

Weekly Cultural News

Substitute for monthly Cultural News

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Keep Japanese Culture Alive in Southern California

New Yorker Youtube channel features *Flower Punk*, documentary of acclaimed floral artist in Tokyo's Aoyama

The flowing is an excerpt from the website of the Japan House Los Angeles:

On Oct. 8, Japan House Los Angeles posted an interview article with documentary filmmaker Alison Klayman about her latest film "Flower Punk," <https://youtu.be/PSMo0Vqjfwl> a short cinematic portrait of the acclaimed Japanese floral artist Makoto Azuma.

Azuma is known for, yes you are reading correctly, sending bouquets into space, or to the bottom of the ocean, disrupting our notions about traditional flower art in the process.

"Flower Punk," which recently debuted on the New Yorker website, captures the artist's practice and philosophy, with insights into the role of nature in Japanese aesthetics and the interweaving of decay and beauty.

In a brief conversation with Japan House Los Angeles, Klayman reflects on the artist, the film, and getting to spend time in Tokyo, a favorite city where she had previously lived for two and a half years.



A scene from *Flower Punk*: floral artist Makoto Azuma

Japan House: How did you first discover Makoto Azuma's work? What compelled you to make a film about him?

Klayman: My good friend Marc Silver, who was responsible for the gorgeous cinematography in the film, actually first told me about Azuma. When I saw Azuma and Shunsuke Shiinoki's stunning photographs—the epitome of a picture being worth a thousand words—I was intimidated at first. They were so powerful on their own. What could a film add to this? But the more I read of Azuma's writing and interviews, I felt that documentary storytelling was absolutely the right

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Weekly Cultural News is edited by Shige Higashi. higashi@culturalnews.com (213) 819-4100

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medium to show people Azuma's personal journey, process and the ideas behind the works.

Japan House: There's a fascinating scene of the Ota flower auction, where Azuma's studio sources many of their flowers. What was it like filming there?

Klayman: The Ota Flower market and auction reminded me of the Tsukiji Fish Market and Tuna Auction, a classic stop on any Tokyo tourist itinerary and somewhere I've been many times. That there is something analogous but for flowers was such a delightful surprise to me, and it is not well-known even though it's the second-largest flower market on the planet.

The way that Azuma's work deals with both the intrinsic beauty of flowers as well as the commodification of flowers was really interesting to me—he also does so many commercial collaborations with fashion houses and other brands—so I was really interested in revealing the way flowers are also bought and sold.

Japan House: One of Azuma's projects was planting sunflowers and working with the community in Fukushima after the nuclear disaster, and he describes the spiritual and philosophical side of sharing flowers as a form of duty and "prayer." What do you think we all can learn from this in the era of COVID-19? Did this influence the way you approach film and creativity in your own practice?

Klayman: I got to think a lot about life and death, both of flowers and then of communities with the trip to Fukushima. Highway notices began to warn us about radiation levels as we approached. The bathrooms in rest stations near the reactors had digital readings of current ambient radiation



A scene from *Flower Punk*: floral artist Makoto Azuma prays in front of his work at former Ukedo Elementary School at Namie-Machi, Fukushima.

to be expected along the route.

When we got closer the landscape turned eerie. In the abandoned towns, and in the ones where people were just starting to move back, it felt like nature had reclaimed the land, and despite the remnants of destruction it was incredibly verdant. Since the menace of radiation was an invisible one, we didn't anticipate how terrifying it would feel until we were there.

It's not dissimilar to the feeling of the early days of the pandemic. You know there's a risk, but you can't see the danger. Our crew documented the creation of Azuma's botanical sculpture there in tense silence. Azuma chose Ukedo Elementary School as the site to do the installation because all the students and staff evacuated before the tsunami hit and survived, while he was concerned some of the other abandoned structures in the area might be haunted by lingering spirits.

Documentary film "Flower Punk"
<https://youtu.be/PSMo0Vqjfwl>

<https://www.japanhouseela.com/articles/interview-alison-klayman/>

Webinar - Painting Edo: Early Modern Masterworks from Feinberg Collection on Oct. 27 at 6:30PM, EDT

NEW YORK - The Japan Society will present a live webinar *Painting Edo: Early Modern Masterworks from the Feinberg Collection* on Tuesday, October 27, 6:30pm EDT.

Japan's Edo period (1615–1868) was an immensely innovative time, during which painters produced a wide spectrum of visually alluring works. In this talk, Dr. Rachel Saunders, the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Curator of Asian Art at the Harvard Art Museums, takes an in depth look at some remarkable Edo period paintings from the extraordinary Robert and Betsy Feinberg collection. [Register](#)

[Painting Edo: Early Modern Masterworks from the Feinberg Collection](#) was organized by the Harvard Art Museums from February 14, 2020–July 26, 2020 at Special Exhibitions Gallery, University Research Gallery, University Teaching Gallery, University Study Gallery, Harvard Art Museums.

