

**Exhibition: *Chinese Paintings from Japanese Collections*****On View: May 11–June 6, 2014****Rotation 1: May 11–June 1, 2014****Rotation 2: June 7–July 6, 2014****Location: Resnick Pavilion**

Image captions on page 3

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents the first major exhibition in the United States to explore 700 years of collecting and preserving paintings from China in Japan. *Chinese Paintings from Japanese Collections* features more than 30 rare masterpieces—both hanging scrolls and handscrolls—that depict ethereal landscapes, detailed flora and fauna, portraits, and scenes from key Buddhist narratives. The works featured in the exhibition rarely travel outside of Japan, and many have never before been seen in the United States. The exhibition includes a National Treasure, fourteen Important Cultural Properties, and three Important Art Objects, all masterpieces registered with the Japanese Ministry of Culture.

*Chinese Paintings from Japanese Collections* explores the ways in which these objects functioned in Japan as symbols of Chinese religious and secular culture, social status, and as models for such traditions of Japanese painting (for example, Zen, Kanō, and Nanga painting). Furthermore, the presentation examines aspects of Japanese identity that derive from traditional Chinese culture, including paintings as embodiments of Chinese cosmology, historiography, mythology, and religion.

“This exhibition presents some of the most famous Chinese paintings in the world, many of which have rarely been seen outside of Japan since their arrival in that country many

centuries ago. Today, these Japanese collections are valued not only for having preserved rare Chinese paintings, but also for the ways in which their contents illuminate shifting trends in Japanese culture,” said Stephen Little, department head and curator of Chinese and Korean art at LACMA. “These works are exceptional, and this is an incredibly rare opportunity to see these masterpieces in Los Angeles.”

The exhibition is accompanied by an eponymous catalogue featuring reproductions and in-depth analysis of each painting, including its religious or secular significance and provenance in China and Japan. Copublished by LACMA and Prestel/DelMonico Books, the catalogue includes essays by Stephen Little and LACMA’s associate curator of Chinese art, Christina Yu Yu.

Due to the light-sensitive nature of the works of art, the exhibition will take place in two parts:

First Rotation: May 11–June 1, 2014

Second Rotation: June 7–July 6, 2014

The exhibition will be closed to the public for a brief period, between June 2 and 6, to accommodate the rotation of works on view.

### **Exhibition Highlights**

*Chinese Paintings from Japanese Collections* is organized chronologically, with works ranging in date from the 13th–17th centuries. The exhibition explores the significance of these paintings in both China and Japan and traces their history of ownership in Japan.

Over a period of 700 years and during three key phases of Japanese history—the Kamakurara and Muromachi periods (14th–16th centuries), the Edo period (17th–19th centuries), and the Meiji, Taishō, and early Shōwa periods (early 20th century)—many Chinese paintings from the Tang (618–906), Song (960–1279), Yuan (1260–368), and Ming (1368–1644) dynasties crossed the ocean from China to Japan by way of merchants and Buddhist monks. Acquired through both purchase and gift, Chinese paintings functioned as symbols of status in Japanese culture and important models for painting traditions in Japan.

*Sparrows on Bamboo in the Rain* (13th century) is one of the most famous works attributed to Muqi, a monk-painter who lived in the 13th century. The painting’s sophisticated brushwork and handling of ink tones are consistent with other known works by the artist. The scroll is known to have been in Japan by the early 15th century, and it bears two collectors’ seals of the Muromachi period shogun (military dictator) Ashikaga Yoshinori, who ruled from 1429 to 1441.

*The Poet Li Bai Chanting a Poem on a Stroll* (13th century) is one of the most famous

Chinese paintings in the world. This masterpiece by Liang Kai, a *daizhao* (attendant-in-waiting) depicts the great Tang dynasty poet Li Bai (701–762), a celebrated Chinese poet who was often depicted in Japanese paintings and whose poetry was admired in both China and Japan. In the painting, Li Bai's mouth is slightly open, as if chanting a poem and his lips, eye, and hair are drawn in dense, dark ink, in contrast to the pale and broad strokes delineating the rest of his face and body silhouette.

In *Two Patriarchs Harmonizing their Minds*, the pair of paintings illustrates two sleeping Buddhist monks. The first depicts a bearded, barefoot monk sitting cross-legged, asleep, and resting his chin on his right hand. The second portrays a monk, the Chinese Zen master Fenggan asleep on a tiger. This is considered to be one of the most famous and finest surviving Chinese scrolls in Japan. Chinese works of this type had an enormous influence on later traditions of ink paintings in Japan.

The scroll *Hanshan and Shide* (14th century) depicts the two enlightened Zen eccentrics Hanshan (Cold Mountain) and Shide (Foundling), who were popular symbols of spiritual emancipation. The artist, Yintuoluo, was a monk from India who came to China during the Mongol occupation of the Yuan dynasty and became the abbot of a Buddhist temple in China. He worked in a sketchy, spontaneous style of ink painting, and most of his known works are in Japanese collections.

### **Credit**

This exhibition is organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and is made possible in part by the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Henry Luce Foundation, and the Blakemore Foundation. This exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.



LACMA is grateful for the special cooperation of the Tokyo National Museum.

### **Image Captions:**

- (left): Liang Kai, *The Poet Li Bai Chanting a Poem on a Stroll*, Southern Song dynasty, 13<sup>th</sup> century, hanging scroll; ink on paper, Tokyo National Museum, Important Cultural Property, photo courtesy of TNM Image Archives
- (center): Traditionally attributed to Shi Ke (active 10<sup>th</sup> century) *Two Patriarchs Harmonizing their Minds*, Southern Song dynasty, 13<sup>th</sup> century, pair of hanging scrolls; ink on paper, Tokyo National Museum, Important Cultural Property, photo courtesy TNM Image Archives

(right): Muqi, *Sparrows on Bamboo in the Rain*, Southern Song dynasty, 13th century, Hanging scroll; ink on paper, Nezu Museum, Tokyo, Important Cultural Property, photo courtesy Nezu Museum

### **About LACMA**

Since its inception in 1965, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) has been devoted to collecting works of art that span both history and geography, in addition to representing Los Angeles's uniquely diverse population. Today LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection that includes over 120,000 objects dating from antiquity to the present, encompassing the geographic world and nearly the entire history of art. Among the museum's strengths are its holdings of Asian art, Latin American art, ranging from pre-Columbian masterpieces to works by leading modern and contemporary artists; and Islamic art, of which LACMA hosts one of the most significant collections in the world. A museum of international stature as well as a vital part of Southern California, LACMA shares its vast collections through exhibitions, public programs, and research facilities that attract over a million visitors annually, in addition to serving millions through digital initiatives, such as online collections, scholarly catalogues, and interactive engagement at [lacma.org](http://lacma.org). Situated in Hancock Park on over 20 acres in the heart of Los Angeles, LACMA is located between the ocean and downtown.

Location: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90036. [lacma.org](http://lacma.org)

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