

Matsumoto Shunsuke Canal View: A City of Water and Concrete

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Matsumoto Shunsuke *Canal View*: A City of Water and Concrete

KAIZUKA Tsuyoshi

In spite of his brief career, the painter Matsumoto Shunsuke (1912–1948), who died at the young age of 36, vibrantly developed his style in representational painting of figures and landscapes while voraciously learning from diverse genres, from Western and Asian classical art to contemporary art. Particularly in the 1940s, the painter would first make quick, rough sketches of landscapes in pencil on-site and then would compose studies based on the sketches at his studio, applying various techniques and processes. He would take time and effort for processing bold and unrealistic deformations, selecting subject matters within compositions, and creating unexpected fusions of multiple existent landscapes. When a study was done, he would use it as a basis for a painting on canvas or board, carefully elaborating on *matière* with oil. Although not a large tableau, *Canal View* (fig. 1), an oil painting the Ishibashi Foundation purchased in 2017, is considered as one of Matsumoto's representative works due to his typical style and his favorite subject during the early half of the 1940s towards the end of the World War II. The issues and agendas characteristic of the painter during this period are summarized in this particular painting. The following essay thus aims to analyze the work mainly topographically in order to understand the meaning of the painting and also discuss the significance of the Ishibashi Foundation's possession and exhibition of the work.

In the winter of 1943, eight painters, namely, Inoue Chozaburo (1906–1955), Ai Mitsu (1907–1946), Tsuruoka Masao (1907–1979), Ôno Goro (1910–2006), Itozono Wasaburo (1911–2001), Matsumoto Shunsuke (1912–1948), Terada Masaaki (1912–1989), and Aso Saburo (1913–2000), formed Shinjingakai, a painters' coterie. They ranged in age from 30 to 37. It is said that Inoue, the eldest member, played a key role to bind these artists from different groups as one. The members of Shinjingakai worked at several places in Tokyo, such as studios around present-day Kanamecho and Senkawa in Toshima ward, the area so-called "Ikebukuro Montparnasse" where numbers of apartment-style studios gathered then, and Nakai, Shinjuku, which was not far from the aforementioned places. Since there exists an old postcard that indicates the mailing address of the Shinkingakai, which was Matsumoto's studio located at 4-2096, Shimo-ochiai, Yodobashi, he must have been a leading figure in the management of the group despite his younger age. He was trusted by other painters probably because he had co-published *Zakkicho*, a monthly literary essay magazine, with his wife, Matsumoto Teiko (1912–2011), from October 1936 to December 1937, and had been a prolific writer afterwards. For a person with a hearing impairment, his success seemed

exceptional. Shinjingakai held the group's first exhibition, "Dai 1-kai Shinjingakai Kaiin Aburae Tenrankai" from April 21 to April 30, 1943 at Nippon Gakki Gallery in 7-1, Ginza, Tokyo. According to the list of the exhibited works, Matsumoto showed the following five works:

1. *Tekkyo Fukin* [*Near the Railroad Bridge*]
2. *Dozo no Aru Fukei* [*Landscape with a Statue*]
3. *Unga Fukei* [*Canal View*]
4. *Kodomo no Kenka* [*Children Fighting*]
5. *Kodomo* [*Child*]

The list has 34 works including those of other painters. According to Fujisaki Aya, the exhibition showed more than 40 works as described in an art magazine, *Nihon Bijutsu*, Vol. 2, No. 5 (June 1943), and so it is assumed that there were other works shown at the exhibition beside the ones in the list.¹ There is no visual evidence to which we can refer to about details of the exhibition, for the event was a modest group show amid wartime and so neither an illustrated catalog nor postcards were published. However, *Near the Railroad Bridge* is now believed to be in the collection of Shimane Art Museum, Matsue.² *Landscape with a Statue* is assumed to be the front view of Manseibashi Station where there is a statue of lieutenant commander Hirose Takeo. Considering the places Matsumoto often visited, but it is not certain and there seem to be other views as well. This exhibition was the first one in which Matsumoto's work titled "Canal View" appeared.

