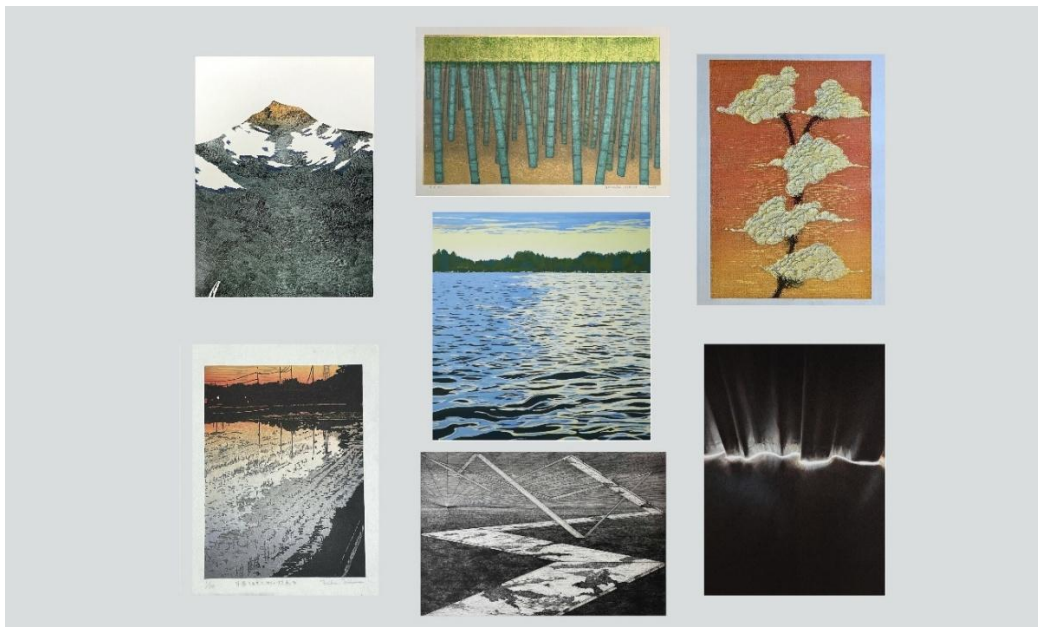


2025 Guided Tour: “Why Printmaking?” Artists’ Talks: From Inspiration to Finished Work



2025 Guided Tour: “Why Printmaking?”

The 2025 CWAJ Guided Tour features 22 striking prints from the 68th CWAJ Print Show. They vary in style and technique. Some are abstract, and others representational. Some are futuristic, and others evoke traditional Japanese paintings. Some shock, and others soothe. But they all have unique stories to tell, those of their birth—where the inspiration has come from and how the artist has translated it into the finished work—and those of their creators. In telling of their passion for printmaking in general and for their chosen techniques in particular, the artists give you glimpses of the fascinating world of contemporary prints.

By Michiko Okubo
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Notes:

*The English titles in square brackets indicate that CWAJ members translated them from the original Japanese.

*The print’s label

Print number:	No. 075
Name:	KONNO Noriko
Title, year:	<i>Moon in natural settings</i> , 2024
Medium:	Drypoint/engraving/gold leaf
Paper size (image size):	75 x 98 cm (59 x 84 cm)
The print no./the edition size:	1/3
Price:	¥75,000

68th CWAJ Print Show





No. 075
KONNO Noriko
Moon in natural settings, 2024
Drypoint/engraving/gold leaf
75 x 98 (59 x 84), 1/3
¥75,000

Rather than preparing a detailed sketch as she normally would, KONNO Noriko carved a design directly on a copperplate from an image forming in her head, letting spontaneous feelings guide her hand. Staying attuned to natural sounds and light around her and letting her imagination run free, she embraced the textures and expressions that emerged on the plate, often the result of serendipity, to compose this piece with lines, subtle gradations, and blank spaces.

Moon in natural settings captures the fleeting beauty of nature, evoking ever-changing natural phenomena such as light, wind, water, and shadow, which lodged the passing moment in her memory. She has created the design using drypoint and engraving as well as spitbite,* a departure from her regular works created with aquatint, a technique she loves for its delicate expressions with gradations and complex layers of planes.

In painting, you work towards the goal of depicting an image directly on a canvas. In printmaking, on the other hand, you go through multiple processes involving various techniques. While proceeding by trial and error, you embrace new sensations that occur before reaching the goal. Composing is an adventure. When Konno finally pulls an impression off the press, the print delights her with its unique texture and expression, which are wholly different from a painting.

*Spitbite is the technique of dropping or painting acid onto an aquatint ground to allow localized and controlled biting.



