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attributed to Kanō Masanobu, (1434–1530)

died Kyoto, Japan

Bamboo Forest and Moon, late 1700s

ink, paper, silk

Museum purchase, 1969.0042

Kanō Masanobu is credited with establishing the Kanō school as a professional workshop in Kyoto during the 15th century. Most renowned for his monochromatic landscapes, Masanobu also painted Buddhist deities and icons. Although Kanō ink paintings draw from Chan (Zen) Buddhism and the free and unrestrained brushwork seen in the Chinese ink-wash style, they also reveal a localized flair. By mid-16th century, the school began embracing native aesthetics known as *yamato-e* (Japanese painting) by integrating splendid colors and gold leaf.

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attributed to Kanō Tan'yū (1602–1674)

born Kyoto, Japan; died Edo (present-day Tokyo), Japan

Landscape, dated 1664, probably early 1800s

ink, color, silk

Gift of Jay Gates, Director, Spencer Museum of Art, 1984–1987, 2012.0593

The Kanō workshop trained generations of painters for 300 years. With dedicated observation and devotion to their masters, Kanō school painters immersed themselves in the strict culture of studio hierarchy and discipline. Through practice and meticulous copying from manuals, the students not only maintained a consistent quality but also developed the school's artistic style. The workshop system embodies the importance of lineage, and “reinvented” lineage by adoption, which was a key factor in the school's success.

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Sanyu or Chang Yu, (1901–1966)

born Nanchong, Sichuan; died Paris, France

untitled, early 1960s

oil, canvas

Anonymous loan, EL2023.041

Sanyu was born at the end of the Qing dynasty in rural Sichuan, China. As a boy, he studied Chinese calligraphy, which can be seen in the spare yet sensual line used to render the figure of a sleeping woman. Sanyu left for Paris in 1921 among the first wave of Chinese artists to study in France. Sanyu lived most of his life in poverty as an expatriate in Paris, where he died without achieving commercial success.

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