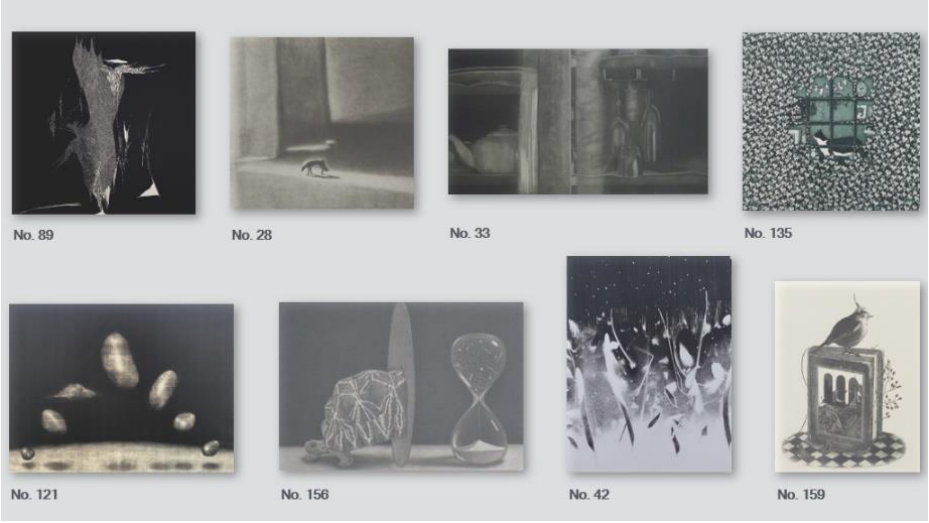
2022 Guided Tours: “The Play of Light and Shadow”

The “Light and Shadow” tour features 8 black and white prints from the 65th CWAJ Print Show, and the “Light and Color” tour 11 color prints. These 19 prints represent the theme of the 2022 guided tours: “The play of light and shadow.”

The videos “Light and Shadow” and “Light and Color” offer a brief description of each print included in the tours whereas this leaflet provides a fuller explanation, including how the artist’s inspiration has been translated into the finished piece.

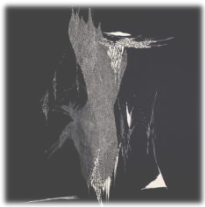
By Michiko Okubo

“Light and Shadow”



Notes:
**The English titles in square brackets indicate that they are translations made by CWAJ members from the original Japanese titles.*
**Some of the artists’ names are followed by “(new),” meaning this is the first time their works have been featured at the annual CWAJ Print Show.*

No. 089. “devote” by MATSUTANI Hiroko, woodcut, 90x90cm



An aurora, a flag swaying in the wind or a wolf rearing on its hind legs? The mysterious “thing” keeps morphing into different forms in your imagination. The triangular white tear in the bottom right jolts. The nameless entity may be light itself, pushing its way out of the darkness.

MATSUTANI Hiroko starts carving a woodblock with no specific images in her mind. As she progresses, a form and movement start to emerge as if an unknown being locked in the woodblock had waited for her to release it. The process is spontaneous and organic. The artist produces the multilayered look by carving at different depths and angles on previously worked areas.

No. 028. “08.22 Xanadu” by HATANAKA Aya (new), mezzotint/*gampi*, 60x60cm

In the path of light seeping out from a curtain stands a dog. Its diminutive size, so out of proportion to its surroundings, immediately draws your attention. Then you focus on its odd-shaped shadow on the polished floor and how the light plays on the other surfaces. In “08.22 Xanadu,” the artist recreates a realistic scene, yet something is slightly off, as in a well-crafted science fiction scene.

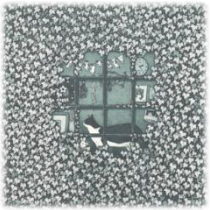
HATANAKA Aya has always worked with the same theme of “fulfilled solitude,” mainly using daily scenes with a dog. The dog in this piece is modeled on a toy dog made in 1940s Europe that belongs to the artist. The evocative mezzotint on lustrous *gampi* paper projects memories of the long journeys the dog has made, alone and always self-reliant.

