

MINGEI: The Beauty of Everyday Things

Press Release July 8–September 18, 2023

Exhibition Overview

Exhibition title: MINGEI: The Beauty of Everyday Things

Dates: July 8 –September 18, 2023

Venue: Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka 4F Galleries

Opening hours: 10:00–17:00 (last entry 16:30)

Closed: Mondays (except for July 17 and September 18)

Organizers: Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka; The Asahi Shimbun; TOEI COMPANY, LTD.

Sponsor: TOPPAN Inc.

Special collaborator: The Japan Folk Crafts Museum

Collaborators: Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Art Museum, Katolec Corporation

Curator: MORIYA Miho (art historian)

Collaborating curator: HAMADA Takuji (Professor, School of Humanities, Kwansei Gakuin University)

Touring Information

After showing at Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka, this exhibition will go on tour to Fukushima, Hiroshima, Tokyo, Toyama, Aichi, and Fukuoka.

Outline

About one century ago, the philosopher YANAGI Soetsu founded the *mingei* (folk crafts) movement. Love of the beauty in everyday life and appreciation for materials and for the people who create folk crafts is the *mingei* concept. Today, there is a renewed need for such a concept, and it is consequently becoming increasingly familiar in our daily lives. The show examines *mingei* items based on the themes of clothing, food, and housing, presenting about 150 beautiful *mingei* works used in daily life. The show also visits centers of *mingei* production and introduces people creating *mingei* works as well as the works that are being passed down.

One of the highlights of the show is an installation that merges contemporary lifestyle with *mingei*, produced by Terry ELLIS and KITAMURA Keiko, directors of MOGI Folk Art who are playing a major role in the current *mingei* boom, and who were directors of the BEAMS Japan until summer 2022. This exhibition explores *mingei* to discover the beauty in everyday life that Yanagi taught about, and provides an opportunity to learn about the movement's growth, as well as what is happening with it today, and where the movement is headed.



YANAGI Soetsu and the *mingei* movement

YANAGI Soetsu (1889–1961), the philosopher known as the “father of the *mingei* movement,” was born in Azabu, Tokyo. In 1910 he helped to found the magazine *Shirakaba* (“white birch”). Deeply interested in subjects including the philosophy of religion and Western art, he graduated from the Department of Philosophy of Tokyo Imperial University in 1913. While studying and collecting Joseon-dynasty ceramics and *mokujiki* Buddha sculptures, he developed an appreciation for the beauty of everyday objects created by nameless artisans and used by the common people. In 1925, he coined the neologism *mingei* (“folk crafts”) with the aim of making people aware of their value, and launched the *mingei* movement together with HAMADA Shoji and KAWAI Kanjiro, who shared his aims. In 1936, he established the Japan Folk Crafts Museum and was appointed its first director. Using this as his base, he subsequently traveled widely in Japan and overseas to engage in research and collection, as well as being active in writing and organizing exhibitions.

Highlights

- 1 The first folk art-themed exhibition to be held at Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka
Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka opened its doors in 2022, and has become popular not just with fans of modern art but also with young people attracted to the contemporary black cube of a building and its spatial design. This is the first exhibition in the museum to focus on *mingei*, or “folk crafts,” the term proposed around a century ago by YANAGI Soetsu to describe the “craft of the common people.”
- 2 The exhibition brings together around 150 famous *mingei* works mainly from the collections of the Japan Folk Crafts Museum (Meguro, Tokyo) and the Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Art Museum.
Having discovered that beauty resides in everyday things created by nameless artisans, YANAGI Soetsu turned his eyes not just to Japan but also to the rest of the world. This exhibition mainly displays the beautiful examples of folk art from everyday life collected by Yanagi and his colleagues, making them accessible to people who may never have heard of *mingei* before and are wondering just what it might be.
- 3 An exhibition that shows what is happening with *mingei* today and where the movement is headed.
Even after Yanagi’s death, the *mingei* movement continued to expand. In many parts of Japan, traditional crafts continue to be passed down, and new artisans and handmade items are still emerging today. This exhibition will feature present-day *mingei* creators and the regions where these crafts are made. It will also suggest a “future *mingei* style” that blends readily into contemporary lifestyles. Its focus extends to the folk crafts of the future that will continue the conversation between creators, connectors, and users.

