

DE-Munich

'East Meets West'

Japanese craftsmanship has been held in the highest regard since time immemorial, and so we were particularly excited about the opportunity of taking a course with Kazunori Oryu. The 5-day workshop 'East Meets West—for Students. Traditional Japanese Techniques and Materials for Paper Conservation' was organised by the Institute of Book and Manuscript Conservation (IBR) of the Bavarian State Library in Munich from 12 to 16 September, 2011.

In 2009, Kazunori Oryu already gave the course 'East Meets West' at the IBR once. Then it was aimed at conservators in co-operation with the IADA and it was a great success. This year, two courses were organized by the IBR, one for conservators again and the other one aimed at students. There were ten students from the universities and Fachhochschulen (Universities of Applied Sciences) in Cologne, Hildesheim, Munich, and Stuttgart whom took part. In future it is hoped that this workshop will take place biennially and be open to students from all over Europe.

Kazunori Oryu is a paper conservation master with a lifetime's experience in the field of paper conservation. From 1992 to 1997 he worked as a Research Assistant at the Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties and held a position as Associate Professor at the Kyoto University of Art and Design from 2000 to 2006. Since then he has been working as a freelance conservator and has been holding training courses for paper conservators in the USA, Canada and Europe. His friendly, open personality makes him an ideal mediator between Japanese and Western culture.

The Methodical Approach

As part of this particular methodological approach, we created a karibari, a panel onto which several

layers of Japanese paper have been glued, used for drying objects made of paper. A karibari is similar in structure to a Japanese folding screen (fusuma), and with its 'paper bags' helps prevent dimensional changes resulting from climatic fluctuations.

Ten layers of paper were applied one by one to the karibari, whereby the alternating grain orientation of the paper and variations in the consistency of the paste and the quality of the paper all had to be taken into consideration. The students were able to study the construction in all its detail, yet there was still ample time to go beyond the purely technical aspects and discuss matters of Japanese history and culture.

The various kinds of tools and materials required to build the karibari served as the point of departure for further discussions:

- > How are the Japanese pastes ShinNori and Funori produced, and how are they employed?
- > Which kinds of fibres are used for Japanese papers?
- > What are the properties of different kinds of Japanese paper?

It was particularly fascinating to see Kazunori Oryu use Japanese brushes. He would stir the paste with vigorous, strong movements, and when he would apply the paper sheets to the karibari it became strikingly evident what a strong material paper, however fragile in appearance, actually is.



Kazunori Oryu, Ritsuko Schuster-Ishii, conservator at the IBR, and the students.
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Excursus: Japanese Hanging Scrolls (Kakejiku)

Japanese hanging scrolls (kakejiku) were the subject of a special study session. Kazunori Oryu had brought with him not only objects from the Bavarian State Library but also a hanging scroll which had been completely disassembled. Using this he was able to illustrate to the participants every single aspect of the material, function and in particular the different mounting methods of the hanging scrolls.

It is important to emphasize that Kazunori Oryu always made a big effort to go beyond the mere material and to speak about the meaning of the objects. For example, the textile parts of a hanging scroll have a higher value than those made of paper. Hanging scrolls are viewed while seated, which explains the proportional construction. And: those little ribbons are not there to mount the scrolls but to scare off birds!

Individual Support From Kazunori Oryu for Every Student

Where words failed—the workshop was held in English—Kazunori Oryu's hands were most eloquent. Handling large pieces of paper, covered in damp paste, which he made look so easy and elegant, was quite a challenge for the untrained hand. But here, too, help and advice was immediately offered, even if it was only a matter of blowing slightly on the paper in order to make it cling to the karibari.

Kazunori Oryu's helpful little hints and pieces of advice, not to be found in any of the textbooks, not only provided us with the guidelines for building a karibari but they made the whole course, with all its variety of thematic material, a rich and rewarding experience.

A Special Thank You

This workshop will surely be long remembered by all participants, not least of all thanks to the efforts of Ritsuko Schuster-Ishii, conservator

at the IBR. She was the one who not only established the contact with Kazunori Oryu, but also worked together with him on the conception and organisation of the whole workshop. Furthermore, she kept providing snacks for the participants after already having organized an initial get-together as well as a sushi-evening, which was followed by the presentation of a film, in which Kazunori Oryu can be seen working on the restoration of the Hokke Mandala (available at <www.iccrom.org>). A special vote of gratitude is due the conservators Karin Eckstein MA and Heidi Fischer, colleagues of Ritsuko Schuster-Ishii at the IBR, who helped prepare the workshop and were always on hand with help and advice during the workshop.

The support of the Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung München deserves special mention, without their generous sponsorship probably none of the students would have been able to take part in this outstanding workshop.

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