

**An Interview: HAMANO Toshihiro, artist, and FUKUDA
Masahide, historian (English translation).**

Walking the Path of Art with a Clear Mind

Learning from MIYAMOTO MUSASHI: The Most Important Aspect of Winning in Life

Based in Takamatsu City, Kagawa Prefecture, Professor HAMANO Toshihiro has earned high acclaim both in Japan and abroad for his original artworks that fuse Eastern and Western aesthetics. Mr FUKUDA Masahide, a scholar of MIYAMOTO Musashi (hereinafter Musashi), has shed light on the lesser-known true nature of Musashi. The two men, who became friends through the book *Musashi*, discussed their respective journeys and the teachings of Musashi. They also talked about the most important aspects of mastering one's chosen path and achieving a better life.

The conversation took place at Professor HAMANO's home and studio in Takamatsu City, Kagawa Prefecture.



In front of the 'Fūjin Raijin Byōbu' in Professor HAMANO's studio

The monumental work *The Illustrated Life of Prince Shotoku*, created over a period of fifteen years

FUKUDA (hereafter *F*): I was very much looking forward to this conversation today with you, Professor HAMANO, whom I greatly respect. You are 89 years old now, yet you remain energetically active in the arts both at home and abroad. I wanted to know more about the driving force behind this, so I decided to pay you a visit at your home and studio in Takamatsu (laughs).

HAMANO (hereafter *H*): Thank you very much for coming all the way from Kumamoto today. I was looking forward to meeting you, too, Mr FUKUDA.

It was about 15 years ago that we first met, wasn't it? I was on a flight to Kraków, Poland, to serve as a judge for an international exhibition. It was when I came across an essay you had written about MIYAMOTO Musashi in a magazine. At the time, I was surprised to find that there were still people publishing papers on Musashi. As I read on, I realised that the account of Musashi's life and deeds was incredibly accurate, and I recognised you as an outstanding scholar.

That's how I became one of the great

admirers of yours, and ever since then, we have been close friends who share a deep bond, haven't we?

F: It turns out that it was indeed Musashi who put us in touch. Then I got a really nice letter from Professor HAMANO. We were in touch for a few years and met up for the first time in 2019. We met at Chugu-ji Temple, which was founded by Prince Shotoku, when your work 'The Illustrated Life of Prince Shotoku' was opened to the public to go with the 'Shoso-in Exhibition' at the Nara National Museum, held to commemorate the start of the Reiwa era.

This is an amazing piece of art — a large folding screen with six panels in four sections — that shows the life of Prince Shotoku, with each section showing a different season. It is two metres tall and 36 metres long. I still remember being amazed and moved by how beautiful it was. I thought it would become a National Treasure of Japan one day.

H: The commission for 'The Illustrated Life of Prince Shotoku' came from the Mother Superior of Chugu-ji Temple. They asked me to paint it in the style of the Kamakura period, using the 'Illustrated Biography of Prince Shotoku' by the Kamakura-period painter *Kōzuke no Hokkyō Tajimabō* as a model. However, this proved to be a tremendous challenge. I visited

researchers specialising in Prince Shotoku, asking them one by one what people in the Kamakura period looked like and how best to depict each scene, and I created the work by interpreting their answers.

My goal was to create something that would be the best example of Japanese art. I added flowers and plants to the background to represent the four seasons, and I paid a lot of attention to the lines in the Yamato-e style. I made sure I understood the subject really well before I started painting it. It took me fifteen years to complete, from the first idea to the finished project.



A monumental work measuring 2 metres in height and 36 metres in length.
The Four Seasons of the Illustrated Biography of Prince Shotoku: Grand Folding Screen.

F: It is truly astonishing that it took 15 years to create.

H: I was over 50 when I started painting it, and by the time it was finished in 2005, I was 68. It felt like I had turned into *Urashima Taro* (laughs).

At the time, I was expanding my artistic activities into Europe, but I felt there was a significant cultural divide between the 'East' and the 'West'. But while I was working on this, I realised that the most important thing to do was to follow Prince Shotoku's idea of 'Cherish the harmony among people'. Society and human life cannot be sustained by Western individualistic thinking alone. I believe that the Eastern spirit of harmony will become even more important in the international community of the future.

F: The large folding screens were shown in Paris and Nantes in France, as well as at the Marubeni Gallery in Tokyo in 2024 and at the Osaka-Kansai Expo 2025, where they were highly praised. This is probably because, in today's world where division and confusion are increasing, people recognised the power of your art and the importance of Prince Shotoku's 'spirit of harmony'.

A Fusion of East and West: Bringing Japanese Culture to the World

F: Professor Hamano, you will be 90 next year. Are you working on any new pieces at the moment?

