

A woman with short dark hair, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans, stands in profile facing left. She has a light blue scarf draped around her neck. The background is a vast, green mountain range under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The overall mood is serene and natural.

空
蝉

utjusemi

BRAND BOOK

An unique close encounter...

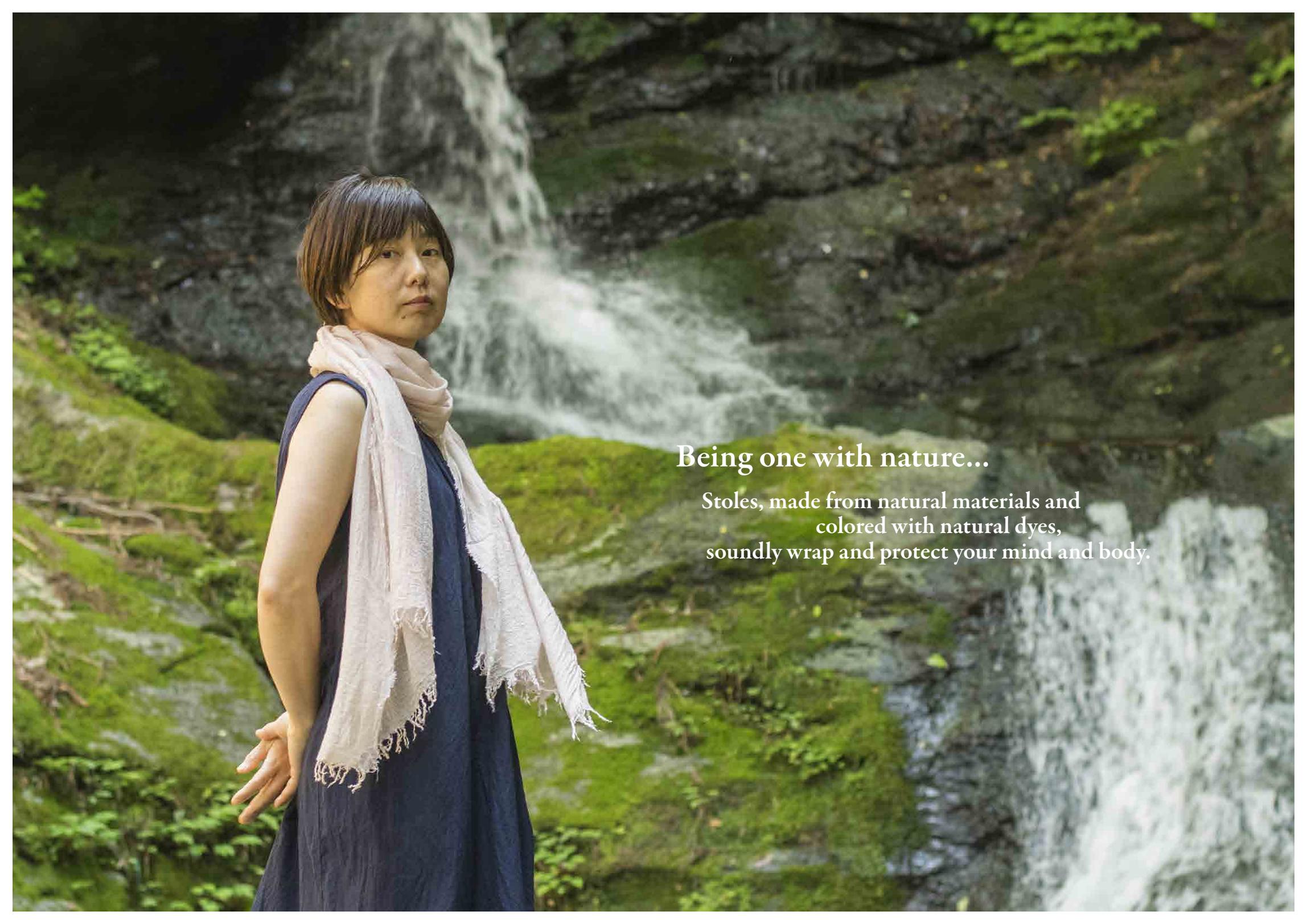
**Something totally unique
Handmade work utilizing one basic colour that says so much.**



A woman with short brown hair is shown in profile, looking towards the left. She is wearing a light green, long-sleeved shirt over a white t-shirt. The background is a dense forest of tall, thin trees with lush green foliage. Sunlight filters through the leaves, creating a bright and airy atmosphere.

