

Yoshiwara's strong guidance kept the work at a certain level, and his economic power supported the activities of the group and created a market overseas. Neo Dadaism in Tokyo had organizers and leader Masunobu Yoshimura provided a base and kept records of the activities.

Kyushu-ha had no leader or patron. Even if the boss Takami Sakurai praised "isn't it good", everyone would argue booing. "What do you want to do?" and "what meaning does it have?" these topics were endlessly discussed. Having a drink at the Farmer's Hall near Tenjin, Toshio Taniguchi, who lives in Omuta, often missed Nishitetsu's last train and "fast asleep on the national railway rode all the way to Kumamoto."

Conflict was constant with "whose side do you take?" (Mitsuko Tabe) and "grappling each other" (Taniguchi) . The change in members was also incessant.

For example, conflict surrounding an "anti-open call exhibition". Mokuma Kikuhata interrogates Kenichiro Terada, who continues to exhibit at the Nika Exhibition, Terada shuts the shoji and leaves. Tabe and Aiko Oguro tried to persuade him but Tarada left Kyushu-ha. Furthermore, Sakurai's road to expansion was criticized by Kikuhata, Ochi, and Shigetaro Yamauchi, who advocated for minority elites. The 3 leave Kyushu-ha, however Kikuhata and Ochi soon return.

The idea of keeping works and records almost didn't exist. "I was immersed in the work I did on that moment. So it wasn't kept, rather it is better that way. It can't be helped." said Tabe.

The basis of "anti-art" is the denial of the preconceived idea. That part carried by passion would have been overwhelming. "I misunderstood that all art traditions in the history of mankind had an institutionalized framework. However, in my career, I didn't experience such ecstasy with my body and soul as I did that time" (Kikuhata "Anti-art talks")

First of all, there was no place to put the work at home because I was poor. Kyowa Sakurai, who was an elementary school student, played by tearing apart his father's Takami work. There are also local disadvantages. Even if a large work was exhibited in Tokyo, it was disposed of on the spot as there was no money to send it back.

The only way would have been to call Hariu Ichiro and other up and coming art critics in Tokyo to showcase their works. "Sakurai's foresight was discerning. In the days when rural painters could only become a painter by being a member of a public exhibition, he realized early on that there was another way." said Yozo Yamaguchi curator of the Fukuoka City Museum of Art.

In the Tokyo exhibition held every year there was an exchange between everyone in Neo Dada including Ushio Shinohara and Kazakura Sho.

However, it also weakened the unity of the group. With the transition from asphalt to objet d'art and happenings the differences in the direction of each member became apparent. The art dealer approached individual artists. The National Museum of Modern Art requested Ochi and Kikuhata to exhibit and Minami Gallery also caught Kikuhata. Sakurai traveled to San Francisco for 5 years and Kyushu-ha headed to dissolution.

The exaltation of the period peaked at the year of the Miike dispute. The Kyushu-ha art movement is not directly linked to labour disputes, but it is certain that " the energy of the times pushed us" (Yamaguchi). From that point on, there is no choice but to deepen their horizons.

Face life and seek your own expression

Kikuhata bought 2 big logs in the lumberyard near Tenjin and his father carried them on the horse carriage to the atelier at the foot of mount Abura. He then borrowed 100,000 yen from a person and went to several banks and exchanged it all for 5 yen coins. Returning with 2 5kg rice bags filled with 5 yen coins. These were tightly nailed to the logs.

With about half of the remaining 5 yen coins he took the night train. The cheap upper berth was squeaky. He was disappointed when the curator at the National Museum of Modern Art told him " You could have exchanged in Tokyo" as he rolled the glitzy logs into the exhibition room. The remaining 5 yen coins were dumped and candles were lit.

This is "Slave genealogy (currency) " exhibited by Kikuhata at the "Experiments in Contemporary Art" exhibition in April 1961 upon request of the museum. It was like an altar from ancient times. The two logs are considered to be male and female due to the shape in the central part. Modern "gold" and "gender" come to mind in the folk expressions.

After that, Kikuhata, who went through Kyushu-ha, became an instant star in contemporary art with the "Roulette" series in 1964, the work was refined and the folk of the Kyushu-ha era receded. From the late 60's Kikuhata entered a long silent period. He was impacted by a painting by Sakubei Yamamoto's, a coal mining painter from Chikuhō, shown to him by the artist Hidenobu Ueno. Sakubei's simplistic drawing, coal miner, "I stood like Nio and couldn't draw anymore" (movie "digging Japan with Sakubei").

Kikuhata worked with students on recreating Sakubei's coal mine paintings. At the same time, he wrote books such as "Rest in peace Fujita (Fujita yo nemure)" and "The emperor's

art (Tenno no bijutsu)", and discussed Pacific War reporting paintings that were taboo in the art world.

Perhaps it was necessary to look at coal mines and war at one's feet to capture what was at the root of modernity. Kikuhata made his comeback as an artist in 1983 with "Ptolemaic theory".

"Kyushu-ha suddenly performs in Tokyo." It was like a public tour of provincial theatrical performance. There was a poster for the Kyushu-ha exhibition at the Ginza gallery in September 1961, 19 people's portraits and names were lined up.

"Lady chairman" Tabe, who was also an accountant became pregnant with her eldest son, she was 5 months pregnant. On the maternity belt that the mothers wore, wrapped 200,000 yen in funds collected from members in an obi and rode the night train. "If a man held it, everyone would end up drinking" said Tabe.

The exhibit was an object titled "artificial placenta". Various materials were attached to the hips of the mannequin. "Why only women give birth to children? It would be easier if there was an artificial placenta. This is not possible, this is new art to think about things that can't be done." said Tabe,

She pioneered Western feminist art for over 10 years. Tabe, who is 87 years old this year, said "Something only women can do. Men like fighting, they cannot have children, serves them right, do you know the greatness of women?"

Tabé was just an ordinary citizen. While working in the department store shaken by the lockout, she continued to participate in Kyushu-ha. After marriage, she opened a painting school and earned the fees which were not cheap. "I read the complete works of Jean-Paul Sartre while breastfeeding and with the other hand I painted, as a result my left breast got bigger". (Tabé "2000 years apple"). After raising the children, aged 55, Tabé declared "no more dishwashing" and devoted herself to her painting career, holding a solo exhibition in New York.

"Down to the bottom down to the root". Like the words written by Tanigawa Gan, a poet who lived in Chikuho, in " Origin's existence", the Kyushu people faced their lives and sought their own expression. Even after the group vanished like mist, various activities still continued and beyond those activities, there may be the "Origin's existence" that modern Japan has lost sight of.

Koga Shigeki

Translated by: Sara Melo