H: When I was a student at art school, I painted figurative works. However,

around the time I graduated, I started painting more abstract and spiritual works. It was a style where, in the mix of subtle shapes and abstract expression, you could sense something like light. I have been exploring this idea ever since, and recently I have been creating works that look at the question of 'what is Japanese beauty?', using both abstract and figurative approaches.

When I was young, I was inspired by Western art. As I continued to create art, drawing parallels between Western and Japanese art, I eventually developed a style that expresses Japanese aesthetics.

F: You have been inspired by different styles of art and culture, but you have ultimately returned to Japanese beauty, haven't you?

H: With this in mind, I plan to hold a major retrospective in Washington, D.C., USA, in 2027, when I turn 90. This will feature new works that express the concept of 'Absolute Void'. The word 'Absolute' refers to the Christian God of the West. 'Void', on the other hand, refers to the Eastern concept of nothingness. Works that embody both Western and Eastern spirits can be described as 'Absolute Void'.

I believe that Japanese culture should be given a place on the world stage. Instead of being separate, the Western

and Eastern worlds should be brought together to create a single world that includes both. To achieve this, we need even deeper insight and discovery than before.

I feel as though I am walking a path where no one has gone before, but as most of the work is now finished, I am determined to see it through before I turn 90.

F: I am amazed by your energy, but when I hear the term 'Absolute Void', I think of the phrase *Banri-ikku* ("Under one sky, we strive for the same goal"), the state of enlightenment attained by Musashi. I'm looking forward to the completion of his new work.

A Work of a Lifetime: 'Ask Musashi'

H: You've been very active yourself, haven't you? You published two books last year, in 2025.

F: Last year was the 380th anniversary of Musashi's death, so I decided to publish two books. The first, released in January, is called *MIYAMOTO Musashi: Living in Kumamoto*. This looks at the final five years of his life, which he spent in the Hosokawa domain of Kumamoto. The second, published in December, is called *Ask Musashi: The Art of War, Art, and Philosophy of Life Mastered*

by the Swordsman MIYAMOTO Musashi".

Ask Musashi is a collection of photographs and essays. It was co-authored with the photographer Mr Takeshi Fujimori. I had the privilege of having a dialogue with him for the June 2020 issue of a magazine called Chichi. Musashi was not just a swordsman; he was also an artist and a great cultural figure. He was good at calligraphy, painting and crafts, and he left behind some great works, including four that are now considered to be Important Cultural Properties of Japan. You can deeply sense his philosophy in his ink wash paintings. It was really a shame that there was no catalogue to show the fact, I was lucky enough to meet Mr Fujimori, a leading figure in cultural photography and a student of Ken Domon, the well-known photographer. Mr Fujimori really liked Musashi, too, so we promised each other that one day we would create a book that shows what Musashi's way of life was really like and why his art is so appealing. We worked closely together, visiting the places where Musashi's art was displayed around the country. He took photos of each piece with great care. As "Ask Musashi" has all of these photographs in full colour, I can truly say that, for me, it is a book into which I have poured my very soul.

H: I have read "Ask Musashi" myself,

and I was really impressed by its great content. I was amazed at how beautifully his life, words and works were presented alongside the photographs. I don't think there has ever been a book on Musashi that is both so deep and so easy to understand.

F: However, I was deeply saddened by Mr Fujimori's unexpected death just before it was published. He was very happy to have achieved his lifelong ambition, and this became his final work.

His aspiration to become an artist

F: In the preface to your book *The Mind and Shape of the East*, Professor HAMANO writes that your experiences during the war were a major factor in your decision to become an artist. Today, I would very much like to hear about your origins and the journey you have taken so far.

H: I was born in Takamatsu in 1937. When the war ended, I was eight and in my second year of primary school. I spent every day at that time feeling as though my heart was being crushed by anxiety over the rapid changes in the world.

I started painting the things I loved, because they made me feel better. I

found beauty in the red flames of the wartime bombings, whilst the calm of the clear, blue Seto Inland Sea soothed my heart.

F: You found it comforting to paint.

H: This experience during the war made me think about what life is for. It also made me want to explore what art and beauty really are.

So, an artist's individuality and unique expression are already inherent in their soul from the moment of birth. When we are not limited by preconceived ideas, but instead look closely at the many different things in the world around us, the feelings and respect we have from this experience create a rich sensitivity. When this sensitivity and our own style become one, we create truly great art. What's more, when we think about ourselves as part of the universe and nature, and really understand that we are the universe and nature itself, we can learn endless lessons.

I also think that this realisation has the most fundamental questions in it: What is a human being? What is the self? What is existence? What is the universe?

F: This story is all about the heart of who you are as an artist.

