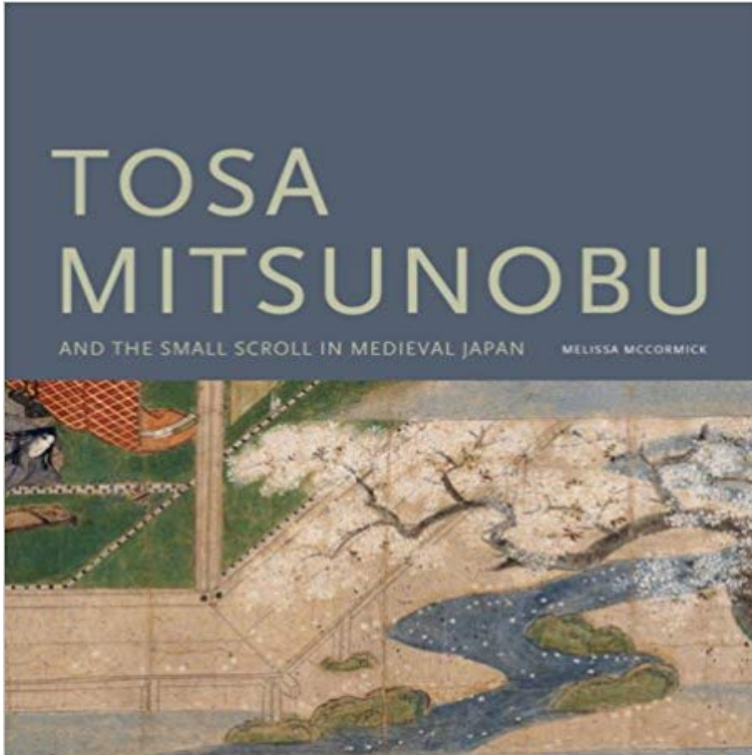


Tosa Mitsunobu and the Small Scroll



Tosa Mitsunobu and the Small Scroll in Medieval Japan is the first book-length study to focus on short-story small scrolls (ko-e), one of the most complex but visually appealing forms of early Japanese painting. Small picture scrolls emerged in Japan during the fourteenth century and were unusual in constituting approximately half the height of the narrative handscrolls that had been produced and appreciated in Japan for centuries. Melissa McCormick's history of the small scroll tells the story of its emergence and highlights its unique pictorial qualities and production contexts in ways that illuminate the larger history of Japanese narrative painting. Small scrolls illustrated short stories of personal transformation, a new literary form suffused with an awareness of the Buddhist notion of the illusory nature of worldly desires. The most accomplished examples of the genre resulted from the collaboration of the imperial court painter Tosa Mitsunobu (active ca. 1469-1522) and the erudite Kyoto aristocrat Sanjonishi Sanetaka (1455-1537). McCormick unveils the cultural milieu and the politics of patronage through diaries, letters, and archival materials, exposing the many layers of allusion that were embedded in these scrolls, while offering close readings that articulate the artistic language developed to an extreme level of refinement. In doing so, McCormick also offers the first sustained examination in English of Tosa Mitsunobu's extensive and underappreciated body of artistic achievements. The three scrolls that form the core of the study are *A Wakeful Sleep* (*Utatane soshi emaki*), which recounts the miraculous union of a man and a woman who had previously encountered each other only in their dreams; *The Jizo Hall* (*Jizodo soshi emaki*), which tells the story of a wayward monk who achieves enlightenment with the help of a dragon princess; and *Breaking the Inkstone*

(Suzuriwari soshi emaki), which narrates the sacrifice of a young boy for his household servant and its tragic consequences. These three works are easily among the most artistically accomplished and sophisticated small scrolls to have survived.

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