

Kyushu-ha Memorandum

Jutaro Yamauchi



Introduction

It has been 41 years since Kyushu-ha was formed, and about 30 years have already passed since its demise. In the fall of 1988, the Fukuoka City Museum of Art held the first large-scale "Kyushu-ha" exhibition, clearly presenting Kyushu-ha's activities, which were becoming legendary, through its works and miracles. The Kyushu-ha movement has already been reviewed by people inside and outside of Kyushu-ha, and we hope that the discovery of new materials and testimonies from inside and outside of Kyushu-ha will continue to reveal the full picture of this first avant-garde art movement in Kyushu.

I would like to investigate and record some facts related to Kyushu-ha, but due to my own personal matters, I will leave that for another time. In this article, I would like to fulfill my responsibility by describing what I have been wondering about Kyushu-Ha and what I have learned recently.

1 Ariake Boat

Although the old Momochi Beach has now been transformed into an artificial beach, some of you may remember that dozens of beach houses used to line the sandy beach. These

beach houses were facilities that served as both changing rooms and rest areas for bathers.

One of these beach houses was the Ariake Boat. It is believed that most of the works by Kyushu-ha members exhibited at the Yomiuri Independents Exhibition in 1958, the year after Kyushu-ha was formed, were created here. In early summer of last year, I met again for the first time in about 40 years with Mr. Minoru Kuwatori, one of the youngest members of Kyushu-ha in its early days, and we renewed our old friendship. His father used to run Ariake Boat. At that time, he was running a boat rental business and opened a beach house only during the annual summer bathing season. Therefore, the beach house was closed every year from autumn to June of the following year.

When I asked Mr. Minoru Kuwatori how he came to rent the place as a studio for Kyushu-ha members to create their works, he said he did not remember the circumstances. This is only a guess, but it is likely that one of the members who learned at a Kyushu-ha meeting that Kuwatori's father ran a beach house, which was not used except during the summer, and who thought it would be a good place to work, borrowed it after consulting his father, Jusaburo Kuwatori, through Mr. Minoru. According to Mr. Minoru, since most of the members were working on large works, one house of "Ariake Boat" was not enough, and they also rented 1.2 houses in the neighborhood, which was also thanks to the efforts of Mr. Minoru's father.

It is immeasurable how much the availability of a large space as a production site was a powerful backup for Kyushu-ha's early efforts to create large-scale works, collaborate on productions, and speed up the production process. On a personal note, my work for the Yomiuri Andapandan, the 3000F "Orient," which was created by joining coffee jute bags, would not have been possible without the use of this platform space as a production site.

It is believed that the owner of the property, Jusaburo Kuwatori, has not paid a single yen in rent, as far as the author knows. He passed away 30 years ago. I would like to offer my deepest gratitude to Jusaburo Kuwatori in heaven and pray for his soul rest in peace.



2 Youngest Members

After 41 years since its establishment, eight members of Kyushu-ha have already passed away, and some of the current members are getting older, and some have become very ill. I myself turned 69 years old this year. There are some members who are still missing, and I am concerned about them.

There were three high school students at Kyushu-ha. They are Mr. Minoru Kuwatori and Ms. Yoko Sugawara and Ms. Mitsuko Ono. In writing this article, I asked Mr. Kuwatori why he joined Kyushu-ha and what grade he was in at the time. Mr. Kuwatori was accepted to the Fukuoka Prefectural Exhibition for the first time when he was in his third year at Momochi Junior High School, and again in his first year at Higashi Fukuoka High School. At that time, Mr. Takami Sakurai recommended him to join Kyushu-Ha, and he joined. At the same time, Toshiko Ohgami, an art teacher at Momochi Junior High School, also joined Kyushu-Ha.

Mr. Oogami's father was a painter, Mr. Makoto Hirashima, a friend of Shigeru Aoki, a teacher at Ogi Junior High School in Saga Prefecture, and a supporter of Aoki's. Mrs.

Oogami once told me that her sister was a very beautiful woman, and that she and Aoki had a chance to get married, but it did not work out because Aoki died of tuberculosis.

Ms. Sugawara and Ms. Ono were students at Fukuoka Chuo High School at the time, but I do not remember what grade they were in. They may have left Kyushu-ha upon graduation from high school. When I was in Paris in 1962 or 1963, I heard after I returned to Japan that Ms. Sugawara came to visit me at my home with a foreigner. I do not know what happened to either of them after that, but I am curious to know what kind of progress they have made.



3 Mamoru Matano's Philosophy

When considering Kyushu-ha's activities as an avant-garde art movement, Mr. Mamoru Matano's presence is extremely important. Without Mr. Matano, Kyushu-ha would have taken a different path.

