Zen Violence: The Legacy of Nantenbō Tōjū's Calligraphy in the Postwar Avant-Garde

Abstract

Rinzai Zen priest Nantenbō Tōjū (1839–1925), an important figure in modern Japanese Buddhism, was also a prominent calligrapher. His eccentric large-scale works inspired avant-garde artists of the Gutai and Bokujinkai groups, and reverberated globally in postwar abstract art.

Known for his close ties with the Meiji military, particularly General Nogi Maresuke (1849–1912), Nantenbō promoted the values of "Imperial-Way Zen." This article shows how Nantenbō's calligraphy, which channeled the militarist ideology of the Japanese Empire, fed into the postwar avant-garde and complicated Zen's role in the politically charged art of the cultural Cold War.

Introduction

Kaiseiji is a small temple of the Zen Rinzai school in the city of Nishinomiya, close to Kobe. Situated across the street from the Nishinomiya City Office, the municipal parking lot is adjacent to the temple entrance. Behind the massive wooden gates that demarcate the temple premises, a stone path leads to the main temple hall. As you walk along it, the sounds of the busy street gradually recede, but cranes from a nearby construction site suddenly emerge above the temple roofs, reinserting the bustle of life into the otherwise serene architecture **(fig. 1)**.

Kaiseiji temple, quiet, tranquil, and relatively modest, once played host to one of the most stunning performances of twentieth-century Japan, functioning as a place of encounter between traditional Zen practices, the postwar avant-garde, and global art audiences. The calligraphic work of Nantenbō Tōjū (1839–1925), Kaiseiji's priest of twenty-three years, reverberated through the postwar avant-garde scene, first in the Kansai region, and then worldwide, inspiring and guiding artists through the stormy waters of Cold War era art.

Visual cross-currents between modern monastic Zen and the global avant-garde cut across many fields, but are particularly apparent in the realm of calligraphy. Through the lens of Nantenbō's works and its later reception, this article explores the complex and often contradictory role of Zen in modern Japan, from its ultranationalist incarnation in the service of the Empire during the Pacific War, known as "Imperial-Way Zen," to the postwar pacifist Zen of the international Zen boom. Specifically, I argue that besides notions of spirituality, spontaneity and pacifism, postwar calligraphic representations of Zen informed by Nantenbō's art infused postwar abstraction with references to the Japanese Empire's ultranationalism.[1] After the war, veiled allusions to the wartime ideology of Japanese colonial expansion helped to reaffirm abstraction as a means of asserting Japan's national interests at a time when "art became rapidly entangled in the cultural politics of the Cold War."[2] In contrast to the common perception of postwar Zen as championing a pacifist agenda that offered a "solution to spiritual anxiety" in the

modern world, I suggest that its role in postwar art was more complex and ambiguous.[3] Through calligraphic links between prewar ultranationalist Imperial-Way Zen and its postwar pacifist counterpart, in visual terms the two formed a direct continuum, similar to the cultural productions of other spheres.

In a visual then sociopolitical analysis of two of Nantenbō's most resonant works, I show how calligraphy, often perceived as a Zen art form, embodied visual references to the aggressive ideology of the Japanese Empire, when "Japanese Buddhism was of one piece with imperialism and militarism."[4] In order to see how this obtained in Nantenbō's calligraphy, I scrutinize the connection between Nantenbō and a celebrated military hero of the Japanese Empire, General Nogi Maresuke, and the art born as a result—which would be picked up and internalized by postwar artists several decades later.

Compared to other art forms, calligraphy serves as an exceptionally accurate marker of the shifts in Zen narratives for several reasons. Persistently represented as a "Zen art" by modern philosophers and art theoreticians, calligraphy was lauded by one of the globally acclaimed postwar Zen campaigners, Hisamatsu Shin'ichi, for addressing "spiritual matters" and representing "wisdom itself."[5] For postwar calligraphers, claiming direct lineage from famous Zen monks such as Ryōkan or Hakuin helped catch the eye of global audiences with remarkable alacrity, opening for them the most prestigious contemporary art venues. Calligraphy, which does not have a direct analog in the Eurocentric art system, became the epitome of Japan's spirituality, impenetrable to outsiders and yet irresistibly alluring, with strong postwar transcultural flows of calligraphy mirroring the transcultural flows of Zen.

Dragon and Tiger Screens from Kaiseiji

After entering Kaiseiji's gate and walking down the path to the building, and then along a quiet passage to the main hall, you suddenly come face-to-face with a set of utterly spectacular screens. The impression

they make is so strong that they resonated not only around the era of their creation in 1914, but also decades later among the postwar avant-gardists.

Created in the early Taishō era, they seem to come from a totally different age, or, rather, a timeless space that inserts ancient legends into the current moment and bridges generations of Zen monastics. Matthew Welch notes that the screens "twist and convulse with ominous and explosive energy" as if "caught in a maelstrom with the turbulence of elemental forces bursting all around."[6] The eight-panel sliding doors parade eight massive characters, one per screen. The ink splashes, each a record of a forceful whirlwind of movement and creative frenzy, perform a spectacular balancing act between frozen dynamism and calculated proportion (**fig. 4**).

Each massive character fits perfectly within the frame of its screen, without disturbing the impression of incredible force. Spectacular in size and unconventional in style and ink-splashing technique, they form an artistic and spiritual unity of expression, evoking Nantenbō's personality—his strong physical presence and vehement spirit. Taken together, the screens create a space that reflects Nantenbō's ideal of Buddhism: direct, uncompromising, and bursting with energy, as well as establishing Kaiseiji "as a vital creative arena for artists in the twentieth […] century."[7]

While the screens are created to impress with visual immediacy, the meaning of the characters is also evocative. Emphatically cursive, they can be deciphered with some effort to form a phrase from the Chinese classics that alludes to primordial forces:

> 龍吟初夜、虎嘯五更
>
> Ryū wa ginzu shoya, tora wa usobuku gokō
>
> The dragon cries at dusk, the tiger roars at dawn.

This phrase refers to Chapter 14 of the Chan Buddhist classic Five Lanterns, which is a late Southern Song dynasty (thirteenth-century) biographical compilation about Linji. This saying was later also used in

Japan, including in Zenrin Kushū (禪林句集), or Anthology of Passages from the Forests of Zen, a collection of capping phrases for Zen training in Nantenbō's Rinzai school.[8] These phrases were originally intended as clues for riddles grounded in Buddhist and classical Chinese knowledge, a learning aid for mastering kōan, which became monumentalized in Nantenbō's rendering. The forceful beasts from this phrase, rather than being cryptic creatures from Chinese mythology, become fierce animals, albeit in ink. Nantenbō's screens breathe life—vigorous and untamed—into ancient Chinese words, and fill the modern Japanese temple with the literary space of Song-dynasty Chan, reincarnated in ink splatters. Coming from Nantenbō's brush, this calligraphy of canonical Chinese is anything but dogmatic and static, but rather very much alive and physically powerful. The dragon and tiger find a perfect incarnation in ink, and their encounter with each other becomes a dance, a battle, and a play.

In what follows, I trace the impact of these screens on postwar abstraction, and in particular on the mode of ink splashes, from avant-garde calligraphy to Mark Tobey and Jackson Pollock, before delving deeper in the second part of this paper into the socio-political context of their creation and Nantenbō's related performance inspired by General Nogi Maresuke.

Nantenbō Tōjū and Modern Zen in Japan

As an artwork clearly associated with Zen, the Kaiseiji screens resounded with new strength in the early 1950s, not only thanks to their visual qualities, but also to the intellectual and cultural atmosphere of early postwar Japan. While the country was recovering from war, Japan's cultural institutions and their agents endeavored to rebrand their country as a democratic and peaceful member of the international community, and the Allies, especially the United States, supported these efforts by drawing the attention of the public away from wartime associations and towards Japan's spirituality and cultural legacy. In the context of the unfolding Cold War, artists, writers, and philosophers found themselves leveraging the

diplomatic potential of Zen as an emblem of creativity and spirituality, making postwar Zen resound globally as a meditation chant—pacifying, self-aware, and omnipresent.

Postwar Zen claimed to carry nothing less than a "universal message of salvation—semper, ubique et pro omnibus."[9] A constellation of Zen proselytizers who spoke about the language of Zen—including Suzuki Daisetsu, Alan Watts, and Hisamatsu Shin'ichi—made it their mission to bring this message to the world. The Zen they promulgated was intended to "engage the world's mystical and spiritual traditions and heal the damages of modernity."[10] Many Euro-American and Japanese artists reached for the promises of Zen as a way out of the moral and philosophical crises of the war, but also as a foundation for a new international cultural dialogue.[11] Renewed attention to Zen presented an opportunity to reengage with some of the older Japanese Buddhist art as well, from the rock garden of the Ryōanji temple to the art of Sengai Gibon, elevating them to the status of global Zen icons.[12] Nantenbō Tōjū's work, little known outside monastic circles before the war, reaped a second chance at broader recognition.

Since his postwar rediscovery, Nantenbō Tōjū (sometimes referred to as Nakahara Nantenbō) has become one of the most widely represented modern Zen artists in the world **(fig. 2)**. Many international art institutions—from the San Francisco Museum of Asian Art to the Berlin Museum of Asian Art and the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney—have his work in their collections. Nantenbō is rightly regarded as a modern Zen master "who carried Zen into the twentieth century."[13] At the same time, his views and self-perception suggest that he "essentially remained a man of the Tokugawa period."[14] In particular, he ardently reinforced the hierarchies and discipline of the Rinzai school and was rigidly inflexible in his beliefs. But he was also innovative in fostering his community of lay followers, and, though somewhat less known than celebrated Edo-period monks such as Sengai Gibon or Nantenbō's role model and predecessor in the Rinzai school, Hakuin Ekaku, Nantenbō provided a link between Zen visualities rooted in the Sino-Japanese classical tradition and the realities of rapidly transforming Meiji Japan.[15]

Nantenbō's name is also evocative as a sobriquet that literally means "stick of nanten, or nandina" and refers to his staff, a symbol of "institutional authority of Zen masters."[16] During his travels in Kyushu in 1873, Nantenbō discovered an old nandina bush, declaring it "a perfect dragon-quelling shippei [Zen training stick], [to become] an instrument of the Law [to] resound for countless generations."[17] This claim proved prophetic, though probably not in the ways he anticipated. Beyond the religious circles of modern Japan, Nantenbō's name also resonated across postwar Japanese arts, providing a model of Zen expressivity and immediacy for avant-gardists.

Nantenbō's calligraphy and personality are equally idiosyncratic. He did not consider himself to be an artist, but rather an amateur who expressed his Zen insight through his calligraphy and ink painting. He created a multitude of works, especially in his later years—over 100,000 ink paintings and calligraphies in the twenty-three years before his death at eighty-seven—regularly fulfilling requests from members of his extensive Zen community that later found their way into a wide range of collections, both private and public.[18] As he commented,

> I don't know of any magical quality about my bokuseki [Zen calligraphy], but recently everywhere I go I am asked again and again to write. […] The other day a young monk checked the records and there were 89,000 requests for my bokuseki. […] Requests for my calligraphy have come from the United States, Hawaii, France, China, Manchuria, Korea and from all over Japan. I am also asked to write at various meetings.[19]

As a result, his works are scattered across Japan and the world.

