2026 Guided Tour: Epiphanies in Print
Artists' Talks: From Inspiration to Finished Work

The 2026 CWAJ Guided Tour Epiphanies in Print features 15 stunning prints from the 69th CWAJ Print Show. They vary in style and technique. Some jolt and delight in equal measure, while others soothe, but all are rooted in nature.

Behind the effortless grace of each piece, however, lies a story of hard work, doubt, revelation, and the artist's passion for printmaking. These tales take you into the heart of the creative process and enhance your understanding. When a sudden clarity of purpose and design strikes the artists, you will share in their joy. Have a great tour!

By Michiko Okubo
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Notes:
*The English titles in square brackets indicate that CWAJ members translated them from the original Japanese.

*Example of a print's label:

Title, year:	[*A Moment of Drowsiness*], 2024
Name:	IKUTA Koji
Medium:	Mezzotint
Paper size (image size):	27x35 cm (17x25 cm)
The print no./the edition size:	45/95
Price:	¥35,000

GOTOU Hidehiko
The silent voice of the stone, 2026
Woodcut
63x46 (55x40), 5/20
¥100,000

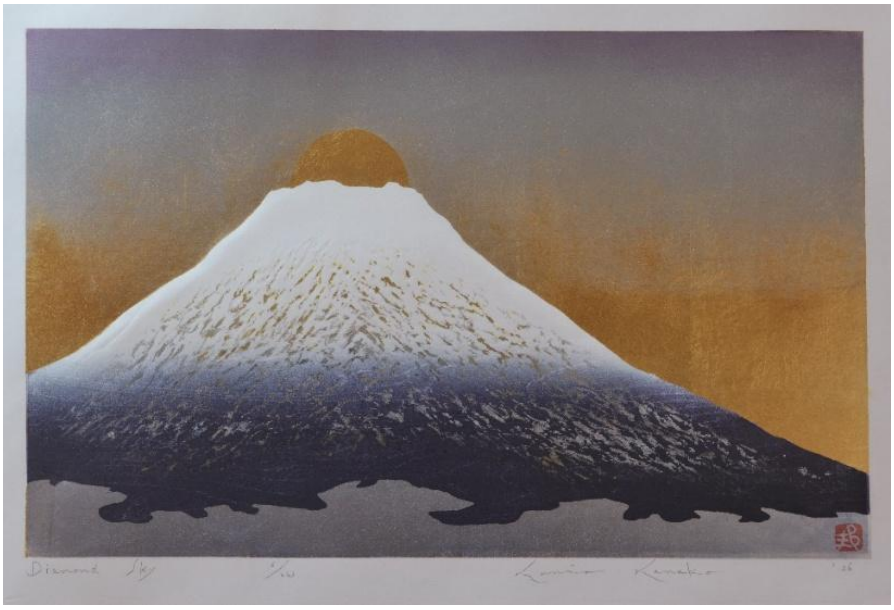
As the stone rests in harmony with nature, this serene woodcut imparts a quiet spirituality. Gotou absolutely loves these plain forms and the impactful colors. The simpler the image, he believes, the stronger and deeper the message it conveys.

But where does the evocative image come from? Gotou has harvested it from the deep well of his subconscious. First thing in the morning, he opens his sketchbook and draws six abstract shapes, just letting his pen move freely. It's his decades-long daily ritual. He leaves the sketches for three years. Then he revisits a vast number and enlarges an image that catches his eye. He gazes at it for days on end, waiting patiently for an image of a woodcut to slowly emerge, complete with colors and textures.

To produce *The silent voice of the stone*, Gotou used 4 woodblocks and 6 colors. He printed 17 times, by pressing the back of washi paper onto an inked plate with a *baren*, a hand-held disk. The moment of elation came when he printed a stone-like shape in a gradation of black – with the arrival of the black stone in the scene, a tension suddenly ran through the whole space of serene indigo blues, which left him with a sense of wonder.

Gotou is wedded to woodcuts in more ways than one. He is also a master *baren* maker, crafting the traditional tool by hand from specifically-sourced natural materials. A *baren* takes months to make. In him, the arts of making a woodcut and a *baren* are deeply interrelated, the one collaborating with the other.

He constantly draws support and inspiration from both forms of art. He loves the nuanced colors and textures of woodcuts that vary vastly, resulting from the type and combination of woodblock, washi paper, and *baren*, and how they are applied. He would like to explore new expressions such as replicating in a woodcut the beautiful blurring of ink of a *sumi-e* ink painting.



