

Paris, Mon Ami

Performance artist Ibuki Kuramochi is taking her unique blend of painting and butoh dance across the globe.

Two years ago, artist Ibuki Kuramochi was invited to take part in Japan Expo in Paris, giving the native of Gunma Prefecture an opportunity to take her unique performance of live painting and Japanese modern dance onto a global stage.

In addition to performing across Japan, in Europe and Taiwan, her paintings have been exhibited in countries around the world.

She shared her experiences in Paris in a special first-person piece for The Rafu.

In 2016, a company called Japan Promotion in Tokyo contacted me. They said that they had seen my artwork and were very impressed with it. They invited me to perform and to exhibit my artwork at Japan Expo as a special guest.

Japan Expo is a convention on Japanese popular culture — the largest of its kind in the world outside Japan — taking place in Paris, France. Since 1999, it has been held yearly at the beginning of July for four days in the Parc des Expositions de Villepinte (the second-largest convention center in France).

The attendance has increased steadily over the years with more than 250,000 attendees in 2016, the year that I participated.



My performances combined Japanese butoh dance with live painting using Japanese sumi ink and a large canvas.

During my performances, I wore a Japanese black kimono that I hand-painted myself. My makeup was white Japanese traditional foundation and red eyeliner.

Accompanying me was a Japanese shamisen player.

The first time I visited Paris was on a school trip when I was a 19-year-old art college student. Paris is called "The City of Lights" or "The City of Love." For me, it was also "The City of Art."

At that time, I was very impressed with the atmosphere of Paris — the amazing art museums, the architecture of very old buildings, and the French people. The people seemed to live their lives enjoying and ap-

preciating art and life.

I knew that I wanted to return someday as an artist, myself, to this beautiful city that was the home of so many famous and wonderful artists that I admired and respected. So, being invited to perform at Japan Expo was a dream come true.

At the Expo, I performed six different times. At each performance, I could feel so much energy from the audiences, which fired emotions from my

very heart and soul, through my paint brush, to the ink, and onto the canvas. It was very satisfying not only to share my art and dance in front of so many appreciative art lovers, but also to act as a bridge between Japan and Europe to introduce Japanese art culture.

After each performance, many people wanted to meet me, to talk with me about my dance and art, to take photos together, and to buy my paintings. When I sold my art to them, I felt that not only did I give them my painting, but I also gave them a piece of my soul.

One person told me that, to them, watching me paint from nothing on the canvas to a beautiful finished artwork was comparable to a plant growing from a seed to a mature, beautiful flowering plant.

Because of the success of my per-



Didier Fagour

Ibuki Kuramochi discovered the wonders of Paris after being invited to perform her painting and dance at the 2016 Japan Expo.

formances and exhibitions at Japan Expo, I was contacted by the Art Levant Association a few months after I returned to Tokyo. They invited me to visit France again in 2017, for a one-month art and dance tour as a featured performer, including my solo art/dance performances and solo art exhibitions.

I performed at many venues, including the Club Le Reservoir, where legendary singer/musician Sting has performed. I also collaborated with many international people.

