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Traditional crafts:
The hidden potential of textiles

FROM THE EDITOR

By YOSHIKUNI SHIRAI / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Although the kimono is a traditional form of clothing, for many modern Japanese it has acquired a distant presence. I am a student of the tea ceremony, so I need to wear one about once a year. But, truth be told, the processes of preparing to wear it, putting it on and cleaning it afterward all require a lot of effort, so I often end up just wearing a suit instead. I do own an Oshima *tsumugi* silk kimono

(a type made on the Amami Islands in southern Kagoshima Prefecture) that I inherited from my father, but it has been sitting in a paulownia chest for years.

That Japanese are no longer wearing kimonos is shown in the numbers. Annual sales peaked in 1981 at about ¥1.8 trillion (\$12.5 billion). Since then, they have declined every year, and in 2023 they hit ¥224 billion, one-eighth of their peak level, ac-

ording to the Yano Research Institute publication *Kimono Industry 2024*.

This special issue is about Japan's traditional textiles. With lifestyle changes impacting demand for kimonos, once considered the ultimate in clothing, the industry now finds itself in danger. Will its techniques be preserved for future generations? Let's examine some of the efforts aimed at achieving that.

「きもの」は日本人の伝統的な衣服ですが、現代を生きる日本人にとってそれは、遠い存在になっています。私はお茶を習っていて、茶会や茶会の手伝いの時などごく稀に、1年に1度くらいきものを着ることがあります。でも、着る前の準備から、着付け、着た後の手入れが面倒で、茶会も大抵はスーツで済ませてしまいます。父親から譲りうけた大島紬のきものなども持っていますが、桐の箱の中で、もう年々も眠ったままです。

日本人がきものを着なくなったことは数字にも表れています。売り上げ額を見みると、ピークは1981年（昭和56年）の約1兆8000億円。以降、減少し続け、2023年（令和5年）には2240億円と、約40年間で8分の1にまで落ち込んでいます（矢野経済研究所『きもの産業年鑑』）。今回は日本の伝統的工芸品である織物に関する特集です。その技術を次世代にいかにか継承していくのか？「織物」を巡る数々の挑戦を見てみたいと思います。



Feature JAPANESE TEXTILES

INTERVIEW

Creating the future of traditional Japanese textiles

By TAEKO TERAOKA

MASATAKA HOSOO

Hosoo was born in 1978 in Kyoto. He is the 12th-generation president of the Nishijin textile company Hosoo. He is also a director's fellow at MIT Media Lab, a representative director of the Kyoto-based craft group Go On, and external technical adviser to Pola Orbis Holdings. After a career in music, he worked for a major jewelry manufacturer before going to Florence to study. He joined Hosoo in 2008, where he has been developing textiles for the international market using Nishijin brocade techniques and collaborating with artists such as David Lynch. He is the author of "Aiming for World Firsts with a Japanese Aesthetic Sense" (Diamond Inc.).



PHOTO: KOUTARO WASHIZAKI

HOSOO

Hosoo was founded in 1688 in the Nishijin area of Kyoto as a producer of Nishijin textiles for the imperial court, shoguns, shrines, temples and more. Since 1923, the company has also been engaged in the wholesale of obis and kimonos from around Japan. In 2019, the Hosoo Flagship Store opened in Kyoto's Karasuma-Oike area. In 2020, Masataka Hosoo became president. In 2023, Hosoo Tokyo opened in Yaesu Midtown, adjacent to Tokyo Station. <https://www.hosoo.co.jp>



PHOTO: KOUTARO WASHIZAKI

Summary

京都・西陣織の技が伝統工芸「織物」を変える。

この40年間できもの市場が大幅に縮小するなか、西陣織の企業〈細尾〉は世界的な高級ブランドとのコラボレーションなど、きもの以外の“出口”を見出している。躍進のキーマンは細尾真孝だろう。

2008年〈細尾〉に入社した細尾は海外での販路を模索するなか、NYの展示で帯を見た建築家、ピーター・マ

リノから依頼を受ける。彼が求めてきたのは和柄の織物ではなく、和紙に金銀の箔を接着して作る箔糸を織物にするという西陣独自の技術で、抽象的な柄を織り出すことだった。この注文を受けるために新しく150cm幅の織機を開発。以降、〈細尾〉の海外展開は一気に飛躍し、現在、ハイブランドの店舗やホテルの内装に同社の西陣

織が使用されるまでになった。

また、インテリアやファッションの自社ブランドも発表し、ライフスタイルそのものを提案。日本の伝統工芸を軸にもつ世界的トップブランドを目指す。形にとらわれず、美と技にこだわれれば、伝統工芸は生き続ける。細尾の取り組みにはそんなメッセージが込められている。



日本語全文はこちら

Nishijin brocade, produced in Kyoto's Nishijin area, is a high-end silk textile with a history dating back around 1,200 years. It is mainly used for obi sashes, but Japan's domestic kimono market has declined significantly since the postwar popularization of Western-style clothing, falling over the past 40 years from ¥1.8 trillion to ¥224 billion (\$12.5 billion to \$1.5 billion), according to *Kimono Industry 2024*, published by the Yano Research Institute.

As a result, the market for Nishijin textiles is now just one-tenth of its past size. One Nishijin textile company, Hosoo, founded in Kyoto in 1688, has been attracting attention by finding applications for its fabrics outside of kimonos, even doing collaborations with international luxury brands. The backstory of this impressive reinvention was first published in 2018 as a case study titled "Innovating Tradition at Hosoo" by Harvard Business Publishing (a wholly owned subsidiary of Harvard University). The key figure in that breakthrough was Masataka Hosoo, the 12th-generation president of the company.

In 2006 the company, then headed by his father, was looking to broaden its sales channels overseas. It exhibited a sofa made using Nishijin brocade at Maison & Objet, an interior and design exhibition in Paris that attracts 100,000 visitors from around the world, but received no orders.