Welch classified the recurring themes of Nantenbō's works into sixteen types, which include Daruma icons, self-portraits, his nandina stick, oxen as a reference to the Chinese Zen painting tradition, the ensō circle, and Nantenbō's own handprint—all referring to the existing traditions of monastic Zen art, with a modern twist **(fig. 3)**.[20]

Nantenbō was thus both a vestige of the past, sometimes thought of as a dinosaur from the strict monastic world order, and a witness to the political turbulence of first the Meiji and then the Taishō eras, along with the tumult it brought to Japanese Buddhism. In fact, the generational gap between him and postwar avant-garde artists was surprisingly small. Nantenbō's life overlapped with Yoshihara Jirō's, the leader of the Gutai group, by twenty years, and with Morita Shiryū's, one of the leaders of the Bokujinkai avant-garde calligraphy group, by thirteen. The proximity was also geographical: situated in the center of the Kansai region—the hotbed of Japan's postwar avant-garde—Nantenbō's artworks in Kaiseiji were only 20 minutes on a bicycle from Ashiya, the center of Gutai activity, and an hour by train from Kyoto, where the Bokujinkai were based. These chronological and geographical factors facilitated the creative synergies between the prewar and postwar artists.

Postwar Reception of Nantenbō's Kaiseiji Screens

Even with the most favorable circumstances, it took a stroke of luck for Nantenbō's screens from Kaiseiji to gain broader visibility within postwar art circles. In April 1952, the future leader of the Gutai group, Yoshihara Jirō, attended his brother-in-law's funeral at Kaiseiji. From where he was seated during the ceremony, Yoshihara could see a small part of Nantenbō's screens, and was absolutely captivated by their energy and ink splashes. When he was able to approach the screens and view them in their entirety, Yoshihara was stunned: "Rather than calligraphy, what I saw was a visual expression (zōkei), a painting, something that we painters and modern artists are longing for, searching for very painfully, be it through calligraphy or painting. And there it was, totally unexpectedly, right in front of my eyes […]—a strong feeling of material presence (jittai) through visual representation."[21] After this initial encounter there followed a series of visits, discussions and artistic studies of Nantenbō's works by avant-garde artists.

As abstract painter Suda Kokuta recollects, "I got a phone call from Yoshihara-kun, who invited me to go and look at calligraphy by Nantenbō. Together with Yamazaki Takao, the three of us went—we were

absolutely astonished the moment we saw it."[22] Other artists whom Yoshihara introduced to Nantenbō included Morita Shiryū, Shimamoto Shōzō, and Shiraga Kazuo. Only a few months after Yoshihara's "discovery," Nantenbō's screens and calligraphic legacy received an unusual spotlight in the avant-garde community.

In July 1952, an important group of Kansai-based avant-garde artists met to discuss Nantenbō's works. Organized and then published by the Kyoto-based Bokujinkai calligraphy group, the roundtable discussion included Gutai's Yoshihara Jirō, Bokujinkai's Morita Shiryū, abstract painter Suda Kokuta, and art critic Arita Kōhō, as well as a priest of Kaiseiji, Kasumi Bunshō, and a Kaiseiji monk, Yamada Yosakichi. The meeting took place in Kaiseiji's main worship hall, directly in front of the dragon and tiger screens. This conversation, transcribed and published in the special issue of the Bokubi calligraphy journal, along with spectacular illustrations and close-ups of Nantenbō's screens, was circulated in the avant-garde community in Japan, and later also abroad.

The leading artists of their day discussed Nantenbō's works in the presence of the "highly charged, frantic shapes" of the tiger and dragon screens, in "an unsettling environment of great power and violent movement," wrapped in the forceful characters and traces of Nantenbō's strong physical presence.[23] Enclosed in the visual and spiritual space of Nantenbō's physicality, the artists contemplated the screens, reflected on their relation to Buddhism, listened to accounts of Nantenbō's life in the temple, theorized about his association with contemporary art and automatism, and together with the abbot Kasumi Bunshō, carefully considered Zen's manifestations in calligraphy. Yamada Yosakichi, the monk from Kaiseiji who had assisted Nantenbō with creating the screens, offered a first-hand account of the process of their creation:

> In this hall used to stand the eight-panel screens with Chinese landscape. The teacher [Nantenbō] wrote his work on their reverse side. […] Before starting to write, he lifted his white clothes, tied up his sleeves, poured saké into a deep food bowl (donburi-bachi), and drank in a gulp as much as he could. This is what he did every time before brushing large characters. Then he would squat

and say, “OK, now I have it! (Yoshi, kita!),” take the brush, and there would be not a moment of break.[24]

Yamada’s first-hand accounts of Nantenbō’s remarkable writing style, and the intense, immersive, shared experience by this group of artists, led to a full reconsideration of Nantenbō’s oeuvre and his place in modern visual culture. Full of energy and spontaneity, Nantenbō’s calligraphy strikingly resonated with the splashes and automatism of the postwar decades. Avant-gardists were deeply inspired by the vitality and non-conventional character of these panels, and, as Yoshihara said, “found in them what they were longing for.”

Shimamoto Shōzō, one of the Gutai artists whom Yoshihara introduced to Nantenbō’s screens, remembers visiting Kaiseiji with his fellow artists and being deeply inspired, calling Nantenbō “a hooligan of a calligrapher (abarenbō).” In particular, Gutai artists were inspired by the massive ink splash in the first character, “dragon,” which they believed was made by a foot kick (**fig. 5**).

Splashes produced by this kick flew across two further screens, and Shimamoto and others mused that this effect was unattainable in oil paint; it was possible only in ink, thanks to its ability to “float (hotobashiru), bleed (nijimu), drip (tareru), or fade roughly off the brush (kasureru).” This insight stimulated young artists to do something radically new with oil paint: inspired by Nantenbō’s screens, Gutai’s Shiraga Kazuo pioneered foot painting, Murakami created images by piercing through canvases, and Shimamoto, who commented that he was “not as physically strong as Shiraga or Murakami,” invented a technique of shooting paint from a gun, and then throwing a glass ball filled with paint “to create a painting using the momentum when it breaks.”[25] All of them thus reinterpreted and reintegrated ikioi, the energy and momentum they saw in Nantenbō’s screens in Kaiseiji.

Art theorists also recognized Nantenbō’s modern appeal. The seminal volume, Avant-Garde Art in Japan, published first in French and then in English in New York as a collaboration between the French star critic Michel Tapié and Japanese artist and critic Haga Toru, opens with an abstract painting by Yoshihara

Jirō and Nantenbō's ink sketch of his staff—a perfect visual parallel to frame the creative potential of Zen for contemporary art, and the synergy between cutting-edge abstraction and Nantenbō's calligraphy.[26] Meanwhile, in preparation for their 1954 show of Japanese calligraphy, the Museum of Modern Art included Nantenbō (spelled Natembo) in the list of the most important graphic artists of Japan.[27]

Nantenbō's direct expressivity, spontaneity, and immediacy performed on the Kaiseiji screens was perceived by avant-gardists as a manifestation of the direct Zen experience, a moment of enlightenment, as rationality overridden by unmediated expression. Abbot Kasumi Bunshō, head of the Kaiseiji temple, explained that "as a monk, who lives in the realm of enlightenment, [Nantenbō] has grasped its essence with all his senses, and vented this feeling into his signs."[28] In his characters, "ink seems to fly from his brush, and we can sense the energy and concentration with which the calligraphy was created."[29]

Ascribed to Zen and enlightenment when in the context of Buddhist calligraphy, in the context of modern art, on the other hand, these features—uncontrolled expressivity vented in creative frenzy—could also be attributed to a manifestation of the unconscious. French action painter Georges Mathieu, for instance, familiar with East Asian calligraphic history and fond of China's wild cursive tradition, consciously stressed speed in his action performances, including those he staged in Japan in 1957.[30] The key words picked by one of Japan's leading newspapers, the Yomiuri Shinbun, to describe Mathieu's style, "speed, intuition, and excitement," resonated with Nantenbō's style.[31] Like Mathieu, the speed of art creation was important to the Rinzai priest, who linked it to the preservation of momentum, and ultimately, to breathing. According to Nantenbō, "Whilst writing a character, you shall not breathe, or the character will die. Do not let the energy (ki) rest before the character is complete, but instead keep writing on one breath (ikki) without losing any of the energy. If you don't write with your guts, characters are dead."[32] The direct, immediate expression in art, seen both in Nantenbō's works and in postwar abstraction, was interpreted by avant-garde artists as "automatism." During the discussion at Kaiseiji, abstract painter Suda Kokuta's comment on Nantenbō's relation to automatism was that "Nantenbō himself bursts out of his calligraphy. In calligraphy, through the ways the lines are drawn, through all the technical

accomplishments, the existential, the automatic (ōtomachikku), comes through, and all of the personality of the author in its entirety comes to light. Nothing is being suppressed here, as happens in figurative painting, and so calligraphy is fully and entirely a representation of the spirit (abusotorakushon [abstraction])."[33]

Japanese avant-garde artists intuitively identified in Nantenbō's screens some key visual characteristics of global abstraction that resonated with works of their Euro-American peers. As Yoshihara Jirō put it in his comment in the Bokubi roundtable discussion, "the ink splatters [of Nantenbō's characters] possess the same charm as the flowing beauty of Kline's ink, or enamel splatters by Pollock."[34] Artists who were studying Zen or other East Asian belief systems, such as Taoism, including Mark Tobey, Robert Motherwell, Pierre Alechinsky, and Jean Degottex, often produced very similar visual outcomes. While many of these artists never saw Nantenbō's works, or only encountered them through reproductions in the Bokubi journal, the visual expressions born from the nexus of contemporary abstract painting and Zen were strikingly similar; strong black and white contrast, dynamic lines, and spectacular ink splashes formed a universal visual language of Zen understood globally. Mark Tobey grasped the gist of this visual mode is his Space Ritual No. 1 (**fig. 6**). Created while the artist was reading D.T. Suzuki's writings on Zen Buddhist aesthetics, it reflects ideas contained in Suzuki's books.[35]

Suzuki's admonition that "Zen takes hold of life in its wholeness and moves 'restlessly' with it" led Tobey to an identical visual expression to Nantenbō's.[36] Hisamatsu also echoed Suzuki, suggesting that relying on spiritual experiences "allows the calligrapher to abandon himself in his calligraphy, which, in turn, results in the splashed ink style."[37] Creativity channeled through splashed ink corresponded to several characteristics of Zen art proclaimed by both Suzuki and Hisamatsu, such as imbalance, simplification, and freedom from attachment, and at the same time satisfied the avant-gardist longing for spontaneous and immediate expression.[38]

In the 1950s, dynamic ink splashes signified non-mediation of mind in art creation, and international and Japanese artists alike interpreted this visual quality in Zen terms. As Tobey writes,

> I never know when I can paint; I just have to bring myself into a state and forget all things if possible to make a union with what I am doing, and the less I think of it—the Painting and myself—the better the result. There is a famous Zen or Tao verse, in translation thus:
>
> Behind the technique, know
> That there is the spirit (ri)
> It is dawning now:
> Open the screen,
> And look, the moonlight is
> Shining in.[39]

For Tobey, the immediacy of art creation and the absence of conscious involvement was a sign of Zen. In the verse he cites, moonlight is a metaphor for Zen wisdom, and to let the moonlight "shine in" the art, the "spirit" has to drive the brush.

