

書の至宝

Twin Peaks The Finest of Chinese and Japanese Calligraphy 日本と中国

Twin Peaks: The Finest of Chinese and Japanese Calligraphy

In this unique exhibition, works by Wang Xizhi, Ouyang Xun, Su Shi, Kukai, Ono no Tofu, Hon'ami Koetsu, Ryokan and others transcend time and distance to appear together in one showing.

Calligraphy is well known as one of the most beautiful arts to emerge from East Asia. The ideograms which first saw the light of day in ancient China, besides fulfilling their basic function as a means of writing, have always taken into account the esthetic aspect too. Brought to their first artistic peak by Wang Xizhi/王羲之 and other masters, they were carried on throughout long centuries, surviving changes of dynasty and the rise and fall of different peoples and developing a wide expressive potential in the process.

From the first transmission of Chinese ideograms (*kanji* in Japanese), the calligraphy of Japan naturally showed a strong influence from China, but the decline of the Tang dynasty and the weakening of its influence eventually led to the emergence of what might be called a genuinely Japanese style. Moreover, experiments with means of writing the Japanese language using *kanji* led to the devising of a uniquely Japanese phonetic syllabary known as *kana*, which in time developed a graceful, delicate world of its own. From then on, a succession of calligraphic styles evolved. In addition to this, it should be noted how the flourishing of Zen and Confucian studies in Japan led to fresh, major influences from China.

By bringing together outstanding works from both countries, the forthcoming exhibition will present a survey of the history of calligraphy in China and the development of the Japanese calligraphy that evolved a unique world of its own under the influence of the former. A very large number of fine works by both Chinese and Japanese masters are preserved in this country, including some from the Song and Yuan dynasties, which are sparsely represented even in China itself. Besides celebrated works such as 'Poems and letters, known as "Akihagi-jo/秋萩帖"' and 'Scroll of Bai Letian's poems/白氏詩卷', and some 50 others designated in Japan as National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties, the exhibition, thanks to the overall cooperation of the Shanghai Museum, will place on display a large number of the best works in the latter's collection, among them the finest extant version of 'Chunhua Ge Tie/淳化閣帖', and Wang Xianzhi/王献之's 'Ya Tou Wan Tie/鴨頭丸帖'. By providing a historical retrospect of calligraphy in China and Japan, it will examine a unique world of beauty created against a varied background of differing cultures and ideas.

General Information

Venue: Tokyo National Museum (Ueno Park)

Period: Wednesday, January 11–Sunday, February 19, 2006

Hours: 9:30-17:00 (last entry 30 minutes before closing time)
Closed Monday

Organizers: Tokyo National Museum; Asahi Shimbun; TV Asahi; Shanghai Museum

With the Assistance of: Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Agency for Cultural Affairs; Embassy of the People's Republic of China; Kanagawa Prefectural Board of Education; Saitama Prefectural Board of Education; Chiba Prefectural Board of Education; Taito Ward, Tokyo, Board of Education.

With the Sponsorship of: Dai Nippon Printing Co., Ltd.; Matsushita Electric Industrial Co., Ltd.

With the Cooperation of: Nissay Dowa General Insurance Co., Ltd.; All Nippon Airways

Admission: Adults: 1400 (1200/1100) yen

University students: 1000 (900/800) yen

High school students: 900 (800/700) yen

Jr. high school students and under: free

* Prices shown in () indicate advance-discount/group (more than 20 persons) tickets.

* Persons with a disability are allowed free entry with one companion.
Valid identification requested upon entry.

* Advance tickets are on sale from November 11 at the Museum ticket office (during museum hours) and JR East Reserved Ticket Offices (*Midori-no-Madoguchi*), Ticket Pia and other major ticket offices.

Access: 10 minutes' walk from JR Ueno Station (Park exit) or Uguisudani Station.
15 minutes' walk from Keisei Ueno Station or Tokyo Metro Ueno Station.

General Inquiries: Tokyo National Museum
Tel. 03-3822-1111

Web Site: <http://www.tnm.jp/> <http://www.asahi.com/sho/>

Next Venue: Shanghai
The exhibition will travel to the Shanghai Museum, China from March 11 to April 23, 2006.

※Rotations of works are scheduled during the exhibition period.

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白氏詩巻 藤原行成

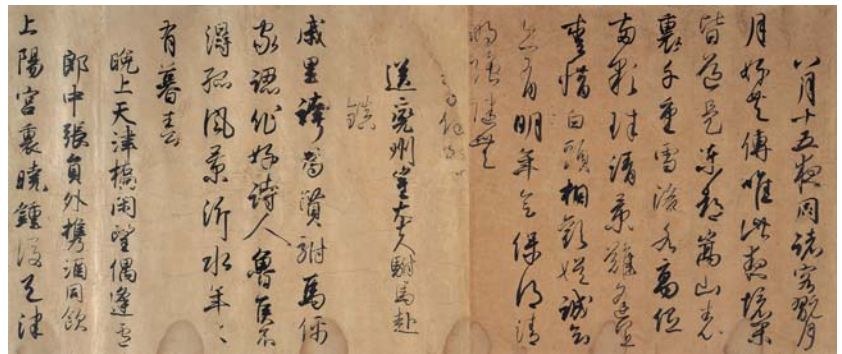
Poems of Bai Le-tian.

