

MASTERCLASS / CONFERENCE / EXHIBITION

Dr Jessamy Kelly,
Edinburgh College of Art

THE JAPANESE
ART OF CUT
CRYSTAL

EDO- KIRIKO●

Diamond Cutting wheel,
Horiguchi Kiriko Glass
Workshop.

© *Horiguchi Kiriko*



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**THE JAPANESE
ART OF CUT
CRYSTAL**

EDO- KIRIKO



An exploration of
the cross-cultural
connections between
the cut and engraved
glass scenes in the
UK and Japan.

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CONTENTS

Abstract	5
Introduction	7
Part 1	
The transmission of Western-style glassmaking from Scotland to Japan	9
Part 2	
The decline of cut and engraved glass in the UK	19
Part 3	
The Masterclass	31
Part 4	
The final reflection	39
Part 5	
Summary	47

Recent research conducted by Heritage Crafts, a prominent national advocacy organisation dedicated to preserving traditional heritage crafts in the UK, has unveiled a concerning trend: several traditional craft skills teeter on the edge of extinction within the UK.

This revelation comes from the Red List of Endangered Crafts, an initiative which identifies crafts that are facing the risk of endangerment. In their recent 2023 publication, Heritage Crafts highlighted the distressing decline of cut and engraved glass craftsmanship in the UK, categorising and placing both brilliant cutting (as endangered) and copper wheel engraving (as critically endangered) on the Red List of endangered crafts in the UK.

This means that these crafts are at risk of not being actively practiced. In December 2023, the alarming downturn of these crafts in the UK was explored and discussed during the recent conference held at Edinburgh College of Art (ECA), entitled **Edo-Kiriko: The Art of Japanese Cut Crystal**. This event explored the cross-cultural connection and exchange that exists between Scotland and Japan, drawing upon a rich historical exchange that saw the transmission of Western-style glassmaking from Scotland to Japan, in the 1870s–1880s. It also opened up the more recent exchange that has been in place between Edinburgh College of Art (ECA) and the Horiguchi-Kiriko glass studio from Tokyo, Japan.

This modern-day exchange has seen the recent transmission of skills through a masterclass led by Toru Horiguchi, a 3rd generation master glass craftsman of Edo-Kiriko, and the staff and students of the glass department at ECA. This publication aims to delve into the proceedings of this conference, exhibition and masterclass, introducing the invited speakers and creating a commentary on the proceedings and the plenary discussions that unfolded. Focus and discussion will be given to the factors that have contributed to the current decline of cut and engraved glass-making in the UK and the possible measures that could be taken to support and safeguard the field. The sharp contrast of the thriving cut glass scene in Japan will be discussed, and the measures that are in place to support this landscape.

The final part of this publication will offer a reflection on the conference proceedings and a call to action by the conference organiser and speaker Jessamy Kelly. This publication will conclude by making an urgent call for the future of cut and engraved glass craftsmanship in the UK. It is hoped this publication will draw attention to the urgent need for support from education and funding bodies, to safeguard and protect these vital heritage crafts, which boast a rich history in the UK.

ABSTRACT

FIGURE 1

Edo Kiriko cut crystal sake glass, Horiguchi-Kiriko glass studio, Tokyo (2020).

© Horiguchi-Kiriko glass studio



INTRODUCTION

This publication will introduce the proceedings of the Edo Kiriko conference held at Edinburgh College of Art (ECA) in partnership with the Horiguchi-Kiriko glass studio based in Tokyo, Japan: a studio specialised in Edo-Kiriko, a traditional type of Japanese cut crystal (Figure 1).

The symposium hosted a range of speakers, a live object-handling session and an object showcase all held at ECA (**Figure 2**). The event revolved around the internationally famed Japanese glass artist, Toru Horiguchi, a third generation master craftsman, who specialises in the Edo-Kiriko technique. This publication will discuss how the conference triggered new debate and discourse around the lost art of cut and engraved glass craftsmanship in the UK.

The conference was split into two parts, an introduction to the art of Edo-Kiriko, a traditional form of Japanese glass cutting that has evolved into a refined and sophisticated craft, earning its esteemed status as a recognised traditional art form within Japanese culture. This was done through the presentations of glass historian Sally Haden, social historian Professor Aaron William Moore and master glass cutter Toru Horiguchi, a master craftsman of the Edo-Kiriko tradition. The second part was focused on the UK glass scene, with presentations from glass historian Dr Jill Turnbull, glass designer and educator Dr Jessamy Kelly, Chris Blade, CEO of Cumbria Crystal and Scottish glass engraver, Alison Kinnaird MBE. The diverse panel of speakers provided a comprehensive and insightful exploration of various aspects of glassmaking, ranging from traditional craftsmanship to contemporary design, and spanning across different cultural and historical contexts.

