

Tanomura Chikuden

Tanomura Chikuden (1777–1835) was born in what is now the city of Taketa and went on to become one of the most influential Japanese painters of his time. His work, which appeared mainly on hanging scrolls, remains sought after today.

Chikuden was born into a family of doctors but was unable to practice medicine due to poor health. Instead, he devoted himself to the study of Chinese poetry and painting. He taught Confucianism in Taketa schools until the age of 37, after which he focused solely on his painting, traveling around the country to interact with other artists.

Chikuden worked in the Nanga style of painting, in which an artwork was made up of three parts: a Chinese poem, calligraphy, and a painting. These works appeared mainly on hanging scrolls displayed in the tokonoma alcove, a feature of guest rooms in the homes of the upper class of the time.

Chikuden stands out from his peers in details such as his soft and delicate brush strokes. He painted scenes that resembled those found in his hometown of Taketa, in a way similar to the Nanga style's custom of depicting fictional landscapes.

These differences ultimately led to the emergence of a new Nanga movement known as Bungo Nanga, named after Bungo Province (now Oita Prefecture). Chikuden passed down his ideas to his disciples, who developed them further after their master's death. Bungo Nanga painting remained vigorous until the 1930s.