No. 165

TAKAHASHI Fumiko

[*Tree of Prayer, Vessel of Rebirth -Isaiah 32:15-18-*], 2023

Aquatint/drypoint/etching/lift-ground etching (sugar tint)

86 x 67 (67 x 55), 1/30

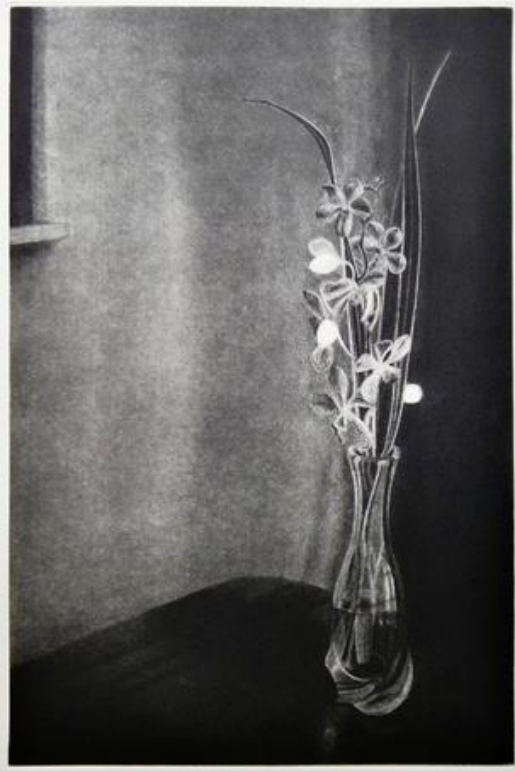
¥80,000

Most of Takahashi's works are inspired by the Bible. When Russia invaded Ukraine, and subsequent attacks devastated the lives of Ukrainians, TAKAHASHI Fumiko created this exquisite work by closely reading *The Book of Isaiah* and making an interpretation of her own while praying for the people and their homeland under fire.

Takahashi enjoys both painting and printmaking. In printmaking she feels that its complex processes, along with the unpredictability inherent in each process, give a finished piece a sense of the passage of time. A copperplate can be incised, sandpapered, or dipped in acid. It responds to all kinds of actions, and also allows her to make changes.

She tries not to become too skilled. Not relying on techniques and always ready to destroy and start again, she aims to create with supple sensitivities, freely exploring a theme she has chosen.

Recently she has pulped unusable prints to make new paper. From the pulp, she creates sculptures. In the future she intends to create a three-dimensional work with etchings.

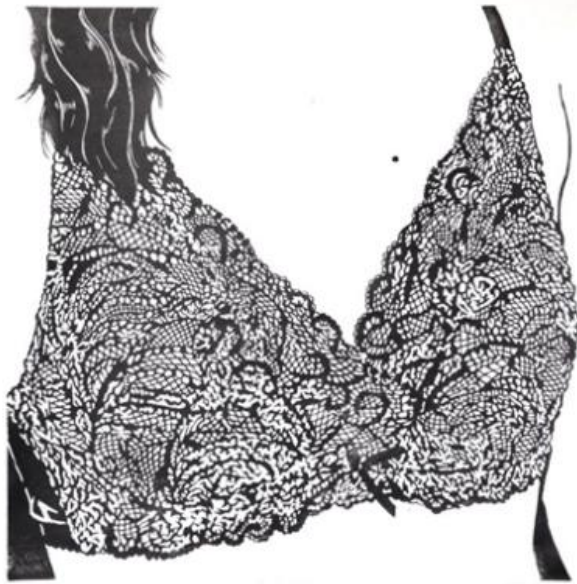


No. 033
HIRANO Hitomi
Shallow Slumber, 2025
Etching
79 x 54 (48 x 32), 2/10
¥50,000

The dimly lit room, reflected in a slim glass vase holding cut flowers, reveals as much as it withholds, adding more mystery to this evocative piece. The sunlight seeps through faintly, playing on the surfaces of various objects and showing up diverse textures. The background, drawn with subtle and irregular lines, makes the delicate yet sharply defined flower petals stand out, while the hard reflected light on the glass is tenderly traced.

HIRANO Hitomi enjoys the aspect of crafts in printmaking. Etching requires a series of complex processes which take a long time to complete, but that restriction allows her to look more closely and deeply at her subject. The time required allows her to discover more details while the design keeps evolving quietly and slowly.

She loves the deep blackness of the etching ink. Though fine and light as hair, etched lines will not easily blur. Once fixed, they will never waver. Yet, even when depicting a hard texture, they impart something organic akin to the barely discernible stirring of life. Hirano wants to continue exploring the possibility of etching and aquatint techniques with the aim to depict deeper black, delicately delineated semidarkness, and the texture of dim lights.



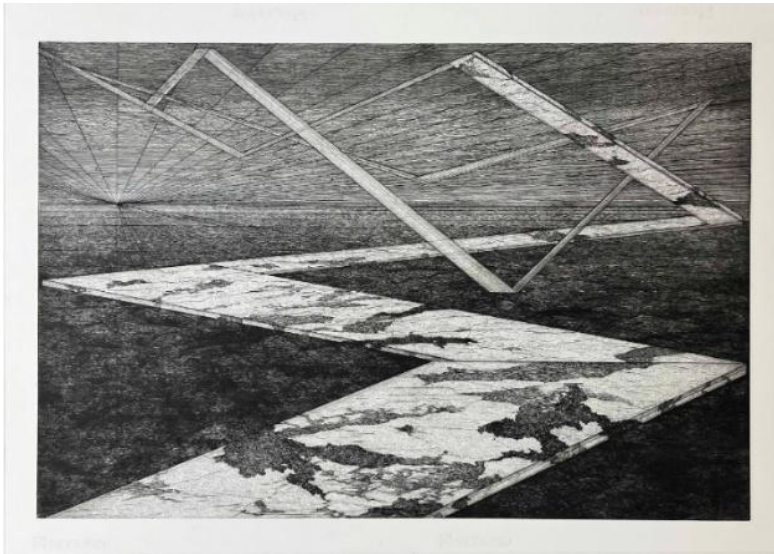
No. 196
YAMADA Hikaru
[female gaze top], 2023
Woodcut
64 x 64 (56 x 56), 1/6
¥88,000

A visit to a gynecologist prompted YAMADA Hikaru to create a series, of which this arresting piece is part. She has always approached gynecological exams with a heavy heart. Realizing that the physical and psychological pains and the burden of being a woman will haunt her all her life, she has chosen the female body as the series' theme.