4 Enjoy the special exhibition shop

The special shop set up for the exhibition will sell a large number of products specially commissioned by MOGI Folk Art (described in Section III), goods designed for this exhibition by renowned dyer and artist MIYAIRI Keita, and a wide range of other artisan-crafted *mingei* products, including ceramics, glass, and textiles.



[From left]

Liquor bottle, KODANI Shinzo, Kurashiki (Okayama prefecture) , 1979 / *Liquor bottle*, KODANI Shinzo, Kurashiki (Okayama prefecture) , c 1985 / *Bottle with stopper*, Mexico, the mid - 20th century. All from the collection of the Japan Folk Crafts Museum.*



The Japan Folk Crafts Museum "Life Exhibition" venue photograph 1941

Part 1

The 1941 "Life Exhibition": A Lifestyle Proposal by YANAGI Soetsu

In 1941, YANAGI Soetsu developed an exhibition entitled "Life Exhibition" at the Japan Folk Crafts Museum, which he himself had founded in Meguro, Tokyo.

He furnished and decorated a room with numerous items of *mingei*, exhibiting them in what would now be called "table coordination." The use of a model room to display ways of making use of *mingei* in everyday life was unusual and even groundbreaking at the time.

In Part I, we have attempted to replicate this "Life Exhibition", using mainly actual pieces from that exhibition, to introduce the beauty of everyday life as expounded by Yanagi.



Child's scroll back armchair

England, 19th century. From the collection of the Japan Folk Crafts Museum

This is one of the Windsor chairs brought back by YANAGI Soetsu and HAMADA Shoji from their visit to Britain in 1929. In Japan, which had no tradition of using a table and chairs in daily life, it was British chairs that Yanagi displayed as the best examples.

Part 2

Mingei in Daily Life: Beautiful Design

YANAGI Soetsu collected not just all types of crafts, including ceramics, dyed textiles, and wooden crafts, but also a wide variety of other goods such as paintings and household furnishings, and he extended the source of his collections from Japan to the entirety of the Korean peninsula as well as journeying to places including China and Europe. Although his collection spanned a broad timescale, from the prehistoric Jomon period to the Showa era in which he lived, he focused above all on the handmade everyday items made in his own day in the various regions of Japan, and was proactive in making them known. Part II categorizes the wide range of *mingei* products into clothing, food, and the housing, and traces Yanagi's perspective that discovered the *mingei* beauty in all of these.



Sakiori garment(part), Echizen(Fukui prefecture), Edo to Meiji period 19th century.

From the collection of the Japan Folk Crafts Museum*



2-(1) Dressing up in clothing

"If you just want something to wear, whether or not it's beautiful is of no concern. But beauty arouses the desire to put it on." YANAGI Soetsu, *Yo to bi* ("Use and Beauty"), 1941.



Farmer's raincoat

Iwashiro Hinoemata(Fukushima prefecture), 1930s. From the collection of the Japan Folk Crafts Museum

Straw raincoats for use as rainwear were formerly made throughout Japan, but according to Yanagi, "The splendid straw raincoats of the north are in a class by themselves" [*Yukiguni no mino* ("The straw raincoats of the snow country"), 1942. This example, from Fukushima, is not only gorgeous to look at but very comfortable to wear.



Garment with applique pattern

Ainu(Hokkaido prefecture), 19th century. From the collection of Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Art Museum

An Ainu garment decorated with a bold design. The pattern has an intriguing sense of movement, and its vivid deep blue, orange, and white color scheme also makes it a particularly impressive item of Ainu clothing among those collected by Serizawa Keisuke.



Kihachijo kimono

Hachijo Island(Tokyo), 1920s-30s. From the collection of the Japan Folk Crafts Museum

Kihachijo is a yellow cloth produced on the island of Hachijo-jima in Tokyo Prefecture. Silk threads are dyed yellow, orange-brown, and black using the island's plants. The dyeing process is repeated many times and the colors are fixed, after which the threads are woven into patterns such as stripes and lattices.



2-(2) Showcasing food

"People like things that are delicious. And that doesn't just stop with food. Serve it on an attractive plate. And choose that for its inherent plate-ness."
YANAGI Soetsu, *Yo to bi* ("Use and Beauty"), 1941.



Square dish, slipware

England, late 18th century-late 19th century. From the collection of the Japan Folk Crafts Museum*

English slipware is a form of pottery that was promoted in Japan by the *mingei* fraternity and remains popular today. This piece, one of the best pieces of slipware from Yanagi's former collection, is a pie dish that was produced in large numbers.*



Straw bag for eggs

Korean Peninsula, the early 20th century. From the collection of the Japan Folk Crafts Museum

This Korean egg carrier has a window in the middle of the woven straw basket through which the eggs were inserted. When hung up by the cord at the top, it could also function as storage.



