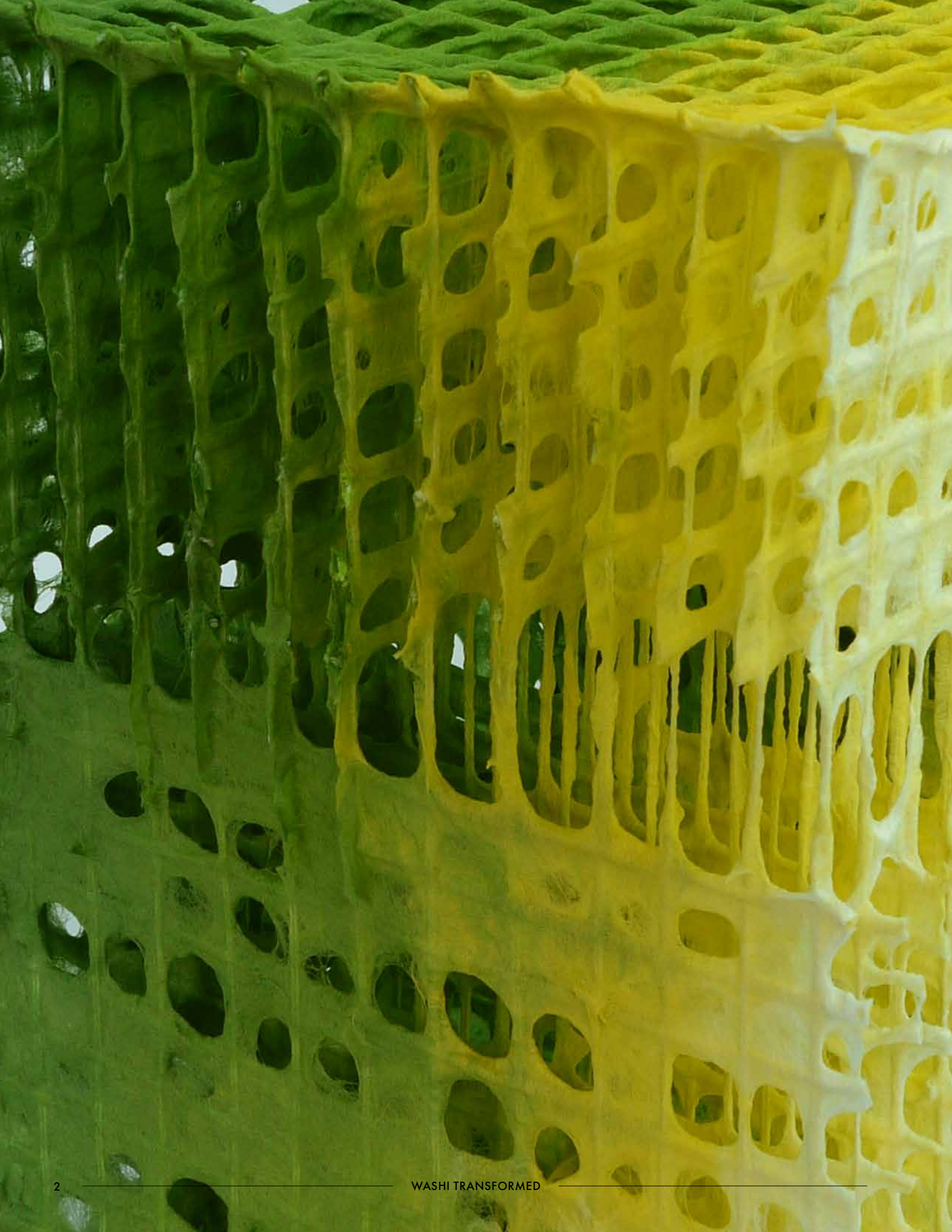


WASHI TRANSFORMED

New Expressions in Japanese Paper





INTRODUCTION

Unique for its strong natural fibers and its painstaking production techniques, which have been passed down from one generation to the next, *washi* stands out as a nexus of tradition and innovation. Its continuing, and ever-evolving, importance as an artistic medium is due primarily to the ingenuity of Japanese contemporary artists, who have pushed *washi* beyond its historic uses to create highly textured two-dimensional works, expressive sculptures, and dramatic installations. *Washi*, which translates to “Japanese paper,” has been integral to Japanese culture for over a thousand years, and the strength, translucency, and malleability of this one-of-a-kind paper have made it extraordinarily versatile as well as ubiquitous. Historically, *washi* has been used as a base for Japanese calligraphy, painting, and printmaking; but when oiled, lacquered, or otherwise altered, it has other fascinating applications in architecture, religious ritual, fashion, and art.

Despite the increased mechanization of papermaking in Japan over the last century, contemporary Japanese artists have turned to this supple yet sturdy paper to express their artistic visions. The thirty-seven artworks and installations in *Washi Transformed: New Expressions in Japanese Paper* epitomize the potential of this traditional medium in the hands of these innovative artists, who have made *washi* their own. Using a range of techniques—layering, weaving, and dyeing to shredding, folding, and cutting—nine artists embrace the seemingly infinite possibilities of *washi*. Bringing their own idiosyncratic techniques to the material, their extraordinary creations—abstract paper sculptures, lyrical folding screens, highly textured wall pieces, and other dramatic installations—demonstrate the resilience and versatility of *washi* as a medium, as well as the unique stature this ancient art form has earned in the realm of international contemporary art. The breathtaking creativity of these artistic visionaries deepens our understanding of how the past informs the present, and how it can build lasting cultural bridges out of something as seemingly simple and ephemeral as paper.

Takaaki Tanaka, *First Gate*, 2015, Kozo mulberry fiber paper, flax, Courtesy of the artist

THE WASHI TRADITION

According to early Japanese texts, Chinese papermaking techniques were first brought to Japan in the early seventh century by a Korean Buddhist monk. For more than a thousand years, *washi* has claimed an important place in Japanese culture, and the methods used to produce this beautiful, yet utilitarian, paper remain essentially unaltered.

