

ARTS | STONY BROOK

Unfolding the Richness of Origami



'Origami Heaven' illustrates how a deceptively simple craft can be elevated into high art.

By AILEEN JACOBSON

At first, Kumi Yamashita's work "Origami" looks like nothing more than brightly colored squares of paper, each slightly crumpled along one edge, arranged on a white wall. And then you notice the shadow that each paper casts — the profile of a face, each one unique.

Hiroshi Hayakawa's "Hope in a New Dark Age" is also deceptively simple. Across two canvases, a boy is depicted flying a kite that looks like a dove — or maybe it's a dove in flight holding a string. On closer inspection, the work is more complicated, both in its symbolism, which refers to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, and in its construction. Most of the elements, including the dove, the boy and small bombs falling in the background, are made of folded paper.

"Origami Heaven," an exhibition at the Charles B. Wang Center at Stony Brook University, is not the collection of small folded cranes that one might expect.

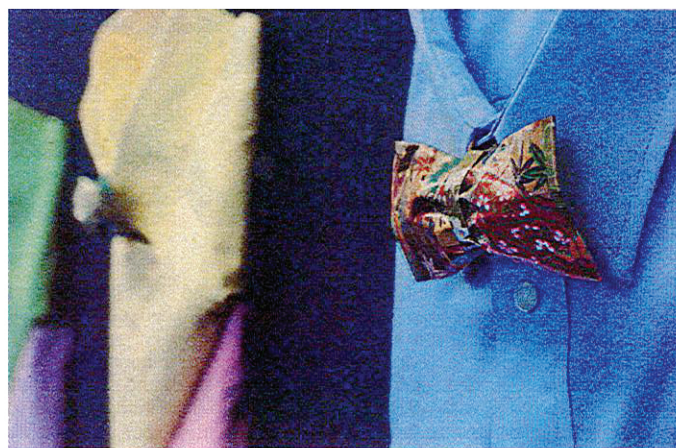
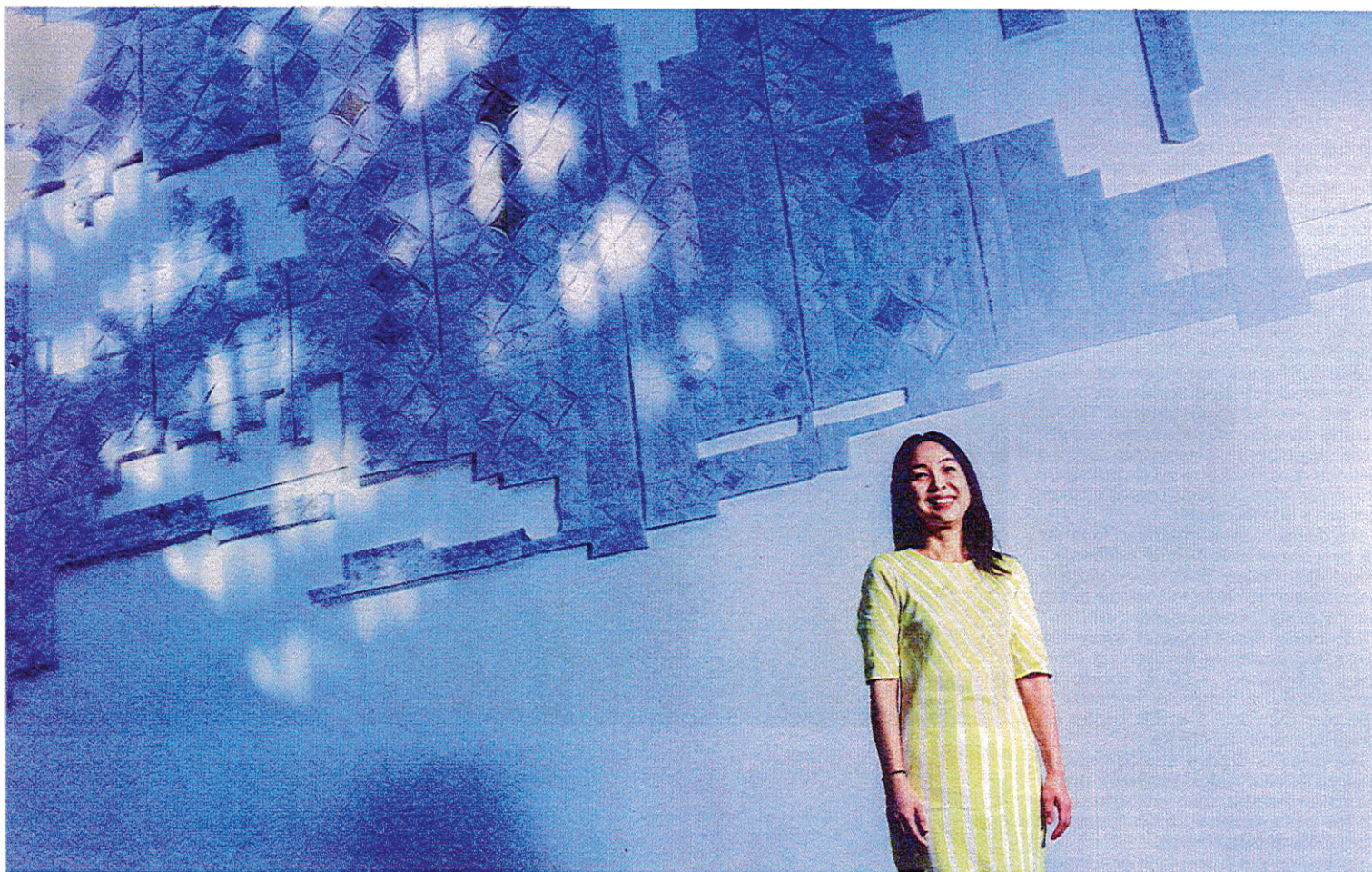
"I wanted to expand into many different kinds of expression, to show a variety of designs," said Jinyoung Jin, the center's associate director for cultural programs and the curator of the exhibition.

