

"Obi Reborn" Art

Kensei Takeda

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In addition to the known and intended use of Japanese "obi" as a sash to the traditional kimono outfit, it has been used for years as a decorative accessory to interior design. They are often seen as tapestries hung on walls, runners on tables and dressers and sometimes are used in the recreation and design of clothing. Several years ago, as a result of his lifelong interest in art, both western and Asian, Mr. Takeda decided to give a rebirth to antique obi which otherwise might not have been used again. Oftentimes, obi cannot be used as a result of wear or soiling to the material. However, due to the extreme length of the article, there are nearly always sections of obi which can be salvaged and given new life. This has been the challenge of Mr. Takeda, and he has created vibrant framed art using obi, obi ties ("objime") and kimono material as the main media for this unique type of art.

In this presentation, several examples of original antique obi were presented to the participants and the finished art works were then shown to demonstrate how the obi and accessories were assembled, painted, matted and framed to bring about the finished pieces.

Depending on the artists location, one of the most difficult tasks in preparing to create these works is the actual finding of the antique obi. They can usually be found in Japanese antique shops or used kimono shops. Furthermore, the artist must be able to look at various obi, kimono and accessories and visualize the artistic layout possible with the materials at hand. Obviously, all antique obi and related material do not lend themselves to being paired with other material, and in many cases the condition of the material must be carefully inspected.

Silk becomes very delicate with age, and antique obi can easily tear or even disintegrate when washed and stretched. In some cases, only trial and error will determine if a particular piece of material can be used in this manner.

Although it was not feasible to demonstrate the washing, drying pressing, stretching and mounting of the obi at this particular demonstration, the procedure was described. An original obi was presented to the audience in it's state before the above-mentioned steps. Then, a mounted portion of the same obi was offered as a working sample. Mr. Takeda uses acrylic and water colors, usually straight from the tube and undiluted, as his paint media. A short demonstration of the painting technique was demonstrated.

The traditional wearing of kimono is a harmony of pattern, color, texture and layering of material. Mr. Takeda keeps this same concept in his art. Very old Japanese art tends to be flat, but he strives to bring about dimension to the materials in his finished art work. At the same time, Mr. Takeda always respects the work of the original artist while creating his own image. Depending on the theme of the work, he occasionally uses other materials such as beads, and in some instances, antique pieces of jewelry. In this way, each work takes on a truly three-dimensional form.

The choice of his frames is influenced by the environment in which the art is to be displayed. Although the initial materials are of Japanese origin, the frames reflect the interior design of the environment in which the art is to be shown. Also, both the frames and the mats are partially chosen based on the theme or title of the finished work.

Mr. Takeda's final works of art are a result of not only painting, but also manipulation and co-ordination of various materials related to kimono. It was a result of his long-time appreciation of traditional kimono and obi that he started to use these materials in his art. In this way, he has created objects of art which allow viewers to enjoy these traditional materials in everyday life.



<Figure> Sample of "Obi Reborn" art