

Manabe Hideo, a Nameless Painter with Three Names: A Case Study on the Multiple Identities of the First-Generation of the Zainichi Koreans

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Abstract | Manabe Hideo (Korean name Kim Chong-nam, 1914-86) was born in Korea and studied oil painting in Japan during the prewar period. He belongs to the first generation of Zainichi (Korean-Japanese) or Koreans who remained in Japan after the Second World War. Despite his significance in Korean modern art history as one of a few Korean artists who worked in a surrealist style, little is known about him and his art. To address this gap this paper presents primary source material related to Manabe Hideo's life and work. Moreover, it explores the relationship between his art practices and his identity as a Zainichi Korean living in postwar Japan. This study argues that Manabe was an avant-gardist who, among Korean artists, was perhaps the most engaged in using surrealist forms and compositions. It is also meaningful to examine his life and art closely given that he identified himself more as a Japanese person rather than a Korean. As such, this paper aims to contribute to the overall understanding of Zainichi artists who are both a part of Japanese society as well as significant figures in Korean modern and contemporary art history.

Keywords | Manabe Hideo, surrealist painter, Korean students who studied in prewar Japan, first generation of Zainichi Koreans, identity of Zainichi Koreans

Introduction

Manabe Hideo (Korean name Kim Chong-nam, 1914-86) was a first-generation Zainichi Korean artist who came to Japan in 1929 and studied art. Even after the end of the Pacific War and colonization, he remained in Japan and continued to work there. Manabe painted in surrealist style which was a rarity among Korean artists. Due to this fact, he holds a notable position in Korean modern and

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contemporary art history. But nonetheless, the artist has rarely been discussed in Korea. The purpose of this study therefore lies in excavating materials related to the artist to delineate his life and art in more detail, in order to fill this biographical gap in the modern and contemporary history of Korean art. Moreover, the study focuses on the issue of identity in the context of the first-generation Zainichi Korean artists during the colonial period. While most of the preceding research on this group has been premised upon the importance of so-called “nationalist” identity, this study argues that Manabe Hideo’s case runs counter to these dominant stereotypes.¹ Thus, this study suggests an alternative view that transcends the current reprobativ frame of “pro-Japanese” and “anti-Japanese.” Instead, it suggests that in actuality multiple identities were formed by Korean artists working in Japan as they faced different individual challenges in both their personal and artistic lives before and after the end of war.

I first came across Manabe Hideo through Kim Young-na’s 1992 study entitled “Korean Students in Tokyo in the 1930s: Focusing on the Avant-garde Group Exhibitions.” Kim’s study shifts the focus from those Korean students who studied and pursued academism in 1920s and 1930s to the figures who, in the late 1930s, experimented with avant-garde forms. A section of this study uses substantive archival research to delve into the lists of works submitted for such exhibitions by artists like Kim Hwan-ki and Lee Jung-Seob who participated in avant-gardist groups such as the Free Artist Association (Jiyū Bijutsuka Kyōkai) and the Art Culture Association (Bijutsu Bunka Kyōkai). It is here that Manabe Hideo’s name appears as “Kaneko Hideo,” a participant in the activities of Art Culture Association. He is recorded as an artist who studied at the art institute of Fukuzawa Ichirō (1898-1992) (Fukuzawa Ichirō Art Institute), Japan’s representative surrealist painter, and produced high-quality surrealist works even to receive a prize in the Art Culture Association’s group exhibition (*Bijutsu Bunka ten*). However, it is added that the artist’s activities after his marriage to a Japanese, change of his name to “Manabe,” and naturalization as Japanese are not known. This is the full extent of what has been written on Manabe Hideo in Korean modern art history up to this point.

In 2010, I came across a photograph of Manabe Hideo in an exhibition catalog of Fukuzawa Ichirō Art Institute organized by Itabashi Art Museum in Tokyo (figure 1). Spurred by this opportunity, I began this research project and collected information from various references on artistic groups Manabe participated in, as well as on the artists that surrounded him. I interviewed the artist’s family in Korea and Japan and had a chance to observe his works

1. See Kim Sun-hee (2000), Youn Bum-mo (2007), Ko Seong-Jun (2009), and Suh Hee-jung (2011).



Source: Itabashi Kuritsu Bijutsukan (2010, 19).

Figure 1. Group photograph from Fukuzawa Ichirō Art Institute's summer course, August 1937 (The third person from the left on the first row is Manabe, and the fourth person from the left in the middle row is Fukuzawa Ichirō)

firsthand.² By collecting information from interviews and excavating documents that attest to the facts gathered through them, I was able to reconstruct the life of Manabe Hideo.

This study is organized in the following order. First, I will delineate Manabe's life. Then, I will look at his artworks in terms of artistic trends in both the Korean and Japanese art worlds of the time to place his art in relation to them. Lastly, I will focus on the issue of identity as reflected in Manabe's life and work. To state the conclusion in advance, one can deem Manabe Hideo as a Korean artist who was significant in that he worked continuously in a surrealist style for a longer period than any of his Korean contemporaries, starting prior to 1945 and continuing long into the postwar period, and therefore his historical example serves to broaden the scope of Korean modern art history. Despite his origins, the artist seems to have considered himself more as a "Japanese" rather than "Korean." This aspect differentiates his case from the "nationalist" stereotype of the first-generation *Zainichi* Koreans established within previous

2. Manabe's family—his son Manabe Hiroshi and his nephew Kim Min-sŏn—as well as his old friend Sekiguchi Ichirō acceded to my interview request. In contacting the artist's family and collecting archival materials, Hironaka Satoko from the Itabashi Art Museum, Tokyo, Katō Hiroko, and Adachi Gen provided much assistance. I would like to express my great appreciation for their immense support.

studies. Through Manabe's example, it is therefore possible to shed light on one form of Zainichi Korean identity—one that reached an impasse between Korea and Japan before and after Korea's independence from Japanese rule. Furthermore, the case suggests the diverse uncharted range of attitudes and personal histories among the first-generation of Zainichi Koreans of the period.³

Artist's Life: From “Kim Chong-nam” to “Kaneko Hideo,” and to “Manabe Hideo.”