The conference addressed the shared material culture and heritage that exists between these two glassmaking countries and the losses that the now-diminished UK glass scene faces. New perspectives on the value of exchanging and sharing intangible cultural heritage were also explored through the transference of specialist glassmaking knowledge and skills. The line-up of speakers for the event was both diverse and distinguished, bringing together a wealth of expertise in the field.

This publication will introduce the speakers and unpack the themes and discussions of this event.



FIGURE 2

The Edo Kiriko conference
proceedings, Edinburgh
College of Art, 2023.

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The transmission of Western-style glassmaking from Scotland to Japan.

In the first part of this conference, the invited speakers were able to set the scene for both the historical and contemporary context of Japanese cut crystal, which opened this field to new audiences and acted as a catalyst for a new material and cultural exchange between Scotland and Japan.

Scholarly research, driven by the historical glassmaking connections between these two countries, was used to draw upon a joint history that dates to the 1870s–1880s, when four glassmakers from Scotland helped the Japanese modernise their glass industry.

Sally Haden, a glass historian who has dedicated herself to researching, writing and lecturing on the fascinating topic of the transmission of Western-style glassmaking from Scotland to Japan was able to introduce this joint history.

Haden's journey into this topic began nearly twenty years ago when she discovered that one of her Scottish ancestors served as a lead instructor, advisor and manager at a ground-breaking glass works in Tokyo during the early Meiji era. This factory, the Shinagawa Glassworks, played a pivotal role in the transformation of Japan's glass industry between 1873 and 1884.

She explained how James Speed, her Scottish great-grandfather, was among the four British individuals who contributed significantly to this glassworks at Shinagawa, Tokyo. Her years of intensive research, publication and speaking in both Britain and Japan have shed much light on the significant impact of this pioneering institution. In her talk she was able to articulate the historical connection between British and Japanese glassmaking and the profound influence the Shinagawa Glassworks exerted on the Japanese glass industry, bringing about profound modernisation.

FIGURE 3

Sally Haden at the Edo Kiriko
conference at Edinburgh
College of Art, 2023.

© *Mari Lamb*



Adding to the richness of this narrative, Sally Haden was accompanied by Diane Irvine, the great-great granddaughter of Emanuel Hauptmann. Notably, Hauptmann played a foundational role in shaping the Japanese cut-glass industry during the 19th century. Together, they brought a unique and personal perspective to the intricate tapestry of the historical linkages between Western and Japanese glassmaking, captivating the audience with their ancestral connections to this subject and shared knowledge.

Haden was able to give key insights into this period and to demonstrate how these early Scottish pioneers were able to offer their advice, assistance, and instruction in all kinds of modern Western-style glassmaking to Japan, and were instrumental in forming Japan's first truly Western-style industrial glass factory, which was established in Tokyo during this period (**Figure 3**). She was also able to show how this pioneering project included the country's first workshop for Western-style cutting and engraving skills. Through it, Western-style cutting and engraving skills which were transmitted directly, for the first time, into Japan. She addressed a range of key questions: Why did the Japanese want to learn these skills? Who took them from Scotland? And what did Japan do with that knowledge? Haden's lecture offered some key insights into the history and style of a distinct type of Japanese fine-cut glass unique to Japan. During her talk, she was able to trace its instruction and lineage directly back to Edinburgh.

¹ www.ed.ac.uk/profile/professor-aaron-william-moore

From this talk, we were seamlessly transported to a thought-provoking discussion led by Professor Aaron William Moore,¹ a distinguished scholar with a rich academic background. He earned his PhD from Princeton University in 2006, following his doctoral studies, and he held prestigious post-doctoral positions at Harvard and Oxford University. His research interests span a wide range of topics within Chinese and Japanese studies. Demonstrating his commitment to advancing scholarship, he assumed the Handa Chair at the University of Edinburgh in 2017. William Moore's multidimensional expertise and dedication to scholarly inquiry have positioned him as a leading figure in the academic exploration of East Asian history and culture.

In his talk, Professor Moore was able to examine the context in which foreign craftsmen entered during Japan's long nineteenth century (**Figure 4**). He was able to describe the fertile ground of that time, providing key context to the Japanese Industry, Craft, and Consumer Culture in the Long Nineteenth Century.



FIGURE 4

Professor Aaron William Moore at the Edo Kiriko conference at Edinburgh College of Art, 2023.

© Mari Lamb

He highlighted how much Japan's consumer culture advanced during the period of restricted trade in the Tokugawa Era.

He introduced a range of scholarly insights into the culture of the time, such as the key fact of this period, in that there was indeed already a surfeit of skilled workers producing several different, high-quality goods for demanding urban markets. Expanding upon this, he was able to articulate the period of open trade and modern industry after 1868, and how this inspired Japanese producers, but additionally how Japanese aesthetics also impacted craftsmen back in Europe, as a form of cross-cultural exchange. He was able to show a clear context and fertile ground for cut crystal.

