

EXPO INOKUMA

Sat. 12 April 2025 - Sun. 6 July 2025

[Inokuma here, there, and everywhere: Uncovering unknown connections and collaborations.]



All images are photos taken during the first restoration of the mural *Freedom* at JR Ueno Station in 1984.
Collection of Marugame Genichiro-Inokuma Museum of Contemporary Art

Exhibition title

EXPO INOKUMA

Date

Sat. 12 April 2025 – Sun. 6 July 2025

Closed

Mondays (except 5 May), Wed. 7 May

Venue

3F Gallery C

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— About the exhibition

This exhibition looks beyond Genichiro Inokuma's (1902-1993) celebrated work as a painter to explore his connections with famous artists, collaborations with architects, design work, and cultural contributions that emerged from these activities. Inokuma was active throughout almost the entire 20th century, with an art career spanning 70 years. While his pursuit of beauty in painting was consistent, he never ceased to evolve stylistically by embracing new modes of expression. He was active internationally, living in Paris before World War II and in New York and Hawaii in the postwar years. This exhibition traces Inokuma's extensive activities in Japan and abroad, focusing on his postwar involvement in areas other than painting. It highlights his collaborations with members of the artist group Shinseisaku-ha Kyokai's architecture section, which he co-founded in 1949; his design work and public art projects; his role in Japan-US cultural exchange during his years in New York; his connections with internationally renowned artists; and his laying the groundwork for an embrace of culture in his home prefecture of Kagawa, which contributed to its current recognition as "Art Prefecture Kagawa."

— About Genichiro Inokuma

- 1902 Born in Takamatsu, Kagawa Prefecture, where he spent his youth.
- 1921 Graduates from Marugame Middle School (now, Kagawa Prefectural Marugame Senior High School).
- 1922 Enters Tokyo Fine Arts School (now, Tokyo University of the Arts), where he studied under Takeji Fujishima.
- 1926 First selected for inclusion in the Imperial Art Academy's 7th Art Exhibition. (Until 1934, Inokuma would mainly be active in the exhibition.)
- 1927 Leaves oil painting program at Tokyo Fine Arts School.
- 1935 Organized the Dainibu-kai group with like-minded associates who also pledged not to submit work to the new Teiten as a protest against government interference, and showed work in the group's first exhibition.
- 1936 Joined artists of a similar age to form the Shinseisaku-ha Kyokai (now the Shinseisaku Kyokai), where he subsequently presented any new work.
- 1938 Studies in France (until 1940), and receives some instruction from Henri Matisse.
- 1949 Established the architecture section of the artist group Shinseisaku-ha Kyokai with architect Bunzo Yamaguchi. Painted the mural *Democracy* for Keio University's Students Hall (designed by Yoshiro Taniguchi).
- 1950 Designs "Hana-hiraku" wrapping paper for Mitsukoshi department store.
- 1951 Paints mural *Freedom* in main hall of Japanese National Railways Ueno Station (now the central concourse in JR-East Ueno Station).
- 1955 Traveled to the US and set up a studio in New York.
- 1958 Produced the ceramic work *Wa Kei Sei Jaku* for the Kagawa Prefectural Government Office's East Building (designed by Kenzo Tange).
- 1975 Gives up his New York studio, and begins spending winters in Hawaii and working the rest of the year in Tokyo.
- 1988 Donated 100 works to Kagawa Prefecture. Received an award from Kagawa Prefecture as a Person of Cultural Merit.
- 1989 Donates 1,000 of his works to the city of Marugame.
- 1991 Awarded honorary citizenship by Marugame City.
Marugame Genichiro-Inokuma Museum of Contemporary Art opens.
- 1993 Dies in Tokyo at the age of 90.



Genichiro Inokuma
photo: Akira Takahashi

Genichiro Inokuma: At the Center of a Hub of Connections

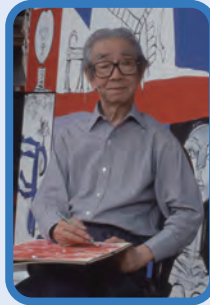
[Connections with Architects and Designers]

A One-Man Cultural Hub for Art and Architecture in Kagawa Prefecture and Japan

- Isamu Noguchi
- Kenzo Tange
- Bunzo Yamaguchi
- Yoshiro Taniguchi
- Yoshio Taniguchi
- Junzo Yoshimura
- Isamu Kenmochi
- Masanori Kaneko*

*Former Kagawa Prefecture governor, paved the way for modern and contemporary architecture in the prefecture