She loves the flatness of a print. Often, she starts with a negative thought when contemplating a theme for her work. By going through the many processes of printmaking, though, she feels she can gradually free herself, throwing off negativity and starting to see things in perspective.

In woodcut, you carve and ink a block to print. She loves this simplicity. It delights her to retrace the design she has carved on the block by applying pressure with a *baren* disk to transfer it onto paper.

The inspiration for *female gaze top* has stimulated her interest in using lace as a motif. Lace making was once a handicraft practiced by women. She wants to try her hand at carving lace making's intricate motifs and patterns.



No. 004
 AOYAGI Yuka
I want to see you, even if it's a dream., 2024
 Etching/aquatint
 70 x 100 (60 x 90), 2/10
 ¥90,909

Inspired by a poem from *The Tales of Ise*, a collection of 125 narrative poems from the Heian period (794-1185), AOYAGI Yuka's spectacular etching conveys the poet's fervent wish with a combination of lines that seem to meander through dark woods to reach the far away capital Kyoto. Unlike her other works marked by a sharp contrast between black and white, this piece incorporates watercolor-like subtle tonal gradations created using aquatint and applying acid with a brush. The dazzling structure is designed, combining oblique projection* and one-point perspective.*

Printmaking is an indirect means of creating art, and the element of surprise is inherent in its complex production process. This tendency is especially strong in etching as the technique uses acid corrosion, which can be affected by many factors like the day's temperature. Aoyagi feels, though, the whimsy of the process often brings a result far exceeding her expectations.

Acid bites into the incised lines deeper and deeper with time. Both the image thus created and the time invested transfer onto paper as the press lifts the ink from the grooves. She likens the processes to the passage of time affecting people's interpretations of historical events and literary works. Because art and literature provide her with a source of emotional support, Aoyagi hopes her works will give comfort to people in the same way.

*Oblique projection is a type of parallel projection where lines of sight are not perpendicular to the projection plane, a feature found in traditional Japanese painting.

*One-point perspective is a type of linear perspective that uses a single vanishing point on the horizon line to create the illusion of depth and space in a two-dimensional artwork.



No. 137
SAITO Ryota,
[*Legend*], 2023
Wood engraving
61 x 48 (41 x 30), 11/100
¥45,000

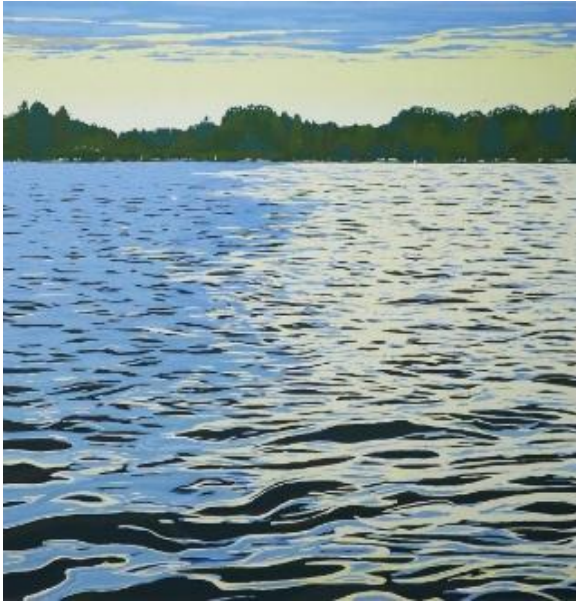
Legend depicts the formidable presence of a *sugi* cedar tree called Odan Sugi in Tsuruoka City, Yamagata Prefecture. The cedar is about 1800 years old, 27 meters high, and 22 meters wide with a root circumference of 8 meters. Though a sacred presence, it is a bit spooky, with its thick, muscular branches extending wide, suggestive of an unknown creature.

In printmaking, a finished image will emerge only after a series of processes during which many elements like the day's temperature affect how a work turns out. SAITO Ryota thinks it is essential to keep communicating with both his work in progress and the plate. In printmaking, the artist and the plate forge a very close relationship.

For wood engraving, the block is cut cross-grained. Saito chose wood engraving as he loved working with wood. A hard end-grain block allows fine intricate work, just as a copperplate does. The end-grain block is relatively small—thus Saito is exploring a way to create a sense of expanse in a limited space without resorting to techniques such as *gampi collage** or *kagami-bari**. He aims to produce a piece that, by conveying the presence of invisible elements—sounds, smells, and temperatures—appeals to the viewer's five senses.

**Gampi collage* or chine collé (chine=tissue, collé=glued) is a technique in which an image is transferred to a thin sheet of paper and the thin sheet is bonded to a heavier backing sheet as it passes through the press.

**Kagami-bari* (mirror image) is a technique in which you first print an image on the translucent *gampi* (*Diplomorpha sikokiana*) paper, a strong, crisp sheet with almost no visible fibers, making two impressions of the same image, and then gluing them side by side, one with the front side up and the other with the back side up, to present mirror images of each other.



