

## Kyushu-Ha Personal Records

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### At the Beginning

The "Kyushu-Ha Exhibition" was held at the Fukuoka City Museum of Art from September 23 to October 10. In 1957, a group of young painters and sculptors mainly from Fukuoka City formed this exhibition with the aim of exploring the possibilities of art to the fullest extent without preconceived notions. However, a quarter of a century has already passed since the end of the movement, and this exhibition is an attempt to expose the Kyushu-Ha to the light of day, to clarify its lights and shadows, and to explore its significance today.

I was a member of Kyushu-Ha for only a little more than two years from its formation in 1957 until late fall of 1959, when I parted company with Ochi Osamu and Kikuhata Mokuma after a dispute over the movement line of the group and formed the Cave Faction (named by Mamoru Matano, which was dissolved one year after its formation).

This time, I have decided to stir up my memory, which is already on the verge of oblivion, and write down some of the things I would like to record about Kyushu-Ha, including its pre-history.



### **1 Persona Exhibition**

According to the first issue of Kyushu-Ha's journal, the following record of the Persona Exhibition can be found at the beginning of the "Group History" section on the last page.

From November 2 to 4, 1956, 3 paintings by Yasuyuki Ishibashi F100, 3 by Yohji Kuroki F100, 2 by Osamu Ochi F100, 1 by F150, 1 by F80, and 6 by Takami Sakurai F130 were exhibited on the wall on the west side of Fukuoka Prefectural Office's main street. Poems by Keizo Amano, Taneo Harada, Kenkichi Itabashi, Atsumi Kawaguchi, Mamoru Matano, Koji Orisaka, Akira Kagami, Sohei Suzuki, Fumiki Takamatsu, and IGen Tanaka were reportedly on display. Four painters who were exhibiting at the Nika Exhibition at the time and ten poets living in Fukuoka City were included in the exhibition.

This exhibition of personas is one of the mothers of Kyushu-Ha's birth and foreshadows the group's unique character as an art collective.

Prior to the Persona exhibition, in May 1954, Kenkichi Itabashi launched the poetry magazine

"Shikka" (Poetry Department), and the cover of the first issue was drawn by Yohji Kuroki. (Later, he and Kenichiro Terada were in charge of the cover.) According to an article by Yohji Kuroki in "The Person and Works of Kenkichi Itabashi," a separate volume of Kenkichi Itabashi's posthumous poetry collection "Seconds Inside Everything," published in March 1983, "The idea of a joint creative exhibition of pictures and poetry came up, with Mr. Itabashi as the poet and myself as the painter, and a big ceremony was held on the prefectural government street, called the Persona Street Exhibition.

Since Mr. Itabashi is now deceased and Mr. Kuroki has lost touch with him, there is no way for us to ask him how he came up with the idea of the persona exhibition, how he named it, and how he chose the West Street wall of the prefectural government office as the place for the exhibition. My guess is that Mr. Itabashi was the head of the Mine Hazard Division of the prefectural government at the time, which may have been the reason for the idea of the street poetry exhibition and the location of the exhibition. Koji Orisaka, who worked with Mr. Itabashi in organizing the poets at the time, asked Akira Kagami about it, and he said that Mr. Itabashi himself was involved in the negotiations to lease the wall.

I would appreciate it if you could tell me who named the Persona Exhibition.

I was surprised to see the name of Taneo Harada, the founder of "Kyushu Bungaku" (Kyushu Literature), among the ten poets who participated in the Persona exhibition, and wondered how he could have participated in a street exhibition that seemed so unprecedented. I asked Mr. Hiroshi Nasu to confirm this, and he replied that he had no record of the work he had exhibited, but that he remembered receiving an invitation to exhibit from Mamoru Matano. When I called Mr. Nasu to ask him about this, he replied that he did not have a clear recollection, but if that was the case in his records, then there must be no mistake. According to Mr. Nasu, Mr. Harada's poems have a strong critical spirit to begin with, which is why he agreed to participate in this avant-garde attempt at a street exhibition.

Mr. Sakurai, one of the artists who participated in the Persona exhibition, also wrote poetry at the time, and was a member of the "Poetry Department" with Mr. Hidesuke Obata, who became a member when Kyushu-Ha was formed, and published their works in the magazine. Thus, even before Kyushu-Ha was formed, the human ties between Kyushu-Ha and local poets were close, and continue to be so even today, even though Kyushu-Ha is no longer in existence. On the other hand, when one considers the relationship between Kyushu-Ha and the local poets in terms of their works, some may argue that although the two genres of

poetry and painting are very close, neither of them ever ventured into the other's work, protecting their respective territories.

With the exception of Mr. Matano's participation as a member of Kyushu-Ha and his active involvement in the organization and painting, which was a major driving force of the movement, and a couple of other exceptions, nothing seems to have changed since the end of Kyushu-Ha. For example, the cooperation between the two parties was limited to the designing of poetry collections and poetry magazines, and there was no production of full-scale poetry and painting collections, or discussions of artists' works or artists from the poet's side.

