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Born in Tokyo in 1967, artist Mariko Mori balances her time between London and New York. Originally studying fashion in Japan, she moved to London in 1989 to attend the prestigious Chelsea College of Art and Design. Her body of work, spanning over 20 years, explores universal questions at the intersection of life, death, reality and technology. She first came to prominence with her large-scale photographic self-portraits but has since used different media including video, installations, sculpture and performance.







Your atelier is not easily accessible from the main street of Harajuku, is there a particular reason to have your office here?

KUNIHICO MORINAGA: I wanted to create my work in a space which didn't have immediate access through the thoroughfare of a fashion district, although we are in close proximity to the main fashion centres, Harajuku and Aoyama.

How did you get into fashion design?

I always liked clothes but I wasn't particularly interested in making them. However, seeing one fashion show changed my mindset. The fashion show took place in one of the train compartments of a moving train. Instead of models walking on the catwalk, which is the usual norm for fashion shows, models were walking through the train cabin. Visitors were watching the show inside the cabin as the train passed by residential districts with the backdrop of houses and trees seen from the window. It was very different from the fashion shows I know. I wasn't seeing the fashion within the 'set', instead fashion was being incorporated into ordinary life. That scenery, of fashion coming into our daily life, really changed my way of seeing fashion.

The clothes you make are certainly not ordinary.

I am not trying to make new clothes; I just want to make clothes in a new way from a new perspective.

Is that the reason you collaborated with digital creator Daito Manabe of Rhizomatiks?

I wanted to bring in elements that are normally ousted from fashion, as I think the fashion industry still holds a sense of exclusivity. By incorporating fields like digital art or media art as expressions of our current time, I thought I could add a new dimension to fashion.

Then what do you want to pursue through your clothes?

I am not intending to bring elegance to my clothes. There are several ways to see the beauty in clothes, whether it is through the silhouette or the material of the garment. I want to find out how beauty can be achieved through means that are not normally associated with beauty. I am always questioning what is believed to be the norm, such as the measurement. Why does the length of the sleeves have to be this length? Why does the width of the waist have to be this width? Is this the set standard for beauty?

So that is how you came up with disproportioned clothes – in our eyes?

Yes. I am not trying to create beauty through the shape or form of clothes. To me, beauty is in concepts that break the norm within scale or measurements and stir up viewers' emotions. That is what I pursue in my creation.

How does your day usually start?

When I come in, I start up the computer first, but most of the actual creating takes place in my notebook. I write down phrases and words that come to mind as a key concept to tell the story. For example, the past collection had a theme of noise, so I started to think 'what is noise?' I wrote down words that relate to it, such as 'cutting data', 'dispersing information' or 'information that can't be visualised'. From there I began to think about how clothes could contain information, rather than dispersing information, maybe coded clothes... these words were then formed into sentences. We might think noise doesn't carry significant information, but I want to change that preconception. How about noise with meaning? How can I make clothes that visualise that? I continue to look for other inspirations, such as noise on a television screen. This physical process of writing down what comes to mind is important in my creation process. I write on one side of the notebook, and I draw on the other side of the notebook. When the words and the images meet, I know it is time for the collection to come to life.

anrealage.com



opposite This monochrome photo is used on the staff's business cards.

Your office is located in a quiet residential block off from the busy Harajuku and Shinjuku areas. Why did you choose this location?

MASAMICHI KATAYAMA: We have been in this space since 2009. It spans three stories above ground level and two stories underground, due to the building regulations around this district. I created the building from scratch, so every detail is designed to meet my needs. The location is convenient – within walking distance from Harajuku and close to Shibuya and Shinjuku. It's a good environment to stay well-informed about what is happening. I expect to stay here for a while as I hope to work until I am at least 60 years old.

How does your day start?

We start at 9.00 sharp. When I am going to the office, I drive from my house, which takes around 45 minutes. The time spent driving allows me to reflect on ongoing projects, so in fact you could say that my day starts gradually while I am driving. Once I am in the office, I am inundated with meetings both in and out of the company.

How are your meetings organised?

There are about 30 people in the office. They are designers, project managers, a modelling team, a PR director, a PA (for my university schedule as I am professor at the Art University) and finance personnel. Meetings take place in two meeting rooms in the building. When I sit in one of the meeting rooms, members of staff walk in and out alternatively to update me on the current situation.

What is the process of designing and coordinating projects in the office?

I make the initial, core concept for any project and discuss it with project members, welcoming their ideas. Visual sources of inspiration and concept sketches are presented for discussion on the steel wall in the conference room that I also designed for this specific purpose. After all the ideas, hints and inspiration are placed on the steel wall, I start to pare down things that seem to be inappropriate. The process is like making a sculpture. We know the best outcome is there, but we just have to find it. It takes time, but we scrap and build our ideas until we feel it is the best. Once the presentation is approved and the design is fixed, project members work on detailed drawings and so on and update me during meetings where I review the overall design constantly and suggest changes. We work as a team until the end. I have my room upstairs but I hardly sit there. The conference room is where we create.

Do your clients come to visit the office?

Most of our clients visit our office. We also offer office tours to give them a better sense of who we are. I also visit the client's office to learn about their company, brand and history. Upon presenting the design, we always make a model. Depending on its size and the schedule, we discuss where the presentation takes place. If it takes place overseas, we bring a model rescue kit and fix the broken parts that occur during long distance travels.

