

MASASHI KUTSUWA

Birth date: December 29, 1967

Language: Japanese-native, English-fluent

Nationality: Japanese

Job title: Professor

Gifu Academy of Forest Science and Culture

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PROFILE:

I have been teaching woodwork full-time at a college called Gifu Academy of Forest Science and Culture since 2006. Gifu Academy is a higher educational institution established by Gifu prefectural government to provide practical multidisciplinary education in the fields of forestry, environmental education, wooden architecture, and woodwork. The objectives of the school are to produce graduates who can develop innovative and sustainable ways for communities and individuals to use forest and wood resources.

My main focus is to research, develop and promote 'green woodwork', the way of working with locally sourced green wood by using hand tools. I believe green woodwork is one of the best ways for the public to get in touch with their local forest and to experience making crafts out of the resource from there. Since I learned the basic philosophy and method from Mike Abbott, the pioneering green woodworker in Britain in 2006, I have been researching and developing Japanese original green woodworking items to run courses, such as carved spoons, ladles and trays. I have also been developing tools and equipment for green woodwork, such as axes, drawknives and shaving horses.

I acquired English proficiency through my work experience as a furniture maker in Britain from 2001 to 2006. It led me to play a role as a coordinator and promoter of cultural exchange between Japan and the Western countries. I have hosted world's leading green woodworkers to teach at Gifu Academy, including Jarrod Dahl, Drew Langsner and Douglas Brooks from the U.S., and Jögge Sundqvist from Sweden. I attended several international craft event including 'Basketry and Beyond 2013' in Britain, 'Täljfest 2016' in Sweden, and 'Spoonfest 2018' in Britain, to introduce Japanese green woodworking culture.

Recently I am putting more efforts on writing articles, publishing books and DVDs related to green woodwork, to raise the awareness and increase the population of the activities. My first book 'Van Gogh chair', introducing the brief history of a Spanish indigenous greenwood chair and how to make them, was published in 2016. My second book "Green Woodwork" was published in 2019. I published Jarrod Dahl's DVD with Japanese subtitles in 2018, and am working on the Japanese version of Wille Sundqvist's DVD, too.

I will keep playing a key role in Japanese woodworking society to pass on our traditional crafts to the next generation and to develop new green woodworking activities, by putting my various skills together.

EDUCATION:

April 1999 – March 2001 Shinrin Takumijuku (private woodworking college)

April 1986 – March 1991 Tsukuba University

Bachelor of arts in international social sciences.

WORK EXPERIENCE:

April 2011 – present

Full time associate professor at the woodworking department, Gifu Academy of Forest Science and Culture, Japan

Teaching basic skills and knowledge of hand tools, machinery, craft and furniture making, finishing, public relations.

April 2006 – March 2011

Full time lecturer at the woodworking department, Gifu Academy of Forest Science and Culture, Japan

Teaching basic skills and knowledge of hand tools, machinery, craft and furniture making, finishing, public relations.

September 2004 – February 2006

Full time woodworker at Borders Forest Trust / Woodschool, Scotland, United Kingdom

Making crafts and furniture for the gallery owned by the trust.

April 2004 –September 2004

Full time woodworker / office assistant at David Colwell Design, Wales, United Kingdom
Prototyping chairs, making drawings, building a website, for David Colwell.

September 2001 – March 2004

Full time woodworker at James Winby Furniture, England, United Kingdom
Making specially commissioned furniture.

April 1991 – March 1999

Full time TV program director at NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation), Japan's biggest public TV station.

Making news documentary programs.

RECENT RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

April 2019

Organizer of Sajifest 2019, the Japan's biggest spoon carving event, Gifu Academy, Japan

August 2018

Presenter of Japanese traditional ladle carving film at Spoonfest 2018, an international green woodworking event, Edale, United Kingdom.

March 2018

Organizer / translator of Green woodworking course run by Jarrod Dahl, Gifu Academy of Forest Science and Culture, Japan.

October 2017

Organizer of Sajifest 2017, an international spoon carving event, translator for Jögge Sundqvist, Gifu Academy, Japan

May – July 2017

Coordinator of the Ukaibune Project, a project recording the traditional technique of Japanese wooden boat building, by Seiichi Nasu, one of the last boat builders at the Nagara river, and Douglas Brooks, an American researcher of traditional boat building, Gifu Academy, Japan.

August 2016

Presenter of Japanese green woodworking activity and Japanese lacquer finishing at Täljfest 2016, an international green woodworking event, Insjön, Sweden.

May 2013

Instructor / presenter of Japanese bamboo basket making at Basketry and Beyond 2013, an international basketry event, Dartington, United Kingdom.

May 2011

Presenter of Japanese green woodworking activity, Bodgers' Ball 2011, Brockhampton, United Kingdom.

October 2010

Organizer / translator of chair making course by Drew Langsner, Gifu Academy.
Coordinator / translator of the international craft tour organized by Drew Langsner, various places in Gifu.

October 2008

Organizer / translator of chair making course by Drew Langsner, Gifu Academy.
Coordinator / translator of the international craft tour organized by Drew Langsner, various places in Gifu.

PUBLICATIONS

October 2018

"One Tree", a DVD of Jarrod Dahl's five-day green woodworking course, Gifu Academy.

June 2016

"Van Gogh Chair", a book about indigenous greenwood chair making in Spain and Japanese arts-and-crafts leaders who were inspired by it, published by Seibundo Shinkosha, Japan. ISBN- 4416516061

November 2013, January 2014, March 2014

"Making the Van Gogh Chair", serial articles about indigenous greenwood chair making in Spain and Japanese arts-and-crafts leaders who were inspired by it, Living Woods Magazine, United Kingdom.

January 2012

“Fishing for a future”, an article about succeeding the technique of bamboo basketry to make traditional cormorant fishing baskets, Living Woods Magazine, United Kingdom.

AWARDS

2019

Wille Sundqvist and Bill Coperthwaite Slöjd Fellowship

(quoted from the Fellowship site)

The 2019 Wille Sundqvist and Bill Coperthwaite Slöjd Fellowship has been awarded to Masashi Kutsuwa of Gifu Prefecture, Japan. The award recognizes his many years working to highlight the long traditions of Japanese handcraft culture and to build a new appreciation of green woodworking in Japan, while making connections to others around the world.

Masashi Kutsuwa is the eighth recipient of the Wille Sundqvist and Bill Coperthwaite Slöjd Fellowship. He is an associate professor at the Gifu Academy of Forest Science and Culture. He is a craftsman, author of several books including “Van Gogh Chair” and “Green Woodwork,” and designer of the Origami Shaving Horse. He established the Japan Green Woodwork Association and Sajifest.

Most important, Masashi is passionate to save old Japanese handcraft traditions and find new apprentices for master craftsmen who have no one to continue their craft. Masashi invites green woodworkers from around the world to Japan and brings Japanese craftspeople out to other countries to showcase their skills and traditions.

On the news of his selection for this Fellowship award, Masashi wrote, “What a great honour to be awarded this Slöjd Fellowship. I have met all the past recipients and know they are the best green woodworkers in the world. As the first recipient from the Asian region, I have become even more aware of my role as the bridge between the East and West to broaden the green woodworking community.”