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芸 [Gei] : The Beauty of Ephemeral and Eternal Opens at Contemporary Craft

PITTSBURGH, PA (August 2024) – Contemporary Craft is pleased to announce its upcoming exhibition, *芸 [Gei]: The Beauty of Ephemeral and Eternal*, opening Friday, September 13 with a reception from 5:30 – 8:00 PM and on view through January 18, 2025. This unique exhibition features the interplay between the beauty of Ikebana – traditional Japanese flower arrangement – and the eternal nature of well-crafted objects. Through the work on view and associated programming, *[Gei]* celebrates the harmonizing impermanence and eternity in Japan’s cultural tapestry.

Featured exhibition artists include Tadao Arimoto, Yoko Sekino-Bové, Carol Kumata, Miwa Neishi, and Sogetsu Pittsburgh, led by Reiko Nakajima and Atsumi Sewell. Throughout the run of the exhibition, the flower arrangements will morph and change color with the passage of time. When paired with the enduring skill of the craft objects, the juxtaposition of these elements sparks a contemplation of time, materiality, processes, culture and heritage.

"There is a rich history and unique cultural perspective found in Japanese craft practices. The exhibition title, *芸 [Gei]*, encompasses multifaceted meanings, including art, craft, processes, and artistic skill. Through the lens of Sogetsu Ikebana practices, which emphasize individual originality and creativity, we learn to respect relationships such as space, movement, and balance," said Associate Director Yu-San Cheng. "This exhibition aims to guide viewers on a journey that explores the harmonizing of impermanence and eternity through the collaborative dialogue between Sogetsu Ikebana and the featured artists."

As part of exhibition-related programming, CC is hosting a concert of traditional Japanese chamber and folk music on Nov 1, 6:30 – 7:30 PM. This performance will feature musicians Kanoko Kamata and Devon Osamu-Tipp, who will be playing the Shamisen (a three string lute) and Shakuhachi (end-blown bamboo flute), respectively. This intimate concert will take place in the gallery space, surrounded by the tranquil artwork. Audiences can expect to enjoy music interspersed with educational content, audience participation, and dialogue with the musicians.

Throughout the course of the exhibition, there will also be a myriad of tea-centric experiences that visitors can enjoy as part of the exhibition. These tea experiences will allow visitors to experience tea culture in a setting crafted by artist Tadao Arimoto. Regularly scheduled "tea-hours" and a tea ceremony performance are being planned, and DIY tea kits will be available for purchase in the Store. More details are forthcoming.

Opening Weekend Events

Opening Reception: Friday, September 13, 5:30 – 8:00 PM. Free and open to the public. Join us as we celebrate the opening of *芸 [Gei]: The Beauty of Ephemeral and Eternal*. Light refreshments will be served.

Artist Talk: Saturday, September 14, 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM. Free, registration required. *[Gei]* artists will be in the gallery discussing their work and answering questions from visitors.

Additional events will be announced in the coming weeks.

Exhibition-Related Workshops

[Sogetsu Ikebana: Fundamentals & Techniques with Sogetsu Pittsburgh](#)

Saturday, October 5, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Led by Sogetsu Pittsburgh's founder and principal teachers Reiko Nakajima and Atsumi Sewell, this session will include an introduction to the modern Sogetsu school of Ikebana, a demonstration of the process and key techniques of crafting a basic Ikebana arrangement, followed by participants creating their own arrangements with guided instruction and one-on-one feedback.

[Sogetsu Ikebana: Freestyle & Form with Sogetsu Pittsburgh](#)

Saturday, November 9, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Led by Sogetsu Pittsburgh's founder and principal teachers Reiko Nakajima and Atsumi Sewell, this session will include an introduction to the modern Sogetsu school of Ikebana, a demonstration of the range of possibilities of the Sogetsu style, followed by participants creating their own freestyle Ikebana arrangement with a container they bring from home and concluding with a casual critique and group discussion.

About the Artists

Tadao Arimoto is a Japanese-born woodworker living in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He designs functional, everyday objects inspired by the diversity of forms and processes in nonhuman nature. In an anthropocentric landscape dominated by right angles, Tadao's work draws on the beauty and strength of organic structures. His use of natural materials explores the passage of time as measured by ancient trees and ageless stones. Before arriving in the United States, Tadao studied industrial design at the International Design Institute in Kyoto. He has lived and practiced his craft in Pittsburgh for 40+ years.