Launched in September, this bag was the result of Hosoo's third collaboration with the Italian luxury brand Gucci. Using Hosoo's textile technique, motifs such as flowers and dragonflies are delicately reproduced with advanced craftsmanship. A special foil for Nishijin brocade is woven into the multilayered fabric to create an elegant finish that changes depending on the angle.

COURTESY: GUCCI

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The following year, it launched a cushion, which received some orders but not enough to be called a success.

Despite these difficulties, the younger Hosoo, who had learned the basics of business during time spent in the music industry and at a jewelry manufacturer, still believed Nishijin textiles had international potential. He joined Hosoo in 2008 and, as the person in charge of overseas business, exhibited at the Salone del Mobile furniture fair in Milan and other large-scale trade fairs around the world. In the midst of all this, two obis he exhibited in the "Kansei: Japan Design Exhibition," which toured to New York in 2009 after showing in Paris that February, caught the eye of the well-known architect Peter Marino.

"We were told they wanted to use Nishijin brocade in the interiors of every Dior store in the world. But they didn't want a Japanese-style pattern. They wanted an abstract pattern made using the traditional Nishijin techniques and materials. I had always thought that to compete overseas we would need to differentiate our products by using Japanese-style patterns, and that we couldn't do that with products like sofas and cushions. But he wanted the Nishijin techniques and materials, and that was an epiphany for me," explained Hosoo.

Nishijin brocade is a yarn-dyed fabric whose history can be traced back to the sixth century, when Chinese and Korean migrants brought sericulture and silk-weaving techniques to what is now Kyoto. As it developed, it came to serve a clientele of emperors, shoguns, shrines and temples. Currently, 12 varieties of Nishijin brocade are designated by law, including semitransparent silks such as *ro gauze*

and lightweight *ra*, as well as double-layered *futsū* weaving. Although India and China have also produced luxurious brocades, Nishijin is the only place in the world that can produce textiles that incorporate gold or silver foil, mother-of-pearl and lacquer, made by attaching them to *washi* paper, cutting it into small pieces and weaving them into the fabric.

"Even if you're using the same gold, a twisted brocade thread will give off a bright reflection. But foil strips give off a surface reflection, so there is an elegance to them. Marino seemed to like that," Hosoo said.

However, there was a problem. Conventional Nishijin looms could only weave fabrics 32 centimeters in width. To meet Marino's request, the company needed to produce 150-cm-wide fabrics, a standard width internationally. Although the company was already losing money on its overseas business, Hosoo was determined to deliver, and after a year of trial and error, he developed a 150-cm loom with the approval of his father, the company president.

Today, the company's Nishijin textiles are used in 100 Dior stores in 100 cities; 60 Chanel stores; Hermes, Cartier and Van Cleef & Arpels stores; and in the interior of some restaurants at the Ritz-Carlton hotel. In addition, while it had long been considered impossible to use Nishijin brocade in car upholstery, Hosoo successfully collaborated with an automotive materials manufacturer to produce a brocade with fire-resistant foil woven into it, which was used in the new Toyota Lexus LS in 2020. With these new products being released, the ratio of the company's nonkimono sales to kimono sales has grown closer, and is now at 4:6. They are aiming for a

50:50 split in the future.

Today, Masataka Hosoo's efforts are diverse. While taking on new challenges, such as collaborations with artists, he also focuses on preserving and passing on traditional kimono and textile culture. While also involved in the wholesaling of obis and kimonos, he has established a research and development center called Hosoo Studies, which conducts fieldwork in areas that make dyed and woven products across Japan, as well as research on ancient dyeing, hemp fabrics, designs, silk-worm farming and more. In addition, the company launched its own collections of fashion and interior design in 2019, broadening its offerings to lifestyle in general. The company's goal is to become a top global brand with traditional Japanese crafts at its core. Hosoo said, "Craft is the desire to create beautiful things." His message is that by maintaining a focus on beauty and technique — and not necessarily in relation to kimonos alone — traditional crafts will live on.

Unprecedented in Nishijin textiles, the 150-centimeter-wide loom developed by Hosoo is aligned with the global standard for decorative fabrics and is credited with making a range of new products possible.



© HOSOO

The interior of Lexus' flagship sedan, the LS, now features upholstery fabric developed especially by Hosoo.



COURTESY: HOSOO



PHOTO: KOUTARO WASHIZAKI

COVER PHOTO

Kyoto's Nishijin brocade has roots dating back some 1,200 years. Now Hosoo, a textile maker founded in 1688, is revolutionizing this long-cherished technique. The cover photo shows a bag from the Hosoo collection made using Nishijin brocade.

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Feature JAPANESE TEXTILES

PROBLEM-SOLVING

Japan's endangered traditional kimono culture

By TAEKO TERAO

The silk fabric *hakata-ori* is created by weaving thick weft threads, which are themselves bundles of thin threads, into numerous warp threads. It was designated as a Traditional Japanese Craft by the Japanese government in 1976.

COURTESY: NISHIMURA ORIMONO

✦ KO ISHIZAKI

Ishizaki was born in 1966 in Tokyo as the second son of Tadashi Ishizaki, a renowned kimono and clothing researcher of the Showa Era. He is a kimono researcher too, in addition to being a producer and marketing director in the kimono industry. Besides product planning for kimono retailers and manufacturers and providing guidance to production areas, he serves on research committees for various government administrations. He also dedicates himself to researching textile history and pattern studies. He is the editor and author of "A Dictionary of Japanese Patterns: The History of Kimono Designs" (Kodansha Academic Library).

PHOTO: KOUTARO WASHIZAKI



Foreign visitors to Japan are often surprised by how few Japanese people wear kimonos. In tourist areas, those seen walking around in kimonos are often foreign or Japanese tourists wearing rented ones.