In fact, it is not so long ago that we began to believe this "Canal View" was exactly the *Canal View* that the Ishibashi Foundation owns now. This idea first came from the "general catalog" included in the book, *Matsumoto Shunsuke Yusai* [Matsumoto Shunsuke's oil paintings], which was published in July 1978 by Sogo Kobo, the publishing company that his wife Teiko managed. Its editor was Asahi Akira (1928–2016), Chief Curator, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Art at the time. He most likely confirmed the matter with Teiko. After thoroughly examining all other remaining works of Matsumoto, Asahi inferred that the one exhibited at Shinjingakai's first exhibition was this particular painting in our collection, which was owned by the collector Okawa Eiji (1924–2008) back then. The timing of the exhibition was exactly in-between two major group shows, the 29th and the 30th Nika Exhibitions held in September 1942 and September 1943, for which Matsumoto respectively exhibited *Standing Figure* (Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura and Hayama) and *Three People* (private collection).

Details are not discussed here but the expression in the painting can be considered to fit this time period. In *Matsumoto Shunsuke Gashu* [*Works of Matsumoto Shunsuke*], a book published by Heibonsha in 1963, this particular painting was captioned as “Canal (near Shiodome)” while *Bridge in Y-City* in the collection of the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, was written as “Canal View” and belonged to a private collection.³ Since Asahi identified it, this work has been increasingly recognized with the title *Canal View* and widely acknowledged as one of the works exhibited at the first Shinjinkai exhibition.

Now let us look closely at *Canal View* itself. The lower third of the 45.5 × 61.0 cm format shows a surface of water. As will be discussed later, it is the surface of a river but its flow is not suggested as it quietly reflects the structures above like a mirror. The top third shows the sky. While there are light areas and dark areas as if suggesting clouds, the sky is overall a gloomy gray, far from bright blue. Depicted in the area between the water and sky are artificial architectural structures in the city. We see a double-arched bridge on the left, a concrete structure with a big square mouth opening to the water on the right, and three or four houses behind the bridge. Several electric poles are distributed with balance and two chimney-like structures are vertically standing, in parallel with them. The painting is, overall, toned in a blackish-brown color, and the shadows on the bridge piers, the square mouth, the electric poles, the roofs of houses, and the shadow of something loaded on the moored boat in particular, are almost jet-black. The paint layer is not so thick as you cannot see the asperity of the canvas of the support of the painting, and paint is evenly applied except for some parts. The outlines that define forms are confidently drawn without hesitation, and there is no sign of the painter’s indeterminism, searching for a resolution using brush and paint on canvas. While the composition mainly consisting of straight lines and geometric shapes seems to have been carefully worked out, there are some parts unnatural to an existent landscape: The top side of the mouth to the right is not parallel to the water surface and the difference of the depth between the building to the right and the bridge to the left is not clear. Since there is a row of piles for fall prevention, we can imagine the rim of riverside is continuing to some extent. However, we are not convinced enough by this depiction. Without a figure, in looking at this painting, it is hard to believe that it is a view of the core of central Tokyo, as will be discussed later.

Matsumoto’s heavy and deep tone is especially conspicuous among his contemporary painters. In terms of the darkness that permeates into the depth of our souls, no one is comparable with the exception of probably Ai Mitsu. Okawa Eiji, who purchased this painting around 1962 at Nantenshi Gallery, remembered later, “Upon seeing the painting, I found it somewhat oppressively intense, but I did not want to buy it at once, and felt just puzzled.” Taking advice from a person he respected, the collector made up his mind and purchased it. Gradually fascinated by the work, he ended up insisting, “There are many paintings that are regarded as representative works by Matsumoto, such as, *On the Street*, *Cityscape*, *Standing Figure*, *Bridge in Y-City*, *Black Flowers*, *Self-Portrait*, *Near the Railroad Bridge*, *Landscape with the Diet Building*, *Portrait of a Lady*, *Canal View*, *Nikolai Cathedral*, *Woman with a Sculpted Head*, *Buildings*, etc. As a

person who has lived with most of these before, if I was forced to pick the best one among them now, I would choose *Canal View* without any hesitance.”⁴

