Beyond Golden Clouds

JAPANESE SCREENS *from* THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO *and the* SAINT LOUIS ART MUSEUM

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Tosa Mitsuoki's Screens of *Flowering Cherry and Autumn Maples with Poem Slips* in the Context of *Kazari* and *Tsukuri*

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PREFACE

In the mid-nineteenth century, flush with enthusiasm for things Japanese, Westerners declared that Japan's art was an art of decorativeness. This idea was adopted by the Japanese themselves as they incorporated modern Western art-historical discourse and methodology in underpinning their efforts at modernization and nation building.[1] In the Chinese-influenced sphere of East Asia, however, "decoration" had long been relegated to women's makeup and ornamentation, or *zhuang shi* as it was called in Chinese painting theories. Likewise, in the West, many supported the views of architect Adolph Loos (1870–1933), who promulgated a modern rationalism founded on the aesthetics of classical principles that also disparaged decoration as superfluous. Until these assumptions were reevaluated in the mid-1980s, it was difficult in Japan, as it was internationally, to address legitimately the subject of the visually beautiful or the decorative in Japanese art.

In the catalogue *Kazari: Decoration and Display in Japan, 15th–19th Centuries* (2002), Tsuji Nobuo, art historian of the Edo period, incorporated this reevaluation when he argued that the Japanese term *kazari* is a richly nuanced cultural construct that cannot be translated simply by the term "decoration" or "ornamentation."[2] *Kazari* includes the celebration with decoration of a special environment, often, as Tsuji points out, a sacred one. In so doing, it creates an experiential setting that integrates many aspects of culture such as literature and performance with the visual arts. The decorative impulse or sensibility has influenced most aspects of Japanese cultural life to the present day, from religious rites and outdoor events to the interiors of residential architecture, as, for example, in the tokonoma, the alcove used for display.

To the term *kazari* should be added the concept of *tsukuri* (artifice or fabrication), which can be found in the expense and effort to produce the most refined and beautiful objects for presentation or for use in daily life. Closely related to *kazari*, *tsukuri* can also be recognized when objects are inventively combined to create something else, whether an imaginary world in a tray or the impression of fluttering poem slips tied to trees. Edo culture took great enjoyment in the cleverness of *tsukuri*, and indeed, the Edo usage of *kazari* and *tsukuri* often overlapped. For example, *kazari-bana* (artificial flowers) or *kazari-mono* (arranged or fabricated objects for display) could be used synonymously with *tsukuri-bana* and *tsukuri-mono*.[3]

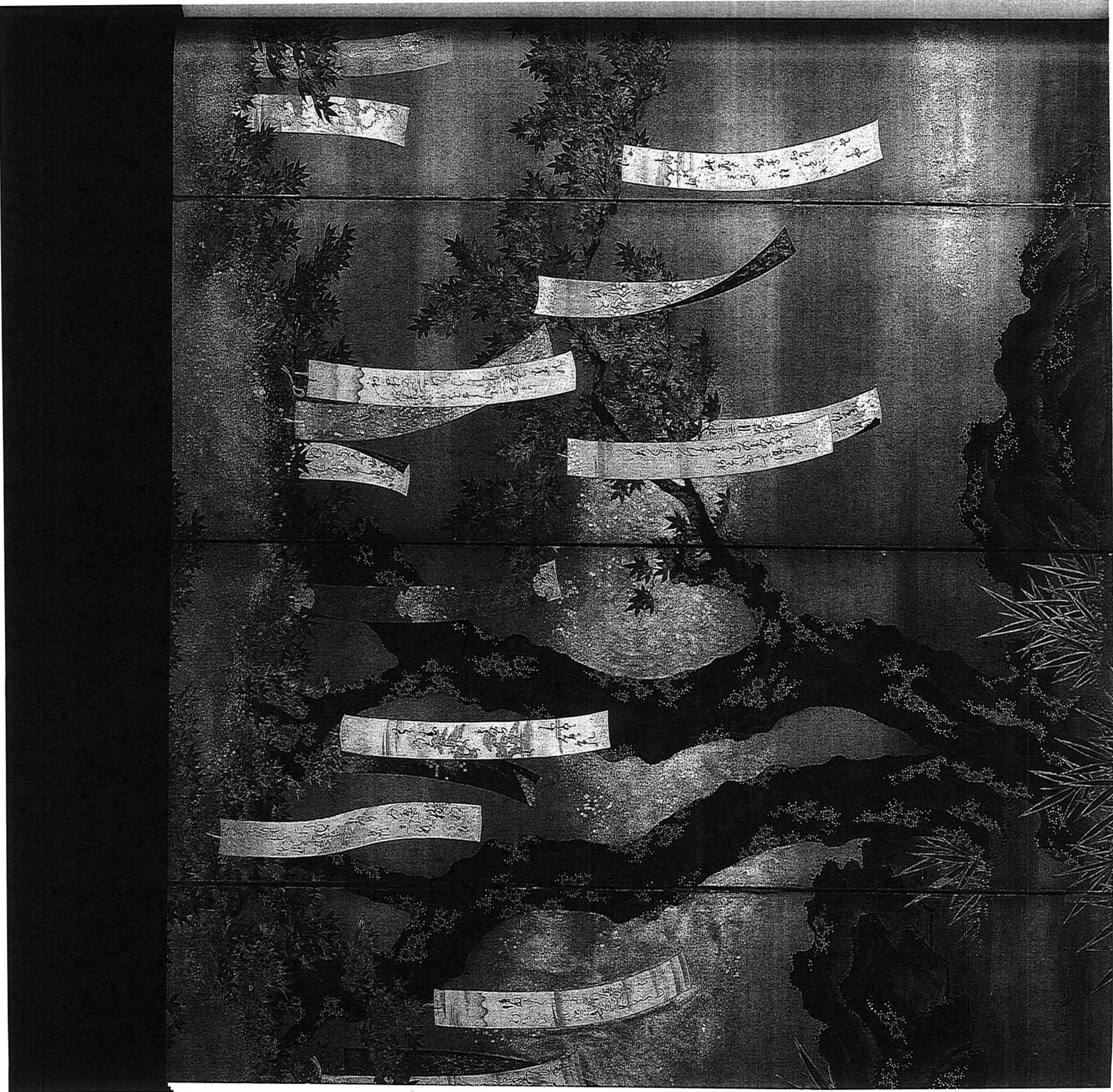
The recent discussion of the underlying importance of *kazari* in Japanese culture has given art historians a new inclusive perspective that overrides many of the modern, Western-derived distinctions between "creative" fine arts and "tradition-bound" crafts, or between "pictorial" and "literary" arts. This new interpretative standpoint leads us to a more integrated appreciation of the Art Institute's screens of *Flowering Cherry and Autumn Maples with Poem Slips*.

A SCREEN PAINTING WITH PLAYFUL INTENT FOR A CELEBRATORY OCCASION

Flowering Cherry and Autumn Maples with Poem Slips (cat. 12) is an elegant, luminous pair of folding screens, viewed in traditional fashion from right to left, that juxtaposes cherry blossoms at their peak on one screen with colorful autumn maple foliage on the other. Integral to the composition is the depiction of the poem slips or *tanzaku*—standardized narrow strips or slips of decorated paper, each bearing a poem—that are shown as if tied to the branches. For the sake of convenience, the forty-three poem slips on the Art Institute's screens have been numbered on the accompanying illustrations from right to left (fig. 1a–b) and in Fumiko Cranston's translations of the *waka* poems.