Attention was then turned to the talk by Toru Horiguchi, a third-generation master craftsman, deeply rooted in the Edo Kiriko tradition (**Figure 5**), who introduced to the audience the art of Edo-Kiriko; a cut crystal art form that emerged in the late Edo period in the former capital of Edo, now Tokyo, that can trace its roots back to 1834. During this period, a skilled worker named Kyubei Kagaya, pioneered the method of using garnet powder to intricately carve and shape glass. In 1999, he embarked on a transformative journey by joining the Horiguchi Glass Company,² where he honed his skills under the tutelage of Tomio Suda. His dedication and mastery culminated in the attainment of the esteemed title of 'shuseki', designating him as a master craftsman, in the year 2008. In a bold move Toru Horiguchi departed from Horiguchi Glass in 2008 to establish his venture, Horiguchi Kiriko. This decision showcased his desire to carve his unique path within the rich tapestry of Edo Kiriko craftsmanship. His exceptional skills and contribution to the art form were officially acknowledged in 2012 when the Association for the Promotion of Traditional Craft Industries recognised him as a prominent advocate of Edo Kiriko.

Toru Horiguchi's influence extends beyond accolades, as he consistently participates in exhibitions showcasing Japanese traditional crafts and glassware. His creations not only stand as a testament to his artistic prowess, but also frequently earn him prizes in these esteemed shows. Through his unwavering dedication, he continues to elevate and promote the enduring legacy of Edo Kiriko on both national and international stages.

² <https://kiriko.biz/>

He was also able to demonstrate how his artistic endeavours transcend conventional distinctions between 'art' and 'craft', utilising the skills he has refined over many years in the realm of traditional crafts to drive his creations.

In his talk, Toru Horiguchi explained how through his work he has expanded the boundaries of Edo Kiriko, to demonstrate a keen awareness of contemporary trends and tradition, whilst infusing a modern perspective into his creative activities. In being introduced to a range of his work during the talk (**Figure 6**), it was evident that his creative approach is a testament to the fusion of heritage and innovation, not only showcasing the mastery of traditional craftsmanship, but also reflecting a commitment to pushing the boundaries of this tradition as an artistic form of expression. Furthermore, Horiguchi's dedication to his craft is not limited to a domestic audience; he was able to talk about how his creations have been widely showcased and appreciated overseas, contributing to the global recognition of Edo Kiriko as an art form that transcends cultural and geographical boundaries.

The first plenary session was chaired by Dr Caroline McCaffrey-Howarth, lecturer in French and British History of Art c. 1650-1900, at Edinburgh College of Art. The session (**Figure 7**) took in questions from the audience and the discussion that ensued saw the rich history between Scotland and Japan further unfolded and celebrated, with a range of historical and cultural observations made by the speakers.

FIGURE 5

Toru Horiguchi at the Edo Kiriko conference at Edinburgh College of Art, 2023.





FIGURE 6

Inside Beauty, cut crystal
by Toru Horiguchi, 2009.

© The Horiguchi Glass Company

**FIGURE 7**

The plenary session at the
Edo Kiriko conference at
Edinburgh College of Art,
2023.

© Mari Lamb



FIGURE 8

Jill Turnbull at the Edo Kiriko conference at Edinburgh College of Art, 2023.

© *Mari Lamb*

The decline of cut and engraved glass in the UK

In the second part of the conference, the invited speakers were able to set both historical and contemporary scenes for UK cut crystal, and to discuss the history of cut and engraved glass. The highs and lows of the landscape in the UK over the years, and the various factors that have contributed to the current decline of cut and engraved glass practices in the UK.

The first speaker was Scottish glass historian Dr Jill Turnbull, who completed her PhD at the University of Edinburgh in 1999. Her thesis entitled *The Scottish Glass Industry 1610–1750*, was published in 2001 by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. In 2017, she went on to publish a sequel to her earlier work, extending her coverage to the period from 1750 to 2006. Her contributions have enriched the scholarly landscape, providing valuable insights into the historical evolution of the Scottish Glass Industry. In her talk, Turnbull gave an overview of glass cutting through the ages, ranging from ancient Rome to the contemporary era (**Figure 8**). She was able to cover a wide history of glass cutting and how initially the glass cutting wheels were turned by hand, she was able to show that the later far more complex cut glass works were created on large numbers of cutting wheels turned by a steam engine.

This talk was followed by Dr Jessamy Kelly, Senior Lecturer in Glass at Edinburgh College of Art, who is also a practicing glass artist based in Edinburgh. She was able to introduce how she first studied Glass and Ceramics at the University of Sunderland and went on to complete her Master's in Glass at Edinburgh College of Art in 2002, which involved an industrial work placement at Edinburgh Crystal. She then worked as an inhouse glass designer for Edinburgh Crystal until 2006, gaining practical experience in the field of cut crystal design and manufacture. She was able to tell the story of her creative journey, which saw her collaborate with a diverse range of clients over the years, and her recent work designing crystal for Cumbria Crystal. In her talk, Dr Kelly was able to offer an insightful journey through the peaks and valleys of her career as a glass designer for the UK cut crystal industry (**Figure 9**).



