



## Trajectory of the Avant-garde

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### fighting spirit stirred up

Kyushu-Ha is not something from the past. Kyushu-ha is not in the past. It is alive in my current approach to production. Yasuyuki Ishibashi, a key member of Kyushu-Ha since its birth, speaks from his six-mat atelier, which is covered with felt in the process of being painted.

“I am still fighting with Korean artists at the Japan-Korea Contemporary Painting Exhibition while deepening exchanges with them, and I am also continuing to challenge new materials. I am also working hard with Mr. Sakurai (Takami, France), Mr. Kikuhata (Mokukuma, Fukuoka City), Mr. Ochi (Osamu, Fukuoka City), and others. Even though Kyushu-Ha has been dismantled, their presence still inspires my fighting spirit.”

Mr. Taiko is usually a quiet man, but when he talks about Kyushu-Ha, his fighting spirit comes out in full force. Unlike the other members of the group, he speaks without drinking alcohol, which makes his words even more powerful.

### At the Japan-Korea Contemporary Art Exhibition

Before Kyushu-Ha was born, he had been selected for Nika Ten for three consecutive years since he graduated from high school in 1927. In those days, it was much more valuable to be selected for an award than now. He studied under the late Ito Shizuo of Kurume City,

who presided over Nika Seijinsha, and showed great promise for the future.

He chose the Kyushu-Ha because, "In order to win an Honorable Mention Award, I had to restrain my expression. At Kyushu-Ha, there were no restrictions, and there was the momentum of a serious competition among the artists, who were competing against each other's works.

The history of Kyushu-Ha has been one of continuous struggle. The opponents were not only the arts, the powers that be, and the center, but also the fellow artists. At the gatherings of the Kyushu-Ha, works of art were subjected to harsh criticism. For Ishibashi, who believes that "when there is no fight, the pictures are ruined," Kyushu-Ha was a comfortable place to be.

He has participated in the Japan-Korea Contemporary Art Exhibition since its first edition with Jutaro Yamauchi (Fukuoka City), a colleague from Kyushu-Ha, "It is a place to explore the unique space of the East, which is different from the West, and their enthusiasm to draw the world's attention to Korea is amazing. We must overcome them.

Be aware of rivals

In 1968, when Kyushu-Ha was in the process of being dismantled, he retired from Nishi Nippon Railway Company, where he worked. He was 38 years old at the time and had two young children. It would be a long time before the unprecedented boom in painting would arrive, and the works of local abstract artists would not sell. He tried hard to persuade his wife, who was opposed to his retirement. He told her, "It was my decision once. I will feed my family even if we are poor," he told her.

"During my time at Kyushu-Ha, I was confident that I could endure my poverty, since I shelled out my entire paycheck for every exhibition."

It was the presence of rivals that brought about the decision. At the time, Kikuhata's Roulette series was attracting attention from art journalism in the center of the country, and Sakurai and Ochi were on their way to the United States.

It is not surprising that Ishibashi became impatient when he was asked to edit the pamphlet for the third Kyushu-Ha exhibition in San Francisco. The three of them were betting on art alone.

Ishibashi retired and taught at Fukuoka International School and painting classes, and painted beautiful water drop pictures that were relatively sellable. However, "my wife earned most of my

living expenses," he said. Under these circumstances, he continued to pursue the beauty of color and composition. He entered various competitions and group exhibitions, including the First Contemporary Art Exhibition of Japan (1966), and held solo exhibitions, producing a large number of works.

### **Integral to the material**

At one time, Kyushu-Ha's trademark was "black," using coal tar and asphalt. Ishibashi was the first to use coal tar. He said. When you are faced with a new material, you have expectations and at the same time anxiety. But the beauty of it is that I feel I'm creating something that keeps me out of a rut."

I used paint, lacquer, and anything else I could get my hands on.

After Kyushu-Ha, I also used canvas, plywood, burned and stacked newspapers, and bread. . . . . In the exhibition "Kyushu: The Will to Possibility" (Yahata Museum of Art, 1973), he colored fragments of actual asphalt pavement and laid them out on the road.

"Now I also work with felt with an iron. I try to use the strength of the material and make it one with myself, which I think is the same as during my Kyushu-Ha days," he says. Last year, he held a two-person exhibition in Seoul with a Korean abstract artist, Choi Myeong-Yong. "I had the same enthusiasm as when I hit Tokyo," he laughs.

I have been working with "white flat space" for the past dozen years, and I presented "black flat space" in my solo exhibition this year. I create my own oriental space with the primordial "white" and the last color "black. " I want to create an abstract world like an emaki or a rolled-up letter," said the man who lives in the mood of Kyushu-Ha enthusiastically.

