

Toshihiro Hamano

The Beauty

of silence

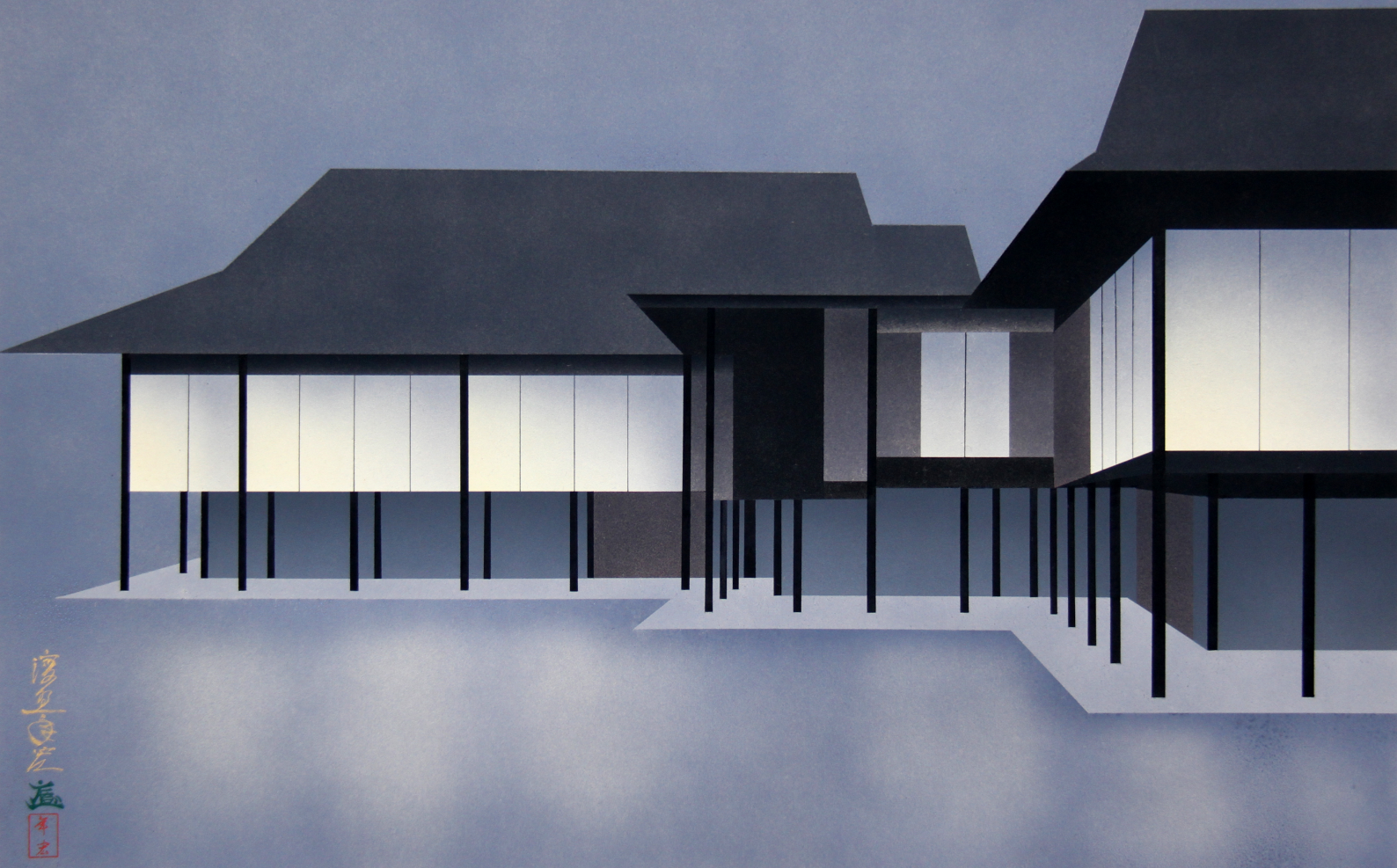


2027 - 2028

Japan

United States

France



Toshihiro Hamano - Katsura Imperial Villa, Night View - 2021 - 104x136cm

Toshihiro Hamano – The Beauty of silence

Traveling exhibition
2027 - 2028

Japan – Tokyo

United States – Washington, D.C.

