

ZENMINDZENBRUSH

Japanese ink paintings from the Gitter-Yelen collection

Education Kit

ART
GALLERY
NSW

Art Gallery of New South Wales
17 June 2006 – 13 August 2006

VisAsia 
Celebrating Asian Art and Culture

INTRODUCTION

Zen Buddhism stressed that enlightenment came as a sudden, immediate flash of intuition reached by breaking the restrictions of normal behaviour and thinking. Zen masters guided their students to enlightenment by posing seemingly nonsensical questions, of which the most famous is probably ‘what is the sound of one hand clapping?’ The Zen style of painting, known as Zenga, typically uses quick, expressive brushstrokes in black ink in accordance with the Zen emphasis on the immediate and intuitive. The paintings are displayed in the format of a hanging scroll and used to remind followers of Zen masters of the insights available through Buddhist practice.

ZENGA

Zenga, literally ‘Zen pictures’, are works of Zen ink painting and calligraphy made in Japan from the Edo period (1600-1868) until the present day. Simple yet profound, spontaneous yet controlled, Zenga are intended to communicate the vision of Zen masters and to reveal the essence of Zen Buddhism.

Zen art first appeared in China. Originally, Buddhist art in China was highly structured and strictly detailed. Zen teachings, however, inspired Chinese Zen artists to break confining rules, allowing them to portray the ‘heart of things’ dynamically with a few vital strokes, using nothing more than a brush, black ink, water and paper or silk.

Executed as a form of Zen activity, Zenga were used as a tool for meditation and spiritual teaching, and subjects range from fierce-looking Zen patriarchs to minimal landscapes, from intense calligraphy to whimsically-depicted, almost cartoon-like illustrations of Zen conundrums. Characterised by their dynamic brushstrokes and often humorous images, these inspired works were mostly created by untrained painters who were monks first and artists second.

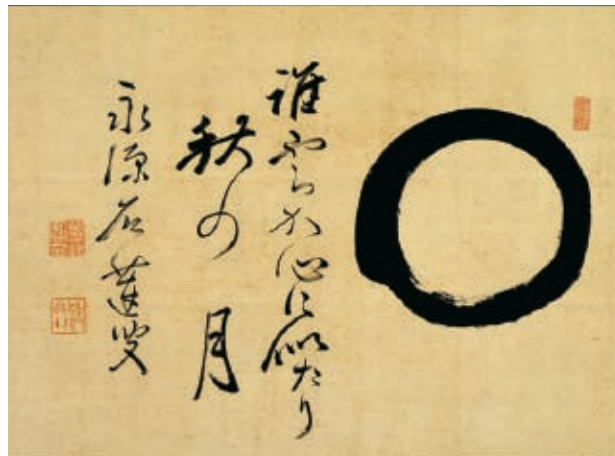
ZENGA AS A TEACHING VEHICLE

The great Zen artists Fugai, Hakuin and Sengai firmly established Zenga as a medium for teaching Zen. They regarded painting and calligraphy as ‘visual sermons’ (e-seppo): Zenga are far more accessible than dry texts and their impact is immediate and long lasting – even if the meaning is not at first clear.

Following the example of Hakuin and Sengai, it became de rigueur for Zen masters to do much of their teaching through the medium of brush and ink, and the exhibition includes examples of works from successive generations of several different Zen traditions. A look at works in the Hakuin monastic line shows clearly how the master’s artistic influence has affected each painting, yet how the brushwork, tonality and line quality of each artist are all quite distinct, demonstrating the point that Zenga reflects inner vision of each Zen master.

This exhibition of 80 outstanding Zenga is drawn from the remarkable private collection of Dr Kurt A. Gitter and Alice Rae Yelen.

