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FROM TRADITION TO INNOVATION

Selected Stories of Japanese Brands

JAN 2026

Curated by SAKURAGAWA Co., Ltd

FOREWORD BY CURATOR

Craftsmanship finds new meaning when tradition meets modern life — connecting the timeless spirit of making with today’s global culture. Under the theme “From Tradition to Innovation,” this publication explores how Japanese artisans reinterpret heritage through contemporary design — where quiet skill and modern sensibility coexist. Curated in Kyoto. Presented in London.

WHO WE ARE SAKURAGAWA CO., LTD.

Founded in 2019, Kyoto, Japan

- **Curator-style trading company**

→ Curating and exporting Japanese textiles, stationery, and lifestyle goods

- **Sakuragawa Select Shop (opened in 2024)**

→ A curated space where visitors experience the harmony of design, craft, and spirit

Mission: Share Japanese craftsmanship with the world

WHY WE ARE HERE

Expanding our presence in the UK

Building partnerships with:

- Galleries
- Museums
- Select shops
- Department stores
- Online stores

Activities we aim to create:

- Pop-up shows
- Cultural events & workshops
- Collaborative showcases introducing Japanese craftsmanship

Goal: Open new global channels for Japanese artisans

WHAT WE DO

- Curating & Supplying Japanese brands aligned with UK aesthetics, quality, and values
- Export & Distribution Support
- Bespoke & Collaborative Design



YINGNI ZHANG | FOUNDER & CURATOR OF SAKURAGAWA CO., LTD.

Born in Shanghai in 1989, Yingni graduated from East China Normal University with dual BAs in Management and English Literature. She began her career in banking in 2011, working at ICBC and later at HSBC, where she developed a deep understanding of precision and global communication. In 2019, she founded Sakuragawa Co., Ltd. in Kyoto. A year later, in 2020, she moved to Kyoto and began a new journey — living among artisans and immersing herself in the quiet rhythm of Japanese craftsmanship. Having lived and worked across China and Japan, and engaged closely with the UK through her experiences at HSBC and later at Sakuragawa, Yingni brings a cross-cultural perspective shaped by diverse communication styles and creative values.

“In Japan, people often communicate indirectly — reading between the lines, sensing the unspoken harmony. In international business, communication is clear and direct. I find beauty in both, and my work lives in the space between them.”

While the global market values speed and efficiency, Japan cherishes time — the patience, precision, and quiet devotion of craftsmanship. My role is to translate between these worlds — to help them understand and inspire each other, to reinterpret Japanese craftsmanship for international audiences, and to transform tradition into innovation — creating dialogue between makers and markets.

It can be quite lonely to start a business in Japan as a foreign female entrepreneur — navigating the pressures of traditional expectations, the subtle barriers of trust, and the challenges of language and cultural differences. The path can feel isolating at times.

Yet, the three Japanese figures featured in this publication have offered me trust and support. In many ways, they embody the very spirit of the brands they represent. Whenever I see their brands, I think of them — their voices, their gestures, their quiet dedication. To me, their brands are not just names or logos, but reflections of who they are. Each of them carries qualities I deeply admire and aspire to learn from. It is my great honor to share their stories here.”

For more than 150 years, Liberty has stood at the intersection of art, craft, and culture. In Japan, its story continues — reimagined through collaborations with contemporary designers and global icons such as Sanrio and Peanuts, and through colors created exclusively for the Japanese market. We invited Mr. Takashi Matsubara, managing director of Liberty Japan, to share how Liberty's timeless design philosophy translates into the Japanese context — a dialogue between two cultures, and two traditions of craftsmanship.

Interview with Mr. Takashi Matsubara from Liberty Japan

TAKASHI MATSUBARA

Managing Director, Liberty Japan





MR. TAKASHI MATSUBARA

earned his MA in Fashion Studies from the London College of Fashion. Since joining Liberty in 2000, he has cultivated a distinguished career within the company, taking on senior leadership responsibilities from 2025 and becoming managing director of Liberty Japan thereafter. In this role, he directs the brand's business across Japan, overseeing sales and licensing while upholding Liberty Fabrics' heritage of design excellence and advancing innovation for diverse clients and partners.

