

Oriental
Scroll Paintings
from the
Maltwood Collection



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Maltwood
Art Museum
and Gallery

COVER:

M964.1.136

from *Amida Raigo*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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*This catalogue is set in Baskerville Medium.
The paper is Shasta 80 lb.*



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Introduction

In 1919, Katharine and John Maltwood made their first recorded purchase of Oriental art objects from a London dealer. After John Maltwood retired in 1921, the Maltwoods travelled extensively, visiting India, China, Korea and Japan making further purchases on these trips as well as from London dealers and eventually accumulating a large collection of oriental art. Among these artworks is a large number of scroll paintings, including Buddhist works.

The Chinese paintings in the Maltwood collection reflect the Maltwoods' preference for the Academic style, based on court painting of the Sung dynasty (960-1279 AD). This is characteristic of Western appreciation of Chinese art in the first half of the 20th century. The bias toward Japanese Buddhist art also indicates the interest in that area, fostered by the early writing and collecting of Japanese art by European orientalists during that period.

Painting is an ancient tradition in China; the earliest paintings so far discovered date from the fifth to third centuries B.C. and are done in ink on silk. Many of the techniques used in Chinese painting were borrowed by the Japanese but they also developed native traditions of painting.

The same materials, techniques, and formats are used in painting and calligraphy. Recognized as a fine art long before painting, calligraphy stressed linear quality and the importance of each brush stroke.

Colours, when used, are vegetable or mineral pigments in a water and glue medium. Like the ink stick made of pine soot and glue, they are ground and mixed with water to obtain the varying tones desired by the artist. Silk was the preferred material for highly coloured paintings, because the relatively heavy pigments adhered better to that surface. Silk was traditionally the material chosen by professional artists, while paper was preferred by the scholar-amateur artists of the literati tradition.

The first format used in oriental painting was the handscroll. This long horizontal scroll was never meant to be seen full-length, as it is displayed in a western museum. The handscroll was placed on a horizontal surface and viewed in sections of about two feet at a time, moving from right to left like a written text. The first section was rolled as the next was unfurled. This helps to explain the development of multiple viewpoints within a Chinese painting; the western fixed vanishing-point perspective is unsuited to such a format. Chinese painting also deals with generalized and idealized settings and time so that a single light source and shadows are not to be found.

Chinese styles and techniques of painting and calligraphy, as well as the handscroll and hanging scroll formats, were adopted by the Japanese. Japan has long been influenced by the arts and culture of China, but always

made these borrowings into uniquely Japanese forms. Buddhism was the greatest vehicle for the exchange of culture, as Buddhist monks went to China to study and returned to Japan to preach. Religious and secular arts were brought to Japan by these monks, and several examples of Japanese Buddhist paintings in the Maltwood Collection represent this cultural exchange.

Academic Painting

In the Sung dynasty, painting was the province of professional artists, especially those under the patronage of the Imperial court. The Emperors Hui-tsung (reigned 1101-1125), himself a painter and calligrapher as well as connoisseur and collector, and Kao-tsung (reigned 1127-1162) were instrumental in establishing the style of the Sung Academy, which was basic to the later professional traditions in Chinese painting. This style stressed elegant and highly finished paintings; the paintings were lyrical and evocative, inviting the viewer to participate and respond to the emotions of the figures in their surroundings. The settings were reduced to a few elements, with distant landscapes shrouded by mists and clouds, suggested by the superbly controlled ink line and wash.

The Yuan court (1279-1368) of the Mongols was less involved in art patronage than the Sung. The surviving Sung professional artists were dispersed, and the literati or scholar-amateur tradition came to the forefront, remaining the most innovative and exciting painting tradition from that time on. However, a conservative style, based on the Sung academic painting of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, survived in the ateliers of numerous minor professional artists in various urban centres, especially in South China. The restoration of Chinese rule, with the founding of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), brought a revival of interest in this conservative tradition; the Ming emperors gave preference to the old Sung academy derived style when they established an informal painting academy at the court, awarding rank and patronage to professional artists, such as Pien Wen-chin, Shih Jui and Li Tsai. Ming versions of the Sung Academy style tended to have fuller, busier compositions, but stressed the same elegant professional techniques and evocative subjects. This conservative tradition became more dynamic in the hands of Ming artists, such as Tai Chin, who generally did not work formally at the court. He and his followers, including Wu Wei and Chang Lu, are often grouped as the Che School, a reference to the southern Chinese province of Chekiang, where so many of these conservative professional artists lived and worked.

