

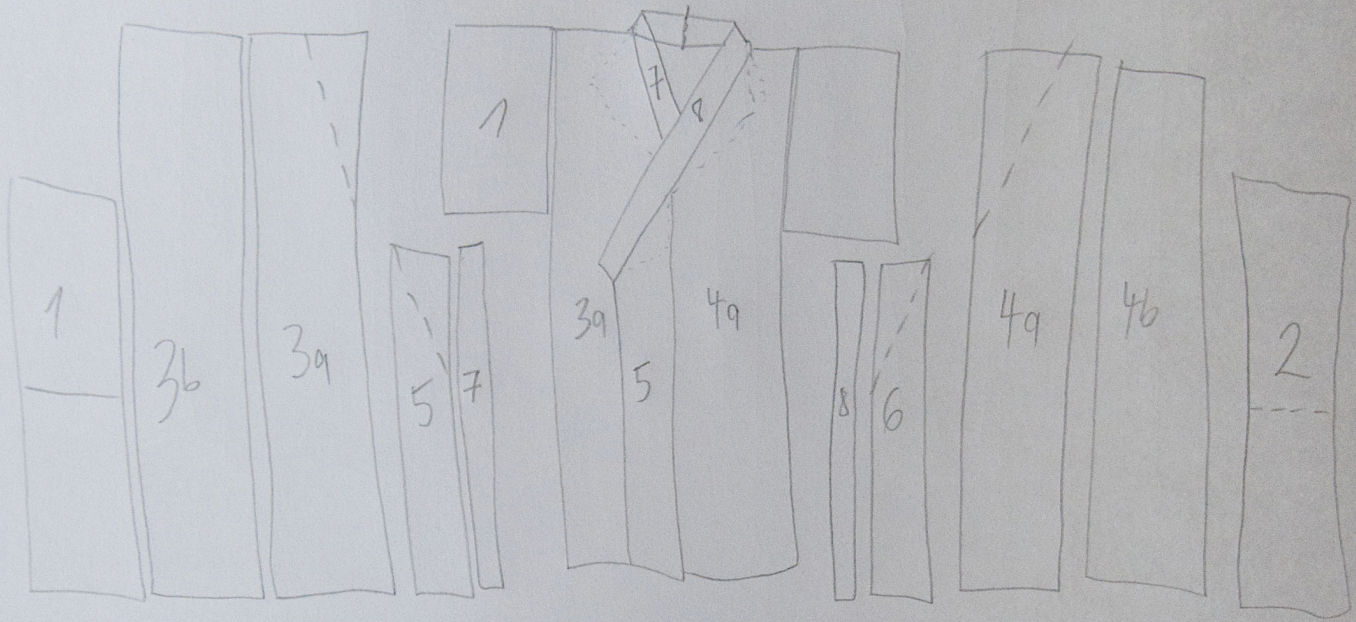
*AMAMI*  
*OSHIMA*  
*project*  
2017





About the project

Around May 2016 I started to work about kimonos. What fascinated me the most was the fact that a kimono is formed out of a square piece of fabric, without wasting any piece of it. The woven fabric is cut into smaller squares and stitched together as a cloth. This concept of clothing is not about the body, its shape or movements - the cut shows a rational use of fabric as a rich material.





Eva Gentner: from the series *kimonos*,  
cement/pigment on jute (stichted)  
Exhibition view, Berlin in September 2016

*What also fascinated me about the kimono was the process of gaining yarn, weaving, dyeing and coloring it. The production of a good quality kimono can take months, working on long time dyeing processes or highly complicated weaving patterns. But at the end the fabric contains so much time and perfection, that gives it a deep aesthetic and value.*



from: *AMAMI OSHIMA project*, 2017  
videoloop 5:00 min

For example the Oshima Tsumugi, a special type of pongee kimono, which is only produced in Amami Oshima, a small Japanese Island in the Eastern Chinese Sea, needs several months until it's complete. Each single step of the production takes place on the island: first, the workers produce the color. For this they use the wood of a tree, that is spread all around the island: its name is Sharinbai. They cook its wood for 22 hours until they gain a deep copper-brown brew. With this Sharinbai brew the workers dye the silk threads three times, until the former white threads have taken on a light brownish color. Afterwards the workers wash the threads in mud. The earth of the island contains iron, which fixes the color. These steps (three times Sharinbai dyeing, one time mud dyeing) have to be repeated for eighty (!) times; so they over-dye and over-dye until the silk threads have reached a shiny deep black without any color cast.