Q1. Could you briefly share when and how Liberty Prints first took root in Japan?

Matsubara: Liberty prints have been introduced since the 1970s. We have always seen many turning points, but probably around 2010 was the year when the popularity of Liberty prints massively started in Japan.

Q2. From your perspective, what has been Liberty Japan's approach to bringing Liberty Prints into the Japanese market?

Matsubara: We believe Liberty prints are an intangible item. Depending on the markets, clients, and products, they can be transformed into something tangible. The possibilities of Liberty prints are infinite.

Q3. Liberty Prints are produced in Japan as well. Could you explain the characteristics of the Made in Japan collections?

Matsubara: Most of the designs originate from our UK headquarters and are then carefully reprinted in Japan, with close attention to preserving the original motifs, aesthetic sensibilities, and defined color palettes. At the same time, bespoke requests from Japanese clients often lead to very special "Made in Japan" versions, particularly through distinctive and exclusive colorways.

Q4. How have traditional Japanese crafts or techniques influenced Liberty fabrics produced in Japan?

Matsubara: About 150 years ago, Arthur Lasenby Liberty and his wife Emma visited Japan and spent three months here, including one month in Kyoto. Since then, Liberty prints have carried oriental and Japanese sensibilities, and even today those influences can still be seen in our designs.

Q5. Liberty Japan has developed innovations such as Japan-exclusive patterns, store-customized colorways, and collaborations with characters like Sanrio or Peanuts. Could you tell us more about these initiatives?

Matsubara: Liberty prints were first introduced to Japan more than 50 years ago. Among all countries, Japan has been the most successful market for Liberty fabrics after UK. Because Liberty prints are used so widely here, competition is very strong. That is why we offer our clients many special bespoke options to differentiate and bring unique value.

Q6. What are some examples of Made in Japan Liberty products that you would especially like to highlight—and why?

Matsubara: I would highlight our Eternal Collection, which has come to be recognized as a "Japan Classic" around the world.

Q7. From your perspective, what makes the combination of Liberty's UK heritage and Japanese craftsmanship attractive?

Matsubara: Our clients are mainly Japanese makers and drapers. Our aim is to introduce the latest Liberty prints while also creating originality tailored to their needs.

Q8. How do you see the role of Made in Japan Liberty products in the international market going forward?

Matsubara: Liberty prints were born in the UK about 150 years ago. Today, "Made in Japan" Liberty prints are also gaining international recognition, and we hope their presence will continue to grow.

Q9. How do Liberty Japan's collaborations and products reflect "From Tradition to Innovation"?

Matsubara: As I mentioned earlier, Liberty prints are intangible and infinite. We believe we can create whatever we imagine—or whatever our customers envision. That is the essence of "From Tradition to Innovation."

TAG STA- TIONERY

Made in Kyoto

EXPANDING THE JOY OF HANDWRITING

Rooted in the techniques handed down in the ancient capital of Kyoto, TAG STATIONERY explores the connection between tradition and modern stationery, proposing new ways to experience the pleasure of writing by hand



TAG STATIONERY





Rooted in Kyoto's craft heritage, the FUMISOME collection transforms centuries-old techniques into tools for contemporary life. It is a story of renewal — where nature, craftsmanship, and design coexist in quiet harmony.

KEY PERSPECTIVES

- **Nature as Palette**

Created in collaboration with the Kyoto Plant Dyeing Research Institute, each ink draws its color from nature itself — indigo, mulberry, gardenia, and upcycled cedar — expressing the beauty of impermanence through traditional dyeing.

- **Sustainable Renewal**

Cedar waste becomes pigment; responsibly sourced deer hide becomes game leather. Materials once forgotten are reborn, reflecting a new cycle of making and meaning.

- **Reimagined Craft**

In collaboration with Suzuka Boku Shinseido and Kyoto artisans, classical forms — ink, inkstone, and pen — are distilled into minimal, poetic tools, where old wisdom meets modern clarity.

- **The Art of Touch**

From the supple deerskin wrapped around brass to the fluid transparency of dyed ink, each piece invites a tactile connection between material, maker, and mind.

Ultimately, FUMISOME is not about preserving tradition — it is about making it breathe again.