Diamond Sky, 2026
KANEKO Kunio
Woodcut
39 x 58 (33 x 52) 6/223
¥25,000

Towards the end of this past winter, Kaneko booked two nights in a hotel overlooking Lake Yamanaka. On the first morning when he drew back the curtains, across the lake Mt. Fuji rose, snow-covered and magnificent against the pale purple sky. In the next moment, he sucked in his breath sharply. From left to right, the clouds were flying past Mt. Fuji at a dizzying speed. In a matter of seconds, a new band of clouds emerged. And another. Immediately, he knew the composition of his next print. He very nearly saw a finished woodcut in his mind's eye.

For centuries Mt. Fuji has appeared countless times in Japanese arts. In *Diamond Sky*, Kaneko presents a new interpretation of Japan's most iconic subject from the global perspective of an artist living in the 21st century. He uses nothing but basic tools for printmaking, carving tools like chisels and hand-held *baren* disks. He first presses a sheet of gold leaf onto the part printed with sticky oil-based ink serving as glue, then prints with silver ink over it, and after the ink is completely dry, he embosses with his fingers where he desires.

He uses gold and silver leaf, not for their sumptuous glitter, but as a base on which to print other colors. He produces the purple sky by layering purple over silver. With cloth, he partially wipes the ink off the leaf to produce a weathered, matt finish. In *Diamond Sky*, he has tried new methods such as silver on gold and purple on silver to depict morning light. He finds these combinations can be applied to works with other themes.

Apart from using oil-based ink to glue gold and silver leaf onto the paper, he prints with water-based ink. He has used 4 woodblocks, but printed about 20 times, washing inks off a block and reusing it to print with another color. Woodcut was the first technique he tried his hand at. He has kept working on it for over half a century, not quite finding time or room for other techniques. There are simply so many things to explore in woodcut.

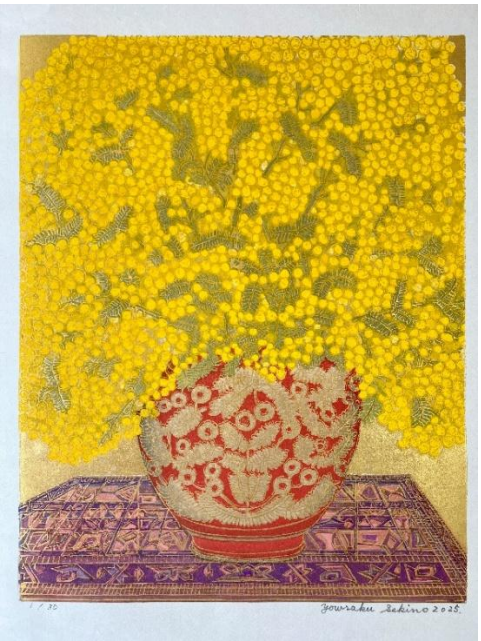
Nature_ True Love, 2026
LEE Wonsuk
Woodcut
70 x 50 (60 x 45)
6/10
¥270,000

Nature_ True Love is a joyous celebration of life, a riot of colors and forms to lift the deepest gloom. Unapologetically gorgeous and vibrant, the hydrangea blooms exude their robust vital force. The lone red rose in the lower left corner gives a little jolt with its shape and color generating a rhythm. Lee is very happy that the delicately carved lines and layered colors have produced the depth, fullness, and textures unique to the woodcut.

The hydrangeas she depicted bloomed voluptuously in her garden, prompting her to capture their beauty and vitality. But as she was breathing life into the flowers in her woodcut, time was running out for the live blooms. They were withering by the time she was completing her work. She continued to work, seeing them both at their most beautiful in her mind's eye and as they aged.

Through this experience, she learned that even as flowers wilt and their colors fade, they are beautiful in their own way. She used a single woodblock to create this piece, carving progressively and layering more than 25 colors of oil-based ink, including warm red, transparent yellow, cobalt blue, and opaque white. The method is reductive – as you carve a wider area away, the raised portion on the block becomes smaller. Working on the same block, she keeps a high level of energy, tension, and concentration channeled into the work.

She would like to explore painterly expressions, creating a woodcut that looks like a painting. As a way to share her works with many people, she wants to print on materials such as cloth producing everyday goods adorned with her works.