By Fujiwara no Kozei.

Handscroll. Ink on paper. Heian Period, 11th century.

Tokyo National Museum.

※On Exhibit 11-29 January



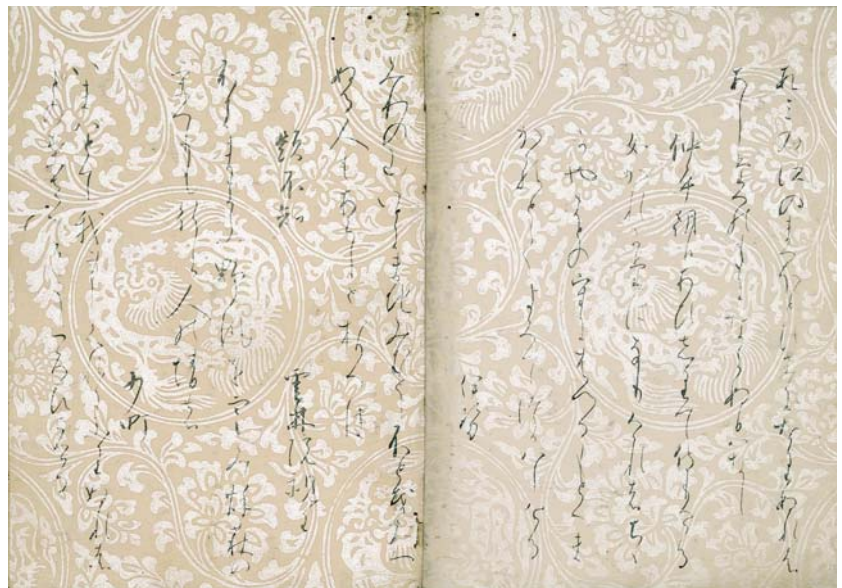
古今和歌集 元永本

Poem anthology "Kokin Waka Shu", Gen'ei version.

Two books. Ink on decorated paper. Heian Period, 12th century.

Tokyo National Museum.

※Exhibited pages will change every week during exhibition period



摺下絵和歌巻 本阿弥光悦

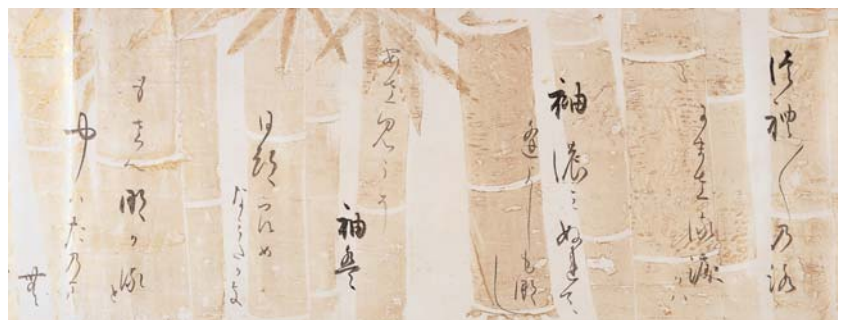
Poems with printed ground decoration.

By Hon'ami Koetsu.

Handscroll. Ink on decorated Paper. Azuchi-Momoyama-Edo period, 17th century.

Tokyo National Museum.

※On Exhibit 11-29 January



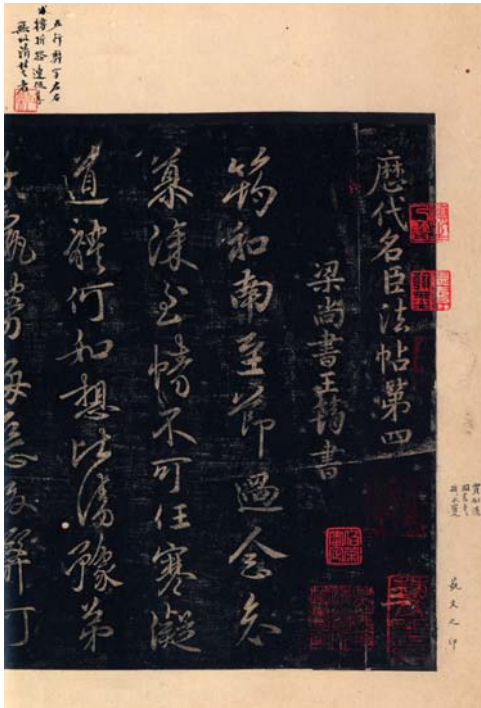
淳化閣帖 王羲之

Chunhua Ge Tie.

