

Serizawa

MASTER OF JAPANESE TEXTILE DESIGN



Master of Japanese Textile Design

Serizawa

edited by Joe Earle

with contributions by Kim Brandt, Matthew Fraleigh,
Shukuko Hamada, Terry Satsuki Milhaupt, Hiroshi Mizuo,
and Amanda Mayer Stinchecum

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With the exception of the lists of Japan Society friends and directors and the authors of essays, all Japanese personal names appear in traditional style, with family name preceding given name.

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p. iii: fig. 25 (detail); p. viii: Serizawa Keisuke applying colors to a textile with the Mandala of the Four Seasons (cat. 54), 1982; p. x: Serizawa Keisuke in the fabric-stretching yard of his workshop in Kamata, Tokyo, 1982; p. 92: cat. 22 (detail); p. 106: fig. 14; p. 124: cat. 38 (detail); p. 130: cat. 43 (detail); p. 132: cat. 60; p. 134: cat. 81 (detail)

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Designated a Living National Treasure in 1956, Serizawa Keisuke (1895–1984) was one of the greatest artists of twentieth-century Japan. This is the first book in English to trace Serizawa's artistic legacy in detail, using the finest examples of his work from leading Japanese collections.

A major exponent of the *mingei* (people's crafts) movement, Serizawa achieved fame as a textile designer using traditional stencil-dyeing techniques and often working in large-scale formats such as folding screens or kimonos. The stunning works in this catalogue are important not only for the originality of their conception but also for the variety of their materials: cotton, silk, hemp, and a range of other fibers, and paper decorated with the brilliant yet warm hues of vegetable dyes. Dramatic in design, Serizawa's textiles have an expressive power that far transcends expectations of a "craft" medium.

Serizawa



Foreword

Motoatsu Sakurai
President
Japan Society

Japan Society could not have presented this ambitious survey of the work of Serizawa Keisuke without the backing of many foundations and individuals. A two-year grant from the E. Rhodes & Leona B. Carpenter Foundation will help us meet the cost of this and two future shows. Chris Wachenheim and Edward and Anne Studzinski continue to display extraordinary personal generosity: we thank them once again for being such loyal members of the Japan Society family. This catalogue, the most comprehensive English-language publication devoted to Serizawa, is subsidized by a three-year grant from Jack and Susy Wadsworth through The W. L. S. Spencer Foundation. We have benefited once more from a grant by the National Endowment for the Arts and we also welcome The Coby Foundation, Ltd., as a new supporter of Japan Society. In addition, we offer sincere thanks to The Blakemore Foundation, The Japan Foundation, Furthermore: a program of the J. M. Kaplan Fund, and an anonymous foundation. We are indebted to Japan Airlines for their ongoing and critical help with transportation, and to our media partner WNYC New York Public Radio. Special mention should be made of the Friends of the Gallery, whose consistent support and encouragement remain so important to the realization of our long-term goals.

In Japan we especially appreciate the support of Hagino Kōki, president of Tōhoku Fukushi University, who not only granted Japan Society permission to display so many treasures from the Serizawa Keisuke

Art and Craft Museum but also facilitated loans from many other institutions and private collectors. We owe an additional debt of gratitude to all the lenders, as well as to Serizawa Keiko, daughter-in-law of Serizawa Keisuke and deputy director of the Serizawa Keisuke Art and Craft Museum, and to her colleague Hamada Shukuko, professor at Tōhoku Fukushi University and curator of the museum. Ably assisted by Honda Akiko and Nara Aya, Ms. Hamada has been closely involved from the start with many aspects of the implementation of this exhibition.

I am delighted to note that *Serizawa: Master of Japanese Textile Design* is the one hundredth exhibition at Japan Society Gallery. As an artist who drew deeply on Asian tradition yet created work that expressed a global sensitivity, Serizawa perfectly symbolizes our commitment to artistic communication that transcends national boundaries. I congratulate the gallery on this impressive milestone and look forward with confidence to the next century of exhibitions.

M. Sakurai



Foreword

Kōki Hagino

President

Tōhoku Fukushi University

Director

Tōhoku Fukushi University

Serizawa Keisuke

Art and Craft Museum

I am delighted that we are able to hold this exhibition of the work of Serizawa Keisuke at Japan Society Gallery in New York.

One of Japan's greatest textile craftsmen, Serizawa Keisuke received two major awards from the Japanese government. In 1956 he was named Holder of an Important Intangible Cultural Property, a title better known outside Japan as Living National Treasure, and in 1976 he was appointed Member of the Order of Cultural Merit. The colorful artistry and boundless creativity of his work continue to delight his many admirers a quarter century after his death.