France – Paris / Nice

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The work of Japanese master Toshihiro Hamano will be celebrated in Tokyo, Paris, Nice, and Washington D.C. through a major retrospective exhibition curated by art historian Lynda Frenois, in close collaboration with curators from partner institutions.

This landmark exhibition will offer a renewed perspective on over sixty years of artistic creation by an artist who masterfully unites Zen aesthetics, contemporary spirituality, and distinctive plastic power in a universal language of restraint and sensitivity.

Bringing together nearly one hundred works – monumental screens, ink paintings, sculptures, graphic pieces, and archival materials – *The Beauty of Silence* will unfold as a poetic dialogue between void and matter, light and breath, time and the present moment.

A highlight of the exhibition will be the exceptional presentation of *The Illustrated Life of Prince Shōtoku Across Four Seasons*, created for the Chūgū-ji Temple in Nara, alongside iconic works exhibited at the 2025 Osaka World Expo, and recent creations such as the *Katsura Imperial Villa* series and *Flying*.

Each venue of the traveling exhibition will be accompanied by a dedicated cultural program, including mediation tools and workshops inspired by the Japanese concept of *ma* (the interval).

A trilingual catalogue (Japanese, French, English) will accompany the exhibition. It will include scholarly essays, interviews, and previously unpublished iconography, bearing witness to the richness of Hamano's career and the international resonance of his work.



Mecenat Kagawa
Hamano Art Foundation

Everything lies therein. In the tension of a stroke, the lightness of a breath, the pause of a blank space. The work of Toshihiro Hamano, born in 1937 in Takamatsu, reveals a rare form of inner discipline, where drawing, ink, and light become instruments of revelation. His is not an art of representation; it is an art of presence.

Trained at the Tama Art University in Tokyo, Hamano follows in the lineage of literati painters, calligraphy masters, and architects of impermanence. His body of work spans a remarkable diversity of media: ink paintings and mineral pigments on washi paper, monotypes, large-format abstract canvases, as well as sculptures in stone, wood, and metal. Across all mediums, he pursues the same essential quest: to evoke, through restraint, a lasting emotion.

His technique is grounded in the art of wash, the respect for material, and the precision of gesture. Ink is never layered but gently laid. Paper is not filled but revealed. Silence becomes surface. Emptiness, composition. The stroke, an inner journey.

The exhibition “Toshihiro Hamano – The Beauty of Silence” offers a poetic exploration of more than sixty years of artistic creation. It opens with foundational influences: Zen philosophy, the aesthetics of wabi-sabi, the landscapes of Kagawa, nature’s spirituality, and the architecture of Katsura Rikyu. At its heart is the monumental cycle *The Illustrated Life of Prince Shōtoku Across Four Seasons*, created between 2003 and 2018 for the Chūgū-ji Temple in Nara. Bridging spiritual narrative and meditative landscape, this work stands as a form of culmination.

Other milestones are also featured: historic pieces presented at the 1970 Osaka World Expo, and major recent compositions such as *Katsura Imperial Villa – Night View*, *Subtle Light of Daybreak*, *Flying*, *Tribute to the Great Sun...* Each of these works embodies a suspended moment—between density and transparency, tension and calm.

Deeply rooted in Japanese tradition, Hamano’s work nonetheless opens itself to dialogue with the world. It speaks to the universal through the sobriety of its means, the clarity of its forms, and the humanity of its silence. Through it, Eastern philosophies and contemporary sensibilities, intimate landscapes and gestures of transmission converge. In this, his work becomes a bridge—between generations, between cultures, between the visible and the invisible.

Conceived as a space for contemplation, the exhibition invites an inner journey. It does not seek to explain, but to make one feel. Each work becomes a threshold. Each room, a space for silent listening. In a world overwhelmed by noise and images, Hamano reminds us that art can still be breath, stillness, transformation.

