Maris ArtProject
Presented By Liku Maria Takahashi
Maris National Flag Project

More than 10,000 people!

Maris ... an art technique invented for painting appreciation by the blind has become a tool for inspiring the sighted toward greater compassion and world peace

world’s first painting method
Innovative contemporary art conceived in Japan, for the world
I think that visually impaired people want to see paintings. Do you know how they feel? Maris, the first art method to make paintings accessible to blind people, spreads a message of kindness across the world. By showing that paintings can be enjoyed by the visually impaired, it creates opportunities for the sighted to gain deeper understanding of those with disability.

It was in 2009 that I succeeded in creating a technique for finally opening the world of painting to those whose eyes cannot see. I called it "Maris." We are all able to rise above discrimination if only we leave our egos behind. Sighted visitors to Maris exhibitions can witness their blind peers enjoying the same paintings they enjoy.

These experiences provided by Maris are opportunities to encounter a realm of Love & Peace that transcends ablebodiedness, ethnicity, gender, and all other distinctions that lead to discrimination. In philosophical terms, my art creates encounters where paintings plant the seeds of understanding.

I am now preparing to launch an art movement of Love & Peace across Europe in 2020. Focused on Paris, this movement will use the power of art to make the world a kinder place.

From the 1970s to the mid-1980s Joseph Beuys endeavored to use art as a force for changing the world for the better. Over the years, I have made the ideals he expressed the foundation of my work, but I have also reshaped them with my own belief that art completely transcends politics and religion.

My vision of art strips away the political and religious aspects from Beuys' concepts, and replants the underlying mysticism and philosophical thinking of Rudolf Steiner in a soil of ancient Japanese animism and Bushido. Deeply inspired by Beuys' concept of “social sculpture”—regardless of any distinctions between East and West—I use my art as a medium for conveying messages on how we can create an ideal society. Art leads us to new discoveries. And, it has the power to change the world.

Liku Maria Takahashi
Art that fills the world with love

**Maris National Flag Project**

Children painting at 33rd project in Turin
More than 10,000 have experienced Maris worldwide!
Participants in a World Blind Union meeting in Tokyo, standing before a Maris exhibition that included Maris paintings of the WBU logo and the Maris flag. This photo is from the top of the “About WBU” page on the WBU’s website.
Building a compassionate society through contemporary art

Art can make special contributions not possible through politics or religion. Conceived in Japan, the Maris National Flag Project is an educational art program that seeks to inspire compassion across the globe—with each grain of sand standing for one person’s hope to make the world a better place. By having people view and make national flag paintings together, the project creates opportunities for everyone to think about what we can do to promote world peace and diversity.

Appreciating paintings: An enriching experience

When we view paintings, our eyes send signals to the brain, whose chemistry converts the stimuli into joy and other profound emotions. In fact, colors affect our mood—the legendary color theorist Johannes Itten (1888-1967) taught that bright colors raise our spirits while darker ones calm us. Because of such effects, painting appreciation is an excellent way to enrich our minds and hearts.

Much more needs to be done for the visually impaired

People with visual impairments need to have opportunities to experience paintings. Sadly, however, that need goes unnoticed among sighted people, including those in the art world, as we have learned from hosting Maris workshops around the globe. Today, support for people with disability tends to focus on material assistance. By adding cultural and artistic support, we can create a more well-rounded package of aid that helps people with disability to enjoy the truly enriched life that all people deserve, both materially and intellectually.

Reaching out to the sighted

Maris National Flags of the World seeks to plant the seeds of respect for the human rights of visually impaired people, and grow that respect into a wave of compassion that reaches across the globe.
Maris is a type of painting and a technique that lets every person, even the visually-impaired see the artworks. It was invented by Liku Maria Takahashi, in 2009, and has been promoted all over the world. Maris expresses the brightness of colors through the size of the sand grain, which are divided into 10 levels. The darker a color gets, the coarser a grain becomes. The hue is expressed through herb essential oils that are applied to the canvas. For instance, purple is the scent of lavender, green is one of sage, and orange is one of oranges.

