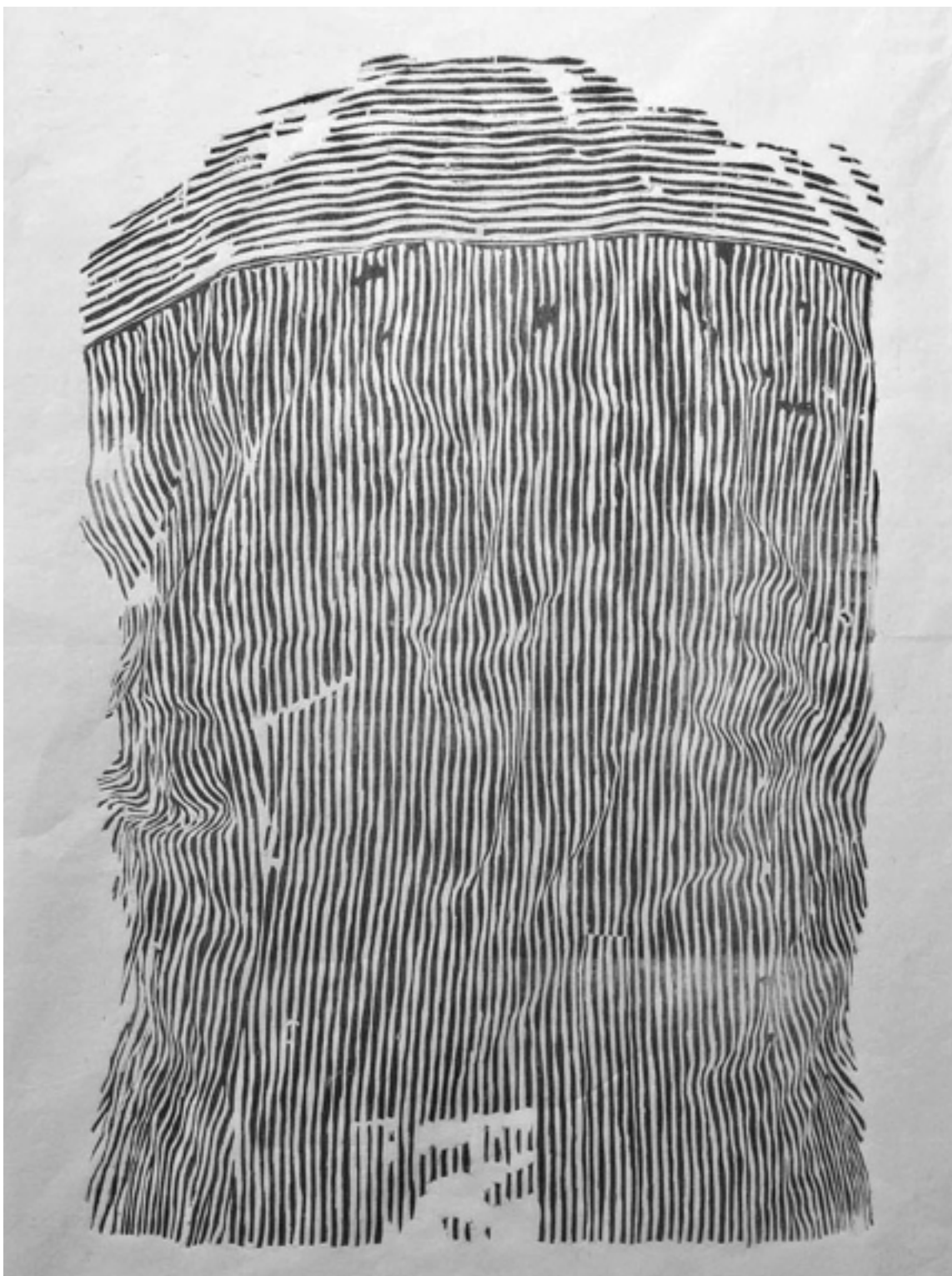


Graphic Impressions

The Newsletter of SGC International

Fall 2011



In this Issue: Letter from Editor Elizabeth Klimek/ Letter from President Eun Lee/ Reflections on SGCI by Susan Harrison/ Interview with Michelle Levy/ Book Review by Adelia Ganson/ 2012 New Orleans Conference Update/ PCNJ by Denise Karabinus Telang/ Polymer Plates by Don Messec/ International Focus: Mokuhanga Conference/ SGCI Logo Contest/ SGCI Members' Exhibition Update/ Letter from Student Member At Large Silas Breaux/ Revival and Renewal by Cat Snapp and Linda Lucia Santana/ Announcements/ Remembering June Wayne

International Focus: The First International Mokuhanga Conference, Kyoto

by April Vollmer



Printing demonstration by Keizo Sato



Carving demonstration by Hiroshi Fujisawa

The First International Mokuhanga Conference took place June 7- 11, 2011. It opened in Kyoto, the old religious capital of Japan. Although this was only two months after the earthquake and tsunami, there were few cancellations. 108 participants from 22 countries attended. The conference was designed to bring together artists, educators, historians and traditional Japanese craftspeople to exchange ideas and information about the contemporary use of Japanese woodblock. Mokuhanga, water-based Japanese woodblock, is the traditional printmaking process of Japan. The earliest existing examples of woodblock in Japan are copies of Buddhist sutras from the eighth century. During the Edo period the technique evolved into the refined multi-colored ukiyo-e prints, translated as “pictures of the floating world.” But mokuhanga was used to print everything, including newspapers, advertisements, books, maps and playing cards. Mokuhanga was the medium through which the rich cultural heritage of Edo was created, shared and preserved. Today the reproductive function of mokuhanga has been replaced by faster and cheaper forms of mass printing. For fine art printing, Japanese artists now excel in techniques that originated in the west, including etching, lithography, and silkscreen. There are few master mokuhanga printers still practicing in Japan. The master printers who demonstrated their technical accomplishments were pleased by the enthusiastic reception they received on the first day of the conference.

