Ryuji Tanaka was a member of the Pan-real Art Association and the Gutai Art Association, two avant-garde groups that were greatly significant to post-war Japanese art. Tanaka was one of the founders of the Pan-real Art Association and he remained a member from 1948 until 1951. Pan-real was known for their urge to loosen the restrictions concerning the motifs and styles of *nihon-ga* — traditional Japanese painting — by actively introducing avant-garde elements found in *yōga* — Western-style painting — to the genre. Tanaka’s works from this early period are figurative and influenced by Surrealism, while also revealing his preference for *nihon-ga* materials: natural pigments and minerals dissolved in animal glue.

Interested in bending the rules of *nihon-ga*, Tanaka eventually only kept the traditional techniques and use of materials. This led him to establish a uniquely abstract style and new method of painting in the early 1960s. He piled up a thick heap of mineral pigments in the centre of his paintings, creating a large plane of colour. Ore is the main ingredient in these pigments, and as these tiny particles shine in the light, they create a hard, yet delicate and powdery texture. Lines overflow from the edges of the colour plane into the surrounding picture. The roughness of the pigments is bright against the dark background, providing his work with fantastical, mysterious qualities. Tanaka also added pebbles to expand the pigments, and rather than a brush, he used a feather, making the picture blurry and allowing the paint to stream.