

Notes

This catalog is the second volume presenting the works of Shigeo Toya, focussing on those produced in 1979-84. The first collection, *Shigeo Toya 1984-1987*, was published in the autumn of last year, also by the Satani Gallery, and, as the title shows, the works introduced there were created later than, not before, those in the present catalog. While the first volume includes the *Woods* series, in which he used an electric saw as a carving tool, we here introduce works mainly from the 1979-84 period, and including such early works as *Pompeii* · 79 (1974). Together the two collections reveal the continuity in Toya's work and his attitudes vis-à-vis sculpture.

As the old saying goes, "The old reveals the new," but it was with some surprise that I discovered that there was something old in Toya's works. After talking with him several times, I learned that while working he has on his mind the sculptures of artists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as Kotaro Takamura (1883-1956), who was an enthusiastic student of Western-style sculpture, and Heihachi Hashimoto (1897-1935), known for his distinctive wooden sculptures.

Some would look askance at Toya's works as deviating from sculpture in the strict sense because they often feature treatment of surfaces. This tendency is most marked in his recent *Woods* series, in which the surface of the wood materials is carved with a chain saw. But, though they appear to be surface-oriented, it would not be adequate to call them, say, "pictorial" sculpture.

Toya once told me an interesting story about the sculptor Kotaro Takamura. Takamura studied in the United States, England and France, and was greatly influenced by Western artists, especially Auguste Rodin. He was critical of works imbued with the traditional Japanese style that inevitably dominated among native sculptors, including those of his own father, well-known sculptor Koun Takamura (1852-1934). He encountered unexpected difficulty, it seems, when

trying to make a wood carving of a carp. He had previously carved catfish (one of which is on display at Tokyo National Museum today) without much difficulty, for the catfish does not have scales. A carp does, however. Critical as he was of traditional nuances in carving, Takamura found it hard to avoid them in executing this work.

The fact that Toya told such a story is all the more interesting because it deals with surfaces. It seems that he began with a readiness to accept the “scales” [surfaces] that Takamura found so distasteful. (Pondering the issue of surfaces in the context of sculpture, I am reminded of the apparel of Degas’s sculpted ballet dancer.) Toya’s vision is often turned toward traditions of carving prior to Takamura, and his unusual concern with surfaces is of considerable significance, inasmuch as there is no sculptor in this country who can fill the gap in sculptural treatment of surfaces between Takamura, born in 1883, and Toya, an artist active today.

As for the carp Takamura had undertaken, it was reduced to ashes in 1945, and at that time it was probably still unfinished. There is no knowing today what that carp was like.

The text for this catalog is by art critic Toshiaki Minemura. In order to preserve the contemporaneous quality of his writing about Toya’s works, Mr. Minemura decided against writing an original essay for this publication, as he did for the initial volume, choosing instead to reprint an article that originally appeared in *Gendai Chokoku* (Modern Sculpture), published in February 1983 by Seiho-sha. I would like to thank Mr. Minemura for adding the notes and Seiho-sha for permission to reprint the article in this catalog.

Satani Gallery Shugo Satani

February 1988