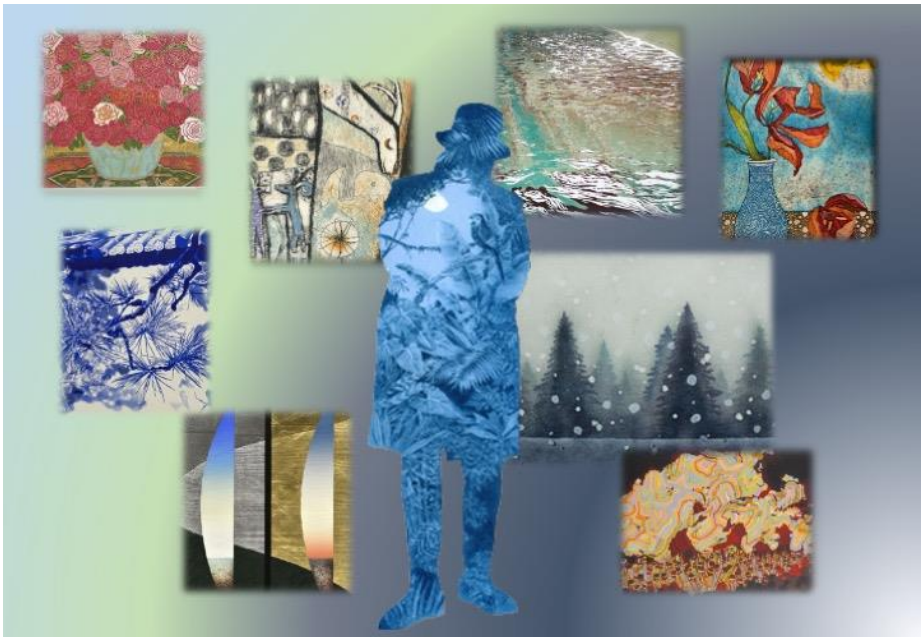


# 2023 Guided Tour

## Look Closer

### Artists' Talks: From Inspiration to Finished Work



66<sup>th</sup> CWAJ Print Show



## 2023 Guided Tour “Look Closer”

The 2023 CWAJ Guided Tour features 20 prints with intriguing details from the 66<sup>th</sup> CWAJ Print Show.

The video “Look Closer” (<https://cwaj-gallery.jp/guided-tours-en/>) offers a brief description of each print included in the tour whereas this booklet provides a fuller explanation, including how the artist’s inspiration has been translated into the finished piece.

By Michiko Okubo  
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### *Notes:*

*\* English titles in square brackets indicate that they are translations made by CWAJ members from the original Japanese titles.*

*\* Artists’ names followed by “(new)” signifies they are first-time exhibitors at the CWAJ Print Show.*

*\* The prints are listed as height x width in centimeters; paper size followed by image size.*

**No. 006. "It's a beautiful thing that is just drifting a life in this world" by ASHIHARA Sho, mezzotint, 53x77 (45x71)**



This delicately-textured piece is surprising. Rather than the velvety blacks you generally expect of a mezzotint, rich and velvety "whites" dominate the light-filled, airy space, where the tent provides a refuge.

"It's light outside," the imp mutters, peering out of the small side window, but the old men, absorbed in playing Go (a Japanese board game), seem oblivious. The artist has pushed away the darkness and brought to life the quirky characters, arresting with their endearing features and demeanors, by shaving away the burrs on the roughened plate to varying degrees. "Life is a journey with no particular destination," muses the artist. "It is a small miracle that you can exist, have friends and take enjoyment in small things." Like these Go players, perhaps.

**No. 033. "MOON GLOW" by HIRATSUKA Yuji, aquatint/etching/lift-ground etching/soft-ground etching/chine collé, 57x39 (46x31)**



The drooping tulip heads show the same flower at three stages of wilting, indicating the passage of time. Time marches on. Life is transient. Withering is so poignant. Despite the sense of loss, though, the mood is oddly upbeat. Shriveled as they are, the exquisite colors are intact, reminiscent of the flowers' prime. In the yellow moon, an insolent cat, not the customary rabbit, is doing a backflip. He is cheering us on: "Why wallow in sorrow?"

