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Japanese colour & Design: A study of its influence on contemporary lifestyle

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Abstract

Japan is home to several cultural traditions. Many of them have been defined by their textiles - especially garments and home furnishings. Japanese textiles have a rich textile history and are world-famous for their intricate design and colour schemes which still retain their original style and technique. Kimono, the national costume of Japan has been in use for several centuries and heavily influenced by Chinese culture. They vary in fabric, design, colour and occasion. These have been adapted to suit contemporary needs and taste. An interesting application of these fabrics is found in home furnishing and the current trend involves Zen Buddhist motifs which instill a sense of calm and peace into the surroundings. The choice of colours and designs are greatly inspired by Thangka paintings. Textiles have always been the warp and weft of our family, which is in the trade for almost a century - spanning three generations. Naturally I developed an interest in combining materials and design to suit a variety of lifestyles. What began as a casual study has blossomed into a passion that seeks to explore traditions and cultures, bringing in elements that tastefully enrich the fabric of life. This paper seeks to study the influence of Japanese colour and design on contemporary life to suit a range of tastes and preferences.

Key words: Kimono, Home Furnishing, Fabric, Design, Colour, Zen Buddhism

1. Japanese color and design: A study of its influence on contemporary lifestyle

Japan is home to several perceptible and untainted cultural traditions. As with many cultures and heritage throughout the world, many Japanese traditions have been defined by their textiles; especially their fabrics and cloths. One that has elucidated Japan for centuries is the art of Textile production. It's so unrevealing that a country as culturally diverse and alluring as Japan has an equally detailed textile history to match. Japanese textiles are world-famous for their intricate design and beautiful color palettes, which have been making headway for centuries, and yet still retain much to their original style and technique. Speaking of Japanese culture, a majority of people may picture things like "Samurai", tea ceremonies and gardens with cherry blossoms, but as a Fashion Designer what impresses me is the Japanese garment called the "Kimono". The style, colour, motif and shape of the garment effectively depict the tradition and culture of Japan and at the same time also provides personalized information about an individual. However, the kimono is just one form of the rich variety of Japanese textiles - an art practiced ever since the first people settled on the islands, about 14,000 years ago. That's very long established indeed!

2. An introduction to the Japanese "Kimono"

In the minds of many people considering a trip to Japan, one of the exemplary icons of this beautiful country is its national costume, the "Kimono". This has been there for hundreds of years and continues to be an enduring image depicting Japanese culture. A glimpse into the history of this lovely garment and how it maintains its popularity in Japan - although most people cannot even wear it themselves!

What is a Kimono?

The Kimono is believed to be heavily influenced by Chinese culture - the silk garments worn by the Wu Dynasty in the 3rd century AD. Kimono in Japan appeared quite contrasting than how we see them today. During the Heian Period, in the late 8th century, new techniques for making kimono were developed that were less labour intensive and produced less withered fabric. The original meaning of kimono is "things to be worn", but eventually it evolved to illustrate only the traditional garment of Japan. Kimono are made from a single length of cloth called "Tanmono", about 36-42 cm wide and 12 meters long. The style varies only imperceptibly between men and women - mainly in the sleeves, which are generally longer for women, providing a more rhythmic appearance.



Courtesy: <https://www.tsunagujapan.com/the-appealing-culture-of-the-japanese-kimono/>;
<https://www.etsy.com/market/tanmono>

Though many believe that real kimono are made only from silk, modern kimonos are made from a variety of fabrics including cotton, wool, linen and even polyester. Silk was premeditated as the ideal kimono fabric, and even many people still desire to own a silk kimono, but they are difficult to be washed and cared for. There are many different styles of silk produced in different regions of Japan. Some of them can't be recognized as silk even if observed closely!

Styles of Kimono

Kimono tend to be more popular with women than men and probably for good reason. Men's styles tend to be conventional in both colors and patterns. Mostly, men's kimono are found in solid colors - especially brown, blue, or grey with obi to bind them. Only recently have some modern kimono manufacturers started speculating with resolute styles for young men in an effort to invigorate kimono as men's fashion. Women have always had a greater range to choose from. Kimono patterns and colours are alienated closely to the seasons and hence only certain colors and patterns are appropriate depending on the time of the year. Blue may be one's favourite colour, but blue is considered a summer colour so kimono traditionalists would calmly frown on one wearing a blue kimono in Spring. This may be moderately responsible for the decline in wearing kimono as women find it difficult and expensive to adhere to the unwritten rules. Favourably, some modern kimono companies are trying to reinvent the kimono to break out of these stereotypes, creating modern patterning that aren't fixed to any particular season.



Courtesy: <https://iamaileen.com/how-to-rent-japanese-kimono-rental-day-asakusa-tokyo/>

Besides a greater spectrum of colors, women also have a large variety of kimono types to choose from. Although the primary shape of the kimono is standard, fabrics and patterns can mutate extensively even within a single season. Some kimono are also made for special occasions or category of professions. Kimono with normal length sleeves come in different types for different occasions. **“Komon” are the most casual type of kimono**, usually covered with a repeating pattern and made from cotton or some lighter, less expensive material. This was the typical wear of Japanese women before Western clothes became popular in the 20th century. **“Iromuji” are solid colored kimono** typically used in tea

ceremonies and other semi-formal events. Luminous colors are reserved for younger women and women are sometimes reprimanded for wearing a color that is not age-appropriate.



