes of expression. Although Shaka faces toward the left instead of the right, certain details of the two works resemble the painting by Liang Kai mentioned earlier (*Shaka Emerging from the Mountains*; Plate 35),

for instance, in his general posture, and square full beard, and wrinkled face. Although the robe on Jakuchū's Shaka is far more stylized, the regularity of the folds may also contribute to the overall sense of similarity.

Though Jakuchū's two works share the same composition, and may appear identical except for their colors, upon careful comparison, the paintings are not as similar as they may seem. For instance, in the polychromatic painting (Plate 39), the Shaka's eyes are small and wrinkled, with heavy lids. In the monochrome version (Plate 40), on the other hand, Jakuchū gives the Shaka massive eyes that bulge outwards. His eyelids, rather than wrinkling, seem swollen. Intriguingly, Jakuchū also reversed some of the key highlights in the polychrome painting into the shadows of the monochrome counterpart, having the effect of emphasizing the unnatural waves at the hems of the robe. The subtle changes Jakuchū made in details seem to shift the concept of the two paintings. The polychrome version presents the Buddha more naturalistically (within convention), and as an exotic foreigner. The monochrome version distorts his facial features and highlights and the fantastic movement of his robe. The monochrome version, in other words, is arguably a representation of the inner spiritual power of the Buddha.

42. Itō Jakuchū. *Vegetable Parinirvāna* (*yasai nehanzu*). Edo period, 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Hanging scroll, ink on paper. 182.4 x 96.3 cm. Kyoto National Museum. From:

kyohaku.go.jp (accessed October 15, 2016).



*Vegetable Parinirvāna* depicts a large, white radish on an upside-down basket, surrounded by an array of domestic vegetables including turnips, gourds, eggplants, and corn. The composition resembles conventional paintings of *parinirvāna* scenes. The white radish replaces the body of the Buddha, in front of the twin *sāla* trees (here replaced by tall corn stalks), while the other vegetables represent the assembled sentient beings and bodhisattvas, witnessing his passing.

Here, Jakuchū appropriates the familiar iconography of the *parinirvāna* scene to represent the death of a lay person. Shimizu Yoshiaki argues that Jakuchū's use of this familiar iconography is informed in part by the preceding belief in the salvation of plants and animals and the centrality of radish as a motif in Zen and literati ink painting.<sup>53</sup> The centrality of the theme of the salvation of non-human sentient beings connects this.

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<sup>53</sup> Shimizu, "Multiple Commemorations," 201-233.

## CHAPTER IV

### VITALITY OF SPIRIT IN BIRD-AND-FLOWER PAINTING

The previous chapter argued for the possibility that the bird-and-flower paintings in the *Colorful Realm* set were produced so that they could be used in the context of a Buddhist ritual based on the *Lotus Sutra* and served to set the space within the Buddha Hall as the Vulture Peak, while reminding the participants of the promise of redemption for all living beings. However, in one respect, this is an effect created through the subject matter and not necessarily the mode of painting. In other words, as long as the paintings represented living creatures, there is no intrinsic reason to paint them so colorfully or using expensive materials, including silk support. This point is worth considering further because Jakuchū was a versatile artist highly accomplished in both monochromatic and polychromatic painting. In order to understand the implications of producing bird-and-flower motifs within the *Colorful Realm* in such vivid polychromatic painting, it is helpful to understand how the bird-and-flower genre was perceived in China and Japan, and what was understood to be the “essence” of the bird-and-flower painting.

#### **The Essence of Bird-and-Flower Painting:**

The bird-and-flower genre of painting was first developed in China in the late sixth century inspired by painted Buddhist banners imported from South Asia with ornate floral motifs.<sup>54</sup> The bird-and-flower motifs became popular within the imperial court and

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<sup>54</sup> Michael Sullivan, *The Arts of China: Fifth Ed. Revised and Expanded* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), 188.

aristocrats in the Tang Dynasty (618 – 907), and eventually spread more widely by the Song Dynasty (960 – 1279).<sup>55</sup> Centrality of nature in the Daoist practices had a profound impact on the aesthetic theories of bird-and-flower paintings. Daoist practitioners preferred to conduct meditation in the outdoor setting to feel the connection with the cosmos. This Daoist appreciation of nature eventually became a foundation in Chinese painting criticism, emphasizing the importance of careful contemplation of nature, so that the painter reveals the universe and a man's place within it.<sup>56</sup>

Bird-and-flower painting drew from Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist thought. As one of the earliest genres of Chinese painting, bird-and-flower theory began to develop as early as the third century.<sup>57</sup> One of the earliest art criticism texts, the *Xu hua* 叙畫, or *Discussion of Painting*, by Wang Wei (王維, 699–759), incorporated Confucian thought. Passages in *Discussion of Painting* indicated that painting was more than a mere representation of form, but actually connected to the essence of the subjects.<sup>58</sup> Wang Wei was talking about landscape painting, but his idea of connection to minds or souls was also adopted in the evaluation of bird-and-flower painting.<sup>59</sup> Artists spent long hours outdoors in an effort to observe the true forms of living creatures, which were believed to be in unison with the larger universe.

The Northern Song Dynasty (960 – 1127) was approached as the recovery of the old classical Chinese empire. According to Richard M. Barnhart, four overarching

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<sup>55</sup> Yang Xin, et al., *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting* (New Haven: Yale University and Foreign Languages Press, 1997), 75. Sullivan, *The Arts of China*, 188.

<sup>56</sup> Richard M. Barnhart, *Peach Blossom Spring: Gardens and Flowers in Chinese Paintings* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983), 31.

<sup>57</sup> Susan Bush, "Pre-T'ang Interpretation and Criticism," in *Early Chinese Texts on Painting* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 19

<sup>58</sup> Bush, "Pre-T'ang Interpretation and Criticism," in *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, 22.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.



features characterize Northern Song Dynasty bird-and-flower paintings: an intense study of nature; a balance between solid and void spaces; a horizontal composition; and the expression of *gewu* (格物), the careful study of the small details of life that reveal the greater cosmic patterns.<sup>60</sup> Bird-and-flower paintings were the most popular genre in the Northern Song period. Court artisans were held to a strict set of standards determined by the genre's primary advocate, Emperor Huizong (徽宗, 1082–1135). Huizong's Three Aspects of Painting were realism, the systematic study of classical painting traditions, and the attainment of poetic ideal, or *shiyi* (詩意).

Huizong held his own artistic endeavors to Three Aspects of Painting, as is visible in his painting *Two Finches on Twigs of Bamboo* (Plate 43). The silk scroll fragment depicts a pair of sparrows perched on spindly branches of bamboo. As directed by Huizong's first aspect of painting, the sparrows are painted in a highly realistic manner. The emperor even applied a dot of black lacquer to each of the sparrows' eyes to convey a sense of life and movement. Scholars have suggested that Huizong may have composed the sparrows' bodies after studying the works by an earlier painter, Cu Bai (崔白, 1050–1080). If so, Huizong's practice is in alignment with his own edict that encouraged artists to study older masters. However, Richard M. Barnhart instead suggests that Huizong's poetic ideal expressed in *Two Finches on Twigs of Bamboo* is actually an examination of the universal *gewu*.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the discussion of Huizong's painting theory in this chapter is drawn from Richard M. Barnhart, *Peach Blossom Spring*, 31.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

The painting also exemplified the “realism” Huizong advocated in its delicate depiction of the sparrows’ bodies. According to Deng Chun (鄧椿, c. 1167), Huizong particularly emphasized the careful study of nature. Deng Chun wrote:

In front of the Hsüan-ho Hall was planted a lychee tree. When it bore fruit, it brought a smile of pleasure to the Emperor’s face. By chance a peacock went under it. Quickly, the Emperor summoned the members of the Painting Academy and ordered them to paint it. Each one exerted his skills to the utmost so that splendid colors glittered, but the peacock was about to mount a mane stool and was [depicted] raising its right leg first. The Emperor said: ‘Unsatisfactory!’ The academicians were alarmed, for none understood. After several days, they were summoned and questioned by the Emperor, but they did not know how to reply. Thereupon he announced: ‘When the peacock ascends to a high place, it invariably raises its left leg first.’ The academicians were abashed and apologetic...<sup>62</sup>

This passage makes clear the degree in which that knowledge of nature was valued within Huizong’s court. The combination of solid training in classical tradition, and observation of reality that enhances one’s understanding of *gewu* is, in Huizong’s mind, what allows one to attain *shiyi*. The naturalistic depiction of the two finches solidly rooted in his study of Cu Bai makes the *Two Finches on Twigs of Bamboo* an embodiment of Huizong’s Three Aspects of Painting, and by extension, the aesthetic philosophy of the Northern Song Dynasty bird-and-flower painting.

Although not without criticism, the three basic principles established by Huizong continued to serve as guides to produce and evaluate bird-and-flower paintings in China through the dynasties of Southern Song (1127 – 1279) to Qing (1644 – 1912). Based on the peacock anecdote, the essence of bird-and-flower painting was inseparable from the reality of living beings observed. However, just as *zhenxing* in Daoism was not

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<sup>62</sup> Bush, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, 136. Chinese transliteration in the quote is original to Susan Bush’s translation.

necessarily about illustrative accuracy, in the Three Aspects of Painting, the purpose of carefully observing reality was the revelation of the “greater cosmic pattern” and lyricism.

