Itchiku Kubota and Tsujigahana

Itchiku was enchanted by the beauty of "Tsujigahana Dyed" patterned cloth that he researched in the Muromachi era and from this era, he started to research Tsujigahana in earnest from the age of 40. But it was another twenty difficult years until he completed a work that he could be satisfied with, and he presented it at his unique dyeing technique, "Ichiki Tsujigahana." Following his first solo exhibition in 1977, he held numerous solo exhibitions around the world. His achievements have been highly acclaimed both domestically and overseas, and he received the French "Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters" in 1990 and the "Commissioner for Cultural Affairs Award" award in 1993. He died on April 26th, 2003, at the age of 85.

Tsujigahana-Dyeing

It is a technique of pattern dyeing that uses painting on a tie-dyed base, which was widely used for the common people's "kosode" kimono from the Muromachi era. It reached its zenith in the Azuchi Momoyama era, when Tsujigahana silk kimono and haori adorned many warlords and samurai, but it disappeared in the early days of the Edo era. The most likely reason is that it was surpassed by the Yuzen dyeing technique, which can be used to create more finely detailed images. Because it disappeared in such a sudden manner, tsujigahana is referred to as 'phantom dyed clothing' or the 'phantom flower.'

Symphony of Light

The "Symphony of Light" is the lifework of Itchiku and our final goal is to integrate 80 works representing nature's "four seasons" and his own "universe." Currently 46 works, including fall, winter, and several works of the universe, have been completed.
Itchiku Kubota Art Museum

In 1994, a dyeing artist, Itchiku Kubota (1917-2003), built the museum in its perfect location with a majestic view of Mt. Fuji and the serene Lake Kawaguchi. The museum permanently exhibits Itchiku Tsujigahana works with the two main themes of “trinity of humans, nature, and art” and “the center of new culture and art.” The whole museum, including the garden, buildings, and furnishings, represents “the world of Itchiku.”

Main Building

The main building is a pyramid-shaped structure supported by 16 wooden beams more than 1,000 years old, using a combination of traditional Japanese and Western techniques. “Symphony of Light”, the lifework of Itchiku, a series about Mt. Fuji and other works are exhibited. At the tearoom “Itchiku-an,” in the back of the exhibition room, green tea and sweets are served for visitors while they enjoy the beautiful view.

New Wing


The New Wing is a unique architectural structure which reminds us of Gaudi’s architecture, and all the walls are made of Ryukyu limestone (coral reef fossils). There is also the “Tombodama Art Gallery”, a shop where rare items such as original goods and glass bead accessories are available, and an open-style café.

Glass Beads

Tombodama is the general term for glass beads with patterns and colors. They used to be objects of worship and symbols of power in earlier times. Later, Tombodama started being traded and valued just like money, and spread all over the world through trading. A collection of glass beads is permanently exhibited: they fascinated young Itchiku and greatly influenced his creation of “Itchiku Tsujigahana”.

*There is a 500-JPY admission charge for the Glass Beads Exhibition Room (includes a beverage)