The artist uses four plates and colors to produce this vibrant etching, layering black (oil-based ink), yellow, red and blue (all water-based inks) onto the thin *kozo* (mulberry) *washi* paper. He can obtain almost an infinite range of colors by controlling the plate's exposure time to the acid and thus varying the intensity of each color.

**No. 056. “confess” by KAKIMOTO Toshifumi, woodcut, 56x76 (46x67)**



What is this blue mass? Is it a sheet of rusting metal or animal hide? Then you notice the tiny flecks of white. Why, it's an eye in the huge head of... a whale! The clear blue eye stares back at you, as if waiting for you to confess your innermost thoughts. The white specks are left untouched by ink, showing the *washi* paper from Tosa, present-day Kochi, Shikoku, known for its tradition of whaling, where whales are seen not as a species to be protected and pitied, but huge mammals with dignity in proportion to their size.

The majestic whale fascinates and intrigues, with its skin bearing scars, creases and marks left by barnacles. The lifelike texture is created using six plates and seven colors, including two gesso coated plates, and a plate laid with gradations of blue inks.

*\*Gesso is usually made of plaster of Paris mixed with glue.*

**No. 059. “Treasure Inside #012” by KANO Shigehiro, drypoint, 57x39 (42x28)**



Inspired by the “Dreamreader” whose job was to read dreams from the skulls of unicorns, from Haruki Murakami’s novel, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, the artist began a “mind landscape” series featuring the head, then expanded it in this full-body version.

Who is this guy in a trench coat and a hat, playing Philip Marlowe? Or is his hard-boiled style just a pose? Inside him, a three-quarter moon casts a pale light on his heart. It is a long process to appreciate the treasure inside an individual.

On the aluminum plate cut into a man’s shape, the landscape of his mind is scratched with a needle. First, a dark blue ink is pressed into the grooves and wiped thoroughly from the surface, then a lighter blue ink is spread over the plate with a roller.

**No. 069. "Reunion 2" by KIMURA Hideki, silkscreen, 56x76 (56x76)**

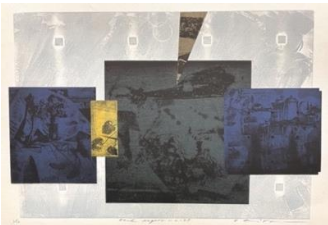


At first, this mysterious piece looks like a monochrome print depicting a waterfowl with a few scattered plants. A closer look reveals then that it is crossed arms masquerading as a bird, a motif the artist chose for its "sustained ambiguity" as a theme. He produced his arm/waterfowl series in various artforms in the early 1980s.

He revived the series for ceramic pieces, then for silkscreens, thus the title "Reunion." It also signifies reaffirming the bond between him and his father, a Kiyomizu-ware potter who died when the artist was six years old.

The luminous forms seem to be made of glossy cellophane films. They are produced by layering transparent oil-based inks. The ink is pushed through the mesh screen to which the non-design parts are fixed, using a positive film and a light-sensitive coating. Twelve colors and ten screens were used here.

**No. 072. "Desk esquis - 2127" by KITANO Toshimi, etching/aquatint/collagraph, 51x75 (43x64)**



On her worktable scattered with printmaking equipment, the artist spreads sketches depicting scenes from her daily life and works out a plan for her next print. With the morning light pouring in, she feels a pleasing sense of contentment. Evocative of a folding screen, the stylish print captures that happy moment with a collage of scenes from the past featuring objects such as a bouquet of flowers and a teapot.