Serizawa's first exhibition outside of his native country took place in 1976–77 at the Grand Palais in Paris. This was followed by exhibitions in the United States, first in La Jolla (1979) and then in Riverside and at the Mingei International Museum in San Diego (1997–98). In Europe there have been shows at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh (2001) and the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg (2006), and in 1981 the French government appointed Serizawa Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. Thanks to these exhibitions and awards, his name has become widely known overseas as well as in Japan.

I hope that this exhibition, by bringing the beauty of Japanese textile art to the American public, will contribute to the further development of close and cordial relations between our two nations.

The Serizawa Keisuke Art and Craft Museum opened in 1989 on the campus of Tōhoku Fukushi

University. Serizawa Keisuke's son, Serizawa Chōsuke, himself a professor at our university, had previously presented the university with three thousand works by his father as well as a thousand pieces from his collection of folk crafts from around the world, creating the perfect opportunity for us to begin work on our own museum and thereby play a leadership role in the development of university museums in Japan. When the Serizawa Museum opened, Serizawa Chōsuke became its first director, and he continued to serve in this capacity until his death in 2006, laying the foundations for its success and overseeing the Riverside, San Diego, and Edinburgh exhibitions. No one would have been more pleased than he to know that the twentieth anniversary of his beloved museum is being marked by an exhibition of his father's work at New York's Japan Society Gallery.

It only remains for me to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have given this project such generous support and understanding.

萩野浩基



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Catalogue

1. Eggplants and Strawberries

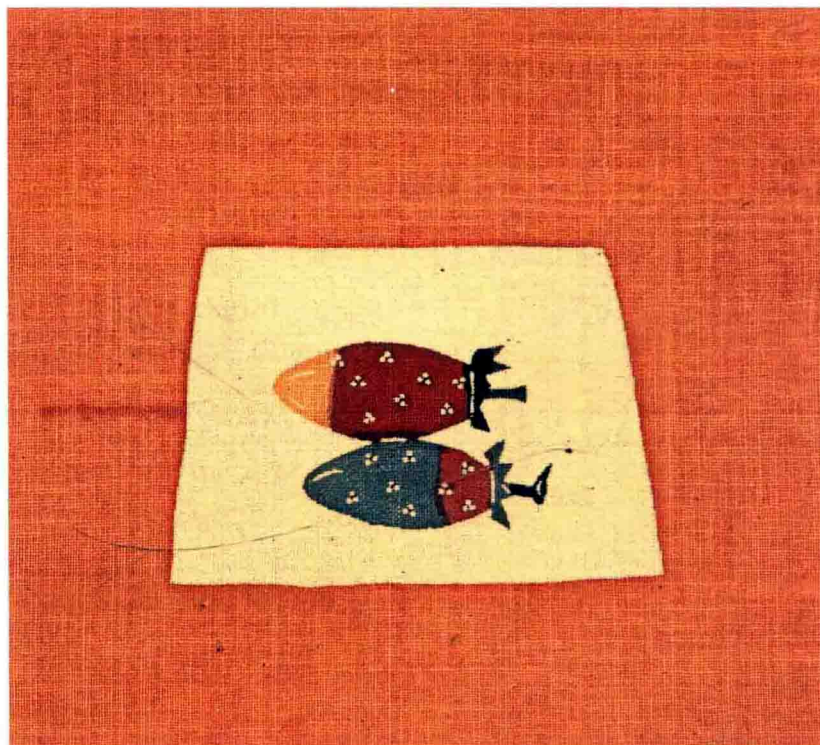
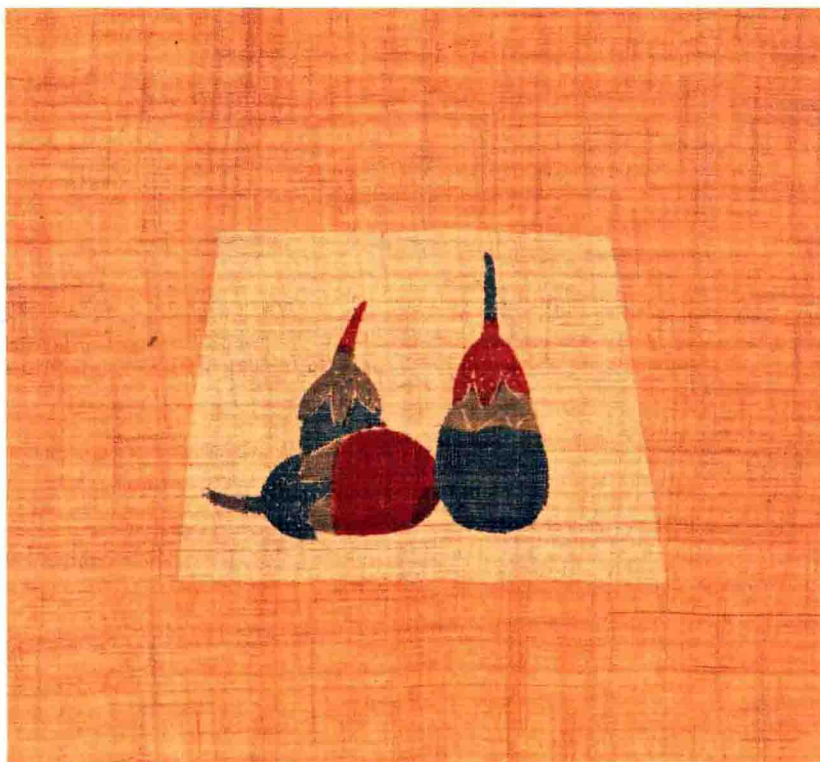
1930, pair of hanging scrolls, stencil-dyed hemp

