GLOBALIZING MOKUHANGA
Review of Nagasawa Art Park and Mokuhanga Innovation Laboratory

1997-2017
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Foreword

Searching for Mokuhanga Light: Globalizing Japanese Woodblock Printmaking
Hambis Printmaking Museum, Cyprus, and International Mokuhanga Conference, Hawaii

The exhibition *Searching for Mokuhanga Light: Globalizing Japanese Woodblock Printmaking* was first held in Cyprus as European Cultural Capital in June, 2017, and then traveled to the Third International Mokuhanga Conference in Hawaii September 28 to October 1, 2017. This exhibition showcases the Center for the Study of Human Endeavor’s twenty-year project to facilitate the globalization of mokuhanga. We at CfSHE would like to express our appreciation for the work of Mr. Hambis of the Hambis Printmaking Museum in Cyprus and of the artist Ms. Ele- ni Panayidou who studied mokuhanga at MI-LAB. Together they made the Cyprus exhibition possible.

CfSHE’s project to globalize mokuhanga began with Keiko Kadota’s 1992 field research in the U.S. to locate new ways to promote mokuhanga. Her preliminary research focused on creating an art center at a small village in Hyogo prefecture in Japan. She considered different models based on art centers in the U.S. where the concept was more developed than in Japan. When she visited San Francisco Mr. Hidekatsu Takada introduced Keiko Kadota to Kathan Brown, the Founding Director of Crown Print Press, an American fine art print publisher. Kadota experienced a life-changing moment there when she saw the mokuhanga prints of Jose Maria Sicilia printed by Mr. Tadashi Toda, the Kyoto master printer who worked for Crown Point Press. The mokuhanga prints astonished her because of their combination of Japanese technical mastery with cutting edge contemporary art.

People concerned with Japanese art often discuss the need to build relationships with foreign countries to promote Japanese traditional culture and technology. CfSHE decided to commit to mokuhanga because it fulfills this need.

Keiko Kadota consulted the administration of Hyogo prefecture, where Mr. Wasa- buro Kashiwagi, the mayor of Tsuna-town, kindly agreed to her proposal at their first meeting. This agreement allowed her to start a woodblock print collaborative workshop in Tsuna-town on Awaji Island, not far from Kobe.

After the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake on January 17, 1995, the workshop continued thanks to Mr. Kashiwagi. Many artists were interested in learning mokuhanga, encouraging us to begin teaching mokuhanga techniques to international artists. CfSHE consulted with the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs, The Ministry of Economy Trade and Industry, and the Japan Foundation for help in funding a long-term workshop.

In 1997 the Agency for Cultural Affairs initiated an artist residency support program *The Creation of Culturally Rich Communities* which benefitted the training program. The Executive Committee of CfSHE organized the Nagasawa Art Park Pilot Program in conjunction with Tsuna-town, creating the first Japanese woodblock printmaking artist-in-residence program.

Over twenty years more than 200 artists who studied mokuhanga at Nagasawa Art Park and later at Mokuhanga Innovation Laboratory have worked as researchers, organizers of artist residencies and studio artists. These artists have helped build the foundation of the Mokuhanga International Conference, which now includes many additional artists and educators. IMC2017 is the first time the conference has been held outside mokuhanga’s home country of Japan thanks to the Hawaii Local Committee and local people who helped organize this conference. Holding the conference in Hawaii is a great opportunity to expand and globalize mokuhanga across the world.

