

Opening November 12:  
110<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemorative Exhibition  
*HIDAI NANKOKU*



√K Contemporary (Root K Contemporary) is proud to host *HIDAI NANKOKU*, a solo exhibition of the avant-garde calligrapher's works. Organized by the Japan Art Inheritance Association, the exhibition will be on view from November 12 to December 10. Presenting approximately 50 works, *HIDAI NANKOKU* will feature never-before-exhibited works as well as Takuhon (ink rubbings) from the artist's personal collection.

Through his conception of the "Art of the Line", Nankoku Hidai shocked the art world, as well as his fellow Japanese calligraphers. Described as the "New Abstract Style" by the San Francisco Sunday Chronicle, his works earned great acclaim and were subsequently acquired by prominent collectors and highly established institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York.

Despite these accomplishments, Hidai's achievements fail to place themselves within the framework of art history. With this year marking 110 years since his birth, the exhibition seeks to revisit and unravel the artist's "Art of the Line" with the hopes of articulating and sharing his talents and accomplishments with future generations.

**【On the Exhibition】**

I came across Nankoku Hidai's works some years back and, taken by the impact of his lines, organized an exhibition titled *Linework* at √K Contemporary. With Hidai as a key figure, we curated a show that shone a light on artists who expressed the art of the line. However, most visitors were new to Hidai's work and were fascinated by his unique and powerful aesthetic.

Although this year marks the 110th year anniversary of the artist's birth, his name is rarely mentioned in 20<sup>th</sup>-century art history, and, knowing how many have reacted to his work, I can't help but feel a sense of incongruity.



67-3, 1967  
Ink on torinoko paper  
Private collection

Since Nankoku is a calligrapher, he is often described as an "avant-garde calligrapher".

However, what exactly is avant-garde calligraphy?

When thinking of his work, this is the question that continued to linger in my mind. Viewed as "avant-garde calligraphy", if his achievements are interpreted as irrelevant to art due to their being calligraphy, then where lies the essence of art?

Nankoku, like much of his surrounding contemporaries, saw great potential for the future and may have been on the brink of arousing extraordinary change.

By changing the way people think, we hope to make an impact that places Japanese art within the global context and removes the perceived boundaries between art and calligraphy. Through the works of the calligrapher who single-handedly tried to convey the essence of both, calligraphy and art, we believe Japanese art can take a leap forward.

With this in mind, we feel honored to be part of this momentous exhibition and look forward to sharing his works with many.

Ichiko Kashima (Director of √K Contemporary)

【Hidai Nankoku (比田井南谷 1912-1999)】

Born as a second son to Hidai Tenrai and Shokin Hidai, Nankoku studied under his father, Hidai Tenrai.

Following his father's death, the artist inherited his father's calligraphy research institute, "Shogakuin" and subsequently began managing thousands of precious monuments whilst simultaneously reopening the Shogakuin Publishing Department to publish high-quality educational literature. In 1945, he created his first avant-garde work, "Den no Variation" (lit. Lightning Variation), and displayed it the following year, shocking his fellow contemporaries.



The artist has held numerous solo exhibitions in cities such as Tokyo and New York and has been invited to participate in contemporary exhibitions. The artist's work has been acquired by several prominent collections, such as New York's MoMA and Hong Kong's M+. Hidai has also given talks on calligraphy at 20 universities, including Princeton and Columbia.

Official Website: <http://www.shodo.co.jp/nankoku/>

**Public Collections**

The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto / Saku City Koma no Sato Fureai Center / Saku City Museum of Tenrai / Chiba City Museum of Art / The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo / Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo / Naritasan Calligraphy Museum / Nagai Museum of Modern Art / Hokkaido

Hakodate Museum / Yale University Art Museum / University of California, Berkeley Museum / Kröller-Müller Museum / Cornell University Johnson Museum of Art/ San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, / New York Museum of Modern Art / Harvard University Fog Museum of Art / National Gallery of Victoria / M+

## ■ Exhibition Highlights

### A Presentation of Approx. 50 Works Featuring Never-Before-Exhibited Works

In this line-up of approximately 50 works, *Hidai Nankoku* will present 7 works that will make their debut in Japan since their inaugural presentation in 1960s America, as well as never-before-exhibited works.

### Nankoku Hidai Takuhon (Ink Rubbing) Collection

The artist's prized collection of Takuhon works will be on display in the basement of the gallery.

When Nankoku held his solo exhibition together with a Takuhon exhibition, he surprised Western audiences by presenting an art form that was unknown to the West. An art form crucial to Hidai's conception of the "Art of the Line", Takuhon exists beyond the bounds of Western art. Presenting a major part of Hidai's collection, this display offers viewers the opportunity to understand and discover the significance of Takuhon.

### A Special Display of Historically Significant Documents

In addition to making art, Hidai was an active promoter of calligraphy, giving lectures, demonstrations, and instructive lessons on "the accurate history of calligraphy, how to appreciate calligraphy, and how to write calligraphy" at universities and research institutes in and out of Japan. On this special occasion, important documents such as publications from the time and newspaper articles will be on display. Additional highlights include items that further evidence the artist's wide influence; from acquisition records by MoMA, NY, and established collectors in the 1960s, to collaborative works by the artist and renowned artists such as Pierre Alechinsky and Walasse Ting.

## ■ Special Events

With the aim of further exploring of the character and artistry of the artist, several special events, from rinsho (calligraphy imitation) workshops to collaborative fashion events, will be held during the course of the exhibition.

Further details will be posted on the official exhibition website.