Avant-garde calligraphers likewise embraced this expressive technique as a marker of Zen. Morita Shiryū's Kanzan, exhibited, like Tobey's Space Ritual, at the fifth São Paulo Biennial in 1959, employs Nantenbō's signature ink splashes (**fig. 7**). The subject of this calligraphy, Kanzan, or Hanshan in Chinese, refers to the eccentric Chinese poet-recluse of the Tang dynasty, one of the most beloved East Asian Zen icons, highlighting the non-conformist behavior of Zen monks. Morita's writing style—extremely fast, seemingly uncontrolled and utterly expressive—alludes to the unconventionality of Kanzan's image. Morita was strategic in selecting this work for the prestigious São Paulo venue—foreign audiences were familiar with the poetic legacy of Kanzan, also known as Cold Mountain, through prominent translations by Ezra Pound and Gary Snyder. Morita's subject was a calculated choice.[40]

Morita closely studied Nantenbō's Kaiseiji screens, and in his comments particularly valued their spirituality manifested in corporeal intensity: "[Nantenbō's Kaiseiji screens] are great works, from the drive they demonstrate, and from the concentration of the entire spiritual and physical power they contain."[41]

Ironically, the perception that Zen experience, or the union with the subconscious, manifests itself in splashes of ink seems to have become conventionalized among both calligraphers and painters in the 1950s. The swift brush strokes, strong color contrasts, and flying ink or enamel splashes indicated Zen, its "intuitive, in-the-moment, spontaneous expression."[42] This easily recognizable technique, shared by calligraphers and painters, became a marker of postwar international Zen, presented as a universal pacifist spiritual force, and a perfect creative alternative to the materialist values and political cruelties of the twentieth century, the Zen "viewed in spiritual and therapeutic terms."[43]

Suppressed Zen Histories: Calligraphy Performance in Memory of General Nogi

The celebrated pacifist narrative of postwar Zen overshadowed the darker side of modern Zen, often deliberately overlooked. Like Japanese wartime propaganda painting, carefully erased from Japan's collective memory after the war, Zen also suffered significant "memory lapses" throughout its modern history. Just as the "rediscovery" of Japanese war painting in the 1990s provided a turning point for the generation of contemporary Japanese artists of the early 2000s, from Murakami Takashi to Aida Makoto, resurfaced memories of Zen involvement with nationalism and the war effort catalyzed a more critical reconsideration of modern Zen. Thanks to the pathbreaking work of religious studies scholars and historians, from Ichikawa Hakugen to Brian Daizen Victoria, Robert Sharf, and Christopher Ives, we know that Zen in Japan, including modern Zen, was sadly not immune to the moral disasters of the twentieth century and was instrumentalized, like many other cultural productions, for the war effort.[44] As

these scholars document, “Zen Buddhist leaders contributed actively to Japanese imperialism, giving rise to what has been termed ‘Imperial-Way Zen’ (kōdō Zen).”[45]

In what follows, I investigate how the two Zen narratives—of postwar Zen pacifism and its aggressive wartime alter-ego—coexisted during the postwar international Zen boom, mutually supporting each other in the work of postwar artists. The militarist undertones of Imperial-Way Zen, which “acted in concert with the state and its military,” migrated into the postwar pacifist narratives and were surprisingly useful for artists navigating the once again rearming world shaped by the Cold War.[46]

Nantenbō’s large calligraphic screens from Kaiseiji contain references to the darker side of modern Zen. The large expressive characters are accompanied by a colophon, written in a much more contained and organized manner and placed prominently on the first screen (**fig. 5)**, which reads:

> 乃木大将大石碑残墨書（焉）
>
> Nogi Taishō daisekihi zanboku sho
>
> Created with ink remaining from the great stone stele for General Nogi

At least two other calligraphies by Nantenbō, Katsu (in the Berlin Museum of Asian Art) and folding screens with Nogi’s poem (in the New Orleans Museum of Art), contain similar colophons linking their creation to the ink remaining from the performance in Nogi’s memory (**figs. 8 and 9**). Together, the three works indicate that this performance was particularly important to Nantenbō, and that he regarded it as central to his oeuvre. The story of this earlier calligraphy to commemorate General Nogi links directly to the militarist legacy of modern Japanese Zen, and demonstrates how the narratives of postwar pacifist and wartime Imperial-Way Zen are intertwined historically and visually in the cultural legacy of twentieth-century calligraphy.

As one of General Nogi Maresuke’s close friends and mentors, Nantenbō Tōjū received a request to create an inscription in his honor following Nogi’s death. Nantenbō was commissioned by the officials of

the city of Kobe to inscribe a stone stele to commemorate the celebrated military leader of the Meiji era, elevated posthumously to the status of national hero. The stele, unfortunately, has not survived, but the record of the dramatic and unconventional manner in which Nantenbō created the inscription is as powerful as the calligraphy itself must have been, and matches in scale and ambition General Nogi's fame. Nantenbō recollects:

> The Largest Characters I Wrote in My Life
>
> Under the auspices of the mayor of Kobe, Kajima Hidemaro, a stele to commemorate the war dead (chūkonpi 忠魂碑) in honor of General Nogi was to be erected in Hiyodori Park in Nagata ward, and I was asked to brush characters for the stele. On a piece of silk 6 shaku wide by 20 shaku long (60 ft x 19.6 ft), I was supposed to write seven characters, "乃木大将忠魂碑 Nogi Taishō chūkonpi). I used 4 to of ink (just over 72 gallons) […].
>
> I decided to write in the square in front of Kaiseiji temple. This was on the 27th day of the twelfth month. I said that I would definitely write that day, so the donors came.
>
> […] I got everything prepared at the square, but then I didn't have enough saké, so I said "not yet, not yet." Then I made a sudden loud shout. Around two in the afternoon, everyone was hurrying me up saying "write soon, write soon!" but I was still answering "not yet, not yet!" and taking another cup [of saké] in my hand. Soon, after drinking three shō of saké (over 5.4 gallons), I said "ok, let's write." I threw away the cup and stood up. I took off my upper kimono (hifu), cast it away, and tied my sleeves in a cross with water-colored ribbons. I took a huge brush with both hands, just the tip of which measured 1 shaku 5 sun and 5 bu (ca. 2.13 ft), dipped it into the bowl of ink, let it soak in as much ink as possible, made the assistant squeeze the rest, took a deep breath in, and made a loud shout "Ya!" Then I'm drawing the brush with wet ink quickly like "sa-sa-

> sa"… The droplets of ink fly from the brush to the faces of the assistant and everyone else around, making them black. Everyone looks like chimney sweeps. After brushing the character "丿" (No), I kicked the hane [tail] for it with the sound "suba!" But this wasn't all—a blob of ink the size of a dango [dumpling] flew off, and left a huge round coal-like stain on the ceiling. "Now the General can rest in peace!"—I shouted loudly, then took a porcelain stamp […] made in the soldier's home (haihei'in) in Osaka […], and had the assistant stamp it. Those were the largest characters of my life. It took 4 to of ink (over 72 gallons), and 1 to (4.7 gallons) of saké. At that point, some calligraphers who had also come to watch, said that this was the first time they had seen somebody write characters by kicking with their feet.[47]

With such a spectacular account, it almost does not matter that the original calligraphy is currently untraceable. For this work, it was clearly not the final result, but the process and the performance that signified the artistic gesture and embodied Zen spontaneity—what would become, in Zwi Werblowski's terms, "a culturally stereotyped spontaneity."[48] Nantenbō's final mighty kick was so mind-boggling for avant-gardists that it rippled across their works, such as in Tōkyū kaiga (Work Painted by Throwing a Ball) by Gutai's Murakami Saburō, where a blot created from throwing a ball into the painting plane leaves a trace that indeed recalls—suba!—the dumpling of Nantenbō's performance (**fig. 10**).

The image of a wildly moving and shouting priest, splashing ink to the ceiling and getting into an altered state using saké, certainly flabbergasted his guests, just as it awed postwar artists. In many respects, it was a perfect embodiment of "Zen folklore," which tells of "masters furiously slapping and pushing their disciples, Buddha-statues used as firewood, sutras being kept in the outhouse, and contempt for ritual as the supreme expression of perfect spontaneity."[49] Unconventional and startling as it might seem, this carefully choreographed act of creative frenzy only "ritually denoted spontaneity and freedom."[50] This calligraphic mode was not Nantenbō's original invention, but recreated almost step-by-step the legends of

Chinese Wild Cursive of the Tang dynasty. As Gregory Levine argues about Buddhist iconoclasm, "the old Zen tales of spontaneous outbursts and flagitious acts were heuristic, ritual, and ideological rather than strictly literal or mimetic."[51] Legends of the founder of the wild cursive style, the Tang monk Huai-su, contain all the elements that Nantenbō's calligraphy incorporated: wild movements, splashing of ink on temple walls and ceilings, and even saké.

Similarly to Nantenbō's calligraphy for Nogi, the legends of Huai-su's calligraphic delirium have resonated beyond the artworks themselves. Huai-su's contemporary Tou Chi, who witnessed and admired Huai-Su's wild calligraphy, wrote:

> The Wild Monk's manner of wielding the brush is wild and unrestrained;
> Taking inspiration from heaven only, he overthrows all calligraphic rules.
> Dragons and tigers surrender as his dots and strokes appear;
> Thunder is driven away by the rapid movement of his piecing brush.[52]

Even the motif of dragon and tigers features in this description of Huai-su's style, evocative of the subject of Nantenbō's Kaiseiji screens. Other elements, including the live audience, loud cries, and consumption of saké, also feature in Tou Chi's account:

> Bring him into high spirits and loosen him up to release his emotional power.
> Old and young people gather, wise and eminent men arrive;
> While he is lying there—reclining on a pillow of the sediment wine—still just half drunk.
> Suddenly several loud cries;
> And the walls are covered all over with myriads of characters in a completely uninhibited manner."[53]

Thus, what seemed to be a modern priest's unprecedented eccentricity was almost a direct citation of this canonical Chinese practice. According to Adele Schlombs, Huai-Su's "wild, insouciant behavior, initially

incited by wine, was regarded by some people as a sign of supernatural spiritual powers. Written in a state of frenzy, calligraphy became an analogy of the drama of natural creation to which man-made rules and standards of judgement did not, as it were, apply any longer."[54] And while Schlombs is doubtful that Huai-su intentionally associated his wild cursive with Chan Buddhism, Nantenbō's work fits the common perception of Zen in art.[55] As Levine suggests, visual manifestations of Zen are usually "rendered in a distinctive visual mien distinguished by abbreviation, reduction, and traces of spontaneous action that are said to originate purely from Zen awakening but are equally indebted to enduring traditions of painting and calligraphy in East Asia."[56] Nantenbō's action perfectly ticks all these boxes. In a sense, Nantenbō merely accomplished what was expected of a Zen master, who, embodying Buddhist iconoclasm, "routinely violated normative conduct with unorthodox couture, inscrutable comments, scatological acts, ribald outbursts, icon desecration, and even killing."[57]

Furthermore, in choosing to impersonate Huai-su's wild cursive style, Nantenbō paid tribute to Nogi's interest in Sinology and compared Nogi's life achievements and fame to those of the great men of the ancient past—after all, Nogi was a renowned calligrapher in his own right, as well as an author of collections of kanshi poems written in classical Chinese.[58] For Nantenbō, Nogi embodied the ancient Chinese ideal of masculinity, a perfect combination of a scholar (wei) and a warrior (wu), equally versed in literary and martial arts. Nantenbō's works in Nogi's honor reflect this duality—while the Kaiseiji screens and calligraphy in the Berlin collection reflect the wild and ferocious side of Nogi as a warrior, the screens in New Orleans, with inscriptions of Nogi's poetry in their well organized and static manner, celebrate Nogi as a scholar and literati.

