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| Ku Ponung (구본웅, 具本雄) (1906-1953) |
| Ku Pon-ung |
| Ku Ponung was a modern artist and critic active during the Japanese colonial period and the Korean War. Due to his spine curvature and eccentric personality, Ku was likened to the French painter Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901) and called ‘The Seoul Lautrec.’ Ku attended the Taiheiyō School of Fine Arts in Tokyo, where he was introduced to Fauvism, Expressionism, Surrealism, Cubism, and other modern Western art styles. He later pioneered the acceptance of these styles in Korea.  As an artist, Ku worked in several ways to enact resistance against the colonial government. In Tokyo, Ku's paintings were displayed in several modern art shows that were organized by independent groups and held in opposition to the state-sponsored exhibitions. In Seoul, Ku organized solo exhibitions of unconventionally expressionistic oil paintings. Ku also participated in non-governmental exhibitions in Korea, and in 1934 he established a group called Mogirhoe with other Korean, Western-style painters. These artists’ shows opposed the Chosŏn Art Exhibition, which was an annual juried show established by the colonial government in Seoul.  Many of Ku's oil paintings were lost during the Korean War, but several portraits and still lifes survive. Ku worked closely with contemporaneous writers, and his friendship with the modern poet Yi Sang is well known. Ku also edited and published the literary magazine *Ch'ŏngsaekchi*. After the Liberation of Korea from Japan in 1945, Ku worked to revitalize Korean art by experimenting with various formats and media, including traditional ink painting and newspaper illustration. His attempt at artistic revival continued even during the turmoil of the Korean War. |
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| Further reading:  (Jungsil)  (Youngna, Artistic Trends in Korean Painting During the 1930s)  (Youngna, Modern and Contemporary Art in Korea)  (Youngna, Modern Korean Painting and Sculpture ) |