This retrospective does not mark an end, but a milestone. At over 85 years of age, Toshihiro Hamano continues to explore new forms, creating daily in his studio—faithful to the precision of the stroke, the rigor of the gesture, and the beauty of what makes no sound.

Curator

Lynda Frenois, Art Historian

Toshihiro Hamano

Toshihiro Hamano was born in 1937 in Takamatsu, in Kagawa Prefecture (Japan), at the heart of the Seto Inland Sea. Hailing from a region deeply rooted in the traditions of sacred landscapes and visual arts linked to Buddhism, he developed at an early age a keen sensitivity to nature, the rhythms of life, and elemental forms.

After completing his secondary studies at Kagawa High School, he enrolled at Tama Art University in Tokyo, one of the most prominent post-war art institutions in Japan. There, he received comprehensive training in nihonga (traditional Japanese painting), as well as in graphic design and mixed techniques. He studied under distinguished masters who combined classical Japanese aesthetics with an openness to international modernist movements.

In the late 1960s, Hamano began exhibiting in various salons and galleries in Tokyo and Osaka. He notably took part in group exhibitions at the National Museum of Tokyo and the Kagawa Prefectural Museum, where critics praised the precision of his brushwork, the originality of his compositions, and his exceptional technical mastery of ink wash painting.

In 1970, he was selected to represent emerging Japanese artists at the Osaka World Expo, a pivotal moment in his public recognition. His large-scale abstract works—created in Chinese ink on Japanese paper and shown in the Pavilion of Japanese Culture—were widely acclaimed. From then on, he established himself as a discreet yet influential figure on the contemporary Japanese art scene.

Hamano's work spans a wide range of media:

- Paintings on washi paper, canvas, or wood, using ink, natural mineral pigments, and acrylics;
- Monotypes and graphic works of varying scales;
- Sculptures in bronze, lacquered wood, or stone, often minimalist in form and at times integrated into natural or architectural settings.

Between 2003 and 2018, he dedicated fifteen years to the creation of a major work: *The Illustrated Life of Prince Shōtoku Across Four Seasons*, an exceptional commission by Chūgū-ji Temple in Nara, a revered site of Japanese Buddhism. This four-panel monumental folding screen cycle offers a remarkably sensitive reinterpretation of the traditional iconography of Prince Shōtoku, a founding figure in Japan's religious and cultural history.

In parallel, Hamano has continued to develop a body of work deeply anchored in the relationship to landscape, emptiness, and circulating energy. His approach—often described as ascetic—is inspired by Zen philosophy, Taoism, and Japanese concepts such as *ma* (the interval) and *wabi-sabi* (the beauty of impermanence and incompleteness).

His works are held in several public collections in Japan (including the Kagawa Prefectural Museum, the Kyoto Museum of Modern Art, and the National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo), as well as in Europe and the United States (notably in private collections in Paris, Geneva, Washington, and Boston). He has exhibited widely in Japanese and international institutions, and has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions since the 1990s.

The exhibition *The Beauty of Silence*, scheduled between 2025 and 2026, marks the first international retrospective to encompass the entirety of his career.

Toshihiro Hamano currently lives and works in the Kagawa region. At over 85 years of age, he continues to create new works with unwavering dedication to the spirit of the gesture, formal rigor, and the silent transmission of ancestral knowledge.

The Beauty of silence, masterpieces

The Illustrated Life of Prince Shōtoku Across Four Seasons

2003–2018

Four-panel folding screen (set of four)

