



Album of twelve Chinese-style landscapes

Nakabayashi Chikutō

On display

Title/Description: Album of twelve Chinese-style landscapes

Artist/Maker: Nakabayashi Chikutō (Artist)

Born: 1830

Object Type: Book

Materials: Fibre, Paper, Watercolour

Technique: Painting

Measurements: h. 440 x w. 330 x d. 37 mm

Inscription: Chikutō

Accession Number: 695

Historic Period: Edo period (AD 1600-1868)

Production Place: Asia, East Asia, Japan

School/Style: Bunjinga, Nanga

This is an album of delicately painted Chinese-style landscapes. In some, human figures are prominent, and in others human presence is only suggested by houses, bridges and gates surrounded by deep nature.

Each of the twelve paintings has a title, a signature and seals. Some of them have a title stating that it was painted in a particular style and techniques associated with artists from Yuan to Qing China, whose names and works were highly appreciated in Japan.

Chikutō was born in Nagoya. There he learnt painting under Yamada Kyūjō, who was keen to study classical Yuan and Ming Chinese paintings. Chikutō later went to Kyoto and became a respected painter of Chinese-style landscape and published books about treatises on painting. He is one of the most prominent artists of the so-called 'literati painting (*bunjin-ga*)' in the late Edo period.

There are interesting layers of evidence of appreciation in the album's title slip, the storage box and the wrapping paper for the box. First, the title slip on the front cover has an inscription by Tanomura Chokunyū (1814-1907), an important artist and leader of 'literati' painters in the Meiji era. It reads 'Twelve mounted small landscape paintings by the old man Chikutō Nakabayashi; Title slip written by Chokunyū Dōjin'. It might be the case that it was Chokunyū who had these twelve paintings mounted into an album.

Next comes the box. On the back side of the box lid is an inscription by Murata Kōkoku (1831-1912), another fine 'literati painting' artist. He praises Master Chikutō's (Chikutō-*sensei*) sophisticated ink colours and unwavering brush control. This inscription includes the date of spring 1905, signed by Kōkoku at the age of seventy-five.

The final layer is the paper that covers the top of the box lid. It states the title 'Chikutō's landscape picture album' with the name of presumably the owner at some point: 'The hidden treasure (*hizō*) of Mr Shiro/Haku Kanō'. 'Shiro/Haku (white)' added to the family name 'Kanō' probably refers to a particular branch of the Kanō family, who is best known for the production of the famous sake brand 'Hakutsuru (White Crane)'. The seventh head of the Kanō family of this branch, Kanō Jihei (1862-1951), is well known as a great collector of East Asian art, but we do not have enough evidence yet to determine whether the name written here refers to him.

Further Reading

Paul Berry and Morioka Michiyo, *Literati modern: bunjinga from late Edo to twentieth-century Japan*; The Terry Welch collection at the Honolulu Academy of Arts, Honolulu Academy of Arts, 2008.

Nagoya City Museum ed., *Owari no bunjinga (Literati Painting in Owari)*, Nagoya City Museum, 1990.