No. 098
 MOMMA Hidemi
The shore of a lake, 2024
 Silkscreen
 77 x 76 (61 x 60), 2/6
 ¥90,000

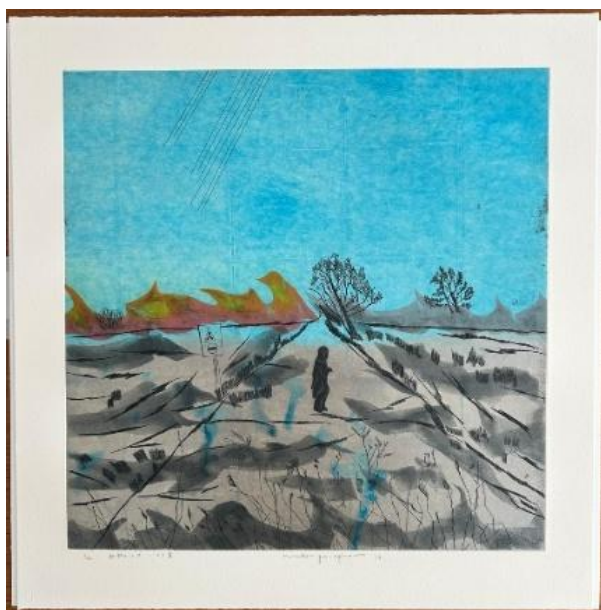
At dusk, the sky overcast with thin clouds turns faintly red, casting a reflection on the surface of Lake Senba in Mito, Ibaraki Prefecture. In *The shore of a lake*, MOMMA Hidemi captures that fleeting moment with vibrant colors and forms. Always alert to small changes in her surroundings, she portrays scenes that arrest her attention, conveying all the phenomena she observes.

Momma draws a 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.

She has chosen printmaking for two reasons. First, because the medium is deeply embedded in Japanese culture, she feels being a print artist gives her an edge in international settings. Second, its complex production processes suit her working style. While painting in oils, she found herself tinkering incessantly. In printmaking, she envisions a finished piece first and works towards the goal. Her vision enables her to put distance between herself and her work.

She has been involved in a project called Print Exchange in which artists gather and work towards the same theme and exchange the finished works. She hopes to host a Print Exchange workshop one day along with an exhibition and invite artists from around Japan and the world.

*The process is called the reduction method as the image area on the screen becomes progressively reduced.

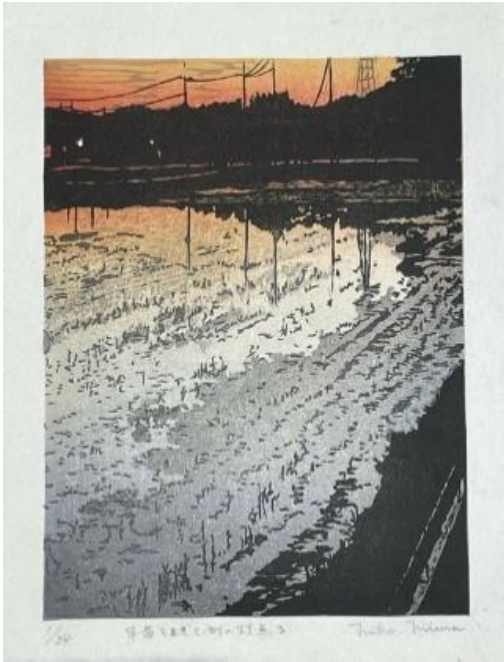


No. 201
YANAGISAWA Noriko
Words Spoken by Animals Life II,
2024
Etching/mezzotint/hand-dying/gampi,
62 x 60 (50 x 50), 3/10
¥250,000

Touched by the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster, YANAGISAWA Noriko visited the Chernobyl power plant in Ukraine in 2015. Since then, she says that the issue of nuclear power has been at the heart of her works. She feels, “Animals and plants share our planet. What do they think of this insurmountable problem surrounding our lives?”

She also produces tableaux using washi paper as a substrate. What attracts her to etching is twofold. First, she loves the beautiful lines that this medium produces. Scratched with etching needles and then bitten by acid, the lines are incised in a copperplate. The ink presses into the grooves and then lifts onto paper creating a beauty that cannot be produced in a tableau. The other appealing point is the art of layering. Printed on the layers of paper—a colored paper, hand-colored *gampi* paper, and heavy support paper—the image acquires complexity born from the see-through effect characteristic of printmaking.

She hopes to keep producing prints as well as tableaux, depending on what she wants to convey through her piece, which after all is the most important point.



No. 094

MIURA Miho

[*The Lights Go On in the Town with the Rustling of Rice Seedling*], 2024

Woodcut

30 x 24 (25 x 19), 1/24

¥20,000

While driving between paddies, MIURA Miho came across a beautiful scene that compelled her to stop and take photos. The sky changed its colors so fast that she fought against time to capture the scene. The next moment, the light was gone from the sky, and night was falling fast. She was bent on capturing the evanescent beauty of the paddies.

The sky is beautiful, and so is its reflection on the paddies. Only during this brief period right after the transplanting of seedlings can you see the reflection. It will be gone once the seedlings fill the space with green. Miura doesn't normally use an image from a photograph, but for this piece she aims to recreate the beautiful colors by paying particular attention to printing with a *baren* disk.

