

TETSUYA NAGAATA

Elevator To Heaven

To reach the Andaz Tokyo's 51st lobby floor, a fast ride in one of its elevators designed by architect Tony Chi is an ascent to poesy, contemporary beauty and a fantastical world with philosophical undertones. These elevators have their walls encrypted with a collection of exquisite works, symbolic figures of auspicious animals, sea breams, carps, plants, flowers and trees motifs that express "feelings aggregated across time and space", says his author, the *washi* paper artist Tetsuya Nagata.

Exuding vitality, spirit, soul and wisdom, the art form he has pioneered, called *wagashi zanmai* ("memory paper"), combines two traditional art forms of *washi* - the traditional handmade paper - and *wagashi*, the ancient art of making ornate sweets. Tetsuya Nagata uses especially the so-called *Nishinouchi washi* - designated as an intangible cultural asset - made from mulberry bark, which has a silky, shiny texture.

Instead of filling the carved wooden *wagashi* moulds with sugar, Tetsuya Nagata places handmade *washi* paper inside - 281 of those wooden molds were used to create the pieces at Andaz Tokyo. Due to the softness of *washi* fibers infusing every piece, it gives life to motifs with rich textures and results in three-dimensional carved-concave surface lively characters. In one elevator, the artwork entitled *Where the Mantis Dwells* depicts nature's cycle of life - flowers from all seasons in full bloom. "Below the flowers are swimming carps, and above them are leaping carps." A composition and a polarity between the water and the sky, inspired by an ancient myth.