A Crimson Vase and Mimosas, 2025
SEKINO Yowsaku
Woodcut/gold leaf
61 x 49 (52 x 41)
6/30
¥200,000

Against the gold background, a glowing cloud of mimosa spills over a crimson vase on an intricately patterned mat. They strike an exquisite balance, lending restrained elegance to this lush and exuberant composition. Mimosa is a recurrent theme in Sekino's woodcuts, and he feels that this is his best mimosa piece yet. He has a particular attachment to the colors and texture of the mat. He printed it with many layers of inks, but when he added just a faint touch of purple as a last layer, the pale purple rendered subtleties and depths to the whole piece, setting off the striking beauty of the mimosa and the crimson vase. The effect was magical, much more powerful than he had ever expected.

To create *A Crimson Vase and Mimosas*, Sekino used 16 woodblocks and 10 colors. He first pressed gold leaf onto paper*. He then printed with water-based inks 22 times, often using different shades of the same color. He always marvels at the perfectly formed carving tools — chisels, gouges, and knives. They allow him to carve thin lines and planes just as he intends to, as if they read his mind. This precision is a testament to a long tradition of Japanese woodblock printmaking and the expertise of artisans who have enhanced the techniques and passed them down the generations.

Water-based ink does not easily transfer to washi paper evenly even when it is moistened. That difficulty, on the other hand, contributes to producing a very distinctive texture. Sekino harnesses that characteristic though it is not always easy to use it to his advantage. But he regards it as part of the allure of woodblock printing. Sekino creates a *bokashi* gradation by controlling the ink and water on the block when printing. He'd also like to make good use of the *horibokashi* technique to create a smooth gradation by beveling the edge of a raised design area.

*Sekino covers a carved block with oil-based ink to print the outlines and background. While the ink is still wet, he presses sheets of gold leaf onto the paper, which adheres to the inked areas. After about a month when the gold leaf is completely dry, he brushes flakes of gold from the non-inked areas leaving only the gold outlines and background.

Cradle of Sound
2024
SAITO Ryota
Wood engraving
48 x 62 (24 x 40)
6/80
¥40,000

Saito's *Cradle of Sound* invites you to walk into its bosom and stand still among the trees bathing in soft light. Many of the innumerable white spaces found in this lovely wood engraving seem glimmering around the edges as if lit by the sunlight streaming in. Saito created them by chiseling out with a burin, a steel cutting tool with a wooden handle. Except for the quadrangle in the top center and the two lines flaring out to the left and right like paths of light, which came with the woodblock. Saito loved the block for its amazing shape but what would he do with the hole and cracks? He agonized over this question, but when he started thinking about the composition, he realized the block would be perfect. These imperfections work perfectly as an integral part of the design.

Blocks for wood engraving are made by slicing a tree into rings. They are called end-blocks and often are hardwoods such as boxwood or cherry. Odd-shaped and small, they are prone to holes and cracks. The artist first thoroughly polishes the block's surface like a mirror, then paints it black. In a finished print, the incised lines will show up white against black – looking like a flash of light, or an organism or a living cell, Saito thinks. The word engraving is misleading. A wood engraving is a relief printing like a woodcut. In both, the raised parts on the block receive ink.

Some people say, a block is still alive, but Saito disagrees. Its life as a tree has long ended. It is he, the artist, who infuses life into the block by engraving an image into it. As he keeps working, he comes to feel this life emerging, more and more strongly. It is also the case with other techniques, but he feels this emergence is more pronounced in wood engraving. Engraving an image is a laborious process, enormously time consuming – the design takes shape as slowly as a plant grows. He feels privileged to witness its simple, striking beauty developing.

He would like to try other forms of art including other printmaking techniques as well as watercolors, pen drawing, and charcoal drawing. He'd like to stay flexible by using his brain in pursuits other than wood engraving.

Bluefin Tuna,
2026
HIROTA Raifu
Linocut
58 x 100 (48 x 99)
4/15
¥300,000

Why was the glorious *Bluefin Tuna* linocut born in the Year of the Fire Horse? First, Hirota's hometown shrine asked him to create images for their 2026 votive tablets. A sushi restaurant owner saw them and wanted Hirota to create "fish" linocuts, maybe one featuring a bluefin or seabream. Hirota had been looking for a totally new subject. So the sushi restaurant's request was good timing! Hirota decided to go back to basics and capture the physical likeness of a tuna. He studied photos and videos, but a live model was hard to come by. Finally, at a tuna auction in the Miura Misaki Fish Market, he found his best model, a paper mâché sculpture of a bluefin prominently displayed at a market restaurant.