Both screens are signed "*Tosa Sakon Shōgen Mitsuoki*" (Tosa Mitsuoki, who holds the rank of Sakon Shōgen), with the square intaglio impression reading "*Mitsuoki no in*" (seal of Mitsuoki). These elements date the work

Opposite: detail of cat. 12



to the period between 1654, when he regained the position of chief artist at the painting bureau of the imperial court in Kyoto and was given the court rank of Sakon Shōgen, and 1681, when he handed down his position to his successor, Tosa Mitsunari. The fact that the screens were painted by the head court painter supports the likelihood of court patronage for the work.

The screens are considered to have been connected to Tōfukumon'in, who died in 1678 at the age of seventy-two, after nearly sixty years at court as consort of the emperor Gomizunoo (1596–1680; reigned 1611–29). Narazaki Muneshige, in a 1957 article in *Kokka* that examined the screens in detail, gave reasons to support this supposition, although his and recent research have not turned up definitive documentary evidence of patronage or original ownership by Tōfukumon'in.[4] Writing about the screens while they were still in a Japanese collection, Narazaki transcribed and discussed authentication documents and the inscription on an accompanying certificate box that cannot be located today.[5] One document stated that the screens were given to a wealthy Kyoto merchant family, headed by Chaya Shirōjirō, by Tōfukumon'in. It was such documents as this—as well as family oral tradition that the Art Institute screens were treasured gifts (*go-ibutsu*) of Tōfukumon'in handed down along with another work from the court, a handscroll of calligraphy—that persuaded Narazaki of the connection with Tōfukumon'in.

The screens' cloisonné metal fittings, which bear the Tokugawa crest of three hollyhock leaves and a floral arabesque pattern (fig. 2), also strongly suggest a connection to Tōfukumon'in, who was the daughter of the second Tokugawa shogun. Her marriage in 1620 and her long, influential presence at court had inestimable importance in the early decades of the Edo period as the first and visible linkage between the new, politically dominant family of the Tokugawa shoguns based in Edo and the imperial family and its tradition-steeped culture at the court in Kyoto. To be more exact, the Tokugawa hollyhock crest on the Art Institute screens most closely resembles the metal fittings and crest embroidered in the mounting fabric of *The Tale of Genji*, a screen painting by Kano Tan'yū (1602–1674), now in the Museum of Imperial Collections, Tokyo (figs. 3–4).[6] This painting is thought to have been part of the trousseau that accompanied Tōfukumon'in's adopted daughter, Fuhime, on her marriage in 1642 to the prince Hachijōnomiya Toshitada (1620–1662). He is best remembered as the builder of the Katsura Villa, while she—the biological daughter of the great warlord and daimyo of Kaga, Maeda Toshitsune—was clearly a member of the inner circles at court, as demonstrated by her marriage to a protégé of Gomizunoo.

Several features of the screens exemplify both the aristocratic taste and improved financial situation of the court thanks to the Tokugawa shoguns in the seventeenth century when Mitsuoki was active as the court's head painter. First, there is the use of silk—a more costly material than paper as the support for the large format of paired six-panel folding screens. The

palette, too, emphasizing jewel-like colors of white, vermilion red, and malachite green, is refined and handled delicately. The graceful shapes of the trees, along with the clear depiction of sharply pointed leaf tips on the low bamboo, reveal sensitivity and detailed brushwork. Ample gold dust and cut foil as well as gold paint were used to render the gold mist or clouds in areas around and above the trees and in the unifying gold expanse at the center of the overall composition. The impression of expense and elegance is further enhanced by the *tanzaku* that under the calligraphic brushwork have been individually decorated with pieces of gold and silver leaf as well as paint, and by the meticulous depiction of two *mizuhiki* strings of red and white or black and white that tie the poem slips to the branches. On the reverse of the screens is a painting of *Bamboo and Fences* in *sumi* ink on gold background (see pp. 136–37). Stylistically it too suggests the court atelier after the middle of the seventeenth century and, although it is unsigned, Narazaki has attributed it to Mitsuoki.

The choice of poems and their contents or imagery, which through associative linkage determined the placement of the *tanzaku* across the expanse of the trees, are an important indication that the screens were commissioned for an auspicious and probably official occasion at the court. In the section that follows, Fumiko Cranston translates all of the forty *waka* poems that appear on the forty-three poem slips on the Art Institute screens—given that three slips face away from the viewer.[7] Also listed for each *waka* are the title of the original poetry anthology that included it and the name of each poet (and dates), which do not appear on the *tanzaku*, although some of the poems and information might have been known to the original viewers in the seventeenth century.

Waka were selected from all but five of the twenty-one imperial anthologies collectively called *Chokusenshū*, sometimes also known as the "Collections from Twenty-one Eras." Selections start from the earliest, *Kokinshū* (Collection of Poems from Ancient and Modern Times) from the early tenth century, and go through to the last anthology, the *Shinzokukokinshū* (New Sequel Collection

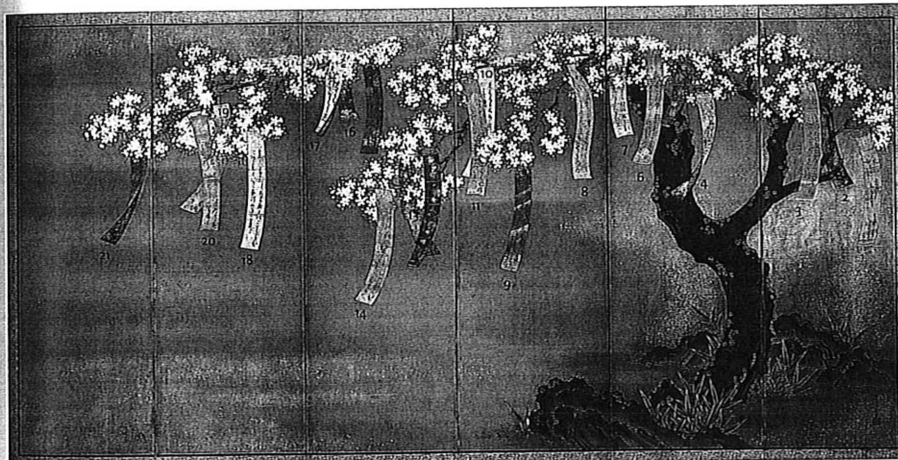


FIGURE 1a–b Tosa Mitsuoki (Japanese, 1617–1691), *Flowering Cherry and Autumn Maples with Poem Slips*, 1654/81 (cat. 12). Pair of six-panel screens; ink, color, gold, and silver on silk; each 144 × 286 cm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Kate S. Buckingham Endowment (1977.156–57). Each poem slip has been numbered to correspond with the accompanying poems.

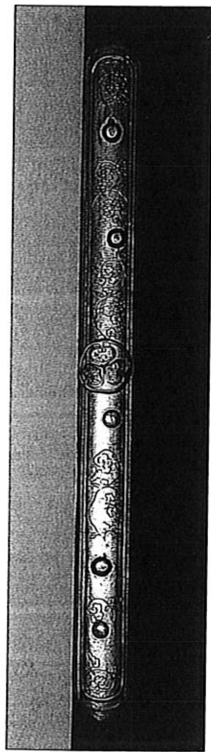


FIGURE 2 Detail view of the cloisonné metal fittings of Tosa Mitsuoki's *Flowering Cherry and Autumn Maples with Poem Slips* (fig. 1a–b; cat. 12), which bear the Tokugawa crest of three hollyhock leaves along with a floral arabesque pattern.