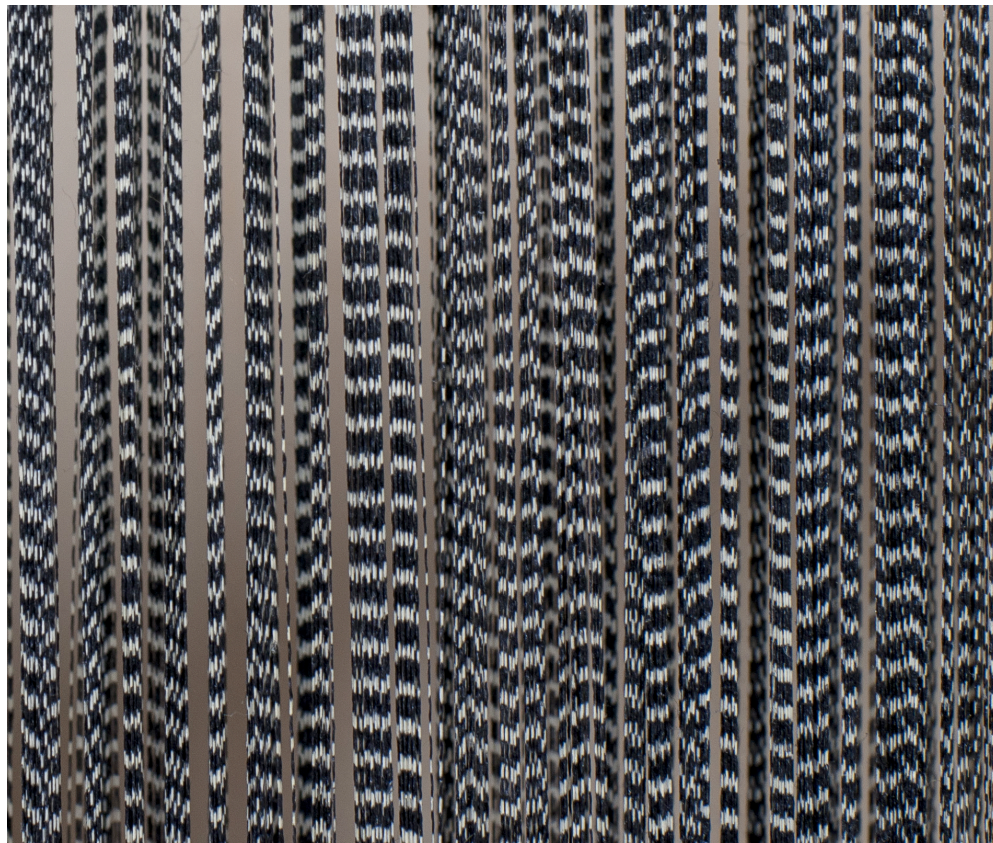
from: AMAMI OSHIMA project, 2017  
videoloop 5:00 min



from: *AMAMI OSHIMA project*, 2017  
videoloop 1:47 min

*Following a straight plan, they bind certain threads together before dyeing them, like you do it when batiking. So some particular parts of the thread remain white and the finished threads are alternating black to white.*