The bluefin can reach top burst speeds of 70-100 km/h when chasing prey or evading predators. Hirota has infused the powerful creature's vitality into his bluefin by progressively carving a single linoleum plate and layering oil-based lithographic inks. The technique is called multicolor reduction linocut. He has refined his skills for over half a century since he first attempted it during his 20's working as a kindergarten art teacher.

First, he carves out a fish belly that will remain the white of the paper and prints the rest with gray, a base color. Next, out goes a wide background area that will remain gray. Now he works on the fish, carving and layering inks in the order of pink, yellow, light blue, green, blue, and dark blue. First the whole fish turns pink; out goes a part that will remain pink. Then yellow over pink, the fish turns yellow. Then with a final layer of dark blue, a bluefin is born. The bluefin remembers what its creator has said, Hirota's weighty thoughts on life and the dignity of man. It will do its best to speak on his behalf.

Clad with the multiple layers of color under its gleaming blue-black skin, the linocut bluefin has an oil painting's texture. Hirota has always worked both with oils and linocuts, and he wants to continue keeping a good balance between the two mediums. He is looking forward to taking on a new, challenging subject whenever it comes.

weaving voices, 2026
HINO Naomichi
Etching/drypoint
76 x 42 (60 x 30)
1/10
¥40,000

The delicate etching seems to rise from the paper, like 3-D art. It unsettles, drawing your eyes deeper inside the multiple layers. What is lurking in the dark?

Last spring, Hino came across ivy near his home. He sketched the vines scaling the mortar wall, gripping the rugged surface, intertwining with one another. Turning every direction – some upside-down by their own weight – the leaves seemed to be whispering. In autumn, they were all cut down, but they are now back again, denser and stronger than ever. Their formidable propagating power echoes in Hino's *weaving voices*.

Hino has created this intriguing piece almost entirely with line etching. The plants are not made up of flat planes, and the shadows have different shades of darkness. He has depicted these intricacies with lines of varying thickness and density as well as with overlapping lines. His favorite aspects are the white of the vines and the backs of the flipped leaves. Here he leaves the white paper untouched to accentuate the whitish veins of the flipped leaves.

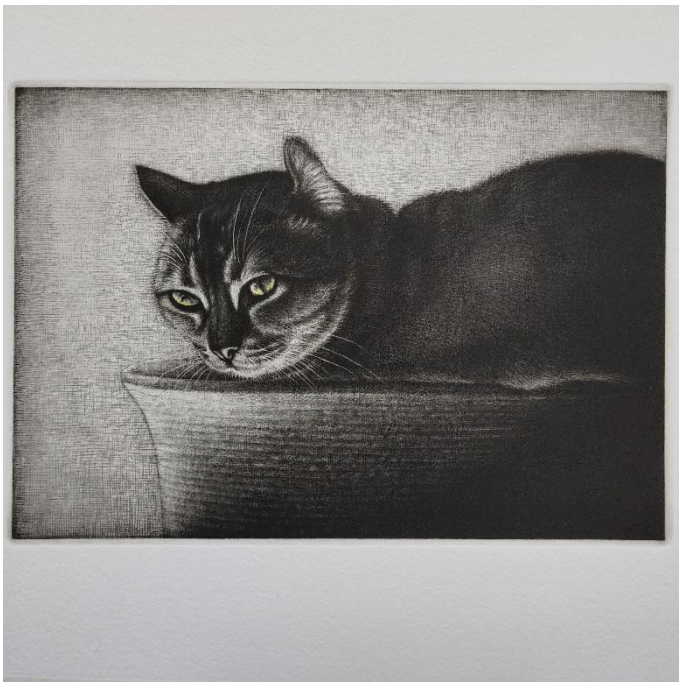
Having applied a ground (typically made from a mixture of beeswax, bitumen, and resin) to a copperplate, he first drew the plants and the mortar wall and dipped the plate in an acid bath. Second, he applied ground again, protected the plants with black varnish, and began working on the wall by drawing tiny distorted squares and then adding dots. While spending endless hours, scratching line after line, carefully and lovingly, he began to feel as if he were weaving a tapestry with an etching needle. He found himself having great fun, adding tiny scraps of leaves, and other remnants of plants, which were not part of his original plan. To work the wall, he divided it into 8 sections, submerged each section in the acid bath for 14 to 56 minutes – to mirror how the sunlight shone on the wall by degrees, brighter in some places than in others. He used drypoint last to create the darkest shadows, ending the long journey to produce this multilayered composition of an amazing depth.

