

SITE SPECIFIC WORK

—Designing a Kasuri Textile Exhibit—

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The invitation to exhibit my works at Gallery K in Kurashiki city, Okayama prefecture as a part of 'Arts and Crafts Kurashiki 05' ; in conjunction with The Fifth International Conference on Arts and Welfare, inspired me to create a site specific work.

Gallery: Gallery K is located in a prominent cultural area among many galleries and shops that bring up the beauty of old Japan, and offers an environment suitable for contemporary art. Its white walls compliment the floor surfaced with glossy white ceramic tiles. Fortunate on this occasion to find myself fully surrounded by white space I felt the same creative temptation as other artists must have felt as they stood in this gallery.

Space layout: The thoughtfully designed layout of Gallery K was created by the architect, Mr. Soichi Mizutani, and consists of two rooms, one square and one elongated rectangular room. These two galleries are adjoined to each other in such a way as to give a sense of attachment and separation at the same time. All works exhibited in the square room cannot be viewed simultaneously until the viewer completely enters the space. That is to say, one can only see a fragment of the exhibited works in this gallery while standing at a distance in the other room. I interpreted this arrangement as a kind of 'peeking effect' for the viewer to connect with (as previewing) and disengage from (as an unseen surprise) the exhibited works in these two separate rooms. I decided to place three long narrow weavings in the square room so as to anchor the exhibit. Placing this triptych there created the desired unifying effect since the doorway within the wall dramatically framed the first vertical wall hanging, along with a second reflecting floor piece - offering a visual pathway and focal point. Counter to a more straight forward approach of spotlighting all element of the triptych, I concealed the third weaving of this grouping from the distant view; and instead hung the small square piece in this same visual opening. This weaving which echoed the shape of the square room where the viewer could see it from the adjoining room and also from the gallery entrance. In addition, this small weaving had similar color and tonality as the center piece closest to it.

Design objectives: My recent works have been about the abstraction of color. The gallery's white space became the perfect vessel for displaying my weavings. In designing this site specific work I have been mindful of the colors and the energies they emit - of their reflections and echoes from every angle; so that within this pristine room the viewer would be wholly embraced by color and light. To make a connection between the triptych and eight new pieces I duplicated the vertical design of the triptych in four horizontal sections. To vary this scheme I hung three of these four square weavings side by side on the wall and positioned the fourth piece on the opposite wall away from the other three, out of their original sequence. This offsetting of similar design elements helped enliven and enhance the convergence of color and light in the gallery space.

Theme of Exhibit: During the week of my exhibit and the international conference, many craftsmen and art scholars presented lectures on the Arts & Crafts movement from its origins to the present day. William Morris was one of its leading practitioners in 19th century England. His ideas cover many fields where craft and art are not always recognized as separate entities. I see in William Morris's textiles an attempt to introduce new meaning and fresh ideas into the fields of craft and art. New forms of artistic expression often followed his development as a craftsman. I believe this is true of my own weaving as well. When I create my work using traditional weaving methods I am refining my craft though my intention is primarily artistic. In this exhibit I introduce more painterly methods by dyeing kasuri threads in combination with traditional hand-tying to produce the woven patterns and nuance of color for this wonderfully luminous gallery space.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the coordinator of the event 'Arts & Crafts Kurashiki 05', Ms. Toyomi Harada, and the owner of Gallery K, Ms. Atsuko Kawai for having given me this very rewarding experience; along with my special thanks to all the people who came to view this exhibit during the hot summer week of 2005.