Three principal plant fibers are used in the production of *washi*: kozo (Japanese mulberry) and mitsumata, both of which are cultivated; and gampi, which is typically found in the wild. Traditional paper production is labor-intensive and complex. First, lengths of the three plants are steamed, so that the dark outer bark can be removed. The remaining fibers are then boiled and beaten into a pulp made up of thin strands, which is then placed in a bath of water,

where it is skillfully strained through a bamboo screen. This process disperses the fibers evenly to form thin sheets, which are then bleached and dried by the sun.

Washi was typically produced by farmers in winter, as an alternate source of income; the cold weather had the added benefit of keeping the fibers fresh, as well as shrinking the pulp, resulting in a stronger paper. This inherent durability has historically made *washi* an ideal resource for such fixtures of Japanese culture as sliding screens, room dividers, and lanterns, as well as a host of everyday objects including fans, furniture, bowls, tape, umbrellas, and kites. In 2014 *washi* was registered as an UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity to honor and celebrate the enduring importance of the papermaking tradition in Japanese culture.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS
AND THEIR WORKS



HINA AOYAMA



YOSHIO IKEZAKI



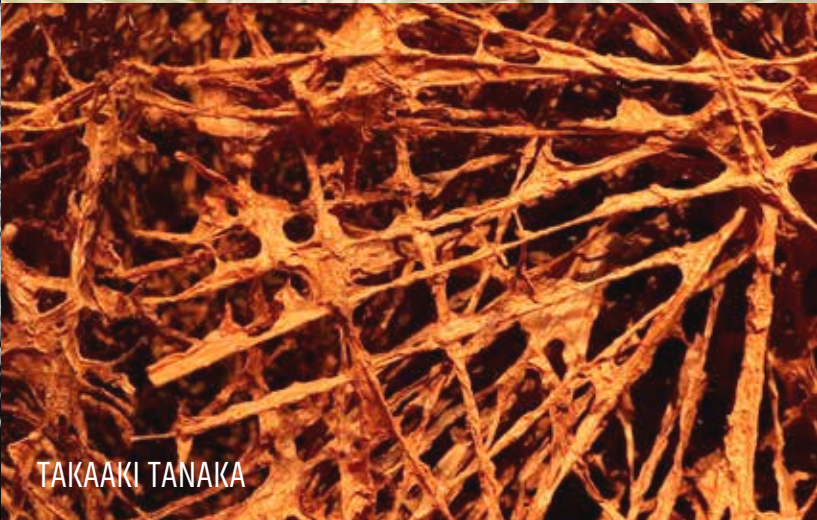
YUKO NISHIMURA



ERIKO HORIKI



KAKUKO ISHII



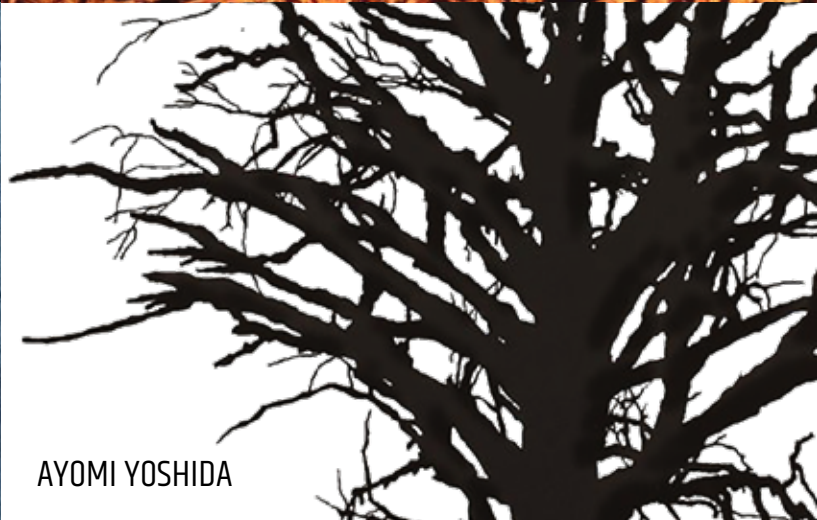
TAKAAKI TANAKA



KYOKO IBE



YUKO KIMURA



AYOMI YOSHIDA



HINA AOYAMA

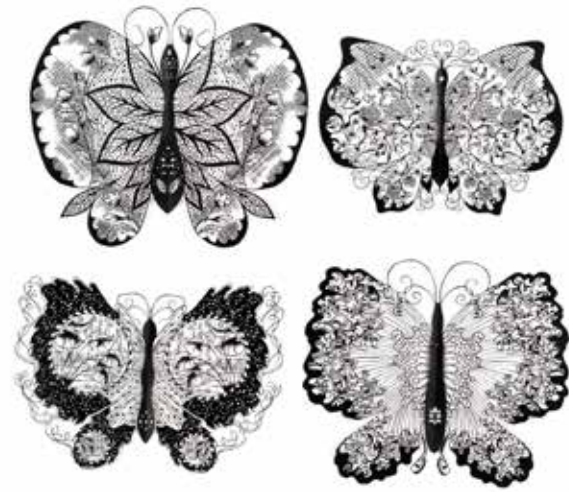
born 1961

Japan/France

Born in Yokohama, Japan, Hina Aoyama has been creating paper cuttings since 2000. Now living in France, Hina eschews traditional Japanese paper-cutting in order to focus on super-fine, lace-like cuttings that express concepts and imagery drawn from a host of cultural traditions. Aoyama works with traditional origami paper, cutting out minute details using very fine scissors and employing a meditative approach in forming her designs. Her subjects are drawn from sources as diverse as nature, including intricate flowers, butterflies, and the philosophy of Voltaire and the poetry of Baudelaire—whose words and sentences she cuts into her paper—although she admits to being inspired more by their lives than their literary creations. Through her paper art, she hopes to express the beauty of nature and a purity of life that (she feels) is often lost in contemporary culture.



