



Excerpt from “Talent, Training, and Power”

Founded in the fifteenth century, the Kano family of painters flourished due to the political astuteness of their leaders, abundant talent, and outstanding organizational skills. The family system was a patriarchal one, modeled after the medieval guilds that passed leadership down through generations of male blood relatives. In the second half of the seventeenth century, a formal school, consisting of multiple lineages of students who studied painting with Kano masters, developed as an extension of this family structure. This vast network of Kano-trained painters encompassed not only shogunal painters, but also those employed by regional domains, as well as low-ranking town painters, who worked professionally as independent artists. However, only a strict pedagogy could keep such a large and complex organization securely within the canons of Kano style. Therefore, pedagogy became the focus of the school. Political connections, patronage, organization, and influence on the art world in Japan were important factors that molded the Kano system of workshops into the de facto academy responsible for training the great majority of painters throughout the Edo period (1615–1868).

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Kano Kōi; *Pheasant and Pine* (detail); ca. 1626; six-panel folding screen; ink, color, and gold on paper; 67 in × 12 ft 5 5/8 in (170.2 × 380 cm). Saint Louis Art Museum; Asian Art Collection; funds given by Mary and Oliver Langenberg, Mr. and Mrs. Richard A. Liddy, and Susan and David Mesker (105:2002).