



Japanese Kano school painting, 17th century POA

Japanese Kano school painting, 17th century, in ink against a gold leaf background, depicting a woman beside a river in which two carp swim, collecting water with a wooden bucket and ladle, looking back towards an elderly lady seated inside a curtained pavilion with a youth bearing water, all in a garden setting with rockwork, pine and drifting golden clouds.

Dimensions:

Dimensions of frame: 40cm. x 46.4cm. (15 3/4in. x 18 1/4in.)

Notes:

The themes and styles of Chinese art have had a significant influence on Japanese painting for hundreds of years, with genres including bird and flower studies, Buddhist religious paintings, inkwash landscapes, and, as seen here, depictions of traditional Confucian tales proving especially popular in medieval and early modern Japan. Despite thematic and stylistic similarities to Chinese models, Japanese paintings display a distinctly Japanese aesthetic. Mirroring this wider narrative of influence and innovation, the Kano school of painters, founded by Kano Masanobu in the 15th century, initially adhered closely to Chinese models, contributing to a revival of Chinese influence within Japanese medieval culture. However, over time the school developed a bolder, more distinctive style with firm outlines and brighter colours, as seen in this example. The Chinese text *Quan xiang ershi si xiao shi xuan* (Selected verses on all aspects of the twenty-four filial exemplars) was compiled in the fourteenth century by the Yuan dynasty Confucian scholar Guo Jujing. The compilation of tales outlining the central Confucian concept of loyalty towards one's parents proved extremely influential across Asia and was translated into Japanese as *Nijushiko* in the fifteenth or sixteenth century as well as becoming a popular theme in Japanese art. The tale depicted in this painting is *yong quan yue li* (The Fountain Bubbled and the Carps Leapt Out), which tells the story of a young man called Jiang Shi, who along with his wife, was devoted to his mother. Though the family lived far away from the nearest river, because the old lady enjoyed fresh water and fish from the river, the couple travelled long distances every day to please her. One day, terrible weather delayed Jiang's wife and she arrived back home from the river late for a meal with neighbours invited at her mother-in-law's request. This was perceived by Jiang as a great rudeness and a show of disrespect towards his mother, and so in a rage he drove his wife away. Staying close by in a neighbour's house, the lady spent the night weaving clothes for her mother-in-law. When the neighbours delivered the clothes the next morning and told the whole story to the old lady, she was so delighted that she immediately invited her daughter-in-law back. Upon her return, a great spout of water and a pair of carp suddenly burst forth outside the house.

Material and Technique

Polychrome inks with gold leaf

Origin

Japanese

Period

17th Century

Dimensions

Dimensions of frame: 40cm. x 46.4cm. (15 3/4in. x 18 1/4in.)

Antique ref: Q7071