FIGURE 9

Dr Jessamy Kelly at the Edo Kiriko conference at Edinburgh College of Art, 2023.

© Mari Lamb

Kelly offered a range of insights into the realm of cut crystal design in the UK and was able to draw upon her early experiences as a student glass designer gaining practical experience at Edinburgh Crystal in 2001, to the subsequent establishment and management of her own companies, alongside creative endeavours as a freelance glass designer for industry (**Figure 9**). Delving into the nuances of the cut crystal industry in the UK, she was able to share both the triumphs and challenges that have shaped this dynamic field as she talked in depth about the closure of Edinburgh Crystal in 2006, due to the firm's unfortunate insolvency. Moreover, she was able to address the current contemporary landscape, shedding light on the decline of the cut and engraved scene glass in the UK. As these traditional crafts find themselves placed on the endangered Red List of Heritage Crafts, she explored the factors contributing to this decline and considered the implications for the future of cut and engraved glass in the UK.

³ <https://cumbriacrystal.com/blogs/news/cumbria-crystal-staff>

The penultimate speaker was Chris Blade (**Figure 10**), the CEO of Cumbria Crystal,³ who stands at the helm of one of the last bastions of hand-blown and hand-cut lead English crystal production. He was able to introduce the diverse roles he has held in the fields of glass design, manufacturing, project management, and education. He earned a Masters in Glass from the Royal College of Art in 1987, and went on to establish his first design and manufacturing business in 1988, in London. His expertise in advanced manufacturing has been a driving force at Cumbria Crystal, which has seen the successful execution of over five hundred bespoke commissions for several esteemed clients. He was able to navigate his talk with a complex set of projects that reflect his deep understanding of both design principles and manufacturing intricacies.

Through his talk he was able to share both his commitment and passion for cultivating knowledge and nurturing the next generation of talent within the Creative Industries. As the CEO of Cumbria Crystal, he was able to show how he champions the heritage of handcrafted English crystal, while pushing the boundaries of design and manufacturing in this field. In his talk, Blade was able to introduce the fascinating story of Cumbria Crystal, a distinguished cut crystal brand that preserve centuries-old traditions in the heart of the Lake District. As one of the last UK producers of hand-blown and hand-cut English lead crystal, his talk delved into the unique challenges faced by luxury goods manufacturers.

He was able to explore the highlights of steering a business rooted in rare artisan skills, where every piece is a testament to heritage and excellence.

Established in 1976, Cumbria Crystal has become synonymous with luxury, gracing the tables of royalty, celebrities, and enhancing the allure of film sets worldwide. He was also able to unravel the brand's commitment to keeping rare, heritage skills alive through the meticulous artistry of crystalware in the UK.

The final speaker of the conference was glass artist, Alison Kinnaird MBE,⁴ who stands as a globally acclaimed artist, renowned for her exceptional work in the realm of engraved glass (**Figure 12**). Through her talk she was able to describe her unique artistry, characterised by a fusion of ancient glass engraving techniques and contemporary lighting technology, which has earned her a place in numerous prestigious public, private, and royal collections worldwide. In her talk, she was able to share both the scale of her projects and the impressive range she has, from intimate engraved glass pieces to large-scale architectural installations. Beyond her role as a prolific engraved glass artist, she was able to demonstrate her influence upon education and the dissemination of her craft knowledge with others, as a speaker and teacher, sharing her expertise and passion with aspiring artists and enthusiasts alike. It became apparent, that her diverse talents have left an indelible mark on multiple artistic spheres, making her a respected and influential figure, not only in the glass art community, but also in the broader cultural landscape.

In her talk Alison Kinnaird, was able to introduce the art of copper wheel engraving, which has been a notable feature of the Scottish glass scene since the middle of the last century (**Figure 11**). Significant work was produced by fine glass engravers such as Helen Monro Turner (1902–1977), Harold Gordon (1917–1996) and Alison Geissler (1907–2011) whose pioneering work set out a strong context for the field as it emerged in the UK in the 1940s and 1950s. Recently, however, copper wheel engraving has declined to the point where it has been placed on the Red List of Heritage Crafts. Alison was able to unpack and explore the reasons for this decline, and to demonstrate through her work, how it is possible, not only to preserve an ancient technique, but to extend its creative potential in contemporary artistic expression.

FIGURE 10

Chris Blade at the Edo Kiriko conference at Edinburgh College of Art, 2023.

