

APPEALING WORDS



Calligraphy Traditions in Western New York

August 27, 2017-June 3, 2018

Artists

Rosemary Lyons

Rosemary Lyons is an artist and calligrapher, born and raised in Buffalo. Rosemary's passion for calligraphy and the illuminated manuscript tradition fuses considerable historical research, spontaneity, and inspiration from dreams to create works exploring a range of topics, including pressing social justice issues.

Muhammad Z. Zaman

Muhammad Zahin Zaman is a contemporary calligrapher and calligraphiti artist from Buffalo. After starting to learn traditional Arabic calligraphy, Muhammad became interested in the free-form calligraphiti movement, and developed a typeface drawing on a mixture of traditional Arabic, Bangla, and English Calligraphy.

Amjad Aref

Amjad Aref first encountered calligraphy as a child in Palestine, inspired by an elementary school language teacher who occasionally incorporated calligraphy into his classes. After a long intermission due to schooling, travel, and work, Amjad began to practice Arabic calligraphy again around ten years ago, especially focused on mastering the *thuluth* script.

Jiannan Wu

Jiannan Wu is a Chinese Calligrapher and an officer in the Chinese Club of Western New York. Originally from Guilin in Southern



My Country, My Home, 2017,
Muhammad Zahin Zaman,
acrylic on wood

China, Jiannan continues to practice a number of calligraphy traditions, including creating a handwritten *fü* to display within his home.

Takako Fukuda Truskinovsky

Takako Fukuda Truskinovsky is a Japanese Calligrapher and Chief Official of Educational Affairs at the weekend Japanese Language School, where she is also a former teacher, held at the University of Buffalo. Takako learned calligraphy as a young child in Aomori Prefecture and has a close familial connection to calligraphy. She first started practicing calligraphy with her grandfather, a noted *tanka* poet.

Toshie Kenney

Toshie Kenney is a master Japanese Calligrapher (*shihan*), active member of the Japanese Group of Buffalo, and a lecturer in the Japanese Language

Program at University of Buffalo. Originally from Hyōgo Prefecture, Toshie grew up with calligraphy from a young age in Japan and recently became a certified *shihan*.

Aharon Baruch

Aharon Baruch is a *sofer s'tam* (scribe) and Hebrew Calligrapher based in Rochester, who creates and repairs both traditional and contemporary works. Originally from Jerusalem, Aharon's calligraphy draws on a range of topics relating to Judaism and Jewish traditions, and is often accompanied by papercuts.

Appealing Words

Calligraphy Traditions in Western New York



OMG, 2013, Rosemary Lyons, mixed medium

Each orchestrated movement of the ink-dipped brush leaves a wake of delicate curls and precise edges — the rhythmic dance of language mapped and adorned. In every character's twists and turns, beginnings and endings, is the discerning skill of the calligrapher.

Calligraphy — the art of writing — is a form of traditional art that can be found throughout the world in diverse cultural and religious traditions. From the illuminated manuscripts of medieval Ireland to an inverted 福 (*fú*) written and displayed on Chinese New Year, to verses stored within a *mezuzah* or a *basmala* on a *masjid* wall, the melding of art and language through the written word has long played a role in community life.

In every character, word, and phrase, calligraphy conveys meaning not only from its content but also from its form, presentation, and use. The intersection of calligraphy with other traditions intertwines subject and application to create and layer additional meaning, merging the message written with new meaning generated from the new context.

Appealing Words: Calligraphy Traditions in Western New York introduces the diverse calligraphy traditions practiced in Western New York, including Japanese, Chinese, Hebrew, Islamic, and Western Calligraphy. Through exploring the different materials, techniques, and uses of calligraphy across different traditions, *Appealing Words* highlights the combined pursuit of meaning through art and language.



petans absoluat. **P**ro ipm dnm nrm.
Omnipotens **oro** **O**remus.
 Scrupiterne deus qui facis mi
 rabilia magna solus preteude sup
 famulos tuos pontifices & sup am
 tas congregaciones illis commissas
 spiritum gracie salutaris. & ut in
 ueritate tibi complacent petiti
 eis rorem tue benedictionis in funde.