Rather than the unconventional mode of Nantenbō's performance and its possible meanings and afterlives in postwar avant-garde, however, it is the political background of this remarkable calligraphic action that I propose investigating further. Behind the dramatic Zen expressions of Nantenbō's performance, it is vitally important not to overlook the socio-political aspect of the connection between Nantenbō and General Nogi Maresuke.

As is well known, Nogi Maresuke was a celebrated military leader of the Meiji era, one of the chief commanders during the first Sino-Japanese war, a governor of Taiwan, and a key figure behind Japan's triumph in the Russo-Japanese War. As Carol Gluck writes, "it was Nogi—not the emperor—who became the embodiment of the Meiji period in popular culture."[59] Nogi largely gained such apotheosized status posthumously, partly due to the circumstances of his death: on the day of the funeral of Emperor Meiji, Nogi and his wife committed ritual suicide, junshi, reviving the medieval and by then outlawed samurai custom of following one's lord into death. His act, a widely publicized controversial gesture of highest loyalty to the Emperor, provided "a symbol of loyalty and self-sacrificing service to the state" and "aroused heated debates over its ethics and appropriateness among the intellectuals of the day."[60] The request to Nantenbō to venerate his memory was related to these events, and to the newly established cult of Nogi as a hero of modern Japan.[61]

Nantenbō and General Nogi were connected by a fifteen-year mentorship and friendship, and Nantenbō instructed Nogi in his Zen studies and study of the kōan. The two first met at Dōrinji temple in Tokyo, where Nantenbō cultivated a community of lay followers, popular among the kendō community and military elites of the Tokyo area. Some prominent military figures, such as General Kodama Gentarō, later Minister of War of the Japanese Empire, also attended the training.

Before Nogi started his formal training with Nantenbō, they engaged in a ritualized initiation exchange. In August 1887, while visiting the Dōrinji temple, Nogi made an unusual request to Nantenbō: "As I am a warrior, please teach me using my saber." Nantenbō refused at first, but then "snatched up the saber, pulled it free of its sheath, and waved the blade before Nogi's face. The astonished general panicked and scrambled backwards. In an instant, he realized his folly, stopped, clapped his hands and bowed low. After granting permission for Nogi to practice at Dōrinji, Nantenbō gave the general the kōan "mu," thus beginning Zen training that would last until Nogi's death in 1912."[62] The screens in the Kaiseiji, made from ink remaining from the performance in Nogi's honor, are thus also a homage to their connection. In classical Sino-Japanese art, the dragon and tiger symbolize two equal counterparts, and could refer to the

friendship between Nantenbō and Nogi—as two equals, a general and a priest, each highly regarded in his respective domain.[63]

The connection between Nogi and Nantenbō developed over many years and sojourns across the country. In a photograph published in the Buddhist journal Bōkatsu, Nantenbō stands authoritatively behind a group of military men that includes Nogi and both his sons, along with some of Nogi's troops, at their Zen study retreat in Oshima (**fig. 11**).[64] Nantenbō's spiritual authority is legible through the priest's body language, demonstrating the highest calm and confidence at overseeing a group of warriors in front of him, while also preserving some distance. Nogi's military authority, in contrast, is manifested by him sitting in the middle of his troops, recognizable both by his military marks of distinction and his older age. Sanctified by Nantenbō standing behind him, Nogi is with his soldiers, sharing his life and ideas with them, getting ready to take them into action.

Along with Zen training, Nantenbō also supported Nogi in his military undertakings, which, in line with the foreign policy of the new Japanese Empire, fed the Empire's growing colonial appetite. Nantenbō fueled Nogi's militarist spirit and embedded it in Zen, asserting that "a warrior is useless if he doesn't practice Zen. If soldiers lose the power of Zen, the country's power will also diminish. Putting warriors who are morally unfirm in the service of the country is like putting a stone on a block of tofu (bean curd)."[65] On this, Brian Victoria remarks that "the belief that the power resulting from Zen training could be converted into military power was to become an ever more important part of the Zen contribution to Japan's war effort."[66]

For Nantenbō, as for Nogi, military service and Zen went hand-in-hand. Michel Mohr says of Nantenbō that "his family background as the son of a samurai apparently contributed to his identification with the military caste, and his fighting abilities gained him early respect."[67] Nantenbō himself proclaimed that "I practice Zen which protects the country," and agreed with Nogi that "you cannot train true soldiers without raising them in the spirit of Zen"[68] Nantenbō himself was not alien to militarist action, as he had

organized a defensive army of monks at Daijōji temple in Tokuyama, Yamaguchi Prefecture, where he had served as a priest through the turbulent early Meiji years. He boastfully referred to this with the words, "when I was a General (taishō) of monk warriors."[69] As Matthew Welch points out, Nantenbō later made a plea "to revive the samurai idea of discipline and dedication through Zen training."[70]

Nantenbō used the nandina stick not only metaphorically, but also quite physically. Nantenbō himself boasts of hitting his students, once even breaking his stick on fellow monk Kazan Genku,[71] as well as employing his stick while inspecting Zen monasteries and using it in "combat-like encounters" with local priests.[72] In his autobiography he boasted that "many received thirty blows, so it was natural for the name 'Nantenbō' to resound throughout the land like thunder," and it generally contains many episodes of ritualized violence, in particular towards pupils and lower ranking monks.[73] This, too, had precedents in classical China, where hagiographies of Chan monks often included elements such as "stick and shouting" (棒喝 bōkatsu), "using a staff to strike (or to feign this act) along with bellicose screams delivered in a stylized fashion."[74] This was a common Zen narrative of "instances of 'deviant' behavior and 'anarchic' performances that skewered attachments to language, perception, hierarchy, representation, and so on."[75] Legitimized by precedents from ancient China, Nantenbō did not shy away from crossing into physical violence in the name of the Zen cause. Yet in the context of modern Japan, metaphysical and ceremonial references to classical Zen folklore dangerously intertwined with hawkish modern policies.

Nantenbō's striking—if not unprecedented—support for violence peaked in one episode related to the key moment in Nogi's military career, his triumphant capture of Port Arthur during the First Sino-Japanese War in 1894. Before Nogi left for the battle, Nantenbō urged the General to fight with the same determination as necessary for Zen practice:

> Fill the sea of Lushun with corpses. Erect a mountain of corpses to reach the Thirty-Three Skies and look at Lushun from its top. Praying for the dead is my duty, taking Lushun is the General's

> duty. Die, die, die without reservation! Kill, kill, kill relentlessly! This is the time to try your sword Rojiken. Banzai! Banzai![76]

This harrowing recommendation by a Zen priest was both determining and prophetic. The triumphant one-day capture of Port Arthur/ Lushun by Japanese troops led by Nogi resulted in a massacre of Chinese servicemen and civilians, with fatalities estimated between 1,000 and 60,000. It would be a stretch to blame Nantenbō's words for this military crime, yet the commander's tolerance of his troops' violence towards the local population definitely contributed to, or at least failed to prevent, the massacre. This episode exemplifies the dangers behind the concept of kenzen-ichinyo, the "unity of Zen and the sword," a close connection between Zen and the samurai, and their warrior ethos bushidō, where the two unite their effort to support their country, including its imperialism—the approach that in the 1930s was extended to shoken icchi or "unity of sword and calligraphy."[77] After the victory at Lushun, Nantenbō remained close friends with Nogi throughout his life, claiming that "Nogi's great accomplishments during the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars were the result of the hard [Zen] training he underwent."[78]

In the postwar years, Nantenbō was valued for his unconventionality, spontaneity, and momentous insight and inspiration ascribed to his Zen spirit, but the historical and autobiographical accounts posit a more complicated picture. Seen from today's perspective, Nantenbō comes across as a controversial personality, known for his aggression—at times physical violence—devotion, and uncompromising spirit. Robert Sharf calls him "a staunch nationalist and a partisan to Japanese military" and says that Nantenbō's notions of Zen "clearly served the interests of late Meiji Zen apologists to identify the 'essence of Zen' with both the 'spirit of bushido' and the 'spirit of Japan,' notions then replete with connotations of imperial conquest and unconditional obedience to the emperor."[79] Although Michel Mohr does not agree with Sharf's unapologetic characterization, he also points out that in his interactions with laypeople, Nantenbō's concern was to "resist the Western culture that would inevitably be coming," and to ensure that Japan did not "lose against the white hairy foreigners," adding that "it is discomfiting to see such language, for it prefigures the militaristic rhetoric that led to the Pacific War."[80]

Nantenbō was thus very far from a tranquil peace-lover spending his days meditating and providing spiritual support to his community, as the postwar narratives of Zen would prefer to see a Zen priest. There are many studies that trace links between Zen and Japanese ultranationalism and militarism, and Nantenbō fits exactly into the patterns they describe.[81] For Nantenbō, Zen and violence were by no means mutually exclusive, but were rather interconnected, like his brush and stick, or tiger and dragon, or Zen priest and military commander.

This insight brings this discussion back to the inspiration that Nantenbō provided to postwar artists and the nature of his appeal for avant-gardists of the 1950s. What in the 1950s seemed an expression of utmost freedom and Zen spontaneity, was in fact an implicit suggestion of violence. Avant-gardists incorporated these features into their works while absorbing Zen narratives linked to it, and in the following examples, we can see how violence disguised as Zen found its expression in the postwar avant-garde. Specifically, I suggest looking at how postwar artists merged visual expressions of monastic Zen, calligraphy, and militarism's aggressive masculinity.

Nantenbō's Legacy and Postwar Cold Warriors

Visual expressions of Imperial-Way Zen also gained followers among postwar avant-garde artists, whether they were conscious of the militarist connection or not. Zen visualities that harked back to Nantenbō thus equipped postwar artists for the cultural battlefield of the Cold War, and for staging their masculinities and potency on the global stage—on par with other "Cold Warriors" of abstract art—narrated as Zen pacifism. This second, more exertive but also potentially more violent reincarnation of modern Zen pioneered by Nantenbō manifested itself in the more performance-like art of the postwar avant-garde artists—calligraphers and painters alike—charged with physical power and latent violence, presented as new spirituality.

