



BRAIN

Japanese Advertising, Design and Creative People



“Toraya” collaborates with designers to create the Yokan of the Future

Design firm ifs Future Laboratory, known as “Miraiken”, has brought their explorations into the lifestyle of the future together with venerable wagashi confectioner Toraya in a collaborative project called “Yokan of the Future: Yokan to Share with Excitement.”



“Shimamoyo” by Reiko Sudo. Modeled after striped textiles; modern graphical patterns emerge with each slice.



“Suehirogari” by Gwenaël Nicolas. Bite-sized yokan on sticks, spread out like a folding fan opened wide.



“Monogatari” by Yoshie Watanabe. Different images appear in the yokan depending on where it is sliced.

In creating the exhibition, Miraiken called upon textile designer Reiko Sudo, graphic designer Yoshie Watanabe, and product designer Gwenaël Nicolas to create their own original futuristic yokan, traditional jellied desserts made from sweet bean

paste. Together, they endeavored to develop yokan that not only can bring a feeling of luxury to everyday life but also to bring these confections to a much broader overseas audience.

First, the three designers met to discuss the overall concept of the project - considering a person's lifestyle, how does he or she feel when eating yokan and how can we make it more attractive? In response to these questions, the idea that emerged was to take the happy excitement of gathering around a large cake and then producing that same feeling in the world of wagashi, Japanese traditional confections. In the lifestyle of the near future, they reasoned, the value of people meeting face to face to enjoy sweets will only increase. With the digitalization of life continuing apace, real in-person communication becomes all the more important as connections between people further transcend boundaries of space and time. As such, in considering such a stimulating moment of genuine human interaction, they saw yokan right in the middle of it. Thus, the theme of the exhibition was decided: yokan to share with excitement.

At that point, together with the confectioners at Toraya, the three designers turned to the actual production of the yokan.



The yokan that Sudo envisioned is the Shimamoyo ("striped pattern"), modeled after textile patterns. When cut, the Shimamoyo reveals a modern graphical pattern, and with each slice, the stripes line up like cloth textiles.

The idea presented by Nicolas is bite-size pieces of yokan on sticks, spread out in a fan shape. It is easy to snack on, perfect for a buffet at a party. This florid and novel concept is the unique Suehirogari ("spread fan").

Watanabe's idea is the Monogatari ("story"), a yokan that tells a tale as you cut it. With colorful pieces inside, different patterns emerge depending on where it is cut. With its transparency, patterns seem to pile up on top of each other both on the

outside and inside edges of each slice, and the story you imagine while comparing the slices inspires delightful conversation.

The intriguing process of Toraya's artisans bringing the three creators' charming designs to life is also worthy of note. It took seven days to create a finished product out of Sudo's Shimamoyo; the stripe pattern in the yokan had to go through 12 rounds of trial and error to reach perfection in its ethereal uniformity.

To make Watanabe's yokan, transparent kohaku (amber) yokan was placed around domyojikan, a confection made with agar-agar and dried cooked rice. Then, the multicolored yokan was arranged precisely at delicate timing as the kohaku yokan hardened.

For Nicolas's yokan, preserving the fan shape required using hoshi-yokan, or yokan that has been dehydrated slightly. Two different colors of yokan were mixed at precise timing in order to create their delicate forms one by one and ultimately build into the fan shape.

Each of these three creations is the product of the concentrated skill and wisdom for the craft that Toraya has accumulated over its long history, the fruit of their artisans' latest endeavor. In this way, they have built on nearly 500 years of history in a brand-new venture, working proactively to join forces with outside contributors. These efforts to continue to refine both techniques and sensibilities are sustaining the venerable brand well into the future.



"Yokan of the Future: Yokan to Share with Excitement" on view at Toraya Tokyo Midtown. During the exhibition, a limited number of these yokan were available for sale.

Translated by Alexander Michaelson

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#toraya #Japan #wagashi #reiko sudo #gwenaël nicolas #yoshie watanabe #kigi

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