A

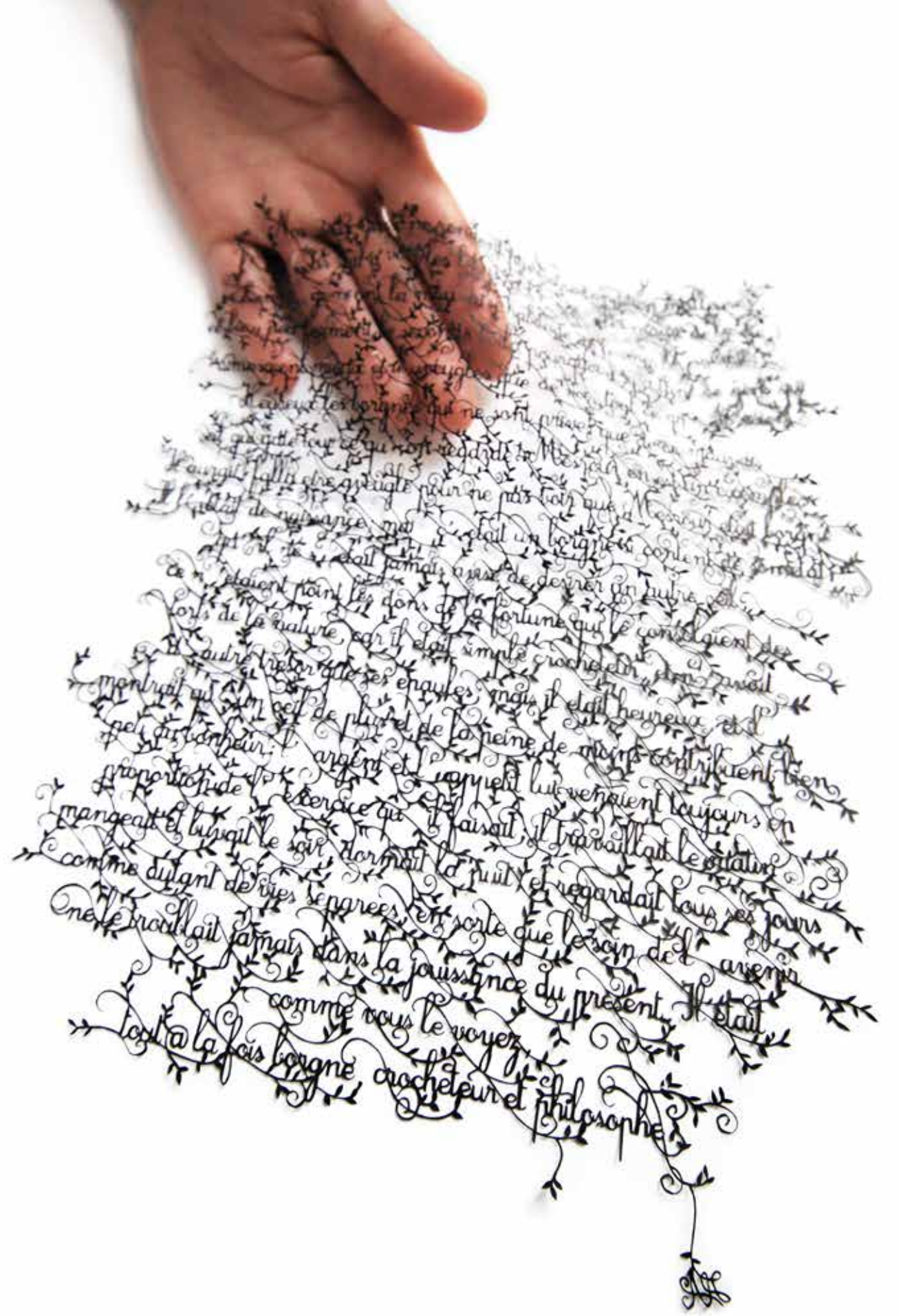


B



C

A. Hina Aoyama, *Musical Score/Les Lotus Jamais Fane*, 2010, Black origami paper, Courtesy of the artist
B. Hina Aoyama, *Les Papillon*, 2010, Black origami paper, Courtesy of the artist
C. Hina Aoyama, *God-Ma*, 2016, Black origami paper, Courtesy of the artist
D. Hina Aoyama, *Voltaire*, 2007, Black origami paper, Courtesy of the artist



D



ERIKO HORIKI

born 1962

Japan

Eriko Horiki has found innovative ways to incorporate traditional *washi* into modern interior spaces. Having left a career in banking when she was in her twenties, Horiki began learning traditional *washi* paper-making, hoping not only to master the skill but to keep it alive for future generations. Working with a team of paper artisans and artists, she creates large-scale sheets of exquisitely textured mulberry paper whose intricate patterns are designed to catch the light. Her works are typically installed as features of architecture—ceilings, walls, room dividers, windows, lamps—in restaurants, hotel lobbies, and public spaces throughout Japan. Meticulously layered, tinted, and backlit to create specific moods and environments, Horiki's paper sheets are a modern tribute to Japan's traditional *shoji* screen doors and folding paper *byobu* screens. Her smaller-scale works mostly comprise paper sculptures that, like her large-scale sheets, are artfully illuminated to create distinctive atmospheres in specific architectural spaces.

