



## Boy and Mount Fuji

by Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849)

Japan, Edo period, ca. 1839

Hanging scroll mounted on panel; ink and color on silk, 69.5 x 127.5 cm

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution

Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1898.110

**SITTING ON A WILLOW BRANCH THAT EXTENDS OVER A RUSHING** stream and facing the magnificent and sacred Mount Fuji, a young fisherman plays his flute. (See Focus on Mount Fuji, page 23.) The budding willow leaves and the deep cap of snow that remains on the top of the mountain show that the season is spring. The artist Hokusai produced an intimate portrait of the imposing Mount Fuji by using soft washes of color, almost without outline, to bring forth the form of the mountain.

Hokusai's long and productive career, began, according to his own writings, when he was six years old. He began as a print designer and illustrator of **ukiyo-e**, or “pictures of the floating world,” a genre that focused on depictions of urban and common life, particularly urban theater and pleasure quarters. (See Focus on Ukiyo-e, page 43.) In fact, he is known for the sensitivity and originality with which he portrayed common people. His life's work is characterized by tremendous variety: paintings, woodblock prints, illustrations, and art manuals. He produced this painting about Mount Fuji—a favorite subject, particularly in his prints and illustrated books—late in life, during a period of concentration on landscapes.

Hokusai earned wide respect in European artistic circles after his prints and illustrated books became available during the nineteenth century. His work influenced such artists as the French painter and printmaker Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901) and the American **expatriate** painter James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903).



## Kumano Mandara—Nachi Shrine

Japan, Namboku-cho or Muromachi period, late 14th–early 15th century

Hanging scroll; ink, color, and gold on silk, 220.3 x 76.3 cm

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution

Purchase, F1958.19

**THIS HANGING SCROLL PAINTING DEPICTS THE NACHI SHRINE, ONE OF** the three sacred centers within the Kumano region. The mountainous area is located south of present-day Nara and has been a vital religious and pilgrimage destination since ancient times. This painting is one in a set of three that depicts the three sacred sites.

This image of Kumano is considered a mandala. Generally, a mandala (*mandara* in Japanese) is a diagram or painting of the Buddhist universe that aids in meditation. This painting of a sacred landscape is also considered a mandala, the contemplation of which provides a spiritually beneficial visual journey or pilgrimage.

Encircled Buddhist deities are pictured in two intersecting lines along the edges. The shrine complex in the center of the painting is framed by deities that correspond to the Shinto kami associated with Kumano. Both Buddhist and Shinto beliefs often share the same sacred sites.

This painting was produced at the peak of Kumano's popularity as a pilgrimage destination. Diaries written by imperial and aristocratic visitors contain many references to the journey from Kyoto to Kumano. The painting's high quality suggests the patronage of a powerful person.



## Square dish with design of “Eight Bridges”

Possibly Ogata Kenzan (1663–1743) and Ogata Korin (1658–1716)

Japan, Edo period, early 18th century

Buff clay; iron pigment under transparent lead glaze; gold lacquer repairs, 2.8 x 21.7 cm

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution

Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1902.220

THIS CERAMIC SERVING DISH DEPICTS A FAMOUS EPISODE FROM THE tenth-century novel *Tales of Ise*. (See Focus on Literature in Japan, page 27.) A group of travelers from Kyoto stops at a marsh full of blooming iris in Miwaka Province (present-day Aichi Prefecture, east of Kyoto). An eightfold plank bridge spanning the marsh became an icon of this place. The tray shows only a few planks and two clusters of iris.

One traveler composed a poem in which each line begins with a syllable from the word for iris — *kakitsubata*. The poem expresses the writer’s sorrow at having to leave behind his wife while traveling:

<i>Karagoromo</i>	I have a beloved wife
<i>Kitsusu nareneshi</i>	Familiar as the skirt
<i>Tsuma shi areba</i>	Of a well-worn robe
<i>Harubaru kinuru</i>	And so this distant journeying
<i>Tabi o shi zo omu</i>	Fills my heart with grief

(McCullough, *Tales of Ise*, p. 75)

Typically, a tray of this shape — for light snacks or sweets — would have been made from unlacquered wood. However, this innovative work — likely produced by the potter Ogata Kenzan and painted by his brother Ogata Korin — is made of clay.