Where is this landscape in *Canal View* located? To answer this question, the painter Tanji Akira (1925–2012) left a decisive legacy. In fact, an unpublished notebook written by Tanji is renowned among researchers of Matsumoto Shunsuke. Fortunately, I had an opportunity to read through it. It was a record of Tanji’s thoughts in the 1970s and 1980s, too fragmental to publish as a book. However, he visited again and again wherever Matsumoto went, to find his subjects taking advantage of his incredible obsession and inquisitive mind as a painter, and finding many things that challenged accepted views. Minutely inspecting and registering the details of the remaining drawings and finished works of Matsumoto in mind, Tanji searched for his predecessor’s footprints in real landscapes. As people know, Matsumoto never depicted a landscape as it really was. However, Tanji revealed one by one that fragments of the original landscapes remained in Matsumoto’s finished paintings. It is also true that, once one knows how far the painting is from the real landscape, one can understand the processes Matsumoto undertook. Parts of the fruits of Tanji’s efforts were made public by Sunouchi Toru (1913–1987), who accompanied him on the research trips.⁵ Tanji emphasized in his notebook that the places Matsumoto depicted were located along the railways connected to and from Nakai, where he lived, such as Shinjuku, Osaki, Shimbashi, Shiodome, Yaesu, Otemachi, Manseibashi, and Ochanomizu, and so on. The only published text written by Tanji was “Matsumoto Shunsuke no Sokuseki o Tadoru [Tracking Matsumoto Shunsuke’s Footsteps]”, in three serial issues of a magazine, *Deformation*. He briefly mentions *Canal View* as follows:

There is another work of Shunsuke in which a waste disposal center is depicted. *Canal View*, which is one of his representative paintings, is a landscape with a disposal center in Shiodome, Shimbashi, as viewed from the Shimbashi Bridge on Ginza Street. [...] The double-arched bridge across the canal is Horai Bridge on Showa-dori Avenue.⁶

This text was written in 1984. It may have made sense to those in Tanji’s generation and readers in the 1980s around the time it was published but some phrases here read unfamiliar to us living in the 21st century. What is the “waste disposal center”? It will be discussed later.

Since this painting was labeled “Canal (near Shiodome)” in the book from 1963 and at exhibitions in the 1970s, the overall location of its landscape seemed evident to people in those days. In fact, the Nippon Gakki Gallery at Ginza 7-chome, where the first exhibition of the work took place, was quite close to Shiodome River. People who saw the first Shinjinkai exhibition were most likely to notice the landscape was that of the canal nearby.

Here are a few words to introduce Shiodome River. After Shogun Tokugawa Iyasu first moved to Edo, in the early 17th century, a gourd-shaped reservoir was constructed in an area stretching from present-day Akasaka Mitsuke to Toranomon to protect Edo Castle. While it was reclaimed in the first half of the

Meiji era (the late 19th century), the name Tameike (literally meaning reservoir) remained in the district. Sakura River, which was created in order to release water from the reservoir and the nearby wet lands, ran to the east, flowing into the Hibiya inlet, part of Edo Bay (present-day Tokyo Bay). When the inlet was reclaimed in the 17th century, Sakura River was extended further to the east, which was Shiodome River. Crossing the Shiodome River, there was Shimbashi Bridge on the Tokaido Road in the middle, and Namba Bridge and Dobashi Bridge to the west. To the east of Shimbashi, there was Shiodome Bridge, renamed Horai Bridge later, where the flow of Sanjikkenbori River joined together, turning its direction toward Hamagoten Palace (present-day Hamarikyu Gardens). Shiodome River was later reclaimed except for the area around Hamarikyu for remodeling before the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games. Today in the former area of Shiodome River, the raised road of Tokyo Expressway KK Line runs with a shopping center beneath it. "Horai Bridge" remains as the name of the intersection of Showa-dori Avenue and the expressway. As this expressway now runs along the border between the two wards, Chuo City and Minato City, Shiodome River was the border between the wards, Kyobashi-ku and Shiba-ku back then. The left bank to the north was Kyobashi-ku and the right bank to the south was Shiba-ku.

