

The Munakata Shiko Memorial Museum

Munakata Shiko (1903–1975) is one of the most significant and influential Japanese artists of the twentieth century. He specialized in woodblock printmaking, although his repertoire also included painting, ceramics, and calligraphy, and he had close ties to the Mingei (folk arts) movement. Born in Aomori in northern Honshu, Munakata moved to Tokyo as a young adult to pursue painting. Fleeing the air raids on Tokyo at the end of the war, Munakata moved his family in 1945 to Fukumitsu in what is now Nanto city. Although he lived in Toyama Prefecture for only about seven years before moving back to Tokyo, Munakata had a great influence on the area, and a museum was established in Fukumitsu to commemorate his life and art. Munakata's work has also been showcased internationally at renowned art museums, including New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and Museum of Modern Art. Significant milestones in his career include winning the Grand Prix at the 1956 Venice Biennale and receiving the Order of Cultural Merit from the government of Japan in 1970.

Munakata's prints are categorized as *moku-hanga* woodblock art, a technique he learned from another Japanese printmaker, Hiratsuka Un'ichi. Much of his work was inspired by Zen Buddhism, which he practiced, and his artwork features religious subjects as well as themes inspired by nature and traditional Japanese folklore.

The Munakata Shiko Memorial Museum has two floors of Munakata's artworks, including large-scale prints as well as some of his calligraphy works. In addition to the museum, the area is also home to Riu Gasai, Munakata's former residence, and Shogedo, a traditional Japanese house that has been converted into a showcase for folk art. The Mingei folk art movement revolved around beautiful, practical objects and artwork created by artisans. Mingei folk art was linked to Munakata because the founder of the movement, Yanagi Soetsu, was one of the influential figures who helped boost Munakata's art career by displaying his work in the Japan Folk Crafts Museum (Mingeikan) in Tokyo, which Yanagi founded. Munakata's former residence, Riu Gasai, is located across from the museum and Shogedo. Visitors can tour the house as well as see Munakata's personal touches to the home, such as artwork that was painted

and drawn on the doors and walls, even in the bathroom.