

## LANDSCAPES

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*Landscapes have a very long tradition in East Asia, most of them adopting a philosophical approach to the subject. In the art of painting China had an overwhelming influence on Japan until well into the Edo period, and it only freed itself from this domination during the course of the eighteenth century.*

*By the end of the century, artists were addressing the question of "reality" anew: for progressive painters, the option between the traditional "famous view" (meisho-e) and "real view" (shinkeizu) was usually chosen in favor of the latter, above all in landscapes. Artists went out into the countryside and sketched their impressions on site, which they interpreted later on picture scrolls. The motif was not an idealized location, but familiar areas, cities, and monuments.*

*During the same period, a second impulse came from Europe via China: central perspective, which facilitated the rendering of distant views into the landscape. Individual elements were no longer added randomly to a picture; the main thing was the total impression.*

*The relaxation of the travel prohibition laws after the early nineteenth century now permitted extensive pilgrimages and journeys, which were declared as such. This also led to the increasing popularity of travel reports and pictures.*

*Hokusai and Hiroshige had great success as rivals in this new genre of color woodcut, which also allowed those unable to travel a "real" impression of their country. Within a relatively short period of less than fifty years, woodcuts were produced which became icons of Japanese art. After the death of Hiroshige (1858), the landscape lost its interest as a motif; it was only after the Meiji period (1911) that some artists attempted in retrospect to carry on the tradition of the two great masters.*