

HIROKO YAMADA, Curator

Hiroko Yamada was born and raised in Japan, and her first career was as an architect in Tokyo. She became interested in small-scale design and chose to pursue this interest at the University of Wisconsin-Madison under the mentoring of metalsmiths Fred Fenster and Eleanor Moty. In addition to becoming an accomplished jeweler, she dedicated herself to helping others create one-of-a-kind works in metal. This commitment has included teaching Penland workshops regularly since 2005.

For the past five years, Hiroko has been involved in projects that promote exchanges between American and Japanese metal artists through exhibitions and workshops with a goal of introducing traditional Japanese metal work and techniques to Western art metal culture.

Hiroko worked closely with Penland Gallery director Kathryn Gremley in creating two exhibitions that presented the work of American metalsmiths in Japan. *The Art of the Brooch* appeared at Gallery C.A.J in Kyoto, Kobe Design University, and Museum of Kyoto in 2014. *North American Mokume-Gane Exhibit* appeared at Tsubame Industrial Materials Museum in Niigata and Yamawaki Art College Gallery in Tokyo in 2016. Both included Penland-affiliated artists.

PENLAND GALLERY

Gallery Hours: Tues-Sat 10-5,
Sun 12-5, Closed Monday
penland.org/gallery, penland.org/shop
PENLAND SCHOOL OF CRAFT

In 2018 Hiroko's work was included in the *Japanese Traditional Art Metal Exhibition* in Tokyo and Kumamoto, along with work by Seth Gould and Andrew Meers, who have both been Penland resident artists and students of Hiroko's. In 2017 and 2018, she co-curated, with professor Hiroki Iwata of Tokyo University of Arts, an exhibition of work by American and Japanese metal artists at Ginza Okariya Gallery in Tokyo. She also facilitated an invitation for American artists to study with Masters and Living Treasures in Japan and invited a Japanese Master to teach workshops in the U.S. in 2016, 2017, and 2019.

Hiroko explains all of these activities this way: *The long history of Japanese traditional metal skills has slowly seen a decline in being passed to the next generation. The technique and skill has either been closed and protected or limited to certain families or selected artists. In order to pass on the skills, Japanese artists and Masters have realized that there is a need to be open and willing to teach, not only within the family, or even to other Japanese, but also to be open to instruction internationally. My mission is to bring together artistic skills and knowledge that will help both Japanese and American artists grow in their work and achieve new levels of excellence.*

Front: from left: Yoshio Ueno, Fumiki Taguchi, Norio Tamagawa



TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE

Japanese techniques in contemporary metal arts | October 1–November 17, 2019

Seisei Asai 浅井盛征
Kiyoko Fujie 藤江聖公
Seth Gould セス ゴードウ
Noriko Hagino 萩野紀子
Hiroki Iwata 岩田広己
Marvin Jensen マーヴィン ジェンセン
Kazuo Kashima 鹿島和生
Morihito Katsura 桂 盛仁
Jim Kelso ジム ケルソー
Takashi Kojima 小嶋崇嗣
Andrew Meers アンドリュー ミース
Haruo Mitsuta 満田 晴穂
Hiroshi Nishikata 西片浩
Ryota Nishikata 西片亮太
Yuko Okahara 岡原有子
Masako Onodera マサコ オノデラ
Motoko Oshiyama 押山元子
Yukie Osumi 大角幸枝
Ryuhei Sako 佐故龍平
Hiroko Sato-Pijanowski ヒロコ サトウ ピジャノスキ
George Sawyer ジョージ ソイヤー
Makoto Susa 須佐真
Fumiki Taguchi 田口史樹
Maki Takehana 竹花万貴
Emiko Takenouchi 竹之内恵美子
Norio Tamagawa 玉川宣夫
Tatsushi Tamagawa 玉川達士
Yoshio Ueno 上野彬郎
Mizuko Yamada 山田瑞子



Clockwise from left:
Ryota Nishikata
Haruo Mitsuta
Hiroko Sato-Pijanowski

The earliest connection between Penland School of Craft and Japan is recorded as 1953, when the international division of the YMCA sponsored Michiko Sato, a social worker from Japan, to attend a Penland class. The Penland archives show visits by intrepid Japanese educators and leaders during the late 1950s and 1960s. This was shortly after the esteemed Japanese potter Shoji Hamada visited Western North Carolina's Black Mountain College, where he participated in a pottery seminar. The seminar invitation included the heading of *Eastern Center for Interchange of Work & Ideas East to West*. Soetsu Yanagi, the philosopher and creator of the Japanese Folkcraft movement lectured on Buddhist aesthetics. Japanese culture, design, artists, and studio practice were influencing contemporary craft in the United States.

From the mid-1960s onward, the classes at Penland reflected this influence through Japanese-American instructors such as ceramist Toshiko Takaezu or instructors who had developed their skills through study in Japan. Metalsmith Hiroko Yamada began teaching at Penland in 2005, and has taught many times since. Her personal influence on the Penland metals program is measurable through the myriad of students and instructors, both Japanese and American, who have been impacted by her efforts to share Japanese metalsmithing techniques. It was this indefatigable enthusiasm that gave birth to this exhibition; the opportunity to share the works of contemporary Japanese artists side by side with American artists who had adopted Japanese techniques in their studio practice.

Curated by Hiroko, the exhibition brings together twenty-nine artists: seven American and twenty-two Japanese, three of whom have received the highest honor to be designated as Japanese Living Treasures. The artists' work represents a broad view; based in historical techniques and approaches, they range from strictly adhering to tradition to reinventing or reinterpreting tradition through a contemporary practice. The age range of the participants is just as broad and inclusive; it is evident that Hiroko is reinforcing respect for the masters and sensei while supporting the next generation of makers and their creative practice.



Ryuhei Sako

It was a conscious decision to label and caption the works in the exhibition using Japanese terminology for the techniques used. Although most viewers will be unfamiliar with words such as *nunome zogan*, *mokume-gane*, *kinkeshi*, and *shakudo*, the terms honor the knowledge and training of these highly skilled artists.

It bears mentioning that many of these techniques and materials, because of their non-Western roots, are markedly different than those used in contemporary metal work in the United States. This exhibition is quite remarkable in that respect, as well as for the sheer beauty of the works themselves. The incalculable hours devoted to making each of these pieces are unmistakable and humbling. The deft hands – wielding hammers, chisels, and torches – are evident in the final works. The devotion to such skill and perseverance towards mastery should resonate with all who aspire to understand a craft so fully and intuitively.

With deep appreciation to Hiroko Yamada for bringing this exhibition to fruition – domo arigato gozaimasu.

Kathryn Gremley
Director, Penland Gallery