Deus qui caritatis **oro**.
 p graciā sancti spiritus tu
 orum cordib; fidelium in fundis
 ta famulis & famular; tuis fratri
 b; & sororib; nostris pro quib; tu
 am deprecamur demenciam sabi
 tem mentis & corporis. ut te tota
 uirtute diligant & que tibi placita
 sunt tota ductione pficiant. **oro**.

Deus a quo sancta desideria rec
 ta consilia & iusta sunt ope
 ra = da seruis tuis illam quam nul
 dus dare non potest pacem ut & cor
 da nostra mantatis tuis tedita et



Unfinished Page from Book of Hours, Prayers of Petition following Litany, Britain c. 1400, ink and gold leaf on vellum. Castellani Museum of Niagara University Collection, Gift of Rev. Msgr. Walter Kern, Niagara University, Our Lady of Angels Seminary Alumni, 1994

Western Calligraphy and Illuminations

An *illuminated manuscript* refers to handwritten books decorated with a range of adornments including miniature illustrations and the application of gold or silver. From sparse illustrations to ornate borders, illuminated manuscripts were held in high regard and were highly labor intensive, often reflecting the wealth of the owner or commissioner.

Popular through the early Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, the emergence of the printing press in the 15th century increasingly lessened demand for these handwritten works.

Materials

A reed pen or quill was the primary tool for writing the calligraphy onto vellum: a high quality parchment and the primary medium for writing manuscripts.

Gold was central to illuminations, reflecting the theology and ideology around the notion of light.

Gold was applied either through gilding gold leaf or burnishing gold specks.

Colors play a significant role in illuminations, and the wide variety of natural materials would be ground according to the needs of the specific illustrations or calligraphy.

Technique

Illuminated manuscripts were made primarily within monasteries by monks for much of the Middle Ages.

Trends in decoration and calligraphy developed throughout Western Europe



Page from *Book of Hours, Personal Devotions*, Salisbury, England, c. 1600, ink and gold leaf on vellum. Castellani Museum of Niagara University Collection, Gift of Rev. Msgr. Walter Kern, Niagara University, Our Lady of Angels Seminary Alumni, 1994

over the course of the tradition, including Insular, Romanesque, and Gothic.

An *initial* is an over-sized letter, usually used at the start of a sentence or section and often decorated with an image.

Rubric is a section of text written in red by the calligrapher, usually to highlight a specific passage or word.

Uses

Illuminations were typically reserved for religious works, though later on in the tradition, secular works were also occasionally illuminated.

A *psalter* is the illuminated Book of Psalms, one of the most popular illuminated manuscripts. Psalters were typically illuminated robustly and used both for liturgy and private devotion.

Book of Hours are books that contain a mix of prayers and writings that were meant to be read during the canonical hours. Book of Hours were a highly common illuminated manuscript, both among the clergy and laypeople.



As the water covers the sea, your love covers me, 2017, Muhammad Zahin Zaman, acrylic on canvas.

The heavily layered design of lettering emerged from experiments by the calligrapher to add further aesthetics to his typeface in a direction unique from other styles within the calligraphiti movement.

The repeated writing of the same phrase provides a meditative and contemplative experience both for the calligrapher and the viewer.

Contemporary Interpretations of Traditional Calligraphy

Contemporary calligraphers may draw from the structures, ideas, and rules within traditional calligraphy—but are not beholden to them.

Rooted in their own vision, the contemporary calligrapher's work navigates the space between tradition and innovation: experimenting with established forms and expectations to create new combinations, new works, and new meanings.

Contemporary Illuminations

A *contemporary illumination* is an interpretation of the illuminated manuscript tradition, drawing on the structure and designs found in their calligraphy, adornment, and gilding.

Traditional aesthetic forms of the illuminated manuscripts, including miniature illustrations, are either replicated or modernized: traditional depictions of vines and ivy may now border an ATM machine or image of a major current event. Gold leaf remains an integral part of contemporary illuminations, continuing the thread of meanings in adding light to a work.

Like a puzzle played over centuries, contemporary illumination intersects the distant with the familiar, pursuing and researching the links that connect the embedded meanings of older calligraphy and illumination forms with the experiences and realities of contemporary life.



September 11th, 2001, 2003, Rosemary Lyons, mixed medium.