After World War II, when Shiodome River was reclaimed, the four bridges, Dobashi, Namba, Shimbashi, and Horai, were altogether demolished. One of the newel post and the public square of the south end on the downstream side of the Shimbashi Bridge are still preserved, indicating the locations of the bridge and the waterway. Horai Bridge depicted in the left side of the painting was called Shiodome Bridge during the Edo period. The name was most likely derived from the tide of Tokyo Bay. In 1874, the wooden bridge was replaced by a stone bridge and renamed Horai Bridge after Horaisha, the company that financed the construction work. There was Shimbashi Station (later Shiodome Freight Station), the entrance to Tokyo, to the south of the bridge. When train passengers got off, Horai Bridge was their first sight. Along with the Fifteenth National Bank (present-day Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation) on the northern end of the bridge, these structures created a space symbolic of the age of Civilization and Enlightenment. Today, on the former site of the Fifteenth National Bank, Mitsui Garden Hotel Ginza Premier is located. When Showa-dori Avenue was constructed as part of the restoration development after the Great Kanto Earthquake (1923), Horai Bridge was shifted one block downstream and reconstructed in concrete as the brand-new street emerged in the back. (fig. 2) It was this bridge that Matsumoto depicted in *Canal View*. The new Horai Bridge, whose construction began in February 1925 and was completed in May 1929, was 32.0 m long and 44.0 m wide, magnificent in scale, but with a modest design of two arches and inverted U-shaped openings lining the railings. The photograph of fig. 2 is a view from the eastside, downstream, and the other side of the bridge Matsumoto depicted. Kobiki-cho (present-day Ginza 8-chome) was to the right and Shiodome (present-day Higashi Shimbashi 1-chome) was to the left. Passing through the left arch of the bridge, there was supposed to be the waste disposal center Matsumoto depicted, but unfortunately, we do not see it in this photograph. The piles

on the southern end of the downstream side of the bridge that we see in the left side of the photograph look similar to those depicted in the center of *Canal View*, the southern end on the upstream side of the bridge.

Let us focus on the "waste disposal center" as Tanji called it. The disposal of garbage and night soil in Edo or Tokyo, one of the biggest cities of the world, was always a major problem to citizens and the government administration alike. During the Edo period (1603–1868), "Eitaiura" (at the mouth of Sumida River in Tokyo Bay) was the disposal center. In 1900, the law of cleaning was established and local governments became responsible for disposal. Tokyo's garbage and night soil were collected by garbage men on an almost regular basis and respectively accumulated in disposals designated by each of the 15 wards. According to a document from 1914, there were 36 disposal centers.⁷ All of them were located by rivers for the convenience of water transportation. This shows how waterways were developed in Tokyo. In Shiba-ku, there were four disposal centers: "Shimbashi Bridge", "Minato-cho Riverside", "Shogen Bridge", and "Takanawa Kuruma-cho Riverside". The waste was collected without classification and at the disposal center, it was classified into three categories, namely, "fertilizer trash" – reusable as fertilizer, "valuables" – reusable wood and metal, and "throw-away trash" – un reusable. "Fertilizer trash" was transported to Chiba and sold to farmers there. Wood was reused as fuel and metals were purchased by dealers. "Throw-away trash" was transported to Heikyū-cho, Fukagawa-ku (present-day Kiba, Koto), burnt outdoors there, and used for reclamation. A waste disposal center was the transit point of the process. Refuse was sometimes carried by carriage and automobiles to the disposal centers but otherwise by two-wheeled handcarts, which was said to have been quite hard work. It is well-known that Matsumoto often depicted garbage men in his works. Incidentally, it was in 1958 that the use of handcarts for collecting trash was abolished in Tokyo, and it was decided that cars specially modified for the purpose would be used instead.

Due to the Great Kanto Earthquake of September 1, 1923, most of the waste disposal centers constructed of wood were burnt or damaged. In the following year, 27 new concrete structures for disposal were planned to be built as part of the restoration project of Imperial Tokyo. This plan concluded with the construction of the disposal center of Shimbashi, which was completed on May 20, 1932. These new buildings were probably built in the same locations as those of the lost ones. The designs of these structures would have been varied due to the characteristics of each location. The one Matsumoto depicted had a mouth open to the canal.⁸ This mouth was a gate for the boats coming in and out to load classified trash to transport it to Chiba or Fukagawa. As a boat went into the space under the structure, trash was dumped onto the middle of the boat from the platform above. The photograph of fig. 3 shows the disposal center that was located in the middle between Mansei Bridge and Shohei Bridge upstream on the left bank of Kanda River, where there is now the Chiyoda Refuse Collection Office. We can see Shohei Bridge and the elevated railway of Kokutetsu (present-day JR) Sobu Line, which look similar to how they look now. Given the rower's gesture, the photograph captured the moment the boat was about to leave

as the loading was done. The structure of the disposal center in Matsumoto's work is supposed to be similar to this. Fig. 4 is a recent view of a place called "Manseibashi Funatsukiba" (Mansei Bridge Harbor), located at the north end of Mansei Bridge on the downstream side. While the harbor, built in 1930 altogether with the bridge and the subway Ginza Line running right beneath, seems to have had nothing to do with waste collection, its concrete structure built at the bridge with its small mouth open to the river evokes the disposal center by the water depicted by Matsumoto, which no longer exists. Since those disposal centers were intermediate facilities, they did not have incinerators. The chimney-like pipes depicted in *Canal View* were most likely air ducts.