Genichiro Inokuma



Introductions and collaborations

[Design and Public art]

- “Hana-hiraku” wrapping paper for Mitsukoshi
- the giant mural *Freedom* at Ueno Station in Tokyo

Creative work

Key figure in founding

Marugame Genichiro-Inokuma Museum of Contemporary Art (MIMOCA)

Friendship

[in New York] (1955 - 75)

Artist

- Isamu Noguchi
- Jasper Johns
- Robert Rauschenberg
- Mark Rothko
- Alexander Calder
- Yoko Ono

Architect

- Walter Gropius
- Bernard Rudofsky

Designer

- George Nakashima
- Charles and Ray Eames

Musicians

- John Cage

Choreographers

- Merce Cunningham

Point

- 01 Focus on Inokuma’s role in establishing the Shinseisaku-ha Kyokai architecture section, collaborations with architects, and friendship with sculptor Isamu Noguchi
- 02 Highlighting activities that brought beauty to everyday spaces, including the Mitsukoshi department store’s wrapping paper “Hana-hiraku” and the mural *Freedom* at JR Ueno Station
- 03 Illuminating Inokuma’s role in Japan-US cultural exchange and connections with world-famous artists during his 20 years in New York
- 04 Showcasing cultural contributions in his home prefecture of Kagawa that led to its recognition as “Art Prefecture Kagawa,” including former the Takamatsu Art Museum and the Kagawa Prefectural Government Office (now the East Building)
- 05 Introduction to the Genichiro-Inokuma Museum of Contemporary Art (MIMOCA), opened in 1991 and designed by Yoshio Taniguchi

Exhibition content

Prologue: Establishment of Shinseisaku-ha Kyokai

In 1935, Minister of Education Genji Matsuda's abrupt reorganization of the Teiten (Imperial Academy Exhibition) sent shockwaves through Japan's Western-style painting circles. Opposing state control of the art world, Genichiro Inokuma broke away from official exhibitions and committed to a purer pursuit of art. In 1936 he founded Shinseisaku-ha Kyokai with like-minded colleagues, including Ryohei Koiso and Toshio Nakanishi, and he continued to exhibit with the group throughout his life.

1. Design and Architecture for Living

During World War II, Inokuma and members of Shinseisaku-ha Kyokai evacuated to Tsukui-gun, Kanagawa Prefecture (now Sagami-hara City), where they formed close ties with admiring local residents. There were even plans to establish an artists' village, and the architect Bunzo Yamaguchi, a close associate of Inokuma, is said to have completed its design. Around the same time, a proposal emerged for a new art museum in Inokuma's home prefecture of Kagawa. At his recommendation, Yamaguchi was appointed as the architect, and in 1949, former the Takamatsu Art Museum opened. That same year, Inokuma and Yamaguchi established an architecture section within Shinseisaku-ha Kyokai, with forward-looking architects Kunio Maekawa, Kenzo Tange, Yoshiro Taniguchi, Junzo Yoshimura, Kiyoshi Ikebe, and Tetsuro Okada becoming members. Shinseisaku-ha Kyokai embraced "design for living" as its guiding principle, and actively fostered collaboration among painters, sculptors, and architects. Inokuma himself contributed murals to architectural spaces, including works for Yoshiro Taniguchi's Keio University Student Hall (1949) and Kenzo Tange's Kagawa Prefectural Government Office Building (1958).



The founding members of Shinseisaku-ha Kyokai, 1936



"Murals and Me," an article by Genichiro Inokuma in the magazine *ART*, January 1950. Photo shows Inokuma at work on *Democracy*.



Keio University Students Hall the mural *Democracy*, 1949 photo: Akira Takahashi



Tokyo Imperial Theatre stained glass *Movement*, 1966 photo: Akira Takahashi

2.Design for Living: Design and Public Art

After the war, Inokuma undertook numerous design projects, including posters, magazine covers, illustrations, and book bindings. His works reflected his belief in “design for living,” and the idea that “painting should not be exclusive, but should benefit the general public by providing delight and insights to many people.” Inokuma’s philosophy evidently fueled his desire to bring beauty into everyday spaces through painting. In 1950, Inokuma designed the Mitsukoshi Department Store’s signature wrapping paper “Hana-hiraku” for that year’s Christmas season. The curving red forms were arranged with careful deliberation so that boxes of any shape and size could be elegantly wrapped. The design became so popular that it was adopted as the store’s standard wrapping paper, and has been in continuous use for over 70 years. In 1951, Inokuma painted the monumental mural *Freedom* for the central ticket gates of JR Ueno Station. Cherished by the public and preserved through multiple restorations, the mural remains in its original location today.