Multi-colored tray, lacquerware

Edo period, 18th century. From the collection of the Japan Folk Crafts Museum



2-(3) Decorating the home

“Living requires a variety of things. The proper materials are chosen and the right shapes are formed accordingly.”

YANAGI Soetsu, *Yo to bi* (“Use and Beauty”), 1941.



Lamp stand with paulownia pattern, late Edo period. From a private collection*



Chair

Austria, the early 19th century. From the collection of Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Art Museum



(Clockwise from top left)

Hand broom

Sendai Koriyama (Miyagi prefecture) , c. 1939

Kanuma broom

Shimotsuke Kanuma (Tochigi prefecture) , c. 1939

Hand broom

Shinshu (Nagano prefecture) , c. 1939

All from the collection of the Japan Folk Crafts Museum



Mat

Korean Peninsula, 1930s. From the collection of the Japan Folk Crafts Museum

The trio of YANAGI Soetsu, KAWAI Kanjiro, and HAMADA Shoji visited Korea for two years in succession in 1936 and 1937, and purchased everyday items made on the peninsula at the time. This mat or cushion with its beautiful woven patterns and characters would have been used as an alternative to a *zabuton* floor cushion.



Candle wick trimmer

Kyoto prefecture, late 1920s - the first half of 1930s. From the collection of the Japan Folk Crafts Museum

Scissors for trimming the wicks of Japanese candles used in Buddhist rituals, made in Kyoto in the prewar Showa period. Their design is thoughtfully functional, with a construction that prevents the cut part of the wicks from falling and handles that are easy to grasp.

TOPIC

Okinawa-A lifestyle fostered by the local climate and environment

Okinawa, far distant from the Japanese main islands, has an ancient history and has developed its own unique culture and customs. The final section of Part II focuses on the *mingei* of Okinawa, described by Yanagi as "miraculous," and crafts including stencil - dyed *bingata*, textiles, ceramics, and lacquerware offer a glimpse of the good life of Okinawa in past times.



Kimono with snow circles, cherry blossoms, and maple leaves pattern, bingata stencil - dyed, Okinawa prefecture, 19th - the first half of 20th century. From the collection of Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Art Museum

Bingata is a tropically vivid Okinawan technique of stencil dyeing. Although many of the patterns have been heavily influenced by mainland Japan, they characteristically do not exhibit any sense of seasonal difference, freely incorporating motifs from all four seasons. Serizawa Keisuke was overwhelmed when he encountered Okinawa *bingata*, and started to study this dyeing technique.

Part 3

Expanding Mingei: Past, Present, and Future

Even after YANAGI Soetsu's death, the *mingei* movement continued its spread. In their book *Sekai no mingei* ("Folk Crafts of the World"), published in 1972, HAMADA Shoji, SERIZAWA Keisuke, and TONOMURA Kichinosuke described products from countries around the world, including Europe, South America, and Africa. The primitive designs stemming from each region's climate and natural environment opened new doors for *mingei*.

In the craft-producing areas of Japan to which the *mingei* movement had drawn attention, too, new products and artisans are emerging as inheritors of these traditions. This exhibition introduces past and present folk crafts from five such areas in Japan, and the present situation of the people working there. The final section of this part consists of an installation in which Terry ELLIS and KITAMURA Keiko (directors of MOGI Folk Art), the pioneers of the current *mingei* boom, showcase a "future *mingei* style" in which their favorite pieces and folk art they have found around the world are integrated into today's everyday life.

3-(1) Folk Crafts of the World: A new world of *mingei*



A nest of earthen pots, suburbs of Guadalajara city (Mexico) late 20th century. From the collection of Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Art Museum



[From left] HAMADA Shoji, SERIZAWA Keisuke, and TONOMURA Kichinosuke, *Sekai no mingei* (*Mingei in the World*), The Asahi Shinbun 1972. From a private collection* / *Socks*, Azerbaijan (Iran), late 20th century. From the collection of Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Art Museum / *Doll*, Huancayo, Junin (Peru), late 20th century. From the collection of Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Art Museum

3-(2) The regions making folk crafts: Artisans today

Since the postwar Showa era, machine production has been the mainstream of Japanese manufacturing, but nevertheless, there are regions that have maintained traditions and continued to make things by hand, artisans attempting to resurrect lost techniques, and people creating new folk crafts. This exhibition focuses on five regions of *mingei* production, introducing their past and present products and the people who work there.



