

The Philosophy and Life of Setsunan Kondo

The world of a solitary calligrapher

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In this thesis, the calligraphy theory of Setsunan Kondo (1922–2009), a Japanese modern calligrapher, is explored on the basis of his calligraphies and ideas regarding life. His work is said to be filled with indescribable power, and it has inspired many people. This is because, I believe, his work has been subsumed with his convincing views toward calligraphy and life, which have been well-received by many people. The purpose of this study is to learn from his philosophy and way of life—both of which can give us newfound knowledge and the power to create our own views of calligraphy.

In the first chapter, “A solitary calligrapher: Setsunan Kondo,” Kondo’s life is presented, and in the second chapter, his fundamental philosophy of the “Creation of modern calligraphic beauty” is examined. It is then concluded that Kondo aimed at creating modern work incorporating novelty beyond the limits of time and space. In the third chapter, “Endless exploration of calligraphic beauty in the classics,” the meaning of the classics in calligraphy is explored in order to create modern calligraphic beauty. In the final chapter, “The calligraphy philosophy of Setsunan Kondo,” it is indicated that Kondo believed that calligraphy work created from subjective passion beyond technique and conscious control could transmit the “heart” of a calligrapher—which then could resonate with the hearts of viewers.