Nihonga Painting with Makoto Fujimara

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NIHONGA PAINTING WITH MAKOTO FUJIMARA

Painting is very healing for me,” said artist Makoto Fujimura in his October First Mondays talk titled “Cultural Stewardship.” “It is a sacred space. I get to have quiet time in my studio, making. Because when you make, God shows up; the spirit hovers. Even if you aren’t an artist, you are indeed a maker of some kind.”

Fujimura’s work has been exhibited in galleries around the world in New York, Tokyo, and Washington, D.C. One painting style he specializes in is called Nihonga, a Japanese style of painting that dates back to the 17th century. Nihonga is traditionally done on Japanese paper and uses pigments created from natural materials such as minerals and stones. These materials are ground into grain and bound together with a glue solution and water.

During his visit to campus, Fujimura also hosted a Nihonga painting workshop attended by a mix of Dordt students, faculty, and community members. Fujimura demonstrated how to adapt the traditional styles to more contemporary methods of painting, using whatever materials are available. Participants experimented with mixing and grinding a variety of materials, ranging from silver and ochre to more common materials like coffee and herbs.

“The goal of this workshop was to make Nihonga accessible,” says Eric Tai, a Fujimura fellow who helped lead the workshop. “I was glad that everyone really jumped in, experimenting with found materials.”

Christina Chahyadinata, a senior graphic design major at Dordt, was one of the workshop participants. She created an abstract painting on hosho paper, using dill, ground silver, green and blue ochre, and cardboard broken up for texture. “We use Fujimura’s book Culture Care for classes. Fujimura emphasizes that artists are not only people who have painting as their job; artists are everyone. He is very inspiring.”

Art Professor Matthew Drissell was particularly excited about Fujimura’s visit. “Nihonga is an approach I have always admired but had no clue how it worked. Hearing Fujimura talk in person gave me a greater sense of the connection with the materials of paint—the idea that these materials have a resonance with history and are rooted in a particular place.”

“I try to be faithful in this slice of expression God has given me,” Fujimura says. “I know something is emanating from my work, and I want to give that glory to God. Culture is not just something that burns up in the judgment; something will survive. Our efforts here are multiplied—they carry through to the other side of eternity.”

“To learn from a world-renowned artist—what a privilege,” says Lori Delong, another workshop participant. “It really is an honor to just sit here and listen and think along with Fujimura.”

—Makoto Fujimura, artist

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