Overall size: $44\frac{3}{8} \times 15\frac{5}{8}$ and $44\frac{3}{8} \times 15\frac{5}{8}$ in.

(112.8 × 39.8 and 112 × 39.6 cm)

Serizawa Keiko Collection

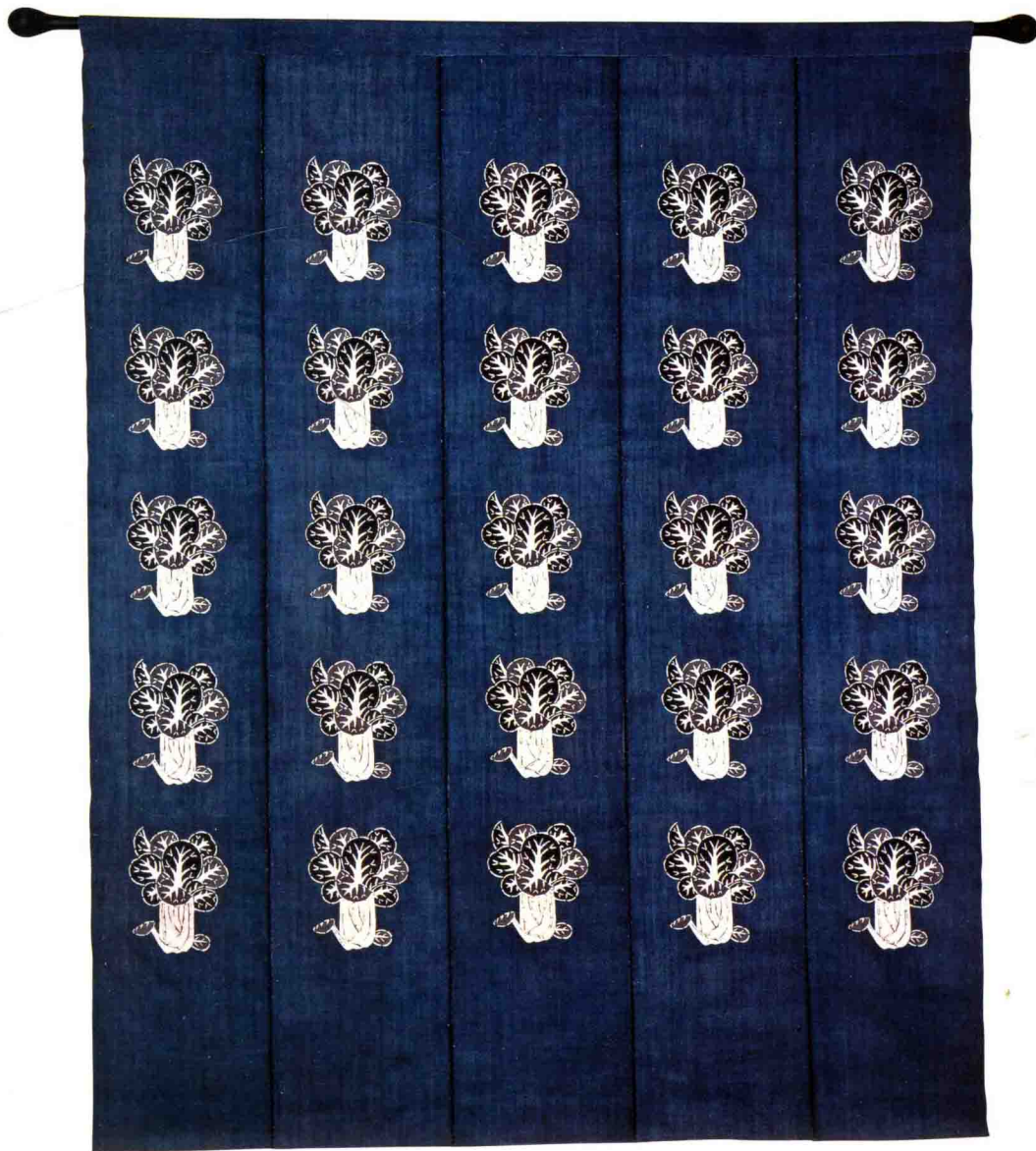
Executed just two years after Serizawa first encountered Okinawan textiles, these two small studies are among his earliest essays in the technique of stencil dyeing.