Bamboo works in Torigoe
Iwate Prefecture*



Yatsuo Japanese traditional paper
Toyama Prefecture*



Kurashiki glass
Okayama Prefecture*

TOPIC

Mixed Mingei Style by MOGI

The final section of Part III is an installation by two of the driving forces of the current *mingei* boom, Terry ELLIS and KITAMURA Keiko (directors of MOGI Folk Art), which integrates folk crafts into our contemporary lives.



The home of Terry ELLIS and KITAMURA Keiko
(directors of MOGI Folk Art)*



MOGI Folk Art

Terry ELLIS and KITAMURA Keiko, who preside over MOGI Folk Art in the Koenji area of Tokyo, have been introducing Japanese handicrafts with a close connection to the *mingei* movement in combination with clothing and accessories and northern European interiors since the 1990s, when they worked as buyers for BEAMS clothing and accessories stores. In 2003 they launched the fennica label for BEAMS, and in 2022 they opened their own shop, MOGI Folk Art. Today, they continue to offer customers a wide variety of suggestions generated by incorporating into everyday life the traditional *mingei* products and crafts they have discovered on their journeys around the regions of their production in Japan, with the theme of “a bridge between design and craft.” Through their interactions with makers, they have also created many exclusive original items that utilize traditional techniques and motifs.



Terry ELLIS and KITAMURA Keiko, Directors of MOGI Folk Art*

Talk Event

How to create the good life, according to the directors of MOGI Folk Art

Terry ELLIS and KITAMURA Keiko have been creating and passing on new values and ways of enjoying folk crafts that blend seamlessly into contemporary living and fashion, while getting close to makers in different places. They will talk about how to create the *mingei*-inspired good life according to MOGI.

Date and time: Saturday, July 8, 2023 14:00–15:30

Venue: Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka 1F Hall (capacity 150)

Speakers: Terry ELLIS/KITAMURA Keiko (directors of MOGI Folk Art)

Interviewer: KITAHIRO Maki (Curator, Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka)

Free of charge

(A ticket to the exhibition is required)

Advance reservation is required

Details of the application method and other events will be posted on the Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka when they have been decided.

Official exhibition website
<https://mingei-kurashi.exhibit.jp/>

Official exhibition social media accounts



@mingeiten



@mingeiten

Access



○ Keihan: About 5 minutes' walk southwest from Watanabebashi station on the Nakanoshima line (exit 2) / About 15 minutes' walk west from Yodoyabashi station (exit 7) after crossing the Tosabori river. ○ Osaka Metro: About 10 minutes' walk west from Higobashi station (exit 4) on the Yotsubashi line / About 15 minutes' walk west from Yodoyabashi station (exit 7) on the Midosuji line after crossing the Tosabori river. ○ JR: About 10 minutes' walk south from Fukushima station on the Osaka Loop Line or Shin-Fukushima station on the Tozai Line (exit 2) ○ Hanshin: About 10 minutes' walk south from Fukushima station ○ Osaka City Bus: Take bus 53 or 75 from the JR Osaka Ekimae bus stop and get off at Taminobashi, from where it is about 2 minutes' walk southwest ○ Limited parking space is available at the museum. (Regular fees apply). Please

Inquiries

4-3-1 Nakanoshima, Kita-ku, Osaka 530-0005
<https://nakka-art.jp/en/>



Tel: 06-4301-7285

(Osaka City General Call Center: 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily, including weekends and national holidays)

Contact information for media inquiries

MINGEI: The Beauty of Everyday Things Public Relations Office (within the TM Office)

Staff members: Bamba, Nagai, Nishisaka

Tel: 06-6231-4426.

FAX: 06-6231-4440

E-mail: mingei@tm-office.co.jp

Tickets

Admission: General: 1,700 yen (1,500 yen)

High school/university students: 1,300 yen (1,000 yen)

Junior high school students and younger: free

- The prices in brackets are for groups of 20 or more people. To book for a group of 20 or more people, please fill in the Group Reception Form on the Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka official website.
- School groups should apply via the guide to school group visits on the Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka official website at least four weeks before the visit.
- The museum may be closed without warning due to circumstances such as natural disasters.
- Visitors with a Disability Passbook or other evidence of disability (and one carer) may enter on the day at half price (certificate required).
- Visitors purchasing tickets at prices other than general admission tickets must show evidence of their status on the day.
- Residents of Osaka City aged 65 and over must pay the general admission price for this exhibition.
- Entry may be restricted if the galleries are crowded.
- Details will be published on the official exhibition website as they become available.