Manabe was born in 1914 in Sanchǒng-myǒn, Sanchǒng-gun, Kyǒngsangnam-do. He was the third boy among three boys and one girl of Kim Sǒng-pae who then served as the head of the town (*myǒnjang*). Manabe's original name was Kim Chong-nam, and his family were wealthy enough that he could learn to play the violin during his childhood. After graduating from Sanchǒng Public Primary School in 1928, he entered Miryang Public School for Agriculture and Sericulture but dropped out during the first year. Right after he left school in the April of 1929, Manabe, then sixteen years old, went to Kyoto on his own, and entered Kyoto Ryōyō Middle School under the prewar system.

According to his family, Manabe Hideo's life in Kyoto was far from carefree. He was a working student, which was rare even at this time, delivering *Asahi Newspapers* (*Asahi shinbun*) and commuting to school. As he had no prior connection in the city to help support himself, it is difficult to surmise the reason for his move to Kyoto, or what he wished to study there. One can however assume from the expression of light and shade, as well as volume in the portrait of his father Manabe painted in 1933 (figure 2),⁴ that he received a certain level of professional art education in Kyoto during this period.⁵ Although one cannot affirm that Manabe went to Japan to study art, it seems clear that he studied oil painting after his arrival in Japan.

3. Before going into the main argument, I would like to mention that images of Manabe Hideo's artworks unfortunately could not be published here without an approval of the artist's family in Japan who hold the copyright. Images of some of his posthumous works can be viewed on the family's blog (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/komachi2/sets/72157626220106015/>).

4. The signature on the oil portrait “kyeyu p'ar-wŏl samsip-il soja Chong-nam” implies that the work was painted in the summer of 1933, during Manabe's temporary return to Korea for a vacation from his studies in Kyoto.

5. In order to be certain of this, it would be necessary to investigate the curriculum of the Kyoto Ryōyō Middle School of the period. It is however difficult to assume that oil painting was taught in Japan's provincial middle school. It would be more convincing to conclude that Manabe studied oil at a professional painter's studio in Kyoto.

Manabe graduated from middle school in March 1934 and moved to Tokyo with the *Asahi Newspaper* delivery agent's son. There, he entered Nippon Art College's Western painting department. What should be noted is that upon his move to Tokyo, Manabe began to introduce himself not as a Korean but "Kaneko Hideo from Kyoto." Manabe is also said to have never acquainted with Korean students studying in Tokyo at the time.⁶ As his friend Sekiguchi states, Manabe appears to have desperately struggled to "blend into the customs and culture of Japan."

Manabe began to attend Fukuzawa Ichirō Art Institute from March 1937 after graduating from college. He immediately established a substantive presence in the Institute and served on the student committee in the summer course of 1937, and many of the pupils remembered him as faithful and well-mannered (Itabashi Kuritsu Bijutsukan 2010, 107, 112, 123). At the time, Manabe was receiving living expenses from his second elder brother in Korea who was working as a teacher. Notwithstanding such support, the artist still had to work part-time to support himself. For around three years after 1938, Manabe worked as a toy designer at the Asakusa Marujū, a toy import company, and continually attended the Fukuzawa Ichirō Art Institute. In the album owned by the artist's family, there is a photograph of him with Foujita Tsuguharu (1886-1968), a celebrated artist who returned home in glory after his success in the European art circle. This picture captures an image of a young artist who strived to seize the modern trend of the contemporary art world. In 1940, Manabe received the Art Culture Prize after submitting three works from his *Landscape (Fūkei)* series in the first exhibition of the Art Culture Association. In the following year for the second exhibition of the Association, he submitted *Waterside (Mizube)*, 1941, figure 3) and became a member of the Association. This work is currently owned by Itabashi Art Museum, and it is the only work by the artist in the Museum's collection.



Figure 2. Manabe Hideo, *Portrait of the artist's father, Kim Sōng-bae*, 1933, oil on canvas, size unknown, collection of Manabe's Korean family, Kim T'ae-sŏn

6. This accords with the testimony of Manabe's old friend Sekiguchi Ichirō. Moreover, Manabe's brief biography compiled at the time of his reception of Art Culture Prize (*Bijutsu Bunka sho*) in 1940 as well as a newspaper article on his solo exhibition in 1970 state that Manabe's place of origin was Kyoto (Bijutsu Bunka Kyōkai 1940; "Local Artist Shows" 1970).



Source: Itabashi Kuritsu Bijutsukan (2010, 34).

Figure 3. Manabe (Kaneko) Hideo, *Waterside (Mizube)*, 1941, submitted to the second exhibition of Art Culture Association, oil on canvas, 123.5 × 161 cm, Collection of Itabashi Art Museum (Itabashi Kuritsu Bijutsukan)

In September 1943, Manabe was enlisted to the aircraft maintenance unit of Tokyo's Tachikawa Airfield—currently Yokota Air Base. Here he worked as a “draftsman,” making assembly drawings for automatic bomb sights (Manabe 1955, 19). Possibly due to this experience, Manabe was later employed at Yokota Air Base in 1948 where he was in charge of the English newspaper *Afterburner's* editing and layout. In December 1950, he became a foster son of the Manabe family, relatives of his friend, and transferred his register from Korea to Japan to become “Manabe Hideo.” Soon after the transfer, he married a Japanese woman and they had two sons. It is said that the artist severed contact with his Korean family at this point. Manabe's oldest son Manabe Hiroshi explained how his father had never mentioned to him that he was a Zainichi Korean nor brought up the word “Chosŏn” in his life. As can be assumed here, Manabe's naturalization as a Japanese citizen was not a mere choice concerning a place of residence but something that involved a stronger determination, to the degree that he completely severed every connection to Korea. One of the reasons is said to be that his wife strongly disapproved of his contacting Korea. But one can also suppose that, in part, there had also been a sense of guilt on transferring the

family register at his will, as well as his desperation to protect his newly formed family from any prejudices or discrimination against “Zainichi Koreans” in Japan’s postwar society.