2. Chinese Cabbage

1978 (based on a design first executed in 1929),
partition hanging, stencil-dyed cotton
Overall size: 80¼ × 63¾ in. (204 × 162 cm)
Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Art Museum

In 1929, Serizawa drew praise from two famous ceramic artists, Tomimoto Kenkichi and Hamada Shōji, for a prize-winning hand-painted wax-resist wall hanging. Nearly half a century later, he executed this copy of the design in his signature kataezome technique. The original was Serizawa's earliest major dyed textile work: looking back he commented that "by using wax resist to apply indigo pigment to a naturalistic botanical drawing, I managed to capture, albeit distantly, the look of ancient dyework."



3. Two Scenes from *Kojiki* (Records of Ancient Matters)

c. 1933, pair of hanging scrolls, stencil-dyed
hemp (Susanoo no Mikoto) and stencil-dyed
silk (Yamasachihiko)

Overall size of each: $48\frac{3}{8} \times 19\frac{1}{2}$ in. (122.2 × 49.4 cm)

Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Art Museum

For this pair of densely designed early figural compositions, one of the last works of his Shizuoka period before he moved to Tokyo, Serizawa drew on two episodes in the *Kojiki*, Japan's oldest historical chronicle, compiled around 700. In the first scene, the storm god Susanoo no Mikoto, expelled from heaven for his violent behavior toward his sister, Amaterasu the sun goddess, slays an eight-headed dragon. Serizawa gives the storm god the shape of a ceramic tomb-guardian figure known as *haniwa*, made between the third and the sixth centuries. In the second scene, the harvest god Yamasachihiko sits astride a giant shark that was the true form of his former wife, the daughter of the dragon king of the sea.

