





Ink sketches with plants, seeds and found objects
photo credit Dorothea Magonet

Art Residency
Studio Kura Itoshima Japan
October 2025



My residency coincided with the biennial International Art Farm Festival, Itoshima, which took place over two weekends, 18/19 & 25/26 October 2025, on the theme of

Celebration of Decomposition

International artists from Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea and Japanese artists participated, as well as the artist from the international art residence programme.

Many community and interactive events by young and old residents of Itoshima and the International artists took place, such as music performances and traditional singing, traditional and contemporary dance performances, sketching for children and adults, lectures and open studios, exhibitions and of course food preparation and consumption.

Participating Artists

[The Termites](#), [Hiroshi Fujii](#), Hiroshi Matsuzaki, Studio Kura (children's art and design class), [Josui Arita](#), [Uzumaki \(Torao Osawa and Natsuko Tezuka\)](#), [Takuji Kawai + Kyoki Murakami](#), [Jun Suzuki](#), [Setsue Ito](#), [Masaya Ishihara](#), Kimi Kimiyo, [Keita Ishimaru](#), [Miki Ogawa](#), [Keitaro Kamo x Chihiro Sugamoto x Sawa Nogami](#), [Ryuichi Sakazaki](#), Seiuchido, [Motonari Tagawa](#), [Tomari University](#) (Yoshitake Nanjo x Fukuoka Prefectural Itoshima Special Needs School), [Yuichiro Nagatsu](#), [Yuko Hisakado](#), [Minyo Fukae](#), [Chizuko Mori](#), [Miki Yamaguchi](#), [Taeyo Yoon and Marika Takanashi](#)

Asia Base x Taito Acoustic Arts Festival x Itoshima International Art Festival International Exchange Series

[Takivan Damula Chuyouji](#) (Taiwanese Aboriginal) [Taiwan], [Lala Sue \(Su Yuting\)](#) [Taiwan], [Ashley Lam \(Lin Le'er\)](#) [Hong Kong], [Proton Chang \(Zhang Pu-teng\)](#) [Taiwan], [Iris Chun-Tzu Chang \(Zhang Jun-ci\)](#) [Taiwan]

Studio Kura Artist in Residence Program

[Chen JingKai](#), [Daphne Bleeker](#), [Dora Miller](#), [Dorothea Magonet](#), [Ingrid Mathurin](#), [Jazz Groden-Gilchrist](#), [Jeffrey de Bruin](#), [Jenny Hsieh](#), [Julie Lindell](#), Katrin Ahlgren, [Karen Shangguan](#), [Konstantinos Vachlas](#), [Maxim de Gilder](#), Siba Shahabi, [Susan Sitko](#), [Zuzana Radicova](#)

Dorothea's works for the exhibition

Spending one month in Itoshima during the rice harvest made me curious about the deeply rooted cultural and religious traditions surrounding rice, and the connection with the ubiquitous traditional Shinto *Inari-Kitsune* shrines – *Inari jinja* - as well as Buddhist temples with fox statues one stumbles across in the countryside and, surprisingly, in corners and streets of the busiest and most commercial areas of the big cities.

1. Reaping the Rice, and the Fox





Kitsune sculpture by Dorothea Magonet
photo credit Dorothea Magonet

Backstory

Rice Harvest and the Fox.



Rice harvest

photo credit Dorothea Magonet

Ine ni nary - Reaping the Rice

Inari ookami (big god), also called *Oinari*

Is the Japanese *Kami* (spirit, deity) not only for improvement in the performing arts; household wellbeing; business and general wellbeing. The *Kami* is also attributed to rice, sake, tea, fertility, foxes, agriculture, industry, and the protection of blacksmiths and warriors.

Kitsune – Foxes



Photo credit Dorothea Magonet

Kitsune are renowned for their intelligence, magical ability, and especially their power of metamorphosis, allowing them to transform into humans and other beings.

Kitsune statues are guarding the entrance of the Shinto *Inari* shrines, where they serve as the deity's messengers. The guardian foxes at Inari shrines usually come in pairs, each representing male and female. Often, they hold symbolic items like scrolls, keys or jewellery in their mouths or paws. They wear vermillion votive aprons – *maekake* - red has also become to be identified with Inari because of the red gates – *torri*.



Shrine gates

photo credit Dorothea Magonet

It isn't clear what the red aprons or bibs are for, but they may relate to worshippers wishing to take care of their protectors. The vermillion colour of the apron may correlate with red being the colour of fertility and for dispelling evil spirits and disease. Red is a colour used traditionally in many other aspects of traditional Japanese life, for example, it is the colour of the sun in the flag, and also of the signature stamps.

Paired kitsune symbolise a balance of good and evil, protection and prosperity, between wisdom and cleverness. They guard both the spirit and the worshipper.

