

Chapter 1. Abstract Paintings

Modern Japanese yoga (Western-style painting) and Western art, mainly Impressionist, collected by Ishibashi Shojiro form the core of the Ishibashi Foundation Collection. The collecting was taken over by the Ishibashi Foundation established in 1956, and in 2006, the year the Foundation celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its establishment, the collection was further expanded on a large scale. A large group of works, mainly French, dating from after World War II, were newly acquired. Furthermore, following the opening of the Artizon Museum in 2020, abstract paintings dating from the early-twentieth century to the present such as American Abstract Expressionism and Japanese avant-garde art have been introduced even more substantially in both quality and quantity and attracted attention.

These newly acquired works are not detached from the former collection. In fact, they enable us to survey the development from works by artists such as Cézanne, Picasso, and Matisse, which were the stars of the collection from the Bridgestone Museum of Art years, to the present day including abstract art as a continuous flow.

A significant key in that respect would be the acquisition of *Self-Illuminating* by Wassily Kandinsky in 2018. The addition of this work dating from the developmental stage of abstract painting laid a foundation connecting nineteenth-century French art to postwar art. How did the innovation introduced by Cézanne and others develop into contemporary art? Here, new horizons to weave a grand story are opened up.

Chapter 2. Impressionism Plus

After World War II, Ishibashi Shojiro put his heart into collecting Western art and built the nucleus of the Ishibashi Foundation Collection composed of nineteenth-to twentieth-century French paintings centered on Impressionism. Following the transition to the Artizon Museum, in order to further expand this category, works by four women artists, namely Berthe Morisot, Mary Cassatt, Marie Bracquemond and Eva Gonzalès, were acquired anew.

The works by these women artists enabled the former collection of Impressionist works to be examined from multiple viewpoints. To begin with, the Impressionist artists were an innovative group which rose in revolt against traditional French art. At a time when the women artists' position was not yet fully respected, the fact that the Impressionist artists welcomed them as colleagues and pursued a new art together was a significant characteristic of this group.

Thanks to the addition of these women artists' works, the Impressionist works in the Artizon Museum Collection evolved into one conveying the multilayered situation of the art world in those days. A colorful story unraveling the role these women artists played and the innovativeness of Impressionism in France in the latter half of the nineteenth century begins from here.

Chapter 3. Early Modern Art Plus

Here in Kurume, many of you may have fond memories of the early modern Japanese art in the Ishibashi Foundation Collection. Early modern Japanese art used to be exhibited together with Japanese-style paintings and ceramics in the Asian Gallery of Ishibashi Museum of Art (present-day Ishibashi Shojiro Memorial Museum). Among them, the group of Rimpa works were one of the main props of the collection from those days.

Even after the transition to the Artizon Museum, the passion to collect early modern Japanese art was never interrupted. In 2014, one year before Bridgestone Museum of Art went into long-term closure, *The Tale of Genji, Ukifune and Yumeno ukihashi* with the seal of Inen (Edo period, 17th century, on view from February 14 to April 5) joined the collection. In 2018, just before Artizon Museum opened, *Peacocks and Hollyhocks*, a masterpiece by Ogata Korin, (Edo period, 18th century, on view from April 7 to May 24) was newly acquired. With the addition of these unsurpassed masterpieces indispensable in discussing Rimpa, the early modern Japanese art in the Ishibashi Foundation Collection became all the more substantial.

The exhibition *Rimpa and Impressionism: Arts Produced by Urban Cultures, East and West* held in 2020 appealed the abundance of Rimpa works on a par with the Impressionist paintings, which form the nucleus of Artizon Museum. Here, you can enjoy the world of decorative beauty which extends further with the addition of these Rimpa works.

Chapter 4. The Paul Klee Collection

The news that Ishibashi Foundation collectively acquired twenty-four works by Paul Klee in 2019 was reported with great surprise in the art world. This collection covers the 1910s, the dawn of the artist's career; the 1920s, when Klee taught at the art school Bauhaus; and the 1930s, late in life; allowing a systematic and comprehensive survey of Klee's artistic achievements. Both quality- and scale-wise, it is one of the foremost collections in the world. Thereafter, the Ishibashi Foundation has continued to collect works by Klee such as *Twins* (1930), and there are currently thirty-one works including those from the Bridgestone Museum of Art period in their collection.

Collecting works by Paul Klee bears a significance more important than simply expanding the number of works in the collection. As was the case with Kandinsky's *Self-Illuminating* (1924), by building a substantial collection of works by Klee, who played a key role in the birth of abstract painting, new relationships among the works already in the collection developed. Through the existence of this Klee collection, it has become possible to survey the genealogy of artistic representation from modern times to the present from manifold angles.

Chapter 5. Modern and Contemporary Japan Plus

The Ishibashi Foundation Collection began from Ishibashi Shojiro's resolve to respond to Sakamoto Hanjiro's concern that Aoki Shigeru's works would be dispersed and lost. Sakamoto asked Ishibashi to "gather Aoki's works and build even a small museum."

Shojiro assembled a broad range of modern Japanese yoga (Western-style paintings) with works by Aoki, Sakamoto, Fujishima Takeji, and others at the core, which laid a firm foundation for his collection. Later on, the Ishibashi Foundation expanded the target of its collection, and nowadays, the fields have expanded as far as postwar avant-garde art by Kusama Yayoi and the Gutai Art Association.

While expanding into contemporary art, modern Western-style paintings, which were the starting point of the collection, have continued to be taken care of with unceasing enthusiasm. The recent acquisition of *Orientalism* (1924), a masterpiece by Fujishima Takeji, shows how historical continuity in long and uninterrupted collecting is regarded with utmost priority.

Presented in this exhibition next to *Black Fan* (1908–09, Important Cultural Property), which Shojiro purchased directly from then bedridden Fujishima, is *Orientalism*. With these two paintings displayed next to each other, the steady flow of history in the background of this collection as it continues to grow should prove all the more convincing.

Chapter 6. Together with Artists of the Times

When Artizon Museum opened in 2020, contemporary art was appointed as a new nucleus of its collection. While the Ishibashi Foundation had shown an interest in contemporary art from the period when it ran the Bridgestone Museum of Art, the new museum came out with this attitude even more distinctly. A symbolic project reflecting this policy would be the “Jam Sessions,” in which contemporary artists collaborate with the collection.

There is no fixed form for this project. Konoike Tomoko designed her exhibition by digging deeply into background factors such as the history and locality of the museum and produced an installation centered on *fusuma* (sliding door) paintings. Morimura Yasumasa impersonated Aoki Shigeru and reinterpreted *A Gift of the Sea* (1904), which is considered to have been conceived as a series, by producing *M's Gift of the Sea* (2021), a series of ten works extending from the Meiji era to the future.

Present-day sensibilities provide the collection with new interpretations, and dialogues transcending time are held between different expressions in the galleries. Some of the works produced through these special sessions are added to the collection and passed on to the future.

By intersecting with present-day sensibilities, the Ishibashi Foundation Collection is reappreciated as a source of representations alive in the present. It is no other than the accumulation of such dialogues that becomes the force to carve out “new horizons of beauty.”