

# Luis Nishizawa

## Master of His Craft

Margarita García Luna\*



Unless otherwise specified, photos by Daniel Wunguia

*Microscopic Lobster*, 53 x 75 cm, 1978 (mixed techniques).

Japanese on his father's side and Mexican on his mother's, Luis Nishizawa was born on the San Mateo Hacienda in the municipality of Cuauhtitlán, State of Mexico, February 2, 1918. His childhood, spent close to nature, would profoundly influence his sensibilities and be a determining factor in his work.

In 1925, Nishizawa's family came to live in Mexico City. Before enrolling in the San Car-

los Academy in 1942, he made jewelry and studied music. In the academy, he studied under Julio Castellanos, José Chávez Morado, Alfredo Zalce and Benjamín Coria, among others. In 1947, he graduated in visual arts and in 1955 he began his long career as an art teacher at the National School of Visual Arts, where he has since wisely and generously shared his knowledge and techniques with several generations of artists.

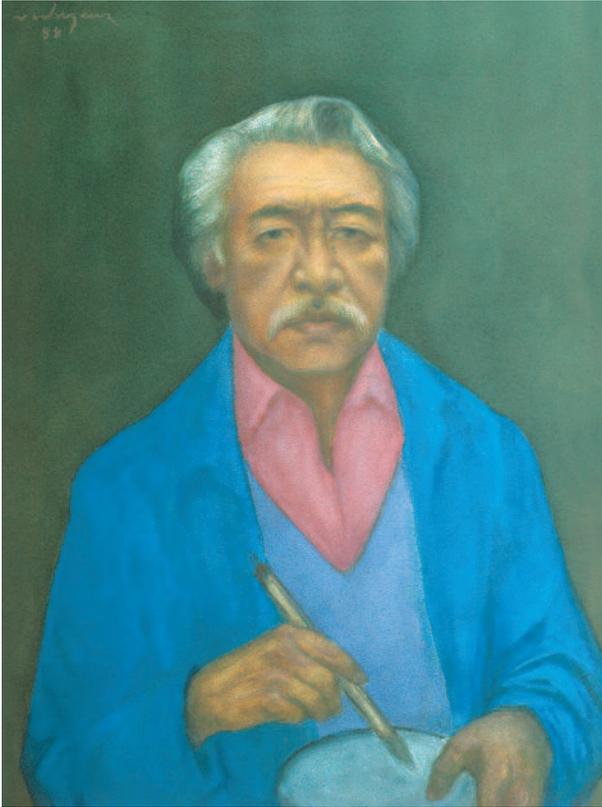
At the beginning of his career, Nishizawa was part of the Mexican school with its strong nationalist leanings, but he has not limited him-

\* Director of the Nishizawa Museum Workshop.

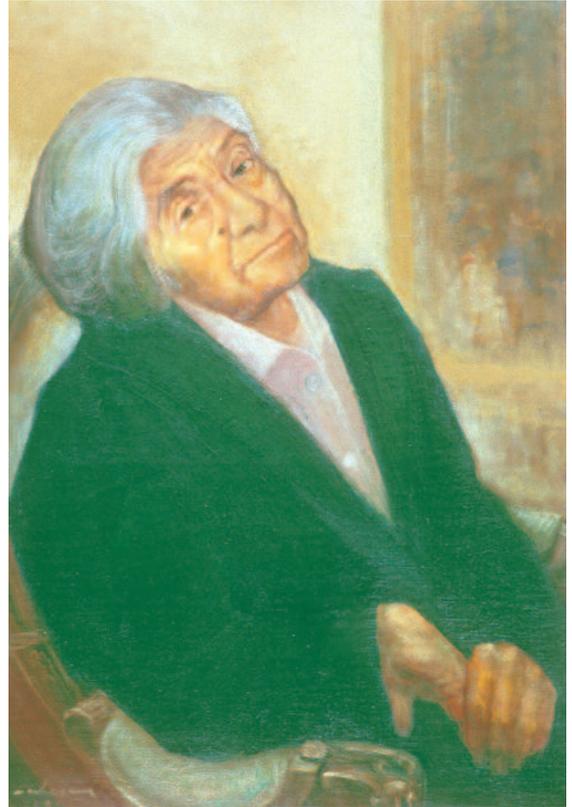
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*Figure*, 104 x 80 cm, 1959 (acrylic).



