

2025 SUMMER
Vol. 63

ISLAND
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Color

Colorful 3D Paper Art Brings Animals to Life

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BLUE OCEAN DOME at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, Hosted by the Rengo Group, Japan's Largest Corrugated Packaging Maker

Visit +

Meeting People Through Books:
Machi Library @ MUFG PARK

TSUNAGU is a public relations magazine published by KPP GROUP HOLDINGS CO., LTD. An exploration in rediscovering a fascination with paper, we link paper and culture, paper and business, and paper and people.

Color P01

Colorful 3D Paper Art Brings Animals to Life

Colorful 3D Paper Art Brings Animals to Life

Animals that seem to speak through kind eyes and humorous expressions are crafted by Miho Akiyama, an artist who brings animals to life in 3D form using paper. Her free-flowing, imaginative and richly colored work has a charm that immediately soothes and relaxes. As an educator, Akiyama also engages in activities that convey paper's appeal to people of all ages in an easy and accessible way. We visited Akiyama in her studio in Hyogo Prefecture to hear her thoughts on the essence of paper as a material in both art and education.

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Create Supplement

Miho Akiyama's Custom-Made Bug
Paper Craft



Miho Akiyama
stag beetle pattern
appended at the end of
this issue!

Make one yourself!

I want people to understand
the unique possibilities that paper
offers as a means of expression and
to feel that the animals I make are
alive and breathing.



Yorkshire Terrier

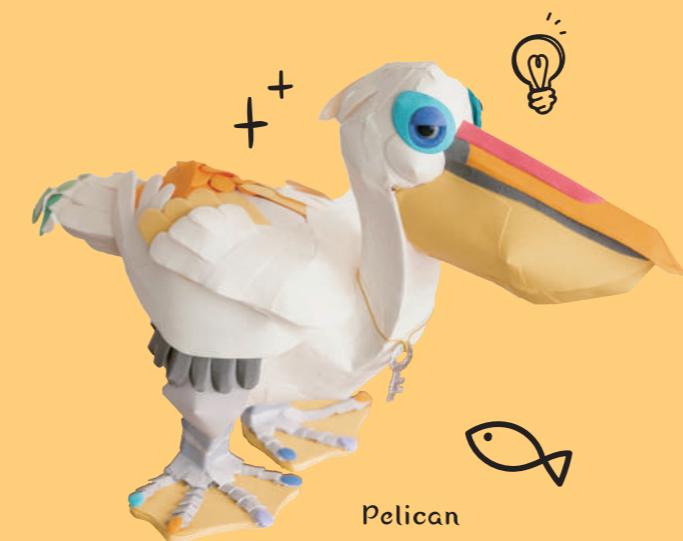
In mid-June, with rainy season and its continuously gray and gloomy skies covering all of Japan, our editorial staff visited Miho Akiyama in Nishinomiya City in Hyogo Prefecture. Entering her home studio in a quiet residential neighborhood, we were greeted by an array of paper art depicting different animals — from dogs, cats and other pets, to large wild animals and even tiny insects like butterflies and stag beetles.

"They originally were a bit crisper," Akiyama says, "but now that it's rainy season, they aren't as cheerful. The paper absorbs moisture and warps, and the color is changed by the sun. It's a particular trait of artwork made of paper."

The charm of her work lies in the expressiveness of her animals, with their personalities, life-like warmth, and clear eyes looking straight ahead or seeming to be in a dream.



Chihuahua



Pelican

She uses paper in different colors and textures to convey the look and feel of the animals' fur and skin. She says she chose paper as her medium because, "it's a material that's easy to get and something that everyone is familiar with."

"When I was asked by an aquarium to make a shark, I started by looking for the right kind of paper with which to create it, choosing paper with the texture and sheen of shark skin. But you have to actually feel the paper to really know, so a lot of what I buy ends up in my personal collection [laughs]."

One paper that has been a favorite of hers for many years is Mi-Teintes construction paper produced by the French company

Canson. With its uniform honeycomb grain and bumpy texture, Mi-Teintes is widely used for pastel drawing in Japan.

"I have always loved the paper's beautiful neutral colors, and I use it for many of the pieces in my books. When I published my books, I wanted to encourage readers to make the pieces inside again and again. So I consulted with the person in charge at the importer, and we decided to include an assorted Mi-Teintes set with one sheet of each of the colors used in the works featured in the books. The publisher also released a craft kit using Mi-Teintes so that readers are able to easily make the pieces in the books."



Penguin

Rhinoceros

In addition to her creative work as a paper artist, Akiyama also works to convey the joy of creating things with paper and give people easy access to art, offering lectures at universities and crafting workshops at culture schools and elsewhere. As part of these activities, she lectures in art studies at Hyogo Medical University.

"Even in a field like medicine that is seemingly unrelated, paper actually plays an important role. Occupational therapists use origami in hand and finger therapy, and nurses find simple crafts to be a very effective tool in communicating with pediatric patients. But quite a few of the university students taking my class have little to no experience with crafts. Before interacting with patients in the hospital, they need to first become familiar with paper and practice crafting. I think it is very important for students who are going to pursue a career in medicine to have experience in creating the forms they imagine using simple

actions like folding, cutting, and pasting paper."

Akiyama also leads general workshops for people of all ages. In her workshops for young children and elementary school students in particular, she focuses on allowing each child to create what they want based on their own ideas, rather than predetermining a specific goal for the finished piece.

