

Kiyoshi Awazu

Overview

Born 1929 in Tokyo, died 2009 in Kawasaki. Self-taught in painting and design.

He was an acclaimed self-taught graphic designer who contributed countless posters for cinema, exhibitions, and theater. Seeing beyond the boundaries that separated the arts, Awazu also practiced exhibition design and made experimental films. He was also an advocate for social issues. Winning the grand prize at the Nissenbi (Japan Advertising Artists' Club) Exhibition for his poster, Umi wo kaese [海を返せ (give back our sea)] in 1955 became the impetus for Awazu seriously pursuing his practice in graphic design. He started his own design firm in 1964. Awazu organized Expose 1968, an art symposium that took place at the Sogetsu Art Center, where both Ichiyonagi and Kurokawa participated. In 1970, he was charged with the artistic direction of the Theme Plaza at Expo '70. Across multiple years, Awazu was a frequent participant at the International Design Conference in Aspen as panelist, jury and exhibiting artist. He has won multiple awards including sekai firumu posutā contesuto [世界フィルムポスターコンテスト (world film poster contest)] in 1958, won special prize at the International Poster Biennale in Warsaw in 1970 and 1982, and won grand prize at the Sekai de mottomo utsukushii hon no tenrankai [世界で最も美しい本の展覧会 (the world's most beautiful books exhibition)] in 1974. Exhibitions featuring Awazu have been held at Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (1986); Kawasaki City Museum, Kanagawa (1988); Museum of Modern Art, New York (1989, 2012); Japanese American Cultural and Community Center, Los Angeles (1992); Printing Museum, Tokyo (2000, 2002, 2006); Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2017); and 21st Century Museum of Art Kanazawa, Ishikawa (2007, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019). His works are in permanent collections of 21st Century Museum of Art Kanazawa, Ishikawa; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and Museum of Modern Art, New York.

He continued to question not only images and the act of communication, but also human existence itself within the entirety of all living things.

The foresight and totality of his creative activity still has a major impact today.