

Who is Kinjiro Kida? — A painter who painted the nature of Iwanai all his life.

He is one of the leading artists in the Hokkaido Western painting world. Born in Iwanai in 1893 (Meiji 26), he developed a passion for painting while continuing fishing, and through his fateful encounter with Takeo Arishima, he decided to spend his life in Iwanai and continue painting. Before long, Arishima wrote a novel about his relationship with Kida and published it as *'Umare Izuru Nayami'* and became known as a model painter. Encouraged by Arishima, he continued to paint the nature around Iwanai in his hard life as a fisherman, and after the death of Takeo Arishima, he abandoned his family business and fishing, to devote his life to painting. In 1954 (Showa 29) his earlier works were burnt in the Big Iwanai Fire (80% of the city was destroyed by fire.), following the fire he continued to create actively and lived his life, cultivating his own painting environment without leaving his hometown of Iwanai. He died of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1962 (Showa 37) at the age of 69.

Encounter with Arishima

As a leading novelist of the Shirakaba school and author of the works *'Cain no Matsuei'* and *'Aru Onna'*, Arishima was a thinker who operated a farm in Niseko Town, as well as a person who left a great mark in the theater and art world, which is indispensable to Hokkaido culture. He was born in 1878 (Meiji 11) in Koishikawa Ward, Tokyo Metropolis, and grew up in long distinguished family, his father was a junior clerk of Customs Bureau of the Ministry of Finance and his mother was from a feudal retainer of Nanbu Domain who helped the Tokugawa Shogunate in the disturbances of the Restoration.

Kinjiro Kida was born in 1910 (Meiji 43), he was the second son of 6 brothers of the Kida family, who operated a fishery in Iwanai town, famous for Herring fishing. He was forced to drop out of Keihoku Junior High School in Tokyo, in order to help his family's struggling business in 1893 (Meiji 26), and to return to Iwanai.

The encounter between Arishima and Kida, who were born from opposite families, was truly significant.

On his way back to Iwanai, Kida visited the 3rd exhibition of 'Kuroyuri Association' held at Tohoku Imperial University Agricultural College (Current Hokkaido University) in Sapporo and was deeply impressed by Arishima's painting *'Tasogare no umi'*. Arishima returned from a trip to Europe and became a professor of English at the university's preparatory course.

A few days later, Kida visited Arishima's house on the right bank of the Toyohira River, which he happened to find with all his paintings. At first, Arishima did not have a good impression of Kida who demanded he look at his paintings. After viewing them Kida changed his mind about Arishima and thought he had a unique perspective.

This was the start of an exchange between Arishima and Kida.

Although Kida returned to Iwanai and continued to work as a fisherman, he could not give up his passion for painting. Arishima, having left Christianity and awakened to socialist thought, agonized over his contradiction of exploiting tenant farmers as a farmer himself. They were both in a state of distress.

A few days later, Kida sent Arishima with sketches drawn on 3 hand-made sketch books, Arishima said, "A serious natural portrait can only be painted by a real artist". The phrase "I want to put a lot of paint on the mountain, and draw a mountain rising from the ground to the sky" was enclosed in the letter from Kida, his desire for nature was deeply ingrained in Arishima's mind. The letter also said, "I can't draw in Hokkaido. I want you to find a job because I want to go to Tokyo and study painting while finding some suitable work."

Arishima encouraged Kida by saying, "It is certainly better to be there and look at the nature and people of the place faithfully and earnestly". Kida replied, "The world brightened suddenly" and decided to stay in Iwanai.

This was the decisive event that made Kida 'Iwanai painters'.

Arishima projected himself into Kida's mental anguish though it was a completely different dimension, and '*Imare Izuru Nayami*' was published in 1918 (Taisho 7).

In 1923, Takeo ARISHIMA committed suicide with his lover at a villa in Karuizawa (Taisho 12).

Arishima's sudden death made Kida think seriously, it was an opportunity to abandon fishing and concentrate on painting.

However, the general recognition that "a model painter in a novel" put great pressure on Kida who lived as a "painter".

Nevertheless, Kida continued to struggle for about 30 years between the conflicting proposition that Arishima, who he deeply admired, should faithfully obey him throughout his life.

Under these circumstances, Kida's spiritual world as a painter was gradually constructed, and even after his second big turning point, when the Iwanai Fire of 1954 (Showa 29) destroyed about 1,500 of his paintings, it was an opportunity to develop his own painting style.

The encounter with Arishima led to the discovery of 'Painter Kinjiro Kida'. The truth of the meeting of the two great souls is still breathing in Kida's work.