"Origami started as a children's craft," she said. "Now it includes science, fashion and fine arts."

For the show, Ms. Jin selected nine contemporary artists who use origami, its cousin kirigami (in which paper is also cut) or other variations of the craft to create works that show just how advanced the paper and folding arts have become.

One artist — Madeline del Toro Cherney, a lecturer in the university's anthropology department — made a series of colorful bow ties. Qi Hu, a fashion designer based in Paris, created a folded-paper headdress inspired by Chinese mythology. An accompanying photo shows the silhouette of a man wearing the fierce-looking headgear.

On a larger scale, Wonju Seo, a Korean-American artist who lives in Englewood Cliffs, N.J., covered a two-story-high wall beneath a skylight with a folded, hand-stitched patchwork, which was assembled using some of the techniques of a traditional Korean craft called pojagi. The cloths, made from scraps of fabric, are normally used to cover tables or carry small objects, Ms. Jin said, adding that she hoped to keep the piece, "White Wonderland," in the location permanently. A video running nearby shows its installation, which took three days and required a crane. The video also demonstrates how shifting sunlight



PHOTOGRAPHS BY HEATHER WALSH FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

changes the look of the piece.

Another video in the exhibition shows how Jule Waibel, a German designer based in London and Stuttgart, folds her pieces. A paper dress and a wall hanging are on display, but she also makes folded-felt seats, similar to ottomans or hassocks.

In another room there is a screening of "Between the Folds," a 56-minute documentary written and directed by Vanessa Gould. The film traces the evolution of origami into works of high art, similar to the pieces in this show, as well as into science projects, including the work of Erik D. Demaine, a professor of computer science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who uses origami to solve science problems and make sculptures.

Stony Brook University has its own

Clockwise from top left: "Hope in a New Dark Age," by Hiroshi Hayakawa; Jinyoung Jin, curator of "Origami Heaven," with "White Wonderland" by Wonju Seo; a headdress by Qi Hu; "Origami Beaux-Ties," by Madeline del Toro Cherney; and a work by Jule Waibel.

A show of nine artists, including a computer science professor.

origami-making scientist, George W. Hart, a research professor in the engineering school whose geometric sculptures have been shown at M.I.T. and Princeton University, and who is a co-founder of the National Museum of Mathematics in Manhattan. He created "Clouds," an airy two-piece sculpture made of plywood strips that hangs in the Wang Center's lobby.

"Paper is a simple medium, and not everyone appreciates just how creative you can be," he said.

Mr. Hayakawa, who made the Hiroshima-Nagasaki work at the request of Ms. Jin, said he used a hybrid of origami and kirigami, along with a little glue. An author of several books about paper crafts, he lives in Columbus, Ohio, and teaches at Columbus College of Art and Design. "I've done

animals, aliens and monsters, but this is the first time I've tried anything like this," Mr. Hayakawa, who visited the show, said. "It's wonderful to see so many different possibilities. You can really see the depth of this craft."

Ms. Yamashita, a Japanese-American artist who lives in Queens, said she had made collections of silhouettes before but the work in the exhibition was new.

"Each one is different," she said. "It's a one-time, temporary installation. At the end, it's discarded."

"Origami Heaven" is on view through Jan. 8 at the Charles B. Wang Center, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook. For more information: 631-632-4400 or thewangcenter.org.