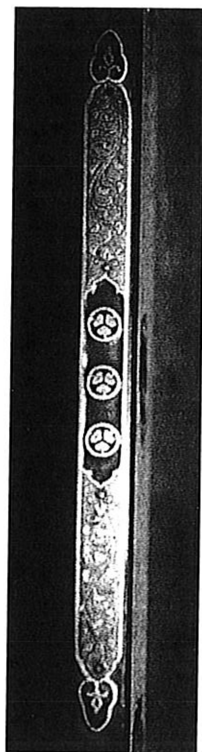


FIGURE 3 Detail view of the cloisonné metal fittings of *The Tale of Genji*, a screen painting by Kano Tan'yū (1602–1674), now in the Museum of Imperial Collections, Tokyo.

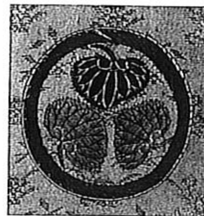


FIGURE 4 Crest embroidered in the mounting fabric of *The Tale of Genji*, a screen painting by Kano Tan'yū (1602–1674), now in the Museum of Imperial Collections, Tokyo.

of Ancient and Modern Poems) compiled in 1439. The *Senzaishū* (1187), *Shokugosenshū* (1251), and *Shokusenzaishū* (1320) were the most frequently used, with four poems cited from each. No poems were selected from the five anthologies—*Shikashū*, *Shinkokinshū*, *Shingosenshū*, *Shokugoshūishū*, and *Shingoshūishū*—that were compiled under troubled reigns when the military shoguns of the Kamakura or Muromachi periods interfered heavily with the court, eventually resulting in the imperial succession being put in grave dispute under the fourteenth-century emperors Godaigo and Goen'yū, the patrons of the last two collections. Any selection of verses from these anthologies would have been considered inappropriate.

All of the imperial anthologies, following the organization of the first one, *Kokinshū*, arrange the poems by types or categories, with "the seasons" and "love" being the largest sections. As might be expected, on the Cherry Blossom screen there are fourteen poems from the "spring" category, mostly about cherry blossoms, with three poems from the "celebratory/felicitations" category, one from the "miscellaneous" category, and one from "Buddhist" subjects. On the Autumn Maples screen are sixteen poems within the "autumn" category replete with images of colored autumn foliage, one poem placed in the "winter" category, two from "miscellaneous," one from "religious" subjects, and one of "felicitations." The four auspicious, "celebratory" poems wish the lord (or emperor) long life and the continuation of the imperial line for a "thousand [meaning innumerable] years." Three of these verses are placed in prominent locations on the screens: on the far right or beginning of the Cherry Blossom screen (poem slip 1) and at the end on its sixth panel (poem slip 21), and again at the very end, on the sixth panel of the Autumn Maples screen (poem slip 43).

This placement, which gives emphasis to felicitous words lauding the imperial line, convincingly suggests that the screens were made for the emperor or for an official celebratory occasion (*keiji*). With the auspicious poems as anchors, the contents and imagery of the other verses end up mostly positive in tone, despite the inevitable reminders of the transience of life in fallen blossoms or chill autumn rains. The overall impression lingers of the beauty of fragrant blossoms or vibrant colors and the repeated opportunities one has to enjoy such beautiful scenes through a long life and the continuation of nature's cycle.

While there is no documentary evidence that the celebratory court event involved Tōfukumon'in, other circumstantial evidence supports the possibility, especially if we accept Narazaki's thesis that she was the probable patron or recipient of the screens. Tantalizingly, from the diary entry of the eighteenth day of the

first month, Kanbun 12 (1672), in the *Mujōhōindono gonikki*, by the princess Tsuneko (Shinanomiya), Gomizunoo's daughter, who was the consort of Konoe Motohiro, we find recorded that Tōfukumon'in was directly involved in requesting courtiers, including the tonsured prince Myōhōin Gyōjo, the tonsured prince Shōren'in Sonshō, and Motohiro, to write *tanzaku* that she affixed to a painting(s) of cherry blossoms and maples.[8] It is not specified whether the work was a pair of folding screens. In any event, the diary entry cannot refer directly to the Art Institute's screens because the *tanzaku* on these are painted depictions, not real *tanzaku* joined to a picture. More probably the entry refers to an album, something like *Waka jittei* (Ten Types of *Waka*) by Kano Tsunenobu and others, in which cherry blossoms and maple leaves that had been arranged and painted on *kaishi* paper were then cut out and pasted to frame examples of calligraphy on the album's pages (fig. 5). This diary log provides documentary evidence that Tōfukumon'in had an interest in works similar to the Chicago screens and that she enjoyed the collaborative fabrication process of combining *waka*, brushed on *tanzaku* by members of her courtly circle, with pictorial imagery of cherry blossoms and maples. Such a recorded instance confirms Tōfukumon'in's reputation in her time as *monozuki*: a person of refined taste, who was interested and engaged in making calligraphy and art works throughout her long life.

The association of court painter Mitsuoki with Tōfukumon'in can also be documented, for the artist produced for her a commemorative screen painting in 1675 (Eihō 3) on the auspicious occasion of the eightieth birthday of her husband, the retired emperor Gomizunoo.[9] This commission is the clearest documentary evidence that connects the creation of screens with both Tōfukumon'in and their use as presentation objects on a celebratory occasion at court. In addition, two years later, in 1677 (Eihō 5), Mitsuoki had further contact with Tōfukumon'in because he authenticated the *Illustrated Tale of the Hidaka River* (*Hidakagawa sōshi*), which she owned, as the work of Tosa Hirochika.[10]

As for the poems on the *tanzaku*, a close examination reveals that—while none of the poets is named on the screens—each *waka* is written in a flowing style of cursive brushwork that links and abbreviates many of the individual characters in a general style typical of the period. Some of the poems are read from bottom to top. Some *tanzaku* reveal the whole poem, while on others some syllables are hidden underneath blossoms or maple leaves or other *tanzaku*, or because the slips appear to be curled at top or bottom as they turn in the wind. Such deliberate concealment makes the process of reading and identifying the poems more difficult, and thus may engender more interest in the viewers. The *tanzaku* on the screens present a playful challenge, much like solving a mystery from clues.

A few of the poems use the pictorial image of blossoms or maple leaves that spill over the *tanzaku* as a clever clue that alludes to the line of verse hidden by the flora, in the manner of *uta-e*, a kind of pictorial puzzle of a poem, that was popular in the late Heian period. For instance, the verse on poem slip 10 (fig. 6)—"Since my heart is not content,/To return home after viewing/The

FIGURE 5 Kano Tsunenobu (Japanese, 1636–1713), page from an instructional album, *Waka jittei* (Ten Types of *Waka*), seventeenth century. Album of ten images; 18.1 × 24.8 cm. Private collection, Japan.

cherry blossoms,/Around the site of their blooming/I'll borrow a place to stay"—is rendered in such a way that the third line of the poem is represented pictorially by painted blossoms over that portion of the poem slip.

