

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Flying Dragons Roam the Heavens, 1989

Set of 12 panels; ink and color on paper

Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Art & Culture 2013.29.1056a-l

In this, the fourth of Araki's five monumental, multipanel works, he drew upon a rich tradition of dragon painting in East Asia to depict four scaly serpents roaming a sky of swirling clouds. The dragon is a mythological beast with Chinese origins introduced to Japan in ancient times, but the artistic impact of one dragon painting in particular is without equal in the history of Japanese art—an example in Kyoto created by Muqi Fachang (c. 1210–c. 1269), a Chinese Zen priest and painter. Muqi-style dragons among clouds were frequently painted on the ceilings of Japanese Buddhist lecture halls, where they were believed to serve as guardians of Buddhist



teachings, or were paired with tigers on large-scale folding screens and suites of sliding door panels. With their long snakelike bodies, bushy brows, and wispy whiskers, Araki's dragons clearly continue this artistic tradition.

Muqi Fachang (Chinese, c. 1210–c. 1269),
Dragon (from *Dragon and Tiger*), 1269,
hanging scroll; ink on silk. Daitokuji, Kyoto

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

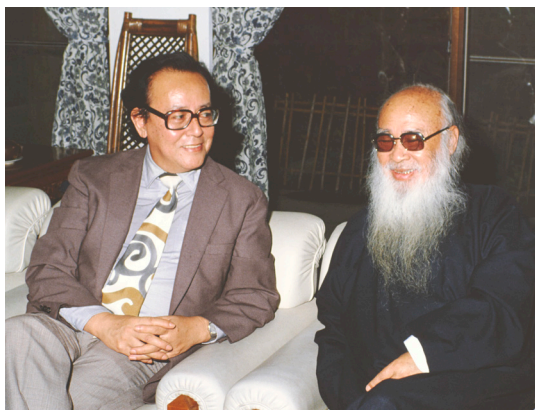
Boundless Peaks, 1983

Set of 24 panels; ink on paper

Gift of David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama 2012.74a–x

Born in Japanese-occupied Manchuria in northeast China, Araki never set foot in Japan until after the end of World War II in 1945, when he and his family were repatriated. They settled in Shimabara, his parents' birthplace. Young Minol soon headed to Tokyo but returned occasionally to Shimabara, where he created numerous sketches of the dramatic scenery. These rough sketches served as the foundation for this painting.

Boundless Peaks is also a tribute to Araki's mentor, Zhang Daqian (1899–1983), who was in the early 1980s creating his own monumental landscape painting—a massive handscroll depicting China's storied Lu Mountains in a virtuosic combination of pooled ink and swirling blue and green mineral pigments. This unfinished work was exhibited for the first time in Taipei shortly before Zhang's death. Months later, Araki completed his own deeply personal monumental landscape painting



in ink, depicting a land as sacred and mysterious to Araki as the Lu Mountains were to Zhang.

Minol Araki with Zhang Daqian at Zhang's home, Taipei, September 1981
© Kazukuni Sugiyama

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

On the River Fen, Startled by Autumn, August 1976

Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper

David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama

This hanging scroll is among Araki's earliest explorations of Zhang Daqian's (1899–1983) trademark splashed-ink-and-color style and a rare example in Araki's body of work of a painting with a literary subject. The composition combines large areas of splashed ink and some splatters of light color with landscape details rendered with traditional washes and dryer brushstrokes. The menacing black clouds that sweep across the mountain-side, bending trees and sending birds flying, are Araki's interpretation of the ominous North Wind in the first line of "On the River Fen, Startled by Autumn," a poem by the Tang-dynasty poet Su Ting (680–737) that is inscribed on the left:

A North Wind sends white clouds billowing	北風吹白雲
ten thousand miles across the River Fen.	萬里渡河汾
My heart like a leaf trembles then falls.	心緒逢搖落
The voices of autumn are unbearable.	秋聲不可聞

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Distant Road, November 1978

Ink on paper

Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of David Tausig Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama, 2013 (2013.462)

Araki absorbed what he could from his mentor, Zhang Daqian, and fairly quickly began to apply these techniques in distinctive ways in his own work. Created in 1978, this painting demonstrates Araki's remarkable mastery of splashed and pooled ink and is an early take on a motif—the distant, meandering, endless road—that would appear again and again in his own landscapes. Rendered in gradations of ink wash and highlighting Araki's representational use of the unmarked paper surface, it is an important early benchmark on the path to *Boundless Peaks*, the monumental painting created only five years later and displayed in this gallery.

