

Aoi Yamaguchi Japanese Calligrapher

Born and raised in Hokkaido, Japan in 1984, Aoi Yamaguchi has been trained to master the basics of calligraphy by learning under the Master Zuiho Sato since at the age of 6, while refining her knowledge and skills. She is a recipient of numerous awards including the First Place prize from the Minister of Education at 44th Asahi Calligraphy Nationwide School Exhibit, Superior First Place at 33rd National Students Calligraphy Exhibition and others that are known as the supreme prizes at competitive public exhibitions. As a noteworthy event, she was nominated to participate in the group, 4th Hokkaido Elementary and Junior High Students Visit to China in 2000, representing the country of Japan and participated in calligraphy exchange sessions at Palace of Pupils of China. Her works show her exploration in juxtaposing the traditional Eastern classics and her contemporary artistic expressions, as well as her unique ambition of transforming two-dimensional art of Japanese Calligraphy into the art of physical expression through performances. In 2008, she initiated a Japanese art crew as known as Surreality in Reality (SIR) based in San Francisco Bay Area, aiming to provide opportunities for local Japanese artists to share their artistic creations internationally. Currently living in Oakland, she has been working on her unique calligraphy installation, exhibition, live performances, custom logo designs and art works globally, as she pursues her career to preserve traditional arts with music in the modern world.

Education

2007 - 2009 Bachelor of Arts in Humanities, Cross-cultural Studies from San Francisco State University
2004 - 2007 Music Industry Studies at Diablo Valley College
2002 Received Title of Master of Student Calligrapher from Hokkaido Association of Japanese Calligraphy
1990 - 2003 Japanese calligraphy study under Zuiho Sato

Solo Exhibitions

還源 KANGEN -Reunited with Nature-, Fivepoints Arthouse, San Francisco, CA
A Dot and A Line, Guerilla Cafe, Berkeley, CA
Solo Exhibition 耀 -Akagari -, Hokusen Gallery Ivory, Sapporo, Hokkaido Japan

Group Exhibitions

2010
Bridge is Over, Lopo Gallery, San Francisco, CA
RAW 08.06.10, Uptown, Oakland Art Murmur, Oakland, CA
6th Annual Asian Heritage Street Celebration, Civic Center / Little Saigon, San Francisco, CA
Four Elements vol.4 風 -WIND-, Space Gallery, San Francisco, CA
43rd Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival, Japan Town, San Francisco, CA
Four Elements vol.3 土 -EARTH, Space Gallery, San Francisco, CA

2009
4th Annual Sake Day, Jewish Community Center, San Francisco, CA
Four Elements vol.2 火 -FIRE-, Space Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Bridge, Project One, San Francisco, CA
Future Classic, Poleng Lounge, San Francisco, CA
Beyond Recognition, Space Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Love Sake & Art, Artmeznik, San Francisco, CA
Flying Kite Man, Subterranean Arthouse, San Francisco, CA
Kinokuniya Seasonal Calligraphy Installation, Kinokuniya Bookstore, San Francisco, CA
Four Elements vol.1 水 -WATER, Space Gallery, San Francisco, CA
HELLA LOGOS!!, Space Gallery, San Francisco, CA
International Valentine's Day, G3, San Francisco, CA
Colorless Spectrum, Space Gallery, San Francisco, CA

2008
頁 - page -, Space Gallery, San Francisco

SAI, Space Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Surreality in Reality - 現実の中の非現実 -, Space Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Anything Goes, Dalva, San Francisco, CA

2007

Spring Landscape, Ensoma, San Francisco, CA
One Love, Gallery One, San Francisco, CA

2006

Minimarhythm x Kero One Launch Party, 330 Ritch, San Francisco, CA
Toki - 時 -, Space Gallery, San Francisco, CA

Live Performances

2010

KANGEN -Reunited with Nature-, Fivepoints Arthouse, San Francisco, CA
Ritmos Sin Fronteras, SOM, San Francisco, CA
Shing02 & Emi Meyer live, Rockit Room, San Francisco, CA
Quadron concert, Mozaic Lounge Hotel Sheraton, San Jose, CA
地跡 CHISEKI -Traces of Nature-, 310 Lounge, New York, NY
Four Elements vol.4 風 -WIND-, Space Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Four Elements vol.3 土 -EARTH, Space Gallery, San Francisco, CA

2009

Invasion, D-Structure, San Francisco, CA
Four Elements vol.2 火 -FIRE-, Space Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Four Elements vol.1 水 -WATER, Space Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Colorless Spectrum, Space Gallery, San Francisco, CA

2008

頁 - page -, Space Gallery, San Francisco
SAI, Space Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Happy Feet, Mighty, San Francisco, CA
Surreality in Reality - 現実の中の非現実 -, Space Gallery, San Francisco, CA

2007

Light and Shadow - 陽と影 -, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA
Wordless Eloquence *07 - 雄弁な沈黙 -, White Rabbit, New York, NY
Spring Landscape, Ensoma, San Francisco, CA

2006

Silence & Motion - 静と動 -, Ensoma, San Francisco, CA
Japanese Month Cultural Festival, Diablo Valley College, Pleasant Hill, CA

Awards

2002 Certificate for An Honor Student from Hokkaido Calligraphy Education Association, Hokkaido Newspaper Corporation
2001 Hokkaido Federation of Japanese Calligraphy Award
2000 Asahi Newspaper Publishing Company Award
2000 First Prize in Japanese National Students' Calligraphy Expo
1999 Title of Master of Student Calligrapher

1999 First Prize from Japanese Minister of Education

Commission

Custom calligraphy gifts for KENZO perfume fair at Bloomingdale's, San Francisco, CA
Ippuku, Berkeley, CA
Cover Art for documentary film "An Eternal Soul", San Francisco, CA
Ramen Dojo, San Mateo, CA
Kinokuniya Bookstore Building, San Francisco, CA (Monthly, March 2009-March 2010)
Dohatsuten Ramen & Tapas, Palo Alto, CA
Ozumo Restaurant & Sake Bar, San Francisco, CA
Tennis Team of Health Sciences University of Hokkaido, Sapporo, Hokkaido, Japan

Other

Demonstration at Presidio Teacher's Night, San Francisco, CA
Lecture / demonstration at ArtSeed workshop, Sequoias, San Francisco, CA
Lecture / demonstration at Japanese Calligraphy workshop, Sycamore Church, Albany, CA

Featured Publications

SF Weekly, San Francisco, November 2010
[X] Press Magazine, San Francisco State University, April 2009
KINARI, Tokyo, November 2008
FIL, Sapporo, August 2008
Hokubei Mainichi Newspaper, San Francisco, June 2008
BaySpo, San Francisco, December 2006

Mission Statement:

Calligraphy is the Pure Plastic Art (the art of pure creation), using letters as its material. From the ancient times in Oriental countries, expressions of strokes by calligraphy brushes and the expressions of the negative spaces have united with the nation's spirituality. As it has been described as "paintings are analogous to calligraphy," or "calligraphy is the reflection of the internal psychology," calligraphy is defined as the supreme form of the individual emotional expression. Thus, the practice of Japanese calligraphy begins from meditation to purify your mind and soul; one seeks to execute refined brush strokes in a perfect balance through the internal journey to find true self. It requires perseverance and concentration for long-term training to master the skill.

Calligraphy is a unique art-form in that seeks to deconstruct, rearrange, and recreate existing linguistic conventions into a form of expression that not only functions as a signifier of an idea, but also exists as expressive element within itself. Typically when one thinks of famous calligraphic works, images of immaculate bold ink on pristine white paper come to mind. However, few realize that calligraphy is a performative work that evolves from an idea to fully formed, fully composed lexical elements. Therefore, I believe that performance calligraphy provides viewers with the unique opportunity to experience calligraphy in its entirety by immersing them in the creative process that is usually hidden from public view. Just as one could not fully appreciate an aria without hearing it from beginning to end, one could not fully comprehend the expressive meaning of a calligraphic work without witnessing its creation. I aim to seek new possibilities of Japanese calligraphy by transferring two-dimensional art of Japanese calligraphy into the art of physical expression through the performance.

Through one of my performance project, *Kangen -Reunited with Nature-*, I intend to remind audiences to stay in touch with nature, in celebration of the blessings from the earth that our lives consist of. *Kan* (return to) *Gen* (origin) means "returning to our life's origin," which is to be reunited with nature. My challenge is to transcribe the visualization of reincarnation, "from rebirth to death," through a collaborative performance incorporating the physical movement of calligraphy and contemporary dance. Using the tools that are made of natural minerals and materials, such as brushes that are made of bamboo and animal hair, hand-made paper made of wood pulp, and sumi-ink made of soot, animal glue and water, I wrote a poem titled *KANGEN -Reunited with Nature-* in black and white and in harmony with nature's essence. The dancer represents the spirit of humanity, which slowly dies, decomposes and is reunited with the earth - and later reborn to the world.