Similarly, on poem slip 24 (fig. 7), the lines "Hurries to color by hand/The maple leaves—/Before the autumn rain" are mostly concealed by maple leaves, but the meaning of inevitable swift loss (whether, it implies, in life or love) is pictorially evoked by the changing colors of the foliage from green to red. On poem slip 28 (fig. 8), the design partially reveals syllables here and there,

while hiding others under maple leaves. This method is reminiscent of a type of *uta-e* found in the decoration on lacquer writing-box sets popular in the Muromachi period, in which syllables of a poem were treated almost as if they were abstract symbols to be disguised within the pictorial design.

The various techniques of concealment and artifice used in the depiction of the *tanzaku* reinforce the sense of play that underlies the production and appreciation of the screens. This playful quality does not contradict the likelihood that the work was intended to commemorate an auspicious occasion at court. On the contrary, the combined sense of play and of official celebration is indicative of the intimate, even relaxed, ambience at the court during the second half of the seventeenth century.

FIGURE 6 Detail of Tosa Mitsuoki's *Flowering Cherry and Autumn Maples with Poem Slips* (fig. 1a–b; cat. 12), showing poem slip 10 in back.

FIGURE 7 Detail of Tosa Mitsuoki's *Flowering Cherry and Autumn Maples with Poem Slips* (fig. 1a–b; cat. 12), showing poem slip 24.

FIGURE 8 Detail of Tosa Mitsuoki's *Flowering Cherry and Autumn Maples with Poem Slips* (fig. 1a–b; cat. 12), showing poem slip 28.

FURTHER EXAMINATION OF THE CALLIGRAPHY ON THE POEM SLIPS

Another relevant document discussed by Narazaki was written by the haiku poet and calligraphy connoisseur Fujimoto Ryōin (Kizan, 1626–1704) and dated the twelfth month, second day, Genroku 11 (1698). This one listed the names of twenty-six aristocratic calligraphers who purportedly were responsible for the writing on the poem slips.[11] Ryōin's authentication, done after the screens had left the court, contains a number of inconsistencies that have led recent scholars to dismiss the document, the original of which is, sadly, now lost. For example, Tominokōji Yorinao (1613–1658), given as the calligrapher of poem slip 31, had died before the courtier Sono Motokatsu (1663–1738), to whom poem slip 32 is attributed, was born. Comparison of different *tanzaku* that Ryōin listed to be by the same calligrapher has also revealed writing that could not be done by the same hand. Ryōin's assessment is nonetheless valuable on several counts, however, and his list of calligraphers, with an addition of their dates, is included in the following section. Even as a list of aristocratic calligraphers for a set of *tanzaku* brushed for a different mid-seventeenth-century project, a list that perhaps later came to accompany the Art Institute's screens, the document is evidence that the practice of nobility providing calligraphic texts affixed to, or brushed directly on, screens was widely accepted by that time.

It is also possible that a *tanzaku* set by members of the court provided the calligraphy models for the court atelier production of the screens. As Narazaki first pointed out, several hands, although nothing close to the more than twenty-six in number suggested by Ryōin's list, appear to have done the calligraphy on the Art Institute screens. It is fruitful to compare the *tanzaku* calligraphies to works still extant by some of the aristocrats named on Ryōin's list.

Of the twenty-six calligraphers Ryōin's document identified as having participated in the Chicago screens, sixteen provided calligraphy for the Album of New Thirty-six Immortal Poets by Kano Tan'yū, and fifteen of them brushed passages for the album *Tsurezuregusa* (Essays in Idleness) with paintings by Sumiyoshi Gukei. Both works are in the Tokyo National Museum. Tan'yū's album is said to have been produced between 1662 and 1669 (Kanbun 2–9) and to have involved thirty-six calligraphers, while Gukei's work dates between late 1677 and the eighth month of Enpō 5–6 (1678) with fifty calligraphers. This dating places both works into the same period as the Art Institute screens.[12]

Four of the calligraphic hands mentioned on Ryōin's list and available in these other works for comparison appear particularly close to calligraphy on the Chicago screens. For example, the refined hand purportedly of Shōkōin Dōkō on poem slip 8 corresponds to Dōkō's calligraphy of the *waka* by Shunzei in Tan'yū's album. If one compares the calligraphy of Myōhōin Gyōjo or that of Asukai Masaaki and Jimyōin Mototoki, as they appear in the *Tsurezuregusa* to those *tanzaku* attributed to them by Ryōin on the Art Institute screens, one can also see many points of similarity. For example, the stylistic formation of characters is similar between the text by Myōhōin Gyōjo for chapter 15 in *Tsurezuregusa* (fig. 9) and poem slip 27 (fig. 10) attributed to him.

Fujimoto Ryōin's authentications, especially given that he looked at the calligraphies in 1698, not so long after the screens were made, have in these instances some plausibility, but in the final analysis they must be used with caution. Several calligraphers working from memory or from examples of well-known or distinctive aristocratic calligraphers could have achieved the same effect of several different hands. In any event, noticing different hands or the artifice of the suggestion of different hands may have added to the enjoyment of viewers of these screens.

THE ELEGANCE OF "CLOUDS AND BROCADE": SUBJECT AND STYLE OF THE SCREENS

The term "clouds and brocade" (*unkin*) likens the masses of cherry blossoms—seen as white tinged with pink—to clouds, and similarly connects the bright reds, oranges, and gold of the maple leaves to brocade.[13] The term was widely used in the Edo period, where it appears in such common phrases as "cloud-brocade pattern" (*unkin-de*), referring to the popular style of decoration, often done in enamels and gold on

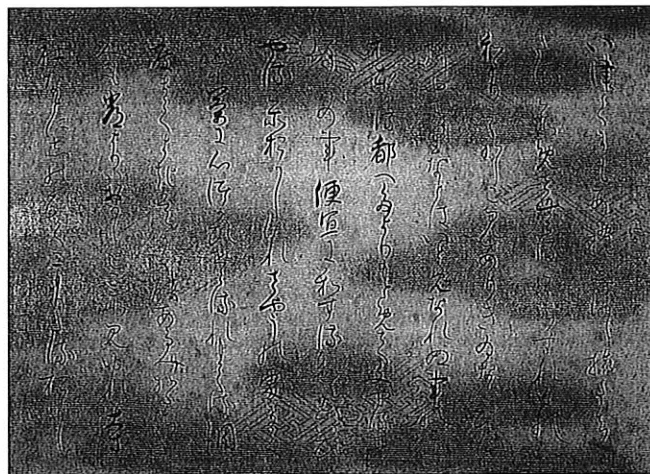


FIGURE 9 Page from the *Tsurezuregusa* with calligraphy by Myōhōin Gyōjo, seventeenth century. Album of fifty paintings by Sumiyoshi Gukei (Japanese, 1631–1705); 17.5 × 24.2 cm. Tokyo National Museum.

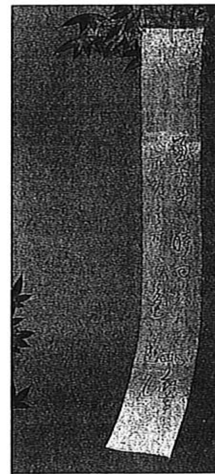


FIGURE 10 Detail of Tosa Mitsuoki's *Flowering Cherry and Autumn Maples with Poem Slips* (fig. 1a–b; cat. 12), showing poem slip 27.

ceramics such as Kyoto wares, that included blossoms and maple-leaf motifs. The inscription on the inside of the lid of the box for authentication records mentioned by Narazaki that once accompanied the Art Institute's screens identified the work as "Clouds and Brocade screens (*unkin byōbu*) painted by Tosa Mitsuoki," attesting to the long-recognized compositional subject of these works.[14]

The pairing of cherry blossoms and maples can be found in three extant Edo-period screen paintings that have been dated to the beginning of the seventeenth century, or slightly earlier than the Chicago screens:

1. *Flowering Cherry and Autumn Maple* by Yamaguchi Sekkei, two pairs of six-panel folding screens, now in Daigoji.