*Self-portrait*, 122 x 82 cm, 1988 (watercolor).



*My Mother*, 95 x 72 cm, 1967 (mixed techniques on canvas and wood).

self to a single aesthetic trend. This has allowed him to articulate currents as varied as expressionism, abstractionism and figurativism, creating free art with no frontiers. His dual cultural heritage has led him down formal, conceptual and technical roads that have accentuated a personality that is profoundly human. The blend of his Mexican and Japanese roots, those of two ancient and artistic peoples, has been very significant in his work, which radiates beauty and transmits emotion through both form and color. In his long career, he has ventured into different languages: muralism, easel painting, sketching, ceramics, stained-glass and sculpting.

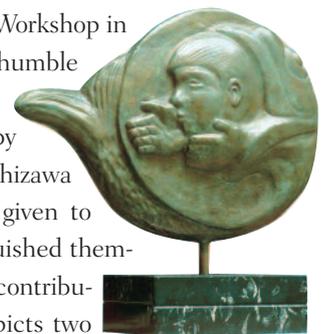
Luis Nishizawa's fine sensibility and complete mastery of his craft has given him a central place in Mexican and world art. His work has won him several prizes and awards. He received an honorary doctorate from the National Autonomous University of Mexico; the Japanese government bestowed on him the "Sacred Treasure of the

Dragon" award in 1987; he was given the National Prize for Art in 1996; and he is a full member of Mexico's Academy of the Arts and has been an honorary member of the National Council for Culture and the Arts since 1993.

#### THE NISHIZAWA MUSEUM WORKSHOP

In recognition of his vast body of work, his artistic legacy and his work as a teacher for almost 50 years, the government of the State of Mexico created the Nishizawa Museum Workshop in 1992. It is housed in what was a humble eighteenth-century dwelling.

The first patio is covered by stained-glass depicting the Nishizawa clan mon, the heraldic symbol given to Japanese clans who have distinguished themselves in battle or through their contributions to culture. The symbol depicts two



*The Spirit Is Ever Renewed*, 40 x 50 x 9 cm, 2000 (bronze).



Louides Grobet/Nishizawa Museum

*Barranca del Cobre*, 94 x 184 cm, 1984 (ink on torinoko paper).



Louides Grobet/Nishizawa Museum

*The Friars V*, 99 x 185 cm, 1997 (suiboku ink).



*Self-portrait*, 71.3 x 49 cm, 1965 (mixed techniques on wood).

sparrows among stalks of bamboo where, aware of its strength and flexibility, they have chosen to nest. The bamboo bends under the force of storms or hurricanes, but later straightens up and moves in the wind. This symbol affirms the human spirit as being as intelligent as a sparrow and flexible in the face of adversity. In addition, the dome creates just the right conditions for carrying out the museum-workshop's cultural activities.

Luis Nishizawa has worked in very durable materials: with the delicacy of distemper, or the

hardness of *recinto* (black sedimentary rock), ceramics and architecture. The pieces in the museum are barely a sampling of his vast body of work.

He conceived of the museum as a center of culture, where the public would have the opportunity to get close to art. With that in mind, the museum sponsors different activities, such as temporary exhibits of well-known artists' work, piano and chamber orchestra concerts, lectures, book launches and courses and workshops of different kinds.



One of the museum's rooms.



The museum's patio.



*The Bed of the Universe*, 2 x 8.5 m, 1987 (mural of grey and rusted stone). Museum of Modern Art at the State of Mexico Cultural Center.

The “Chatting Over Coffee” program offers the public a chance to sit down and talk with Luis Nishizawa. This popular activity has attracted people from all walks of life: newspaper and shoe-shine boys, architects, doctors, street vendors, students, retirees, teachers, artists, journalists, bakers, butchers, intellectuals, etc. While sharing his experiences, Nishizawa explains

the links that all these different kinds of people have with the cultural center's activities.

THE NISHIZAWA MUSEUM WORKSHOP  
NICOLÁS BRAVO NORTE 305  
TOLUCA, STATE OF MEXICO  
OPEN, TUESDAY TO SATURDAY 10 A.M. TO 6 P.M.  
SUNDAYS, 10 A.M. TO 4 P.M.  
TELEPHONE: (72) 157465 OR 157468.