According to the Yano Research Institute publication *Kimono Industry 2024*, retail sales of kimonos have been declining since their peak of about ¥1.8 trillion (\$12.5 billion) in 1981, dropping to ¥224 billion in 2023. So over about 40 years, the kimono market has shrunk to roughly one-eighth or one-ninth of its peak size — a significant contraction.

Why has this happened? We spoke with kimono researcher Ko Ishizaki about the challenges facing Japan's traditional kimono culture. Ishizaki, whose father was also a kimono researcher, worked as a store manager and buyer for a major kimono chain before becoming independent. He currently works in marketing and as a director in the kimono industry while also conducting academic research.

"Before delving into the main topic," he said, "let me start with the history of Japanese textiles, which were woven as far back as the Jomon Period, over 3,000 years ago. However, the beginning of the textile techniques used in current kimonos dates back to the sixth century when Buddhism, along with textiles and advanced weaving techniques, was introduced from the Korean Peninsula. At that time, Buddhism was not just a religion; it also encompassed cutting-edge technologies including astronomy, medi-

cine and architecture, and textiles were another part of that package. In fact, automotive companies like Toyota and Suzuki, which have driven Japan's postwar economy, originally started as loom manufacturers. So as you can see, the textile industry has been involved throughout history with cutting-edge technology."

Our conversation then moved on to the 16th century.

"By the 16th century, before the Edo Period began, traditional textiles from various parts of Japan, now designated as Important Intangible Cultural Properties, had already emerged. These included *kasuri* (ikat) with roots in Southeast Asian countries like Thailand and Indonesia, and cotton textiles whose seeds and production methods were introduced by shipwrecked Indian vessels,

A scene of *hakata-ori* production. In textile production areas across Japan, efforts are being made to explore using these fabrics in items beyond traditional kimonos and obi sashes.



COURTESY: NISHIMURA ORIMONO

● Summary

日本の伝統文化、「きもの」が直面する課題。

日本の文化的なアイデンティティとも言える「きもの」が岐路に立っている。そのきもの文化が直面する課題について、きもの研究家の石崎功に話を聞いた。「形としては平安時代の十二単や江戸時代の小袖など、時代によってファッションの変化はありますが、基本的には日本人は皆、きものを着ていました」。

だが、明治時代、第二次世界大戦を経て洋装が一般化し、きものは多くの日本人にとって、日常着ではなく、特別な日にしか身につけない装いとなってしまった。「業界が戦後の復興のため、売り上げを確保しようと1枚数十万円以上はする晴れ着としての絹のきもの製造・販売に力を入れるようになったことにも原因があり

ます」。その結果、着物作りを担う職人が減り、消えていく伝統織物も少なくない。このままでは日本を象徴する伝統文化がなくなってしまう。そんな危機感から、石崎は海外への販路拡大や文化交流、若い養蚕農家の応援、プロの着付け師を増やす活動に力を入れている。



日本語全文はこちらから

showcasing a wide variety. Homespun *tsumugi* made from waste cocoons that couldn't be shipped was used for personal clothing, as were cotton and hemp. Silk textiles, initially used for Buddhist decorations and by rulers and wealthy merchants, gradually spread to become formal wear for the middle class. While there were fashion changes in form over time, such as the *jūni-hitoe* of the Heian Period and the *kosode* of the Edo Period, basically all Japanese people wore kimonos."

However, since the end of the Edo Period (1603-1868) with its isolationist policy, through the Meiji Era (1868-1912), when Westernization was considered equivalent to modernization, and following World War II, Western-style clothing became increasingly common over a period of 80 years. Now kimonos are for many Japanese no longer everyday wear, but attire worn only on special occasions like weddings and coming-of-age ceremonies.

"The kimono industry bears some responsibility for this. Many people in my parents' and grandparents' generations enjoyed wearing cotton and wool kimonos as everyday clothes. However, because these were low-priced items, the industry focused on manufacturing and selling silk kimonos for formal occasions, which cost several hundred thousand yen each, to secure sales for their postwar recovery. This led to an image among the Japanese people that kimonos were luxury items. This worked well during economic boom times, but as lifestyles changed and the economy worsened, the Japanese rapidly moved away from kimonos."

Alongside the decline in kimono sales, there has been a decline in the number of kimono craftspeople. With fewer sericulture farmers producing silk, as well as the artisans who handle processes like spinning, dyeing and weaving, many traditional textiles are disappearing. At this

rate, a traditional culture symbolizing Japan may vanish. Driven by this sense of crisis, Ishizaki is taking on new challenges. Since participating in a project that showcased kimonos at New York Fashion Week for the first time in 2016, through Kimono Artisan Kyoto, a group formed by 10 dyeing and weaving brands, he has been involved in projects to promote kimonos abroad through cultural exchanges. He is furthermore working on strategies to ensure the survival of traditional Japanese textiles by expanding their applications, such as using fabrics once primarily used for kimonos to create interior goods, Western-style clothing, bags and other accessories.

In addition to their traditional Japanese accessories, the Kyoto-based brand Sacra, with which Ishizaki is involved in product planning, is producing down jackets woven using Nishijin-ori weaving techniques with recycled yarn from plastic bottles, targeting environmentally conscious Western markets. They are also working on creating yarn from resources such as corncobs and fruit peels. Moreover, Nishimura Orimono, a company in Fukuoka Prefecture that Ishizaki knows well, has seen its traditional *hakata-ori* fabric used in decorations in the Ritz-Carlton hotel in Fukuoka. These efforts are thus gradually showing results.

However, what Ishizaki considers most important is preserving traditional kimono culture and passing it on to future generations. One of his efforts toward that end is supporting young sericulture farmers.

