

studio

palette

composition

canvas

artist profile

inspiration

gallery

imagination

“Kanreki: A 60 Year Journey”

Introducing Contemporary Japanese Printmaking

JANET MENDELSON **writer**

art has been known to open doors and forge international connections. In diverse ways, that’s precisely what the College Women’s Association of Japan’s (CWAJ) annual print show has accomplished since 1956 along with introducing contemporary Japanese printmaking, known as *hanga*, to a wider audience. Initially, the CWAJ event raised funds for travel grants enabling Japanese students to study abroad. Since then, the show has become a global ambassador of sorts for Japanese artists while providing major support for programs that strengthen cross-cultural dialogue and projects that improve lives through scholarships, education, and art.

Now a special 60th anniversary edition, “Kanreki: A 60 Year Journey,” has come to Highfield Hall & Gardens in Falmouth through September 14, with highlights on display through October 31. The Cape Cod venue is the exclusive location outside Japan this year for the *hanga* exhibition and print sale. Previous editions have travelled to the British Museum and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., as well as Europe, Australia, and New Zealand.

A bit of background: In 1949, Mt. Holyoke College alumnae founded CWAJ, welcoming first Wellesley College graduates and then others from the Seven Sisters schools to join them in building new relationships with Japan and fostering opportunities for women during the post-



Tadashi Ikai
White-eye Bird III
2014
mezzotint
45cm x 36cm

artist profile “a special achievement”

World War II era. Today, CWAJ is a nonprofit, international volunteer organization of nearly 500 Japanese and non-Japanese women. Its projects range from English language classes for Japanese children to Fukushima disaster relief, public lectures, artist grants, programs for the visually impaired community, and grants for research and education for Japanese and international students, including many from developing countries. All of this is made possible in large part by the annual print show.

“In Japan, the 60th birthday, or *kanreki*, is associated with renewal and rebirth and celebrated as a special achievement,” said Joanne Fallon, CWAJ Co-Chair of the travelling show. “This 60th show’s debut late last year in Tokyo was attended by Her Imperial Majesty Empress Michiko. Its only other stop was in Kobe, Japan. For the opening at Highfield Hall in June, 140 people from around the world,



Toko Shinoda • HYMN • 2002 • lithograph • 72cm x 99cm

including 90 from Tokyo, came here for four days, a mark of its importance.” Cape Cod is well known in Japan, she said, because as marine biologists both Emperor Akihito and his late father, Emperor Hirohito, have been affiliated with the Woods Hole Oceanographic



*Iwao Akiyama
Colleague
2014
woodcut
21cm x 30cm*

artist profile “the most skilled printmakers in the world”

Institution where many Japanese scientists have come to study and conduct research.

