

Melody of the Firmament
Journal of Koji Kinutani Tenku Art Museum special issue

Special Exhibition
Energy -Gods of Nature-



Rebuking 2015 Mixed media

Description of Exhibited Works

SEKISUI HOUSE Presents *Kinutani*

絹谷幸二 天空美術館

Koji Kinutani Tenku Art Museum

Purpose of the exhibition

Energy in nature is the source of all life. Here, Kinutani depicts figures of the Gods that govern all things in nature and symbolize this infinite power which is beyond human understanding and brings about both fertility and disaster. Myths, divine beasts, and statues of gods approach with overwhelming power. In this imagery, the various aspects of modern society are reflected and a warning bell tolls for humankind. At the same time, this work also evokes a prayer for the "wisdom to live" - a consistent theme in Kinutani's art. You are invited to fully experience this passionate message filled with spiritual energy, which is transmitted to the world by Koji Kinutani who, with a sense of awe toward nature, consistently poses questions about the possibility of "a world of peace" in both the first and second phases of the exhibition.

[The first part of the exhibition] 2023.12.15 (Fri) ~ 2024. 6.30 (Sun)

[The latter part of the exhibition] 2024. 7. 5 (Fri) ~ 2024.12. 8 (Sun)

Description of Exhibited Works

* [First] Exhibited in the first part of the exhibition, [Latter] Exhibited in the latter part of the exhibition, [Whole] Exhibited through the whole part of the exhibition

<cover> **Rebuking** [First] 2015 1940 × 2590mm Mixed media

Myoo, conqueror of the three worlds holding ritual implements in his eight arms, chanting a Buddhist prayer with a fierce expression on his face, with layers of black smoke rising from an impressively depicted massive explosion. Eyes of regret drawn at the bottom of the paintings peer out at viewers.

"Kappa (rebuking)" means correcting false theories and uncovering the truth" and, in the painting, Myoo plays this role. Each of the variously shaped Dharma implements possesses the power to crush, cut off, and break down earthly desire, and the lines being chanted, a detailed commentary on the Heart Sutra (Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya-sūtra)," contain the truth of this world.

This is a work that gives a strong sense of energy through vigorously presented graphic elements that draw the viewer into the world of the painting and the delicate yet bold color expressions that are the true essence of Kinutani art. The work contains his passionate message of rebuke to modern society, which is confronted with a variety of social problems.

This work was adopted as the main visual for his solo exhibition, "Koji Kinutani - A Journey of Colors and Images" held at the National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto in 2017, and can be considered to be a representative work of Kinutani, who has said: "Paintings have the role of pointing out and making known."

Creation of All Things



Yomotsuhirasaka

(The Slope That Leads to the Land of the Dead) [First]

2012 1818 × 2273mm Mixed media

From the beginning of the Kamiyo (age of gods) in the first volume of "Kojiki," the oldest historical book in Japan, which is said to have been compiled in 712 (first, middle, and second volumes), this work depicts a tragic scene in which Izanagi and Izanami, the married gods of Kuniumi and Kamiuni (giving birth to lands and gods), were on the cusp of life and death.

Izanagi, mourning the death of his beloved wife Izanami, enters the realm of the dead but, breaking his promise not to look, he sees Izanami's completely changed appearance. Touched by his wife's anger, Izanagi throws peaches at the pursuing thunder gods of Yomi (the realm of the dead) and runs away to save his life. He blocks Yomotsuhirasaka (the slope that leads to the realm of the dead), the border with the underworld, with a huge stone and bids eternal farewell to Izanami. In response to the furious Izanami saying, "I will kill a thousand people in your country in a day," Izanagi replies "Then, I will give birth to one thousand, five hundred people in a day."

This is an ambitious work that depicts an original landscape of the Japanese view of life and death using the dripping technique.

Koji Kinutani's "Kojiki" series was created to commemorate the 1,300th anniversary of the compilation of "Kojiki" in 2012, upholding a large picture scroll of the creation of all things, consisting of some 30 paintings and three-dimensional works.