“Hana-hiraku” pattern paper for Mitsukoshi wrapping paper, 1950



JR Ueno Station mural *Freedom*, 1951
photo: Akira Takahashi

Exhibition content

3. To New York

When Inokuma moved to New York in 1955, his painting style dramatically shifted from figurative to abstract. He was represented by the Willard Gallery, where he had 10 solo exhibitions and continuously presented ambitious new work. During his approximately 20 years in New York, he played a key role in Japan-US cultural exchange in both the public and private spheres. He formed connections with leading artists in various disciplines, and hosted many gatherings at his home. At a time when overseas travel was still uncommon among the Japanese populace, many travelers from Japan to New York, from politicians and business leaders to ordinary tourists, sought out Mr. and Ms. Inokuma through word of mouth. Showing generous hospitality even to first-time guests, the couple became known as “civilian ambassadors.”



Invitation to first solo exhibition at the Willard Gallery, 1956

Examples of public contributions to Japan-US cultural exchange

- | | |
|------|--|
| 1956 | Oversaw interior decoration for Japan Airlines New York branch (interior by Junzo Yoshimura). |
| 1957 | Appointed board member of the America-Japan Society, cultural exchange advisor to the Consulate-General of Japan in New York, and cultural exchange advisor to the Japan External Trade Organization. |
| 1958 | Painted a mural for the Takashimaya Department Store New York branch (architectural design by Junzo Yoshimura). |
| 1959 | Oversaw the display for the <i>Rosanjin</i> exhibition at the Japan House Gallery, New York. The poster was by Shiko Munakata, who was visiting the US at the time. Munakata also held a solo exhibition at the Willard Gallery, with Ms. Inokuma assisting with installation. Inokuma designed the tea room and garden display gifted to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston by the Urasenke school of tea ceremony, commemorating the formation of a sister-city affiliation between Kyoto and Boston. |
| 1960 | Designed the catalogue for the USA-Japan Centennial Year celebration. |

Exhibition content

4. Laying the Foundations of “Art Prefecture Kagawa”

Inokuma's collaborations with architects, which began in the architecture section of Shinseisaku-ha Kyokai, flourished in his home prefecture of Kagawa. The Kagawa Prefectural Government Office Building (now the East Building), completed in 1958 and designated as a National Important Cultural Property in 2022, was realized after Inokuma emphasized the importance of excellent architecture to then-Governor Masanori Kaneko and introduced him to the architect Kenzo Tange, a rising star at the time. The building became one of Tange's early masterworks, celebrated for its interpretation of traditional Japanese architecture in reinforced concrete, its open piloti and lobby, and its beautifully designed furniture. Inokuma made the ceramic wall piece *Wa Kei Sei Jaku* for the first-floor lobby, while Isamu Kenmochi, a member of the Shinseisaku-ha Kyokai architecture section, designed some of the furniture. As Tange's international reputation grew, the Prefectural Office Building attracted increasing numbers of visitors from abroad. Inokuma introduced American dignitaries, including John D. Rockefeller III, to Governor Kaneko. Through Inokuma's efforts, craft items from Kagawa began to be sold at high-end stores in New York. When Kaneko dispatched sculptor Masayuki Nagare, who had a studio in Kagawa, along with the stonemasons' group Sekisho-juku to New York for the World's Fair Japan Pavilion, he entrusted Inokuma with looking after the visitors. Kagawa's artistic network, which began with the Prefectural Office Building, continued to expand. With a profound understanding of the importance of art, reflecting Inokuma's influence, Kaneko committed resources to improving architecture and industrial design in the prefecture, and came to be nicknamed “the Architecture Governor” and “the Design Governor.” He associated with artists from Japan and abroad, and was even featured in Time magazine. Inokuma fostered further connections in Kagawa, leading to the aforementioned former the Takamatsu Art Museum designed by Bunzo Yamaguchi, and bringing his close friend the sculptor Isamu Noguchi to the prefecture. These efforts by Inokuma and Kaneko laid the foundation for the present-day “Art Prefecture Kagawa,” which hosts the Setouchi Triennale and is home to many architectural landmarks.