Yasuyuki Sato
Director of CfSHE
The objective of these residencies is to teach and disseminate mokuhanga technique, knowledge, tools and materials across the world; aiming to revitalize the related craft industries that employ blacksmiths, brush makers, pigment makers and especially papermakers. Keiko Kadota, the late director of NAP and MI-LAB and co-founder of CfSHE, worked with Japanese papermakers before undertaking her mokuhanga residency projects. She witnessed first-hand the distressing decline of the traditional paper supply following profound changes in Japanese life-style – for example new homes that no longer include shoji screens and less reliance on calligraphy on handmade paper. In search of ways to increase the demand for washi, Kadota focused on mokuhanga, which requires hundreds of sheets of washi for editioning prints. Woodblock printing resembles textile dyeing in its absorption of pigments, and employs some similar techniques. Washi, most often made from the inner bark of kozo, paper mulberry, is flexible and strong. Its strength is essential for water-based printing because it is printed damp to most readily absorb pigments from the pressure of hand printing by baren; its dimensional stability allows accurate registration of multiple colors. Thus, washi is essential to mokuhanga.

Christie’s auction house recently released a video How did Hokusai create The Great Wave? for their spring auction at Rockefeller Center in New York. In it, Brooklyn-based artist Takuji Hamanaka demonstrates the traditional ukiyo-e printing process and speaks about Hokusai’s influence on him and on the art world in general. Although its commercial intent further sanctifies already-famous Hokusai and his print The Great Wave, I realized that in fact Hokusai’s icon functions well as a hook to generate global interest in mokuhanga. Mokuhanga – Japanese water-based woodblock printing used for ukiyo-e prints – has a distinctive quality of light and has attracted international printmakers and artists to visit Japan to learn its techniques. One of the first artist residencies in Japan, the Nagasawa Art Park (NAP) Artist-in-Residence, begun in 1997, and its successor Mokuhanga Innovation Laboratory (MI-LAB), begun in 2011, enabled more than 200 artists to study mokuhanga in Japan. These residencies were key in the globalization of mokuhanga: alumni from the US, South America, Europe, Asia and Oceania have become leading educators and artists of mokuhanga in their respective countries. This network of artists has acted as a catalyst for further reactions culminating in exhibitions, exchange programs, research projects, conferences and publications.

Both NAP and MI-LAB programs were established and operated by the Center for the Science of Human Endeavor (CfSHE) – a general incorporated association in Tokyo. Inspired by the history of Arts and Crafts Movement in England and the Bauhaus in Germany, CfSHE has pursued an interdisciplinary approach in Japan since 1990 – attempting to merge contemporary art with various craft industries. CfSHE focused on mokuhanga because of its interdisciplinary nature, encapsulating many aspects of Japanese traditional crafts. Carving woodblocks utilizes the skills of blacksmiths and woodworkers who built the iconic temples and shrines of Japan with handmade tools. Printing borrows from Japanese textile dyeing techniques that were used to create the enormous variety of kimono patterns. Japanese paper, washi, is essential for printing; its composition determines much of the character of the finished print.

Fig. 1
Asebi, José María Sicilia, 1989, 64.5cm x 77cm ©Crown Point Press

Searching for Mokuhanga Light: Globalizing Japanese Woodblock Printmaking

Twenty Years of Residencies in Japan: Nagasawa Art Park and Mokuhanga Innovation Laboratory