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Splashed-color Landscape, 1979

Ink and color on paper

Lent by Beth Beloff and Marc Geller

With its brilliant splashes of blue and green mineral pigments (ground azurite and malachite) applied on top of washes of ink that had yet to fully dry, this early landscape demonstrates Araki's deep assimilation of his mentor Zhang Daqian's splashed-ink-and-color technique. However, it also represents a departure from Zhang's painting. Araki's application of color washes is notably more methodical than Zhang's, and Araki includes many more landscape details than Zhang typically did, tendencies that signal a convergence of Araki's varied artistic interests. Several of the most prominent motifs seen here appear time and again in Araki's work—distant waterfalls and meandering roads created by leaving parts of the paper surface unmarked, and large, gnarled trees in the foreground.

Zhang Daqian

Chinese, 1899–1983

Splashed-color Landscape, 1965

Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper

Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Robert Hatfield Ellsworth, in memory of La Ferne Hatfield Ellsworth, 1986
(1986.267.361)

Zhang Daqian, Araki's mentor, is hailed as a master of traditional Chinese painting techniques (his study of old Chinese paintings was so vast and his talent so deep, in fact, that he also had a lucrative career as a forger of Chinese paintings). Zhang left China during the Communist Revolution (1945–50) and established residences in California and several cities in South America before settling in Taipei, Taiwan, where Minol Araki first met him in 1973. By then, 74-year-old Zhang had poor eyesight and had mostly abandoned detailed brushwork in favor of applying layers of wet ink and color, partially at random, before adding more detailed motifs such as trees and architecture. Zhang developed this technique in the 1950s and '60s, after exposure to Abstract Expressionism and expatriate Chinese artists experimenting with abstraction in landscape painting.

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Landscape of the American Southwest, 1999

Ink and color on paper

Lent by David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama

Araki's success as an industrial designer enabled frequent overseas travel, which in turn had an enormous impact on his painting. Based partially in Tokyo and Taipei, he also spent significant time in Hong Kong and regularly visited the United States on business. There were also trips to Miami and Haiti, and weeks spent at friends' homes on Long Island and in the southwestern United States. He maintained painting studios in several of these locales—Taipei, Tokyo, New York, and at the home of close friends in Tucson, Arizona. The beauty of the surrounding Santa Catalina Mountains and Sonoran Desert inspired several paintings including this splashed-ink-and-color mountainscape dominated by reds and punctuated by cacti and other desert plants.

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Yangming Mountains, September 1999

Pair of panels; ink and color on paper

Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Art & Culture 2013.29.785a,b

The Yangming Mountains are a range of mountains and a national park a short drive north of Taipei, Taiwan, where Araki spent large portions of his adult life. This two-panel composition includes motifs seen frequently in Araki's work—the distant road, ghostly foreground trees, and building block-like rock forms. But it also represents a departure from the predominately splashed-ink-and-color landscapes displayed elsewhere in this gallery. Although Araki never abandoned his experiments with the splashed technique, neither was it his sole interest. Starting in the late 1970s and particularly in the 1990s and after, Araki's work reveals an interest in the elements of traditional Japanese painting: ink and pigments derived from natural materials such as seashells and minerals applied to Japanese *washi* paper. In this painting, for example, Araki depicted stars and wisps of cloud using mica, a shimmery, traditional mineral pigment with which he had only just begun to experiment.

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Lotus Pond, 1987

Set of 12 panels; ink and color on paper

Lent by David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama

Araki's long, narrow compositions invite comparisons to the traditional Japanese handscroll. A viewer unrolls a handscroll from right to left, determining the tempo of the unrolling in response to cues provided by the artist, slowing down to investigate some scenes or perhaps speeding through others. Araki's large-scale works offer a similarly dynamic viewing experience signaled by the composition but determined by the viewer.