Demonstrations, Kyoto Kaikan

The first presenter was Keizo Sato, the master printer who has worked with internationally recognized artist Akira Kurosaki in Kyoto for many years. He demonstrated Osaka style printing using 18th century blocks created for a book

of textile prints. Osaka style printing differs from Tokyo printing by its emphasis on texture and surface application of color. Sato-san was joined in the large conference room of Kyoto Kaikan by master carver Hiroshi Fujisawa, who demonstrated carving an ukiyo-e block from a design by the artist Utamaro. In addition to reproducing ukiyo-e prints, Hiroshi also makes his own creative prints, nature studies based on his Buddhist philosophy.

That afternoon, Kenji Takenaka, a printer from a long line of mokuhanga printers, and Yuko Harada, demonstrated printing a Hokusai print of the Great Wave. Takenaka is also an artist and showed some of his creative prints as well as his ukiyo-e reproductions. Simultaneously, baren maker Hidehiko Goto demonstrated the creation of a baren, the printing disk for mokuhanga. The power of the baren comes from the shin, a disk made from a coil of thin strips cut from bamboo sheath, carefully twisted and sewn flat, placed in a backing disk made of many layers of washi. Goto-san had recently published a book on his work, and signed copies for the audience.

During and following these demonstrations in the Big Hall, there were additional demonstrations of contemporary mokuhanga, waterbased monoprinting, intaglio woodblock, individual artist presentations, Japanese bookbinding, and classes in urauchi mountings and byobu hinges.

Product Fair

An important element of the conference was the presentation of Japanese mokuhanga supplies to an international audience. Many papermakers from all over Japan presented examples of their beautiful handmade washi. Woodcut

supplies from Woodlike Matsumara's shop were on display, along with a presentation of Holbein watercolor used for mokuhanga.

