

Uchiwa-e

The Fan Prints

Brooks Jensen

2010





Kuragari ni hirari-hirari to ôgi kana

*In the darkness
Phwew... phwew...
My paper fan.*

〜 Issa
(1763-1828)



About this project

The *uchiwa*, or rigid paper fan, is a practical device in the heat of Japan. But the Japanese have the perpetual inclination to make aesthetic objects out of the most mundane items of daily life. Over the centuries, *uchiwa* have become an art form with a charm all their own.

The paper prints that are used to make fans are called *uchiwa-e*, the suffix indicating the print itself. These are typically woodblock prints, often a secondary art form for the artists who are more famously known for their large *oban*-sized *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints — Hokusai, Hiroshige, Yoshitoshi, and their peers. Whereas the large prints are considered their main artwork, the smaller *uchiwa-e* prints only later became admired and collected as a fully developed art form.

I first became acquainted with the beauty of these designs in the book *Hiroshige Fan Prints* by Rupert Faulkner, published in 2001 by Victoria and Albert Museum, London, as part of their Far Eastern Series. As a long-time admirer of *ukiyo-e* prints, these fan-shaped images include a unique compositional element that introduce non-rectangle borders to the design. I was mesmerized. Thus was born the inspiration to use a similar composition with my photographs.

In the early 1990s, I made three trips to Japan to photograph in the rural, northern prefectures known collectively as Tohoku. To the Japanese, Tohoku is not a term of respect; they tend to think of the far north as a region with little culture, a “backwoods” region of yokels. To the adventurous, it is a portal back in time where one can still find family farms, a slower pace of life, and the occasional thatch-roofed house — particularly the L-shaped constructions known as *magariya*.

Yearning to return, I finally did so in the fall of 2009. One of my objectives for this trip was to experiment with making photographs for the *uchiwa* format. I now understand why this format suited the Japanese printmakers so well; everywhere I turned I found subjects ideally suited to the fan-shaped image — so much so that I now wonder which came first, the concept of the fan shape or the Japanese scene that influenced artists to see the world in this way.

Unlike my earlier trips, this time I traveled with a digital camera and its ability to record color images. The timing of my trip was such that I expected to miss the fall colors. Fortunately, I was wrong. The Japanese maples near Hiraizumi in particular, were just at their peak.

The six “chapters” in this project represent autumn in Japan — at least to me. Because I am not a native Japanese person, I’m limited to experiencing their culture and seasons through the filter of a Westerner’s eyes and aesthetic. Nonetheless, the senses of *wabi* and *yugen*, *furyu* and *sabi* that have been written about with such frequency in discussions of Japanese aesthetics do resonate with me.

Others will judge whether or not these photographs successfully combine the Western aesthetic of photography and the Eastern aesthetic of the *uchiwa-e*. They do not thrill me to the degree of a Hiroshige or Hokusai original *uchiwa-e*, but then again I’m not a Japanese master printmaker. I am, at the very least, pleased there is some common ground where East can meet West with some degree of pleasing design. Lacking any other virtues, these photographic experiments at least provided me a reason to again visit beautiful Tohoku in the fall.



Momiji

(Maple Leaves)





Tonde kuru yoso no ochiba ya kururu aki

*Fall leaves
Come flying from elsewhere
Autumn is ending.*

~ Shiki
(1867-1902)



Momiji
(Maple Leaves)



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(Maple Leaves)



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O-take

(Bamboo)





Sune ippon take ippon zo yûsuzumi

*Just me
And a stalk of bamboo...
The coolness of the evening.*

~ Issa
(1763-1828)



O-take
(Bamboo)



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(Bamboo)



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Shizen

(Nature)