It is well-known that Matsumoto often took up facilities related to waste collection as his subject. In addition to the one in Shimbashi, he repeatedly depicted the disposal center near Kiji Bridge in Hitotsubashi and the waste collection office of Takadanobaba, which was close to his studio, and even added it to the background of his self-portrait. Similarly, the painter showed a keen interest in public lavatories. The smell must have been quite pungent back then. Looking at things considered filthy, buildings in which such materials are treated, and workers handling them was one of features of Matsumoto's work during this particular time period. His warm and calm gaze upon an essential support of society seems to have derived from affirmation of his own life.

I will now examine the positional relationship between the Shimbashi disposal center and Horai Bridge. Looking at the map of 1937 (fig. 5) and aerial photograph of 1936 (fig. 6), we see Shiodome River slowly curve to the right after passing through Shimbashi as the Sanjikkenbori River joins from the north. I assume the waste disposal center of Shimbashi was located right on the apex of this curve. The curve can be seen as that of the expressway today. The aforementioned commentary by Tanji Akira may lead you to believe that the view of the painting was seen from Shimbashi Bridge but what he only meant was that the disposal center can be seen from on the bridge. When seen from standing on the bridge, the waste facility was probably almost invisible, hidden by the curve. Matsumoto must have seen the canal view from Gomon Street along the left bank of Shiodome River, which was on the other side of the river from the disposal center; from somewhere between the north end of Shimbashi Bridge and Yatsuya Bridge over Sanjikkenbori River. Fig. 7 is a photograph I took from the spot that I assumed Matsumoto stood to have the view. The painter would be bitterly laughing in the other world at such a massive change. As for the readers of this essay, the photograph may make no sense, perhaps ultimately serving simply to cater to my own self-satisfaction.

There are several drawings considered as drafts of *Canal View*. Three of them will be compared and discussed here. They are now included in the collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, which Asahi Akira was likely to be deeply associated with. The following is information on the three drawings:

Canal A, c. 1942, pencil on paper, 32.1 × 47.0 cm (fig. 8)

Canal B, c. 1942, pencil on paper, 26.2 × 37.4 cm (fig. 9)

Canal C, c. 1942, pencil on paper, 49.7 × 60.7 cm (fig. 10)

As Matsumoto must have visited the site many times, it is not sufficient enough to make an assumption based only on the remaining pieces, but let us trace his process through these three drawings and the finished painting.

The drawing seemingly the most approximate to the first on-site sketch is *Canal B*. Standing on the left bank of the Shiodome River, the painter cast his gaze rather diagonally to the northeast, depicting the disposal center in the middle of the view. The Horai Bridge was pushed away to the left. In his notes, Tanji in fact pointed out that there were four windows on the riverside wall of the disposal center, which existed until the 1950s, and so emphasized that the painter depicted the windows differently in *Canal View*. The facility in *Canal B* shows exactly four windows as Tanji wrote, suggesting the drawing was approximate to the real view. In spite of its simplified style, the gap between the depths of the Horai Bridge and the disposal center is obvious in *Canal B*. The shadow on the water before the mouth of the building emphatically drawn seems to demonstrate the painter's focus. *Canal B* can be said to be an explanatory composition with more objects depicted in the left half, while the disposal center is situated in the middle, indicating the painter's concern lies in the combination of the bridge and the facility.

Canal A, probably drawn after *Canal B*, seems to have been created in his studio. Its perspective is daringly shifted to the left from the previous drawing. Completely focusing on the building and the bridge, the artist drew the bridge larger and was exploring a new composition while ignoring balance and depth. The windows were reduced in number to two and half opened, perhaps because the painter wanted to put black patches there. The number of the houses in the background of the bridge was also reduced, in order to expand the space behind them. The dark shadows under bridge piers and the mouth show experimentation with the balance of light and dark. This experimentation eventually reaches its conclusion in *Canal C*.

