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MFA St. Pete presents 'Above the Fold'

By LEE CLARK ZUMPE, Tampa Bay Newspapers 11 hrs ago



Erik Demaine and Martin Demaine, *Together*, 2012, Mi-Teintes watercolor paper. Photo courtesy of the artists.

ST. PETERSBURG — Overhead, the air is full of life. Each horizon offers myriad vistas. Light and shadow craft powerful illusions.

All this creativity exists in an enclosed space within a gallery at the Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg. Welcome to “Above the Fold: New Expressions in Origami,” an exhibition showcasing the power and potential of a centuries-old art form in its contemporary incarnation. The exhibition opened in June and will continue through Sept. 22 at the museum, 255 Beach Drive NE, St. Petersburg.

Presented in conjunction with the exhibition and as part of the Marly Music concert series, participating artists and computer scientists Erik and Martin Demaine will fold a series of their signature, abstract “Curved-Crease Sculptures” and place them inside a blown glass sculpture. The father-and-son team will be accompanied by pianist John C. O’Leary III during this special event Sunday, Aug. 11, 2 to 4 p.m. The performance piece will blend art and science. Admission is \$15 for Marly Music Society members and students; and \$25 for adults. Tickets include general museum admission.

According to a press release from the museum, “Above the Fold” features massive, elaborate works suspended from the gallery ceiling and spanning hundreds of feet across the walls in the Museum of Fine Arts.

Origami is rooted in history and spirituality. In this traveling exhibition, nine international artists utilize light, shadow, nature, math and science to elevate contemporary origami to a global art form. “Above the Fold” includes nearly 20 paper-based works of arts in the form of dramatic sculptures, large-scale installations, and conceptual works that express contemporary, social, political, aesthetic, and cultural dialogues. It is the first traveling exhibition to bring a group of origami installations and conceptual sculptures from around the world to North American audiences. The MFA is the second-to-last museum to host the exhibition before it concludes in 2020.

The master folders whose work is exhibited in “Above the Fold” are Erik Demaine and Martin Demaine of Canada and the United States; Vincent Floderer of France; Miri Golan of Israel; Paul Jackson of the UK and Israel; Robert J. Lang of the United States; Yuko Nishimura of Japan; Richard Sweeney of the UK; and Jiangmei Wu of China and the United States. Collectively, these artists push the boundaries of paper as a medium to create bold, provocative works.

“Above the Fold” is curated by Meher McArthur and the tour is organized by International Arts & Artists, Washington, DC.

Origami — which literally means “paper folding” — has evolved from a Japanese craft into a highly expressive, global art form that intersects and impacts the realms of art and science. Today, artists all over the world are folding paper into increasingly elaborate and provocative sculptural works, while scientists and mathematicians are using origami to unlock the mysteries of the universe.

“Paper is a fascinating medium, and we’re excited to present these brilliant contemporary works of art, in such an immersive way, that reflect how origami has evolved as an art form,” said Kristen A. Shepherd, the museum’s executive director. “This is one of the MFA’s most ambitious installations, and our guests will be able to experience origami as never before.”

In addition to the captivating paper art, the MFA exhibit will incorporate artwork from its collection, such as Japanese woodblock prints, and other local loans. The gallery will also include a paper-folding interactive space for guests to create paper cranes and other paper patterns. Guests can take the cranes home or leave them on display in the space for the duration of the exhibition. The ones left will be sent to the Children’s Peace Monument in Hiroshima, Japan. The MFA’s goal is to send 1,000 cranes to be placed at the peace monument commemorating Sadako Sasaki and all the children lost to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

About the participating artists

Father and son Erik and Martin Demaine fold, pleat, and twist paper into powerful sculptural forms that illustrate the intriguing and profound connections between mathematics and origami. They use mathematical calculations to create unconventional works that challenge the direction of paper folding. For years, the Demaines have been exploring the potential of curved folding, in which paper is folded along a curved, rather than a straight line. The Demaines have folded a series of their signature, abstract “Curved-Crease Sculptures” using modular techniques to increase sculptural size. They also created combined glass-and-paper folded forms, large works that incorporate text, and mobius hypars (curved-crease foldings) interlocked through space, thus blending art, science and literature.