She has always loved carving wood and sharing her creations with people. Growing up, making New Year's cards and summer greeting cards was part of her life. Woodcut requires no special tools or expensive equipment other than gouges and *barens*. This simplicity allows her to continue making art.

She had long wanted to combine woodcut and etching to create a new piece, but paper was a stumbling block. In the future, she would like to give it another try with Sekishu* washi paper, an option suggested by a friend.

*Produced in Shimane Prefecture, Sekishu washi paper is known for its exceptional durability and elegant luster.



No. 047
 IKUTA Koji
 [*A Kingfisher in Flight*], 2024
 Mezzotint
 26 x 36 (15 x 25), 23/95
 ¥40,000

IKUTA Koji has produced this exquisite piece using two plates, a technique for most of his color mezzotints. One of the Kingfisher Series, *A kingfisher in flight* depicts how perceived speed and colors interact by placing the kingfisher blue in ukiyoe-like *bokashi* gradations in the lower part of the print. Above he creates a scattering of pink flower petals and a bird in flight.

While majoring in Japanese painting at college, Ikuta encountered mezzotint and embraced the strong element of craft in the medium. Themes and creative ideas are of vital importance to both painting and mezzotint. Moreover, in mezzotint the mastery of techniques is essential as it helps expand the range of expression. Ikuta identifies his creative principles more with craftsmanship. Technical proficiency holds the key to success in printmaking, yet the finished piece has no trace of the artist's struggle.

Once Ikuta gets an idea, he concentrates on executing a design on a copperplate. He pricks the whole plate with a rocker, throwing up burrs (which will hold ink), then creates the design by removing burrs with a burnisher or a scraper—all work of a craftsman. Like a potter opening the door of a kiln after firing, he feels excitement and trepidation in equal measure when peeling an impression off the plate. Being able to make multiple impressions of the same piece is important to him. It will give him the greatest pleasure if his works adorn people's homes as popular art as ukiyo-e prints did in the Edo period (1603-1867).



No. 070
KOBAYASHI Jinan
Time of Silence-Chinese cabbage,
2025
Mezzotint
30 x 47 (20 x 36), 1/15
¥35,000

KOBAYASHI Jinan has been focused on creating works with his main theme of “time and human psychology.” The trace of time is represented in the ever-changing state of a being from its inception to demise and from its continuance to degradation. In everyday life, you encounter a scene or a moment that makes you aware of the passage of time. He embodies the emotions such an encounter stirred in his mind in this intricate piece, with both the real and virtual (reflected) images of a Chinese cabbage. In each leaf he finds the transience of beauty,

He believes that prints and paintings are both art on paper created by different means. Printmaking is his main medium, but not exclusively so. He sometimes paints or sculpts. For *Time of Silence-Chinese cabbage*, he thought the theme called for a black space, and subsequently chose mezzotint as the most suitable medium. Other techniques like etching have an element of unpredictability, but in mezzotint, you will get exactly what you have worked to achieve, no more, no less. It is stoical and self-contained.

He aims to create a mezzotint embodying “a state of mind changing with the passing of time” with varying tones of velvety blacks.

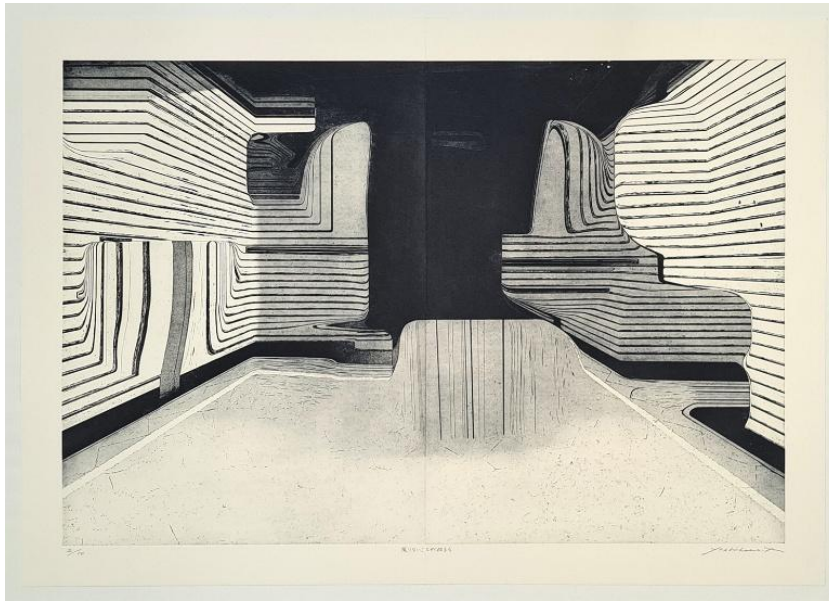


No. 051
ISOMI Teruo
[*Shoreline-V*], 2024
Woodcut
70 x 89 (50 x 71), 1/15
¥165,000

As ISOMI Teruo contemplated a woodblock, he wondered what might reside in its surface and what kind of world might exist there. The musing led him to the image of a liminal space between sea and land, a shore teeming with life, which inspired this piece.

When carving an image on a woodblock or a copperplate, unlike drawing directly on paper, the physical presence of the matrix serves to exert a certain level of control over the artist's conceptual approach.