Now you can wear fresh air...

Work inspired by the beauty of nature.
Wear it with pride and freedom.



Being one with nature...

Stoles, made from natural materials and
colored with natural dyes,
soundly wrap and protect your mind and body.



Embracing life...

Getting away from city life, my work comprises all natural materials and dyes. For example, cherry tree dyeing is done with liquid from boiling a cherry tree branch, which is most beautiful before the flowers have bloomed, and when the branches still have buds.

Indigo has a fermented indigo dye and a fresh leaf dye. The fresh leaf dye is nature's gift only available in the summer when the indigo leaf grows. It gives us an invigorating sky blue color.

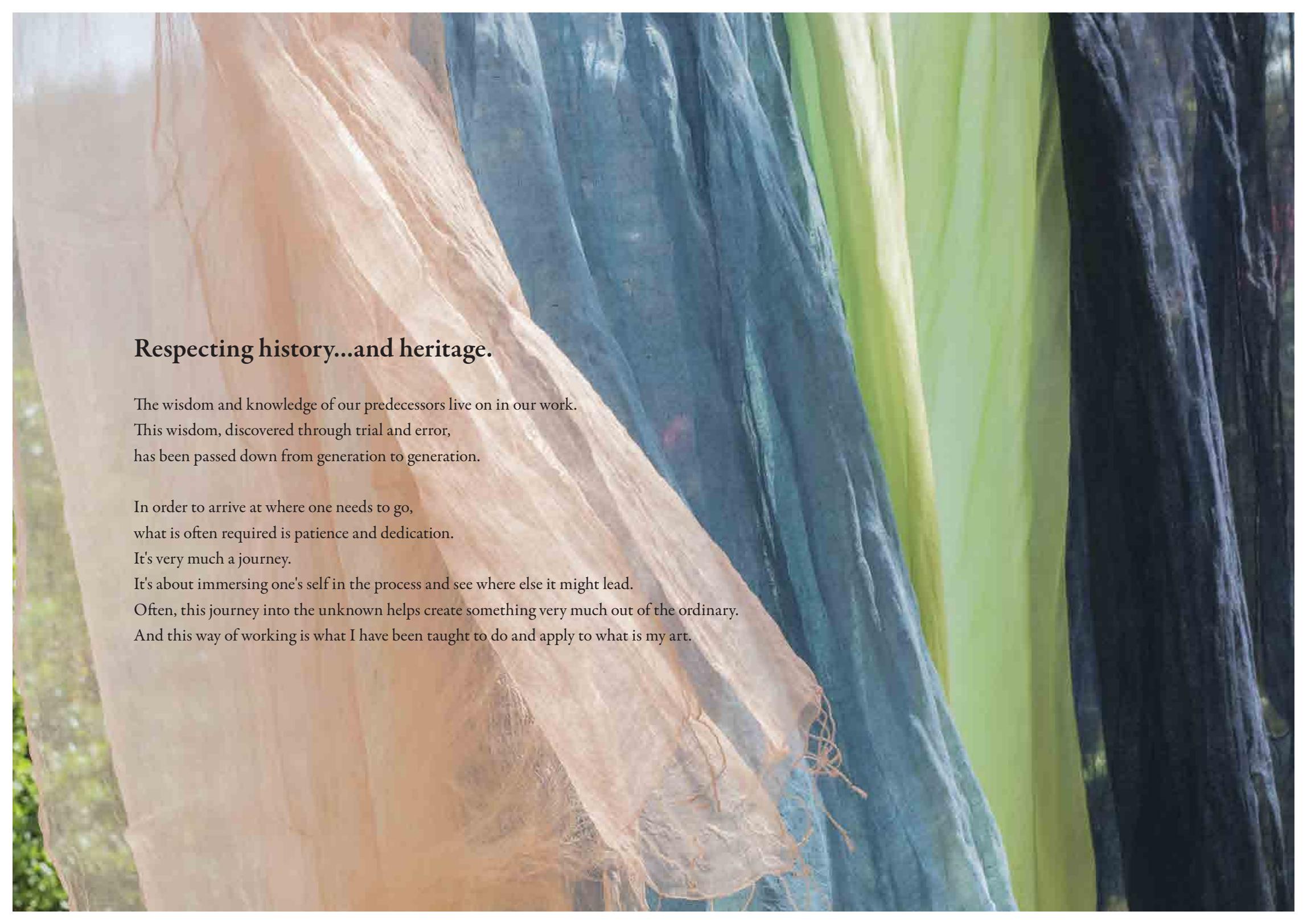


Listening to the Voice of the Material

On the other hand, working with fermented indigo dye is more challenging. Needed is to dry the indigo leaves cut in the summer, and ferment them for 100 days. I raise that with the lye from wood ash, borrow the power of the fermented bacteria and dye my material.