"I bring in age-appropriate materials and give everyone the same talk on how to make basic shapes. But I also work with each student to come up with a way to create the particular shape they want to create. The important thing is that they are able to use the colors they want and create a form they like. I don't want them feeling that what they made fell short of what they imagined and for that to become an obstacle to enjoying crafting in the future. I want to help the children learn to trust in their own sense of expression and in their capabilities."



Akiyama also says that paper as a material plays a role in a child's emotional development during the years of early education.

"Not only do they express themselves through drawing and making crafts, they also use paper to vent their emotions by scribbling with crayons or shredding newspaper. I think there must be many more ways to use paper and many more benefits to be gained from it in education."



Akiyama's work is on permanent display at the Fujikawa Papercutting Forest Museum at Yamanashi Fujikawa Craft Park, where visitors can experience her pieces in person. Thanks to her popular solo exhibitions and other activities, interest in her artwork is growing.

"A large number of adults come to my solo exhibitions, and many of them leave telling me, 'I'm going to try paper art myself.' I think this is another unique aspect of paper as a

medium. Everyone uses paper all the time and can easily get hold of it. Even if it's just something simple, I hope adults, too, will feel free to try making paper art," says Akiyama.

Asked to leave our readers a final message, she says, "I have great respect for living animals, and no matter how elaborate my pieces may be, they can never surpass the real thing. Which is why I try to capture in my work the essence of a particular animal. Beyond that,

it makes me happy if people who see my art sense the kind of pliability and vitality that you feel when you touch or hold a living animal."

Imparting an immediate feeling of relaxed pleasure, Akiyama's work evokes a deep respect for animals and a curiosity about the intrinsic value that paper as a medium offers.



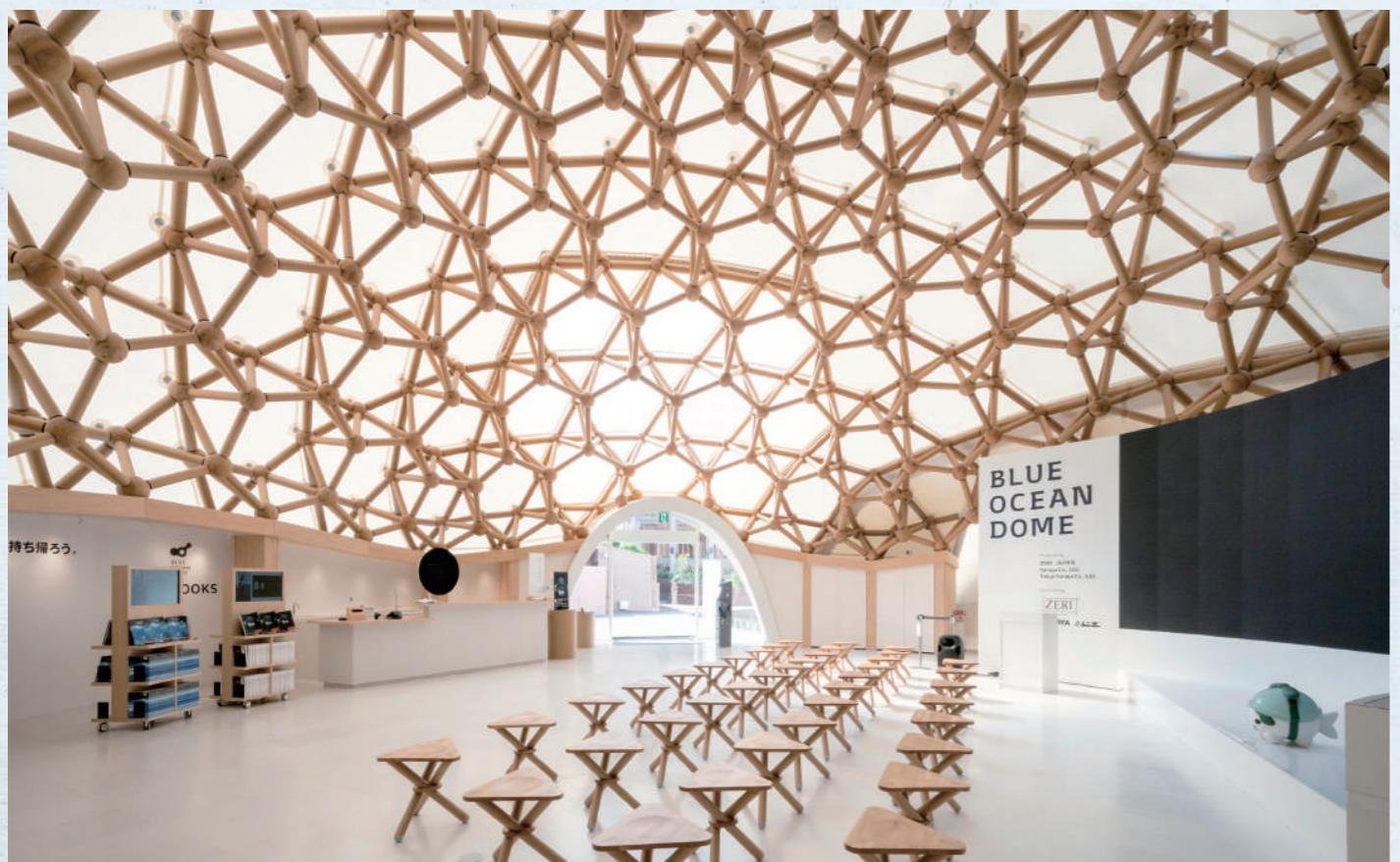
Creating a new piece, Central Bearded Dragon

