

## **The Fighting Mikoshi that Ran Through Tatsuo Ikeda**

Perhaps because I myself was born in Kyushu, I had a special interest in the activities of "Kyushu-Ha" from the beginning, as if I were not a stranger. Although I thought I had absolutely nothing to do with a sense of hometown, something about the word "Kyushu" and its characters shook me, and perhaps it was because of this that, more than 10 years after I moved to faraway Tokyo, I learned that young painters had begun to gather momentum across the Kanmon Straits.

I think the first time I met the artists was at the first "Kyushu-Ha Exhibition" (1958) held at the Ginza Gallery, which was located on the second floor of an antique shop in Ginza 2-chome, Tokyo. Although that was probably the first time we met, I remember feeling as if we were already old acquaintances. Perhaps it was because I was delighted to hear the nostalgic Kyushu dialect that was exchanged without reserve over a bottle of sake on the floor of an art gallery in the middle of Ginza.

Among them, Takami Sakurai's a cup of sake in one hand and his monstrous temperament in the other was especially moving. Although his argument was not clear, his heart was conveyed to the audience as lightly as if he were crossing a springboard.

Contemporary art will be impossible without "Kyushu-Ha"! I think I heard him say something to the astonishment of the people of Tokyo. It was a long time ago. At that time, not only art, but the whole world was still in a state of postwar fever, and hot steam was rising here and there. The term "avant-garde" was very attractive, both politically and artistically. The "arts" were young, and I am not so sure what the "palanquin" was supposed to knock down, perhaps because I was born in Kyushu and was too patronizing of the "new". The newer ones were even more neglected by the public. That is why demonstrations were effective and possible.

Speaking of rough and tumble, "Neo Dada" which was as violent as "Kyushu-Ha," must have been similar. However, the Tokyo-born "Neo Dada," while "Kyushu-Ha"! may have been at a great disadvantage. In a country that has always had a centralized structure, it takes far more energy to accomplish something from the center of the country to the center than from the center down to the regions.

Art is an explosion! Art is energy! The energy of "Kyushu-Ha" therefore, must have

been considerable. The reason it did not last very long was probably because it was too strong. When I first heard about the group's many whirlpools that had formed and were violently bumping into each other, I remember feeling rather refreshed as I watched, thinking that if this was the case, there would be no time for stagnation and rotting. After all, it was a long time ago.

But what exactly was "Kyushu-Ha"? Looking back on it again, I am not quite sure what it was all about. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend the "Gathering of Heroes," which was held in the autumn of 1962, as if it were the last fireworks display in Hakata Bay, because I was not able to make it, even though I was notified of the event, I can't help but think of it as if it were the Fight Mikoshi that rushed through the festival on the eve of the lively 1960s.



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