Didactic panels by Clare Pollard, Curator, Japanese art AGNSW



CONTENTS

This selection of work is representative of key themes in Zen art which are:

- 1 **Daruma**, the bearded and fierce-looking founder of Zen Buddhism
- 2 **Kanzan and Jittoku**, the mountain dwelling eccentric pair
- 3 **Calligraphy**, pictograms expressing the spirit of the artist
- 4 **Procession of monks**, whimsical line of monks on their alms round
- 5 **Dragon and tiger**, powerful symbols of heaven and earth
- 6 **Enso**, the ink circle completed in one brushstroke

Each artwork is accompanied by background text and activities linked to the New South Wales K-6 syllabus.

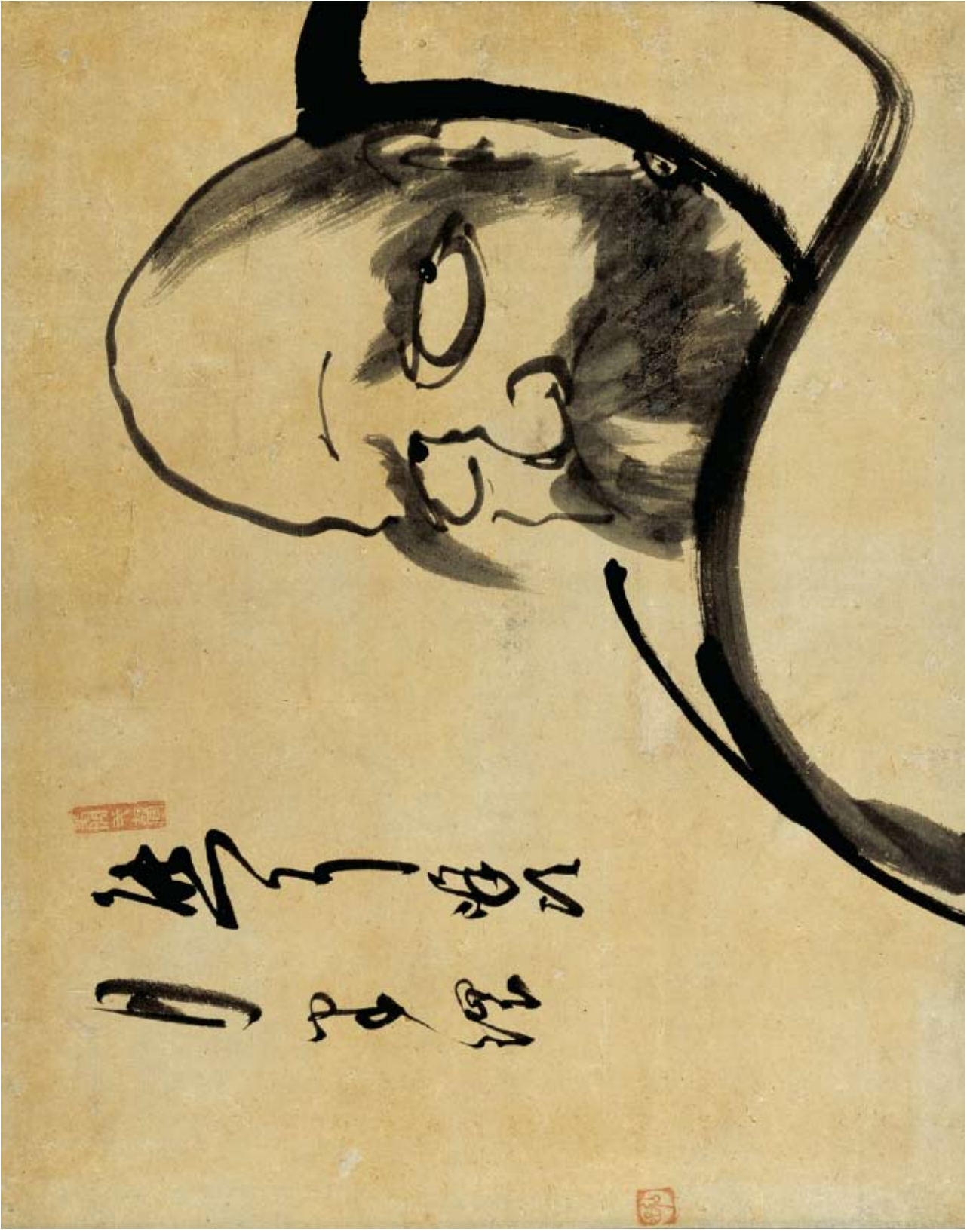
COLLECTION CONNECTIONS

While the exhibition artworks are on display in the gallery for a limited period these key themes and subjects may also be explored in artworks the Art Gallery of New South Wales permanent Japanese art collection. With each artwork, a suggested collection connection has been offered. They can be used as starting points for developing a greater understanding of the State’s permanent collection. Further information on works in the permanent collection can be sourced from the Gallery’s Collection Handbooks, the permanent Collection Education Kit: *Adventures in Asia*, the Gallery’s research library and archive and the Online collection search LINK <http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/browse>.

LINKS TO NEW SOUTH WALES K-6 SYLLABUS – PEOPLE AND THEIR BELIEFS

In this exhibition and education kit Zen Buddhism is highlighted as one of the many diverse religious groups in our community. Artworks are seen as a significant teaching vehicle to achieving a ‘state of enlightenment’ and are a meditative process. Through brush and ink, symbols of spiritual belief are identified providing opportunities for students to compare Buddhist customs/traditions, lifestyles, culture and language to their own experiences.

Front cover: (detail) Yamaoka TESSHU (1836–1888), Talismanic dragon, hanging scroll, ink on paper, 44.5 x 60.3 cm. Page 2: Ashizu SEKIREN (1850–1924), Enso, hanging scroll, ink on paper, 41.3 x 56.5 cm. Page 14: Nakahara NANTENBO (1839–1925), Daruma, 1911, framed leaf, ink on paper, 33.2 x 108.8 cm