About Maris
Maris is based on the Maris World Standard Table, which defines specific colors and tones by sand grain size and herb essential oil scents.

The 10 levels of lightness and hue in the Maris World Standard Table were decided by Liku Maria Takahashi.

① Grain size = Monochromatic painting (85% of color information)

① Grain size + ② Scent = Colorful Painting (10% of color information)

Note: For simplicity, the Maris Method does not express saturation, which accounts for the remaining 5% of color information.

About Maris

Maris is a form of sand painting. It is the world’s first painting method designed to be accessible to everyone, regardless of visual ability. The sand’s textures and scents enable blind people to “see” the colors and shapes depicted.

The brightness of colors is defined by sand grain size, all mapped out in the Maris World Standard Table.
(Invented by contemporary artist Liku Maria Takahashi in 2009, patented in Japan)

The coarser the grain is, the darker the tone represented. Each color used—red, yellow, or whatever—is expressed by a specific scent.
(Paintings measuring at least 10 x 5 cm)

Accessible to everyone, even children
Once the simple rule about how grain size expresses brightness is learned, anyone with visual impairment can start enjoying the paintings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lightness</th>
<th>Sand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>small</td>
<td>grain size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Herb essential oil

- Rosemary
- Orange
- Lavender
- Lemon
- Sage
- Peppermint
- Frankincense
- Marjoram
- Lavender
- Geranium

Red
Yellow
Red
Yellow
Green
Yellow
Green
Blue
Green
Blue

Maris

① Grain size + ② Scent
Maris National Flag Project

This hands-on workshop provides both kids and adults with a fun and easy opportunity to experience the technique and concept of the Maris Method. Participants work together to create a Maris picture of the flag of a country other than theirs. As they form the picture, they are encouraged to wish for the happiness of the people of that country. Launched in 2012, the Maris 206 + 1 project aims to complete all 206 national flags of the world, plus the Refugee Nation flag created for the contingent of refugees who competed in the 2016 Summer Games in Rio. To date, some 50 flag pictures have been created at 24 workshops held in Japan and abroad.
This project, part of the larger Maris Art Project, hosts workshops for collaborative creation of Maris paintings of all the world’s national flags.

Participants paint the flag of a country other than their own. Each grain of sand represents one person in that country. As participants place a grain on the canvas, they wish for the happiness of that person. By engaging people in a hands-on activity that encourages them to hope for the happiness of others, this project seeks to foster international mindedness and compassion.

This project was launched on the day of the closing ceremony of the London Olympics in August 2012.

MESSAGE FROM WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT

I prayed for peace as I placed each grain. I hope that many people will see this and bring peace to our world.

10-year-old resident of March 2011 tsunami/earthquake disaster area in Japan
#1 2012/6/1 Toyama Japan
#2 2012/8/18 Setagaya Tokyo Japan
#3 2012/12/16 Tsukuba Ibaraki Japan
#4 2012/12/31 Toyama Japan
#5 2013/1/2~4 Toyama Japan
#6 2013/6/1~7/21 Yokohama Japan
#7 2013/8/1~11 Shiogama (Miyagi area affected by March 2011 earthquake/tsunami) Japan
#8 2013/8/5~10 Ginza Tokyo Japan
#9 2013/8/10~18 Sakai Osaka Japan
#10 2013/8/24~29 Toyama Japan
#11 2013/12/6~7 Sakai Osaka Japan
#12 2013/12/20 Gifu Japan
#13 2014/7/6~21 Shiogama (Miyagi area affected by March 2011 earthquake/tsunami) Japan
#14 2014/7/23 Tsukuba Ibaraki Japan
#15 2014/11/22~24 Yoyogi Tokyo Japan
#16 2014/11/29 Tokyo Japan
#17 2015/3/30 Toyama Japan
#18 2015/4/1~6/29 Yokohama Japan
#19 2015/9/19~27 Shiogama (Miyagi area affected by March 2011 earthquake/tsunami) Japan
#20 2015/10/5~12 Ekoda Tokyo Japan
#21 2016/6/7~12 Setagaya Tokyo Japan
#22 2016/9/8~23 Rio de Janeiro Brazil
#23 2017/6/28 Shiogama (Miyagi area affected by March 2011 earthquake/tsunami) Japan
#24 2017/7/1~9 Shiogama (Miyagi area affected by March 2011 earthquake/tsunami) Japan
#25 2017/9/17 Sendai Miyagi Japan
#26 2017/10/28 Setagaya Japan
#27 2017/11/7~10 Takadanobaba Tokyo Japan
#28 2017/11/19~23 Prague Czech Republic
#29 2018/5/31~6/21 Opava Czech Republic
#30 2018/9/16 Sendai Miyagi Japan
#31 2018/10/19~25 Torino Italy
#32 2018/11/5 Shiogama (Miyagi area affected by March 2011 earthquake/tsunami) Japan
#33 2018/11/23~12/9 Hanoi Vietnam
#34 2019/2/14~17 Ho chi mihn Vietnam
#35 2019/4/22~25 Paris France
#36 2019/4/27~5/8 Paris France
#37 2019/5/14~23 Prague Czech Republic
The number of people who have attended a Maris event surpassed 10,000 with the October 21, 2018 event in Turin.

