

Chihiro Iwasaki: Her Life and Work

The Chihiro Art Museum houses almost all of the existing works created by Chihiro (some 9,400 items) as well as materials and articles associated with the artist. During the past 30 years, the museum has preserved, studied, and exhibited these works, materials, and other items she left behind, and it has also been working to collect her anecdotes and other new materials from those who were

associated with her. The study on the artist's life and work has been brought to fruition in the form of numerous Chihiro exhibitions (held 153 times at our Tokyo museum, 42 times at our Azumino museum, in addition to exhibitions elsewhere); exhibition catalogues; and exhibit explanations. These efforts led to the publication of some 40 books about Chihiro (see pp. 70-72).



Chihiro, 57 days after birth
February, 1919



Fifth year at the Sixth Girls' High School
1935 (age 16)



With her mother atop Mt. Shirouma-dake
Summer of 1936 (age 17)



Picture taken at Morikawa Photo Studio for matchmaking
1938 (age 19)



In front of unit commander Morioka's housing, Boli, China
June, 1944 (age 25)

1918	Born on December 15 as the eldest daughter of Masakatsu and Fumie Iwasaki in Takefu City (now Echizen City), Fukui Prefecture, where her mother worked away from home	"Akai Tori" (Red Bird), a children's literary magazine, first published (June) Commencement of the Siberian Intervention (August)
	Chihiro's father, Masakatsu, works as building engineer for the Fortification Headquarters of the old Japanese Army; mother Fumie teaches home economics and science at a girls' high school	World War I ends (November)
1919	Moves to an area in what is currently Dogenzaka, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo	
1920	Chihiro's sister Yoshiko born	League of Nations established (January)
1922	Moves to Shitan-cho, Ebisu, Shibuya-cho (now Shibuya-ku)	"Kodomo no Kuni" (Children's Land), a children's illustrated magazine, first published
		Union of Soviet Socialist Republics established (December)
1923	Chihiro's sister Junko born	Great Kanto Earthquake (September)
1925	Enters Shibuya Municipal Hasedo Elementary School	Visits every school holiday to Nagano, home of her parents
1927	Often draws <i>sekiga</i> (impromptu drawings) for gatherings such as school plays	Japan Doga (Children's Pictures) Artist Association established, prompted by Takeo Takei
	Artist discovers visual work of Kiichi Okamoto, Shigeru Hatsuyama, Takeo Takei, and others	
1931	Enters Tokyo Prefectural Sixth Girls' High School (currently the Tokyo Metropolitan Mita High School)	Manchurian Incident (September)
	Visits Nakabusa hot spring (Nagano) every summer under the camp school program; often goes hiking in the North Alps	
1932	Closely follows the Tokyo Big 6 Baseball League tournament while in school, due to the influence of her father; frequently goes to Jingu Stadium	Manchukuo declares independence (March)
	Excels in many sports; often plays basketball and practices swimming and kyudo (Japanese archery); enjoys skiing and hiking in the mountains	May 15th Incident
1933	Moves to Meguro, Meguro-ku and begins study of sketching and oil painting under Saburoku Okada	Japan withdraws from the League of Nations (March)
1936	In March, graduates from Tokyo Prefectural Sixth Girls' High School and subsequently enters supplementary courses of the school	February 26th Incident
	May Accepted for the Shuyokai Exhibition of Western-style Painting by Women Artists	Initial publication of "Kodansha no Ehon" (Kodansha's Picture Books) series
1937	Begins to study Fujiwara-no-Yukinari-style calligraphy under Shuyo Oda	Marco Polo Bridge Incident (July): Sino-Japanese War of 1937-1945 commences
1939	Marries in April and moves in June to Dalian in Liaoning Province, China, where her husband works	Germany invades Poland (September); World War II begins
1940	Chihiro's mother, Fumie, retires from Tokyo Prefectural Sixth Girls' High School, becomes supervisor of the Greater Japan Federation of Girls' Youth Groups (later, Greater Japan Youth Organization)	Tripartite Pact signed by Japan, Germany, and Italy (September)
1941	Returns home in February after her husband commits suicide Returns to study calligraphy under Shuyo Oda, aiming to become calligrapher	
	Builds and moves into a house in Chiyoda-cho Nakano-ku (near current-day Honcho)	Pacific War commences (December)
1942	Returns to study oil painting under Tai Nakatani	
1944	In April, along with Tai Nakatani and sister Yoshiko, travels to Boli (in Heilongjiang Province, China) with a women's volunteer unit; returns home in summer due to deteriorating war situation	U.S. B29 bombers start air raids on Tokyo (November)
1945	House in Nakano, Tokyo, burns down in air raid in May; evacuates to grandmother's house in Matsumoto City, Nagano Prefecture, where she remains until end of war	Great Tokyo Air Raids (March) Battle of Okinawa (March to June)
	In autumn, parents begin cultivating land in Matsukawa Village, Kita-azumi County, Nagano Prefecture, current site of the Chihiro Art Museum Azumino	Atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (August) Japan surrenders; World War II ends
1946	Becomes a member of the Japanese Communist Party in Matsumoto City, Nagano Prefecture	Nihon Doga Kai (Japan Children's Picture Society) founded (July)