The objective of these residencies is to teach and disseminate mokuhanga technique, knowledge, tools and materials across the world; aiming to revitalize the related craft industries that employ blacksmiths, brush makers, pigment makers and especially papermakers. Keiko Kadota, the late director of NAP and MI-LAB and co-founder of CfSHE, worked with Japanese papermakers before undertaking her mokuhanga residency projects. She witnessed first-hand the distressing decline of the traditional paper supply following profound changes in Japanese life-style - for example new homes that no longer include shoji screens and less reliance on calligraphy on handmade paper. In search of ways to increase the demand for washi, Kadota focused on mokuhanga, which requires hundreds of sheets of washi for editioning prints. Woodblock printing resembles textile dyeing in its absorption of pigments, and employs some similar techniques. Washi, most often made from the inner bark of kozo, paper mulberry, is flexible and strong. Its strength is essential for water-based printing because it is printed damp to most readily absorb pigments from the pressure of hand printing by baren; its dimensional stability allows accurate registration of multiple colors. Thus, washi is essential to mokuhanga.
In 1992, Kadota conducted field research in the US to locate new ways to promote mokuhanga. She visited the Tamarind Institute for Lithography and was inspired by June Wayne’s efforts, which contributed greatly to the lively printmaking scene in the US. Kadota also visited Crown Point Press in San Francisco where she had a life-changing experience. During her meeting with director Kathan Brown, a parcel was delivered from Kyoto and was unpacked in front of Kadota; it was José María Sicilia’s Asebi (Fig.1) and Shikibu (Fig.2) printed by Kyoto-based master printer Tadashi Toda. Toda’s printing beautifully replicated the watery quality of Sicilia’s painting, which astonished her. Brown told Kadota about her mokuhanga publishing venture at Crown Point Press between 1982 and 1992, when a total of 47 mokuhanga works were produced by 25 high-profile artists - including Chuck Close, Francesco Clemente, Sol LeWitt and Pat Steir - in collaboration with Tadashi Toda. These prints have been collected by major art museums around the world. Kadota’s discovery of Toda’s prints in San Francisco and his use of mokuhanga - far more innovative than ukiyo-e printing - confirmed her desire to pursue mokuhanga.

From 1994 to 1997, CfSHE organized a woodblock print collaborative workshop with four contemporary artists and various Japanese carvers and printers including those who had worked with Crown Point Press (Fig. 3). This pilot project on Awaji Island took the form of open workshops and attracted public attention. At the same time, CfSHE recognized the extent of interest in mokuhanga among international printmakers, and wanted to launch a mokuhanga training program for them. Coinciding with the creation of The Creation of Culturally Rich Communities program by the Japanese Government in 1996, the Nagasawa Art Park (NAP) Artist-in-Residence two-month training program was established in 1997 and continued until 2009 (Fig. 4).

Each year, NAP selected four to twelve artists from among 80 to 100 applicants. Participants learned mokuhanga techniques from Japanese artists and master carvers and printers by creating their own mokuhanga prints. The first month was devoted to studying the materials, tools, and fundamental techniques of mokuhanga. During the remaining month, the artists focused on making their own prints. The complexity of mokuhanga required sufficient time for learning and processing information so CfSHE established an immersive artist residency for training. This template differs from other residencies, which are often project based or incorporate socially engaged art projects. NAP functioned to increase the population of mokuhanga artists and educators.

In twelve years, NAP accommodated 136 artists from 30 countries. Many alumni began to incorporate mokuhanga not only in their artworks but also in education and academic research. In response to the increasing need for intellectual exchange and discussion concerning mokuhanga, Kadota called for cooperation from six mokuhanga professionals and founded the tri-annual International Mokuhanga Conference (IMC), based on the format of the US-based Southern Graphics Council International (SGCI) and other conferences including the international IMPACT printmaking conference.
The first IMC was held in Kyoto and Awaji in 2011, the second was in Tokyo in 2014 (Fig. 5, 6); each conference attracted over 100 delegates. The participants, including many NAP alumni, presented papers, demonstrations, artworks, portfolios and books, alongside the trade fair of tools and materials. The community of mokuhanga professionals is expanding alongside the IMC, whose next meeting is scheduled in Hawaii in September 2017.

Kadota established the Mokuhanga Innovation Laboratory (MI-LAB) in 2011 (Fig. 7, 8) to continue the mokuhanga training artist residency. Unlike NAP, which was co-organized by Awaji City, MI-LAB runs independently and organizes diverse programs in addition to the Basic Training Program. MI-LAB also offers a project-based mokuhanga residency Advanced Program and a Research Program that facilitates a particular study or publication project. Located at the foot of Mt. Fuji, the studio is used as a laboratory to test out the new potentials of mokuhanga.

