Zen art is known for its elegant simplicity, embodied in the many paintings and calligraphies in this exhibit that consist of black ink on white paper or silk. With a few brushstrokes, Zen monks create expressions of enlightenment, from a simple circle, to an image of Zen's Indian founder, Bodhidharma. These works from the Kagetsu An Collection show a wide range of Zen art from Japan’s Edo period (1600-1868) to the twentieth century. Among these pieces are painting and calligraphy by such prominent Zen figures as Hakuin Ekaku (1685-1768), Sengai Gibon (1750-1837), and Nakahara Nantenbo (1839-1925), who were all great artists and great Zen masters.

ABOVE: The monk Renshobo was so devoted that he always faced west, the direction of the western paradise in Chinese Pure Land Buddhism, even if, as here, he was traveling east. Inscription by: Daikei Sotetsu (1677-1756). Abbot of Daitoku-ji Temple Painting by: Mochizuki Gyokusen (1692-1755). Hanging scroll, ink on paper. Height: 61 inches.

LEFT: A few brushstrokes, painted with the right mind, evoke a lotus pond. The lotus is a widespread symbol of spiritual purity in Buddhism, and the unopened bud represents the potential of all beings to realize enlightenment. Gocho Kankai (1749-1835). Hanging scroll, ink on paper. Height: 47.3 inches.

ZEN BUDDHISM and the ARTS of JAPAN
September 15—December 31, 2012

CURATED BY AND ON LOAN FROM
John Fong
ASSOCIATE CURATOR
Megan Bryson, UT Department of Religious Studies
COLLABORATOR
Suzanne Wright, Chair of Asian Studies, UT School of Art
TEA CEREMONY SET LOANED BY
Morikami Museum and Japanese Gardens, Delray Beach, FL
EXHIBITION SPONSORS
Aitha and Clayton Brodine Museum Fund

{ WEEKENDS AT THE MUSEUM } sponsored by
Frank H. McClung Museum
1327 Circle Park Drive • Knoxville, TN 37996—3200
865-974-2144 • mcclungmuseum.utk.edu

The University of Tennessee is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA institution in the provision of its education and employment programs and services. All qualified applicants will receive equal consideration for employment without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, physical or mental disability, orcovered veterans status. A project of the Fank H. McClung Museum with assistance from the Creative Communications group of the UT Office of Communications and Marketing. 4-490-5171 Rev. 3/17
Zen is one of many schools of Buddhism, a religion based on the teachings attributed to Siddhartha Gautama, commonly known as the Buddha. The Buddha lived and taught in India sometime between the sixth and fourth centuries BCE. Buddhists recognize him as an awakened or enlightened teacher who ultimately attained nirvana and shared his insights. Buddhism spread from India to China via the Silk Road by the second century CE. According to Zen legend, the Indian prince Bodhidharma introduced Zen to China between 420 and 580. “Zen” is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese character “Chan,” which is the Chinese rendering of the Sanskrit word dhyana that refers to a mind absorbed in meditation. Seated meditation, or zazen, is a core practice of Zen.

Japanese Buddhists embraced Zen in the twelfth century and it became one of the dominant forms of Buddhism there. In Japan, Zen is split into three lineages of Soto, Rinzai, and Obaku. The Rinzai and Obaku forms of Zen retained close ties to China. Monks of these lineages mastered the classical Chinese arts of painting and calligraphy in addition to philosophy and literature. Most of the pieces in this exhibit come from Rinzai and Obaku monks. Though their paintings and calligraphy might look effortless or unstudied, they are the result of years of training. As with most endeavors, it takes a lot of effort to appear effortless!

Zen art expresses the enlightened mind that, according to Zen doctrine, exists within everyone. The only difference between buddhas and other people is that buddhas have awakened to their innate enlightenment, while other people have not. Zen masters have the job of leading their students to realize they are already buddhas, but this is not something people realize by hearing an explanation. Instead, Zen masters use various non-verbal techniques and wield language creatively (sometimes confusingly) to trigger students’ awakening. Nakahara Nantenbo took the name Nantenbo, meaning “Nandina tree staff,” from the staff he used to strike students to prompt their awakening. Teachers are important in Zen, not only for helping guide students to awakening, but also for verifying students’ awakening. When students reach enlightenment, teachers are important in Zen, not only for helping guide students to awakening, but also for verifying students’ awakening.