2. *Scenes of Yoshino and the Tatsuta River*, a pair of six-panel folding screens, Nezu Museum (fig. 11a–b).

3. *Flowering Cherry and Autumn Maple with Poem Slips*, a pair of six-panel folding screens, Peggy and Richard M. Danziger Collection (fig. 12a–b).

While often compared to Mitsuoki's work because of their similar subject matter, these screens stylistically recall the preceding Momoyama period, which was dominated by civil war and the flamboyant taste of the warlords in decoration for their castles. All three works are characterized by the profusion of blossoms and leaves, tree trunks, and branches that fill up the pictorial space. The Nezu and Danziger screens also show poem slips apparently tied to tree branches in a manner similar to the *tanzaku* found on the Art Institute screens. Like those in Chicago, the *waka* poems that are cited on these two screens are not contemporary, but were instead selected from canonical imperial anthologies: *Kokinshū* and *Gyokuyōshū* (1312) for the Nezu screens, and *Kokinshū*, *Shūishū* (Anthology of Poetic Gleanings; 1007), and *Shinkokinshū* (1205) for the Danziger screens.[15]

The depiction in both the Nezu and Danziger works seems influenced by the monumental style of tree trunks developed by Kano Eitoku (1543–1590), such as the bold depiction found in his late work *Cypress* at the Tokyo National Museum. This painting, originally mounted as a sliding door handed down in the Katsura branch of the imperial family, has today been remounted as an eight-panel folding screen. In Eitoku's style, which emphasized a single compositional element, the impression of a living tree is subsumed by the bold manneristic design and flattened mass of the contorted trunk. The fact that Fuhime, Tōfukumon'in's adopted daughter, married into the Katsura family suggests how seventeenth-century courtiers and court painters could have known such earlier works as Eitoku's *Cypress*.

The powerful and energetic depiction of cherry blossoms and maples, especially in the Nezu and Danziger screens, invokes the aesthetic taste of grand festivities thrown during the time of the warlord Toyotomi

FIGURE 11a–b Artist unknown, *Scenes of Yoshino and the Tatsuta River*, seventeenth century. Pair of six-panel screens; ink, color, and gold on paper; each 177.3 × 418.5 cm. Nezu Museum, Tokyo.

FIGURE 12a–b Artist unknown, *Flowering Cherry and Autumn Maple with Poem Slips*, seventeenth century. Pair of six-panel screens; ink and color on paper; each 175 × 372 cm. Peggy and Richard M. Danziger Collection.

Hideyoshi (1537–1598). Records give details of an extravagant *waka* party held by Hideyoshi on the twenty-ninth day of the second month, Bunroku 3 (1594), during a pilgrimage to the Yoshino mountains. Hideyoshi is also known to have organized large-scale poetry parties in 1588 (Tenshō 16) at his Kyoto residence of Jurakudai, and also toward the end of his life, in the spring of 1598 (Keichō 3) in Daigo, on the occasion of a cherry-blossom viewing. The *waka* poems composed during these parties are preserved in collections of poetry sheets called *Juraku waka kaishi* and are housed in various collections as *Yoshino waka kaishi* (Date family, Sendai City Museum) and *Daigo waka tanzakuchō* (Daigoji temple).

Thus by the early seventeenth century, cherry blossoms were often linked in poetry and visual imagery to the idealized setting of Yoshino, a spot near Nara, that was known for its wide mountain vista of spring blossoms. As for poetry gatherings associated with viewing autumn color, the best known seems to have been the outing of the emperor Uda to the Ōi River, to the west of Kyoto, in the early tenth century.

Probably growing out of the tendency to pair right and left, and so the need to find imagery equivalent to Yoshino for autumn, the design of autumn maples came by extension to be associated with flowing water of the Tatsuta River, also near Nara. The linkage had been suggested by introductory commentary in the influential *Kokinshū*, in which it is stated:

To the Emperor's eyes, colored leaves, floating on the Tatsuta River of an autumn evening, resembled brocade; to Hitomaro's mind, cherry trees, blooming in the Yoshino Mountains on a spring morning, seemed exactly like clouds.[16]

The Nezu screens add a depiction of flowing water in blue around the bottom area of the composition. This element supports the interpretation, clearly reflected in the title, that the scenes are cherry blossoms at Yoshino and autumn maples at Tatsuta River. Even when not explicit, however, as in the lack of any visual reference or direct mention in the composition and *waka* of the Art Institute's screens, the pairing of spring cherry blossoms with autumn maples surely evoked for Edo-period viewers Yoshino and the Tatsuta River.

Narazaki also pointed out that the merchant family of Chaya Shirōjirō handed down another work, a handscroll of *waka* no longer extant, treasured together with the Art Institute screens, that suggests links to Tōfukumon'in as well as to Hideyoshi.[17] This handscroll, *Jurakujō gyōkō waka*, was composed on the great occasion of the imperial visit to Hideyoshi's Jurakudai

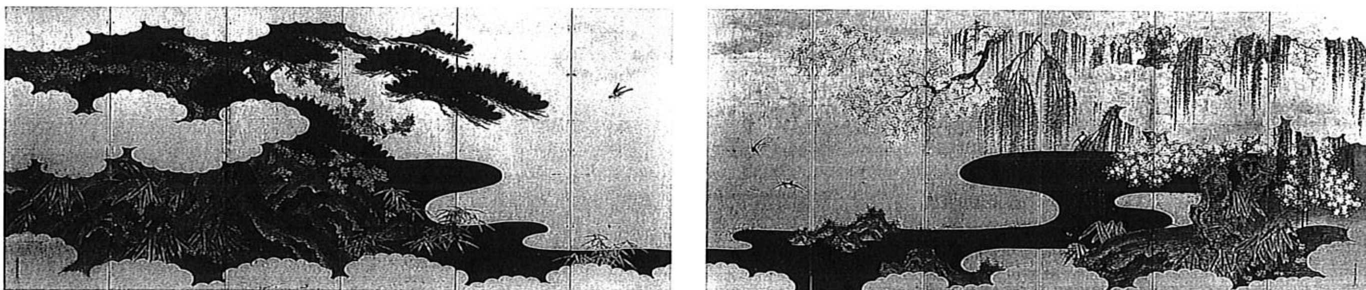


FIGURE 13a–b Tosa Mitsuoki (Japanese, 1617–1691), *Birds and Flowers of Spring and Autumn*, seventeenth century. Pair of six-panel screens; ink, color, and gold on paper; each 157 × 367 cm. Egawa Museum of Art, Hyōgo, Japan.

residence. According to tradition and the now missing documents, it too was a gift received from the court. Tōfukumon'in's aunt was in fact Hideyoshi's wife. The Art Institute's screens are redolent with possible family connections and thematic memories of Hideyoshi's poetry parties.

