



FIBER FUTURES

Japan's Textile Pioneers

常州大学图书馆藏书章
FIBER FUTURES
Japan's Textile Pioneers

PUBLISHED BY JAPAN SOCIETY
NEW YORK


DISTRIBUTED BY
YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS
NEW HAVEN & LONDON


This volume accompanies the exhibition *Fiber Futures: Japan's Textile Pioneers*, presented at Japan Society Gallery, New York, from September 16 to December 18, 2011. The exhibition was organized by Japan Society, Inc. in collaboration with International Textile Network Japan and Tama Art University Museum, where a larger version of the exhibition was shown from June 4 to July 3, 2011.

This exhibition is generously supported by the E. Rhodes & Leona B. Carpenter Foundation; The Coby Foundation, Ltd.; Chris A. Wachenheim; Friends of Fiber Art International; Henry and Gilda Buchbinder; Furthermore: a program of the J. M. Kaplan Fund; Nomura Foundation, and the Leadership Committee for *Fiber Futures: Japan's Textile Pioneers*.

Further significant funding has been received from the National Endowment for the Arts; the New York State Council on the Arts; and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council.



Media sponsorship is provided by WNYC. 

Transportation assistance is provided by Japan Airlines. 

Exhibitions at Japan Society are made possible in part by the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Endowment Fund and the Friends of the Gallery.

Edited by Melanie B. D. Klein

Designed by Christine Knorr

Translations by Joe Earle

Printed and bound by ProGraphics, Rockford, IL

All Japanese personal names appear in contemporary style, with given name preceding family name.

Cover, p. 14 and pp. 94–95: Yasuko Iyanaga, *Umi kara no okurimono: Air, X* (detail), 2010 (p. 40); inside cover and frontispiece: Kazuyo Onoyama, *Orikata* (detail), 2006 (p. 64); p. 7: Tomoko Arakawa, *Toki no Inori* (detail), 2010 (p. 24); p. 8: Hitomi Nagai, *Birth* (detail), 2011 (p. 55); p. 11: Dai Fujiwara, *Taiyō no ie*, 2000 (p. 28); p. 13: Naoko Serino, *Generating—12* (detail), 2009 (pp. 76–77); p. 90: Naomi Kobayashi, *MA 2000* (detail), 2000 (p. 43).

Copyright © 2011 Japan Society, Inc.

All rights reserved.

This book may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, including illustrations, in any form (beyond copying permitted by Sections 107 and 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law and except by reviewers for the public press), without written permission from the publisher.

ISBN: 978-0-300-17576-9

Library of Congress Control Number: 2011932123

Distributed by Yale University Press for Japan Society

Yale

Yale University Press

302 Temple Street

P.O. Box 209040

New Haven, CT 06520-9040

www.yalebooks.com/art



Japan Society Gallery

333 East 47th Street

New York, NY 10017

www.japansociety.org

FIBER FUTURES Japan's Textile Pioneers

This book documents an exhibition of contemporary Japanese artists who are active at the cutting edge of the global fiber-art movement, transforming fabrics into sculptures, pictures, emulations of nature, or even abstract meditations on memory and identity. The materials they use range from silk, cotton, recycled cocoons, antique paper scraps, jute, and hemp to stainless-steel wire and synthetic fiber. Their methods are sometimes traditional, but can also incorporate the latest weaving and dyeing technology, often with the goal of expressing an environmentally conscious green ethic.

The thirty artists, including both established figures and newcomers, were selected for *Fiber Futures: Japan's Textile Pioneers*, an exhibition at New York's Japan Society Gallery. Introductory essays by Hiroko Watanabe, President of International Textile Network, and Gallery Director Joe Earle provide the context for these innovative, beautiful, and sometimes challenging works of art. The catalogue section features artist statements, informative commentary, and lavish photography, much of it commissioned especially by Japan Society.

Originally conceived in 2007, *Fiber Futures* came to fruition after the devastating natural disasters that struck Japan on March 11, 2011, events which give the exhibition and its catalogue added significance. *Fiber Futures* not only reflects the fecundity of Japanese artistic tradition, but also speaks to the resilience and ingenuity of the Japanese people and their ability to repurpose the past in order to better shape the future.

With 55 color illustrations.



Japan Society 333 East 47th Street New York, NY 10017
www.japansociety.org

FIBER FUTURES

Japan's Textile Pioneers



FIBER FUTURES

Japan's Textile Pioneers

PUBLISHED BY JAPAN SOCIETY
NEW YORK


DISTRIBUTED BY
YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS
NEW HAVEN & LONDON


This volume accompanies the exhibition *Fiber Futures: Japan's Textile Pioneers*, presented at Japan Society Gallery, New York, from September 16 to December 18, 2011. The exhibition was organized by Japan Society, Inc. in collaboration with International Textile Network Japan and Tama Art University Museum, where a larger version of the exhibition was shown from June 4 to July 3, 2011.

