

Masters Tomomi and Hisashi Kano

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Washi paper-making



Mrs. Tomomi Kano and Mr. Hisashi Kano work together as a unit in the traditional Japanese methods of paper making at Obara of Toyota City, Aichi, Japan.

Individually, Mrs. Tomomi Kano inherited her family business of making washi paper, mastering her method through her life. Mr. Hisashi Kano brought a unique clay flavor into paper making. Together, they have developed a new genre of Japanese papers.

Tomomi and Hisashi Kano's first workshop was held at the Japanese Pavilion of the Hanover Exposition in Germany in 2000. Since then, they have held workshops and exhibitions every year at major art galleries in Japan.



Photos of washi paper ornamental designs by Masters Kano

Washi (*wa* meaning Japanese, *shi* meaning paper) is a style of handmade paper originating from Japan. Made by traditional methods, washi is made from the fibers of bark from many native Asian plants. In Toyota City, the bark is typically made from Kozo, a type of mulberry which is a flowering shrub that can grow up to 35 meters tall.

The branches are boiled, stripped of the bark and dried. The fibers are then boiled in lye to remove contaminants, placed under running water to be cleaned, and bleached. What remains of the Kozo fibers are then laid on a rock and beaten. The pulp created is mixed with water, scooped onto a screen, and shaken to evenly spread the fibers. The secret of Obara paper crafters is adding colors and designs to the paper by using the soil from the Obara area. This long and intricate process helps make washi a tougher paper that is used in a variety of traditional Japanese arts as well as everyday household items.



Photos courtesy of Masters Kano showing some of the processes of washi making