Besides the Art Institute's screens, Tosa Mitsuoki painted another pair of extant screens that contrast cherry blossoms and autumn maples, the well-known *Birds and Flowers of Spring and Autumn* in the Egawa Museum of Art (fig. 13a–b). These screens bear the painter's same official signature identifying his court rank, "Tosa Sakon Shōgen Mitsuoki," as on the Chicago screens, and they are thought to have been painted around the same time. The right screen arranges weeping willow branches and a monumental cherry tree, while a stream of water visually connects the right to the left screen, which depicts a large, gnarled pine, closer to the style of Kano Sanraku (1559–1635), in front of autumn maple foliage. Repeated birds help to unify the sky or gold-leafed space. The inclusion of smaller, more realistically detailed elements is closer to Sanraku than the earlier Eitoku.

Compared to the complexity and number of detailed elements, as well as the bold cloud silhouettes of the Egawa screens, the Art Institute work strikes one as more refined and ethereal. The impression is fostered by the extensive empty areas of gold background and the top-heavy blossoms and foliage supported by slender, off-center tree trunks. The difference in the two works by the same court painter at about the same time suggests the possibility of a different purpose or patron at the court. The Art Institute's screens, even more than the Egawa work, represent a move away from the preceding Momoyama style with its complicated and energized patterns of lines and colors, as well as the powerful mannerist flattening of forms that fill the picture plane. The top-heavy trees stand precariously on *suhama* or islandlike patches of earth, depicted between low, rocky mounds, as if floating in flattened, empty space. This depiction is also removed from the concern with tangible realistic details associated with the style of Sanraku. The screens show instead a new (post mid-century) style that revived the flattening stylization and elegance of Muromachi precedents like *Birds and Flowers of the Four Seasons* (Suntory Museum, Tokyo).[18] The appeal of the Chicago screens lies above all in the aristocratic aesthetic of refined elegance.

THE COURTLY TRADITION OF POETRY CONTESTS AND TASTE FOR REFINED ELEGANCE (*FURYŪ*)

Nearly seven hundred years separate the Art Institute screens from the height of the Heian period, but the work remarkably continues to share themes and motifs,

as well as underlying cultural assumptions from that era. Heian visual arts can be said to begin with the decorative style imported from Tang China. This visual culture was refined and polished for secular purposes but never rejected, just as Chinese writing was adapted to vernacular poetry and literature, over the next four hundred years, while the imperial family and select noble families continued ensconced at the court and capital in Kyoto. No residential buildings and interior decoration, however, and hardly any secular painting or pictorial evidence remain from before the twelfth century. Most of what is known about Heian courtly taste and developments in the nonreligious visual arts comes from documents of the time, especially the careful records of poetry contests, the diaries and narratives written by the aristocracy, and the extant examples of poetic calligraphy on decorated paper.

Calligraphy such as that exemplified by *waka* brushed on the decorated paper of *tanzaku* or poem slips originated as an integral part of the pictorial arts within the context of Heian poetry contests (*uta-awase*). In these contests Heian nobles divided into two teams to compete for prestige at court by demonstrating their poetic skills and aesthetic sensibility. Poetry contests were more than mere literary games. They involved a specially decorated setting at the palace or at an aristocrat's mansion for what was a performance where the poetry entries were recited. Ostensibly created spontaneously for the contest on themes set for the occasion, the poetry was then judged and edited—often with detailed commentary—and then recorded in an order linking imagery and word choice. From the start, *uta-awase* included important visual elements in the decoration of interiors, costuming, and presentation items that accompanied the ceremonies and that required the close supervision and participation of the courtiers.

From the time of early poetry contests in the ninth century, to enhance the elegance of the setting and the cohesion of each team, each side readied for the occasion a display of presentation objects called *suhama* (literally, sand beaches), which were assemblages of symbolically auspicious, miniature landscapes on trays. No actual examples or sketches of early *suhama* are extant, although the term *suhama* later came to designate a design motif or shape that resembles an amoeba or cloudlike island. The *suhama* tray arrangements were characterized by the expression "reaching for perfection in beauty of refinement and design (*furyū*)." *Furyū* is at the aesthetic heart of courtly culture.[19]

The documents show that aristocratic taste and decoration developed in stages during the Heian period. First, in the ninth and tenth centuries, decorative efforts were focused on either creating the *suhama* itself or the footed tray on which a *suhama* was displayed. By the second half of the eleventh century, the fashion turned to the commissioning and supervision of exquisitely colored and decorated papers and the fabrication of albums or other paper objects such as fans that displayed the poetry texts in fine calligraphic hands by the aristocrats themselves.

Records from the ninth century show that poems on *tanzaku* or sheets (*shikishi*) fabricated from colored or decorated paper were from this early period a part of the assemblages that decorated the settings for poetry contests. On the occasion of the "Court Poetry Contest of Chrysanthemums of the Kanpyō Era" (*Kanpyō no ontoki no dairi no kiku-awase*) in the second half of the ninth century, the "left" team presented nine *suhama*, each depicting a famous scenic spot of Japan, on each of which were propped a spray of chrysanthemums tied with a poem slip. For the "Court Poetry Contest" that took place in 960, the "right" team put a small poem sheet inside a silver turtle shell displayed on its *suhama*, while other sheets of poetry were attached to small flowers and plants, bird beaks, and figurines crafted of gilt, silver, and fragrant wood.

For the "Second Court Poetry Contest of Bonsai"(*Dairi godosenzai awase*) in 966, the "right" team arranged pine *bonsai* in pots to represent the scenic sand spit with pines of *Amanohashidate*, and *waka* poem slips were tied to the trees. For the "Empress Dowager Senshi's Dianthus Poetry Contest" (*Kōtaigō senshi nadeshiko awase*) in 986, two *suhama* were prepared, and the one for the "left" team was decorated with two stems of pinks, which were woven into a small bamboo-hedging fence that surrounded a central crane, and a poem slip was tied to the flowers and the crane. On the other *suhama* tray was placed a blue glass vase with a stem of pinks tied with a poem, along with an insect cage, also decorated with *tanzaku*.

While certain details remain unclear, these records of poetry contests demonstrate how inventive and playful arrangements of symbolically meaningful, crafted

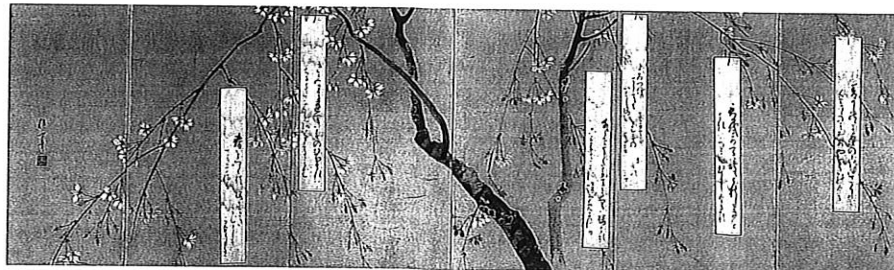
objects like animals might be combined with real or artificial flowers and plants. These assemblages were then decorated with tied-on *tanzaku* or sheets bearing *waka* poems. Thus the tradition of presenting *tanzaku* along with animals, flowers, or plants developed very much in a setting of decoration and participation by the aristocracy where calligraphy was an integral part of the aesthetic experience.

