

Summary of Japanese language books/articles

KOGEI 2011

This volume provides an overview of Japanese arts and crafts including pottery and explains how new cultural importance was created in Japanese arts and crafts on two occasions. The first was in the sixteenth century when Sen no Rikyu outlined his style of *chanoyu* 'the Japanese way of tea', and established the unique aesthetic value of *wabi-sabi* 'quiet simplicity and subdued refinement'. The second was in the nineteenth century, the *mingei* 'folk craft' movement advocated by Muneyoshi Yanagi also known as Soetsu Yanagi. A time when items for everyday use created by relatively unknown artisans came into the limelight. Yanagi spread the beauty of this *mingei* overseas together with others such as Bernard Leach and Shoji Hamada. All these men transformed things of little value into things of great cultural value by motivating the world to recognize beauty in objects that until then, had not been seen as beautiful. In addition, the text summarizes the results of a questionnaire survey of Kyoto artisans including ceramic artists, clarifying how production is falling and raising the issue of a lack of successors to whom to pass on their skills. To resolve these sorts of problems, we need to create a renewal of cultural value once again, similar to the work of Sen no Rikyu and Muneyoshi Yanagi. I emphasize that this can be done by communicating to the people of the world the tradition of craftsmanship in coexistence with nature that the artisans of Japan have inherited since ancient times, and that things around us that enable us to appreciate the beauty of everyday life are themselves of immense value. This book was published in Japanese but there is an English translation.

Beauty Through the Seasons: Japanese Arts and Crafts

This book compiles a series of essays that were published every day for a year on the front page of the Kyoto Shimbun newspaper. 365 days of arts and crafts including ceramic art from the Kyoto and Shiga area are photographed with commentaries. The text explains the meaning of these items in the context of the season. Japan has four seasons and things are used in daily life in accordance with the season, repaired when they break, used throughout a lifetime and sometimes even passed on to the next generation. This book was intended to communicate this unparalleled tradition throughout the world and both Japanese and English versions have been published.

KYOTO ARTISANS

This book sheds light on the spiritual attitudes of people involved in craftsmanship by focusing on artisans and ceramic artists in the Kyoto area. Included are interviews of world-renowned pianists, poets, actresses, tea masters, and researchers who appreciate and use the things that artisans have made and questions what they admire in these objects as an attempt to clarify the philosophy behind Japanese culture that connects these creators and users at a fundamental level. This is a bilingual book written in both Japanese and English.

Yakimono soshite ikirukoto 'Pottery and Living'

In this book, I examine the life and work of world-famous ceramic artists, Ryoji Koie, Mutsuo Yanagihara, Yo Akiyama, Tsubusa Kato, and Fuku Fukumoto, and set out to reveal their philosophies toward craftsmanship as ceramic artists in relationship with the times in which they lived. In addition, I also describe the historical background and roles of Muneyoshi Yanagi, Bernard Leach, Shoji Hamada, Kenkichi Tomimoto, and Kazuo Yagi who were the leading figures behind the Japanese modern ceramic art movement becoming recognized throughout the world since the Second World War.

Mutsumi Takayanagi Exhibition

This article is a review of the first major solo exhibition of Mutsumi Takayanagi at Gallery Utsuwakan in Kyoto. At the time, she was still a relatively unknown artist, but after this solo exhibition she began to draw considerable attention. The article evaluates her technical skill and delicate touch that seems almost possessed by the supernatural, with its underlying Japanese philosophy of coexistence with nature. At the time her talent seemed so great that there was concern she might not be able to continue to produce such work, but today her work continues to glow with increasing charm and she is bringing a new breath of life into the world of Japanese ceramic art.