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TEACHING TUESDAY

TSUMAMI ZAIKU

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Tsumami zaiku (つまみ細工) is a traditional craft that has been practiced since the late Edo period and is an essential part of kimono, especially the ornamental hairpin known as a kanzashi. Typically made by hand, tsumami zaiku features small, square pieces of cloth that is pinched and folded with tweezers into beautiful, intricate designs.

The earliest mention of tsumami zaiku began in the early 1800s, when Japanese women began to wear kanzashi hairpins featuring small chrysanthemums and cranes made from colourful pieces of cloth. Typically worn by maiko, tsumami zaiku eventually became seasonal items that were exchanged every month to match the monthly symbols and kimono color.

Made using silk, an artisan uses tweezers to fold the fabric to resemble everything from flower petals to bird feathers. There are two major techniques: maru-tsumami (round pinching), to create gentle rounded edges, and ken-tsumami (sword pinching), which makes sharp edges. Each square will form one petal or feather, and can contain anywhere between five and 75 or more pieces of fabric.