Lotus Pond "opens" at far right with a view of distant peaks, then gives way to the dancing blossoms and flowers of a lotus pond in the foreground, which is interrupted again by views of trees, rocks, and distant mountains. Only in the seventh panel from the right do we take a deep dive, as it were, into the lotus pond itself, a riveting, close-up journey through a thick tangle of flowers, leaves, and stalks that finally gives way in the farthest panel on the left to an expanse of blank paper.

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Lotus and Rock, January 1980

Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper

Lent by David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama

Among Araki's earliest lotus paintings, this large hanging scroll features a single open lotus flower at the center of the composition and a just-opening bud above, haloed by the lotus's broad green leaves. Below, the plant's stalks twist among a clump of grass and a porous garden rock rendered in black ink. At right is an inscription in Chinese that also appears on several paintings of the flower by his mentor, Zhang Daqian:

The manner of a gentleman

君子之風

is like the pure beauty [of the lotus].

其清穆如

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Thinking Bird, September 1976

Hanging scroll; ink on paper

Lent by David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama

This painting is among several early works in which Araki depicts mynah birds in poses similar to that of the first of two birds from Bada Shanren's handscroll *Birds in a Lotus Pond* (c. 1690). But Araki places his birds in long, narrow hanging-scroll compositions featuring lotuses and rocks. In this early work, lines are used sparingly, while most of the motifs are rendered in layered washes, drips, and dots of ink.

Zhang Daqian

Chinese, 1899–1983

Lotus, 1965

Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper

Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Lin Yutang Family Collection, Gift of Richard M. Lai, Jill Lai Miller, and Larry C. Lai, in memory of Taiyi Lin Lai, 2005 (2005.509.25)

This painting of a lotus blossom in washes of ink and blue pigment is rendered in Zhang Daqian's trademark splashed-ink style. It is informed by the work of Bada Shanren (c. 1626–1705) as represented by his handscroll *Birds in a Lotus Pond* (once owned by Zhang), by Zhang's interest in Abstract Expressionism, and by a long tradition in East Asia of related ink techniques. This synthesis of styles had a profound impact on Minol Araki, who studied lotus paintings by both Zhang and Bada in the 1970s and continued to paint the subject for decades afterward.

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Lotus Pond, 1992

Set of 4 panels; ink and color on paper

Gift of David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama in honor of Willard “Bill” Clark, visionary and passionate collector of Japanese art and a generous benefactor to the Minneapolis Institute of Art

This painting offers a view of delicate pink lotus blossoms amid a tangle of gray and black leaves and stalks. The influence of Zhang Daqian and his splashed-ink approach to rendering lotuses is clear in Araki’s washy handling of the leaves and in the composition itself. Araki combines this with a greater interest in description, evident in his execution of the blossoms and detailed rendering of the underside of the large leaf at far right.

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Lotus Pond in Moonlight, July 2000

Ink, color, and gold on paper

Lotus Pond in Moonlight, September 2000

Ink, color, and gold on paper

Lent by Dr. Cheryl Willman and Dr. Ross Zumwalt

Araki created both of these arresting compositions, each mounted on a single horizontal panel, in the summer of 2000. Although their compositions are complementary, they were not intended to be a pair. Featuring pink and white blossoms peeking through a murky tangle of black leaves and stalks, these works represent some of Araki's earliest uses of metallic pigments, including gold, silver, and mica, in combination with mineral pigments like malachite green and natural pigments such as white made from ground oyster shells, all of which feature prominently in his late works.

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Bird on a Persimmon Branch, April 1978

Ink and color on paper

Lent by David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama

This mynah bird, like all the birds in Araki's paintings, is drawn from Bada Shanren's handscroll *Birds in a Lotus Pond* (c. 1690), which was once owned by Araki's mentor, Zhang Daqian. Here, Araki placed the mynah in an old persimmon tree, its knobby branches bald but for a handful of rust-colored leaves, rendered by layering wet ink and a diluted form of the reddish-orange pigment used elsewhere in this painting. At far left is a bright orange persimmon, a likely self-referential motif found frequently in the paintings of Araki, whose given name, Minol, means "fruit" in Chinese.