TAKEDA Fumiko
[*Autumn is in the Air*]
2024
Etching/aquatint/soft-ground/hand-colored
49 x 38 (38 x 28)
5/30
¥48,000

A fig, hand-colored with *gansai* Japanese watercolors, lies snuggly in a cocoon of luminous black in the lower half of *Autumn is in the Air*. The dark space diffuses light upwards that pools just below the fig tree growing above. Coming across Henri Matisse's powerful drawings of fig leaves, Takeda wished to create her own. She began by buying fig seedlings of two rare varieties, and as they grew, she sketched their leaves. A series of small doodles eventually led to a line forming a teardrop-like shape, when she realized that it was going to play a vital role in spatial composition, especially in striking a good balance between positive and negative space.

Takeda generally starts with soft-ground etching. She finds it more relaxing as she can draw with a pencil on paper, a drawn line pressing onto a sticky, grease-infused etching ground covering a copperplate. When peeled, the paper pulls the wax etching ground from the drawn lines. She then submerges the plate in an acid bath, letting acid eat into these unprotected lines. She moves on to work with etching, repeating the process of scratching lines with a needle and covering parts with black varnish to prevent further etching before submerging the plate in the acid bath. Finally, she applies aquatint to create planes; she scratches off some of the aquatinted parts to create shades. She repeats the process scores of times. It is a long, painstaking process, but she loves etching, for it allows her to create minute details. She is also fond of such simple aspects as the ink being slightly raised in a finished print (as a result of a high-pressure press forcing the paper into the grooves) and a plate mark left on the paper.

Takeda always pays close attention to the balance between positive and negative space, and she is happy at how well it has turned out in this piece. While refining her techniques and artistic sensibilities, she wants to keep exploring the depths and versatility of monochrome to create works that speak her thoughts and beliefs.



[*A Moment of Drowsiness*], 2024
IKUTA Koji
Mezzotint/hand-colored
27 x 35 (17 x 25)
45/95
¥35,000

A cat sits in a flower vase, drowsy but still alert to the world around him, ready to spring into action. Look closely. Hand-painted very faintly in yellow, his eyes gleam hypnotically. You could almost reach out and caress his warm body and feel his soft fur and muscle-packed body pulsating against your palm.

Ikuta is deeply drawn to the beauty of nuanced, velvety black of mezzotint. Usually, he makes designs emerge from the darkness by polishing off burrs with a burnisher. In this piece, however, the cat itself is a black space, rendered eerily lifelike down to tiny hairs and whiskers with a wide spectrum of shades from black to white.

In mezzotint, you prepare a copperplate by roughing the surface of a polished metal with a rocker, a tool with a curved toothed blade, until the plate is covered entirely with tiny holes. Around these holes are burrs that will hold ink. You then create an image, by scraping and polishing burrs away in varying degrees. Ikuta takes special care in working the rocker. The white background and the flower vase underneath the cat bear the rocker's teeth marks, which are an integral part of the composition.

Ikuta makes both monochrome and polychrome mezzotints. *The 2025 Guided Tour: Why Printmaking?* included his exquisite color mezzotint featuring a kingfisher in flight. Each motif calls for a new challenge, a need for a new thought and approach. These challenges make him appreciate anew the versatility of mezzotint as an artistic method. About 15 years ago, Ikuta started creating a mezzotint using bark-freckled *gampi* paper. With the burrs scraped off, the background would show up blank on this highly-textured washi paper, which "replaces" the nuanced mezzotint black (pictured right).

Time of Silence - Essential
2026
KOBAYASHI Jinan
Mezzotint
48 x 59 (36 x 45)
1/15
¥52,000

Kobayashi aims to reward the viewer. First, you wonder: “What’s this heavy-looking round object?” Then you exclaim: “Ah hah! That’s bread.” Don’t stop, but keep “reading” the image closely like a book. You won’t be disappointed. In the darkness, time and the air seem to hang still around the bread. The folded white cloth in the back and the mirror underneath the bread come into action then. These supporting players help produce a sense of depth and expanse of the space along with the movement of air. The bread represents reality as it is for people in the rich world, while its mirrored image symbolizes fabrication – just a fantasy out of reach – as it is for the world’s poor. *Time of Silence - Essential* invites you to stop for a moment to think about bread as being the sustenance of life.