### **Itō Jakuchū and the bird-and-flower paintings in the *Colorful Realm*:**

Huizong’s Three Aspects of Painting are applicable to the analysis of the bird-and-flower paintings in the *Colorful Realm*, for Jakuchū was fully immersed in the Chinese and Japanese bird-and-flower painting traditions. Like his contemporaries, Jakuchū’s incorporation of Chinese bird-and-flower painting tradition was eclectic. It appears that Jakuchū was educated in traditional modes of Chinese painting. His awareness of Chinese bird-and-flower painting came predominantly through his interactions with scholars and collectors of Chinese art, many of whom studied the new style of contemporaneous Chinese artist Shen Nanpin (沈南蘋, also known as Shen Quan 沈銓; c. 1682–1760).<sup>63</sup>

Shen Nanpin was a mid-Qing Dynasty painter, who had a profound impact on the revived popularity in the Chinese-style bird-and-flower painting in Japan. A student of Lü Ji (呂紀, b. c. 1477), Shen Nanpin was a professional painter whose works referenced many aspects of Northern Song and Ming aesthetics.<sup>64</sup> He was well known for his meticulous style, brilliant colors, and symbolic content, all of which referenced Huizong’s three aspects of painting. In 1731, Shen Nanpin travelled to Nagasaki, Japan and taught painting there for two years. Due to the isolation policy, people in Japan had

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<sup>63</sup> Beerens, *Friends, Acquaintances, Pupils and Patrons*, 80 and 90.

<sup>64</sup> For detailed discussion of Shen Nanpin and his impact to the Edo-period painting, see Hidemi Kondo, “Shen Nanpin’s Japanese Roots” *Ars Orientalis* 19 (1989): 79-100.

extremely limited access to Chinese works of art. It is easy to imagine the enthusiasm with which Japanese painters embraced Shen Nanpin as a bona fide Chinese painter. His works in fact became so popular that in Japan the naturalistic mode of the Qing-dynasty bird-and-flower paintings became specifically associated with Shen Nanpin works. Ultimately his influence was so significant that the “Nanpin School” continued to remain popular even after his departure.

Keeping with the trend of his time, many of Jakuchū’s polychromatic bird-and-flower paintings are in the Nanpin mode, using meticulous detail and brilliant colors combined with expressive black brushstrokes and ink washes.<sup>65</sup> Shen Nanpin and Jakuchū both belonged to the tradition of Chinese bird-and-flower painters who sought to render the inner essence of their subjects through close observation of nature and complexity of depiction. Although he is popularly known as a “naturalist,” Jakuchū’s bird-and-flower paintings are often not all that naturalistic, even compared to some works by contemporaneous painters. This is perhaps best exemplified by *Chickens* (Plate 20) from the *Colorful Realm*. *Chickens* depicts twelve roosters and one hen on a grassy open field. The birds’ bodies appear lively, but not necessarily naturalistically. Jakuchū skillfully intermingles naturalistic and stylized depictions of chickens, simultaneously enlivening the composition with dramatic movement, while anchoring the entire flock in reality. Seen from afar, the thirteen chickens bend with each other into dizzying patterns of black, white and brown, interrupted by the brilliant red of the crests that zigzag through the composition. This balance, or tension, between free exaggeration and naturalism is

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<sup>65</sup> Other bird-and-flower paintings in Jakuchū’s oeuvre are based on earlier Chinese works. For example, his painting *White Cranes* (Plate 49) is a replica of Shōkokuji’s pair of Chinese paintings titled *Cranes* (Plate 44) by Wen Zheng (文正, fl. first half of the fourteenth century). See Chapter IV below for further discussion.

ultimately what imbued Jakuchū's works with the essential vitality of living beings central to a bird-and-flower painting.

Finally, returning to the initial question: Was there a reason why a polychromatic mode would have been more appropriate for the *Colorful Realm* bird-and-flower paintings than monochromatic? Since Jakuchū did not leave any record of his planning process, there is no way to confirm the actual reasons behind his choices. However, it is nevertheless significant to underscore the difference in *whose* essence a painting captures between a polychrome and monochrome paintings of a same subject matter.

Monochrome ink painting in East Asia was traditionally associated with amateur painting practices of Chan/Zen monks and literati (detailed discussion of the literati painting to follow in Chapter V). Chan Buddhism emerged in China upon the arrival of the legendary first patriarch, Bodhidharma (C: Damo, J: Datsuma or Daruma, 達磨) from India. Certain schools of Chan Buddhism emphasized the idea of a “sudden enlightenment” (C: *dunwu*, J: *tongo*, 頓悟), which was the enlightenment that “is attained outside any time system, without reliance of dualistic, goal-oriented constructs.”<sup>66</sup>

Chinese monk named Heze Shenhui (菏泽神會, 684-758) once said on sudden enlightenment:

The principle of sudden enlightenment means to understand without going through gradual steps, for understanding is natural. Sudden enlightenment means that one's own mind is empty and void from the very beginning... Therefore the scripture says, “[Living beings] have spontaneous wisdom and wisdom without teacher.” He who issues from principle approaches the Way rapidly, whereas he who cultivates externally approaches slowly.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, s.v. “*tongo*, 頓悟,” November, 2016, <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=頓悟>.

<sup>67</sup> Chan, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, 441.

Heze Shenhui's explanation relays that the principle of sudden enlightenment was founded on the belief in the universal properties of Buddha nature. This idea of sudden enlightenment also informed the painting practices by Chan monks.<sup>68</sup> In paintings produced by Chan monks, careful rendering of details or control of the brush was not a central concern even in their depiction of Buddhist deities. Instead, they used free, emotive strokes of black ink on open space to capture not the form but more the impression of the subject.<sup>69</sup> The spontaneity expresses feeling of "the pulsation of one and the same life animating both him and the object... [Thus,] the spirit sees itself reflected in itself."<sup>70</sup> The works by Chan monk-painters, in other words, are just as much about their own Buddha nature, as the innate qualities of the subjects they portrayed. As Jakuchū intended his paintings to be used in familial and public Buddhist rituals, such individualistic works may not have appeared appropriate.

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<sup>68</sup> *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, s.v. "ichimi Zen, 一味禪," November, 2016, <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=一味禪>.

<sup>69</sup> Hugo Munsterberg, "Chinese Painting under Ch'an Influence" in *Zen and Oriental Art* (North Claredon: Charles E. Tuttle Publishing, 1993), 36.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

PLATES: VITALITY OF SPIRIT IN BIRD-AND-FLOWER PAINTING

43. Emperor Huizong (徽宗, 1082 – 1135). *Two Finches on Twigs of Bamboo*. Northern Song Dynasty, 11<sup>th</sup> century. Horizontal painting mounted as a handscroll, ink and colors on silk. 34.9 x 83.9 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. From: metmuseum.org



(accessed October 15, 2016).

As it was discussed in Chapter IV, “Vitality of Spirit in Bird-and-Flower Painting,” above, Emperor Huizong (徽宗, 1082 –

1135) was the most important patron of the arts in the Northern Song Dynasty and had a profound impact on the nature of the bird-and-flower genre for generations that followed. His philosophy of bird-and-flower painting (Three Aspects of Painting) emphasized the study of nature and of classical painting, and the embodiment of poetic ideal. One of Huizong’s own works that exemplifies his painting philosophy is *Two Finches on Twigs of Bamboo*. The painting (currently mounted as a handscroll) depicts a pair of sparrows in muted brown color, perched on twigs of bamboo. The soft, delicate bodies of the sparrows and the precision in which the bamboo branches are executed reflect Huizong’s interest in naturalism. Famously, Huizong used black lacquer, which reflects light, to dot the sparrow’s eyes to imbue them with a flicker of life. Huizong’s painting philosophy influenced the production and appreciation of bird-and-flower paintings in both China and Japan.

44. Wen Zheng (文正, fl. first half of the fourteenth century). *Cranes*. Late Yuan to early Ming Dynasty, c. 1376. Pair of hanging scrolls, ink and color on silk. 181.3 x 85.2 cm (each). Shōkokuji Temple. From: *Celebrating Two Contemporary Geniuses: Jakuchū and Buson* (Tokyo: Suntory Museum of Art and Miho Museum, 2015) 152.



This diptych is a representative work of Wen Zheng's bird-and-flower painting. The left scroll depicts a crane atop a lightly defined hill. In the background, one finds bamboos partially hidden by

cloud-like mist. The crane twists its head toward the moon that appears at the upper right corner. The right scroll, on the other hand, presents a crane in mid-flight, diving towards what appears to be a shoreline with sharply rising cliff. Wen pays a close attention to the details of the cranes, particularly their feathers, giving them texture, and a sense of lifelikeness. This diptych is particularly important because it was imported to Japan in 1376, and was in the collection of Shōkokuji by Jakuchū's time. This pair of paintings



may have been particularly desirable as models for their adherence to Huizong's Three Aspects of Painting. As stated in Chapter IV above, the Three Aspects of Painting stated that a painting should render forms in a realistic manner but with the awareness toward the styles of classical traditions, while expressing a poetic ideal. Notably, Shōkokuji also owns a diptych of cranes by Jakuchū that clearly demonstrate his careful study of Wen Zheng's original (Plate 49).

**45 a – d.** Lü Ji (呂紀, b. 1477). *Birds and Flowers of Four Seasons*. Ming Dynasty. Set of four hanging scrolls, ink and colors on silk. 176.0 x 100.8 cm (each). Tokyo National Museum. From: <http://www.emuseum.jp> (accessed October 15, 2016).



Lü Ji was a Ming Dynasty artist who was trained in Ningbo, in the Zhejiang province, and later became a painter in the imperial academy. It is through the Ningbo trading port, in fact, that the *Birds and Flowers of Four Seasons* may have come to Japan. Lü Ji was most known for his large-scale polychrome bird-and-flower painting. This set of four paintings with birds and flowers of the four seasons is understood to be his masterpiece. The central motif of each of the four pieces is as follows (from left to right):

*Spring (45-a)*: Pairs of magpies and of doves in a blossoming plum tree over a creek with a pair of ducks.

*Summer (45-b)*: A pair of ducks in water, and another of yellow birds—possibly orioles—in a blossoming peony bush.

