



6450 A six-fold paper screen painted in ink and colour on a buff ground with six horses, tethered to posts. Each horse is rendered as a particular animal through placement, pose and colouration.

Seal: Jippo kin (unidentified)

Japan 16th/17th century Muromachi/Momoyama period

Dimensions: H. 107.5cm x W. 323cm (42½" x 127¼")

Umayazu byōbu (screens with horses in stables) have been in existence since the Muromachi period (1392-1568). There are mainly two types of these screens. In the first type the stables occupy the whole surface, and each stall has a painting of a horse. The second type along with the depiction of stables and horses include male horsemen and attendants seated on tatami (Japanese floor mats) which run the length of the stalls. A popular subject during the late Momoyama and early Edo periods (16th/17th centuries), these screens reflected the samurai class's enthusiasm and concern for horses during those war-torn years. Often the images of restless, energetic steeds depicted on one screen of a pair, are contrasted with quiet, calm horses on the other.

Horses entered Japan from the continent in the prehistoric period and were used initially for domestic purposes. Military use of the horse in Japan began centuries later, in the end of fourth century.

Thereafter, even in eras of peace, horsemanship was an important attribute of the court and military elite.

In Shinto it is believed that horses carry messages between the temporal and heavenly realms and kami (gods) appear on horses. In this regard, white horses were initially kept at important shrines as sacred animals, but when this became prohibitively expensive, large carvings or paintings of horses were often substituted. Ema (picture horses) are votive plaques where horses are depicted and are placed at

shrines and temples to convey one's prayers and petitions to the gods.

For similar examples see; *Unfolding Beauty, Japanese Screens from the Cleveland Museum of Art*, p. 8 and 9, pl1. *Japan Heritage as Legend of Gold Biombo*, p. 74 and 75, pl15 owned by the Imperial Household Agency Sannomaru Shozokan and pp. 76 and 77, pl16 in the collection of the Tokyo National Museum.