Kenzan’s ceramic tablewares became popular during the prosperous Edo period, and his unique and diverse styles spawned numerous imitations. His brother, Korin, was a successful artist in his own right and produced paintings in the style of what was later called the “Rinpa [or Rimpa] school.” Rinpa works feature themes from classical Japanese literature and depictions of the four seasons, as well as of gold, silver, and bright pigments. Kenzan and Korin’s collaboration produced highly original and much admired works in which evocative pictorial images decorated ceramic objects.

This tray was made from a slab of clay shaped around a wood or clay mold. It was then painted with iron pigment, coated with a colorless lead **glaze**, and fired at a low temperature sufficient to melt the glaze. (See Clay, page 50.) On two sides of the tray, repairs in gold **lacquer** illustrate how precious objects were restored and cherished, despite damage. In many cases, objects with imperfections were especially valued for their unique qualities.



## Shigaraki ware storage jar

Japan, Shiga Prefecture, Shigaraki kilns

Muromachi period, ca. 1400–50

Unglazed stoneware with natural wood-ash glaze, 47.0 x 36.8 cm

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution

Purchase, F1982.29

### STONEWARE FROM SHIGARAKI—A VALLEY IN THE MOUNTAINS

southeast of Kyoto — is identified by the coarse-grained reddish clay and pale yellow or green natural wood-ash glaze, which formed when ash from burning fuel settled on the jar and was melted by the heat. On this Shigaraki jar, the glaze is evident in the large oval patch on the left and the rivulet in the center.

This jar was almost certainly made by a farmer who was a part-time potter. The potter's amateur status is indicated by the irregular shape. From an early date, narrow-necked Shigaraki jars were used as vessels for tea leaves. In the sixteenth century, however, Shigaraki storage jars began to attract the attention of urban tea connoisseurs. Searching for new sources of tea ceremony utensils (see Focus on Tea Ceremony, page 58), tea masters discovered a special beauty in the appearance of Shigaraki clay. Borrowing a term from literary criticism, they described it as “chilled and withered” and associated it with autumn and winter. (See Focus on Literature in Japan, page 27.) Shigaraki ware became one of the first native Japanese ceramics to find a place in the tea ceremony.

The body of this jar was constructed by using coils of clay, which were smoothed in a sequence of four layers. Although much of contemporary Shigaraki ware is now thrown on a fast **potter's wheel**, this ancient technique, appropriate to the coarse Shigaraki clay, is still employed for building large pieces.



## Viewing Cherry Blossoms at Ueno Park

by Hishikawa Moronobu (1618–1694)

Japan, Edo period, 17th century

Six-panel folding screen; ink, color, and gold on paper

Image 165.6 x 367.8; overall 180.0 x 382.2 cm

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution

Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1906.267

CREATED IN THE ARTIST'S FINAL YEARS, THIS IMAGE REFLECTS Moronobu's celebration of the seasonal pleasures of a resurrected and vital city. Edo (now Tokyo) had experienced a devastating fire in 1657 that killed more than one hundred thousand people. In this painting, however, all appears well as groups enjoy the cherry blossoms — flowers that symbolize the spring — in the Ueno area.

The artist Hishikawa Moronobu, who was born into a family of textile designers, is regarded by some as an originator of the genre known as ukiyo-e (literally “pictures of the floating world”), which depicted contemporary life and fleeting pleasures of the Edo period.



## The First Katsuo of the Season

by Totoya Hokkei (1780–1850)

Japan, Edo period, late 18th–mid-19th century

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk, 108.0 x 54.8 cm

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution

Purchase, F1996.32

THE FIRST BONITO CATCH, AN EVENT OF EARLY SUMMER, IS EAGERLY awaited each year, and fresh raw bonito (sashimi) is a seasonal delicacy. Cured by drying, this fish also serves as an essential ingredient in soup stock throughout the year.

