

Morikawa Sobun (1847-1902)

森川曾文

"Courtesans in Procession"

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper
14 x 30 cm. (5 1/2 x 11 3/4 in.)

Inscription:

"Sobun," followed by a poem by the artist.

Artist's seal:

Sobun

Two *oiran* or licensed courtesans, attended by young girls and shaded with umbrellas held by male attendants, make their way along a street, presumably in the Gion district of Kyoto. The women are seen only partially, their lower bodies concealed by architecture, and this was surely intentional, arousing the interest of the viewer today but withholding full or immediate gratification of that desire, which in turn can be held to have been the case in actuality at the time. The figures appear as if in a dream, emerging out of the mist for a brief moment before disappearing

again, leaving us with tantalizing hints of an unrealized reality.

Morikaga Eikan, called Sobun, worked in Kyoto where he was influenced by Maekawa Gorei and Hasegawa Gyokuho. A member of the Kyoto Bijutsu Kyokai, Sobun played an active role in Kansai art associations, exhibiting at various government-sponsored exhibitions, where he was recognized as having developed a personal style of landscapes, flower-and-bird paintings, and such charming figure compositions as the present painting.