

Repetition ad infinitum / Yokoo museum's opening exhibition

Miki Kimura / Yomiuri Shimbun Staff Writer

KOBE--The Yokoo Tadanori Museum of Contemporary Art, which opened Nov. 3 to display the works of its namesake artist in Nada Ward, Kobe, is holding an inaugural exhibition until Feb. 17.

Titled Han-Han-Puku-Puku-Han-Puku (which means repeat, repeat, repeat), the exhibition features about 100 pieces. The event is designed to showcase Yokoo's penchant for continually reinterpreting specific motifs in a plethora of subtle styles.

The museum houses about 3,000 pieces donated by or on indefinite loan from the artist, including paintings, prints and posters.

Yokoo, 76, a native of nearby Nishiwaki, Hyogo Prefecture, lived in Kobe and was married there. Although about 50 years have passed since he moved to Tokyo, Yokoo said he still thinks of the two cities almost every day and that they sometimes enter his dreams.

Among the images on display, the Y-ji Ro (Y-junction) series was inspired by a view Yokoo took in during a temporary homecoming to Nishiwaki.

Upon returning to an intersection he knew well as a child, he found a toy model shop he had often visited was no longer there. Suddenly impressed by what seemed to him its conspicuous absence, he was moved to capture the scene in a photo; his creative imagination was later piqued when he reviewed it, prompting the genesis of the series.

As a part of the series, he created a piece, Anya Koro N-shi--I (A Park Night's Flashing N City-I), in 2000. He later created a multitude of works on the same theme with varying seasons and weather as background.

The Pink Girls series was first exhibited in 1966, the year Yokoo made his debut in the art world, and features women with pink skin posing suggestively. It has since been regarded as representative of his early work.

He derived the theme from pop art, in which works are often based on existing images; it was a theme he would employ again in the 1990s.

About 40 examples from the famous series are on display at the exhibition, including Jinsei niwa Goru ga Nai (No Goal for Life). Measuring about 160 centimeters by 160 centimeters and produced in 2005, the piece is based on Yokoo's Ohori (Moat), a work depicting a woman swimming in a castle moat, rendered in different hues.

Miki Kimura. "Repetition ad infinitum." *Daily Yomiuri*, November 28, 2012.

Yokoo said he has enjoyed creating art that imitates art since he was young.

"There is more than one way to express a theme. The creation of only one piece doesn't necessarily complete a theme," Yokoo said. "I want to link several pieces like renga (traditional Japanese linked verse) or shiritori (a Japanese word chain game) and coordinate them when creating my work."

He also said: "Some people feel that repeated interpretations of existing artwork invariably point to the past, which may cause them to ponder the nature of originality. For me, it is about finding new means of expression and progressing toward the future."

According to Yokoo, each time he walks around the exhibition space he is struck by a new idea about the layout of his pieces and the myriad nuances produced by different juxtapositions.

"Around the end of the exhibition period some new pieces might be added," he said mischievously.

He also said, "From now on, I'm planning to use this space as one of my creative bases."

Visiting museum shops is a delight for many museum visitors. Yokoo suggested modeling his gallery's shop in the image of a mom-and-pop candy store he frequented as child; it is an engaging space chaotically filled with numerous treasures.

Yokoo is planning a public demonstration of his creative process in the open studio on the museum's first floor in December. The product of that session may be displayed in the ongoing exhibition, he said.

"How will I be inspired? How can I put that inspiration to use repeatedly in my work? How will people who see the work respond? Repetition will perpetuate. I look forward to seeing how it will be," Yokoo said.

(Nov. 30, 2012)

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