Yuku aki no kusa ni kakururu nagare kana

*The stream hides itself
In the grasses
Of departing autumn.*

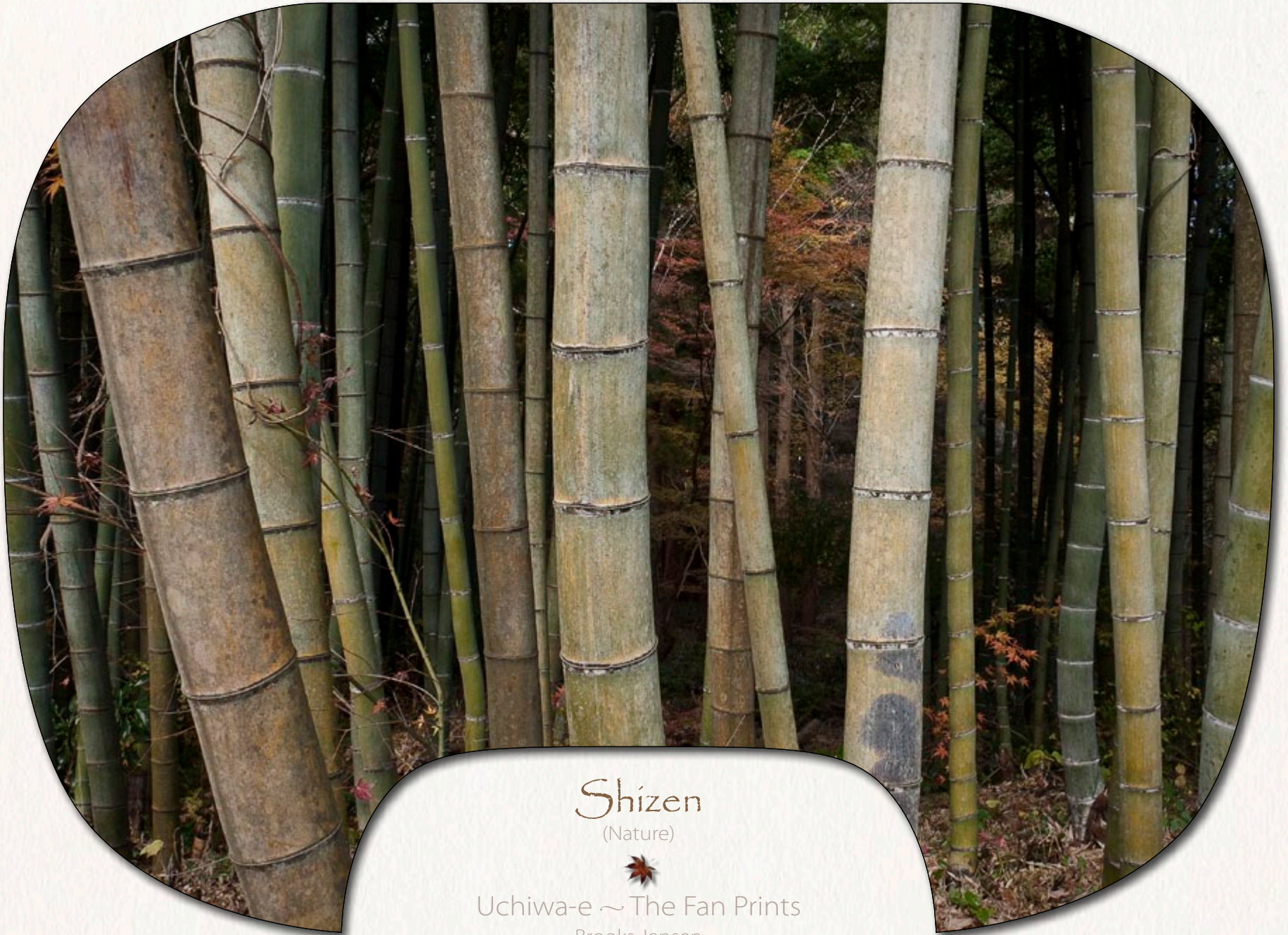
~ Shirao
(1738-1791)



Shizen
(Nature)



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Shizen
(Nature)



