

Yasuyuki Ishibashi and Kyushu-Ha

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It has been 42 years since the formation of the Kyushu-Ha in 1957, and 37 years since the "Great Meeting of Heroes" in 1962, which is regarded as the end of the movement.

In Kyushu, where avant-garde art has been absent for a long time, Kyushu-Ha was the first avant-garde art movement. There are people who think that only a handful of artists are Kyushu-Ha. On the other hand, there are those who overestimate the value of an artist simply because he or she belonged to the Kyushu-Ha, regardless of the artist's activities or works.

All of these are probably wrong. Since the dismantling of Kyushu-Ha, it cannot be said that there has been sufficient follow-up research on the lives and works of individual members.

Of course, there are members who gave up their artistic activities after Kyushu-Ha. Even today, there are those who still maintain the spirit of the Kyushu-Ha and continue to create art regardless of public opinion. However, all of them are either in their old age or approaching it. The sun creates light and shadows, and public opinion also creates light and shadows. It is self-evident that just as we cannot say that an artist is excellent because he is famous, we cannot say that he is not excellent because he is unknown. Yasuyuki Ishibashi seems to me to be the latter. I know very little about Yasuyuki's pre-Kyushu-Ha work, but during his time at Kyushu-Ha, Yasuyuki led Kyushu-Ha, along with several other members, in experimental works that could be called his Dada-like adventures. There is no other artist who has been as experimental as Yasuyuki during and after his time at Kyushu-Ha. Moreover, his wide range of experimental works are not mere ideas, but are backed by solid techniques and a strong sense of self.

I was in Paris from May 1962 to May 1963. During that period, there were many retrospectives of Dadaism and Surrealism, and it was also the heyday of Nouveau Réalisme, the French Neo-Dada movement, but for some reason, Yasuyuki's work kept coming back to me. I don't know how it happened that I was the only member of Kyushu-Ha to have worked with Yasuyuki at most of the group exhibitions since the dissolution of Kyushu-Ha until the last Japan-Korea Contemporary Art Exhibition in 1994. All of his works exhibited at these exhibitions can be described as experimental works. You can see this by looking at his work history. Whenever I meet Yasuyuki, he always talks about his next experimental work.

It reminded me of something that the late Shun Kumashiro told me when I was at Kyushu-Ha. I remember the late Shun Kumashiro telling me during my time at Kyushu-Ha, "Yasuyuki's work stood out even in a place like Kyushu-Ha that was so full of adventure and

experimentation. He was very worried that Yasuyuki might spend the rest of his life experimenting and experimenting. I didn't argue with him, perhaps because I thought it was a good idea at the time. For Takayuki, Mannerism might as well be death. Over the past few years, even though he has been in a difficult situation both materially and emotionally, his enthusiasm for experimenting with his work has never ceased. I would like to send my heartfelt encouragement to this "spirit of excessive experimentation."