

## **Hanging Scroll within a Hanging Scroll**

A woman wearing a *yukata* (an informal cotton kimono) is combing her hair in front of a mirror. There is a *shamisen* (a three-stringed Japanese instrument) in an alcove behind her. She appears to be a prostitute. In the alcove, there is a hanging scroll depicting Hotei (the god of happiness, one of the seven deities of good fortune), lying sprawled with his elbow and jaw resting on a big bag. It seems as though he is watching her preparation with a smile. Viewers may feel as though they are peeping into her daily life, just like Hotei in the hanging scroll. The depiction of Hotei in the hanging scroll is not merely part of the scene; it serves as a trick to guide the viewer's eye and emotions.

## **Kannon from the Korean Peninsula**

In Japan, many artworks, including Buddhist paintings from China and Korea, have been passed down from antiquity. At that time, these Buddhist paintings created on the Korean Peninsula, such as this one, were believed to have been handed down from China. These Buddhist paintings, which crossed the sea, were highly esteemed due to the respect for China, the home of Buddhism. The veil worn by Kannon is depicted as translucently thin, and delicate patterns are shown on its clothes. Hanging screens depicting Buddhas evoke a sense among viewers that the object of their worship is before them.

## **Jam-Packed Gathering of Arhats**

*Gohyaku Rakan* refers to the five hundred arhats of Buddha who attained Nirvana following the Buddha's passing. More than five hundred arhats are depicted, and their appearances and expressions are varied, so viewers never tire of looking at them. During the Edo period, many painters, particularly those not associated with the government, became active. They were freed from the constraints of traditional Buddhist painting standards and created Buddhist-themed artworks that expressed their strong individuality. Faith in *Gohyaku Rakan* became popular in the middle of the Edo period, and people believed that depicting or carving more than five hundred arhats could cultivate virtue.

## **Portrait of a Poet from Ancient People's Dreams**

Kino Tsurayuki, a poet from the early Heian period, has long been respected as an outstanding poet. His portrait was created along with those of other distinguished poets. Although this hanging scroll has no accompanying inscription, it is assumed to have been displayed at *tanka* poetry gatherings and in places

associated with Japanese poetry.

The mounting of this hanging scroll was created by hand. The landscape - including hills, waters, and pine trees, - depicted on the mounting illustrates one of Kino Tsurayuki's poems from the *Kokin Wakashu* a collection of ancient and modern Japanese poetry.

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## **A Role Model of Ancient People, Tea Ceremony Master, and Pioneer of the Senke School**

This hanging scroll is believed to be a portrait of Sen no Rikyu, who attained Wabi Cha (a simple, austere, frugal tea ceremony), which considers simplicity and silence important. He is depicted facing forward, allowing viewers to make eye contact with him. The tea ceremony was a necessary accomplishment for a samurai household. It was later expanded to townspeople by wealthy merchants, and the spirit of Rikyu has been preserved.

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## **Enjoy Chinese Poetry and Paintings**

In Japan, people appreciated paintings not only with Japanese poetry, but also with Chinese poetry, mainly in Zen temples.

This hanging scroll depicts a plum tree search in the severe cold, walking on lonely mountains. The love for plums, which bloom during the cold winter, symbolizes retreating from the ordinary world, preserving one's will, and seeking purity. For the people of the Muromachi period, paintings with Chinese literature as a subject, like this one, were appreciated for their respect not only for the virtuous figure in the painting but also for China.

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## **Painting of Refreshing Nature Once Used as a Sliding Door**

Paintings for sliding doors, which were originally a part of a building, were sometimes modified into folding screens or hanging scrolls when the building was renovated or dismantled. In the left center of this hanging scroll, there is a mark of a round handle from a sliding door. Therefore, this hanging scroll is assumed to have been used as a sliding door. The tall trees and massive mountains are dynamic, but the light ink tones and free brushwork create refreshing atmospheres. By hanging it in the alcove, people can enjoy this idealized scene of China in their room, a scene they could not see in real life.