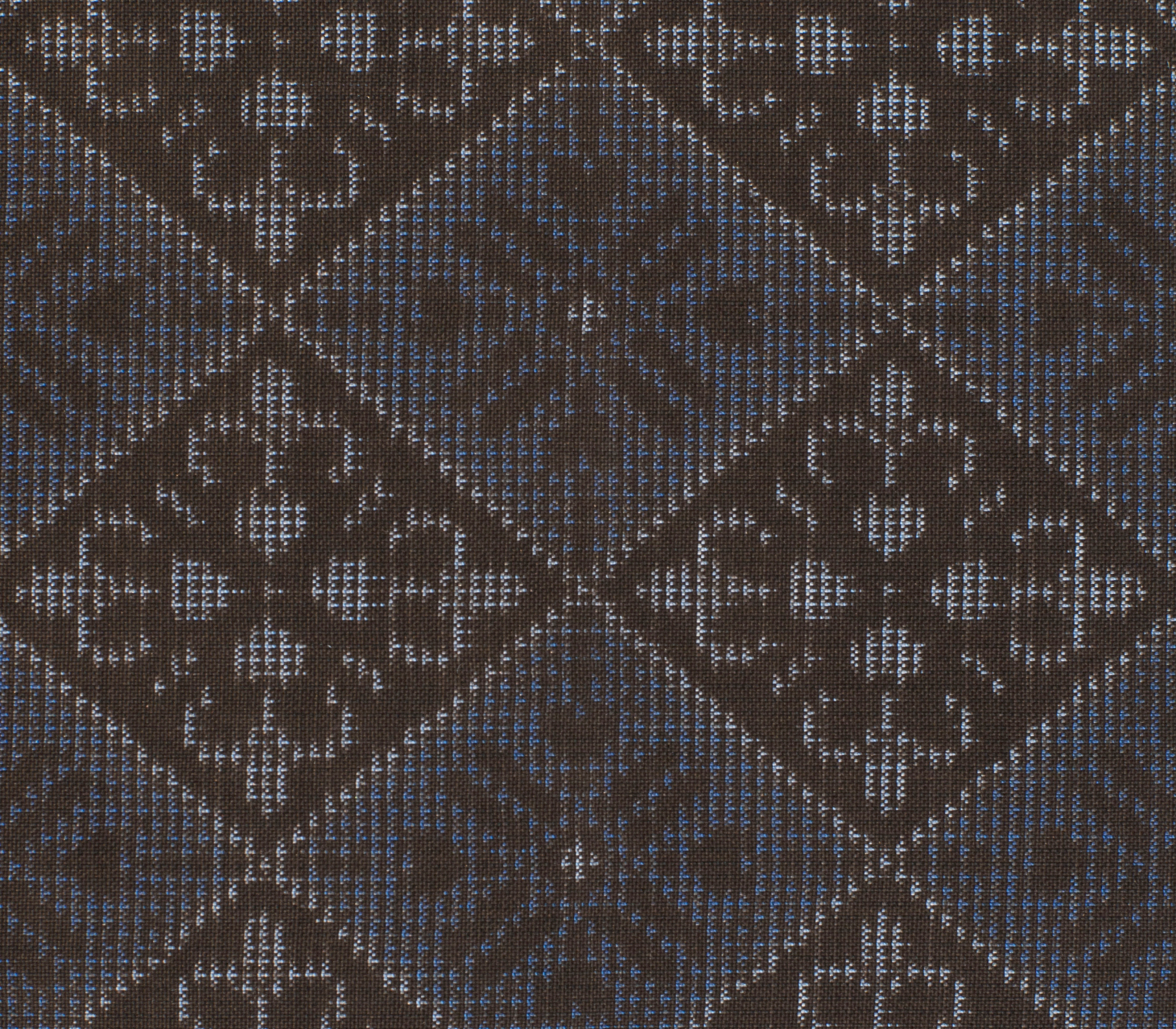
*After dyeing, the silk threads get woven. The kimonos weaving looms are much smaller as they used to be in Europe. For a kimono you just need a web width of 33cm/13". This allows highly complicated patterns, which they create out of the black and white threads. This old technic is known as Ikat and you find it in nearly every culture all around the world. But only the precision and simultaneous simplicity is forming the unique aesthetic and auratic beauty.*







from: *AMAMI OSHIMA* project, 2017  
videoloop 5:00 min



*In April 2017 I traveled to Amami Oshima Island, that is still nearly isolated from tourism, to experience this process, their handling with the materials and to get to know the people who are keeping this tradition alive. For several days I could attend the dyers and weavers while working and document my impressions. Visiting the few production places on the island, I shot video stills and took photos, focusing on the material aesthetic and on the workers handling the materials. The video stills, that are shown as loops try to work out the process of creating this special kind of beauty, showing e.g. the weavers hands on the pongee, the dyers hands washing the treads in the mud, the black silk drying in the sun, cooking Sharinbai color or the water basins they use for clean washing the threads.*



Further, I brought canvas fabric from my atelier to the island, to dye it at workshops on site. I haven't been long enough to dye them in black, so the fabric now shows the shades of the Sharinbai Color, a light rose-gray and a chocolate brown. The fabric is exhibited with a drying construction I often saw on the island: long pipes, either bamboo but mostly plastic pipes hung from the wall and the fabric layed upon. In addition I shot a little documentation showing me and the workers helping me dyeing the fabric.







from the series *Oshima*, 2017, cotton, dyed with Sharinbai, plastic pipes

Eva Gentner  
*Amami Oshima Project*

[www.evagentner.de](http://www.evagentner.de)  
+49 15226443933