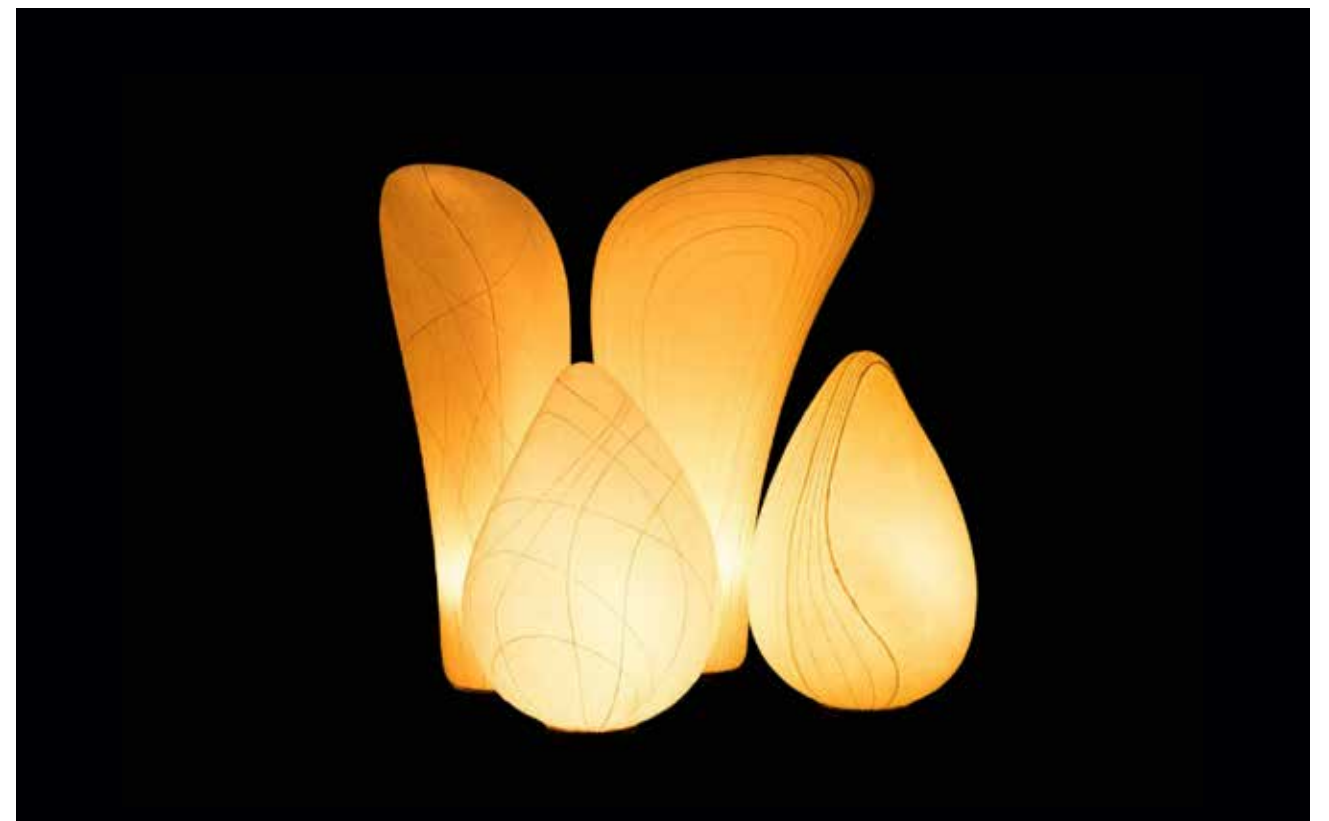
- A. Eriko Horiki, *Six-Panel Folding Screen*, 2019, *Washi* and steel frame, Courtesy of the artist
 B. Eriko Horiki, *Small and Large Tane (Seed) Light Objects*, 2017, *Washi* and resin mold, light fixture (steel), Courtesy of the artist and Eriko Horiki and Associates
 C. Eriko Horiki, *Group of Ishi (Stone) Light Objects*, 2017, *Washi* and resin mold, light fixture (steel), Courtesy of the artist and Eriko Horiki and Associates



