

Genichiro Inokuma : Inokuma-san

Date: Saturday, April 12–Sunday, July 6, 2025

Venue: Marugame Genichiro-Inokuma Museum of Contemporary Art, Gallery B

Organized by Marugame Genichiro-Inokuma Museum of Contemporary Art / The MIMOCA Foundation

In the picture book *Inokuma-san* (Shogakukan, 2006), poet Shuntaro Tanikawa (1931–2024) introduces painter Genichiro Inokuma (1902–1993). This exhibition features Tanikawa's words from the book, along-side paintings by Inokuma.

MIMOCA commissioned Tanikawa to write *Inokuma-san* to introduce the artist to a young audience. A box of archive material was dispatched to the poet, with the request to create a book for children that would be akin to visiting the museum on a school trip and enjoying the works with classmates. A week later, editor Noriko Ichikawa got in touch to say that Tanikawa was thinking of taking the job. A fortnight or so after that, Tanikawa himself telephoned, with just one question. We settled in to wait for the text, assuming he would now start thinking about it, only for Ichikawa to take delivery of a draft the very next day. This was Christmas 2004.

Tanikawa's draft version included the layout of words and pictures for each two-page spread.

*Inokuma-san who from childhood loved drawing pictures has drawn many that are charming.*1
(Photo from childhood and in studio in later years/collage of pictures painted as a child etc.)*

It was an elegant, delightful verse in 253 hiragana characters, that captured the whole of Inokuma perfectly. When the book went to print, we told Tanikawa he should be immensely proud of it. He replied:

Even MoMA couldn't produce a picture book like this!

After the book's release, people began to refer to Genichiro Inokuma affectionately as "Inokuma-san." This spread so naturally it seems like he has been called that for a very long time, but in fact was Tanikawa's name for him. To date eight "Inokuma-san" exhibitions based on this book have been staged around Japan, starting with MIMOCA in 2007. Tanikawa's text is still responsible today for introducing Inokuma's paintings to countless children.

*1 Shuntaro Tanikawa, *Inokuma-san*, trans. William I. Elliot & Kazuo Kawamura.

*2 *MIMOCA NEWS 014* (The MIMOCA Foundation, 2006).

Kanako Furuno (Senior Curator)