Painting Edo: Japanese Art from the Feinberg Collection — the largest exhibition ever presented at the Harvard Art Museums — offers a window onto the supremely rich visual culture of Japan's early modern era.

Selected from the unparalleled collection of Robert S. and Betsy G. Feinberg, the more than 120 works in the exhibition connect visitors with a seminal moment in the history of Japan, as the country settled into an era of peace under the warrior government of the shoguns and opened its doors to greater engagement with the outside world.

The dizzying array of artistic lineages and studios active during the Edo period (1615–1868) fueled an immense expansion of Japanese pictorial culture that reverberated not only at home, but subsequently in the history of painting in the West.

Robert and Betsy Feinberg have generously



promised their collection of over three hundred works of Japanese art to the Harvard Art Museums. Judiciously assembled over more than four decades, the collection offers an exceptional opportunity to explore continuities and disruptions in artistic practice in early modern Japan.

Painting Edo: Japanese Art from the Feinberg Collection: Organized by the Harvard Art Museums. Curated by Rachel Saunders, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Curator of Asian Art, Harvard Art Museums; with Yukio Lippit, the Jeffrey T. Chambers and Andrea Okamura Professor of History of Art and Architecture, Harvard University.

Painting Edo: Japanese Art from the Feinberg Collection was made possible by the Robert H. Ellsworth Bequest to the Harvard Art Museums, the Melvin R. Seiden and Janine Luke Fund for Publications and Exhibitions, the Catalogues and Exhibitions Fund for Pre-Twentieth-Century Art of the Fogg Museum, the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, the Thierry Porté Director's Discretionary Fund for Japanese Art, and the Japan Foundation.

The accompanying print catalogues were supported by the Harvard Art Museums Mellon Publication Funds, including the Henry P. McIlhenny Fund.

Ohayashi Juku (Japanese percussion lecture) Kabuki Series #17 talks about “Tori Kagura”

By Mariko Watabe

There are dance videos and shamisen videos. But KABUKI HAYASHI (Japanese percussion) videos are rarely found or discussed especially in English or with English subtitles.

I have decided to make them as I believe this art is too precious to be hidden or lost. With the guidance of Master Katada Shinjuro, I am trying to uncover the world of HAYASHI by producing YouTube videos in Japanese language with English subtitles.

[Ohayashi Juku - Kabuki Series #01 - #05: See Weekly Cultural News Aug 31-Sept 6 issue](#)

Ohayashi Juku - Kabuki Series #06: Spooky Sounds <https://youtu.be/qFiyyB8hjtM>

Ohayashi Juku - Kabuki Series #07 Part I: Festival Music <https://youtu.be/3hJpLyAz0dw>

Ohayashi Juku - Kabuki Series # 07 Part II: Festival Music <https://youtu.be/LBcE6l1Zdw4>

Ohayashi Juku - Kabuki Series #08: Debayashi and Kagebayashi <https://youtu.be/w7tEuS0U63k>

Ohayashi Juku - Kabuki Series #09: Why is Hayashi So Special? <https://youtu.be/SYxojFOy9LQ>

Ohayashi Juku—Kabuki Series #10: Battle Sounds <https://youtu.be/0M7Ua8SIHic>

Ohayashi Juku—Kabuki Series #11: Fighting Sounds <https://youtu.be/aWJqDubYRiw>

Ohayashi Juku—Kabuki Series #12: Toki Daiko <https://youtu.be/VblxgwGIQq8>

Ohayashi Juku - Kabuki Series #13: Daimyo Gyoretsu <https://youtu.be/H39ZUosGhqY>

Ohayashi Juku Kabuki Series #14: Aragoto



<https://youtu.be/-XPJeqFBpJk>

Ohayashi Juku #15: Jo no Mai <https://youtu.be/IW2GDxEoQR4>

Ohayashi Juku (Kabuki Series) #16: Summary of Hayashi <https://youtu.be/JufrMgct3DY>

Ohayashi Juku (Kabuki Series) #17 <https://youtu.be/2Ks-zXqAFwQ> will be the start of a six-part series on the sounds related to the life of people in the Edo period. Today's topic is a rhythm pattern “Tori Kagura” used in the piece Tomoyakko which is a town song.

I will also refresh your memory on the time of Edo and the alternate attendance policy of the Tokugawa shogunate as well as some more details about this period. How the peace in this period furthered Japan's arts and culture. While the historical plays were mostly tragedies, you will find comical dance pieces such as Tomoyakko which indicates the peaceful age of Edo period.

Mariko Watabe has been introducing Kabuki dance and music to American audiences nationwide for over 40 years. She goes by her stage names such as; Kimisen Katada for Hayashi, Kyosho Yamato for Yamatogaku, Kichitoji Kineya for Nagauta; and Marifuji Bando for dance.

She is currently living in Los Angeles area. Her activities and performances are found at <http://fujijapanesemusic.org>