Kobayashi works out a concept, then decides on a motif. This time, he picked a *boule*, a traditional French bread shape resembling a squashed ball. *Boule* or ball is the etymological root of both *boulanger* (baker) and *boulangerie* (bakery). After visiting several bakeries and failing to find a whole *boule*, Kobayashi finally bought a ¼ piece. He then created a whole *boule* using polystyrene foam (widely known as Styrofoam TM). The foam *boule* (pictured below) looks as appetizing as a real one.

Mezzotint creates a range of rich, nuanced blacks, which exude a sense of quiet, time passing, and memory. Also inherent in the black space is a tension born of the principle that a living entity passes a moment only once and never can it reverse the course. Kobayashi is fairly confident that he can harness that tension. He finds meeting the challenge very rewarding and satisfying. Alongside mezzotint, Kobayashi works in other mediums, such as painting in acrylic and watercolor, and creating pen drawings, still pursuing similar themes. It is very beneficial to work with these different ways of expression.

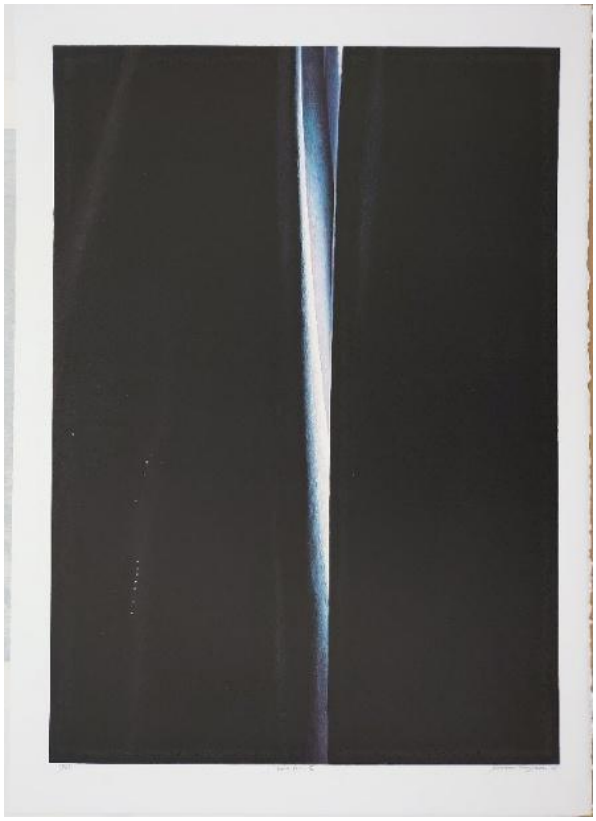
blue pepper kitchen, 2026
SAITO Noriko
Drypoint
88 x 76 (75 x 66)
6/20
¥120,000

Standing tall and proud, the black rabbit silently proclaims: “I am here.” How dignified and assertive Saito’s bunny looks. And how fresh and energizing the cobalt blue of the sky behind him! Her *blue pepper kitchen* makes Saito so happy.

This delightful piece could have turned out quite differently. First, it started its life in a landscape format. Saito drew a fish, but changed her mind halfway through and switched to a guitar. “Oh, forget it” — she abandoned the guitar altogether and started working on the sun. There she paused and thought: “Today’s world is muddled, and people have no clear sense of which way to go, but I have my own spices, though they are still young and green, but there is music in my kitchen, and birds will be flying in. We are all good!”

Drypoint is very simple and straightforward. Scratching an image into a copperplate, Saito feels, is like sharing a vivid sense of being alive with prehistoric people who incised designs into rocks. Once she scratches a line, there is no going back. It’s scary but exciting. When she incises with a sharp needle directly into a plate, she throws up a burr, a ridge of displaced metal. These burrs alongside the incised lines trap ink. Saito imagines tadpole shrimp sleeping in the pool of ink. The ink released from behind the burrs creates a soft, slightly blurred line.

She uses two plates, the first one to print blue and yellow, and the second, black. She scratched a whole area and pressed blue ink into it to create the big blue circle. The scratching requires a tremendous amount of physical force. There are a whole cast of characters lurking in her *blue pepper kitchen*, some of them half erased. You are very welcome to go in to stand beside the rabbit looking out to the blue sky and create your own story.



