

But that's a good thing. Squares of tan cigar paper and pieces with metallic sheen, cuts from the inside of security envelopes and sparkling floral patterns -- some glossy and others textured -- are stacked in neat piles. They come from as far away as Taiwan, Japan, Italy and the United Kingdom, and as near as the local Staples, and sit on Louise Yale's dining room table in Redwood Valley.

Yale, a retired woman who volunteers at the Grace Hudson Museum and Sun House, uses the varied paper products to create origami designs, and in recent years has put her craft to use making trophies for winners in the annual ukiaHaiku Festival. Yale said the idea came from Sherri Smith-Ferri, a member of the organizing committee for the competition and festival and director of the museum, which also sponsors the festival. Like haiku, short poems traditionally about nature, origami is said to have its origin in Japan -- origami is a Japanese word translated to mean to fold paper' -- and was so picked by Smith-Ferri for the haiku reward.

However, Yale, who grew up in Berkeley at a time when many Japanese-Americans were returning to the area from internment camps, said the true history of origami is a controversial topic. "As cultures evolved and developed, or realized that paper existed, people started playing with it. I think it evolved in every culture," she said. Today, there are origami associations in countries around the world. The inspiration for this year's ukiaHaiku Festival trophies, which will be awarded to the first place winner in each of nine categories at the festival in April, came from a design by Yuval Atlas, a 16-year-old boy from Israel. Yale's introduction to the artform, however, did come from young Japanese-American classmates with the simple construction of four-pronged fortune-tellers, or as she called them, "cootie catchers."

Later, at age 15, she travelled to Japan for a month, and said that is where her interest in the origami and Japan's culture was solidified. But architecture and engineering, as well as a regard for color, design and texture, keep her creating the intricate shapes now. "About 15 or 20 years ago, I became aware that there was a whole nother area besides frogs and birds," she said of the traditional Japanese shapes. Yale's primary interest is in modular origami design, which forms small structures by locking together multiple origami units in the folding process. The trophies this year are flat, disklike objects made each from eight pieces of paper. The largest design she's created used 90 pieces of Japanese paper and tissue paper and took a few hours to complete. While origami, for Yale, is mostly a hobby done in spare time, she is inspired by the work of others who have made a living off the art. Her favorite origami author, despite not reading Japanese, is Japanese mathematician Tomoko Fuse.

"The language of origami is pretty universal," Yale said of the diagrams with dashed and dotted lines used in the book to demonstrate how to fold the paper. She's looking forward to the release of a book by Meenakshi Mukerji, a woman who was born and raised in India, but now lives in California, and mentioned another Californian, Bay Area physicist Robert J. Lang, who puts origami to practical use. Lang, she said, has done consulting work for space projects and the automobile industry, particularly, applying folding techniques to air-bag design. But Yale's work is suited to the haiku. "Haikus are very brief and short, and I wouldn't want to do an elaborate design for the trophies. These are direct, simple-type designs," Yale said. "I think it works."

Smith-Ferri said the trophies are well-received by the winners of the haiku competition and noted that Yale will be on hand to demonstrate the art of origami at the festival, which is being held April 29 from 2 to 4 p.m. in the Ukiah Valley Conference Center. According to Ukiah Poet Laureate David Smith-Ferri, Sherrie's husband, judging of the approximate 1,000 entries in the competition this year, including one from Romania and another from New Zealand, began Monday. For more information about the ukiaHaiku festival, visit www.ukiahaiku.org.

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