*Fall (45-c)*: A pair of geese—a standard iconography for fall in East Asian bird-and-flower painting—before a body of water, and a pair of mynah birds and a ribbon-tail bird resting in a tree behind a peony bush.

*Winter (45-d)*: A pair of pheasants in a snowy forest with a monumental plum tree with white blossoms, and a few camellia blossoms bending over a frozen stream

This set was originally in the collection of the Shimazu family, the warrior lord who oversaw the southern most region of Satsuma on the Kyushu Island, Japan. Warrior lords particularly preferred large bird-and-flower paintings as interior decoration. In fact, Lü Ji's works had a significant impact on the development of Kano school painting style. With regard to the new trends in painting during the Edo period, perhaps his most significant contribution was his influence over the later generations of bird-and-flower painters, most specifically, Shen Nanpin (沈南蘋, c. 1682–1760; Shen Quan in Chinese). Shen Nanpin travelled to Japan in 1731. Known today as the “Nanpin school” (J: Nanpin-ha, 南蘋派), the colorful and detailed works inspired a renewed interest in bird-and-flower painting in Japan. Though Jakuchū may not have seen Lü Ji works in person, he was certainly aware of the new Nanpin mode. The use of warm bright color as highlight

in otherwise a desolate wintery scene, for instance in *Mandarin Ducks in Snow* (Plate 3), can be placed in the lineage of Lü Ji's bird-and-flower painting.

46. Shen Nanpin (or Shen Quan, c. 1682–1760). *Pine, Plum, and Cranes*. Qing Dynasty, China, and Edo period, Japan, 1759. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk. 191 x 98 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing. From: Evelyn S. Rawski and Jessica Rawson. *China: the Three Emperors 1662 – 1795* (London: Royal Academy Books, 2006), 1.



This painting synthesizes a variety of auspicious motifs, painted in a delicate manner, in a single composition. The central motif is a pair of red-capped cranes—symbols of longevity—standing above a foaming stream. To the left of the cranes are nandina branches, symbols of plenty; and to the right are bamboo, pine, and plum, symbolizing longevity and scholarly purity. The work is done mostly in a mode of academic polychrome painting, using fine outlines, subtle gradients, and saturated colors to accentuate the

bird-and-flower motif in the foreground, which creates contrast to largely monochromatic background.

Shen Nanpin's bird-and-flower painting was inspired by his Ming predecessors. In 1731, he was invited to Japan, precisely because he was accomplished in traditional

academic mode of bird-and-flower painting. Though Nanpin was relatively unknown in China, his paintings became very popular in Japan (see “Vitality of Spirit in Bird-and-Flower Painting” for further discussion on Shen Nanpin and his impact to Kyoto painter circle). The popularity of the “Nanpin school” grew in tandem with that of the Ōbaku sect (Ōbaku-shū, 黄檗宗) of Zen Buddhism.

When Shen Nanpin’s work is compared to Jakuchū’s painting of cranes in the *Colorful Realm* (Plate 15), several distinctions appear. Although there is no question that Jakuchū was influenced by the Nanpin mode, he clearly did not blindly copy from it. For example, Jakuchū’s cranes have comical expressions, whereas Shen Nanpin’s cranes have more naturalistic faces. On the other hand, the feathers on Jakuchū’s cranes are more translucent and lace-like, giving far more a sense of reality and three-dimensionality compare to Shen Nanpin’s counterpart, which are done in opaque pigments with clearly defined brown shading.

**47 and 48.** *Peach Blossoms and Dove*. [Plate 47] Emperor Huizong. *Peach Blossoms and Dove*. Northern Song Dynasty, 11<sup>th</sup> century. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk. 28.6 x 26.0 cm. Private collection, Tokyo. From: Yoshiho Yonezawa, *Flower-and-Bird Painting of the Sung Dynasty* (London: Faber and Faber Incorporated, 1961), 25. [Plate 48] Kano Tsunenobu (狩野常信, 1636-1713). *Copy of Pigeon (Dove) on a Peach Branch by Emperor Huizong*, from *Album Copies of Chinese Masterpieces*. Edo period, 17<sup>th</sup> – early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk. 24.3 x 33.2 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. From: metmuseum.org (accessed October 15, 2016).



Painted on plane background, Emperor Huizong’s album leaf presents a close-up of a single dove on the forked twiggy branches. The dove is portrayed with subtle gradations of blue, green, brown, and black. Its feathers, feet, and eyes are all rendered in careful detail, displaying sensitivity to the liveliness of the dove. Only two of the peach blossoms are in full bloom, indicating that this is a scene of early spring. Suggesting the arrival of spring—instead of height of the season—seems to correspond to the idea of lyricism (*shiyi*), one of the most important aspects in Huizong’s Three Aspects of Painting.

About five centuries later, and in Japan, Kanō Tsunenobu painted a copy of Huizong's original. Although the subject matter is the same and the general composition is also very similar, there are some significant differences in detail. Perhaps to accommodate for the horizontal shape of the painted surface, Tsunenobu extended the peach branch further to the right. To balance the composition, Tsunenobu's version *zooms out*, including not on the tip of the branches, but the thicker area presumably closer to the trunk. As a result, the dove now appears much smaller compare to Huizong's original. Significantly, Tusnenobu's version also includes many more fully-blossomed peach flowers, indicating that this scene is closer to the height of spring, rather than the beginning as it was the case with Huizong's painting. Tsunenobu's dove is in more vibrant colors, with greens, yellows, blues, reds, and black. Particular details he chose to include, such as the textures of the feathers, are more characteristic of Ming Dynasty paintings, closer to Tsunenobu's own time.

**Plate 49:** Itō Jakuchū. *White Cranes*. Edo period, 18<sup>th</sup> century. Pair of hanging scrolls, ink and color on silk. 124.7 x 70 cm (each). Location unknown. From: *Celebrating Two Contemporary Geniuses: Jakuchū and Buson* (Tokyo: Suntory Museum of Art and Miho Museum, 2015) 153.



Shōkokuji

maintained a large collection of art works. Wen Zheng’s diptych, *Cranes*, included in this exhibition (Plate 44) was in fact a work owned by the temple. *White Cranes* is a copy Wen Zheng’s original made by none other than

Jakuchū, attesting to the impact of Wen’s works had on his artistic development. As Huizong emphasized in his *Three Aspects of Painting*, copying the works by the previous masters was an essential part of artist’s training in East Asia, including Japan. However, as the example of Tsunenobu (Plate 48) and this Jakuchū’s diptych demonstrate, the practice of “copying” was rarely a simple faithful mimicry.

Just as we observed with the Kano Tsunenobu’s copy of Huizong’s *Peach Blossoms and Dove* (Plate 48), Jakuchū’s copy is very similar to Wen Zheng’s original, but he makes some significant compositional changes. Like Wen Zheng, Jakuchū paints his cranes in the traditional manner of the Chinese imperial academy, with a careful

attention to natural detail that conveyed the lifelikeness of the birds. The major difference is in the background. For the left scroll with a standing crane, Jakuchū replaces the bamboos on a misty hill in the original with a monumental pine trunk and plum branches hiding in the background. In other words, Jakuchū's version replaces atmospheric and ethereal scenery reminiscent of scholarly seclusion, with a strong and vibrant auspicious scene. The fact that Jakuchū enlarged the crane in proportion to the painted space also adds to the impression that the focus of this painting is the crane itself, rather than the environment in which the crane appears. For the right scroll, Jakuchū reverse the location of the background scenery, so that the cliff is now to the right side of the crane, and the body of water (presumably a roaring sea) is to the left. Since he did not reverse the directionality of the crane in the foreground, in Jakuchū's version, the crane faces the open sea, rather than the cliff, as in Wen's original. Due to this change, when the two paintings are hang side by side, the trunk of the pine tree at the bottom of the left hand scroll now connects to the wave of the ocean at the bottom of the right hand scroll, creating a stronger sense of unity between the two halves of the diptych.



CHAPTER V  
LITERATI SPIRIT

**Jakuchū's Literary Circle:**

As Lippit demonstrated in his contextual study, Jakuchū was a man of his time. “Jakuchū” literally means “like a void,” a phrase that referred to the virtues of detachment and oneness with the universe, merits the artist took to heart.<sup>71</sup> As previously stated, in Japan there was significant overlap between literati and Buddhist cultural practices. Literati lifestyle and mode of painting were first introduced to Japan through Zen monastic community. Certain ideological commonalities, such as the emphasis on isolation further encouraged such conflation. It is no surprise then to find that Jakuchū's growth as a Buddhist lay practitioner and a painter within a literati circle was also intertwined. Jakuchū's literary network described him to be someone who captured the “essence.”

In 1760, so moved by the *Colorful Realm*, Baisaō (賣茶翁, 1675 – 1763) gave Jakuchū a hanging scroll of his own calligraphy, which described Jakuchū's paintings as: “Enlivened by his hand, his paintings are filled with a mysterious spirit” (*tansei kasshu no myō kami ni tsūzu*, 丹精活手妙通神).<sup>72</sup> Touched by Baisaō's gesture, Jakuchū made a seal with his words and used it in three of his later *Colorful Realm* paintings. *Tansei* (丹精) refers to working earnestly, as emphasized in Zen Buddhist practice. *Myō* (妙) can be

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<sup>71</sup> Lippit, “Jakuchū's Seals,” in *Colorful Realm*, 161.

<sup>72</sup> Lippit, “Single-Column Calligraphy by the Zen Monk Baisaō,” in *Colorful Realm*, 131.

translated as “beautiful,” “profound,” or “mysterious.”<sup>73</sup> *Tsūzu* (通ず) literally means to be connected, but can also mean being free and unhindered, like a Buddha, bodhisattva, or scholar.<sup>74</sup> *Kami* (神) is often translated as “god.” In this context, it may also be translated as “soul,” “spirit,” or “essence.”<sup>75</sup> Thus, we can see that Jakuchū’s companions believed that his paintings expressed three types of essence: the essence of his natural subjects; the artist’s innate quality in the Buddhist sense; and the essence in the Daoist sense of *shen* (introduced in Chapter II).