© Mari Lamb

⁴ www.alisonkinnaird.com/







FIGURE 11

Alison Kinnaird at the Edo Kiriko conference at Edinburgh College of Art, 2023.

© Mari Lamb



FIGURE 12

Alison Kinnaird at work in her studio engraving glass.

© Anna Colliton

The final plenary session was chaired by Sarah Rothwell, Senior Curator of Modern & Contemporary Design, in the Department of Global Arts, Cultures and Design at National Museums Scotland (NMS). The session (**Figure 15**) answered a range of questions from the audience and the discussion that unfolded saw a stark contrast to the first session, which saw a frank discussion on the decline of the engraved and cut glass scene in the UK, and its placement on the heritage red list of endangered crafts. The various factors that have contributed to the current decline were discussed, and the possible measures that could be taken to support and foster the scene were discussed.

At the end of the conference an object handling and networking session ensued, with the chance for conference participants to interact with the exhibition that had been set up by Toru Horiguchi and the workshop participants (**Figures 15-19**).

FIGURE 13

Jessamy Kelly, diamond cutting glass at the ECA Glass workshops.

© Jessamy Kelly



FIGURE 14

Final plenary session at the Edo Kiriko conference at Edinburgh College of Art, 2023.

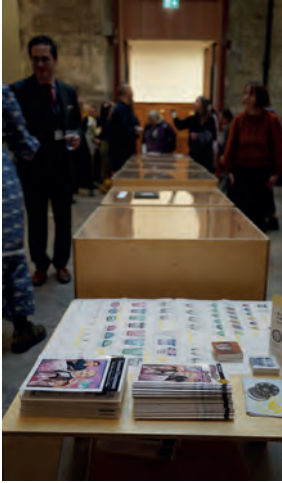
© Mari Lamb

FIGURE 15

A display of cut crystal by Toru Horiguchi at Edinburgh College of Art, 2023.

© Mari Lamb





FIGURES 16/17

A handling session of cut crystal made by Toru Horiguchi at Edinburgh College of Art, 2023.

© Mari Lamb





FIGURE 18

A handling session of cut crystal made by Toru Horiguchi at Edinburgh College of Art, 2023.

© Mari Lamb





The Masterclass

A three day masterclass with Toru Horiguchi held at ECA preceded the conference and a range of the work created by the staff and students was shown during the conference, in a curated exhibition (Figures 14–18).

During the masterclass, Toru Horiguchi was able to share his vast skills and knowledge of cut crystal, and the fine art of the Edo Kiriko tradition, with staff and students at ECA, which culminated in a cross-cultural exchange and a modern-day skills transmission, which saw the lost art of cut crystal being reintroduced to this group of Scottish glass makers.

The workshop participants were encouraged to try out diamond lathe cutting, many for the first time. They first drew out their ideas as sketches, which Toru Horiguchi helped them to realise using a diamond cutting lathe to cut the glass (**Figures 20–25**).

FIGURE 20

Masterclass with Toru Horiguchi at Edinburgh College of Art, 2023.

© Mari Lamb



FIGURE 21

Masterclass with Toru Horiguchi
at Edinburgh College of Art,
2023.

© Mari Lamb







FIGURE 22

Masterclass with Toru Horiguchi
at Edinburgh College of Art, 2023.

© *Mari Lamb*





FIGURES 23–25

Masterclass with Toru Horiguchi at Edinburgh College of Art, 2023.

© Mari Lamb

FIGURE 26

Edo Kiriko cut crystal
from Horiguchi Kiriko.

© *Horiguchi Kiriko*



The final reflection

The final part of this publication offers a final reflection on the proceedings, and a call to action by the conference organiser and speaker Dr Jessamy Kelly. With this final reflection comes an urgent call and appeal for the future of cut and engraved glass craftsmanship in the UK, and the urgent need for sector support from education and funding bodies, to safeguard and protect these vital heritage crafts, which boast a rich history in the UK.

In reviewing the living heritage of the Edo Kiriko cut glass tradition in Japan it brings into sharp contrast the unfortunate case of the dying UK cut and engraved glass scene, which should be viewed as a significant cultural loss if action is not taken. The recent research conducted by Heritage Crafts, a prominent national advocacy organisation dedicated to preserving traditional heritage crafts in the UK, has unveiled a concerning trend: several traditional craft skills teeter on the edge of extinction within the UK.

This revelation stems from a pioneering initiative, the Red List of Endangered Crafts,⁵ which identifies crafts facing the risk of endangerment. In their recent 2023 publication, Heritage Crafts highlighted the distressing decline of cut and engraved glass craftsmanship in the UK, categorising both brilliant cutting as 'endangered', and copper wheel engraving as 'critically endangered' on the Red List of endangered crafts in the UK. At the conference, it was possible to introduce and discuss the alarming downturn of these crafts in the UK. In particular, the various factors that have contributed to the current decline of the cut and engraved glass in the UK, and the possible measures that could be taken to support and foster the scene, were discussed. The sharp contrast of the thriving cut glass scene in Japan, and the governmental measures that were put in place to support this alternative landscape, were also noted, and could be used as a model of good practice to assist the rebuilding of the UK glass scene.