"In the 1920s, there were 2.21 million sericulture farms in Japan. Now there are only 146, and it's said that in five years, due to reasons such as aging, that number will decrease to 69. I believe this is our last chance, so I intend to do everything in my power to prevent the extinction of Japanese sericulture farms and to produce the highest-quality domestic co-



A bag made with Nishijin fabric using yarn recycled from plastic bottles. It is produced by Sacra, a Kyoto-based brand specializing in traditional Japanese accessories.

PHOTO: KOUTARO WASHIZAKI

coons."

Additionally, because the process of putting on a kimono is complex, many Japanese people who do not regularly wear kimonos cannot dress themselves in one. This barrier to casual wear is thought to be another reason for the decline in kimono use. Ishizaki is thus also focusing on efforts to increase the num-

ber of professional kimono dressers.

"Japanese textiles and kimonos are not just a wonderful clothing culture, they are works of art and craft. I want foreigners and, more importantly, Japanese people to appreciate their charm."

Kimono culture, which can be considered part of Japan's identity, is now at a major crossroads.

Nishimura Orimono in Fukuoka Prefecture began trading in silk thread in 1587 and founded a *hakata-ori* weaving business during the Edo Period. At the Ritz-Carlton hotel in Fukuoka, approximately 700 meters of *hakata-ori* fabric produced by Nishimura Textile are used as decorations in lobby lounges and suite rooms. <https://nishimura-orimono.jp/>

COURTESY: NISHIMURA ORIMONO





SHIN TAKAMATSU

Professor emeritus, Kyoto University. Doctor of engineering. Honorary member of the American Institute of Architects. Honorary member of the German Institute of Architects. Member of the Royal Institute of British Architects. In 1997, he became a professor at the Graduate School of Engineering, Kyoto University, where he continues to teach. Major works include the Shoji Ueda Museum of Photography, National Theatre Okinawa and the Tianjin Museum in China. <https://takamatsu.co.jp/>

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IIDA GROUP & OSAKA METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY JOINT EXHIBITION HALL (Architect: Shin Takamatsu)

The concept of the exterior is a “sustainable Mobius strip.” Specially processed Nishijin brocade is used for the exterior to express the eternal wish for happiness and prosperity in life. Inside the building, exhibits are planned on “future housing” and “urban development” that will enable healthy and comfortable living through new technologies and new energy sources to realize a decarbonized society.

Site area: 3,500 square meters / Floors: one basement, two floors / Maximum height: 12.7 meters / Structure: framework-membrane structure with steel frame in parts / Construction: Shimizu Corp. / Nishijin textile production: Taiyo Kogyo Corp. and Hosoo Co. Ltd.



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Feature JAPANESE TEXTILES

EXPO 2025

The expo pavilion with a Nishijin brocade exterior

By TOSHICHIKA IZUMI

It is now just six months until World Expo 2025 opens in Osaka. While construction of the overseas pavilions is behind schedule, the domestic pavilions are making steady progress toward opening day in April.

In addition to the national and local government pavilions, such as the Japan Pavilion and the Kansai Pavilion, 13 pavilions by companies and organizations will be part of the expo.

At the 1970 Osaka Expo, it was the numerous private-sector pavilions that were the stars. Their futuristic and avant-garde

Nishijin brocade, from the Nishijin district of Kyoto, is a high-end fabric with a history of around 1,200 years.



© IIDA GROUP HOLDINGS

architecture — like the Toshiba IHI Pavilion and Takara Beautilion Pavilion by then-promising young architect Kisho Kurokawa, and the Textiles Pavilion by artist Tadanori Yokoo — must have left a strong impression on the minds of many visitors, especially children.

Of all the pavilions planned for the upcoming expo, one of the most eye-catching is sure to be the private-sector pavilion jointly produced by the housing manufacturer Iida Group Holdings and Osaka Metropolitan University. All of its exterior walls will be made of Nishijin brocade, a traditional fabric from Kyoto.

The pavilion was designed by architect Shin Takamatsu. To express his idea that “human life and technology are all part of one single cycle,” Takamatsu created the concept of a “sustainable Mobius strip.” A Mobius strip, which one can create by twisting a rectangular strip once and pasting the edges together, has no front or back and so is often used to symbolize eternity or circulation. Takamatsu incorporated this motif into his design. “The building is a complex and completely unique three-dimensional structure based on a Mobius strip. The entire structure is almost elliptical in shape, within which all of the exhibitions will be placed. It is, so

to speak, a one-room three-dimensional exhibition,” he said.

The exterior walls of the pavilion will be made of Nishijin brocade, a fabric dating back 1,200 years, to express a time axis linking the past and the future. Of course, using textiles for the exterior of a building, exposed to rain and wind, is unusual. Furthermore, the use of the high-end Nishijin brocade for all 3,500 square meters of the pavilion’s external surface is an expensive endeavor. And not only that, since textiles are basically flat, it is not easy to attach them to a building frame that has a complex three-dimensional structure. As the pieces of fabric are combined, great care must be taken to align the patterns. Shrinkage of the delicate fabric must also be avoided.

The production of this Nishijin brocade was handled by Hosoo, a venerable manufacturer founded in 1688. The standard width of conventional textiles is 32 centimeters, to match the dimensions of a kimono, but Hosoo has developed a weaving machine with a width of 150 centimeters, a standard used internationally in interior design. Using this loom as well as 3D mapping technology, Hosoo was able to create a three-dimensional fabric for the building’s exterior. In addition,

to ensure durability, Hosoo applied a unique twist to polyester threads and, together with Taiyo Kogyo, a pioneer in membrane structures, developed a Nishijin textile with a surface coating capable of withstanding both wind and rain. Because there was a risk that the coating would be so glossy that it could look like the brocade had merely been printed, they had to be careful to give it a realistic muted tone.