H: Another starting point was an incident when I was in Year 5 at

primary school. I was playing sword-fighting games with some friends in the grounds of the local Usahachimangu Shrine when the chief priest told us off. I was the only one who didn't manage to run away in time, so I was caught and tied to a pillar of the shrine building.

F: Oh, to a pillar...

H: I shouted 'Help me! Help me!' until late afternoon, when someone from the shrine office untied the rope and rescued me. But as evening fell, the atmosphere of the shrine filled me with a terrible fear. At that moment, I felt frustrated that I had been caught alone and my friends hadn't come to my aid. I began to think that I had to find my own way of living.

After thinking about it a lot, I decided to try to become a professional artist. I told my mother that I wanted to be an artist. She replied, 'OK, let's change your name then.' My original name was 'Toyoji', but my father gave me my current name, 'Toshihiro', and I changed my name.

At the time, I wondered why I had to change my name, and whether simply changing it would make me an artist. But later, I realised that my decision to change my name to become an artist was still deeply affecting my life.

F: We can only say how great your parents are, and that they are the

reason you are such a successful painter and artist.

H: My parents were very religious. My father, Tatsuji, returned to Takamatsu after the war, but before the war he had been an active hand-painted *Yuzen* artist in Osaka and Kyoto.

He passed away in 1969, when I was around 50. I suddenly felt I wanted to find out what sort of work my late father had done before the war, so I visited Kyoto. There, by chance, I met someone who had known my father back then. He asked me if I was Tatsu-chan's son, and I was able to hear his story. He says my father was a great *Yuzen* artist. He only took on work he felt was worthy.

Looking back now, perhaps my decision to pursue a career in the arts was partly influenced by my father. I'm quite stubborn like him (laughs).

Being fascinated by the art of Musashi filled with warmth



Portrait of MIYAMOTO Musashi (held by the Shimada Art Museum)

F: As I listened to your story, I found myself reflecting on how I came to researching MIYAMOTO Musashi. Forty years ago, I was working as a manager for a housing company. I was sent to Kumamoto, the place where Musashi died. At the same time, an exhibition from the Eisei Bunko collection was on at the Kumamoto Prefectural Museum of Art. It featured many of Musashi's works, including ink paintings.

I had always thought of Musashi as a master swordsman, like in YOSHIKAWA Eiji's books. However, at the Eisei Bunko exhibition, I was amazed to see Musashi's own hand in pieces such as 'Folding Screen with Reed and Wild Geese', 'Red Plum Blossoms and Pigeons', and 'Cormorant'— all of which are designated as Important Cultural Properties of Japan. I was struck by the gentleness and warmth they exuded. It seemed to me that Musashi's spirit was revealed in these works; they appeared almost like self-portraits, and I felt I was witnessing his state of mind, one of profound detachment, which moved me deeply. The gap between the idea of Musashi that we get from his works, and the idea of the 'sword master' that is shown in society, was so significant. I was interested in where this gentleness came from, and what Musashi was like in real life. So, I started studying Musashi.

H: It's truly wonderful that you were able to sense Musashi's character through his works. How did you do your research?

F: I started my research by looking into Musashi's final days in Kumamoto. Luckily, historical sites associated with Musashi – such as Reigandō Cave, Musahi-zuka, and the site of his former residence – were all nearby, and reliable historical records had been kept. From there, I did further research all over Japan, looking at places connected with Musashi—such as Sakushu Miyamoto Village (now Miyamoto, Ohara Town, Okayama Prefecture), Himeji, Akashi, Tatsuno, Miki and Takasago in Harima Province, as well as Kyoto and Osaka in the Kansai region, and Kokura and Nakatsu in Kyushu. I read a lot of historical documents, spoke to descendants of the family and other researchers, and did extensive research.

H: I am truly impressed by your curiosity and thoroughness, Mr FUKUDA.

F: As a result, I discovered new aspects of Musashi that had previously been unknown to us. I felt obliged to share this information, so I started writing and publishing papers in journals and other publications. These were

compiled and published as *The Collected Research Papers on Miyamoto Musashi*. Thanks to you reading that book, we are able to talk about this today.

I would like to speak in more detail about Musashi's life later on.

Pursuing the path he believes in with unwavering dedication

F: Professor HAMANO, once you had set your sights on becoming an artist, how did you go about learning to paint?

H: After leaving my local high school, I went on to study at an art university in Tokyo. As I mentioned briefly earlier, I initially studied representational painting, but around the time of my graduation, I shifted towards spiritual and abstract painting.

When I was in Tokyo, my mother sent me a copy of a book called *Zen and Japanese Culture* by D.T. Suzuki, a Buddhist philosopher. At the time, I didn't really understand it, but when I read the book, I realised it described something completely different from what was popular at art exhibitions in Tokyo. I felt that if I continued to copy Western styles or follow trends, I would reach a dead end within ten years and be completely unable to move forward. So, with *Zen and Japanese Culture* in hand, I decided to

go back to Takamatsu.

