

Chapter I

Folding Screens

Large and Collapsible

Recently, houses without a Japanese-style room are increasing in Japan, so there may be fewer opportunities to see folding screens in daily life. However, people used to use folding screens, *shoji* (sliding translucent paper doors), and *fusuma* (sliding paper doors) to divide a room before the influx of Western-style buildings in modern Japan, when Japanese people's lifestyles were completely changed. The Chinese character “*byo*” in “*byobu*” (folding screens) means “wall up” or “shut out”, and “*byobu*” refers to shutting out winds and walling things off.

Folding screens have been used as a part of daily life and interiors before they were admired as works of art. They are used to shut out the gaze of others as well as act as partition walls. Therefore, many folding screens are taller than people. Due to their strong presence, they affect the atmosphere of the room.

Let's consider folding screens as pictorial art. Folding screens cannot stand if they are completely straight. Thus, we can say that the paintings on the screens are meant to be viewed while folded accordion-style. The impression of a folding screen can change depending on how it is folded. The usual way of displaying a folding screen in museums is by folding it in a zigzag pattern. However, as shown in the folding screen painting of entertainment in Yoshiwara (NO. I-5), the folding screens in the painting are displayed in many ways, indicating that there are no fixed rules for displaying them in daily life. At this exhibition, folding screens are displayed in various folding styles. Please try to view them from various angles and find your favorite one.