Courtesy: <http://maihanami.blogspot.com/2013/11/types-of-kimono-04.html>; <https://jvb.com.vn/dat-nuoc-nhat-ban/kimono-net-dep-truyen-thong-cua-nhat-ban/>

“**Houmongi**” are more formal kimono, often dyed with patterns resembling paintings that flow over the shoulder and sleeves or below the waist to the hemline. These are the “party” kimono, meant to be worn during fancy events.

“**Tomesode**” are the most formal non-wedding kimono. They are dyed or embroidered with the family crest in 3 or 5 locations on the sleeves and the center back below the neckline. Like Houmongi, they are decorated with complex dyed or embroidered patterns, sometimes with real gold thread. Married women wear black tomesode while unmarried women can wear tomesode in a variety of colors.



Courtesy: <https://kyotokimono-rental.com/en/english-blog/kimono-for-wedding-ceremony-tomesode-houmongi.html>; <https://wafuku.me/en/portfolio/kimonostores/attachment/furisode-kimono-pic5>; <https://japantoday.com/category/features/new-products/Stylish-Disney-summer-yukatas>

Kimono with the longest sleeves are called “Furisode” and are generally only worn by young girls and unmarried women. These are also often worn by the Maiko sometimes seen hurrying through the streets of Kyoto, or more often by tourists dressing up like them. The most expensive Furisode are made from silk though polyester Furisode are common as rental kimono. Girls wear Furisode on the Coming of Age Day in January and at graduation ceremonies from high school or university. They are also sometimes worn for pre-wedding or engagement photos.

There are a number of other kimono types used for very specific occasions such as wedding ceremonies and traditional dance. Are Yukata Considered Kimono?

Indeed, “**Yukata**” are summer kimonos made of cotton or linen, popular due to their comfort in the humid summer weather and ease of inserting on. Unlike kimono, yukata doesn’t require extra layers of special undergarments. You can wear them right over your normal undergarments (or even shorts and camisoles) and the obi can be tied in a variety of ways ranging from extremely uncomplicated to passably difficult.

Are Kimono Popular in Japan?

Despite the railing created by the traditional rules of wearing kimono and the steep learning curve in dressing one’s self, kimono have been making a bit of resurgence in modern Japan.

There are a number of factors driving the revival of kimono in Japan. One is obviously the presence of synthetic materials like polyester. This enables people to wash their own kimono instead of sending out to an expensive silk cleaner, and the maintenance is much easier as polyester does not wrinkle easily. However, synthetic fibre kimono has been around for decades and that alone has not created a strong revival in wearing kimono in Japan.

A more compelling reason for the revival is a new demeanour about kimono from the companies making them. For centuries, kimono companies catered only to their wealthy, older generation of customers, to whom they could sell kimono costing as much as a new automobile. In recent years, the number of customers willing to spend abundantly on kimono has dwindled to the point that they can no longer survive on these types of clientele.



Courtesy: <https://in.pinterest.com/a0986253536/> 傳統服飾전통-의류 <https://www.radiotoday.com.au/radio-lessons-66-zen-buddhism/>

The strong cultural similarities between India and Japan made me give life to the emotions that I carried within to create a line on Thematic Furnishing based on Zen Philosophy for a studio apartment.

What is Zen Buddhism?

Zen is the Japanese improvement of the school of Mahayana Buddhism that started in China as Chan Buddhism. While Zen practitioners trace their credence to India, it highlights on the toss-up of precipitous enlightenment and a close connection with nature.

Shunryu Suzuki quotes Zen as: *“Zen is not some kind of excitement, but concentration on our usual everyday routine.”*

The life of a techie involves a rugged ambience, demanding work pressures and elevated stress levels; To balance this, his home should be a place where his mind can relax and settle down into a space of peace and calm.; The concept of Zen Philosophy plays a significant role in achieving this; The Zen inspired way of life is reflected in the simplicity, minimalistic use, natural materials, patterns of light and space, etc. The design has an especially soothing feel; Buddha prints on rubberized paper with appropriate backdrops have been selected for the cushion covers; The table cloth and backrest for chairs in the hall has a visual appeal that reflects the health benefits of a simple meal; Peepal leaf motifs on the curtains add a special light and shade effect; The Bolster cover, Pillow cases, Bed sheets and Duvet are especially meant for resting and stylized Bodhi tree motifs would be the perfect choice;

Techniques Employed: Pre fitted Metal Eyelet Curtain; Dining Chair Slipcover using patterned pieces; Round Tablecloth for Dining table; Mitered corners for Pillow cases; Cross binding for Cushion covers; Sublimation printing techniques for Bolster covers and Duvet; Hand painted rubberized Buddha print on Cushion covers

Target Customer (Profile): Theme: Zen Buddhism; Collection Name: Moksh; Collection Details: Color: Off-White, Cream, Burnt Sienna/Umbre, and Brown Ochre Fabric: Ondario {Jute finish fabric}; Tissue sheer stripe; Synchronsilk Mercerized cotton, and Handloom cotton; Space: Studio apartment; Potential Market: International; Price Range: 250 \$

Inspiration Board



List Of Articles: Curtain; Round table cover for dining table; Dining chair slipcover; Cushion covers for living and bedroom; Bed spread; Duvet; Pillow cases; Bolster covers



The Bedroom & Side View of The Bedroom



A View Towards the Balcony:

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