

ASIAN ART COLLECTION

Kim Hong-do

Hunting with Falcons

Choson dynasty (1392–1910)

Ink and color on silk

55 × 20¼ in. (139.7 × 51.4 cm)

Gift of General James A. Van Fleet

1988.1.25

A versatile artist, Kim Hong-do (pen name Tanwon) was known for his mastery of many painting genres, ranging from landscapes to portraits to robust documentary images of daily livelihood in eighteenth-century Korea. In addition, he was noted for his calligraphy and poetry. Kim's reputation and artistic prowess secured him imperial court support during the reigns of King Yongjo (1724–1776) and King Chongjo (1776–1800), both known for their encouragement of scholarly and artistic endeavors in a period of relative political stability.

Hunting with Falcons depicts a group of men on horseback using falcons to hunt geese. Falconry was a popular sport among the wealthy classes in Korea and was a conventional theme of Korean art. Kim captured the manners and customs of eighteenth century Korea in a well-conceived approach that distinguished itself from earlier, popular formulaic styles of ink painting derived from Chinese sources. Rather than an idyllic otherworldly and dreamy landscape, as is often found in Chinese works, Kim paints a humanistic and real scene of actual life played out against the Korean landscape. This may be seen in part as Kim's reflection of the relative peace, optimism, and prosperity enjoyed in Korea at the time, and in part as his self-reflection of his court patronage and cultivation. Kim enjoyed an often ideal life, and he therefore was consciously painting direct expressions of what he envisioned his life to embody.

Since only about three hundred extant works are recognized at this time as being by Kim's brush, *Hunting with Falcons* is an exceptionally rare example to be found outside Korea. It was donated to the Harn in 1988 by General James A. Van Fleet (1892–1992), who acquired many fine examples of Korean art during his military command posting in the 1950s.

