

# **From Wabi-Sabi to Japanese Design**

Gelek Samphel  
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**Wabi-Sabi:** An integral part of Japanese aesthetic consciousness and generally refers to simple and quiet.



# Wabi-Sabi



**“Wabi”** is said to be defined as “rustic simplicity” or “understated elegance” with a focus on a less-is-more mentality.

**“Sabi”** is translated to “taking pleasure in the imperfect.”

**A kind of beauty that doesn't deliberately highlight the decoration and appearance, emphasizes the material inner simplicity, and can withstand the test of time.**



## There are seven aesthetic principles in achieving **Wabi-Sabi**:

**Fukinsei** — asymmetry or irregularity

**Kanso** — simplicity

**Kokou** — austere

**Shizen** — naturalness without pretense

**Yugen** — subtle profound

**Datsuzoku** — unworldly

**Seijaku** — tranquility

**Fukinsei** — asymmetry or irregularity



Yasuhiro Suzuki | **Cabbage Bowl**

**Asymmetry, odd numbers, irregularity, unevenness, imbalance is used as a denial of perfection as perfection and symmetry does not occur in nature.**

**Kanso** — simplicity



Mamiko Wada | Ceramic Vases

**Simple things can naturally express their true side. Neat, clean and not complicated.**

**Kokou** — austere



Basic, weathered bare essentials that are aged and un-sensuous. **Evokes sternness, forbiddance, maturity and weight.**

Masayuki Kurokawa | **Kettle**

**Shizen** — naturalness



**Raw, natural and unforced creativity without pretence. True naturalness is to negate the naive and accidental.**

John Procaro | **Lamps**

**Yugen** — subtle profound



Keisuke Fujiwara | **Flower Vase**

**Suggest and not reveal layers of meaning hidden within. Invisible to the casual eye and avoiding the obvious.**

**Datsuzoku** — unworldly



**Transcendence of conventional and traditional.  
Free from the bondage of laws and restrictions.  
True creativity.**

Nendo | **Seven Doors**

**Seijaku** — tranquility



Silence and calm, blissful solitude. **Absence of disturbance and noise from one's mind, body and surroundings**

Nendo | **Paper Lamp**



Simply put, it refers to an intuitive way of life, emphasizing the discovery of **beauty in imperfections and accepting the natural cycle of life and death.**

A brand that clearly represents the Japanese Wabi Sabi culture is **MUJI**



No-Brand Quality Goods.

MUJI  
無印良品

MUJI appeared in the early 1980s when the material began to flood, by directly using simple materials such as cardboard boxes and aluminum and plastic, the Japanese aesthetics that were gradually lost by the Japanese were revived in modern times.

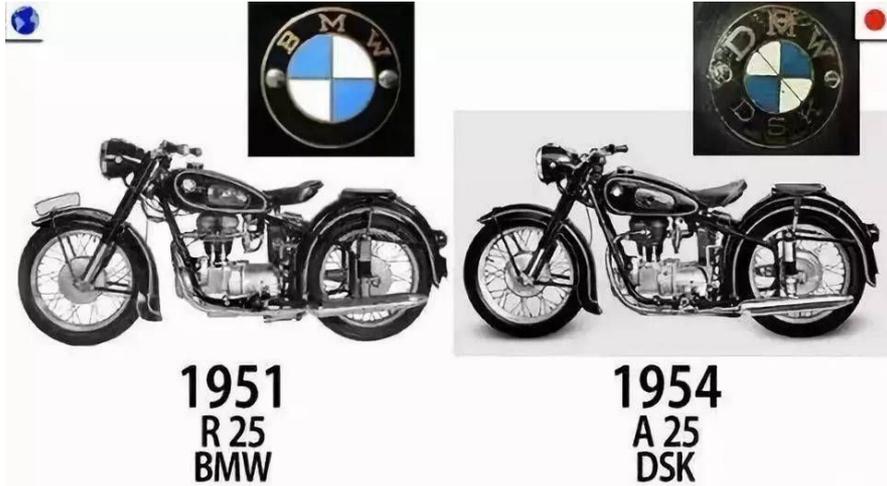




It stands no reason that Japanese design can achieve this step today. It is poor in resources and small in size. After the defeat, the land was deserted. **people are starving, let alone cultivate design and aesthetic awareness.**

