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## Journal of the Japan Society of Design, No. 73, 2018

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## A Study of Evaluation Criteria and Value Setting of *Meiboku*

OKADA (TOMARI), Ryoko

Wood has been regarded as an important material for many objects in various cultures since ancient times. The conditions of the Japanese climate highly favor the growth of dense woodlands and consequently Japanese culture has often been rephrased as a “tree culture”. Therefore it is naturally considered that wood has been deeply involved in the formation of Japanese culture.

This paper focuses on the circumstances in which a specific group of wood is regarded not simply as a wooden material but also as the prestigious one named *Meiboku*.

*Meiboku* has often been used for cultural properties and precious highly art works. Its rare and special grain pattern, colors and texture have been highly appreciated. Judging from these facts, there must be certain standards of the distinctive quality of *Meiboku*.

In order to clarify the above-mentioned standards, three important viewpoints are chosen in this paper

- 1) different elements between *Meiboku* and ordinary wood
- 2) cognitive boundary between *Meiboku* and ordinary wood
- 3) branding methods of *Meiboku* conceived by its dealers

I believe that this analysis will lead to the more logical as well as sensitive understanding of *Meiboku* for its future marketing and clearer evaluation.

## The Development of Modern *Sanuki* Lacquer Art and Design — From the Analysis of Influences of the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties and the Traditional Art Crafts Exhibition —

SASAKI, Chihiro

This paper discusses how the characteristics and localities of *Sanuki* lacquer art and design have been formed since the 1950's.

The artists in Kagawa Prefecture successfully show novel designs fitting modern lifestyle in Japan in the Traditional Art Crafts Exhibition related to the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties. Distinguished artists such as Kōdō Otomaru (1898–1997), Joshin Isoi (1883–1964) and Masami Isoi (1926–) have created innovative expression and designs and fulfilled important roles as Holders of Intangible Cultural Properties under the influences of the law. *Sanuki* lacquer art and design have progressed greatly under the leadership of them. Especially, the Kagawa Lacquerware Institute has functioned to preserve traditional techniques of *Sanuki* lacquerware and train successors in both art and industrial fields.

The Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties is a significant factor in modern Japanese lacquer art scene. The main reason for the innovation of *Sanuki* lacquer art and design lies in the fact that the close interaction between the administration, the public educational institution and the substantial industry has worked effectively as a local lacquer producing area since the 1950's.

Research on *Marubeni Shoten*, Ltd., Textile Art Workshop  
— Follow-up survey on Modern Design Education 1 —

OKA, Tatsuya

This paper is a part of modern Kyoto's design education research and aims to clarify what position a person who received the specialized education on design played his role in the industry later. A case study is *Heitaro Mizuki* (?–1939) and the textile art workshop founded in the *Marubeni Shoten* Ltd., *Kyoto* Branch where *Mizuki* worked.

The textile art workshop was established in the background of emerging of department stores including *Mitsukoshi* and *Takashimaya*, which are positioned as promoting fashion and consumption in textile-dyeing products at the time.

The intent and the change in the works on the textile art exhibition from 1930 to 1939 when *Mizuki* was involved as the director were analyzed to clarify the trend in the corresponding period.

As a result of the analysis, while department stores are positioned as promoting creation of fashion and consumption of customers with main items as ready-made products, it was positioned as an organization with the proposition of creating textile-dyeing cloths that combine advanced technology and aesthetic value under the position that the workshop disseminates from the producer side without premising mass production in spite of adding a tinge of fashion.

## An essay about *Kawaii* Part 2: The limits of *Kawaii* theory

NISHIMURA, Mika

In “An essay about *Kawaii* Part 1,” I focused on the question of whether *Kawaii* could be considered a part of Japanese esthetics. In Part 2, I focus on *Kawaii* as a global phenomenon. To understand this theme, I have relied on Christine Yano’s *Pink Globalization: HELLO KITTY’s Trek Across the Pacific*, comparing the United States and Japan.

Yano presents HELLO KITTY in the context of “cute” and “cool Japan,” yet regarding *Kawaii*, the Japanese perspective differs. In the United States, HELLO KITTY is used in various social and cultural movements. For example, in the gay community, it is a symbol of resistance, while lesbians use it as a symbol of unity. Conversely, because HELLO KITTY has no mouth, the character is a target of feminists who demand women to take action and speak out. Despite this, HELLO KITTY has been adopted by UNICEF in 2004 as a mascot character to serve as a good-will ambassador promoting women’s education and women’s rights.

In Japan, *Kawaii* has been understood as meaning small, infantile, and child-like, contrasting with the things that signify largeness. Today, the meaning of *Kawaii* has gone beyond the large-small contrast to refer to someone who is pitiful, odious to others, and is an object of condescendence. We can detect a will to dominate others from these meanings, suggesting how the concept of *Kawaii* is being manipulated. Moreover, *Kawaii* does not stand for mature self-reliance, but dependence, childishness, and a penchant to follow. Already adult women who are neither infantile nor small use *Kawaii* as a strategy to gain a livelihood by depending on the protection of some male guardian.

In this way, the various representations of *Kawaii* have spread throughout the world, but conceptually, it has yet to be fully understood.

*Botanical Gardens of Graphic Arts* by Ikko Tanaka  
— *The Transmigration of Botany in Japan* —

KOSHIISHI, Maori

Although biological time runs in cycles and physical time moves forward at a constant rate, time never runs in reverse.

Plants flower according to seasonal rhythms that symbolize the passage of biological time, which is one of the most popular themes in Japanese art, especially the Rimpa school of painting.

Rimpa is a school formed through mutual relationships between artists whose works share the common thread of *ten-kei-ka*. In a similar manner to DNA, *ten-kei-ka* forms the basic framework that characterizes Rimpa. Therefore, Rimpa works can be compared to plants from the same botanical family, in that, while they may be different in their outward appearance, they share identical key features. This may lead us to view Rimpa works as lacking originality. However, the subtle distinction is a fleeting moment in the broad scope of biological time.

The act of producing a new work of Rimpa is like the blossoming of a flower; it is a sign that it is alive in response to the season. In the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ikko Tanaka (1930–2002) made posters, such as *Botanical Gardens of Graphic Arts*, as an artist of Rimpa, sustaining the theme of biological time.

Ikko Tanaka's viewpoint as a Rimpa artist in expressing the Japanese perspective has its origin in biological time.