At this point, I would like to mention Mr. Matano's legacy to Kyushu-Ha. I believe that an art movement needs both a fanatical outward propulsion of activities and an inward theoretical support of the movement, and Mr. Matano has done the latter. I believe that Mr. Matano left Kyushu-Ha when I left in 1959. During his entire tenure at Kyushu-Ha, Mr. Matano was a behind-the-scenes player, never appearing on the surface. He played a major role in the Kyushu-Ha movement by naming the organization, publishing the journal, drafting the Declaration, setting up the Steering Committee, teaching courses on contemporary thought (especially existentialism), proposing study groups for members to present their opinions, and providing guidance to make up for the deficiencies of our inexperienced members. He played a major role in the Kyushu-Ha movement and was indispensable. I believe that his contribution should not be lost.

As an aside, I would like to note that I remembered the study group I mentioned earlier. The venue was Kenichiro Terada's studio each time, and I think there were always around ten members in attendance.

At Mr. Matano's suggestion, it was decided that the first course would be on existentialism. Mr. Terada's acquaintance, Tadao Arita (currently a professor at Seinan Gakuin University), who was working in the French literature laboratory at Kyushu University at the time, was chosen as the lecturer for the course. The lecturer at that time, Mr. Koyanagi, was a member of the Kyushu University Art Club when I was at Seinan Gakuin University in 1952, when the Fukuoka Six University Art League was formed and the Fukuoka Six University Art Exhibition was held at the Fukuoka General Bureau of the Asahi Shimbun newspaper in Tenjin at the time.

The content of the lecture, which I have on me, was written down in a small notepad that I recently found by chance, and I read it over, and found that he talked mainly about the aesthetic aspect of existentialism, but he also explained the flow of phenomenology from Husserl through Heidegger to Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, and discussed the relationship between the aesthetic and the phenomenological. It was a very detailed lecture, and for those who are still involved in contemporary art today, I think it was very thought-provoking and valuable.

It should be noted that on several occasions during our study sessions, I mentioned that the poet Henri Michaux had expanded his field of expression through hallucinations caused by taking mescaline, but there was little response from the members.

This is a long digression, but to return to the Persona exhibition, I have not seen it for some reason. I think this exhibition played a significant role as a milestone in the formation of Kyushu-Ha the following year.

The Persona exhibition set a precedent, and from November 2 to 4, 1957, the year after Kyushu-Ha was established, all Kyushu-Ha members and members of the Poetry Department held the Group Q and Poetry Department Informel Open-Air Exhibition at the same location.

It is not known how many members of the Poetry Department participated in the exhibition.

The following year, from November 14 to 16, 1958, a similar exhibition was held under the name of the 3rd Kyushu-Ha Street Exhibition, but no poets participated at that time, and not all Kyushu-Ha members exhibited, but Mitsuko Tabe, Eisuke Obata, Mokuma Kikuhata, Hidesaburo Saito, Takami Sakurai, Kenichiro Terada, and Yoriko Cho. The following exhibitors are also exhibiting.





## 2 Before and After the Formation of Kyushu-Ha

According to the chronology in the "Kyushu-Ha Exhibition Catalog," the exhibition of Yasuyuki Ishibashi and Takami Sakurai was held at Iwataya Social Room from April 9 to 14, 1957, and the "Gathering of Young Artists" was held on the last day of the exhibition. I remember seeing the exhibition, but I did not attend the meeting on the 14th.

The reason I saw the exhibition was that I had a friend who is a nephew of Mr. Masato Hara (cartoonist), the head of the Art Department of Nishinippon Shimbun at the time, and his uncle told me that a young artist at the newspaper company was holding a two-person exhibition.

I believe it was at the first meeting in early May at a coffee shop cellar that Sakurai and others called for the expansion of the "Gathering of Young Painters" and the formation of a group. I do not recall how I learned of the meeting. I think there were about 20 people in attendance at that time, but I am not sure. It was agreed that we would bring our recent works to the next meeting. Mr. Sakurai seemed to be the facilitator of the meeting, and I could feel the momentum building for the formation of the group.

The second meeting was a sort of reciprocal worship of the works I brought. I brought an F6 work titled "White Nude Woman," which I had painted in January of that year. I don't remember what the painters said about it, but I still remember that the poet Noriaki Shiroy, who was present at the meeting, said that it had the feel of an oriental landscape. At that meeting, I think we all decided to exhibit our works at the 8th West Japan Art Exhibition, which was coming up the following month. I enlarged the "White Naked Woman" to size 30 and painted another one on F50, which I named "Naked Woman A and B. Mr. Sakurai was the one who put "Sabitsuta" on the "Naked Woman" when it was submitted for exhibition. At that time, Mr. Sakurai and I were fortunate enough to receive the Encouragement Award. The following year, in 1958, "Sabitsuta" Nude Woman A" won first place and the Gold Prize at the 1st Western Japan Newcomers' Exhibition of Western-style Painting organized by the Ishibashi Museum of Art.

