

A Tribute - The Konno Shigeru Collection of Yagi Kazuo

I was still small back then, even before starting primary school, but I remember well a man of strong build occasionally seen around in our house on Gojōzaka in Kyoto. His name was Konno Shigeru (1934 - 2011) originally from Tohoku, North-East part of Japan. He was kind and gentle to me and my younger brother, often taking us for a stroll around Kiyomizu temple. It was a joyous memory that I still cherish.

Tanida Masako, his eldest daughter, told me how her father was proud of himself because ‘Maestro Yagi, who was normally reluctant to take apprentices, eventually accepted him despite he resisted in the beginning’. From what I heard from my mother, I knew that Mr Konno was attending the Potter’s Training School next door to our house. I sometimes saw him, with his soiled hands with slip, talking to my father during a lunch break. Then he stopped coming to our house before I was aware. I just presumed that he went back home having finished his training course. Time went by with no knowledge of what had happened to him, until later I was told that he had to abandon his dream to become a potter because the injury to the cervical spine disabled him to move his hands properly.

Soon after reaching the age of 20, I started my apprenticeship with my father helping him in his work but sadly I lost him three years later. I struggled to regain myself to move on but gradually managed to apply myself to work out my own style in ceramics, which led me to show the outcome in a solo exhibition at a gallery in Tokyo. There a man came to talk to me who had a recognisable face and a calm voice that immediately reminded me of someone I know. Mr Konno in person was in front of me. He was nostalgically talking about the old days in Kyoto. Since our reunion, he never missed a single exhibition I held in Tokyo, even when he was not in good form, much to my grateful surprise. Then one day he stopped coming and the news of his death reached me, which struck me with shock and filled me with great sorrow. I felt the loss for quite a while.

Now for the first time, I have learnt that Mr Konno had been collecting the works of Yagi Kazuo in such a scale, filling in every corner of his room with numerous works of my father, like a treasure box, including *objēt-yaki* made around 1964 and more domestic wares for daily use. I was so touched by Mr Konno’s heartfelt dedication towards my father, Yagi Kazuo.

My sincere thanks go to the late Mr Konno Shigeru as well as to his family who shared with us a posthumous recognition of the Konno Shigeru collection of Yagi Kazuo, and all who made this tribute exhibition possible at Nakacho Konishi Arts.

Yagi Akira
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今野成さんの思い出 ―「八木一夫 今野コレクション」展によせて―

私が小学校に上がる前、時々ガッチリした体格の男性が五条坂の我が家に現れていました。東北出身の今野成さん(1934-2011)でした。幼い兄弟に優しく対して下さり、弟と一緒に清水寺界隈を散策した事を今でも覚えています。

今野さんのご長女、谷田督子さんによると「当初は断られたが、あまり弟子をとらない八木一夫先生に弟子入りを認められたことが、父の自慢でした」とのこと。その頃我が家の隣にあった陶工訓練校に訓練生として通っておられていたと、その時母に聞いていました。手にドベを付け、お昼休みに父と話されていた事もありました。卒業されて帰られたのかいつの間にか現れなくなり、そのまま時が経って行きました。実は頸椎を損傷し手を思うように動かすことができなくなったことで、夢を断念せざるを得なかったことを、後に知ることとなりました。

私も二十歳過ぎに焼き物をする為父の元で手伝い始めたのですが、3年程で父が亡くなり、気持を立て直して制作の道に専念。ようやく自分のスタイルも掴み東京での個展を開ける様になったある時、来客の男性が微かに記憶するお顔と物静かな聞き覚えのある声で話しかけて下さりました。今野さん。懐かしそうに昔の話をされて、東京での展覧会を開く度にお会いする機会が続きました。体調が悪い時も来ていただき恐縮する事が何度かあったのですが、それがブツリと途絶え、訃報をお聞きした時に大変驚いたのと寂しさが混ざり合った思いがしばらく続いたのを覚えています。

この度、今野さんがこれほどの八木一夫作品をコレクションされていたことを私は初めて知ることとなりました。1964年頃制作のオブジェから、日々愛用して頂いた器達、自宅の一部屋を宝物箱のように八木一夫作品で埋め尽くしていたという今野さんが、父、八木一夫に寄せて頂いたお気持ちを改めて知ることとなり、今野成さんへの感謝とともに、この度中長小西における展覧会を開催する為にご尽力された御遺族はじめ皆様に感謝致します。

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