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Bird with Lotus Stem, September 1977

Ink on paper

Lent by Madeleine Gehrig

This head of a mynah bird looking up toward a lotus, only the stalk of which is visible here, is a reworking of a passage from Bada Shanren's short handscroll *Birds in a Lotus Pond* of 1690. Yet it is also difficult to dissociate this image of a mynah bird and its curiously humanlike gaze from the dozens of portraits of men, women, and boys that Araki was creating from late summer 1977 to spring 1978, during which time he also created this painting. Portraits from these series can be seen in this gallery and the adjacent gallery.

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

A Bird That Ate a Lot of Rabbits and Turned White, February 1977

Ink and color on paper

Lent by David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama

At first glance, this painting appears to depict a mynah bird perched on a rock at night. Moonlight is suggested by a splash of yellow at left and is reflected on the faceted surface of the rock. But why is the mynah bird white? Araki provides the answer in his title, which is written in Japanese on the back of the painting: *A Bird That Ate a Lot of Rabbits and Turned White* (ウサギをたくさんたべて白くなった鳥). Look for the gray rabbit-like form behind the bird's tail.

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Figure with Bird, February 1979

Ink and color on paper

Lent by David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama

In the late 1970s, Araki painted dozens of portraits of various human figures, many inspired by the drawings of U.S. artist Ben Shahn, and images of birds adapted from those found in paintings by the Chinese painter Bada Shanren (c. 1626–1705). This work alone depicts both—the face of a person upon whose hand rests a mynah bird and from whose index finger dangles a passion fruit. The bird is clearly related to those painted by Bada, while the hand is reminiscent of drawings by Shahn, whose figures often hide part of their own faces with their hands. Fruit in Araki's paintings are frequently self-referential (his given name, Minol, means “fruit” in Chinese), suggesting that this work may, in fact, be a quasi-self-portrait.



Minol Araki, *Man in Thought*
(after *Self-portrait* by Ben Shahn),
March 1978, ink and color on
paper. Collection of David T. Frank
and Kazukuni Sugiyama



Ben Shahn (American
[born Lithuania], 1898–1969),
Self-portrait, 1958, ink on
paper. Collection of
Ms. Barbara G. Fleischman.

© Estate of Ben Shahn/Licensed by VAGA,
New York, N.Y.

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Woman, June 1979

Ink and color on paper

Lent by David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Woman, February 1979

Ink on paper

Lent by David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Woman, March 1978

Ink on paper

Lent by David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Boy, March 1978

Ink on paper

Boy, March 1978

Ink on paper

Boy, March 1978

Ink and color on paper

Bird, March 1978

Ink on paper

Lent by David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama

Between fall of 1977 and spring of 1978, Araki created a startling number of paintings of myriad subjects and in multiple formats, not only the landscapes and lotuses for which he is best known, but also several series of portraits and nudes of men, women, boys, androgynous figures, and birds. His intense focus on these subjects seems to have begun with his chance encounter with a self-portrait by the American artist Ben Shahn, which he first saw when it was shown in Japan in 1970 and of which he later made numerous copies. By spring 1978 his portraits had morphed into a singular fusion of the introspection of Shahn's figures and the anthropomorphized mynah birds of Bada Shanren conveyed in the swirls, pools, and splashes of Zhang Daqian's splashed-color-and-ink technique. In these portraits, pools of ink, some representational and others seemingly more experimental flicks of the brush, conceal their eyes or blot out parts of their faces. Rather than emerging from the paper, the boys' and birds' white faces seem to sink into wet backgrounds of jet black ink.

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Persimmons, after Muqi, January 1977

Hanging scroll; ink on paper

Lent by David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama

This painting of two persimmons is based on Araki's sketches of a world-renowned painting by the Chinese painter Muqi Fachang (c. 1210–c. 1269). That painting, called *Six Persimmons*, was extremely popular in the United States in the mid-1900s, when it was trumpeted by poets of the Beat Generation such as Gary Snyder (b. 1930). Seemingly less inspired by the profundity of the acclaimed Chinese ink painting than the subject's ability to be used as a kind of personal logo, Araki—



whose given name, Minol, is written with the Chinese character meaning “fruit”—adopted Muqi's fruit for one of his personal seals, which can be seen on a number of paintings, including the work *Bird with Lotus Stem* displayed in this gallery.