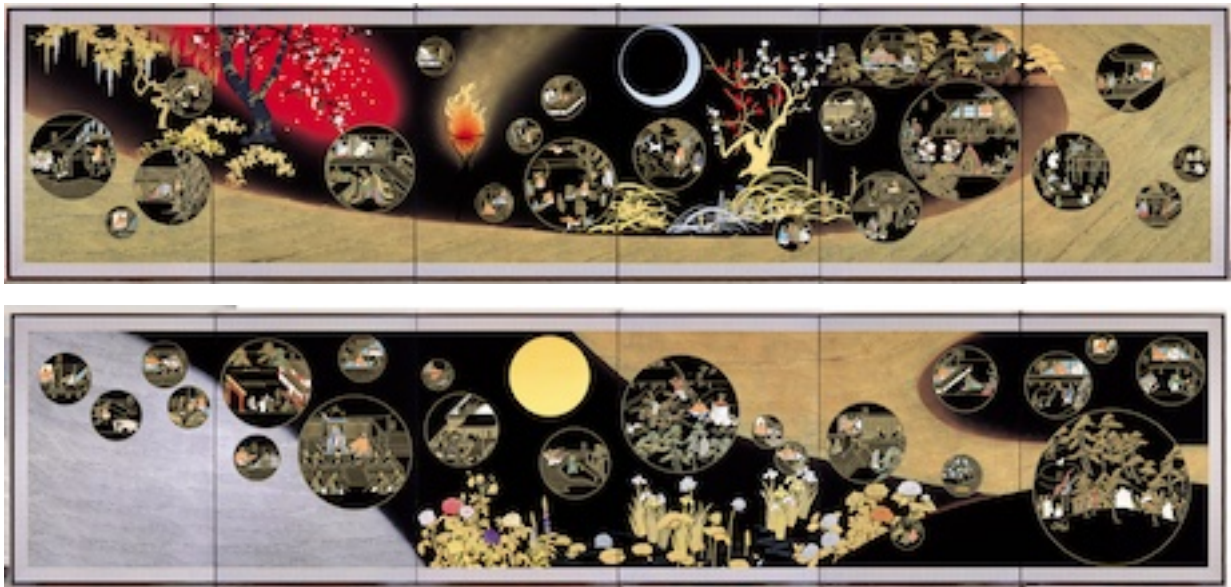
Ink and mineral pigments on Japanese paper mounted on lacquered wood

Commissioned by Chūgū-ji Temple, Nara

Created over the span of fifteen years, this monumental work represents one of the spiritual and technical pinnacles of Hamano's oeuvre. It reinterprets the traditional iconography of Prince Shōtoku—a central figure in Japanese Buddhism—through the rhythm of the seasons, adopting a narrative yet meditative approach.

The cycle, consisting of four folding screens, is executed in the nihonga tradition, combining historical inks with natural mineral pigments. Its composition, both ethereal and refined, evokes the breath of time more than it recounts a specific story.

The work is currently housed in the inner pavilion of Chūgū-ji Temple.



Katsura Imperial Villa – Night View

2021

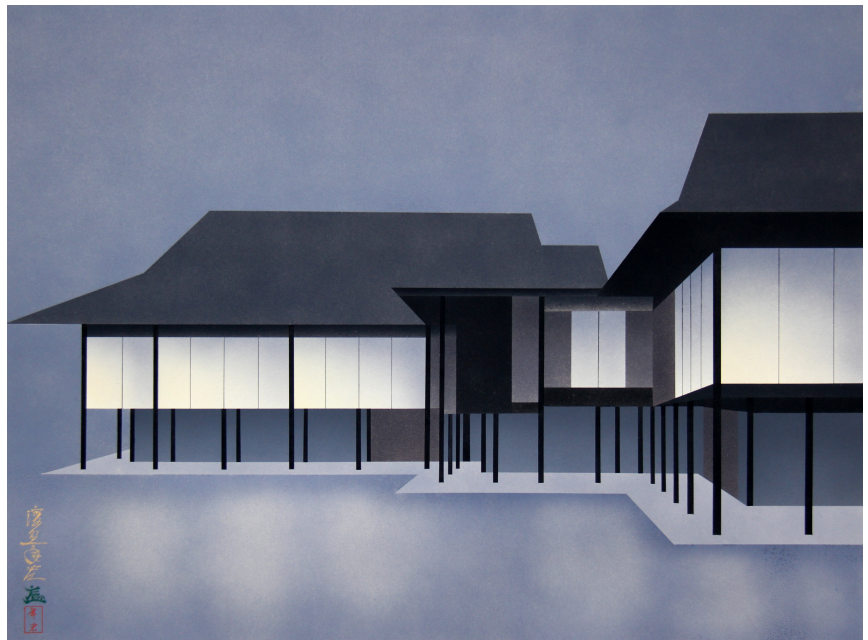
104 × 136 cm (framed)

Ink, mineral pigments, and acrylic on Japanese paper

Inspired by the garden and architecture of the famed Katsura Imperial Villa in Kyoto—a masterpiece of Japanese aesthetics—this work depicts a nocturnal vision where fluid ink interacts with the matte glow of pigments.