月
半
輪
頭
熊
耳
峰
頭

*A half moon above the peak
of Bear Ear Mountain.*

KOGAN Gengei (1748–1821)

Daruma

hanging scroll, ink on paper,
33 x 41.5 cm

Gitter-Yelen collection

Bodhidharma, known as Daruma in Japan, is the legendary first patriarch of Zen Buddhism and the favourite subject of Zen artists. He is known as an Indian monk who brought his style of Buddhism to China in the 6th century. He is portrayed as a foreigner with a hairy beard, draped in monk's robes and with wide open eyes indicating his intense commitment to meditation. It is said Daruma sat in meditation for nine years either losing or cutting off his eyelids to stay awake. The Japanese legend that he also lost his arms and legs is kept alive in the red Daruma dolls used to make wishes.

In Zen tradition Daruma represents penetrating insight and realisation – the mind of Buddha. Daruma is almost

always depicted as a half-body giving form to the Zen saying the teaching is so big that it can never be portrayed in full. As in many Daruma portraits, the depiction of his robe with a few simple brush strokes hints at the character 'kokoro' (mind), and that is how we are to look at a portrait of the patriarch: we must enter into the heart of the painting and grab Daruma's essence.

Kogan was a prolific artist who painted all kinds of subjects for teaching. The Bear Ear Mountain in the inscription is the location of Daruma's tomb in China. The moon is often a symbol of enlightenment but he reference to a half-moon leaves us with a puzzle typical of Zen.

VISUAL ARTS

Paint a portrait of your friend in a contemplative mood. **Consider** how painting or calligraphy can be form of meditation through the preparation of materials such as the ink on the ink stone and the state of mind required to achieve the art form.

Paint a portrait of your friend. **Make** a cardboard frame to use as a view-finder and look through it, partly obscuring your view of the subject. **Paint** only what you see within the frame. **Display** your paintings in the classroom.

PDHPE

Experiment with facial expressions to show different feelings.

ENGLISH

Imagine what Daruma is thinking. **Write** a speech bubble for his thoughts.

