

AQC0336

Nanopublication — Ideamorphic Translation of Folklore Through Material

by Arnaud Quercy · Noppera - bo - The Mujina of the Akasaka Road · 2021



METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FIRST PERSON PRACTICE

DERIVED IDEAMORPHIC TRANSLITERATION HIGH

Ideamorphic Translation of Folklore Through Material

I translate the noppera [1]-bō myth—a narrative concept of faceless void—through systematic dimensional transformations: from Lafcadio Hearn [4]’s written account to digital 3D modeling to physical wood PLA sculpture. The essential invariant (the uncanny absence where a face should be) persists across each transliteration while the material substrate transforms completely.

CONTEXT

The noppera-bō is a faceless yōkai from Japanese folklore, famously documented in Lafcadio Hearn’s 1904 story "Mujina," where a traveler encounters a woman on the Akasaka Road in Tokyo who reveals she has no face. This narrative captures a particular kind of supernatural terror: the absence where features should be, the void that looks back.

My sculptural practice engages this myth as an **idea-wave** that travels across multiple substrates. The translation sequence moves through distinct material phases: oral folklore tradition → written literary account (Hearn) → digital 3D model (Blender) → physical

printed object (wood PLA) → hand-finished sculpture (polishing, patina application). At each transliteration, the substrate changes entirely, yet the core concept—faceless encounter, the uncanny void—persists as structural invariant.

This work exemplifies ideamorphism as defined in my theoretical framework [2]: the systematic transliteration of ideas across sensory and conceptual domains while preserving measurable structural elements. The noppera-bō’s defining characteristic (absence of face) remains legible through each transformation, even as the materiality shifts from narrative language to geometric vertices to tangible wood-composite form.

The digital modeling phase involved creating simplified geometric volumes: an ovoid head with no facial features, a torso reduced to essential form, arms extended in a gesture that echoes traditional yōkai depictions. The 3D printing process using Geeetech Wood PLA filament then materialized these digital coordinates into physical space, followed by hand-finishing techniques (polishing, wood patina, wax) that bridge contemporary fabrication with traditional craft approaches.

REFERENCES

- [1] Arnaud Quercy (2021). Noppera - bo - The Mujina of the Akasaka Road — Catalogue raisonné. <https://arnaudquercy.art/en/catalogue-raisonne/AQC0336.html>
<https://arnaudquercy.art/fr/catalogue-raisonne/AQC0336.html>
- [2] Quercy, Arnaud. "Ideamorphism: A Framework for Enacting Diffraction." Multimodal Institute, Version 3.0, January 2025. [Internal document reference]
- [3] Artwork documentation: AQC0336, "Noppera-bo - The Mujina of the Akasaka Road," 2021. Wood PLA on metal, 20.5×12.0×12.0cm. Collection: Spells and Magic. Private collection, Schmitten, Germany.
- [4] Hearn, Lafcadio. "Mujina." In **Kwaidan: Stories and Studies of Strange Things**. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1904.

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