

Original Landscape of Salvation #3

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“nontitle” oil on canvas 1160x915mm

3

After the mid-1950s, Kenichiro Terada's painting style entered the world of informel (non-figurative).

He got married and returned to Fukuoka from Tokyo in 1957. His base of operations was Yakuin Atelier.

It was in an art magazine that he came to know the American painter Jackson Pollock.

He told me several times, "That was the turning point for me to move from figurative painting to abstract expression.

"My paintings are called abstract abstractions, but to me they are figurative."

he added.

Jackson Pollock had a profound impact on young Japanese painters. Pollock removed the

canvas from the easel. When a canvas is painted on an easel, there is an elasticity between the canvas and the paintbrush. He would avoid this elasticity, spread the canvas directly on the wall or floor, and use the hard resistance of the surface to paint.

He walks around the canvas and paints from anywhere. Therefore, there is no specific center or orderly composition. The corners and the center of a large canvas have the same meaning. Structural order, such as top or bottom, right or left, is ignored. The paint is mixed, dripped, and splattered. It is fluid and intricate.

There is no way to answer the question often asked, "What are you painting?"

Pollock's work was "emotionally expressive, emphasizing the act of painting rather than the work itself, an appealing form of expression that had not existed until now. Terada was also obsessed with this. The wild and violent style of painting that began with Pollock was called "hot abstraction," and was named "informel (non-figurative)" because it did not capture a definite form.

Why did Kenichiro Terada, who learned sometimes too severe restraint from Kenshi Ito, leap into this chaos of informel? The drawing method, without order or structure, is at least superficially far removed from the lyricism of restraint and control.

This is where Terada leapt.

As he himself has stated, he was exposed to the world of Jackson Pollock, but there was also a group of young avant-garde painters called "Kyushu-Ha" which at the time was showing off its scandalous forward-thrusting power.

Takami Sakurai, Mokuma Kikuhata, Osamu Ochi, Mitsuko Tabe, and others, almost all in their 20s, were young artists of Dadaist descent in terms of artistic thought, sharply rebelling against the authority of the established art world, and rampaging about in complete disregard of conventional techniques and concepts. The presentation in Tokyo, which was carefully planned at the time to advance their careers, was a joke to everyone at Kyushu-Ha, as if a troupe had suddenly arrived.

"Young painters, like insects in a corner of the countryside, enter into the pseudo-collusion between society and pictorial expression. They expose it one by one in concrete terms. In other words, while developing a new and extremely harsh theory of expression, they attack the world of Japanese painting, with Tokyo culture at the top of the heap. This was an unprecedented

event for the art world in Kyushu, which had long been a child of Tokyo" (Mokuma Kikuhata, "My Postwar Years").

Kenichiro Terada also joined "Kyushu-Ha".

For Terada, most of the members of "Kyushu-Ha" were younger than him, with the exception of Sakurai. In terms of painting history, Terada was regarded as a hope among the Nika exhibitors living in Kyushu, along with Fukuoka's Yohji Kuroki and Chikugo's Koji Koga. Therefore, Terada did not approach Kyushu-Ha" in any way. In the beginning, there were circumstances that came from personal connections.

Kyushu-Ha" began in 1956 with a street exhibition (persona exhibition) held in the wall facing the street of the former Fukuoka Prefectural Office. Its main organizers were Takami Sakurai, Yohji Kuroki of the Nika Department, and poets Mamoru Matano and Sohei Suzuki. Kuroki, like Terada, had exhibited at Nika, and Suzuki and Terada, both poets, lived within a five-minute walk of each other and were friends. Mokuma Kikuhata, who has emerged as a prominent figure in "Kyushu-Ha", was also a young friend who used to ask Terada for critiques. Kikuhata, who was in his teens, went to "House of Blue" a studio that Terada had set up in the city with a friend before moving to Tokyo, to ask for a critique of his work.

When Terada was exposed to the group's activities at the invitation of these friends, something burst within him. According to Terada's recollection, "I had only known artists who had retained their prewar artistic temperament, so it was refreshing to see younger group members creating 'works' as they pleased, and I began painting abstract-like works with some trepidation."

Phenomenologically, Kyushu-Ha was a "rambunctious" group. However, it had the essence of activities that questioned what painting is in a very subtle way.

This is the testimony of Takami Sakurai.

"I knew very well that I had no talent for painting, so I made the hypothesis that anyone can paint. Now that I have put it up, I have to prove it. There was a woman who was a musician and a college alumna. I encouraged her to complete her first oil painting in one week and entered it in the prefectural exhibition. It was accepted and was critiqued. Those who had been unsuccessful soon began to be selected. At that time, I was deeply confronted with the question of what painting is. The question of what painting is always haunted me, and I ended up doing all kinds of things that were not even painting."

“It was a time when everything was a painting! or Technique!. The materials available were coal tar, pitch, sand, cement, plaster, and anything else one could think of. We were happy as long as it stuck, or if it didn't, we nailed it or tied it with string. Sometimes it would get done, and sometimes it would fall apart in the process. Some put an iron pipe in the center hole of a car tire, connected it with a wire mesh, and then hardened the inside of it with concrete, which was then fixed to a board frame. We attached the pan to the glass window with pitch, filled the rest with plaster, drilled a hole just above the pan, and let it rot naturally with a little water. The rest was a brownish square hollow. That is the kind of works.”

Here was a world apart from the painter's path of restraint and devotion. It was liberation and explosion. There was a freedom of expression that was not bound by form. And Kenichiro Terada encountered it. With "Kyushu-Ha" as a familiar entity and Pollock as information as a catalyst, Terada's informel period began.

Numerous essays recounting memories of Kenichiro Terada convey the bright side of the man known as Mr. Teraken. However, in the 1950s, he had a crushing pain that he did not show to others. He is the eldest of eight siblings. After his father became ill and died, he dropped out of college and worked for a company for a year. Moved to Tokyo, battled the disease. Married, returned to his hometown. Although he was selected for the Nika Prize at the young age of 20, he did not receive any training in the art school system. He had responsibilities as the eldest son of a family that had lost his father. In addition, there were the technical and social quotas for Nika's advancement. It was a time when he struggled with the pressure of responsibilities he had to assume and expectations he had to meet.

The freedom to express himself outside of conventional frameworks must have given Kenichiro Terada an open and airy feeling as a painter.

By "an expression that emphasizes the act of painting rather than the work itself," he was able to free his spirit from the oppression of the painting method.

In 1959, Terada received a long-sought special prize at Nika.

However, as I confirm from the works of the time that remain in his studio from his days at Yakuin, the style of his paintings is dark and depressing. I felt the style was more like Jean Dubuffet's subdued and hard paintings than Pollock's openness.

For example, the work "1961-11" is a hard-toned screen with a dark green base, a mixture of gray and dark brown, and thick but short milky lines. The matière, formed from the "act itself" of

painting automatically, as if in the throes of emotion, is somber and dark, as if reflecting his trapped individuality and the circumstances surrounding it at the time. It seems that Kenichiro Terada's paintings at that time were not so much works of art as mental activities of self-salvation to endure pressure pains.

He left "Kyushu-Ha" after two years. Kenichiro Terada found a place for free expression there. Kyushu-Ha continued to question him about his membership in the established Nika-kai. Kenichiro Terada torn apart. Later, when he left the Nika-kai, Terada burned a huge amount of his own work. Most of them were created around 1960. It is not that he erased his own trajectory as a work of art, but that the inner pain he was trapped in at that time was unbearable for him, even as a memory. Perhaps shaking something off with this incineration, Kenichiro Terada eventually entered the age of colorism with its rich color palette.