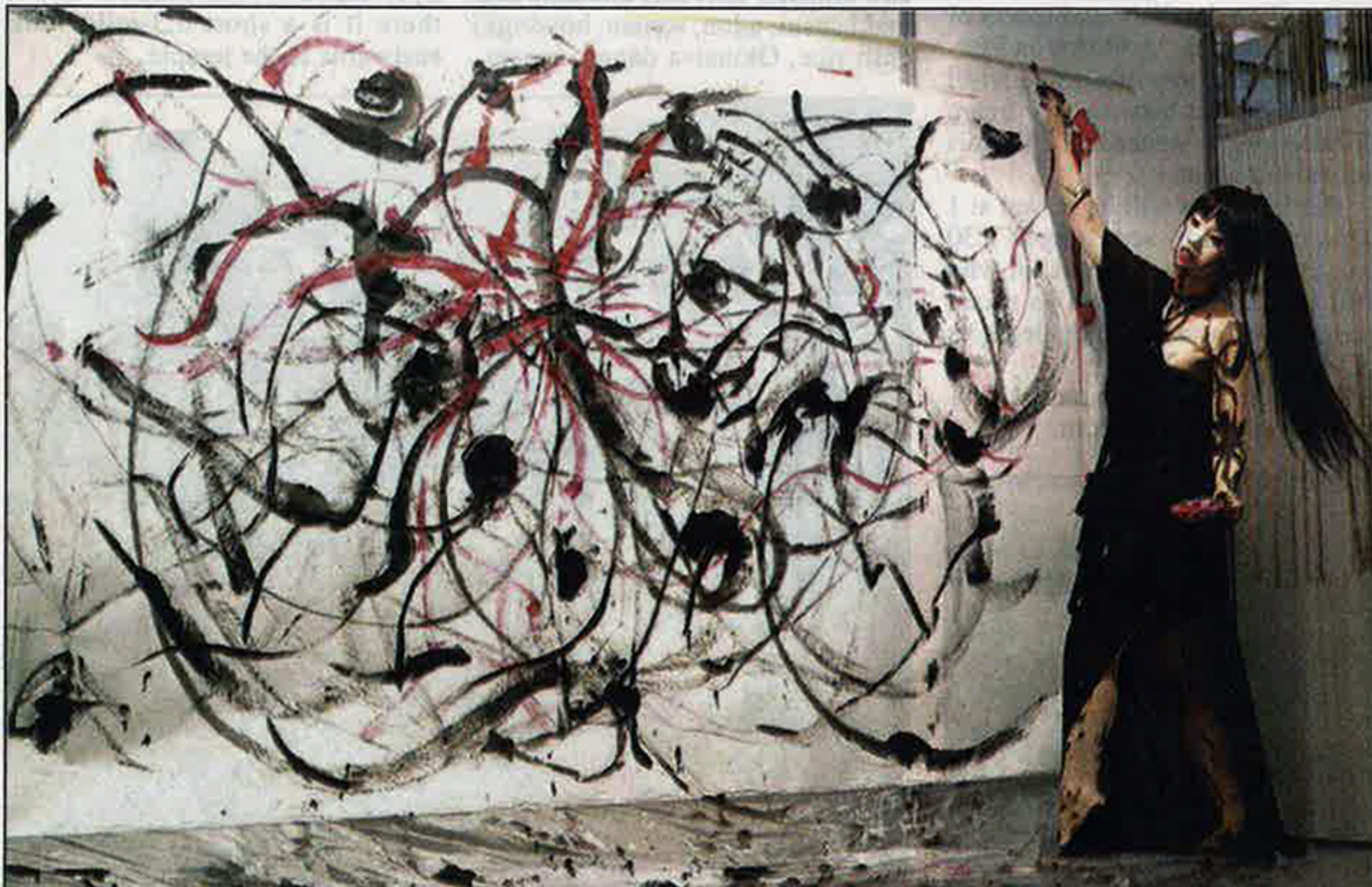
My performances were very well received by the audiences, and I sold many of my paintings. Because the tour was successful, the promoters invited me to return again in 2019. Since I was in Paris for almost one month, I had more time to enjoy the wonderful city. I went to many nice restaurants and cafes on the Champs de Elysees, where I enjoyed delicious French cuisine and wine.

I had the chance to see famous Paris attractions — the Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe, Notre Dame Cathedral, the Palace of Versailles.

I visited many amazing art museums, including the Louvre, the Orsay, the Orangerie. But my favorite, by far, was the Rodin Museum, where I felt some connection between the sculptures there and Japanese butoh dance. All of these museums energized me as an artist and inspired me to become a better artist and to challenge the world art scene.

In addition her dance and art performances, Kuramochi has collaborated with popular Japanese clothing designers, appeared in music videos and has created artwork for stage plays.

More information and examples of her work can be found at her official website, www.ibuki-kuramochi.com.



Kuramochi combines Japanese modern dance — butoh — with live painting, costume design and music. She impressed to the point of being invited back to Paris for a month-long tour the following year. Top: She treats fans to original body art during one of her appearances.