PHILOSOPHY OF SIMPLICITY

- Natural Dye Ink



Indigo / Leaf Green / Gardenia / Cedar

This plant-based ink was developed in collaboration with the Kyoto Plant Dyeing Research Institute. The rich colors found in nature are expressed using traditional dyeing techniques. Enjoy the changes that occur over time, a unique feature of nature.

Capacity: 25ml

Use: Fountain pens and pens

*As the main ingredient is natural ingredients, the color may change depending on the storage period and conditions. After use, close the cap tightly and store away from direct sunlight and high temperatures and humidity.

• Glass Inkstone



This is an artistic glass inkstone that has been handcrafted to recreate the surface of a natural stone inkstone. The unique size of the ink pool allows you to use a variety of writing implements, including brushes, glass pens, and dip pens. You can also use regular solid ink or ink available on the market.

*Size: 92 x 92 x 20mm
Country of Origin: Japan*

* Each piece is handmade by a craftsman, so there may be individual differences.
Care instructions: After use, clean with household mild detergent and a dish sponge. If color deposits, it is effective to rub with a fine sponge such as melamine.

• Various Dyeing Ink



01 Blue / 02 Green / 03 Yellow / 04 Shuiro / 05 Purple

Highly transparent colors are expressed using ink containing dye. It is more colorful than conventional solid ink and features the shades and transparent colors that can only be achieved with dyes. It is a colored ink made from dyes, glue, and funori seaweed, which were developed in collaboration with Suzuka Boku Shinseido.

Country of origin: Japan

*Each piece is handmade by a craftsman, so there may be individual differences. This is a solid inkstone that you rub on an inkstone. Please prepare a separate inkstone to use this product.

• Soft Fountain Pen Fuwari



Gibier Leather Deer Gray / Navy Blue



A soft-touch fountain pen with a brass body wrapped in deerskin. The weight of the brass and the soft texture of the deerskin fit perfectly in the handle. The aging process is unique to brass and natural leather. It is a writing instrument that is closer to the owner's feelings, and you will grow to love it more and more with each use.

Environmentally Friendly

Lighter than previous models, the design incorporates revised leather materials that reduce overall weight by half. The new "game leather," crafted from deer hides sourced through wildlife population control, embodies both environmental responsibility and material innovation. Natural dyes with minimal environmental impact are used, reflecting a commitment to sustainability in every detail.

The tanning process is designed to minimize environmental burden, while natural polyphenols extracted from tree bark are used to achieve a gentle, organic coloration.

Material: Brass, deerskin (game leather)

Nib: Steel (Fine)

Country of Origin: Nib/Germany Body / Japan Accessories: Schmidt converter

*The surface is treated to a minimum extent to preserve the natural texture. Therefore, there may be some unevenness or scratches on the surface that are characteristic of the original leather. Each piece is handmade by a craftsman, so there may be individual differences.

VOICES BEHIND THE BRAND

Interview with Mr. Koichi Moriuchi from TAG STATIONERY

KOICHI MORIUCHI

Director, Planning & Development Office, Takeda Office Machine Co., Ltd.

With a background in stationery retail, Moriuchi leads TAG STATIONERY, a brand dedicated to expanding the culture of handwriting. His role spans ink development, collaborations with traditional crafts, and event direction.

Expanding the Joy of Handwriting

Q1. What was the motivation behind transforming from a traditional stationery shop into TAG STATIONERY?

Moriuchi: We originally operated as a local stationery and office supplies store. But as the industry began to shrink, we realized that simply buying and selling products was no longer meaningful. To preserve and pass on the culture of handwriting, we launched TAG STATIONERY as our own design and development brand. Drawing on years of direct experience with customers, we create products that truly resonate with the way people write and feel.

Q2. When preserving the value of handwriting, what is the most important thing you want to protect?

Moriuchi: We believe handwriting is not just about using a tool, but about expressing human thoughts and emotions. To preserve that richness, we focus on creating a tactile and emotional experience that makes people want to pick up a pen and write.

Q3. How has the culture and environment of Kyoto influenced TAG's design?

Moriuchi: Kyoto embodies a sense of understated beauty—subtle rather than showy, and timeless rather than fleeting. That cultural backdrop strongly influences our design, which values simplicity and quiet presence.

