

KAINOSHO TADAOTO:

Crossing Boundaries in Nihonga, Theater and Film

2023/7/1-8/27



ENGLISH COMMENTARIES ON SELECTED WORKS

*Section commentaries in English are printed on the banners in the exhibition.

006 *Side Comb (Kabuki Play: Yokogushi)*, 1918

There are two scrolls of the full-length portrait of a woman entitled *Side Comb*. They are the collections of the National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto (ca.1916) and Hiroshima Prefectural Art Museum (1918). The latter shared popularity with Okamoto Shinso's *Rouge* at the first exhibition of Kokuga Sosaku Kyokai (The Association for the Creation of National Painting). Since Tadaoto made drastic modifications around 1963, the style of the painting differs slightly from the original. You can only guess the original painting's atmosphere from the postcard sold in the old days and from the Kyoto's collection. Kyoto's collection was found at Tadaoto's family's house when preparing the major retrospective (1997). Tadaoto writes in his notebook that the model of the painting was Hiko, the wife of Tadaoto's elder brother. Also, about the Hiroshima collection, he recalls, "After many years, at last, the glimpse of *Mona Lisa*'s smile may have appeared in this painting" as he recollects his inspiration from the Renaissance paintings which he was fascinated during his student years. Now it is impossible to find out how that glimpse of *Mona Lisa*'s smile appeared in the painting. However, an indescribable aura dwells in these two works for sure.

013 *Spring Night (Flower Petals)*, c.1921

The deep shadow on a courtesan's smile in this work is striking. This work might be uncompleted since there is a girl attendant unfinished at the lower left of the painting. Although uncompleted, the impressive details, such as the texture of the white powder on the skin and the gradation of the hair ornament rising from the dark, catch the viewer's eyes. Also, there is a photograph of Tadaoto dressed similarly to this courtesan. Whether it was a direct model of the painting is unknown, but Tadaoto supposedly had a special feeling towards these figures of a gorgeous courtesan.

S-002 *Prostitute (Descending)*

This is one of Tadaoto's last works. Tadaoto interrupted his painting career at the beginning of the 1940s and switched to the film industry. After that, his painting style changed radically. He started to paint women with oval-shaped faces, and removed the shadings and details. Tadaoto's patron Kumazawa Goroku regretted Tadaoto's interruption and thought his art did not mature over the years. However, Tadaoto chased away Kumazawa's worries. Kumazawa regarded Tadaoto only as a painter, but Tadaoto did not necessarily stick exclusively to painting. From the works in his final years, you can sense that he escaped from the pressure of succeeding as a painter and see depictions of his lighthearted way of life. There we can see a kind of "maturity" that transcends skillfulness.

S-036 *Sketchbook*

Tadaoto used sketches of what he saw in the playhouse for his paintings. In those sketches, he drew the gestures of the performers, their facial expressions, and the patterns of their kimono. These sketches tell that Tadaoto was interested in kabuki and *shimpa* (a new style of play established in the Meiji era). The notes accompanying the drawings show the names of playhouses, along with the play titles, names of the performers, and the roles they played. Also, there are female figures in the Art-Nouveau style in some sketchbooks.

M-008 *Scrapbooks*

The existing number of Tadaoto's scrapbooks is unknown. These are some of the identified out of sixty. In the pastes of newspaper and magazine cut-outs, there are overwhelming numbers of iconography related to a human body of all gender and ages. You may say that these are the image source for Tadaoto's creation. Also, he must have enjoyed editing them. These so-called "hand-made databases" of Tadaoto's taste and orientation are similar to Google or Instagram's image search results that reflect and match users' interests.

S-019 *Sketch for Yamauba (Mountain Witch) from the Noh Play*

From these sketches, you can see the process of trials and errors of Tadaoto. He makes several changes, such as the position of the hand, tilting of the head, angle of the knees, clothing (with or without kimono), and the wave or volume of the hair to draw the *yamauba* (mountain witch). By changing the position of one of the limbs, the appearance of the other body parts changes. You may find Tadaoto's obsession with seeking the best lines and shapes until he is convinced through these endless re-drawing processes. The memo, "That's it for today / Pretty good shape" tells his achievement and the satisfaction he might have felt during those processes.