In looking at the Christie’s video again, no matter how expensive Hokusai’s original prints have become in the lavish secondary market, the potential for creative use of mokuhanga by contemporary printmakers continues to grow. Mokuhanga is compatible with the crafts of various cultures, folk art, contemporary art, education, publication and so on. Mokuhanga’s low environmental impact and mobility allows anyone with a creative spirit to enjoy this medium; even primary school children learn the techniques in Japan. International artists coming to the residency have a clear objective. It is not to become a master carver or printer – which requires many years of apprenticeship – but is rather to experience, adapt and be inspired by the potential of mokuhanga. Artists merge the historical richness of mokuhanga and its myriad possibilities with their own creativity. The artists often enjoy making connections between differing disciplines and incorporate ideas about Japanese cultural history, food, people, weather and geography. In other words, they come to Japan with intellectual curiosity to experience the context in which Hokusai’s *Great Wave* was created.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge Keiko Kadota by saying that this text reflects my first-hand experience of working for MI-LAB and the International Mokuhanga Conference between 2013 and 2014 under Keiko Kadota. I was running like a headless chicken in a remote place near Mt. Fuji to accommodate international artists learning mokuhanga. Considering the number of miscellaneous tasks and constant requests for help from the artists, the residency was a challenging job; it was primarily Kadota’s passion and dedication to mokuhanga that moved the program ahead. Many times, I wondered why Kadota was so preoccupied with mokuhanga. Two years later, I speculate about her motivations by writing this text. I reminisce about Kadota’s passion and the meaning of her words and gestures. Kadota’s legacy will be continued at MI-LAB, IMC and by the work of the hundreds of mokuhanga lovers she inspired.

Hayato Fujioka
Curator of *Searching for Mokuhanga Light*
Globalizing Mokuhanga

CfSHE features the following artists who participated in either the NAP or the MI-LAB programs. Their recent projects demonstrate the globalization of mokuhanga reflected in new artist residencies, education, research, publication and commercial galleries.

Eva Pietzcker (Germany) Artist, Director of druckstelle, Berlin
Attended Nagasawa Art Park in 2003 and MI-LAB in 2012

“I see myself as a strong devotee of mokuhanga. First in my own art work, where I have been working with the technique exclusively since I got the gift of learning it in 2003 during a stay at Nagasawa Art Park, changing and adapting it technically for my changing esthetic needs, and also by teaching it to my students, who often then start working regularly with this brilliant and beautiful art form.”

Mara Cozzolino (Italy) Artist
Attended MI-LAB in 2012

“I opened my studio in 2015. I started teaching mokuhanga since my return from MI-LAB, and I’ve been traveling around north Italy in order to do so: but I wanted to have my own place to teach fewer pupils in a more intimate but intensive way. Mokuhanga is still not very well known in Italy so teaching allows me to spread the knowledge and I love seeing my students fall in love with the technique as I did in the first place.”

Hiroki Morinoue (USA) Artist, Artistic Director of Donkey Mill Art Center, Hawaii
Attended MI-LAB in 2012

“I did my first mokuhanga in 1976, mostly out of curiosity. In the early 1980s, I studied under Okubo-sensei in Japan. Since then, I have been printing and teaching the most traditional and efficient processes along with innovative and contemporary techniques and concepts. I am devoting all my printmaking to working with water-based pigments after my residency at MI-LAB in 2012.”

Cozzolino’s studio

Hiroki teaching mokuhanga
Karen Kunc (USA) Artist, Artistic Director of Constellation Studios, Nebraska
Cather Professor of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Attended in Nagasawa Art Park in 2001

Karen Kunc founded Constellation Studios in 2014 to pursue and pass on her passion for print, paper and bookmaking and to invite artists for residencies, workshops, collaborations, and exhibitions. The professional studios specialize in Western and Eastern woodcut and papermaking processes, etching, letterpress and bookbinding in a restored historic building in downtown Lincoln, Nebraska.