Advancing world peace through diversity

Using the power of art to sow the seeds of love and peace, the Maris Method is the world’s first technique for creating paintings accessible to everyone, including the blind. To date, participants in the Maris National Flag Project have expressed their hope for the happiness of 1.5 million around the globe.

Hanoi is the first stop on the project’s Asian tour. Vietnam—having surmounted the pain of many years of war to make a stunning recovery, and filled with a strong interest in art—is an excellent place to convey the project’s message of love and peace across Asia. Following the second stop in Ho Chi Minh City, the tour will visit neighboring Southeast Asian countries.

Maris, now in the spotlight in Europe, is much more than just a method of painting. It is the first in the world to make paintings accessible to everyone, whether sighted or blind. And, it is a high-level initiative to encourage people to think about our world, especially the importance of compassion and ensuring a bright future for everyone. Why? Because the defining theme of this conceptual art is “Love & Peace.”

Participants in the upcoming events will use Maris to craft sand paintings of national flags. As they do so, they will hope for the happiness of all the people of that country, with each sand grain symbolizing one person. This Eastern way of thinking will resonate with the people of Asia, even those who normally do not have contact with contemporary art.

This Japan-born project is an example of how Japanese outreach to the rest of Asia is not limited to economic partnering. It seeks to increase awareness of the needs of people with disability and foster a stronger sense of international community. Vibrant, rapidly rising Vietnam is the perfect place to launch this endeavor.

Educate: Program for volunteer development

Offering diversity education to university students in Hanoi

During the exhibition period (Nov.23–30), project artist Liku Maria Takahashi will personally lead hands-on workshops to train university students in how to serve as Maris exhibition volunteers. Limited to five students each, the 3-hour sessions will teach the participants how to explain Maris art’s aims and technique to visitors.

The overarching goal of the workshops is to reach out to youths—tomorrow’s leaders—to remind them of the importance of compassion and encourage them to keep alive Vietnam’s legacy of mutual support for everyone in the community. Through lectures and hands-on experiences grounded in a global perspective, the workshops will lead highly educated and highly inspired university students through the basics of awareness-raising activities aimed at fostering deeper understanding of the need for diversity in the communities of Vietnam.
2013.6.1-7.23
Maris National Flag Project
in Yokohama
BankART Studio NYK

2013.8.1-11
Maris National Flag Project
in Siogama
Miyagi area affected by March 2011 earthquake/tsunami
2013.8.5-10
Maris National Flag Project
in Ginza

2013.8.10-18
Maris National Flag Project
in Sakai
Big-i
International Communication Center for Persons with Disabilities
2013.8.24-29
Maris National Flag Project
in Toyama

2013.12.6-7
Maris National Flag Project
in Sakai
Sakai Shiritu Kenkou Fukushi Plaza
2013.12.20
Maris National Flag Project in Gifu

2014.7.6-21
Maris National Flag Project in Shiogama
Miyagi area affected by March 2011 earthquake/tsunami
2014.7.23
Maris National Flag Project
in Tsukuba University of Technology
Special lecture

2014.11.22-24
Maris National Flag Project
in Yoyogi
Hosted Maris exhibition "A Brand-new World Day"
in conjunction with IBSA
Blind Football World Championships 2014 (Tokyo).
Dear Liku,

You are doing a wonderful job. Keep up the good work for the awareness of the fact that there are Blind people in the world who need our help.