Canal C was the *carton*, as called by researchers, a final study composition ready to be transferred to the canvas, for *Canal View*. Composed the same size as the painting, it has almost the exact same image. For the transferring, the painter is believed to have used several different methods, but details of the matter are not known. Kano Keiko, who researched the drawings when she was preparing for the 2012 exhibition, "MATSUMOTO Shunsuke: A Centennial Retrospective," writes as follows:

While the paper used for *cartons* is mostly craft paper, some drawn on tracing paper and Japanese paper were also found. [Matsumoto] created *cartons* on sheets of these kinds of paper, layering them and copying the outlines. In order to trace the images, he painted on the backside of the paper with charcoal and used sharp tools like a hard pencil or a stylograph to draw lines. However, quite a few not painted with charcoal were also found. In these cases, he may have simply marked colorless outlines on canvas, or used something like carbon paper to copy.

Canal C was drawn on opaque paper, painted black on the backside, and used for transferring. Similarly, there were three drawings executed on opaque paper whose lines were traced with heavy pressure but none of them were painted

black on the backside.

Cartons were mostly drawn with pencil and some lines seem to have been drawn using a ruler [...]

The creation of paintings based on *cartons* were concentrated around the period between 1941 and 1944. Particularly in the earlier half of the time, several paintings with almost the same composition were created.⁹

Comparing the *carton Canal C* and *Canal View*, there is almost no difference in compositions. It seems that the drawing was transferred to the painting as it was. Only a few changes were made: the electric pole in the center is longer and thicker and the leftmost electric pole behind the bridge is shorter. The center of gravity became closer to the center of the canvas, and the composition came to look weightier. More important to note is their difference in size. While *Canal C* is 49.7 × 60.7 cm which is standard 12F, *Canal View* is 45.5 × 61.0, equivalent to 12P. Nakano Jun (1925–2017) noted an interesting episode of the time right after the end of World War II as follows:

One day, Mr. Matsumoto and I were tying two paintings to the bicycle with a cord and a blanket at Ikueisha. Both were his works of the canal view. One of them was “Canal View” (1943; presently renamed *Bridge in Y-City*), size 20, which I saw at the Shinjingakai exhibition. The other was “Canal” (1943), size 12. Our destination was the coffee shop “R” near Shibuya Station, and these paintings were for loaning to decorate the shop. [...] Each time he came to work, Mr. Matsumoto brought one painting to Ikueisha. As of “Canal” of size 12, he seemed content saying, “Although I exhibited the painting once, I reduced its length, cropping a little at the bottom this morning, which made it become much better.”¹⁰

“Canal” mentioned here was *Canal View*. It was from February 1946 until December 1947 that Matsumoto worked for the company, Ikueisha. If we consider Nakano’s description, Matsumoto himself cropped the canvas by 4 cm in his later years. If so, when his signature at the bottom left of the painting was written is an issue to consider. If the canvas was 4 cm longer, the signature would have been a little out of place. Since the canvas of the painting is stuck on a wood panel, we cannot see how the work was cut. At any rate, cropping at the bottom must have made the composition tenser. This episode suggests that Matsumoto sought out a final destination for his work even three years after its completion.

In his works of the landscape of the Shiodome River, the painter did not modify or deform the actual landscape as much as in his other series, such as “Bridge in Y-City,” “Nikolai Cathedral” and “Near the Railroad Bridge.” He was relatively loyal to reality. Nevertheless, in terms of his endless pursuit for a tense composition and process of elaboration, these works are not entirely different from other series. Matsumoto was continuously working on painting in order to live his life as a human being during the difficult time of the later years of World War II. His mental and physical states as such are concentrated in *Canal View*.

Matsumoto’s distinctive characteristics in this particular period of time found in the painting are as follow: Firstly,

the painter made exhausting efforts to develop geometric compositions on each actual site of the landscape and in his studio. To fulfill his goal, he needed water as a physical force that endlessly creates horizontality. As important objects that cross it at right angles, he juxtaposed vertical electric poles and concrete buildings with water. That is why artificial riverbanks were the most favorable as his subject. Secondly, his selection of each subject seems to have been rather deliberate, based on his understanding of the topographic culture it carried. It is often said that Matsumoto grasped anonymous corners of the cities. Certainly, he never depicted landscapes like the views of scenic sight-seeing spots. However, he must have been profoundly aware of the meaning or historical and cultural background behind the reality in front of him. He knew the disposal center was an advanced apparatus of the time and laborers’ exhaustive work there. The Shiodome River still carried the remains of the Edo culture, and the Showa-dori Avenue preserved the memory of the Great Kanto Earthquake. Matsumoto was much too intellectual to be indifferent to these matters. To the stories woven by various people, he overwrote one of his own. He was a painter who was conscious that such a process would make the history of human beings.