A



B



C



KYOKO IBE

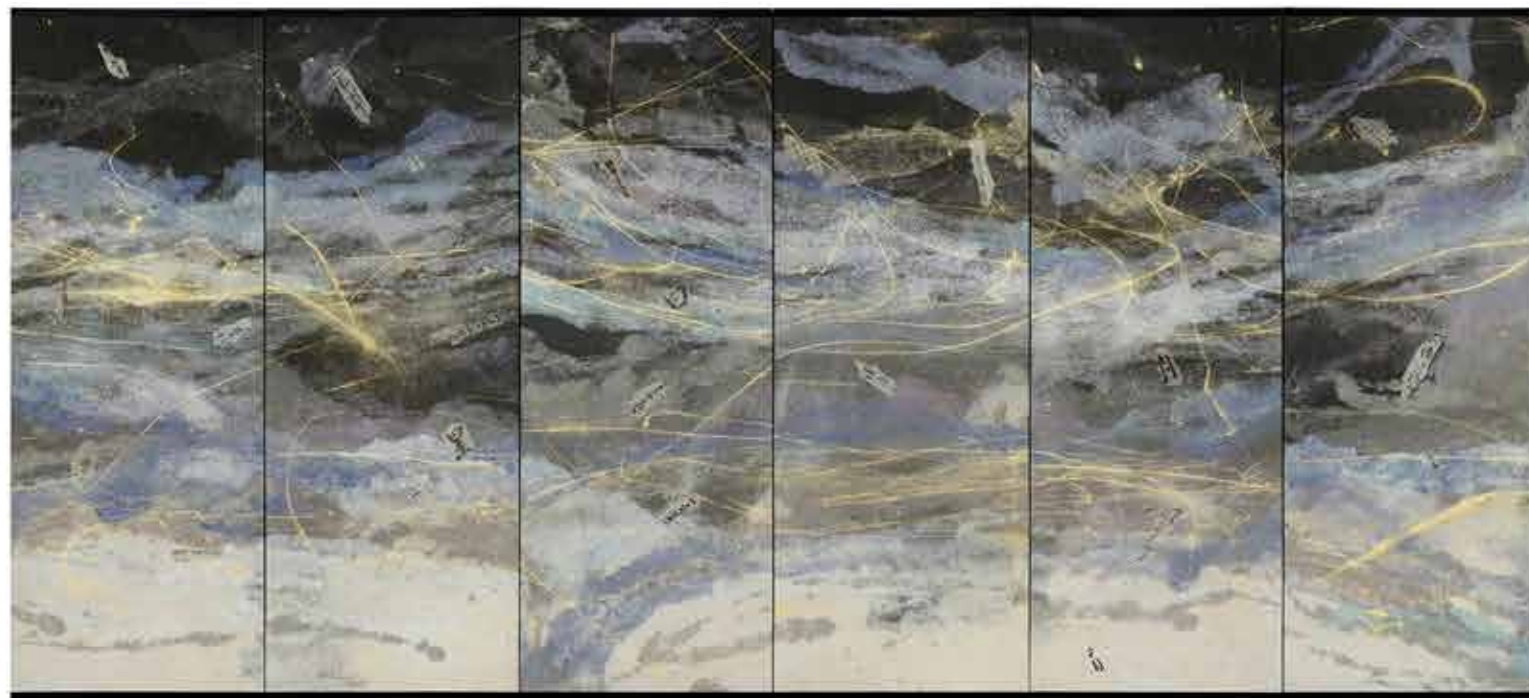
born 1941
Japan

Kyoko Ibe began working in traditional *washi* as a medium for contemporary art in the 1960s, a time when the material was confined to traditional Japanese arts and crafts. In the 1970s she won acclaim for her large-scale artworks, which pushed the limits of paper by combining traditional techniques with technological experimentation—such as recycling old handmade paper and handwritten documents into new *washi*. In these works, the ink of the original sources remains embedded in the paper, infusing the new work with gray shadows of the past. She also creates large-scale installations, a wide range of interior products, stage sets, and costumes, and has collaborated with many foreign theater groups. The beneficiary of numerous awards, Ibe was selected in 2009 to be a Cultural Ambassador by the Agency of Cultural Affairs of Japan. She is a professor at the Kyoto Institute of Technology and a director of the Japan Paper Academy.

A. Kyoko Ibe, *Once Upon a Time #1*, 2011, *Washi*, Courtesy of Heather James in Palm Desert, CA
B. Kyoko Ibe, *Morning Glory*, 2009, Pair of 6-panel folding screens, old *gampi* paper, indigo, old documents, *sumi* ink, mica, Courtesy of Erik Thomsen Gallery in New York



A



B



YOSHIO IKEZAKI

born 1953
Japan/USA

Born in Kitakyushu, Japan, Yoshio Ikezaki earned his BA and MFA from Florida State University before returning to Japan to study traditional Japanese paper-making with the master papermakers Shigemi and Shigeyuki Matsuo. Since 1986, he has divided his time between the US and Japan, working as a *washi* artist and a professor of art in both countries. Ikezaki works with *washi* as both a painter and sculptor: in his *sumi* ink paintings, he creates mysterious, evocative landscapes that unify positive and negative space; in his sculpture, he layers handmade *washi* paper into abstract forms that express “his wish to capture a trace of the enormous energy collision that happens in nature.” Many of his sculptures, too, are infused with *sumi* ink, and resemble lava flows, ancient tree bark, or textured rock; others suggest ancient books on which inked Buddhist sutras, barely visible against the dyed paper, evoke Buddhist concepts of form and emptiness.

A. Yoshio Ikezaki, *Timeless Auras 615*, 2006, *Sumi* ink on *washi*, Courtesy of the artist and Kylin Gallery
B. Yoshio Ikezaki, *The Earth Breathes Mind Landscape 06*, 2008, Handmade mulberry paper with charcoal powder, Courtesy of the artist and Kylin Gallery



A



B



KAKUKO ISHII

born 1952

Japan

Fiber artist Kakuko Ishii is based in Fukuoka, Japan, where she works as an artist, and recently retired from teaching at Kyushu Sangyo (Industrial) University. Since 1978, she has shown her work in fiber art exhibitions around the world, and has held several solo exhibitions throughout Japan and in Korea.

Most of Ishii's works are fashioned from paper cords called *mizuhiki*, which are created by tightly winding rice paper and adding starch (to give it stiffness) and then the desired color. For many of her works, she weaves the cords together to create structure and form; but once she has shaped the base, she typically allows the cords the freedom to spread dynamically into abstract forms.

-
- A. Kakuko Ishii, *Japanese Paper Strings (1)*, Washi paper and pigment, Courtesy of the artist
 B. Kakuko Ishii, *Japanese Paper Strings (2)*, Washi paper and pigment, Courtesy of the artist
 C. Kakuko Ishii, *Japanese Paper Strings (4)*, Washi paper, Courtesy of the artist



A



B



C



YUKO KIMURA

born 1968

Japan/USA

Yuko Kimura was born in Oakland, California, and spent her childhood in Japan. Returning to the US in 1989, she received a BFA in printmaking from the Cleveland Institute of Art and an MFA in printmaking from the University of Michigan. For the last two decades, her printmaking has incorporated multiple processes, including etching, aquatint, and dyeing with indigo on pleated or twisted paper—mostly worm-eaten pages from old printed books or handmade *washi* papers made from kozo, gampi, and abaca fibers. She also incorporates worn fragments of cloth obtained from her grandmother in Japan, which she combines with newly-made sheets of paper and linen to form delicate, multilayered surfaces. Although Kimura's use of aged paper and cloth can evoke a nostalgic, antique quality, her innovative printmaking practices focus intuitively in the present. For Kimura, transparency, form, and texture all take priority as she constructs her two- and three-dimensional patchwork experiments.

A. Yuko Kimura, *Indigo Mushikui*, 2019, Etching, monotype, aquatint, indigo pigment on antique bookpages from Japan, thread, Courtesy of the artist