Amaterasu [First]

2012 1303 × 1620mm Mixed media

The three pillars (Amaterasu, Tsukuyomi, and Susanoo) are the last to have been born in the Misogi (purification ceremony) performed by Izanagi through washing his body in seawater following his visit to Yomotsuhirasaka. Among them, Amaterasu (Amaterasu Omikmi) is the supreme deity, positioned as the sun god of Takamagahara (high plains of heaven). However, she hides herself in Ama-no-Iwato (a rock cave that appears in Japanese mythology) out of anger at her brother Susanoo's insolence. The world, which has lost its light due to Amaterasu's hiding-out in Iwato, falls into state of darkness where evil spirits residing in forests, mountains, and rivers ran rampant. However, hoping to revive Amaterasu from the confusion and despair, Yaoyorozu-no-

kami (all the gods and goddesses) gather together and succeed in bringing Amaterasu out of Iwato (the cave) through their resourceful tactics. The world is revived by the light radiated by Amaterasu, who emerges from Iwato, and a circle of joy among living things such as people, birds, and animals spreads while lilies, symbolizing the life force, bloom.

This work is based on the scene of the rebirth of all things in the age of the gods in the first volume of "Kojiki."

Kunitsukami, Okuninushi-no-Kami [First]

2012 1303 × 1620mm Mixed media

Okuninushi-no-kami, a descendant of Susanoo, also known as "Daikoku-sama," is enshrined at Izumo Ooyashiro Shrine, as the god of nation-building. Omononushi- no-Mikoto, the deity enshrined at Omiwa Shrine, Japan's oldest shrine in Sakurai City, Nara Prefecture, is said to be another name for Omononushi's Wakemitama (division of a shrine's tutelary deity) and is famous as a god of good harvests and a miracle-working god who prevents natural disasters and epidemics, manifesting in the form of a snake.

This work depicts a scene associated with mythology, with Okuninushi (Ohmononushi), the god of nation-building, on a sea of clouds. In the background is Mt. Miwa, which is worshiped as Shintai (a sacred object), and the wind blowing from the mouth of the sun suggests the "path of the sun" that traverses the sky of the Yamato Basin as far as Mt. Nijo in the west. This work celebrates Yamato, which is referred to as the Japan's "Mahoroba" (great and splendid land), as the cornerstone of Japanese culture.



The Descent of the Sun Goddess's Grandson to Earth "I" "II" [Whole]

2012 1940 × 2590mm Two-pieces set Mixed media

Representative pieces in the Kojiki (Records of Ancient Matters) Series, created in commemoration of the 1300th anniversary of the Kojiki compilation. The piece depicts Ninigi no mikoto, the grandson of the sun goddess, with his squadron of sailing warships descending from a far-off sea of clouds, painted in grand scale. While he was working on it, Koji Kinutani visited the land of myths and legends including Takachiho in Hyuga and Takamahiko Shrine in Mt. Kongo, Nara prefecture and worked over his plan with care. He saw the rich splendor of Japan's oldest image world, and the Kojiki became the introduction to new creations for Koji Kinutani.

Images Evocative of Prayer



Bodhicitta (Thoughts of Enlightenment) [First]

2003 2590 × 1940mm Three-pieces set Mixed media

The world of Buddhism on the Kunisaki Peninsula depicted on a huge canvas. On the Kunisaki Peninsula in Oita Prefecture (Kyushu), known as the birthplace of the syncretism of Shintoism and Buddhism, stone Buddhas and Magaibutsu Buddhas (Buddha figures carved on rock faces) still exist, and the pious prayers of worship for various Buddhas have survived since ancient times. The Bodhicitta refers to thoughts that seek enlightenment. The face of Amitabha, depicted in colors and intense brushstrokes as if enveloped in crimson flames, and the dignified appearances of Yamantaka and Acalanatha on either side, filled with rage at the ravages of repeated wars and the folly of human beings, reflect the depth of Koji Kinutani's faith and the strength of his desire for salvation. This is a large work drawn as a set of three pieces comprising a 259.1 × 193.9cm triptych in issue 200, expressing a wish for peace in the world and the well-being of all people.