This exhibition is generously supported by the E. Rhodes & Leona B. Carpenter Foundation; The Coby Foundation, Ltd.; Chris A. Wachenheim; Friends of Fiber Art International; Henry and Gilda Buchbinder; Furthermore: a program of the J. M. Kaplan Fund; Nomura Foundation, and the Leadership Committee for *Fiber Futures: Japan's Textile Pioneers*.

Further significant funding has been received from the National Endowment for the Arts; the New York State Council on the Arts; and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council.



Media sponsorship is provided by WNYC. 

Transportation assistance is provided by Japan Airlines. 

Exhibitions at Japan Society are made possible in part by the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Endowment Fund and the Friends of the Gallery.

Edited by Melanie B. D. Klein

Designed by Christine Knorr

Translations by Joe Earle

Printed and bound by ProGraphics, Rockford, IL

All Japanese personal names appear in contemporary style, with given name preceding family name.

Cover, p. 14 and pp. 94–95: Yasuko Iyanaga, *Umi kara no okurimono: Air, X* (detail), 2010 (p. 40); inside cover and frontispiece: Kazuyo Onoyama, *Orikata* (detail), 2006 (p. 64); p. 7: Tomoko Arakawa, *Toki no Inori* (detail), 2010 (p. 24); p. 8: Hitomi Nagai, *Birth* (detail), 2011 (p. 55); p. 11: Dai Fujiwara, *Taiyō no ie*, 2000 (p. 28); p. 13: Naoko Serino, *Generating—12* (detail), 2009 (pp. 76–77); p. 90: Naomi Kobayashi, *MA 2000* (detail), 2000 (p. 43).

Copyright © 2011 Japan Society, Inc.

All rights reserved.

This book may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, including illustrations, in any form (beyond copying permitted by Sections 107 and 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law and except by reviewers for the public press), without written permission from the publisher.

ISBN: 978-0-300-17576-9

Library of Congress Control Number: 2011932123

Distributed by Yale University Press for Japan Society

Yale

Yale University Press

302 Temple Street

P.O. Box 209040

New Haven, CT 06520-9040

www.yalebooks.com/art



Japan Society Gallery

333 East 47th Street

New York, NY 10017

www.japansociety.org

CONTENTS

FOREWORD			6
Motoatsu Sakurai			
FIBER FUTURES: Japan's Textile Pioneers			9
Joe Earle			
RESONATING THREADS: Contemporary Japanese Fiber Arts			12
Hiroko Watanabe			
MACHIKO AGANO	17	TETSUO KUSAMA	52
MITSUKO AKUTSU	20	HITOMI NAGAI	54
JUN'ICHI ARAI	22	EMIKO NAKANO	56
TOMOKO ARAKAWA	25	YUH OKANO	59
TETSUO FUJIMOTO	26	FUMINORI ONO	62
DAI FUJIWARA	29	KAZUYO ONOYAMA	65
AKIO HAMATANI	30	REI SAITÔ	66
KYÔKO IBE	32	HISAKO SEKIJIMA	71
KIYOMI IWATA	37	NAOKO SERINO	75
YASUKO IYANAGA	41	REIKO SUDÔ	79
NAOMI KOBAYASHI	42	HIDEHO TANAKA	80
KINYA KOYAMA	44	TAKAAKI TANAKA	83
SHIGEO KUBOTA	47	MISAO TSUBAKI	84
KYÔKO KUMAI	48	HIROKO WATANABE	87
AKIKO KUMAZAWA	51	ATSUKO YOSHIOKA	88
		Suggested Reading	90

FOREWORD

Motoatsu Sakurai PRESIDENT, JAPAN SOCIETY

I congratulate Tama Art University Museum and International Textile Network Japan on their success in forging ahead with the larger version of this exhibition, which was held in Tokyo from June 4 to July 3, despite the devastating earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan on March 11, 2011. Their resilience and resolve—typical of the overall Japanese response to the disaster—has enabled us to open *Fiber Futures* in New York as planned. I am deeply grateful to both organizations for their extraordinary efforts.

