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[media@cincvart.org](mailto:media@cincvart.org)

953 Eden Park Drive | Cincinnati, Ohio | 45202

[www.cincinnatiartmuseum.org](http://www.cincinnatiartmuseum.org)

**\*Images Available Upon Request**

## Masterpiece Takes Rare Trip from Japan to be Featured in Cincinnati Art Museum Exhibition

**CINCINNATI — November 14, 2022** — An artwork that was part of the Qing dynasty’s (1644–1911) imperial collection in China will take a rare trip from its current home in Japan to the Cincinnati Art Museum.

The *Noble Horse*, a handscroll work painted by the government official and painter Gong Kai (1222–1307) during the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), will be featured during the second half of the museum’s [Galloping Through Dynasties](#) exhibition. Visitors can see it from Nov. 18, 2022–Jan. 1, 2023. The exhibition is free.

Due to its age and significance, the *Noble Horse* does not make frequent appearances outside of the Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts, where it’s a part of the permanent collection. The work, therefore, will only be on view at the Cincinnati Art Museum for a limited time during the exhibition, which opened Oct. 7.

“This is the single most important painting to help us understand what happened under Mongolian rule,” said Hou-mei Sung, the exhibition’s curator and the Cincinnati Art Museum’s curator of East Asian Art. “It’s an important, meaningful masterpiece that represents a crucial moment in Chinese history. We are honored to be among the few museums to have it on view outside of the Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts.”

The *Noble Horse* portrays a starving and neglected horse walking with its head hanging low. The horse most likely symbolizes Gong himself, a talented scholar and official under the late Song dynasty (960–1279) before the Mongol conquest. As a Song loyalist Gong refused to serve the new government and chose to live as a painter-recluse. His paintings never failed to express his indignation and defiance under the invader’s rule. Though emaciated and nearly skeletal, one can still recognize the *Noble Horse*’s fine frame and defiant spirit.

A skinny horse had long been used in Chinese poems and paintings as a symbolic image of a neglected talent. In the Yuan dynasty, horse paintings took on a transformative role, venting Chinese artists’ frustrations and tools of self-assertion, symbolizing veiled political discontent.

*Gallop Through Dynasties* highlights more than 60 paintings and objects from the collections of leading museums in both the U.S. and Asia, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago and the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, as well as objects from the Cincinnati Art Museum’s own collection. Through carefully selected examples and structured displays, the exhibition illustrates how the horse played an important role in shaping the sociopolitical world of China throughout the centuries. In addition, the exhibition will provide viewers with a firsthand encounter with Chinese concepts involving horses as well as new insights into unique aspects of Chinese art and culture.

### **About the Cincinnati Art Museum**

The Cincinnati Art Museum is supported by the generosity of individuals and businesses that give annually to ArtsWave. The Ohio Arts Council helps fund the Cincinnati Art Museum with state tax dollars to encourage economic growth, educational excellence, and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans. The Cincinnati Art Museum gratefully acknowledges operating support from the City of Cincinnati, as well as our members.

Free general admission to the Cincinnati Art Museum is made possible by a gift from the Rosenthal Family Foundation. Special exhibition pricing may vary. Parking is free. [cincinnatiartmuseum.org](http://cincinnatiartmuseum.org)

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