



Waka about Snow, Pine and Flowers

Date
Edo period

Primary Maker
Arisugawa Tsunahito

Medium
Hanging scroll: ink on paper

Description

Entitled "Ei setsu sho ju ka. Waka, Tsunahito" (poem about snow, pines, trees, and flowers. Waka, Tsunahito). Among the educated elite of Japan, calligraphy was considered an art form commensurate with or higher than painting, as it was in China. Prior to the ninth century, Chinese had a tremendous impact on many aspects of Japanese culture, including the introduction of the Chinese writing system as well as literary forms. In the ninth and tenth centuries, however, the Japanese imperial court promoted indigenous modes of expression. Among the many developments of this period was a new poetry form called "waka," consisting of thirty-one syllables. "Waka" presented a purely Japanese poetic diction that rejected Chinese forms. The legacy of this and other arts from the Heian era (794-1185), a golden age when the arts flourished, can be seen in later Japanese art and culture. As Japan's foremost aristocratic literary form, "waka" anthologies were compiled by generations of Japan's emperors and princes, many of whom were accomplished calligraphers. Prince Tsunahito's "waka" displays the elegance and conservative approach that characterizes much of Japanese aristocratic calligraphy.

Dimensions

Image: 15 1/8 × 21 9/16 inches (38.4 × 54.8 cm)