In the 2000s, the world of Koji Kinutani's art began to develop even more freely and uninhibitedly, giving birth to alternating styles of passionate painting and calm painting style with the Japanese, or Oriental, flavor becoming stronger. In particular, the expression of his Buddhist worldview reflects the archetypal scenes of his birth and upbringing in the ancient capital of Nara, and the teachings of "wisdom for living" cultivated in his childhood flash back through Koji Kinutani's mind like a revolving lantern.

As the primary sources of Koji Kinutani's creativity are vividly inherited concepts of "Mujokan," (impermanence), expounding that all tangible objects will eventually decay, the theme of "Ku," (emptiness), a teaching from the "Hannya Shingyo," (Heart Sutra), "Yuishinge (verse declaring that the mind manifests all form)" of the Kegon Sutra teaching that a Buddha is like a skillful painter, and "Funi Houmon," (Dharma Gate of Non-Duality) of the "Vimalakirti-nirdeśa-sūtra" explaining the fundamental principles that underlie the contradictions in dualistic perspectives.



Lotuses and a Prayer [Latter]

2011 727 × 606 mm Mixed media

The lotus flowers blooming beautifully in their full glory depicted with a Buddha figure having a peaceful expression depicted in the background. The lotus flower has been closely associated with Buddhism since ancient times, signifying purity and an immaculate state. As the saying goes, "the lotus growing in the mud;" the lotus, while rooted in the swamp, absorbs nutrients from the mire and blooms with beautiful flowers without being tainted. In addition, the "Vimalakirti-nirdeśa-sūtra", which Kinutani encountered in his youth, expounds the concept of self-interest and altruism, comparing this to the lotus: "Just as a lotus flower does not grow on high plateaus, but only grows in the low, moist mud."

As Kinutani was also impressed by this Buddhist philosophy and the lotus that evokes a deep love for humanity, he decided to pick up the paintbrush, considering "world peace and the splendor of the universal chain of life."

This work contains a powerful message of peace in a serene and meditative space, like motion in stillness, and was also exhibited in Koji Kinutani Solo Exhibition "Love and Prayer, the Wings of Abundance" (at the Tsinghua University Museum of Art, Beijing, China), held in 2018 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the conclusion of the Japan-China Peace and Friendship Treaty.



Paying Homage to Heiji Monogatari Emaki

(Night Attack on Sanjo Palace, from the Illustrated Scrolls of Events from the Heiji Era)

Rebuking (left) and Sunyata (right) [Whole]

2017 1940 × 2590mm Two-pieces set Mixed media

A work that takes its theme from the civil war of the Heiji Era. The dynamic figure of Acala (Rebuking), furious at the ravages of war brought about by a series of power struggles, and the static figure of Tathagata (Suryayana = Emptiness), tacitly looking on, emerge out of a backdrop of bright red flames. A large-scale work by Kinutani, wherein he gazes directly at the folly of human beings and wishes for mankind's salvation through the teachings of Buddha.



Juichimen Kannon (Eleven-headed Avalokitesvara) with Dogan-ji Temple [Latter]

2009 1940 × 2590mm Mixed media

This work is inspired by the national treasure, the standing Juichimen Kannon (Eleven-headed Avalokitesvara) statue enshrined in Dogan-ji Kannondo belonging to Kogenji Temple in Nagahama City, Shiga Prefecture. The eleven-faced Kannon at Toganji Temple, with its beautiful body and gentle, peaceful expression, is regarded as the most beautiful of the seven eleven-faced Kannon statues designated as national treasures across Japan. In the background, divine sunlight shines down forming a circular halo around the statue of Kannon, illuminating Lake Biwa and Chikubu Island as if drifting on the surface of the lake. And at his feet are depicted a boat floating on the surface, and images of white herons and birds gathering at the lakeside. These wonderful depictions, rendered with creative brush strokes and magnificent coloring, demonstrate Kinutani's high level of skill in the art of drawing.

