

## Voracious attempts at creation



**Road to Paradise -90x72.5 1973**

“Can a painter live without painting?” Takami Sakurai This replies: "I can. And I can't".

Wakes up at five o'clock every morning. He eats a vegetarian diet of one soup and one meal. Paints for five or six hours straight. Every day, he undergoes a rigorous training similar to that of a monk. And what does painting mean to him, who says that "painting is a way of life"? He answers, "Painting is a way of life". This does not simply mean an obsession with painting alone. Rather, he continues to reject the painter's habituation to painting.

Fifteen years ago, he founded the avant-garde painter's collective Kyushu-Ha. This group was not a place of technicalism where gypsum sketches and realistic paintings were studied. It was a union of more than 20 young artists who were confronted with the great question of what expression is. The expression of slapping paint on a large canvas that could not possibly fit inside the studio, or the inaction of digging a hole in the surf. The happening of the bonfire, reminiscent of esoteric practices. A loach floundering in a large tub, a chicken stuck to a wall - acts that are probably impossible to interpret and explain in everyday language - captured the

hearts and minds of the young people of Kyushu-Ha. It was a bold challenge to established authoritarianism.

At the same time, it was an adventure of the spirit, an attempt to tap the roots of human expression from the unconscious and aimless. They were extremely diligent painters. Their eagerness to experiment with creation went far beyond the norm.

The shadow of one painter, Takami Sakurai, is on every one of these trajectories. He says: "Painting is to live." He refuses to paint, and spends his entire life in an act that leaves no trace. To get up at five o'clock in the morning and continue painting. These two tremendous amplitudes are hidden within him.

This is why some people are surprised that Sakurai Takami "paints". After his second visit to the USA, he had already painted over a hundred pictures in five months. Many people would not believe it. He lived in the USA for two years each in 1965-67 and 1970-73. Based in San Francisco, he travelled across the continent from New York to Mexico and then on to France. He slept and woke with Allen Ginsberg and Gary Schneider, standard-bearers of the post-war American poetry world, and absorbed each other's work. He produced murals, held solo exhibitions and created communes. His large spiritual sphere directly corresponds to the vastness of his sphere of action.

In the sense of a speculative commodity on the art dealer's route, he is not a successful painter. Financially, he is in a modesty reminiscent of an ascetic monk. And yet, this is not a constraint on his behaviour in any way. It is not an obstacle to painting. The scale of his work is impressive.

From 15 to 24 May, a solo exhibition is being held at the Fukuda Gallery in Hakata Ward, Fukuoka City. The works on display are mainly 'women's faces'. Women with flowers in their hair, their lips knotted and their eyes wide open, speak to us from behind the canvas. The women look like Mexican Indians, ancient Egyptian women, Tahitian women or young Japanese farm women. The joy and strength of the women who live amidst the cycles of the earth and the sun is expressed in their faces, which is common to all of them. It goes without saying that these 'women' embody the prayers born from the endless adventures of Sakurai Takami's spirit

and actions. He often says that 'to live must be a joy'. This joy of living is the aspiration for human life to be a festival that is celebrated by Mother Nature.

Modern civilised society has been built by banishing fundamental human festivals from life. For artist Takami Sakurai, who seeks to restore human festivity, there is still not a moment's respite. After the exhibition, he will soon return to Europe. Some of the works displayed at the exhibition will remain in someone's possession to continue to follow the endless wanderings of an artist.



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