

Successful Fan Shop

Fans were consumables and popular as gifts, so a large number of fans circulated after the Muromachi period, and there were many fan shops. Particularly, Kyoto was an area famous for fan production, and there is a record that Eishun (1518-1596), the head of Tamonin at Kofukuji Temple in Nara, purchased a fan there.

The main processes of fan production, such as folding the paper used for fans and inserting the fan's ribs, were carried out by women. From the end of the 16th century to the 17th century, fan shops were popular subjects for paintings, and it is believed that primarily women worked in these shops.

III -2,3,4

Ink Fan Painting Produced by a Fan Shop of the Kano School

The Kano School was a group of expert painters supported by influential figures during the Azuchi Momoyama period. Since the time of its founder, Kano Masanobu, who was appointed as an official painter at the end of the Muromachi period, the school produced large wall paintings such as sliding doors, folding screens, etc. In addition to their work for the government, they also operated a fan shop, which was a major source of income.

Some of the three exhibited fans are believed to have originally used as fans and are mounted with ribs, as the folds are still clearly visible. Although they are drawn in ink, the backgrounds shine softly due to the use of gold and mica, giving them a magnificent appearance. The "Kuninobu" seals found on Sanseizu and Takisansuizu (III-2,3) are associated with Kano Eitoku, a prominent painter of the Azuchi Momoyama period. Therefore, these fans may have been special works, possibly custom orders or tributes.

III -5,6

Most Painters Drew Fan Paintings

Fan paintings are some of the most commonly created paintings in Japan.

During the Edo period, almost all painters created fan paintings, regardless of their status. Sarumawashizu (III-5) is a collaborative work between two painters: one painted a monkey trainer while the other painted a monkey. Some fans had their ribs removed and were pasted onto hanging scrolls, folding screens, or picture albums. These fan paintings have folds on their surfaces. However, some fan paintings were originally created on fan-shaped paper, such as the Four Seasons Birds and Flowers Album of Folding Fans (III-6). These were fan paintings made specifically to be appreciated, drawn on fan-shaped paper. The shape of the fan was not for practical use but served as a unique form of painting

meant for enjoyment.

III -7

Stylization of the Fan

The shape of fans widens outwards at the end, making it a symbol of expanding prosperity. This shape has been integrated into the design of patterns for crafts including kimonos.

III -10

Gorgeous Practical Tools

A narrow-opening fan called Bon Bori was used in the Imperial Court during the Edo period. Bon Bori are depicted with finesse and vivid colors in scenes from classics such as The Tale of Genji (III-9) and the Famous Places Illustration (III-11). Fans were considered accessories, so paintings featuring them aimed to attract people's attention.

III -13

Drawing Actors in a Fan-Shaped Frame

Since ukiyo-e prints were introduced to the world, many ukiyo-e prints depicting portraits of popular actors have been created. Some of them were painted in a fan-shaped frame.

The narrowed shape of the fan makes the actor's face appear larger compared to the rectangular-shaped paper.