



7525/7526 A pair of six-fold paper screens painted in ink and colour with sakura (cherry trees) and kiku (chrysanthemums) on a gold ground

The right hand screen with several cherry trees in full bloom and the left hand screen with a profusion of red and white chrysanthemums, both issuing from brush-wood fences amongst gold clouds, the details in moriage (raised design)

Hasegawa School, Japan, 16th/17th century, Momoyama period

Dimensions: H. 174cm x W. 360cm (68¾" x 142") each

The Hasegawa School was founded by Hasegawa Tōhaku (1539-1610) in the late 16th century. Despite being small, consisting mostly of Tōhaku, his sons and sons-in-law, it is known today as one of the most influential artistic groups of the period. Its members conserved Tōhaku's quiet and reserved aesthetic, which many attribute to the influence of Sesshū Tōyō (1420-1506) as well as his contemporary and friend, Sen no Rikyū (1522-1591).

Cherry blossoms and chrysanthemums have been regarded as the flowers which represent Japan and its

culture and have been depicted in many forms of Japanese art, each symbolising one of the four seasons. Japanese interest in cherry blossom and chrysanthemums as a theme for poetry developed during the Heian period (794-1185). At that time, along with the evolution of a native artistic sensibility heavily influenced by the passing seasons, the flowers gained their place as one of the premier symbols of spring and autumn.

Since the Heian period, the cherry blossom or sakura has been revered by the Japanese, for its natural beauty and grace, its brief blossoming period and the fragility of its delicate flowers personifying the transience of life.

The chrysanthemums or kiku were also cultivated as ornamentals in Japan from the Heian period while the plant's medicinal qualities had been celebrated since the pre-Nara era (pre-710). The Edo period (1603-1868) saw a gardening boom. As a result of this enthusiasm in the early 17th century, various species of chrysanthemums were produced and flower shows for new types of chrysanthemums called kikuawase (chrysanthemum matching) gained great popularity among the people.

The first use of the chrysanthemum as a symbol of the Japanese Emperor and the Imperial family occurred in the 13th century when Emperor Go-Daigo adopted the flower as a crest this tradition continues until the present day. In more recent times many commoners also used chrysanthemum as a family crest, and a Matsuya store catalogue of 1913 included 95 designs for crests based on this flower. For a set of paintings mounted on a wall from the late 16th century depicting a cherry tree in a similar manner by Hasegawa Kyuzo (1568-1593) (designated as a National Treasure) in the collection of Chishaku-in temple, Kyoto, see:

Tsugiyoshi Doi, Momoyama Decorative Painting, The Heibonsha Survey of Japanese Art, Volume 14, (New York / Tokyo, 1977), p. 18, pl.5 and p.106-107, pl. 90 and 91

Kyoto National Museum, The 100th Anniversary of the Kyoto National museum Special Exhibition: The Age of Gold, The Days of Dreams - in praise of the paintings of the Momoyama period, (Japan, 1997), p. 26

Nakayama Junji, Nihon Bijutsu Kaiga Zenshū (A Complete Works of Japanese Fine Artworks), vol. 10 Hasegawa Tohaku, (Tokyo, 1979), no. 12

Tokyo and Kyoto National Museum eds., Hasegawa Tohaku: 400th Memorial Retrospective, exhibition catalogue, (Japan, 2010), p. 298, no. 11

Takeda Tsuneo and Kano Hiroyuki eds., Kenran taru kaiga I, Flower and Bird Paintings of Japan, Vol. 3: Early Momoyama Period, (Tokyo, 1982), no. 121-123, 128

For other similar examples, fusuma (sliding doors) paintings of cherry blossoms painted by the Hasegawa school (Momoyama period, Important Cultural Property) in the collection of Myoren-ji Temple, Kyoto, see:

Kyoto National Museum, The 100th Anniversary of the Kyoto National museum Special Exhibition: The Age of Gold, The Days of Dreams - in praise of the paintings of the Momoyama period, (Japan, 1997), p. 232-237, no. 52

Nakayama Junji, Nihon Bijutsu Kaiga Zenshū (A Complete Works of Japanese Fine Artworks), vol. 10 Hasegawa Tohaku, (Tokyo, 1979), no. 16

Tsugiyoshi Doi, Momoyama Decorative Painting, The Heibonsha Survey of Japanese Art, Volume 14, (New York / Tokyo, 1977), pl. 138

Similar rendering of chrysanthemums can be found in a pair of two-panel screens by Hasegawa Tohaku (1539-1610) (designated as National Treasures) also in the collection of Chishaku-in temple, Kyoto. See: Kyoto National Museum, The 100th Anniversary of the Kyoto National museum Special Exhibition: The Age of Gold, The Days of Dreams - in praise of the paintings of the Momoyama period, (Japan, 1997), p. 222-227, no. 50

Nakayama Junji, Nihon Bijutsu Kaiga Zenshū (A Complete Works of Japanese Fine Artworks), vol. 10 Hasegawa Tohaku, (Tokyo, 1979), no. 10-11

Tokyo and Kyoto National Museum eds., Hasegawa Tohaku: 400th Memorial Retrospective, exhibition catalogue, (Japan, 2010), p. 140-143, no. 42

Takeda Tsuneo and Kano Hiroyuki eds., Kenran taru kaiga I, Flower and Bird Paintings of Japan, Vol. 3: Early Momoyama Period, (Tokyo, 1982), no. 127

