



The Written Image: Japanese Calligraphy and Painting from the Sylvan Barnet and William Burto Collection

Miyeko Murase

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Calligraphy is often regarded as the purest manifestation of an artist's inner character and level of cultivation, as well as the expression of his soul, thoughts, and feelings. This lovely book presents some fifty-eight Japanese works, almost all calligraphy, from the remarkable collection formed over the last forty years by Sylvan Barnet and William Burto, literary scholars who became enraptured by the Japanese art of the brush. Spanning more than a thousand years from the Nara period (710-794) through the nineteenth century, the material includes sublime early sutras, or transcriptions of the Buddha's discourses; an extraordinary mandala that is perhaps the finest example of its kind in the West; seminal works by such renowned figures as Myōe, Kōetsu, Musō, Konoe, and Daishin; engaging letters and poems that illuminate courtly life; and powerful graphic statements by Zen monk-artists. The opening essay by Sylvan Barnet and William Burto, which is directed to a non-Japanese reader, gives an illuminating look at the ways in which Japanese calligraphy can be appreciated. Miyeko Murase's introduction provides a rich commentary on the Japanese calligraphic scripts and scribes and an insightful overview of the society and world in which this art flourished.

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