HUMAN SOCIETY AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

What is Zenga? **Why** did Zen masters consider this style as a way to achieve enlightenment? **Research** Zenga and find out why Daruma is a revered figure in Zen Buddhism.

COLLECTION CONNECTIONS



Torii School (Japan)

(Daruma, samurai and courtesan)

early 18th century

hanging scroll; ink and colours on paper

36.5 x 51.8cm image; 120.0 x 62.8 x 69.2cm scroll [height x width x rod]

Gift of David Newman 1982

176.1982



非是僧非是俗非是聖
 非是凡三千界禪一枚
 帚掃

海雲盧秀子書

[Jittoku]
*Not a monk, not a layman,
 Not a saint, not a sinner
 In 3000 worlds just a ragamuffin with a straw broom.
 Brushed by Roshu of Kaiun*



是真優
 這個童
 面目不
 相露
 髮長似
 蓮

海雲三代盧秀讚

[Kanzan]
*This is true, this is real.
 What he recites makes him special.
 His original face has not been revealed.
 His hair is long, and wild as a lotus flower.
 Inscription by Roshu, Third Generation Abbot of Kaiun*

Ito JAKUCHU [1716–1800]
Kanzan and Jittoku
 hanging scrolls, ink on paper,
 each 104.1 x 29.2 cm
 Gitter-Yelen collection

The pair Kanzan and Jittoku is a classic theme of Zen art in Japan. They were two eccentric monks believed to have lived in China in the Tang dynasty (618-907). In Zen culture they epitomise the ideal of indifference to material concerns. An emphasis on the eccentric and unconventional was central to the tenets of Zen Buddhism which stressed that enlightenment came as a sudden, immediate flash of intuition reached by breaking the restrictions of normal behaviour and thinking.

In the unusual composition of this pair of hanging scrolls Kanzan (Hanshan in Chinese) and Jittoku (Shide) are facing away from us. We can recognise these characters

because of the objects that they hold. Kanzan, the hermit-poet with an open scroll, and his friend Jittoku, the kitchen hand at the mountain temple with his broom. Kanzan would write and read poetry to Jittoku, who in return provided him food from the temple kitchen.

They are usually portrayed in ragged clothing with long, tangled hair. The artist Jakuchu has created their long hair with splashes of black ink and outlined their silhouettes with simple and spontaneous brush strokes. This spontaneity suggests the pair's free and unfettered natures much revered in the Zen tradition.

VISUAL ARTS

Paint a large-scale figure with brush and ink using wet and dry brushwork. Over a series of lessons, begin with a detailed drawing and simplify and minimize each artwork until only three lines are used. Drop a slash of ink onto a piece of paper and turn it into a human form.

What elements of nature are evident in this artwork? Draw images of nature from your home or school.

HUMAN SOCIETY AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

What does 'eccentric' mean? Why is the quality of being eccentric appreciated in the Zen Buddhist tradition?

ENGLISH

Read the poems that accompany these images. Add another verse for each of the two characters.

Write a poem about the tranquil qualities of nature. Recite your poems in a natural environment to the class to create a Zen-style atmosphere.

DRAMA

Write a dialogue for each character and present a play to the class.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Research the types of flowers and plants commonly found in Japanese art.

COLLECTION CONNECTIONS



Nagasawa ROSETSU (Japan, b.1754, d.1799)

Kanzan and Jittoku

1780s

hanging scroll; ink on paper

156.0 x 82.3cm image; 244.5 x 98.9 x 105.8cm

scroll [height x width x rod]

Purchased 1985

338.1985



HAKUIN Ekaku (1685–1768)
One hundred times 'longevity'
 1767
 hanging scroll, ink on paper,
 124.1 x 54.3 cm
 Gitter-Yelen collection

壽
 可貴百壽篆文字直是妙法蓮華臺一字々
 靈驗無比大陀羅尼一匝々諸佛無上金色身若人瞻禮
 尊信者除雷災及火危滅七難生七福

沙羅樹下白陰老衲
 八十三歲
 炷香
 九拜
 明和第四亥歲七月吉辰

Venerate the 100 seal script characters for longevity [kotobuki]; each one is a lotus pedestal of the marvellous law, a source of miraculous, unsurpassed magic and a picture of the golden body of a Buddha. Those who bow, respect and believe in them will avoid thunder and fires, be safe from the seven disasters, and bring forth sevenfold good fortune.

