

# Kin byōbu: golden screens

In Japan, *Kare-e* (Chinese style painting) is a style most often contrasted with *Yamato-e* Japanese style painting (discussed in the main *Kin byōbu: golden screens* text). From the eighth century onwards paintings by Chinese artists were imported to Japan which influenced similar style paintings being executed by Japanese artists. During the fifteenth century the Japanese artist and Buddhist monk Sesshū Tōyō, after studying painting in China returned to Japan with the skills of refined Song dynasty style painting that went on to have a most profound effect on Japanese *Kara-e*.

In the tradition of Chinese painting, most subjects of Japanese *Kare-e* are pure brush and ink landscapes or compositions of birds and flowers in landscapes of changing seasons. Here in a pair of extremely rare sixteenth century screens by Hagetu Tosatsu, a second generation student of Sesshū, we can find ducks, egrets and hawks hunting their prey in a serene landscape with plum blossom, camellias, irises, peonies, young bamboo and lotus plants all indicating the changing of season from late winter to summer.

The second pair of screens by Kanō Eino is also in the *Kare-e* tradition of birds and flowers in a seasonally changing landscape. The ever-green pine tree, the auspicious symbol of long life, sits among Chinese style eccentric rocks on the right screen, and a plum tree, still covered in late winter snow, bearing flowering buds, announcing the coming of spring, is on the left screen. Numerous tiny birds, geese, ducks and even two mythical phoenixes are depicted with acute observational skills among cherry blossoms, magnolia, peonies, irises, camellia, orchids and other flowers. A long lineage of Kanō school painters became one of the most powerful forces in Japanese art throughout the Edo period. This pair of screens clearly shows how they combined the traditional formula of Chinese bird and flower painting with the characteristic Japanese use of a gold leaf background to create a hybrid style of art that suited the tastes and requirements of the Japanese aristocracy.

## HAGETSU Tosatsu 波月等薩

Japanese 1516–1585

*Birds and flowers in a landscape*

(*Kachozu byobu* 花鳥図屏風) 1575

pair of six panel folding screens:

ink and pigments on paper

(a) 155.6 x 357.0 cm (image and sheet)

(b) 155.6 x 356.6 cm (image and sheet)

Felton Bequest, 1958 (1762.a-b-D4)

## KANŌ Eino 狩野 永納

Japanese 1631–1697

*Birds and flowers of the four seasons*

(*Shiki kachōzu byobu* 四季花鳥図屏風)

(17th century)

pair of six panel folding screens: ink

gold paint and pigments on gold leaf

on paper, lacquer on wood, paper, silk,

metallic thread, brass

(a-b) 164.5 x 364.6 cm (image and

sheet) (each) (a-b) 181.1 x 64.5 x

10.8 cm (closed) (each) (a-b) 181.1 x

381.0 x 10.8 cm (open) (each)

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