This painting presents the bonito in the context of a **still life** with poetry in a hanging scroll format. The image includes assorted vegetables (radish, or daikon, and eggplant), a plate, a cup, a lacquer box, a sprig of wisteria, and, most prominently, a fresh bonito on a large blue-and-white dish. The twelve vertically aligned poems at the top, signed by poets who were members of the same circle or club, praise the early summer and write of the cuckoo, peony, cicada, flowers, trees, moon, and summer heat.

Interestingly, Hokkei was a fish monger whose enjoyment for painting eventually developed into a professional talent. He was known for his prints, but in this special case, he produced a painting of unusual quality.



## Nabeshima ware dish with design of reeds and mist

Japan, Edo period, second half of 17th century–early 18th century

Porcelain with cobalt decoration and partial celadon glaze, 5.7 x 20.3 cm

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution

Purchase, F1964.7

THE AUTUMNAL IMAGES OF WITHERED REEDS SURROUNDED BY MIST are unusually realistic for a Nabeshima ware, which generally features a more abstract treatment of natural motifs. Iron pigment applied directly to the roughened clay surface suggests the brittle texture and rust color of the dried leaves. The cobalt blue wash in the background and the band of celadon (greenish blue) glaze lend depth to the mist. (See *Clay*, page 50.)

Nabeshima ware is named for the Nabeshima clan, which established a kiln in Arita (on the island of Kyushu) in the 1670s and produced high-quality porcelain for dining and decoration. The typical Nabeshima ware object is a shallow dish (like that pictured to the left). Asymmetry and abstraction characterize the decorative style. Nabeshima lords (daimyo) used Nabeshima ware dishes as tableware for official functions and for presentation as gifts. Nabeshima ware was highly prized, and the techniques were carefully protected.



## Square dish with design after poems of birds and flowers

by Ogata Kenzan (1663–1743)

Japan, Edo period, 1699–1712

Buff clay; enamels, white slip, and iron pigment under transparent lead glaze, 2.4 x 16.9 x 16.8 cm

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution

Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1905.58

IN 1214 EMINENT POET AND CRITIC FUJIWARA TEIKA (1162–1241)

composed a sequence of twenty-four season poems featuring a bird and flower for each of the twelve months. These poems were incorporated into the Japanese literary canon as the ideal verse expressions of the seasons. Early in the Edo period, an interest in the court sensibilities of the earlier Heian and Kamakura periods produced many works of art that illustrated these poems. This plate depicts the mandarin ducks and plum blossoms of the twelfth month:

### Plum blossoms

It is that time when snow buries the color of the hedge,  
Yet a branch of plum is blooming, on “this side” of the New Year.

### Mandarin duck

The snow falls on the ice of the pond on which I gaze,  
Piling up as does this passing year on all years past,  
And on the feathered coat of the mandarin duck, the “bird of regret.”

(Kamens, “The Past in the Present: Fujiwara Teika and the Traditions of Japanese Poetry,” in *Word and Flower*, ed. Carolyn Wheelwright, p. 31)

These paired poems illustrate the visual pleasures of the twelfth month. The plum blossom heralds the New Year, while the mandarin duck—believed to take a lifelong mate—symbolizes fidelity. The “bird of regret” is the mandarin duck left behind by the death of its partner.

The plate depicts a duck at the side of a body of water, under a blossoming plum tree. The outside edge of the plate is decorated with camellias, pomegranate blossoms, cloves, flowers, and scrolls in underglaze blue enamel.

In terms of technique, this plate illustrates how Kenzan’s interest in painting on pottery led to his invention of a method for applying enamel pigments on a ground of white slip under, rather than over, the glaze. In his technique, the colored pigments are painted on the white slip and then coated with a transparent glaze. After firing, the colors have a soft look, similar to the way pigments appear when applied to a paper that absorbs the color.



