



The technique of flower-knot weaving is handed down according to the rule of *isshisoden* or sole succession: a father's trade secrets can only be passed to one person in the next generation.





Fumi Kawasaki
Hariko maker
and designer
Tottori

川
崎
富
美

Minimalism in movement

“The rice fields may look barren now, but soon they’ll be filled with water and reflect the sky”, Fumi Kawasaki tells me as she gazes at the fields. We are standing in the *engawa* at the front of her house, a traditional narrow porch closed off by sliding doors. Kawasaki takes a deep breath. After living in this large *kominka* or farmhouse all by herself in the middle of nowhere for over seven years, she still feels exhilarated even though the weather is not particularly good on the day I visit.

The countryside around Tottori plays a seminal role in Kawasaki’s life. She was born and raised in this prefecture, more specifically in a traditional house on the other side of nearby Koyama Lake, which is close to Tottori City, the humble capital, and its famous sand dunes. At the age of eighteen, Fumi left to attend college and train as an industrial designer. Soon after graduating, she went to work for a Tokyo-based design office, where a new life awaited. She worked for this company for four years, which included a six-month stay in its Shanghai office.

After that, she changed jobs and went to work for Muji, a no-brand with a cult following. Its flagship store in Tokyo’s Ginza district is like sacred ground for Japan enthusiasts, the result of a specific philosophy and aesthetic. Although a big retailer that sells household items and apparel, Muji offers a sanctuary for those seeking a minimalist style with functional and affordable tools for life. The name is short for *mujirushi ryohin*, which means ‘no brand, good products’. From its inception in 1980, Muji offered a refreshing alternative to the logo mania of the eighties that swamped Japan and the world.

Almost all products are a neutral white or grey. Muji considers them empty recipients, waiting to be filled in depending on the user’s needs. When you walk through a Muji store, none of the products clamour for your attention, nor will they do so in your living room. Instead, they are designed to blend in with the environment, leaving the user’s mental space intact. Some were created by renowned designers such as Jasper Morrison, although no attribution is given. Everything is just Muji.







Hirokane serves the photographer and I *koicha*, a thick tea made with high-quality matcha, which she explains is “the espresso variant of tea”. Its texture paints the *chawan* or tea bowl an intense green. Although I have no idea what the right way is to hold the cup, she does not seem to mind. “Many Japanese don’t know either”, she assures me, ever the perfect host. After the tea, she sits in a bowed position. “This is usually the time we chat”, she says. It is customary for guests to show an interest in the beauty of the tea utensils. They have all been meticulously chosen and vary depending on the season, time and mood. The same goes for the message on the scroll in the *tokonoma*, the alcove. Sado is a reminder that every little detail in life has meaning and should be considered accordingly.

**From The Book of Tea by Kakuzo Okakura (1906). Translated and published as an ebook by Matthew, Gabrielle Harbowy and David Widger for Project Gutenberg.*

*** From Radical Zen, The Sayings of Joshu. Translated by Yoel Hoffmann for Autumn Press.*



Leaning over his sheet, he raises his right hand in the air, slaps the table, and then repeats this action. He then draws a miniature face. This ritual is repeated all day long.





列聖飯篠長威脊之

石段
100段
1000歩



“I do what I wished my parents would have done: to look at me. As an outsider, I now observe myself and ask how I’m doing. My dogs are the result.”