Miho Akiyama
Paper artist

Born in 1982 in Yamanashi Prefecture, Akiyama graduated from the Graduate School of Arts and Culture at Osaka Kyōiku University. While at university, she began creating three-dimensional sculptures featuring paper animal motifs. In addition to solo exhibitions at fine art museums and arts and crafts museums, she collaborates with high-end international brands on display goods, works in illustration, conducts workshops, and much more. She is a part-time lecturer (Art Studies) at Hyogo Medical University.
<https://akiyamamaho.com/>

Supplement

Enjoy making the original insect paper art by Miho Akiyama appended at the end of this issue!



Paper-Powered Innovations for a Thriving Ocean Future

Approximately five months have passed since the start of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, on April 13. Held under the theme "Designing Future Society for Our Lives," the international exposition serves not only as a platform to experience diverse cultures and cutting-edge technologies from around the world, but also as a valuable opportunity to reflect on how humanity's life is supported by the natural environment and to motivate individuals to think and act on global environmental challenges.

Among the pavilions showcasing sustainable initiatives for the future, the BLUE OCEAN DOME, presented by the non-profit organization ZERI JAPAN, is drawing particular attention. Under the theme "Revitalization of the Ocean," the pavilion not only raises awareness about the severity of ocean pollution, but also invites visitors to consider what actions they can take to help ensure a thriving future for our oceans.

The BLUE OCEAN DOME is composed of three domes: A, B, and C. In Dome A, visitors experience an installation that evokes the circulation of water. Next, in Dome B they

can watch artistic footage that portrays the vibrant diversity of marine life and the current state of plastic waste pollution. Finally, in Dome C, they can observe first-hand the cutting edge of innovation to solve marine issues, with footage that conveys messages from companies, organizations and experts. Through its three distinct thematic exhibitions, the structure of the pavilion guides visitors toward a deeper understanding of the actions needed to secure humanity's future existence in harmony with the ocean.

Each dome is designed by architect Shigeru Ban. Dome A is made primarily of bamboo, Dome B of carbon fiber, and Dome C of paper tubes. The paper used to make the tubes in Dome C was supplied by the Rengo Group, a major corrugated cardboard manufacturer. Inspired by its participation in the Blue Ocean Initiative,* a co-creation community that takes on the challenge of making improvements to ocean issues, the Rengo Group has been carrying out a range of initiatives under the banner of "Rengo Blue Action" (see right page), seeking to create a virtuous cycle of ocean

conservation.

In addition to the paper tubes that are the main structural material of Dome C, the Rengo Group also supplied flooring materials and decorative panels made from compressed waste paper, so all throughout Dome C, visitors can experience first-hand the appeal of paper as a sustainable material.

The role that paper, a recyclable material with a low environmental impact, can play in creating a thriving future for the oceans, is by no means a small one. The BLUE OCEAN DOME invites visitors to explore just a fraction of the possibilities that paper has to offer.

*Blue Ocean Initiative

A Blue Action platform launched in December 2022 through collaboration among industry, government, academia, and civil society. Through multifaceted interaction and business co-creation among a wide-range of ocean-related stakeholders, the organization aims to solve social issues in a manner that balances sustainability and efficiency in ocean conservation and prosperity.

BLUE OCEAN DOME

Structural materials

The paper tubes forming the structural framework that supports Dome C are made from a special reinforced paper developed by the Rengo Group. Their main component is waste paper, identical to that used in making corrugated cardboard. Rolled up in multiple layers to enhance strength, this material combines the load-bearing capacity needed to support ceilings with the lightness inherent to paper, highlighting paper's potential as a recyclable resource for circular use.



Flooring materials and decorative panels

Dome C serves as a venue for international symposiums, lectures, workshops, and various other events focused on ocean conservation and prosperity. The materials used for its flooring and the decorative panels at the cafe counter are also supplied by the Rengo Group. These materials boast strength and durability achieved by compressing waste paper, and upon closer inspection visitors can even see cut pieces of paper embedded in them.



Special video footage

Special video footage is displayed on a giant hemispherical screen, featuring comments from organizations, companies, and experts involved in efforts to solve ocean-related issues. In interviews with over 20 experts confronting the grave situation of our oceans today, visitors can learn about the challenges humanity faces and the diverse, cutting-edge initiatives underway to address them.



Exhibition zone

In one corner of Dome C, an exhibition zone showcases the initiatives implemented by the Rengo Group. Using a giant corrugated cardboard box as an artboard, the display features the base paper used for the tubes that support Dome C, as well as the biodegradable cellophane employed in the company's seaweed bed restoration project.



Development of materials for the fisheries industry advanced by the Rengo Group

Rengo Blue Action!

PROJECT 01



Fishing gear development and seaweed bed restoration

In order to address the loss of seaweed colonies (seaweed beds) growing on reefs in coastal areas, a field trial is underway to grow seaweed seeds and seedlings using a substrate produced by spinning cellophane made from cellulose into twisted yarn. As this cellophane is biodegradable in seawater, it can help reduce ocean pollution and lessen the impact on marine ecosystems. While taking advantage of the characteristics of corrugated cardboard, such as compact foldability and recyclability, the new products developed by the company are lighter in weight and offer improved cold-retention properties.

