



7127 A two-fold paper screen painted in ink and colour on a buff ground with a mountainous landscape.

The scene depicts pine trees, a waterfall and a uguisu (Japanese nightingale) in the rain.

Signed: Heian* Yūzan

Seals:

Upper: Heian Mori shi

Lower: Yūzan

Japan 19th/20th century Meiji/Taishō period

Dimensions: H. 67³/₄" x W. 75" (171.5cm x 190cm)

Mori Yūzan (d. 1917)

Yūzan was a painter of the Nihonga School and excelled in painting landscapes, flowers and animals. He first studied under his grand-father Mori Kansai (1814-1894) of the Maruyama Shijo School in Kyoto. In 1894 his work titled 'Monkeys at play in deep mountains' won the third prize at the 3rd exhibition of Nihon Seinen Kaiga Kyokai (Japan Young Artists Painting Association). In the following year he also received the third prize for this painting 'The rising sun'.

In 1896 he and Imao Keinen (1845-1924) co-founded the Kōso Kyōkai an art group which promoted painting in Kyoto.

He also compiled several picture and pattern books as well as being an avid collector of works by his grand-father Mori Kansai.

The uguisu (Japanese nightingale) is celebrated in Japan for its singing. The term hatsune in Japanese prose and poetry means literally 'first sound' or 'first note', but is synonymous with the first hearing of the Japanese nightingale's song in the New Year.

This visual motif alludes to chapter 23 of The Tale of Genji called Hatsune (The First Warbler). The chapter opens on New Year's Day at Prince Genji's villa in Kyoto and includes a poem about the first-heard song of the bird. On New Year's Day, Genji took it upon himself to visit his ladies in their quarters. As he stops at each room of the Rokujō mansion he finds nothing lacking and every detail is perfectly in place. En route he visits his daughter's rooms. She had received elaborate New Year delicacies from her mother, the Akashi lady, along with a poem:

The old one's gaze rests long on the seedling pine,

Waiting to hear the song of the first warbler, in a village where it does not sing.

Yes, thought Genji, it was a lonely time for her. One should not weep on New Year's Day, but he was very close to tears.

You must answer her yourself, he said to his daughter. You are surely not the sort to begrudge her that first song. He brought ink and brush.

She was so pretty that even those who were with her day and night had to smile. Genji was feeling guilty for the years he had kept mother and daughter apart. Cheerfully, she jotted down the first poem that came to her:

The warbler left its nest long years ago,

But cannot forget the roots of the waiting pine.

Works by the artist can be found in the collection of the Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, Florida, USA

*Heian - old name for Kyoto