Family picture at the time of parents' attendance at the enthronement ceremony of Emperor Showa (Chihiro at far left)
November, 1928 (age 9)



Self-portrait from diary "A Tip of Grass"
August 23, 1945



May Day rally in an open-air concert area at Hibiya Park
late 1940s



Three Children
May 11, 1945



With her husband
Zenmei
1950 (age 31)



With Toshiko Akamatsu
April 10, 1950 (age 31)



At the site of new house
in Shimo-shakujii,
Nerima Ward
November, 1951 (age
32)



Chihiro carrying her son
Takeshi on her back at
Osaka Station platform
June 25, 1954 (age 35)



At the awards ceremony
of the Juvenile Culture
Award of the Shogakukan
Publishing Co.
1956 (age 37)



Chihiro and her son
Takeshi leaning back to
back
Late autumn, 1956 (age
37)

1946	Moves to Tokyo in the spring; becomes reporter for <i>Jinmin-Shimbun</i> (<i>People's Paper</i>). Enters art school run by publicity department of the Japanese Communist Party	Constitution of Japan promulgated (November)
	Studies art under Toshiko Akamatsu (also known as Toshi Maruki) Sketches people often in drawing groups and similar events	
1947	Participates in the foundation of the Zenei Bijutsu Kai (Avant-garde Art Group); Becomes member of Nihon Bijutsu Kai (Japan Art Group), and Nihon Doga Kai (Japan Children's Picture Group)	
	In May, illustrates her first independent book: " <i>The Bad Fox: His Name is Reinecke</i> " (published by Kasumigaseki Shobo)	Education Ministry produces and distributes brochure entitled "Stories about the New Constitution" (August)
	At the request of Nihon Minshushugi Bunka Rennmei (Japan Democratic Cultural Association), illustrates "The Story of a Mother" picture-story show	
	Around this time, decides to become independent artist	
1948	Works on many newspaper clips, inserted illustrations, picture magazines, and textbooks; often paints in oils as well	
	Takes lodgings on second floor of a tin shop in Kanda	
	Becomes enamored with dancing of Fred Astaire; frequently goes to movies	
1949	Becomes acquainted with Zenmei Matsumoto through the activities of the Japanese Communist Party	Shimoyama Incident and Mitaka Incident (July)
	" <i>The Story of a Mother</i> " picture-story show published by Kyoiku Kamishibai Kenkyukai (Educational Picture-story-show Study Group), receiving the Education Minister's Award the following year	Matsukawa Incident (August)
		People's Republic of China established (October)
1950	Marries Zenmei Matsumoto in January	Korean War begins (June)
1951	Birth of son Takeshi in April	San Francisco Peace Treaty and the first of the United States-Japan security treaties signed (September)
	For financial reasons, obliged to leave Takeshi in her parents' care in Matsukawa Village, Nagano Prefecture in June; frequently goes to Matsukawa Village to see her son, leaving numerous sketches	
1952	Builds a house in Shimo-shakujii, Nerima-Ward, Tokyo, where the Chihiro Art Museum Tokyo now stands; begins life there as a family of three; continues to work at site for next 22 years	
	Around this time, begins illustrating Higeta Soy Sauce advertisements	
1953	Chihiro's father, Masakatsu, dies in January	Initial publication of the "Iwanami Children's Books" series
1954	Participates in the 2nd Nippon (Japan) exhibition with "A Girl with an Eye-Patch" (in oils), and in the Doga exhibition with "The Story of the Tamamushi no Zushi" (Jewel Beetle Shrine) (in oils)	Defense Agency and the Self Defense Forces inaugurated (July)
1956	Receives the Juvenile Culture Award from Shogakukan Publishing Co. for her work, including illustrations for picture magazines	Japan granted membership in the United Nations (December)
	Creates her first Picture Book, <i>Hitori de Dekiru yo (I Can Do It All By Myself)</i> (published by Fukuinkan Shoten)	Initial publication of Fukuinkan Shoten's "Kodomo no Tomo" (Children's Friend) picture-magazine series
1958	Begins illustrating the " <i>Kodomo no Sekai</i> " (<i>Children's World</i>) monthly picture magazine by Shikosha	
	Illustrates the " <i>What the Moon Saw</i> " picture-story show by Doshinsha; receives the Health Minister's Award the following year	
1960	Creates " <i>AIUEO no Hon</i> " (<i>The Hiragana Book: A-I-U-E-O</i>), published by Doshinsha; wins the Sankei Children's Books and Culture Award the following year	Second of the United States-Japan security treaties signed
		Nihon Doga Kai dissolves the following year
1962	Paints her last oil work, "Kodomo" (Child)	
	Along with Daihachi Ota and Masao Kubo, protests against reuse of their textbook illustrations, putting up a tenacious fight until the issue is resolved	
1963	Begins illustrating front covers of the magazine " <i>Kodomo no Shiawase</i> " (<i>Children's Happiness</i>), a publication of Sodo Bunka; Chihiro's illustrations continue to grace the magazine's covers until its August 1974 issue	
	In March, forms the "Group Kabe" with Suekichi Akaba, Teruyo Endo, Kozo Kakimoto, Akira Nakao, Saburo Watanabe, Toshi Maruki, and others	
	Extensions built to the Shimo-shakujii residence and studio to live with her husband Zenmei's parents	
	In June, attends the Women's International Conference held in the Soviet Union	
1964	Forms the "Doga Group Kuruma" (Cars) with Tai Yasu, Teruyo Endo, Koichi Kume, Jiro Takidaira, Tsune Higashimoto, Genjiro Minoda, and others	Tokyo Olympics (October)
	In October, Japan Children's Book Artists Society (Dobiren) inaugurated As executive board member, continues active involvement in copyright protection	
1965	" <i>Ryu no Me no Namida</i> " (<i>The Tears of the Dragon</i>) published by Kaiseisha; " <i>Ohanashi Anderusen</i> " (<i>Hans Christian Andersen Stories</i>) published by Doshinsha	US airplanes begin bombing North Vietnam (February)
1966	Travels in Europe with her mother, Fumie	
	Returning home, illustrates H.C. Andersen's " <i>What the Moon Saw</i> " published by Doshinsha	
1966	Builds a lodge in Kurohime Heights, Nagano Prefecture; produces picture books at this site every year thereafter	
1966	" <i>Thumbelina</i> " published by Kodansha and " <i>The Crane's Reward</i> " published by Kaiseisha	



