

Statement

There are a great many ways of expressing things. For me, to express is to draw; drawing what I create in my mind is everything to me.

When I draw, I never vent my emotions randomly in an effort to express. Rather, I make a point of selecting a theme to embody what I feel and allow me to manifest this feeling in a tangible form. I also make elaborate calculations for the purpose of creating these forms in much the same way as an architect drafts designs, a photographer considers composition and a novelist prepares characters and backgrounds.

Most of my past works on literary themes have used poems in English. There is a reason why I, a Japanese, have avoided my native language. I think of Japanese as a delicate and exhaustive language and I myself am Japanese, which makes it all the more difficult for me to come up with meanings other than the generally accepted meanings of the words I read, which leaves no scope for my imagination. By contrast, I can only read the languages of foreign countries in a clumsy manner at best, but this lack of thorough understanding is, I contend, what provides my mind with plenty of room for exercising a broad and deep imagination, although this may be a subjective idea.

I believe that the depth and breadth of the imagination is the life of art.

The Tale of Genji, a work of Japanese literature, was written over 1,000 years ago. The Japanese language used in those days seems like a foreign language to present-day Japanese people, and for me this story is a work of literature that leaves lots of room for imagination.

In addition, there were two things that I particularly wanted to know with regard to The Tale of Genji. One was the purpose for which Murasaki Shikibu, a lady-in-waiting who lived in the tenth and eleventh centuries wrote this long novel. The other is why a number of noted Japanese female artists in the past became involved with this story and what it was about that fascinated them.

My past creations have usually been initiated by my experience of being inspired by something, which I would then use as the theme. With The Tale of Genji, as I think back, it was the other way around. I delved into the story like an explorer, wondering what was so intriguing about it.

First of all, I was surprised at the depth and breadth of the education of Murasaki Shikibu. Undoubtedly, this woman who lived over a thousand years ago made a stupendous effort to acquire a level of knowledge matching or exceeding that of her male contemporaries. In a story of men and women in the Imperial Court, she narrates Japanese events taking place in each of the four seasons and episodes from people's lives while generously throwing in snippets of her abundant knowledge.

What I decided to do was to depict in my works various things that serve to embellish the story, rather than depicting the flow of the story itself.

Attempting to appreciate this story by viewing it on ancient picture scrolls is no easy task. It is more difficult than one might expect to identify the different scenes, unless you are exceptionally well educated.

I had never been this aware of the potential of abstract expression prior to this opportunity. Giving form to a long story containing as many as 54 chapters as if to insert illustrations turned out to be a very amusing process, contrary to what I had expected.

Giving thought to the truth of life and finding an unchanging philosophy in a story is a great pleasure for me as a creator, which in turn provides me with energy for drawing. Here is a passage from the words of the sage mentioned in Chapter 53 of *Tenerai* or "Writing-Practice": "Human life is short enough as it is, and we must respect what remains, even if it is no more than a day or two....." I was also quite impressed by the even deeper philosophy expressed by the author immediately before the last chapter.

Through the entire work, I felt great empathy with the aspect of Murasaki Shikibu as a creator. Writing a story—or the act of writing itself—may have been her purpose. After all, creation itself is a delight and a *raison d'être* for an creator.

Lastly, I would like to say that my choice of The Tale of Genji as the theme of my works has been a major turning point in my life. The fact that the world's first full-length novel was written by a Japanese woman named Murasaki Shikibu makes me feel extremely proud as a fellow Japanese woman.

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