

## Beyond Baskets

We have to learn from one thing to go to the next. I am an artist who began as a painter and draughtsman, and then evolved into a sculptor making site-specific installations using natural materials.

In 1996, I went to Japan to learn how to work with bamboo. A Japanese bamboo master, Ueno Masao, invited me to participate in the Kamogawa outdoor sculpture festival. When I finished my piece, I helped him weave something that he was working on that resembled the round lip of a bamboo basket emerging from the lake surface. With reeds or saplings, the logical way to draw a line in space is to weave them together; this connects my work to the technique of basket making.

I chose baskets from Jan Serr and John Shannon's collection that go beyond utility in concept. These works are unique, express geometry and simplicity, and touch some of the same themes as my own work. Jiro Yonezawa's design is defined by structure and form, as seen in his tightly woven *Bridge Babjo*. Joe Hogan starts with a natural form, a pod, which inspires the basket-structure of his work. Francina and Neil Prince use multicolored pine needles bound with thread to create a patterned surface. Ueno Masao in *Apricot Blossom* weaves a trefoil knot from bamboo strips inspired by geometry and natural forms.

Each of these artists uses traditional techniques—manipulating organic materials into a state of controlled, natural perfection—to create contemporary forms. They are inspired by the characteristics of the natural materials, just as I am in my installations. They push their designs toward abstraction, simplification, and new structures.

No matter how controlled the craft, the natural material exposes its presence.

—Roy Staab, 2016

## Nature in Three Parts

Villa Terrace's museum-wide summer exhibition *Nature in Three Parts* consists of three exhibitions based on the work and ideas of artist Roy Staab.

Roy Staab's *Shadow Dance*, in the Renaissance Garden, is the keynote work in *Nature in Three Parts*. It is the first commissioned sculpture on the grounds of the Villa Terrace.

*Suspended in Time* features photographs and videos of Staab's earlier installations in North America, Europe, and Asia. *Shadow Dance* and *Suspended in Time* are the subjects of a catalog especially published for the Villa Terrace exhibition.

*Beyond Baskets*, guest curated by Roy Staab, showcases contemporary basket-making, emphasizing the structural similarities of the baskets to Staab's larger environmental work. Roy Staab selected contemporary baskets from the collection of Jan Serr and John Shannon, which includes significant holdings in three-dimensional art. *Beyond Baskets* includes over a dozen works by Jiro Yonezawa, two by Polly Adams Sutton, and one each by Joe Hogan, Ueno Masao, Francina and Neil Prince, Deborah Smith, Leslie Wilcox, and Hiroi Yasushi.

*Beyond Baskets* received curatorial assistance from Jenille Junco, Villa Terrace Assistant Curator, and independent curators Susan Barnett and Laura Sims. Katie Steffan provided registrarial support and Robert Sieger, Fine Art Services, oversaw art logistics. This catalog was designed by Susan Barnett and Kate Hawley and edited by Laura Sims, with photography by Robb Quinn. Timothy Cobb, Timothy Cobb Fine Arts, suggested the theme of *Beyond Baskets* after observing a dialogue between Staab's work and contemporary baskets. Many thanks to John Sterr, Executive Director, Charles Allis & Villa Terrace Museums, for his ideas and cooperation, and to the CAVT Board of Directors for their support.

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Villa Terrace Decorative Arts Museum  
2220 N. Terrace Avenue  
Milwaukee, WI 53202  
Open 1–5 p.m., Wednesday–Sunday  
villaterracemuseum.org



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Curated by Roy Staab

VILLA TERRACE  
DECORATIVE ARTS MUSEUM



Left to right: Ueno Masao, *Apricot Blossom*, 2007; madake bamboo; 5 x 15 x 15-1/2 in.  
Joe Hogan, *Pod with Rowan Wood*, ca. 2007; rowan wood; 12 x 12 x 20 in.  
Francina and Neil Prince, *Torrey Pine Needle Basket*, ca. 1997; pine needles and thread; 8 x 15.5 x 8 in.  
Jiro Yonezawa, *Bridge Babjo*, 2007; bamboo, cane, cedar root, urushi lacquer; 6.5 x 9 x 41 in.  
Cover: Hiroi Yasushi, *Shiosai (Mareta Shell)*, 2008; bamboo, rattan, and urushi lacquer; 9 x 23 x 20 in.