

Profile ● Born in 1965. Eldest son of the fifth-generation owner of Kyoshindo Inazaki Hyoguten. Chairman of the Hamacho Shopping District Association.

2-48-7 Nihonbashi-Hamacho, Chuo-ku, Tokyo

Hyogushi (Scroll mounting)

Tomonobu Inazaki

Brothers take the baton from their father
The eldest paves the way

It is an attention to detail that builds trust

Kyoshindo Inazaki Hyoguten was founded in 1837. Fifth-generation owner Munehika Inazaki has passed the baton to his two sons, Tomonobu and Masahito. Both are artisans, but Tomonobu takes the lead in managing the business and participating in neighborhood associations and other community endeavors. "I'm the eldest son, like my father," he explains, "so I naturally wanted to run the family business. I grew up watching my father and grandfather at their work, and they let me do simple tasks like hammering and cutting wood."

However, he says, "I did want to challenge myself with something that my father hadn't done, and the changing trends meant that demand was shrinking for *shoji* and paper doors... I decided to study architecture and broaden the scope of

our work."

He studied and worked in architecture, gaining broad experience in design. After qualifying as an architect, he returned to the family business. His qualifications enabled them to work on walls, floors, and interiors more generally, in addition to making paper doors.

Recently, he has been able to shift back to his original work as a mounter. "These days, more and more people work with wallpaper, and meanwhile my brother and I are getting older and less mobile. I feel that we can focus on the specialized work that only our company can do," he says.

The skills he learned in his youth have remained with him. When he first joined the family business, he was trained in the basics by a craftsman who had been his grandfather's apprentice. "He was very old-fashioned

and strict, especially about blades," Tomonobu recalls. "They're key to carving and to cutting cloth and paper... And if the whetstone isn't absolutely flat, you won't get a straight blade. I'd lay gravel on the cover of a roadside gutter and flatten the whetstone on it. But when I showed it to him, he sent me back time after time, saying I hadn't yet got it flat. It might be a matter of millimeters, but he kept me at it again and again."

Customers entrust the shop with their hanging scrolls, so mistakes are not permissible. "When I was a child, if a friend was over and accidentally stepped on one of my tools, my father or grandfather would yell at me: 'What are you doing?!' I could see their concentration. And now, I tell my craftsmen to 'pay attention to the minutest details.' To peel masking tape off a floor,



Adding border trim to the embroidered mounting paper

say, you have to do it slowly and carefully or you'll damage the paint. Now that I'm the teacher, I remember how deliberate my father was."

Tomonobu says that the main job of a scroll mounter is to highlight the artwork. "The smile on the customer's face when they see their piece restored – I stay at this work because I want to see that moment."

Creating mountings that are worthy of the artwork



Serious when at work, Tomonobu smiles gently when talking about local festivals and events.

The shop displays mounting techniques. It also participates in Chuo-ku's Machikado Exhibition Hall, a resource of tools and other items related to the district's rich culture.