In 1958, Manabe Hideo left the Art Culture Association and continued to work at the US military base until his retirement in 1979. During this period, Manabe also continued to work on his own art in his atelier at home every evening after work. While this part-time approach to his own creative activity meant a far lesser chance of professional success, Manabe is said to have pursued his art in earnest every day. Dozens of the remaining works now owned by the artist’s family display an impressive level of completion, and attest to the fact that Manabe’s interest in painting was no mere hobby but something he undertook with great devotion.

Over this period Manabe Hideo participated in numerous relatively smaller scale group exhibitions. In 1970 at age fifty-six, the artist had his first solo exhibition from March 23 to March 28 at Formes Gallery in Ginza, Tokyo. This solo exhibition was advertised in an article in Yokota Air Base newspaper accompanied by Fukuzawa Ichirō’s recommendation. In his remarks, Fukuzawa introduces Manabe as “a surrealist” with “a long career in the field.” He also reveals his happiness at this “resurrection of surrealism,” saying that while the style of surrealism “is becoming outdated ... its spirit will not cease to exist.” Moreover, he added the following passage to express his high expectations for Manabe’s future career:

For quite some time now Mr. Manabe has not come up with [any] painting. However, upon observing the recent artwork he completed, the elaborate and minute description is energetic and his dash of the brush has not diminished in any way. He is one of the artists I want to see complete a most difficult task of taking on the latest trends in the field of surrealism. (“Local Artist Shows” 1970)⁷

As if responding to his former teacher’s praise, Manabe held a two-person exhibition with Takayama Ryōsaku in 1980 at Gallery Jeiko located in Shibuya, Tokyo (September 16 to 24, 1980) after retiring from his job. Upon this occasion, Manabe expressed his desire to engage in the more prolific and vigorous production of art. Six years later in 1986, however, he passed away at age seventy-two.

7. This article was provided by Manabe’s family member Manabe Hiroshi.

Manabe and Japanese Surrealist Painting

Surrealism began in Paris in 1924 with André Breton's manifesto. It sought for the true freedom of man by liberating the unconscious, and surrealist ideas and formal approaches spread around the world between the two world wars. In Japan, surrealism was first adopted in 1927 in the literary community. Around 1930, paintings influenced by surrealism started to appear in exhibitions, and mainly in the *Nikaten*, an annual exhibition hosted by Nika Association that pursued an alternative approach to that of the official academy. Japanese surrealism in art began to fully unfold in 1931 with the return of Fukuzawa Ichirō from France, and surrealist concerns remained popular for about a decade until the outbreak of the Pacific War.

Fukuzawa's adaption of collage greatly influenced numerous young artists at the time. Some of these young painters left the Independent Art Association (Dokuritsu Bijutsu Kyōkai), established the New Plasticity Art Association (Shin Zōkei Bijutsu Kyōkai), and finally worked actively in the Art Culture Association (Bijutsu Bunka Kyōkai) during their heyday. However, with the consolidation of militarism in Japan, Fukuzawa, who had been suspected of communist sympathies, was apprehended in 1941. After this moment the surrealist movement in Japan also faced its decline. Despite its relatively short decade of popularity, Japanese surrealism was fervently supported by these younger-generation artists and developed in various ways.

Despite this, Japanese surrealism has often been criticized within the discourse of Japanese history of art for its weak theoretical foundation. While surrealism of the West inherited the "spirit of revolt" pioneered by Dadaists in the previous generation and delved into the spirituality of "exploring the subconscious" as well as "liberating creativity," surrealism in Japan branched out from the overall modernist lineage and was independent of Dadaist concerns. It has thus been pointed out that Japanese surrealism concentrated more on appropriating a surrealist "appearance" than understanding the movement's original ideas.⁸

Some also interpret this tendency as its specificity, in that Japanese surrealism paid more attention to "reality" than the "spirit" while harboring a passion for social reform, eventually extending into an "active humanism" movement. Yamada Satoshi calls it a "surrealism's Japanese mutant," and states that in the way surrealism's "artistic style" gave form to more socially engaged works, it is by nature a "humanist movement" (Yamada 1990, 9). In a similar

8. Yamada Satoshi (1990, 8-9) described how surrealism in Japan was only a kind of "artistic style" based on Marxism and humanism, rather than an independent "ideology" that aspired to "break free from reason."



Source: Itabashi Kuritsu Bijutsukan (2010, 33).

Figure 4. Manabe (Kaneko) Hideo, *Grapes (Budō)*, 1943, submitted to the fourth exhibition of the Art Culture Association, unknown size, unknown whereabouts

context, Ōtani Shōgo positively evaluates that Japanese surrealism, through its encounter with the wider modern “humanist movement,” was capable of “facing the reality of Japanese society” rather than exploring the unconscious “to successfully develop in more original way” (Ōtani 2006, 12). In this regard, even in the 1930s Fukuzawa affirmed that he adopted surrealist methods as “a means” to emphasize reality, and in this way his works can clearly be distinguished from those of the Western surrealism.⁹

As explained above, Japanese surrealism seems to have unfolded largely in two ways: The first moved away from a pure search for the subconscious and only appropriated surrealist methods such as collage or *dépaysement* to express messages of social criticism, while the second dominant concern was to pursue the surrealist interest in the fantastical beauty of form. The former trend was followed by many of the proletarian artists of the previous era who were dispersed through the oppression of the militaristic government, while the latter was followed by the younger generation of art students who aspired for new approaches to plasticity in their practice. Artists of both tendencies joined Fukuzawa Ichirō Art Institute established in 1936 (Kata 1989, 66), and Manabe belonged to the latter group.

