

Korea Depicted by Japanese Artists

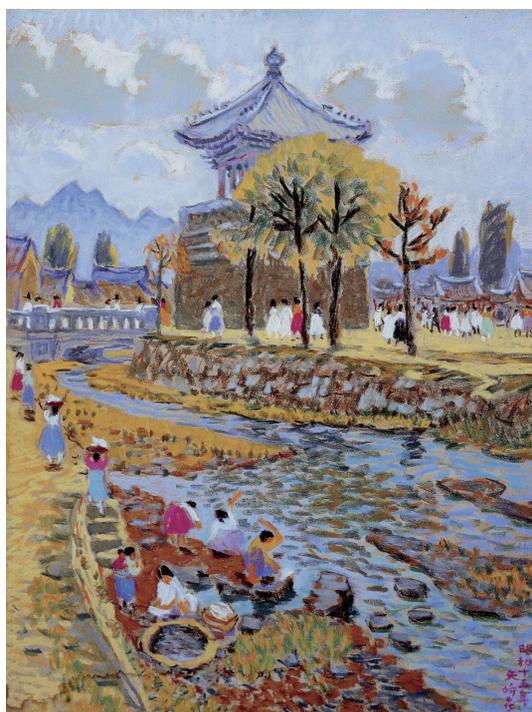
日本人作家が 描いた朝鮮

Dates: Thursday, April 7 - Tuesday, June 14, 2022
Venue: Asia Gallery

1. Yazaki Chiyoji, *Gyeongseong*

Gyeongseong, painted by Yazaki Chiyoji in 1940, depicts the ordinary life of prewar *Gyeongseong* (present-day Seoul). In the center, Dongsipjagak Pavilion, a watchtower at the east end of the city's walls, is depicted symbolically and identifies the place as *Gyeongseong*. Yazaki accurately captured the class system of *Joseon* at that time by contrasting the common people living in the lower part of the river, *Cheonggyecheon*, and Yangban residing in the upper part of it. Also, the landscape combining the people's daily lives and traditional buildings in his painting evokes nostalgia for the original scenery in the viewer's imagination.

Yazaki studied oil painting at Tokyo Fine Arts School under Kuroda Seiki, introducing Pleinairism, a painting technique of capturing outdoor lighting, to Japan. After his graduation, he kept creating oil paintings as a member of *Hakuba-kai*. However, when he made a trip to China at 45, he gradually gravitated toward pastel. Yazaki believed that the idea of "expressing light with color," which was emphasized in oil painting techniques, could even be possible with pastel. After that, he advocated "Color Snapshot," a painting method of depicting natural objects that constantly change outdoors. Yazaki vividly depicted the scenery of his travels, using pastels to take a quick snap of the ever-changing light and weather.



Yazaki Chiyoji, *Gyeongseong*, 1940, pastel on paper
Fukuoka Asian Art Museum Collection

2. Matsuda Reiko, *Gisaeng House* and *Sword Dance*

Gisaeng House and *Sword Dance*, printed by Matsueda Reiko in 1940, are woodcuts influenced by Japanese painting. *Gisaeng* refers to a traditional Korean professional female entertainer, and *Gisaeng* was one of the popular subjects of paintings by Japanese artists at that time. While *Gisaeng* represents an exoticism of Korea, it also suggests unequal relations between men as painters and women as models.

Sword Dance depicts a woman dancing a traditional court dance. In early 1940, before the outbreak of the Pacific War, artists exhibiting at the *Korean Art Exhibition* began to produce artworks with heroic themes. We assume that *Sword Dance* was also created under such an atmosphere. *Gisaeng House* and *Sword Dance* are colored by using the backhand coloring on paper technique to produce delicate gradations reminiscent of Japanese-style painting.

Matsuda studied Japanese painting on his own while working as a drawing teacher at Gyeongseong Daiichi High School for Girls, and from 1922, he exhibited his works at the *Korean art exhibition* held by the Governor-General of Korea. In 1940, he published a series of woodblock prints on Korean traditional customs in The Seoul Press.

Before World War II, Korean genre paintings were produced and sold as export paintings, and the exotic images of Korean customs were widely circulated as “Representations of Korea” of the time. The creators of these genre paintings were mostly Japanese painters who emigrated to Korea like Matsuda .



Matsuda Reiko, *Gisaeng House*, 1940, woodcut, hand coloring on paper
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Matsuda Reiko, *Sword Dance*, 1940,
woodcut, hand coloring on paper
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