The professor who had mentored me asked, 'Why are you going back to the countryside?' But I was still determined. I believed that, by immersing myself fully in what I had learnt from Daisetz here in Takamatsu, far from the capital, my own artistic style would naturally evolve. Ultimately, this decision proved to be the right one.

F: Not many people can make the decision to leave the mainstream art world when they are so young.

H: I'm sure that there would be much to be learnt by staying in Tokyo. But sometimes, you can be affected by what's popular, or feel pressured by what others think.

I think Daisetz's point is that we shouldn't get caught up in these things. Instead, he says, we should 'let go' and 'be selfless'. When you become selfless, it doesn't matter where you are or what other people think. There is no difference between the East and the West. So, when it came to my creative work, I approached it with the conviction that the key to success lay in how mindlessly I could engage with the process. If I failed to do so, the responsibility lay solely with me.

F: So, SUZUKI Daisetz's teachings had great significance for you.

H: This happened after I turned 30, but another person who influenced me was when I met Dr NAKAMURA Hajime, a Buddhist scholar and comparative philosopher. I became friends with Dr NAKAMURA through a connection, and he often visited my studio in Takamatsu. During these visits, he told me, "Mr. HAMANO, I hope you will pursue a career in the arts with single-minded determination, and realise the fusion of Eastern and Western comparative thought in your paintings". These words have also been great encouragement to me as an artist.

My relationship with Dr NAKAMURA lasted until his passing in 1999 at the age of 86. I am the sort of person who, once I think someone is wonderful, will stay friends with them until the very end. For an artist, it is very important to observe people. It's about being able to see things as they really are. Artists use their ability to paint or express themselves through words. So, even though I'm not that good at painting, I think I'm pretty good at seeing what's really going on.

Of course, I'll stay in touch with you, Mr FUKUDA, until the day I die (laughs).

F: It's truly an honour (laughs).

A Turning Point in My Career as an Artist: 'The God of Wind and God of Thunder' Folding Screens

F: When you came back to Takamatsu, how did you develop the style of art that you are known for today?

H: After leaving Tokyo, I focused on the tradition and innovation of Japanese art. I wanted to create original works that only I could produce. I started by doing some basic drawing exercises to improve my mind and body. Then, I did further research into Japanese cultural traditions and the art and values of other countries. This helped me understand the unique features of each country and its people. It also made it clear what the future might hold for both Japan and the rest of the world. In fact, I founded the 'Intercultural Art eXchange Academy 21' in 1981. Through comparative studies with renowned European artists, I sought to clarify the differences and similarities between Eastern and Western art, aiming for a new fusion of the two traditions. Just as a gemstone only reveals its true form when polished, a person cannot find their path without self-cultivation, including the cultivation of the mind. I also came to understand the importance of acquiring a broad general education alongside academic study.

F: To find your path, you need to keep

refining yourself. Looking back, is there one piece of work that you can point to as the moment your career as an artist took a new direction?

H: If I had to choose one, it would be the *Fujin Raijin Byōbu (Folding Screens of the God of Wind and God of Thunder)*, which I unveiled in 1985 when I was 48. This work was inspired by the *Fujin Raijin Zu (Paintings of the God of Wind and God of Thunder)* by TAWARAYA Sotatsu and OGATA Korin, two of the most important painters of the Rinpa school during the Edo period, and combines Rinpa tradition with contemporary art. It was very well received, including a special exhibition in the VIP room of the Japan Pavilion at the 1992 Seville World Expo in Spain. President Gorbachev of the former Soviet Union also praised it, saying it expresses Japanese tradition in the most modern way and that it would be great if it were made into a sculpture. In fact, two years later, following a commission from Kagawa Prefecture, I created the '*Fujin Raijin Byōbu*' as a sculptural monument-, 'Agora- 21 Echoes of Enlightenment' - at the Industrial Exchange Centre, Sunmesse Kagawa.

F: So, your unique style has been widely recognised, both at home and abroad, hasn't it?

H: Actually, I made this work because a museum in Tokyo commissioned me to do so. Maybe they thought, 'There's an interesting painter in Takamatsu, let's give him a try,' but I was able to rise to the challenge and make it a success. This became a big turning point in my career as an artist.

A Heart That Reveres the Gods and Buddhas Is the Force That Sustains Life

F: In pursuing your own unique path, haven't you often found things don't go the way you want them to?

H: Of course, there were times when things did not go as I'd hoped. I think it was before I turned thirty. I lost sight of the path I should be taking and I became so desperate that I thought, 'I might as well just die.' I even went as far as Cape Ashizuri in Kochi Prefecture, looking for a place to end my life.

