



Landscape with a figure

Gakuō Zōkyū (attr.)

Not on display

Title/Description: Landscape with a figure

Artist/Maker: Gakuō Zōkyū (attr.)

Born: 1504 c. - 1520 c.

Object Type: Scroll painting

Materials: Fibre, Ink, Paper, Silk

Measurements: h. 1198 x w. 525 mm

Accession Number: 883a

Historic Period: Muromachi period (AD 1333-1568)

Production Place: Asia, East Asia, Japan

Many Japanese ink paintings were created in the 14-15th centuries emulating Chinese classical models, that were imported and treasured by Japanese elites and major Zen temples. Some of the elements in this painting - the concentration of the foreground motifs to one lower corner and the leaving of the other diagonal half as open space, the strong dark brushstrokes articulating the rocks and trees, and the central motif of a large leafy tree facing to the waterfront - remind us of the styles of the Chinese academy painters in the early 13th century of the Southern Song dynasty, such as Ma Yuan and Xia Gui.

Turning to the subject matter: Along a rocky shore, a nobleman has stopped to appreciate the vast waterscape. The area seems breezy as small triangular waves ripple on the water surface. The large tree in the central foreground looks as if it is braced against the wind. The blossoming white plum branches above the figure add a delicate detail to the picture, otherwise somewhat desolate.

Stylistically speaking, while the key compositional principle appears to be based in the style of Xia Gui's landscape, the simplified landscape composition, omitting completely the middle ground, and the relatively large proportions of the figure to the scale of the landscape, may point to an artist slightly later than Gakuō.

The storage box of this painting has an inscription on the lid that identifies the painter to be Gakuō (active ca. 1482-1514), who is said to have been a pupil of the monk painter Shūbun (active ca. early 15th century). There are no seals or signature on the painting. There may have been a seal at the right bottom corner originally, but in the present state it looks like it was removed and only a trace is barely visible. In addition, the two boats offshore might possibly be a later addition.

Akiko Yano, June 2022

Further Reading

Yoshiaki Shimizu and Carolyn Wheelwright eds., *Japanese Ink Paintings from American Collections*, Princeton: Art Museum, Princeton University, 1976.

Nezu Bijutsukan ed., Muromachi jidai suibokuga no keifu (Ink Monochrome Painting of the Muromachi Period), Tokyo: Nezu Bijutsukan, 1992.

Tochigi Kenritsu Hakubutsukan and Kanagawa Kenritsu Rekishi Hakubutsukan eds., Kantō suibokuga no nihyaku-nen (Two Hundred Years of Ink-painting in the Kanto Region), Utsunomiya: Tochigi Kenritsu Hakubutsukan, 1998.
