

# Brush the Sky Walking Tour

**Brush the Sky: Amerika Monogatari  
(An American Story).**

*Augmented reality: Tamiko Thiel.*

*Calligraphy: Midori Kono Thiel.*

*Plum blossom design: Pam Matsuoka.*

*Photo courtesy of Ralph Pearce.*

## THE ARTISTS

Midori Kono Thiel is a celebrated Seattle-based Japanese American artist and calligrapher. Her daughter, artist Tamiko Thiel, used Augmented Reality (AR) to place Midori's calligraphy as virtual artworks that can be viewed in specific locations using smartphones and tablets. These two artists have collaborated to create "**Brush the Sky**," which premiered in the Wing Luke Museum's CONSTRUCT\S exhibit May 2015 – April 2016 as a series of linked site-specific AR installations. A subset of this public art work has been adapted for San Jose Japantown by the artists and JAMsj to create an AR community art demonstration project that expands the walls of the museum to encompass Japantown's public spaces. The artists' family ties to both San Jose and Seattle Japantowns go back to the early 1900s. Using their work, JAMsj invites you to see Japantown in a new way and discover how histories hidden and seemingly lost can be seen again.

## WHAT IS AUGMENTED REALITY?

Augmented Reality (AR) is a mobile app technology that overlays computer-generated information (sounds, images, text) on the camera view of the real world around you. In "**Brush the Sky**" the artists transform your smartphone into an "ARt-scope" that reveals the hidden geolocative AR artworks they have placed at GPS locations around Japantown.

## Get Involved

"Brush the Sky" is a work-in-progress of how AR art can be used by neighborhood heritage and cultural organizations to draw in, engage, and activate new audiences and participants. This project is only the beginning for using the entire Japantown area as a public art gallery space. We invite artists who are interested in using AR technology to help us build a community-based infrastructure to support this work. Interested? Please contact Tom Izu: [izutom@deanza.edu](mailto:izutom@deanza.edu)

## DONATE

Please consider donating to JAMsj to help us build this project.

Sponsored by:



Japanese American Museum of San Jose  
535 N. 5th Street, San Jose, CA 95112  
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*Photographs by Jim Nagareda, Curt Fukuda,  
Ralph Pearce and Tamiko Rast*

# Brush the Sky

*A calligraphic narrative written onto  
the San Jose Japantown skies*



by Tamiko Thiel and Midori Kono Thiel,  
2019

*Sponsored by the Japanese American Museum  
of San Jose (JAMsj) with support from the  
California History Center, De Anza College*

[www.tamikothiel.com/brushthesky](http://www.tamikothiel.com/brushthesky)

# To view the artworks

1. Download the free **ARpoise** app on your mobile device (iOS or Android only) by scanning the QR code in this handout or searching for **ARpoise** in the App or Play store.
2. Open the **ARpoise** app. Let the app access your device's location and camera.
3. Walk to one of the locations described in this handout.
4. Open the **ARpoise** app and select your location on the list. On your mobile device, you should see a golden calligraphy enhancing the location. The calligraphy is described in this handout.
5. When you go to a different location, open the **ARpoise** app again. If you still see the previous location and its augment, tap the **ARpoise** icon in the upper left corner of the screen to return to the list. Select your new location.



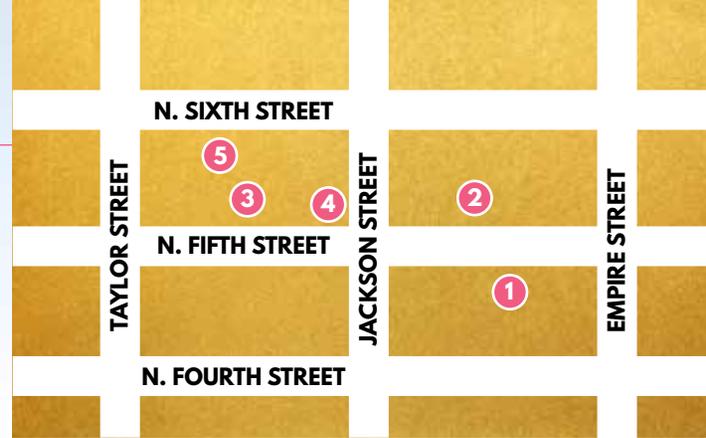
過去 現代 未来

## 1 Kako Gendai Mirai “Past, Present, Future”



**Japanese American Museum of San Jose**  
535 N. 5th Street  
San Jose, 95112

The museum has the mission of collecting, preserving, and sharing Japanese American history, culture, and arts. Born out of the dreams of its Nisei founders, the museum is expanding its exploration of the past to sustain its relevance in a multicultural future.



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## 2 Kizuna “Community Ties”



**Wesley United Methodist Church**  
566 N. 5th Street  
San Jose, 95112

One of the pillars of the community since its establishment in 1895, the church has provided support and guidance for Japanese Americans and people of other ethnicities. For the artists this church also has a special connection that ties them to San Jose Japantown: Midori Kono Thiel's father, Juhei Kono, was a young pastor at the church and married Midori's mother, Hisako Nara, here in 1932.

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## 3 Kizuna “Community Ties”



**San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin**  
640 N. 5th Street  
San Jose, 95112

An important light of the community, the church remains a center for cultural events and activities. The church provided support when the community was establishing itself, and when the Japanese Americans were forcibly removed and later resettled in the Valley. The church has been an anchor during the good times and the times of challenge.

アメリカ 物語

## 4 Amerika Monogatari “An American Story”



**Intersection of N. Fifth and Jackson Streets**  
San Jose, 95112

For well over half a century, the neighborhood was known as Chinatown, a place where Asian immigrants could find refuge in a familiar cultural setting. From this nurturing environment, the earliest Japanese began planting roots and establishing a community. The 1915 Sanborn map of the area was one of the earliest published acknowledgements of a Nikkei community in San Jose placing the designation “Japanese” at the corner of Fifth and Jackson Streets. This intersection marks the hub of the Japanese American community today.

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## 5 Nai Gai “Inside/Outside”



**Former Ideal Laundry Building**  
665 N. 6th Street  
San Jose, 95112

Who is an insider; who is an outsider in a community; then, now, and in the future? The two-story brick Ideal Laundry building stood apart from the surrounding row of old wooden buildings and a trucking yard. Located across the street from San Jose Chinatown, it was a confluence of cultures (Japanese, Filipino, and Chinese). The building also represented the optimism of a growing community. Unfortunately, it opened just as the Wall Street Crash of 1929 sent the country spiraling into the Great Depression. Its Japanese owner, Ichimatsu Tsurukawa, sold the business to one of his Filipino workers, Ben Ragsac. Today the monumental structure symbolizes the possibilities of a developing community growing out of its past.