



CHIAKI WATANABE

Calligraphy artist and designer

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Bio

Based in Copenhagen from Tokyo via New York. CHIAKI combines Japanese calligraphy with contemporary art and design. She interprets it as an expressive art form, consistently pushing boundaries by exploring new mediums through innovative approaches using traditional techniques. She creates, teaches, and performs calligraphy at galleries, museums, festivals, and cultural institutions internationally.

Statement

Calligraphy is more than beautiful writing; it is an expressive art form that blends tradition with personal interpretation. Living abroad for more than half of my life influenced my perspectives and inspired me to explore traditional Japanese calligraphy in fresh ways. The birth of my daughter also inspired me to reconnect with this art, inspired me to reconnect with this art, guiding me back to my artistic roots after a long hiatus. In my work, I deconstruct letters, words, and symbols as motifs, and explore movement and rhythm with simple brushstrokes. With a minimalist aesthetic influenced by Zen philosophy, drawing emptiness - space between, I reconstruct traditional forms in innovative ways. This process led me to work at the intersection of traditional art and contemporary art. My practice extends beyond traditional calligraphy. I work across various mediums—from paper-based pieces to motion graphics—pushing the boundaries of the art form and expanding its possibilities. I see calligraphy as a universal language for expressing human emotions beyond words and a continually evolving art rooted in tradition yet open to new interpretations. Through these explorations, I aim to reinterpret calligraphy and develop new visual languages within contemporary art.

Selected Exhibitions

2025 : ARTMUC Kunstmesse, Munich, Germany
2025 : Interior Design Fair / Messe Frankfurt, Tokyo, Japan
2021-24 : Japan Design Festival, Copenhagen, Denmark
2019 : G2 gallery - Solo exhibition, Tokyo, Japan
2019 : Prema Arts gallery - Solo exhibition, Berlin, Germany
2016 : Mapping festival, Geneva, Switzerland
2011 : Nikolaj Contemporary Art Center, Copenhagen, Denmark
2010 : Visual Music Festival, ZKM, Center for Media Arts, Germany
2009 : Den Frie Udstilling, Group Exhibition, Copenhagen, Denmark
2007 : Visual Arts Gallery - Group exhibition, NY, USA
2006 : European Media Art Festival, Germany
2006 : Mapping Video Festival, Switzerland
2007 : Group exhibition, Brooklyn NY, USA

Workshops/Lectures

2025 : CPH DOX film festival, Copenhagen, Denmark
2025 : Matsume cup even, Vejle, Denmark
2018-24 : Copenhagen Sakura Festival, Denmark
2020 : Medieval Lab (Nordic medieval music concert), Copenhagen, Denmark
2022 : MUJI Denmark Anniversary celebration - Calligraphy performance, Copenhagen, Denmark
2019 - 22 : Calligraphy workshop at Muji Denmark, Copenhagen, Denmark
2021-22 : Muji Denmark Design Market, Copenhagen, Denmark
2021 : Culture Night in Copenhagen, Denmark
2017 - present : Calligraphy workshop for Japanese schools in Copenhagen, Denmark
2021 - Present : Lecture at Copenhagen University, Denmark
2019 - 22 : Calligraphy workshop at Muji Denmark, Copenhagen, Denmark
2017 : Art workshop at Cisternerne Museum, Denmark
2016 - Present : Private & Group Calligraphy lessons and workshops in Copenhagen, Berlin, Tokyo
2007 : Lecture at The School of Visual Arts, MFA Art Department
2006 : Lecture at Bergen Art Academy, Norway

Work Experience

2015 - Present : Freelance Calligraphy artist/designer, Copenhagen, Denmark
Clients include Louis Vuitton, CHANEL, Motorola, MUJI EU, Uniqlo EU, Kontrapunkt
2001 - 2010 : Freelance Media Designer, New York, USA
Clients include MTV Networks, Viacom, CBS, Reuters, News Corporations
1999 - 2001 : Sr. Designer, Nickelodeon - MTV Networks, New York, USA
1997 - 1999 : Designer - CBS Interactive, New York, USA
1996 - 1997 : Designer - Simon & Schuster Publishing, New York, USA
1995 - 1996 : Designer - News corporation, New York, USA

Residency

2006 : USF Verftet Artist in Residence, Bergen Norway

Awards

2006 & 2007: Finishing Funds from New York State Council on the Arts

Education

2011-2014: M.Sc. in Medialogy, Aalborg University Copenhagen, Denmark
2003-2005: Creative Art Therapy Certificate, The New School University, New York, USA
1993-1996: BFA in Computer Art, The School of Visual Arts, New York, USA
1988-1990: Musashino Art University in Scenography, Spacial Design, Tokyo, Japan