Manabe Hideo's earlier works such as *Waterside (Mizube)*, 1941, (figure 3), *Landscape (Fūkei)*, 1941), *Grapes (Budō)*, 1943, (figure 4), and *Eagle Having a Rest (Ikoi washi)*, 1943) display a pictorial plane filled with plants and animals.

9. “Montage for me is a means to enforce realism” (*Montāju to wa watashi ni yoreba genjitsu kyōka no shudan nanode aru*, Fukuzawa 1932, 91). “Its satirical and crafty aspect can be described in context of surrealism, but strictly speaking, it is somewhat distinguished from it.” (*Sono fūshi no aru bubun, gikō no aru bubun ni oite, chō genjitsu shugi de wa aru ga genmitsu na imi ni oite wa chigau mono*, Fukuzawa 1960, 3).



Figure 5. Henri Rousseau, *The Dream*, 1910, oil on canvas, 204.5 × 298.5 cm, collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York

Although there is no distortion in realistic and detailed forms of the foliage in the images, the motif of the dense forest itself effectively delivers an eccentric idea of the living world, and expresses the unfamiliar sense one might come across when experiencing nature in real life. Moreover, the difficulty of recognizing the complete forms of the creatures hidden throughout the composition creates a somewhat incongruous impression. The fantastical and naïve illustration of nature displayed in this image of lush vegetation replete with its hiding animals suggests the influence of Rousseau or Ernst (figure 5). In terms of more local points of reference, the method of creating an eccentric atmosphere through the depiction of plants and vegetation also appears in Fukuzawa's *Flower* series (*Hana*, 1938-39, figure 6), as well within works by Yonekura Hisahito (1905-94) who also studied at the Institute around the same time as Manabe. Therefore, it is possible to assume the influence of these two figures on Manabe's naturalist themed surrealist paintings.

As with most other surrealist paintings created in Japan at the time, traces of a profound understanding of, or any notion to experiment with the forces of the subconscious mind are almost entirely absent in Manabe Hideo's works. Rather, the artist enthusiastically employed surrealism's formative manner, particularly detailed delineation of imagined scenes or *dépaysement*. His surrealism was not borne from any so-called "activist" tendency to disclose Japan's reality. Nonetheless, the artist's illustration of landscapes that are suffocatingly dense and



Source: Itabashi Kuritsu Bijutsukan (2010, 16).

Figure 6. Fukuzawa Ichirō, *Flowers (Hana)*, 1938, oil on canvas, 116.7 × 90.9 cm, Tama Art University Museum

gloomy successfully reflects the ambience of the day, as that of a nation depressed and devastated by the war. More specifically, the elephant-like creature painted deep inside the pictorial plane of *Waterside* (figure 3) reminds one of Ai-Mitsu (1907-46)'s *Landscape with an Eye* (*Me no aru fūkei*, 1938, figure 7) in its depiction of the subject's profile and an eye. *Landscape with an Eye* itself is also often described as a representative work reflecting the wartime zeitgeist. Any direct connection between the two artists is unknown, but one can nonetheless summarize some potential relation based on the fact that they both lived in Ikebukuro Montparnasse at the same time (Sekiguchi 2011, 106).

Here, I would like to go into some detail describing the area of "Ikebukuro Montparnasse." This is because Manabe's residence in this sophisticated cultural village of avant-garde experimentation offered him a fertile creative ground that greatly stimulated his artistic production. Ikebukuro Montparnasse was an area originally built by filling up the wetland near Tokyo's Ikebukuro station with cinder. Due to this weak foundational base, most of the houses constructed in the region were prefabricated ones. Because of the subsequent cheap rent, young artists from around the country gathered here and formed an artist's village. Famous as a place of youth and romance, and even somewhat decadent in reputation, Ikebukuro Montparnasse was therefore a special location for exchanges between artists from various fields, from painters to musicians to poets (Itabashi Kuritsu Bijutsukan 2011, 9). Manabe (at the time Kaneko) lived



Figure 7. Ai-Mitsu, *Landscape with an Eye* (*Me no aru fūkei*), 1938, oil on canvas, 102 × 193.5 cm, The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo

here for about seven years from the mid-1930s to 1943, until he was conscripted. He experienced here not only avant-garde art but also Japan's newest fashionable interests in things such as café life or concerts, and certainly this experience greatly stimulated this young man from a small provincial town in colonial Korea.

It has been stated that the place's significance in art history lies in that it "expanded arts' boundaries." Ikebukuro Montparnasse is credited for having borne the Taishō period's new wave of art, through movements such as proletarian art, the Shōwa prewar avant-garde, and especially surrealism (Ozaki 2008, 115). Surrealists like Yamashita Kikuji (1919-86) and Ai-Mitsu, and many young art students of Fukuzawa's Institute lived here. It can be assumed that Manabe in such an environment would naturally have become acquainted with surrealism.¹⁰

In a photo of a gathering that took place to celebrate the foundation of an informal society called the "Ikebukuro Artist Club" on September 10, 1936 at the Horizon (*Chihei*) restaurant, a figure who is presumably Manabe sits in the front row with a bright smile on his face (figure 8). In the unique space of Ikebukuro Montparnasse young artists "gathered from around the country to develop their original artistic styles while struggling with their individual issues with identity" (Ozaki 2008, 115). Here, in this photo, it is shown how Manabe, also a "stranger" in Tokyo, could stand equally with his colleagues and exist

10. Manabe's relationship with Asō Saburō (1913-2000), his direct neighbor at the time and regular associate, is also worthy of attention. Asō was a promising young artist who called for "new art" (*shin bijutsu*) that reflected elements of reality and existence. He did not advocate for surrealism but partook in the foundation of the Art Culture Association. Therefore, there is also a possibility that Manabe encountered surrealism through Asō (Hironaka 2008, 115).



Source: Ozaki (2008, 113).

