

photo by Nik van der Giesen

Description of

OBAKE “A” / “UN”
[a] [hūm]

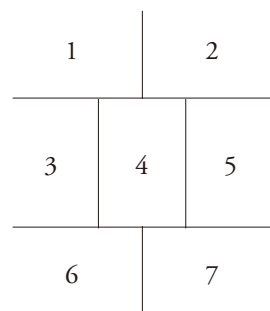
“CHOCHIN” Craftsmanship of Japanese Lantern 1

CHOCHIN is a lighting fixture that was brought from China during the Muromachi period (1336-1573) and later developed as a Japanese tool in the original craftsmanship. They have been used for festivals, Obon*1, and other events, as well as in everyday life as decorations and signs for stores. OBAKE "A" / "UN" is a "Kyo-CHOCHIN" made in Kyoto, and is produced by Kojima-Shoten*2 as a traditional craft in Kyoto.

Processing of Kyo-Chochin

For the framework of the CHOCHIN, splitting the bamboo into small pieces called “Hira-Bone,” which are made into thin plates. These are then fixed on a wooden mold in a circle to form the framework. The flat bones are processed to precise dimensions, and the joints of the bamboo are left in place so that the joints form beautiful curves up and down.

Photo 1 & 2: Making the “Hira-Bone” . A single piece of bamboo is split and finished to an even width and thickness. Photo 3 & 4: Fixed the flat bone on the assembled wooden form. Photo 5 & 6: The rings are joined evenly with thread to maintain accurate gaps. Washi is applied one at a time, using the space between the threads as one side. Normally, the paper is pasted on 6 to 12 sides, depending on the size of the chochin. Photo 7: At Kojima Shoten, they often paint CHOCHIN for festivals and store interiors. You can see many traditional patterns with bright colors and sometimes modern.



※1 Obon

Obon is one of the buddhist events. In Buddhism, it is believed that the spirits of family ancestors come back to this world during the obon period between July and August, and a series of events take place to commemorate them.

※2 Kojima Shouten

Kojima Shouten Inc., begun its operation in the period of 1789-1801, Edo era, generates strong Kojima style Japanese lantern, which all process is done by handmade from splitting bamboo until, painting on lantern. On the basis of traditional manufacturing method, Kojima shouten Inc. will creates new special scenery by our lantern and hand the precious tradition to next generation by seeking relationship among lantern and materials from nature, which is washi paper, bamboo and wheat glue.

All Photo: Yuna Yagi

“CHOCHIN” Craftsmanship of Japanese Lantern 2



See the curves drawn from up to bottom
by the bamboo joint of the bamboo rings.

Photo: Nik Van der Giesen



STILLIFE, “Under the Hazy Moon”

"Under the Hazy Moon" is the base work for OBAKE "A" / "UN". It is a design that crosses regional craftsmanships, with a "Kaga-CHOCHIN" design while being made using "Kyo-CHOCHIN" techniques and design named "Kanazawa-type". Harashima's unique interpretation of the traditional craft technique has led to a new way of being.

Characteristics of CHOCHIN in Regions

Kaga-CHOCHIN

The Kaga-CHOCHIN made in Kanazawa City, Ishikawa Prefecture, where Harashima lives, is made in the same way as the Kyo-CHOCHIN, with a framework in the ring shape, but using thin bamboo strings for the bamboo ring. The main shape of the CHOCHIN can be described as vase-shaped, narrowing from top to bottom.

Gifu-CHOCHIN

In contrast design to the Kyo-CHOCHIN, the Gifu-CHOCHIN is the one of famous. On the wooden mold, A thin bamboo string are wound in a spiral pattern and thin translucent Japanese paper is pasted onto the framework. Since they are mainly used as tool for Obon, they have a more delicate and fragile atmosphere, with seasonal flowers and plants painted on them. Also, the Akari series by ISAMU NOGUCHI is manufactured by a Gifu-CHOCHIN manufacturer.

DESIGN for OBAKE “A” / “UN”

Design of OBAKE face

OBAKE "A"/"UN" is one of Harashima's art series "STILLIFE^{※1}", which expresses the "TSUKUMOGAMI^{※2}" in modern. As an imaginary creature that can be seen all over the world, the one-eyed would be an appropriate way to express spirituality. In Japan, the one-eyed is also a familiar expression as "Yōkai^{※3}". The "A"/"UN" in the title comes from the "A-UN^{※4}" statue, which is derived from religion, and is intended to evoke scenes of shrines and temples for Japanese and asian people, and to provide an opportunity for other people to experience the spirituality of Japanese culture in modern way. The complementary colors of red and blue, and the pop graphics of OBAKE "A"/"UN" create an impact at the beginning of the encounter. Then you will recognize the Yōkai existence stand by us. Although it are lightings that glow in the dark, it stands as a gatekeeper that connects our world with the existence that lives in the darkness.

※1 STILLIFE

This furniture series is a modern reinterpretation of the classic yet sophisticated transformation of tools, contrasting old tools and traditional crafts that feature a deep texture and atmosphere not found in mass-produced products with modern industrial materials such as brass and glass.

※2 TSUKUMOGAMI

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsukumogami>

※3 Yōkai

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yokai>

※4 A-UN

"A" is the facial expression that is the first pronunciation to make a sound in Sanskrit, which means "truth" and "spirit of inquiry" at the same time. "UN" expresses the pronunciation to close the sound, and at the same time means "wisdom" and "nirvana." There is also the idea that describing the beginning and end of the universe is represented by considering the "A" and "UN" as a pair. In Asia, it is a common sight to see a pair of guardian statues with the expression "A-UN" placed at the entrance of temples and shrines. The statues of "A" and "Un" are usually placed on the left side and the statue of "A" on the right side when viewed from the front.

Design as CHOCHIN lighting

The initial idea was to combine a large lantern with a brass frame and place it on the floor to make it look like a "large ceramic jar". Furthermore, by making the top of the lantern as thick as a ceramic jar, it created a symbolic detail as a new interpretation of a lantern that is not an existing lantern.



Photo: Yuna Yagi



Photo: Nik Van der Giesen

Design of Brass Frame

The frames of the STILLIFE series are all machined from round brass rods, and are designed with a more straight composition in mind. The contrast of straight, architectural design against the strong crafted design of old tools and lanterns gives the work a contemporary feel. Also, by adding legs, which were not included in the original tool, he intended that symbolize its transformation into a independent being as modern TSUKUMOGAMI.



Photo: Nik Van der Giesen

Harashima is also particular about the fact that his works are "tools". He believes that it is important for a work to be sophisticated not only to be installed as an object, but also to be a tool that actually functions.