



Melody of the Firmament in Italy 2006

Melody of the Firmament

Journal of Koji Kinutani Tenku Art Museum

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On publishing the Journal

“In this museum, I want you to absorb colors with your eyes to activate your brains and become healthy, just as you eat colorful food such as vegetables, fruit, meat and fish every day to become healthy.” This is what Koji Kinutani, our honorary director, always says when he explains his works. Therefore we, the staff of Koji Kinutani Tenku Art Museum, also make daily efforts, aiming for our numerous visitors to touch Kinutani Art full of energy and take in the spectacular view overlooking Osaka Bay, forget the routine of daily work and reality for a moment and feel energized.

This journal “Melody of the Firmament” is published with our earnest desire to help you when you use our museum, providing more in-depth information than is available from the captions so that you can appreciate the displayed works with more interest.

General and abundant knowledge is not always necessary in appreciating art. In particular, Kinutani works draw viewers into a world of their own with their colorful expressions and vigorous world of images even without knowledge of the works.

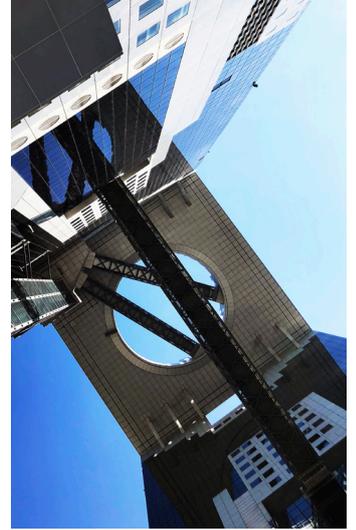
Such moving experiences are important, the best part of art appreciation. However, we also think it true that viewers can feel the fineness, delicacy and advanced skill from a different viewpoint other than a sensuous moving experience by adding further knowledge and information. It is considered that the emotions spring from there.

A moving experience from viewing an artwork means a new encounter with oneself who is moved. Such an encounter can become the source of creativity, a veritable “seed” for energy.

We are confident that this Tenku Art Museum, and the works of Koji Kinutani are filled with such seeds. We want the visitors to discover as many seeds as possible and enjoy the moving experience of discovering a new self. This journal is positioned to serve its secondary role. We intend to strive toward regularly providing information from diverse viewpoints.

History of Koji Kinutani Tenku Art Museum

- December 2015 The concept of the museum came from Sekisui House, Ltd., and Koji Kinutani, Person of Cultural Merit.
- August 2016 Museum facility construction began on the 27th floor of Umeda Sky Building Tower West.
- December 2016 Completion. Open on the 23rd. "Exhibition Commemorating the Opening of the Museum"
- August 2017 Special Exhibition "City of Radiant Light", first viewing of the affresco masterpiece"
- December 2017 Special Exhibition "Time Brimming with Joy - Sing, Eat, Love, and Art -"
- March 2018 Special Exhibition "A Message of Peace - Passion, Vitality, and Prayer"
- June 2018 Special Exhibition "Commemorating the 25th Anniversary of Umeda Sky Building Tenku Fantasy - The Amazing Floating Garden Experience"
- December 2018 Special Exhibition "Commemorating the Second Anniversary of the Museum The Power to Dream - Grand Theater of the Imagination"
- July 2019 Special Exhibition "A Time Trip - Arcadia "



Koji Kinutani Biography

Born in Nara prefecture in 1943. Completed a Mural Painting Course in the university's graduate school after graduating from Tokyo National University of Fine Art and Music. Spent time in Italy to study affresco painting (mural technique). After returning to Japan, he was awarded the Yasui Prize in 1974, the youngest award recipient in its history.

A unique painting style full of abundant energy making the best of his various techniques and rich colors saw him awarded the 19th Grand Prize for Japanese Fine Arts in 1987. He went on to create original paintings for the official posters of the Nagano Winter Olympics in 1997, and was honored as a Person of Cultural Merit in 2014, leading the Artists' Society in Japan.