This illuminated manuscript contains a historiated letter depicting the raising of a flag at Ground Zero by New York City Firefighters, accompanied by musical notation of the *Star Spangled Banner*, in Latin. Musical notation was often found in illuminated manuscripts containing songs or chants.

Calligraffiti

Calligraffiti refers to a melding of calligraphy and graffiti—a public mural of artistic writing used to communicate meaning. Within the Arabic and Islamic Calligraphy traditions, *calligraffiti* refers to new, more freeform styles that do not strictly adhere to any of the established scripts or their conventions.

The scripts used in *calligraffiti* typically adapt concepts within the traditional repertoire—for example, how to proportion and interlace characters—into new arrangements, stretching or moving beyond its conventional limits.

Other typographies, whether within the same tradition or not, may also be incorporated, including the artists' creation of their own script.

Influences for the content of *calligraffiti* are wide-ranging, a mirror for the social, religious, and political concerns which weigh on the artist and the wider public.



In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, 2017, Amjad Aref

Also known as the *basmala*, this saying opens every surah (chapter) within the Quran, and is commonly found within Arabic calligraphic works.

This *basmala* is written in the *thuluth* (one-third) script, one of the proportional scripts refined by Ibn Muqla, where one-third of each letter should curve or slope (relative to the size of the letter). Along with *naskh* (copy script) it is often used for writing calligraphy from Quranic texts.

Arabic Calligraphy

Al-Khatt Al-Arabi (Arabic Calligraphy), refers to calligraphy written using the Arabic *abjad* (alphabet). Abbasid Baghdad and Ottoman Istanbul were major centers for the development of the tradition, which spread all throughout the Islamic world. Arabic and the written word both play a central role in Islam, and its calligraphy forms one of the major Islamic art traditions.

Al-Khatt Al-Arabi may be written either linearly or vertically, feature interlacing characters, and arranged to evoke different abstract or representational shapes.



Surah Al-Mu'minun [23:118] – And, [O Muhammad], say, "My Lord, forgive and have mercy, and You are the best of the merciful.", 2017, Amjad Aref

The calligraphy of different *surah* can commonly be found both within *masjids* (mosques) and within the home – both for its aesthetics as a decorated object, but also for its content in helping to encourage mindfulness and reflection on its message.

Materials

A *qalam* (reed pen) is the most common writing tool used, and is modified with a nib and edge cut at a sharp slant.

Two types of ink, *midad* (carbon-based ink) and *hibr* (metal infused ink) are commonly used, and are stored in a *dawat* (inkwell) with a tuft of *liqa* (silk) at the base to control the amount of ink transferred to the pen.

Waraq (paper) is prepared through *ahar* (size) to create a smooth top finish, allowing a calligrapher to make quick corrections or adjustments. Tinted or marbled papers have historically also been used as a writing medium.

Technique

Balance and symmetry guide a *khattat* (calligrapher) as they follow rules relating to the shape, structure, and proportion of both the individual characters and the work as a whole.

Nuqta are diamond shaped dots made with the *qalam* to determine the correct proportion for the height, curve, and extensions in each character.

Al-Khatt Al-Mansub (proportional calligraphy) is a method and set of rules developed by Ibn Muqla (d. 940) to ensure consistency, leading to the six proportional scripts, *al-aqlam al-sittah* (Six Pens).

Uses

Aside from its literary presence, *Al-Khatt Al-Arabi* can be found as ornamentation on a range of objects: from architecture and signs, to pottery, coins, and fabric.

As the language of the Quran, *Al-Khatt Al-Arabi* has historically been used to compose the entire Quran, and to create calligraphic works from select *ayat* (verses).

In Ottoman Turkey, a method was developed using *kat'i sanati* (traditional Turkish paper cutting) to both create borders for calligraphy and cut the individual characters.

