

#44

Zeszyty Artystyczne

TKANINA ARTYSTYCZNA
Wobec współczesności

TEXTILE ART
In the face of contemporary times



Uniwersytet Artystyczny
im. Magdaleny Abakanowicz
w Poznaniu

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Chikako Imaizumi

In 2016 – artist in residence in University of Arts in Poznan (Poland) for 3 months. Since 2007 Opened the Gallery Nekogameya (has been working as a gallerist). In 2004 Bachelor of Art, Textile Course, Kyoto University of Art and Design (Japan), in 1977 Bachelor of Science, Department of Biology, Faculty of Science, Kyushu University (Japan). Major exhibition: 12th Baltic Mini Textile Gdynia (Poland), Asia-Europe 5 fiber art (German, Denmark, Belgium, Finland), 6th Textile Art of Today (Slovakia), 11th From Lausanne To Beijing (China), 10th International Paper Triennial (Swiss), 21th Textile Miniature Exhibition (Slovakia), 16th International Triennial of Tapestry Łódź (Poland), Miniatextile Como (Italy) (2019, 2018, 2017)

About Japanese and Polish textile art

Currently, I am working as a fiber-art artist and gallerist in Japan. At the gallery, we plan and hold a wide range of contemporary art exhibits, from textile art to paintings and three-dimensional art.

When I was young, I studied biology (ecology) at university, worked as a teacher, and dyed and weaved as a hobby. However, after entering art college and studying dyeing and weaving, I changed jobs and began a life of creating works while running a gallery. In 2016, 10 years after starting the gallery, my husband (a painter) and I were able to stay for three months as artists-in-residence at The University of Arts in Poznań.

First, I would like to talk about the textile art course I studied at the university of arts in Kyoto. The studies of various techniques are included in the curriculum. In dyeing, about 30 students received practical instruction from specialized teachers for each technique, such as tie-dyeing, wax-dyeing, stencil-dyeing, and silk-screening. There was also a class called material research. The university had a large space for dyeing, and it was fully equipped with large shared tanks, gas stoves, and water tanks for washing large items under running water. There were also many weaving machines, and it was possible to learn various techniques, starting from the basics.

After almost 3 years of the dyeing and weaving course, 4th-year students make their graduation work in the technique of their choice. The materials most commonly used for dyeing and weaving are silk, cotton and linen. Of course, there are various materials, but the main ones are those used in traditional Japanese kimonos. Although we rarely wear kimonos, beautiful kimonos are still very important as special clothing. Kyoto has long been a city of dyeing and weaving, and there were many jobs in the creation of high-class kimonos by division of labor. Nowadays, the number of these jobs has decreased due to the decrease in demand, but I had a chance to visit the studios of professional craftsmen.

Many students made traditional kimonos and tapestries for their graduation projects. Some made mixed-media and 3D objects, but there were very few. At that time, I made tapestries with tie-dye using natural

dyes. It was only during this graduation work that I received proper individual guidance, starting with what to make, but it was a very valuable experience. I was always thinking about what the concept of the work was.

In Poznań, I entered the textile studio of Prof. Anna Goebel, who gave me a desk and allowed me to enter the studio freely, even on Saturdays and Sundays. First of all, I was surprised by the state of the studio when I entered it. There were a lot of leg-shaped sculptures made by students, and there was even a solid one made of something like cement. I had culture shock thinking that this was a textile classroom – a world completely different from the scenery of textile classes in Japan was opening up to me.

In addition, the class in Poznań was very different in that work production was based on individual instruction. Various students came there, such as theater, design, oil painting, drawing, graphics, architecture, and intermedia students. It would be impossible in Japan for students of different majors to take practical courses and study together. I was surprised that there were no boundaries between faculties, and students were able to study freely in any class according to their interests and needs. Even though some people do not understand the basics, the way they can use and experience materials is creative and free. I felt like they were working hard to find their own originality. It was stimulating and very interesting that people with various ideas were there to study. I brought wool and Japanese banana thread and sewed them together to create various 3D objects.

I also attended Prof. Jerzy Hejnowicz's drawing studio. For me, as someone who always starts with a material, this was my first experience of choosing a topic and then creating it. I chose to create 3D installation pieces using textile fiber. When I was first introduced to the studio, I heard that you could make anything, so I made fiber art objects in the drawing studio. It's unthinkable that this would be tolerated in Japan.