Shirtless man sitting with his hands supporting his body behind his back ca. 1946



A child
1949



A goat in Kodohara
June 15, 1950



Her son Takeshi
1951



A girl with an Eye Patch
1954



With her husband, Zenmei, in their garden blooming with marguerites
May, 1968 (age 49)



Chihiro painting "A Boy Holding His Knees to His Chest"
1971 (age 52)



On the veranda
Spring of 1972



In celebration of winning the Graphic Prize Fiera di Bologna
1973 (age 54)

1967	Illustrates " <i>When I Was a Child</i> ", published by Doshinsha	
	Husband Zenmei is elected to the House of Representatives	
	" <i>Snow White</i> " and " <i>The Wise Queen</i> " published by Kodansha; " <i>The Little Mermaid</i> " and " <i>Urashima Taro</i> " (<i>The Dragon Palace</i>) published by Kaiseisha	Anti-Vietnam war movement intensifies
1968	" <i>Ame no Hi no Orusuban</i> " (<i>Staying Home Alone on a Rainy Day</i>) created this year and published by Shikosha; artist's first attempt to create a book told largely in pictures; subsequently active in Picture Book production for Shikosha, along with Yasoo Takeichi	
	Creates autobiographical picture book " <i>Watasi no Ehon</i> " (<i>My Picture Book</i>), published by Midori Shobo (now Shinnihon Shuppansha)	
	" <i>Swan Lake</i> ", published by Kodansha; " <i>The Red Balloon</i> ", and " <i>The Red Shoes</i> " published by Kaiseisha; " <i>Ai Kagirinaku-Dekaburisuto no Tsuma Sho</i> " (<i>Unlimited Love</i> " <i>The Wives of Decembrist Wives</i> ") published by Doshinsha	
1969	Creates " <i>Onita no Boshi</i> " (<i>Onita's Hat</i>) published by Poplar-sha; " <i>Akachan no Kuru Hi</i> " (<i>A New Baby Is Coming to My House</i>) published by Shikosha; " <i>Hana no Dowa Shu</i> " (<i>Flower Fairy Tales</i>) published by Doshinsha	
	" <i>Futari no Butoukat</i> " (<i>Dance for Two</i>) and <i>Blue Bird</i> published by Kodansha; " <i>Koi no Iru Mura</i> " (<i>A Village with Carp</i>) published by Shinnihon Shuppansha	
1970	Creates Pastel illustrations for " <i>Tonari ni Kita Ko</i> " (<i>Will You Be My Friend?</i>) published by Shikosha	EXPO '70 opens in Osaka (March)
	Most of the artist's currently existing pastel drawings date from this year	
	" <i>Akachan no Kuru Hi</i> " (<i>A New Baby Is Coming to My House</i>) published by Shikosha; " <i>Ojuro de Chapu Chapu</i> " (<i>I Love Bathing</i>), " <i>Moshi Moshi Odenwa</i> " (<i>The Phone is ringing</i>), and " <i>Manyo no Uta</i> " (<i>Verses of "Ten Thousand Leaves"</i> , the oldest anthology of Japanese poetry) all published by Doshinsha; " <i>Niji no Mizuumi</i> " (<i>Rainbow over the Lake</i>) published by Kaiseisha	
	Participates in street exhibition organized by the Association to Help Vietnamese Children	
	Takes mother, who suffered cerebral thrombosis the previous year, into her care at her Shakujii home	
1971	" <i>Kotori no Kuru Hi</i> " (<i>The Pretty Bird</i>) published by Shikosha; wins the Graphic Prize Fiera di Bologna	
	Around this time, begins suffering from duodenal ulcer	
	" <i>Tonari ni Kita Ko</i> " (<i>Will You Be My Friend? Child's Play</i>) published by Shikosha; " <i>Akachan no Uta</i> " (<i>Songs for Babies</i>) and " <i>Child's Play</i> ", published by Doshinsha; " <i>Yukigon no Okurimono</i> " (<i>The Snowman's Present</i>) published by Shinnihon Shuppansha	
