

# ARTY Cats

Shunso Hishida, Japan  
by GREG BALAGIAN



Shunso Hishida  
Japan 491 (1951)

Japanese painter, Hishida Miyoji, who used the pseudonym Shunso Hishida (1874-1911), was an innovative artist who often painted cats.

Traditional *Nihonga* style features strong lines. He painted with a gradation of colors, often monochromatic in opposition to what was formerly in vogue. At first, the style was derisively called *moro-tai* or "faded," eventually gaining recognition as impressionist.

Hishida's combination of old and newer styles can be seen in his most famous cat painting, *The Black Cat* or *Kuroki Neko* (1910) with shades of pale gold in numerous gradations for the background. The cat sitting on a branch of an oak tree is thinly outlined in white. Each leaf is also outlined and the veins.

The *Black Cat* is in the collection of the Eisei Bunko Museum in Tokyo and has been designated an "Important Cultural Property" of Japan. This beautiful painting appears on a stamp issued by Japan in 1979 (Scott 1363) minus the upper portion of the tree.

Hashida studied at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. After graduation he was commissioned by the Imperial Household Museum to copy important religious paintings at Buddhist temples in Kyoto and Nara, and he also became a teacher at the Tokyo University of the Arts.

Between 1903-1905 he traveled extensively overseas, holding exhibitions of his works in India, the United States and in Europe.

Although Hashida died at a young age due to kidney disease, he left an important legacy in Japanese painting and was highly regarded by the government of Japan. His portrait is on a stamp in the 1951 Famous Japanese Personalities series (Scott 491). 🐾



Above: *The Black Cat*, by Shunso Hishida (1910), Japan 1363 (1979), is in the Modern Art series. Below: The painting is shown in its entirety.