Eleven-faced Kannon is said to have a compassionate heart, looking out in all directions with various facial expressions, from gentle to stern, and offering salvation to all beings. To this figure of Buddha portrayed in a tranquil setting, the divine presence of Kinutani's spiritual prayer for fertility and salvation for all living beings is vividly conveyed.

A Sense of Awe toward Nature

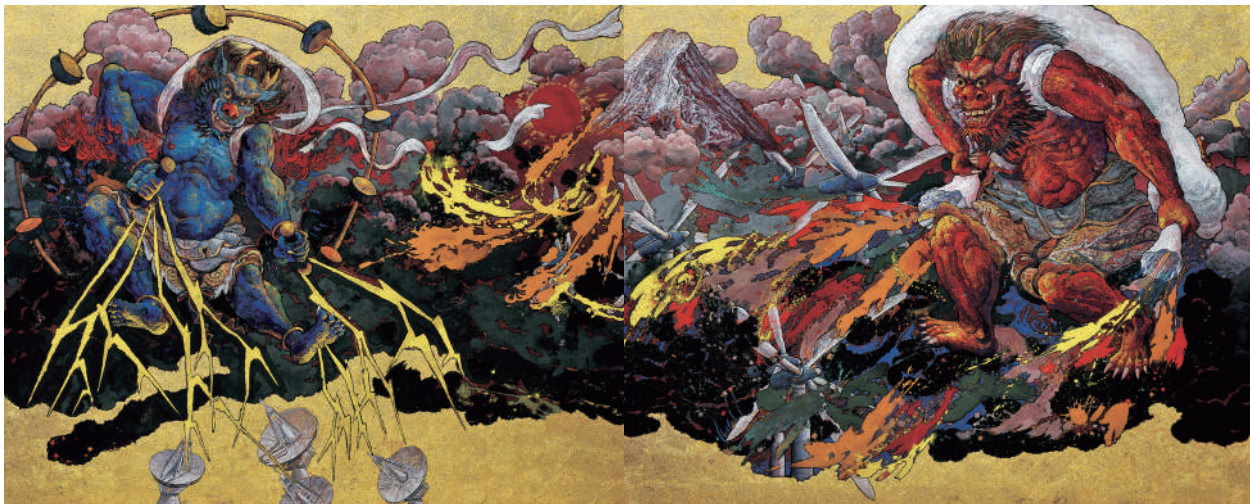


1. Glorious Dragon King with Nijo-jo Castle
2. Flying Ryujin (Dragon God) with Kiyomizu-dera Temple in the Night with a Full Moon
3. Flying Dragon Going to Heaven from Daimonji (Mountain Bonfire)
4. A Carp Climbing up a Waterfall Becomes Ryujin (Dragon God)
5. Arboreal Two Dragons with Fushimi Inari-taisha Shrine
6. Flying Dragon Descending to Kinkaku-ji Temple
7. Ryujin (Dragon God) Descending to Kamigamo-jinja Shrine with the Sun

[Latter] 2017 2590 × 970 mm Seven-pieces set Mixed media

A series of seven paintings depicting flying dragon gods each associated with one of the famous Kyoto sites including Kinkaku-ji Temple, Nijo Castle and Byodo-in Hoo-do (the Phoenix Hall), as if they represent the seven days of the week. "Kinutani says about this series of works, "Ryujin (dragon god) is a fantasy creature, but it is very important to imagine this. Painting the real Kyoto landscape and the imaginary dragon god on the same canvas leads to the source of Kinutani's creativity, Funi Homon (Dharma Gate of Non-Duality: a teaching of the "Vimalakirti-nirdeśa-sūtra" explaining that seemingly opposing concepts are not separate, but parts of a unified reality)

"This Ryujin is the dragon god who governs water and symbolizes the Kamogawa River, and the water, Ryujin, is imbued with an enormous energy that supports the life of all things," Kinutani continues. The water of the Kamogawa River flowing from north to south through the city of Kyoto, transforms itself into the Ryujin and ascends to heaven, which eventually changes into rain and pours down upon the earth, creating the fabric of our lives. The seven dragon gods embody the awe-inspiring power of nature, which has an energy beyond human comprehension that can bring immense disasters but also bestow great blessings.