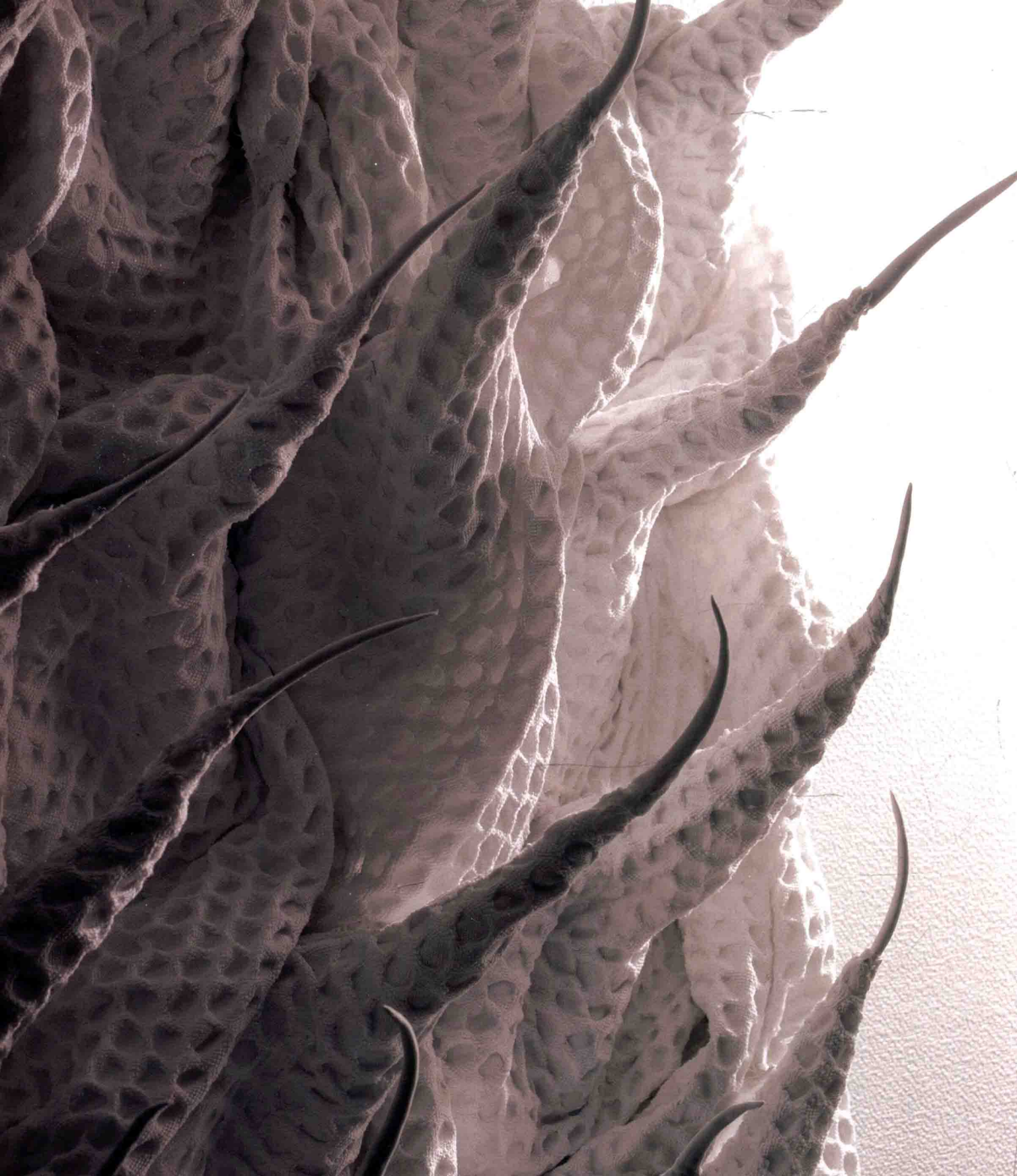
The selection of fifty-two artists for Tokyo and thirty for New York was made by Akira Tatehata, President of Kyoto City University of Arts; veteran critic Fram Kitagawa; Hiromichi Kobayashi, Curator at Tama Art University Museum; and Joe Earle, Director of Japan Society Gallery. We extend heartfelt thanks to our three Japanese colleagues for participating so willingly in this exacting task. Much of the credit for the success of the entire project must go to our friend and collaborator Professor Hiroko Watanabe, President of International Textile Network Japan, a devoted promoter of fiber art who has worked tirelessly to bring the exhibition to fruition. In New York, we benefited from the diligent and dedicated work of Kodama Kanazawa, a contemporary art curator who interned at Japan Society with support from the Bunkachō (Agency for Cultural Affairs) of the Japanese government.