Three years before becoming a Buddhist lay practitioner (*koji*, 居士), Jakuchū met Daiten Kenjō, a monk at (and later abbot of) Shōkokuji. Daiten would prove to be one of Jakuchū’s closest friends and most valuable patrons, whose mentorship helped to define Jakuchū’s artistic education and religious experience. Through his friendship with Daiten, Jakuchū entered a network of leading cultural producers including Kimura Kenkadō (木村兼葭堂, 1736 – 1802), Baisaō, Kakutei (鶴亭, 1722 – 1785), Ike Taiga (池大雅, 1723 – 1776), and, by extension, figures including the artist Maruyama Ōkyo (円山応挙, 1733 – 1795).<sup>76</sup> A survey of Jakuchū’s circle of friends and acquaintances reveals that Jakuchū was fully accepted and respected among the Kyoto literati circles. It is important to note, however, that the detailed colorful bird-and-flower genre, which was Jakuchū’s forte, was not necessarily the most highly praised with—in fact antithesis to—the traditional Chinese literati aesthetic. However, the same bird-and-flower genre was

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<sup>73</sup> *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, s.v. “*myō*, 妙,” November 15, 2016, <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=妙>.

<sup>74</sup> *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, s.v. “*tsūzu*, 通,” November 15, 2016, <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=通>.

<sup>75</sup> *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, s.v. “*kami*, 神,” November 15, 2016, <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=神>.

<sup>76</sup> Beerens, *Friends, Acquaintances, Pupils and Patrons*, 76.

fully embraced as a legitimate works of literati painting in Edo-period Japan. This final chapter explores the idea of “essence” in the tradition of literati painting in both China and Japan to understand how and why Jakuchū’s works (and by extension Jakuchū himself as a painter) was revered among his circle of Kyoto intellectuals.

Before we discuss the literati idea of the essence of painting, we will first review the Kyoto literati and professional painters who had the most significant impact on Jakuchū’s career and on the reception of his works.<sup>77</sup> Kimura Kenkadō was the eldest son of a wealthy *sake* brewer.<sup>78</sup> He studied painting in the modes of Kano school and the Nagasaki school as a young man. Kenkadō’s greatest contribution to Jakuchū and the development of Edo-period painting as a whole was his collection of imported paintings, antiques, manuals, and scientific illustrations from China and Europe. Kenkadō’s collection of paintings by the Chinese literati Yi Fujiu (伊孚九, 1698 – after 1747) was a particularly important model for literati artists in Japan. Kenkadō also trained in the new custom of Chinese tea drinking, *sencha* (煎茶), to participate in literati socialization with his sinophilic guests. Kenkadō’s items and practices allowed Japanese artists, including Jakuchū, to study Chinese and European culture that would have otherwise been inaccessible.

Baisaō, who was the eldest of Jakuchū’s social circle, was teacher and friend to Jakuchū, Daiten, and Taiga.<sup>79</sup> As a Ōbaku monk, Baisaō was skilled in spoken and written Chinese, and often acted as a translator between the Chinese and Japanese priests.

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<sup>77</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the biographies of Jakuchū’s friends and acquaintances included in this chapter are taken from Beerens, *Friends, Acquaintances, Pupils and Patrons*, 13-288.

<sup>78</sup> Further introduction to Kimura Kenkadō can also be found in Patricia J. Graham’s “Lifestyles of Scholar-Painters in Edo Japan,” *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 77, no. 7 (1990): 272.

<sup>79</sup> Further information on Baisaō can also be found in Norman Wattles, *Baisaō – the Old Tea Seller: Life and Zen Poetry in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Kyoto* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2009), 11.

Reputed as an eccentric, Baisaō was deeply knowledgeable about Chinese literature and was an accomplished poet and calligrapher. Baisaō's familiarity with Chinese culture and language certainly proved an important influence on Jakuchū. Upon the monk's death, Jakuchū, Daiten, and Taiga collaborated to produce a posthumous collection of Baisaō's poetry, calligraphy, and painting.

Kakutei was an occasional Ōbaku priest in Kyoto and Edo.<sup>80</sup> He studied painting in the style of Shen Nanpin in Nagasaki, which he later taught to Kenkadō.<sup>81</sup> He excelled in monochromatic, literati painting, as well as the polychromatic bird-and-flower genre. As both a priest and a painter, Kakutei was close friends with Daiten and Ike Taiga. There is no record that Kakutei and Jakuchū ever met. Their shared interests and social circle leads some scholars to believe that the artists were conscious of each other's works.<sup>82</sup>

Ike Taiga was a literati painter and Jakuchū's friend. As a young man and self-taught artist, Taiga opened his own fan illustrating shop to support his widowed mother.<sup>83</sup> Ōbaku monks of Manpukuji also trained him in the arts of poetry and calligraphy. The popularity of his shop enabled Taiga to begin garnering professional commissions when he was as young as twenty-one. Soon Taiga became versed in Chinese literati painting, Chinese painting manuals, and Confucian sketching practices. He was famous for his

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<sup>80</sup> For the most extensive discussion on Kakutei and his works, see Nagasaki Museum of History and Culture, *My Name is Kakutei* (Nagasaki: Nagasaki Museum of History and Culture, 2016).

<sup>81</sup> For an extended discussion on the Nagasaki school, see Marco Meccarelli, "Chinese Painters in Nagasaki: Style and Artistic Contaminatio During the Tokugawa Period," *Ming Qing Studies 2015* (December 2015), 175 – 236.

<sup>82</sup> Nagasaki Museum of History, *My Name is Kakutei*, 146.

<sup>83</sup> For a detailed discussion of Taiga and his works, see Melinda Takeuchi, *Taiga's True Views: The Language of Landscape Painting in Eighteenth-Century Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); Felice Fischer and Kyoko Kinoshita, *Ike Taiga and Tokuyama Gyokuran: Japanese Masters of the Brush*, Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

hybridization of Chinese and Japanese techniques and tastes, which may have inspired Jakuchū's own eclectic mode.

Maruyama Ōkyo reportedly never met Jakuchū. However, their mutual friend and patron, Kenkadō, indirectly connected the two. Ōkyo is most renowned for his naturalistic painting based on his first-hand study of nature that at times incorporated Western techniques. Ōkyo's dedicated observation was as much a characteristic of classical Chinese bird-and-flower paintings as it was Western scientific illustration, both of which were popular in Japan.

Jakuchū's large, inclusive social circle exposed him to classical and contemporaneous culture across genre and medium. Figures like Daiten, Kenkadō, and Baisaō directed his spiritual education. Kenkadō, Baisaō, and Taiga introduced the artist to the burgeoning Edo literati aesthetic. Activities by Kakutei and Ōkyo introduced foreign styles emphasizing new techniques and methods of observation into Jakuchū's artistic skill set. His resultant paintings are a nuanced combination of these inspirations. The common thread that connected the intellectual circle of Kyoto at this time was the intense yearning for Chinese culture. Members of a literati social circle studied and upheld the lifestyle and ideals of their (imagined) Chinese counterpart.

### **Literati Painting in China and Japan:**

Broadly, "literati painting" refers to an East Asian painting tradition often associated with calligraphic ink paintings on paper done by amateur artists. It originated

in Song Dynasty China, derived largely from calligraphic and poetic practices.<sup>84</sup> What we consider literati painting today emerged in the Northern Song Dynasty. The scholar-official, Su Shi (蘇軾, 1037 – 1101), disillusioned by the rigidity of academic court artists, suggested scholar artists use painting to depict their essence. Later, in the Ming Dynasty, the artist and aesthete Dong Qichang (董其昌, 1555–1636) coined the term *wenrenhua* (文人画), literally “scholar-gentleman’s painting,” which became the default term for referring to art produced by amateur scholar artists as a form of expression.<sup>85</sup> Literati artists depicted many of the same themes as their academic predecessors, including Buddhist subjects, bird-and-flower scenes, and landscapes. The most popular genre of literati painting was landscape painting in a mode referred to as *nanzonghua* (南宗画), the “Southern school of painting.”

Paintings in the mode of *wenrenhua* were introduced to Japan in the Kamakura period (1185 – 1333). However, it was not until the Edo period that the concept of *wenren*, or *bunjin* in Japanese, was adopted among the Japanese intellectuals educated in Chinese culture. *Bunjinga* (文人画) was the Japanese term generally applied to works produced by professional painters and amateur scholar-painters working in the general pictorial mode of *wenrenhua* or otherwise aspiring to follow the idealized lifestyle of a *wenren*. Following Dong Qichang, the *wenren*-mode of painting was also known in Japan as *nanshūga* (南宗画). But in practice, the works produced by Japanese artists were eclectic in nature, freely incorporating elements from both “northern” and “southern”

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<sup>84</sup> Susan Bush, *Chinese Literati on Painting: Su Shih to Tung Chi Chang* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), 5.

<sup>85</sup> Discussion on the impact of Dong Qichang to the Edo-period literati painting, see for instance, Takeuchi, *Taiga's True Views*; Graham, “Lifestyles of Scholar-Painters in Edo Japan,” 272; Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s.v. “*wenren hua*”, accessed August 12, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/art/wenrenhua>.

schools according to Dong Qichang's categorization. Furthermore, it was not uncommon for literati painters to also be accomplished in traditional and contemporary Japanese modes of painting.