Mr. Matano was originally a poet, and had been friends with Yutaka Maruyama, Hitoshi Anzai, and Utaroh Noda, poets from Kurume, his hometown, since he was young, and had written modern poems early on. He is a poet in the intellectual lyric school of poets such as Yutaka Maruyama. After the war, he joined the Nishinippon Shimbun, and a chance encounter with Takami Sakurai, who worked at the same place, had a great influence on the Kyushu-Ha movement. It was a very fortunate encounter. In my article "Personal Notes of Kyushu-ha" (published in the literary magazine "Umi" No. 6), which I wrote shortly after the "Kyushu-ha Exhibition" at the Fukuoka City Museum of Art in 1988, I listed Mr. Matano's achievements in Kyushu-ha: naming Kyushu-ha, publishing the journal "Kyushu-ha," drafting the declaration, establishing the steering committee, teaching contemporary thought, and proposing study groups among the members.

Several years ago, Mrs. Matano called an old acquaintance of hers, the poet Keiji Hada, to ask if she could sell him her husband's collection of books. So I once visited her home. The library contained not only literature and art books, but also a wide range of books on philosophy and thought, and I learned anew that Mr. Matano was an excellent reader. At that time, I wanted to find a clue to the formation of the Kyushu-ha movement by cataloging the collection of Mr. Matano, who was one of the core ideologues of the Kyushu-ha movement, and to explore how this was related to the Kyushu-ha movement. Later, when I told this to a young writer who was interested in Kyushu-Ha, he said he wanted to catalog the exhibition himself, and I was happy to hear that. However, for whatever reason, it never materialized. According to some reports, Mrs. Matano entered a facility specializing in the elderly. I do not know what happened to Matano's collection of books, but it would be a pity if they were lost.

Mr. Matano left behind a collection of poems titled "Dreaming and Wandering" before his death, but it is difficult to get a sense of his thought process from this collection alone. During his Kyushu-ha days, Mr. Matano often talked about the poet Rilke and was interested in Sartre's existentialism. I have heard that he became a Catholic in his later years. According to his wife, he took a trip to China in his later years. Or was it a trip to admire Chinese culture, as he was a skilled calligrapher and had a deep knowledge of calligraphy?

During his time at Kyushu-ha, Mr. Matano once told me that he would like to write a novel "Kyushu-ha" and that the main character would be Takami Sakurai. More than ten years ago, I wrote to him once or twice to ask him to write a novel "Kyushu-ha," but did not

receive a reply. Although I assume that there are certain intervening circumstances, I still wish that he had written it as his life's work.



4 The House of Blue

Although it belongs to the prehistory of the Kyushu-Ha, the existence of "The House of Blue" may have served as a nucleus for the formation of the pre-Kyushu-Ha. "The House of Blue" was located behind Shintencho in Tenjin, Fukuoka City. It was a handmade wooden atelier. It was originally built as a studio for the production of works to be exhibited at the Nika Exhibition by young exhibitors living in Fukuoka City, including Yohji Kuroki, Yasutaka Nakagawa, Kenichiro Terada, and Toku Yonekura. I do not know how or why, but Shin Kinoshita, who was exhibiting at the Dokuritsu Exhibition at the time, took over the studio and began to live there either to work or to bring in a bed.

In 1953/4, I was a student at Seinan Gakuin University. One evening, I was passing by a restaurant in the back of Shintencho when Mr. Kenichiro Terada stopped me in the bar and introduced me to Mr. Shin Kinoshita. I believe that Mr. Kinoshita was already living in "The House of Blue" at that time. After that, I began to visit "The House of Blue" often, and I remember that there were times when I visited there day after day.

Although Mr. Kinoshita had been suspended for nonpayment of electric light charges, he had continued to work by candlelight. At that time, he was painting in a cubist style with brown as the main tone. In 1957, with the formation of Kyushu-Ha, I joined "The House of Blue. I joined up with Kuroki, Terada, and Yonekura of Nika and Kinoshita of Independence, and we worked together.

It is said that the construction of "The House of Blue" was made possible by the efforts of Toshiko Yasukawa, the director of the adjacent Yasukawa College of Fashion. I asked Mr. Une Yasukawa, the sculptor and brother of the Director, and Mr. Masami Yasukawa, the Director's son, about this matter, and they told me that "The House of Blue" was originally city-owned land, but the Director rented it after negotiations with the city.

"The House of Blue" was built directly behind the Oshima Sake Brewery on the back street of Shintencho, through the narrow alley between the Oshima Sake Brewery and the Wachi Dental Clinic. Eventually, the Oshima liquor store, where Kinoshita lived at the time, was purchased by the city and he was forced to move out. Although there were some circumstances, Mr. Kinoshita came to live in a house in Higashino, at the exit of Yakuin. In the early days of Kyushu-Ha, meetings were held there.

I do not know exactly when "The House of Blue" was built and when it was torn down. I have heard that Mr. Yasutaka Nakagawa, who is currently the chairman of the Yuho-kai Medical Foundation in Ureshino-cho, Saga Prefecture, is well versed in the history of the construction of "The House of Blue," but I have not had an opportunity to hear his story. Mr. Nakagawa is said to have established a painting therapy for the mentally handicapped and is highly regarded.

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