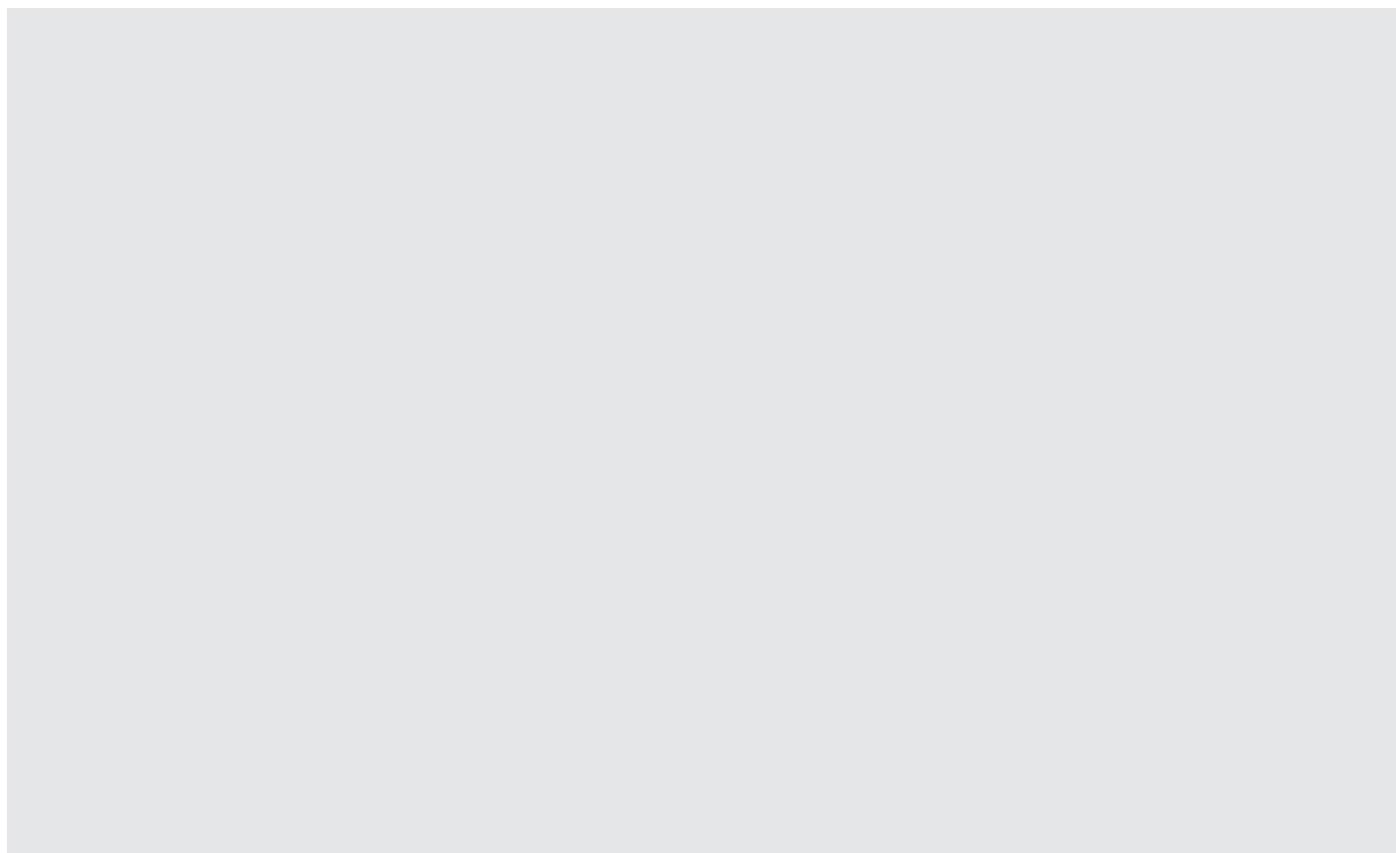
For this show, an international panel of printmaking scholars selected works by more than 200 established and emerging artists whose techniques range from traditional woodblock to intaglio, lithography, etching, aquatint, and silkscreen. A special feature is Hands-On Art, a tactile art experience for people who are visually impaired. A retrospective of the show’s history includes prints by established artists including Kuniharo Amano and Toko Shinoda, the latter whose career spans 80 years. Shinoda, who once lived in Boston, works primarily with sumi ink paintings and prints, merging traditional calligraphy with abstract expressionism in pieces that have been exhibited in museums and galleries worldwide.

Weston and Woods Hole resident Meg Pierce, chairman of Highfield’s board of trustees, noted 2016 also marks a special year for

the historic venue. “Ten years ago, this magnificent Victorian mansion, built as a summer home in 1878, was saved from the brink of demolition. Through private efforts, it was restored with the intention of offering an engaging place to experience the arts, explore nature, and appreciate history. Since then we’ve become a true cultural center that is almost self-supporting. CWAJ’s print show and charitable work are exactly the kind of partnership we were looking for.”