By Wang Xizhi.

Rubbing collection.

Northern Song Dynasty, 10th period.
Shanghai Museum



The Shanghai Museum Showing

The special exhibition "Twin Peaks: the Finest of Chinese and Japanese Calligraphy" will include 65 outstanding works from the Shanghai Museum, which has one of the finest collections of calligraphy in the world. Besides 'Chunhua Ge Tie/淳化閣帖', noted for having been bought back for China from the United States, they will include works from the Tang, Song and Yuan dynasties that are rarely taken outside China. Following the end of the "Twin Peaks" exhibition in Tokyo, the 65 selected items of Japanese and Chinese calligraphy preserved in Japan which were shown in Tokyo will cross the seas and be shown at the Shanghai Museum along with the 65 exhibits belonging to that Museum.

"Masterpieces of Chinese and Japanese Calligraphy"
(provisional title)

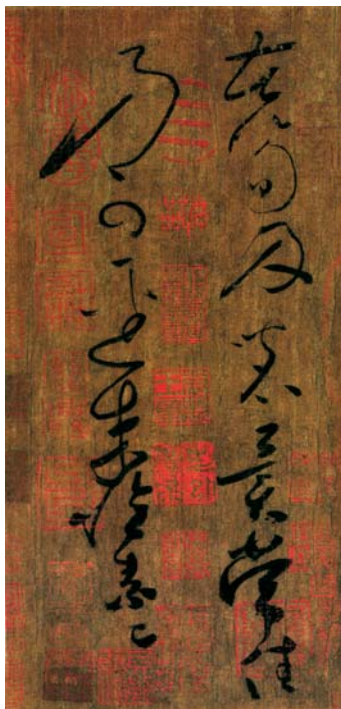
11 March to 23 April, 2006

苦筍帖 懷素

Ku Sun Tie.

By Huai Su.

Handscroll, cursive script, ink on silk.
Tang dynasty, 8th period.
Shanghai Museum



Note to media representatives

Please address requests concerning gathering of material, loan of photographs of the exhibits, etc.

to the "Twin Peaks" Public Relations Office (by fax if in English) at the following address:

Public Relations Office "Twin Peaks" Exhibition
1-28-9 Nihonbashi Kakigara-cho, Chuo-ku,
Tokyo 103-0014

Tel: 03-3639-0725 Fax: +03-3664-3833

Enjoying Calligraphy

There are many different aspects to calligraphy: the content of what is written; the skill or otherwise of the calligraphy as such; the significance of the work's transmission to the present.

Unfortunately, some people seem to shun calligraphy on the grounds that, for example, the characters are too stylized or deformed for them to be read easily, or that the poems or prose thus written are difficult to understand. However, the appreciation of calligraphy is not solely a matter of reading the script or correctly interpreting the Chinese-style poems or the prose that they represent.

Calligraphy presents a variety of beauties: of form, of the flow of the brush-strokes, of the spatial disposition of the characters and their relationship to the space surrounding them. There is also the attraction of the materials used —the paper, and the varying hues of black ink. Besides this, there is the incidental beauty created in the forms of the ideograms and the overall effect when they are written in a continuous flow, as well as by the spreading of the ink or the gradual drying of the ink on the brush, and by the varying pressure of the brushwork. Yet another characteristic of calligraphy is that, by tracing the successive strokes of the brush, one can experience for oneself something of the esthetic emotions of the calligrapher at each moment. One does not necessarily have to apprehend every element of a work at the same time —there is plenty to savor, even in a single aspect.

The specimens of calligraphy from the past that survive today have done so because of their significance in religion, literature, education, or everyday life. There is pleasure, surely, in contemplating this miracle whereby they have been preserved for a thousand years —sometimes, even, since before the beginning of the Christian era. Appreciation of calligraphy transcends its age; at the same time, the work of each individual calligrapher clearly shows the special characteristics and atmosphere of the period in which he lived. Careful contemplation also reveals subtle differences between the calligraphies of Japan and China —the lyricism, whimsicality and intuitiveness of the former, the architectural quality, massiveness and logical strength of the latter.

Calligraphy is rated as accomplished or otherwise for various reasons. But the most important quality in a successful work is a certain sense of grace and dignity. An air of distinction and individuality are the principal charms of the art. "Calligraphy is the man," the saying goes, and the works of those calligraphers whose names have gone down in history are faithful reflections of particular personalities. The best way to enjoy a piece of calligraphy is to contemplate it unhurriedly so as to realize within oneself, as one traces its rhythms, the attitude to life and the esthetic emotions experienced by the author in creating it.