Isomi chose a woodblock, the most familiar material in everyday life. When working on the woodblock, he feels the block giving something back to him. At the center of his creation are interactions between the artist and the woodblock. He does not set a big goal to attain. It is enough for him to work with the block.



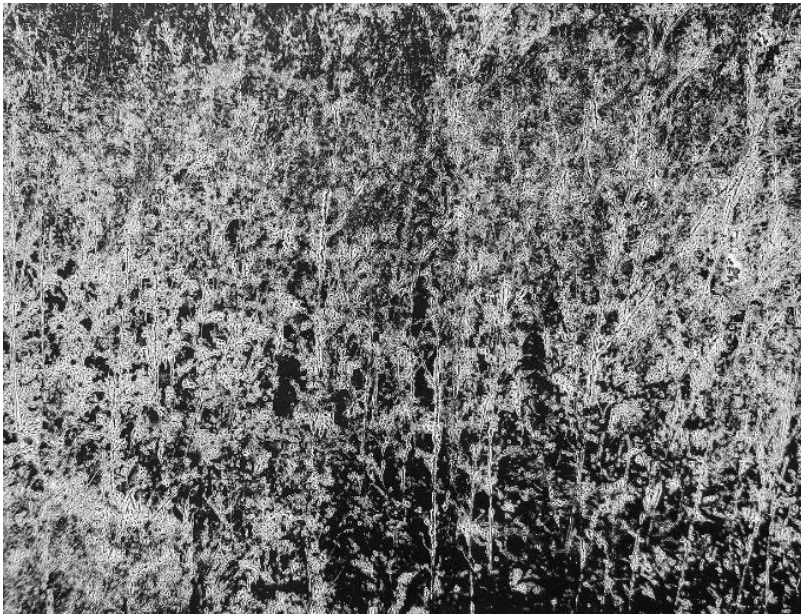
No. 205
YOSHIHAMA
Takafumi
[*The infinite begins*],
2024
Etching/aquatint, 70
x 100 (60 x 90), 2/10
¥120,000

About four years ago during the Covid-19 pandemic, YOSHIHAMA Takafumi came across a deserted street in Tokyo lined with restaurants and bars. Instead of bustling with activities, the quiet space was dominated by the furrows in the shuttered fronts. This cool, faintly disquieting print embodies the sense of unease and foreboding he felt then.

He regards printmaking as an indirect process of painting. In printmaking, after the process of creating a design on a plate—as you would on a canvas in painting—comes an additional process of printing, whose outcome rests on an intricate balance between passion and self-possession.

The pressure of the press transfers the ink onto paper. This perfect integration of the image and paper is one of the beauties of an etching. Thick and strong, the oil-based etching ink best serves Yoshihama’s works to mark strong contrasts between dark and light.

Yoshihama always seeks to produce unusual, mysterious spaces that prompt questions like “What’s this?” and “How does he do this?” He has certainly succeeded with this piece.



No. 109
NISHIMURA Ryo
Sounds of life 3, 2023
Drypoint
54 x 77 (46 x 60), 4/10
¥66,000

NISHIMURA Ryo has always been interested in depicting lines that suggest motion such as drops of ink dissolving in water, smoke rising from an incense stick, and the wavy surface of a pond or a river.

Sounds of life 3 is part of a series in which he has featured plants for the first time. It depicts how a patch of grass near his atelier thrives and withers. Through this drypoint, he tries to give shape to phenomena we often overlook such as the fluid state of nature, life's activity, and the passage of time.

Initially drawn to printmaking for its similarities to handicrafts, he came to appreciate the lightness of a print bearing a film-like, thin layer of ink in which the image exists precariously—so different from the thick textures of oils and Japanese paintings.

In drypoint, his chosen medium, a sharp needle is used to incise lines directly into a plate. Nishimura uses a plastic plate whose transparency comes in handy when an artist traces an image. The process creates a burr, a ridge of displaced plastic alongside the incised line, which holds ink. When the plate is inked and run through a press, the ink trapped behind the burr creates a softer, slightly blurred line. Nishimura feels these drypoint lines embody living beings from body fluids to muscles and nerves. The lines also convey all his physical movements, even his breathing, that are passed through the needle into the incisions.



No. 060
KASHIWAGI Yuki
The Path, 2025,
Woodcut/laser engraving
36 x 33 (30 x 30), 1/15
¥20,000

In this intriguing and playful piece, KASHIWAGI Yuki recreates a 360-degree view of a space she saw around her while standing in a small shrine near her parents' home. *The Path* is the first piece she has created directly from a landscape, but she has used her usual production method of working digitally and by hand. After drawing an image digitally, she engraves with a laser cutter, then carves by hand using gouges. Finally she prints by hand, thus generating the contrast between the opposing textures—the hard-edged digital drawing and the soft and slightly wavering touch of the woodcut.

You keep working with a brush to complete a painting. Printmaking by contrast requires a series of various processes, each involving some planning. Working towards the goal step by step, you must think structurally. Kashiwagi finds this approach suits her.

She aims to expand the range of expressions with new methods and perspectives. This piece exemplifies such efforts. She is also trying her hand at spatial installations.