Figure 8. Gathering on the foundation of Ikebukuro Artist Club, September 10, 1936, Restaurant *Chihei* (The figure on the first from the left on the first row is assumed to be Manabe)

comparatively freely without having to worry about his origins in “colonial Korea.” In these streets filled with cultural energy, and the interaction and exchange of influences between young artists, Manabe gradually created a “Japan” of his own, in a realm where he could exist as himself regardless of his origins. His life in Ikebukuro Montparnasse, a place of significance in Japanese modern and contemporary art history, could be considered as an important factor that affected Manabe’s choice to become “Japanese” after the war.

Surrealism in Korean Art Circle

I would next like to examine the development of surrealist painting in the Korean art world and the place Manabe holds in this schema. As has been noted, surrealism failed to become established in Korea despite many attempts in both written discourse and creative activity. Surrealism was initially introduced to Korea in the late 1920s within the literary community, as in Japan. This was when those who studied literature in Japan returned to Korea and made their debut to the Korean literary world (“Pul mundan hoego” 1929).¹¹ Then, at the

11. Surrealism in Korea started with a 1929 magazine article written by Yi Ha-yun (1906-74), a poet who returned to Korea after graduating from the Faculty of Letters at Hōsei University. Since

beginning of the 1930s surrealism was introduced in the Korean art world. In December that year, the word “surrealism” (*chò hyönsiljuüi*) first appeared in the *East Asia Daily* (*Tonga ilbo*). Kim Yong-jun, who at the time was studying at the Tokyo Fine Arts School, formed the Baekman Western Painting Association (*Paengman Yanghwahoe*) with other Korean students in Japan. They declared that they would, like Picasso who “transformed himself like a chameleon from Cubism ... to Surrealism,” freely employ “a variety of artistic styles” (Kim Yong-jun 1930). In 1930, surrealism had not yet begun in earnest even in Japan, and it was only mentioned in magazines through works citing its influence. Kim Yong-jun was well-versed in art theory and had encountered the style in advance, and this made it possible for him to express his aspiration to freely adopt not only surrealism but a variety of other “cutting-edge forms from the West.” On the other hand, however, Kim also expressed his anxiety over the audience’s possible response, saying that “some critics might reproach that [such future works] display a kind of perverted mind.”

In a more recent study, Pak Hye-sung (2018) retraces the development of surrealism in Korean modern art to broaden the previous discussion and identify its distinct characteristics. She points out the limitations of Korean surrealism in that, although many art critics of the mid-1930s—Kim Yong-jun, Yoon Hee-soon, and Jeong Hyeon-ung—had recognized surrealism’s potential to spur artistic and social reform, their understanding failed to extend to a meaningful discourse. This frustration was mainly caused by the criticism and misunderstanding of surrealism proffered by the proletariat art group KAPF (Korea Artista Proleta Federacio) and those who pursued purism in painting.¹² Even artists with experience of studying abroad like Oh Chi-ho (notwithstanding Oh’s antagonism to most avant-garde art forms) explicitly criticized surrealism as “a pathological phenomenon originating from mental disorder” (Oh Chi-ho 1940). This critical atmosphere doubtless made it more difficult for the general public in Korea to understand the art form.¹³

then, writing on surrealism was intermittently translated and introduced by a number of writers and journalists who had studied in Japan.

12. However, Pak Hye-sung (2018) focused not only on the artistic style but also the artist’s “attitude” to reinterpret works by those who have previously been discussed in terms of nationalistic localism—such as Lee Jung-Seob and Lee Que-de—as well as earlier works by Yoo Young-kuk. Through this approach, Pak’s study contributed in extending the boundaries of surrealism in Korean modern art and defining its distinct characteristics.

13. In a 1936 *East Asia Daily* (*Tonga ilbo*) article that introduced surrealist paintings, the writer earnestly attempted to explain surrealism as “a psychological automatic action” that “deals with the irrational.” However, at the end of the article, he honestly confessed that “even after reading this, it would make no sense at all” (“Chò hyönsiljuüi üi hoehwa” 1936).

It was not only the art world that was unwelcoming. As soon as surrealism was introduced into the literary circle by writers and journalists, a few young writers like Kim Ki-rim, members of literary community magazine *Samsa Literature* (*Samsa munhak*), and Yi Sang (1910-37) enthusiastically and proactively attempted to interpret and experiment with the style. However, their efforts failed to yield any meaningful impact on the poetry of the time,¹⁴ or create any positive response among the public (Mun Hye-wŏn 2006, 46-50). A representative example would be the vehement response of readers to the poem “Crow’s Eye View” (*Ogamdo*), one of Yi Sang’s experimental works, that eventually led to the suspension of the poem’s serial publication in *Korea Central Daily* (*Chosŏn chungang ilbo*) (Yi Ki-chŏl 2000, 227-28).

Why was it then that surrealism could not solidify a place in Korean art world? Some possible factors include the structural problems within the Korean art community, and the reception of Western art and the intellectual atmosphere of the period. Korea received Western-style painting in the 1910s through artists who returned from their studies in Japan, and in the 1920s, Japanese academism officially took root in Korea with the foundation of Joseon Art Exhibition (*Chosŏn misul chŏllamhoe*), an annual national exhibition of colonial Korean art. Later in the late 1930s, art forms such as fauvism and abstract art began to enter the art community as opposing tendencies to this dominant mode of academism.

These were, however, not directly received from Europe and America, but through Japan. This structural problem of colonial Korea, that the inflow of new art forms was “a step behind” and “indirect” limited the possibility of the Korean art community to truly adopt, understand, and develop them. Moreover, the thirty-year period between the initial reception of western art manners such as academism and surrealism was not enough to digest all the trends that in Europe and America emerged after an accumulative process of long history and tradition. Since the Korean art community lacked any understanding of the art theories of previous generations—including Dadaism, a prerequisite to surrealism—or any experience of the avant-garde, no foundation could be established for modernism upon which such avant-garde approaches could settle.

