

Closing and Opening (A Study of Bravery)

A German lawyer once told me that you are brave – 勇敢 to be doing something art in a foreign country by yourself. It may indeed seem that way to people who live with their families in their mother tongue country, but those words made a strange impression on me.

A trip to Dejima in Nagasaki inspired this new work. In an age when only boats were available, why would they risk crossing the sea and going to unknown places when they might die? Why do they want to see the unknown? I was thinking about what my lawyer had told me and Dejima, somehow overlapping. About opening and closing, and the courage and curiosity that comes with it.

The circumstances that led to the isolation of the country in the 17th century and the way the country opened up at the border between the Edo and Meiji periods determined the Japan we know today. When I look at Japan from the outside, I often think about the peculiarities of Japan and the way it has moved towards closing in many ways in recent years. This overlaps with the question of what it means for people today, who are at the mercy of the virtual space of the internet, to be closed and open to the world.

The new textiles are interspersed with textiles from Europe before the isolation of the country, maps from the time of Dejima, the logo of the Dutch East India Company, chintz patterns of hidden Christians, sketches of unknown authors from the Edo and Meiji periods, an English dictionary from the opening of Japan in the Meiji period, a clock to learn the European time system, Emoji for communication, AI image-generated images by words, etc. As a 'reading textile', like a riddle to be solved.

Aiko Tezuka
December, 2023



Map of Japan

By Luis Teixeira
One sheet
Hand-colored copperplate print
H.41.3 x W.53.3 cm
Antwerp, Belgium Dated 1595

Internal Pattern of the Map of Japan

Kowatari (antique and imported) Chintz, White Ground, Temple Patterns

Probably late 16th-18th century



Map of the Old World

Transcribed by Takami Senseki

Color on paper
H.119 x W.117.5 cm
Edo period Transcribed in 1836
(Tenpō 7)



Internal Pattern of the Map of the Old World

La tenture de la Vie Seigneuriale : Scènes galantes

(La Vie Seigneuriale wall hanging: Scenes galantes)
Netherlands, circa 1500 - 1520
Wool, silk
282 x 372 cm



VOC Monogram of the Underglaze Blue Fuyo-de (cotton rosemallow) Dish with Flowers and Birds

The company emblem of the Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (Dutch East India Company), abbreviated VOC, founded in 1602; the VOC built a trading house (branch) in Hirado in 1609 and moved from Hirado to Dejima, Nagasaki in 1641, thus establishing a foothold for the spread of Dutch studies in Japan. From 1639 onwards, the VOC monopolised trade between closed Japan and Europe.

Dejima was the only place in secluded Japan open to the world. The VOC's emblem, of which the only European company authorised by the Edo Shogunate to trade there, was placed on goods coming into and going out of Japan. The VOC mark is evidence of a Japan that was 'closed but open'. I constantly think about that boundary.



Woodblock print of a sketch (Azuchi Castle Screen) by Philips van Winghe

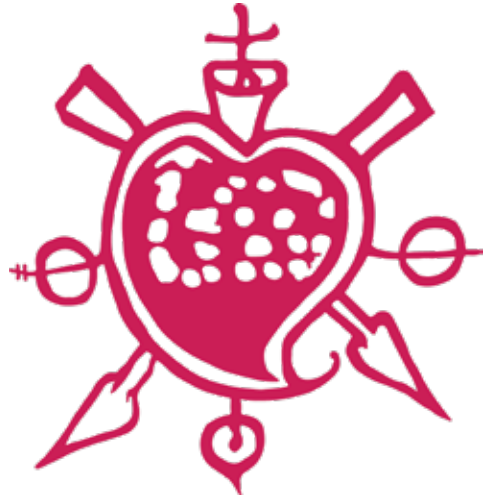
1592

The 'Azuchi Castle Screen' was drawn by the Flemish scholar Philips van Winghe in 1592. Oda Nobunaga built Azuchi Castle between 1576 and 1579, which disappeared shortly afterwards and cannot be seen in its original form. However, there was an 'Azuchi Castle Screen' painted at the time. It is known that this screen was presented to Pope Gregory XIII by the Tensho Boy Mission to Europe but was subsequently lost. However, the screen was displayed in the 'Gallery of Maps' in the Vatican Palace on the Pope's order. The Flemish scholar Philips van Winghe made a drawing of the screen displayed there in 1592. The drawing was passed to the Paduan classical scholar Lorenzo Pignoria after Winghe's death. Pignoria made a woodcut of Winghe's drawing of the 'Azuchi Castle' and included it in the second edition of his book 'The Idols of the Ancient Gods'.