### **The Essence in Chinese Literati Painting:**

According to documentation from the time, the idea of scholars' art appeared in China at the end of the eleventh century.<sup>86</sup> It would be inappropriate to say that literati theory did not exist prior to this time. Many analytical approaches used by Northern Song scholar-officials circulated before the emergence of literati painting.<sup>87</sup> Pre-Tang scholar Zong Bing (宗炳, 375 – 443) introduced the concept of the “essence” to art analysis. He wrote that if an artist could capture the likeness or essence of his subject then he would achieve excellence. Later, artist Xie He's (谢赫, fl. c. 420 – 502) developed the “six principles of painting” (*huihua liufa*, 繪畫六法). According to Xie He, paintings should be evaluated by their: (1) spirit resonance; (2) bone method; (3) correspondence to the object; (4) suitability to type; (5) division and planning; and (6) transmission by copying. *Qiyun* (氣韻) used the root word *qi* (氣) to refer to the lingering effect of the painter's essence and energy on the painting, which resulted in the painting's lifelike appearance. According to Xie He, through the attainment of *qiyun*, a painting imbued his motifs with the life force of living things. According to these men, brushwork should support the creation of a sense of life, rather than merely depict the likeness of the subject.

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<sup>86</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the discussion of the history of Chinese literati movement and literati ideals is based on Bush, *Chinese Literati on Painting*, 5.

<sup>87</sup> Jianping Gao, *The Expressive Act in Chinese Art: From Calligraphy to Painting* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1996), 30.

During the Song Dynasty, scholars were court officials who played significant roles in Chinese society and politics.<sup>88</sup> Because of their wealth and favor at court, scholars were able to partake in the arts at leisure. Despite the later distinction made based on particular modes of expression, the literati and bird-and-flower genres largely emerged from the same ideological root. In the late eleventh century, a group of scholar-friends, all connected by the poet and calligrapher Su Shi, became interested in painting. Su Shi, as a powerful official, successful poet, and strong personality was the leader of his social group.<sup>89</sup> Under the influence of these men, the scholarly arts of poetry, calligraphy, and painting (which were not mutually exclusive) came to emphasize refined simplicity, spontaneity, and the use of scholarly motifs and subjects.

It was under the guidance of Su Shi that literati connoisseurs began to evaluate art upon its “scholarly spirit,” the expression of the artist’s inherent personality, rather than artistic style.<sup>90</sup> To be accomplished in the arts of poetry, calligraphy, and painting was to have become the ideal gentleman, whose qualities were presumably reflected in their works. Su Shi considered the character of the man more important than the physical remains of such. Su Shi wrote: “What is not used up in the poetry overflows to become calligraphy and is transformed to become painting. Both are what is left over from poetry.”<sup>91</sup> Here, it is evident that the scholarly accomplishments of poetry and calligraphy offer the background necessary to be a painter. It is through education and empirical

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>89</sup> Further discussion of Su Shi can be found in Robert J. Maeda, *Two Sung Texts on Chinese Painting and the Landscape Styles of the 11th and 12th Centuries* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1978).

<sup>90</sup> Sullivan, *The Arts of China*, 184. Bush, *Chinese Literati on Painting*, 7 and 11.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 12.



research that an artist, in a comparable way to a Confucian scholar, can capture the vital energy, or *qi*, in both the painted subject and the painter.<sup>92</sup>

Northern Song Dynasty Confucian scholar Zhu Xi (朱熹, 1130–1200) wrote that men who wished to reach their highest potential, should do so through a variety of practices, including the investigation of things. He said:

Those who wished to bring order to their states would first regulate their families. Those who wished to regulate their families would first cultivate their personal lives. Those who wished to cultivate their personal lives would first rectify their minds. Those who wished to rectify their minds would first make their wills sincere. Those who wished to make their wills sincere would first extend their knowledge. The extension of knowledge consists in the investigation of things. When things are investigated, knowledge is extended; when knowledge is extended, the will becomes sincere; when the will is sincere, the mind is rectified; when the mind is rectified, personal life is cultivated; when personal life is cultivated, the family will be regulated; when the family is regulated, the state will be in order; and when the state is in order, there will be peace throughout the world.<sup>93</sup>

As the underlined sentence shows, the investigation of things was critical to the development of a man's *ren* (仁), his highest character.<sup>94</sup> The literati utilized the already-established Confucian value of self-betterment through empirical research and education to describe the character of the best literati scholars and artists.

The popular subject matter of the Southern Song emerged first in the Tang Dynasty (618 – 907) and persisted into the Yuan Dynasty. These subjects included: “...landscapes, ink bamboos, blossoming plums and orchids, leafless trees and strange rocks, ink flowers and birds, etc.”<sup>95</sup> These subjects were chosen for their use as literary

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>93</sup> Chan, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, 86.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>95</sup> Bush, *Chinese Literati on Painting*, 97.

metaphor. Many of the above listed motifs were indicators of a gentlemanly nature. Southern scholar-artists chose subjects that maintained the appearance of a gentlemanly nature despite losing their influence as scholars to an imperial court. Southern Song literati also began to emphasize the ideal of the wandering mountain scholar.<sup>96</sup> Thus, rusticity and reclusion became significant motifs within the canon of literati painting.

After the Mongolian empire claimed China, literati art again left the court setting. The Mongolian court mainly commissioned polychromatic portraits. Most of the famous literati painters only received commissions from lesser nobles and obtained very little recognition at the court. As a result Yuan scholars became the leading producers and theorists of painting. During this time, the relationship between literati poetry and painting was strengthened, with longer, more intimate poems now accompanying the monochromatic works. Ultimately, the complementary inscriptions became an integral part of the composition.<sup>97</sup>

Tang Hou (湯垕, c. 1221 – 1279), like his predecessors, emphasized the “virtues of being a scholar” in the evaluation of amateur art. He dictated that viewing a painting was in fact an attempt to truly know the artist. He emphasized the elements of play and spontaneity of Yuan ink painting, believing that such characteristics expressed the feelings of the artist, which was critical to interpreting the painting. Tang Hou believed that the artist’s personality was additionally expressed through their ability to “pour out” or to “sketch ideas,” *xieyi* (写意). All of these elements played a role in the artist’s ability to convey the emotional content of the natural scene depicted. Though Yuan artists

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<sup>96</sup> James Cahill, *The Lyric Journey: Poetic Painting in China and Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 4.

<sup>97</sup> National Palace Museum ed., *Chinese Cultural Art Treasure: National Palace Museum Illustrated Handbook* (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1969), 75. See also Sullivan, *The Arts of China*, 217.

emphasized spontaneous acts, the existence of artist albums suggested that scholars' painting was in fact an established, learned practice.

When the Chinese regained control of the court, the new emperor Hongwu (洪武, 1328–1398), enforced a variety of anti-scholarship laws, resulting in the development of a large gentry class that was highly educated and had copious amounts of leisure time to be spent on their family estates. One of the leading connoisseurs and theorists at this time was Dong Qichang. The scholar-painter divided literati painters into members of the Northern or Southern Schools of painting.<sup>98</sup> According to Dong Qichang, the Southern School paralleled the Southern School of Chan Buddhism. The spontaneous enlightenment taught by the Chan School was mirrored by the spontaneous, amateur painting created by literati painters. Conversely, the Northern School taught gradual enlightenment. The artists Dong Qichang labeled as members of the Northern School were court painters, who painted in color and practiced their craft. Dong Qichang's evaluative properties would continue to be applied to artists in the Ming Dynasty, and retroactively, to Song and Yuan painters by both Chinese and Japanese connoisseurs.

European techniques and mediums like chiaroscuro and oil paints became very popular amongst court and academic painters in the Qing Dynasty.<sup>99</sup> However, literati artists resisted the introduction of such changes. Instead, they continued to follow the pre-established aesthetic theories of the Song and Yuan scholars. Theorists continued to emphasize painting, particularly landscapes, as expressions of the artist. Upon a new Manchu invasion, the literati artists were again forced to decide between a life at court, supporting their invaders, or a life of poverty and self-sufficiency, rejecting foreign rule.

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<sup>98</sup> Further discussion can also be found in Sullivan, *The Arts of China*, 241.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

## Literati-Mode Painting in Japan: A Brief History

In Japan, the Chinese-style monochromatic painting was first practiced within the Zen monastic community. Zen Buddhism was introduced to Japan during the late-Heian and Kamakura periods, and enthusiastically patronized particularly by the warrior class that came into power.<sup>100</sup> In this early period, Zen Buddhist monastic community functioned as a courier of Chinese culture. Chinese paintings and other artifacts were luxurious commodities owned, gifted, and displayed by warrior rulers to legitimate their power.

It was only natural that collecting soon turned to domestic production of Chinese-style artworks. Zen monks in Japan sought to emulate the lifestyle and culture of the Chinese Song and Yuan dynasty. They began composing poems and producing ink paintings in the style of their Chinese predecessors.<sup>101</sup> Kano school (discussed earlier) rose to prominence, specializing in the Chinese style of painting. It was not until the Edo period, however, that the Chinese literati ideals became known in Japan.<sup>102</sup> The introduction of the literati ideals were reintroduced to Japan through Chinese practitioners of Zen Buddhism, which in Japan came to be known as the Ōbaku sect.

In the late seventeenth century, small group of Chinese monks from a monastery called Wanfusi (萬福寺) on Mt. Huangbo (C: Huangboshan, 黃檗山) in the Fujian

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<sup>100</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the introduction to the early practices of ink painting in Japan is based on H. Paul Varley, "Zen in Medieval Japan," *Monumenta Nipponica* 36, no. 4 (1981): 463-68.

<sup>101</sup> A further discussion can also be found in Yoshiho Yonezawa and Chu Yoshizawa, *Japanese Painting in the Literati Style* (New York: Weatherhill, 1974).