On reflection, what has become apparent through these cross-cultural events is that Scotland and Japan are very much a part of each other's rich and shared cultural history of glassmaking. The cross-cultural connections that this conference revealed, also demonstrates the strong modern-day relationship that exists between Scotland and Japan.

⁵ <https://heritagecrafts.org.uk/redlist/>

However, it also highlights a striking contrast between the two countries and the stark differences behind the support of these creative industries.

In hearing first hand from Toru Horiguchi, a third-generation master of the Edo-Kiriko tradition, who was able to convey his mastery as an active practitioner of Edo-Kiriko, a cut glass technique, which dates back to 1834, which has received government support and official designation as a living tradition. In Horiguchi's testament to this rich tradition of craftsmanship that has been passed down to him through over three generations, is an important fact to savour. As previously discussed, he assumed the succession name 'Shuseki', succeeding his mentor Tomio Suda, in 2008. In Japanese culture, succession names, often inherited from one's father, grandfather, or teacher, carry immense honour and significance. Each successor must strive to uphold the legacy associated with the name, embodying the spirit, style, and skill of all previous bearers. Thus, assuming a succession name is more than a mere formality — it symbolises a profound commitment to preserving and advancing the artistic heritage of one's lineage. To bear witness to this at the conference and to really take time to consider the meaning of this, is perhaps at the very crux of this discussion. In contrast in the UK, we do not follow this tradition or approach, and very rarely is a craft handed down generationally in such a formal way. This strong connection and support of intangible cultural heritage through craftsmanship is a standing testament to Japanese culture and society and should be used to evaluate our own standpoint in the UK.

The designation of 'Living National Treasure,' which carries significant cultural weight within Japanese society, and is a term in Japan that is used to recognise individuals as Preservers of Important Intangible Cultural Properties, comes under Japan's Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties. Though not formally specified in the law, this term refers to individuals designated as custodians of cultural properties considered National Treasures. This recognition is based on their exceptional expertise and contributions to preserving and transmitting traditional cultural practices, such as craftsmanship. The selection process typically involves rigorous evaluation of the candidate's mastery, dedication, and significance within their respective cultural domain. Being a generational craftsman is not a strict requirement for being designated as a Living National Treasure in Japan.

While having a family history or lineage in a particular craft may contribute to one's expertise and understanding of traditional practices, the designation is primarily based on individual mastery. Therefore, individuals from various backgrounds and experiences can be considered for this designation, based on their exceptional skills and contributions within their cultural domain, regardless of their generational lineage. They are revered as living symbols of Japan's cultural essence and they must also fulfil a crucial role as mentors, imparting their skills and wisdom to apprentices, to ensure the preservation of these ancient crafts for future generations.

As discussed, Horiguchi was trained by Tomio Suda, a registered Important Intangible Cultural Asset of Koto-ku, Tokyo, an accolade and designated title which is important to honour in this discussion. And in 2009 and 2010, Horiguchi achieved consecutive first-place wins at the 'Edo Kiriko New Work Exhibition'. From 2010, he has held the esteemed title of Master of Traditional Crafts in Japan. It is apparent that Horiguchi holds a significant role as a living master of this tradition and his actions are significant to the future survival of his craft, which is a huge undertaking. It is through this act that we see the true inner strength of this tradition and the actions of its proponents. It shows us why it is so important that a craft should be shouldered by a master: for transmission to future generations to take on this mantle, as the role they play as forebearers of the craft holds strong and ensures the future survival of the craft. It is important to consider the contribution that this approach brings. Could this approach be taken in the UK to revive the cut and engraved glass scene, to help protect and safeguard a creative industry which has significantly suffered over recent decades, with the closure of most major glass works and only one key producer of cut crystal left in the UK.

It is worthwhile considering the UK context when discussing this approach to skills development and the imparting of knowledge and skills to future generations. Take, for instance, the experience of Alison Kinnaird MBE, as discussed, a prominent Scottish glass engraver who was able to share her experience, skills and knowledge of the field of copper wheel engraving at the conference. Although the UK may not officially recognize artisans as 'Living National Treasures,' Kinnaird was able to vividly recall her formative learning experiences, having honed her craft under the guidance of the glass engraver Harold Gordon.

She further refined her skills through hands-on practice with copper wheel engraving using the lathes at Edinburgh College of Art, a glass engraving department that was set up by Helen Monro-Turner in 1941.

This highlights a less formal, yet deeply meaningful, connection between a glass apprentice and their teacher who can be viewed as a master craftsman and mentor. It is also important to note that Harold Gordon was taught by Monro-Turner. So, we can indeed trace the mastery of this tradition back to this point and person and the significant role that Monro-Turner held as a master training her student apprentices in the art of copper wheel engraving.

