

Hirakushi Denchū Art Museum

Sculptor Hirakushi Denchū (1872–1979) created emotionally compelling works in a wide range of styles. Born in Ibara but adopted at the age of 10 into a family in nearby Fukuyama, Hiroshima Prefecture, he moved to Tokyo in 1897 where he struggled for years to find success. Acclaim from Okakura Tenshin (1863–1913) and other influential art instructors proved crucial to bringing attention to his work. Denchū felt great admiration for Okakura, and even decades after Okakura's death, Denchū created many masterpieces modeled on Okakura's likeness. In 1944, Denchū was appointed an Imperial Household Artist, and in 1970, the city of Ibara built this museum to display his achievements. It is in the heart of town not far from Ibara Station, and when he visited, Denchū planted the camphor tree that stands in front of the building.

The museum's collection showcases a wide range of Denchū's artistic themes. Some pieces appear to depict figures from Buddhism, such as a

demon spitting out a human in the fearsome work *Tenshō*, while others focus on more intimate themes. His work *Ane Musume* shows Denchū's daughter kneeling, hands cupped to her ears, listening to a neighbor's distant radio because her family was too poor to own one.

One of Denchū's masterpieces is *Kagamijishi*, an imposing statue of Kabuki actor Onoe Kikugorō VI (1885–1949) in costume for the play of the same name as the statue. The statue itself usually stands in the lobby of the National Theatre of Japan in Tokyo, but prototypes and unfinished models of *Kagamijishi* are kept on display here.