Lumière-E, 2025
SONOYAMA Harumi
Lithograph
75 x 54 (67 x 48)
22/35
¥220,000

A sharp line of light cuts through the dark like the slash of a sword in this superb lithograph by Sonoyama, *Lumière-E*. The sliver of white – the white of the paper – embodying a flash of light, dominates the whole black surface just as he intended. It all happened one morning when Sonoyama woke up in a hotel room abroad. The zigzag of light, flashing like a lightening, caught his eye. He stared at it, mesmerized by its beauty but not understanding what it was. But of course! Successive beams of light were seeping through the narrow gap beneath the curtains, refracting into a vivid spectrum of colors across the floor before fading away.

There's beauty everywhere. We only have to look around. Sonoyama decided then and there to make a switch from reflected light to light itself and set out working on a new series he titled *Lumière* or light. His previous long-running series *Signe* features a stunning motif of undulating white cloth. With light filtering through and bouncing off luminous cloth, he channels his emotions and inner thoughts and invites the viewers to reflect on theirs.

In creating *Lumière-E*, Sonoyama used 9 ball-grained aluminum plates and printed 11 times. To give depths and nuances to the black, he layered 3 primary colors underneath – yellow, red, and blue as well as pale blue, pale pink (scraped off then printed with pink), pale flesh color, blue (scraped off then printed with ultramarine), red, yellow, pale gray, and dark gray.

Carving was never his thing. He finds lithography, where he can convey his feelings and thoughts directly with his fingers, to be his preferred technique. He has already decided to end the *Lumière Series* with G, the 7th print. He will start working on a new series in the latter half of this year. The theme will still be light, but the works will be so radically different that you won't know whose they are.

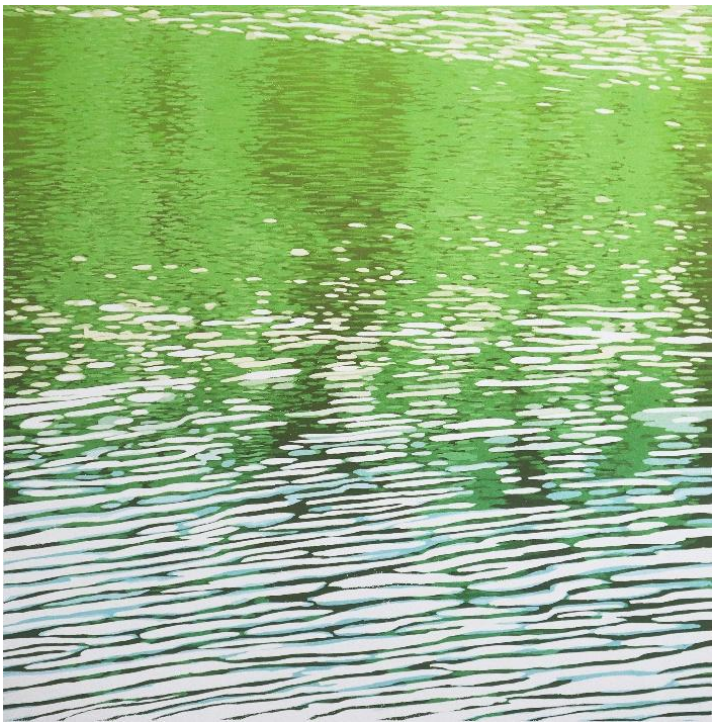
[*The Flower Once I Saw 1*], 2026
MATSUSHIMA Junko
Lithograph
76 x 56 (62 x 47)
1/6
¥50,000

The stylish leaves and delicate flowers play a beautiful duet in this exquisite lithograph featuring a dayflower. Far from flamboyant, those small flowers make you reflect on life. Through depicting the shapes and colors of plants that are visible, Matsushima wishes to convey the realm of the invisible.

While working on a new piece, Matsushima always had one thing in mind: getting to the finish line without making mistakes. This time, she wanted to try something new. Seeing dayflowers blooming in her garden, she set herself a challenge: she'd let the supporting character — the leaves — speak for themselves. Though modest looking, the leaves were distinct from one another. While observing the subdued color of each leaf, she began to discover a new, different world. The work was an anxiety-laden experience, but she feels she has gained something from the unexpected outcomes.