Kagawa Prefectural Government Office East Building tiled mural *Wa Kei Sei Jaku*, 1958 photo: Akira Takahashi



Rexam Hall (Kagawa Kenmin Hall) mural *Message for the 21 Century*, 1988 photo: Akira Takahashi

Exhibition content

5. MIMOCA

In 1987, as part of its 90th-anniversary celebrations, Marugame City approached Inokuma about establishing a museum in his honor. Inokuma agreed to support the project on the condition that it be a top-quality museum, not merely memorializing him but also actively presenting contemporary art. He also requested a convenient location next to the train station, a beautifully designed architectural space, an emphasis on children's education, and a role as a "health resort for the spirit" where people could find relief from daily fatigue. For the architectural design, Inokuma recommended Yoshio Taniguchi (1937-2024, the son of the aforementioned illustrious architect Yoshiro Taniguchi) to the city of Marugame, and the painter and the architect realized their shared ideals through extensive discussions. The result was a spacious venue bathed in natural light that embodied Inokuma's vision of a "health resort for the spirit." Opened in 1991, the Marugame Genichiro-Inokuma Museum of Contemporary Art (MIMOCA) stands as the culmination of Inokuma's career, reflecting his lifelong pursuit of beauty and his dedication to "increasing the number of people who understand beauty. Those who understand beauty will seek peace."



MIMOCA photo : Yoshiro Masuda



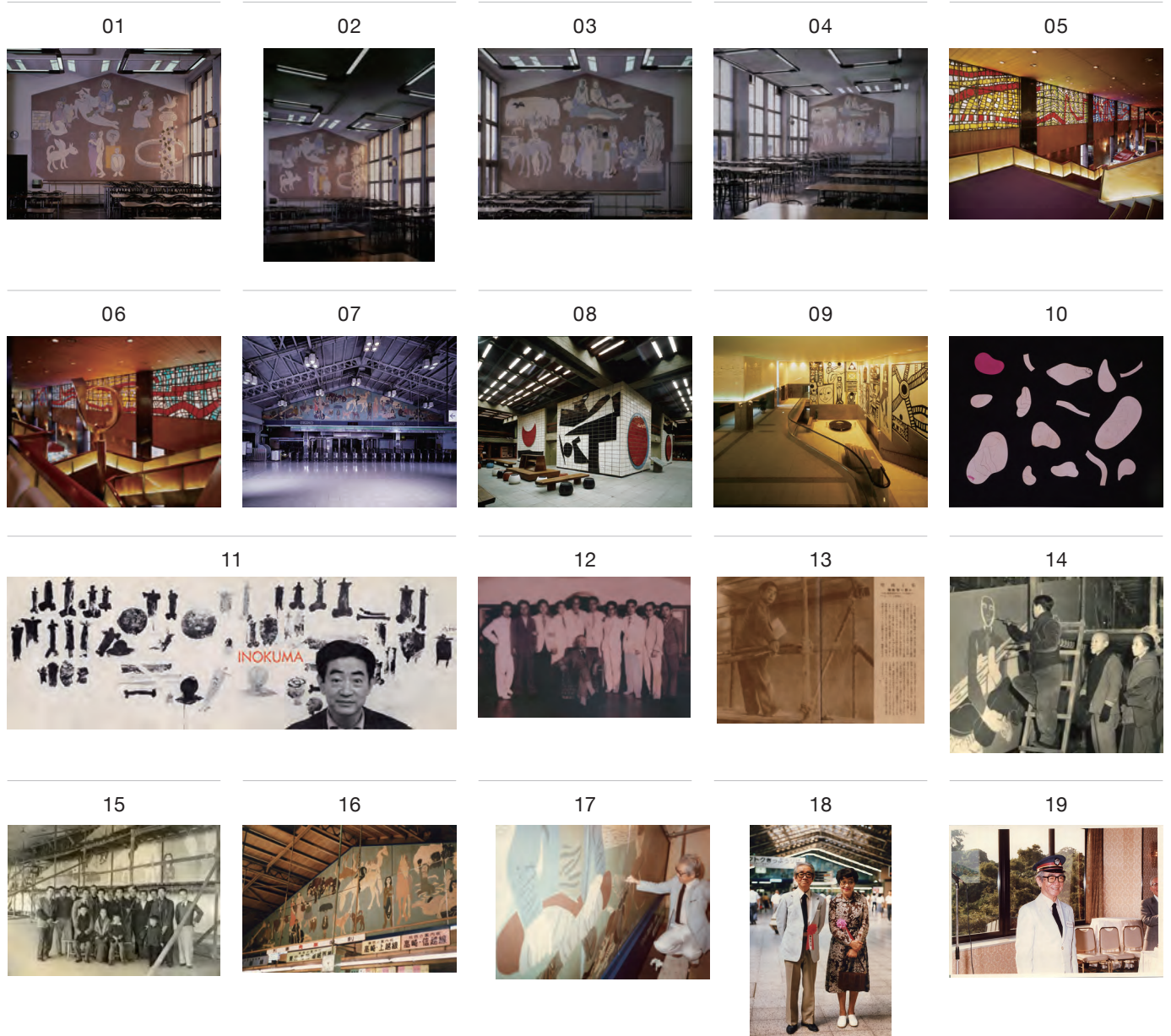
Yoshio Taniguchi and Genichiro Inokuma, October 26, 1991