No. 033. "The Trace of a Prayer/ 祈りの痕跡" by HIRANO Hitomi (new), etching/aquatint, 54x79cm

HIRANO Hitomi captures the evanescence of light in her “The Trace of Prayer.” The light penetrates the dark secretive space in the cupboard, bouncing off the glasses hanging upside down, the beveled surface of the glass door and the smooth body of the teapot, while leaving much in shadows. Rendered in a subtle range of shades from bright and muted whites to light grays, the patches of light have a liquid fluidity.

The complex interaction of light with the varying surfaces throws the flow of time out of kilter, turning the cupboard into a pensive space and bringing back memories of prayers never answered.

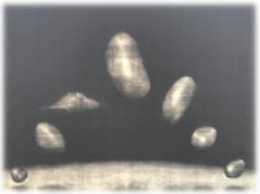
No. 135. “[Cats in the Window]/ 窓の中の猫たち by SAJI Ryotaro, etching/aquatint/drypoint, 37×38cm



SAJI Ryotaro carefully chooses techniques suitable for each work. To best depict the profusion of the layered ivy leaves that play the main role in his “Cats in the Window,” he uses the deep-etching method. The copper plate, pasted with ivy-shaped films, was soaked in a ferric chloride solution for 6-8 hours. The artist then repeated the process — adding more leaves, drawing vines, and finally superimposing a window frame. He engraved the veins later, and shaped the leaves around the edges meticulously by hand.

Behind the window is an oddly shallow space, less a room than a tableau, hung with numerous cat ornaments. In comes a curious cat to investigate, letting time in the quiet space start flowing again.

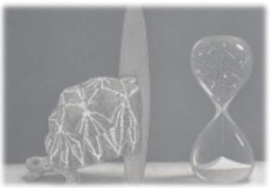
No. 121. “untitled” by OGASAWARA Kiseko, mezzotint, 52x72cm



OGASAWARA Kiseko finds that the distinctive presence of stones in a mezzotint appeals to her sensibilities. In her arresting mezzotint, “untitled,” six stones of various sizes and one shadowless object float against the background of nuanced, velvety black tones. The remarkable play of light makes them so palpably real. The viewer can almost feel their cool smoothness.

To Ogasawara, the immutability of stone represents how, despite the changing times, people remain the same deep down. In contrast, the amorphous object can easily change its shape or disappear like a cloud. Together, they show how different things can look with the passage of time and a shift in perspective.

No. 156. “Escape the time/ 時を逃れて” by TAGO Hiroshi, mezzotint, 26×37cm



In his “Escape the time,” TAGO Hiroshi asks: “Where do we come from? Who are we? Where are we going?”

The turtle-and-hourglass motif is inspired by the fantasy novel “Momo” by Michael Ende. The hourglass contains the whole universe whose birth prompted the flow of time. The soft tones match the dreamlike ambience of this delightful mezzotint with finely defined details.

The turtle tries to escape the confines of time by slipping into another dimension, but fails in his attempt and comes back. Instead of giving up the struggle as hopeless, though, the turtle starts questioning why he should be so bothered with the tyranny of time.

No. 042. “[Summer Garden]/夏の庭” by IGARASHI Kumiko, lithograph, 77x57cm

In IGARASHI Kumiko’s “Summer Garden,” scintillating threads of light splinter into an incandescent glow as they fall on dancing plants. The threads could be a shower of light or fine rain, or even swirling snowflakes. Snow in summer, but why not? The artist encourages your imagination to run free.

She aims to emulate the effects of colors with varying shades of black and white in her radiant lithograph; the luminous whites – fluffy down, sharp sparkles and a glow – stand in for a range of colors. Carefully drawn on a plate with lithographic crayons and pencils, the joyous garden is recreated through a long, painstaking process that leaves no room for error.

No. 159. “[Book of Time]/刻(とき)の本” by TAKEDA Fumiko, aquatint/etching/soft-ground etching, 48×39cm

As the frayed edges and the worn leather cover attest, this tattered old book of hours has seen countless nights fall and seasons turn. The book stands on the checkered floor, seemingly a continuation of the floor at the foot of the stairs inside the front cover. A few leaves are spilling out. The worlds inside and outside the book connect, and the key hints at another world. The briar berries growing out of the book attract the curious robin whose cap looks like a Japanese snowbell. The hand-painted red dots accenting the berries bring the varying shades of black to life in this charming etching by TAKEDA Fumiko.

“Light and Color”

No. 012, “Xanadu” by CHOI Eunji, mezzotint, 42x58cm

While layering imaginary transparent films, CHOI Eunji starts to see forms emerge, which could be mountains or shooting stars. Her works, however, do not represent a real landscape but a surreal and mysterious space, where the wind blows gently, making you calm. And she finds such a place takes on shades of blue.

She first roughens the copper plate and then shaves away the burrs to create an image varying in shade from deep blue to clear white and everything in between. The velvety tones seem illuminated from within.

In search of her Xanadu, Choi aims to create blues that have crystalline clarity and exude hope. She has succeeded with this luminescent piece.

No. 096. “gaze/見つめる” by MIYAKE Aoi (new), silkscreen, 79x100cm

The white light floods MIYAKE Aoi’s striking silkscreen. Instead of casting shadows, it pools into an assortment of colors. The result is the imaginative gradations of light recreating a scene from the artist’s daily life with her cat, Mint, lured by the sound and light from the microwave.

She deconstructs and simplifies the components, then reassembles them assigning carefully chosen colors to each – 87 colors in all – from the pale blue streak on the white cat to the varying shades of magenta on the microwave. Stronger colors emerge in secondary elements like plastic bags, a towel and electric switches, drawing attention to them and upsetting the composition’s dynamics. Miyake used 72 mesh screens to create “gaze.”

No. 007. “You are still in the night/まだあの夜に君は居る” by ASANO Ayaka (new), etching, 103x73cm

ASANO Ayaka’s delicate etching mystifies then captivates with a subtle play of light and color contained in the gemstone and a woman’s barely drawn face in its rectangular frame. With her eye slightly downcast, she looks pensive but not dejected. The black blotch may embody her hair or her inner struggle.

“The night” in the title signifies a point in the past that has a strong pull, while “you” can be the person reflected in the gemstone or you the viewer, depending on your state of mind. A purveyor of messages and a talisman against evil, the gemstone contains memories of the past and light leading to the present and future.

No. 054. “CASCADE” by ITO Yukio, mezzotint, 64x48cm

We marvel at the miracle of our existence and ask: “Who are we?” These moments of awareness, however, become memories that belong to the past, even as they occur, in the relentless progression of time since the birth of the universe. Our consciousness of the self and our surroundings continually stream through time like a waterfall. ITO Yukio’s “CASCADE” captures this imagery in its sparkles and interconnecting lines of rays superimposed on translucent rings.

Ito creates this dazzling mezzotint by rotating one plate 90 degrees each time and printing only with colored inks. Some parts, kept ink-free, become white lights. Others, printed with single colors or multiple layers, turn into luminous images. Multilayered inks create the profound darkness – the universe may have sucked in all the colors.

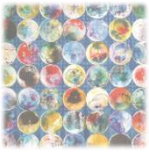
No. 137. “[Chaos]/混迷” by SANO Takayoshi (new), woodcut, 87×66cm

In late autumn, tangles of shriveled lotus stalks and leaves cast labyrinthian shadows on the surface of Shinobazu Pond in Ueno Park. SANO Takayoshi thinks back to their glory days of green leaves and lovely flowers in summer.

The inspiration for the print came when the artist saw a wild duck swimming by, disturbing the reflection of the dead lotuses and rippling them into an unpredictable world of chaos. The forlorn pond became animated and stirred Sano’s artistic instincts to recreate the image of the wilted, yet beautiful, foliage.

The stunning woodcut is a triumph of the unexpected. Sano brings out the powers and surprising beauty hidden in disorderly, “unattractive” things. He uses Ukiyo-e techniques to produce gradations of blue and the reflection of white light in this autumn scene.

No. 027. “floating time-purplish blue” by HASEGAWA Yuki, lithograph, 54x53cm



While working, HASEGAYA Yuki always keeps in mind that you only see what is in your field of vision, but outside is the wider world. Her mesmerizing lithograph suggests a snapshot of the infinite. The spherical objects floating in an orderly manner resemble one another at first, she says, but with more colors added –the last of which is the “purplish blue” of the title – the translucent spheres develop their own characteristics, proving that no two things are identical in this world.

Making this piece during the Covid pandemic, she was keenly aware how the details of objects around her were vividly reflected in her eyes. No two sets of eyes see things the same way, but she will be thrilled if her work can connect with scenes remembered by viewers.

No. 203. “Matsukaze '22/松風’ 22” by YOSHIMATSU Junichiro, silkscreen/collagraph/dyed Japanese paper/leafing 65×48cm

The nuanced blue of the sky and sea sets the tone for this evocative piece with elegant calligraphy and the silver moon floating in the waves. YOSHIMATSU Junichiro suggests rather than illustrates. He says, “Ideally, there should be as many ways to interpret ‘Matsukaze ’22’ as there are viewers.”

Underneath apparent tranquility throbs a story of the sublimation of intense passions. “Matsukaze (Wind in the Pines)” in the title is a 15th-century Noh play, relating a love story between two *ama*-diver sisters and a nobleman poet in exile. A Buddhist monk eventually sets the sisters’ spirits free from their obsession with the departed lover. The fractured moon may signify the sisters’ longing or the moon’s reflection in the seawater with which they fill their buckets.

No. 048. “[Appreciate the Moon]/ 月を愛でる” by IMAMURA Yoshio, photo-etching/woodcut, 41x54cm

In his “Appreciate the Moon,” IMAMURA Yoshio captures a fleeting moment of life. Individual creatures have only a limited time in this world, yet life has continued since the birth of the universe.

The three-quarter moon rises above a clematis sharply outlined and delicately colored with water-based inks. On the left, Pegasus lies on his back, having fallen from the constellation perhaps? On the right floats the delicate shell of a Paper Nautilus octopus, suggestive of a fossil and the passage of time. Does the nuanced blue in the bottom signify the sea or sky?

Imamura has used eight woodblocks to print with water-based inks, and an etched plate with black ink. Water-based inks sink into the washi paper whereas the etching ink rises slightly when it dries.

No. 021. “The moon of others/ 他人の月” by GOTOU Hidehiko, woodcut, 39x31cm

“The Zen expression, ‘*jita ichinyo* (self and other are as one),’ means that one
should regard others’ sufferings as one’s own,” says GOTOU Hidehiko. “Caring about others has become all the more important today with growing uncertainties. How does ‘the moon of others’ appear to us?”

His exquisite woodcut imparts tranquility. Indigo blue is a delicate and profound language of color that always speaks to him. Through the small square in the center, you see another space, which offers hope and liberation.

A master maker of the *baren* printing tool, he finds this handheld disk indispensable to richly and faithfully transfer the moisture and warmth of a woodblock and its inked image onto washi paper.

No. 166. “Handcarrying fireworks ceremony/手筒花火” by TANAKA Masaaki, silkscreen, 58×77cm

This vibrant silkscreen by TANAKA Masaaki conveys the sheer joy and excitement of a wild festival where everybody is enjoying the fireworks, from those holding bamboo tubes stuffed with gunpowder, two in red jumpsuits and others in *happi*-coats, to the musicians and spectators.

The backs of the musicians left in shadow makes you realize this is a night scene, lit by the flames shooting out of tubes with straw rope wound around them. Some details such as a head or an arm are illuminated in white and sparks fly around in all directions as if jumping for joy.

Tanaka pastes paper stencils to a mesh screen to block the ink from getting through. He usually uses seven or eight screens.

No. 095. “Spiral leaves – 2” by MIURA Yahoko, mezzotint, 37x46cm

In many of her works, MIURA Yahoko has portrayed the life of an imaginative planet from its prime to death, alluding to phenomena such as extreme weather triggered by global warming. Meanwhile, the world is still devastated by the Covid pandemic with no clear end in sight.

Miura wants to keep faith in a strong force of life that helps us break out of this negative spiral. Inspired by the DNA double helix, the ivy-like creeper spiraling in her luminous mezzotint embodies an eternal lifeforce.

The play of the dazzling, life-giving light is mesmerizing, from the leaves flooded with light to those lit from behind and almost translucent.

The image is printed onto special *gampi* paper, using two plates, first with colored inks then black ink.