M-024 *Notes*

These materials show Tadaoto's work at film productions as a historical researcher of costumes and customs. He writes the specifications of the costumes and make-up for the setting of the characters precisely. For example, with the drawing of *kariginu* (everyday wear), the note writes "use *ayaji* (a type of silk) if it's for court noble / with patterns, any color." Furthermore, it says as a related matter, "no need for eyebrow make-up for court nobles (leave the white make-up as it is." Also, there are instructions about the furnishing and miscellaneous props. By using these images, Tadaoto probably shared the visual ideas with the production staff and also used them as a reminder of preparation.

008 *Woman and White Lily*, 1920

White lily is a symbol of purity and virginity, also an attribute for Virgin Mary or Archangel Gabriel in Western painting. Moreover, the swelled stomach and emphasized curvy breasts of the woman in a white *nagajuban*, a robe-like undergarment for a kimono, suggests that she is pregnant. This painting's inspiration might be the Annunciation. At that time, Tadaoto was deeply fascinated by Leonardo da Vinci. In addition, a photograph of a female model exists supposedly to be the basis of this work since she looks very similar to the woman in this painting.

017 *Nude*, 1926

Tadaoto recalls models for paintings as follows: "In those days in the Meiji era, when Western-style painters had just gradually started to paint nudes, there was no one who bought them, let alone there were hardly any models, and it was such a big deal to hire a model for a young *nihonga* student painter. People who became models were a woman who had burnt moxibustion marks or pregnant women. I hired those models cheaply, those who struggle to make ends meet because of their jobless husbands, secretly wanting to earn some pocket money." The model of this work might have been one of them.

023 *Woman in Blue*, 1919

The model of this work is Toku, a younger sister of Tadaoto's classmate Maruoka Hiroshi. Toku and Tadaoto were engaged though she married a wealthy man Hachiroubei, the year after the production of this work. From a recollection of Tadaoto's younger sister, Toku often visited Tadaoto's house and

modeled for him. There is a surviving photograph of her posing just like the woman in this work, supposedly taken at that time. Tadaoto abbreviates the pattern of her kimono in the painting visible in the photograph. The combination of a blue robe on a red robe is a typical way to depict the Virgin Mary, although whether Tadaoto intended to superimpose the two figures is uncertain.

020 Maiden, 1927

This piece was submitted to the 6th Kokuga Sosaku Kyokai exhibition. There is a surviving photograph which was the basis of this work. Tadaoto's adjustments through creating a painting from a photography are visible by comparing the two. The angle of the woman's face is changed to be able to see her facial expression, and the position of her hair bun is slightly higher. The elements of the pattern of her kimono are the same, there are partial changes in the arrangement, and the chain-like decoration of the shoulder seam is abbreviated. Color planes divide the background along the extended line from the back of her neck and the collar.

028 Primavera (Haru), 1929

This work was exhibited at the first exhibition of the Shinjusha, a group established by some members of the Kokuga Sosaku Kyokai after its disbandment. Tadaoto was one of the core members of Shinjusha. Tadaoto strove to change his dim and melancholic painting style during those years. The bright light colors and the decoration made by patterns can be a manifestation of Tadaoto's consciousness. We can say that this was Tadaoto's ambitious work in which he tried to open up his new phase. In addition, this work was a private collection for ninety years until collected by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in 2019. This Kyoto and Tokyo exhibition is the first time to exhibit the work in Japanese museums.

032 Backstage before a Performance of the Kabuki Play Katsura-gawa, 1915

As the title and the script painted, the theme of this work is the kabuki play of a tragic love story of Ohan and Choemon. The model of Ohan sitting in front of the brazier is Tadaoto himself, and there is a surviving photograph of him in a similar pose. Tadaoto's fascination with *onnagata* (female role performed by male actors) started during his childhood when he saw Nakamura Shibajyaku the 4th (a.k.a. Kyoya, later became Nakamura Jyakuemon the 3rd) playing Ohan. He recalls, "I wanted to find out the mystery of how on earth can that aged man become so beautiful" as he went to the playhouse thrice to see Kyoya playing Ohan.

