Kyoto Artisans and their Worlds
Fall 2018  Wed 13:10-16:25
Instructors: Douglas Woodruff, Kyoko Mimura

Ever since its founding in 794, Kyoto has been at the forefront of traditional Japanese crafts. The variety and unparalleled quality of fine and applied arts remains a constant source of pride for the city as a whole, and for the entire country. Neighborhoods, and even streets, were often defined by the various artisanal guilds that prospered throughout different parts of the city, from the famed textile workshops of Nishijin to the coveted ceramics coming out of the workshops around Kiyomizu-dera. We will be exploring these unique sections of the city to experience the breadth and depth of Kyoto’s artisanal and artistic culture first hand: papermakers, gold leaf craftsmen, weavers, dyers, carpenters, printers, bamboo workers, metalsmiths, sculptors, potters and as many more as you own time permits. Through exclusive visits to private studios, the course will seek to give students first-hand experience of not only the abundance of crafts, but also their makers’ changing roles in supporting the lifeblood of Kyoto as an increasingly global city.

This year in the fall semester we will focus on materials—bamboo, wood, clay, cloth, metal and paper—and the processes by which they turn into objects of beauty—splitting, smoothing, shaping, dyeing, casting, carving and printing. We will look at blinds and archery bows, architectural and interior accents, tea bowls and vases, kimono and obi, screens, scrolls, even artisanal foodstuffs. Classes are focused around weekly fieldtrips backed by brief lectures and readings providing historical, cultural, and technical background for each topic. In lieu of a final exam, students will be expected to freely choose a personal focus to explore for a class presentation as well as a final paper on the same subject. This is a rare opportunity to experience just some of the finest artisans and applied arts of Japan.

Due to the space restrictions of many of the workshops, enrollment will be limited to 10 KCJS students.

Requirements: no previous knowledge is required, but commitment and consistent class attendance is imperative. This is a class where each student is expected find his or her own meaning from varied first-hand experiences, not a course where the teachers present a theory and require the students to apply it to specific examples.
Project presentations and a final paper of around 10 pages should support research, fieldwork and/or hands-on projects.

Assessment will be based on class participation (10%), weekly worksheets (30%), presentations (30%), and final paper (30%). Absences, unless supported by medical medically excused

Schedule

Class 1: Introduction. A fun and compelling overview of Kyoto’s craft world will pave the way for a better grasp of the multiple arcs of innovation in the world of crafts and the reverence for materials and techniques that can help elucidate the merits and remarkable staying power of these mostly multi-generational enterprises. With the exception of the final presentations, this is the only fully classroom week in an otherwise fully experiential course.

Class 2: Bamboo– from the raw material for interiors, teahouses, garden landscapes to basketry, tea utensils to screens and bow making. The finest bamboo retail shop in the city, the much sought-after Birendo screen maker and a 21st generation bow maker by appointment to the Imperial family are the three destinations scheduled for our first outing. We’ll also be introducing you to a hilariously gregarious golden labrador retriever at our last stop… just for some comic relief.

Read before class:

Class 3: Machiya…traditional merchant houses: their construction, maintenance and furnishings. This is your first introduction to traditional architecture and a chance to view an environment that encapsulates many of the artisanal crafts in a residential and commercial context. This will be followed by a visit to one of the last remaining kettle foundries in a neighborhood, one that once boasted over 70 such enterprises.
Read before class:
* Background culture: Tanizaki Jun’ichiro, *In Praise of Shadows*.

Class 4. (SATURDAY OUTING) Clay, wood, and straw— a full day outing to Shiga prefecture to investigate the historic pottery village of Shigaraki, view an exquisitely restored country house (minka) and stop by the world-rekwnowned Miho museum. This will be followed by a visit the studio of internationally known potter and good friend, Sawa Kiyotsugu. The opportunity for some to try throwing pots is a added perk.

