

# Pyrography artist Hamada make 3 dreams come true

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As an artist working in the medium of pyrography, Soji Hamada must execute every stroke of his heated pen with precision as he burns images of birds and animals into wood.

Pyrography does not permit "another try once you make a mistake in drawing an object," the self-taught artist says.

Hamada, 63, draws inspiration for his subjects from his experience as a breeder of birds and small animals at a zoo.

"As a former breeder, I cannot draw animals by means of fabrication or fakery," Hamada says. "Such a practice cannot be permitted under the name of art."

Born and raised in Osaka, Hamada began a nomadic life when he was 20 years old, working at a farm, mountain lodge and other places as a temporary worker for over three years. He eventually settled in Matsumoto, Nagano Prefecture, where he had wanted to live since visiting on a mountain climbing trip as a high school student.

Early in his 30s, Hamada was hired as a breeder at a zoo for birds and small animals in the city, a job he had dreamed of as an elementary school pupil.

He began to live in a log house he built himself in a mountainous area in Shiojiri in the prefecture 13 years ago. He happened to find his skill of pyrography in the spring of last year when he built a sun porch. One day he decorated its wooden door with an electri-

cally heated pen he had used for woodworking in the past.

"I was touched by my drawing" on the wooden door, Hamada recalls. "I couldn't sleep, thinking that I could draw pictures with this (electrically heated pen)." The following day, he began his efforts in earnest and has not stopped since.

The excitement traces back to his dream of becoming a painter when he was a junior high school student.

Hamada held an exhibition of his work in Nagano this spring, which attracted people not only because of realistic designs but

also because of funny comments attached to them. For a mythical creature known as a "kirin," for example, he wrote, "Though I have not raised it, I am tempted to drink beer," in apparent reference to a leading Japanese brewer called Kirin Brewery Co.

Hamada's three dreams of becoming a breeder, living in nature and working as an artist have come true without any effort, he says.

"People should find what they like," Hamada adds. "You have to go to pains to do what you don't like but you can do what you like with no effort."



SHIOJIRI, Japan - Photo taken Sept. 4, 2013 shows self-taught pyrography artist Soji Hamada holding one of his favorite creations -- a picture of an owl -- at his home in Shiojiri, Nagano Prefecture. Hamada makes animal images as true to nature as possible, taking advantage of his experience as a breeder of birds and small animals at a zoo. (Kyodo Photo)