PROJECT 02



Development of fish boxes

This project aims to replace the Styrofoam used in making boxes for cold storage and transportation of marine products with corrugated cardboard, in an effort to reduce plastic pollution of the ocean and lessen the impact on marine ecosystems. While taking advantage of the characteristics of corrugated cardboard, such as compact foldability and recyclability, the new products developed by the company are lighter in weight and offer improved cold-retention properties.

PROJECT 03



Viscopearl promotion

This project aims to utilize Viscopearl, spherical cellulose beads, as a water purification material in aquaria for land-based fish farming. The product works by allowing microorganisms to adhere to and colonize the porous structure of the Viscopearl beads, and utilizes their functions to remove ammonia, promote fish growth, and reduce the frequency of water changes in large aquaria.

Voice

Taku Furuta

Managing Executive Officer, Member of the Senior Executives Meeting, Overseeing the R&D and Environmental Management Promotion Department
Rengo Co., Ltd.



Rising concern over marine pollution since 2018 has prompted us at Rengo to explore how we might contribute to solving this issue through packaging made from paper and cellophane. As we advanced development of packaging that fully leverages the biodegradability and biomass-based properties of these materials, we joined the Blue Ocean Initiative through our connection with Shigeru Ban, the architectural producer of BLUE OCEAN DOME, and also became a sponsor of the pavilion. Since then, our repeated field studies on Tsushima Island, where large amounts of plastic waste continue to wash ashore, have further reinforced our commitment to helping solve the ocean pollution problem by leveraging our technology and experience. I truly believe that by having as many people as possible visit the BLUE OCEAN DOME, we can share the challenges facing our oceans.

BLUE OCEAN DOME

Duration: Currently ongoing through October 13 (Monday, public holiday)

Hours: 9:00 - 21:00 (Last admission 20:20)

Venue: Yumeshima Expo Site (Konohana Ward, Osaka, Japan)

Websites: Pavilion official website <https://zeri.jp/expo2025/en/>

Rengo Co., Ltd., Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai,

Japan special website <https://www.rengo.co.jp/expo2025/en/>

Pavilion



Rengo



Recommended Spot

Machi Library @ MUFG PARK



People Interact with Ease via Books at a Community Library in a Beautiful Forest

In the South Area of MUFG PARK, a community exchange facility that opened in June 2023 in Nishitokyo City, Tokyo, an area surrounded by the rich natural environment of Musashino, there is a large-roofed building at the end of an expansive tree-enclosed lawn. This is the Machi Library @ MUFG PARK. It is unique in that all of its books have been donated by individuals. The pocket of each book contains a comment card on which is written the donor's reasons for recommending the book and memories of the book, as well as impressions from those who have later read it, so one can feel a connection with others via the book. Roughly 10,000 books, gathered in the keen desire for them to be read and enjoyed collectively, make up this very personal selection. It is quite different from that of a city bookstore or public library. The place also offers other fun ways for people to meet and interact. The library holds reading groups and talk events, and users themselves plan and hold mini-events on the lawn to enjoy communicating with others who share the same interests, one of which is playing boccia, a popular sport that is also an official Paralympic Games event.

This space with all-glass windows looking out on the lawn gives one a sense of openness, as if enveloped in nature. In addition to single-seat sofas, high chairs, and counter seats with power outlets by the window, there are also terrace seats under the eaves where the wind blows through, so you can choose where to sit according to the weather or perhaps your mood on a given day. In a beautiful wooded setting where you can enjoy seasonal changes, this community library allows you not only to immerse yourself in reading, but also to enjoy interacting with a diverse range of people via books. We recommend it as a place to spend time on the weekends.

Feature

Donate

You can donate books that you feel special about and recommend.

Anyone can donate a book by selecting a book that they would like someone else to read and writing a recommendation comment or personal memory on the comment card. You can also register as a member to borrow books from the library (up to 3 books per person for a 2-weeks period).



Send to the future

Use the Time Capsule Book Box to send your feelings to the future

You can fill a book-shaped time capsule box with your own personal treasures, such as records of your children's growth, memorable photos with friends, or gifts for your partner. The time-capsule will be displayed on the library's bookshelves, and can be taken back when the pre-set day comes (for a fee, up to 10 years).



Participate

Take part in events and make new connections

Anyone is free to participate in a wide variety of regularly held events, including book readings, study groups, talk events, and picture book readings. Register as a member of Machi Library, and you can also organize your own small-scale events in the building.



Create

Attend planning meetings and support operations

At monthly held Supporters' Meetings, participants freely discuss plans they would like to see tried and things they personally want to attempt at Machi Library @ MUFG PARK. A wide range of children and adults can gather here to expand the circle of a new community through books.



Interview

Hoping People Will Use the Library to Do What They Want to Do

The Machi Library is a private library where people meet via books. It began in Osaka in 2011 and have since spread all over the country. There are now more than 1,200 Machi Libraries in total. This initiative has been highly commended, and the Machi Library, which gives operational support, received the Citizen of the Year award at the 2024 Japan PR Awards. We interviewed Yoshimitsu Isoi, the representative director of Machi Library, about Machi Library and book culture.