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Class 5. Paper, papermaking, paper products. The hugely successful and innovative washi artist and producer, Eriko Horiki, is a force to be reckoned with. Her midtown showroom and excellent presenter, Ms. Hosoo, will redefine your perception of washi forever. This will be followed by a hands-on experience in traditional book-binding.

Read before class:
*Hunter, Dard. *Papermaking: The History and Technique of an Ancient Past.*
*( optional) Salter, Rebecca. *Japanese Woodblock Printing*
Class 6. Patterning cloth: *shibori* and indigo dyeing. This week is a visit to Fukumoto Shiho’s indigo dyeing studio. Ms. Fukumoto is a hugely talented and prolific international artist. As with Mr Sawa, you will have another opportunity to consider the sometimes wavering line between arts and crafts. Until the late 19th century, there wasn’t even a Japanese word for what we Westerners often refer to as fine arts.

**Read before class:**
* Sandberg. *Indigo Textiles: Technique and History*. (p. 13-29), & (p. 71-76) & (p. 93-97)
* Wada. *Shibori: The Inventive Art of Japanese Shaped Resist Dyeing*: (p 7-52)
* Brandon. *Country Textiles of Japan: The Art of Tsutsugaki*. "Indigo" (p. 43-52)

Class 7. Printing on cloth: stencil dyeing. Our visit to the Daiwa Senko *kata yuzen* workshop is, perhaps, a visit to the precariously positioned craft of stencil dyeing. We’ll be looking forward to your own insights regarding this fascinating and fragile workplace.

**Read before class:**
* Brandon. *Country Textiles of Japan: The Art of Tsutsugaki*. (p 3-20)
* Yoshioka, Sachio. *Ryūkyū Bingata*. (Kyoto Shoin, 1995). P. 1-95 (much is photographs)

Class 8: Nishijin area textiles... from gold thread to obi to Buddhist weavings. We’ll be visiting a total of three places to get a better idea of the extensive division of labor within the textile community and experience the exceptional quality of goods emanating from this rarified enclave.
Read before class:
*Bethe, Monica. “Historical Survey of Gold on Fabric.” Unpublished

Class 9: Buddhist altar items: implements and statue making. We will be making a trip to the Matsuhisa Buddhist statuary studio to take in the eye-poppingly intricate delicacy of religious statuary carving at its very best.

Read before class.
*Bethe, “Worship Sanctuary; Altars and their Surrounding” in Amamonzeki; A Hidden Heritage (Tokyo Geidai Catalog, 2009) P. 148-151)

Class 10: The direction of craft in the wake of Japan’s modernization: the mingei (folk craft) movement. A visit to the former home of potter, calligrapher, essayist and designer, Kawai Kanjuro, will offer students a special look into the heart and soul of one of Japan’s most influential 20th century artists. One of your instructors for this course is also one of Japan’s foremost authorities on the mingei movement and its practioners. There would be no better time to dive into the readings early and get your questions ready.

Read before class
*Leach, Bernard and Yanagi Soetsu. The Unknown Craftsman: A Japanese Insight into Beauty. (The entire book is recommended, but you’re free to select readings that most interest you.)
Class 11: Tea and Wagashi: Our final outing will be to the well-known Tsuruya Yoshinobu confectionary establishment where we will experience why even many purveyors of foodstuffs are counted as members of the artisanal and crafts world.

We end our journey by sampling a handmade traditional sweet and imbibing a cup of *matcha*, Japan’s frothy powdered green tea.

*Read before class*


Class 12: Student presentations

Class 13: Student presentations

Depending on the calendar, an additional class may be added prior to presentations. Final papers due to be handed in during exam time.

**Reference books for further study.**

**General**


**Bamboo**


Carpentry and architecture

Papermaking and printing


Textiles
Kyoto Shoin's Art Library of Japanese Textiles –20 volumes
Bethe, “Reflections on *Beni*: Red as a Key to Edo-Period Fashion” in *When Art Became Fashion*. (p. 133-151)


**Ceramics**


Honolulu Academy of Arts, *Yakimono: 40000 Years of Japanese Ceramics*. 2005


**Food**