Proceeds from the print show will also support Highfield Hall & Gardens’ full schedule of concerts, culinary classes, family events, educational opportunities, and art festivals. Among other members of the board are Wellesley residents Charles (Chuck) Klotz and Fred Greenman.

“Nothing like this has come to the Cape previously,” said Annie Dean, Highfield’s director of programs and exhibitions, who previously managed collections at the Cooper Hewitt and Smithsonian



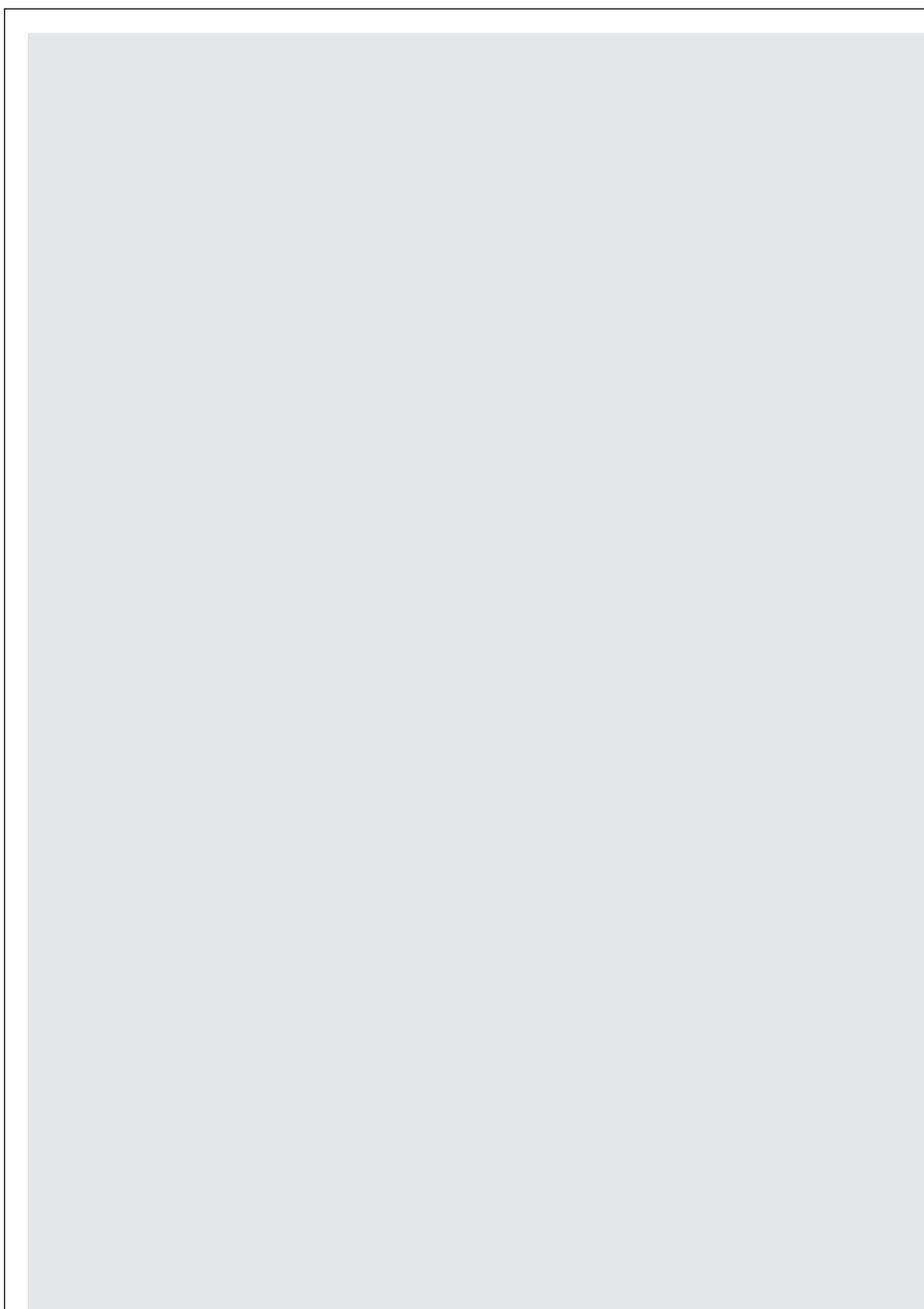
museums. “When the prints arrived from Japan, I was stunned. They are just exquisite. Techniques used by these printmakers include combinations I’ve never seen before.”