I think that the biggest difference to Japan is the attitude of how to think about one's own expression, being fully aware of the importance of originality from the first year of university. In Japan, the most important point is to learn the techniques properly first of all and be able to perform them beautifully and accurately. Subsequently, you can think about what to do with your work for the first time. I didn't hear much about 'original style' at Japanese universities or exhibitions.

In Japan, there is a tendency to appreciate works that are born from high artistry. As the artist continues to pursue that artistry, he gets better and better. But will new expressions and art be born from that? I would like to cultivate an eye that overlooks the whole without getting caught up in the details. Technique is necessary, but I would prefer to remember that it can't be the goal.

During my stay in Poland, I realized that even if the language is difficult, people all over the world can communicate about art through art – the “Language of Art”. These are the words of Richard Demarco in his lecture at Abakanowicz University of the Arts in Poznań. Contemporary art is a universal means of communication, a means by which people can intuitively empathize. What does a work say? There may be emotions that cannot be expressed in words. There may be a message about the problems of modern society. I believe that contemporary art that transcends the genres of art and comprehensively incorporates philosophy, history, and science is growing.

After returning to Japan from Poland, I consciously used materials that are not often used in textiles in order to free myself from the rules that I thought were common sense, and to experiment and make prototypes to see if I could express myself. I am still searching for my own expression.

Japan is still a vertical society where the hierarchy of human relationships is emphasized. The same trend can be seen in art in Japan. There are many large art groups, but it seems very difficult to jump over the pyramid structure and succeed. In a world that values tradition and techniques, it is common to ask teachers to teach you. I think the world of contemporary textile art is free from tradition and techniques, but it is still very difficult for an individual to be recognized in Japan. There are almost no *open call* exhibitions in museums and galleries that offer financial support for artists. For these reasons, I decided to present my work to the world.

One great experience is that I have made many acquaintances overseas. In 2019, the International Triennial of Tapestry in Łódź changed from an invited exhibition to a direct open-call exhibition. Thus, this historical exhibition was opened equally to all artists. I was finally able to apply and was lucky enough to have my work selected.

For me, the three months at the university in Poznań was a valuable time that taught me how to be prepared to go out into the world as an artist and that it is okay to approach fiber art more freely – as contemporary art. In Japan, awareness of fiber art is still low, and I often have to explain my work. I hope that it will be widely recognized as an expression of art in the art world, not as a craft or handicraft.

I am very honored to contribute an article to the journal „Zeszyty Artystyczne”. I would like to thank Prof. Anna Goebel and Prof. Jerzy Hejnowicz, everyone at the university, and Poland, which cherishes its support of culture and art. ●

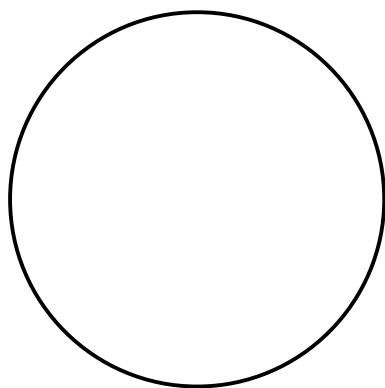
Abstract

I currently have my own gallery and plan and manage exhibitions in various genres. As a textile artist myself, I actively participate in exhibitions both in Japan and abroad. I stayed at a university in Poland for three months as an artist-in-residence. Based on that experience, I would like to compare what I learned at an art university in Japan for four years and discuss the differences. This is what I thought and felt from my personal experience.

In Japan, the emphasis is on thoroughly learning the basic techniques of textiles. In Poland, it starts with what you want to express about your expression. In Japan, most classes are group classes, but in Poland, individual instruction is provided. You can learn expressions in any genre according to your needs and interests. I felt that the biggest difference was whether to focus on the technical aspects of the work, or on what the work was trying to express. Contemporary art is a universal means of communication, a means by which people can intuitively empathize. I feel that textile art is the same.

Keywords:

japan, poland, textile, university, craft, art





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Kontakt

zeszyty.artystyczne@uap.edu.pl

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im. Magdaleny Abakanowicz
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Uniwersytet Artystyczny
im. Magdaleny Abakanowicz w Poznaniu
Wydział Edukacji Artystycznej i Kuratorstwa
Aleje Marcinkowskiego 29
60-967 Poznań 9

tel. +48 61 855 25 21
e-mail: office@uap.edu.pl
www.uap.edu.pl

Druk

MJP Drukarnia Poterscy Sp. j.
ul. Romana Maya 30
61-371 Poznań

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