In turn, during the conference, Dr Kelly was able to speak about her time at Edinburgh Crystal as a student glass designer studying for her master's degree at ECA in 2001. She was also able to share the formative time she spent with master glass cutters at Edinburgh Crystal, a cut crystal factory once based in the Pentlands, Edinburgh, but unfortunately now closed due to insolvency. During her time at this glass factory, she was able to learn first-hand from the skilled and experienced glass cutters at Edinburgh Crystal. It is important to recognise her own role as an educator at ECA, a role which has given her the chance to pass on and transmit her skills and knowledge to new generations of students studying glass making at ECA, following in the steps of other educators like Helen Monro-Turner, who led the glass department for 30 years from 1941–1971. During her time at ECA, Monro-Turner taught a wide range of glass engravers who went on to actively practice this craft. In doing so, she opened up and shared these techniques widely, laying the foundation for wheel engraving in the UK. In retrospect, this pioneering act can be seen as a vital form for establishing an educational ground at ECA for this tradition, to ensure its uptake by future generations. Her work today should be valued for its contribution to the field and should be retrospectively viewed as a form of Intangible Cultural Heritage. As we can trace the inherited knowledge and traditions passed down by Monro-Turner to future generations, whilst not direct descendants by birth, we can see the educational connection was a strong and valid mode for the transmission of these skills. It also brings into focus the role of modern-day glass making educators play at ECA and the role educators like Dr Kelly play in ensuring the survival of all facets of this discipline for future generations: a role which Dr Kelly takes very seriously; especially given the threats we face in the light of some aspects of this discipline facing extinction in the UK.

The importance of preserving heritage through the sharing and protection of craft skills cannot be overstated.

As previously discussed, the recent research conducted by Heritage Crafts (2021–2023), sheds light on the growing challenges faced by vulnerable traditional skills. It reports how this situation is made worse by factors such as the energy crisis and inflation. Alongside the impacts of the global pandemic, the uncertainties of Brexit, and funding issues that affect the transmission of crafts skills, such as cut and engraved glass in the UK. Despite these obstacles, they claim that there are indeed encouraging signs of progress. For instance, crafts like brilliant cutting have experienced an improvement in their status, transitioning from being classified as 'critically endangered' in 2021 and downgraded to 'endangered' by 2023. Through its Endangered Crafts Fund, Heritage Crafts has distributed a range of grants and funding to provide support to artisans in the field. Helping them to pass on their invaluable craft skills to future generations. Mary Lewis, the executive director of Heritage Crafts summarises the context of this research (2023):

The effect of the energy crisis, inflation, COVID-19 and Brexit have been tough on everyone, not least the craftspeople who possess our most fundamental craft skills. We know that heritage craft skills operate like an ecosystem; if we lose one part it can have devastating consequences on other parts of the system. If we allow endangered crafts to disappear then we seriously diminish the opportunities for future generations to create their own sustainable and fulfilling livelihoods and deal with the challenges of the future.⁶

⁶ <https://heritagecrafts.org.uk/redlist2023/>

Heritage Crafts set out as part of their listings, the training and market issues that pose significant challenges for each craft. In terms of the listing of 'brilliant cutting' it discusses the labour-intensive nature of this craft which can discourage people from learning it, due to the substantial dedication and time required to refine one's skills.⁷

⁷ <https://heritagecrafts.org.uk/brilliant-cutting/>

Additionally, it states that there have been difficulties in sourcing necessary equipment such as grinding wheels. Traditionally, grindstones for brilliant-cutting glass were primarily made of sandstone from Craighleith in Edinburgh, but contemporary ones are chiefly composed of aluminium oxide. Sourcing these wheels was extremely challenging for a period.

However, a recent development has established a new supply of grinding wheels in the UK, contributing to increased accessibility to the craft.

One of the major hurdles in the market is the high cost of materials and labour, and the elevated costs associated with this type of cut-glass production. This stark contrast often deters potential clients from commissioning traditional craftwork. These cost differentials pose significant challenges to the sustainability of traditional craft businesses. These challenges underscore the need for innovative solutions to promote and sustain traditional crafts in a competitive market landscape.

Heritage Crafts also set out the training and market issues associated with the decline of copper wheel engraving in the UK which, as discussed, was listed as critically endangered in 2023.⁸ The listing cites the time required to master the intricate skills involved in setting copper discs on spindles, centering them, achieving perfect alignment and profiling. Maintenance also presents a significant barrier, especially when compared to the efficiency of diamond wheels. Additionally, the high cost of equipment, including setting up a basic lathe and acquiring wheels, poses financial challenges for aspiring craftsmen. The lack of training facilities for copper wheel engraving in the UK highlights a major issue for this craft at Further and Higher Education levels. Many institutions either lack lathes or have disposed of them due to non-compliance with health and safety regulations. This shortage of training resources hampers the ability of individuals to acquire and refine their skills, and the shortage of copper wheel engravers and practitioners in the UK makes it difficult to pass on skills to the next generation.