שמע ישראל יהוה אלהינו יהוה אחד ואהבת יהוה
יהוה אלהיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ובכל מאדך ויהיו
הדברים האלה אשר אנכי מצוה היום על לבבך ושננתם
לבניך ודברת בם בשבתך בביתך ובשכבתך
ובשכבך ובקומך וקשרתם לאות על ידך והיו לטלפריס
בין עיניך וכתבתם על מזוזות ביתך ובשעריך
והיה אם שמע תשמעו אל מצותי אשר אנכי מצוה אתכם היום לאהבה את יהוה אלהיכם ולעבודו
בכל לבבכם ובכל נפשכם ולתתו מלך ארצכם בערותו
יורה ומלקוש ואספת דגנך ותירשך ויצהרך ולתתו
עשב בשדה לבהמתך ואכלת ושבעת השמרו לכם
פן יפתה לבבכם וסרתם ועבדתם אלהים אחרים
והשתחויתם להם וזרה אף יהוה בכם ועל צדקת
השמים ולא יהוה מלך והאדמה לא נתן את יבולו
ואבדתם מהרה מעל הארץ הטבה אשר יהוה נתן לכם
ושמתם את דברי אלה על לבבכם ועל נפשכם וקשרתם
אתם לאות על ידכם והיו לטלפריס בין עיניכם ולמדתם
אתם את בניכם לדבר בם בשבתך בביתך ובשכבתך
בדרך ובשכבך ובקומך וכתבתם על מזוזות ביתך
ובשעריך למען יראו וימיכם וימי בניכם על האדמה
אשר נשבע יהוה לאבותיכם לתת להם כיומי השמים
על הארץ

Mezuzah, 2017, Aharon Baruch

A mezuzah is a small case containing a scroll of parchment, that is fastened to the upper-inner right doorpost, and commonly inscribed with the letter ש (shin). The two verses from Deuteronomy written on the parchment are composed in 22 evenly spaced lines, with the calligrapher stretching or enlarging specific portions of specific letters — both to articulate additional meaning in those letters and to achieve an aesthetic balance.

Mezuzah cases are produced from a wide variety of materials, from silver and other metals, to wood, stone, or ceramics.

Hebrew Calligraphy

The written word plays an integral role within Judaism and a wide range of Jewish traditions, intertwining belief and practice through the art of Hebrew Calligraphy. There is no one direct term for Hebrew Calligraphy, though it is sometimes referred to as *ketivah tamah* (whole or fine writing) or *sofrut* (scribal arts).

Ktav s'tam is a form of traditional writing and calligraphy with strict rules and conventions, specifically used by a *sofer s'tam* (scribe) to write the *Sifrei Torah*, *Tefillin*, and *Mezuzot*.



Mizrach, 1990, Aharon Baruch

Mizrach or east, is the direction for prayer within the Jewish tradition, similar to *qibla* in Islam.

When *mizrach* is depicted on a plaque or other work of art within a temple or home, it is called a *mizrach*.

This contemporary Hebrew Calligraphy piece was created using a flow of ink technique, where a blob of ink is placed on the writing surface and then guided by the calligrapher towards a particular direction.

Materials

A *kulmus* (quill) is the most common writing implement, though reed pens have also long featured within Sephardic communities. *Kulmus* are commonly made from turkey feathers by creating a nib at the bottom end. For non-liturgical and non-ritual works, a metal-nib pen may also be used.

The black *d'yo* (ink) used in calligraphy is traditionally made from a mixture of soot, oils, and other natural ingredients.

Klef (parchment) is the most commonly used medium, though two other forms of parchment may also be used depending on the type of text that will be written: *duchsustus* and *gevil*.

Technique

Hebrew Calligraphy requires a keen attention to spacing, rhythm, and the individual components of each letter.

The angle of the *kulmus* or other writing implement used, plays a significant role in ensuring proper widths and edging, critically important in the transitions from the wider to thinner strokes of a letter.

