

# ALEXA KUMIKO HATANAKA

JAPANESE CANADIAN  
CULTURAL CENTRE

EXHIBITION ON FROM 23 SEPTEMBER 2023  
THROUGH 25 NOVEMBER 2023

CURATED BY  
CHIEDZA PASIPANODYA

# UNCHANGING AND CHANGING AND CHANGING

OPENING NIGHT AND LIVE PERFORMANCES  
THURSDAY 12 OCTOBER 2023  
DOORS OPEN 6:30 PM



Mist-Walker wearing artist's washi top and flying washi flag, Tokyo, Japan. Image by Johnny Nghiem.

## EXHIBITION

“Unchanging and changing and changing” is a solo exhibition and live performance by Alexa Kumiko Hatanaka that features wearable paper artworks that are imbued with the life of the performers alongside the histories of craft and place that inform them.

A reflection on well-being and selfhood, the works unite and contrast needs for protective armours and “inverse armours,” the latter activated by dance, music and friends to encourage expression and joy. Hatanaka reflects on personal aftershocks from tsunamis, both real and metaphorical. Her work integrates her formative childhood experience in dance at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre and is steeped with her recent time spent at a fourth generation paper mill in Japan. Her ethereal work collapse time and string together interconnected histories held within the threads, repairs and fibres of her practice: ancestral ties; the lineage of printmaking, inks and natural dyes; personal narratives incorporating past printmaking blocks; and scraps of papers sewn into the next and the next work.

A video shares the intergenerational experience of the papermakers in Japan and an intimate look at Hatanaka’s process while she was immersed in the very lands and community that create the specific paper she has used for over a decade. She intentionally chose paper that is delicate yet strong, and heartfully shares its possibility into the future and its significance as an over 1000 year sustainable craft technology.

“The softness of the Japanese washi paper and its transparency represent the environment where the natural materials were picked, under a clear sky and near a magnificent river.

The warmth and robustness of Japanese washi paper comes from the efforts of farmers and their love for this land where they have lived for several generations.

It is thanks to this strong bond between people and nature that the Kashiki paper production company was able to produce Japanese washi paper.”

—Kashiki Seishi, fourth generation paper mill in Japan where Hatanaka was artist in residence

## OPENING NIGHT & LIVE PERFORMANCES

JAPANESE CANADIAN  
CULTURAL CENTRE:  
KOBAYASHI HALL

FREE ADMISSION  
CASH BAR

THURSDAY 12 OCTOBER 2023

EXHIBITION ON VIEW  
ARTIST IN ATTENDANCE

Opening night begins with musicians Benja and Peach Luffe performing in custom washi wearables by Hatanaka.

Following the music, “Unchanging and changing and changing” is a performance that brings together Taiko drumming, Nihon Buyo (dance) and washi (Japanese paper) techniques used for costuming. These three Japanese expressions are combined in the spirit of celebrating the potential of hybrid, personal and contemporary interpretations of historical practices. Developed collaboratively with Hatanaka, the performance features drummers Jody Chan & Wy Joung Kou and a mother and daughter dance duo Katherine Yamashita & Danielle Yamashita, the latter whom Hatanaka danced with as a child.

The performance traces a story that reaches back generations and toward a hopeful future despite the certainty of grief and gravity. Percussion and movement meld quietly, and then persistently propel through a constellation of selfhood, tsunami, dis/order, change, koi and Obon Odori.

## OPENING NIGHT SCHEDULE

6:30 pm	Doors open
7:00 pm	Benja and Peach Luffe, live musical performance in washi wearables “Unchanging and changing and changing”, a collaborative performance with Taiko drummers Jody Chan & Wy Joung, and Nihon Buyo dancers Danielle Yamashita & Katherine Yamashita in washi wearables
8:30 pm	After party & artist’s birthday party DJ Velma and more to be announced ♪♪



#### THE ARTIST

Alexa Kumiko Hatanaka is a Japanese-Canadian artist based in Toronto. Her practice brings together historical craft technologies of her heritage including ink, natural dye, printmaking and papermaking to create her distinct visual vernacular. Her work is experience based research which includes a foundation in long-term community-engaged projects with collaborators in the high Arctic as well as recent collaborative performances that integrate and reinterpret kamiko, garments sewn out of washi, Japanese paper.