—How did you start Machi Library?

I have always loved spaces surrounded by books, so I started the Machi Library to create my own place to spend time. In my previous job as manager of Culture, Education & Art at Mori Building Co., Ltd., I created the Roppongi Hills Library. After I left the company, I again felt that I wanted to create a place where people could meet and learn from each other in a space surrounded by books, so I started Machi Library.

—What is the attraction for you of a space surrounded by books?

It relaxes me because the paper used for books is made of wood, which is a plant. Materials like plastic or steel are just not the same. Perhaps I feel physiological comfort because I am feeling the wood in the books.

—What kind of interactions have grown out of the comment cards on which donors and readers write messages?

—What do you think is behind young people's distancing from books?

Yoshimitsu Isoi

Born in Osaka in 1958. Representative Director of Machi Library. Doctor of Economics. In 1981, he joined Mori Building Co., Ltd. and was involved in many epoch-making cultural and educational projects, including Ark Toshi Juku and Roppongi Academy Hills. In 2011, Isoi started Machi Juku @ Machi Library, the forerunner of Machi Library. In 2024, he received the 24th Library Support Forum Award. His recent writings include *Book Festa: Hon no Jiryoku de Chiiki o Kaeru* (2021, co-authored) and *Machi Library no Kenkyu: Ko ga Shuyaku ni Nareru Shakaiteki Shihon Zukuri* (2024).



Some people who read the cards and felt that their sensibilities matched those of the donor, leading to the holding of talk events. In some cases, multiple users found themselves borrowing a book from the same donor, and just happened to become friends. New interactions grew out of conversations with staff or through another person.

—How do you see the current state of the digitization of books?

I like paper books that make up a cozy space, but there are also conveniences that only an e-book can offer. I travel a lot, and have found out it is hard to carry a large number of technical books with me. So, if the book I need is available in electronic format, I'll buy both the paper book and the e-book. Some functions in e-books are very useful. Both paper books and e-books have social value, and as a reader myself, I wish they were sold together as a set. I also use audiobooks in the car while traveling. First, I listen by ear to get a rough idea of the content, and if necessary, I buy the e-book. If I decide that it's worth keeping, I buy the paper book. I try to enjoy books in multiple ways.

—Lastly, how about a message for our readers?

The purpose of the Machi Library is to make people realize that, even without relying on an organization or funding, they can do what they want to do if they just get started. I want people to use the Machi Library as a place where they can express something, delve into their hobbies with their friends, and liberate their true selves from their constraints. I believe that this is the fundamental remedy that will most revitalize our modern society.

Information

Machi Library @ MUFG PARK

Address: MUFG PARK, 4-4-40 Yanagisawa, Nishitokyo-shi, Tokyo

Hours: 10:00-17:30

*MUFG PARK closes at 18:00 (20:00 in July and August)

Closed: Mondays, Tuesdays, year-end and New Year's holidays

Admission: Free *Membership registration is required to borrow books and hold events. (Initial registration fee only: Adults 500 yen, Children 300 yen)

Access: JR Kichijoji Station, Mitaka Station, Musashi Sakai Station; Keio Inokashira Line Kichijoji Station; Seibu Shinjuku Line Higashifushimi Station, Seibu Yanagisawa Station. 3-minute walk from the Musashino Daigaku stop on the Kanto Bus and Nishitokyo City Community Bus lines.

Website: <https://machi-library.org/where/detail/8096/>



Making Letters Speak

Tomone Uemura

Humans are creatures who express their thoughts. I feel that letters are the most profound and noble form of human expression. When it comes to letters, hand-written letters are best.

When we try to read between the lines, we can see the personality of the writer.

Vol. 41: Kei Kumai

Among the film directors I have had the privilege of knowing over the course of my life, I believe Kei Kumai was the most talented and outstanding. His debut film, *A Condemned Criminal*, was released in 1964. This semi-documentary masterpiece recounts the Teigin Incident. Shortly after the end of World War II, in January 1948, around 12 employees of the Shiniyamachi Branch of the Teikoku Bank were tricked into drinking cyanide and died. The investigation led to the arrest of an artist named Sadamichi Hirasawa, who was later convicted and sentenced to death. However, Kumai harbored doubts about the trial and visited Hirasawa at the Miyagi Detention House in Sendai City to hear his testimony firsthand. His film was completed with the premise that the real perpetrator was not the one convicted in the trial. Looking back on his later achievements in the film industry, I am convinced that this debut film truly reflected the essence of Kei Kumai.

A quick internet search leaves me amazed by the sheer number of awards he has received. In 1965, the year following the release of *A Condemned Criminal*, he presented *A Chain of Islands* to the world. The film is based on a novel by Koichiro Yoshihara. As Kumai's second work that deals with deep social issues, it follows a man (played by Jukichi Uno), who works as an interpreter for a shadowy organization. He is asked by his superior to investigate the true nature of this organization, and in the course of the investigation, the full extent of

postwar Japan's deeply rooted evils comes to light. The film was featured at the Moscow International Film Festival, and received the Blue Ribbon Award for Best New Director the same year.