## **Poem for the First Bonito of the Season**

Due to rising seawater temperatures, bonitos are arriving in the Japanese territorial waters off Izu, Sagami, and Awa in May. Eating the first bonito of the season as soon as possible was a source of pride for the people in Edo. Comic tanka and couplets composed about the first bonito of the season are written around the freshly depicted blue bonito. These poems make readers crave bonito sashimi. Since hanging scrolls were easy to change, this one might have been displayed at the beginning of summer.

## **Listening to the Singing of Insects without Depicting Them**

*Mushierami* was a special autumn competition involving capturing insects and comparing their songs. A nobleman is in a garden where pampas grass and Japanese bush clover grow thickly, straining his ears to hear the beautiful tones of the insects' singing. On the screen, only autumn plants, within which viewers can imagine there are many insects, are depicted, with no insects shown. Because the insects are not depicted, viewers can imagine looking for the insects and listening to their singing along with him.

## **An Old Man and an Old Woman Transformed into a Boy and a Girl**

*Takasago* is a Noh play that celebrates long life, the bond between husband and wife, and peace throughout the world, represented by an elderly couple. The old man and woman are pine tree sprites who live separately in Sumiyoshi and Takasago. A scene of them sweeping pine needles with brooms is often depicted.

Normally, signs of age are depicted on their faces, but on this hanging scroll, they are shown as a young couple. *Mitate* is an artistic concept in which classical subjects are reinterpreted using the manners and customs of the present, allowing viewers to enjoy the wit of transformation. *Mitate* is often used in ukiyo-e prints.

## **The Sounds of Shamisen Seem to Be Audible**

On the second floor of a teahouse, a young man is tuning his shamisen while another sits on the stairs, watching. Although they appear to be young women, they are actually young male courtesans. They

wear beautiful kimono adorned with family crests, suggesting that they may be based on real individuals. A folding screen stands beside them, and a man's kimono – one that does not belong to them – is hanging nearby. This detail implies that the original viewers of this hanging scroll were likely men who wore such kimono. It is a quiet, atmospheric painting, evoking the scent of plum blossoms drifting in through the window and the faint sound of a shamisen echoing from the scroll.

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## **Are Hanging Scrolls Ideal for Depicting a Standing Beautiful Woman?**

At the beginning of the early modern period, a genre of painting depicting festivals and cherry blossom viewing came into being. Depictions of women were no more than incidental details in paintings, but over time, they became more prominent and were often depicted alone. A hanging scroll is a painting longer than it is wide, making it well-suited for depicting a standing beautiful woman. Kimonos with *Shikishi* (a square piece of fancy cardboard used for writing or drawing) patterns were popular during the Genroku period. At that time, wearing a kimono featuring scenes from classical literature, such as the Ise stories, reflected a longing for the dynastic literary traditions of the Heian period.

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## **Beautiful Woman? Madwoman? Who is She?**

A woman with extraordinary presence is seen putting a torn letter into her mouth. Patterns of Rokaku Sansui (a painting of a palace and landscape) are depicted on her kimono, while Unryu Moyo (a dragon in the clouds) is illustrated on her sash. These are Chinese motifs, and ink-painted orchids appear in the background. One interpretation, based on these details, suggests that she may represent Qu Yuan, a male politician during the China's Warring States period, transformed into a Japanese woman of that time. Qu Yuan composed a poem about orchids in the Chu Ci (an ancient anthology of Chinese poetry), and committed suicide by jumping into a river due to slander. Other interpretations suggest that the image may depict a character from a novel by Ihara Saikaku or from a Noh play. There are several interpretations of this hanging scroll, as it is a fascinating artwork. Since no one knows where the scroll was originally appreciated, it is enjoyable to imagine the context.

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## **Ghost Appears from Hanging Scroll**

Nagasawa Rosetsu depicts a ghost that scowls menacingly at viewers in this hanging scroll. A poem composed for the scroll by Genka Undo, a monk from Aki Province (present-day Hiroshima) is added in

the blank space of the scroll. It's a somewhat humorous poem, which softens the tone of the scroll. It is assumed that this ghostly hanging scroll was originally appreciated during a round of ghost story meetings. The theme which makes the most effective use of hanging scrolls is ghosts because the scroll can appear to bring figures into the space.