



Taka Ishii

Gallery

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Sofu Teshigahara

Dates: February 10 – March 16, 2024

Location: Taka Ishii Gallery (complex665)

Opening Reception: Saturday, February 10, 17:00 – 19:00

Taka Ishii Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition of the work of Sofu Teshigahara from Saturday, February 10 to Saturday, March 16. Teshigahara, the founder of the Sogetsu School of ikebana flower arrangement, was not only a leading figure in postwar avant-garde ikebana, but also forged connections with the contemporary art world both in Japan and internationally, rising to prominence as a visual artist. This solo show, his second at Taka Ishii Gallery, will feature approximately 15 works, primarily two-dimensional pieces such as calligraphy on folding screens and paintings with Mount Fuji as a central theme.

I believe that flowers can be derived from calligraphy, and calligraphy from flowers.

There is an inherent connection between their forms. The spreading of a plant's branches, and of its roots...

These really are the origins of the characters we write. I find this so incredible sometimes.

Sofu Teshigahara (quoted in Sekijo Kaneda, *Marui kao shikakui kao* ["Round Face, Square Face"], Seisei Shuppan, March 2000)

Sofu Teshigahara identified three elements of ikebana composition: line, color, and mass. He particularly emphasized line, advocating for boldly sculpting flowers rather than simply relying on their natural beauty, a process that involved cutting unwanted stems, bending flowers, and fixing them in place. In addition to ikebana and sculpture, Teshigahara produced numerous calligraphic works. He was inspired by similarities between ikebana and calligraphy, both of which are composed of lines (stems or branches). His characters exude a plant-like organic energy, as though the concepts they represent are bursting free from the shells of pictographic kanji. As seen in his "Hakuun" (White Cloud) series of the 1950s-70s, this energy accentuated by applying color to the ground (the areas around the characters) under the figure (characters). This also has the effect of incorporating relationships between line and mass in ikebana into calligraphic works.

Beginning in the early 1960s, Teshigahara prolifically produced works with Mount Fuji as their main theme, including folding screens, oil paintings, and watercolors. From his villa on the shores of Lake Yamanaka, he observed the revered mountain from before sunrise until nightfall, capturing its "eternally changing and endlessly flowing" essence with a wide-ranging color palette, soft lines, and swift, sketch-like brushstrokes. While Teshigahara's sculptures and calligraphy often depict fierce nature and convey awe and dread toward

it, his Fuji works radiate gentle emotion, as if cherishing a familiar companion. The works also reveal the powerful creative drive that caused him to respond instantly to shifts in his emotions, and compelled him to give shape to these feelings through art.

In recent years Sofu Teshigahara's work has enjoyed ongoing critical reappraisal, and is scheduled to be featured in the 8th Yokohama Triennale, *Wild Grass: Our Lives*, opening in March of this year.

Sofu Teshigahara was born in 1900 as the eldest son of Ikebana artist Wafu Teshigahara. Starting to take lessons in Ikebana from childhood, he gradually began to attract attention for his outstanding talent; however, in questioning the formalistic traditions of Ikebana he broke away from his father to establish the Sogetsu School of Ikebana in 1927. He eventually came to lead the postwar "avant-garde Ikebana movement" together with Houun Ohara and Yukio Nakagawa, which deviated from conventional practices of Ikebana. While actively carrying out exhibitions and demonstrations of Ikebana both in Japan and across Europe and the United States from the 1950s to the 1970s, Teshigahara had involved himself in the production of numerous sculptures, paintings, calligraphy, and collage works. Also engaging with postwar avant-garde art movements such as Jikken Kobo [Experimental Workshop], Art Informel, and the Gutai group, he had worked to introduce a wide range of avant-garde art to Japan, including the events by John Cage and David Tudor (1962) and Merce Cunningham Dance Company's Japan performance (1964) that were held at the Sogetsu Art Center under the direction of his son Hiroshi. Actively pursuing his creative practice until his late years, Teshigahara passed away in 1979.

Teshigahara's main exhibitions include, "Sofu Teshigahara in the Postwar Avant-Garde Era," the Setagaya Art Museum, Tokyo (2001); "Sogetsu and Its Contemporaries," the Ashiya City Museum of Art and History, and the Chiba City Museum of Art (1998-99); "The Sculpture of Sofu Teshigahara," The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto (1967); Haus Mei, Cologne (1972); the Palais Galliera, Paris (1971); the Middelheim Museum, Antwerp (1971); the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels (1966); Lincoln Center, New York (1964); Sala Gaspar, Barcelona (1959); Stadler Gallery, Paris (1959 and 1961); Martha Jackson Gallery, New York (1959); and the Château de Bagatelle, Paris (1955). He has participated in group exhibitions such as "Art Contemporain," Grand Palais, Paris (1963); "Dalla natura all'arte," Palazzo Grassi, Venice (1960); "International Art of a New Era: Informel and Gutai," the Takashimaya Department Store, Osaka (1958); "International Contemporary Art Exhibition of the World," the Bridgestone Museum of Art, Tokyo (1957); and "Abstract Art and Surrealism," The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (1953). In 1962 Teshigahara received The Minister of Education, Science and Culture's Art Encouragement Prize, as well as the Legion of Honor Knight's cordon and the insignia of Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters by the French Government in 1961 and 1960 respectively.

For further information, please contact:

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Tue-Sat 12:00 – 19:00 Closed on Sun, Mon, and National Holidays



Sofu Teshigahara

“Mandala” , 1978

Six-panel folding screens, ink on silk

175.5 x 369.8 x 1.8 cm

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Photo: Kenji Takahashi