## Ewer or freshwater jar

Japan, Hizen Province, Karatsu ware

Momoyama period, early 17th century

Stoneware with iron and rice-straw ash glazes; lacquered wooden lid

15.8 x 24.5 (over handle and spout) x 14.2 cm

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution

Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1898.457

THIS VESSEL COMBINES A BODY THROWN ON A POTTER'S WHEEL WITH a hand-formed spout and handle. A combination of opaque white and iron brown make up the two-color glaze. During firing, the rice-straw ash glaze turned bluish white and the iron ash glaze dark brown. The brown glaze also ran irregularly over the white glaze, and this accidental effect of firing was considered attractive. A lid for the vessel was made from lacquered wood. This jar was used in the Japanese tea ceremony—in fact, Karatsu ware was one of the wares that originally attracted tea masters to native Japanese ceramics. (See Focus on Lacquer, page 63.)



## Amida

Japan, Kamakura period, early 14th century

Wood with gilding, 113.2 x 44.0 x 44.0 cm

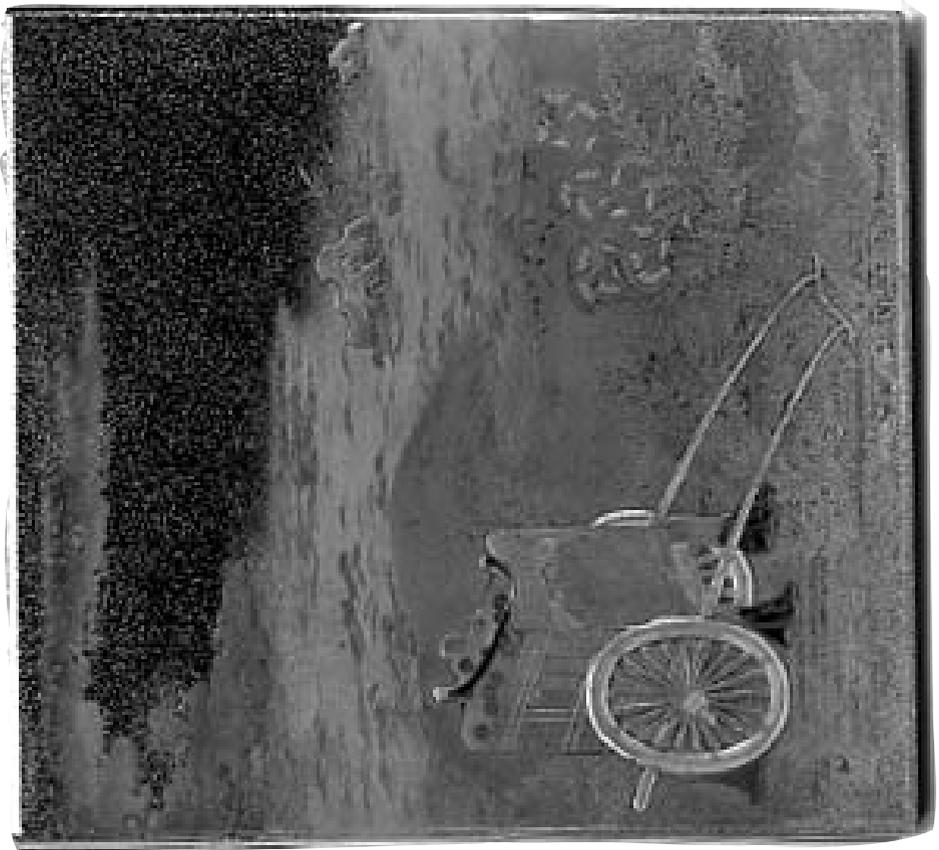
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution

Purchase—The Harold P. Stern Memorial Fund and museum funds in appreciation of Nancy Fessenden and Richard Danziger and their exemplary service to the Galleries as leaders of the Board of Trustees, F2002.9a–f

**BELIEF IN SALVATION THROUGH THE POWER OF AMIDA, THE BUDDHA** who presides over the Western Paradise, became widespread in Japan from the eleventh through the fourteenth century. Amida Buddha's promise of salvation provided a simple, direct, and consoling faith for believers who lived in times of frequent warfare and social unrest. Esoteric Buddhism, a system favored by the aristocracy in earlier times, required attention to complex rituals and images. Amida, by contrast, was perceived as compassionate and approachable.