The experimentation of avant-garde calligraphy in postwar Japan manifested itself not only in Morita's ink splashes and calligraphic works that explore the synergies between writing and painting but also in the realm of action painting, where the process and spectacle of writing—and the technological record thereof—formed the ultimate artistic statement. Backed by ancient calligraphic theories and the precedents in premodern calligraphy from China, but also by Nantenbō's example, postwar calligraphers explored the performative potential of their art, and how it could resonate with the actions staged by painters.

Inoue Yūichi, the second unofficial leader of the Bokujinkai calligraphy group, produced a series of abstract calligraphies in 1955 that caused controversy among his group's members by fully abandoning the writing of characters. Besides the calligraphies themselves, a series of photographs that show Inoue working on the series in his atelier were produced by the Asahi Newspaper for their special issue on avant-garde calligraphy (**fig. 12**). These photographic images are often juxtaposed and compared to Jackson Pollock, especially as Hans Namuth's famous images of Pollock's dripping had become available in Japan several years earlier, but also because Inoue, like Pollock, had started to use enamel. However, there is an equally strong case for placing Inoue's images in the context of Nantenbō's legacy.[82]

The photographer shows Inoue in the supposedly intimate process of concentrated creative frenzy in his studio. The bare-chested 39-year-old calligrapher bends over a large sheet of paper in an uncomfortable squat, smeared in sticky black enamel up to his elbows. His face is distorted with physical straining, as he conquers the paper surface with his brush. It looks as if the paper is not giving up easily—as if it is resisting Inoue's appropriations, and the struggle with the resisting picture plane is draining and absorbing the artist.

Inoue's strained posture and tense arm muscles speak of the struggle between him and the paper, the brush clenched between them constrained to perform his will. In the process, the calligrapher becomes one with his work: the calligraphy leaves marks on his skin and clothes, while he leaves the imprints of

his arms and feet on the paper as he touches and steps on it. Unlike conventional images of calligraphers, which show dignified aged men, often long-bearded, sitting comfortably over paper in their studios, discarnate in their intellectual pursuit, Inoue's calligraphy demands physical training. The muscular body of a young calligrapher displays its physical power and returns explicit masculinity into the picture of calligraphy, reminiscent of the recent wartime experiences and military claims on the male body. Physical strength, drilled for combat, is now required for practicing calligraphy, in an age when the fighting has moved from the battlefields of the Pacific War into the exhibition spaces and critical reviews of the Cold War. The masculinity and physical intensity of this image evoke the common trope of the connection between calligraphy and the martial arts—commonly described in ancient Chinese calligraphy treatises, but also revived by Nantenbō—as well as the classical Chinese idea of harmonious combination of wei and wu in ideals of masculinity, embodied, among many others, by Nogi Maresuke.

In addition to calligraphers, avant-garde painters also followed cues from Nantenbō's fierce calligraphic actions, extrapolating from them references to violent physicality. Gutai's Shiraga Kazuo and his celebrated foot painting demonstrate some striking parallels with Nantenbō. In reading Shiraga's "art as violence," Namiko Kunimoto argues that his art "offered a model of renewed masculinity that dislodged the heroic from the battlefield" and instead "brought it into the domain of international art."[83] Known for his continuous interest in Zen, ordained as a Buddhist monk in 1973, and often titling his works "after Buddhist deities […] and sutras," especially later in his career, Shiraga's way of employing Zen was nuanced and multidimensional.[84] His rendering of Buddhist spiritualism—as a way of "testing himself as an artist and as a man," and evoking "extraordinarily fierce and physically dynamic" subjects from esoteric Buddhist such as the Five Kings, was often at odds with pacifist Zen of the Zen boom, while still drawing on Zen's "currency amongst the global avant-garde."[85]

Introduced to Nantenbō's art by Yoshihara Jirō, the raging ink splashes and traces of unrestrained calligraphic frenzy of the Kaiseiji screen matched Shiraga's interest in corporeality and materiality. Already as a student, Shiraga had been fascinated by the darker side of Japanese Buddhism, and often

visited the Yogen'in temple in Kyoto, famous for its blood-stained ceilings that preserve traces of a group suicide by Torii Mototada and his troops from the historic battle of the Sengoku period.[86] The castle's floorboards, soaked in the blood of the warriors, were later turned into a memorial to their bravery by rearranging them as Yogen'in's ceiling. Among the silhouettes of the bodies of the fallen warriors imprinted in their own blood still clearly visible, several hand and foot imprints stand out, as if still reaching for help or making a final attempt to attack or escape. Shiraga later encountered the same elements in Nantenbō's Kaiseiji screens—in their physicality, bodily marks of battle-like encounters (albeit recorded in ink, not blood), memorialization of heroic military violence (be it modern imperial warfare or Momoyama-era samurai battles), and monastic Zen. Nantenbō's kicks and ink blots on the Kaiseiji temple ceiling eerily resonate with the footprints of Yogen'in—and Shiraga's own foot painting and the canvases they leave in a dramatic post-battle mess of black and reds. The fluidity between ink and blood in its spiritual ambiguity and calligraphic kinetics explored by Shiraga kept reappearing in later artworks—as for example Nam June Paik's 1962 performance Zen for Head, where Paik, following the score of La Monte Young, also re-enacted legends of Huai-su's calligraphy using a mixture of ink and tomato juice, a common "fake blood" popular in media productions, merging Zen hagiographies with the latest performance art.

For Shiraga, radical calligraphic practice bridged the cutting-edge creativity of contemporary art and the spirituality of Buddhism: in addition to Nantenbō, and like Paik and Mathieu, he also admired Huai-su—to the point of later considering himself Huai-su's reincarnation—for "his work is overflowing with life-force (qi)! When he created a work, he would drink a lot, then, in front of a group of his friends, he would move into action, brushes flying, ink splashing."[87] Ming Tiampo has noted that "the discomforting coupling of violence and beauty which fascinated Shiraga" was projected into postwar art struggles.[88] Traces of Shiraga's feet discernible on some of his canvases, in red or black, close the circle from the suicide of Torii Mototada to the ritual junshi of Nogi Maresuke and their traces in modern and postwar Japanese art and calligraphy (**fig. 13**). Employing Zen's discursive potential to marry Cold War and

Abstract Expressionism's violent masculinity with the international expectations of non-violent spirituality and pacifism coming from Japan, Shiraga marvelously navigated the postwar art world to a position of international prominence. Unlike many of his generation, for Shiraga "Buddhism and violence were not necessarily at odds.[89]

While neither Shiraga nor Inoue, and certainly not Paik, explicitly called their actions battles, downplaying their militarist menace, international artists did not shy away from direct war associations. In postwar French art, Serge Guilbaut suggested that "the violence of application of paint could indicate the violence outside."[90] In the same vein, Bernard Marcadã called French abstractionist Georges Mathieu, "a 'painter of battles,' quite literally, because a number of his works refer directly to historical battles (Bouvines, Brunkeberg, Hakata, Korea), but also because, above all else, he is an artist who considers his paintings as authentic scenes of battle. Each time he paints, a genuine confrontation occurs between himself and his canvas, where rituals of martial art, dance and trance all come together."[91] Mathieu was probably the most explicit about relocating battles to art media. With his direct experience of contemporary American art and personal rivalries with both Pollock and Kline, Mathieu was situated at the center of the power struggle between the Paris and New York schools of abstraction, where "the war of images turned into the duel between two antagonistic sets of logos: American violence, roughness, and subjectivity against French rationality, decoration, and gloss."[92] In the struggle between these two poles, Mathieu used the cues he learned from the visual traditions of Zen and calligraphy to display his masculinity, physical potency, and heroism through painting. The action paintings that he performed in Japan were staged as military exercises, and the photograph of him walking from the performance site in Tokyo likewise stages him as a warrior walking from the battlefield, still in the rush of the action (**fig. 14**).

Mathieu's performances in Osaka and Tokyo in 1957, La Bataille de Bun'ei, La Bataille de Hakata, and Hommage au général Hideyoshi, explicitly referred to Japan's military history and legendary samurai battles, which he enacted wearing a white kimono and headband. In his interviews with the Japanese

press, Mathieu called his art "a challenge to Japanese calligraphy" and admired the art of Chinese wild cursive.[93] While it is unlikely that Mathieu was aware of Nantenbō's works at the point of his performances in Japan, he knew of the work of his fellow avant-garde calligraphers and Gutai contemporaries. Mathieu thus demonstrated that the violence and physical potency in art expression channeled through Zen and calligraphy was not necessarily limited to Japanese artists.

In short, even when artists, both Japanese and international, considered Zen a source of peaceful creative energy and harmony with the world, what they learned from it in terms of visual representation and methods was sometimes much closer to martial art skills—like Shiraga and Yves Klein, who both practiced judo and Zen. Nantenbō and the later art he inspired gave rise to the more ambiguous and multivalent visual renderings of Zen, which readily incorporated physical confrontation and violent encounters, intermingled with conflicting signals of unrestrained creativity and artistic spontaneity.

Ambivalent Postwar Zen in Arts: The Peaceful and the Violent

The visual culture of twentieth-century monastic Zen provided a much more complex and contradictory legacy than the avant-garde artists of the Zen boom—and later scholars—were conscious of. On some occasions, Zen offered refuge and solace. The Enryaku-ji temple on Mount Hiei, where Mark Tobey and Shiraga Kazuo underwent Zen training, provided for both artists a space to heal from the ailments of modernity, despite its association with the historically combative Tendai sect.[94] They considered it a powerful place where you could reconnect to yourself and explore your deeper inner spirituality, as well as find a source of new creativity and spontaneity—channeled through ink splashes, meditations, kōans, and calligraphy. It was also a place of encounter: Mark Tobey recollected seeing "a great dragon in free brush style" painted in a temple in Kyoto, which inspired him and kept reappearing in his work.[95] This is the inspirational Zen of the Zen boom: with its zazen meditations, kōan riddles, unfathomable wisdom, and promise of peace. This was the Zen of later D.T. Suzuki and Alan Watts.

But the other side of modern Zen, more disguised, was just as real and fruitful for modern art. This was the Zen of the Japanese Empire, the Zen that was motivating, justifying, and instilled the power to fight—the Zen of bushido. It appears in Nantenbō's Kaiseiji screens with their aggressive energy, the descriptions of wild performances and violent hagiographies, and the legends and connections to Nogi Maresuke and the war. It engenders the artist as masculine hero, and the image that belongs to the cultural battlefields of the Cold War and the political rivalries of abstract painting—between Paris and New York, New York and Tokyo, Tokyo and Osaka, between painters and calligraphers, avant-gardists and traditionalists. The battles were fought with brushes, inks, and enamel, with the outcomes being as important as some of the battles of the recent war, "the trenches of the critical discourse."[96] Artists as "cold warriors" sourced energy and a fighting spirit from their spiritual mentors and the cultural legacy available to them, reconnecting to what had fueled the military rush in the previous decades. Nantenbō's visual allusions evoked the mobilizing spirit of the recent war, to which artists could immediately respond and reconnect, and that empowered and armed Japanese avant-gardists in their new role as defenders of Japan's national interests. It was the Zen of Nantenbō and of General Nogi Maresuke.