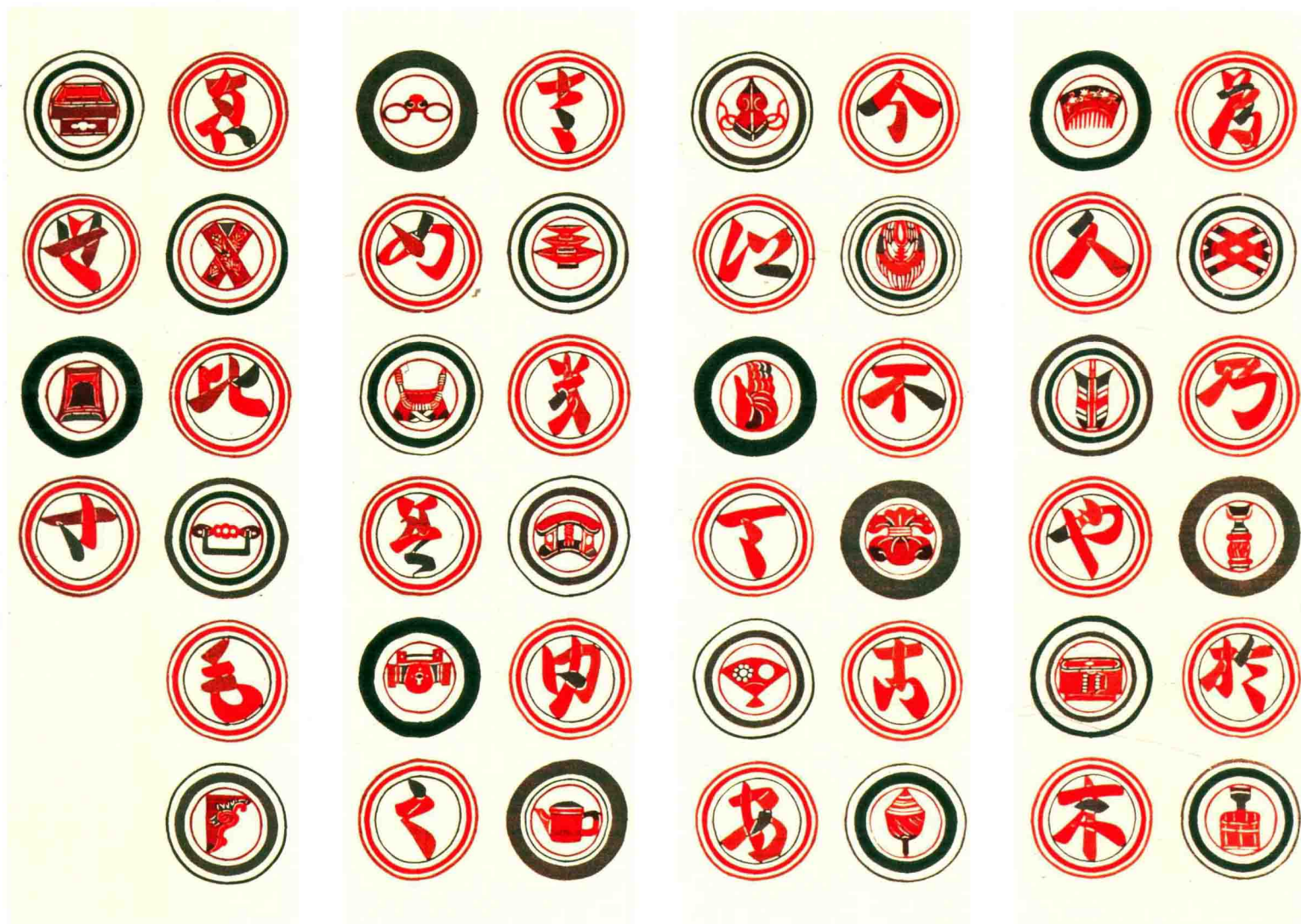




4. Scenes from *Isoho Monogatari* (Aesop's Fables)

1935, four-leaf screen, stencil-dyed silk
Overall size: 59 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 61 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (151.5 × 156 cm)
Tōhoku Fukushi University
Serizawa Keisuke Art and Craft Museum

Aesop's fables have been known in Japan since the surprisingly early date of 1593, when the Jesuit mission press published a version in romanized Japanese. A Japanese-script edition of the text appeared a few years later, and the first of several premodern illustrated versions was printed in 1659. Sixteen of Serizawa's Aesop designs were originally executed in scroll format and shown at a folk-craft exhibition in 1932, while the first record of an Aesop screen appears in the catalogue of an exhibition held by Serizawa after he moved to Kamata in March 1934. The roundel designs, somewhat less stylized than the two *Kojiki* episodes (see cat. 3), can be seen as a precursors to Serizawa's much more ambitious foray into European literature, *Ehon Don Kihōte* (see cat. 9).



5. Japanese Syllables

1940, eight-leaf screen, stencil-dyed
tsumugi-weave silk

Overall size: 60 × 121¼ in. (152 × 308 cm)

Japan Folk Crafts Museum

This is Serizawa's first large-scale design based on the forty-seven graphs of the cursive Japanese phonetic script known as hiragana. Read downward from the right in columns, the syllables are arranged in the same traditional order as in an ancient poem that uses each of them once only, starting, *i*, *ro*, *ha*, *ni*, *ho*, *he*, *to*, *chi*, and *ri*. They are alternated with images of objects whose names begin with the same syllable: *iori* (hut), *rōsoku* (candle), *hagoita* (a decorative racket

used in New Year's games), *nishikide* (enameled decoration on porcelain), *hobune* (sailboat), *heishi* (sake jar), *toishi* (grindstone), *chasen* (tea whisk), and *rin* (bell). Many of the subsequent references similarly reflect Serizawa's detailed knowledge of unusual traditional artifacts. For other treatments of the Japanese syllabary, see catalogues 55, 60, 75, and 100. The subsequent graphs are: