

The Kichijoji Art Museum

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Situated in the heart of Kichijoji in Musashino and just a short walk away from the station, the Kichijoji Art Museum is worth seeing despite its relatively small size, thanks to the originality of its exhibitions. The low entrance fee is one of its best points – you can visit the museum for the modest sum of 100 yen (add 200 yen if you want to see the temporary exhibition, which is renewed frequently). In this way, you can stop at the museum as you pass by and enjoy a cheap cultural excursion every time you feel like it. It is the perfect place to enjoy art in a tranquil atmosphere even if you have a short attention span. Also, the museum is open every day of the week, opening at 10:00 and closing at 19:30.

Many Japanese artists are represented. You can find the permanent exhibitions in its two first rooms, presenting works by Yozo Hamaguchi and Hideo Hagiwara. This collection gathers two series of woodcut prints and copperplate etchings by these artists.

The first exhibition, called “Black Expression” (黒の表情) focuses on Hamaguchi. It opens with an explanation of the process of copper-plate engraving, which is the technique he used for creating his works. His prints, of which there are around fifteen, are all black and white still-life engravings, representing geometrical forms and objects from daily life. For example, in *Ears of Corn and Lemon* (1959), you can see that the artist plays with different tones of gray to bring out the objects from their fully-black background.

We find in the same room more traditional works, reminding one of the *Ukyio-e* genre, realized by Noda Kuuraura, an artist who lived in Kichijoji.

Hagiwara’s woodcut prints and copperplate etchings present a contrast, as they are more lively and colorful, yet remain very geometrical and still depict simple objects as well. The artist plays with the material, varies between warm and cold tones, and creates a different atmosphere. The 13 abstract prints present in the “Wood and color, copper and wire” (木と色、銅と線) exhibition differ strongly from Hamaguchi’s work, and it is interesting to compare the styles of these two artists, which is very different despite the fact that they used similar techniques.

The museum also possesses a bigger room devoted to temporary exhibitions. Currently the works shown are prints being in keeping with the *Ukyio-e* tradition but also oil and aquarelle paintings realized by Hiromitsu Nakazawa. This ends on the 27th of January.

If, because of its size, the museum may be lacking a huge selection of works, this is offset by having an interesting collection in a calm place, where it is pleasant to stroll during your free time.