The exhibition has been generously supported by several old and new friends of Japan Society: the E. Rhodes & Leona B. Carpenter Foundation; The Coby Foundation, Ltd.; Chris A. Wachenheim; Furthermore, a program of the J.M. Kaplan Fund; Friends of Fiber Art International; Henry and Gilda Buchbinder; Nomura Foundation; and the Leadership Committee for *Fiber Futures: Japan's Textile Pioneers*. Further significant funding has been received from the National Endowment for the Arts; the New York State Council on the Arts; and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council. We salute all of these generous foundations, groups, and individuals for their continuing commitment to the visual arts in general, and to Japanese culture in particular.

We hope that this show will introduce the dynamic field of Japanese fiber art to a new audience. The works on display range in their materials from ethereal silk and hemp to paper pulp and synthetic fiber, using methods that are sometimes deeply traditional, or may employ the latest weaving and dyeing technology along with an environmentally conscious “green” ethos. Moving far beyond day-to-day utility, Japan’s textile pioneers fuse old techniques with new to create innovative, beautiful, and sometimes challenging works of art. *Fiber Futures* not only reflects the fecundity of Japanese artistic tradition, but speaks to the resilience and ingenuity of the Japanese people in their ability to repurpose the past in order to better shape the future. I would like to thank all of the artists who have participated with such enthusiasm in this ambitious project and enriched our lives with their skills, creativity, and vision.

M. Sakurai





FIBER FUTURES: Japan's Textile Pioneers

Joe Earle DIRECTOR, JAPAN SOCIETY GALLERY

Fiber Futures is the result of a long-term collaboration between Japan Society Gallery, Tama Art University Museum, and International Textile Network Japan, whose stated mission is "to foster public awareness of textile culture...with the ultimate goal of enhancing the quality of life and promoting sustainable global harmony through love and respect for nature." This statement makes a good starting point for a discussion of the extraordinarily varied art reproduced in this catalogue. Although our thirty featured artists occasionally address broader concerns shared by their contemporaries working in other media, the truth is that many of these fiber artists are inspired above all by love of nature, and especially by the sheer joy of working with their chosen materials and techniques, whether traditional or contemporary, natural or artificial.

Kyōko Kumai explores the ability of stainless-steel yarn to behave in an organic, expressive manner; Hiroko Watanabe rejoices in the strength of fabric and the power of dye; and Akio Hamatani tries to let "the fabric take the most natural shape possible," a choice he shares with Hideho Tanaka, who invokes the concept of *tariki* (originally a Buddhist term meaning "the power of another") in support of his creative use of chance effects. A similar urge to let the material take control is expressed in Shigeo Kubota's hemp sculptures, which speak "the language of the yarn." Other artists, however, move beyond the perceived limitations of the fiber medium into territory usually occupied by more mainstream art. Tetsuo Fujimoto struggles not to "lose sight of the fact that I'm working with a piece of cloth," even as he creates pieces "conceived of as drawings or paintings," and similar aspirations—as well as tensions—are seen in Mitsuko Akutsu's tapestries, Misao Tsubaki's patchworks, Atsuko Yoshioka's installations, and the woven sculptures of Hitomi Nagai.

Our spring 2011 exhibition, *Bye Bye Kitty!!!*, identified "Threatened Nature" as a key concern of younger Japanese artists in general. Perhaps it is not surprising to find that fiber specialists, accustomed to working with natural materials, are still more sensitive than their avant-garde colleagues to issues of environmental degradation, even when they switch to new means of expression. For example, although Machiko Agano's latest intriguing interventions abandon her customary materials—sisal, bamboo, and earth—in favor of printed mirror sheet, she uses this new medium to reflect scenes of mass production and consumption. But the message is never stridently polemical, and Agano's work is also a compelling exploration of space and light, just as the eye-teasing tangled nets of Kiyomi Iwata's *Chrysalis* sculpture, made from a coarse form of silk thread that is usually discarded, are so much more than an excuse to find a new use for a neglected product. For veteran paper specialist Kyōko Ibe, her beloved material is simultaneously a flexible, expressive medium and an object lesson in recycling and sustainability, as well as a means of reaching out to threatened craft communities around the world.

A large group of artists connect their work to nature, the cosmos, and the cycle of the seasons without making any specific environmental comment. This is just as true of artists like Tomoko Arakawa, another specialist in stainless steel, or Fuminori Ono and his chemical pulp arrangements, as it is of Naomi Kobayashi's organic paper and thread installations, Yasuko Iyanaga's almost representational silk sculptures, or Naoko Serino's feather-light jute constructions. The works of Kobayashi and Serino, like Akiko Kumazawa's womb-like celebrations of fecundity, also appeal to us in the way that they engage with and challenge the spaces where they are displayed. A very different approach to public art is seen in the work of Tetsuo Kusama, whose tapestries enliven prestigious institutional buildings throughout Japan. Two artists working in paper, Kinya Koyama and Takaaki Tanaka, explore the potential of natural materials in a more conceptual manner. Koyama marries paper from mulberry trees with the cocoons of the silkworms that feed on those trees, and Tanaka transforms paper from a soft to a hard medium by applying it to tautly stretched threads.