Here, Amida Buddha leans forward toward the viewer with hands forming a ritual gesture, or *mudra*, of reassurance, or “have no fear.” The figure stands upon a stylized lotus blossom composed of multiple, delicately carved petals. In Buddhist belief, the lotus symbolizes purity and is associated with all enlightened beings. In keeping with Buddhist **iconography**, the Amida Buddha is portrayed with elongated earlobes (symbolizing the former life of the Buddha as a prince who wore heavy earrings, only to renounce them along with all other material possessions); a knob on the top of the head (*ushnisha*), which symbolizes his immense knowledge; and a dot in the middle of the forehead (called an *urna*), which represents his great wisdom. (See Buddhism, page 13.)

This figure is made from multiple carved pieces of wood, coated in lacquer that was applied over a layer of linen, and features crystal insets for eyes and complex patterns of gold leaf to indicate the designs on Amida's robes. (See Wood, page 52, and Focus on Lacquer, page 63.)



## Inkstone box

Japan, Edo period, 17th century

Lacquer, gold, and silver on wood; gilt silver and stone fittings

4.2 x 16.9 x 18.4 cm

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution

Edith Ehrman Fund and museum purchase, F1991.9

THIS BOX DEPICTS IN GOLD AND SILVER ORNAMENTAL LACQUER (*MAKI-E*) a solitary noble person's carriage in a deserted autumn field, which probably alludes to a scene in the tenth chapter of *The Tale of Genji*. (See Focus on Lacquer, page 63, for discussion of *maki-e*.) Large areas of gold and silver heighten the effect of the metallic powders used in this design. (See *The Tale of Genji*, page 29, and Silver and Gold, page 55.)

The insides of the lid and base continue the theme of solitude associated with autumn, presenting a scene of pine trees along a shoreline and a silver crescent moon above. The box contains an inkstone, trays for brushes and inksticks, and a water dropper in the form of a boat with waves lapping up on the sides. (See Focus on Calligraphy, page 44.)

This box is made from wood coated with black lacquer with textile underlay. The crescent moon on the inside of the lid is made from tin sheet.



## Waves at Matsushima

by Tawaraya Sotatsu (Japanese, active ca. 1600–39)

Edo period, 17th century.

One of a pair of folding screens; ink, color, gold, and silver on paper

Image: 152.0 x 369.9 cm; overall: 166.0 x 369.9 cm

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution

Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1906.231

THE BRILLIANT PAINTING ON THIS FOLDING SCREEN (ONE OF A PAIR) is considered a masterpiece. The work is one among only six surviving sets of screens by Sotatsu, a talented and innovative artist who headed a fan painting workshop known as Tawaraya. While living in the city of Kyoto, Sotatsu produced paintings on fans for popular consumption. By the late 1620s, however, Sotatsu was painting for the imperial court, and his works survive in the collection of the Kyoto imperial palace. For his artistic merit, he was granted the honorary Buddhist ecclesiastical title *Hokkyo* (Bridge of the law), which is included in his signature on this screen.

Matsushima (Pine Islands) is a famous site near the city of Sendai, in northeastern Japan. The beauty of the cluster of islands inspired both poets and painters. Sotatsu's innovative composition creates a dynamic interplay among the land and cloud forms, the bending pines growing on rocky islands, and the churning waves. He depicts the rocks from which pine trees grow in brilliant mineral colors of green, blue, and brown, highlighted with gold. He delineates the gleaming waves in animated forms by alternating lines of ink and gold. He renders the clouds and embankments using particles of gold leaf accented with silver, which has darkened over time to a soft black tone.

Sotatsu's lifelong experimentation with pictorial composition left a lasting legacy. Later painters of the Rinpa school, such as Ogata Korin (1658–1716), repeated the Matsushima theme in their work.