Ulrich Pfisterer
Chairman Blind Football
Tokyo 24 Nov 2014
#16 2014
2014.11.29
Maris National Flag Project in International Association For The Visually Impaired

#17 2015
2015.3.30
Maris National Flag Project in Toyama
2015.4.1-6.29
Maris National Flag Project
in Yokohama
BankART Studio NYK

2015.9.19-27
Maris National Flag Project
in Shiogama
SHIOGAMA SUGIMURA JUN MUSEUM OF ART
Miyagi area affected by March 2011 earthquake/tsunami
2015

2015.10.5-12
Maris National Flag Project in Tokyo
TURNER GALLERY

2016

2016.6.7-12
Maris National Flag Project in Tokyo
SETAGAYA ART MUSEUM
2016.9.8-23
Maris National Flag Project
in Rio de Janeiro Instituto Benjamin Constant
Held Maris exhibition in Rio de Janeiro
during the 2016 Paralympics
Rio de Janeiro’s Instituto Benjamin Constant, the largest school for the blind in South America, was the site of a Maris exhibition in the summer of 2016, just as the city was hosting the Paralympics. Held in the school’s gallery, the exhibition attracted a wall-to-wall crowd to its opening party, and was viewed by some 2,500 visitors during its course. The state-run TV Brasil covered the first day of the show, which was also the first day of the Paralympics. That evening, the broadcaster presented scenes of the exhibition, along with their coverage of the Games’ opening ceremony. Due to the heavy turnout, the exhibition was extended another week.

One of the more memorable aspects of the event was that five of the school’s students visited every day—bringing along friends, family, and classmates each time. Among them was a first-year high school student who said that her favorite exhibit was *The Declaration of Maris* (2016), whose canvas was covered with a huge poppy. “I love this painting the most! I mean, it’s this bright red flower!” the completely blind girl explained matter-of-factly (photo 1). This particular work is a 110-centimeter square, so it takes a lot of fingerwork to explore each grain of sand. It must have been a Herculean task for her to spend hour upon hour tracing the grains and forming a detailed mental picture of the whole. Yet, amazingly she came to the gallery every day of the three-week show and continued her fingertip journey through *The Declaration of Maris*. Her thirst for knowledge seemed unquenchable. Someday, she just might become Brazil’s own Helen Keller.

Of course, there were students who didn’t seem very keen on paintings in general, but even for them the easily relatable depictions of national flags were a hit. Many were captivated by certain elements of those paintings: the Lebanon cedar of that country’s flag, Switzerland’s white cross, Japan’s rising sun, and so on. And, the flags served as natural teaching opportunities—standing before different paintings, a social studies teacher and a geography teacher spontaneously began giving lessons in their subjects. Even a new flag painting still being worked on fascinated the children. Many of them caressed its surface and voiced their hope for it to be completed soon, saying things like “I can’t wait until it’s finished. I want to see what the whole flag looks like!”
Two Maris art classes were scheduled for the project in Brazil, but three more were added on site due to their immense popularity. Each gathering consisted of two kinds of activities: having the entire group work together on a flag painting in progress, and having each participant create their own special painting on a postcard-sized canvas. The school’s regular art class teaches pottery to adults, so many participants had experience in working with other art forms. Perhaps because of this, some had fun adding lace ribbons, cardboard, and other materials to their paintings.