The Ming period was the last great period of the conservative academic tradition, but it never completely disappeared. In the Ch'ing period (1644-1912), it formed the basis for the style of some Manchu court painters, as well as for other painters outside court circles. From the seven-

teenth to nineteenth centuries, this style continued to be passed along in a relatively pure form, though on a lower artistic level, by innumerable minor artists, who produced attractive decorative paintings for patrons with conservative, less intellectual tastes. These works survive today by the thousands and have also appealed strongly to western collectors, who found the more intellectual abstract works of the literati tradition too austere. The Maltwood Collection is one of those in which the academic tradition is heavily represented, with some ten paintings in that style, compared to only one in the literati style.



M964.1.1
Two Magpies on a Branch
 Anonymous
 16th century style
 Hanging scroll, ink and pigment on silk
 82 cm x 37.8 cm

The bird and flower subject genre dates back to the Five Dynasties period, but it enjoyed a considerable revival under the Ming Academic artists

The silk of this painting has darkened, but it is still a handsome example of the sixteenth century Academic style, although it may be considerably later in date. The subject is two magpies sitting on a branch. The magpie is a common bird in China; it is regarded as a good omen.

M964.1.2
Lotus
 Signed Ch'en Shun (1482-1539)
 Dated 1551
 Hanging Scroll, colours on silk
 110 cm x 53.7 cm

The lotus is the Buddhist symbol of purity, while the Taoists also honoured it. Outside of both contexts, the Chinese also regarded it as a symbol of summer and fruitfulness.

M964.1.3
Boating by a Cliff
 Anonymous
 Style of Chang Lu (16th century academic ink painter)
 Hanging Scroll, ink on silk
 115 cm x 54.1 cm

This is a much later painting done in the style founded by the southern Sung masters, Ma Yuan and Hsia Kuei. The one-corner composition and the dramatic quality of the trees are reminiscent of the archaic style. The subject matter of a man in a boat amidst mountains, trees and mist is very common in Chinese painting.



M964.1.5.

Blue-Green Landscape, with Touches of Kuo Hsi Style

Anonymous

16th century style

Hanging Scroll, colours on silk

198.5 cm x 101 cm

There are eight figures in this painting in the blue-green academic style. Two female figures cross the bridge, while four scholars have a discussion.

M964.1.6.

Sheldrake and Heron

Attributed to Li Tsung of Chin-ling

Ch'ing Dynasty (1644-1912)

16th century style

Hanging Scroll, ink and light colours on silk

187 cm x 108 cm

The sheldrake and the heron are symbols of happiness in China.

M964.1.9

Spring Woods at Dawn

Attributed in the inscription to Ch'iu Ying (ca. 1490 - ca. 1552)

16th century style

Hanging Scroll, colours on silk

187 cm x 102.5 cm

This is a careful study in the academic style known as "Blue-green". The name refers to the predominance of the blue green mineral pigments used by academic painters since the T'ang dynasty.

In composition it is a typical archaistic scheme favoured by all subsequent academy artists. A luxurious palace compound adds to the feeling of sumptuousness.

A lengthy inscription on the upper right declares that Ch'iu is peerless among ancients or contemporaries, gives the title of the composition and describes the brushwork as strong and antique, worthy of the T'ang master Li Chao-tao himself. The colophon is signed Lu Hsiang, an official who earned his Chin-shih degree during the Chia-ching period (1522-1566), a contemporary of Ch'iu Ying's and a scholar from the Suchou region.

M964.1.10

Dwelling of Immortals

Anonymous

16th century style

Handscroll, colours on silk

2 Panels, each 31 cm x 251 cm

Total length 502cm

The iconography of this painting is quite complex. The subject is a representation of Taoist Immortals, a class of superior beings who dwell in nature and are credited with

miraculous powers. This subject is very popular in Chinese decorative arts.

The heavy pigments and finely detailed figures recall the work of the late Ming professional artist Ch'iu Ying, while the contorted landscape and expressionistic trees suggest the influence of other late Ming artists, such as Cheng Chung, Ku-I-te, and Ch'en Hung-shou. The signature is a false one, purporting to be that of Chao Po-chu, a 12th century painter.

M964.1.7

Gathering of Immortals in a Garden

attributed in the inscription to T'ang Yin

early 16th century style

Hanging Scroll, ink and light colours on paper

227 cm x 119 cm

The subject matter is quite common in 16th century Chinese painting; sages are gathered in a garden to ponder and muse.



M964.1.8

Gathering of Scholars in a Garden Setting

Signed Ch'ien-t'ang Tai Chin (Tai Chin, 1388-1462)

Hanging Scroll, ink and light colours on silk

104 cm x 193 cm

This is a painting actually after Tai Chin rather than being an original by him depicting the activities of Chinese scholars with servants in a landscape setting. They are practising calligraphy, enjoying the shade of the bamboo and appreciating the beauty of the garden.