Studies on the modern history of poetry also point to the social atmosphere of the time as another reason for surrealism’s failure in Korea. Cultural critic Mun Hye-wŏn (2006, 43) explains that there existed no psychoanalytical theory that could be applied to analyze surrealist literature. She adds that it was also

14. But the experiments of *Samsa Literature* adopted new perspectives not just on poetic techniques but also the world. For this, the coterie is appreciated for its significance in expanding the boundaries of Korean literature and providing a theoretical base for postwar surrealism movement (Chang In-su 2007, 89).

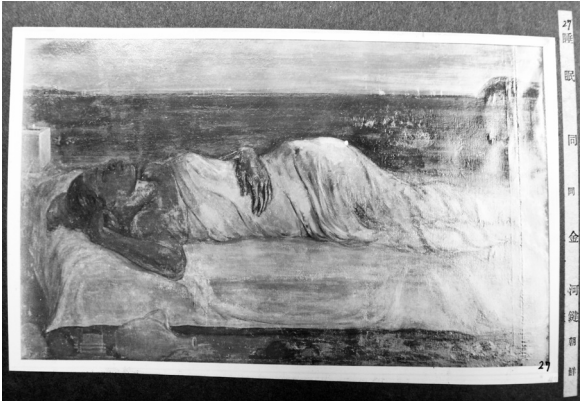
“related to the society’s emphasis on order and harmony rather than the free explosion of one’s instinct or reason.” Yi Ki-chöl (2000, 228), on the other hand, returns the question by asking whether it would have been possible to even recognize surrealism, an idea that distances itself from reality, as “an object of empathy” in colonial Korea which was suffering from the aggression of an external power. Yi even goes as far as to claim that surrealism was ultimately nothing but a “conscious play of words” or “void sound without any sense of reality.” What is certain is that in Korea, whose society at the time stressed order and was distracted by its own “problems of reality,” a surrealist pursuit of the “unreal” would have been difficult for the public to accept.

As One of a Few Korean Surrealist Painters

However, there were a few Korean students who during their studies in Japan enthusiastically experimented with surrealism. Unlike many other students in Japan, these artists mainly participated in small avant-garde group exhibitions rather than official ones. Firstly, Mun Hak-su (1916-88) enrolled in Bunka Gakuin in the mid and late 1930s, and in this more liberal school environment, he was able to work in a more avant-garde style. Mun actively participated in the Free Artist Association which focused on abstract art and received attention by exhibiting several surrealist paintings, that took forms such as a “horse,” a “cow,” and an “airplane” as their main motifs. Mun’s paintings with cows and human figures dressed in *hanbok* (Korean traditional clothing) were deemed by Japanese critiques to have “successfully embodied local beauty” (Kim Young-na 1992, 299-30).¹⁵

Kim Ha-kön (1915-?) was a student at the Tokyo Fine Arts School who, like Manabe, participated in the Art Culture Association. He exhibited his works in the Association’s second group exhibition in 1941, received the Association’s prize the next year, and became a full member in 1943. Preceding research has shed light on the influence of Dalí and de Chirico in Kim’s work (which now exists only in black and white images) (Kim Young-na 1992, 312). It is quite exceptional that Kim concentrated on surrealism, considering the conservative academism of Tokyo Fine Art School and the artist’s origins in Korea. His graduation work in Tokyo (figure 9) depicts a seminude woman lying in bed in the foreground with a coastline in the background, displaying Kim’s bold

15. See An Hye-jöng (2006) for more information on Mun Hak-su.



Source: Photographed from Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku Fuzoku Toshokan (1942).

Figure 9. Kim Ha-kōn, *Surface of the Water (Suimen)*, 1942, photographed image, picture taken from the photo album of graduation works owned by Tokyo University of the Arts Library (left)

Source: Photographed from Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku Fuzoku Toshokan (1942).

Figure 10. Jeong Gwan-choel, *Tides (Chōrō)*, 1942, photographed image, picture taken from the photo album of graduation works owned by Tokyo University of the Arts Library (right)

experimentation with a surrealist style.¹⁶

One newly revealed point of relevance is that the graduation work of Kim's classmate Jeong Gwan-choel (1916-83) also displays a similar ambience (figure 10). Notwithstanding the difficulty of accurately analyzing the two works as they exist only in old black and white photos, the motifs of horizon and waves, spilled jar, and the expression of shadow create a somewhat dreamy scene in both images. The original intention of the artists is not known, but considering that the other students of the same graduating class followed the normal custom and submitted more realistic paintings of a seated figure, these works by Kim and Jeong are certainly distinctive. Moreover, both works are set at the seaside and depict a spilled jar. It can be assumed from their future foundation of the "Red Soil Group" (Hwangt'ohoe) that there was a certain level of exchange between the two artists during their years in Japan. Because Kim Ha-kōn's relationship with the Art Culture Association started before graduation, it is highly possible that it was Kim's influence that triggered Jeong Gwan-choel's

16. This work was submitted to the fourth Art Culture Association's group exhibition in 1943.

interest in surrealism.

Another reason for surrealism's lack of presence in Korea could be conjectured from the future professional paths of the students who worked in a surrealist style in Japan. After returning to Korea, Mun Hak-su and Jeong Gwan-choel went back to their hometown of P'yŏngyang. With the establishment of the North Korean government, they conformed to the new regime and turned to socialist realism. Kim Ha-kŏn, on the other hand, went missing during the Korean War. From this, it is possible to conclude that surrealism could not truly develop in Korea because, in addition to the abovementioned structural issues, the successful fostering of the style by these young artists was frustrated by the very real problems of the country, not least the civil war and eventual division of the Peninsula. For these reasons, Manabe Hideo, who remained in Japan after the Pacific War and continued to produce art, ultimately became the Korean artist who worked in a surrealist style for the longest period. And in this regard alone, Manabe could be considered as a noteworthy figure who broadened the scope of art produced by Koreans during the many vicissitudes of the twentieth century.