F: Oh, you were so desperate you even thought about taking your own life. This is the first I've heard of it.

H: But there was an oil painting of Cape Ashizuri hanging in the accommodation where I stayed. Looking at it, I decided to paint again and went back to Takamatsu. Art made me want to live again.

Difficult times are just part of life. It is exactly at these times that I think it is important to look at the words and art that were left behind by the people who came before us. Looking back, I have been fortunate to gain new insights and opportunities to develop my own creativity through the challenges I have faced.

F: Difficulties are what make us grow, you think.

H: There is one more thing that I consider very important in my life. That is my reverence for the gods and Buddhas. I have a lot of respect for them. I believe that when people pray and show respect for a higher power, it can help them grow as people.

F: Indeed, many of your works depict deities and Buddhas. Examples include the folding screens featuring the 'Twelve Guardian Generals' and the 'Four Heavenly Kings', which were exhibited at last year's World Expo.

H: I think the roots of this lie in the fact that my parents, who are very religious, taught me about Buddhism and Buddhist statues. For example, they would explain things to me in a way that even a child could understand, saying, 'If you believe that the Thousand-Armed Kannon can use all of her thousand arms, you will fail. The two hands joined at the centre are

the only path for you to follow in your artistic journey.' Looking back now, I realise that was simply a parent's love for their child.

This inspired me to have a lot of respect for the gods and Buddhas. As an artist, I have devoted myself to studying Buddhism and Zen, starting with Daisetsu. In addition, for twenty years from the age of thirty-five, I studied under Master NARASAKI Ikko at the Sōtō Zen School's Zuio-ji Monastery. There, I practised *zazen* (a type of meditation) and took part in tasks such as cooking and cleaning. This taught me how important it is to put my faith into practice. I am sure that these lessons and experiences have had a big effect on my life and my art.



Mr HAMANO at work in his Takamatsu studio

The truth behind ‘The Duel at Ganryū Island’, the turning point in Musashi’s life

F: I can see that you are a deeply compassionate person, and I now

understand that this comes from your parents' teachings and your studies of Buddhism and Zen. Musashi seems to have embraced Zen Buddhism, achieving a state where his sword and Zen practices are fully united. In his book *Dokkyodo*, Musashi wrote about what he believed in. He said that Buddhas and gods are noble, but he didn't rely on them because he has made his own path in life. I think Musashi's way of life is similar to your own.

The commonly accepted story of Musashi's life started with his birth in Miyamoto Village, Mimasaka Province (Okayama Prefecture), the death of his parents, followed by his involvement in the Battle of Sekigahara on the side of the Western Army, which ended in defeat. However, this story is completely wrong. The truth is that Musashi was born in Harima Province (Hyogo Prefecture) and, when he was young, was adopted by the martial arts master Shinmen Muni. He then fought alongside Muni in the 'Battle of Bungo Ishigahara' – also known as the Sekigahara of Kyushu – under the command of Kuroda Josui in the Eastern Army.

H: The fact that Musashi was with the winning Eastern Army in Kyushu with his father makes people see him in a completely different way, doesn't it?

F: I believe the first turning point in

Musashi's life was the world-famous 'Duel at Ganryū Island'. But this is not what most people think, either. When I looked closely into it, I found out that Musashi was teaching martial arts with his father in the Buzen and Bungo regions of Kyushu. Kojiro was also teaching in the Ganryu style in that area. The duel was started because the students were arguing about which master was stronger. Kojiro fought with a long sword that was over three *shaku* long, while Musashi used a wooden sword. Musashi won, but the story that he arrived two hours late for the duel is a later invention. Musashi just needed to beat his opponent with the wooden sword to win, and he did not kill Kojiro. Kojiro, however, later woke up and was killed by Musashi's disciples, who were hiding. This surprising result was found in the Hosokawa clan's old records, the *Numata-ke-ki*.

H: That is quite a surprising fact, isn't it?

F: We don't know if it was his father's instruction that led to Kojiro's death. In any case, Musashi was unable to forgive his father for killing Kojiro. This made him decide to break with his father. He did not inherit his father's *Tōri-ryū* school. Instead, he established his own school, the *Enmei-ryū*. This was in Keichō 9 (1604), when he was 23 years old. The following

year, he wrote *Hyōdōkyō* and said in certificates given to his students that *Enmei-ryū* was 'the best in the land'. I think this suggests that he was confident that he had surpassed his father.

From then on, he faced challenges from many martial artists. As described in *The Book of Five Rings*, he achieved the remarkable feat of remaining undefeated in 60 matches. He fought against over 60 practitioners of other schools until the age of 29 without losing a single time.

