



M I N G E I 2 0 2 6

A N A R T R E T R E A T I N J A P A N

May 16 - May 24

with Monica Dengo and Satsuki Hatsushima

Are you looking for a meditative art retreat in a country of millennial traditions? This is the workshop for you!

We will be immersed in the quiet and profound beauty of southern Japan, in the middle of the countryside, surrounded by rice fields and mountains. The focus will be on experiencing the spirituality of Nature through the practice of drawing, mark making and writing by hand in every experience we live.

Arrival date: May 16, 2026

Departure date: May 24, 2026

Location:

We will live and work at Kahoalpe, Kama city area, at the bottom of the Kaho Alps mountains in the Fukuoka prefecture. Our workshop is organized in collaboration with the local community of artisans, small restaurant owners, and people who always welcome us warmly and enthusiastically.

'Pattern is the essence of beauty, form reduced to its primary elements'

Soetsu Yanagi

Throughout the week, we will pay special attention to the role of patterns in Japanese culture and folk art. We will also explore how the Japanese folk crafts movement, Mingei, has contributed to the preservation of traditional crafts. Soetsu Yanagi (1889–1961), the founder of the Mingei movement, developed a theory to explain why objects created by unknown craftsmen possess such profound beauty. Our retreat will be an immersion into this calligraphic and design culture.

Students will also have the opportunity to create multiple artist's books in a classroom within the Kaho Alpe premises, accessible at any time of day or night. Two special artisan days will enrich this experience: one in Koishiwara, a mountain pottery village, where we will learn to make marks on ceramic plates at Taketoshi Oota's pottery studio; and another in Akizuki, a nearby mountain village, where Mr. Inoue will guide us through the process of making washi (Japanese paper). There, students will craft their own sheets of paper to use in their artist's books. In addition, there will be time to explore Koishiwara and Akizuki, discovering local galleries, traditional architecture, and some of the finest examples of Japanese design.

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Drawing is both an act of observation—looking, feeling, listening—and of expression—placing marks on a surface—that sharpens our ability to see and perceive the world. It can be practiced without looking at the paper, in darkness, or without lifting the pen. In these moments, drawing becomes more than a translation of what lies before us into two dimensions; it becomes a visual record of the present, an imprint of the emotions we feel as we perceive. Throughout our work, we will experiment with a variety of instruments. Monica will guide your process, helping you discover connections between the forms you observe and the lines that emerge from your hand.

Mark making is the materia prima of written communication—in all its forms and in the endless interplay between orality and writing. Yet it is also something more: a fundamental impulse that reaches beyond logic into the profound experience of being alive. Together, we will approach writing not merely as a fixed code of communication but as a visual expression of presence and emotion, including forms that may not be legible in a conventional sense. Monica will accompany you in this exploration, opening space for gestures, silences, and the traces of self that handwriting carries. At times, the urge to communicate cannot be captured in shared words or forms; in writing, however, we can inscribe what resists translation.

Photo by Marco Mensa



Over the week, we will also engage in meditative mark-making exercises, using textures and rhythms inspired by nature.

At the end of the retreat we will exhibit all our artist's books at the Kaho Alpe's lobby.

Class times

Normal class time will be from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Students may also use the classroom in the evening or at any other time.

Paper

Students will have the special opportunity to work on a variety of papers, both modern and traditional.

Optional: additional special papers can be purchased from Satsuki.

Bike rentals

At Kahoalpe, students will have the opportunity to rent bikes. The nearest town with shops is 5 km away and can be reached via easy secondary roads.

Accommodation

We will live and work at Kahoalpe, a beautiful and comfortable facility filled with natural light. Formerly a school, it has recently been transformed into an accom-

Kaho Alpe, dinner preparation. Art retreat with Monica and Satsuki, 2023 . Photo by Max Fish



modation and learning center. Students will stay in single or double rooms and will have access to a classroom open at all times, day and night.

Meals

Most meals will be served at Kahoalpe. Breakfast and meals at Kahoalpe are vegan, prepared with fresh local vegetables. The cook can accommodate food allergies and dietary restrictions. Their motto is: "Everybody in the world can eat at the same table!" No chemical seasonings are used, out of concern for the Earth as well as for human health. A coin-operated machine will be available for those who would like coffee. We will also have lunch at two fish restaurants and, during trips, enjoy bentos (which can be meat, fish, or vegetarian, according to your choice).

Fee, deposit and registration:

First contact Monica at ciao@monicadengo.com to check availability and receive additional information. Maximum number of participants: 16

FEE

Yen 335000 (threehundredtwelvethousand) is the total fee.

Deposit of yen 80000 (eightythousand) is due by December 15, 2025.

If we receive more than 16 requests, we may need to ask you to send the deposit before the December due date, as we may run a second retreat.

Fee includes:

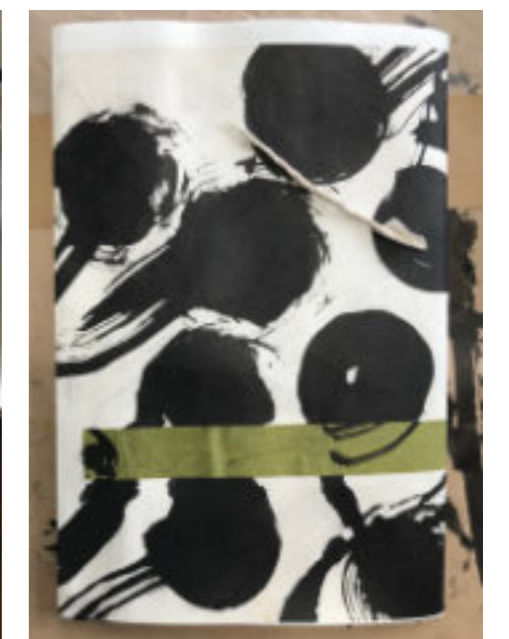
- Accommodation in Kahoalpe. Accommodation is in double rooms, if you wish single room there will be an additional fee of yen 20000 (twentythousand).
- All meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner)
- Lessons in a classroom open exclusively for us 24/7
- Visits and workshops in Akizuki and Koishiwara and all the week's events.
- all the course's materials

*** Accommodation is in double rooms, if you wish single room there will be an additional fee of yen 20000 (twentythousand).**

Final payment is due by February 28, 2026

See Terms and Conditions:

Your place on the workshop is confirmed with full payment. Due to the logistics, people and places involved, these events are non-refundable. Please ensure you are suitably insured.



All photos are from the Art retreat at Kahoalpe, Kama City, 2023 by Marco Mensa



Above: The Mingei art magazine and traditional wood containers.
Below: photo by Anna Maria Rocca..



**We look forward to being together with you in Japan!
Monica and Satsuki**