The Long Darkness is a film adaptation of Tetsuro Miura's Akutagawa Prize-winning novel of the same title. It is romantic film that traces the love story of Tetsuro (played by Go Kato), a university student, and Shino (played by Komaki Kurihara), a waitress working at the traditional restaurant Shinobugawa near the university where the two first meet. It follows their relationship as it blossoms and leads them to come together. The scene in which Tetsuro and Shino, naked together under a single padded kimono on their wedding night, gaze at a horse-drawn sleigh with its bells ringing as it passes along a snowy road in front of a small inn in Tohoku, is particularly beautiful. Komaki's appearance in this nude scene became quite a hot topic back then. *The Long Darkness* received the Mainichi Film Award for Best Film in 1972.

Two years later, in 1974, *Sandakan No. 8* received the Best Film Award at the Asia-Pacific Film Festival. Then four years later, in 1978, *Ogin-sama* was recognized as an outstanding film, winning an award at the Hong Kong International Film Festival. Based on a book by Tomoko Yamazaki, *Sandakan No. 8* tells the story of a former *karayuki-san* (a historical term referring to Japanese women who, in the past, went abroad to work as prostitutes in South China, Southeast Asia, and Oceania), now living in Amakusa, as she reflects on her life in a brothel in Borneo. Kinuyo Tanaka plays the role of the *karayuki-san*. *Ogin-sama* is a film adaptation of the novel of the same title by Kon Toko. The film skillfully captures the subtle inner conflict of Ogin, who, even after marrying Soan Mozu, a wealthy merchant from Sakai, cannot forget her first love, the Christian warlord Ukon Takayama.

In 1986, Kei Kumai released *Umi to Dokuyaku* ("The Sea and Poison"), a film adaptation of a novel of the same title by Shusaku Endo. It is based on an incident during World War II, in which US soldiers captured by the Japanese military were used as test subjects for clinical experiments. The film explores the theme of guilt in the Japanese people, who live without a concept of God, and stars Eiji Okuda and Ken Watanabe. The following year, 1987, it won the Silver Bear Jury Prize at the Berlin International Film Festival, the Special Project Award at the Japan Academy Film Prize, and the Blue Ribbon Award for Best Director.

But there is more. His film *Death of a Tea Master* won the Silver Lion Award at the Venice Film Festival and the Silver Hugo Award at the Chicago International Film Festival in 1989. The film tells the story of Sen no Rikyu, a tea master who lived during the Warring States and Azuchi-Momoyama periods (1522-1591), gaining great influence among feudal lords, until he fell out of favor with Toyotomi Hideyoshi and committed *seppuku* (ritual suicide).

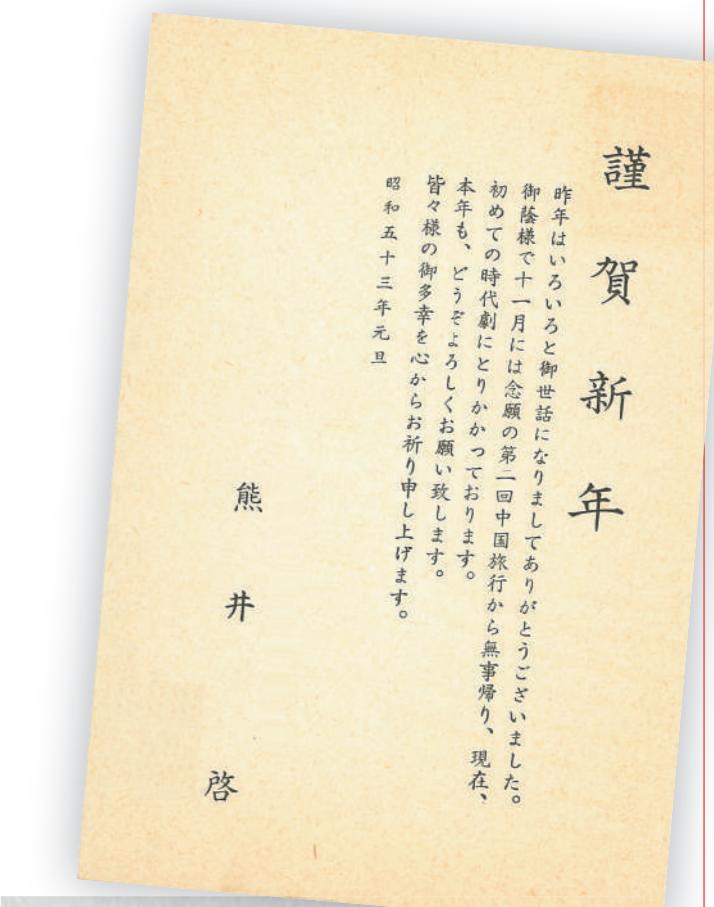
The casting of Kei Kumai's films is particularly impressive. To introduce every notable actor who has appeared in his works would take forever, so let us take *Death of a Tea Master* as an example. It is truly remarkable when you see that Eiji Okuda plays Honkakubo, Toshiro Mifune plays Sen no Rikyu, and Kinnosuke Yorozuya plays Yurakusai Oda. This is the last film in which Yorozuya appears, as well as his last on-screen collaboration with Mifune. This fact alone speaks volumes about the amazing casting in Kumai's work.

The reason I was able to form a close friendship for a time with the director of so many masterpieces is that, as a longtime employee at a TV station, I had the opportunity to be directly involved in the production of numerous programs.

