



Springfield Museums welcomes unique origami exhibit

By [Kathryn Roy | Special to The Republican](#) on January 19, 2015 at 7:00 AM, updated January 19, 2015



Vincent Floderer talks about his origami art work. More origami adorns the wall in the D'Amour Museum of Fine Arts

When thinking of origami, most people think of small, simplistic folded pieces of paper. But a new traveling exhibit, making its North American debut at the Springfield Museums, will turn that perception on its head.

"Above the Fold: New Expressions in Origami," described as a groundbreaking exhibition of sculptures and large-scale origami installations by nine internationally-

known "master folders," will be on display at the Michele and Donald D'Amour Museum of Fine Arts from January 20 through April 12, 2015.

Origami, which means "paper folding" in Japanese, has evolved from a Japanese craft into a skilled global art form using complicated math and science techniques to achieve the resulting finished art piece.

Participating artist Vincent Floderer of France uses a multitude of paper types to achieve whimsical-looking three-dimensional "inflatable" structures.

Floderer said he has been practicing the art of origami for about 30 years, and continues to learn and explore new techniques.

"I've been testing different ways to fold and close, without gluing or attaching (the paper to itself)," he said. "The fold holds it together. You have to find a combination of folds. It's a challenging task, with complicated mathematics, but it is possible to close these edges together using any angle."

One of the paper materials Floderer uses for his origami is a pinewood fiber used in France to wrap food.

"It gives mechanical resistance," he said. "It is grease, water and oil resistant. It is treated to be displayed outside."

Floderer said it's hard to estimate how long he spends on each of his origami pieces, because he works on several at a time, especially when the same techniques are used.

He said it's a very time-consuming art.

"Pre-folding is very important," he said. "It must be very accurate."

Floderer said he is exploring the opportunities for using origami techniques to build emergency shelters.

"These techniques haven't been taught in universities, which is very surprising because you can test (scientific) protocols without any tools," he said.

Artist Jiangmei Wu, originally from China but a United States resident for 26 years, is also interested in using origami to build purposeful structures, but her exhibit piece is purely an art piece.

Wu has installed her large-scale piece, "Ruga Swan," for the exhibit. Wu's artwork measures almost 20 feet in length and allows the viewer to walk underneath to see the piece from different perspectives.

"I was doing smaller works, and was known for that," Wu said. "This is my first attempt at the larger scale/architectural scale. I had to change the way I work."

Other master artists featured in the exhibit are Erik Demaine and Martin Demaine, from Canada/USA; Miri Golan, from Israel; Paul Jackson, from UK/Israel; Dr. Robert J. Lang from USA; Yuko Nishimura from Japan, and Richard Sweeney from the UK.

Julia Courtney, Curator of Art for the Springfield Art Museums, said there are several reasons they wanted to bring this exhibit to the D'Amour Museum of Fine Arts.

"It's an art form that people don't know a lot about, but it is very accessible, especially to children and families," Courtney said. "This is more like a site-specific installation than a traveling exhibit."

Heather Haskell, Director of the Springfield Art Museums, said one of the Springfield Museums' missions is to introduce visitors to all forms of art.

"We're trying to bring atypical art forms to the museums just to show people the great range of work being done," Haskell said. "It's also very exciting to be the first venue in the U.S. to host this exhibit. The science of origami is just as interesting as the art, and this fits nicely with our three disciplines (of art, science and history)."

In coordination with "Above the Fold: New Expressions in Origami," the museum is hosting a related exhibit, "Origami Interpretations: Gloria Garfinkel," at the nearby George Walter Vincent Smith Art Museum.

The Springfield Museums are located on the Quadrangle at 21 Edwards Street in Springfield. They are open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, visit www.springfieldmuseums.org or call 413-263-6800.