Conclusion

As set out above, Manabe Hideo is one of only a few Korean surrealists and an important figure who extended the spectrum of modern Korean art production. At the same time, the artist's identification of himself as a "Japanese" rather than "Korean" makes his existence even more fascinating. His works do not display any local color or subject matter reminiscent of Chosŏn, thematic approaches common to most Zainichi Korean artists of the time. Rather, his repetition of motifs like the destroyed "fighter plane with the Japanese national flag (*Hinomaru*)" and his face painted over the plane expresses the particular Japanese sentiment of remorse over "the defeat in war."¹⁷ Moreover, in his series of works retrospective of the conflict, the "end of war" state is depicted not in relation to Korea's independence but from the perspective of Japanese people who are filled with shock, grief, and remorse at the destruction of the foundation of their lives.¹⁸

17. This tendency is displayed in works like *Landscape with Plane* (*Hikōki no aru fūkei*, 1955), *After Country Perishes* (*Kuni yabure te*, 1969), and *Untitled* (*Mudai*, 1983) currently owned by the artist's family.

18. As reflected in paintings like *Up on the Hill: Tokyo Air Raid* (*Oka no ue kara: Tokyo kūshū*, 1982) and *Up on the Hill: Thirty-Seven Years Since* (*Oka no ue kara: are kara 37-nen*, 1982).

This tendency can also be discovered in Manabe's writings. In one example, the artist states how he felt pain at the sight of the bright red *Hinomaru* of a Japanese jet, which once had much more value than human life, tumbling down into a field.¹⁹ In the personal statement he submitted to Yokota Air base Manabe also writes:

Until recently I originally had Japanese nationality, but after the war, with Korea's independence, I had to forgo this status. In order to reside in Japan, I transferred my family register by means of adoption to a Japanese family, and created a new register in Ome-shi, Tokyo. (Manabe n.d.)²⁰

Here, Manabe writes as if he had to forfeit his "Japanese nationality," and gives the impression that he originally considered himself a Japanese or was desperate to be recognized as such. This collection of works and statements clearly distinguish Manabe's case from the stereotypical description of first-generation Zainichi Koreans as primarily Korean "nationalist" or "inclined to return to homeland."

As outlined, Manabe Hideo arrived alone in Japan at sixteen and spent his formative adult life in Japan. It is possible that he therefore regarded "Japan" and "Chosŏn" (colonial Korea) in terms of the colonial discourse of "Japan proper" (*naichi*) and "external territory" (*gaichi*), vaguely "one mother country" or "homelands that should become one," despite the differences in discrimination that existed between Japanese and Koreans within the Japanese Empire. Moreover, Manabe's experience of sophisticated avant-garde culture in Ikebukuro Montparnasse had probably been fascinating to him as a young man who was planning his future as an artist. Therefore, after the war when he was forced to choose one nationality, Japan must have been, for both Manabe as "an individual" and "an artist," the more familiar and promising choice than Korea.

We might ask if there wouldn't have been a greater number of Koreans who identified themselves as Manabe did during the colonial period. Tonomura

19. The full text is as follows: "Japanese plane that we could not even faintly protect ... in a merciless condition, ... tumbled to the field. [The] flashing red color of the *Hinomaru* hurt my eyes. Just a few days ago, it was much more valuable than us human beings, and was something of great popularity" (Manabe 1955, 19). Also, in the list of works submitted to the fifth Art Culture Association's group exhibition (April 28-May 9, 1944, Tokyo-fu Art Museum), Manabe exhibited the painting entitled *Fighting Street Factory* (*Tatakau machi kōjō*). This title is distinguishable from Manabe's previous works in its propagandistic connotation. However, considering that this exhibition took place after Fukuzawa's arrest and during a period when the authority's censorship intensified and artists were forced to produce works that enhanced the fighting spirit, the works' contents might not have been inspired by Manabe's creative motives.

20. Text provided by the artist's family Manabe Hiroshi.

Masaru, who studies the history of Zainichi Koreans, has asked a similar question on this issue. He explains that Zainichi history has been discussed primarily in nationalistic terms by Zainichi Korean groups because their particular perspective evaluated and emphasized one's connection to "the homeland." In reality, however, the cultural identity and individual priorities of Zainichi Koreans has of course always varied from person to person, and even before Korea's independence. Just as each person's relationship with their "motherland" as well as their awareness of ideas of nation or ethnicity also differ greatly on an individual basis (Tonomura 2004, 357-58).

In this regard, Tonomura (2004) divides Zainichi Koreans of the 1930s-'40s into three categories based on their "individual" identity: 1) Those living in the Korean residential community in Japan who are more familiar with this specific "regional" culture rather than [the Korean] "mother country," and who seek Japanese society's approval of their culture as one of Japan's local cultures; 2) Those who wish to return to Korea someday, but feel that their cultural identity formed in Japan would hinder them from blending into Korea; 3) Those suffering in Japan because of their positioning as Zainichi Koreans, and who refused to naturalize as Japanese citizens despite that this might ease their marginalization, and instead maintain a nationalist stance and identify Korea as the national homeland they wish to return to. Ultimately, it is difficult to fit Manabe into any of these categories, not least as Tonomura himself has only offered three simple types. In terms of the artist's cultural identity, however, it is possible to position Manabe closely to the second category.²¹ It is of course difficult to say that most Zainichi Koreans before Korea's independence felt that they belonged to Japan. Although nationalist aspects have deliberately been emphasized and history has been edited that way after the war, a great number of records also attest that many Zainichi Koreans during the colonial period did indeed have nationalist attitude and were inclined to return to Korea.²² However, this paper argues that due to the lack of interest and discovery in relation to artists conforming to the first two of Tonomura's categories, the view on Zainichi Koreans has been skewed

21. A similar case to that of Manabe Hideo can be found in the literary community. Tachihara Masaaki (Korean name Kim Un-gyu, 1926-80) was fascinated by Japanese literature and naturalized as Japanese after the war. He first came to Japan on the occasion of his mother's remarriage, dropped out of Department of Japanese Literature at Waseda University, absorbed himself in the study of medieval Japanese literature, and began to write novels. In the 1960s he was awarded the Akutagawa Prize and Naoki Prize. He married a Japanese woman after the war and acquired Japanese nationality.