LONGEVITY [KOTOBUKI]

The old monk Hakuin, under the trees of nirvana [ie, near death] 83 years old, burns incense and prostrates nine times 1767, seventh month, an auspicious day

Calligraphy was especially important in Zen Buddhism as it was thought an enlightened mind could be conveyed through the brushstrokes. It combines the intellectual and moral dimensions of content with the emotive and visual qualities of the art of writing. As much emphasis was placed upon the expressiveness and fluency of the calligraphy as on its meaning.

Kotobuki is the Japanese character for 'long life and happiness'. In the last few years of his life, Hakuin brushed this very difficult and demanding 100 kotobuki theme a number of times. For a calligrapher, the ability to brush 100 kotobuki characters in 100 different ways is considered the supreme test of artistic ability and scholarship. As indicated in the inscription and his signature, Hakuin's entire life is in each brushstroke here. It is clear that by taking up this challenging theme, he wanted to provide his

students (and future generations) with a powerful visual image to be remembered by. Even though he was dying, 'longevity' – life lived to its fullest – was a final statement.

The artist Hakuin Ekaku is considered one of Japan's most influential Zen monks both for his teachings and his art. He knew as a small child that he wanted to be a monk and left home to join a monastery at age fourteen. His studies included religion, the Confucian classics, literature and calligraphy. In his twenties he was adept at brushwork, yet after viewing a piece of calligraphy by a Zen master he is said to have burnt his brushes and painting manuals in the realisation that inner character and an enlightened mind were required to produce exceptional calligraphy. He didn't pursue art again until he was in his sixties and went on to complete more than one thousand calligraphies and paintings before his death at eighty-four.

VISUAL ARTS

Choose a word and write it in as many different styles of lettering as you can. Keep each word in the same size dimension. Create a class artwork by combining these words in a similar composition as this hanging scroll.

HUMAN SOCIETY AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

Find out about writing practices in Japan and other culture and discuss the shared and diverse characteristics of language.

MATHS

Consider the repeated patterns created in this artwork. Make your own stamps or prints and grid out a large piece of paper and make a class print of your stamps.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

What materials and techniques have been used to create this image? What writing tools would have been used by the artist? Describe the type of lines that are displayed in this hanging scroll.

COLLECTION CONNECTIONS



HAKUIN Ekaku (1685 - 1768)

Calligraphy: "The Shrine of the heaven illuminating great-august-god [centre]; Hachiman, the great Bodhisattva [right]; Kasuga, the great illuminating god [left]"

18th century

hanging scroll; ink on silk

112.3 x 35.0cm image; 198.0 x 47.0 x 51.4cm scroll [height x width x rod]

Yasuko Myer Bequest Fund 1996

227.1996

4
Procession of monks



步 一
々 鉢
是 千
泥 道 家
龍 場 飯

[Monks coming]
Step by step we are practicing the Way

Deiryu

[Monks going]
Each begging bowl full of rice from a 1000 homes.

DEIRYU Kutsu (1895–1954)
Procession of monks
pair of hanging scrolls,
ink on paper, each 162 x 22.4 cm
Gitter-Yelen collection
© the artist

In this pair of hanging scrolls lines of begging monks walk towards us on the left and away from us on the right in a composition that became a Zen painting standard. Buddhist monks lived a simple life with few possessions. In addition to meditation, recital of Buddhist texts and housekeeping chores, the alms round was part of the daily life of a monk. While attempting to be self-sufficient, most monasteries practiced alms rounds where monks walked single file through their neighbourhoods holding alms bowls. The monk in the lead holds a staff which he taps on the ground to announce the procession. As the monks pass people

drop donations into their bowls. As the inscription suggests, the most usual donation was rice. The monks keep their hats on and do not speak, so the giving is anonymous. In Buddhist practice giving alms is a way for lay people to make merit to further their spiritual growth. This practice can still be seen in Buddhist countries today.

