木庵受

Kinoshita Ōju (1777-1815)

木下應受

"Valley Landscape"

山水圖

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper
112 x 30 cm. (44 1/8 x 11 7/8 in.)

Inscription:
"Ki(noshita) Ōju."

Artist's seal:
Ōju

Published:
Kyoto Museum: *Kyoto Bunka Hakubutsu-kan Kaikan Jusshūnen Kinen Tokubetsu Ten, Miyako no Eshi ha Hyakka-ryōran*, ("The Museum of Kyoto Tenth Anniversary Exhibition: The Blossoming of One Hundred Flowers; Kyoto Painters of the Edo Period in the *Heian-jimbutsu-shi*") (Kyoto: The Museum of Kyoto, 1998), pl. 3-20, p. 117.

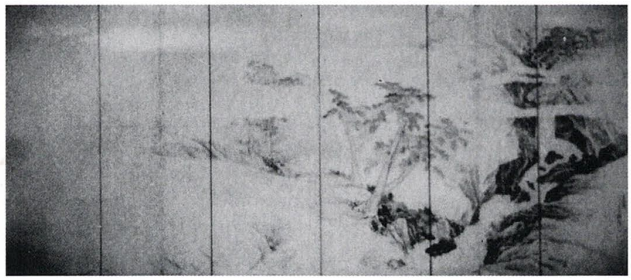

Fig. 1. Maruyama Ōkyo: "Hozu River" screen, after *Zaigai Nihon no Hihō*, vol. 6: *Bunjuin-ga, Shoha* (Tokyo: Mainichi Shinbun, 1980), pl. 44.

Perceptual gradients of size, clarity, and detail create a very naturalistic and convincing recession through pictorial space, from a foreground dominated by large pines to distant peaks in the background which are partially obscured by clouds and mist. The viewpoint is quite high, tilting the ground-plane sharply, which allows one to follow the course of the river as it flows downward from the distant peaks through a mist-filled valley to pass from view in the lower left. The visual and conceptual realism of the painting, apparent in the atmospheric perspective as well as in spatial organization and details, marks the artist as being under the sway of Western attitudes and approaches to the creation of art; the immediate source in his case identified in the very meaning of his name Ōju: "Received from Ō(kyo)."

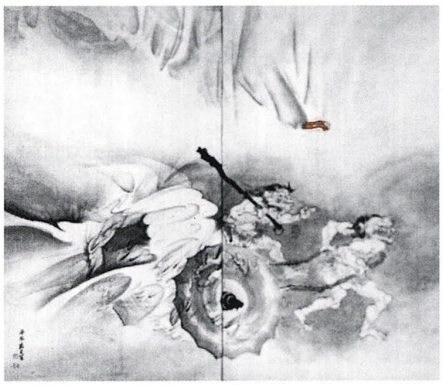

Fig. 2. Kinoshita Ōju: "Hi no Kuruma," after *Illustrated Catalogues of Kyoto National Museum; Japanese Paintings of the Edo and Post-Edo Period* (Kyoto: Kyoto National Museum, 1990), pl. 12, p. 6.

Maruyama Naoichi, called Suiseki ("water-stone") and Ōju, was born in Kyoto, the second son of the great master Maruyama Ōkyo (1733-1795), whose emphasis on realism and a direct response to Nature came to dominate one current of painting in Kyoto, termed the Maruyama school after its founder. Ōju of course was trained in painting by his father, a relationship that is evident in a comparison with Ōkyo's "Hozu River" of 1772 (figure 1). Ōju quite clearly followed his father in adopting an artistic vocabulary derived from traditional Chinese conventions but blended these with his own, very Japanese vision that utilized these visual schemata in pursuing pictorial goals based on verisimilitude. Due to his early death, at the age of only thirty-eight, rather few works by Ōju are extant today; a two-panel screen by him is now in the Kyoto National Museum (figure 2).

Although Ōju was regarded as the equal of his elder brother Ōzui in artistic terms, as a second son he was not essential to the continuation of the

Maruyama family line, which was inherited by Ōzui; Ōju was thus given in adoption to the Kinoshita family of his maternal grandfather. Ōju's first son, Ōshin, was subsequently adopted by Ōzui in order to continue the Maruyama line, while Ōju's second son, Oka, suceeded to the Kinoshita line. Despite having lived for a regrettably short time, then, Ōju contributed significantly to the evolution of painting in Kyoto, through his sons as well as through his own very distinctive paintings.