22. As an example, Oguma and Kang (2008) interviewed fifty-two first-generation Zainichi Koreans and recorded their memories of their life experiences. They found that many recounted their life through nationalist sentiment and in terms of their relationship to the homeland.

toward the third category. This is also because those who did not identify themselves in “nationalist” terms seldomly declared outwardly their will to belong to Japan or left any record of such inclination. Ultimately, studies on individual Zainichi artists are insufficient, and up to this point, Manabe Hideo is the only first-generation Zainichi Korean artist known to have worked in surrealist style. Therefore, he can be distinguished from other Zainichi artists in terms of both his lifestyle and artistic manner. In this context, this paper is meaningful as an attempt to begin to fill in this gap in Korean art history, in which surrealism currently occupies a minute part, as well as in its proposal of a new type of Zainichi Korean artist.

Manabe was an unknown artist who actually held three names: “Kim Chong-nam,” “Kaneko Hideo,” and finally “Manabe Hideo.” Considering that a person’s name is something that is most directly related to one’s identity, the act of changing one’s name could be interpreted as an expression of a strong will to abandon things familiar and embrace new changes. In the 1940s when the Japanese authority coerced Koreans to change their original names to Japanese ones, the act of changing name might have occurred on daily basis. However, for Manabe, this happened twice and even before the official enforcement. His change of name could thus be interpreted as reflecting his strong will to maintain his place in Japan. Manabe Hideo was a stranger who “desperately sought to blend himself into Japanese customs and culture.” In this context, the artist’s frequent use of motifs of animals who expose only their eyes in dense vegetation, or insects that become one with leaves through their protective coloring, could be interpreted as allusions to the artist himself who, as a Korean, lived in Japanese society, hiding behind the camouflage provided by the name “Manabe Hideo.”

Among the things the artist left behind, there was only one item related to “Chosŏn”—a photo of a scene from the play *The Tale of Spring Fragrance* (*Shunkōden*). *The Tale of Spring Fragrance* was an adaptation of a Korean classical work of the same title *Ch’unhyangjŏn*, and it was directed by Murayama Tomoyoshi (1901-77), Chang Hyŏk-ju, and was staged by Murayama’s Shinkyō Theater Troupe in Tsukiji Little Theater (March 23 to April 14, 1938). In the play, the character Ch’unhyang who defends her chastity while yearning for her lover was also a motif that alluded to the Koreans who waited for their country’s independence during the colonial period. Manabe saw the work’s staging while working part-time as a set designer. In this Japanese adaptation with Kabuki elements, Japanese actors played the role of Koreans in *hanbok*.²³ What senti-

23. Murayama Tomoyoshi formed the Shinkyō Theater Troupe in 1934 after the Proletariat

ment would “Kim Chong-nam,” who at the time was living as “Kaneko Hideo,” have felt when watching the play? Could it have been nostalgia for his homeland? Or could it have been a faint sense of relief at the possibility that “Japan” and “Chosŏn,” two countries that continued to conflict within himself, be united? And, why was it that “Manabe Hideo,” who after the war never disclosed his Korean origins even to his son, kept this photograph all his life?

The reason this study has so tenaciously dealt with Manabe Hideo’s notions of his identity is that, unlike diaspora groups in other regions, Koreans who remained in Japan are often easily subject to the old and powerful frame of being pro-Japanese, or “ch’in-Il.” Critical debates on the ongoing legacy of pro-Japanese activities are still highly salient in Korean society, and attempts to ascertain the scope and settlement of these activities will understandably continue.²⁴ However, in order to prevent a myriad more of forgotten “Manabe’s” who were powerless aliens and ordinary citizens from becoming easily confined to a pro-Japanese frame, it is important to understand their lifestyles and biographical histories as something that resulted not from any deep political tensions or great economic interests, but merely from their simple but desperate desire to live an everyday life as an ordinary person in the country they wished to live in. The existence of a man from Korea who had no desire to be called “Zainichi” but desperately struggled to live as a Japanese testifies arguably to the tough history suffered by Zainichi Koreans during the colonial period. In this way, the identity of first-generation Zainichi Koreans is very complicated, as here, the two spaces of the Korean Peninsula and Japan, as well as the two time periods of prewar and postwar, reached an impasse. It is hoped that in future research one might be able to approach the variety of personalities who lived through modern times torn between the two countries not through a single “nationalist” perspective but with greater room for understanding. And it will be a future task to excavate the wider histories of the unknown first-generation of Zainichi Korean

Theater League was disbanded. *The Tale of Spring Fragrance* which Chang Hyŏk-ju participated in as a playwright became a national topic of debate in Japan but was met with a critical response. One of these is that the play’s attempt for “decontextualization” achieved by adding Kabuki elements to a narrative from Korean traditional literature was, for Korean intellectuals, nothing but a “misappropriation of culture” (Kida 2015, 96).

24. According to National Institute of Korean Language’s Korean Standard Unabridged Dictionary, “ch’in-Il” is defined as “the act of supporting or advocating Japanese policies of invasion and plunder in collusion with the Japanese authority during the colonial period” (Kungnip Kugŏwŏn pyojun kugŏ daesajŏn, s.v. “ch’in-Il”). However, the criterion and scope of ch’in-Il has been a subject of controversy, particularly regarding whether the act includes not only aggressive “antinational crimes” but also more passive activities such as assuming Japanese names and conscription in the name of military aid.

artists, and to discover a true range of the various personalities of the era.

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