The two visual and artistic incarnations of Zen were not necessarily at odds: one often contained the other or was camouflaged as the other, and were mutually supportive. Imperial-Way Zen gave power and potency to Japanese artists who might otherwise have been perceived internationally as too metaphysical and too soft, especially next to American and European cold warriors, while the pacifist Zen narrative of the Zen boom helped disguise the aggressive undertones of their art and make them internationally acceptable. Nantenbō's screens and performances in the Kaiseiji temple animated the wilder, untamed energy of art production, but also linked it to the physical and violent side of Zen Buddhist heritage, and the possibility of merging Zen and war. Camouflaged by Zen, artists from postwar Japan could safely demonstrate their masculinities and show off their artistic and physical muscles, without explicitly alluding to the war or to imperialism, and could thus face their opponents on the battlefield of the cultural Cold War as masculine heroes rather than feminized losers of the recent war. This hypocrisy of modern

monastic Zen art explains the strong appeal of Nantenbō to postwar avant-gardists—he gave them the means and power to fight. At the same time, Nantenbō's Zen allowed avant-gardists to indulge in military innuendos and violence in creativity's name, and provided the perfect alibi. In the context of the cultural Cold War, instead of offering an alternative to the international adversaries of abstract art and bringing the art world into a state of mutual respect and enriching harmony, the visual lineage of wartime Zen further fueled the aggressiveness of the postwar art environment.

Conclusion

In this discussion I aimed to highlight two points: that the art of calligraphy provides important insights into the postwar avant-garde in Japan and beyond, and that the narratives of Zen that were introduced into the postwar avant-garde through calligraphy carried contradictive messages of both pacifism and militarist ideology. Images that allow multiple interpretations, either of peaceful and fulfilled spontaneity, or aggression and violence, linked the postwar avant-garde to the visual expression of modern Japanese militarism through their shared Zen lineage.

While rhetorically, postwar avant-gardists were juxtaposing Zen's pacifism and universalism to the aggressive and politically turbulent environment of the unfolding Cold War, they were fighting the war on the cultural front too, demonstrating in their acts the traditional philosophy of connection between literary and military arts, and the ultra-masculine ideology rooted in wartime tenets. Japanese avant-garde artists of the postwar decades, marked by the politicized rivalry within the global abstract painting scene and the redistribution of cultural powers across the globe, were no less cold warriors than American abstract expressionists or European Informel artists. Like their European or American counterparts, Japanese avant-garde painters and calligraphers were fighting for their place in the world, and for Japan to become a global player in the international art scene again, with the means inherited from the previous generations of artists—the Zen art of Nantenbō Tōjū and his ferocious, and at times violent, calligraphy battles.

[1] The cross-disciplinary strands of research that this study builds on include critical Zen studies, such as Gregory P. A. Levine, Long Strange Journey: On Modern Zen, Zen Art, and Other Predicaments (University of Hawai'i Press, 2017); Shoji Yamada, Shots in the Dark: Japan, Zen, and the West (University of Chicago Press, 2009); and Sueki Fumihiko, ed., Kindai to Bukkyō (Kokusai Nihon Bunka kenkyū sentā, 2012); works on calligraphy and avant-garde, including Bert Winther-Tamaki, Art in the Encounter of Nations (University of Hawai'i Press, 2001); Miyatsu Daisuke, Gendai Bijutsushi ni okeru Zen'eisho no Ripojishoningu (Shibunkaku shuppansha, 2022); Kurimoto Takayuki, Bokkon: Sho geijutsu ni okeru modanizumu to taidō (Shinwasha, 2016)); and critical global Cold War art histories, notably Serge Guilbaut, How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War (University of Chicago Press, 1983), and Ann Sherif, Japan's Cold War—Media, Literature, and the Law (Columbia University Press, 2016), among others.

[2] Serge Guilbaut, "Postwar Painting Games: The Rough and the Slick," in Serge Guilbaut, ed., Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal 1945–1964 (MIT Press, 1991), 33.

[3] Robert H. Sharf, "Whose Zen? Zen Nationalism Revisited," in James W. Heisig and John C. Maraldo, eds., Rude Awakenings: Zen, Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism (University of Hawai'i Press, 1994), 50.

[4] Kawase Takaya, "Anti-War and Peace Movements among Japanese Buddhists after the Second World War," trans. Micah L. Auerback, in Vladimir Tikhonov and Torkel Brekke, eds., Buddhism and Violence: Militarism and Buddhism in Modern Asia (Routledge, 2012), 211.

[5] Hisamatsu Shin'ichi, "Sho to Tōyō seishin," Bokubi no. 48 (October 1955), 7.

[6] Welch, "The Painting and Calligraphy of the Japanese Zen Priest Toju Zenchu Alias Nantenbo (1839–1925)," 136–37.

[7] Yasuko Tsuchikane, "Dōmōto Inshō (1891-1975) and Buddhist Temple Art in Twentieth Century Japan" (Ph.D. Diss., Columbia University, 2009), 3.

[8] I am grateful to Michel Mohr for his help with identifying the sources of the saying, as well as his suggestions regarding its interpretation. For the kōan, see Victor Sōgen Hori, Zen Sand: The Book of Capping Phrases for Kōan Practice, Paperback edition, Nanzan Library of Asian Religion and Culture (University of Hawai'i Press, 2010), 449; entry no. 10.538.

[9] R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, "Some Observations on Recent Studies of Zen," in Efraim Elimelech Urbach, R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, and Chaim Wirszubski, eds., Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom G. Scholem (Magnes Press, 1967), 321.

[10] Levine, Long Strange Journey, 48.

[11] Some studies that discuss the role of Zen in postwar art include Levine, Long Strange Journey; Bert Winther-Tamaki, "The Asian Dimensions of Postwar Abstract Art: Calligraphy and Metaphysics," in The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989 (Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2009), 145–57; Stephen Addiss et al., eds., Japan und der Westen: Die erfüllte Leere und der moderne Minimalismus (DuMont, 2007); Jacquelynn Baas, Smile of the Buddha: Eastern Philosophy & Western Art from Monet to Today (University of California Press, 2005), and more.

[12] For the postwar transformation of Ryōanji's global image, see Yamada, Shots in the Dark; for reception of Sengai in postwar art, see Kasashima Tadayuki, Nihon bijutsu ni okeru 'sho' no zōkeishi*/*—The History of Modeling Theory of Calligraphy in Japanese Art (Kasama shoin, 2013), 247–67.

[13] Stephen Addiss, The Art of Zen: Paintings and Calligraphy by Japanese Monks 1600–1925 (Harry N. Abrams, 1989), 186. One of the first English-language scholarly introductions to Nantenbō and his importance is the outstanding dissertation by Matthew R. Welch, "The Painting and Calligraphy of the Japanese Zen Priest Toju Zenchu Alias Nantenbo (1839–1925)," (Ph.D. Diss., University of Kansas, 1996) , which remains one of the most comprehensive overviews of Nantenbō's artistic oeuvre, and is focused on the intersection of Nantenbō's theology and visual art. Beyond art histories, Michel Mohr offers insights into Nantenbō's legacy from the standpoint of religious studies, in several articles cited below.

[14] Michel Mohr, "Monastic Tradition and Lay Practice from the Perspective of Nantenbō: A Response of Japanese Zen Buddhism to Modernity," Zen Buddhism Today 12 (March 1996): 83.

[15] For the impact of Nantenbō's calligraphy on the Gutai group, see the interview with Shimamoto Shōzō of August 21, 2008, conducted by Katō Mizuho and Ikegami Hiroko, Oral History Archives of Japanese Art,

http://www.oralarthistory.org/archives/shimamoto_shozo/interview_01.php (accessed February 17, 2022); and Osaki Shin'ichirō, "Yoshihara Jirō to sho," in Botsugo nijū nen—Yoshihara Jirō ten (Ashiya City Art Museum, 1992), 178–79. For connection to Hakuin, see Mohr, "Monastic Tradition and Lay Practice from the Perspective of Nantenbō: A Response of Japanese Zen Buddhism to Modernity," 82.

[16] Steven Heine, "Thy Rod and Thy Staff, They Discomfort Me: Zen Staffs as Implements of Instruction," in Pamela D. Winfield and Steven Heine, eds., Zen and Material Culture (Oxford University Press, 2017), 1.

[17] Welch, "The Painting and Calligraphy of the Japanese Zen Priest Toju Zenchu Alias Nantenbo (1839–1925)," 35.

[18] Ibid., 1.

[19] Ibid., 110.

[20] Ibid., 170. See especially chapter 3 for a discussion of Nantenbō's painting.

[21] Yoshihara Jirō, Suda Kokuta, Kasumi Bunshō (rōshi), Asano Keizō, Yamada Kōsankich, Morita Shiryū, and others, "Nantenbō no sho," Bokubi no. 14, July 1952, 5–6. Translations from Japanese are by the author unless otherwise indicated.

[22] Ibid., 6.

[23] Welch, "The Painting and Calligraphy of the Japanese Zen Priest Toju Zenchu Alias Nantenbo (1839–1925)," 135.

[24] Yoshihara Jirō et al., Nantenbō no sho, 7.

[25] This is according to Shimamota Shōzō's perception of Nantebō's impact on his fellow Gutai artists. Interview with Shimamoto Shōzō of August 21, 2008, in Oral History Archives of Japanese Art, http://www.oralarthistory.org/archives/shimamoto_shozo/interview_01.php (accessed February 17, 2022).

[26] Michel Tapié and Haga Tore, Avant-Garde Art in Japan (H. N. Abrams, 1962), unpaginated.

[27] Archives of the Museum of Modern Art New York, Collection CE, series folder 11.1.32.2.

[28] Yoshihara Jirō et al., Nantenbō no sho, 7.

[29] Addiss, The Art of Zen: Paintings and Calligraphy by Japanese Monks 1600–1925, 192–93.

[30] Georges Mathieu, "Shodō to no taiketsu," ed. Imai Toshimitsu, Geijutsu Shinchō 8, no. 10 (October 1957): 53–65.

[31] "Spīdo, chokkan, kofun," Yomiuri Shinbun, September 1, 1957, morning edition, 5.

[32] Nakahara Tōjū, Nantenbō angyaroku (Hirakawa Shuppansha, 1984), 358.

[33] Yoshihara Jirō et al., Nantenbō no sho, 7.

[34] Ibid., 6.

[35] Bert Winther-Tamaki, Art in the Encounter of Nations (University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 49.

[36] Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, Zen and Japanese Culture, Bollingen Series 64 (Princeton University Press, 1973), 356.

[37] Shin'ichi Hisamatsu, Zen and the Fine Arts (Kodansha, 1971), 73.