The artist Deiryu was abbot of the temple Enpukuji near Kyoto and a disciple of the Nakahara Nantenbo. Although the alms rounds to the village are intended for trainee monks, it is said that even as abbot Deiryu would lead the procession himself.

VISUAL ARTS

Look closely at this image. How has the artist created a sense of depth? Using a similar approach create a black and white ink painting using water to dilute the intensity of the black to show the effect of the image disappearing into the background.

Compare the linear effect of the calligraphy to the line of the monks.

Photograph your class lining up. Use this image as a basis for a painting capturing similar qualities of these hanging scrolls

Using the same image, manipulate it in Photoshop accentuating the repeated forms and sense of infinity.

HUMAN SOCIETY AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

In many religions the practice of giving alms to the poor is considered obligatory. Find out about the practice of charity in different religions.

MUSIC

Find examples of music including pop, classical, vocal and instrumental that could be played to accompany this image.

Consider the formations and speed of the monks and respond through your own movement.

ENGLISH

Create a word bank linked to Zen Buddhism.

Write a descriptive poem about this hanging scroll.

MATHS

Count the monks coming towards you on the left. If each of the 1000 homes in the inscription donated one portion of rice and the rice was shared equally between the monks, how many portions of rice would each monk have in his begging bowl on his way back to the monastery?

COLLECTION CONNECTIONS



AKIYAMA Iwao (Japan, b.1921)

Which way shall we go?

1989

Woodcut

55.0 x 38.0cm image; 61.0 x 46.0cm sheet

Gift of the artist 1993

405.1993



虎
廣
壽
即
非
書

KO [TIGER]

[signed]
Brushed by Kōju¹ Sokuhi

1. Mount Kōju, site of the temple of Sofukuji, where Sokuhi lived



龍
廣
壽
即
非
書

RYU [DRAGON]

[signed]
Brushed by Kōju Sokuhi

Obaku SOKUHI (1616–1671)
Dragon and tiger
pair of hanging scrolls,
ink on paper, each 113 x 51.1 cm
Gitter-Yelen collection

The dragon and tiger are a familiar motif in the art of China, Korea and Japan. Originating in China's ancient past as tribal totems the dragon and tiger came to symbolise the Daoist forces of yin and yang which harmonise to form the universe. Legend has it that the dragon wanted to replace the tiger as king of the animals and the Jade Emperor made a compromise decreeing the dragon king of the water and the tiger king of the earth. Later the dragon became the symbol of the Chinese emperor and the tiger a protective symbol among the general populace. These two powerful symbols were taken up by the samurai class in Japan who also embraced Zen Buddhism and monochromatic ink painting. The dragon emerging from swirling clouds and the tiger crouching in the bamboo thicket can be seen in many

Zen temples. In this context the dragon is associated with spiritual power and enlightened wisdom and the tiger with physical strength and courageous living.

In this pair of hanging scrolls pictures appear below the boldly brushed calligraphic character for each animal. The dark, thick and dry lines of the characters contrast with the fine, gentle lines and grey tones in the illustrations in a balance that reinforces the theme of harmony of heaven and earth. The artist Sokuhi is one of the three Patriarchs of Obaku Zen sect founded by Chinese emigre monks in the 17th century. Because of its entry into Japan much later than the Rinzaï and Soto schools in the 1200s, the Obaku Zen retains a greater Chinese influence in its artistic style.

VISUAL ARTS

Make up your own stories about dragons and tigers and illustrate them.

