

# Kiyoharu Art Village

A teahouse in a treehouse. A massive sculpted thumb. A yellow-painted spiral staircase that ends in a French tricolor flag blowing in the wind. Kiyoharu Geijutsu Mura (Kiyoharu Art Village) is a fascinating study in diversity, writes Julian Ryall.

**K**iyoharu Art Village was founded in 1983 by art dealer Chozo Yoshii to promote and develop exchanges between artists in Japan and abroad. The institution's foundations lie in the Shirakabaha (White Birch Group) literary movement begun in 1910 by writers such as Naoya Shiga, Saneatsu Mushanokoji, Soetsu Yanagi and Nagayo Yoshiro. The Shirakabaha held Western aesthetics in high esteem and, through their writings, promoted Western art and literature in Japanese society. The Kiyoharu Geijutsu Mura would have been the culmination of their dreams.

Chozo Yoshii, the proprietor of art galleries in

Tokyo and Paris, had heard that many artists overseas want to come to Japan to work, and knew that there were not so many places for them to do so. Yoshii therefore decided to build such a place himself, and about thirty years ago established Kiyoharu Art Village.

Kiyoharu Art Village is positioned in the southern shadow of the Yatsugatake mountains of Yamanaashi Prefecture, a couple of hours northwest of Tokyo. The brick La Ruesh atelier of the Village has sixteen sides that afford spectacular views in all directions.

The gardens are dotted with eye-catching works.



The teahouse by Terunobu Fujimori



Paintings by Georges Rouault in the Kiyoharu Shirakaba Art Gallery (left); La Ruche is a reconstruction of a building designed by Alexandre Gustave Eiffel in Paris which was once the atelier of artists including Marc Chagall (right).

A massive stone statue by Belarus-born artist Ossip Zadkine is of a modernistic human figure holding a ship. Nearby, an installation by abstract-expressionist Jacques Yankel melds together rusted metalwork.

A yellow spiral staircase stands behind the La Ruesh, a human figure by César cast out of shards of metal standing at its base with a metal bird on an outstretched arm. A plaque affixed to the stairs says it is an original part of the Eiffel Tower from 1889.

In the furthest corner of the lawn, surrounded by cherry trees that are preserved as natural prefectural treasures, a stucco-walled treehouse has been built atop a 4-meter-high cypress tree. Visitors are only able to enter the teahouse by climbing up a ladder and through a hole in the bottom of the structure.

The newest addition to the museum is the Clavé Galerie designed by Tadao Ando, which opened in April 2011. As its name suggests, the gallery houses works by one of Spain's best-known artists, Antoni Clavé, including stunning early-period oil paintings, collage works and sculptures.

Amid the white birch trees in front of the Kiyoharu Shirakaba Art Gallery stands the Rouault Chapel, with a stained glass window of deep reds and greens painted by Rouault above the entrance. Each of the chapel's rounded walls has pictures from the museum's collection of works by Georges Rouault.

A little further on is the Japanese-style cottage used by Ryuzaburo Umehara to paint, relocated from Kaga-cho. In the cottage, there are canvases on easels and paints, pots and brushes positioned to look as if the artist has just stepped away for a few moments but will be returning very soon.

Designed by Yoshio Taniguchi, architect of the newly expanded Museum of Modern Art, New York, the main Kiyoharu Shirakaba Art Gallery makes use of natural daylight to get the most out of the masterpieces that it houses. The works on display here include pieces by the Shirakabaha, Georges Foucault, a French painter of religious works, as well as by Japanese artists such as Kazumasa Nakagawa and Ryuzaburo Umehara. A retrospective of Bernard Cathelin, whose works are characterized by the bold use of color, is being held until late June. This writer was most taken by the bronze statues by Auguste Rodin, in particular the bust of the famous French novelist Honoré de Balzac, detailed right down to the wrinkles around the eyes.



*Julian Ryall is the Japan correspondent for the Daily Telegraph and freelances for publications around the world.*



### Kiyoharu Geijutsu Mura (Kiyoharu Art Village)

2072 Nakamaru Nagasaka, Hokuto, Yamanashi Prefecture, 408-0036, Japan

**Tel:** +81 551 32 4865 **Website:** [www.kiyoharu-art.com/](http://www.kiyoharu-art.com/)