M964.1.523

Foliage and Rocks

Anonymous

16th century style

Hanging Scroll, ink and light colours on silk

98.5 cm x 117.5 cm



M964.1.11

Groom and Eight Horses

Signed Tzu Ang (Chao Meng-fu, 1254-1322)

(actually 19th-20th century)

Handscroll, colours on silk

31 cm x 222 cm

The spurious signature is that of Chao Meng-fu, the renowned Yuan dynasty literati painter, who was also known as a great painter of horses. The subject has remained a popular one in Chinese painting. In China the horse is symbolic of speed and perseverance.



M964.1.521

Portrait of a Chinese Person

Anonymous

Hanging Scroll, ink and colours on paper

77.7 cm x 144.4 cm

The figure in the foreground may be Kuan Yu, the god of war, who is worshipped in almost every Chinese household.



M964.1.4
Taoist Immortal with Crane
 Anonymous
 16th century style
 Hanging Scroll, ink and colours on silk
 187 cm x 102.5 cm

The painting is predominantly blue and green, the standard colours of the academic style. The female figure beneath a pine tree can be tentatively identified as a Taoist Immortal. The Immortal combined with the motifs of the pine tree, the crane and the plum blossoms in the background suggest that this painting was kept for good luck by a Chinese family.

M964.1.522
Scholars and Servants in a Landscape
 attributed in the inscription to T'ang Yin
 Hanging Scroll, ink and light colours on silk
 154.5 cm x 95 cm

This is an academic style painting of a scholar in a garden, viewing a picture with his servants. The colophon consists of 28 characters, and reads:

Jade trees rustling in the wind
 The canyon grass is fragrant
 Green shade fills my vision
 Inspiration grows long
 Idly gazing on the painting
 I only recognize the empty hills
 and the fifth month



Literati Painting

Paintings by Chinese scholars form the greatest part of art history in China. Chinese scholars prided themselves on being "amateur" artists, whose paintings did not have a professional finish, but instead strove to be artless and bland, while expressing a wide range of human emotions, an understanding of nature, and a deep involvement with the art and literature of past masters. Literati painting is one of the most intellectually complex art forms.

Literati painting is represented in the Maltwood Collection by only one work, "*Riding a Donkey Over Frosty Bridge*", by Ming-chung, a monk-painter active in the eighteenth century. It is a monochrome ink painting that alludes to the Northern Sung monumental landscape of Fan K'uan (early eleventh century); it is also stylistically reminiscent of the seventeenth century Orthodox literati painters, such as Wang Chien and Wang Hui. To enjoy this work, identify yourself with the two figures crossing the bridge and follow the direction of their gaze, through the mist, up to the temples and mountains, then down the stream and waterfall. Take note of the accomplished brush work and the play of wet and dry ink. This painting is not so much a realistic portrayal of the world, as it is a distillation of human feelings and thought transformed into landscape elements, invoking great artistic figures of the past.

M964.1.42

Riding Donkey Over Frosty Bridge

Signed Ming-chung (active 18th century)

16th century landscape style

Hanging Scroll, ink on paper

167 cm x 60 cm

This is an ink monochrome painting in the literati style. It alludes to the great Northern Sung painting, "Travellers in the Mountains" by Fan K'uan. The landscape is built up with dots called "t'ien" and the ink is wet and fluid. The colophon on the right is written in very cursive "grass" script and cannot be deciphered. The other colophon, written in reverse, is a poem praising nature.



Buddhist Art

Buddhism, in its original form, was a simple doctrine, in which moderation was taught as the way out of suffering. With time, however, the Buddha was transformed from an unassuming monk into a supernatural cosmic being, and the Buddha's teachings became a complex metaphysical system. As Buddhism spread through Asia, each culture added its own interpretation.

Shingon, or "True Word", and Tendai are two sects of Buddhism popular in Medieval Japan. Both are esoteric, similar to forms of Buddhism that arose in Northern India and Tibet. Esoteric Buddhism enforces a series of initiations and uses complex rituals and chants. The arts, especially painting, are also important in Esoteric Buddhism.

Shingon was introduced to Japan by the monk Kukai, or Kobo Daishi (774-835 A.D.). The portrait in the Maltwood Collection, assumed to be of Kobo Daishi, shows him seated in his chair. This type of portrait was usually given to a monk when he was considered sufficiently enlightened, and thus serves the same purpose as a diploma. It also reminded the monk of his master, and is a valuable record of the masters of Buddhism.

Jodo, or Pure Land Buddhism, is based on a belief in perfect paradises. One Pure Land sect, the Amidist, teaches that the believer needed only to repeat the name of the Amida Buddha to be transported at death to Amida's Western Paradise. The Amida Buddha is the embodiment of light, wisdom and compassion, and he came down from Paradise to guide the deceased. This descent, called the "Raigo", was a common theme in painting, especially in the Kamakura period (1185-1332). Amida is usually shown with Kannon, the bodhisattva of Compassion, and Seishi, the bodhisattva of Wisdom.

