



Bringing Paper to Life

"Bird Carrying Flower" was made by folding a 20 x 20 cm sheet of square newspaper. Shatner Nishida says his motivation for using English-language newspaper is three-fold: Origami made with newspaper captures a sense of "time"—paper fated for recycling is reborn; English-language print is beautiful; and the paper is easy to fold.

The Japanese word “origami” is used the world over to denote the pastime of folding paper. And after the Great East Japan Earthquake, people worldwide folded origami cranes in a gesture of support for the disaster victims.

Although many people think origami should be made by folding a single square paper without cutting it, some origami is in fact made using multiple sheets of paper and with the use of scissors.

In recent years, techniques and theories in respect of origami have moved forward at an accelerated rate, with even software to design diagrams of origami now available. And there are numerous mathematicians and physicists in the world researching origami or making origami as works of art.

In the midst of this emphasis on origami’s rational qualities, one origami creator continues to produce works rich in individual artistic character. His name is Shatner Nishida, who is an author, director and actor. Nishida uses the motif of living creatures for all his origami works, each one filled with a sense of energy that gives the impression it is going to move at any moment.

“The process of folding origami is very similar to that of creating a living thing. A unicellular single sheet of paper goes through various processes of evolution to create a ‘living thing.’ My origami is, as it were, the vicarious experience of that evolution. When I fold, I try not only to incorporate my powers



Shatner Nishida with samples of his origami

of observation in respect of the living creature, but also the way the living creature feels.”

Nishida uses diagrams as little as possible, instead creating his works through an innocent exchange between his fingers and a single piece of paper, never making a cut. Nishida says that it is “as though it is not me making something, but allowing the paper itself to make something.”

This probably accounts

for the warmth and feeling of vitality akin to works of ceramic art that is unique to his pieces.

Nishida presents many of his works on his website. Many overseas visitors to the site post comments such as “awesome!” and “they almost look alive!”

Recently, filled with a desire to deliver hope to the disaster victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake, Nishida folded a new work, “Bird Carrying Flower.”

“I have always tried to fold living creatures that appear real, brimming with a sense of vitality,” says Nishida. “But the earthquake has made me feel differently. From now on, I want to give form to something that did not exist in the world until I folded it.”

Nishida has provided the image of this work to the Great East Japan Earthquake disaster relief mobile phone fundraising website. Here, mobile phone users can download the works of anime artists, photographers, novelists, and other artists for a fee of 105 yen, with the proceeds being donated to the victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake. 