B. Yuko Kimura, *Blue Field*, 2019, Etching on kozo handmade paper, antique bookpages from Japan, Courtesy of the artist

C. Yuko Kimura, *Rain Drops*, 2019, Etching, indigo dye on kozo handmade paper, Courtesy of the artist



B



C



A



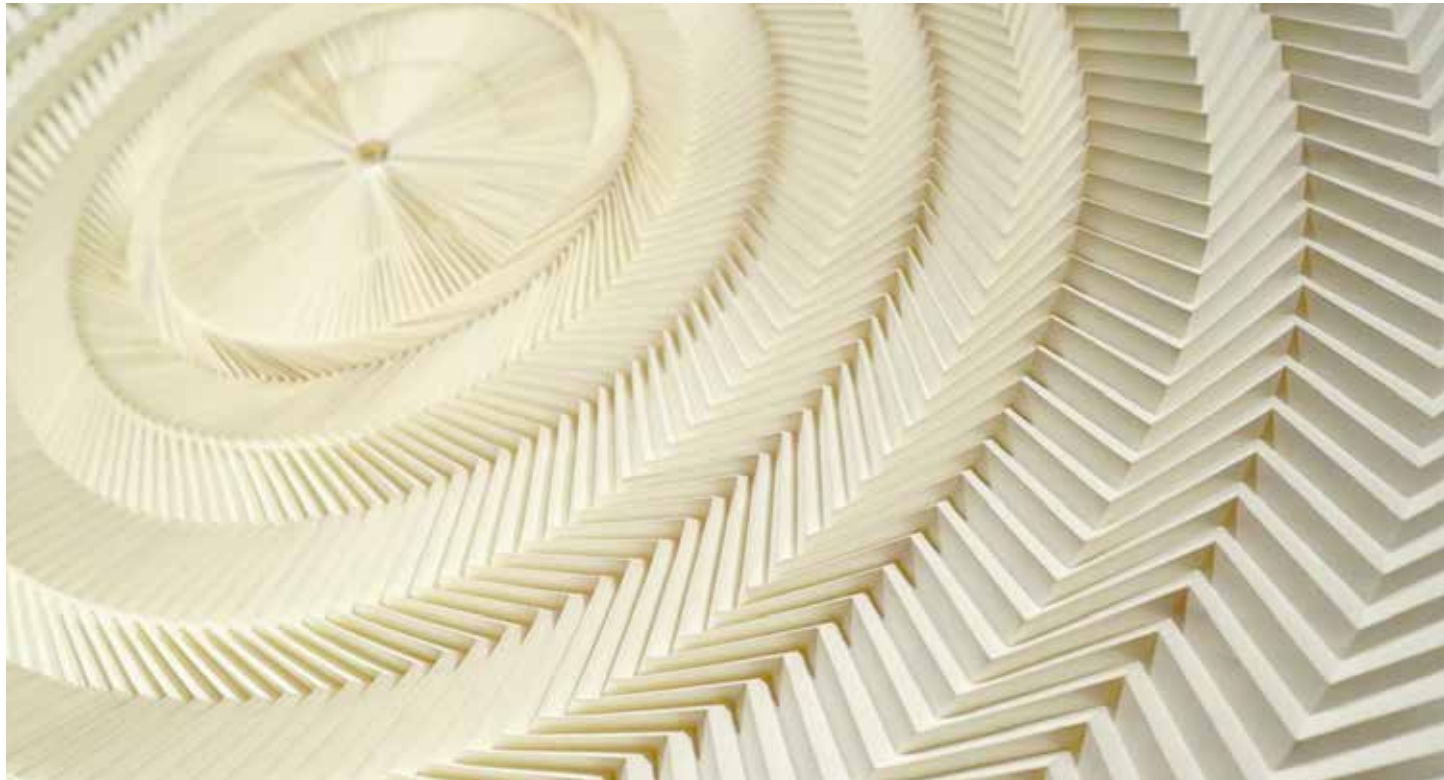
YUKO NISHIMURA

born 1978

Japan

Yuko Nishimura graduated from the architectural design program at Nihon University in Tokyo and the Master's Program in design at Tsukuba University. From her time as a student, she has been working with *kyokushi*, a special handmade paper, which she folds into conceptual reliefs and three-dimensional works that intersect the worlds of art, architecture, and fashion. For Nishimura, the act of folding paper holds special meaning that goes back over 1,000 years to ancient Japanese rituals. It also possesses a spiritual dimension: in Japanese, the word *ori* can mean both "fold" and "pray"; and *kami* can mean both "paper" and "god." Embracing this spiritual quality, Nishimura creates designs that are at once subtle and dynamic in their interplay of form, light, and shadow. Her use of alternating "mountain" and "valley" folds produces dramatic geometric effects that (almost magically) evoke patterns of nature, such as ripples on the surface of water or dappled sunlight.

A. Yuko Nishimura, *Sparkle/Shine*, 2008, *Washi (kyokushi)*,
Courtesy of the artist
B. Yuko Nishimura, *Untitled*, 2019, *Washi (kyokushi)*,
Courtesy of the artist



