

Collection of Genji

New Brand for deeper understanding of Japanese culture

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To be benefited from a deeper understanding of Japanese culture abroad, it is necessary to explore new methods and approaches. For this purpose, the Agency for Cultural Affairs has determined to launch a new project to create "Japan Brand: Collection of Genji". This project attempts to make Japanese culture more visual and accessible from outside of Japan, through providing good series of arts and crafts in line with certain themes and concepts extracted from Japanese history.

The term "brand" refers to a concept or information to distinguish a product from others. Such information has a role to enhance communication between the "product" and consumers. Disseminating culture in the world made of diverse cultures, we need to create new way of presentation to show their competitive edge in a multicultural environment.

Japan has a comprehensive cultures since ancient times. In order to present them as cultural resources more accurately, we need innovative producers who can collaborate with craftsman who are masters of traditional meticulous techniques. However, the issue is how to integrate philosophy and mastery.

To facilitate this work, we decided to apply our traditional methodology of narration "MONOGATARI" in order to connect "goods" and "expression". MONOGATARI encourages imagination.

One of the most popular narration is "Genji Monogatari (源氏物語)" written by Murasaki Shikibu (紫式部) which tells us the life of imperial prince. We will use this literature as cultural inspiration to formulate this Collection, selecting products in line with certain themes extracted from this book.

Through this Collection, we hope that you will start your journey of Japanese culture behind the crafts.

Genji Monogatari: *The Tale of Genji* is a classic work of Japanese literature written by the noblewoman and intellectual courtier Lady Murasaki Shikibu in the early years of the 11th century. It is sometimes called the world's first psychological novel and it is still considered a classic. The work also illustrates a unique depiction of the lifestyles of high courtiers during the Heian period.

The first Collection of Genji "Moon at the Katsura Imperial Villa

This first series explores the imperial court lifestyle inherited in the Katsura Imperial Villa (桂離宮) and the moment of moon-viewing at the Villa.

The compound of the Katsura Imperial Villa, was constructed in the beginning of the 17th century. The central theme is "the Moon viewing."



Photo: Imperial Household Agency of Japan

Emperor Reizei (冷泉帝) wrote the following poem in the style of Waka poetry:

"Far away from imperial house and bustle of the city, in the country village of Katsura, the reflection of the moon upon the water is clear and tranquil." It really describes one's feelings through "objects" one sees. As this passage shows, this site has been known as one of the most elegant places for admiring the Moon.

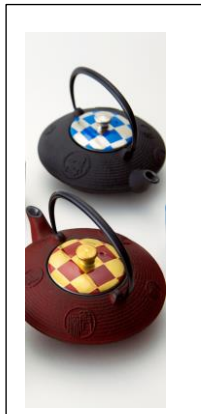


Photo: Imperial Household Agency of Japan

Its strolling style garden features teahouses, small hills, sandy shores, bridges and stone lanterns around the pond, with water drawn from the Katsura River (桂川). There are four teahouses: Shokintei(松琴亭), Shokatei (賞花亭), Shoiken (笑意軒) and Gepparo (月波楼). Another feature of the garden is the Onrindo (園林堂), a hall housing a statue of Buddha(持仏堂). Each of the tea houses is equipped with a small dock.

These teahouses served as the venue for a variety of entertainment and events, including boating, tea parties and banquets for admiring the moon. In essence, the moon at the Katsura Imperial Villa signified the essence of the Japanese aesthetics in admiring

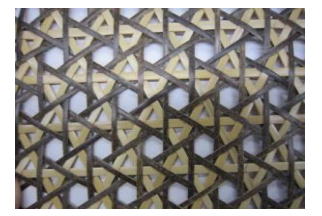
and enjoying nature. It was an ultimate form of entertainment.

Today, it is forbidden to access. Even pictures are kept secret. It still remains still intriguing. That is why we tried to show the ambiance of this Villa through this Collection.

We prepared two sets of products: dinner party set and tea party set. For dinner set, we put together light-blue plates representing the water of the pond, bamboo tray with different traditional design often used during moon-viewing, and small ceramic cups for tasting Sake. These kind of things are created by artists of Task: the Traditional Arts Super College of Kyoto).

Tea party sets: teapots of Kyoto Kiyomizu pottery (清水焼) with lids of check (Koushi) design and with moon and pine tree.

The contrast of darkness of the night and the light of the moon light is represented in black and gold foil bowls (Hakuichi, Kanazawa). The incense, "Katsura no Tsuki (桂の月)" is created by Sohitsu Hachiya (蜂谷宗宓) of the Shino school of incense "KODO (香道志野流)".



The aesthetics that underpins Japanese culture has been maintained over generations. It is said that this style was first established in the Tale of Genji. The sentiment of the moon viewing is symbolizes the Japanese aesthetics, often described with the phrase, "*Mono no Aware*." It is this aesthetics we want to communicate first to the rest of the world.

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Marketing and sale: ISETAN MITSUKOSHI