One of Liku Maria’s indelible memories of the Maris workshops was that of a participant who appeared to be in his mid-30s. The man was apparently a manual laborer, as he was dressed in work clothes. The class marked his first time to take an art lesson at the school, and he seemed to have trouble applying the sand to the flag painting. The three teachers in attendance were unfamiliar with him, but they noticed how he sat with a blank expression, hardly placing any sand on the canvas. One approached him and suggested, “This is an art class, so even if you don’t understand everything, think hard about what to do and try to apply sand in your own way.” Still, something seemed odd about his behavior. It was when Liku Maria tried to guide his hands that the problem became clear. The skin of his fingers was cracked from years of labor, and the crevices had become impregnated with sand and the acrylic paint used as an adhesive base on the canvas. Yet, he didn’t say a word, just sitting there and enduring the discomfort. Liku Maria dabbed his affected fingers with a steroid ointment she had brought from Japan, and then wrapped them in plastic wrap from the cafeteria.

With his fingers covered, he spent the remainder of the lesson just listening. When a teacher asked him if he wanted to leave early, he responded, “I don’t want to leave! As soon as my fingers get better I want to join everyone in making the flag!” The following week, he returned to the classroom with a smile. Just this experience in itself meant that he was participating in the art class. And, it was a lesson that unequivocally tells us there are visually impaired people who, regardless of their social class or level of education, strongly desire to take art lessons, appreciate paintings, and make their own creations.
This exhibition was directed by Maria da Glória de Souza Almeida, a completely blind professor at Instituto Benjamin Constant and one of South America’s leading experts on education for the blind.

Speaking in an interview afterwards, she faced the camera and said, “Visually impaired people need more than just musical performance as their medium for experiencing art. They also need to experience art appreciation in the form of sculpture and painting. Brazil’s education ministry says that schools for the blind don’t need art classes, but we want to have the pleasure of making paintings and working with different colors and shapes. As humans, we all have the right to enjoy art. The same can be said at all schools for the blind around the world. This is something we want everyone to understand.” As the largest school for the blind in South America, Instituto Benjamin Constant is one of the continent’s leaders in education for the blind.

Gloria continued, “We have always strived to foster awareness of the darkness enshrouding Brazil. In a society where many struggle each day to feed themselves, the rights of people with visual impairments and their hardships in employment still remain largely unaddressed. During the Paralympics, the activities of people with disabilities were covered every day by diverse media outlets, but once the torch was extinguished, TV stations went back to just showing able-bodied people. I want to ask the media to rethink how the Paralympics can reshape our society.”

The Maris art projects at Instituto Benjamin Constant and the world’s largest school for the blind, Perkins, displayed paintings that the sighted and the totally blind could enjoy together. This art opened the door for visually impaired people in the 21st century to experience the world of painting. In the years ahead, Liku Maria will continue to run the Maris Art Project to bring the pleasure of paintings to children at schools for the blind around the globe.
2017.6.28
Maris National Flag Project
in Shiogama
Shiogama First Elementary School The 1st Special lecture
Miyagi area affected by March 2011 earthquake/tsunami

2017.7.1-9
Maris National Flag Project
in Shiogama
SHIOGAMA SUGIMURA JUN MUSEUM OF ART
Miyagi area affected by March 2011 earthquake/tsunami
-Maris Art Project in Shiogama, Miyagi
-Creating a Friendlier World with Art
-Disaster Recovery Project

LOVE&PEACE
FROM SHIOGAMA TO RIO
AND THE WORLD

2013 #7 Shiogama
2014 #13 Shiogama
2015 #20 Shogama
2016 #24 Rio
2017 #25.26 Shogama
2018 #34 Shiogama

→ The World →
2017.9.17
Maris National Flag Project in Sendai
AFRICA seminar & culture The 1st

2017.10.28
Maris National Flag Project in Tokyo
2017.11.7-10
Maris National Flag Project in Tokyo
World Blind Union Officers and Committee Meetings

2017.11.19-23
Maris National Flag Project in Prague / Czech Republic
Prague Congress Centre
The 42nd Japanweek in Prague
祝のべ1万人！参加者動員数突破！

2018年10月19-25日
Maris National Flag Project in Torino / Italy
Museo d’Arte Orientale
The 43rd Japanweek in Torino

2018年11月5日
Maris National Flag Project in Shiogama
Shiogama First Elementary School
The 2nd Special lecture
Miyagi area affected by March 2011 earthquake/tsunami
2018.11.23-12.9
Maris National Flag Project
in Hanoi / Vietnam