Hamano explores space as rhythm and light as silence.

This composition belongs to a recent series of mental landscapes in which nature is approached not as a motif, but as a structure of perception. The work is emblematic of his ongoing exploration of *ma* (the interval) and the active presence of emptiness.



Flying

2015

202 × 250 cm

Acrylic, ink, and natural pigments on canvas

A large-scale work, *Flying* marks a turning point in Hamano's practice toward a more expansive, gestural abstraction, reminiscent of the breath of calligraphy.

Executed on stretched canvas, the piece contrasts suspended dark masses with luminous white voids.

Its title—both concrete and poetic—evokes the motion of the spirit as much as that of matter.

The monumental scale of the painting heightens the viewer's immersion in an atmosphere suspended between descent and ascent.

Subtle Light of Daybreak

2019

145 × 180 cm

Ink, pigments, and acrylic on mounted Japanese paper

This work explores the liminal moments of dawn, suspended between the lingering traces of night and the diffuse emergence of daylight.

Hamano applies highly diluted washes in successive layers to create a luminous veil. The surface appears to vibrate from within.

The transparency effect is achieved without resorting to color, relying solely on the subtle mastery of tonal values, empty space, and surface tension.

The piece reflects a formal inquiry akin to music or breath.

Homage to the Great Sun

2020

160 × 220 cm

Mixed media on canvas and paper, with gold leaf inclusion

This work pays tribute to the solar principle, central to several Japanese spiritual traditions.

Here, Hamano introduces golden elements for the first time—not as ornamentation, but as radiant energy.

The gesture becomes more assertive, almost sculptural.

The balance between transparency, reflected light, and pictorial matter lends the piece a rare density.

It offers a synthesis between the formal heritage of Zen and a contemporary expression of the sacred.

List of works

Dialogue – Influenced by Picasso's Blue Period (1958)

Japanese Title: 対話 –ピカソの「青の時代」に影響を受けた作品

Dimensions: 123.6 × 39.0 cm

Medium: Oil on wooden panel

Rocky Coast (1952)

Japanese Title: 荒磯

Dimensions: 56.5 × 78.0 cm

Medium: Watercolor on paper

Description: Created at the age of 15, during his third year of junior high school. It was around this time that he decided to become a painter.

Portrait of a Woman (1959)

Japanese Title: 裸婦半身像

Dimensions: 79.3 × 61.2 cm

Medium: Oil on canvas

Takamanogahara, Iganosuigetsu (1959)

Japanese Title: 高天原・伊賀の水月

Dimensions: 160 × 110 cm

Medium: Oil on canvas

Sunflowers (1957)

Japanese Title: 向日葵

Dimensions: 45.5 × 53.0 cm

Medium: Oil on canvas

Landscape (1952)

Japanese Title: 山水

Dimensions: 96.0 × 65.0 cm

Medium: Watercolor on paper

Homage to the Great Sun (1968)

Japanese Title: 日輪讃歌

Dimensions: 145 × 112 cm

Medium: Oil and acrylic on canvas

Description: A work composed of numbers and small dots, expressing a cosmic world through their dense arrangement.