⁸ <https://heritagecrafts.org.uk/copper-wheel-engraving/>

A further issue was the market preference for modern styles and techniques, with many students of glass opting for modern dremmel, diamond wheel engraving and sandblasting methods over copper wheel engraving, due to its perceived slowness and labour-intensive nature. The preference for faster techniques further reduces the pool of individuals interested in mastering more traditional methods. The commercial viability and cost of the technique of copper wheel engraving is increasingly deemed too slow for commercial purposes.

Moreover, the final products tend to be expensive compared to alternative methods of glass decoration, deterring potential clients and limiting market demand. These factors collectively challenge the economic sustainability of traditional copper wheel engraving as a viable craft.

It is important to highlight that the glass scene is not totally bleak in the UK, with many glass makers working throughout the UK. Glassmaking is currently designated as a viable craft in the UK, and this includes diamond glass engraving and glass working, and the techniques of glassblowing, kiln-formed glass, and lampworking. However, the following issues may affect the future viability of these glass techniques including, most notably, a shortage of training opportunities in glass making. This scarcity will likely affect the ability of aspiring artisans to acquire and develop the necessary skills to sustain these crafts in the future. There has been a concerning decline in glass education programs across the UK. As institutions reduce their courses, there are fewer avenues for individuals to receive formal education and training in these crafts, which if left unaddressed could lead to a potential loss of expertise and knowledge. Unfortunately, ECA has seen this decline firsthand, with the unfortunate closure of its BA Glass programme in 2012-2013 and the closure of its Master's Glass programme in 2019-2020, due to recruitment issues associated with the global pandemic. Within the field of glass in the UK, it can be said that there is a distinct lack of recognition around many of the techniques, which may diminish the perceived value of these crafts and therefore limit opportunities for glass artists to show and sell their work. Again, there is an awareness that in the future, experienced glass artists may retire or leave the profession, which could mean that there are not enough custodians to pass and transmit their skills and knowledge to future generations. Fortunately, ECA will launch its MA Craft programme in 2025 which will mean that glass-making, alongside a range of other crafts such as ceramics, textiles, jewellery and silversmithing, will be safeguarded and taught at ECA.

The importance of transmitting crafts skills such as glass cutting and engraving is summed up aptly by Jay Blades, MBE Heritage Crafts Co-Chair, (2023):

When craft skills are in danger of dying out it's important that we know exactly where to focus our efforts. Over recent years the Red List of Endangered Crafts has made us realise exactly what we are at risk of losing, and has given our team at Heritage Crafts the information we need to direct our support most effectively.⁹

⁹ <https://heritagecrafts.org.uk/redlist2023/>

Although the UK excels in preserving tangible heritage, such as museum collections and monuments, it falls short in safeguarding intangible heritage, encompassing knowledge, skills, and practices. Notably, the UK has only recently in June 2024 ratified the 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Furthermore, there is a gap in government oversight for heritage crafts, as it falls between agencies responsible for supporting the arts and heritage in the UK, which indicates a need for more comprehensive attention to be given to intangible cultural heritage.

The ongoing development of the Heritage Crafts Red List plays a crucial role in monitoring the status of heritage crafts in the UK, providing a vital platform for initiating discussions on how to bring about positive change for the future of these traditional craft skills and their future transmission.

Summary

In summary, the assembly of such a diverse range of speakers at the Edo Kiriko Conference has provided a crucial dialogue for the field of cut and engraved glass making. Each speaker played a pivotal role in honoring and articulating the cultural heritage inherent within the shared histories and traditions of these glassmaking traditions.

The Edo Kiriko conference, exhibition, masterclass and publication underscore the importance of the transmission of craft skills, such as cut and engraved glass making to future generations through cross-cultural exchange and debate.

This publication has not only set out the proceedings of the conference, but it has also reflected and shed light upon the unfortunate decline of the cut and engraved glass scene within the UK. It has demonstrated how these time-honored crafts now find themselves perilously listed on the endangered Red List of Heritage Crafts in the UK in stark contrast to their Japanese counterparts.

Despite this designation, there is an optimism stemming from this conference that asserts that, through concerted effort in education, training, and recognition, we could indeed draw together to elevate these crafts from this precarious status. By examining the contributing factors behind the current decline, it is hoped that this publication can issue a call for action, to collectively envision the future trajectory of cut and engraved glass, and its future survival in the UK.

Toru Horiguchi at Edinburgh
College of Art, 2023.

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Edinburgh College of Art

Edo Kiriko cut crystal from
Horiguchi Kiriko.

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