The thematic pairing of spring and autumn was sometimes used to emphasize the contrast between the right and left teams at a poetry contest. A well-known example of this was the "Spring and Autumn Poetry Contest" (*Shunjū uta-awase*) that was hosted by the empress Kanshi, daughter of Fujiwara no Yorimichi, in 1056 (Tengi 4). This date falls into the last phase when aristocratic decorative interest shifted to calligraphy and its decorated paper and the elaborate compilations of poetic texts in albums and handscrolls, some with pictorial illustrations. For this occasion, the left team prepared an album of "poem pictures" (*uta-e*) on themes of spring and decorated the cover with ornamental knots in the shape of spring flowers, while the right team arranged "poem pictures" of autumn on paper in assorted colors mounted in a handscroll.

In a chapter called "Calamus Root Contest" (*Ne-awase*) in *Eiga monogatari* (A Tale of Flowering Fortunes), which is the eleventh-century embellished, but historical, account of the great regent Fujiwara no Michinaga and life at court, a poetry contest between "spring" and "autumn" teams was further played out in the contrasting costumes worn by the participants. The leading lady of the spring team wore an outer robe decorated with double-petal red plums over green and vermilion layers, and other court ladies also wore spring-inspired robes. The leading lady for the autumn side wore an outer robe of yellow with red layers of autumn colors (*momiji-gasane*), while other ladies followed in patterned and layered robes with color effects suggestive of maple and chrysanthemum colors.

These records of aristocratic activities suggest how, despite the years that separate them, the Art Institute screens indeed share much with the Heian courtly tradition and its quest for refined elegance (*furyū*). There is the thematic contrast of spring and autumn that sets off right and left. The selected and ordered assortment of *waka* poems on seasonal and auspicious themes are written on poem slips in fine calligraphic hands of different courtiers. The elegant cherry and maple trees depicted as if growing from small, islandlike mounds of earth also recall the shape and plantings of *suhama* tray assemblages. Finally, all the poems that are featured on the screens were selected from the imperial anthologies of poetry, which memorialized the glory of the courtly tradition.

The format of paired folding screens, although a type of interior furnishing that was a post-Heian invention, also shares a strong presentational and decorative function with the *suhama* tray assemblages. The aristocratic pleasure taken in the choice, arrangement, and display of objects in order to decorate a space for a special occasion is central to the courtly legacy of *kazari*, "decoration." It was directly from such impulses that the practice of affixing to screens arranged or scattered *tanzaku*, *shikishi* sheets, or fans bearing poetry or pictures had developed from the medieval period.[20] Under the dictates of the taste of Momoyama-period warlords like Hideyoshi, the courtly literary pairing of spring and autumn developed into the powerful and energized compositions of "clouds and brocade" screens, where the cherry blossoms and maple foliage were decorated with *tanzaku* bearing *waka* from the imperial anthologies.



THE CULTURE OF *KAZARI* AND *TSUKURI* IN THE TIME OF TŌFUKUMON'IN AND MEISHŌIN

In the court diary *Mujōhōindono gonikki*, written by Gomizunoo's daughter Tsuneko, and mentioned above, there is further evidence that the culture of *kazari* and *tsukuri* was integral to the activities of the courtiers.[21] While unfortunately there are no further entries (and no comparable earlier diary accounts) of the activities of Tōfukumon'in herself, it is safe to extrapolate the tenor and activities of the intimate circle of women at the court from its record of the activities of Meishōin (1623–1696), who was the first child of Tōfukumon'in and Gomizunoo. After her father retired from the throne in 1629, Meishōin reigned until 1643 in her own right. On retirement and taking the tonsure, for the remaining fifty years of her life Meishōin found great pleasure in various fashionable cultural pursuits (*furyū*), including the arranging and fabricating of elaborate settings in the gardens of her villas.

According to the entry in the diary for the tenth month, fourteenth day, Genroku 1 (1688), for example, Meishōin had fabricated at her villa along the Kamo River the setting of a countrified fishing village. In this she was said to be following the example of Minamoto no Tōru (822–895), who was credited with commanding that salt be hauled in from Osaka Bay to create a salt flat landscape in the garden of his Kawara'in residence in Kyoto. Meishōin also created a town with shops and public spaces inside an adjoining garden pavilion (*chaya*), using various charming dolls and props, all decorated with *tsukuri-bana* (artificial flowers).

Meishōin's younger sister also enjoyed the artifice of a townscape (*machiya-fu*) decorated with different items when she later visited at the villa. The female servants dressed up to act out the roles of townspeople as they served the aristocratic guests. According to the diary entry for the fourth month, ninth day, Genroku 6 (1693), the Second Princess was among those who paid a visit. This lady's husband, Nijō Tsunahira, was a patron of the Rimpa artists Ogata Kōrin and his brother Kenzan.

Moreover, in 1692 (Genroku 5), on the celebration of Meishōin's seventieth birthday, the diary records that Reigen (1654–1732; reigned 1663–87), who was a half brother, sent her a screen painting *Flowers of the Twelve Months* by Yamamoto Soken, still extant in the collection of Konbuin. Paintings of the Twelve Months (*tsukinami*) display a standardized subject matter of plants and/or genre scenes for specific months that had become the specified imagery or seasonal references when composing *waka*. Presentation of such screens had been popular since at least the twelfth century. Like the Art Institute screens, this genre is another example of the important links between poetry and pictorial representation in the courtly tradition.

The historical circumstances that led to the production of the Soken painting have been examined,[22] but no mention has been made of the diary entry (from the ninth month, twenty-ninth day, Genroku 4 [1692]) that clearly reveals that the screen painting was part of the group of presentation items from Meishōin's relatives at the court. These *tsukuri-mono* included an amusing

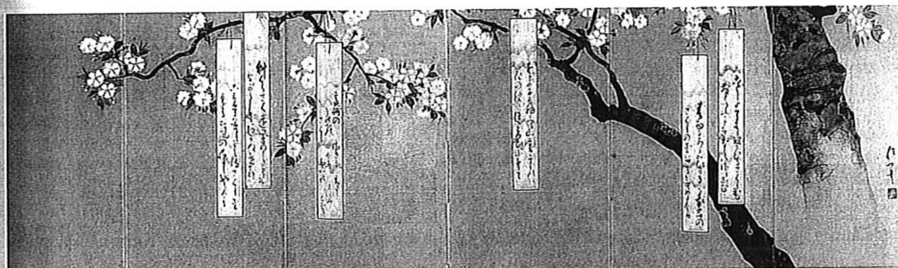


FIGURE 14a–b Sakai Hōitsu (Japanese, 1761–1828), *Cherry Blossoms and Poems Slips*, with calligraphy by Tachibana no Chikage (1735–1808), early nineteenth century. Pair of six-panel screens; ink, color, and gold on paper; each 56.6 × 195 cm. Private collection.

kimono-dressed figurine of the legendary Urashima Tarō and his boat on a tin-alloy sake container in the shape of a tortoise, all affixed on top of a ten-tier food box, from the princess Tsuneko. Konoe Motohiro sent celebratory food delicacies presented on a *suhama* tray with a miniature landscape that contained flowers and auspicious figurines of a pine tree, bamboo, a crane, and a tortoise, along with a glass sake container hidden in one of two rocks, probably representing a felicitous scene alluding to conjugal fidelity. This entry provides documentary evidence that on such an occasion at the court in the seventeenth century, celebratory screens would have been set up and displayed along with *tsukuri-mono* of presentation trays and their assemblages, and that together they composed a kind of installation. Screen paintings were considered a type of furniture, not paintings as such, but were the more official gifts, while *tsukuri-mono* were presented more privately, often by equal or lower ranking well-wishers (*uchi-iwai*). Both kinds of gifts were significant as presentation items for elaborate festive display.

