

One might find as many reasons to compare kimonos and contemporary artworks as reasons to oppose them. On one side, the kimono is a canvas (Karina Bisch, Anne Laure Sacriste), a work of art to wear (Karina Bisch, Ingrid Luche), an image (Lisa Holzer, Anne Laure Sacriste), and is valued by its chamanic / psychological effects (Lisa Holzer, Ingrid Luche). On the other side, it has a strict shape, and is collaboratively produced (designers and, until 20, craftsmen). It traditionally is the result of a continuous tradition (since 1555 as Chiso is concerned), whereas contemporary artists' specific culture insists in inventing new forms and promoting the tradition of the new. Instead of solving this contradictory arguments, I have chosen to multiply them in inviting artists to produce new works, each of them linked to different steps of kimono's production process, and and to exhibit them with their classical equivalents.

Lisa Holzer and Anne Laure Sacriste produced half scale kimono designs, inkjet printed on silk – the same way Chiso's designers draw first on paper. Karina Bisch and Ingrid Luche have been invited to produce « tamonos », 13 meters long rolls of silk, which are meant to be swen into kimonos, the same way 20 craftsmen turn Chiso's drawings into reality. Karina Bisch and Ingrid Luche's dresses, as well as this newly produced works, are then exhibited with pieces from Chiso's archives : 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th and 21rst century kimonos and works produced by Chiso, for 19th century Japan's universal exhibition pavilions, or older pieces. Surprisingly, processes, shapes, forms and patterns, reveal similarities with contemporary artworks, even before modernity ever emerged in occidental art : interferences of text and images (Lisa Holzer), figures of ornament / deliquescence and monochrome (Anne Laure Sacriste), geometrical patterns combined with animal forms, collage (Karina Bisch), reversal of composition principles (Ingrid Luche). Copy and unicity are undifferentiated as well, just as well, you can't tell copy from unique piece of work. « Nihon-ga », Chiso's historical core still preserved and developped until now in contemporary manners, appears more enlarged than ever expected, once one pay attention to Chiso's incredible archives. The indistinctness in classical representations, expectations and objects that this exhibition tries to reach perfectly matched french poet Paul Éluard's 1951 verse « Et nous voici plus bas et plus haut que jamais » (We are lower and higher than ever) [1]. It seems more than accurate as a title for this exhibition as it is an excerpt from « Le Phoenix », a love poem describing the birth and rise of the mythological bird in a landscape the ekphrasis of which reminds Nihon-ga themes.

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[1] I initially discovered this verse written on a folder I found in a japanes flea market a few days after my arrival in Kyoto, at Villa Kujoyama. Paul Éluard wasn't quoted, nor the order of the verses

respected. Nonetheless, it summarized feelings that gaijin often discover in Japan and motivates the eagerness I still experience here.

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