Jacqueline Gribbin (UK / Australia) Artist, Educator
Attended MI-LAB in 2012

Gribbin has delivered mokuhanga workshops in Asia and across northern Australia. She has travelled to remote locations to deliver workshops in often challenging environments, taking her tools and materials with her. Living in a rural community in the Northern Territory, Australia, Gribbin has worked extensively with artists in remote Aboriginal communities. Workshops with Tiwi Island artists resulted in a series of prints, which utilized ochre from the area.

Ralph Kiggell (UK / Thailand) Independent Artist, Educator
Attended MI-LAB in 2012

Ralph Kiggell is predominantly a studio-based artist, but has led woodblock printing courses at several universities, and conducted workshops for students of all ages including schoolchildren, refugees and other artists. The courses he offers generally introduce basic skills for both traditional and contemporary woodblock printing.

Yoonmi Nam (USA) Artist, Associate Professor, University of Kansas
Attended Nagasawa Art Park in 2004 and MI-LAB in 2012

Since 2006, Nam has been teaching mokuhanga classes in the Department of Visual Art at the University of Kansas, where she is currently an Associate Professor. She also organizes summer study abroad trips to Japan where students take a week-long mokuhanga workshop at MI-LAB. She has taught week-long summer workshops at Anderson Ranch Arts Center in Snowmass, Colorado and Frogman’s Printmaking Workshop in Omaha, Nebraska. She is regularly invited to give short mokuhanga demonstrations and workshops at universities across the U.S.
Dariusz Kaca (Poland)  Artist, Former Vice-Dean at the Faculty of Graphics and Painting from Wł. Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts and Design (2005-2012). Attended in Nagasawa Art Park in 2004

Since 2010 Kaca has been running the Studio of Woodcut Techniques and Artistic Book at the Faculty of Graphics and Painting, Wł. Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Łódź, Poland. He published a book Dariusz Kaca, Grafika. Special attention is given to his experience with traditional Japanese woodcut.

Elspeth Lamb (Scotland, UK)  Artist and Educator  
Attended Nagasawa Art Park in 2000 and MI-LAB in 2015 and 2016

Japan has always held a particular fascination for artist Elspeth Lamb and in 2000 she travelled to Nagasawa, Awaji Island where she turned the tables on herself by becoming the pupil of master craftsmen to study mokuhanga. It was during 2000 that she first experienced Japanese papermaking whilst working with local papermaker Okuda-san. This inspired her to return to Japan during 2002 to study oriental papermaking in depth for her publication Papermaking for Printmakers, which was subsequently published by the Bloomsbury Press, London during 2006.

Hommage To Utamaro, Dariusz Kaca mokuhanga, 2004

April Vollmer (USA)  Artist, Educator and Writer  
Attended in Nagasawa Art Park in 2004 and MI-LAB in 2013

Vollmer wrote Japanese Woodblock Print Workshop, released by Watson-Guptill in 2015. This book is an inspirational how-to course on Japanese woodblock printing history and techniques. It was designed as an introduction for Western artists unfamiliar with Japanese methods and includes information on supplies and studio practices, with examples of finished prints by the author and other contemporary artists as well as historic ukiyo-e prints.

Japanese Woodblock Print Workshop

Florence Neal (USA)  Artist, Co-founder, Chief Curator and Director of the Kentler International Drawing Space  
Attended MI-LAB in 2013

Neal co-founded Kentler International Drawing Space with the mission of expanding the definition of drawing and work on paper. To bring attention to mokuhanga artists working in New York State, Neal curated New York Mokuhanga (2014) presenting prints by Takuji Hamanaka, Ursula Schneider, Yasu Shibata and April Vollmer. In 2016 Keiko Hara was invited to present her large-scale mokuhanga installation at Kentler. Through Kentler exhibitions and the Kentler Flatfiles, new audiences are gaining an appreciation for contemporary mokuhanga.

