

Close Up

From the Permanent exhibition at the Fukuoka Prefectural Art Museum

Junnosuke Miyazaki, who was born as the second son of a part-time farmer in Fukuoka City. He is known for his activities as a core member of the indigenous Fukuoka anti-art group “Kyushu-Ha” while working as an art teacher at a school for the deaf. After the dissolution of Kyushu-Ha, he did not belong to any group. He silently continued to carve hundreds of mysterious wooden works from the camphor trees that were growing in the garden of his atelier in Kitakyushu City, during his 59-years of life

Miyazaki is an important and rare artist who has faithfully sustained and developed the Kyushu-Ha's attempt to “ground art in the depths of human life” with “The Philosophy of Those Who Live in Society,” even after the dissolution of the group. How was Miyazaki's “sei-katsu-sha” philosophy, which finds its positive value in daily life itself and the principles of art production, reflected in his works?

Round balls made of camphor wood, which repeat themselves in a lovely yet somehow eerie way; boards and pillars with endless repetitions of wave shapes; rugged tickle dolls that remind us of old-fashioned rural life; and small statues that stand firmly on the ground with their short legs. The common appeal to all these works is the “richness” that shakes the depths of the viewer’s memory and cannot be contained within the framework of conventional art. The works, which are made of familiar camphor trees and look like tools or playground equipment, remind us of the people's life before the modern era and the strong energy that flowed through it.

Another characteristic of Miyazaki's works is that most of the pieces are hand-carved and then sanded with sandpaper to a smooth finish, leaving no chisel marks. When we consider the chisel marks as traces of the artist's action and expression of his personality, it seems that Miyazaki has chosen to be an individual as a consumer rather than as an artist. While gazing at the subject, it seems to transcend his ego and becomes transparent, a “namelessness”. It is precisely because of this commitment that the camphor wood reveals its true nature in such a relaxed manner, and Miyazaki’s works are overflowing with a fresh poetic sentiment.

Miyazaki wanted viewers to be naturally involved in the work he created while he himself was playing with the trees. The reason, why the relationship between the work and the

viewer is so close and the space in which the work is placed is so warm, is due to Miyazaki's strong will to create works that lead from the "mere human horizon" to a "human existence that is not imaginary". Just as the waves were able to backfill the hole he dug overnight on the beach during his Kyushu-Ha days, Miyazaki chose wood as material for his artworks, which will one day decay and return to soil. It may be said that the interaction between the two, the fluctuations and transformations of the space, were the works.

Today, the relationship between art and daily life is being reexamined from a different standpoint than in the 1960s, when Kyushu-Ha was active. Can art, which is said to have become emaciated in an autistic world, regain its richness by connecting with the real world, and can this richness be returned to our daily lives? Sharing the fresh, open space created by the round balls made of camphor wood, we must once again reflect on Junnosuke Miyazaki's "The Philosophy of Those Who Live in Society".