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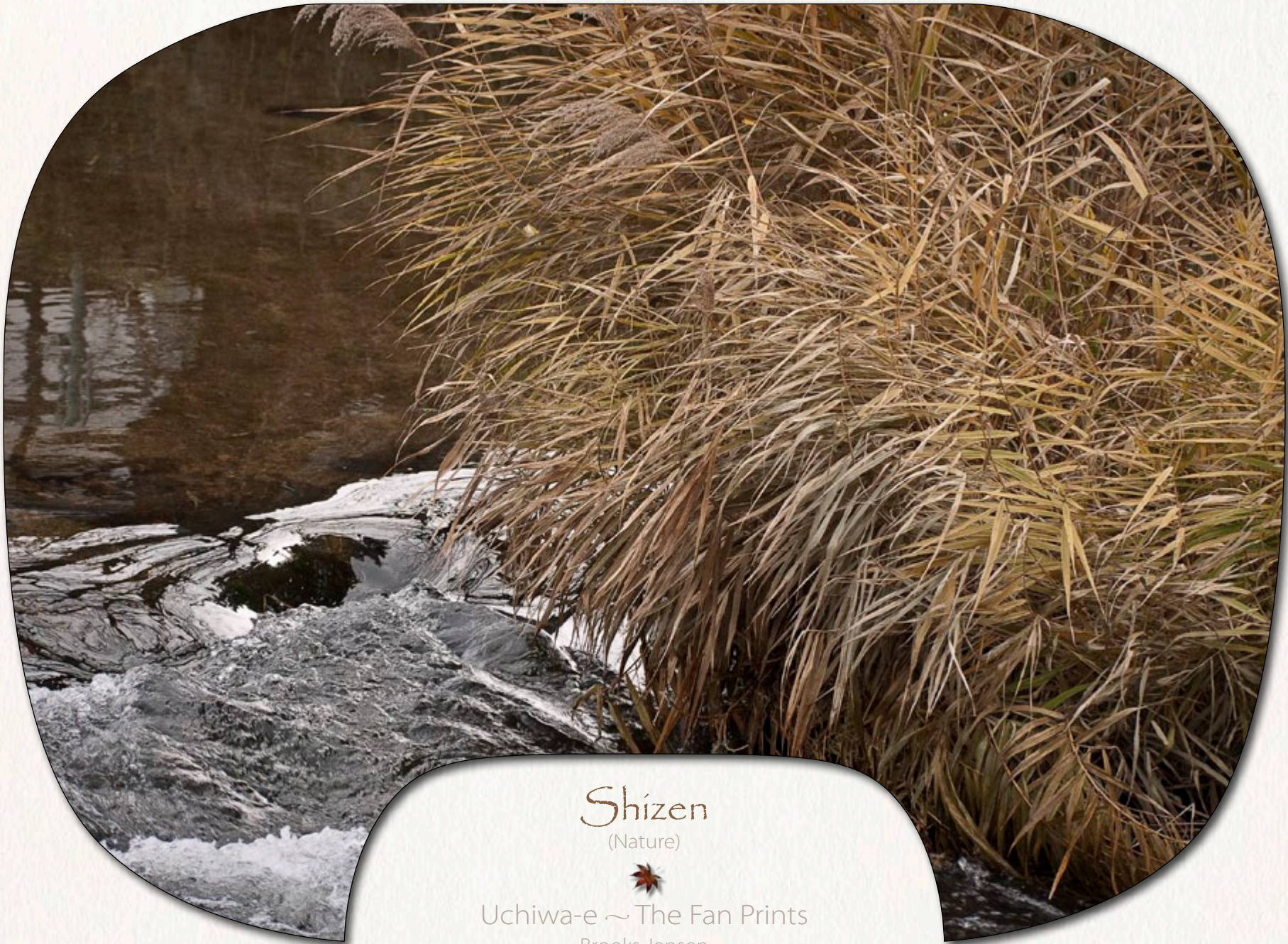
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(Nature)



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Furusato

(Ancestral Home)





Sumigama no keburu ni kageru shôji kana

*Darkened by smoke
From the charcoal kiln...
This paper door.*

〜 Issa
(1763-1828)



Furusato
(Ancestral Home)