Thus, with an exterior featuring traditional Nishijin brocade made using the latest technologies, and an interior featuring exhibitions of advanced technologies like artificial photosynthesis to support future cities and home wellness technologies, the past, present and future are fused together, and the “life” that has continued from past to present is expressed as growing refined and polished through repeated cycles of reincarnation and progress. According to Iida Group Holdings, after the expo is over, the company is considering reusing the textiles for home and office interiors. Work began in April to stretch the brocade over the exterior of the pavilion. How fascinating it will be to watch the progress of this completely new application of a traditional Japanese technique.

● Summary

伝統的な「西陣織」を外装にした万博パビリオン。

2025年4月開催の大阪・関西万博で特に注目したいパビリオンが、住宅メーカー〈飯田グループホールディングス〉と〈大阪公立大学〉が共同出展する民間パビリオン。その理由は外壁のすべてに京都の伝統的な織物、西陣織を使用していることだ。設計者は建築家・高松伸。「人間のいのちもテクノロジーも、すべては循環している」

ことを表現するために高松が生み出したのは「サステナブル・メビウス」というコンセプトだ。ご存じメビウスの輪は表裏の区別がなくなる特徴から、永遠性や循環のモチーフとして用いられることが多い。高松はこれを設計に取り入れた。外壁には、過去と未来とをつなぐ時間軸を表現するため、1200年の歴史と技術をもつ西陣織が

採用されることになった。

だが雨風にさらされ耐久性が求められる建物外装に織物を使用するという試みは前代未聞のことだ。また複雑な立体構造をもつ建築躯体に平面の織物を貼り合わせるのは至難の業。美しい柄が特徴の西陣織を貼り合わせる際、柄がずれてしまわないように細心の注意が必要だ。



日本語全文はこちら

When considering how traditional Japanese textiles should be preserved for future generations, several problems quickly emerge. First and foremost, the Japanese have largely stopped wearing kimonos in their daily lives as their lifestyles have changed. As a result, demand has decreased drastically, making it difficult to nurture the next generation of artisans to sustain the industry.

So, what if we could direct people's attention to kimonos and thus boost demand? One artist is creating kimonos so unique and new, they just might do that. Hiroko Takahashi creates innovative kimonos that respect traditional techniques, structures and theories but use unconventional geometric patterns composed only of circles and straight lines.

Since childhood, Takahashi had dreamed of going abroad to work as a fashion designer, but she also felt obliged to learn about the traditional clothing of her own country and so began to study kimono-making. She quickly realized that kimonos are designed so that no material is wasted. One 12-meter-long piece of fabric is used for each kimono, and whether it is for men or women, small or large, the shape and size can be changed by the amount of fabric that is stitched or tucked, rather than by cutting or adjusting the fabric. As a result, it can be returned to its original squares of fabric when the threads are removed.

In contrast, when Western clothing is made, the fabric is cut into curved lines to fit the body, so there are always scraps, or wasted fabric. When Takahashi made her

own tailored shirts using fabric she dyed, she was left with lots of scraps that ended up going to waste in the garbage. In contrast, with kimono she was shocked to learn that all of the fabric she had worked so hard to produce was put to use rationally without wastage.

However, the kimonos she was aiming for were not the traditional ones decorated with flowers, birds and other traditional Japanese patterns. Although she thought those Japanese patterns were wonderful, they weren't something she would want to wear herself. So she sought to make a kimono that was genderless and also suited both Japanese and non-Japanese — something that was universal, rather than something that was particularly "Japanese" or "Scandinavian." The answer she came up with was geometry, namely circles and straight lines.

"In the beginning, traditional artisans weren't too keen on the patterns I designed," she explained. "When I was a student, I once brought a sample with a geometric pattern that I had dyed myself. When I showed it to the craftsman and asked him to replicate it, he said abruptly, 'I have never seen a pattern like this before, and I don't want to do it.' In retrospect, I think that with the circles and straight lines I use, distortion and blotchiness tends to stand out, be it in woven or dyed fabrics, and that's why those designs may have been avoided."

The people she most frequently asks to make kimonos for her are craftspeople in Tokamachi, Niigata Prefecture. Tokamachi is known for its Tokamachi *kasuri* wo-

ven fabrics and Tokamachi *yūzen* dyed fabrics. It is second only to Kyoto as a kimono-making region. Of course, she also sources other elements from elsewhere in Japan, including obi sashes from Hakata and undyed fabric from Tango Chirimen in Kyoto.

One of Takahashi's sources of emotional strength was something she was told by a legendary Japanese fashion designer who has since passed away.

"In 2007, Issey Miyake asked me to create a kimono for him," she said. "He wanted a kimono for a program on traditional performing arts like *rakugo* and *kyogen* at 21_21 Design Site, a design museum he had established in Roppongi, Tokyo. At the time, Miyake said to me, 'I have neglected kimono myself, but I feel I can entrust their future to you.' Since that time, I have held those words in my heart as I have made kimono."

In 2019, one of Takahashi's kimonos was added to the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. She regularly plays a role in promoting kimono culture overseas, with exhibitions at the Japanese Embassy in Singapore (2012) and Japan House London (2020). Currently, many of her clients are from overseas, and often the well-heeled guests at Tokyo's luxury hotels are sent by concierges to her studio in Tokyo's Sumida Ward to order kimonos.

"What I do is a kind of 'update' to kimonos. I want to create 'new kimonos' in which the skills of all the people involved in production, including the artisans who sew them by hand, can be passed on to a new generation of kimono-makers," she said.

Possessing unique charms not seen in kimonos before, Takahashi's creations are sure to help nurture a love of kimonos in new generations to come.

Hiroko Takahashi's exhibition "Renovation: Kimono & Sustainability" at Japan House London in 2020. The kimonos on display showcased both their beauty and how they were made from a single piece of cloth.