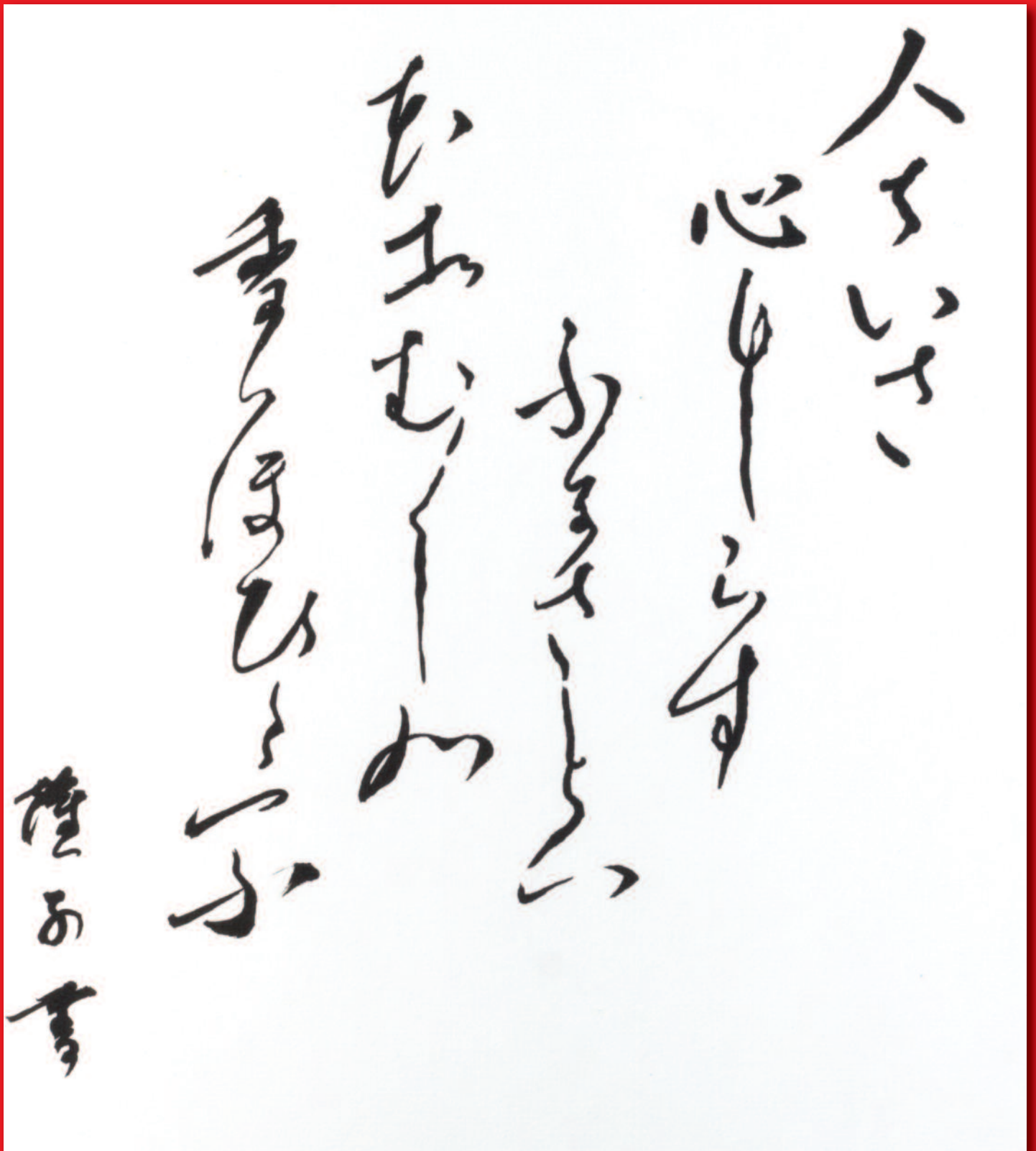
Tagin are the crown shaped decorations that adorn select letters, either in ones or in threes, within the *aleph-bet* (alphabet).

Uses

Hebrew Calligraphy spans a range of artistic and decorative applications, to works used within Jewish ritual practices.

A *sofer s'tam* (scribe) is responsible for composing and repairing a number of hand-written works central to the practice of Judaism, including the *Sifrei Torah* (Torah Scrolls). *Sofer s'tam* are trained in the *sofrut* and must be well versed within a wide range of Jewish customs, writings, and laws.

The handwritten *Sefer Torah* contains over 300,000 individual letters—any error or wear of even a single letter, may make the scroll *pasul* (invalid) and require it to be corrected or repaired.



