

## **Kano Museum of Art, Yasugi City**

This museum, which stands in a forested valley near the banks of the Iinashi River in the Hirose district of the city of Yasugi, is devoted to the life and work of the painter Kano Kanrai (1904–1977). Kano trained as a Western-style oil painter until 1938, when he was sent with the Japanese Imperial Army to Shaanxi Province in China as a war artist commissioned to produce patriotic paintings. While in China, he took up ink painting and calligraphy, which became his primary focus in later life. Kano's wartime experience led him to become a peace activist after Japan's surrender, and in 1949, he began petitioning the Philippine government for amnesty for former members of the Japanese military who had been convicted of war crimes. He sent over 300 remorseful letters to Philippine government leaders, appealing for peace and asking for "forgiveness for the unforgivable." His patient and persistent efforts finally bore fruit in 1953, when then president Elpidio Quirino declared amnesty for 105 Japanese war criminals. Kano and Quirino, whose wife and three children had been killed in front of him by Japanese soldiers, became close friends and combined their efforts in advocating for peace.

### *The Layout and Collections*

This compact, well-curated museum was founded in 1996 on the site of Kano's family home by the late Kano Hiroki, the artist's eldest son. The collection and exhibition spaces are spread over two stories. One gallery chronicles Kano's peace and amnesty efforts, while others display a rotating selection of more than 120 paintings and other visual works by the artist, beginning with the prewar years and continuing until his death in 1977. The museum also possesses what is considered the best collection of Bizen pottery in Japan, with over 800 items. During special events held at the museum's tearoom, visitors are allowed to handle selected items from this collection. Over 290 examples of Raku pottery, including pieces by such modern masters as Kawai Kanjiro and Arakawa Toyozo, are included. There is also a sizable collection of Japanese-style paintings (Nihonga) by Ono Chikkyo and Ikeda Yoson, well-known painters who were contemporaries and friends of Kano.