<sup>102</sup> Graham, "Lifestyles of Scholar-Painters in Edo Japan," 264.

province immigrated to Japan.<sup>103</sup> The practices of the Wanfusi monks were very different from the now-familiar Zen Buddhism in Japan. The Chinese form of Zen Buddhism grew in popularity. Eventually, in 1661, its leading abbot, Huangbo Xiyun (隱元隆琦, 1592-1673), was allowed to establish the first temple complex, Manpukuji (萬福寺) in Kyoto. The Ōbaku sect was sensational, not just in its Buddhist practices: the monks, first just Chinese and later their Japanese disciples, dressed in Chinese robes, spoke only Chinese, and performed contemporary Chinese music. The proponents of Ōbaku Buddhism presented the sect as a more accurate, Chinese form of Zen Buddhism. As a result, the Ōbaku sect came to be patronized by both the elites and commoners. Like the Zen monasteries of the Muromachi and Kamakura periods, Ōbaku temples became the hub for importing Chinese landscape paintings, which were used as models by the painters in Japan.<sup>104</sup> In addition, some Ōbaku priests also practiced poetry and painting as leisure. Furthermore, in a typical form of “ink play,” the works produced by these monks often disregarded the established principles of painting. These practices inspired cultured patrons in and around Nagasaki and Kyoto.

Outside of the monastic community, the person who is widely regarded as the spiritual founder of the literati movement in Japan is Ishikawa Jōzan (石川丈山, 1583–1672).<sup>105</sup> A samurai and aesthete, Jōzan is credited with the popularization of Chinese-style tea, *sencha* newly introduced by the Ōbaku monks, which later became an integral part of literati socialization. Like his Kamakura and Muromachi predecessors, Jōzan

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<sup>103</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the introduction to the Ōbaku sect is based on Helen Baroni, *Iron Eyes*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006).

<sup>104</sup> James Cahill, “Phases and Modes in the Transmission of Ming-Ch’ing Painting Styles to Edo-Period Japan,” *Sino-Japanese Cultural Interchange: Aspects of Archaeology and Art History: Papers of the International Symposium on Sino-Japanese Interchanges*, vol. 1, edited by Yue-him Tam (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1985), 68.

<sup>105</sup> Graham, “Lifestyles of Scholar-Painters in Edo Japan,” 266.

avidly collected Chinese cultural products. He designed his home, the Shisendō (詩仙堂, later converted into a Zen temple), as a hybrid of Chinese- and Japanese-styles of architecture and garden. After his samurai status was revoked, he lived in isolation inspired by the wandering literati of the Yuan Dynasty. Jōzan's lifestyle and collection had a profound impact on the popularization of the literati ideas in Japan. Thus, both monastic and secular peoples influenced the development of literati painting in Japan.

### **Eclectic Nature of Japanese Literati Practice:**

Eclecticism is one element of Japanese literati practice that is often emphasized. The government's prohibition on foreign travel combined with the lack of steady inflow of Chinese books and artworks, inevitably skewed people's perception of Chinese literati practices, including painting, in a critical way. So a negotiation between what people learned about literati ideals in books and what they actually saw as its product was needed. One text responsible for the skewing of Japanese perceptions of Chinese literati art was the *Mustard-Seed Garden Painting Manual* (C: *Jieziyuan huazhuan*, J: *Kaishien gaden*, 芥子園畫傳, Qing Dynasty, hereafter *Mustard-Seed Manual*). The *Mustard-Seed Manual* was an instructional book that detailed connoisseurship of literati paintings, evaluations of materials, and methods of painting, including sample illustrations.<sup>106</sup> Japanese literati painters often appropriated the *Mustard-Seed Manual* motifs and imagery.<sup>107</sup> The influence of the *Mustard-Seed Manual* may have also been responsible for the Japanese literati paintings that depicted forms poised mid-paper, in seemingly

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<sup>106</sup> Yonezawa, *Japanese Painting in the Literati Style*, 174.

<sup>107</sup> In the case of Ike Taiga, see Takeuchi, *Taiga's True Views*, 26.

empty space. Because of the *Mustard-Seed Manual*'s didactic appearance, Japanese artists may have believed it was common to paint forms in open space, though it actually was not a technique in formal Chinese literati works.<sup>108</sup>

Another element is the experimentation with Western-mode of painting. As previously stated, during the Edo period, the government enforced the isolationist policy that severely limited trade with the outside world. The only port that remained open to Dutch and Chinese merchants on the Japanese archipelago was the artificial island of Dejima (出島) in Nagasaki. Through this port, the Japanese had limited access to foreign goods and ideas.<sup>109</sup> In 1720, the Tokugawa shogunate loosened the ban on Dutch books, and Nagasaki became the center for Western studies.<sup>110</sup> Dutch gifts to the Japanese government, such as paintings and botany books, ignited interest in Western studies throughout Japan.<sup>111</sup>

The idea of observing from life valued in the Confucian philosophy encouraged sketching practices among artists, which consequently paralleled the emphasis on sketching with the Western artistic tradition.<sup>112</sup> The main difference between Confucian and Western sketching was that the Western scientific manuals utilized illusionistic techniques to sketch a realistic scene and the traditional Chinese practice of sketching was more impressionistic, capturing the outlines or shapes of the subject.<sup>113</sup> Notably,

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<sup>108</sup> Takeuchi, *Taiga's True Views*, 29.

<sup>109</sup> It should be noted that while Japanese contact with outside countries was limited by the *sakoku* edicts, they still continued to trade with China, Korea, and the Ryūkyū Kingdom, now known as Okinawa.

<sup>110</sup> Donald Keene, *The Japanese Discovery of Europe, 1720 – 1830* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969).

<sup>111</sup> Tamon Miki, "The Influence of Western Culture on Japanese Art," *Monumenta Nipponica* 19 (1964): 155.

<sup>112</sup> Sherman E. Lee, *Reflections of Reality in Japanese Art*, (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1983), 165.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 153 and 163.

Japanese literati, unlike the Chinese predecessors, applied techniques deriving from both sketching practices to their paintings.

Maruyama Ōkyo, an eclectic artist, is widely regarded as a painter who captured the reality in an objective way. He studied bird-and-flower painting in the Kano School, European oil painting, and Dutch prints.<sup>114</sup> Ōkyo produced hundreds of sketches from life. Not unlike literati artists who sketched impressions of the landscape, Ōkyo sought to understand nature by capturing its accurate form. Jakuchū and Ōkyo shared a similar career trajectory. Both came from a commoner background - Jakuchū the son of a merchant and Ōkyo the son of a farmer. Both artists were classically trained, most likely by artists in the Kano School. Their careers were elevated by the early patronage of Buddhist monks. Through these connections, Jakuchū and Ōkyo were able to access Japanese and foreign works of art. The artists' popularity grew significantly, earning them prestigious commissions from the elite members of society. Furthermore, they were both praised as the best “naturalist” painters of their time.

Both Jakuchū and Ōkyo developed new modes of representing reality by incorporating classical and foreign influences. Their work challenged previous artistic philosophies like those developed by the conservative Kano School. However, their modes of representing the spirits of their animal and plant subjects differed critically. Ōkyo drew conventions from bird-and-flower painting, literati painting, and European painting to represent his subjects as “real” as possible through a careful observation of natural life. Conversely, Jakuchū drew upon conventions from bird-and-flower painting, literati painting, and Buddhist painting to represent his subjects as “true” as possible.

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<sup>114</sup> For discussions of Ōkyo's career, see Chisaburō Yamada, “Japanese Modern Art,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 3 (1940): 567-578; William Rathbun and Johei Sasaki, *Ōkyo and the Maruyama-Shijo School of Japanese Painting* (St. Louis: St. Louis Art Museum, 1980).



Here, “true” describes impressionistic representations born of a studied scholarly nature or Zen-esque humor.<sup>115</sup>

### **Literati Essence in the *Colorful Realm*:**

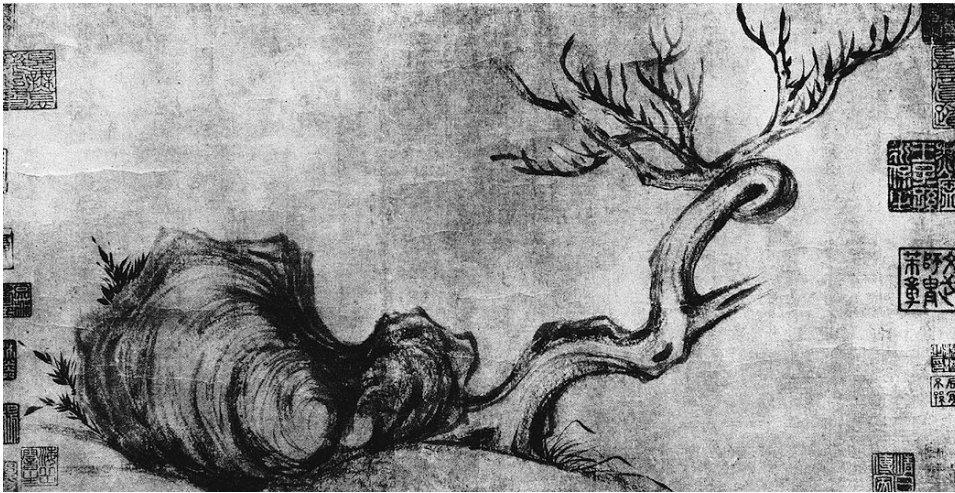
As mentioned earlier, Baisaō described *Colorful Realm* as “Enlivened by his hand, his paintings are filled with a mysterious spirit,” using the character *shen* (神) for “spirit” or “essence.” Because (as discussed above), this “*shen*” was a significant term in the Chinese literati context as “the consciousness of the artist,” it may be considered that, at least to Baisaō, the *Colorful Realm* was not just Jakuchū capturing the essence of the living beings he portrayed, but somehow a manifestation of that essence synchronized with the essence of Jakuchū himself, thereby *inspiring* the paintings. Jakuchū used this inscription in three paintings in the *Colorful* as his seal: *Lotus Pond and Fish* (Plate 17), *Peonies and Small Birds* (Plate 22), and *Pond and Insects* (Plate 23). It was common for a painter to own multiple seals and use them freely and interchangeably, one must be cautious when interpreting their significance. It is, nevertheless, intriguing that Jakuchū chose to use this seal in paintings that represent the three large categories of the living creatures in the *Colorful Realm*: fish, bird-and-flower, and insects.

