

Newspaper: Taiwan Daily News (Taiwan nichinichi shinpō), January 16, 1932, page 6

Article Series Title: True Stories of Library Use (Part 2) Collected from all over Taiwan

Article Title: “How I Received a Special Award [at the Taiwan Fine Arts Exhibition]: Guo Xuehu, Taipei, second prize”

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I loved drawing since I was a child. I hoped to find a good instructor, study drawing properly, and become a successful painter. However, due to family circumstances it was not possible. So, after graduating from school, I gave it some thought and became a scroll mounter as it would allow me to come in touch with many great paintings. Whenever I had some time after work, I would take up the brush and study. The first Taiwan Fine Arts Exhibition in 1927 gave me bright hopes that it would be a gateway to success for an unknown artist like myself. I thought “I haven’t had proper training, but I will do my best.” And so, from early in the summer I devoted myself to painting and completed three works in time for the deadline. When I finally saw the announcement of who got accepted, I saw that only three Taiwanese (hontōjin) got accepted to the Eastern Painting (tōyōga) division. Luckily, I was one of them. When I heard that famous painters all got rejected yet an unknown person like myself got in, I was in the seventh heaven. However, the public and people who got rejected began gossiping, saying things like “Guo Xuehu’s works were painted by someone else.” Some even said “It was a complete accident that he got in. We will see next year! He will definitely be rejected.” When I heard these rumors, I thought to myself “I will show them next year! I will paint something much better than this year.” I made a resolution. Unfortunately, I did not have the money to study with a good instructor. I was at a loss. Then, suddenly I remembered the library. From then on, I began to frequent the library. In the evenings or during the day, whenever I had some free time, I would go to the library. The library [staff] knew about my resolution and even showed me books from their special collections. At the library I looked mostly at books featuring new Eastern Painting (tōyōga), read about painting theory, copied old masterpieces, and studied new painting techniques. I studied desperately. Eventually, time came for the second exhibition. I submitted a large-sized hanging scroll “Maruyama Area,” which was double the size of my works from the previous year. The acceptance or rejection of this work would prove or break my reputation. I truly did my best. The announcement said: accepted, accepted! My work got accepted for the second time! My joy was even greater than that first time. On top of that, my work received a special award and was displayed in the most prominent place. When I received this good news, I felt as if in a dream. And I was deeply grateful to the library. I could not study with an instructor and it was the library who allowed me to be honored in this way. The library was my unparalleled good teacher. Thanks to this honor, all of the bad gossip from the previous year stopped. From then on, I considered the library my teacher, continued to visit it and study. Thus far, I have received three special prizes and two Taiwan prizes.