

Press Release

The Brooklyn Museum to Acquire Five Works by Japanese American Artist Kyohei Inukai from the Private Collection of Miyoko Davey

Supporting the Museum's goal to expand its holdings of works by Japanese American artists, the acquisition includes two paintings that will be featured in the reinstated American Art galleries, opening October 4, 2024.



Image: Kyohei Inukai (American, born Japan, 1886-1954). *Dorothy*, 1933. Oil on canvas, 50 x 40 in. (127 x 101.6 cm). American Art. Gift of John and Miyoko U. Davey, TL2023.57.4.

The Brooklyn Museum is proud to announce the acquisition of five major paintings by Japanese American artist Kyohei Inukai (1886–1954), expanding the Museum’s diverse holdings of American art. The generous gift comes from Manhattan-based collector Miyoko Davey, a dedicated researcher, collector, and champion of Inukai’s work since the 1980s. Davey brought further attention to the artist by publishing his biography, *Kyohei Inukai (1886–1954)*, in 2014.

“We are incredibly grateful to Mrs. Davey for her generous gift to the Brooklyn Museum. It is a tremendous acquisition that falls perfectly in line with our mission for our reimagined American Art galleries: to expand the representation, engagement, and research of previously marginalized American artists,” says Stephanie Sparling Williams, Andrew W. Mellon Curator of American Art. “These impressive works by Kyohei Inukai shed light on

Brooklyn Museum

the life and successful career of an early twentieth-century Japanese American artist, and we look forward to sharing his paintings with our audiences.”

Born in Okayama, Japan, in 1886, Inukai immigrated to the United States when he was 14. He trained at the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art in San Francisco and then at the Art Institute of Chicago. Upon moving to New York City in 1915, he established himself as a successful society portraitist. Inukai regularly exhibited his work at the National Academy of Design and the Grand Central Art Galleries, where he was the sole Japanese artist admitted in the field of painting.

After over two decades as a portraitist for elite New Yorkers, Inukai—like many Japanese Americans—faced racist backlash during World War II. He found himself largely ostracized from the society circles in which he had worked, as fewer people were willing to hire Japanese-born artists. In an autobiography drafted in the 1940s, Inukai discusses anti-Asian sentiment he faced and acts of violence he witnessed, particularly in response to the Immigration Act of 1924. Davey was the first to discover this unfinished and unpublished text after the artist’s death and, by including it in the 2014 book she edited, she brought life to his long-buried words.

The Brooklyn Museum will receive four masterful portraits and one still life that Inukai created in the 1920s and ’30s. The acquisition comes at an important moment, as the artistic careers of Inukai and his son, Kyohei Inukai the Younger (born Earle Goodenow), are receiving revived attention from scholars and institutions. The Brooklyn Museum’s American Art department recently acquired works by both father and son, contributing to emerging scholarship and greater access to their oeuvres.

Several works in the Davey gift will be on view in the Brooklyn Museum’s reinstalled American Art galleries, which will open in tandem with the [Museum’s bicentennial celebration](#) on October 4, 2024. The reenvisioned American Art wing will shift away from the long-held art-world tradition of showcasing art through European American lenses. Instead, the galleries will be organized by important cultural frameworks that give a voice to the diverse perspectives of historically excluded communities. In addition to Inukai’s paintings, the American Art galleries will feature works by Japanese American artists such as Bumpei Usui, Chiura Obata, Hisako Hibi, Okada Kenzo, and Yasuo Kuniyoshi.

About Miyoko Davey

Miyoko Davey is a visionary advocate of education and cultural exchange. Alongside her husband, John Davey, she founded the John and Miyoko Davey Foundation in 2012, dedicated to providing scholarships for Japanese students studying in the United States. She also continues the couple’s legacy of patronage of organizations supporting the Japanese community in the United States, including the Japan Society.

About the Brooklyn Museum

At the Brooklyn Museum, art is a vital force for personal transformation and social change. For 200 years, the Museum has expanded the definitions of art and what it means to be a museum by revealing untold stories and uplifting our shared humanity. Among the oldest, largest, and boldest art museums in the United States, the Brooklyn Museum holds an encyclopedic collection of over 500,000 objects representing more than 5,500 years of creativity from cultures around the globe. Highlights range from ancient Egyptian masterpieces and world-class American works to our Center for Feminist Art, the only one of its kind in the country. Housed in a landmark building in the heart of Brooklyn, the Museum is dedicated to its communities—both near and far—and remains an advocate for growth, healing, and social change.