

The East-West Center Arts Program in cooperation with the
Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts and the
Hawai'i United Okinawa Association presents

AYANUJI 綾虹

Okinawa's traditional culture:
past and present

Curators:

Tatsuya Mori, Michael Schuster

Exhibition design: **Masaru Nakamoto,
Miyako Hanashiro, Izumi Higa**

Installation design: **Lynne Najita**

Project Supervisor: **Eikichi Hateruma**

Project Manager: **Junko Konishi**

Project Coordinator: **Darcy Gibo**

Featuring works by: **Harumi Tonaki,
Tomokazu Nago, Okishige Maeshiro,
Miyako Hanashiro, Hiroshi Tasato,
Satoshi Yamada, Masaji Itokazu,
Osamu Mizukami, Shigeru Toma,
Yoshikuni Yanagi**

Okinawa and Hawai'i have a long history of exchange, with many local Hawai'i families originating from Okinawa. AYANUJI is a word used in ancient Okinawan poetry meaning "beautiful rainbow." This exhibition aims to build a rainbow bridge between Okinawa and Hawai'i by sharing both past traditions and present-day interpretations of Okinawan culture. Showcasing textiles, lacquerware, ceramics, carving, and glassware, traditional Uchinanchu culture is highlighted alongside contemporary expressions. This exhibition features works made by the faculty of Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts (OPUA).

Okinawa Prefecture is a sub-tropical island group in Japan, located where the Pacific Ocean meets the East China Sea. Through its trade with Southeast Asia and China, Okinawa developed its own distinctive culture from Japan during the period of Ryukyu Kingdom (15th–19th century). After the Pacific War (World War II) through 1972, Okinawa was ruled under United States' military administration. Okinawan traditional arts, architecture, and customs reflect this complicated history.





IZUMI HIGA IN BASHOFU DANCE COSTUME, 2013.
PHOTOGRAPHER: SEIYU TAKANO

Bashofu

Bashofu is a textile woven from banana tree fibers, a regional craft technique passed down for centuries. No machines are used during production, requiring painstaking efforts from the artisan—from cultivation of the yarn, to the spinning, dyeing and weaving of the bolts of fabric. *Bashofu* was once ubiquitous

hot weather attire among Okinawan farmers; however, it is now rare and expensive to acquire. In 2000, the *bashofu* weaver Toshiko Taira was honored as an intangible cultural asset of Japan. The exhibited *bashofu* kimono is a dance costume for the role of a farmer.



GATHERING BANANA FIBERS, 2014, COURTESY OF OPUA

Bingata

The renowned rich and elaborate designs of *bingata* textiles require time, precision, and expertise. This highly valued Okinawan textile uses handmade stencils to create unique patterns. Stencils are placed on the fabric and rice paste is used to resist dyes. The stencils are affixed to the cloth and rice paste is spread over the entire surface. The stencils are carefully removed and the freed areas are then painted with small stiff brushes. This process may be repeated several times, and the creation of a single *bingata* may take over one month. In 1997, Reiko Fujimura (1939–2015) was designated by the Japanese government as one of Okinawa's intangible cultural assets for her work as a *bingata* artist. Inspired by classical Okinawan designs, Fujimura also created new *bingata* using Okinawan plants and flowers as motifs.



APPLYING PIGMENT TO BINGATA, 2014, COURTESY OF OPUA

Other Contemporary Ryukyu Arts and Artists

Masaji Itokazu's lacquer piece, *Deigo Creation "Ryu"* is made with *deigo* wood, the second lightest wood in the world (*erythrina variegata*) and native to the Okinawan islands. This wood does not easily crack or warp, making it the preferred choice for Ryukyuan lacquerware. The undercoat glaze uses a mixture of local powder called Oroku Niibi and is followed by numerous layers of lacquer. The wave pattern was shaped using hemp cord.

Konseki (Traces) by Tomokazu Nago is made from traditional Japanese paper (*washi*) and employs the *noribosen* dyeing technique. The *noribosen* technique applies resist rice paste to a stencil on both sides of the material prior to dip dyeing.

Miyako Hanashiro's displayed piece, *Flower Line*, is a unique watch face design combining contemporary aesthetics and traditional Ryukyu ikat dyeing and weaving techniques.



MASAJI ITOKAZU APPLYING LACQUER UNDERCOAT, 2016. COURTESY OF OPUA



YUSEI TABA CARVING A MASK, PHOTOGRAPHER: DAI TAKANO



MIRUKU IS THE MASKED FIGURE LEADING THE PROCESSION, 1995. PHOTOGRAPHER: HIROAKI OSHIRO

Folk Masks

Okinawa has a long history of worshipping local deities. The villages and islands are protected by the Gods, and it is believed that the Gods bring abundant harvests and happiness. Always performed with stateliness, Gods are worshipped at a sacred spot called *Utaki*.

One representation of a deity found in the Yaeyama region is the *Mayunganashii* god of Kabira on Ishigaki Island. Covered in palm leaves and carrying a stick, the *Mayunganashii* god visits each

house in the village sometime between September and October promising to bring prosperity. The *Mayunganashii* mask on display is from Ibaruma village.

Masks representing ancestor spirits are worn during *Obon*, the summer festival honoring the dead. A special event called *Angama* includes groups of masked musicians. Two participants representing the elderly male and female ancestor gods act as guests from the heavens. They offer comfort

and a sign of filial piety to the spirits of the ancestors.