The light gray background is prepared by spreading gesso with bold brush strokes on a large plywood plate. Five individual colored and printed *washi* papers that adhere to the larger paper reveals a beautiful combination of oil-based ink and *washi*'s subtle texture. Etching produces clearly defined lines and aquatint softer tonal effects.

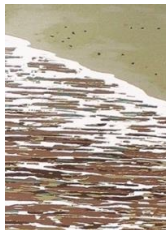
**No. 088. [Today's Dessert] by MAEDA Yukari (new),  
etching/aquatint/collagraph, 91x59 (78x50)**



This outsized parfait first brings delight, then dismay. Several unusual toppings; a freight train, a shopping bag and bomb sites, make you as perplexed as the small chimp cradling a missile. His puzzled look reflects the internal turmoil of the artist. Wars are raging far away while she carries on with her peaceful life. But she knows it can be upended by natural disasters such as the floods and earthquakes she has suffered in Kumamoto, Kyushu.

The swirling pale-blue cream, and the red and blue disks in the bottom of the tall glass are created using the collagraph technique. This big print in fact comprises several parts printed separately, glued onto the large paper, and run through the press to achieve seamless integration.

**No. 101. [Seaside in Early Spring] by MOMMA Hidemi,  
silkscreen, 61x60 (61x60)**



In this arresting silkscreen, the artist recreates a scene from a visit to Izu Oshima island, where the clarity of water heralded the advent of spring and she felt time slowing down.

The sunlight glinting on gentle waves lapping on the beach and breaking into multiple colors through the clear water with the sand visible underneath – she draws the design with a brush, applying screen filler to a mesh screen, prints with one color, then draws more on the same screen and prints with another color. She likens the process to painting in oils on a canvas, except that the filler hardens and blocks the ink from getting through the screen to the paper below. Printed multiple times, the water-based inks build up layers, adding thickness and a glossy sheen.

**No. 111. “FEMME · FATALE” by NAGANUMA Sho (new), etching/photo-etching/aquatint/drypoint, 34x46 (24x35)**



The etching features sharp-looking women, embodying the proverbial principle “see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil.” They all look detached, though they could be feigning indifference. Look closer. The woman on the left seems wary, turning her head away from the framed graffiti art. The woman with her back to the cityscape is more welcoming, head cocked and smiling faintly. The panel on the right projects a feeling of disquiet with gravity-defying vases and the woman taut and tense as if reeling from the night scene outside.

The artist has taken pains to seamlessly integrate the hand-drawn images with those created using the photo-etching process. He loves etching, as it allows him to create extremely fine details, and the ink slightly raised from the paper adds depth.

**No. 121. [At Drifting Island] by NISHIMURA Sayuri, etching/drypoint/aquatint, 40x50 (30x36)**



A doodle of a seafaring dragon found in her notebook led the artist to imagine building a house on its back. Life is like navigating through rough seas, but it should be safe up there with a roof over one’s head, protected from the elements. Now, zoom in on the half-man, half-beast. Does he prefer sitting on the grass? If so, nature has won over the man-made structure.

Advancing only a few centimeters a day, she worked for more than two months to complete “At Drifting Island.” And it is these minutely-drawn details that give tremendous power to the mighty dragon.

Using a variety of etching techniques, the artist recreates the textures she loves, simulating a subtle blur of *sumi* ink using aquatint and producing sharp lines with an etching needle.

**No. 132. "AM 5:00" by OKADA Ikumi, woodcut, 46x52 (30x36)**



As the snowflakes descend from the pale gray sky, the trees exhale, scenting the cold, moist air, in the stillness of the predawn hours. The temperature, humidity, silence, light and air current are beautifully captured, with the subtly complex texture created by layering warm and cold tones. The flecks of snow loom, depicted with multiple layers of white inks or by exposing the paper itself. The evocative woodcut mesmerizes, quietly drawing you into its tranquil world.

The flurry of snow blurs the view of your surroundings, a sensation produced by the technique of carving the reverse side of a plate. When the plate is run through the press, with the paper laid over the inked, uncarved side, the carved-out areas of the back show up on the impression uncolored and with fuzzy outlines.