Mount Fuji, the Sun, Fujin (God of Wind) and Raijin (God of Thunder) against a Golden Background [Whole]

2015 1818 × 2273 mm Two-pieces set Mixed media

Underlying the originality of this work is the artist's homage to the work "Fujin, Raijin" created by Sotatsu Tawaraya, founder of the Korin School, which represents the paintings of the Edo Era. The two gallant gods are confronting each other from the opposite sides of Mt. Fuji, which emerges in the sunbeams. The eyes of Fujin and Raijin, painted with incomparable expressive power, are filled with fury at the arrogance of mankind in its destruction of nature. Fujin generates electricity using windmills. Raijin uses thunderbolts. Mt. Fuji symbolizes terrestrial heat. Respectively, they imply mighty alternative energy sources that exist in the realm of nature. A large-scale work containing warnings for modern civilization.

Flame, Flame, Shuni-e in Todaiji-Temple [Latter]

2008 860 × 1150 mm Mixed media

Scarlet flames entwine the Nigatsu-do Hall of Todaiji Temple, which stands in pitch black darkness, as if gorgeously decorating it. The flames run vigorously through the hall and eventually transform into Ryujins (dragon deities) symbolizing divine power. The dragon deities dancing playfully dissolve into the darkness and reappear, and then return to serve as a light for the Rengyo-shu (ascetics for the Shuni-e ceremony) performing their duties. This work is one of the fantastic depictions of the Shuni-e ceremony (Omizutori: water-drawing ceremony) held every March.

The official name of the Shuni-e ceremony is "Juichimen keka hoyo," (the event for the confession of sins to Eleven-faced Kannon),

which is a Buddhist memorial service held to repent of various wrongs committed in the past and to pray for a good new year in front of the main deities of Nigatsu-do, the eleven-faced Kannon (the great Kannon and the two smaller Kannon). Since ancient times, this event has been held without interruption for more than 1250 years as an opportunity to pray for people's happiness, such as protecting the nation and having a good harvest, and will celebrate its 1,273rd anniversary in 2024. This is a piece that depicts the continuous "energy of prayer" with subtle, profound and beautiful colors that blend light and darkness.



Flying dragon frolicing around the Sky Building (Sculpture) [Whole]

2018 H2450 × W1900 × D1300 mm Styrofoam Mixed media



With Umeda Sky Building set against a glowing background, Ryujin, the Dragon God of the Sea, rises up from the Yodo River and in celebration of the building's 25th anniversary, transforms itself into a Tamatori ("Jewel-taking") Dragon and proceeds to playfully wind about the towers. Dragons are the Gods of Water, born out of a respect of water, inhabiting the realm of dreams. Meanwhile, the Sky Building is a globally-renowned structure that exists very much in the real world. Rather than being antithetical concepts, the sense of "fantasy" and "reality" generated as the dragon creates a sense of dynamism, weaving up and around the towers, can be described as merely two aspects of the same object - it is this theme of nonduality (funi homon) described in the Vimalakirti Sutra that runs through Kinutani's entire body of work.

The sense of presence and weight embodied in this sculpture suggests that the Ryujin has the power to start moving at any moment. The side of the Umeda Sky Building is like a beautiful mirror that reflects everything; the blue sky dotted with fluffy clouds, the imposing building seemingly transparent, melting into the surrounding sky. Seeing the Ryujin flying through the air playfully around the Sky Building here in the Tenku Art Museum creates a bridge between us and the dream world. Using planar representations, sculptures, and 3D visual mediums, Kinutani continues to open up the possibilities of art by placing himself in various spatial spheres.

Gods of nature – Satoyama and Chinju no Mori

The expressions Satoyama, meaning an area of underdeveloped woodland near a village, and Chinju no Mori, a sacred shrine forest, have represented the notion of an original landscape in the intrinsic nature of Japanese people since olden times.

