

**Eight Miniature Japanese Albums,
19th-20th century**

八小画帖

By various artists including Kunshita Itsuum (1799- 1866),
Mori Kansai (1814-1894) and Kunii Oyo

Ink, ink and color on paper

Dimensions: ranging from 1.9 x 11.4 cm. (3/4 x 4 1/2 in.)
to 13.7 x 21.3 cm. (5 3/8 x 8 3/8 in.)

1. Mie (19th c.)

14 double leaves, ink and color on paper
10.2 x 14.2 cm. (4 x 5 5/8 in.)

2. Kinoshita Itsuum (1799-1866)

14 double leaves, ink and color on paper, dated 1862
13.7 x 21.3 cm. (5 3/8 x 8 3/8 in.)

3. Mori Kansai (1814-1894)

9 double leaves, ink and color on paper
1.9 x 11.4 cm. (3/4 x 4 1/2 in.)

4. Various 19th c. artists

7 double leaves, ink and color on paper
9.5 x 5.7 cm. (3 3/4 x 2 1/4 in.)

5. Various Meiji period artists

9 double leaves, ink and color on paper
11.8 x 15.6 cm. (4 5/8 x 6 1/8 in.)

6. Various artists

2 volumes of 14 leaves each, ink and color on paper
6.0 x 7.6 cm. (2 3/8 x 3 in.)

7. Kunii Ôyô

14 double leaves- ink and color on paper
4.2 x 10.2 cm. (1 5/8 x 4 in.)

8. Oguri Ken-ichi (Priest at Higashi Honganji)

15 double leaves- ink on paper, dated 1877
11.8 x 9.2 cm. (4 5/8 x 3 5/8 in.)

Miniature albums are comprised of paintings or calligraphies done in small-scale and mounted in album format. These tiny “books” originated in China and are best known through the collection and preservation of such works during the Qing dynasty (A.D.1644-1911). The Qianlong emperor (r. A.D.1736-1795), for example, enjoyed miniatures not only of paintings and calligraphy but of porcelain and other works of art as well. These were preserved in special treasure boxes or cabinets for the enjoyment of the emperor and his guests... As far as paintings are concerned, they are often small scale renditions of full-size paintings of note that were in the imperial collection and the replicas were likely commissioned by the emperor or some member of the court or a circle of literati.

The group of albums offered here were produced in Japan during to 19th-20th centuries. It is not surprising that they were a popular item given the

Japanese propensity for miniaturization. *Bonsai* is perhaps their foremost achievement in this area. *Bonsai* too originated in China but was adopted by the Japanese and engaged in so fervently that the art today is known worldwide by its Japanese name.

Rather than trivializing the art of painting and calligraphy, the great care taken in mounting the works and creating covers produced in the proper materials and labeled appropriately, all in the manner of a full-size work, indicates they were taken quite seriously. Some of the paintings were done by artists of note and others not. Whoever the artist, however, these vignettes are captivating because of the great skill and sensitivity involved in their production and the pleasure they bring to the viewer. The miniature albums were easily transportable and one imagines them wrapped in a small *furoshiki* and tucked into one’s bag or pocket when setting out to visit a friend nearby or on a journey further afield.