S-054 Drawing for The Woman and the Pirate, c.1959

These are the rough sketches for the characters of the film, *The Woman and the Pirate*, directed by Ito Daisuke. Tadaoto worked as a custom and manners verifier for the production. In envisioning the specific characters in the story, Tadaoto, as a painter, drew the image of the characters and supposedly shared it with the production staff. The pose of a young man leaning on the sword is reminiscent of the male figure in the national treasure *The Hikone Screen* (Edo period, 17th century). By the way, although these sketches were colorfully painted, the film itself is black-and-white.

041 Mound of Beasts (Chikushozuka), c.1915

The theme of this work was based on a story of a mound associated with Toyotomi Hideyoshi located at Zuiganji-temple of Kyoto. The influences of Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo that Tadaoto was fascinated by in his youth are visible in the expression of the female figures, such as the long arms and legs, the facial features with distinctive shadows, and the physique with well-developed muscles. In addition, many sketches and photographs of Tadaoto related to this work show traces of his careful

planning. Tadaoto started to paint this work around 1915, although it ended up unfinished. And the work was found in Tadaoto's younger sister's backyard garage in 1987 by art critics, including Kurita Isamu. Tadaoto's attempt to sublimate the vexation and anguish of life itself to an art form did not accomplish, and the work became an "unachieved final destination." However, the fact that it is unfinished makes the work more attractive and dramatic and gives us a stronger impression of Tadaoto's bizarre life.

042 Rainbow Bridge (Seven Beauties), 1915-76

There are seven courtesan in a gorgeous kimono in the painting. The original title was *Shichiken* (*Seven Beauties*), however, it was changed later on. Tadaoto added some brush strokes intermittently within about sixty years. There is a story told that he washed away all the courtesan's faces and re-painted them for his solo exhibition in 1976. The new faces of the courtesans became oval-shaped forms which Tadaoto preferred in his final years. The very idea of the work was by Tadaoto at the age of twenty-one, since he started to paint this work around 1915, the same year as the *Mound of Beasts* (*Chikushozuka*). You can see the starting point of Tadaoto's attempt to discover the beauty of a woman, and at the same time, it is the masterpiece of his final years.

F-081-3 Costume for Tales of the Idle Vassal: Island of No Return

This costume was used in the 24th production of the film series *Tales of the Idle Vassal*. It was worn by the actor Ichikawa Utaemon who played the role of the protagonist Saotome Mondonosuke. Tadaoto worked as the costume design researcher for this production. Bold patterns of big flying fishes on a dark blue ground with waves in gold and silver that reminiscence the blue ocean are eye-catching. Since it resembles Kawabata Ryushi's *Kuroshio* (1932, two-fold screens, Yamatane Museum of Art), Tadaoto might have designed the costume referring to this work.

F-026 Costume for Ugetsu

Ugetsu, the film directed by Mizoguchi Kenji is one of the representative works of Japan's film history which was awarded the Silver Lion at the 14th Venice International Film Festival. Tadaoto worked as the manners and customs researcher for the production and his costume design was nominated for the Academy Award's Best Costume Design (black-and-white film category). This costume, a collection of La Cinémathèque française, Paris, was used in *Ugetsu*, but it is not clear who or which scene it was worn. The shape is for men and the paulownia crests in foil stamping are scattered on a cotton ground.

The starting point of Tadaoto's photographs of himself dressed up was his admiration when he saw the *onnagata* in kabuki. Tadaoto, finding devilishness in an aged man transforming into a beautiful woman, started to take photographs wearing costumes of traditional theater with his friends. The same sense of desires existing today dwells in the boys' playful acts 100 years ago, such as avatars in the metaverse, using multiple accounts within the same SNS, and the prosperity of photo editing apps. Those dimensions that nullify gender, appearance, and all those social constraints are always in need throughout the ages, and there is also a certain kind of pleasure in crossing those boundaries.

As a historical researcher and a verifier of costumes and customs, Tadaoto made enormous contributions to the *jidaigeki* (period drama) films at its golden age. The knowledge and insight he had cultivated through painting and appreciating classical Japanese popular performing arts won the trust of distinguished *jidaigeki* directors such as Mizoguchi Kenji, Ito Daisuke, and Matsuda Sadatsugu. All these materials and the film star Ichikawa Utaemon's gorgeous costumes that Tadaoto designed tell us about Tadaoto's insight and sensibility.