HUMAN SOCIETY AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

Research the 12 animals of the Chinese Zodiac. **Find out** why these particular animals are represented. **What** do animals symbolize in different cultures? **Collect** historical stories, legends and fairytales from Japan and other cultures about dragons and tigers. **Read** an extract in class.

CREATIVE ARTS

Create a dragon costume using found objects. **Compose** a piece of music to accompany a dance by this dragon.

COLLECTION CONNECTIONS



Kanô TAN'YŪ (Japan, b.1602, d.1674)

Dragon and tiger

circa 1640s

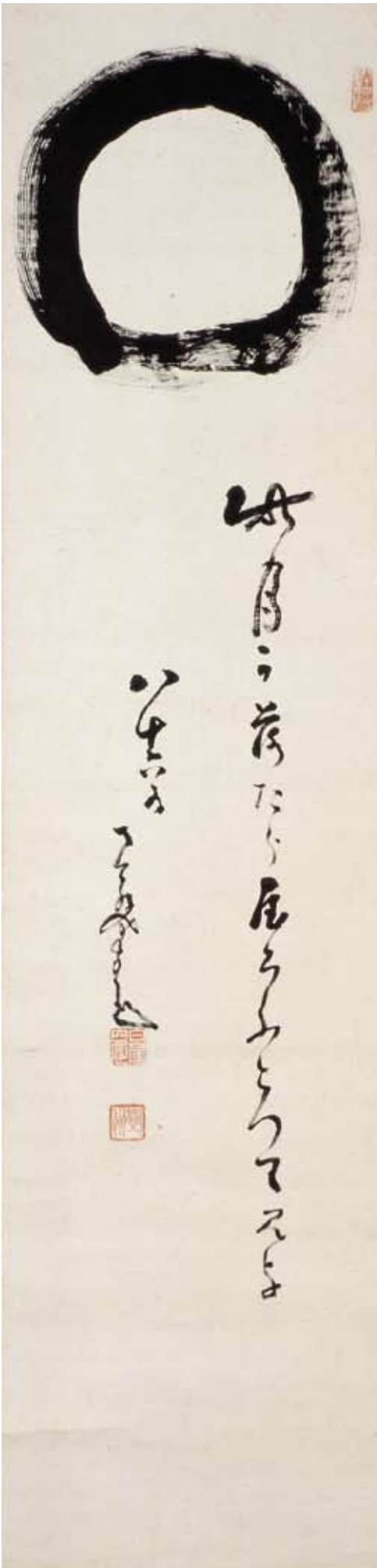
Painting

pair of six-fold screens; ink on paper

each screen: 133.7 x 352.0cm image; 154.0 x 373.0cm screen

Purchased with funds provided by Kenneth Myer 1990

106.1990.a-b



此月可落たら
屋らふとつて見よ
八十六翁
南天棒鄧州

When this moon falls who will try and catch it?

[signed] The 86-year-old fellow Nantenbo Toju

Nakahara NANTENBO (1839–1925)

Enso

hanging scroll, ink on paper,

194.5 x 43.8 cm

Gitter-Yelen collection

The ultimate symbol of Zen art is the enso, where an ink circle is brushed with just one stroke. As with portraits of Daruma, enso are often accompanied by inscriptions giving us a Zen hint or question to ponder. From the beginning of Buddhism, enlightenment has been compared to the 'bright full moon' and a 'great round mirror'. This enso particularly resembles the rising moon as it appears at the top of a long vertical composition. One popular inscription for enso was a line from a poem by the Zen eccentric Kanzan 'My heart is like the autumn moon.' The inscription here also associates the moon with enlightenment as it echoes the Zen painter Sengai, who wrote 'Enlightenment is coming towards us. Who is bold enough to step forward to attain it?'

