

## THE SANKEI SHIMBUN / February 28, 2022 / Seeing is Believing

(The first of the trilogy)

### Fairy Tale Spun by the 'Love for Sanda'

#### Sculptor Susumu Shingu – 84

Susumu Shingu (84), who is known worldwide as a “wind sculptor” for his sculptures that move with the wind and water, is also popular as a picture book writer. I visited his studio in Sanda City, Hyogo Prefecture, where the snow fluttered, in order to hear the source of his rich ideas and the reason why he is always youthful.

(Caption for the photograph)

Susumu Shingu, who holds *Sandalino* and smiles against the backdrop of the wind-moving sculpture "Ripples of Light" installed in a pond near his studio in Sanda City, Hyogo Prefecture (photographed by Mizue Torikoshi).

#### Character Born from Rural Scenery

Getting off at Shin-Sanda Station on the JR Fukuchiyama Line and taking a taxi toward the foot of the mountain for about 30 minutes, Susumu Shingu's studio stood on a remote road like a hideaway.

There is a pond right next to his studio. In this place surrounded by nature, Shingu devises ideas for his works and thinks about the story of picture books.

His studio, originally located in Toyono-cho, Osaka, became too small and he moved to Sanda in 1990. "How about Sanda?"

That's what Tokitada Sakai (1911-90), the former governor of Hyogo prefecture, told Shingu to move over to Sanda. Twenty-four years later, in Hyogo Prefectural Arimafuji Park in Sanda, WIND MUSEUM was completed with 12 large sculptures by Shingu of their individual dance in the wind. While holding various open-air events such as "Noh" and "jazz" and interacting with people, Shingu fell in love with this place. There is no shortage of episodes showing his love for Sanda. Shingu, who also has a studio in Paris, said that when he woke up there one morning, suddenly came up with a character related to Sanda for some reason.

"It is *Sandalino* the alien with sandals who has fallen to Sanda with lightning. The story of *Sandalino*, who becomes friends with a girl in the village and becomes fond of the earth, overflowed inside me.

I wasn't very confident at first, so I explained it to an Italian I knew in Paris. Since he was extremely happy to hear it, I became confident."

Until then, Shingu had published two picture books with pop-up gimmicks from Gallimard in Paris, but this story also caught the heart of the editor in charge, and three years ago the French version (Gallimard Jeunesse), the Italian version (L'ippocampo Edizioni) and the Japanese version titled "*Sandalino - Where did you come from?*" (BL Publishing) were published as a pop-up book.

"*Sandalino* has to become famous overseas. That's why I chose the Italian-style name of small sandals." Of course, the name comes from "Sanda." When it allows people to come and go freely through the crisis of new coronavirus, Shingu hopes that people from all over the world will come and visit *Sandalino* in this village where they can fully enjoy the countryside just by looking at the changes of the four seasons.

"Now, I'm thinking of turning this story into a feature-length novel. It's something like the series of Harry Potter (the world-famous fantasy novel). That's how the story expands."

Shingu made a song right away. Lyrics were written by him and the music was composed by Takumi Seino, a guitarist who graduated from Berklee College of Music in the United States. In fact, Takumi Seino, is the one who became Shingu's fan after loving the picture book *Strawberries*, the first picture book published by Susumu Shingu in 1975. "I don't think art should be incomprehensible. Art can be a fairy tale."

Shingu's dream goes beyond art while weaving encounters with people.

Interviewer: Toshikazu Masaki, Editor-in-Chief

Susumu Shingu - Born in Osaka Prefecture in July 1937. Studied painting at Tokyo University of the Arts. Then he went abroad in Rome, Italy in 1960 and started making three-dimensional works. After returning to Japan in 1966, he continued to present sculptures that move with wind and water, and attracted attention. He has also had many solo exhibitions at home and abroad, while being known as a picture book writer and for his stage works.

(Caption for the photograph)

Along with the sculpture "Together with the Sun" exhibited in Expo'70 Osaka (provided by Shingu)