Sashiko

By Kyoko Fischer

My work explores the artisan craftwork that people in the Edo era (1615-1868) of Japan used daily, called *Mingei*. As the art and craft of ordinary people, Mingei refers to everyday or “normal” objects – such as toys, brushes, clothing, or furniture – that people adored.

I deeply connect to this era. These ordinary objects had surrounded me when I grew up in Japan, but I had never noticed. Perhaps in the realization of how long I’d been in the US, I found myself drawn to *sashiko* (literally translated to “little stabs” or “little pieces”). Sashiko is a form of decorative reinforcement stitching on traditional Japanese clothing that started from a practical, functional need during the Edo era. Sashiko typically has a repetition of short lines from the stitches, a pattern I felt I had already subconsciously incorporated in my own artwork. This excited me. I knew I had to push myself to explore further and reimagine Mingei, and specifically sashiko, as modern fine art.

Most Mingei art was done by ordinary craftspeople who never signed name onto their work. The practice is practical and utilitarian, not commercial, and Mingei art is an everyday companion, something that grows on you affectionately through use.

At a high level, my project is centered on the Mingei concept, creating a modern expression of the traditional Japanese work that people cherished in the olden days. I envision an installation of etching prints with sewn sashiko to recreate the atmosphere of the Edo era.