



Japanese Kano school painting, 17th century POA

Japanese Kano school painting, 17th century, in ink against a gold leaf background, depicting Wang Xiang swimming in a frozen river with two carp, in a desolate wintry landscape with a bare tree and small bridge.

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 *wo bing qiu li* (He Lay on Ice in Search of Carp), which tells the story of a man called Wang Xiang, whose mother died when he was very young. His father remarried, and his new stepmother intensely disliked him, often complaining about him to his father, who eventually turned against his son. Despite this misfortune and ill treatment, Wang remained loyal to his parents, and one freezing winter when his stepmother suddenly craved some carp, he went to the frozen river and lay on the ice, which eventually thawed enough for him to catch a pair of the fish for her.

Material and Technique

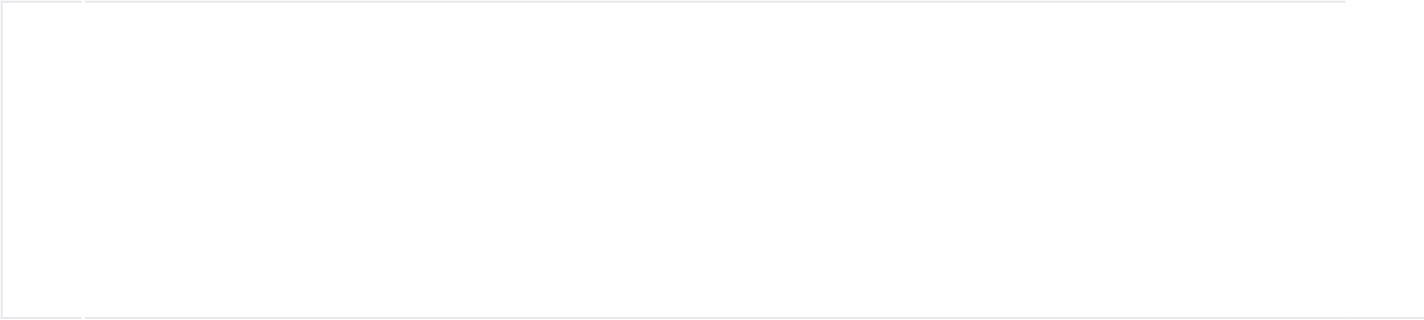
Coloured inks and gold leaf

Origin

Japanese

Period

18th Century



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Antique ref: Q707B