Tanka by Ki no Tsurayuki, on occasion of returning to his hometown, 2017, Takako Fukuda Truskinovsky

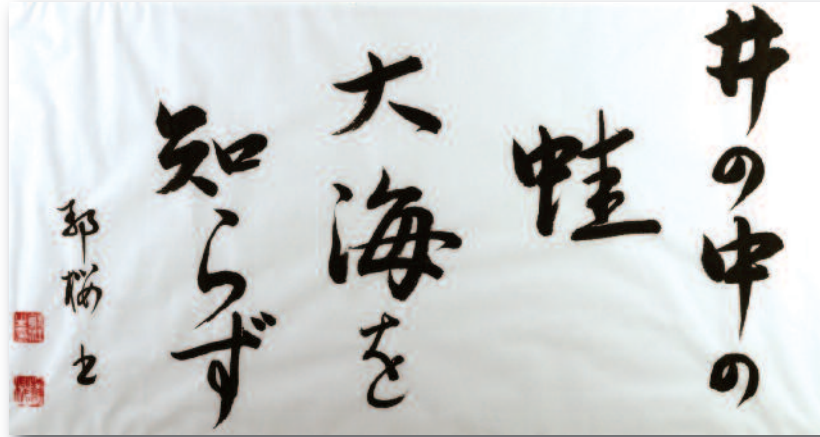
*The state of human
hearts I cannot know and yet
the blossoms of this
familiar village still greet
me with the scent of years past*

This *tanka* by Ki no Tsurayuki (872-945) was included in the *Kokinshu*, a Heian period poetry collection published in the 10th century, and also in the *Hyakunin Isshu*, published in the 13th century, which featured 100 short poems by one hundred different poets. Ki No Tsurayuki was a renowned author, poet, and courtier during the Heian Period, who was especially known for his *tanka* and *waka*.

Japanese Calligraphy

Japanese Calligraphy or *Shodō* (way of writing), emerged in Japan during the Nara period, when the Chinese writing system was first imported and adopted. Intertwined with Chinese Calligraphy, *Shodō* shares some similarities and differences through its separate development.

Shodō can be roughly divided into *Kanji Shodō*, Japanese Calligraphy using the Chinese-based *kanji* syllabary, and *Kana Shodō*, calligraphy in the native Japanese writing systems: *hiragana* and *katakana*.



井の中の蛙大海を知らず *The frog in the well knows nothing of the great ocean*, 2017, Toshie Kenney

This proverb references a fable in the *Zhuangzi*, one of the major books in Daoist philosophy written by Master Zhuang in the 4th century BCE. In the fable, a turtle comes across a frog stuck living in the bottom of a well. The frog claims that the bottom of the well is paradise and boasts that there is no greater body of water than the well where he lives. A curious turtle attempts to enter the well but fails, and instead begins to tell the frog about the immense size of the sea — however the turtle is unsuccessful in convincing the frog to leave his well to explore a new, greater sight.

Materials

A *fude* (brush) comes in a range of sizes and is commonly made out of either horse hair or goat hair.

Sumi (ink) is traditionally made by grinding the soot of the inkstick with water in a *suzuri* (inkstone).

Varieties in paper material, size, and absorbency play a central role in *Shodō*, but are typically made out of fibers from *kozo* (mulberry), *gampi* shrubs, or *mitsumata* plants.

In (seal) contains the etched name of the calligrapher and is stamped on a work once it is complete.

Technique

Calligraphers must balance awareness of the brush's movements and force to manage the design of the strokes, and their proportions— both to the other characters and to the *ma* (space or gap) between.

There are five scripts within *Shodō*: *Tensho* (seal script), *Reisho* (scribe script), *Kaisho* (block script), *Gyōsho* (cursive script), and *Sōsho* (rough script).

Chirashi gaki (scattered writing) is a style used especially for composing *tanka* in *Kana Shodō*, where the lines of poetry are staggered.

Uses

Shodō can be found throughout a range of literary, decorative, and ritual practices within various Japanese cultural traditions.

Tanka or *waka* are a form of short poems dating back to the 8th century, which were often written in *Kana Shodō*.

Chōchinmoji is a specific style of calligraphy letters developed for use on *chōchin* (paper lanterns).

Kakizome (first writing) is a tradition near the New Year where calligraphers write auspicious characters or poetry using *kanji* characters.



