

SHIRAGA Kazuo - Body and “Painting”

Shiraga Kazuo (1924-2008) believed that art must be created from zero, starting from nothing, and formed a group named the “Zero Party” with TANAKA Atsuko, KANAYAMA Akira, and MURAKAMI Saburo, who shared this belief. In 1955, they joined GUTAI, and from then, Shiraga became a leading artist there. He painted with his fingers and gradually developed his style, eventually creating foot-paintings. He believed that the mental nourishment he gained after exhausting his body to its limit improved his works. His action of painting while swinging from a rope hanging from the ceiling (Figure 1) involved a degree of unconscious drawing, but he did not completely surrender himself to the rope and painted with a certain degree of intentionality. You can see some paint lines that seem to try to extend beyond the canvas but are forcibly pulled back inside, which suggests a struggle between the conscious and unconscious in his creative process. In fact, Shiraga sometimes added finger paintings, which were easier to control, to his works made with his feet. Most of the works in our collection are small and made using fists, the side of the hand, and fingers.

In his works, where his body directly touches the canvas, you can feel the strength of his creative action using his body as well as the energy of the paint as a material.