Installation view of New York mokuhanga exhibition

Reindeer, Badger, Squirrel mokuhanga print on the artist's handmade watermarked paper

Installation view of New York mokuhanga exhibition
Survey of MI-LAB/ NAP Alumni

In March 2017, MI-LAB conducted a survey with the alumni of NAP and MI-LAB regarding their involvement with mokuhanga. Fifty respondents contributed to the survey; the following column chart indicates a number of respondents whose practice incorporates mokuhanga in PhD work, teaching, studio practice, artist residency, research and publication.

Mokuhanga in PhD Awards:
Asa Andersson (Sweden)
Heidi Almosara (US)
Dariusz Kaca (Poland)
Tomasz Kawelczyk (Poland)
Wendy Tokaryk (Canada)
Aleksander Wozniak (Poland)

Mokuhanga in University Teaching:
Charles Darwin University, AUSTRALIA; Banff Centre for Arts & Creativity, CANADA; Estonian Art Academy, ESTONIA; Heidelberg University, GERMANY; Tokyo University of the Arts, JAPAN; Otago Polytechnic/Ara Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology, NEW ZEALAND; The International World College, Dale, NORWAY; Academy of Fine Art, Lodz/University of Warmia & Mazury Olsztyn/Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts, POLAND; University of Belgrade, SERBIA; University of Cape Town/University of Stellenbosch/Stellenbosch Academy of Design and Photography/Rhodes University Grahamstown, SOUTH AFRICA; Zaragoza University, SPAIN; Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm, SWEDEN; University of Tasmania, TASMANIA; Dunedin School of Art/Edinburgh College of Art, Scotland/Grays School of Art at Robert Gordon University, Scotland/Leeds Metropolitan University, Leeds, UK; Auburn University, Montgomery/ Henderson State University/Montana State University/Philadelphia University of the Arts/Rhode Island School of Design/University of Kansas/University of Nebraska-Lincoln/Whitman College, Washington, US

Mokuhanga Residency Coordinators:
Mara Cozzolino (Italy), Judith Elisabeth de Haan (the Netherlands/Norway), Keiko Hara (Japan/USA), Yvonne Hering (Australia), Karen Kunc (USA), Hiroki Morinoue (Japan/US)

Mokuhanga Books, Catalogues and Publications:
Dariusz Kaca (Poland) Dariusz Kaca, Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts in Lodz, 2015.

In Memoriam: Keiko Kadota

Keiko Kadota was a key figure in the revival of interest in mokuhanga for creative expression, making training available to artists through her international residency programs. She was unique in her personal investment and in her emphasis on the place of mokuhanga within Japanese culture and craft traditions. Her influence has been magnified as graduates from her programs have begun teaching mokuhanga themselves.

I first met Keiko Kadota in 2004 when she invited me to participate in a portion of the Nagasawa Art Park mokuhanga training program on Awaji Shima. I already had a master’s degree in printmaking from Hunter College, but this residency turned my career around and gave me an identity as a Western specialist in mokuhanga. Keiko invited me on the Board of the First and Second International Mokuhanga Conferences in 2011 and 2014. Since I do not speak Japanese the difficult organizational work fell to others, but I contributed what I could as facilitator and documentarian. The information I gathered at these conferences was crucial to my book. Keiko also invited me to Japan in 2013 for the MI-LAB Writer/Researcher Residency. I watched Keiko working intensely on the 2014 conference, but also arranging flowers, cooking traditional Japanese dishes, chatting with her neighbors, laughing, and enjoying the beauty of nature. She found time to show me her book collection and gave me much insight into the world of washi. In the fall of 2015 she invited me to Tokyo for an exhibition of my mokuhanga prints at the CfSHE gallery, along with a public talk about my book at Hibiya Library. Keiko was not alone in her generosity, but she was unwavering in her support, and my book would never have been written without her.

April Vollmer
Review of Nagasawa Art Park and Mokuhanga Innovation Laboratory