Q4. Why do you continue to pursue a minimalist and simple design approach?

Moriuchi: The true protagonist of handwriting is the words and ideas themselves. We believe tools should never overshadow them. A minimalist design allows the user's expression to stand out, not the object.



Q5. How do you balance functionality and design in your products?

Moriuchi: We always prioritize usability first. Then, by adding simple and universal design, our products naturally integrate into daily life, becoming items people want to use for years.

Q6. From your experience in workshops and exhibitions, have you ever gained new product ideas or design inspirations?

Moriuchi: Yes. Observing how people actually write and interact with our products in workshops and exhibitions provides invaluable insights. Their reactions often inspire new ink colors or even entirely new tools.

Q7. Is there a collaboration with another brand/artist that left a strong impression on you?

Moriuchi: Collaborations with calligraphy artists and international creators left a deep impression. When different cultures and expressions meet, they create colors and ideas we could never achieve alone—expanding the possibilities of handwriting.

Q8. How do you see the relationship between younger generations and handwriting culture?

Moriuchi: Even in a digital generation, we see more young people enjoying handwriting as a "special experience." It's not about efficiency, but about expressing emotions and individuality—handwriting is taking root in new ways. Just like film cameras and vinyl records, we believe the timeless and simple charm of analog will continue to resonate across generations.

Q9. If UK buyers encounter TAG STATIONERY, what would you most like them to feel?

Moriuchi: We want people to feel that our products are not just stationery, but tools that enrich the act of handwriting itself. Rooted in Japanese aesthetics yet designed for universal use, they bring quiet depth to everyday writing.

Q10. What challenges and visions do you have for TAG in the international market?

Moriuchi: We believe the joy of handwriting is universal across cultures. Our vision is to share that culture worldwide with trusted partners, without being swayed by mass trends. Our challenge is to create stationery that remains timeless and beloved internationally.

TEN TO SEN

Designed in Hokkaido

ABOUT TEN TO SEN

Founded in 2008 by textile designer Rieko Oka, Ten to Sen Moyou Seisakujo is a design studio that transforms everyday scenery into patterns filled with warmth and poetic sensibility.

Oka finds inspiration in both the visible beauty of nature — such as plants, landscapes, and changing seasons — and the invisible feelings that accompany them, like the chill of winter air or the sound of rain. Each design reflects fragments of ordinary life and personal memories, inviting people to enjoy decorating their spaces or creating handmade items that bring quiet joy into daily living.



Born in Hokkaido and inspired by the natural rhythms of everyday life, Ten to Sen Moyou Seisakujo transforms hand-drawn motifs into contemporary patterns — bridging traditional Japanese design sensibility with modern craftsmanship.

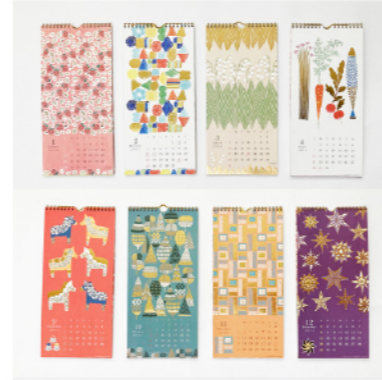
Each fabric begins as a line drawn by hand — a quiet gesture that captures the quiet poetry of nature. These patterns are then interpreted through embroidery and textile printing, connecting the warmth of handmade design with industrial precision.

From fabric production to collaborative creations such as stationery, masking tape, socks, and calendars, Ten to Sen Moyou Seisakujo continues to expand the boundaries of textile design — turning patterns into stories, and everyday items into art.

In the dialogue between tradition and innovation, the studio's work reminds us that design can be both nostalgic and new — a living expression of Japan's gentle modernity.