Exhibition Website : [https://root-k.jp/exhibitions\\_en/hidai-nankoku\\_2022/](https://root-k.jp/exhibitions_en/hidai-nankoku_2022/)

### • Gallery Talk

Led by Ms. Kazuko Hidai of Tenraishoin, a gallery talk featuring a variety of guests will be held during the exhibition. Taking place within the exhibition space, the talk will provide an intimate and valuable insight into the artist's oeuvre, creative environment and character. (Japanese only)

### • Nankoku-Style Calligraphy Rinsho Workshop

A workshop where participants can choose which takuhon they would like to render and make their own work will be held at the venue.

During his time in America, he would teach calligraphy to local artists who knew nothing of the art. In this workshop, Mr. Soseki Takahashi, a disciple of the artist who also studied calligraphy, will give a lecture based on a course from the time. All participants are welcome, so please take this valuable opportunity to interact with takuhon and learn more about calligraphy. (Japanese only)

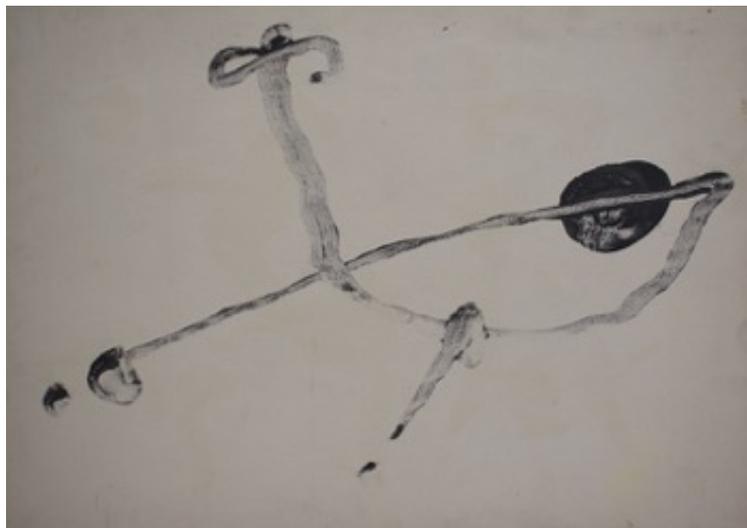
### • Takuhon x Fashion

When Hidai held his solo exhibition in America during the 1960s, his takuhon garnered much attention and were featured in LIFE magazine in a special collaborative takuhon and fashion feature. With the hopes of recreating the energetic synergy of the time, a fashion event will be held at the venue during the course of the show.

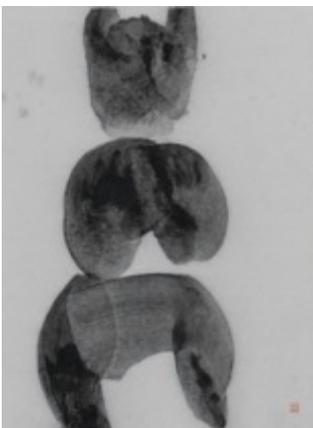
### ■ Featured Works



No. 7 "Bird and Bow", 1949  
Ink on paper



57-11-B, 1957  
Ink on paper



59-27, 1959  
Ink on paper



61-3, 1961  
Ink on paper



64-10, 1964  
Ink on paper

### ■ Exhibition Outline

Exhibition Title | *110th Anniversary Commemorative Exhibition, HIDAI NANKOKU*  
Dates | November 12 (Saturday) to December 10 (Saturday), 2022  
\*Closed on Sundays & Mondays, Open on Public Holidays  
Admission | Free  
Venue | √k Contemporary (Root K Contemporary)  
Address : Minamicho 6, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo  
Tel : (+81) (0)3-6280-8808 / Email : [info@root-k.jp](mailto:info@root-k.jp)  
Exhibition Website | [https://root-k.jp/exhibitions/en/hidai-nankoku\\_2022/](https://root-k.jp/exhibitions/en/hidai-nankoku_2022/)

Organizer | Japan Art Inheritance Association  
Planning | √K Contemporary  
Collaborators | Tenraishoin, Kazuko Hidai, Yoshinobu Hidai, Susumu Takahashi, Soseki Takahashi,  
SEI-RIN Co., Ltd.  
Design | Shintaro Tabara

【The Japan Art Inheritance Association】

The Japan Art Inheritance Association was established with the aim of securing past legacies unto future generations. Through the three pillars of succession, preservation and restoration, the association serves to protect the history and culture of artworks.

Official Website: <https://www.art-inheritance.org/> (Japanese Only)

【Tenraishoin】

The origins of Tenraishoin source to Shogakuin, an establishment founded in 1917 by Hidai Tenrai, the founder of modern calligraphy. Home to a large collection of rare, historical works, Shogakuin was succeeded by Hidai Nankoku and became Tenraishoin in 1990 under Hidai Kazuko. Today, Tenraishoin continues to engage in a wide range of activities, such as publishing, organizing calligraphy-related events and providing video distribution, to help promote and enhance the art of calligraphy.

Official Website: <https://www.shodo.co.jp/>

About √K Contemporary

Guided by the notion that new art is generated from years of refinement, √K Contemporary deals mainly with contemporary art from the post-war period onwards. With an ethos colored by its roots in traditional art, √K Contemporary hosts and organizes various unique exhibitions and events that aim to provoke, stimulate, and evoke new thoughts and ideas. In conserving their acts, the gallery hopes to place themselves within and pave their way towards the future art scene.

Manifesting this notion, the 300sqm gallery space was envisioned as a "gallery from space", where works are shown with new values and viewed with new eyes. With innovation at its heart, √K Contemporary strives to become the next-generation art space that represents "the present of the future".

Official Website: <https://root-k.jp/en>

TW: @rk\_contemporary | FB: @rootkcontemporary | IG: @rk\_contemporary

※Depending on the state of COVID-19, business days and hours are subject to change.

Please check updates on the √K Contemporary website, Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter periodically for updates.

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For all Press & Media Related Inquiries

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