

Column 3 **SHIRAGA Kazuo, Buddhism, and Acts**

In the latter half of the 1960's, Shiraga reflected on himself and his paintings. During that time, he became interested in Sanskrit characters and mudras carved in stone pagodas and stone statues of the Buddha, which he had seen during his mountain hunting trips, and was attracted to esoteric Buddhism. In 1970, he climbed Mt. Hiei to seek guidance, and in May of the following year, he became a monk. He received his monk's name, SHIRAGA Sodo. The reason he was interested in esoteric Buddhism was that he believed it was necessary to improve his talents in order to enhance his paintings, so he sought to temper his spirit. In 1974, he practiced asceticism, during which his legs swelled and he lost about 10 kilograms over 35 days. Esoteric Buddhism practices aim to connect with the mystery of the universe through a kind of trance state. He might have found a similarity between this and his mental state during his creative process, which pushed his body to its limits. After becoming a monk, he said that he prayed to Acala (*Fudo Myo-o*) before starting his creations.

However, in his later years, he lost interest in depicting Buddhist themes directly. Instead, he decided to live with faith in mind intentionally, believing that his faith would positively influence his paintings from within.