She carries forward the beauty of environmentally sustainable traditions, to explore the possibilities of their application into the future. Her approach to wearable sculpture removes the boundaries between craft, fashion and art. Hatanaka's intentional choice of materiality supports the concepts embedded in her work which includes interconnectedness and impacts of globalization on communities integrally grounded in specific lands; collapsing time to layer ancestry and past versions of self; and the relationship between protection and courage.

Hatanaka has exhibited her work at the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa, CA), Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto, CA), the British Museum and Canada House (London, UK), The Toronto Biennial of Art (Toronto, CA) the Guanlan International Printmaking Base (Shenzhen, China), the Nikkei National Museum (Burnaby, CA) and Harper's (New York, USA), and forthcoming at the Ino Cho Paper Museum. Hatanaka is represented by Patel Brown Gallery in Toronto, Canada.

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Artist photographed by Johnny Ngheim.

#### THE PERFORMERS

WY JOUNG KOU & JODY CHAN

Kou and Chan are interdisciplinary artists with a practice rooted in frameworks of disability justice, relational process and queer crip kinship. Together, their body of work spans mosaic, poetry, sound, movement, performance, video and installation. They are both performing members with Raging Asian Womxn Taiko Drummers.

KATHERINE YAMASHITA & DANIELLE YAMASHITA

The Yamashitas both studied classical and semi-classical Nihon Buyo (Japanese Dancing) since childhood, and carry over 20 years of dance training and experience. They studied under Hideya Ogawa of Ogawa Ryu and later both danced with the Sakura Kai Dance Group at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre where Danielle has also been an instructor and choreographer.

BENJA

A prismatic tour, a lo-fi mist, an open experiment: Benja blends bedroom-infused indiepop with the soulful production of R&B. Like the best of eclectic visions, the Toronto-based guitarist pulls from a variety of sourcebooks. He has backed up Bad Bad Not Good, Jonah Yano and Joseph of Mercury, and has contributed production on the forthcoming K'naan album, and released his first EP Ivy in 2023.

PEACH LUFFE

Jong Lee is a classically trained violinist making Dream Pop under the project name Peach Luffe. Starting solo and expanding to collaborate with band members, Peach Luffe connects with a dedicated fan base globally. The name Peach Luffe originates from the manga One Piece with the character Luffy, an aspirational story that informs the sentiment of Jong's music.



Drummers, Jody Chan (left) and Wy Joung Kou (right), in washi wearables.

## JAPANESE CANADIAN CULTURAL CENTRE

Founded in 1963, the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre (JCCC) is one of the largest and most vibrant Japanese cultural centres in the world. The JCCC promotes excellence in contemporary art and design, and visitors will find intersectionality in both spaces, and recognize the accomplishment of the Nikkei community. The JCCC also offers a broad spectrum of Japanese traditional and contemporary cultural programs, martial arts, festivals, performances, film screenings, and other experiences for its thousands of members and hundreds of thousands of annual visitors.

## EXHIBITION ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTORS

Curator	Chiedza Pasipanodya
Dance & Drum Performance	Danielle Yamashita, Katherine Yamashita, Wy Joung Kou, Jody Chan
Musical Performance	Benja, Peach Luffe
After Party DJs	DJ Velma and more to be announced 🎵
Documentary Video & Photography	Johnny Nghiem
Photography	Maya Fuhr, Holly Chang
Photography & Advisory Support	Johnny Le
Fabrication	Dylan Moore, Yorgo Liapis
Garment Modelling	Benja, Peach Luffe, Sima Sepehri, Elissa Mielke, YGC, Leah Mersky, Felicia Daisy, Mist Walker
Production Assistance	Akash Inbakumar, Yahn Nemirovsky, Felicia Daisy, Gideon Näf, Danny Cardoso
Graphic Design	Christine Xia

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Musical performers, Peach Luffe (left) and Benja (right), in washi wearables and holding patchwork washi flag. Images by Maya Fuhr.



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