It is mostly believed that the duel happened at Ganryūjima in the 17th year of the Keichō era, when Musashi was 29 years old. But the timing is uncertain, and the name SASAKI Kojiro is also a creation of the later work *Nitenki*. All that is known is that he was a martial artist who practised the Ganryū style.

The True Portrait of MIYAMOTO Musashi, a Great Cultural Figure

F: Another major turning point in Musashi's life was the 'Summer Campaign of Osaka' in 1615, when the Toyotomi clan was defeated. Most people think that Musashi went to Osaka Castle because the Toyotomi army called him. However, the Mizuno family's historical records, *Osaka Gojin no Gokyu* and the Owari clan's *Kōko Zatsuroku*, show that he was actually

fighting as a guest commander under Mizuno Katsunari of the Tokugawa side, protecting the young lord.

H: So Musashi was on the winning side at both Sekigahara and the Summer Campaign of Osaka, wasn't he?

F: After that, Musashi left the Mizuno family and became a guest of the Honda family in Himeji (like an advisor to the daimyo), but with the fall of the Toyotomi clan, there was an era of peace without major warfare. In a time when it was impossible to survive by being loyal to the sword alone, Musashi thought about using his skills to bring about peace through the 'Way of Governance'. From the time of the Siege of Osaka, Musashi raised young boys like Miki-no-suke and Iori Ori. He adopted them as his own sons and had them appointed as close aides to daimyo, acting as their guardian. At the same time, he was helping the domain's leaders as a guest while also learning about the Way of the Samurai and the Way of the Art of War.

During this time, he developed close friendship with important cultural figures, such as Hayashi Razan, a Confucian scholar and teacher to the Shogun's family; Karasuma Mitsuhiro, a nobleman and poet who worked at the court; and well-known Zen monks. He gained experience in administration, culture (including

waka poetry, painting and Noh theatre) and urban planning through these connections. He expanded the military strategy to include not just combat techniques, but also the principles of nation-building and human relations.

In fact, various historical records show that Musashi was involved in the town planning and construction supervision of Akashi Castle town, as well as the design and construction of the daimyo's garden within the castle grounds and the landscaping of temples; he also produced numerous works of art.

H: Indeed, Musashi was a great man of culture. He was more than just a swordsman. I have also studied Musashi's way of life and been influenced by it, but I feel he was more of an artist than a samurai. If you look at the surviving drawings and layouts of his gardens, you can see that he was a great landscape architect who combined beauty with practicality. Stone arrangements are very important when creating a garden. Although there are many ways to arrange stones, Musashi understood them well. This meant that his designs were both simple and strong. I also design gardens, so I understand this well.

F: After establishing himself, Musashi trusted the Miyamoto family to Iori in his later years. He was then invited by

Lord Tadatoshi Hosokawa of Kumamoto, where he wrote *The Book of Five Rings* to help future generations. He died peacefully in 1645, at the age of 64. In his book, *The Book of Five Rings*, he wrote, 'To save one's life and one's reputation—this is the way of the martial arts'. This set out the samurai's most important principles and the reason for their existence.

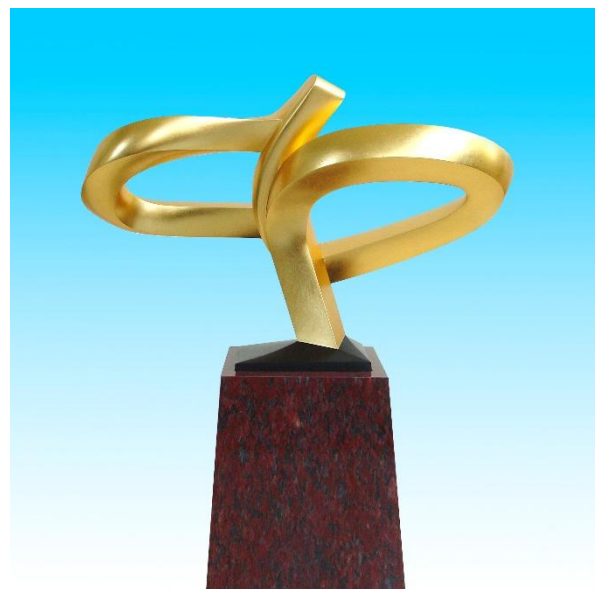
Musashi won every challenge, both on his own and in a team, and that's how he was able to write about how to win in *The Book of Five Rings*.