**No. 150. "[Roses and Vase]" by SEKINO Yowsaku, woodcut/gold leaf, 61x90 (53x82)**



A rich profusion of roses rises out of the gold background as if carved in bas-relief. In red, pink and white – they are alive and compelling. The artist has chosen red roses as a symbol of passion, reflecting the artist's resolve to always push the limits of the possible; the challenge here is to create smooth gradations by shaving off the edges of the raised design areas, a technique called *hori-bokashi*.

By pressing gold leaf onto the impression with the outlines and background printed in oil-based ink, still wet and sticky, leaving it to dry for a month, and then brushing off excess gold, the artist creates his famous gold outlines and background. He then prints with one color at a time, using water-based inks. He printed 24 times to create this piece.



**No. 156. "landscape - 3" by SHIMIZU Misako, lithograph, 66x50 (55x41)**



In this light-suffused lithograph, even the shadows cast on the wall by the tiled eaves and the pine needles are luminous. Let the light fill you, bringing a sense of liberation. The alluring luminosity is created by translucent layers of ink on a flat surface.

Drawn onto the ball-grained aluminum plates with a grease pencil or tusche, the designs are affixed by means of a chemical reaction. The key plate is printed with a cobalt blue ink, and the other plates with whites of varying clarity, from pure white to whites diluted with a transparent medium, forming a thin layer on top of each other.

To be a good lithographer, the artist believes, you need to be a good athlete with good reflexes, motor coordination and strength.

**No. 161. "Signe - Lumière et Ténèbres" by SONOYAMA Harumi, lithograph, 85x68 (72x55)**



In the luxuriant folds of white sheets lurk dark recesses, in this dazzling lithograph. "Light and darkness" in the title came to him while he was arranging dark and light photographs of cloths for drawing as the basis for his design, and thinking of the war in Ukraine and the Covid pandemic.

He struggled to strike the right balance while integrating dark shades with his signature luminous whites that are created by layering complementary colors. The primary colors produce white light when layered in equal intensity. The effect is simulated by layering complementary colors, and diluting these oil-based inks with transparent inks just as a watercolorist uses plenty of water.

Looking at numerous folds of the cloths, some viewers have found faces, and others shapes that stirred nostalgia and sadness. "God is in the details..."

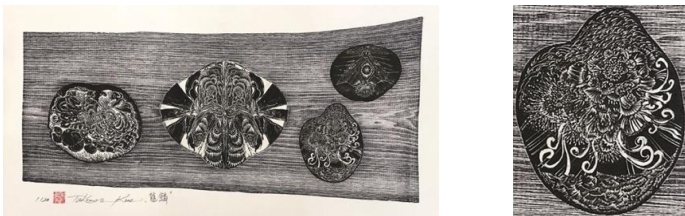
**No. 168. "Dream of Deer - 13" by TAKAHASHI Kyoshiro, drypoint/collagraph, 79x54 (69x42)**



Wildlife is under threat from climate change as environmental destruction continues and wars rage. In this world inhospitable to animals, the artist asks, how can humans live comfortably? With this lyrical print, the artist narrates a story of a noble deer, gentle but brave, who is watching over other animals with motherly tenderness. The deer keeps her head down for now, but will start searching for the world of her dream with her friends.

The deer's story is created using two plates: one is topped with a raised image molded from gesso (collagraph) and the design is incised in the other (drypoint). The former is printed with colored inks, and the latter is pressed with black ink onto the impression with the inks still wet. The finished print bears warm, soft lines that bled out slightly.

**No. 171. "[Dragon Scales] by TAKEMURA Ken, wood engraving/woodcut, 34x68 (29x60)**



This captivating print combines woodcut and wood engraving. Against the background of woodgrain symbolizing the eternal flow of time, the four wood engravings reveal part of the imagery always present in the artist's mind, representing a power far bigger than he can understand.

