



with finely split bamboo, resulting in brand new and expressive forms. Often elaborate and always beautifully made, these baskets were artworks intended for places of high esteem – used for Ikebana in the Imperial Palace and for major art collectors in the USA.

This enthusiasm for idea sharing is central to basketmakers now, as facebook pages and image sites provide a far-reaching platform for the like-minded to foster these passions and broaden their communities. Browngrotta gallery, for instance, is a wonderful organisation with a strong online presence where enthusiasts can go to discover contemporary makers from around the world. Hungarian born artist Gyongy Laky's freeflowing vessels and sculptures can be found there alongside the powerful, freestanding sculptures created by Jiro Yonezawa crafted with bamboo. The Creative Basketry course at London's City Lit is another great place of discovery where both tutors and students use natural manmade materials. Experimentation in this course and has had a huge effect on the discipline's output, opening many makers' eyes to unusual new approaches to basketweaving.

Karen Lawrence has emerged from this course with an almost ethereal practice, as seen in her piece *Loosen the Corset* – a contemporary work that now forms a part of The Museum of English Rural Life collection in Reading. Meanwhile, in Montana USA, artist Christine Joy similarly embraces the natural environment with her willow sculptures, each reflecting the cyclical nature of the

landscape, and Shouchiku Tanabe works beautifully with bamboo in a similar way, learning from his father. It is right at this juncture, between natural and manmade, where the best of basketry is today. The diversity is wonderful, there is great vigor in this craft and there are markets there for both functional and purely artistic basketmaking.

In spite of a few skeptical traditionalists, contemporary basketmaking is now a widely accepted art form. Basketry festivals in Europe, at Vissinggaard in Denmark, Nowy Tomysl in Poland, Noordwolde in the Netherlands, in the Canary Islands and at other basket centres have drawn both local and global audiences. With the support of various craft organisations in the UK, this craft is going from strength to strength.

The Heritage Crafts Association and NADFAS have been collaborating in awarding funding to three exciting young basketmakers announced last spring, and The Basketmakers' Association and The Worshipful Company of Basketmakers also offer grants and bursaries to their members, with some dedicated to City Lit Basketry students.

On top of that, The Winston Churchill Fellowship Trust and the Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust offer help to those working in basketmaking and other disciplines, which is essential to the development of contemporary crafts. Support is there for all budding basketmakers to reach out and grab. Wholeheartedly embracing both the old and new, basketry is at an exciting point in history. The future is bright. ♦♦♦ **Mary Butcher MBE**

Courtesy Pierre Marie Giraud, Brussels Photo: Minamoto Tadayuki

Page74: At Water's Edge, Nancy Moore Bess, dyed cane, bamboo, waxed cotton and linen, carved industrial foam, acrylic, 22 x 27 x 22cm, 2006

Page75: Dry Land Drifter, Gyongy Laky, dead tree, bullets for building, 81 x 55 x 55cm, 2010

Opposite: Shouchiku Tanabe AUN II, bamboo 53 x 63 x 48 cm, 2014

Below: Water, Christine Joy, cottonwood, 83 x 53 x 25cm, 2005, Lily, Christine Joy, red osier, beeswax and damar resin, 108 x 71x 40cm, 2002



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