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HAJI OH

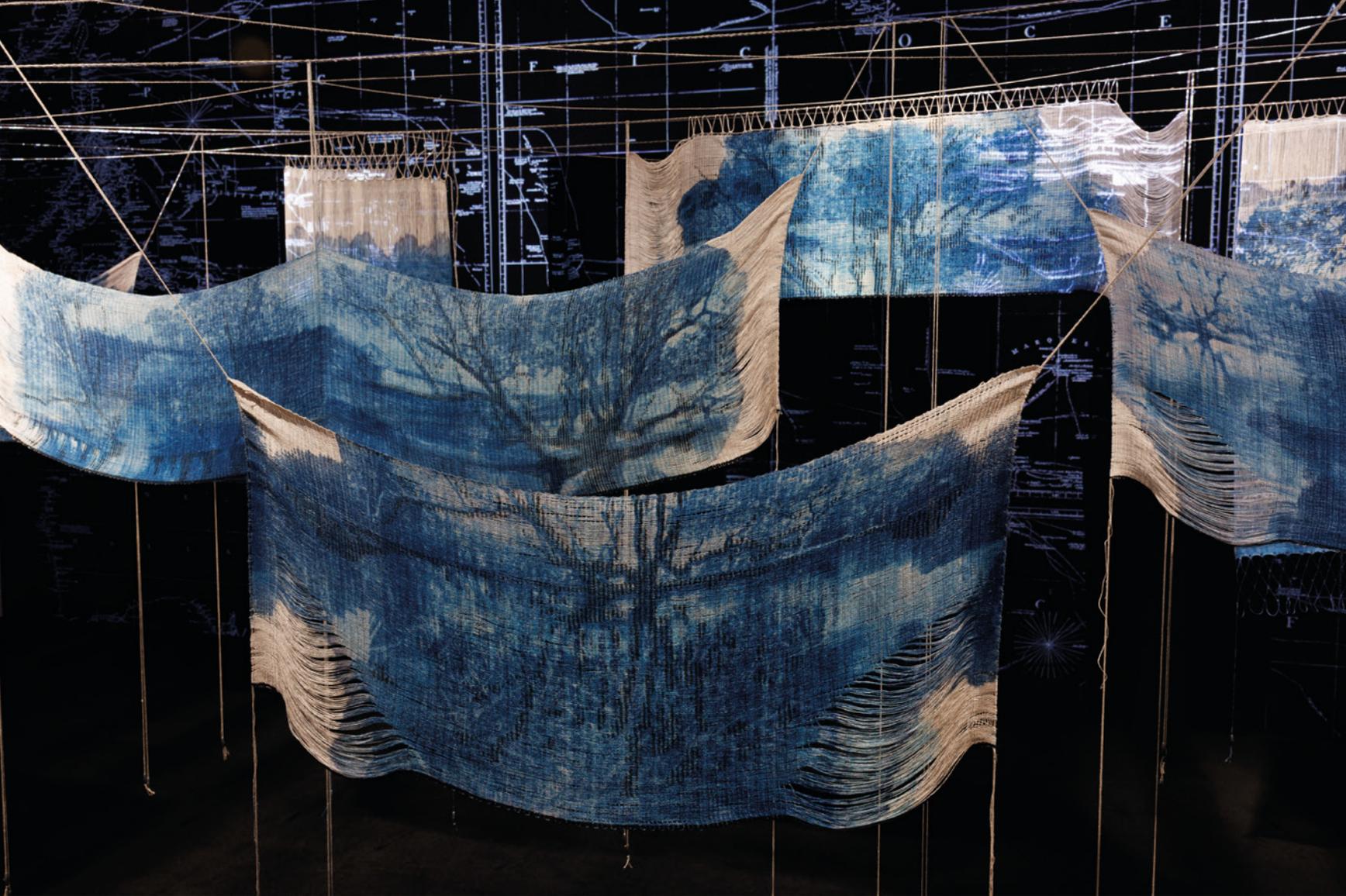
Haji Oh's textile practice carries across borders the unspoken histories of her grandmother and countless others.

WORDS | CAMILLA WAGSTAFF

As a third-generation Zainichi Korean artist who grew up in Japan and now works in Australia, **Haji Oh** understands how histories move with people – often quietly, beneath the surface.

Her textile-based practice is grounded in what she describes as “the inheritance of unspoken memories,” a theme shaped by her grandmother’s migration from Jeju Island, Korea, to Japan during the Japanese government’s colonial period. “When she passed away, I wondered whether her experiences and memories would disappear along with her body,” Oh says. “She had never spoken about what she had been through. I regard her memories as silent memories and make them the theme of my work.”

Through weaving, sewing and unravelling, Oh transforms these quiet histories into forms that can be sensed, if not spoken. “By expressing what I do not know – what I could never have



known – about her memories, I try to affirm the existence of those experiences,” she reflects. “Art allows us to evoke the presence of suppressed or unspoken memories without describing them concretely.”

This line of inquiry reaches a new scale in her forthcoming exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, presented as part of the prestigious Tokyo Contemporary Art Award (TCCA) 2024–26. Alongside TCCA co-recipient **Umeda Tetsuya**, Oh is creating the dialogic presentation, *Wetland*, born from the common threads in the two practices. She brings together *Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 5* of her long-running grandmother island project developed since 2017. *Chapter 5*, premiering in Tokyo, continues her research into the *haeyeo*, the women divers of Jeju.

“The project draws on personal memories and on stories of people who have moved across

“Art allows us to evoke the presence of suppressed or unspoken memories without describing them concretely”

~ *Haji Oh*

LEFT: Haji Oh, *Seabird Habitatscape #1 - Bunda Lagoon and Mother Mountain*, 2024. Linen, cyanotype, warp-faced pick-up patterns, four-selvaged cloth, and projection. PHOTO: DARIO LASAGNI. COURTESY: THE ARTIST, ALISON BRADLEY PROJECTS, NEW YORK AND THIS IS NO FANTASY, NARRM/MELBOURNE.
 ABOVE: Installation view, Haji Oh, *Seabird Habitatscape #2, Nauru, Banaba and Viti Levu*, Hong Kong 2024. COURTESY: THE ARTIST, AND THIS IS NO FANTASY, NARRM/MELBOURNE.

the Pacific – Australia, Korea, Japan, the Torres Strait, Nauru and beyond,” she explains. “Rather than focusing on histories defined by nation-states, the work centres on individual histories. By engaging with the past in this intimate way, I hope we can find threads of connection that extend into the future.”

Oh’s practice has gained significant curatorial attention in the past year, with recent presentations at Paris Photo (2024); Asia Pacific Triennial APT 11 (2024); *Un/Weaving* at Alison Bradley Projects, New York (2023); and *KANTEN: The Limits of History* at apexart, New York (2023). In 2025–26 she exhibits in *And Still I Rise* at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, where her workshop-based doily cyanotypes activate personal memory through shared making. A forthcoming exhibition at Melbourne’s *This Is No Fantasy* in mid-2026 will show work never before seen in Australia.