At that time, workers low wages uses unmature machines to produce knock-offs. **“Made in Japan” was synonymous with cheap and low quality.**

## "Design Theft"



After the Second World War, the Japanese manufacturing industry, eager to revive the economy, began to make extensive copying of European and American designs. From transportation and home appliances, brand identification and even direct imitation, **Japan has also been criticized and questioned internationally for the misappropriation of exported products.**



1974  
Magna Doodle



1977  
せんせい



1974  
Magna Doodle



1977  
せんせい



1950  
Mike  
Birdc Eve



1951  
ホコ  
不二家



1941  
M&M's  
Milk Chocolate



1961  
Marble  
chocolate



1936  
zeiss  
contax II



1954  
Nikon SII



1960  
The Beatles



1964  
The Tokyo Beatles



1938  
Superman  
DC Comics



1958  
Rocketman  
Shigeru Mizuki



1926  
Z.ikon



1946  
Nikon



Musti  
Ray  
Goossens  
1945



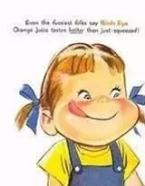
Miffy  
Dick Bruna  
1955



Hello Kitty  
Yuko Shimizu  
(Sanrio Co.)  
1974



Cathy  
Sanrio  
1976



1949  
Merry Birds Eye



1950  
ベコ 不二家



1927  
Monitor Top  
Refrigerator  
GE



1930  
国産初冷蔵庫  
TOSHIBA



1935  
Leica IIIa



1941  
Seiki's Nippon



Renault Espace

Renault Espace



Mini Cooper

Mini Gino



Dodge Coronet RT

Skyline GTR

1928  
Electric Cleaner  
GE



1931  
国産初掃除機  
TOSHIBA



Lancia Fulvia

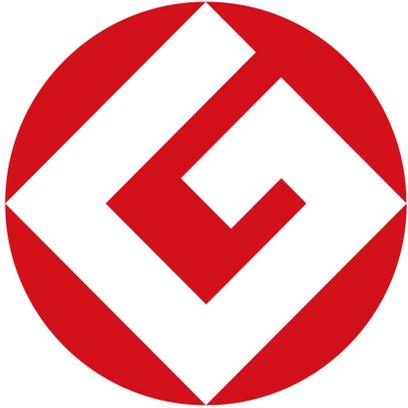


Nissan Silvia



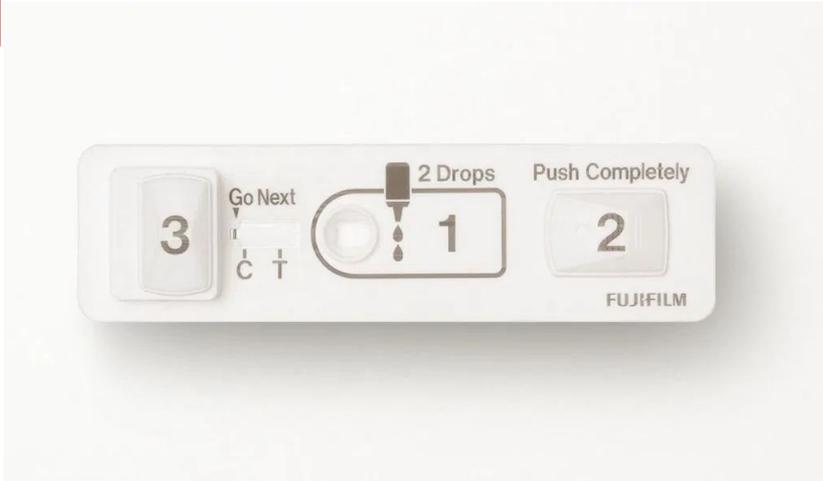
Since Japan is an island country and its natural resources are relatively scarce, at this time, the quality of the design is directly related to the economic lifeline of the country, so that **Japanese design has attracted the attention of the government.**