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THE LANGUAGE OF PATTERNS

- EMBROIDERED FABRIC – SQUIRRELS' FOREST (LINEN)

Blue grey / Beige / Sand beige



- EMBROIDERED FABRIC – BIRDS' GARDEN (COTTON)

Navy / Beige



- EMBROIDERED FABRIC – FOREST (COTTON / LINEN)

NAVY / GREEN



- EMBROIDERED FABRIC – FOXES' PATH (COTTON)

Green / Navy / Light blue



- EMBROIDERED FABRIC – THICKET (COTTON)

Yellow



- EMBROIDERED FABRIC – CLOVER (COTTON)

Pink / Yellow



- EMBROIDERED FABRIC – RABBITS (COTTON LINEN)
Beige / Green



- EMBROIDERED FABRIC – HYDRANGEA (COTTON)
Pink / Light blue / Yellow



- EMBROIDERED RIBBON – BIRDS' GARDEN
Blue grey / Yellow / Beige



FABRIC-BASED PRODUCTS



Tile



Tote Bag



Square Bag



Porch



Badge

VOICES BEHIND THE BRAND

Interview with Mrs. Rieko Oka from Ten to Sen Moyou Seisakujo

RIEKO OKA

Born in Hokkaido, Japan in 1981.

Graduated from the Graduate School of Design, Tokai University (2001–2004), where she studied Integrated Design.

During her studies, she reproduced William Morris wallpapers through woodcut printing to explore the structure and rhythm of patterns.

From this experience, she created her own wallpaper design titled “Kitaguni no Kabegami-moyou” (“Pattern on Wallpaper from the Northern Country”).

Later, she began designing textiles, believing that fabric is a medium more closely connected to everyday life.

Q1. Your designs are often inspired by the nature of Hokkaido. Could you share a specific example, such as a landscape, plant, winter cold, or the sound of rain?

Oka: *'The Fox's Path' is a pattern drawn after finding fox footprints in the early morning on the snowy mountains. The footprints appeared to meander up and down the snowy slopes before disappearing into the forest. Upon seeing that scenery, I felt curious about what the fox sees while we are asleep, and that's what inspired the design. The surrounding scenery is depicted from the fox's perspective, including mushrooms, spider webs, and small flowers at foot level, rather than from a human viewpoint.*

Q2. During your studies, you recreated William Morris's wallpaper using woodblocks. How has that experience influenced your current work?

Oka: *I purchased one roll of wallpaper with a pattern called 'Willow Bough', separated the colors to create printing blocks, and reproduced it. I read in a book that Morris often saw this willow tree during his walks. I felt that turning familiar outdoor scenery into patterns to decorate a room is similar to picking flowers blooming in the garden to display indoors. From that experience, I learned that there are many subjects for patterns in my daily life, which became the foundation of my pattern-making.*



Q3. You expanded your medium from wallpaper to fabric. What motivated this shift?

Oka: *At first, I was trying to create patterns for fabric (curtains), but my mentor in spatial design at university advised me that fabric can be easily replaced in an interior. If I wanted to learn the basics of patterns, she suggested that it would be better to create patterns for wallpaper, which cannot be easily removed once applied. She emphasized the importance of learning patterns that could support a way of life that doesn't tire people when spending long hours in a space. I profoundly agreed with her words and pursued wallpaper pattern creation at university. After graduating, I expanded my work to include creating patterns for fabrics that are widely used.*

Q4. When designing fabric patterns, what details do you value the most?

Oka: *The first thing I consider is what kind of people will use it. I focus on the users and the production background, considering in what situations the patterns will be used and what techniques (printing or embroidery) will be applied. For example, when creating patterns suitable for small items, I make the size smaller and fill it with flowers, leaves, and living creatures, ensuring that any cut will yield a delightful pattern. For patterns I create for everyday use with printed fabrics, I tend to make them slightly larger and use two to three colors, aiming for them to blend harmoniously into the space without being overly prominent.*

Q5. Has customer feedback ever inspired new designs?

Oka: *Since I started selling fabrics, I have interacted with many craft-loving customers. Through our conversations, I have been inspired to create fabrics that are easy to use no matter where they are cut, and I incorporate these ideas into my designs and fabric making every day.*

Q6. For the UK market, what aspects of your brand would you most like to convey? And how would you like to see your brand develop in the future?

Oka: *We create fabrics with a unique Japanese sensibility, featuring delicate textures, interesting color combinations, and elegant patterns. I hope that when you see the fabrics, ideas such as 'I want to make something like this' will inspire you, and that excitement will spread. As a small-scale brand, we cannot take on new challenges, but we aim to provide our customers with new fabric encounters by continuing to produce one or two new designs each year.*