

1 Premonition: Blue House, Poetry .

A lot of preparation was done before the formation of Kyushu-Ha(九州派). This is the movement of painters, that created “Blue House”. In June 1953, Kenichiro TERADA(寺田健一郎), Youji KUROKI(黒木耀治), Tokui YONEKURA(米倉徳), and Yasutaka NAKAGAWA(中川保孝 1928-2000) set up the joint atelier “Blue House” in a vacant lot in Tenjin Shintencho, Fukuoka City.

However, it was too small to be an atelier, and eventually functioned as a hangout for young cultural figures. TERADA and KUROKI, with Kenshi ITO(伊藤研之), a painter of The Nikakai, as their teacher, were first selected for the Nika-Ten in 1951. They were seen as the up-and-comer of the Nika-Ten in Fukuoka, but at the same time tried to distance themselves from The Nika-Kai and make their own move. Since during these times, becoming a painter meant that they would participate in public exhibitions and other events, gathered awards, and become associated with or joined an official organization, to create their own movement, they had to break away from “Ga-dan”.

Not long after, Shin Kinoshita(木下新) settled in “Blue House” and it became his atelier. KINOSHITA is a painter who has had solo exhibitions and also exhibited at Nishinohon Art Exhibition. Jutarō YAMAUCHI(山内重太郎) and Mokuma KIKUHATA(菊畑茂久馬) have already visited KINOSHITA’s atelier “Blue House” to deepen their relations. Another artist who stood out at this time was Shigeharu OBANA(尾花成春). Since 1952 he was awarded three times at the Fukuoka Art Exhibition (prefecture exhibition) and also became a member of the Fukuoka Art Association at a young age. They later became members of Kyushu-Ha(九州派).

KUROKI and TERADA also had a close relationship with a poet group. They drew the cover and cuts of the poetry magazine “Shika” (launching in May 1954) of “Shikano-Kai” led by Kenkichi ITABASHI(板橋謙吉) and worked together with the poets. Among them were Eishi OBATA(小幡英資) and Takami SAKURAI(桜井孝身). Before becoming the central figures of Kyushu-Ha(九州派) and poets, they were poets. This is how, young painters in

Fukuoka met through poetry and painting, to move away from existing art platforms and artistic systems.

2 Encounter: Kyushu-Ha formation

Takami SAKURAI (桜井孝身), a poet, but at the same time also exhibited pictures on the Nika-Ten; his first prize was at the 40th exhibition in 1955. During this time, painters selected by Taro OKAMOTO (岡本太郎) were gathered in the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, Room 9 at the Nika-Ten venue. SAKURAI, who came to Tokyo and saw the venue, was fascinated by the work of a young painter. Osamu OCHI's (オチオサ 亼)"Children who like fireworks" and "Children who like Mambo". After being satisfied and returning to Fukuoka, Sakurai got from the Tokyo based painter OCHI the impression: "the painters in Tokyo are sophisticated". The following year, the two met at the "The Nika-Ten Encouragement Party" in 1956. There are artists overflowing with wisdom in Fukuoka. SAKURAI was fascinated by the young man, about 20 years old, and immediately took OCHI home to talk about the formation of a group.

SAKURAI, being already familiar with Youji KUROKI (黒木耀治), also approached Yasuyuki ISHIBASHI (石橋泰幸), who was exhibiting at the Nika-Ten as well, with the offer to join their group; SAKURAI, KUROKI, ISHIBASHI, and OCHI left the artists' world and moved on to hold the outdoor exhibition "Persona Exhibition", using the prefectural government's outer wall. In September the same year, OCHI and ISHIBASHI were rejected from the 41st Nika-Ten. As a result, they moved away from the existing art system and formed an "anti-artists' world" movement.