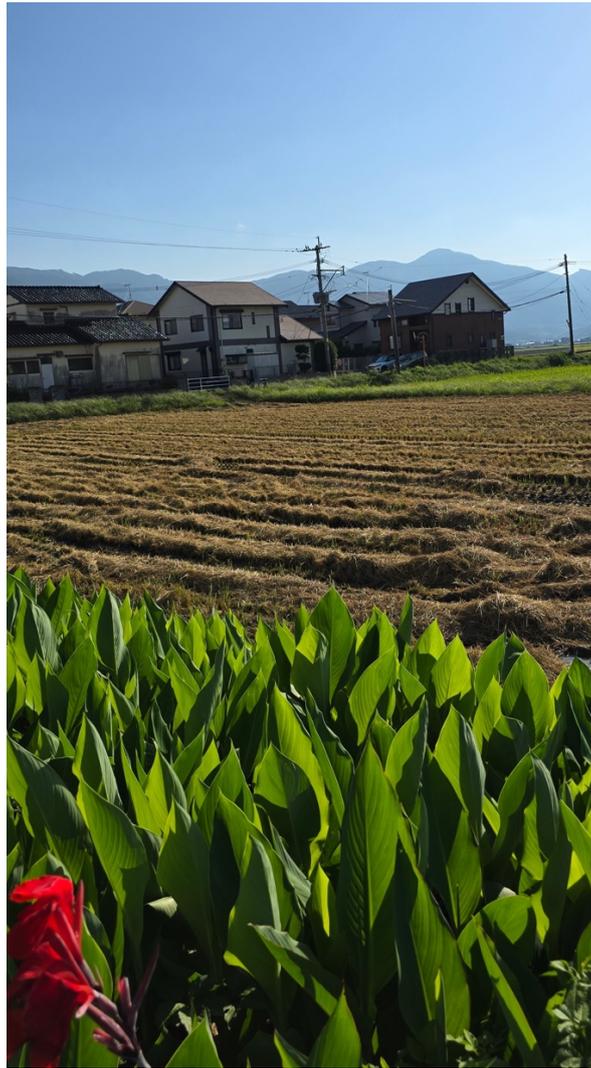
The fox's ability to transform symbolises adaptability and personal growth. A pair can represent the many transformations a person can undergo in life.

Fox, the shapeshifter and mischief maker

There is, however, another side to kitsune. In ancient Japanese mythology, the fox can also turn into an evil creature. They become shapeshifters and tricksters and seek out the company of humans for a variety of reasons. Almost always that may cause havoc. The main reason a fox spirit might search out a human was to suck away their life force or to even eat human flesh and thereby steal any powers that person might have along with all their memories, knowledge, and even their human form. When talking to a Japanese pastor about foxes, he told me that in his sermons in Japan the snake that tempted Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden would have to be a fox.



Japanese folktales speak of the Kitsune who trick others by portraying themselves as faithful guardians, friends, lovers, and wives. (IrenHorrors / CC BY-SA 3.0)



Harvested fields
photo credit Dorothea Magonet

Symbolism of Foxes around the World

Foxes are considered as cunning; tricksters; holders of wisdom; possess adaptability and magic; are ferrymen or guides between worlds; possessors of special knowledge and symbols of transformation due to their nocturnal nature.



Sketch by Dorothea Magonet, October 2025 photo credit Dorothea Magonet

The sculpture of *Kitsune*, made of plaster of Paris and rice straw, rice grass and red cord, resting on a pedestal of cedar wood, is now permanently installed in the community worship hall of the *Matsusue Gonkuro Inari Shrine*, Itoshima.



Photo credit Studio Kura

1. *Beauty on the Edge of Nothingness*

These collages and sculptural assemblages made from found organic and inorganic materials collected on the edges of fields and the beach refer towards the Japanese philosophical aesthetic of *wabi sabi*.

Finding beauty in imperfection and impermanence is the foundation of this concept, the development of the patina of decay, aging, and the appreciation of something that is simple, has cracks, is fragmented, is repaired and mundane. It is about noticing and reacting to small details rather than grand gestures and valuing the small things.

The object or work may be transient, be unfinished and have an incomplete quality, and is often quiet, minimal, calm and uncluttered.



Horse shoe crab skeleton on the beach

photo credit Dorothea Magonet

The following works explore this concept of *wabi sabi*, resisting the temptation of presenting something perfect, permanent, and shiny.

All were left in Japan.



Untitled Collage, packaging paper, ink, cord, plants, shells, found objects and gold thread
photo credit Dorothea Magonet



Shell and Shard Found objects
photo credit Dorothea Magonet



Flotsam and Jetsam Found objects
photo credit Dorothea Magonet



Drift Found objects, silver thread
photo credit Dorothea Magonet

3. Seaweed

Seaweed is an ubiquitous ingredient in the daily Japanese cuisine. It was my intention to explore working with seaweed and to search for seaweed on the beaches. Alas, the seaweed season was long over. Researching carefully the seaweed sections in the supermarkets, I found large enough sheets of dried *Kombu* - kelp. Here are two pieces of kombu with embroidery.



Spiralling
photo credit Dorothea Magonet



Untitled

photo credit Dorothea Magonet

Thank you, Studio Kura, for a fabulous month with you and giving me the opportunity to create and show work in Itoshima and within the community of international artists. It has been a wonderful and enriching experience.

Dorothea E. Magonet

