“Perseverance brings good fortune. It furthers one to cross the great water.”
For better or sometimes worse, such forecasts about the outcome of “crossing the waters” appear in eleven of the sixty-four hexagrams of the ancient Chinese classic of divination, the Yi Jing. Occasionally it does not further one to make the crossing, for there are great risks, and the last of the sixty-four divinations writes of a “little fox”: “if...after nearly completing the crossing [he] gets his tail in the water, there is nothing that would further.” But the significance of such crossings is not in doubt; water-crossing itself is a trope for significant change. One wonders if Yoshiaki Shimizu, who took this risk at the age of seventeen and who twenty-one years later dedicated his dissertation “For all those who crossed the seas,” was drawn to the subject of his dissertation by this shared overseas undertaking. Professor Shimizu’s subject, Mokuan Reien (d. 1345), was an artistically revered but biographically obscure Buddhist monk who dwelt in the Chinese cities of Hangzhou and Jiaxing, who was known in Hangzhou’s Jingci Temple as the “reincarnation of Muqi” in the second generation after that venerated Chinese monk-painter, and who was so well integrated into his adoptive homeland that for centuries afterward he was often thought to have been Chinese. Like Mokuan, Shimizu was drawn to Chinese art as well as that of Japan, and to the profound aesthetic encounter between these two cultures. (As recounted in Mimi Hall Yiengpruksawan’s biographical account of Professor Shimizu later in this volume, his first formal entry into art history arose from an encounter with paintings from the old Chinese imperial collection, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1960.) Like Mokuan, Yoshi Shimizu himself both professed and painted. And yet, Mokuan’s crossing was not all that unusual for his time, the Kamakura period; Shimizu wrote a long dissertation section on such voyages of Buddhist pilgrims as being “a continuous traffic of monks both to and from Japan, a phenomenon unparalleled in any other period.” In Professor Shimizu’s case,
crossing the great water certainly brought good fortune, not just to himself but to all those who care about Japanese art and who have benefited from his teaching of the history, connoisseurial aesthetics, and underlying theory of this art.

Of course, crossing the great water can be taken both literally and figuratively. Yoshi Shimizu sustained a complex and varied career characterized by many such figurative crossings, from active painter to scholar, from academic professor to museum curator and back again. All of his abilities were enriched and deepened by the breadth of this experience. As a university professor, he sent numerous others on such crossings, literally, in the opposite direction, from America to Japan and China. It is for the essential importance of such crossings, of such risk-taking, life-changing ventures made by Professor Shimizu and by all those whose essays appear in this volume to honor him, that we have titled this collection Crossing the Sea. Like his dissertation, this volume salutes all those who have made that crossing.

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Crossing the Sea grew out of a two-day symposium titled “Friends at a Brushwood Gate” held at Princeton University in April 2009 to honor Professor Yoshiaki Shimizu upon his retirement, after more than twenty-five years of teaching at Princeton University. All of Professor Shimizu’s students in Japanese art attended. Relatives, friends, and colleagues of Yoshi from the many places he had passed through also gathered together and met one another, sometimes for the first time, to celebrate his contributions, achievements, and friendship. This volume, a scholarly celebration of that gathering, is composed of thirteen essays originally presented during the
symposium along with an introductory essay, on Professor Shimizu’s career and his influence in the field of Japanese art history, and a bibliography of his publications. The P.Y. and Kinmay W. Tang Center for East Asian Art served as the primary organizer and sponsor of the symposium and this publication.

We are grateful to the Tang family, especially Oscar L. Tang, whose generosity has enabled the center to engage in ambitious scholarly programs and publications. For the symposium, our generous cosponsors were the Department of Art and Archaeology, chaired at the time by Hal Foster, and the Princeton University Art Museum, under director James Steward. The museum also held a special exhibition in Professor Shimizu’s honor, Memorable Encounters from Honen to de Kooning. We wish to thank Asian art curator Cary Y. Liu for his support, together with associate curator Xiaojin Wu, who was the last student accepted by Yoshiaki Shimizu into the PhD program and who curated the exhibition. In support of this two-day symposium, we received a generous grant from The Henry Luce Foundation, Directors’ Discretionary Grants Program, made at the request of Mr. H. Christopher Luce, for which we remain extremely grateful.

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Jerome Silbergeld
Director

Dora C. Y. Ching
Associate Director

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