## “Good Design Award”



In order to solve the design misappropriation problem, Japan, *Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry* (MITI) established “Good Design Award” in 1957 , the award was established in the belief of **“good design is essential and indispensable to everyday life of people after the Pacific war, and that the good design shall give people prosperous lives through the eminent power of good designs.”**

## “Good Design Award”



FUJIFILM corporation's 'rapid tuberculosis diagnostic kit' has won the grand award of the GOOD DESIGN award 2019,

*organized by the japan institute of design promotion. chosen out of 1,420 winners, the grand award is granted to a product with the most outstanding design.*

Although, the award may be difficult to reverse the industry's habits, but the original design gets more attention. At the same time, Japanese companies began to add design-related departments. Under this background, the Good Design Award gradually won the support of manufacturers. From the late 1960s, the number of participants began to increase. **The winning work is regarded as a symbol of "high-quality goods".**

## The Education of Next Generation



The country attaches great importance to children's design education and calls on children to **participate in design from an early age and broaden their thinking. Japan started aesthetic education from elementary school**, and design education courses were opened in the fourth grade.

*Japan NHK TV station created this 15-minute short tv program "Design Ah!" " uses the things that are easily overlooked in the life scene to analyze the design principles.*

## Design Revival Movement.



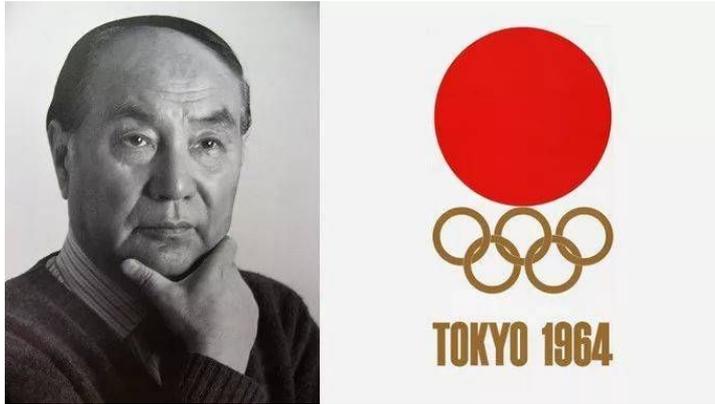
"Japan Advertising Artists Club" was established in Tokyo in June 1951 as Japan's first national design group after the war. They held a series of exhibitions and events throughout Japan, and many associations were established afterwards, **which constituted a vigorous post-war design revival movement.**

**It conveyed a message to the general audience through the exhibition, that is, "To achieve the revival of Japan, design is indispensable"**



**Japan is a country that is good at absorbing the essence of foreign civilization and combines its own cultural characteristics to develop a design that is distinguishable.**

## Nippon Design Center



**Nippon Design Center (NDC) was officially established in March 1960.**

**it gathered a large number of master designers, copywriters and photographers in Japan.**

**At the Tokyo Olympics in 1964, NDC showed its talents. Yusaku Kamekura's (one of the founders of modern Japanese graphic design) **posters are highly modern, yet without losing the symbolism and simplicity of traditional Japanese aesthetics.****

## Creativity and innovation



The first use of male and female icons on bathroom doors was also originated from the Tokyo Olympics. Considering that many foreigners are coming to watch the game, **they have invented icons that everyone understands and will continue to use them.**



**The impact of the environment on people is subtle, Japan is able to incorporate design into people's daily life, letting its citizens to have a good aesthetic awareness, and let good design become a part of people's lives.**

**Citizens grew up in such an environment that pays attention to good design, which in turn provides a guarantee for Japanese design standards.**

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Wabi Sabi and Zen Aesthetics in User Interface Design  
Zac Taschdjian -  
<https://medium.com/@ZacTaschdjian/wabi-sabi-and-zen-aesthetics-in-user-interface-design-55a243c5fc43>