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History of Japanese Painting Conservation in the United States

ABSTRACT

This paper covers the brief history of pioneers in the field of Japanese painting restoration/conservation in the United States. It describes the circumstances under which they worked and the changing ethics and philosophy they applied in doing Japanese painting conservation. When Japan opened to the West in the 1860s, countless Japanese screen and scroll paintings made their way to the United States. Major museums on the East Coast started collecting Japanese and Chinese scroll and screen paintings. Japanese painting restoration studios were among the earliest museum conservation/restoration studios to be located in-house. Traditional *hyogushi*, or scroll mounters/restorers, Tamura and Kinoshita were invited to work at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in the early twentieth century. Since then several scroll/screen *hyogushi* have been invited to work at the Boston Museum, at the Smithsonian's Freer Gallery, and at New York's Metropolitan Museum. From the time the first conservators came to the U.S., the techniques and philosophy of Japanese painting conservation have evolved both in Japan and the United States. East and West have had important influences on each other in the development of current conservation ethics and practice.

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Presented in two parts: Part 1 at the General Session and Part 2 at the Book & Paper Group Session, AIC 31st Annual Meeting, June 5–10, 2003, Arlington, Virginia. Received for publication Fall 2003.