To create this piece, she used 5 ball-grained aluminum plates and 6 colors; pale yellow-green, dark green, gradations of dark green and pale blue, sky blue, and black. Lithographic inks are translucent, so you can create a new color by layering inks. The white of the flowers is left untouched by ink, showing the white of the paper. The leaves have a stylized, abstract quality while the flowers are more lifelike.

Japanese aesthetic tradition emphasizes the importance of negative space. Matsushima regards it as an integral part of her work. Rather than piling up images, she leaves some areas blank. The blank space makes room for the creator's voice to resonate and for the viewer to let their imagination run loose. In lithography, you draw with a greasy medium, and fix the image using a chemical etch (typically gum arabic and a mild acid, like nitric acid). The etch works, by performing two opposing actions simultaneously: turning the drawn area oil-friendly and the non-drawn area water-friendly. Having the image bonded chemically to the plate, you must work with great care not to ruin the delicate balance. Small mistakes will lead to the loss of the image. Despite the difficulty, Matsushima loves the ease with which she can draw and choose colors.



Still water, 2024
MOMMA Hidemi
Silkscreen
79 x 79 (60 x 60)
4/6
¥90,000

The wind sends ripples across Lake Senba in Mito, Ibaraki Prefecture, making the crests of the waves dance with shimmering sunlight. In this luminous piece, Momma captures the scene entirely through the patterns spreading over the water's surface. She moved a brush so that the trace of each stroke should represent light reflecting on the water. She is happy with how the images have turned out, all the more so because the effect was hard to execute. She likes depicting a landscape and sharing memories of the place with the viewers.

Momma draws a design by applying screen filler with a brush to a mesh screen. The screen filler hardens when it dries, and blocks ink from passing through, thus acting as a stencil. Using a single screen and water-based acrylic ink, she prints with one color and then draws more and prints with another color. Before she starts, she must plan the order for layering the colors. As the drawing fills more space on the screen, the more colors layer on top of one another. She loves the way inks accumulate to create *matière* or texture. It's like painting in oils. To create *Still water*, she used about 16 colors, typically using 2 colors at one go and creating a subtle gradation.

In her small studio, there is not enough room to step back and view a large piece as a whole. This difficulty sometimes makes it hard to remember where she is in the layering. So she takes photos on her smartphone. Looking at them, she will say: "Ah, I made a mistake at this point," or "it was too early to use this color then." Her motto is "it will become a mistake only when you acknowledge it as such." There is no point saying: "Why has the color turned out like this?" Rather she thinks, "Why not? It's not that bad," and carries on. Momma loves sharing the joy of printmaking. With the prize money of her 2009 CWAJ Young Print Maker's Award, she offered a silkscreen workshop at her junior high school, where students like her continue to study silkscreen today.

beauty under the moon, 2025
TOKITOU Ayako
Silkscreen
65 x 50 (50 x 36)
6/15
¥50,000

Epiphyllum oxypetalum (commonly known as Queen of the Night or Dutchman's Pipe Cactus) is a tropical night-blooming succulent. The flower lasts only for a few hours on a single night at the height of the summer. Tokitou captures this ephemeral night beauty in the exquisite tonal gradations of her elegant silkscreen. One hot summer night found Tokito sketching feverishly. The Queen of the Night had begun to open around 9 pm. Her heart pounded as she recorded the white flower slowly unfolding in the dark of night.

Initially, she used colors, like the faint yellow moonlight and dark blue night. After making four colored versions, she thought: "Why not create a black and white silkscreen to render this beautiful white flower?" Her title, *beauty under the moon*, simple and straightforward, came to her. She chose a paper with a coarser surface to give the piece a textured background reminiscent of the humid and sticky summer night.

In silkscreen, the printed design does not reverse but appears exactly as it is drawn on the screen. Tokitou draws a design directly onto a screen with a screen filler that hardens and prevents inks from getting through the screen. With a squeegee, she presses ink through the unblocked areas of the screen directly onto the paper below. By controlling the squeegee's movement, she creates a gradation. Using a single screen and one color — oil-based translucent ink, she repeats the process, drawing and printing 10 times, layering inks, as in watercolor painting. The ink is so faint that it barely shows up the first time it is printed. As she proceeds, the area that receives ink will become smaller, and the tone darker.

She has recently experimented with water-based ink as a finishing touch to good effect. That experience has made her think she should try new materials when necessary while not straying from the basics.