Main ticket points of sale *An administration fee may be payable at the time of ticket purchase.
Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka official website, Lawson Ticket (L code: 59222), branches of Lawson and Ministop convenience stores
Sales period: April 8–September 18, 2023

Combination discounts: Presentation of an exhibition admission ticket (or ticket stub) entitles the bearer to a 200-yen discount on tickets to the Parallel Lives – Susumu Shingu + Renzo Piano exhibition on the 5th floor (Thursday, July 13 to Thursday, September 14, 2023) purchased on the day. Each ticket is valid for one person.

This discount cannot be used after purchase or in combination with any other discount.

Program tickets *Only available via Lawson Ticket

(1) Original goods ticket set

Sacoche bag with original art from this exhibition by MIYAIRI Keita

This set comprises an exhibition admission ticket and a sacoché bag (a small bag worn diagonally across the body) decorated with a unique design created by famed dyer and artist MIYAIRI Keita.

Price: 3,200 yen (tax included), limited numbers.

Design only available with this ticket!

Size (approximate): Bag / width 170 mm × height 225 mm

Strap / width 10 mm × length 1150 mm

Material/color: Canvas, natural





- The image is for illustrative purposes only, and the actual design may differ slightly.
- Please exchange the coupon issued with the purchase of your ticket for the sacoché bag in the special exhibition shop (4F) (valid only during the period of the exhibition). The bag cannot be delivered.
- The sacoché bag sold in this set is not on sale at the exhibition. A sacoché bag of the same size but a different design will be on sale for 1,800 yen (tax included) in the exhibition shop.



MIYAIRI Keita

Dyer and artist. Drawn by the thought of YANAGI Soetsu, he studied *mingei*, and now pays attention to folk crafts in the creation of his own works. His work is attracting attention, having been featured in a special issue and on the cover of the fall/winter edition of Uniqlo's free magazine *LifeWear*, and in January 2023 he held an exhibition in the Shinjuku branch of the Isetan department store. His specially created *katazome* stencil-dyed works will be exhibited and sold as original goods for this exhibition

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Original art for this exhibition by Miyairi Keita

(2) Workshop ticket set

This set comprises participation in the "Touch and make your own Tamba cloth" workshop and an exhibition admission ticket.

Tamba cloth is made in the Tamba region of Hyogo Prefecture, but had fallen out of fashion before its beauty was rediscovered by YANAGI Soetsu. In this workshop, you can hear from one of its makers and make a small item to take home while enjoying the special texture of hand-spun thread and the colors created by vegetable dyes.

Lecturer: ERASMUS Chihiro (certified in *Tamba-nuno* techniques)

A. Make a coaster: 3,000 yen (tax included)

B. Make a mini-pochette: 3,500 yen (tax included)

Coaster: Saturday, July 22, 2023 (1) Starts 13:00 (2) Starts 15:00

(Each workshop lasts around 1 hour, and is limited to 20 participants)

Mini-pochette: Sunday, 20 August, 2023 (1) Starts 12:00 (2) Starts 14:30



(Each workshop lasts around 90 minutes, and is limited to 20 participants)

Venue: Both workshops will be held in the Workshop Room on the first floor of the Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka

What to bring: Sewing kit (sewing needle, scissors)



Coaster



Mini-pochette

*Images are for illustrative purposes only

● The mini-pochette is card-case sized. The patterns and designs of the examples in the photograph are both for illustrative purposes only. ● If you do not view the exhibition on the day of the workshop, the exhibition admission ticket may be used on another day. ● Sales will end when the designated number of participants is reached. Please see the official exhibition website for more details.



*

ERASMUS Chihiro

Tamba cloth maker. While living in Okayama, she encountered wool spinning, dyeing, and weaving. After moving to Tamba, she came to know of the existence of Tamba cloth, and studied cloth-making at the Tambanuno Densho-kan (Museum & Training center of Tambanuno Hand woven textile) Having worked as a lecturer at that museum, she now creates her own works

In her home workshop, using only cloth woven from hand-spun thread dyed with vegetable dyes.

*Photo: Yuki Ogawa