Vincent Floderer specializes in crumpling, a technique that includes dampening and stretching origami paper to create organic and multi-layered forms. Floderer has created a dynamic, large-scale installation called “Unidentified Flying Origami” (2002-2014). It is a universe of floating, rotating organic models that move via air flow. The models show the creative process Floderer uses to develop his crumpling techniques. Each model derives from classical, modular, box-pleated origami forms that he transforms into otherworldly creations. The installation adapts to each venue’s gallery space, changing aesthetically with each presentation.

Miri Golan, a peace activist, educator, and origami artist, has created a series of book sculptures, based on her conceptual piece in the traveling exhibition “Folding Paper, Two Books,” in which origami figures emerge from the pages of two sacred texts, the Torah and the Koran, and reach out to each other. Golan hopes to use her installations as a catalyst to unite people of different religious and cultural backgrounds. She has founded an organization called Folding Together, a group that encourages Israeli and Palestinian

children and adults to fold paper forms as a team, turning the creation of origami into a collaborative expression of hope for a more peaceful world. Golan's work represents the possibility for origami to be not only a means of artistic expression, but also a platform for positive social change.



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Yuko Nishimura is already an award-winning origami artist at a young age. With a background in architecture and design, Nishimura contributes several framed, wall-hung tessellations in which light and shadow interplay on the folded surface of the paper to dramatic effect. “Japanese people unconsciously experience the action of folding on a daily basis, and therefore encounter various folded forms,” she said. “I think there must be a special meaning for Japanese people through this everyday practice, folding. In order to link the past with future generations regarding the form of folding, I do not limit myself to the category of origami but consider the pursuit of any possibility of folding paper.”

Robert J. Lang, a former NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory laser physicist and professional origami artist, author, and lecturer, has created a large, modular mathematical piece exploring the concept of infinity. In modular origami, multiple sheets of paper are folded into individual units — or modules — and combined to form larger, more complex geometric structures. Works are held together by the friction and tension created by inserting flaps from one module into pockets of another. Titled “Pentasia” (2014), the surface of Lang’s work is composed of equilateral triangles and theoretically extends to infinity without ever repeating itself.

Paul Jackson is a folder who specializes in abstract origami sculptures and takes a highly philosophical approach to the process of folding – and unfolding. Jackson designs a series of large, folded photographs featuring the artist’s own hands folding paper. The piece, *Untitled* (2014), is suspended from the ceiling, with images appearing on the front and back of the sculpture. On one side the image will appear smooth, and on the opposite it will be fragmented or abstracted, offering new perspectives on how we view ourselves.

Richard Sweeney, a multi-media artist rather than an origami artist per se, combines handcrafted, three-dimensional models with computer-aided design and computer numerical control techniques in the creation of his works. He has created a large-scale pleated paper installation called “Air” (2014) that spirals downwards from the ceiling in a form that blends poetry with precision.

Jiangmei Wu is currently an assistant professor in design at Indiana University Bloomington. She also works as an artist and designer and is interested in how folding can be expressed mathematically, physically, and aesthetically; how it can be done with different material and techniques; and how these aspects work together with the conceptual space in which they occur. In her folded works like “Ruga Swan” (2014), the folded forms have rigid properties and at the same time are flexible; they are deployable and can be collapsed again into smaller compressed forms. This installation, created from two folded sections joined together, unites her fascination with interior skin, natural forms and the effects of light and shadow. Wu created the largest work in the exhibition, a paper sculpture measuring 7 feet tall and 20 feet long.

The Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, features a world-class collection with works by Monet, Morisot, Rodin, O’Keeffe, Willem de Kooning, and many other great artists. Also displayed are ancient Greek and Roman, Egyptian, Asian, African, pre-Columbian and Native American art. Selections from the photography collection, one of the largest and finest in the Southeast, are on view in a gallery dedicated solely to the medium.

Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Wednesday, Friday and Saturday; 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Thursday; and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. Regular admission is \$20 for adults; \$15 for those 65 and older, Florida educators, college students and active duty military; and \$10 for students 7 and older. Children 6 and younger and museum members are admitted free.

For information, call 727-896-2667 or visit mfastpete.org.