A flock of birds darting out of the trees, Startled snakes scurrying into the grass, 2017, Jiannan Wu

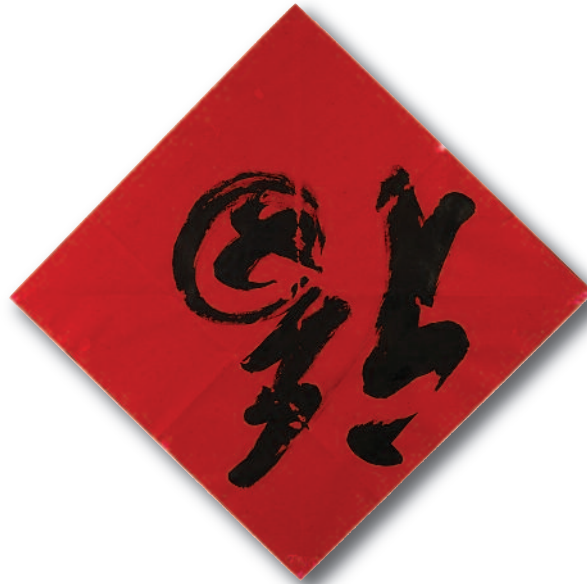
Reference to a critique of calligraphy style attributed to Huaisu, a Tang Dynasty Buddhist monk and calligrapher, known for his rapid, cursive strokes. The full quote highlights the use of two older idioms to describe sudden, direct movements in calligraphy – with the brush fleeing from character to character.

*“Good calligraphy resembles a flock of birds darting out of the trees,
or startled snakes scurrying into the grass,
or cracks bursting in a shattered wall.”*

Nature metaphors play a significant role in the descriptions, criticisms, and aspirations of *Shūfǎ*. Often these take on meanings beyond their direct translations, for example, when *Héng* (a rightward stroke) is combined with *Gōu* (a hook-like stroke), it is sometimes described as a broken branch and *Shù* (a downward stroke) described as a dewdrop or crossbow, depending on the width and focal points of the stroke.

Chinese Calligraphy

Chinese Calligraphy or *Shūfǎ* (way of writing), is seen as one of the most esteemed traditional visual arts in China, with a history stretching back millennia. A long lineage of treatises debating, refining, and describing the proper appearances of characters and ideal strokes of *Shūfǎ* reflect the complex meanings and significance of the written aesthetic form.



福 *Fú*, 2017, Jiannan Wu

Fú, meaning fortune or good luck, is commonly written in calligraphy and displayed around festivals — especially Chinese New Year — and is often written on red paper, with red being a color traditionally associated with luck.

Fú may be displayed upside down — as it is here — to symbolize fortune and good luck coming into the household.

Materials

Wén Fáng Sì Bǎo (four treasures of study) is an expression that articulates the four essential tools in *Shūfǎ*: the brush, ink, paper, and inkstone.

Máo bǐ (brushes) come in a variety of sizes, and a mix of different bristle strength and firmness: its flexibility and fluid movement is central to *Shūfǎ*.

Huàzhān (felt desk pad) may also be used to help prevent ink from bleeding onto a table, and is also sometimes printed with an eight-way grid.

Technique

There are eight basic strokes within *Shūfǎ* that form the basis for most Chinese characters and are usually learned through writing the character 永 *yǒng* (eternal).

Calligraphers balance conventions relating to the proportion and structure of individual strokes and the entire character. Managing the speed, pressure, and grip on the ink brush is necessary to properly control the shifting width and shape of each stroke.

There are five major scripts used in *Shūfǎ* including *Kǎishū* (regular script) and *Xíngshū* (running script).

Uses

Shūfǎ permeates a wide range of beliefs, practices, and decorative applications in traditional culture.

Before the spring festival, two lines of poetry known as *Chūnlián* (spring couplets) are written and displayed near a doorway to usher in the auspicious messages they contain.

Shūfǎ is related to *Guóhuà*, traditional ink brush painting, in sharing similar materials and techniques. *Shūfǎ* is also often used to write poetry. The combination of calligraphy, painting, and poetry in one work is referred to as the *Sānjiué* (three perfections).



一期一會, *One time, one meeting*, 2017, Toshie Kenney

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COVER: (Top) Aharon Baruch with *Mezuzah*; (Bottom) Toshie Kenney with seal.

Three Insets (left to right): *My Country, My Home* (detail), 2017, Muhammad Zahin Zaman, acrylic on wood;

Yosef and the kesones passim (detail), 1996, Aharon Baruch; 福 *Fú* (detail), 2017, Jiannan Wu.



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