



Heart of the Brush: The Splendor of East Asian Calligraphy

By *Kazuaki Tanahashi*

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Heart of the Brush: The Splendor of East Asian Calligraphy By Kazuaki Tanahashi

Its history, techniques, aesthetics, and philosophy—with an in-depth practical guide to understanding and drawing 150 characters

A guide to the history and enjoyment of Chinese and Japanese calligraphy that offers the possibility of appreciating it in a hands-on way—with step-by-step instructions for brushing 150 classic characters.

This book is a comprehensive and accessible introduction to the history and art of calligraphy as it's been practiced for centuries in China, Japan, and elsewhere in Asia. It works as a guide for the beginner hoping to develop an appreciation for Asian calligraphy, for the person who wants to give calligraphy-creation a try, as well as for the expert or aficionado who just wants to browse through and exult in lovely examples. It covers the history and development of the art, then the author invites the reader to give it a try.

The heart of the book, called "Master Samples and Study," presents 150 characters--from "action" to "zen"--each in a two-page spread. On each verso page the character is presented in three different styles, each one chosen for its beauty and identified by artist when possible. The character's meaning, pronunciation (in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese), etymology, the pictograph from which it evolved, and other notes of interest are included. At the bottom of the page the stroke order is shown: the sequence of brush movements, numbered in their traditional order. On each facing recto page is Kaz's own interpretation of the character, full page.

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Editorial Review

Review

"*Heart of the Brush* is many things, and all of them astonishing: a rich historical compendium; a subtle object of contemplation; an inspiring instructional manual; a profound spiritual practice; a true artist's testament; a stunning work of art. And it's become a companion, as well. The book now lives on my work table, and every morning I turn at random to a different character, taking a moment to study the form and meaning, and then letting it inspire me throughout the day."—Ruth Ozeki, author of *Tale for the Time Being*

"I have always felt the power of a single ideograph by a master hanging in a zendo, but I understood little else. This book is a gift, illuminating the approach, the meaning, the possibility, the actor and the action; the stroke, the mark, the dancer and the dance. We become rooted in calligraphy's history and then carried beyond that--smack into the present moment. Kaz Tanahashi and his work are a transcultural treasure."—Natalie Goldberg, author of *Writing Down the Bones* and *The Great Spring*

"There are several books on how to do East Asian calligraphy, but *Heart of the Brush* by Kazuaki Tanahashi is clearly the best. His explanations are clear and lively, his multitude of brushwork examples are thorough and generous, and he demonstrates how to do each character stroke by stroke. In addition, he makes the availability of different scripts an exciting opportunity rather than an overwhelming burden. In effect, Tanahashi invites us into many aspects of the dynamic and wide-ranging world of calligraphy, and we can understand why it has been considered the highest of all art forms."—Stephen Addiss

About the Author

KAZUAKI TANAHASHI is an accomplished Japanese calligrapher, Zen teacher, author, and translator of Buddhist texts from Japanese and Chinese to English, most notably works by Dogen. He first met Shunryu Suzuki in 1964, and upon reading Suzuki's book *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* he stated, "I could see it's *Shobogenzo* in a very plain, simple language." He has helped notable Zen teachers author books on Zen Buddhism, such as John Daido Looi. A fellow of the World Academy of Art and Science, Tanahashi is also an environmentalist and a peace worker.

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