Pignoria's book gave the commentary 'Temples of the Japanese Gods'.

(Reference: *Shin Momoyama: Japanese Art in the Age of Discovery*, catalogue pp 50 - 51, "How was the 'Azuchi Castle Screen' described" Kosuke Matsuura, Kyushu National Museum, 2017).

I decided to use this sketch in my textile design without knowing this background because I felt a strange sense of the near future. I was attracted to the mysterious space, which seemed to be a mixture of perspective and non-perspective, where it was unclear whether the castle was on the ground or floating. Later, after reading the commentary, I learnt of the mind-boggling process involved in obtaining our image of the phantom 'Azuchi Castle', which no one could ever see. I thought again about the meaning of 'painting'.



Partial Cut-out of the "Sacred Heart" Hikone Chintz Pattern

Coromandel coast, India, 17th century / Japan

This heart-shaped object represents the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the heart of Christ, which was impaled on a sword and spear. A small cross is drawn above the Sacred Heart, and it is said that traces of scraping can be seen in an attempt to erase the cross.

(References: *AGES OF SARASA* Catalogue p67, Fukuoka Art Museum, 2014 / Taiyo "Chintz" pp 100 - 101 "About Hikone Chintz" Sae Ogasawara, 2005)

It is astonishing that in the Edo period, under the Christian ban, people were willing to retain such a dangerous pattern of cloth, even to the extent of cutting away the crosses. I was reminded that the patterns adorning textiles and cloth were not mere decoration but indirect and acute reflections of people's needs.

When I tried to draw iOS Emojis on this textile, I discovered a copyright problem, so I hastily replaced them with free Emojis. While making this replacement, I was thinking of the people who had scraped out the crosses in this 'Sacred Heart Pattern'. I am mentioning this in the explanation of 'Emojis'.



Kowatari (antique and imported) Chintz

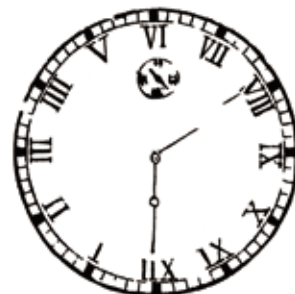
India, 18th century



Japanese-English dictionary published in 1868

The first year of the Meiji era, 1868, Keio 4
Published by Kaientai, Tosa

This Japanese-English dictionary was created at the time of Japan's opening to the outside world. I read this book and felt myself in the same boat as the Japanese people of that time, who tried to learn foreign languages and understand different cultures. I was also surprised to find that English pronunciations in the katakana notation in this book are closer to native English speakers' pronunciation than those used in current English education in Japan.



The illustration of the clock is a schematic of a British clock drawn to teach the European time system.



Drawing by an unknown in the Meiji - Edo era, probably in Kyoto

Aiko Tezuka purchased the drawings in Berlin in 2023. They were drawn by an unknown person who lived around during Japan's modernisation. Unsigned. I admire how they drew with ease as if he were singing.

Emojis (Google Fonts, Noto Emoji)



Emojis of zip in the mouth, smile upside down, cry, secret, heart, love letter, good luck, and email. I was thinking about the conflict between the lightness of sending at the touch of a button and the weight of the sender's and receiver's hearts. There was a hasty replacement with Google Fonts' Noto Emoji when I discovered that iOS emojis were caught by copyright. See the commentary on the *"Sacred Heart" Hikone Chintz Pattern* for more.



Spider webs generated by AI-generated images

I placed the 'web' on a lower layer of the world.