Although the dates of the two meetings in the cellar mentioned above cannot be specified, I consider this to be the time when Kyushu-Ha was formed. Some may consider the "Group Q Eighteen Artists Exhibition" (Q is another name for Kyushu-Ha), which was held at Iwataya on the 6th floor from August 14 to 18 of the same year, to be the full-fledged launch of Kyushu-Ha.



### **3 Kyushu Poetry and Painting Exhibition**

According to Kyushu-Ha magazine No. 3, the "Kyushu Poetry and Painting Exhibition" was held at Fukuoka Maruzen Gallery from December 17 to 19, 1958. The exhibitors were Kyushu-Ha members Mitsuko Tabe, Yoriko Osa, Eisuke Obata, Mokuma Kikuhata, Takami Sakurai, Kenichiro Terada, Mamoru Matano, Shigetaro Yamauchi, and other members of the poetry department.

The above-mentioned Kenkichi Itabashi's poetry collection also includes my manuscript, which reads as follows: "The first time I met Mr. Itabashi was at a meeting held in December 1958 at Maruzen Gallery in Gofukumachi for a poetry exhibition between Kyushu-Ha and the members of the poetry department.

I think it was on the second floor of the Prince in the back of Shintenmachi. It has been more than 20 years since then, so I am not sure who attended the meeting, but I vaguely remember that some members of Kyushu-Ha and a few members of the poetry department attended the meeting. The only thing that remains in my dim memory is that Mr. Itabashi and Mr. Kaname Yamaguchi were there.



The format of the exhibition at that time was that the poet and the artist worked in pairs, and the artist drew a series of paintings that were appropriate to the content of the poem. I was partnered with Mamoru Matano, and I drew a pen portrait of a half-animal god against the background of the ruins of the temple of Palmyra, taking the poem's meaning into consideration. One of them, a cowering man in the shape of a copper plate blown greenish-blue, was titled "Man in Algeria. I remember that a poet, I forget who it was, praised the title very highly. It was the middle of the Algerian War at the time, so I guess he felt some sympathy for me.

It was at this Kyushu poetry and painting exhibition that my association with the members of the poetry department began. I have almost forgotten what kind of poems and paintings were exhibited at the exhibition, but somehow I have a clear impression of the sincere personality of Keiji Haneda, whom I met for the first time at the exhibition. Twenty-one years later, I met him again at the commemoration of the publication of Otsuru Toshio's poetry collection, and since then we have had several opportunities to meet.

I recently met Mr. Hada and we were reminiscing about the Kyushu Poetry and Art Exhibition, and he told me that he saw a painting by Midori, Mrs. Kenichiro Terada, when he was decorating the exhibition and wrote "Horse and Boy" on the spot. The poem is included at the beginning of his first book of poems, "Mimei". As an introduction, this "Mimei" was published four years ago under the editorship of Koji Orisaka, who used two of the author's series of prints, "White Whale," as cover cuts. On November 1, Mr. Haneda published his second collection of poems, "Bungo Okajo Poems," a unique all-color book of poems with photographs taken by Mr. Haneda himself. Through a chance encounter, I was able to assist him by editing the book. It is a curious coincidence.

Returning to the "Kyushu Poetry and Painting Exhibition," I have not forgotten the impression I had at that time, and if I may speak frankly, it was that both poets and painters had a very limited understanding of contemporary poetry and painting, and that this was nothing more than a friendly exhibition, which could not be expected to deepen their creative relationship. After this poetry exhibition, I believe that the collaboration between the two artists has gone away, although I believe that there were good reasons. The relationship between language and image is an important issue for both genres. It is regrettable that creative development would have been possible if both genres had been understood and absorbed by each other. Twenty years after the "Kyushu Poetry and Painting Exhibition," what can be called "art

through language" has emerged. Conceptual art has emerged.

#### In Conclusion

For the "Kyushu-Ha" exhibition, I exhibited a new work titled "A Stain". When a newspaper reporter encouraged me to create an eye-opening work, I had an image of blue blood in my mind, but after a month of searching for the right shape, I arrived at a sharp blue crescent shape. I thought this was the symbol of the Kyushu-Ha movement, and completed it in five days, just before the installation. During the creation of this work, I was afraid to be lamenting, so I tried to be strict in my critique.

In the name of Kyushu-Ha, there are those who avoid, those who have fallen ill, and those who have been wounded. The movement itself is bleeding blue. I wrote "A SCR (Scar)" on the screen. For the exhibition, I added the old works "Xinjing Xiaolian" and "Unnamed Monument". This is for the sake of repose and sorrow. I meditated and put down my pen.

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The images in the text have nothing to do with the text.