Many of these paintings were probably done by monk artisan-painters working in the ateliers of various Japanese monasteries, following styles and iconographic types established centuries earlier.

M964.1.135

Amida Raigo

Anonymous

14th/15th century

Hanging Scroll, colours and kirikane on silk

107.1 cm x 35.1 cm

This is a Raigo painting: the Amida Buddha is descending, along with attending bodhisattvas, to greet the soul of the deceased and guide it into Paradise. The bodhisattva standing to the left of the Buddha is Seishi, while Kannon is kneeling, offering the lotus vehicle to the believer. Jizo, identified by his staff, stands to the right of the Buddha. The standing pose of the figures and the small number of figures date this painting to the early 14th to 16th century.



M964.1.136

Amida Raigo

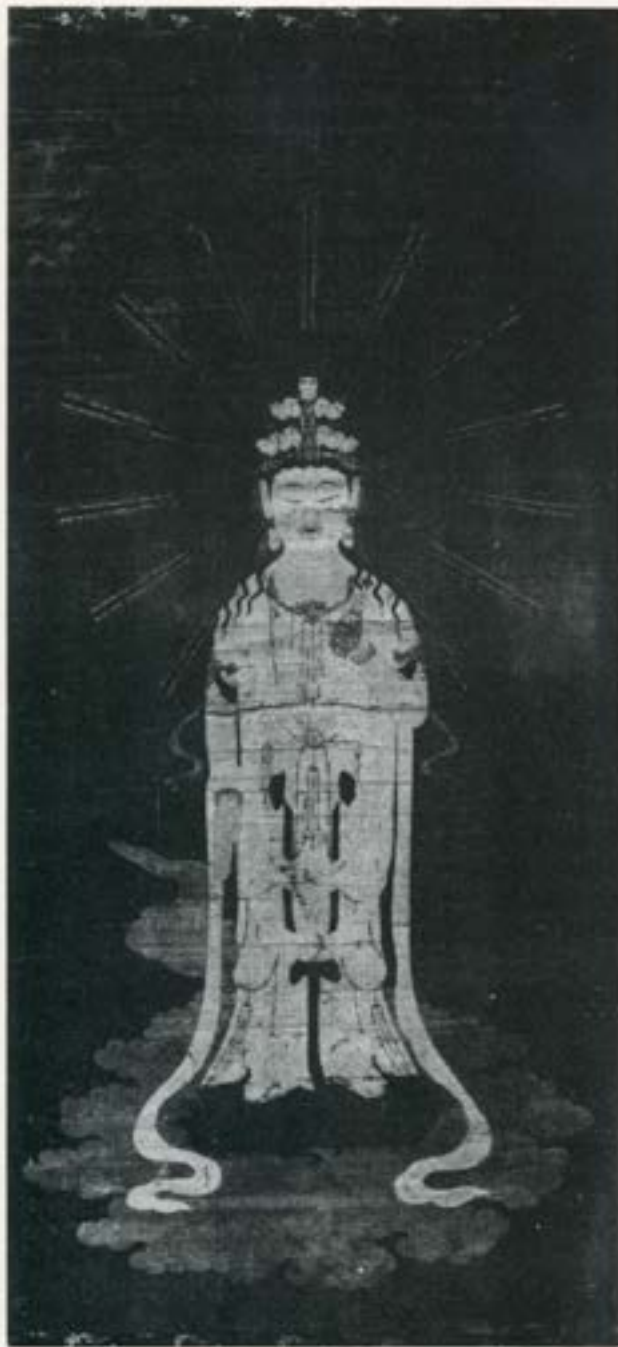
Anonymous

14th century

Hanging Scroll, gold and colours on silk

102.2 cm x 42 cm

This painting depicts the descent of the Amida Trinity: Buddha, Kannon and Seishi. The standing pose of the trio and rays emanating from the Buddha's halo date this painting well into the late Kamakura period.



M961.1.524

Portrait of Kobodaishi

Anonymous

Hanging Scroll, ink and colours on silk

54.9 cm x 92 cm

Portrait of a monk of the Shingon sect, as identified by the vajra in his right hand. The figure is tentatively identified as Kobodaishi. The calligraphy is very cursive and cannot be read.

M961.1.137

Eleven-headed Kannon

Anonymous

14th century

Hanging Scroll, colours and kirikane on silk

75 cm x 36 cm

The eleven-headed Kannon standing upon a "raigo" cloud is associated with the Nigatsu-do, part of the Todai-ji Complex in Nara. Kannon is the most important and popular bodhisattva attending Amida Buddha.