No. 019
 FUKUMOTO Yoshihide
*[Ablaze with autumn leaves,
 Mt. Jonen is now crowned with
 snow]*, 2025
 Silkscreen
 49 x 64 (32 x 48), 1/28
 ¥34,000

On a whim, Fukumoto decided to give a haiku-like title to his new piece. He had no knowledge about haiku making. No matter. He composed a haiku and went on to make trial impressions with the aim to create a work that matches an image the title evoked: Mt Jonen still ablaze with autumn leaves but already crowned with snow. The motif is the scenery of an area near a village in Azumino where he moved his atelier in 1991.

Why printmaking? It is a hard question to answer. He always did only what he liked, and what was left was printmaking. When he starts on a painting, he just keeps going and doesn't seem to bring it to a finish. In making a print, he can take apart the whole, structure and colors, into components and focus his attention on each part. He is also drawn to the lightness of prints.

To create Mt. Jonen with autumn colors and snow, he made three stencil plates (mesh screens) photographically.* With the first screen, he then printed the basic image of Mt. Jonen, placing thick opaque inks, white on the top part and brown on the lower area, and grading the boundary by mixing the two colors with a squeegee. With the second screen, he layered another image with a thinner, transparent pale-brown ink. Finally, with the third screen he printed the snow with a semitranslucent white ink. Thin, transparent inks give a softer look to a silkscreen, suggestive of a lithograph. He loves this versatility in silkscreen.

*Fukumoto draws a design on a matt film with an opaque ink, places it onto the screen coated with a thin layer of photo-sensitive emulsion, then exposes them to ultraviolet (UV) light. (On a matt film he uses to prepare the second screen, he splatters opaque ink with wire mesh and a brush. This design detail created by the splattered ink will show up as the dots in the clouds in the finished print.) The design blocks the UV light that hardens the emulsion around the image. He washes the screen, but the emulsion covered by the design remains soft and washes out of the screen, leaving a stencil of the design on the screen.



No. 064
 KAWARAI Yasuyuki
Transition 1, 2025
 Lithograph
 99 x 76 (90 x 71), 1/3
 ¥150,000

All matter is composed of tiny particles. Atoms combine to form molecules, which then form larger structures, including living organisms. We exist as individuals. But in a broader, historical context, we are just parts of the whole, our individuality effaced, insignificant, and destined to perish. KAWARAI Yasuyuki tries to capture the poignancy of transient existence, using motifs like mountains, waterfalls, and rivers.

This striking piece depicts a cold, early morning in winter. Fine dots and lines combine to form a mountain. Clouds, passing above the mountain and casting shadows, embody the beauty of ephemeral phenomena.

As a high school student, Kawarai loved painting in oils, but found it hard to complete a piece because he could paint over and start again. In printmaking, which he came across at college, once a line is carved or drawn, the process is irreversible. Irreversibility serves him well. This aspect is what makes printmaking special for him more than being able to make multiple impressions of the same piece.

In lithograph, the artist can draw anything on an aluminum plate, making lines as fine as engraving lines to layers of colors with traces of brush strokes. Kawarai wants to convey vicissitude in his work, and he feels lithograph answers his expectations more than he imagined.

He will be happy if the viewer finds something new and interesting in his work, saying: "It looks different now that I've got closer" or "It seems to have multiple meanings."



No. 028
 HAYASHI Takahiko
The Unformed Figure-Flexible Objects,
 2010
 Etching/gampi
 79 x 60 (60 x 45), 7/50
 ¥90,000

This stunning piece is one of a series of large etchings with the theme “formless form,” which is a fundamental principle in Daoism, signifying the formless, limitless aspect of the universe that underlies all of creation. HAYASHI Takahiko compares printmaking to theater. An artist creates an image on a plate as if writing a script on paper. The paper, a substrate, serves as a stage, and inks act like players. Hayashi finds that their joint production—a finished impression—is full of surprises and discoveries.

Hayashi has made the intricate image, using one plate and one color, and running it through a press only once. Due to the varying sizes of pigment particles in the ink, the color shows up differently according to the depths of incisions. In etching, when running through the press, the paper is embossed into the incisions with enormous pressure, pulling the ink up. Transferred onto the paper, the lines thus look slightly raised. The more the plate passes through the press, the less defined the incisions will be. That is why Hayashi runs the plate through the press just once to print the image.

Also notable is the use of chine collé, a technique involving two types of *gampi* (*Diplomorpha sikokiana*) washi paper, one unbleached and the other indigo-dyed, backed by a thicker support paper. The image printed on the ultra-thin, fine-grained, glossy *gampi* paper stands out vividly as if backlit by the clear white support paper.

Prints are more accessible and also more transportable across the world than paintings. Rather than adorning the walls of the White Cube galleries, Hayashi wants his works to be part of the lives of people around the world who have different values.