I speak with my fermented bacteria everyday, and can't dye anything if I don't keep it in good condition.

Without opposing nature, I listen to its many voices, and softly lend a hand so we can work in harmony.



Respecting history...and heritage.

The wisdom and knowledge of our predecessors live on in our work.
This wisdom, discovered through trial and error,
has been passed down from generation to generation.

In order to arrive at where one needs to go,
what is often required is patience and dedication.

It's very much a journey.

It's about immersing one's self in the process and see where else it might lead.

Often, this journey into the unknown helps create something very much out of the ordinary.

And this way of working is what I have been taught to do and apply to what is my art.

DESIGNER'S PROFILE

Hiroko Utsunomiya

After leaving the film distribution and production industry, I set my mind to travel along a path that led to dyeing and weaving, crafts learned at the Nomura Silk Museum in Seiyo City, Ehime.

This is a prominent silk producing area of Japan, with its raw silk once being used in the clothing of England's Queen Elizabeth for her coronation ceremony. Its threads are still used in the sengu renewal ceremony of Ise Grand Shrine.

This is where I spent five years learning how to make silk thread from silk worms, how to color with natural dyeing materials, and how to produce with a hand weaving machine. In 2018, I moved to my current Higashi Yoshino Village and opened Utsusemi, my dyeing and weaving workshop.



