

The 2004 Niigata Chuetsu Earthquake An Activity Report by the Niigata Prefectural Museum of Modern Art

At 5:56 p.m. on Saturday, October 23, 2004, the greatest epicentral earthquake imaginable hit the Chuetsu Region, Niigata Prefecture. This museum is situated in Nagaoka City, which during the main shock recorded a maximum seismic intensity level of 6- (M6.8) and continued to be threatened for the following two months by aftershocks with a seismic intensity level of over 4. The entire building of the museum vibrated violently and some facilities and collections were damaged. The damage our museum received, however, was fortunately kept to a minimum considering the scale of the earthquake. There seems to be several reasons for this fact: First, taking into account the lessons learned from the Great Hanshin Earthquake, we had prepared beforehand to prevent earthquake damage. Secondly, the museum building had only one story. Finally, there were no visitors inside the building during the disaster because it was after closing hours. This report reflects on the situation at the time of the disaster, and describes the details of the damage our museum received and the response measures we took.

After the “Cheerful Chuetsu Kids Exhibition” “I am so glad that these children’s works were shown”

Minoru MARUYAMA

It goes back to the time when the students from Higashi Ojiya Junior High School, which was affected by the Niigata Chuetsu Earthquake, came to visit the museum. I said to the students that I thought it must have been difficult living in the earthquake-affected area. After asking one of the female students what school she went to, she answered ‘Higashiyama Elementary School’ . Although I said with sympathy, “Oh, that was the worst affected area...,” I didn’ t know what to say after that. Later that day, as the children left the museum smiling because they had enjoyed and appreciated all the art works, a boy came up to me and whispered something to me. He said, “You know, the girl you spoke to earlier, she lost her brother in the earthquake.” I felt as though I had been kicked in the head. It was such a shock. Then I thought, “Have I really done my best for these children?”

I decided to launch this “Cheerful Chuetsu Kids Exhibition” because I had felt the urge to do something as a staff member of the local museum. I am confident that all the crew and volunteer staff did their very best. However, I also think that we might have been able to do more. I was very pleased to see the works of the children from this school at the exhibition.

The Aizawa Collection - Art Works Donated in 2005-06

Kuninori MATSUYA

During 2005-06, the Niigata Prefectural Museum of Modern Art was donated 1,088 art works by Mr. Naoto Aizawa. Mr. Aizawa was the curator of the Aizawa Art Museum in former Teradomari Town, Niigata Prefecture.

A business entrepreneur and a novelist, Mr. Aizawa collected these art works as part of his literary enterprise and for cultural development of Tsubame City and its surrounding areas. He continued to invest personal money and corporate donations for thirty years in order to improve his own art gallery and museum.

Many of the works in this collection are of an abstract tendency. Comprised mostly of watercolors, printings and sketches, the collection represents the finest in modern Japanese art. In addition, a series of works gathered in the course of active exchange with artists such as Tatsuoki Nambata, Bakujin Nagasaki and Sougen Eguchi, is also a principal pillar of this collection.

To extend my gratitude to Mr Aizawa’s dedication to offer his precious property to citizens of Niigata Prefecture, I hereby present an outline of his efforts and the list of his collected art works.