FIGURE 15 Yamamoto Hōsui (Japanese, 1850–1906), calendar cover for *Paris Illustré*, no. 22 & 23 (December 1, 1884). Private collection.

As another example—nearly ninety years later, on the third month, twenty-ninth day, Tenmei 4 (1784)—the retired daimyo Yanagisawa Nobutoki (1724–1794) received a folding screen from his son, the current lord, together with *tsukuri-mono* of decorated "island trays" (*shimadai*) from other relatives and retainers for his sixtieth birthday. Here, the list of gifts he received makes no apparent distinction between "official" and "private" gifts that was made earlier on the occasion of Meishōin's seventieth birthday.[23]

Given these examples of joint presentations of screen paintings and *tsukuri-mono* on celebratory occasions, it is quite possible to imagine that the Art Institute screens were once displayed in just such a festive space, where they would have been appreciated in a similar way. An art-historical approach that separates the functions of these celebratory and decorative objects into official painting or "high" art and "lesser" objects (*tsukuri-mono*) for private presentation and amusement, has effectively distorted the historical context and meaning of paintings—like the Art Institute screens—made for celebratory occasions. For Tōfukumon'in, her daughters, and the circle of intimates at court, the assemblage and fabrication of artistic objects and settings, replete with classical allusions, clever artifice, and playful intent, were essential aspects of their social and cultural life.

CONCLUSION

This essay has examined the Art Institute's screens not as a work of a single genre—such as a painting—but as one that synthesizes calligraphy, installation or decoration, and painting. As seen from another perspective, screens have also been shown to bring together poetic literature with creative plastic form. In addition, screens invite the interactive participation of the viewers, and represent a work of collaboration within the environment of a court salon surrounding Tōfukumon'in, where courtiers, especially aristocratic women, were actively engaged in calligraphy, the decoration of elaborate interiors, and the assemblage of artistic or amusing objects (*tsukuri-mono*).

The use of *tanzaku* as a compositional element on screens continued well after the seventeenth century, as is evident from the early-nineteenth-century *Cherry Blossoms and Poems Slips* in a private collection (fig. 14a–b). These screens display the happy combination of calligraphy by the literati scholar Tachibana no Chikage (1735–1808) with the Rimpa painting of Sakai Hōitsu (1761–1828).

In the second half of the nineteenth century, when Japanese decorative arts enjoyed tremendous popularity

among Westerners, the oil painter Yamamoto Hōsui (1850–1906) arrived in Paris to become the darling of fashionable society. He designed the 1885 calendar insert (fig. 15) that accompanied the December 1884 issue of *Paris Illustré*.[24] Hōsui chose to depict two beauties dressed in kimono who write on and tie *tanzaku* for each of the twelve calendar months to a blossoming cherry tree. The calendar combines traditional Japanese motifs with Western elements. It is a composition that could not better exemplify what Europeans at the time considered to be the quintessential decorative elegance of Japan.

Despite the continued popularity of such design motifs as *tanzaku*, a work like the Art Institute's screens, which is an early example of an elegant screen in the courtly tradition that combined *tanzaku* with pictorial imagery, was neglected as the object of art-historical study. Such decorative works carried negative connotations, where the addition of calligraphy and the reuse of classics from imperial *waka* anthologies were considered not particularly creative fields of endeavor.

Since they were not as highly valued, these screens ended up being sold and leaving Japan during the 1960s. A look at the catalogue for the 1989 exhibition *Word in Flower*, which was organized by Carolyn Wheelright at the Yale University Art Gallery, makes clear how many Edo-period art works that are related to literature or carry texts are now housed in collections in the United States. A shift in aesthetic values since the late 1970s has led to a new recognition of the poetic texts gracing works such as the Chicago screens that add meaning and depth to the visual beauty of the pictorial design. It is hoped that by placing these works within the context of *kazari* and *tsukuri*, with their long traditions in Japan that dissolve the modern Western-derived categories of fine art, decorative crafts, and calligraphy, we can further our appreciation of the unique appeal of the screens.

Translated from the Japanese by Margaret Miller Kanada with Noriko Murai.

NOTES

1 See, for instance, Yashiro 1943.
2 Tsuji 2002, pp. 14–19. For a summary of scholarly trends in Japanese art history since the 1980s that have incorporated the concept of *kazari*, see the introduction in Tamamushi 2005, pp. 1–10.
3 See Tamamushi 2002.
4 Narazaki 1957.
5 For English translation of these historical documents, see cat. 47 in Wheelwright 1989, pp. 116–17.
6 See illustrations in Tokugawa Bijutsukan 2005, p. 136.
7 The catalogue entry for this painting in Wheelwright 1989 left four poems unidentified, but since that time I have been able to identify and transcribe these poems. A new study, published after I authored this essay, reports similar findings: see Hanafusa 2007.
8 See the entry on the first month, eighteenth day, Kanbun 12 (1672), in *Mujōhōindono go-nikki* (the original is in the Yōmei Bunko in Kyoto; a copy is in the collection of the Historiographical Institute at the University of Tokyo). See also Segawa 2001, p. 77.
9 Tanomura 1961.
10 Himejishi Shishi Henshū-shitsu 2003, p. 200. This illustrated scroll was later handed down in the Utanokami, the official *gagaku* performing family of Sakai.
11 Although Narazaki claimed that the names of twenty-five calligraphers are recorded in the 1698 document, in actuality twenty-six are given, according to the published version of that document in Noma 1961, pp. 103–06.
12 Matsubara 1987; Matsubara 1983, pp. 19–29; Matsubara 1993, pp. 82–96.
13 Santorii Bijutsukan 2004, pp. 106–09.
14 Narazaki 1957, p. 394. The actual date of the box and its inscription cannot be verified.
15 Another mid-seventeenth-century screen painting, *Red and White Plums*, in the Etsuko and Joe Price Collection, also juxtaposes prolifically blossoming trees and contains the depiction of *tanzaku* tied to the branches. Interestingly, the *tanzaku* depicted on this work have been left empty, leading to speculation about whether aristocrats might have planned to supervise the choice of poems or to do the calligraphy.
16 McCullough 1985, p.6.
17 Narazaki 1957, p. 395.
18 This pair of six-panel screens from the mid-fifteenth century was attributed to Tosa Hirochika by Mitsuoki, who himself wrote the certificate of authentication. The Suntory screens depict plants whose slender trunks are set into islets of mounded earth in an artificial and flattened space. The Chicago screens echo the exquisite balancing of shapes and placement, although with only one cherry tree or two maples on each screen.
19 What the term described and how the courtly aesthetic of decorative refinement related to artistic developments in calligraphy and paper decoration were themes first proposed in the major work *Heianchō uta-awase taisei* by Hagitani Boku, which compiled the older documents *Jikkanbon uta-awase* and *Nijikkanbon ruijū-uta-awase*. The topic has been more concisely explicated in the recent scholarship of Sano Midori. See Hagitani 1979, vol. 10, pp. 3066–75; Sano 1997, pp. 63–66.
20 On fans affixed to larger-format paintings, see Miyajima 1980. On *shikishi* sheets affixed to larger-format paintings, see Tamamushi 1985.
21 Segawa 2001, pp. 218–20.
22 Tanomura 1961, pp. 133–41.
23 Tamamushi 2002, pp. 84–85.
24 Takashina 2000, p. 80.