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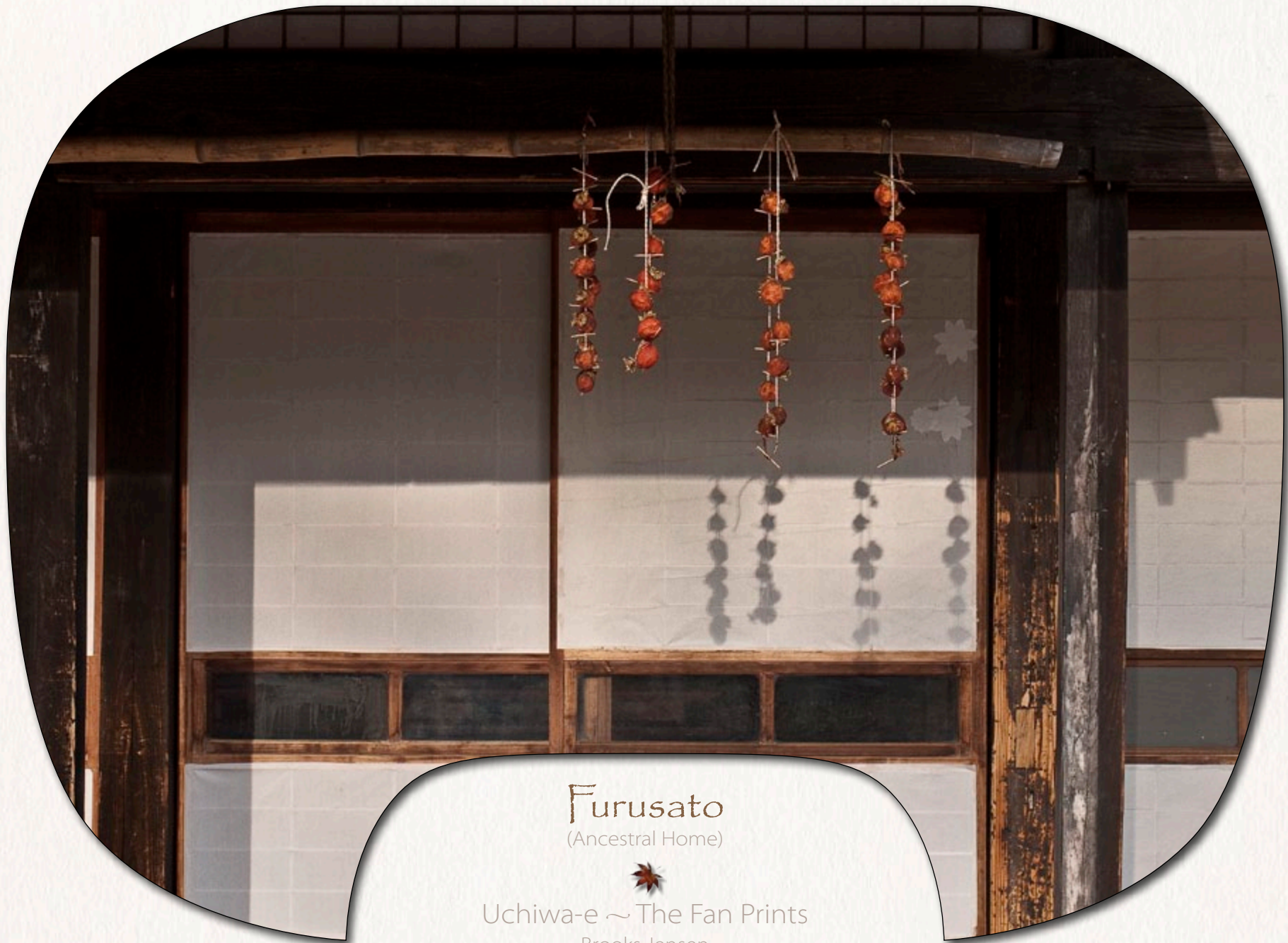
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(Ancestral Home)



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Jiin

(Temples)





Hyakunen no keshiki wo niwa no ochiba kana

*A hundred years old it looks,
This temple garden,
With its fallen leaves.*

~ Basho
(1644-1694)



Jiin
(Temples)



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Jiin
(Temples)



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Hikage

(Shadows)





Ôyami ni yami wo soetaru hito ha kana

*Adding its darkness to
The great darkness...
One leaf falls.*

〜 Issa
(1763-1828)



Hikage
(Shadows)



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BROOKS JENSEN ARTS

FOLIOS

What is a folio?

A “folio” is a collection of unbound prints presented in an embossed, die-cut art-paper cover. In these *Uchiwa-e* folios, I use a title page to lead things off, then an opening haiku followed by a statement about the project; the ten images pages come next; and the last page is a colophon.

I’ve never actually seen anything quite like these collections of original prints I produce, so there really isn’t a term for it. I’ve been forced to make my own definition. I even tried to find a Latin root that I could adapt, but “folio” seemed the best, so that’s the word I use. From the Latin term *folium*, meaning a leaf or loose page. I’ve used this term since 1992 when I made my first folios.