Satoyama came about in the life of village people. Terraced rice paddies and fields extending through the hills became a great foundation for bountiful harvests, while Chinju no Mori came into being in the awe of countless gods and subsequently evolved into a place of prayer for mercy and protection.

Abundance brought about by Satoyama and faith in Chinju no Mori. The existence of both material and spiritual aspects has influenced the formation of the spiritual climate of Japanese people consistent with coexistence with nature and respect for the gods of nature. People would accept the enormous natural energy beyond human understanding which inevitably brings both fortune and misfortune, and passed down this Satoyama and Chinju no Mori to the next generation as signs indicating wisdom for life. Such eternal work is the original source from which the values and sense of beauty of Japanese came about.

An effort is being made to recover such a notion representing the indigenous landscape of Japanese which is currently disappearing. It is the concept of Shin-Satoyama (new Satoyama) constructed within the premises of Umeda Sky Building where this museum is located. There, blessed with the fertile rain of four seasons, children can experience the joy of abundance and learn the importance of nature. At that time, the Tenku Art Museum displaying the gods of nature becomes a power spot where the divine energy of gods is in residence, as if taking up the role of Chinju no Mori.

Praise and affection for nature, and awe and gratitude for the gods. It is a place where our most fundamental joy of life can be embodied. This effort has been made for 30 years already, implemented by Sekisui House, the management organization of the Tenku Art Museum.



Shin-Satoyama spreading in Shin Umeda City, at the foot of Umeda Sky Building

Measures for nature and environment by Sekisui House

In the Shin-Satoyama, one of the measures contributing to biodiversity by Sekisui House, over 500 native Japanese trees and more than 200 species of shrubs and flowers are planted to create thickets. Terraced rice paddies and fields are also provided to reproduce Satoyama, the disappearing native landscape of Japan in the city center.



The wall of hope

Instead of employing the conventional consumption-oriented management approach of removing weeds and fallen leaves immediately, a natural low-load circulatory management system has been adopted for the Satoyama to enrich the soil organisms and broaden the food chain. The growth of a wide variety of plants has increased the amount of greenery, and numerous creatures including more than 40 species of wild birds and more than 20 species of butterflies visit, live and grow in the garden. The arrival of birds of prey, which rarely make an appearance in the city, has also been confirmed.

Also, the Wall of Hope, a huge greening monument, measuring 9 meters high and 78 meters long, adjacent to the Shin-Satoyama, functions as a model for a kind of vertical spatial greening in the city. It achieves this by using more than 20,000 plants of about 100 diverse species to cover the greening wall. The strategic arrangement of plants that flower or change colors at different times allows visitors to enjoy the varied appearance of the garden as it changes with the seasons. Along with the Shin-Satoyama, it has become familiar to nearby residents and office workers as a place where one can experience the merit of living in harmony with the true value of the ecosystem.

These measures are based on the Gohon no Ki (five trees) Project, a landscaping and greening project to conserve biodiversity through the housing business. The aim is to fulfill its responsibility as a large-scale house builder which plants one million trees nationwide annually, starting from 2001.

The Gohon no Ki Project is based on the concept of “three trees for birds, two trees for butterflies, and all are local native tree species”. Among the local native trees, those that are especially beneficial to birds and butterflies and also can be used as garden trees are designated as Gohon no Ki to serve as the center of planting. The goal is for house gardens to increase the amount of rich green space in urban areas, for an ecological network to enrich local biodiversity, and for people to enjoy the richness brought about by the power of nature.

Sekisui House is also promoting ZEH (net zero energy house) as a measure toward a decarbonized society to protect the earth and natural environment. ZEH achieves virtually zero energy consumption by supplementing consumed energy with renewable natural energy such as solar power generation, for example. ZEH performance in detached residence construction achieved 93% in fiscal year 2022, greatly exceeding the ZEH average of 19% all over Japan. ZEH is similarly promoted in rental housing and condominiums.

Sekisui House will continue protecting nature and the environment, making the best use of energy brought to us by nature, and promote/continue measures for a sustainable development future in which humans live together with nature. That is the duty and ideal of Sekisui House, Ltd.

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