

Repurposed Murals —Shikidai-no-ma—

The original murals of the Ninomaru-goten Palace at Nijo-jo castle were created by Kano-school artists during major renovation of the castle in 1626, in preparation for a visit by Emperor Gomizunoo (1596–1680). This year's exhibitions, entitled "Age of Nijo-rikyu Imperial Villa"Series, focus on the Imperial Villa period of Nijo-jo castle and introduce the roles and situations around the murals of Ninomaru-goten Palace at the time.

After 1871, Nijo-jo Castle, which was used as a facility for the Kyoto Prefectural Government and the army, became "Nijo Imperial Villa" under the jurisdiction of the Imperial Household Ministry in 1884. In response, large-scale repairs were carried out over two years from the following year. The Ninomaru-goten Palace was also decorated to be suitable as a palace of the Imperial Family. This exhibition introduces mural repair at that time and murals that have been repaired and restored with alterations from their original form.

Nijo Imperial Villa major repairs and murals

After 1634, facilities such as utility buildings at Ninomaru-goten Palace were demolished since the shogun, who was the owner, never visited the palace. During the turbulent late Edo period, Ninomaru-goten Palace became a political arena again, but by that time, some of the murals created in 1626 had been lost or removed due to damage. After the Meiji Restoration, Kyoto Prefecture used the Ninomaru-goten Palace as a government building, so the deterioration of the murals continued.

The repair of the murals by master mounters began around January 1886. The repair specification prepared by the Imperial Household Ministry stated that when repairing the missing parts of the gold paper, the remaining "old gold leaf (residue of the original gold leaf)" and "new old gold leaf (old color applied to new gold leaf)" owned by the Imperial Household Ministry should be used. In fact, the Imperial Household Ministry owned not only gold leaf, but also old murals collected from various sources. The "Nijo Imperial Villa Delivery Dossier," created by Kyoto Prefecture in 1885 for the transfer of Nijo Imperial Villa from the Kyoto Prefectural Government to the Imperial Household Ministry, contains a list of old murals that were removed from the walls and fixtures at that time and stored flat. This document includes removed murals that were produced in the Kanei period, murals of unknown origin, and murals that were originally created for Imperial Palace buildings. Of these, it is known from previous research that murals that were not produced in the Kanei period were used in the repairs at that time.

Renovated Kacho-zu (Flowers and Birds)

It is known from historical sources that the *koshi-shoji* (paper sliding doors with waist-high wooden panels on the bottoms) in the Shikidai-no-ma originally depicted spring and summer flowers and a waterfront, but these features have been lost. The current Kacho-zu is one of the Meiji period renovations of a mural that was not produced in the Kanei period. Unfortunately, it is not clear which one of the murals in the list mentioned above this mural is. There is a possibility that this mural is not on the list.

So, what were the murals like before the renovations? In this Kacho-zu, you can see unnatural joints in the image. If you look closely at these parts, you can see that, in order to reduce this unnaturalness, additional drawings and gold dust have been added later and there are regular traces where the paper has been joined. At that time, large sheets of paper could not be produced, so large screens such as murals and folding screen paintings were made up of several sheets of paper. Normally, there is regularity in the way the paper is joined. When these joints are irregular, it means that something has happened to the mural or folding screen painting. In many cases, as in this Kacho-zu, it means that the original image has been cut and rearranged. In this Kacho-zu,

there are many places where the vertical paper joints are irregular, and misalignments in the horizontal paper joints can also be seen in multiple places. If the vertical paper joints that show that the pattern was not connected originally are detached and the horizontal paper joints are arranged so that there is no misalignment, this mural can be restored into two groups: a spring Kacho-zu centered on an Asiatic apple tree and an autumn Kacho-zu featuring wild geese and ducks. For the part depicting the Asiatic apple tree, it can be found from the traces of the catches and hanging brackets (such as the second one from the right on the front) that it was originally a *fusuma* painting. In addition, on the autumn Kacho-zu, there are also catch marks on the left and right sides below the paper joint part of the second *koshi-shoji* from the left, which is displayed on the left wall facing the exhibition room.

However, each restored mural is damaged at both ends. It is believed that the screens continued further to the left and right. In fact, there are screens in other palace rooms that seem to be continuations of both the spring and autumn murals. The group of thin bamboos gently drawn on the left end of the spring Kacho-zu follows the pattern on the eastern wall of the Tozamurai Fuyo-no-ma. The trees depicted on the bottom left of the autumn Kacho-zu are covered with cut foil that has been applied afterwards, and trees that seem to follow them are depicted on images attached to the south side *nageshi* (horizontal beams) in the Kuroshoin Chodai-no-ma.

Matsu-zu (Pine) and color repair

An important aspect of the mural repairs at Nijo Imperial Villa is the color repair by painters. According to the "Nijo Imperial Villa Repair Work Record Diary" (hereinafter referred to as "Diary"), a total of 14 painters participated from their hiring on November 15, 1885 until the completion on August 25, 1886. These included Tosa Mitsutake (1844-1916), a member of the Tosa family who served as the Edokoro-azukari of the Imperial Court for multiple generations in the Edo period, and professional painters who followed the lineage of the Maruyama school and the Shijo school. However, it can be seen from the "Diary" and "Kyoto Hinode Shimibun" articles at the time that Imperial Household Ministry staff from the department that managed the palace who had a sense of painting were also engaged. In addition, according to a newspaper article published about a month before the repairs were completed, the ceiling paintings were repaired (color repair) first, and although the *fusuma* sliding doors and other areas were started later, it was difficult to paint them so that the missing parts blended in with the original pictures, and there were not enough days or manpower to complete the repairs. As a result, in the repairs at that time, the missing parts were painted as new parts and the faded parts were repainted. The vivid colors of the pine leaves and waterfront that you are currently viewing are the colors that were added during these repairs. Many of the repaired pine leaves were repainted without following the original lines of the pine leaves, and the characteristics of the added lines differ depending on the screen, so it can be seen that the repairs were done in a short period of time using a large number of painters to finish up the work.

Although this method and approach are far removed from current mural repairs, at that time, the main priority was to improve the appearance of the imperial villa quickly.