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YOSHIDA, Akiko. Eliminated Hand: Still Life Paintings by KISHIDA Ryūsei of 1918

This paper has two purposes. The first is to clarify the relations between three still life paintings by Kishida Ryūsei of 1918—titled *Still Life with Hand*, *Still Life with Lyric*, *Still Life of White Vase and Compote and Four Apples*—with his concept of “Internal Beauty.” Kishida had planned to send the three paintings to the 5th Nika Exhibition, but *Still Life with Hand* was rejected. The titles *Still Life (1)* and *Still Life (2)* were listed in the catalogue of the exhibition, and it is certain that *Still Life with Lyric* was accepted as *Still Life (1)*. However, there have been no suggestions put forward regarding the identity of *Still Life (2)*. In this essay, *Still Life (2)* is argued to be identical with *Still Life of White Vase and Compote and Four Apples* according to the coincidence between the painting and Kishida’s writings. The second purpose of the essay is to examine the origin of the hand depicted in *Still Life with Hand*. Though the painting was rejected and forgotten for a long time, the motif seems to reflect Kishida’s unique ideas relating to contemporary aesthetics.

The simultaneity of Kishida’s three still lifes and his writings on the three elements of “Internal Beauty”—namely, Decorative Beauty, Realistic Beauty, and Imagined Beauty—suggest a close relationship between the paintings and his writings. According to Kishida’s writings in 1918, *Still Life with Hand* and *Still Life with Lyric* are each connected with Imagined and Decorative Beauty, while *Still Life of White Vase and Compote and Four Apples* was said to have been painted in a “genuinely realistic manner.” These writings were published at the same time as the three still lifes were painted, before the Nika Exhibition. “Internal Beauty” was reprinted in Kishida’s monumental book, *Ryūsei Gashū oyobi Geijutsukan* (劉生画集及芸術観) published in 1920 as representing his key concepts. Here *Still Life of White Vase and Compote and Four Apples* is discussed as one of his masterpieces, while *Still Life with Hand* is omitted. Considering the importance of *Still Life of White Vase and Compote and Four Apples* to his career and its strong relationship with the concept of “Realistic Beauty” as a part of “Internal Beauty,” it seems valid to regard *Still Life of White Vase and Compote and Four Apples* as constituting *Still Life (2)*.

Still Life with Hand has been underestimated as an exceptional work, but there are some reasons to consider the motif of the hand as an important motif in reflecting his original views regarding still life painting and art itself. In 1916, two years before making *Still Life with Hand*, Kishida painted *Apple on the Top of a Jug*. The jug depicted in *Apple on the Top of a Jug* is the same one he used in *Jug*, which was finished six months earlier; the handle of the jug was broken in the later work. According to an essay on aesthetics titled “Handle” by Georg Simmel, translated into Japanese in 1913, the depiction of the broken handle can be interpreted as a sublimation of the beauty of the jug depicted in the painting with the beauty of painting itself. In addition, *Apple on the Top of a Jug* was followed by a painting, titled *Hand*, in which a hand of his wife was depicted alone. The hand painted coincidentally with these conceptual still lifes can be interpreted as a representation of the human mind responding to the beauty of objects. *Still Life with Hand* developed the idea of *Hand* and improved it. Depicting a hand moving toward a fruit, Kishida suggests that every motif in still life painting can be moved. While the artificial character of still life paintings had long made them taboo subjects for modern Japanese painters, Kishida appreciated the beauty of still life painting because of its artificial nature. *Still Life with Hand* should be considered one of the best modern paintings in Japan, for it expresses clearly the artist’s self-referential attitude in an original way.

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