Each folio is 8x10.5” and includes 10 pigment-on-paper color prints, a title page, haiku page, text page, and colophon. Folios are signed and numbered, but not limited. A statement of my philosophy about [numbering and editioning](#) can be found on my website

The cover is made from an acid-free archival art paper – Gilbert Oxford 100# Cover. The warm tone of this paper perfectly matches the warmth of the prints. The self-closing cover is embossed with my name and logo. The die-cut opening displays the folio title.

The assembly uses only archival, acid-free materials to protect the life of the prints and pages inside. Each folio is shipped in a sealed, ClearBags™ sleeve.

Each of the six folios in the *Uchiwa-e* series is being introduced for \$95. The set of all six folios is \$495. After the introductory period, prices will be \$125 individually, while the full set of six folios will be \$595. Please check [my website](#) for the current prices.

With each folio order, we’ll include at no charge the computer DVD [The Making of the Uchiwa-e Series](#).

Momiji

(Maple Leaves)

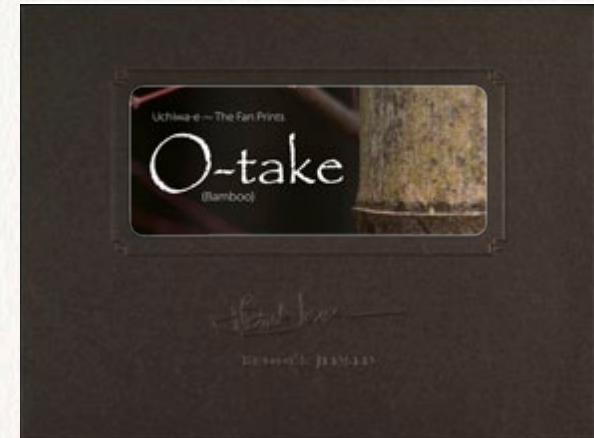
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O-take

(Bamboo)

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Shizen

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Furusato (Ancestral Home)

10-print folio
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Jiin (Temples)

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Hikage (Shadows)

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The Making of the *Uchiwa-e* Series

An Expanded, Companion Computer DVD

Want to learn more?

In addition to this free downloadable PDF e-book, you might be interested in the expanded version available in computer DVD disc. This expanded PDF includes...

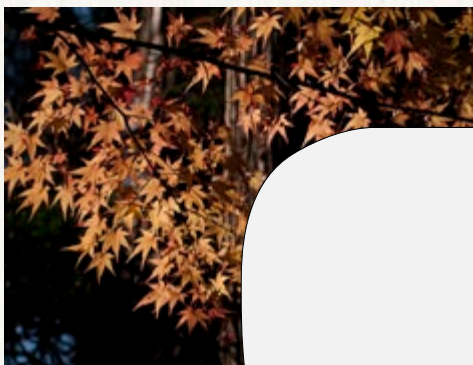
- Audio comments on selected images
- A video interview with Brooks Jensen
- A special video recorded in Japan at one of the sites photographed in this project.
- *Beyond the Rectangle*

The computer DVD disc also includes a special video training program published as part of the *LensWork Creative Labs* titled *Beyond the Rectangle*. In this video training program, Brooks takes you through a step-by-step video tutorial on how to create non-rectangular images like these *uchiwa*-shaped images you've seen in this PDF. Using either Adobe InDesign™ or Adobe Photoshop™, you can explore non-rectangular images for your work once you see how it can be done with either of these two popular software programs.

The Making of the Uchiwa-e Series computer DVD disc will be included as a free bonus with all orders of one or more folios, or it can be purchased online for \$15 (plus shipping & handling).



Brooks at Rikuzen Tomiyama in Iwate-ken



\$15

plus shipping & handling

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by Brooks Jensen

First Edition, February 2010

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The images in Uchiwa-e are available in a series of 10-print folios printed on Hahnemühle Photo Rag 308gm/m² archival paper using Epson Ultrachrome archival pigment inks.

More information at

www.brooksensenarts.com

The images in this portfolio were photographed during a two-week period in the northern region of Japan known as Tohoku in November 2009. Creative work with the images, layout, and design completed in February 2010.

