

# Jakuchū

PRESS RELEASE  
June 2018

## The Colorful Realm of Living Beings

15 September – 14 October 2018



Petit Palais  
Musée des Beaux-Arts  
de la Ville de Paris

Tuesday - Sunday, 10 am - 6 pm  
Open late: Friday until 9 pm  
Saturday and Sunday 8pm

### INFORMATION

[www.petitpalais.paris.fr/en](http://www.petitpalais.paris.fr/en)

The Petit Palais is honoured to be presenting in its entirety, for the first time in Europe, the series of 30 hanging scrolls titled *Dōshoku sai-e* [*The Colorful Realm of Living Beings*], painted by Itō Jakuchū approximately between 1757 and 1766. This exhibition has been made possible by exceptional loans from Japan's imperial collection. Active in the middle of the Edo period (1603-1867), Jakuchū is much appreciated in Japan for his subtle brushwork and vivid colors. Only ever shown once outside Japan – at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, in 2012 – the series is considered his masterpiece. Because of their extreme fragility the works will be on show for only a month, as part of the season *Japonismes 2018*.

Little known in Europe, Itō Jakuchū (1716–1800) is nonetheless regarded as one of the greatest Japanese artists of all time. A vegetable wholesaler, at the age of 40 he decided to hand over the family business to his brother and devote himself to the painting that had been his passion since he was 10. Already a recognised artist, in 1757 he set to work on *The Colorful Realm of Living Beings*, pictures of animals and plants whose realism and precision were rooted in close observation of his subject matter. These 30 scrolls – portrayals including cocks, fish, peacocks, phoenixes, ducks and trees in flower – reveal an astonishing delicacy of line and vividness of color, allied to an extraordinary talent and technical mastery.

The outstanding feature of this remarkable series is its combining of all the silk painting techniques. Application of paint on both sides of the fabric, the absence of outlining, use of both mineral and natural pigments – Itō Jakuchū blended all these complex techniques with enormous ingenuity and control. In *Old Pine and White Phoenix*, for example, the use of ochre on the back of the silk enables the tour de force of suggesting gold without having to use it. And his *Mandarin Ducks in Snow* scroll is a striking example of capturing snow right down to its actual texture. His portrayals of the living world, whether animal or vegetal, teem with details, including those most difficult to catch with the naked eye. The result of endless hours of attentive observation, these meticulous images point up a deep affection for his subject matter. At the same time he transcends reality by using it as the basis for a remarkable world of painterly imagination.

Jakuchū's piety meant Buddhism was the core of his existence; even before his 30 scrolls were completed he had decided to donate them to the Shōkoku-ji monastery in Kyoto, together with his Buddhist triad *Shaka Sanzon-zō* [*Sakyamuni Triad*]. Only this later work has remained in the temple, but the Petit Palais is offering the public the opportunity to see the ensemble as its creator originally intended it.

This exhibition is being shown to mark the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations between France and Japan in 2018, on the theme of «Japonismes 2018». It is jointly organized by the Japan Foundation, Nikkei Inc., the Imperial Household Agency of Japan, the Petit Palais, and Paris Musées.



### CURATORS :

**Aya Ota**, Chief Curator of the Museum of Imperial Collections (Sannomaru Shōzōkan)

**Manuela Moscatiello**, in charge of the Japanese collection at the Musée Cernuschi in Paris

### #Jakuchu

### CATALOGUE :

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Itō Jakuchū, *Old Pine and White Phoenix*, 1765-1766, Tōkyō, Museum of Imperial Collections (Sannomaru Shōzōkan)