He does not limit himself to his own creative activities but makes contributions to educational activities for future generations. Participation in the "Japan Brand Program" organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, creation of the "Koji Kinutani Prize" for young artists, and taking part in the "Kids Dream/Art/Academy" by the Agency for Cultural Affairs are typical examples.

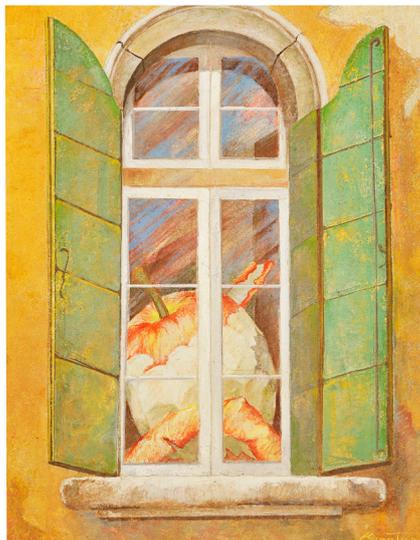


Photo Yu Kaida

Encounter with affresco - Path to become the authority on affresco in Japan -

The mural paintings of Horyuji Temple in Nara are said to have inspired Koji Kinutani to paint affresco when he was in his third year at Tokyo National University of Fine Art and Music oil painting department. In 1949, a disastrous event struck the temple when fire broke out in the main hall, destroying numerous mural paintings in storage. Later, the columns and mural paintings were stored as they were, for posterity. In 1964, when Kinutani was allowed to see the storage as part of his training in antiques, he felt sad having seen the burnt columns and walls yet was amazed at the existence and appeal the mural paintings still possessed despite having gone through fire. He learned from the still brilliantly shining murals that people put hope and prayed for something that would last forever even though they felt the sense of vanity of life at the Horyuji Temple in ruins and realized the impermanence of things.

Later, after he finished at the Oil Painting Department, he went on to the Mural Painting Course, Graduate School, and to the Academy of Fine Arts of Venice at the invitation of Professor Bruno Saetti who had given him lectures. He studied mural painting techniques in Italy, the home of fresco paintings. This led to the creation of numerous affresco works representing the Kinutani Style of the time, such as "Flight of the Apple" and "Thinking Woman". The Apple series were displayed in an exhibition sponsored by the Bevilacqua La Masa Foundation, and he was awarded the La Masa Prize. He continued to stay active, holding private exhibitions at a municipal museum in Venice. In 1972, when the "Asuka Beauties" were discovered at Takamatsuzuka Tumulus in Asuka Village, Nara prefecture, the Agency for Cultural Affairs asked him to become a conservation task force member for murals. He returned to Japan after training at the Central Institute of Restoration in Rome. He became the recipient of the 17th Yasui Prize for "Portrait of Mr. Anselmo" (owned by the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo) in 1974, thus making "affresco" as well as the name of "Koji Kinutani" well-known all over Japan. Later, in his autobiography, Kinutani says "Since my childhood in Nara I have always been deeply aware of the Buddhism sense of vanity in life that all physical existence will someday wither away and vanish. All of us die but if anything exists that will not disappear, that would be the "heart" of people and dreams. That thought is the theme underlying all my works." He puts this consistent thought into all the affresco works he creates.



Flight of the Apple (Through the Window) 1971
Fresco and strappo on canvas

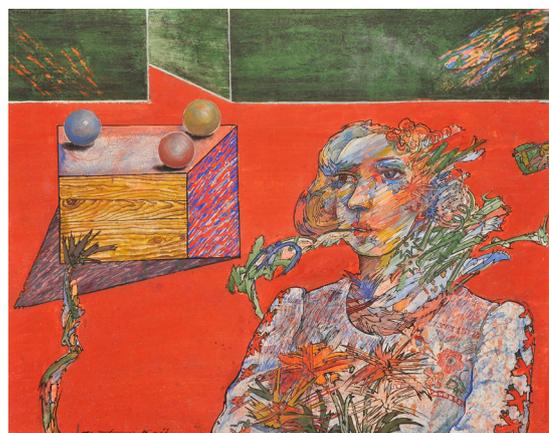
What is affresco?

