

TSUKISHIMA KARUKAYA

– the world of the naive art from picture scrolls and narrative paintings

June. 11th (Tue) – August. 18th (Sun), 2013

In the history of Japanese fine arts, ‘Tsukishima’ (a picture scroll of the Tale of Tsukishima, collection of the Japan Folk Crafts Museum) and ‘Karukaya’ (an illustrated book, collection of Suntory Museum of Art), both made in the Muromachi period, could be the surpassing beauty of the naive art. Usually, these narrative paintings with a naive style of the Muromachi period have not been noted in the history of fine arts. Soetsu Yanagi (1889-1961), founder of the Japan Folk Crafts Museum, was one of the persons who paid attention to them at a very early stage. It was 1935, just one year before the museum opened, when Yanagi encountered a picture scroll whose rolls had damaged severely and had been handled roughly. Yanagi opened the worn out scroll and then got astonished with its rare beauty. Then Yanagi instantly decided to obtain that scroll. After some research, Yanagi found out that the picture scroll was telling a tale of Tsukishima, a story of constructing a Kyōgashima island by Taira-no-Kiyomori, a first Japanese soldier dictator of the late Heian period. In the 63rd volume of *Kogei* magazine published in 1936, which Yanagi himself edited, Yanagi featured the picture scroll ‘Tale of Tsukishima’ and highly praised, saying ‘It was drawn without any intentions in an immature way. Nevertheless, it is extremely beautiful and has its own world of painting.’

An illustrated book ‘Karukaya’, on the other hand, was found out in 1950’s by Shigeru Yokoyama (1896-1980), who was a Japanese literary scholar and was acquainted with Yanagi. Yokoyama was an independent scholar and his collection of excellent rare books of the middle and the early modern age is known as ‘Akagi Library’. A part of the excellent collection of tale paintings and *tanrokubon* in our museum was collected by way of Yokoyama. ‘Karukaya’ is known as a sad and moving story of Priest Karukaya and his son Ishidōmaru. The work on display

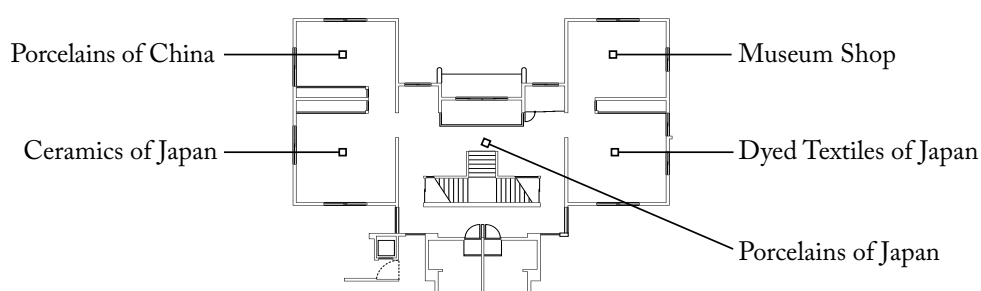
in this exhibition is assumed to be the oldest illustrated book in existence and its style of painting is very unique among the naive art of Muromachi period. Especially, the wild and rough brushwork of Mount Kōya, which was probably drawn with a different brush from other parts, could be found nowhere else.

This exhibition centers on these two paintings. Besides, picture scrolls and *tanrokubon* (block-printed and hand-colored books of mainly two colors, orange-red *tan* and mineral green *roku*) based on *otogizōshi*, story paintings such as a folding screen of ‘Tale of the Soga’, Ōtsu-e and documentary paintings, picture scrolls of Buddhist narrative paintings like ‘Ten Kings of Hell’, etc. paintings with simple and naive expressions collected by Yanagi are introduced.

Recently, these paintings are getting highly appreciated as the naive art. The paintings of our museum’s collection mainly belong to the naive art. Among them, paintings without any intensions of ‘simplicity’ with a natural and pure style would be found more than those which were painted with some intentions. These were originally drawn not for the purpose of painting beautifully and skillfully, but some were illustrated for explaining stories and others for reporting secrets of ceremonial clothing or arts and crafts. This is why they could produce an unintentional style of paintings naturally.

It is easy to regard these paintings as immature and rough expressions. However, if you have a viewpoint that these paintings have rare and excellent beauty, like Yanagi praised them fresh beauty, then they would change into those which have positive values. Even though the paintings with simple and naive expressions in this exhibition were painted in the middle and early modern times, they seem to have significant meanings in the present times.

FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR