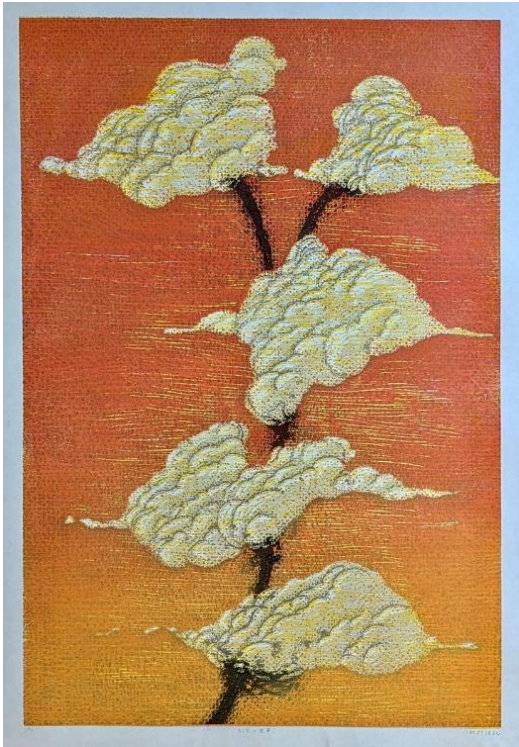
No. 156
SONOYAMA Harumi
Lumière-A, 2024
Lithograph
76 x 56 (64 x 47), 20/38
¥220,000

With the new *Lumière* series of light flashing in darkness, SONOYAMA Harumi made a complete about-face from the long-running *Signe* series of lustrous whites. Having long created luminous reflections of light, he is now focusing on capturing light itself. Inspired by a stream of morning light filtering into his hotel room abroad, he immediately set about producing this piece, the first of the new series.

At age 21, Sonoyama began to teach himself to make lithographs following an introductory textbook. It was the early 1970's, and the student movement was at its height. Classes were disrupted, so it was a hard time to paint in oils in peace. He appropriated a deserted room for printmaking, an art not yet revived.

With conceptual art dominating the art world, he was racked by doubt. From the beginning, he was never attracted to printmaking as a whole but only to lithography, probably because lithographs look least like prints. Sonoyama sees no difference between painting and prints as art. He chose lithography because it is great fun. He loves the mysterious universe that emerges when he pulls an impression off the press.

Printmaking techniques keep advancing, but Sonoyama wants to create modern art with classical techniques from the 19th century. He has no interest in trying digital art. He feels that materials for new techniques may soon be discontinued. By contrast, you can always make old-fashioned materials yourself. He wants to keep faith in the sensitivities of human eyes and hands.



No. 089
MAKINO Hiroki
[*Floral Clouds in a Crimson Sky*], 2025
Woodcut
97 x 67 (91 x 61), 1/10
¥80,000

“Stick a twig through pieces of clouds, and the clouds will become blossoms.” Such was a playful idea MAKINO Hiroki had in his mind while creating this delightful piece. Clouds or cotton candy? It is up to the viewer to decide. His creation is a shape-shifter. Fluidity is what he aims for.

Prints have wide-ranging attractions, but when it comes to the woodcut, Makino cherishes its distinctive textures created by carving and printing, which would be very hard to simulate with a brush.

In recent years, he has been using mainly slender U-gouges to carve away a block leaving finely-defined raised parts all across the surface. He prints by applying pressure with a hand-held *baren* disk to transfer water-based inks onto paper. He uses multiple carved blocks to layer colors, which produce a fabric-like texture.

In a variety of marks made with gouges, chisels, or knives, Makino sees infinite possibility. He is focused on creating a woodcut whose image appears to rise when seen from the distance, but close up the traces of carving come to the fore in abstract layers.

Compared with other techniques, in woodcut you can adjust the brightness and saturation of color more easily, so together with the fluidity of colors produced by water-based ink, you can improvise as a jazz artist would. Makino wants to take full advantage of this flexibility to explore new possibilities.



No. 146
SEKINO Yowsaku
[*Bamboo*], 2025
Woodcut/gold leaf
62 x 91 (52 x 82)
3/20
¥200,000

A well-tended grove of bamboo, composed of individual trees each possessing a distinctive texture, seemed to be performing a symphony. Finding himself in the midst of the sounds, blending with light and air and rising up to heaven, SEKINO Yowsaku decided then and there that the scene was made for a woodcut with water-based ink. He used gold leaf, created smooth gradations of tones with the *hori-bokashi* technique, which involves shaving off the edges of the raised design areas, and incorporated wood grains into the design.

Painting, though still evolving, is a centuries' old art form. In comparison, woodcut has a relatively short history as an artistic medium, he feels, and there is still room for further development.

It is hard to achieve a softer look in woodcut, but *hori-bokashi* is one of the techniques that make it possible. Sekino keeps setting himself new challenges, ranging from frequent use of *hori-bokashi* and creating colors by layering them based on mathematical calculations. Prints are works of art, and he wants to create woodcuts that exhilarate the viewers.



No. 159
SUZUKI Tomoe
a moment-25-1, 2025
Lithograph
76 x 58 (63 x 48), 5/20
¥70,000

As a motif for her print, SUZUKI Tomoe uses a dress she will sew. Recreating the whole scene with light filtering in, her work conveys conflicting emotions she feels, from excitement to a sense of loss, in anticipation of making a dress intended for someone else.

Unlike her previous works, *a moment-25-1* features a fabric which is to become a dress. The light from the window falls on the linen cloth slung over the back of a chair, making it look as if someone was sitting on the chair. Suzuki captures a scene that imparts a touch of loneliness. People often comment that her prints stir up nostalgia. Be it loneliness or joy, Suzuki wants the viewer to interpret her work freely.

In printmaking, multiple impressions can be made from the same matrix whereas there is only one painting, like a dress she makes. She finds it wonderful to be able to share her prints with many people.

As if sewing stitch by stitch, she draws soft creases and folds with oil-based pencils. Lithography is best suited for creating prints by drawing by hand. Digital and AI-assisted printmaking techniques are sure to advance further. But she wants to keep making art by hand, which conveys warmth.