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Artist with Down Syndrome Communicates Through Calligraphy

(Portland, Ore.)

The Brush of Shoko Kanazawa
3 April – 3 May 2020
Shoko Kanazawa (金澤 翔子)

Since Shoko was a young child, Yasuko Kanazawa has been collecting artwork made by her daughter. Yasuko always knew Shoko had a gift, but was not aware her daughter's art would become a global inspiration.

Born with Down syndrome, Shoko Kanazawa, 34, started studying calligraphy at age five and has since refined her craft to achieve worldwide fame. A young woman with talent that demands attention, Shoko has been selected as **the official calligrapher for the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo, Japan.**

Shoko held her first exhibition at the age of 20, with Yasuko as her mentor and supporter in both calligraphy and life.

"It is difficult for Shoko to clearly express herself with speech. Calligraphy has offered an outlet where she can fully connect with people while showcasing her artistic talent," Yasuko Kanazawa said of her daughter. "She's helping to change the way people view Down syndrome through her art."

With a gigantic brush in hand, Shoko Kanazawa creates much of her art by using the strength of her whole body. Moving with precision, she expressly reveals each written stroke across large, blank sheets of paper. It is that same dramatic, calligraphic demonstration that Kanazawa will be bringing to **Portland Japanese Garden as part of The Brush of Shoko Kanazawa (April 3 – May 3)**, an exhibition of more than ten of her celebrated works of art. This exhibition is the second of five art exhibitions scheduled as part of its 2020 Year of Peace. Like the Kanazawa show, many of the exhibitions include commissioned pieces of art that are specially created for Portland Japanese Garden.

"Shoko's ink on paper works of art are imbued with her energy and spirit. Each stroke of her brush adds life and depth to the characters she chooses to write... Shoko is a celebrated calligrapher who inspires and enchants people around the world with her dramatic expressions in ink," said Laura J. Mueller, Curator of Art at Portland Japanese Garden.

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The only person who isn't concerned about the fact that Shoko Kanazawa is a world-renowned artist is the artist herself. Yasuko says her daughter is mostly concerned with making people happy.

After completing a demonstration in Portland on April 3, Shoko will travel to Los Angeles to hold a public calligraphic demonstration in the City Hall Plaza to amplify the message of Peace and Human Rights. Both appearances are sponsored, in part, by a grant from the Japan Foundation in Los Angeles.

About Portland Japanese Garden:

Portland Japanese Garden is a nonprofit organization originally founded in 1963 as a place for cross-cultural understanding following World War II. It has become a global destination for Japanese art, nature, and peace in Portland, Oregon. It is considered the most authentic Japanese garden outside of Japan and the foremost Japanese cultural organization in North America.

Year of Peace at Portland Japanese Garden:

In 2018, Portland Japanese Garden started focusing its programming on specific regions throughout the country in order to share the vast array of culture, customs and practices that exist in Japan. In 2020, the spotlight is on two regions – Hiroshima and Nagasaki – to recognize the 75th anniversary of the end of WWII. Rather than focusing on the regions, Portland Japanese Garden is commemorating 2020 as the Year of Peace, taking the opportunity to address an important topic of cultivating peace and cross-cultural understanding.

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