Additional exhibited masks representing gods from the Yaeyama region include: Miruku god of Taketomi Island, Kohama Island's Datuda, and Hoshitate Village on Iriomote Island's Ohoho. The masks are considered highly sacred objects protected by strong spirits; they are only seen by local people during festivals, never to be removed from their respective regions. Consequently, all of the masks displayed are replicas.

The **East-West Center** promotes better relations and understanding among the people and nations of the United States, Asia, and the Pacific through cooperative study, research, and dialogue. Established by the U.S. Congress in 1960, the Center serves as a resource for information and analysis on critical issues of common concern, bringing people together to exchange views, build expertise, and develop policy options. The Center is an independent, public, nonprofit organization with funding from the U.S. government, and additional support provided by private agencies, individuals, foundations, corporations, and governments in the region.

The **East-West Center Arts Program** for more than 35 years has enriched the community through concerts, lectures, symposia, and exhibitions focusing on arts of the region, and by arranging cultural and educational tours by artists who are skilled in bridging cultures.

EWC Arts Team: Karen Knudsen, director, Office of External Affairs; Michael Schuster, Ph.D., curator; Eric Chang, arts program coordinator; Anna Reynolds, arts program assistant; William Feltz, adjunct arts specialist; Gary Yoshida, Elizabeth Kuioka, development officers; Kisore Sherreitt, student assistant; Matthew Jewell, research consultant

Mahalo: Jane Serikaku, Tom Yamamoto, Jon Itomura, Grant "Sandaa" Murata, Yusei Taba, University of the Ryukyus Yaeyama Performing Arts Group, Tomoki Uho, Takefumi Kamiya, Hiroaki Oshiro, Kazuya Omori, Dai Takano, Ryukyu Logistics Co., Ltd., SUGAR TRAIN, Inc., Hajime Ikemiya, Naha City Traditional Arts and Crafts Center, Eizo Koubou, Lynne Najita, Kennedy & Preiss Graphic Design, Leilani Ng, Colorprints Inc., Nancy Hulbirt, SOEST, Jennifer Leger, Shayne Hasegawa, Phyllis Tabusa, Lucy Kamealoha, Deanna O'Brien, Tina Tom, Patsy Hiraoka, Marie Ebesu, EWC Facilities Management



つくる、つなげる30年。

AQUA ASTON
HOSPITALITY



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The EWC Arts Program is supported by EWC Arts 'Ohana members, Jean E. Rolles, Jackie Chan Foundation USA, and other generous donors.



SHISA ARE PROTECTIVE LION FIGURES.
COURTESY OF JON ITOMURA

Special Events

In the EWC Gallery with free admission, unless otherwise noted.

Sunday, September 25,
2:00–3:30 p.m.

Exhibition Gala Opening including reception and short dance performance by Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts. ***Full dance and music performance** to follow at 4:00 p.m. at UHM Orvis Auditorium (Tickets \$15–\$30 at the door).

Sunday, October 2, 2:00–3:00 p.m.

Illustrated talk: **"Okinawans in Hawai'i"** by Joyce Chinen, Director, UHM Center for Okinawan Studies and Professor of Sociology, UH West O'ahu.

Sunday, October 16, 2:00–3:00 p.m.

Dance: **"Kumiwudui: The Legacy of Kin Ryosho"** by Cheryl Yoshie Nakasone, Master Instructor and Yukie Shiroma, Instructor. Local performers demonstrate and discuss aspects of this 18th century classical form of masked court dance theatre.

Saturday–Sunday, October 29–30

Hands-on Workshops by OPUA faculty in pottery, fabric weaving and dyeing. \$10; no experience needed; reservations required — inquire for details.

Sunday, November 6, 2:00–3:00 p.m.

Illustrated talk: **"Okinawan Language"** by Stewart A. Curry, Instructor, UHM Dept. of East Asian Languages and Literature.

Sunday, November 13,
2:00–3:00 p.m.

Illustrated talk: **"The Okinawan Diaspora"** by Robert Nakasone, Director, Okinawan Special Projects, East-West Center.

Sunday, December 4,
2:00–4:00 p.m.

Film: **"Nabbie's Love"** Life in a small Okinawan community is depicted through the story of a local grandmother, her grandchildren, and a young Japanese visitor. Directed by Yuji Nakae. 1999, Japanese with English subtitles, 92 minutes.

Sunday, December 11,
2:00–3:00 p.m.

Music: **"Mimi-gusui: Life Sustenance through the Ears"** talk-story concert led by Norman Kaneshiro, Musical Director, Ukwanshin Kabudan Ryukyu Performing Arts Group.

Sunday, January 8, 2:00–3:00 p.m.

Okinawan Music by President/Director Grant "Sandaa" Murata and members of the Afuso Ryu Koten Ongaku Kenkyu Choichi Kai USA.

East-West Center Gallery

John A. Burns Hall, 1601 East-West Road (corner Dole St. & East-West Rd.)

Gallery admission is free.

Hours: Open Weekdays 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. and Sundays Noon–4:00 p.m. Closed Saturdays, Oct. 10, Nov. 11, 24, Dec. 23, 25–26, 30, Jan. 1–2

Parking on the UH-Mānoa campus is normally free and ample on Sundays.

Free school & group tours available

For further information: 944-7177
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<http://arts.EastWestCenter.org>



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