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Feature JAPANESE TEXTILES

KIMONO

The celebrated artist 'updating' the kimono

By MINAMI NAKAWADA



Hiroko Takahashi wearing kimonos she designed herself. In Japan, women wearing kimonos are expected to behave in a "feminine manner." In these images, however, Takahashi dares to stand with her legs akimbo, staring straight at the camera while holding a range of unlikely items like a computer or a skateboard. These memorable images undermine the rigid stereotypes of kimonos.

© TAKAHASHIHIROKO

Summary

「きもの」をアップデートする、注目の日本人アーティスト。

日本の伝統工芸である織物を、次世代へとその技術を伝え残していくということ考えた時、難しい問題に直面する。そのひとつは日本人のライフスタイルが大きく変化し、日常的に「きもの」を着なくなったため需要が大幅に減り、職人の育成や世代交代が難しい点にあるだろう。では逆に人々の視線が「きもの」へと向かい、需要

が伸びればどうだろうか？ 低迷した和服の需要を高める。そんな可能性を秘めた魅力的な「きもの」を生み出すアーティストがいる。それが高橋理子だ。彼女が生み出すのは、職人の技術や和服の構造などそのセオリーを引き継ぎながらも、「正円」と「直線」の柄のみで構成される幾何学模様を用いた斬新な「きもの」である。

彼女が目指したのは、「和柄」と言われる、花や鳥、伝統的な柄をあしらったものではなかった。追及したのは、ジェンダーレスで、日本人でも外国人でも似合い、そして日本的だとか北欧的だといった地域性を感じるものではなく、普遍的で本質的なデザインのものだった。そして「正円」と「直線」といった幾何学に行きついた。



日本語全文はこちらから

HIROKO TAKAHASHI

Born in Saitama in 1977, Takahashi is an artist. In 1996, she entered the Department of Crafts in the Faculty of Fine Arts at Tokyo University of the Arts. She received her M.F.A. in 2002 and then worked as a designer for an apparel company. In 2008, she completed a Ph.D. in crafts at Tokyo University of the Arts. Her kimono designs are highly acclaimed in Japan and abroad, with one of her kimonos added to the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2019. <https://takahashihiroko.jp/> Kimonos and clothing designed by Takahashi can be purchased through her online store. <https://www.hirocoledge.jp/>



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Democrat vs. Republican

America vs. China

White vs. Black

Economy vs. Ecology

Wealth vs. Health

Urban vs. Rural

Government vs. People

Dogs vs. Cats

Coffee vs. Tea

Man vs. Woman

Monopoly vs. Share

Privacy vs. Surveillance

Politics vs. Science

Think vs. Do

Reject vs. Embrace

You vs. Me

Argument vs. Dialogue

Where there's division,
there's an opportunity for progress.

#BeyondVS

Dialogue matters.

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PICK-UP ARTICLE

The lobby of Six Senses Kyoto. The mural, depicting Mount Kurama, is made from 504 tiles in Raku ware, a traditional Kyoto pottery. The hotel's interior and furniture are designed by Blink Design Group.



PHOTO: BEN RICHARDS

Design of Six Senses Kyoto engages all senses

By TERUKO IKE

Six Senses, which operates hotels globally on the themes of “sustainability” and “wellness” and is a pioneer in the movement for natural luxury resorts, opened its first hotel in Japan in April.

Located in Kyoto's Higashiyama district next to the Kyoto National Museum and Toyokuni Shrine, which enshrines Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the feudal lord who unified the nation during the Warring States Period (1482-1573), the hotel lies in the heart of the ancient capital, which despite its dignified and tranquil atmosphere is a hub of tourism.

Stepping inside the hotel from a modest carport that blends in with the ancient city, visitors find themselves in a lobby facing onto a courtyard. On the wall where the front desk is located is a mural depicting the ethereal Mount Kurama comprising 504 tiles made in the traditional Kyoto style of Raku ware. On the opposite wall is a unique artwork that is a modern interpretation of the national treasure “Choju Giga,” a picture scroll often referred to as Japan's oldest manga. The hotel's design is said to have been inspired by the Heian Period (794-1185), when Japan's unique artistic culture first flourished.

Six Senses pursues a kind of comfort that is felt through all five senses. The ho-

tel's efforts to transform and sublimate “luxury” from something material to something spiritual can be felt everywhere, from visible interior features to invisible fragrances and services. Innovations in interior design include the use of natural materials such as wood and stone and the incorporation of artisanal craftsmanship. The hotel was designed by the Singapore-based Blink Design Group, which has worked on luxury resorts all over the world. We interviewed Clint Nagata, the founder and creative director of the design team, about the hotel's design.

“This is our second project with Six Senses, after Uluwatu in Bali,” he said. “The difference here is that the Kyoto project is an urban resort, the second for Six Senses, after Rome. The site is long and narrow from east to west, with the entrance on the east side facing a busy street. Even under these conditions, it was important in the design process how the hotel concept (connecting one to nature) could be perceived by the hotel's guests. In particular, the entrance, the first point of contact for guests, expresses a simple, beautiful design with a sense of materiality and playfulness. The folding book-inspired ceiling, gently curving furniture and the courtyard glimpsed through the windows enrich the

visitor's journey at its beginning and end.”

After passing through the entrance, which Nagata said is his favorite, we headed toward the guest rooms. The corridor is long and narrow, raising guests' anticipation of their stay. Once in their room, the lush green of the courtyard and, in some rooms, the greenery of Toyokuni Shrine spreading out beyond the window let guests experience nature even from inside. Nagata said the hotel has been planned so guests can see greenery throughout the facility, from almost every location. In this way, Six Senses Kyoto achieves its goal of being an urban oasis where the guest's sixth sense is stimulated through the enjoyment of nature.