2019.2.14-17
Maris National Flag Project
in Ho chi mihn / Vietnam
Ho chi mihn Fine Arts Museum
2019.4.22-25
Maris National Flag Project
in Paris / France
AAA Paris

2019.4.27-5.8
Maris National Flag Project
in Paris / France
PARIS INTERNATIONAL CONCOURS LÉPINE
International invention competition
118 Concurs Lepine Lepine Paris 2019

In addition to the silver medal, Liku Maria Takahashi (Satoko Takahashi) received a special award gold cup.
“Without limit”
This is a core value of the Perkins School for the Blind, the world’s largest school for the blind and the alma mater of Helen Keller. In 2010, the year after she invented the Maris Method, Liku Maria Takahashi visited Perkins to give a special lecture on her technique. The junior high principal at the time had decided to let the children at the school judge whether Maris art had value for blind people. Some 17 junior high school students interested in paintings were invited to the lecture and given the opportunity to experience three Maris works. They slowly examined the paintings one by one, with each spending about five minutes per work, while their peers politely awaited their turns in three lines. As soon as the first three children began exploring the paintings with their fingertips, their faces lit up with joy. “I can see it! This is a painting of a railroad. Did you come from Japan on a train, Maria?” said a student checking out Rail way (2010; currently part of the Perkins Museum’s collection and on permanent exhibit). Another student proclaimed, “This peppermint-smelling flower is a peppermint-colored flower, isn’t it? I like this painting of flowers the most of the three, because there are so many flowers in it!”

After the students finished enjoying the art, they gleefully asked a barrage of questions, so many that the junior high principal, two art teachers, and Liku Maria’s interpreter had to step in and help explain the paintings. Before anyone realized it, the lecture ran past its allotted time of one hour, as students continued to ask about the paintings and the colors used. Liku Maria received many comments, including: “Thank you, Maria. I’ve gained a new experience.” “I had thought I’d never be able to experience paintings.” “I hope you will keep painting many artworks and show them to us.”

The children’s excitement over the paintings profoundly resonated with Liku Maria, becoming a wellspring for her artistic activities in the ensuing years.
Liku Maria Takahashi
Painter, sculptor, designer, art theorist, educator, martial artist
Signature works include the Maris Art Project
President, The Japan Diversity Art Society

1993 Graduated from Tokyo Zokei University, with a major in Sculpture.
        Studied under the supervision of Churyo Sato.
2011 Studied at the Art Students League of New York, with a major in Painting,
        under the supervision of Charles B. Hinman (NY, USA).
2010 Invented Maris, the world’s first painting that everyone can see.
        Started the Maris Art Project and began producing works and exhibitions
        Published the "Maris World Standard Table,"
        Held a special lecture at Perkins School for the Blind (Boston, USA).
2011 Maris Art Project in NY: Exhibition at the front space of seven museums.
        Participated in the Times Warner art program "NonVision – creative art and
culture tv" in NY.
2012 Started the "Maris National Flag Project."
2014 Revised the "Maris World Standard Table."
        Hosted Maris exhibition "A Brand-new World Day" in conjunction with IBSA
        Blind Football World Championships 2014 (Tokyo).
2016 Held Maris exhibition in Rio during the 2016 Paralympics.
2017 Held Maris exhibition at the World Blind Union Officers and Committee
        Meetings (Tokyo).
        Participated in 42nd Japan Week in Prague in 2017.
2018 Held Maris traveling exhibition in four countries:
        Opava (Czech), Torino (Italy), Hanoi (Vietnam),
        Shigoma (Miyagi, area affected by March 2011 earthquake/tsunami)
Upcoming 2019 Paris (France) Prague (Czech), Stockholm (Sweden), Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam)

To whom it may concern.
This letter is to highly recommend Liku M. Takahashi with her Maris,
a new Art technique.

Charles B. Hinman
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In Rio de Janeiro 2016
https://youtu.be/xf4SSS8Fbx8

Maris Nationalflag project in the tsunami area after 3.11
https://youtu.be/qfapPsnAMvk