Japanese Spirit (Ma) (1961)

Japanese Title: 大和ごろろ（間）

Dimensions: 162 × 130.3 cm

Medium: Oil on canvas

Singing Universe (1967)

Japanese Title: 哥う宇宙

Dimensions: 130.3 × 268.2 cm

Medium: Oil on canvas

Harbinger of Spring (1961)

Japanese Title: 春のきざし

Dimensions: 142 × 110 cm

Medium: Oil on canvas

Kompira-Mandala (1969)

Japanese Title: 金毘羅

Dimensions: 145.5 × 112.1 cm

Medium: Oil and acrylic on canvas

Work79-12 (1979)

Dimensions: 130.3 × 194 cm

Medium: Oil and acrylic on canvas

Work76-1 (1976)

Dimensions: 160 × 23 × 2.3 cm (set of 5 pieces)

Medium: Oil and acrylic on granite

Work79-3 (1979)

Dimensions: 162.1 × 130.3 cm

Medium: Oil and acrylic on canvas

Work77-3 (1977)

Dimensions: 88 × 200 × 2.5 cm

Medium: Oil and acrylic on wood

Work74-9A (1974)

Dimensions: 130.3 × 194 cm

Medium: Oil and acrylic on canvas

Work75-1 (1975)

Dimensions: 77 × 168 cm

Medium: Oil and acrylic on wood

Description: Associated with the Japanese contemporary movement Mono-ha, the artist expanded the material-based approach by integrating painting—developing his own expressive style through what he called the "metal belt series."

Work77-7 (1977)

Dimensions: Not specified

Medium: Oil and acrylic on canvas

Flying (1978)

Japanese Title: 飛翔

Dimensions: 202 × 250 cm

Medium: Oil and acrylic on canvas

Description: Using a reduced color palette and energetic brushwork, Hamano captures the instant of a hawk's flight—a symbol of vitality and hope for Sakaide.

Work75-5 – The Beginning (1975)

Japanese Title: Work75-5 はじまり

Dimensions: 123 × 160 × 2.5 cm

Medium: Oil and acrylic on wood

Variational Aspect of Mandala-2 (1972)

Japanese Title: 曼荼羅変相図-2

Dimensions: 194.0 × 130.3 cm

Medium: Oil and acrylic on canvas

Work82-2 (1982)

Dimensions: 130.3 × 162 cm

Medium: Oil and acrylic on canvas

Dawn over Chigoga-dake, Mount Shiramine (1984)

Japanese Title: 白峰山稚児ヶ嶽の黎明

Dimensions: 80.3 × 100 cm

Medium: Oil on canvas

Work80-6 – Jūjū-mujin (Bowtie) (1980)

Japanese Title: 重々無尽 (蝶ネクタイ)

Dimensions: 118 × 100 × 66 cm

Medium: Oil and acrylic on acrylic panel

Work86-1 – Kūkai (1986)

Japanese Title: 空海

Dimensions: 184 × 232 cm

Medium: Oil and acrylic on folding screen

Twist up (1982)

Japanese Title: ねじれおこし

Dimensions: 130.3 × 162 cm

Medium: Oil and acrylic on canvas

Original Landscape of Sanuki (1982)

Japanese Title: 讃岐原風景

Dimensions: 72.7 × 91 cm

Medium: Oil on canvas

Work82-5 – Éclair (1982)

Titre japonais : 閃き

Dimensions : 130.3 × 162 cm

Technique : Huile et acrylique sur panneau acrylique

Ailes phénoménales s'étendant à droite et à gauche (1981)

Titre japonais : Right and left に広がる現象の羽

Dimensions : 150 × 250 cm

Technique : Huile et acrylique sur toile

Description : Cette œuvre met en scène le dialogue entre Orient et Occident, tradition et modernité, dans une forme spirituelle et poétique. Utilisant la technique du sfumato, elle suggère une envolée cosmique d'oiseaux mythiques dans une perspective symbolique.

Work88-2 – Enkaku-jō (Pagode) (1988)

Titre japonais : 縁覚乗 (塔)

Dimensions : 227.3 × 130.3 cm

Technique : Huile et acrylique sur toile

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► Analysis of pictorial space, breathing, and nature in the *Subtle Light* and *Homage to the Great Sun* series.

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► Essay on the use of white, pigments, and paper in the artist’s later works.

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► A classic study on Japanese perception of space, emptiness, and rhythm in painting, architecture, and garden design.

François Berthier. *Japanese Painting – History, Spirituality, Styles*. Albin Michel, 1996.

► Historical context of *sumi-e* and *literati* painting traditions, often linked to Hamano’s practice.