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One of Japan's Most Celebrated Cultural Treasures—*Colorful Realm of Living Beings* by Itō Jakuchū—to be Seen in Its Entirety for the First Time Outside of Japan

On View at National Gallery of Art, Washington, March 30 through April 29, 2012



Itō Jakuchū, *Old Pine Tree and Peacock* (J. *Rōshō kujaku zu*), c. 1759–1761 (Hōreki 9–11), ink and color on silk, with gold, from *Colorful Realm of Living Beings* (J. *Dōshoku sai-e*), set of 30 vertical hanging scrolls, c. 1757–1766, Sannomaru Shōzōkan (The Museum of the Imperial Collections), The Imperial Household Agency

Washington, DC—One of Japan's most renowned cultural treasures will come to Washington, DC, in celebration of the centennial of Japan's gift of 3,000 cherry trees to the nation's capital. Entitled *Colorful Realm of Living Beings* (J. *Dōshoku sai-e*; c. 1757–1766), this 30-scroll set of bird-and-flower paintings on silk is the centerpiece of the landmark exhibition *Colorful Realm: Japanese Bird-and-Flower Paintings by Itō Jakuchū (1716–1800)*, on view at the National Gallery of Art's West Building

from March 30 through April 29, 2012. Exhibited for four weeks only (owing to their fragility), these works will be in Washington during the National Cherry Blossom Festival, which runs from March 20 through April 27, 2012.

Never before shown in its entirety outside of Japan, *Colorful Realm of Living Beings* provides a panoramic pictorial survey of flora and fauna, both mythical and actual, reflecting the highest standards of artistic and technical accomplishment in Japanese painting. To evoke the work's original religious context, the Gallery will install it with Jakuchū's *Śākyamuni Triptych* (*The Buddha Śākyamuni, Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, and Bodhisattva Samantabhadra*), which belongs to the Jōtenkaku Museum, Shōkokuji Monastery, Kyoto. In 1765 Jakuchū—who was active in Kyoto during the mid-Edo period—had donated *Colorful Realm* (then comprising 24 scrolls) and the triptych to Shōkokuji, where they were displayed in a large temple room during Buddhist rituals. *Colorful Realm* was donated to the Imperial Household in 1889; since then, it has been shown together with the triptych only once, in 2007 at the Jōtenkaku Museum, Shōkokuji.

Organization and Support

The exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Art, The Imperial Household Agency, and Nikkei, Inc., in association with the Embassy of Japan.

It has been made possible through the generous support of Toyota, Nikkei, Inc., and The Exhibition Circle of the National Gallery of Art.

Additional sponsorship from Japan has been provided by Daikin Industries, Ltd., and Panasonic Corporation.

"The National Gallery of Art is deeply honored to present this exquisite set of 30 scrolls to visitors from around the world who will be in Washington for a very special National Cherry Blossom Festival," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "The Gallery has a long history of working closely with our Japanese colleagues to present important exhibitions, including *The Tokugawa Collection: Noh Robes and Masks* (1977); *Japan: The Shaping of Daimyo Culture 1185–1868* (1988–1989); and *Edo: Art in Japan 1615–1868* (1998–1999)."

"This is a great event to commemorate the centennial. These works are very popular

and highly admired, but they are rarely exhibited even in Japan. I understand that this is the very first time that *Colorful Realm of Living Beings* will be shown in its entirety outside of Japan. This exhibition exemplifies our strong friendship. We Japanese are so grateful to Americans for showing solidarity and friendship with us after the Great Earthquake of March 11," said His Excellency Ichiro Fujisaki, Ambassador of Japan to the United States.

"The Japanese loan of a cultural treasure to the United States during the centennial celebration marks another watershed moment for Americans and Japanese. It honors the spirit of the original gift of cherry blossom trees from Japan in 1912, and emphasizes the importance of cross-cultural exchange and understanding. We are honored to have such an important exhibition as part of the 2012 Festival," said Diana Mayhew, president, National Cherry Blossom Festival, Inc.

Exhibition and Catalogue

Synthesizing numerous East Asian traditions of bird-and-flower painting, *Colorful Realm* depicts each of its 30 subjects in meticulous detail, but in such a way as to transcend surface appearances and capture the otherwise ineffable, vital essence of the cosmos, the Buddha nature itself. Recent conservation of the set has generated an entirely new awareness of its material profile and the technical means by which Jakuchū created each scroll. According to guest curator Yukio Lippit, professor of Japanese art, Harvard University, "It stands as one of the most virtuosic and visually dynamic—yet at the same time interiorized and distilled—expressions of the natural world in all of Japanese art."

Also included in the exhibition are the dedicatory inscription that Jakuchū wrote in 1765 when he donated *Colorful Realm of Living Beings* to Shōkokuji; the well-known calligraphy scroll praising it by the monk Kō Yūgai, also known as Baisa'ō (1675–1763)—both on loan from the Imperial Household Collection; and a handscroll showing the plan for the Jakuchū Room at the Japanese Pavilion in the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis, in which Gobelin-weave tapestry replicas by Kawashima Jinbei (1853–1910) of the 30 *Colorful Realm* scrolls were displayed. The textile replicas were themselves destroyed when the ship conveying them home caught fire. The handscroll is being lent by the Kawashima Selkon Textiles Co., Ltd.

The 240-page, fully illustrated exhibition catalogue is being published in English by the National Gallery of Art in association with the Imperial Household Agency; it is being distributed by the University of Chicago Press. Edited by guest curator Yukio Lippit, the volume features entries on each of the 30 scrolls as well as essays by Lippit; Ōta Aya, senior curator, Sannomaru Shōzōkan (The Museum of the Imperial Collections), Tokyo; Hayakawa Yasuhiro, head of analytical science section, National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, Tokyo; and Oka Yasuhiro, head of the Oka Bokkōdō Conservation Studio, Kyoto. Informed by groundbreaking conservation discoveries and the most recent research on Jakuchū's life and cultural environment, this volume offers a multifaceted understanding of the artist's virtuosity and experimentalism as a painter—one who not only applied sophisticated chromatic effects but also masterfully rendered the richly symbolic world in which he moved.

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General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on Twitter at www.twitter.com/ngadc.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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