A



B



TAKAAKI TANAKA

born 1967

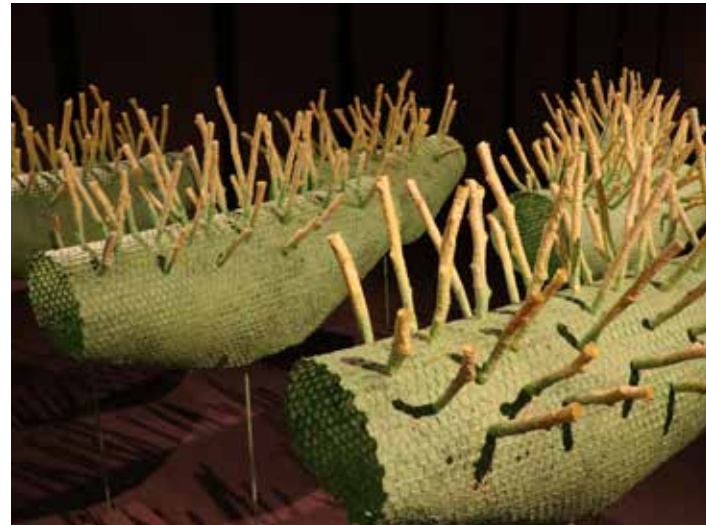
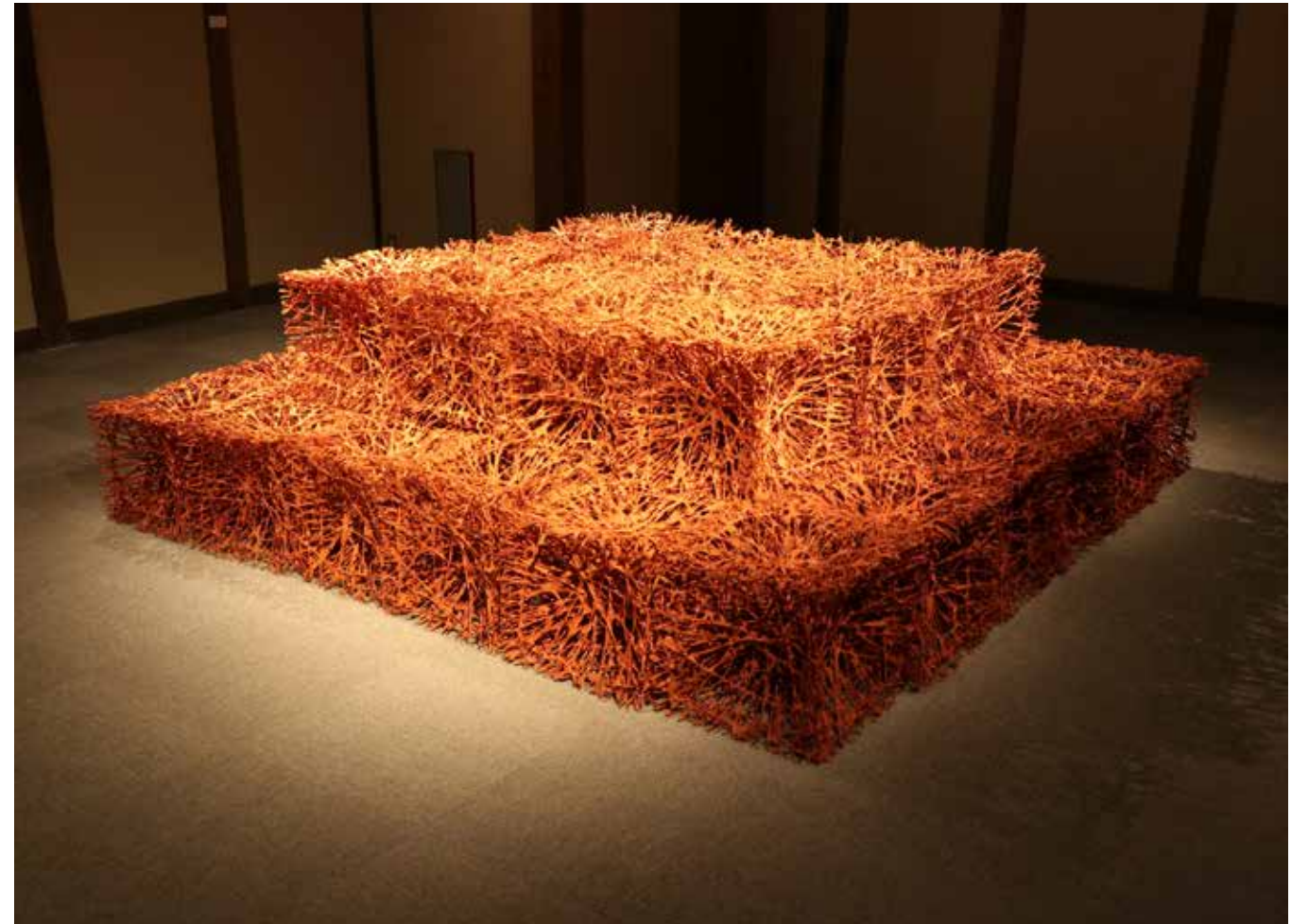
Japan

Takaaki Tanaka was born in Hyōgo prefecture, and graduated with a MFA from Tama Art University in Tokyo. He is currently an associate professor at the Kurashiki College of Apparel Arts, Okayama Prefecture.

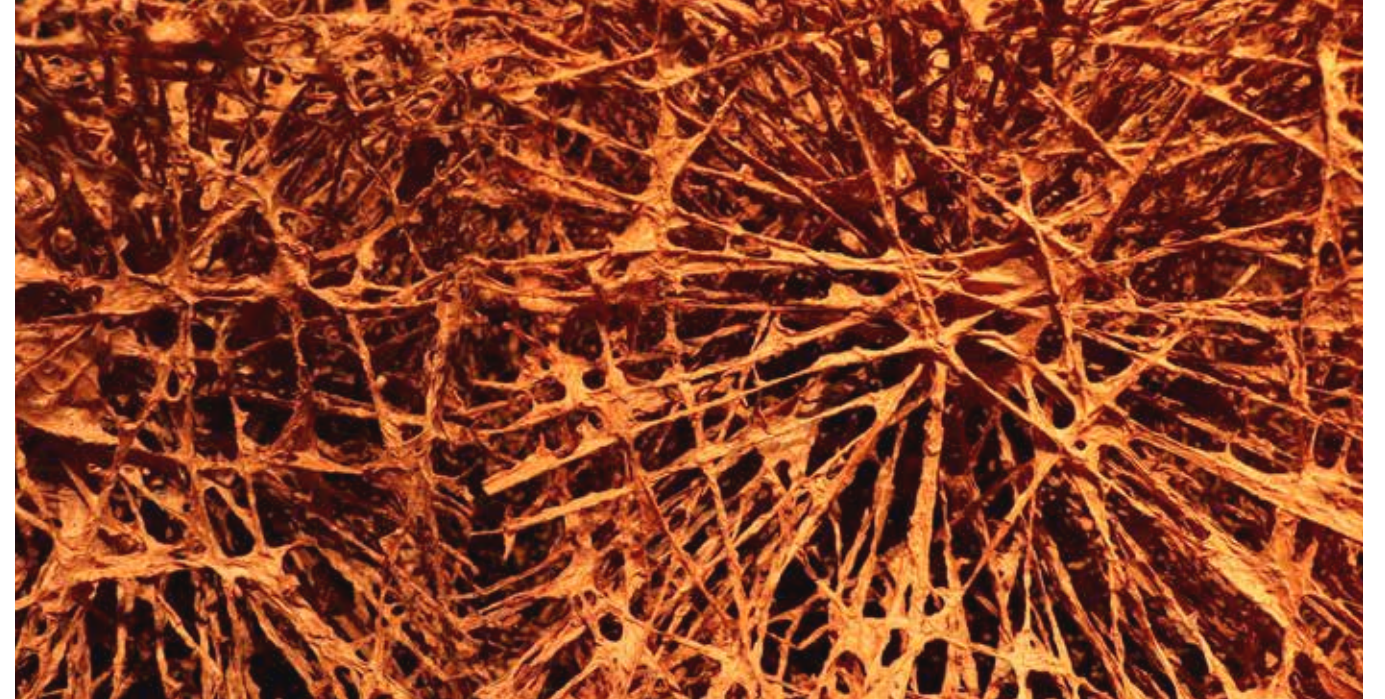
He has exhibited his work in numerous exhibitions in Japan and overseas, including the New York City exhibitions *Fiber Futures: Japan's Textile Pioneers*, at the Japan Society Gallery, and *Paperworks: Material as Medium*, at the Flinn Gallery. As an artist, Tanaka is interested in exploring the virtually infinite ways in which paper fiber can be manipulated to take on new forms inspired by the natural world. In several of his works, he has explored the concept of the nest, a fundamental starting point for many species of animal life. As Tanaka explains, "The shapes become emotional shapes that illustrate themes of nature, sense of touch and communication."