Kyoto Exhibitions

In addition to the extraordinary demonstrations, there were six mokuhanga exhibitions in Kyoto. Mokuhanga Innovative at Art Forum Jarfo in Kyoto was an exhibition of contemporary work by Honorary Board Members Akira Kurosaki (Kyoto Seika University, retired) and Tetsuya Noda (Tokyo Geidai, retired), with Board Members Karen Kunc (US), Seiichiro Miida (Japan), Tuula Moilanen (Finland), Kari Laitinen (Finland) and April Vollmer (US). Mokuhanga: Dialogue and Dialect was a juried exhibition of 55 woodblock artists from around the world at the Kyoto International Community House. For the Mokuhanga and Hyogu exhibition, mokuhanga from the Nagasawa Art Park Program was displayed on low tables, highlighted by woodblocks mounted on hyogu panels in the beautiful Kyoto Art Center Tatami Room. Mokuhanga Connexions, the open portfolio session at Kyoto Kaikan, gave participants and interested local artists an opportunity to show their prints on tables around the room. Hanga Ehon: Handprinted Books was a display of mokuhanga books at Kyoto Paradise (Yamazaki Art Bookstore). These exhibitions, as well as the demonstration venues, were all coordinated by Board Member Tuula Moilanen. In addition to her work on the Conference exhibitions, she organized an exhibition of her own mokuhanga prints at Gallery Keifu.

The second half of the conference took place at Tadao Ando's impressive Awaji Westin Hotel, on Awaji Island, near the home of the original Nagasawa Art Park Program mokuhanga residency. Surrounded by views of the Sea of Japan, this is a special location where the beauty of the Japanese landscape can be felt.

Presentations took place at The Westin Awaji Conference Center and included a wide variety of subjects by Japanese and foreign artists, educators and craftspeople. Claire Cuccio, an independent scholar of Japanese print culture, provided sensitive translation for many events, and presented her own paper on "Mokuhanga in Japan Today." She provided a historical context for contemporary work in mokuhanga, and chaired the panel "Collaborations between Craftsmen and Artists: Adapting Traditional Ukiyo-e printing and Carving Techniques to Contemporary Woodblock Prints." In this panel, professional printers Shoichi Kitamura and Makoto Nakayama from the Kyoto Woodblock Printmaking Crafts Union presented several of their projects, highlighting one with Rebecca Salter, whose original work, along with the blocks and woodblock prints, were on display.

In addition to individual artist talks, technical papers, and discussions about teaching mokuhanga, there were presentations concerning the history and philosophy of mokuhanga. These included scholarly papers on its history, a look at mokuhanga in the west, international exchanges, print appreciation, kite making and much more. This rich and varied menu of woodblock topics gave attendees only one complaint: it was too difficult to decide which of the simultaneous presentations to attend.

Banquets

The banquets were an essential part of the conference, providing a place for participants from different disciplines and different countries to meet while sharing Japanese specialties. The beautifully prepared food reflected the special spirit of the occasion. The welcome banquet at the Kyoto Karasuma Hotel was an opportunity to hear introductions from IMC Chairman Kari Laitanen (Aalto University, Helsinki), and Karen Kunc (University of Nebraska-Lincoln). The Honorary Board Members, both internationally known woodblock artists, Akira Kurosaki from Kyoto Seika University and Tetsuya Noda from Tokyo Geidai University, spoke about their work as contemporary international artists using the traditional Japanese technique.

The Sayonara Banquet at the close of the conference was particularly moving because of the arrival of Keiko Kadota, whose work as head of the Tokyo office was interrupted by surgery only months before the conference. Her presence was especially welcomed by the many Nagasawa alumni at the conference who were grateful to her for their introduction to mokuhanga through the Nagasawa Art Park Program.

The conference brought together alumni of that program with artists who had studied at Tokyo Geidai, at Kyoto Seika, and artists with an interest in the possibilities of contemporary mokuhanga from Japan and around the world.

Conference website: www.mokuhanga.jp

More information: www.aprilvollmer.com

April Vollmer is a New York artist-printmaker who teaches at the Lower East Side Printshop.



Hidehiko Goto's demonstration on making a baren