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Despite the abundance of rainfall, this month is known as the "waterless month".

Takehisa Yumeji

by H. Hara

There is a picture I cannot forget in Yumeji Kyoudo Bijyutsukan (Yumeji Art Museum) in Okayama city. A girl in red kimono mysteriously has her eyes closed. Her costume and hair style seem to be traditional at first glance, but she is in fact a symbol of a cross cultural era.



Tatsutahime, by Yumeji Takehisa

The picture was painted by Yumeji Takehisa (1884-1934). He was born in present-day Setouchi City in Okayama Prefecture and his painting style, particularly his paintings of women, are well known throughout Japan.

Looking closely at the woman in the picture, one realizes that her hair style is different from past eras. It

looks much rougher. Her red kimono is without traditional decorations, such as birds or flowers and shows a change in fashion. Her face is without rouge or other traditional make-up. She is Tatsutahime, the goddess fertility, yet she is not bound by old customs.

The era in which Yumeji lived was a time when Japan was heavily influenced by foreign culture, and the Japanese people were trying to find a balance between tradition and modernization. Yumeji captured these changes on canvas. His paintings show women in kimonos but with hints of foreign influence, or groups of women, some in kimonos, others in French couture.

I sometimes regret the loss of Japanese identity and feel sad that people who lead wholly traditional lifestyles are rare now. When I feel like that, I go to the Yumeji museum to see his girls, who managed to balance western and traditional culture so well.



The Yumeji Kyoudo Bijyutsukan (Yumeji Art Museum).
Open 9:00-17:00. Closed Mondays. Ph.086-271-1000
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