Mamoru MATANO (俣野衛) played an important role in the formation of Kyushu-Ha. A colleague of the poetry magazine "Vowel", he quickly met SAKURAI, who had joined Nishinippon Shimbun. MATANO was also a colleague of the poetry magazine "Kyushu Poet" and edited the magazine. They wrote each other poems and, since they both came from Kurume, hit it off right away. At the recommendation of SAKURAI, MATANO also started painting. He advocated for SAKURAI to form a group, create a theory for it, and

publish a bulletin with the experience he gathered by editing poetry journals. The group of young painters, with SAKURAI as the leader, was named “Kyushu-Ha”. About 20 members came together and fully started their movement, beginning with the exhibition “Group Q18 People Exhibition” and their second outdoor exhibition, “Group Q. Poetry @ Informel Outdoor Exhibition”.

3 Rain Cloud: parting from public exhibitions

Between 1957 and 1959, Kyushu-Ha (九州派) tried to appeal to Tokyo and reorganize the local art world with an unprecedented outdoor exhibition, a bold group exhibition in Tokyo, and Kyushu’s first INDEPENDENT Exhibition, which marked a great breakthrough.

However, even though they claimed to be “Anti-art” and submitted a protest form regarding the judging method to the Fukuoka Prefecture Exhibition, exhibitions at the Nika-Ten and the Fukuoka Prefecture Exhibition continued.

In addition, the difference in opinions among members had increased, from those who had increasingly avant-garde ideas, to those who only drew as a hobby. Inside Kyushu-Ha (九州派), there was a section that had been debating since the summer of 1958, especially over the pros and cons of participating in public exhibitions and this developed into a prominent controversy in the summer of 1959.

The vanguard was Mokuma KIKUHATA (菊畑茂久馬). He approached Kenichiro TERADA (寺田健一郎), who was also a member of Kyushu-Ha (九州派) while still belonging to the Nika-Ten, and asked “who’s side do you take?”. TERADA couldn’t tolerate KIKUHATA’s words, left the meeting and never returned to Kyushu-Ha (九州派).

In the same year, Seiryō SURUSUMI (磨墨静量), who wasn’t very interested in the idea of avant-garde, formed the Group Nishinippon with Hidesaburo SAITO (斎藤秀三郎), leaving Kyushu-Ha (九州派). At the end of the year, three radicals, Osamu OCHI (オチ・オサム), Jutarō YAMAUCHI (山内重太郎) and the just mentioned KIKUHATA, criticized SAKURAI’s policy and left Kyushu-Ha to form “Dōkutsu-Ha (Cave)”.

For Kyusyu-Ha(九州派), who was comprised of heterogeneous members, this split was an unavoidable obstacle. However, the fact that such different people were able to come together, consequently led to being able to fully demonstrate the energy of the group, that Takami SAKURAI(桜井孝身) aimed for.

There was further break-up drama. It was the withdrawal of Kyushu-Ha's theoretical support, Mamoru MATANO (俣野衛). MATANO, who was also active in the Nishinippon Shinbun labor union like SAKURAI, quickly left the movement after becoming secretary general in 1960. It ended in a dispute with SAKURAI over this issue. KIKUHATA, who witnessed the controversy, realizes that before becoming social movements that directly affect live, hobby-like art movements are being blown off like smoke. So can there be an art movement that isn't blown away by "life"? This split drama posed a difficult challenge for Kyushu-Ha(九州派).

4 Comeback: Kyushu-Ha recovery and dissolution

Dōkutsu (Cave) -Ha was dismantled after holding an exhibition in Tokyo once, and KIKUHATA and OCHI returned to Kyushu-Ha. Group Nishinippon became Kyushu-Ha (九州派) with Toshio TANIGUCHI (谷口利夫), Tadashi HATARAKI (働正), SAKURAI and other split-off Kyushu-Ha members. With the addition of a few new members, Kyushu-Ha has entered a new phase.

The members' works have also changed from informal paintings using asphalt to three-dimensional works. Masterpieces such as Mokuma KIKUHATA (菊畑茂久馬)'s "Slave Tree" and Mitsuko TABE (田部光子)'s "Artificial Placenta" were introduced.

At first glance, the transition from painting to three-dimensional seems like "development", but in fact it is the loss of common ground "painting", that connected both amateurs and avant-garde artists.