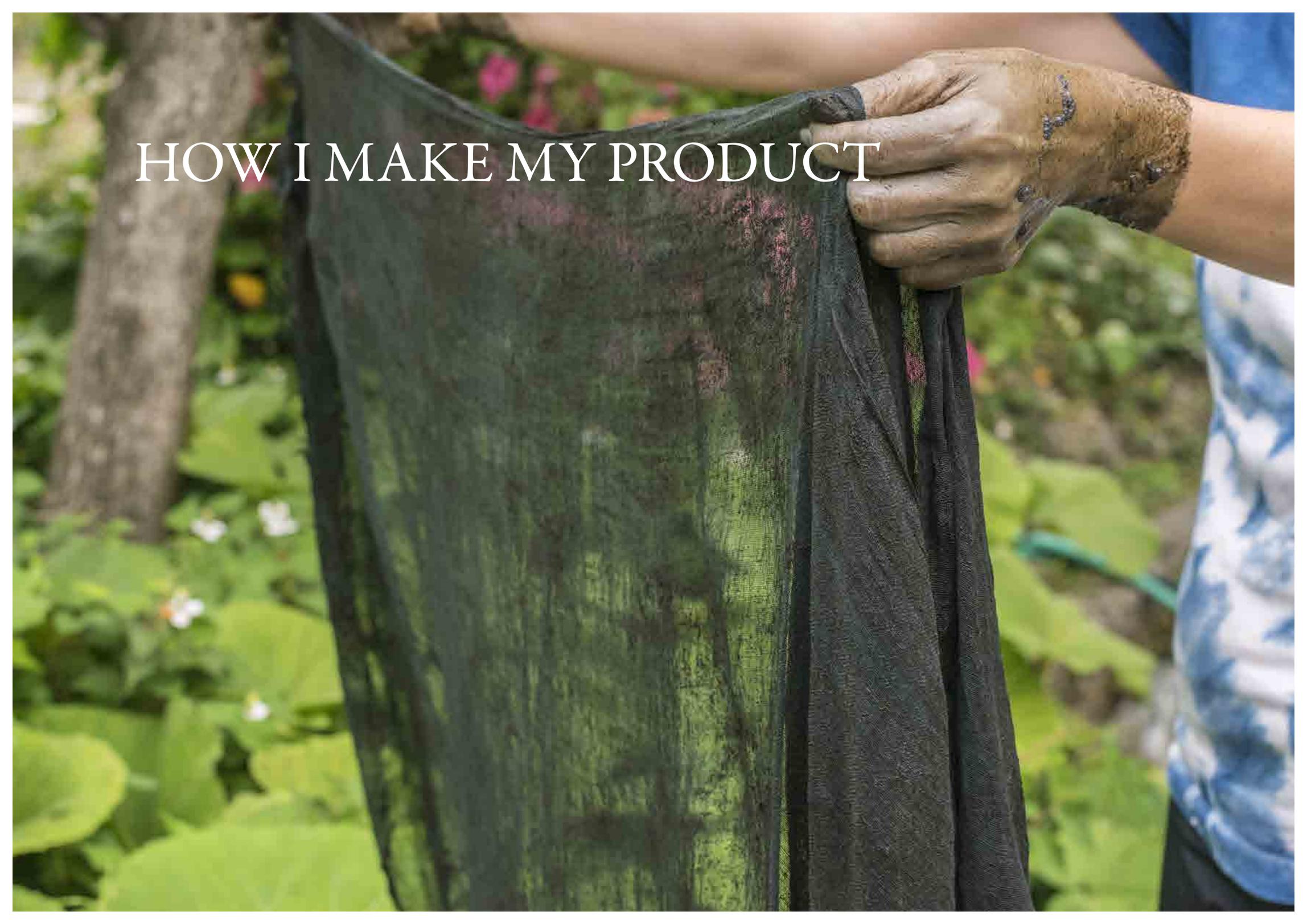
LOCATION

In a small village in Japan...

Nara prefecture is the former location of the oldest capital of Japan. My workshop is on that eastern edge, and situated in a mountain village blessed with mountains and water. It is near Mt. Yoshino, a world heritage site filled with cherry trees, and was what prompted me to start dyeing with cherry trees.



HOW I MAKE MY PRODUCT





MATERIAL



DYE

**I use 100% natural materials and dyes.
Through this combination, unique color and texture are born.**

MATERIAL



Cotton



Silk



Linen

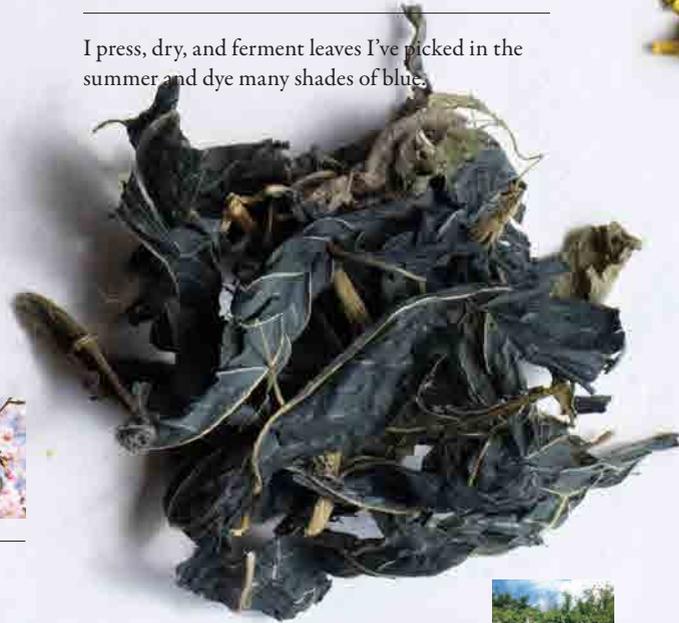


DYE

Indigo Ai



I press, dry, and ferment leaves I've picked in the summer and dye many shades of blue.



Amur Cork Tree Kihada



On the inner side bark of the deciduous citrus Amur Cork Tree is a yellow cork layer that has a bitter taste. Along with being used for medicinal purposes in China and Japan, it has been used as a dye since ancient times. Iron mordanting offers a bright yellow color.

Cherry Tree Sakura



When I dye in spring using branches with buds before they bloom into flowers in spring, I can attain a cherry blossom color.