You create such intricate and immaculate maquettes. Why do you put so much effort into them?

It is an important part of our design process – before the presentation. With clothes it is possible to do a fitting before production. However, with a space it is impossible to test it on a 1:1 scale. That is why we make a model. We verify if our concept and design works in a space. We create updated models during the process, sometimes even going back to the blank page. We are not making models for the purpose of a presentation but we need it for the design process. Afterwards we show it to our clients. As far as possible, the model has the same features as the actual design, including material, colours and textures. We also include products if it is a retail store.

What do you respect most about Japanese mentality?

I appreciate the Japanese coinage of *wa*, which is synonymous with all things that are Japanese. Such as Japanese cuisine: *wa shoku*. *Wa* can also be read as *aeru* in Japanese, meaning to fuse different elements. From ancient days, Japan respected and admired other civilisations and happily incorporated other influences into their own. Sometimes those influences were expressed in the form of the direct copying of another culture, but often the concepts were well understood, evolved to their standard and blended together – *aeru* is creating original Japanese culture, from fashion to architecture. I think this idea is inherent in Japanese creativity, just like the continuous sharpening of ideas.

wonder-wall.com

previous spread Katayama has his own little action figure.

opposite A beautiful garden on the second floor makes for a great place to have lunches.



top The airvase can be moulded into a dish, bowl or vase. The thin and lightweight paper gives strength and resistance while the colours on each side create changing impressions when viewing it from different angles.

bottom The miniature model of House in Kohoku, made of concrete.

opposite Right in front of the entrance is a table displaying architectural and product models of projects in progress.



‘When the tsunami hit, these guys went into the village to teach the people how to make furniture so the villagers could earn money, giving their own designs away’

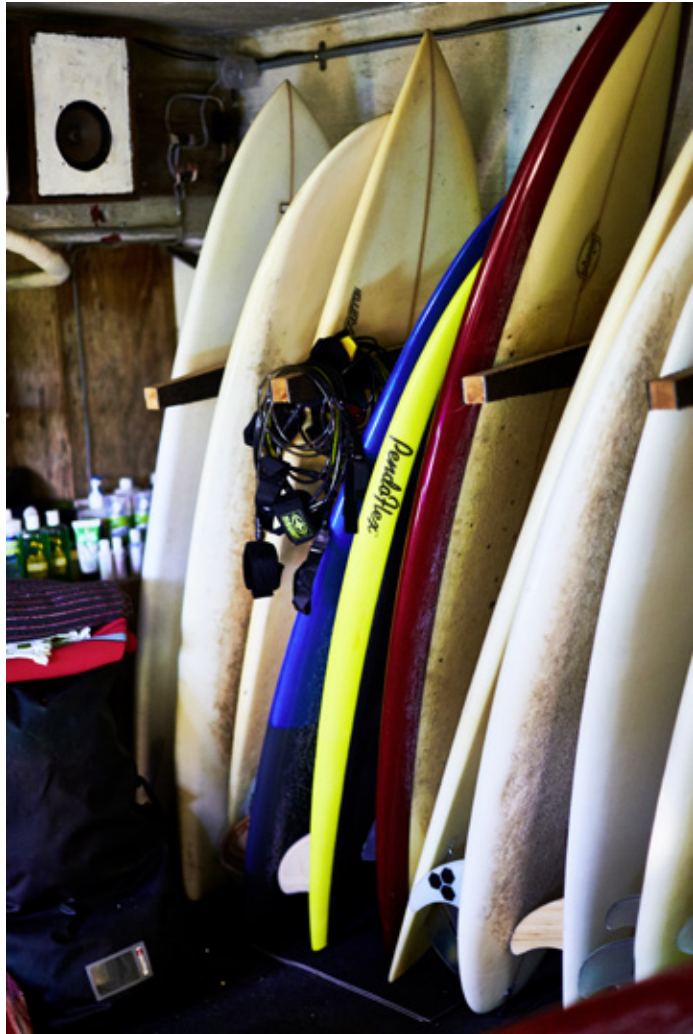
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opposite His favourite surf spot, Chojagasaki in Hayama, is only a five-minute drive from his home. Mount Fuji can be seen in the background.

top Kumagai has been collecting sunglasses since he was young. He also collaborated with Stussy, Illesteva and Oliver Peoples on several sunglasses.

bottom Bought at beach towns all over the world, a few dozen surfboards are lined up in this dedicated room.









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Born in 1941, Tadao Ando founded his architectural firm, Tadao Ando Architect & Associates in his hometown of Osaka, in 1969. Completely self-taught, Ando's approach to architecture stems from his engagement with nature, linking international Modernism to Japanese traditional aesthetics. In his designs, his renowned smooth concrete structures complement his sensibility to space and light, harmonising one another as if the light itself dances within the renowned concrete forms. In 1995, Tadao Ando was awarded Laureate of the Pritzker Architecture Prize for accomplishing an extraordinary body of architectural work both in Japan and internationally.



‘Such an unassuming space for such a prolific artist, until you knew where to look’

PAUL BARBERA



previous spread The golden-brass edition of the Water Block had very recently been exhibited at the Golden Pavilion Temple in Kyoto.

opposite top The wooden beams in the meeting room are adorned by signatures of well-known visitors, such as Ingo Maurer and Ross Lovegrove.