The Beauty of Compassion and the Prayer for Peace that Underlie the Work of These Two Artists

F: Musashi never served under any daimyo (Japanese feudal lords) throughout his life. Instead, he spent his days creating his own methods and training himself. This helped him to become an expert in the art of war. The Book of Five Rings has been translated into more than ten languages and is read all over the world these days. Professor HAMANO, you too, have honed his craft without belonging to the mainstream art world; he established your own artistic organisation and pioneered a unique form of art from your base in Takamatsu, which is now

internationally acclaimed. There are many points in common with Musashi. Most importantly, I think you and Musashi are both guided by a spirit of harmony, a beauty of compassion, and a desire for peace.

For example, in Musashi's painting *Red Plum Blossoms and a Dove*, a dove is perched on the branch of an ancient tree in full bloom, fluffing up its feathers and dozing contentedly. As if to protect the dove, two slender young branches stretch out behind it, resembling his twin swords; it seems to be teaching us that 'it is the samurai's duty to protect the peace of the people'. I'm amazed that Musashi used a dove to symbolise peace 400 years ago. I also see a prayer for peace in your sculpture, *Dove of Peace*, which is at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.



The sculpture, *Dove of Peace* at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris

H: Yes, *Dove of Peace* is a sculpture based on my other work, *Unity*. In *Unity*, I tried to express three-dimensional form on a two-dimensional surface. I created *Unity* to produce a work that was simple yet warm and moving, making full use of the expressive qualities of Japanese ink. The *Dove of Peace*, based on the painting, is given a depth and volume. I am truly delighted that you sense a prayer for peace in my work that resonates with the art of Musashi.

F: I understand that *Unity* was commissioned by the Vatican as a commemorative work for the Great Jubilee celebrating the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Christ; you were the only Asian artist to receive such a commission. I heard that you were granted an audience with the Pope on his birthday and gave him your work in person.

As a Japanese person, I am deeply moved and proud.



"If you study one path deeply, it will lead you to all paths. "

"I believe this is vital for us to lead better lives."

Musashi's Secrets to Success in Life

F: Musashi left behind the words: 'By applying the principle of strategy to the arts and skills of all kinds, I have become my own master in all things.' Indeed, while he was mastering the way of the sword, he also engaged in calligraphy, painting, crafts, and performing arts through 'self-study and self-discovery', having not been taught by anyone. He left behind outstanding works.

If you study one path thoroughly, it leads to all other paths. I believe this is a very important principle for us to achieve a better life.

H: I couldn't agree more.

F: Reportedly, Matsushita Konosuke, also known as the 'God of Management', once gave a lecture at the Matsushita Seikei Juku, in which he encouraged his students to follow Musashi's example in terms of self-cultivation and self-discovery. He wanted them to become like Musashi in politics and management. So, how can we become like him? I think the 'Method of Training in the Way' that he left behind can help.

Rule 1: Do not think dishonestly

Rule 2: The way is in training

Rule 3: Become acquainted with every art

Rule 4: Know the ways of all professions

Rule 5: Distinguish between gain and loss in worldly matters

Rule 6: Develop an intuitive judgment and understanding for everything

Rule 7: Perceive those things which cannot be seen

Rule 8: Pay attention even to trifles

Rule 9: Do nothing which is of no use

These are all things that Musashi practised himself. Could they be the key to success in all matters?

H: I really relate to the part in Musashi's *The Path of Aloneness* (*Dokkōdō*) where it says, "Consider your superficiality and have profound thoughts for others." He understood how hard it was for ordinary people to live through a war. Because of this, he thought a lot about how he should behave as a samurai, so that a war like this would not happen again. These words really show what Musashi thought about the world, and how much he wanted it to be peaceful. Another is the passage from 'The Book of Water' of *The Book of Five Rings*: 'The observing eye is stronger, the perceiving eye is weaker.' "The observing eye"—that is, the eye that sees the essence of things and the mind of one's opponent—must be strengthened, whilst "the perceiving eye"—that is, the eye that sees only the superficial appearance of one's opponent—must be weakened. The same idea can also be applied when making art: First, you use your 'eye of observation' to see the whole picture from far away. Then, when it's time to paint, you use your 'eye of perception' to add the details. You can't make great art without both the 'eye of observation' and the 'eye of perception'. I think this is true in any area.



"What is essential for living a better life is to engage in constant self-improvement and build a solid foundation, whilst learning from the lives of those who came before us and continually broadening our knowledge and culture."

Continuing to strive and dedicate oneself for the sake of the world and others

F: I agree. In the opening lines of *Dokkyōdō* — 'In no way should one act contrary to the great future you have before you' — shows Musashi's determination in his way of life. Let me share some of what he said in *The Book of Five Rings* to show how he trained his mind and body.

○ "A thousand days of training to forge, ten thousand days to refine." A thousand days (three years) of practice lay the foundations; ten thousand days (thirty years) of practice make one a true master.

○ "Today is victory over yourself of yesterday"
Reflecting on one's daily efforts leads to victory tomorrow.