A Deluxe King room (42 square meters) fronting onto the courtyard.



© SIX SENSES KYOTO



PHOTO: BEN RICHARDS

SIX SENSES KYOTO

Regarded as a pioneer in the natural luxury resort movement, Six Senses began in 1995 with its first resort in the Maldives. The company, which became part of IHG in 2019, currently operates 26 hotels worldwide and has 42 new projects in the pipeline. Six Senses chose the Higashiyama district of Kyoto as the site of its first Japanese property, with the 81-room urban hotel opening last April. The hotel has 12 types of guest rooms, including eight suites, and the spa, restaurant and bar are open to nonstaying guests. 431 Myohoin Maegamachi, Higashiyamaku, Kyoto, Japan Tel: 075-531-0700 <https://www.sixsenses.com/jp/kyoto/>



PHOTO: MASAOKI INOUE

BLINK DESIGN GROUP

Blink Design Group is a design studio established in Bangkok in 2006 by Clint Nagata. Currently based in Singapore, it also has offices in Bangkok, Shanghai, Dubai and Tokyo, and has created luxury hotels and resorts in many countries and regions. www.blinkdg.com

● Summary

第六感に訴える秀逸なデザイン。

自然派ラグジュアリーリゾートの先駆者として知られ「サステナビリティ」と「ウェルネス」をテーマにするホテル〈シックスセンス〉が、今年2024年4月、日本に初上陸となるホテルを京都・東山に開業した。〈シックスセンス〉が追及するのは、五感で感じる心地よさ。その工夫はインテリア・デザインで言え

ば、木や石など天然素材を内部空間に多く使用することや、職人の技を取り入れるといったことだろう。

ホテル内部に一步踏み入れると、中庭に面したロービーが現れる。壁面には焼物「楽焼」の陶板504枚を使い京都・鞍馬山を表した壁画や国宝絵巻「鳥獣人物戯画」を現代的に解釈した作品が飾られている。ホテ

ルのデザインは日本独自の芸術文化が花開いた平安時代からインスピレーションを得て展開されている。

このホテルの空間デザインを手掛けたのはシンガポールを拠点に活動する〈ブリンク・デザイン・グループ〉だ。ファウンダーでクリエイティブ・ディレクターのクリント・ナガタにホテルのデザインについて聞いた。



日本語全文はこちら

the japan times

Destination Restaurants

Hokkaido

- 1 French
Chimikepp Hotel
- 2 Italian
Yoichi Sagra
- 3 Wild game
Elezo Esprit

Aomori Pref.

- 4 Italian
Casa del Cibo

Iwate Pref.

- 5 Japanese
Tonoya-Yo

Akita Pref.

- 6 Japanese
Nihonryori Takamura

Yamagata Pref.

- 7 Japanese
Deway
- 8 French
Restaurant Pas Mal

Fukushima Pref.

- 9 Innovative
Hagi

Tochigi Pref.

- 10 French
Otowa Restaurant

Gunma Pref.

- 11 Italian
Ventinove

Niigata Pref.

- 12 French
Restaurant Uozen
- 13 Japanese
Satoyama Jujo
- 14 Sushi
Tokiwasushi

- 15 Japanese
Shintaku

Ishikawa Pref.

- 16 Japanese
Kataori
- 17 Sushi
Mekumi

- 18 French
L'Atelier de Noto

- 19 Japanese
Ipponsugi Kawashima

Toyama Pref.

- 20 Innovative
Cuisine régionale L'évo
- 21 Japanese
Oryouri Fujii
- 22 Japanese
Ebitei-Bekkan

Tokyo

- 23 Italian
Don Bravo

Kanagawa Pref.

- 24 Japanese
Kamakura Kitajima

Shizuoka Pref.

- 25 Japanese
Chakaiseki Onjaku
- 26 French
Chisou Nishi Kenichi

Yamanashi Pref.

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Terroir Ai to Ibukuro

Nagano Pref.

- 28 Japanese
Nihonryori Yukimoto
- 29 Innovative
Restaurant Naz
- 30 Italian
Ca'enne

Mie Pref.

- 31 Chinese
Shibousai Kitagawa

Wakayama Pref.

- 32 Italian
Villa Aida

Nara Pref.

- 33 Japanese
Tsukumo

Hiroshima Pref.

- 34 French
Akai

Nagasaki Pref.

- 35 Innovative
Pesceco
- 36 Italian
Villa del Nido

Oita Pref.

- 37 Innovative
Enowa

Okinawa Pref.

- 38 French
État d'esprit
- 39 French
6 Six
- 40 French
Mauvaise herbe

A list of the best restaurants in Japan, selected by Japanese experts with international diners in mind.

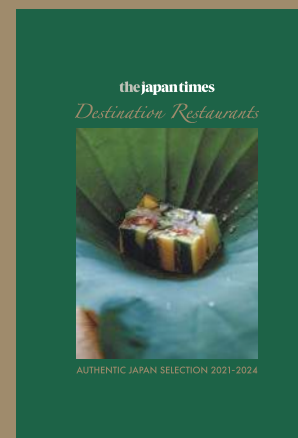
In 2021, The Japan Times created the Destination Restaurants list around the idea of Japanese experts uncovering top local restaurants for people around the world — hidden gems that not only offer unique culinary experiences but also contribute to community revitalization, sustainable food and the promotion of natural resources.

We aim to differentiate ourselves from other selections by bringing countryside talent proper recognition.

This book, marking the fourth anniversary of the Destination Restaurants project, is a compilation of the finest restaurants we have selected so far.



