

For Immediate Release

Minneapolis Institute of Art Organizes First Exhibition Celebrating Long-Overlooked Poet and Painter from Japan

The exhibition will showcase over 50 works, including loans from Japan, Europe, and the U.S.

April 19, 2023, MINNEAPOLIS—The Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) announces the exhibition “Fukuda Kodōjin: Japan’s Great Poet and Landscape Artist.” Fukuda Kodōjin (1865–1944) was among a handful of scholar-artists who continued the tradition of literati painting (*nanga*) after 1900. Kodōjin’s painting style is characterized by bizarre mountain forms rendered in vivid color or monochromatic ink that often include a solitary scholar enjoying the expansive beauty of nature. The exhibition, on view from April 22 through July 23, 2023, is curated by Andreas Marks, PhD, Mary Griggs Burke Curator and Head of Japanese and Korean Art at Mia.

In addition to painting, Kodōjin was also an accomplished poet and calligrapher with deep knowledge of Chinese literature. In the late 1920s, a group of prominent admirers that included the then-prime minister of Japan, members of parliament, industrialists, scholars, and educators created a society to honor Kodōjin and his poetry and paintings. Following his death, the artist slipped into obscurity; today he is better appreciated outside his native Japan.

The culmination of 15 years of scholarly research and the discovery of 800 paintings and calligraphies and over 1,000 poems, this exhibition is the first comprehensive retrospective of Kodōjin in the world. Across multiple galleries, more than 50 paintings highlight Kodōjin’s versatility, from simple abstraction to highly detailed landscapes. In recent decades, his unique and unconventional style has mesmerized audiences in the United States and Europe. This exhibition is a rare chance to see these astounding works and make new discoveries and features items from Mia’s collection and loans from Japan, Europe, and the U.S.

Included in the exhibition are important works like *One Thousand Mountains and Ten Thousand Streams*, created in 1918. Kodōjin fills the work with rock formations painted in shades of orange and completes the composition with scenes of water and dense foliage. Accompanying the illustration are 11 poems, more than Kodōjin included in any other painting, that describe moments of solitude in nature and the companionship of a visiting guest. As the guest departs, Kodōjin’s final poem reflects, “My guest has left, the bramble gate is silent. My autumn heart touches season’s colors.”

Kodōjin creates a winter scene in 1928’s *Withered Tree and Winter Crow*. Demonstrating his mastery of abstraction, he leaves ample negative space and places only five tall, vertical peaks in the background, each painted with a wet brush in a different color: red, black, yellow, green, and blue. The withered tree mentioned in the title is positioned at the bottom edge of the painting, rendered in black with red spots, atop of which sits the almost indiscernible crow. Kodōjin celebrates the austerity of winter with a poem, writing “Clouds daily come and go...Ah! Reverie! Here is joy!”

At over six feet tall, Kodōjin’s 1914 summer scene *Landscape after Mi Fu* is his tallest landscape. Instead of paper or silk, this scene is depicted on satin, which Kodōjin used for only four percent of his works. Mountains rise from the bottom of the painting, and the scene culminates with a poem at the top that praises the bounty of summer, and his unity with it. Kodōjin exclaims “Streams are flowing, the very stones sing out.”



Fukuda Kodōjin
(Japanese, 1865-1944),
Landscape after Mi Fu,
October 1914, ink on
satin. Gift of the Clark
Center for Japanese Art &
Culture, 2013.29.1041

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"We are pleased to present this exhibition of works by Fukuda Kodōjin," said Katie Luber, Nivin and Duncan MacMillan Director and President of Mia. "Mia is committed to excellence in the research we do and the exhibitions we present, and the work of Fukuda Kodōjin is truly remarkable."

A related publication accompanies the exhibition, both made possible with generous support provided by the Gale Family Endowment, and is available for purchase at The Store at Mia.

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About the Minneapolis Institute of Art

Home to more than 90,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history, the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) inspires wonder, spurs creativity, and nourishes the imagination. With extraordinary exhibitions and one of the finest art collections in the country—from all corners of the globe, and from ancient to contemporary—Mia links the past to the present, enables global conversations, and offers an exceptional setting for inspiration.

General admission to Mia is always free. Some special exhibitions have a nominal admission fee.

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