

Hanzawa Tomomi approaches papermaking as a negotiation between human action and material behavior—remaining within the process rather than directing it from outside. Fibers respond to water, pressure, and movement; structure forms without being fully commanded. Within this making, traces of daily life, memory, and loss are held inside the paper itself. The works do not depict what has passed, but allow what has touched them to remain—layered, fragile, and open to change.



Another Garden , 2025



Garden , 2025

ARTIST STATEMENT

Hanzawa Tomomi works with paper and fibers to explore how human existence is shaped, sustained, and transformed through relationships with others, time, and environment. The practice does not approach paper as a neutral support or decorative surface, but as a structure formed through the intertwining of fibers—a physical process that parallels how lives take shape through accumulated interactions, traces, and encounters. Paper, in this work, is not a background for expression but a site where presence, absence, and connection are materially negotiated.

Central to Hanzawa's thinking is the understanding that human existence is not a fixed state, but something continuously formed through contact. Just as fibers gather, separate, and rebind in the making of paper, relationships leave uneven layers, tensions, gaps, and densities within a life. The works allow these processes to remain visible. Surfaces hold thickness and fragility at once; structures reveal both cohesion and vulnerability. What appears is not a representation of relationships, but their residue—made tangible through material process.

Papermaking itself forms the core of the artist's inquiry. Having engaged with papermaking traditions across Japan, the United States, Mexico, and Canada, Hanzawa approaches the medium not as a predetermined object, but as something that comes into being through interaction. Fibers respond to water, pressure, and movement according to their own tendencies; outcomes cannot be fully anticipated or controlled. Rather than mastering the material or executing a fixed plan, the artist works by attending closely to how paper forms itself through these conditions. The work emerges through a balance of intention and responsiveness, involvement and release.



Papermaking process. Fibers layered in a grid, forming structure through repeated contact.

This attitude toward making aligns with what can be described as a middle-voiced practice. In ancient Greek grammar, the middle voice referred to actions in which the subject is neither an external agent imposing will nor a passive recipient of forces, but is situated within the process itself. To act in the middle voice is to be implicated in what unfolds—to participate without full command. Hanzawa's papermaking operates in this register. The artist does not force material into compliance, nor simply surrender to chance. Instead, the artist remains within the unfolding process, responding as form takes shape through a dynamic relationship between human action and material behavior.

Within this middle-voiced approach, paper is understood not as static matter but as something continuously becoming. Even after a work is formed, it retains the capacity to change—reacting to humidity, gravity, and time. This openness is not treated as a flaw to be corrected, but as a condition to be acknowledged. The work does not aim for permanence or closure. It holds a state of ongoingness, where stability is provisional and transformation remains possible.



From the studio

Memory operates in the work in a similar way. Memory is not depicted through image or narrative, nor translated into symbolic motifs. Instead, it is embedded in the material process itself. Fibers carry traces of contact; layers accumulate the marks of time, handling, and environment. Fragments from daily life and remnants connected to others are incorporated not as representations of what is absent, but as active participants in the work's formation. Memory here is neither recalled nor illustrated—it arises through material continuity.

This approach allows the work to engage with loss and absence without resolving them into meaning or consolation. What has been lost does not return, yet continues to shape what remains. Absence persists within presence, not as an image of what is gone, but as a structural condition. In this sense, the work engages mourning not as an event to be overcome or a state to be escaped, but as a

temporal mode that continues to operate. The work does not seek healing through completion; instead, it sustains a space where what is missing remains influential.

The body, though often not directly depicted, is implicit throughout the practice. Papermaking is a bodily process involving repetitive gestures, pressure, balance, and attention. The resulting works register these actions without recording them literally. They bear the imprint of touch and labor while resisting narrative fixation. The body appears not as an image, but as a condition of making—embedded within the structure of the work itself.