Japanese printmaking dates back to the eighth century when woodblocks were used to reproduce texts that were stamped on paper and silk. Basic woodcut techniques gradually became more complex and by the 18th century allowed for multiple colors on a single sheet. A golden age of Japanese woodblock printing followed during the mid- to late Edo period (mid-1700s to mid-1800s). Scenes depicted entertainment and pleasure, courtesans and Kabuki theater, as well as daily life and landscapes. Printmaking became a lucrative business controlled by publishers. Each print represented collaboration between the designer, the engraver, and the printer, but the publisher had creative control. This lasted until the mid-19th century when the world of the “Pleasure Quarters” was disappearing. The woodblock printing industry declined until the 1920s when a new generation of artists began innovating to express their individual creativity.

Artists in the CWAJ show’s early years were pioneers of this “creative print” movement, known as *sosaku hanga*. With complete control over their own work, they have become bold experimenters and some of the most skilled printmakers in the world, said Dean.

“Highfield Hall is an experiential house,” said Dean. “It’s a domestic interior with

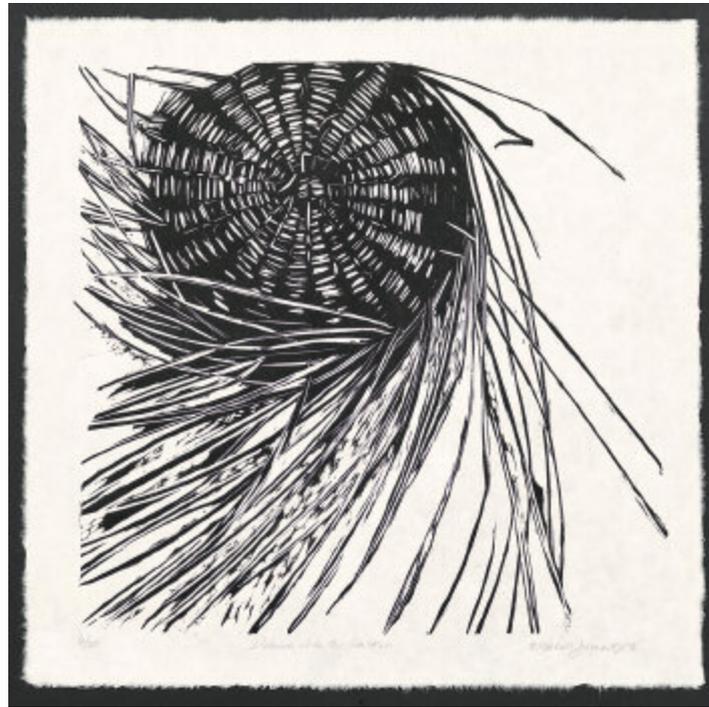
architectural features so art is presented and encountered in a whole different way than you would experience in a gallery or museum. This is the first time this art will be shown in this context. As director of the exhibition, but not its curator, I had to determine how some 200 works of art would be shown in the house. That was a challenge because originally I didn’t realize their scale. About 75 of the prints are two feet by three feet in size. It was important to hang them in a way that’s not overwhelming. Moreover, when they arrived around Christmas, they