This is due to the fact that Kyushu-Ha (九州派) and many other avant-garde artists from all over the country participated in the free exhibition "YOMIURI INDEPENDENT Exhibition", which was canceled in 1963.

In 1961, OCHI and KIKUHATA were selected to exhibit at the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo's special exhibition "Experiments in Contemporary Art", and solo exhibitions of those two were planned at the gallery.

These circumstances may have made Kyushu-Ha members, who have always been active in the group think that the power of the "individual" is the important thing in the end. Consequently, in the 1960s, members' solo exhibitions increased. The initial Kyushu-Ha's solid unity seemed to have gradually weakened. Then, what is the purpose of the group and what is its significance?

If it exists solely to secure one's identity as an "artist", it is no different from the existing public recruitment associations that Kyushu-Ha (九州派) wanted to distance themselves from. Tadashi HATARAKI (働正), one of the late members, criticized the same thing.

In 1962, SAKURAI organized a "Heroes Assembly" with the aim of reviving Kyushu-Ha. Although not many Kyushu-Ha members were participating, the Avant-garde Happening Play that was held overnight with avant-garde artists from Tokyo and others such as Sho KAZAKURA (風倉匠), Yasunao TONE (刀根康尚), foresees the beginning of the end rather than the renewal of Kyushu-Ha.

SAKURAI, who was trying to rebuild Kyushu-Ha, planned to visit the United States in the early 1960s to test his own potential, and followed through on said plan in 1965. Since SAKURAI lost his leadership and his centripetal force, he decided to dissolve the group at the suggestion of Takeshi OWARI (尾張猛), after holding the "Kyushu-Ha 10th Anniversary Exhibition" (Fukuoka Prefectural Cultural Center).

5 Falling Star: Kyushu-Ha Forever

After the dissolution resolution of 1965, each member continued their work enthusiastically. Mokuma KIKUHATA (菊畑茂久馬), who had already withdrawn, partnered with journalists Osamu FUKANO (深野治) and Harumichi TANIGUCHI (谷口治達) to organize the "Kyushu Contemporary Art Trends Exhibition" (1967, Fukuoka Prefectural Bunka Kaikan). It was their intention to reorganize the Fukuoka art world after Kyushu-Ha and create a new

scene. In addition to Kyushu-Ha (九州派), several other artist groups were born. Kyushu-Ha's activities as a group had almost disappeared at this time, but attempts to create another art scene different from Tokyo in Fukuoka were continued since 1970 by artists and journalists. This was obviously due to the influence of Kyushu-Ha.

Meanwhile, following Takami SAKURAI (桜井孝身), Osamu OCHI (オチオサム) also traveled to the United States in 1966. They advertised "San Francisco Kyushu-Ha (九州派)", while meeting up with hippies in San Francisco. In 1968, the last journal was published, but they relentlessly expanded their activities. After returning to Japan, SAKURAI, OCHI, TABE and HATARAKI collaborated with the movement of the anti-expo in the late 1960s, and with the radical anti-art group "Shudan-Kumo (集団蜘蛛)," which appeared to replace Kyushu-Ha (九州派).

The last time the name Kyushu-Ha appeared, was in the "Potential of Art by Group Rengo Exhibition" (Fukuoka Bunka Kaikan, 1968). Nine people, including SAKURAI, who had returned home participated. Under the theme of "sex museum", each work was created. Maybe working under a theme rather than bringing in individual pieces was done with the intention to revive the collective activities once again? The setting of the theme may have been as removed from life as possible.

Kyushu-Ha's activities ended with the above exhibition, but "things in the spirit of Kyushu-Ha" still remain in Fukuoka. The willingness to create an art scene in Fukuoka, that's different from Tokyo, is stronger for many aspiring artists and artisans. However, the questions left behind by Kyushu-Ha seem to be left unresolved and neglected. Is it possible to launch presentations that don't depend on the central submission system? How do you create an audience for it and which one has priority, groups or individuals? How does the expression of art relate to the times and the audience? – The seeds sown by the now dissolved Kyushu-Ha are still there, like a falling star that materializes in times of turmoil.