[38] For characteristics of Zen art representative of Zen boom rhetoric, see Suzuki, Zen and Japanese Culture, 27–28, and Hisamatsu, Zen and the Fine Arts (Kodansha, 1971), 36–38.

[39] As quoted in Hyun-Sook Hwang, Westliche Zen-Rezeption im Vorfeld des Informel und Abstrakten Expressionismus (Der Andere Verlag, 2011), 156.

[40] Ezra Pound et al., Cathay: The Centennial Edition (New Directions Publishing Corporation, 2015); Gary Snyder, Cold Mountain Poems (Counterpoint, 2013).

[41] Yoshihara et al., "Nantenbō no sho," 8.

[42] Levine, Long Strange Journey, 110.

[43] Ibid.

[44] These include a trilogy by Brian Daizen Victoria, Zen at War (Rowman & Littlefield, 2006); Zen War Stories (Routledge, 2016) and Zen Terror in Prewar Japan: Portrait of an Assassin (Rowman & Littlefield, 2020); groundbreaking work by Ichikawa Hakugen, including Bukkyō no sensō sekinin (Hōzōkan, 1993); as well as more recently Christopher Ives, Imperial-Way Zen: Ichikawa Hakugen's Critique and Lingering Questions for Buddhist Ethics (University of Hawai'i Press, 2009); Nino Kazunobu, Kōdō Bukkyō to tairiku fukyō: jūgonen sensōki no shūkyō to kokka (Shakai Hyōronsha, 2014), and Vladimir Tikhonova and Torkel Brekke, eds., Buddhism and Violence: Militarism and Buddhism in Modern Asia (Routledge, 2014).

[45] Ives, Imperial-Way Zen, 1.

[46] Kawase, Anti-War and Peace Movements among Japanese Buddhists after the Second World War, 211.

[47] Nakahara, Nantenbō angyaroku, 356–58.

[48] Werblowski, "Some Observations on Recent Studies of Zen," 323.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Sharf, "Whose Zen? Zen Nationalism Revisited," 43. Emphasis in original.

[51] Levine, Long Strange Journey, 58.

[52] Account by Tou-chi, in Adele Schlombs, Huai-Su and the Beginnings of Wild Cursive Script in Chinese Calligraphy (Steiner, 1998), 42.

[53] Ibid., 41.

[54] Ibid.

[55] While it is common to consider these performances as Zen tradition, Adele Schlombs, in her investigation of the origins of the Chinese wild cursive tradition and the oeuvre of Huai-su, comes to the conclusion that "however attractive this idea may seem, it is purely speculative. Accounts of Huai-su's life and his own writings give no support to this idea." Schlombs, Huai-Su and the Beginnings of Wild Cursive Script in Chinese Calligraphy, 12.

[56] Levine, Long Strange Journey, 78.

[57] Ibid., 54.

[58] For an example of calligraphy by Nogi Maresuke, see Nogi Maresuke, Nogi Taishō iboku shū, ed. Nose Ten'yū (Ōsaka Nogi-kai, 1932).

[59] Carol Gluck, Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period (Princeton University Press, 1985), 224.

[60] Ibid., 226 and 221. For discussion of the mixed reception of Nogi's suicide by Japan's intellectuals, see Gluck, Japan's Modern Myths, 221–27.

[61] For a discussion of Nogi's suicide in establishing a connection between Zen and nationalism, see Robert H. Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," in Donald S. Lopez, Jr., ed., Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism under Colonialism (University of Chicago Press, 1995), 115–16.

[62] Welch, "The Painting and Calligraphy of the Japanese Zen Priest Toju Zenchu Alias Nantenbo (1839–1925)," 46.

[63] I am grateful to Michel Mohr for pointing out this aspect of the phrase's meaning.

[64] Nakahara, Nantenbō Angyaroku, 269, but also the journal Bōkatsu, issue 15 (1913), with a photograph caption noting that the photograph was taken in the Zuiganji temple in Matsushima.

[65] Nakahara, Nantenbō Angyaroku, 243–44.

[66] Victoria, Zen at War, 99.

[67] Mohr, "Monastic Tradition and Lay Practice from the Perspective of Nantenbō: A Response of Japanese Zen Buddhism to Modernity," 78.

[68] Nakahara, Nantenbō Angyaroku, 236–37.

[69] Ibid., 130–31.

[70] Welch, "The Painting and Calligraphy of the Japanese Zen Priest Toju Zenchu Alias Nantenbo (1839–1925)," 44.

[71] Ibid., 29.

[72] Ibid., 36–37.

[73] Ibid, 37. Also Nakahara, Nantenbō Angyaroku, 314.

[74] Heine, "Thy Rod and Thy Staff, They Discomfort Me: Zen Staffs as Implements of Instruction," 5.

[75] Levine, Long Strange Journey, 55. For more on bōkatsu, see Heine, "Thy Rod and Thy Staff, They Discomfort Me: Zen Staffs as Implements of Instruction," 1–37.

[76] Nakahara, Nantenbō Angyaroku, 295–96.

[77] For more on kenzen ichinyo, see Ives, Imperial-Way Zen, 102.; for the concept shoken icchi, see programmatic article by politician Kiyoura Keigo, "Shoken ichhi," Shodō Vol.1, issue 8 (August 1932): 2–3.

[78] Nakahara Tōjū, Nantenbō zenwa (Hirakawa shuppansha, 1985), 244, translated and quoted in Victoria, Zen at War, 37.

[79] Robert H. Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," History of Religions 33, no. 1 (August 1993): 11–12.

[80] Mohr, "Monastic Tradition and Lay Practice from the Perspective of Nantenbō: A Response of Japanese Zen Buddhism to Modernity," 79.

[81] Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism;" Victoria, Zen at War; Ives, Imperial-Way Zen.

[82] Unagami Masaomi, Inoue Yūichi: Sho wa bannin no geijutsu de aru, 2nd ed. (Mineruva shobō, 2009), 132. For information on the 1955 traveling exhibition in Europe, see special issue of the Bokubi journal, Gendai Nihon no sho: Sumi no geijutsu, no. 48 (October 1955).

[83] Namiko Kunimoto, The Stakes of Exposure: Anxious Bodies in Postwar Japanese Art, 150.

[84] Namiko Kunimoto, "The Buddhist Hero", in Gabriel Ritter and Kōichi Kawasaki, ed., Between Action and Unknown: The Art of Kazuo Shiraga and Sadamasa Motonaga (Dallas Museum of Art, 2015), 76–77.

[85] Ibid., 76 and 79.

[86] Namiko Kunimoto, The Stakes of Exposure: Anxious Bodies in Postwar Japanese Art, 175.

[87] Shiraga Kazuo, "Sho to chūshō kaiga," Kyōsho, Hanshin shodō kai, no. 565 (December 1996): 4; Ming Tiampo, "Moments of Destruction/ Moments of Beauty, Gutai and Japanese Matsuri Festivals," in Atsuo Yamamoto, Ming Tiampo, and Florence de Mèredieu, eds., Gutai: Moments of Destruction/ Moments of Beauty, Moments de Destruction / Moments de Beauté (Blusson, 2002), 42–44.

[88] Tiampo, "Moments of Destruction/ Moments of Beauty, Gutai and Japanese Matsuri Festivals," 58.

[89] Namiko Kunimoto, The Stakes of Exposure: Anxious Bodies in Postwar Japanese Art, 175.

[90] Guilbaut, "Postwar Painting Games: The Rough and the Slick," 60.

[91] Bernard Marcadã, "Pretentious? Moi? Document: Georges Mathieu," in Tate ETC, January 1, 2010, https://www.tate.org.uk/tate-etc/issue-18-spring-2010/pretentious-moi (accessed February 19, 2022)

[92] Guilbaut, "Postwar Painting Games: The Rough and the Slick," 61.

[93] Mercadã, "Pretentious? Moi? Document: Georges Mathieu" https://www.tate.org.uk/tate-etc/issue-18-spring-2010/pretentious-moi; and "Mathieu and Tapié, 1948–1958: A Decade of Adventure" in Georges Mathieu – the official website, https://georges-mathieu.fr/en/publications/mathieu-and-tapie-1948-1958-a-decade-of-adventure/ (accessed February 19, 2022)

[94] For more on connection between Enryakuji, the Tendai sect, and shugendō, see Kunimoto, "The Buddhist Hero," 76.

[95] William C. Seitz, Mark Tobey (Museum of Modern Art, 1962), 27.

[96] Guilbaut, "Postwar Painting Games: The Rough and the Slick," 60.

Figures

Fig. 1

Kaiseiji temple in Nishinomiya, Japan, in December 2019. Photograph by the author.

Fig. 2

Nakahara Nantenbō

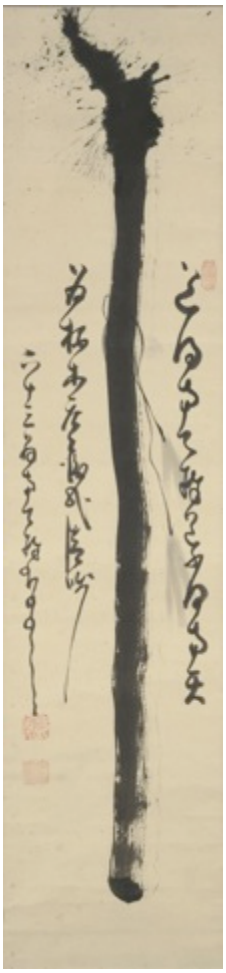
Self-portrait, 1917

Ink on silk, 76.2 × 18.57 cm

The Louis W. Hill, Jr. Fund

Minneapolis Institute of Art

Fig. 3



Nakahara Nantenbō

The Stick of Nantenbō, 1901

Ink on paper, 137.6 × 31.8 cm

Lillian Ernestine Lobb Bequest, 2003

Collection of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Fig. 4

Nakahara Nantenbō

龍吟初夜、虎嘯五更

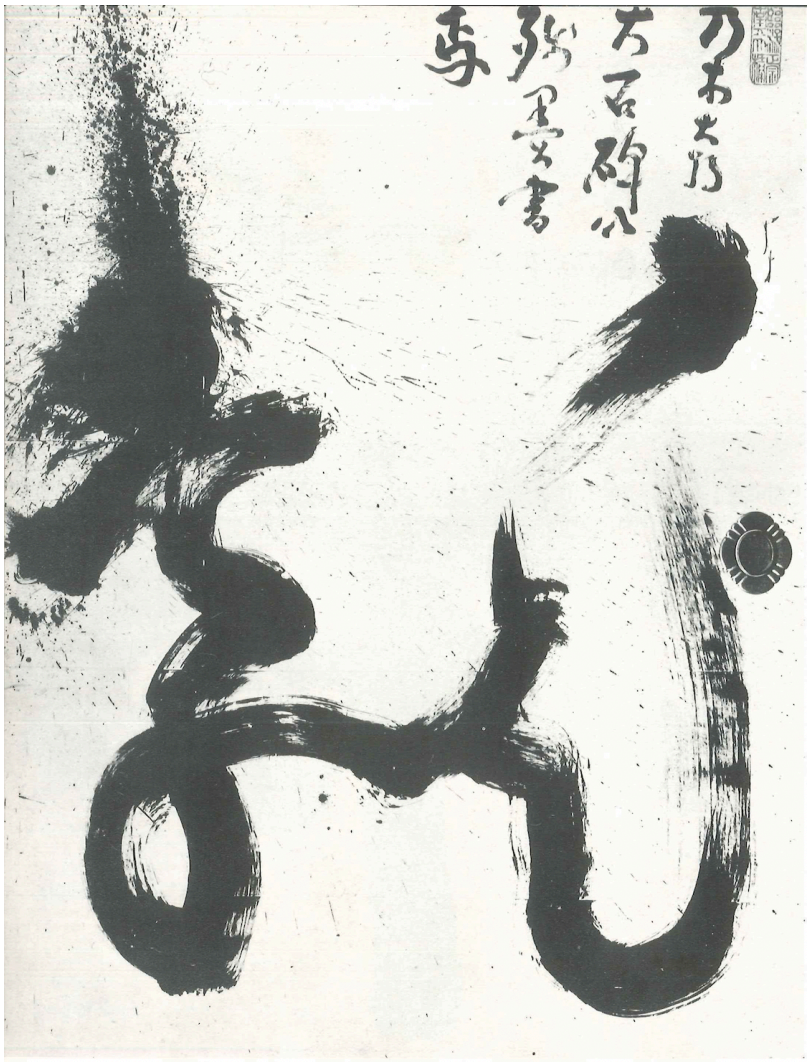
Ryū wa ginzu shoya, tora wa usobuku gokō