The dragon scale on the left depicts how a nascent energy source expanded as our universe did. The scale in the center presents today's world inhabited by humans and animals; one side is a mirror image of the other, reflecting your own conduct. As for the two scales on the right: from the one above a big eye looks down; the one below shows how boundless, cosmic energy falls on earth.

The artist took up printmaking as a means of self-expression back when, as a young actor, time hung heavy on his hands between performances.

**No. 173. "Two Crescents" by TAMEKANE Yoshikatsu, collagraph/woodcut, 49x34 (49x34)**



In his dream the artist was painting a picture in Edo Castle, pondering how best to incorporate the black lacquer frame of *fusuma* sliding doors. One answer to that question is this stylish print that packs in motifs of Japanese art, expertly rendered using various techniques.

The black line of a *fusuma* frame divides the print into two sections, one pasted with silver (aluminum) leaf and the other with gold leaf, both bearing an embossed woodgrain pattern representing the flow of time.

The crescent in the silver part embodies day and the other evening, since life becomes more meaningful as it advances. Or the gold crescent could signify sunrise, the start of life. Night and day continue to repeat in an infinite cycle, and every phase of life has its own beauty and value.

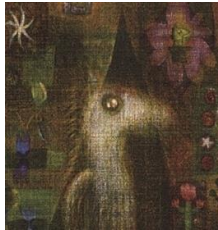
**No. 176. "Big torchlights parade-ONIYO" by TANAKA Masaaki, silkscreen, 50x58 (41x51)**



The raging fire shooting from the giant torches burns the winter sky in this dynamic silkscreen, conveying the heat and excitement of Oniyo (demon night), a 1,600-year-old fire festival to exorcise evil spirits held in Fukuoka, Kyushu. The torch bearers, naked except for their headbands and loincloths, reflect the striking motif of the swirling flames, as if tremendous energy was uniting them. The unique rendition of fire captures its amorphous shape vividly.

From exploding flames to tiny sparks, every detail of the design is made with paper stencils, which are then pasted to a mesh screen to block the ink from getting through. The artist used eleven screens to create this piece, paying close attention to the order in which to layer oil-based inks.

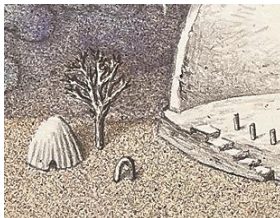
**No. 193. "Curtains that reflect dreams" by YAMADA Momoko (new),  
mezzotint, 39x51 (28x36)**



The horse, wide-eyed, peers out through a crack in the curtains on which is projected his dream, fantastic but a little crazy. As in nature, the landscape of this dreamland is made up of small details such as tulips and roses, pinwheels, bowties and horses, all depicted in a spectrum of nuanced colors in this darkly alluring mezzotint. Lose yourself in its dark recesses.

After roughening four copper plates, the artist gradually develops a design and creates intermediate colors, by shaving off the burrs and layering four oil-based inks; yellow, red, blue and black – in that order with one color for one plate – adding ever more depth. She loves making a color mezzotint in its painstaking process which sometimes produces unexpected colors and combines aspects of both painting and craft.

**No. 194. "Twilight VI - White shell park" by YAMAGUCHI Mari,  
lithograph, 31x29 (22x21)**



The shell-like structure is inspired by playground equipment from the artist's childhood. Probably an open-air stage, but to her a mysterious object back then, its curious shape remains alluring as a motif to embody an "imaginary structure," a place built not for practical purposes but as a refuge for souls. This faintly whimsical piece stirs up nostalgia, with the sky tinted by ephemeral twilight rendered in delicate gradations of tones.

She draws on five ball-grained aluminum plates with materials such as grease pencils, lacquer spray, ballpoint pens and tusche. The creation of the sandy ground involves multiple plates and lacquer spray; the complex texture of the sky is achieved by partially erasing the design with organic solvent.