

Verdant Variations a modular origami by Michael DeShazo.

Michael has been fascinated by origami's intricate aesthetic since the age of 12 and over the years has come to appreciate its use as an academic tool for math and its practical application in engineering and design. Origami dates to approximately 1600 AD Japan. Many do not know that another form of paper art was also recorded around the same period. Kusudama [pronunciation: koo • soo • dah • mah] is a model made of many pieces (usually origami flowers) which are glued or sewn together to form a large spherical shape.

Beginning in the late 1960s, inspired by kusudama, origamists began to experiment and a new form of paper folding art was born, dubbed "modular origami". Unlike its parent, modular origami does not use glue or string to maintain its shape. Rather overlapping fold patterns result in "modules" having pockets (insertion points) and tabs (connecting points) allowing a mechanical friction bond to be generated which holds the individual "units" together to form larger pieces.

"Verdant Variations" is an example of one of the first modular units - a "sonobe [pronunciation: soh • noh • bee] unit". Sonobe units are combined in various counts to form larger and larger shapes.

"Verdant Variations" is composed of 5 octahedrons (12 units each) and 5 cubes (6 units each) for a total of 90 individually folded units.

While the original sonobe unit has no extraneous folds or flair, other origami artists discovered one could ADD artistic flair to the folding process resulting in myriad variations on the original sonobe unit. The variations included in this piece are: the original sonobe, the lined sonobe, the barbed sonobe, the snow-capped sonobe and the reverse fold snow-capped sonobe.