

Interview with Rikyu, a Japanese Calligraphy Artist & Designer (Part2)

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Shodo(書道) is the art of expressing the meaning and feeling of words using a brush. It literally means "the way of writing" in Japanese, and those who practice the art are called *shodoka*(書道家).

I get up close and personal with Rikyu(利久), a *shodoka*, as he tells us about the beauty and artistry of Japanese calligraphy. This article is split into two parts, so be sure to check out [part 1](#) as well!

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Q. Who do you want to appreciate Japanese calligraphy?

I want people from all over the world to appreciate Japanese calligraphy.

I always hear from people from other countries that they'd never heard of the thick brush, black ink, and Japanese paper that are used in Japanese calligraphy. So, writing big characters, the fragrance of *shodo* ink, the contrast of black and white, and the perception of white space—everything is a first time for them. I think everyone should try it even at least once, because you never know until you try, right? In my workshop, I usually ask for their favorite words in English, say "beauty" or "peace," and then think of their best translation in Japanese and go from there. "Let loose and enjoy" is our motto and that's what we do. And since we're letting loose, we don't constrict ourselves with black ink. We experiment with colors.



I recommend this to other Japanese, too. Most Japanese experience calligraphy when they're in elementary school, but our experiences aren't really very pleasant. Some end up hating it, or getting "allergic" to it, or even traumatized, so after that, that's it. They never look back. I think that's because Japanese calligraphy lessons in elementary schools are meant to hammer down the rules of "how to write characters correctly," and not encourage one's individuality. It's drab, it's boring, and it's no wonder more than 90% of the students end up hating it.

A lot of the comments I hear from the Japanese participants in my workshops are in the lines of "Wow, I never realized calligraphy can be so much fun," or "It was really fun being able to express myself," or "I realized that my work can be beautiful or sloppy, but either way I own it and I'm having fun!"

Q. Are there any tricks to making beautiful calligraphy?

Each character and line reflects your current mood and feelings, so if you relax and put your heart into it, it shows in your work.



Q. Can you do Japanese calligraphy abroad?

It's good to have calligraphy brush and ink, but even without them nothing can really stop you from having fun abroad.

Actually, I use different tools myself. For example, I've used regular paintbrushes (both for artists and painters), a small desk broom, a dishwashing sponge, a tree branch, and more. And instead of calligraphy ink, any paint or even fountain pen ink will do. If anyone from abroad is interested in joining any of my workshops, I guess we can do it over Skype. I've never done it but it's worth a try.

Q. Tell us where we can buy your artwork and join your workshops.

I hold workshops in my house in Tokyo, but I do travel, too.



My artwork, on the other hand, is displayed in galleries like *Design Festa Gallery* in Harajuku where they're available for purchase. You can check them out on my English website, too, and you can contact me there for inquiries about my workshops as well.

- Official Website: <http://rikyu.main.jp/english/index.html>
- Email Address: rikyu.syohagakika@gmail.com



Q. Tell us your hopes for the future.

I hope to promote Japanese calligraphy to as many people as possible that come from all over the world.

I also want to continue making Japanese calligraphy artworks that inspire them. I hope that the people visiting from other countries can appreciate the Japanese tradition of calligraphy, and I hope that through my workshop they can experience it firsthand and take it with them back home as a memento of their journey in Japan. Furthermore, I want more people to see the exquisite beauty of Japanese calligraphy. Don't miss [part 1!](#)

Q. Tell us what makes your artwork unique.

Most of my works are themed with the four seasons of Japan.

For example, *sakura* (or cherry blossoms), they're very popular among tourists and other non-Japanese. When I fuse imageries of, say, a tree that's raining down its petals, or an old tree in full bloom, you can really feel the gentle serenity of cherry blossoms. Also, I incorporate photographs and collaborate with pressed flower artist to create other interesting fusion works. There are lots of other works that foreign visitors especially love, like when we create *kanji* (or Chinese characters) for their names based on their sounds. For example, I made photograph calligraphy for a guy named Zack that did a homestay with us. He's in this world famous American musical group called "The Young Americans." His dream is to become a musical producer, so I used the characters 座駈 for his name.

Zack = 座駈

- 座(za) = a group entertained
- 駈(ck/ku) = move quickly towards a goal

ZACK



Profile: Rikyu (利久), a Japanese calligraphy artist & designer



- Japanese postcard artist a **Japanese calligraphy artist & designer**
- Born in 1964. From Mie Prefecture. Male.
- Known for his 4 season-themed calligraphies.
- Holds solo gallery shows and exhibits in Tokyo.

Official Website: <http://rikyu.main.jp/english/index.html>

【message from Rikyu】

Here are postcards and greeting cards created featuring Japanese calligraphy:SHODO.
I try to express the image of seasonal sceneries.
Please enjoy the beautiful four seasons in the works.
I put my heart into making each piece of post card.
I send them to my close friends and persons I came to know from time to time.

Now that we are all in the digital societies, I cherish the true value of handwritten and handmade works and the warmth of analog.

From this year(2018),I started to hold a workshop for foreign travelers to Japan and foreigners in Japan (including Japanese people) so that they can enjoy Japanese calligraphy and understand Japanese culture well.

【holding a solo exhibition and joining a exhibition】

1 solo exhibition

- Jun 2015 at HOTEL CLASKA in Tokyo
- Mar to Apr 2016 at Showa Commemorative National Government Park "Showa Kinen Park " in Tokyo
- Aug 2017 at HOTEL CLASKA in Tokyo

2 I joined the exhibition of Mr.Nobuo SUGINO's pressed flowers.
Mr.SUGINO is a very famous artist of pressed flowers in the world.
Some pieces of my works were exhibited as art of combination of pressed flowers and calligraphy.

- Dec 2014 at Mitsukoshi's main store in Nihonbashi, Tokyo
- Jan to Feb 2015 at
- Dec 2016 at Mitsukoshi's main store in Nihonbashi, Tokyo
- Dec 2018 at Mitsukoshi's main store in Nihonbashi, Tokyo

Photos has taken by Kota Wada



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