Finally, I would like to mention the significance of the Ishibashi Foundation’s collection and exhibition of the work of Matsumoto. The painter flexibly absorbed various styles of art from classical to contemporary art. He visited again and again the exhibitions of the Fukushima Shigetaro Collection held in Tokyo several times in and around 1935, deeply impressed not only by the techniques and styles of Pablo Picasso, Georges Rouault, and Henri Matisse, but also by the unfathomable depth of Western culture. The Ishibashi Foundation now owns most of this collection. Furthermore, our collection includes works by Amedeo Modigliani and George Gross, whom Matsumoto and his colleagues once idolized, and the self-portrait of Edouard Manet, by which Matsumoto’s standing self-portrait may have been influenced, as one of its iconic pieces. Among Japanese modernist paintings, the masterpieces of Fujita Tsuguharu and Oka Shikanosuke, whose expressions and subjects Matsumoto followed as if vicariously experiencing them, are exhibited in our museum. Juxtaposed with these works in the collection, the masterpiece of Matsumoto echoes in many ways just like a stone causing a stir on water. I hope this will provide opportunities to reexamine the significance of *Canal View* in our exhibition.

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(General Manager, Educational Department,
Artizon Museum, Ishibashi Foundation)
(Translated by Yamakawa Sumiko / Caroline Elder)

Notes

1. Fujisaki Aya, "Ai Mitsu to Shinjingakai" [Ai Mitsu and Shinjingakai], *Ai Mitsu to Koyu no Gakatachi* [Ai Mitsu and his Friend Painters] (exhibition catalog), Hiroshima Prefectural Art Museum, 2001.
2. While not mentioned as a piece included in the Shinjingakai exhibition, it is assumed to have been included because of its reproduction printed in the June 1943 issue of the magazine *Garon*. It is dated March 1943 on the surface, which is just before the exhibition.
3. *Bridge in Y-City*, now in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, is considered to have been exhibited from November 19 through 24, 1943 in the second Shinjingakai exhibition at Nippon Gakki Gallery, where the first Shinjingakai exhibition took place. When the painter Nakano Jun saw the work at the exhibition, he "stared into the work and felt a strong sympathy with the painter's fresh sensibility" and visited Matsumoto at his studio, which was the beginning of their deep friendship. Later, he wrote, "As I saw the label beside the painting, it said, 'Canal View', Matsumoto Shunsuke." Since there is no catalog remaining, it is a precious testimony. See Nakano Jun, *Aoi Enogu no Nioi—Matsumoto Shunsuke to Watashi* [Scent of Blue Paint—Matsumoto Shunsuke and I], Chukobunko. August 1999, p. 14. (Originally published in *Bijutsu no Mado*, October 1994)
4. Okawa Eiji, "Matsumoto Shunsuke 'Unga (Shiodome Chikaku)'" [Matsumoto Shunsuke "Canal (near Shiodome)"], *Gasuto* (Okawa Museum of Art News) 9, July 1991.
5. Sunouchi Toru, *Kimagure Bijutsukan* [Capricious Art Museum], Shinchosha, 1978, pp. 204–242.
6. Tanji Akira, "Matsumoto Shunsuke no Sokuseki o Tadoru I" [Tracking Matsumoto Shunsuke's footsteps], *Deformation* 28, 1984.
7. General Affairs Section, General Affairs Division of Tokyo Metropolitan Government Bureau of Public Cleaning ed., *Tokyo Seiso Jigyo Hyakunenshi* [One Hundred Years of the History of Waste Management in Tokyo], Tokyo Environmental Public Service Corporation, 2000, p. 48.
8. Another disposal center near the Kiji Bridge in Hitotsubashi that Matsumoto liked depicting was a different type with the hood, into which the garbage was dumped, solely sticking out over the water. The painter was likely to be aware of such a difference.
9. Kano Keiko, "Matsumoto Shunsuke no Karuton" [Cartons of Matsumoto Shunsuke], *MATSUMOTO Shunsuke: A Centennial Retrospective* (exhibition catalog), NHK PlanNet, Inc. TOHOKU Branch Office, NHK Promotion Inc., 2012, p. 287.
10. Nakano, op. cit., pp. 97–99.
(Translations are not available for the books referred to in the notes.)

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