The dragon cries at dusk, the tiger roars at dawn, 1914

Ink on paper, a set of eight fusuma sliding doors, 168 × 103 cm each

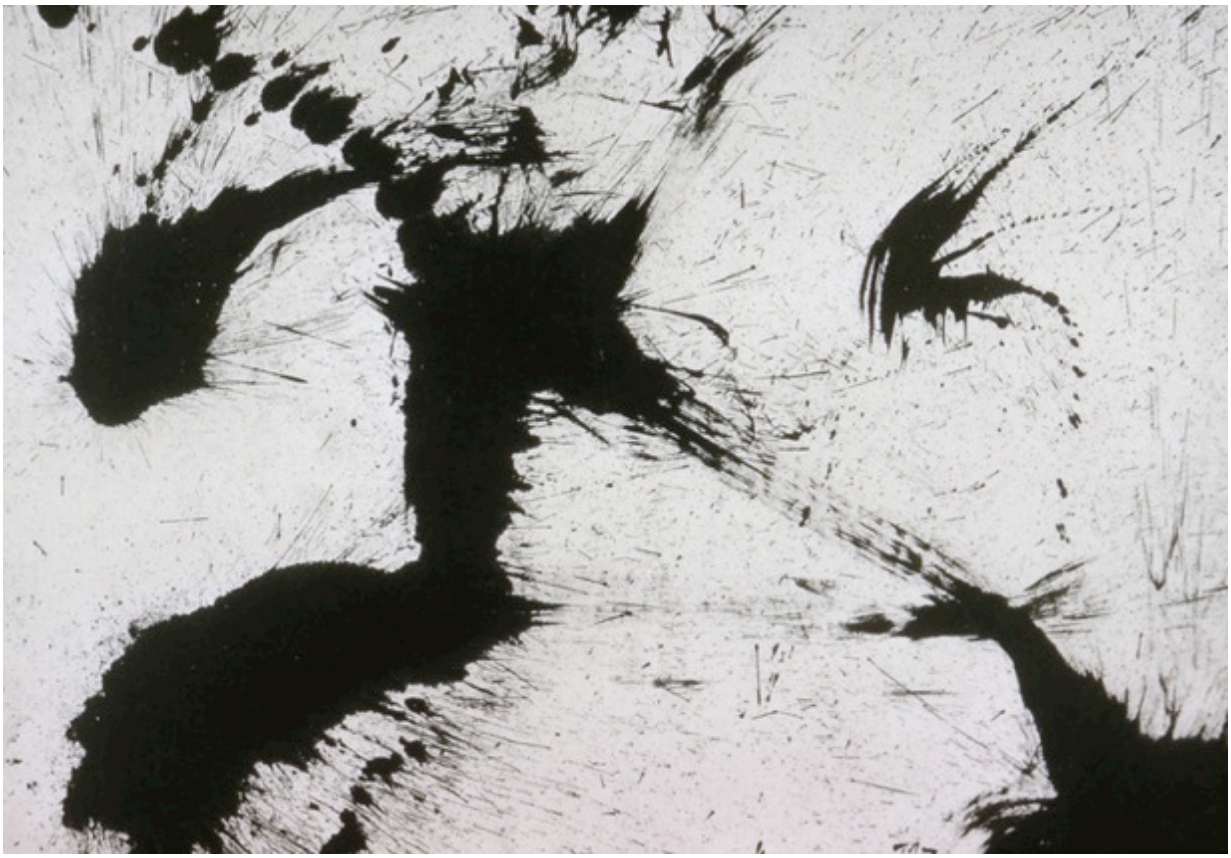
Kaiseiji temple, as reproduced in Bokubi journal no. 14 (July 1952), p. 5

Fig. 5



Fusuma sliding door with the character 龍 (ryū, dragon) in Nantenbō's Kaiseiji screens, with colophon referring to Nogi Maresuke, as reproduced in Bokubi journal no. 14 (July 1952), p. 10

Fig. 6



Mark Tobey

Space Ritual No. 1, 1957

Sumi ink on paper, 74.3 × 95.1 cm

Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 60.85

Collection of the Seattle Art Museum

Fig. 7

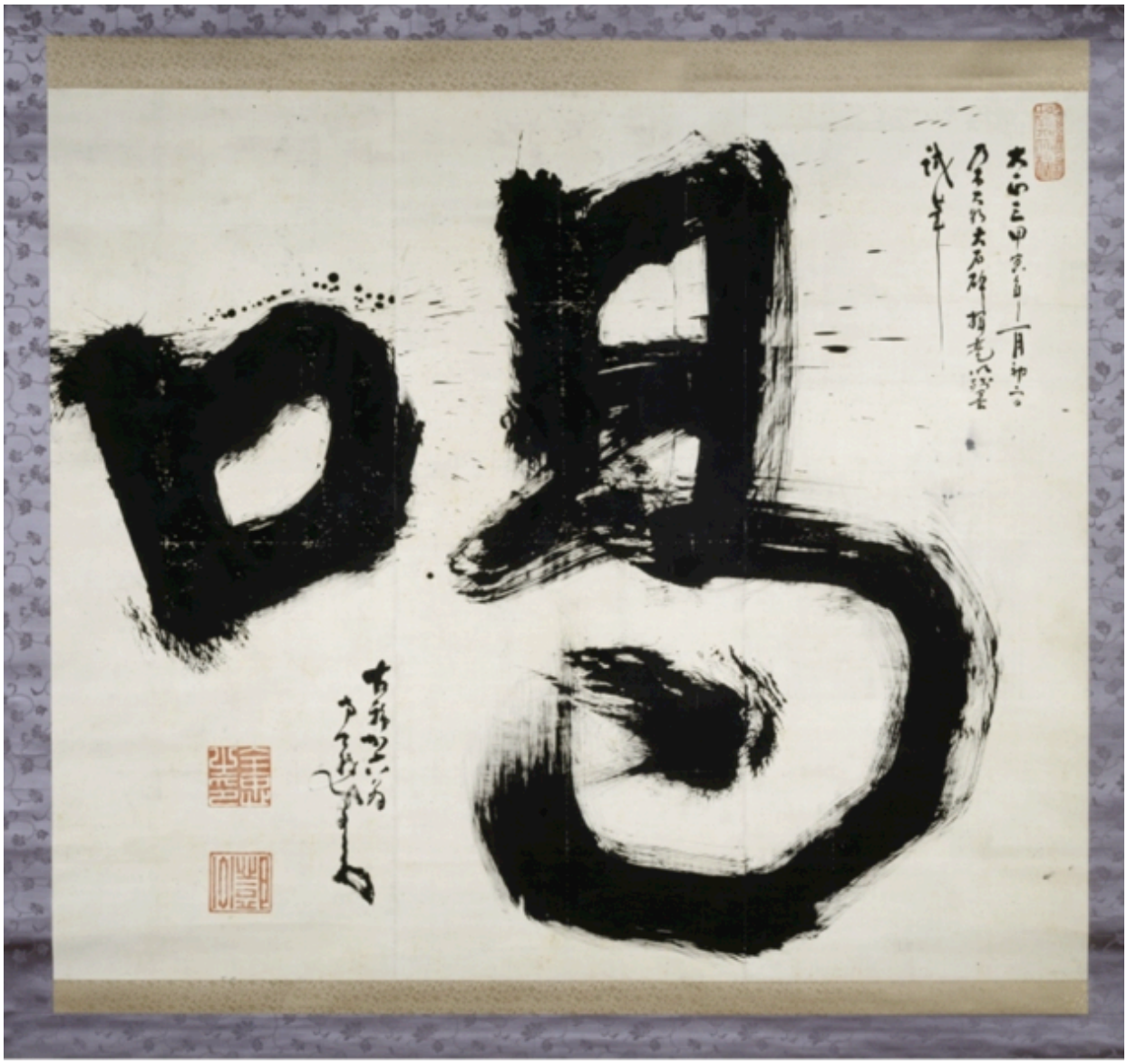
Morita Shiryū,

Han-shan (Kanzan), 1958

Ink on paper/panel, 96.0 × 177.0 cm

The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto

Fig. 8



Nantenbō Tōjū

Katsu, 1914

Ink on paper, 248.00 × 208.00 cm

Museum für Asiatische Kunst Berlin

Fig. 9

Nantenbō Tōjū

Calligraphy Screen with a Poem by Nogi Maresuke, 1923

Ink on paper, each screen 136.84 × 49.95 cm

Gift of Kurt A. Gitter, M.D. and Millie H. Gitter, 98.272

New Orleans Museum of Art

Fig. 10

Murakami Saburō

Tōkyū kaiga (Work Painted by Throwing a Ball), 1954

Acrylic on paper, 105.7 × 75.6 cm

Collection of the Museum of Modern Art New York

Fig. 11

Nantenbō, Nogi with his sons, and their troops at the Zen training in Oshima, photograph from Bōkatsu no. 15, 1913, n.p. Nantenbō can be seen in his priestly attire standing in the back row second from the left, and Nogi is sitting to the right in front of him, in his high officer's hat with a star.

Fig. 12

Inoue Yūichi creating abstract calligraphy in his home atelier for the 1955 European exhibition, "Contemporary Japanese Calligraphy." Photograph featured on the cover of the Shūkan Asahi journal dedicated to avant-garde calligraphy, from February 5, 1956, and reprinted in Bokubi no. 64 (March 1957).

Fig. 13

Shiraga Kazuo

Work II, 1958

Oil on paper, 183 × 243 cm

Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art

Fig. 14

Georges Mathieu painting La Bataille de Bun'ei, behind the window of Shirokiya department store in Tokyo, September 1957. Photo: François René Roland