Kariyasu



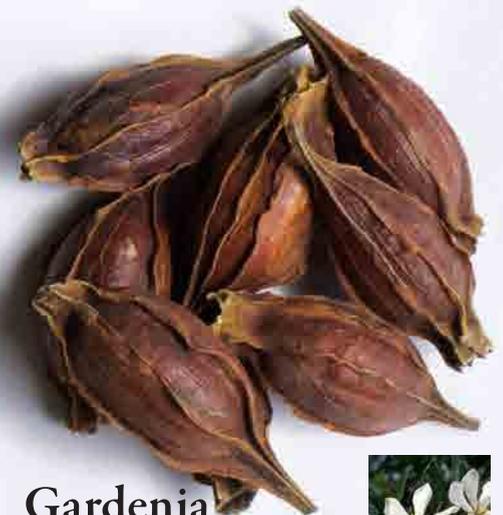
With dried plant leaves of the grass family, we dye this yellow with a hint of traditional Japanese blue—the kariyasu color. With iron mordanting, I can also achieve colors from a deep green to an olive color.



Gardenia Kuchinashi



A dried fruit that ripens in autumn. The dye is a pure yellow color.



Safflower Benibana



I pick petals of flowers that have bloomed in the summer, dry them, and which are used for dye. There is a yellow and a rouge color, with the rouge mainly used for dyeing.



COLOR

There are actually a variety of traditional color names in Japan. They were certainly born from the unique Japanese sensibility created by a climate of four distinct seasons.

However, ancient Japanese people sought these colors, learned from the civilization on the Asian continent, and through the interaction of people and things developed that culture of color.

I want to revive these traditional colors in our modern lives.

Kurenai Safflower

Color history

The method of dyeing this bright rouge color by extracting rouge dye from dried safflower petals originated in the Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations.

How to dye

I knead flower petals in lye from wood ash, abstract just the rouge color, and use it to dye at room temperature.

Hanezu Gardenia × Safflower

Color history

This special orange represents the color of the rising sun and is revered as the color of the Crown Prince from the Heian period, 1300 years ago to the present day.

How to dye

On a yellow pre-dyed with gardenia, I dye it by adding the rouge of safflower.

Hanada Fermented Indigo

Color history

A traditional Japanese method of dyeing indigo is to further ferment the indigo mud called skumo, which is fermented for 100 days with dried indigo leaves, and then dye it with the help of microorganisms

How to dye

Every morning and evening, I stir the indigo vat to add air and encourage fermentation. All while always being grateful to the indigo that will bring me a nice color.



Sakura

Branches of Cherry Tree

Color history

With that faint hue and fleeting frailty, cherry blossoms fascinate Japanese people— no, they fascinate people the entire world over. From a wish to harness this color, a variety of cherry blossom colors have been dyed since ancient times.

How to dye

In ancient times people see Sakura colors through a transparent white cloth to Kurenai rouge . Now we boil the branches of the buds before the cherry blossoms bloom, take out the dyeing liquid, and dye it with a cloth.

Color history

A word that expresses eternally unchangeable, name of Tokiwa is come from pines and cedar tree leaves that never change their vivid green throughout the year.

How to dye

I add indigo to a material already dyed a dark yellow with kariyasu. Depending on the darkness and strength of the kariyasu and indigo, we can see a variety of Tokiwa colors just like natural trees themselves.

Tokiwa

Karivasu × Fermented Indigo

Color history

The bright yellow-green of the young leaf which is called Moegi.. Wearing this color was also about bringing eternal youth and vitality into your body.

How to dye

Traditionally, green was dyed through a combination of indigo and yellow dyes. This vivid yellow green is dyed by adding yellow color of Amur cork tree to the materials dyed by fresh indigo leaves.

Moegi

Fresh Indigo Leaves × Amur Cork Tree

Color history

Surrounded by the sea, in Japan there are actually many different names for the color blue. Sorairo which is sky blue and Mizuiro which is water blue are lightly colored with indigo.

How to dye

Using squeezed fresh indigo leaves that have grown only in the summer season. The refreshing aroma that surround me while I am dyeing is a secret joy of summer.

Sorairo/Mizuiro

Fresh Indigo Leaves

Color history

Foreigners who came to the Meiji era were surprised at the blue of indigo found all over Japan and called it Japan Blue.

How to dye

Soak once or twice in the fermented indigo liquid, or soak and dye many times in a liquid of squeezed fresh indigo leaves.

Asagi

Fermented Indigo or Fresh Indigo Leaves

Color history

A dark indigo color that almost looks black “Kachi” is homonymous with “win” in Japanese, It is a color that comes from dyeing over and over again by very advanced traditional techniques.

How to dye

I repeat the process of dipping the cloth in the indigo vat, drying it, and oxidizing it in the air many times. In pursuit of dark colors, I sometimes repeat the same work for many days.

Kachihiro

Fermented Indigo