While the Zen circle enso represents fullness, it is also empty. The realisation as an individual of being completely empty but perfectly aware is the Zen experience of enlightenment. It is said that the 1st century patriarch Nagarjuna, often considered a 'second Buddha', was transformed into a luminous circle whenever he taught in public to reveal, according to his biography, 'the true form of Buddha-nature, that is neither large or small, neither wide nor narrow, neither good nor bad, neither transient nor eternal'.

The Zen monk Nantenbo was one of the tradition's most prolific painters and the most important Zen artist of the 20th century. He produced most of his works in his 70s and 80s including many enso.

VISUAL ARTS

Make a circular collage using only black and white.

DRAMA

Write a play called When this moon falls who will try to catch it?

HUMAN SOCIETY AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

Find out about other Zen-associated arts. What are they and how do they show an appreciation for Zen philosophy? Compare Zen Buddhism with other religious beliefs.

Write and illustrate a description of a Japanese tea ceremony. Recreate a tea ceremony in your classroom.

How does it differ to the way you may drink tea at home?

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Research the moon's cycles and its significance to different cultures.

MATHS

List all the circular objects that surround you. Include words that also describe circles, such as, radius, concentric etc.

Consider the way the circle or cycles are represented in the everyday world. Collaborate with the class and compose a list of your findings.

COLLECTION CONNECTIONS



Katô Shuntai (Japan, b.1802, d.1877)

Tea bowl

1800-1850

Ceramic

stoneware with Shino-type glaze

7.3 x 11.0cm

Gift of Mr. F. Storch 1987

442.1987



GLOSSARY

Amida Buddha (Sanskrit: Amitabha) The Buddha who presides over the Western paradise and the focus of Pure Land Buddhism, which holds that salvation is assured for anyone who recites Amida's name with sincere faith.

Bodhisattva A 'being of awakening'; in Mahayana Buddhism a person who has achieved enlightenment but who has chosen to remain in this world to help others to achieve it.

Bodhidharma (Japanese: Daruma) The Indian credited with establishing Zen Buddhism in China during the early sixth century C.E.

Daoism A set of Chinese philosophical teachings and religious practices which arose in the in the sixth century BCE, based on the Dao, or 'the way' – the unchanging principle of reality behind the universe. It aims to achieve harmony with all things and advocates the idea that creative inactivity is better than frenetic activity.

Enso In Zen a brushed-ink painting of a circle, usually depicted in a single brushstroke. Among its many meanings, the enso represents and infinite void, the true nature of existence and enlightenment.

Kanzan and Jittoku (Ch. Hanshan and Shide) A pair of enlightened Zen eccentrics of Tang dynasty China, immediately recognizable from their attributes, a broom and a blank scroll.

Koan A riddle-like puzzle used for teaching in Zen Buddhism. It cannot be solved by reason, but instead forces the student to solve it through a flash of insight. Its solution requires that students directly and intuitively perceive the true nature of reality.

Zen (Dhyana in Sanskrit, Chan in Chinese) 'Meditation' in the broadest possible sense, a meditation that is manifest in both mind and body; unity between the spiritual and the physical.

Zenga Term used to describe Zen inspired calligraphy and painting of the modern period (1600 -)

FURTHER READING

Zen Mind Zen Brush: Japanese ink painting from the Gitter-Yelen Collection Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2006

The Gitter-Yelen Art Study Center
<http://www.gitter-yelen.org/>

John Stevens and Alice Rae Yelen, **Brushstrokes of enlightenment**, New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, 1990

John Stevens, **Sacred calligraphy of the East**, 3rd edn, Shambhala Publications, Boston 1995

This education kit is available online.
www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/ed/kits/zen

Coordinated and written by Leeanne Carr, Ann MacArthur and Victoria Collings, Public programs department with assistance from Debbie Bourke, Danebank Anglican School for Girls with introductory text from the exhibition panels written by Clare Pollard.

Produced by The Public Programs Department in conjunction with the exhibition *Zen Mind Zen Brush*, Japanese ink painting from the Gitter-Yelen collection. 17 June – 13 August 2006

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