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Destination Restaurants 2024

AUTHENTIC JAPAN SELECTION

Ca'enne: Italian firewood cuisine from the mountains

By TAEKO TERA0

Ca'enne is an Italian restaurant in Chino, Nagano Prefecture. Chino Station is just over two hours from Shinjuku in Tokyo on the Chuo Line. A taxi will take you from the station to the restaurant in less than 30 minutes. Ca'enne is located at the base of the Yatsugatake mountains at an altitude of 1,000 meters, so even in summer you feel a bracing chill in the air the moment you step out of the car.

Today, this is an area with vacation homes and a smattering of golf courses and tennis courts. Four to five millennia ago, it was home to many Jomon people, inhabitants of ancient Japan. Chino alone has 273 Jomon ruins, and it is here that the clay figurine nicknamed the "Jomon Venus," a National Treasure, was discovered. In the sunny highlands there are nut-yielding broadleaf forests, wild mountain vegetables and mushrooms, wildlife including deer, hare and ducks, and river fish such as *amago* (red-spotted masu salmon) and *iwana* (whitespotted char). The mountain blessings that were surely enjoyed by the Jomon people millennia ago still abound here today.

Ca'enne's owner-chef, Noriyuki Usui, uses only ingredients produced in Yatsugatake and the area within a 20-kilometer radius (with the exception of olive oil). He therefore uses no seafood — but the area is blessed with an overabundance of ingredients nonetheless. What is more, the water and air are pure and delicious.

Usui said: "When you combine foods that have been nurtured with the same water, the dishes have flavors that go straight into the body. That's why I don't use ingredients from northern Nagano, where the water is different."

Although he seems to know Yatsugatake like the back of his hand, Usui was actually born and raised in Kanagawa Prefecture. After graduating from university, he decided to pursue a career as a chef and trained in several Italian restaurants in Tokyo. In 2009, he went to Italy to train further, returning to Japan in 2012. He worked as a chef in Tokyo restaurants, but his wish to create dishes in an environment rich in nature, like those of the restaurants in Italy where he had trained, grew ever stronger. Thus, in 2017, he moved to Nagano Prefecture, his wife's home area. First he opened a restaurant in the Tateshina area, and in April 2020 he relocated to the city of Chino and launched Ca'enne, a restaurant specializing in firewood-cooked cuisine. Usui is the only chef. At lunchtime, his wife helps with meal service.

Usui cooks his ingredients with firewood, as the Jomon people did. Nearly all of the 10 dishes in the course menu — ¥17,600 (\$117) at both lunchtime and dinnertime — come to the table enveloped, sometimes heavily and sometimes lightly, in the aroma of firewood.

"I taught myself how to cook with firewood," said Usui. "With firewood, unlike with a gas stove or a charcoal fire, the ingredients are steamed by the moisture that evaporates from the wood, so they have a plump, fluffy texture when they're cooked."

Indeed, the restaurant's spring-water-raised iwana and Suffolk lamb are crisp and golden brown outside but moist inside. When chewed, the meat is exceptionally juicy.

Along with firewood-cooked cuisine, a specialty of Ca'enne is the naturally aged prosciutto served as the course menu opener. While in It-



The star of this dish, *yūsui iwana/hachiku*, is iwana (whitespotted char) raised for three years in mountain spring water (*yūsui*). The iwana is wrapped in a spiced coating and steam-cooked to lock in its natural flavor, then served with roasted hachiku bamboo brushed with sweetfish sauce.

PHOTOS: TAKAO OHTA

aly, Usui worked in a prosciutto production facility in the Parma region and learned to make *culatello prosciutto*, which is called the "king of prosciutto." Based on that production method, he makes his own prosciutto from pork produced in Nagano Prefecture, which he coats with the rice malt of locally made sake. Aged for a year while being exposed to the out-

door air of Yatsugatake, which can be as cold as minus 10 degrees Celsius in winter, the prosciutto is truly the taste of this land. More and more people are coming to Ca'enne from beyond the mountains and the ocean to experience a cuisine born of a phenomenon that has continued since the Jomon Period — the coexistence of nature and human beings.



Nagano Prefecture (Italian)

Ca'enne

10222-25 Toyohira-Higashidake,
Chino-shi, Nagano Prefecture
<http://caenne.com>



NORIYUKI USUI

Usui was born in Kanagawa Prefecture in 1979. After training at several famed Italian restaurants in Tokyo, he went to Italy in 2009. There he honed his skills further at a starred restaurant in the Piedmont region and a Parma prosciutto production facility in the Emilia-Romagna region. Following his return to Japan, he worked as a chef in restaurants in Roppongi and Minami-Aoyama, Tokyo. In pursuit of beautiful air and water, he moved to the city of Nagano in 2017, then opened a restaurant in the Tateshina area of Nagano Prefecture. In April 2020, he relocated to the Nagano city of Chino, where he launched a restaurant with the new name Ca'enne.

Summary

縄文遺跡が残るハケ岳の恵みを薪で焼くイタリアン。

長野県茅野市、ハケ岳麓の別荘地にあるイタリアンレストラン〈カエンネ〉。周辺には多くの縄文遺跡があり、古来より山の幸に恵まれている。その利を生かし、オーナーシェフ、白井憲幸は主にハケ岳を中心に半径20km以内で産する食材だけを扱う。神奈川県で生まれ育った白井は大学卒業後、料理

の研鑽を積み、2017年、修業先のイタリアのような自然豊かな環境を求め、妻の故郷である長野県に移住。2020年4月に薪火料理を掲げる〈カエンネ〉を開いた。料理人は自分ひとり。昼は妻もサービスを手伝う。白井は縄文人がしたように、薪で食材に火を入れる。昼夜共に¥17,600円のコース10品中、ほとん

どの皿は薪の香りをまもって供される。

「薪で焼くと、木から蒸発する水分によって、素材の中身が蒸されてがふっくらと焼き上がるんです」縄文から続く、自然と人間の共生から生まれる料理を求めて、山の向こう、海の向こうから訪れるゲストが増え続けている。



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