○ "In strategy, your spiritual bearing must not be any different from normal." Always keep your mind centred and maintain a calm, composed state. Cultivate the discipline to remain unperturbed in all circumstances.

○ "Take water as your guide and make your mind like water."
Water adapts to the shape of its vessel, becoming a single drop or the vast ocean. Avoid fixed ideas and complacency; respond flexibly according to the situation.

This is precisely 'to adopt a posture of no-posture'. I believe that his fundamental philosophy lies particularly in this concept of 'water'. If you can make these principles a habit, you will become like Musashi. You will become a victor.

H: As you have just explained, Mr FUKUDA, I believe that what is essential for us to live better lives is to

engage in ceaseless study and build up our foundations, whilst learning deeply from the ways of our predecessors and continually enhancing our cultural literacy. In short, it is a matter of 'refining oneself'.

My most important belief is the phrase from Daisetz's *Zen and Japanese Culture: Omu Shojū Nishō Goshin*

"Abiding nowhere, the awakened mind arises". This is a phrase from the Diamond Sutra, and it is also quoted in Zen Master Takuan's *Fudochi*

Shinmyoroku from the Edo period; in essence, it means 'become mindless'.

If we become mindless and have the self-awareness and practice befitting a Japanese person, then there is no difference between the centre and the provinces, or between the East and the West. We should be able to do what we want to do wherever we are. We are still halfway there; the path is long, and we can't see the end. But I want to carry on following the path of art with a mindless heart, using the teachings of our ancestors, Musashi's *The Book of Five Rings*, and the way of life as a mirror to reflect on myself.

F: We live in a time where great

nations are acting in their own interests and tragic wars continue across the globe. This is why the 'philosophy of harmony' of Prince Shotoku, Misashi's *Bushido*, and the power of Professor HAMANO's art—which preaches a prayer for peace—are so important.

As an artist, you have successfully captured the spirituality of Japanese culture in a way that is understood all over the world. This has led to you receiving high praise from three major organisations: the state (represented by the World Expo), international cultural organisations (UNESCO) and religious institutions (the Vatican). I think this makes him a special person because he is at the point where Japanese art history, the history of religious art and international cultural history all meet. Thank you so much for this valuable opportunity today.

H: Mr FUKUDA, Although I may not be as famous as Musashi, I will create a new *Book of Five Rings* in the world of art. It will be called *Heaven, Earth and Man!* Thank you very much indeed for a wonderful time today.

Toshihiro HAMANO—Born in Takamatsu City, Kagawa Prefecture, in 1937. Graduated from Tama Art University. Based in Takamatsu, he promotes the fusion and harmony of Eastern and Western aesthetics, exploring and presenting original works on the world stage. In 1981, he founded the 'Intercultural Art eXchange Academy 21'. His major works include the *Fujin Raijin Byōbu* (1985), the Jubilee Year commemorative work *Unity* (2000), and the *The Illustrated Life of Prince Shotoku* (2005). In 2023, the series of works *Tea Room: Katsura Imperial Villa*, held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, was designated as a World Art Heritage, and a dedicated exhibition room was completed. He has received numerous awards and honours, including the Order of Merit for Culture and the Medal of Culture from the Republic of Poland, the Kagawa Prefecture Award for Cultural Merit, the Commissioner for Cultural Affairs Award, the Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters (France), the Minister for Foreign Affairs Award, and the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays.

Masahide FUKUDA – Born in Nagasaki Prefecture in 1948. Completed a Master's degree at the Graduate School of Cultural Sciences, The Open University of Japan. Researches historical figures such as MIYAMOTO Musashi and KATO Kiyomasa. Member of the Japanese Historical Society. Councillor of the Shimada Art Museum (Public Interest Incorporated Foundation). Director of the Kumamoto Castle Commemoration Society (Public Interest Incorporated Foundation). Organiser of the Kumamoto Prefecture Cultural Discussion Group (Local History) and Director of the Kumamoto Prefecture Cultural Association. His publications include *A Study of Kato Kiyomasa's 'Wife and Children'* (co-authored with Katsuyuki Mizuno) and *Kato Kiyomasa and Tadahiro: A Study of the Disinheritance of the Higo Kato Clan* (both published by Buitsu Solution); *Collected Papers on MIYAMOTO MUSASHI* (Reiken); and *MIYAMOTO MUSASHI Studies Vol. 2: The MUSASHI Province Transmission Record*, *MIYAMOTO MUSASHI: Living in Kumamoto* (both published by Bui-Two Solution), and *Ask MUSASHI: The Military Strategy, Art, and Philosophy of Life Mastered by the Swordsman MIYAMOTO MUSASHI* (Clevis / Photographs by Takeshi Fujimori), among others.