This happened in 1976. TV Tokyo aired a regular documentary series called *Warera no Shuyaku* ("The Stars Among Us"), which profiled prominent historical figures. Midway through the season, Sadaharu Oh was coming close to surpassing Babe Ruth's American Major League record of 714 homeruns. So we immediately decided to follow Oh. Perhaps it was I who first approached Kumai with the request to direct the episode. That marked the beginning of our friendship. I valued creative individualism in my work and sought to collaborate with directors who had achieved success in cinema. A search turned up about 20 postcards from Kumai at the bottom of a cardboard box where I had stored old letters. Almost all are New Year's greeting cards. The address is penned in neat, meticulous handwriting that reflects Kumai's personality. There are hardly any personal messages. The date of the first postcard is several months after the program aired, suggesting that *Warera no Shuyaku* is what sparked our friendship. Kumai was eight years older than me. After that, I had the privilege of enjoying his friendship for over 20 years until the time of his passing. The essay collections he kindly sent me — *Eiga to Dokuyaku* ("Cinema and Poison"), *Eiga no Fukai Kawa* ("The Deep River of Cinema"), *Eiga o Aisuru* ("To Love Cinema") — still rest quietly on my bookshelf. We had drinks together on several occasions. Though I had heard from fellow filmmakers that he could be difficult when drinking, he never lost his composure in front of me.

Kumai readily accepted the request to direct the Sadaharu Oh episode of *Warera no Shuyaku*. He was a baseball enthusiast who belonged to the baseball club at Nikkatsu Studios and played first base, just like Oh. On top of that, he was a huge fan of Sadaharu Oh, and watched him closely on the field. He often shared with me stories about Oh's movements: how he would meticulously check his defensive area when on defense, or pick up any pebbles that might lead to an irregular bounce and toss them off the field. To capture the moment when Oh would reach Babe Ruth's 714 homeruns record (October 10, 1976) and surpass it by hitting his 715th homerun, Kumai and his filming crew were on standby at Korakuen Stadium for several days in a row. During that time, I also went to the games to boost the crew's morale. Then, on October 11, Oh surpassed Babe Ruth's record.

The program, subtitled *Members of the Oh Family*, aired in two parts on October 18 and 25. Watching the finished program in the screening room, I was deeply moved. Under Kumai's direction, the camera deliberately chose not to follow the historic 715th homerun. Instead, it stayed tightly focused on Sadaharu Oh as he rounded the bases, visibly holding back his emotions, while occasionally cutting to his parents, Shifuku and Tomi Oh, in the stands, celebrating their son's remarkable achievement. This footage encapsulated the image of Sadaharu Oh, born to a Chinese father and a Japanese mother, along with the very essence of the Oh family itself.



Author

Tomone Uemura
Essayist

After graduating from the Department of History, the Faculty of Letters, Arts and Sciences at Waseda University in 1962, he worked at Toei Co., Ltd. before entering TV Tokyo Corporation, where he was later appointed to managing director of TV Tokyo and president and representative director of PROTX.



Kei Kumai

Film director and screenwriter
1930-2007

Born in 1930 in Minami-Azumino County (today Azumino City), Nagano Prefecture. After graduating from Shinshu University, he joined Nikkatsu Studios in 1954. After working as a screenwriter for some time, he made his directorial debut in 1964 with *A Condemned Criminal*, based on his own original screenplay. His debut was followed by a diverse body of work, ranging from socially-conscious films based on meticulous research and intent on exposing hidden truths in the underbelly of society, to artistic films that closely examine the flaws of human nature. The majority of his works were distinguished with numerous awards both domestically and internationally. In 1995 he received the Purple Ribbon Medal, and in 2003 the Order of the Rising Sun, Fourth Class, Gold Rays with Rosette. In 2007, Kei Kumai collapsed at his home and passed away from a subarachnoid hemorrhage. He was 76 years old.

 Hataraku Yell 2025 Certification as an Employee Benefit Promotion Corporation



 Shareholder Benefit Program Introduced

KPP Group Holdings has introduced a new shareholder benefit program to express our gratitude to shareholders for their continued support and to encourage more people to own shares of our company.

This year, shareholders owning 100 shares or more as of the end of March will receive a prepaid bookstore card worth 1,000 yen. The Group will continue to focus on bolstering shareholder returns.

Prepaid bookstore card design

The card features popular papercrafts included as supplements in *TSUNAGU* magazine. We hope the card design evokes a sense of fascination and conjures up the possibilities that paper offers in creating new forms and structures through design and processing.



KPP Group Holdings and group company Kokusai Pulp & Paper have been certified under the Hataraku Yell 2025 employee benefits awards and certification program, earning recognition as employee benefit promotion corporations that focus on utilizing and enhancing employee benefits.

Certification was granted in recognition of the purpose of the companies' employee benefits, their alignment with that purpose, and the effectiveness of our evaluation processes in assessing how well the programs achieve it.

With this certification, the companies remain committed to developing and implementing benefits programs that are responsive to the needs of our employees.

Recognized Strengths

1. Strong, broad awareness of the purpose that employee benefits serve in management and human resources
2. Broad recognition that the purpose of employee benefits such as flextime and hourly paid leave is not limited to recruiting and retaining employees, but also serves to facilitate a diverse workforce, increase employee productivity, and motivate employees

Employee Benefits Awards and Certification Program (Hataraku Yell)

Launched in 2019, this program recognizes and certifies companies, organizations, and municipalities working to utilize and enhance employee benefits. Sponsored by the Hataraku Yell Executive Committee, which comprises businesses that provide employee benefit-related services, the program has awarded and certified a total of 352 legal entities to date.