Despite fiber art's penchant for green and natural themes, a few practitioners use the medium to explore other contemporary ideas, in particular memory, personality, tradition, and cultural identity. Rei Saitō selects old newspapers and magazines as her medium because they help her to address issues of transformation and childhood memory. For Kazuyo Onoyama, the very process of folding is an auspicious reenactment of traditional origami, resulting in a strikingly contemporary outcome. Emiko Nakano explores the metaphoric relationship between her multilayered weaving process and the formation of national and personal identity. Hisako Sekijima's conceptual approach is turned inward, toward the very process of manufacturing, as she rigorously examines the question of what it is that defines a basket, with results that are always beautiful as well as thought-provoking.

Unlike the *Structure and Surface* show held at the Museum of Modern Art in 1998–99, our focus here is on fiber art rather than fabric manufacture, but no presentation of contemporary textiles would be satisfactory without a sampling of the bold innovations of Jun'ichi Arai, whose leadership has played such a crucial role over the past five decades. Arai, like Reiko Sudō and Yuh Okano, revels in making the artificial seem natural, and in exploring and exploiting the conceptual spaces between technological wizardry, high fashion, and fine art. Dai Fujiwara's *Sun House*, the last work experienced by visitors to the exhibition, broadens our definition of "fiber" to include hard timber as well as soft fabric, and shows us how imaginative use of these materials may indeed help us to enhance the future quality of daily life.



RESONATING THREADS: Contemporary Japanese Fiber Art

Hiroko Watanabe PROFESSOR, TAMA ART UNIVERSITY AND PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL TEXTILE NETWORK JAPAN

It gives me great personal satisfaction to know that *Fiber Futures: Japan's Textile Pioneers* is now on view in the high-profile environment of a New York gallery, and as one of the prime movers behind this project, I feel a strong sense of responsibility for ensuring that visitors to the exhibition appreciate its full significance. "Fiber Art," a new field of creative endeavor, emerged during the postwar period as a development of traditional tapestry weaving both in America and at the long-running Tapestry Biennale in Lausanne, Switzerland. After numerous changes in emphasis and direction in response to the shifting values of the late twentieth century, fiber art rapidly achieved the status of an innovative global art form and soon reached as far as Japan, where a long textile history and rich craft heritage fostered the emergence of a host of talented fiber artists. During the past decade, the unique softness and flexibility of fabric—qualities shared by no other artistic material—have inspired these artists to move beyond mere technical mastery to create daring, original works that hold the promise of still more impressive advances in the years to come.

Throughout my career, the fragmented, partisan nature of the Japanese art world has led me to conduct my study and practice in a spirit of intense self-questioning about the respective definitions of "art," "craft," and "design." That questioning has often focused on issues of communication and function, leading to distinctions such as "art is a dialogue with the self," "design is a dialogue with others," or "craft is a dialogue between things and skills," the latter requiring a profound understanding of both materials and processes on the maker's part. Some critics have addressed this problem of definition in terms of "fine art" as being something practiced by artists, "craft" as something practiced by artisans, and "design" as something practiced as a business. Nowadays, however, even fine art is expected to be more easily understood (a development that has led to increased emphasis on the role of "functional art"), while design can never rise above dry formalism if it fails to reflect essential human qualities as well as the designer's own lifestyle and inner world. In the case of craft, it is important not just to master materials and techniques, but also to work with an awareness of the realities of everyday life and the needs of society. I have come to realize, then, that "art," "design," and "craft," far from being three separate phenomena, constitute one of the cornerstones of the human condition. They are an indispensable source of nourishment, and the essential philosophical foundation for a way of life that is worth living materially, aesthetically, and intellectually.

In early times, everything was made by hand. Even architecture was regarded as an art form. The Greek and Roman statues that we admire today in museums were originally intended as decorations for palaces and tombs or furnishings for the mansions of the wealthy, each with its own particular *topos*, or appropriate location. It was only after the Industrial Revolution that the discrete concepts of "design," "craft," and "fine art" emerged. Contemporary fine art, once considered suitable for display everywhere and anywhere, now seems to be in search of a new *topos*, and in these changing times,