Through these material and conceptual strategies, Hanzawa proposes that human existence is neither autonomous nor fully determined, but emerges through ongoing entanglement. Like paper—porous, layered, and vulnerable to change—life unfolds through accumulation, dissolution, and the quiet persistence of what has passed through. The works hold together agency and exposure, presence and absence, intention and unpredictability, without resolving their tension. In doing so, they offer a way of thinking and being that remains attentive to uncertainty and open to transformation.

BIOGRAPHY

Hanzawa Tomomi (b. 1988, Japan) works with paper and fibers, approaching the medium not as a surface but as a structure formed through material process. Creating sculptural, two-dimensional, and installation works, Hanzawa explores memory, traces of time, and the relationship between landscape and the body. Subtle marks and remnants from daily life are embedded within the internal structure of paper, allowing experiences and sensations to accumulate rather than be represented.

Major exhibitions include *Listening to the Garden* (aaploit, Tokyo, Japan), *A Quest into the World "with" PAPER* (Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto, Japan), and *The Histories of the Self* (Atrium Gallery, Pola Museum of Art, Kanagawa, Japan). Hanzawa has also participated in artist-in-residence programs in Japan and abroad, sustaining a practice shaped through ongoing engagement with place, environment, and the conditions of making.

CV

EDUCATION

2010 B.F.A. in Sculpture, Joshibi University of Art and Design, Tokyo

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2025 *Listening to the Garden*, aaploit, Tokyo

2024 *Self: multiple presents*, Fuji Paper Art Museum, Shizuoka

- 2023 *Grab the bubbles*, Komatsuan sohonke Ginza, Tokyo
- 2022 *Narrative Act*, DiEGO Omotesando, Tokyo
- 2020 *Note*, MARUEIDO JAPAN, Tokyo
- 2019 *The Histories of the Self*, Atrium Gallery, Pola Museum of Art, Kanagawa

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (SELECTED)

- 2025 *International Contemporary Art Festival "Nakanojo Biennale 2025"*, Gunma
- 2024 *Intimité*, space Un Tokyo, Tokyo
FROM THE GROUND, Dream Space Gallery, Chiang Mai, Thailand
- 2023 *The Eyes of the Skin*, MARUEIDO JAPAN, Tokyo
Nakanojo Biennale 2023, Gunma
Shin Japanese Painting: Revolutionary Nihonga, Pola Museum of Art, Kanagawa
Premonition of Beauty 2023, Takashimaya Art Gallery, Nihombashi; Kyoto; Osaka; Nagoya; Yokohama; Shinjuku
- 2022 *A Quest into the World 'with' PAPER*, Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto
- 2021 *Texture and Perception*, X Art Gallery, Tokyo
- 2020 *Pola Museum Annex Exhibition 2020: Authenticity and Aura*, Pola Museum Annex, Tokyo

ART FAIRS

- 2025 *Art Fair Tokyo 2025*, Tokyo, (aaploit)
- 2024 *Art Fair Asia Fukuoka 2024*, Fukuoka, (aaploit)

RESIDENCIES & FELLOWSHIPS

- 2025 Artist-in-Residence, *Nakanojo Biennale 2025*, Gunma
- 2024 Residency Program, space Un, Dakar, Senegal
Artist-in-Residence, *Nakanojo Biennale International Exchange Program 2024*, Chiang Mai, Thailand
- 2023 Artist-in-Residence, *Nakanojo Biennale 2023*, Gunma
- 2018 Fellow of POLA Art Foundation Overseas Study Program (U.S.A., Mexico, Canada)

2017 Artist-in-Residence, *NANSO KANAYA GEIJUTSU TOKKU*, Chiba

AWARDS & GRANTS

2019 19th Production/Research Encouragement Award, Joshibi University of Art and Design

2018 Overseas Study Grant for Young Artists, Pola Art Foundation

2016 Excellent Work Award, *FINE ART / UNIVERSITY SELECTION 2016-2017*

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Haneda Airport – Centurion Lounge

The Ritz-Carlton Fukuoka

Hotel Toranomon Hills

Grancreeper HARUMI FLAG

PARK HOMES Nishi-Ogikubo Avenue

PARK HOMES Ogikubo 3-Chome

Private Collections in Japan

aaploit

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