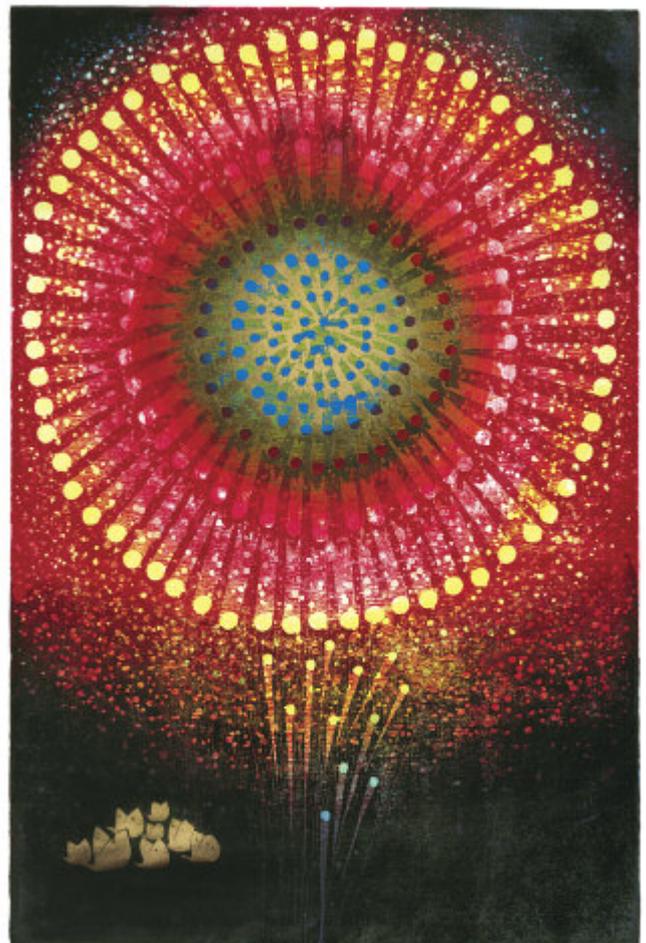
Ryusei Okamoto
White Fox (Moonlight) I
 1985 • Woodcut/mica • 60cm x 32cm

artist profile “clear composition”



Elizabeth Forrest • *Drawn into the Pattern* • 1996 • woodcut • 57cm x 57cm

Fumiaki Fukita
New Beginnings
 2012
 woodcut
 97cm x 66cm



were flat, not framed. I’ve spent months with the artwork to get a feel for the prints and select which ones to frame to hang in the main galleries.” In other rooms, prints are presented flat.

One room contains a display of the various print-making methods as well as an example of Hands-On Art where visitors are urged to run fingers over the print surface. Participating artists are encouraged to produce raised images chosen for their clear composition, distinctive colors, high contrast, and inspiring theme or idea. The work preserves the artist’s concept and is accompanied by a braille transcription of the artist’s statement so both sighted and visually impaired visitors can experience the art together.

artist profile “fun art experiences”



Tomoko Ogoshi
ICE BLOCKS 36
2014 • lithograph • 82cm x 79cm

Following the March 2011 earthquake in Japan, CWAJ created several relief programs for residents of the area near the damaged nuclear plant in Fukushima. *Asobijutsu*, Art as Play, offers children free, fun art experiences including printmaking.

Pieces by more than 3,000 elementary and junior high school students were entered in a competition. The winners are featured in the CWAJ show. Other CWAJ relief projects include a van donated to the Nagomi Mental Health Center, scholarships to nursing students at Fukushima Medical University, and crafts classes, games, and English lessons for children at an indoor playground considered safe from possible nuclear radiation. [WW](#)

Kanreki: A 60 Year Journey

June 26-September 14; Highlights through October 31
Print prices: \$100 to \$8,000 (most around \$600)

Highfield Hall & Gardens

Open daily: April 15-October 31
M-F: 10 a.m.- 4 p.m., S-S: 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Fri. free: 4-7 p.m.
Admission: \$5
Free: active military and children under 12
56 Highfield Drive, Falmouth, MA
Phone: 508.495.1878
www.highfieldhall.org