

## **Nakamura Zensaku – Impressions of Otaru**

The landscapes of Otaru have inspired many artists, and the works of Nakamura Zensaku (1901–1983) in particular are associated with the city. Throughout his life, Nakamura continued to paint the landscape of his hometown in a style characterized by vivid colors and lively compositions. Otaru's distinct landscape of mountains and sea was a common theme of his works.

The Nishiya family were shipowners who founded the first warehousing business in Otaru. They recognized Nakamura's talent when he was in his early teens. After completing his schooling, he worked for the family, studying art at night with a group of young artists at the Otaru Western Painting Institute.

In 1924, as Nakamura was preparing to move to Tokyo to study art full-time, the Nishiyas loaned him a villa for six months in the hills above Otaru, so that he could focus on painting. In his twenties, Nakamura discovered the work of French Post-Impressionist painter Paul Cézanne (1839–1906) and was inspired to paint Otaru's landscapes using similar broad brushstrokes and vivid colors. In 1925, his work was selected for the Nika-ten Exhibition in Tokyo, one of Japan's most prestigious competitive art exhibitions.

He returned to his hometown every year, capturing the city as it rapidly modernized, and its natural environment changed. Many of Nakamura's prewar works were destroyed during the bombing of Tokyo in 1942, but a significant number are on display in the Otaru City Museum of Art Nakamura Zensaku Memorial Hall.