Affresco means fresco paintings in Japan, originating from the Italian word “fresco (fresh)”. Fresco painting is a classical technique of mural painting, and existed in the BC era. Numerous artists used this painting technique before the advent of oil painting, which is the mainstream today. Italian Renaissance masters including Giotto di Bondone, Michelangelo Buonarroti, and Raffaello Santi left various works in affresco.

Affresco is a technique in which a wall of half-dried plaster is made on which paint is directly applied using pigment dissolved in water before it has fully dried. It features no use of medium, which serves as glue in general paints (oil paintings and acrylics). While the half-dried plaster is drying, the pigment is absorbed into the lime layer. When dried, a glass-like firm and clear film is crystallized on the surface, which serves as protection. This is why affresco has its special finish that stays solid without the color fading for a long time (said to be thousands of years). Moreover, the pigment sealed in the crystals shows the bright and strong coloring it originally possessed. This brightness of colors is also a feature of affresco.



▲ In the city of Florence



The half-dried plaster dries in about 24 hours, requiring speedy work in the affresco painting process. Basically, artists carefully create the idea and prepare real-size sketches so that they can paint the complete affresco all at once, literally a work of total commitment. Therefore many of the works of Koji Kinutani are like this, energetic affresco created all at once, the same as the brilliant image world portrayed by the Renaissance masters.

Thinking Woman 1972 ~ 3
Fresco and strappo on canvas

Introduction of affresco painters Part 1

Michelangelo Buonarroti 1475-1564 Florence

Michelangelo Buonarroti is known as a Master of High Italian Renaissance along with Leonardo da Vinci and Raffaello Santi, leaving outstanding achievements as a sculptor, painter and architect.

He was discovered by Lorenzo de' Medici called Lorenzo il Magnifico (the Magnificent), and studied sculpture in earnest under his patronage, allowing his talent to blossom. He painted a boundless world of images and ideal beauty based on deep culture and sharp critical spirit. He developed the position of art in those early days, and is now one of the most important figures in the history of western art.

He was heavily influenced by the Hellenistic sculptures of ancient Greece, and his massive and dynamic marble sculptures are famous including the “Pietà” at St. Peter’s Basilica and “David”. His other creations are the almost divine affresco monumental works represented by the Sistine Chapel ceiling in the Vatican and its counterpart “The Last Judgment” on the altar wall of the chapel, whose dynamic design focused on the emotional movement of human bodies fascinate viewers.

Sistine Chapel (Vatican City) ▶
In Vatican Museums ▼





Announcement of Workshop “ Painting Affresco ”

Koji Kinutani Tenku Art Museum offers a popular monthly workshop “Painting Affresco” where participants can experience this technique.

Plastered brick is assumed to be a wall, and participants freely paint on it. Prior to painting, a display commentary is given by a curator, so participants can listen to it, deepen their knowledge about affresco, and develop their imagination through looking at the displayed works before enjoying the



affresco experience. Thus the affresco experience is somewhat different from painting on paper or canvas. Enjoyable for everybody from adults to children, a great memory experience making something that will last for 100 - 200 years.

Use the QR code shown below or visit our official website for details including workshop dates.

【QR code】



【Official website】
<https://www.kinutani-tenku.jp>

Come with your whole family
for memory making affresco experience

Editor's note

Excuse me for being personal, but one year has already passed since I came to this museum. I am still learning as assistant curator, and have been able to become interested in the field of viewing education thanks to the work of educational activities, mainly consisting of workshops. I hope I can introduce the details of this deep and intense field in future journals.

Because of the circumstances, “On publishing the Journal” at the beginning was a somewhat formal greeting. However, to my mind, this journal is not a place for one-sided information delivery or a curator's talk but a place to carry on thorough communication with all the staff of Tenku Art Museum and visitors.

That is why I have placed an “Opinion Box for Journal” in the workshop space! Your opinions, requests, and frank comments are all welcome, and I would like to make this “Melody of the Firmament” with you all.

The next journal is planned for publication around the time of the “Special Exhibition Commemorating the Third Anniversary of the Museum”.

(Akio Takahashi Assistant curator of Koji Kinutani Tenku Art Museum)

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