Carol Kumata is a sculptor living and working in Pittsburgh, PA. She received her M.F.A. in 1979 from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. In 2021, she retired after a 42-year teaching career at Carnegie Mellon University's School of Art, where she shared her deep knowledge of metalworking and sculpture with generations of students. Teaching was always her greatest interest, working with a diverse range of students in various media, concentrating on three dimensional ideas and execution. Carol taught a variety of courses across the curriculum, including foundational classes, Senior Project, Art in Context, Summer projects, and study abroad courses in Germany and Italy, on top of a wide array of sculpture studios.

Whether small or large in scale, Kumata's studio practice occupies "the ideologically suspect and undefined territory between functional craft...and fine art," striving to preserve the integrity of the materials while illuminating the human condition. Carol has incorporated a variety of materials from traditional metalsmithing to mixed media and found objects. Her work spans the scale from hand holdable works to installations that command an entire room. She often uses visual and word puns to reflect on the history of objects, as well as to comment on a particular human situation or reality. Much of the work deals with the fragile and ephemeral. Carol has exhibited both regionally and nationally, and has been the recipient of numerous awards including fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and Pennsylvania Council for the Arts.

Miwa Neishi is a Tokyo-born, New York-based artist, whose sculptural works draw inspiration from abstract expressionism, prehistoric clay figures, and Japanese calligraphy. Neishi has studied and worked in various regions in Japan and in the US, exploring art in both contemporary and traditional perspectives. Her sculptural flower vases are made to invite people to connect with the elemental forms of life—earth and nature—in their homes. The placements of the openings of each work are playful, sometimes challenging, to open the new ways of looking at arrangement.

Yoko Sekino-Bové was born in Osaka, Japan. She worked as a graphic designer in Tokyo and Los Angeles before her passion for ceramic art took her onto a new path.

After receiving an MFA in Ceramics from the University of Oklahoma, Yoko moved to Washington, Pennsylvania, and started working from her home studio. Her porcelain work has been exhibited in galleries, museums, and most importantly, many private homes (mainly kitchens). She enjoys teaching workshops at craft schools and serves residencies all over the world. Currently, she teaches ceramics at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, PA.

Yoko approaches ceramic art as a way to share stories, using function as a design element to enhance the experience. Her ambition in art is for her work to serve people in many different ways, to provide comfort, joy, and excitement.

Sogetsu Pittsburgh is a collective of ikebana practitioners dedicated to studying and sharing the modern art of Sogetsu ikebana through workshops, special projects and exhibitions. The group, founded in 1990 by Reiko Nakajima and Joan Walter, introduces the practice to the public and community through collaborations with various organizations and artists. Past events and partners have included the Carnegie Museum of Art, Phipps Conservatory, the Andy Warhol Museum, the Cleveland Botanical Garden, Ohio University Eastern and more. Sogetsu Pittsburgh was a 2023 Fallingwater Institute Artist-in-Residence, with members presenting *Elements of Balance*, a curated installation throughout the historic house, terraces and grounds. The collective continues to be led by Nakajima and Atsumi Sewell as principal instructors and is active with Ikebana International Pittsburgh Chapter #25, established in 1959 by Kay McKenna of Greensburg, cultivating the appreciation of ikebana in the region.

Sogetsu is a school of ikebana founded in Japan in 1927 by artist Sofu Teshigahara on the premise that traditional ikebana – originally intended for altars, the tokonoma and tea ceremonies – could be expanded and be created “anytime, anywhere, by anyone.” Sogetsu incorporates influences including modern sculpture, abstract art, architecture, and design while honoring custom and particular techniques.

About Contemporary Craft

Presenting contemporary art in craft materials by regional, national, and international artists since 1971, Contemporary Craft offers cutting edge exhibitions focusing on multicultural diversity and contemporary art, as well as a range of artist-led studio workshops, community engagement programs, and a store featuring work by top artists from across the country. Located at 5645 Butler Street in Pittsburgh, PA, Contemporary Craft’s exhibition and Drop-In Studio are free to the public.

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