Muqi Fachang (Chinese, c. 1210–c. 1269),
Six Persimmons, mid-13th century, hanging
scroll; ink on paper. Daitokuji, Kyoto

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Album of sketches, late 1970s

Album; ink and color on paper

Lent by David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Album of Sketches of Fish and Shellfish, 1978

Album; ink and color on paper

Lent by David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Priest Mending His Clothes in the Morning Sun, after Kaō, June 1978

Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper

Lent by David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama

A man holds up to his face an object not immediately identifiable, formed by several strokes of jet black ink. Araki's trailing brushstrokes suggest movement, perhaps even furtiveness. With his shifty eyes, which dart dramatically to the left, this fellow seems up to no good. Upon close inspection, however, the man's identity is revealed: he holds between his right thumb and index finger a needle. It seems he is sewing, not stealing, the inky black object, recognizable now as a garment. Araki took this mysterious figure from a Japanese Zen painting of the 1300s long attributed to the painter Kaō. In that



painting the monk's gaze is focused intently on the tiny needle in his outstretched right hand. The monk is mending his clothes in the bright morning sun, a traditional painting subject depicting an old poem that encapsulates Zen practice. Araki's reconfiguring of this painting results in a noticeable misconception of the original composition.

Kaō (Japanese, active mid-14th c.), *Monk Sewing under the Morning Sun*, mid-14th century, hanging scroll; ink on paper. Cleveland Museum of Art, John L. Severance Fund 1962.163

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Hekiba Village, 1985

Set of 12 panels; ink and color on paper

Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Art & Culture; formerly purchased by the Center with a gift of funds from David T. Frank

2013.29.1057a-l

Although Araki created this monumental landscape only two years after *Boundless Peaks* (on display in Gallery 263), the two works are worlds apart. Unlike *Boundless Peaks*, a swirl of splashed and pooled black ink, this work displays carefully applied washes of color and well-defined forms rendered in ink and mineral pigments like green malachite and blue azurite. In this way, *Hekiba Village* points to Araki's growing interest in traditional Japanese painting techniques after the death of his Chinese mentor, Zhang Daqian, in 1983.

Boundless Peaks is a painting of the countryside around Shimabara, his parents' hometown in Japan, while this painting represents a purely imaginary locale. The word "Hekiba" appears in several of Araki's personal seals, which are read in Japanese "Hekiba-sai," or "Hekiba studio." In Chinese, the same characters can be read "Pipa," a name Araki had bestowed on his industrial design studio in 1969. Late in life he produced additional paintings referring to the imagined village of Hekiba. Perhaps this fanciful countryside represented a paradise of sorts for Araki.

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Snow Monkeys at Play in Autumn and Winter,

1992

Set of 12 panels; ink and color on paper

The P.D. MacMillan Memorial Fund and gift of David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama in honor of Matthew Welch in recognition of his outstanding achievements in the advancement of Japanese art at the MIA 2015.34a-I

In each of his five monumental paintings, Araki navigates both his Chinese and Japanese backgrounds to varying degrees. Whereas *Boundless Peaks* is a painting of a Japanese place rendered in the painting style of his Chinese mentor, Zhang Daqian, both *Hekiba Village* and *Snow Monkeys* take their inspiration more directly from Japan. In this case, his subject is the iconic snow monkey. Snow monkeys live throughout the Japanese islands, though they are particularly common in the Japanese Alps and the northernmost reaches of the main island of Honshū. They are famous for their ability to withstand colder temperatures than other monkey species. Historically, the Japanese have delighted in watching their social behavior, like grooming each other, washing and seasoning their food, and swimming—including forays into natural hot springs as illustrated by Araki in this painting.

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Cherry Trees like Clouds, 1990

Pair of panels; ink and color on paper

Promised gift of David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama

Japan, the Japanese countryside, and his own legacy in Japan increasingly became a preoccupation for Araki after the 1980s. This painting shows a mountainside dotted with delicate pink cherry trees—a common springtime sight in Japan. Araki originally designed this work to be hung above a friend's high mantelpiece in a room with walls over 20 feet high. Viewed from below in this way, the thick blossoming canopy of a grove of cherry trees appears almost as light pink clouds meandering among cedars. This painting later became the signature image for Araki's first major exhibition, held at the National Museum of History in Taipei and the Phoenix Museum of Art in 1998–99, a well-publicized event that solidified Araki's legacy in the United States. However, his work was then and remains mostly unknown in Japan, a fact that Araki sought to ameliorate by purchasing a plot of land on Japan's rugged Bōsō Peninsula, where he intended to build his own personal art museum. He never succeeded in doing so.

Zhang Daqian

Chinese, 1899–1983

Mountain Vegetables, 1965

Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper

Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Lin Yutang Family Collection, Gift of Richard M. Lai, Jill Lai Miller, and Larry C. Lai, in memory of Taiyi Lin Lai, 2005 (2005.509.21)

Zhang Daqian, a skilled cook, frequently depicted displays of humble vegetables. Here, Chinese cabbage, mustard greens, and mushrooms are painted entirely in his trademark splashed-ink technique. The inscription above reads: “Pure offerings from a mountain kitchen, painted in the summer of the *yisi* year [1965] at the instruction of Mr. Yutang by Daqian, your junior, Zhang Yuan, from the Dafeng-tang [Great Wind Hall].”*

*Translation after Shi-yee Liu

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Pumpkin, Squash, Eggplant, Turnip, and Bamboo, November 1977

Ink and color on paper

Anonymous lender

This large composition shows a bountiful autumn harvest of a pumpkin, squash, eggplants, and a turnip arrayed rather unnaturally on a misty knoll and backed by shoots of bamboo, grasses, and what may be large banana leaves. The muted palette and greenish-purple fog that seems to have settled in the background, as well as the precariousness with which the vegetables are positioned, lend this work a vaguely unsettling quality.

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Chinese Cabbages, April 1979

Ink and color on paper

Lent by David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama

Araki was not officially a student of Zhang Daqian, but Zhang accepted him as an informal mentee, and Araki visited Zhang in Taipei two or three times a year. These visits often centered on food. Not only was Zhang a master of the brush, but he was also an accomplished cook, and his oeuvre includes a number of paintings of assorted vegetables, including Chinese cabbages, mustard greens, mushrooms, and radishes, all vegetables that Araki also painted at one time or another in a similar style. Araki engages directly with Zhang's vegetable paintings in this early work, in which he uses the brush only sparingly to draw the contours of the stalks of three Chinese cabbages and the veins of some of their leaves. The rest of the leaves are rendered in washes of ink and light color.

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Chinese Cabbage and Chili Peppers, 2001

Ink on paper

Lent by David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama

Its unmistakable erotic flair notwithstanding, this monochrome ink painting of a Chinese cabbage and three chili peppers remains a salute to Zhang Daqian's (1899–1983) vegetable paintings, a subject Araki explored intensely earlier in his career.

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Fish and Coral, September 1976

Hanging scroll; ink on paper

Lent by David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama

This painting offers an underwater view of a school of fish swimming among coral. A range of ink tones applied in layered washes and drips captures the rough surface of the coral and suggests three-dimensionality. This work demonstrates Araki's great admiration for the paintings of Bada Shanren (c. 1626–1705) and Bada's 20th-century admirers such as Qi Baishi and Araki's own mentor, Zhang Daqian. Araki had spent years studying and sketching the works of these Chinese masters, including their paintings of fish and other sea life.

Bada Shanren (Zhu Da)

Chinese, c. 1626–1705

Fish and Rocks, 1699

Hanging scroll; ink on paper

Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of John M. Crawford Jr., 1988 (1989.363.137)

This underwater view of seven tiny fish swimming between two rocks in a garden pond is typical of the enigmatic and sometimes unsettling compositions that Bada Shanren created in the last 20 years of his life. Born Zhu Da into the imperial family of China's Ming dynasty (1368–1644), he escaped to a temple and became a monk at age 18 when the Ming dynasty fell to the Qing (1644–1912), a foreign takeover of China that Zhu staunchly opposed throughout his life. In his mid-50s, Zhu abandoned monastic life, took the name Bada Shanren, and began a life as a professional painter.

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Man, August 1977

Ink on paper

Man, October 1977

Ink and color on paper

Man, October 1977

Ink and color on paper

Lent by David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama

These three images are from a group of several dozen portraits of men that Araki created in the summer and fall of 1977. Similar features, such as the distinctive aquiline noses, curly hair, and mustaches, suggest that he was repeatedly depicting the same man in different angles and moods. As is often the case in Araki's portraits, pools of ink, some representational and others seemingly more experimental flicks of the brush, conceal the men's eyes or blot out parts of their faces.

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Man in Thought, November 1976

Ink and color on paper

Lent by David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama

This early portrait is closely related to ink drawings created by the American artist Ben Shahn (1898–1969), in whose work Araki became engrossed in the mid- to late 1970s. Here Araki combines Shahn's line work with washes of gray and black and, more sparingly, blue washy highlights on the man's eyes, nose, and jawline.

Ben Shahn

American (born Lithuania), 1898–1969

You Have Not Converted a Man Because You Have Silenced Him, 1968

Offset color lithograph

Published by Container Corporation of America

Gift of Michael and Rosalyn Baker 2003.219.47

This poster by the artist Ben Shahn includes the type of roughly drawn figure for which Shahn had become known and in which Minol Araki took a particular interest in the mid- to late 1970s. An exhibition of drawings by Shahn had traveled to a museum in the Japanese city of Hiroshima in 1970, and close copies of several of the works in that exhibition appear in Araki's sketchbooks. It is unclear if Araki saw that exhibition in person or only knew of the catalogue, but, in any case, he would have had ample opportunity to view Shahn's work in New York, where Araki spent long periods of time after the mid-1960s.

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Man with Flower, c. 1978

Ink and color on paper

Lent by David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama

This undated portrait of a seminude male figure is consistent in style and tone with a large number of figural works Araki created over the course of around 10 months, from late summer 1977 to spring 1978. The figures in this series are commonly defaced by blots and smears of ink, but this portrait shows a near complete erasure of the man's face with swaths of dark, wet ink that partially represent his hair and beard but also conceal all but his mouth. The seductiveness of the man's pose—perhaps an invitation to a lover—is further amplified by the great attention paid to his bulging crotch, which, owing to the bleeding of the pigments, seems to emanate sexual energy. Araki added so much watery blue pigment to this area that it degraded the paper surface.

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Lone Tree at Sunset, 2005

Ink, color, gold, and mica on paper

Lent by Beth Beloff and Marc Geller

A recurring theme in Araki's work is the isolated, wizened tree. Among his last works, this half-height panel shows a single evergreen tree perched on a rocky outcropping. Between the foreground tree and distant peaks at upper right and left is a vast expanse of mist glowing in the last light of day. Bands of color—azurite blue, ocher, and cinnabar—flow across the width of the narrow composition and shimmer with highlights of gold and the mineral mica. The fact that the Chinese characters for his surname, Araki, mean “wild tree” may partially account for the prevalence of this subject matter in his body of work, particularly late in life, when it seems to have become a preoccupation.

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Mist over Field, 2004

Ink, color, and gold on paper

Lent by Tom Margittai and Richard Tang

This work is one of several dozen paintings Araki created for a gallery exhibition in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Unlike his earlier focus on Zhang and Chinese painting, in his final works Araki made use of thickly applied mineral and metallic pigments in combination with modulated washes of ink and light color—a trademark of the modern Japanese traditionalist painting movement known as Nihonga (literally, “Japanese painting”).

Minol Araki

Japanese (born China), 1928–2010

Baixiang Fruit, 1997

Ink and color on paper

Lent by David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama

Native fruits have long held symbolic meaning in the literary and artistic traditions of China, Korea, and Japan—common examples include peaches, grapes, pomegranates, and gourds. Yet the colorful abundance of plump, round fruits here, rendered by Araki with washes of purples, yellows, and greens, has no symbolic meaning whatsoever in traditional East Asian culture. You might recognize these globular fruits as passion fruits. The artist's title comes from the modern Chinese epithet for these fruits, *baixiang*, a phonetic rendering of the English word “passion” that means “fruit of one hundred fragrances” in Chinese. Depictions of fruits—passion fruit and persimmons most prominently—were a mainstay of Araki's painting throughout his life, not only as a vehicle for exploring the expressive potential of ink and color wash but likely also as a personal logo of sorts, one particularly fitting for an artist whose given name, Minol, means “fruit.”