1972	Illustrates " <i>Hisa no Hoshi</i> " (<i>Star of Hisa</i>), published by Iwasaki Shoten; " <i>Yuki no Hi no Tanjobi</i> " (<i>Snowy Birthday</i>), published by Shikosha; " <i>Kaasan wa Orusu</i> " (<i>Mother Is Out</i>), published by Shinnihon Shuppansha; begins illustrating " <i>Senka no Naka no Kodomo-tachi</i> " (<i>Children in the Flames of War</i>)	Diplomatic relations established between Japan and China (September)
	Admitted to Yoyogi Hospital in summer	
1973	Convalescence in Hawaii in March	
	Illustrates " <i>Pochi no Kita Umi</i> " (<i>What's Fun without a Friend?</i>), published by Shikosha; completes " <i>Senka no Naka no Kodomo-tachi</i> ," (<i>Children in the Flames of War</i>) published by Iwasaki Shoten; granted bronze medal of the Leipzig International Book Fair the following year	Vietnam Peace Pacts signed (January)
	Series of cover illustrations for the magazine <i>Kodomo no Shiawase</i> (<i>Children's Happiness</i>) published by Sodo Bunka, compiled into a book of illustrations entitled " <i>Kodomo no Shiawase Gashu</i> " published by Iwanami Shoten	
	Admitted with cancer to Yoyogi Hospital in autumn; later discharged from the hospital, in remission	
	" <i>Akamma Toge</i> " (<i>The Akamma Pass</i>) published by Doshinsha; " <i>Kitsune Michi wa Ten no Michi</i> " (<i>A Path of Foxes Is a Path to Heaven</i>) published by Dainippon-tosho	
1974	In March, readmitted to hospital due to worsening health	
	Picture of a baby; final work before the artist's death (June)	
	On August 8, dies of primary liver cancer at age 55	
1975	Unfinished work " <i>Akai Rosoku to Ningyo</i> " (<i>The Red Candles and the Mermaid</i>) published posthumously by Doshinsha	Vietnam War ends (April)
1977	In September, Chihiro Iwasaki Art Museum of Picture Books (currently Chihiro Art Museum Tokyo) opens its doors on the site of the artist's home in Shakujii, Nerima-Ward, Tokyo	
1997	In April, Chihiro Art Museum Azumino opens its doors in Matsukawa Village, Kita-azumi District, Nagano Prefecture	



Clutching a sketchbook to her chest
1960 (age 41)



At her studio with her dog Chiro
1971 (age 52)



At home
1973 (age 54)

Chihiro's calligraphy



Chihiro's letter to her cousin 1942



Cloud 1970s

A person just like her artwork

Vice-Chair, Chihiro Iwasaki Memorial Foundation

Zenmei Matsumoto

There are people who say that simply taking a glance at Chihiro's artwork in the morning will cheer them up for the rest of the day.

I never had such grand thoughts while she was alive, probably because Chihiro herself was just like her artwork. I never felt uncomfortable when I was with her. When I found myself in a slump and said, "I've become so lazy,"

she would tell me, "If you're lazy, everyone in the world is lazy." She always perked me up again. She was just that kind of person.

Maybe because of this relationship, I am now painfully aware of the value of her artwork. I think I am also beginning to appreciate the arts to a greater extent—from paintings to poems. It is strange.

