Matsu-ura Byōbu

Byōbu are Japanese folding screens made from several joined panels, bearing decorative painting and calligraphy. Like many Japanese arts and crafts, folding screens originated in China; prototypes dating back to the Han dynasty have been found.

The term "byōbu" figuratively means "protection from wind", which suggests that the original purpose of byōbu was blocking drafts. Byōbu were introduced in Japan in the eighth century, when Japanese crafts-men started making their own byōbu, highly influenced by Chinese patterns.

These particular byōbu are miniature examples of Matsu-ura Screens and are beautifully worked upon gold leafed paper. You will note that the faces of the women are almost all identical and there is an emphasis on the the Kimono patterns, each shows a different technique for pat-tering such as weaving embroidery, painting etc… You will also see that the women are playing cards and this is a reference to western influence.

Today byōbu are often machine-made, however hand-crafted byōbu are still available, mainly produced by families that preserve the crafting traditions.