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<sup>115</sup> This definition is inspired by Melinda Takeuchi’s analysis of the “naturalism” of Ike Taiga’s paintings. Takeuchi, *Taiga’s True Views*, 36.

## PLATES: LITERATI SPIRIT

50. Su Shi (蘇軾, 1037 – 1101). *Withered Tree and Strange Rock*. Northern Song Dynasty, c. late 11<sup>th</sup> century. Handscroll, ink on paper. Dimensions unknown. From: Patricia Buckley Ebrey, et. all. *A Visual Sourcebook of Chinese Civilization*. University of Washington, <http://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv/> (accessed October 15, 2016).



As  
previously  
mentioned,  
literati  
painting  
aesthetic

developed in the Northern Song Dynasty. Previously, painting was considered an inferior art form to poetry and calligraphy.<sup>116</sup> However, Su Shi—who was a scholar official, and accomplished poet and calligrapher—was instrumental in elevating the status of painting as a legitimate form of expression for literati. Using poetic and calligraphic analysis to evaluate literati paintings, Su Shi claimed that true literati art expressed the nature, or essence, of an educated, scholarly gentleman.<sup>117</sup>

*Withered Tree and Strange Rock* is one of Su Shi's early works. A barren, twisting tree grows beside a turban-shell-like rock in what appears to be a desolate landscape. The tree is presented in minimal, dry, curved strokes. The broken branch

<sup>116</sup> Bush, *Chinese Literati on Painting*, 22-23.

<sup>117</sup> Alice W. Cheang, "Poetry and Transformation: Su Shih's Mirage," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 58 no. 1 (1998): 148.

toward the right seems to dissolve into the paper, as the dry brushstrokes become lighter and lighter toward the tip. The stone is done using unusual spiraling strokes, making it look organic.

Highly expressive, *Withered Tree and Strange Rock* exemplified Su Shi's new literati ideals. Rather than capturing the scenery in any naturalistic way, this painting is hyper-conceptual ink-play, or an expression of the artist's inner self: proud, virtuous, wise and alone. Su Shi's literati painting theory had a profound and lasting impact on the later generations in China and Japan.

51. Bada Shanren (八大山人, ca. 1626—1705). *Fish and Rocks*. Qing Dynasty, 1699. Hanging scroll, ink on paper. 235 x 87 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. From metmuseum.org (accessed October 15, 2016).



Small fish appear swimming around rocks by the embankment of a stream. Much of the rocks, the embankment, and water, are dominated by unpainted negative space, differentiated and anchored in space by limited, carefully applied, wet brushstrokes. Without a clear delineation of space, the painting still conveys a sense of depth of perspective. The negative space between the two rocks conveys the presence of water. Similarly, Bada Shanren's strategic placement of the school of fish allows the viewer to imagine the water's depth.

Bada Shanren was a descendent of the Ming-Dynasty imperial family, who was pressed into a life of exile when Manchu ruled ended the Ming regime. Bada led a life as an ordained monk for twenty years before he left the monastery under extreme circumstances. He lived the rest of his life as a lay hermit.<sup>118</sup> Bada was renowned for his bird-and-flower ink paintings, particularly those of fish. His animals are typically imbued with personality and a touch of humor, impregnating his paintings with meanings and

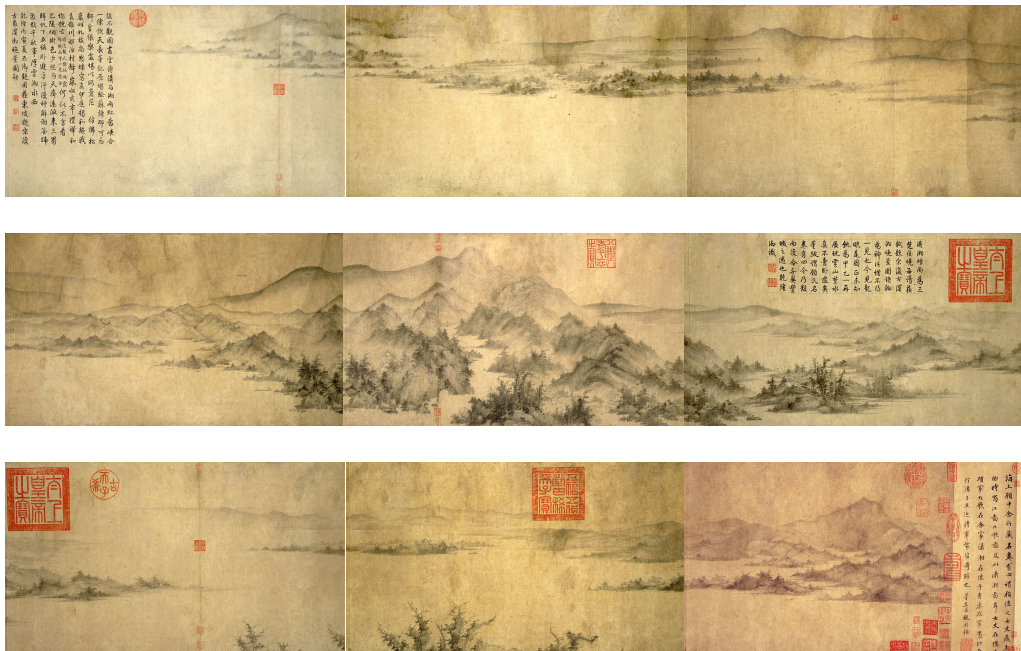
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<sup>118</sup> Nie Chongzheng, *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 256.

allusions.<sup>119</sup> Although there is no record to indicate that Jakuchū had an occasion to study Bada’s works personally, his seemingly sympathetic eye toward nonhuman creatures—not to mention his sense of humor—resonates with Jakuchū’s approach to his subjects.

52. Mr. Li (李氏, c. 12<sup>th</sup> century). *Dream Journey Over the Xiao and Xiang Rivers*.

Southern Song Dynasty, 12<sup>th</sup> century. Handscroll, ink on paper. 30.3 x 403.6 cm. Tokyo National Museum. From: <http://www.emuseum.jp> (accessed October 15, 2016).



*Dream Journey Over the Xiao and Xian Rivers* is a transcendent voyage through a misty landscape of the eight scenic sites around the Xiao and Xiang Rivers (in present Hunan province, China). Established by Song Di (宋迪, c. 1015 – 1080), the so-called “Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers” include scenes of: (1) wild geese descending onto a sandbar; (2) sailboats returning at distant shores; (3) mountain markets in clearing

<sup>119</sup> Hui-shu Lee, “Bada Shanren’s Bird-and-Fish Painting and the Art of Transformation,” *Archives of Asian Art* 44 (1991): 7.

mist; (4) evening snow; (5) an autumn moon over Dongting Lake; (6) night rain on the Xiao and Xiang; (7) an evening bell tolling in a mist-shrouded temple; and (8) a fishing village in the evening glow.<sup>120</sup>

Confucianism Daoism, and Buddhism all emphasized practices of seclusion in and wandering through nature. Consequently, literati considered landscape to be the genre best suited to demonstrate their ideals. The “Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers” became a popular motif amongst Chinese and Japanese literati painters alike, as a way to express the artist’s emotional response to natural beauty and changes of season.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Alfreda Murck, “Eight Views of Xiao-Xiang and the Northern Song Culture of Exile,” *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 26 (1996): 121.

<sup>121</sup> “Eight Views of Xiao and Xiang,” the Metropolitan Museum of Art, accessed November, 2016, <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/42489>.

53. Ike Taiga (池大雅, 1723 – 1776). *Finger Painting Landscape*. Edo period, 18<sup>th</sup> century. Hanging scroll, ink on paper. 171.1 x 45.4 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. From: Felice Fischer and Kyoko Kinoshita, *Ike Taiga and Tokuyama Gyokuran: Japanese Masters of the Brush* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 380.



Itō Jakuchū and Ike Taiga belonged to the same social circle. They both considered Baisaō their mentor and friend, who inspired their artistic production through his Chinese education and spontaneous mannerisms. Jakuchū and Taiga experimented with literati techniques, philosophies, and materials. In fact, both artists were acclaimed for their ability to synthesize styles and techniques from China and Japan.<sup>122</sup>

This painting showcases Taiga's early experimentation with the traditional mode of literati landscape painting, using finger painting (*shitōga*, 指頭畫) and in-dripping (*tarashikomi*, たらし込み) techniques.<sup>123</sup> Taiga used his fingertips, the side of his hands, and even his fingernails to paint the landscape. Rather than trying to make his painting resemble those done with a brush, Taiga emphasized the presence of his own hand within the painting.<sup>124</sup> In-dripping technique involved applying multiple layers of ink and other pigments on top of each other while wet. As a result, the colors bleed and form ambiguous shapes. *Tarashikomi*

<sup>122</sup> Fischer, *Ike Taiga and Tokuyama Gyokuran*, 380.

<sup>123</sup> Melinda Takeuchi, "Ike Taiga: a Biographical Study," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 43 (1983): 142.

<sup>124</sup> Fischer, *Ike Taiga and Tokuyama Gyokuran*, 380.

was used extensively in Rinpa-school paintings. His application of this in-dripping technique further removes the painting from qualities of brushstrokes.

