

**TANAKA ISSON'S LANDSCAPES OF ISOLATION AND WILDERNESS FROM  
AMAMI ŌSHIMA**

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**Abstract**

The mainstream art world, specifically, the *nihonga* (Japanese-style painting) institution in the 1920s–1950s was dominated by the hegemony of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, public art exhibitions (*kōboten*) and the strong collectivism of members affiliated with the aforementioned structures. This paper examines the work of nihonga artist Tanaka Isson (1908–1977) who was outside of these structures. His dramatic move to the remote island of Amami Ōshima in the years after the islands' reversion to Japan transformed his artistic practice and resulted in a body of works he was most well known for. Reiko Tomii's *Wilderness* as a methodology helps to understand outliers like Isson in the context of post-war Japanese art and establishes a connection of artists working in the wilderness.

The multiplicity of *Seashore with Screw pine* (1969) is presented as a self-portrait and as a landscape of isolation and the wilderness. I posit that the work can be understood as a commentary on both the artist's marginalised position and the geopolitics of Amami's peripheral location in the art world and with mainland Japan, respectively.