Employee Benefits Awards and Certification Program
Hataraku Yell
<https://fukurikosei-hyoso.com/>



 **TSUNAGU Now Part of National Diet Library Collection**

TSUNAGU is now part of the National Diet Library collection. Founded in 1948, the library's mission is to preserve all publications produced in Japan—including books, magazines, newspapers, music scores, and maps—for future generations. It is the country's only national library with this comprehensive mandate. Open to everyone seeking knowledge, from researchers and students to members of the Diet, the library serves as the intellectual foundation of Japan.

It operates under the Legal Deposit System and plays a central role in documenting and passing down Japan's publishing culture for posterity. Highly regarded in Japan and around the world, the collection housed at the library is considered national intellectual property and

a valuable resource for culturally significant knowledge and scholarly research.

In addition to being stored at the library, as part of the collection, *TSUNAGU* will also be available for anyone* to read. We are proud that, beyond providing information, the magazine will be preserved for future generations as a publication reflecting the times. We hope this recognition will bring greater awareness of the value our Group provides.

As for the *TSUNAGU* team, we will continue to do our best to provide even more useful information to our readers. We thank you for reading and for your continued support.

* Use of the library is restricted to those 18 years and older.



Location



Tokyo Main Library
1-10-1 Nagata-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo



Kansai-kan of the National Diet Library
8-1-3 Seikadai, Seika-cho, Soraku-gun, Kyoto

Scan the code for
more details

National Diet Library <https://www.ndl.go.jp/en/index.html>



Editorial postscript

Do you have a memorable piece of artwork you made in arts and crafts when you were a child? I remember having a lot of fun in the third grade of elementary school making a stained glass craft using black construction paper, cardboard, and cellophane in all different colors. It was a simple construction, just a frame made of cardboard in any shape we liked with cellophane glued into it. When hung near a window, the light shone through so beautifully that I still remember it vividly. As I recall, the title was "A Gift From Santa" and mine

was shaped like Santa's bag of presents. I brought it home, and my family hung it in the window. Later, when I grew up and left my parents' house, my artwork saw me off through the small window.

Miho Akiyama, the artist featured in this issue, who creates paper animals, is also engaged in educating people of all ages. In light of her experience and background, I confessed, "I feel that I haven't been able to enjoy drawing or crafts like I used to as a child, when I genuinely enjoyed my arts and crafts class. Because

now I feel like I'm being judged on how well I do." She replied, "It is not whether something is done well or poorly that we are looking at. We are evaluating what was used to express it, the method itself." She went on to say that she measures the ability to learn and execute a particular method, not giving a low grade because of a student's poor skills.

I don't often wish to turn back time, but just for a moment now, I would like to go back to those days of painting in the art room. Tomoka Kato

Explore

KPP Group's sustainable solutions to promote a recycling-oriented society

Presenting the KPP Group's Diligent Efforts toward Realizing a Sustainable Society

KPP Sustainable Times



paper turf

OJO+ Paper Turf Installed in Indoor Amusement Arcade at EXPO 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan

OJO+ Paper Turf, an artificial paper turf sold by our group company KOKUSAI PULP & PAPER CO., LTD., is installed at "Asonde Ikan?" of WIDE LEISURE Inc. at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai Japan, which is underway in Yumeshima, Konohana Ward, Osaka City. Seventy-five square meters of OJO+ Paper Turf is employed in a space envisioned as a park of the future. Along with the playground equipment in the center, it is available for all visitors to use.

OJO+ Paper Turf is a paper artificial turf whose raw material is yarn made from Manila hemp. The paper's moisture absorbency and desorbency (the ability to both absorb moisture and dry easily) make it soft to the touch and an ideal material to use in a safe, comfortable playground.

Inside Asonde Ikan?, in addition to the futuristic park MIRAPPA featuring OJO+ Paper Turf, visitors can enjoy a giant crane game over 3 meters tall and Future Picture, a creative space where they can draw their own visions of future games. The space is designed to be enjoyable for both Japanese and international visitors. We look forward to seeing you there.

WIDE LEISURE EXPO 2025

Asonde Ikan?

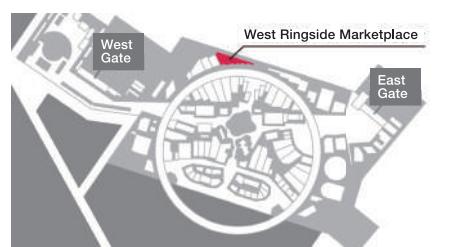
Exhibition Period: From now through Monday, October 13 (national holiday)

Location: Yumeshima Expo site, West Ringside Marketplace 2F

Hours: 9:00 - 21:00

Special website: <https://www.wideleisure.co.jp/expo2025/asondeikan/en/index.html>

Check here
for details



We have adopted a bookbinding method free of staples, paste and heat, taking into consideration recycling and the risk of injuries.



KPPグループホールディングス株式会社
KPP GROUP HOLDINGS CO., LTD.

Published by Group Human Resources Div. Group Corporate Communications Office
Address: 6-24 Akashi-cho, Chuo-ku, Tokyo, 104-0044, Japan
TEL: +81-3-3542-4166 (main switchboard number)

<https://www.kpp-gr.com/en/>

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