Epilogue: MoMA

The architectural success of MIMOCA led to Yoshio Taniguchi's selection as the architect for a redesign of The Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA), completed in 2004. During Inokuma's time in New York, Taniguchi was studying at Harvard University, and Inokuma would take him to visit MoMA whenever he visited the Inokuma residence. While working on MIMOCA, the two often discussed the idea of realizing a museum similar to MoMA. Eventually, this led to an architectural link between Kagawa Prefecture and New York City. MIMOCA continues to attract many visitors from Japan and abroad who come to experience its architecture.

Exhibition title	EXPO INOKUMA
Organized by	Marugame Genichiro-Inokuma Museum of Contemporary Art, The MIMOCA Foundation, The Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan, JAPAN Arts Council
Venue	3F Gallery C
Date	Sat. 12 April 2025 – Sun. 6 July 2025
Hours	10:00-18:00 (Admission until 30 minutes before closing time)
Close	Mondays (except 5 May), Wed. 7 May
Admission	<p>Exhibition admission fees will be updated as of Saturday, April 12, 2025.</p> <p>Due to rising utility costs and personnel expenses, the MIMOCA will revise its exhibition admission fees as follows. Along with this revision, a new City Resident Discount (for Marugame citizens) will be introduced.</p> <p>【Special exhibition】*Ticket valid for admission to concurrent the permanent collection. Adults ¥1,500 (City Resident Discount: ¥900) Students (college, university) ¥1,000 (City Resident Discount: ¥600) ○Group Use(Discount rates for groups of 20 or more.) Adults ¥1,200 (City Resident Discount: ¥900) Students (college, university) ¥800 (City Resident Discount: ¥600)</p> <p>【Permanent collection】 Adults ¥300 (City Resident Discount: exemption) Students (college, university) ¥200 (City Resident Discount: exemption) ○Group Use(Discount rates for groups of 20 or more.) Adults ¥240 (City Resident Discount: exemption) Students (college, university) ¥160 (City Resident Discount: exemption)</p> <p>(Notes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · City residents must present identification (driver's license, insurance card, etc.) at the first-floor reception desk when visiting. · The city resident discount cannot be combined with other discounts, including group discounts. · With the introduction of the city resident discount, advance tickets will be discontinued. · There are no changes to MIMOCA FRIEND membership benefits. · Children (under 18), residents of Marugame who are 65 and over, and all visitors with a physical disability certificate are admitted free.

— Images for Press Use



01-04 Keio University mural *Democracy*, 1949, photo: Akira Takahashi

05-06 Tokyo Imperial Theatre stained glass *Movement*, 1966, photo: Akira Takahashi

07 JR Ueno Station mural *Freedom*, 1951, photo: Akira Takahashi

08 Kagawa Prefectural Government Office East Building tiled mural *Wa Kei Sei Jaku*, 1958, photo: Akira Takahashi

09 Rexam Hall (Kagawa Kenmin Hall) mural *Message for the 21 Century*, 1988, photo: Akira Takahashi

10 "Hana-hiraku" pattern paper for Mitsukoshi wrapping paper, 1950

11 Invitation to first solo exhibition at the Willard Gallery, 1956

12 The founding members of Shinseisaku-ha Kyokai, 1936

13 "Murals and Me," an article by Genichiro Inokuma in the magazine *ART*, January 1950. Photo shows Inokuma at work on *Democracy*.

14 Genichiro Inokuma painting the mural *Freedom* at JR Ueno Station, 1951

15 Group photo during production of the mural *Freedom* at JR Ueno Station (Inokuma is fifth from the left in the center row), 1951

16-19 All images are photos taken during the first restoration of the mural *Freedom* at JR Ueno Station in 1984.

Collection of Marugame Genichiro-Inokuma Museum of Contemporary Art