54. Itō Jakuchū. *Roosters, Hens, and Chicks*. Edo period, 1795. Paintings mounted on pair of six paneled folding screens, ink on paper. 130.0 x 48.8 cm (each). From: *Celebrating Two Contemporary Geniuses: Jakuchū and Buson* (Tokyo: Suntory Museum of Art and Miho Museum, 2015), Cat. 183.



Jakuchū produced many works in literati mode. The pair of oversized six-panel fold screens, *Roosters, Hens, and Chicks*, is an artfully expression of the traditional literati ideals. Each panel depicts a different fowl family in wet, monochrome ink. The panels share a similar composition, depicting a rooster as the central, largest figure, with accompanying hens and chicks. In these folding screens, Jakuchū painted a set of a



rooster, hen and chicks in different combination. Rather than the meticulous polychrome painting of animals and plants in the *Colorful Realm*, which gave the subjects energy and lifelike presence, in this set of folding screens, he employs expressive, calligraphic strokes, that draw attention more to the movement of the artist's hand, than necessarily the subjects themselves. At the same time, with minimum strokes, Jakuchū artfully captures the movement of the chickens, with a hint of humor in their facial expressions. Jakuchū was particularly known for his fascination with chickens, repeatedly portrayed this motif in variety of painting medium. Arguably, what we see here is the synchronization of Jakuchū's inner essence, with those of the chickens.

55. Kakutei (鶴亭, 1722 – 1785). *Bamboo in Wind*. Edo period, 18<sup>th</sup> century. Hanging scroll, ink on paper. 137.3 x 56.9 cm. Nagasaki Museum of History and Culture, Nagasaki. From: Nagasaki Museum of History and Culture, *My Name is Kakutei* (Nagasaki: Nagasaki Museum of History and Culture. 2016), 146.



As examined in Chapter V (“Literati Spirit”), Kakutei was an invaluable member of the literary community surrounding Jakuchū. As both a patron to and student of the Ōbaku Buddhist sect and the Nanpin school, Kakutei's influence was widespread. Even though Kakutei and Jakuchū were never recorded to have met, the two had shared acquaintances, like Daiten and Taiga. The two artists also shared certain interests, like Chinese studies and Nanpin mode, so they were likely aware of each other.

Accomplished in both polychrome and monochrome painting techniques, Kakutei frequently painted images of bamboo, plum blossoms, and other auspicious motifs. In this painting, the wind appears to blow the bamboo to the right side of the composition. As the bamboo stems bend, a jagged rock appears to lean over the ground underneath, zigzag up the bottom right side of the painting. The painting is filled with motion, as many of the bamboo fronds seem to zoom through space, unattached to the stems. The rhythmic, calligraphic strokes place this painting firmly within the tradition of Japanese literati painting.

56. Itō Jakuchū. *Various Flowers*. Edo period, 1764. Displayed by Mie Prefectural Art Museum, owned by Kotohiragū Shrine. Sliding doors, ink and color and gold on paper. From: [bunka.pref.mie.lg.jp](http://bunka.pref.mie.lg.jp) (accessed October 15, 2016).



In the early 1760s, a prominent shrine in Kagawa prefecture called Kotohira Shrine (Kotohiragū, 金刀比羅宮, also known as Konpira Daigongen, 金比羅大権現), commissioned Jakuchū to paint the interior of one of the large gathering halls (*shoin*, 書

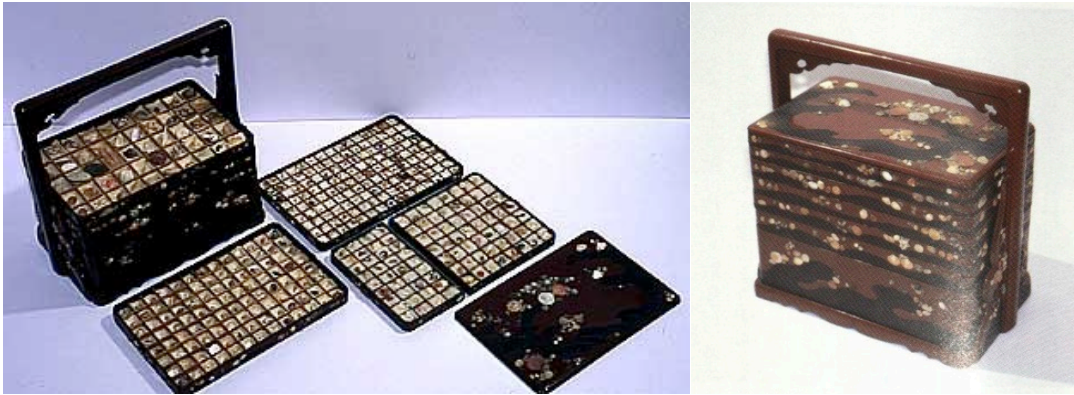
院) in its complex. Jakuchū produced a gold-leaf masterpiece, depicting more than forty varieties of flowers in rich, polychromatic paints. The sliding doors displayed in this exhibition belong to this *shoin*. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, sparked by the import of Chinese encyclopedias of botany and zoology, there was a rapidly growing interest in natural sciences in Japan.<sup>125</sup> Later, inspired by the Western paintings and illustrated books imported through the Dutch trade, Japanese artists began to experiment with Western mode of naturalistic painting.<sup>126</sup> Jakuchū's paintings of flora in the Kotohiragū are hybridization of East Asian painting and newer Western scientific techniques, portraying familiar flowers—such as hydrangeas, chrysanthemums, and peonies—in a more meticulous method that is in part reminiscent of botanical encyclopedia.

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<sup>125</sup> Masuzo Ueno, "The Western Influence on Natural History in Japan," *Monumenta Nipponica* 19 (1964): 316.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 159 and 161.

57. Kimura Kenkadō (木村兼葭堂, 1736 – 1802). *Collection of Fantastic Stones and Shells*. Edo period, late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Shells and stones in a lacquered wooden box. 42.0 x 27.0 x 77.0 cm. Osaka Museum of Natural History. From: [mus-nh.city.osaka.jp](http://mus-nh.city.osaka.jp) (accessed October 15, 2016).



Kimura Kenkadō, the eldest son of a wealthy *sake* brewer, was a collector, aesthete, and an avid student of the natural sciences. He studied under botanists and zoologists Ono Ranzan (小野蘭山, 1729–1810) and Tsushima Keian (対馬慶安, 1648–1652).<sup>127</sup> Kenkadō's wealth and prominence in the Kyoto and Nagasaki areas allowed him to collect scientific samples, books, and art. One of the famed set of objects in his collection was the sample of shells, which includes nearly 250 seashells, both Japanese and foreign. The shells were neatly stored in a red lacquer box inlaid with shell fragments with more than five shelves containing around fifty shells apiece. A similar box of rare rocks accompanied the impressive collection of shells. Kenkadō shell and rock collections were apparently famous amongst the Edo-period elites. It is speculated that Jakuchū, who befriended Kenkadō, may have studied his shell and rock collections. The

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<sup>127</sup> Bereens, *Friends, Acquaintances, Pupils and Patrons*, 90.

painting, *Shells* (Plate 24) in the *Colorful Realm* set, appears similar in composition to the raised ornamentation on the Kenkadō's lacquered shell box.

**58 – 60.** Maruyama Ōkyo (円山応挙, 1733 – 1795). From top to bottom: [Plate 58] *Album of Sketches*. Edo period, 1776. Painting mounted as an album, ink and color on paper. 26.5 x 19.4 cm. Tokyo National Museum. From: <http://www.emuseum.jp> (accessed October 15, 2016). [Plate 59] *Sketches*. Edo period, 18<sup>th</sup> century. Painting mounted as an album, ink and color on paper. H: 39.4 cm. Kyoto National Museum. From: [kyohaku.go.jp](http://kyohaku.go.jp) (accessed October 15, 2016). [Plate 60] *Rose Bush and Sparrow*. Edo period, 1784. Hanging scroll, ink, color, and gold on silk. 119.3 x 105.1 cm. Shōkokuji Temple. From: *Art Treasures from Shōkokuji, Rokuonji, and Jishoji Temples* (Hokkaido: Hokkaido Museum, 1998), Cat. 2.





Maruyama Ōkyo was one of the artists most associated with the appropriation of Western painting techniques in the Edo period. Born as a son of farmer, Ōkyo swiftly grew in popularity when he moved to Kyoto and began to study painting.<sup>128</sup> Ōkyo studied European prints, paintings, and manuals and incorporated Western techniques,

such as single-point perspective and chiaroscuro, into his own works (See Chapter V above for more detail). He was also reputed to sketch from life. Many of his sketchbooks evidence Ōkyo's careful observation of birds, insects, and plants. However, like Jakuchū, Ōkyo did not simply observe detail for its own sake. It is clear from his teachings to his

<sup>128</sup> Bereens, *Friends, Acquaintances, Pupils and Patrons*, 100.

students that Ōkyo believed a painting needed to first depict the subject “as it was” and then to “transmit the spirit of it” to the viewer.<sup>129</sup>

In *Rose Bush and Sparrow*—selected here for its similarity in general composition to Huizong’s *Peach Blossoms and Dove*—Ōkyo renders his sparrows in exacting detail. The rose bush is similarly meticulous: its spindly branches painted with care, including the thorns done in red and green. Having captured the sparrows “as they are,” Ōkyo proceeds to imbue them with life. The birds’ gazes achieve this, as they stare directly out of the painting, at the viewer.

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<sup>129</sup> C. H. Mitchell, *The Illustrated Books of the Nanga, Maruyama, Shijo, and Other Related Schools of Japan – A Bibliography* (Los Angeles: Dawson’s Book Shop, 1972), 128.

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