



Still Made by Hand

Kyoto's roots as a cultural capital reveal themselves in places that carry on the city's revered crafts and traditions—tea ceremonies, kimonos, parasols, works in pewter, bamboo, lacquer, cotton, glass, and paper—in innovative ways. BY JACKIE COOPERMAN



Hosoo

Since 1688, Hosoo has been creating some of Japan's finest textiles using hand-dyed yarn, three-dimensional weaving techniques, and ornate brocades from its headquarters in Kyoto's Nishijin textile district. What began as an obi (kimono sash) workshop remains a family-owned business, only now it sells to designers such as Chanel, Dior, and Yohji Yamamoto; debuts collections at Milan's Salone del Mobile; and makes iridescent fabric by injecting jellyfish proteins into silkworms. By appointment, Hosoo offers consultations, glimpses of its 20,000 archival patterns, and showroom tours. While it caters to fashion houses, Hosoo sells fabric starting at \$100 a foot. 752 Bishamon-cho, Kuromon-dori, Motoseiganji-Sagaru, Kamigyo-ku; www.hosoo-kyoto.com.

Daitou

Toshiyuki Ohigashi is the fourth generation of his family to run this shop near the Jonangu shrine. Daitou got its start selling futon bedding such as soft cotton gauze sheets (a queen set is \$138), and today it also stocks items like pajamas. Bleached over four days—most companies complete the process in 40 minutes—the store's special fabric keeps one cool in summer and warm in winter. The shop also happens to be certified by the Department of Sleep Medicine at Japan's Shiga University. 66-2 Yamaden, Shimomisu, Yokoaji, Fushimi-ku.

Above: Textile maker Hosoo creates its fabrics by using a 1,200-year-old Nishijin yarn-dyeing technique. *Right:* Lacquered tableware at Zohiko



Zohiko

A contemporary lacquer gallery south of the Imperial Palace, Zohiko was a purveyor to the imperial court. Its craftsmen use 16 techniques to lacquer wood, sometimes gilding it with metallic powders or applying gold in millimeter-wide lines. A set of 12 modern sake cups is the best seller. Prices range from \$26 for a lacquered bamboo dish to \$44,000 for an inkstone box. 719-1 Yohojimae-cho, Teramachi-dori, Nijo-Agaru, Nishigawa, Nakagyo-ku; zohiko.co.jp.

FROM TOP: HOSOO; ZOHIKO

Pass the Baton

A two-story designer thrift store near the Minami-za Kabuki theater, Pass the Baton opened last year to critical acclaim. The shop sells not only vintage bags (some priced as high as nearly \$18,000), 120-year-old kimonos, and antique Japanese glass, but also the latest fashions and recycled washi lanterns. Hip locals head to the bar downstairs for sake and tea-based cocktails. 77-6 Sueyoshi-cho, Higashiyama-ku.

Kyoto Design House

Located in a Tadao Ando-designed building near the Nishiki market, Kyoto Design House was founded in 2005 as a place for contemporary crafts. The bright boutique stocks hand-painted silk scarves, briefcases made from Japanese leather and wood, porcelain sake cups coated in liquid platinum, and lacquered deerskin purses stitched with gold filaments. There's always an English-speaking employee on duty; prices go up to \$2,600, though most items cost far less. 105 Fukunaga-cho, Nakagyo-ku; kyoto-dh.com.



Hitamuki

This store showcases tableware and decorative pieces by artists working with old materials. Look for thinly shaved Kurikyudo cedar lunch boxes, which protect food from humidity, and tumblers from glassblower Chie Metaka, who grinds glass on a diamond wheel before reheating it to attain remarkably smooth surfaces. Most items cost less than \$300. Teramachi-dori, Oike-Agaru, Nakagyo-ku.

Seikado

This metal-goods maker, which started out designing religious artifacts for shrines and temples, has been in business since 1838. It remains Kyoto's only pewter specialist. Working out of a studio near City Hall, five in-house artisans craft tea sets, incense holders, and chopsticks in pewter, silver, bronze, and copper. We particularly like the pewter sake cups (\$50) and silver teapots (\$3,500). Seikado also exhibits modern metal masters. 462 Myomanji-mae-cho, Teramachi-dori, Nijo-Sagaru, Nakagyo-ku; seikado.jp.



A pewterer working at Seikado. *Inset:* Seikado pewter ware. *Below left:* Crafts from Kyoto Design House. *Bottom:* Kamiji Kakimoto's wall of washi

Sekisen

Housed in a 120-year-old townhouse near Tatsumi Bridge, Sekisen is popular with collectors of antique bamboo, lotus leaf, and rattan baskets. (Prices range from \$400 to \$50,000.) Owner Michikazu Mizutani, a fifth-generation art dealer, is also an expert on regional design styles. "There are over 80 antique shops in this area, so we each do what we love best," he says. His sons Yuichiro and Masaya sell antique painted scrolls in the shop's back room. 36 Benzaiten-cho, Yamatoji-dori, Sanjo-Kudaru, Higashiyama-ku.

Kamiji Kakimoto

Founded as a bamboo business in 1716, Kamiji Kakimoto now supplies everything from origami kits to richly printed business cards. The shop, close to the Ritz-Carlton Kyoto, has a wall of rainbow-hued washi and stocks more than 10,000 varieties of paper. Among them is *aizome* (\$94 a sheet), which is made from Japanese indigo plants, and is a favorite of interior decorators. 54 Tokiwagi-cho, Teramachi-dori, Nijo-Agaru, Nakagyo-ku.



Hiyoshiya

In a tiny atelier near Hokyoji temple, Hiyoshiya's artisans produce umbrellas, lampshades, and bamboo frames. Founded 160 years ago to furnish parasols often used for tea ceremonies, Hiyoshiya has adapted well to the times—its lampshades hang in stylish hotels, and its new line of compact umbrellas feature waterproof bioplastic derived from sugarcane. Prices range from \$60 to \$3,600. 546 Dodo-cho, Horikawa Teranouchi-Higashi-Iru, Kamigyo-ku; wagasa.com.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: SEIKADO CO. LTD. (2); KAMIJI KAKIMOTO; KYOTO DESIGN HOUSE (10)