A. Takaaki Tanaka, *Boat Island*, 2018, Kozo mulberry fiber paper, flax, iron, Courtesy of the artist

B. Takaaki Tanaka, *Land of Nest*, 2019, Kozo (mulberry fiber paper), flax, iron, Courtesy of the artist



A



B



AYOMI YOSHIDA
born 1958
Japan

Ayomi Yoshida is the youngest artist in Japan’s renowned Yoshida family of artists. Although she originally studied architecture, she was eventually drawn to her family’s traditional medium of woodblock printing. For about two decades, she specialized in fairly traditional woodblock prints, but in the late 1990s she began pushing the limits of the art form—technically, geographically, and spatially—and is now best known for her room-sized installations of woodchips and for the thousands of tiny woodblock-printed details she has created for galleries and museums in Japan and the United States. Created primarily using paper, wood, and metal, Yoshida’s works evoke the fragility of nature and the impact of human behavior on the natural world.

The specially created installation will feature a series of Yoshida’s abstract woodblock prints on *washi* paper. They will be arranged to create an immersive installation. *(The following images are examples of her earlier printed works and installations.)*



A



B



C

A. Ayomi Yoshida, *Reverberation*, 2010, Installation at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, Courtesy of the artist
B. Ayomi Yoshida, *Tree M*, 2012, Woodblock print on paper, Courtesy of the artist
C. Ayomi Yoshida, *Water 107*, 2012, Woodblock print on paper, Courtesy of the artist

ABOUT THE CURATOR



MEHER MCARTHUR

Meher McArthur, the Gabrielle Jungels-Winkler Curator of Academic Programs and Collections at Scripps College, is a Los Angeles-based historian of Japanese art who also curated the IA&A traveling exhibitions *Folding Paper: The Infinite Possibilities of Origami* (2012-2016) and *Above the Fold: New Expressions in Contemporary Origami Art* (2015 -2020) and co-curated *Nature, Tradition and Innovation: Japanese Ceramics from the Gordon Brodfuehrer Collection* (2016-2019). Additionally, Ms. McArthur has published a wide variety of books relating to Asian art, including *The Arts of Asia: A Guide to Materials, Techniques and Styles*, Thames & Hudson, London and New York (2005); *Reading Buddhist Art: An Illustrated Guide to Buddhist Signs and Symbols*, Thames & Hudson, London and New York (2002); and *Gods and Goblins: Japanese Folk Paintings from Otsu*, Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena (1999). Meher received an MA in Japanese Studies from Cambridge University; a postgraduate diploma in Asian Art from Sotheby’s School of Oriental Studies (SOAS), London University; and an MA in Art and Archaeology from SOAS, London University.

Exhibition Catalogues in Collaboration with IA&A

- *Nature, Tradition and Innovation: Contemporary Japanese Ceramics in the Collection of Gordon J. Brodfuehrer*, catalogue for the traveling exhibition organized by International Arts & Artists (ArtsandArtists.org), August 2016.
- *Folding Paper: The Infinite Possibilities of Origami* (co-authored with Robert J. Lang), Washington, DC, International Arts & Artists, 2012; Hardcover, Tokyo/Rutland, Vermont/Singapore, Tuttle, 2013

Publications

- *New Expressions in Origami Art*, Tokyo/Rutland, Vermont/Singapore, Tuttle, 2017
- *Threads of Life: Catalog of the Paintings of Vietnamese American Artist Trang Te Le* (working title), to be published by the artist September 2016
- *Fukusa: Japanese Ceremonial Cloths*, online catalogue, Palm Desert, CA, Heather James Fine Art, 2016
- *Confucius: A Biography*, for Quercus Books’ *Great Lives* series, London, hardback 2010, UK paperback 2011; US edition, Pegasus, hardback 2011, paperback 2012
- Curriculum Guide (principal author) for *Treasures of Shanghai: 5,000 Years of Chinese Art*, Bowers Museum (June 2007)
- *The Arts of Asia: A Guide to Materials, Techniques and Styles*, Thames & Hudson, London and New York (2005)
- *Reading Buddhist Art: An Illustrated Guide to Buddhist Signs and Symbols* - Thames & Hudson, London and New York (2002)
- *Gods and Goblins: Japanese Folk Paintings from Otsu*, Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena (1999)
- *East Asian Books*, co-authored with Bob Miller, Wei Chen-hsuan, Sam Fogg, London: Sam Fogg (1998)
- *Japanese Buddhist and Shinto Prints from the Collection of Manly P. Hall*, Sam Fogg Rare Books (1996)

Detail Yoshio Ikezaki, *Timeless Auras 589*, 2006, *Sumi* ink on *washi*, Courtesy of Kylin Gallery in Beverly Hills, CA



FRONT Kakuko Ishii, *Japanese Paper Strings* (3), Washi paper, Courtesy of the artist
 BACK Detail Kakuko Ishii, *Japanese Paper Strings* (3), Washi paper, Courtesy of the artist

EXHIBITION SPECIFICATIONS

Number of Works

37 works and installations

Organized by

Meher McArthur and
 International Arts & Artists

Approximate size

2,000 – 5,000 square feet, installation
 customized to fit gallery's space

Security

Moderate security

Shipping

IA&A makes all arrangements; exhibitors
 pay outgoing shipping costs within the
 contiguous US

Booking Period

12 weeks

Tour

May 2021 - December 2024

Availability

May 2021 - December 2024

Educational Materials

Please inquire

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