

PROJECT 1

Japan House, London

Welcome to Japan, without any of the clichés and stereotypes. The London version in an international series has been designed by Katayama Masamichi, of Wonderwall, aiming to create a view that references Japan's deep-rooted concepts

JAPANESE culture has always been elusive, shrouded in misconceptions and stereotypes. The phrase conjures images in the mind of iconic animations, picture-perfect scenes of Mount Fuji and the conspicuous appearance of the geisha. Historical and media accounts of life in Japan continue to perpetuate these ready-made images, with Wes Anderson's recent film *Isle of Dogs* coming under fire for subscribing to this stereotypical model of Japanese culture.

Borne out of this misconception, as it leaves footprints of cultural fictions across the globe, came the project Japan House. With a vision to educate and facilitate a more nuanced understanding of life in Japan, it is creating a number of hubs in major global cities. London is the third city to host Japan House. Through performance, food and drink, retail, exhibitions and a library, Japan House London will bring the city a unique, authentic insight into Japanese culture.

The cultural hub will be a moment for visitors to reflect not on what they know and perceive Japan to be, but what they are yet to know about it. It provides space to realise how little they knew of the complex nation. Chief creative director of the global Japan House project, Hara Kenya says: 'For people who have not thought about Japan, for those who think they do, and for Japanese people themselves, I hope that at each encounter with Japan House there will be fresh discovery.'

In order to fulfil this ambitious proposition, Japan House London needed an architect who could build this idea. In Katayama Masamichi, principal of Wonderwall, it found a shared vision and the potential to make this a reality. >

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Previous page The Akira restaurant at the Japan House London is based on the tradition of the doma

Above The shop, where the lines between retail and gallery are blurred, introduces Japanese products, their provenance and the designers and artists who make them

Below Take-away drinks and snacks bar at the entrance to Japan House, The Stand is where to try authentic Japanese hot and cold drinks and food

Masamichi says of the design for Japan House London that he wanted to break away from the conventional stereotypes of Japan, adding that 'I wanted to show something more than that, show that we have something original and more authentic which has developed throughout the history of Japan.'

The design of Japan House London is built around the idea of the 'void' and 'emptiness'. In Japanese culture, a void is not empty space but open space. Referred to as 'Ma', the idea is temporal. It is can be illustrated by the pauses in a conversation. Although they are perceived as silences, they can say a lot. 'Ma' asks the observer to see spaces between objects for what they provide and not the gaps they leave. This spaciousness is synonymous with Japanese design and was popularised by German architect, Bruno Taut, after visiting the Katsura Imperial Villa in Kyoto in the Thirties.

Masamichi noted how this was influential in his design for Japan House London, saying 'Bruno Taut mentioned the idea of how relationships are important in the creation of space. When he went to the Imperial Villa he thought about what is important in creating the space – the relationship between people and things.' He continues: 'I conceived Japan House London as something that can create this totality of space – which incorporates the visitors, the events and the food, the retail – all these factors strive for totality.'

Central to the space is a monumental steel staircase, wrapping around a glass tube lift. This connection provides openness between the three floors, through a void that provides a moment to pause. It is an exemplar of the 'Ma' notion. It was so important to the design that it was custom-made in Japan and shipped to London, where it was assembled piece by piece.

Masamichi's design for the restaurant is rooted in the Japanese space, doma. In Japanese houses, where you must take off your shoes to enter, the doma is the area between the indoor and outdoors that forms a threshold. Visitors can keep their shoes on here and are allowed a space to gather and talk. A doma usually has a kitchen, which creates a sensual experience of sights, sounds and smells. A grill will crackle in the background of neighbours chatting and laughing against the warmth of a fire. Japan House London's restaurant contextualises this idea. 'You can see the sake bar and you can come in and have a chat there. Then you can come into the restaurant and from there see the kitchen where you can see and hear the Japanese barbecue,' Masamichi

PROJECT INFO

Interior Designer
Wonderwall
wonder-wall.com





Top The exhibition space, with the Japan House London's inaugural show of work by Sou Fujimoto

Above KI's Opt4 chairs are used in The Hall

Right In The Hall, stacking Opt 4 chairs enable the space to be flexible

says: The idea is ingrained in a sense of community and the blurring of the public and private space.

Away from the main restaurant, is a traditional tatami room. Thick, woven straw tatami mats, from where the room takes its name, line the floor. The windowless enclosure is offered as a tranquil, private dining room, hidden away from the busy main space.

The shop at Japan House London encompasses the entire ground floor. It presents a carefully curated selection of Japanese products, presented in a gallery format that celebrates the artists and designers behind them, fixing them into the historical and social context that Japan House seeks to celebrate.

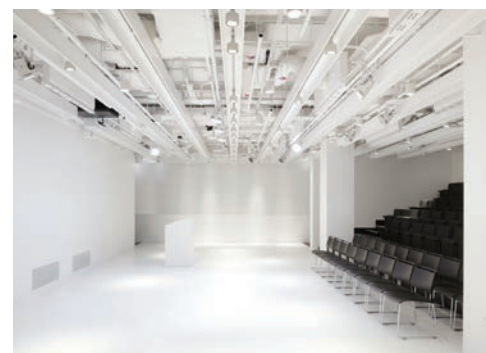
Haba Yoshitaka of BACH has curated a library at Japan House London that provides a revolutionary book display, in an increasingly digital world, intended to encourage visitors to pick up and engage with the books. The book display will change periodically, while the most recent display is around the theme of Japan's 'mingei' folk art movement that developed in the Twenties.

On the lower ground floor is the exhibition space. Being inaugurated by Sou Fujimoto's Futures of the Future exhibition, the gallery celebrated not what the Japanese architect did – but what he didn't do. It reflected on his unrealised works, alongside a few of his seminal structures, such as the 2013 Serpentine Pavilion. The gallery's second exhibition, The Biology of Metal: Metal Craftsmanship in Tsubame-Sanjo, which opened in September, delves into a lesser-known aspect of Japanese design. It looks at the northern Japanese district

home to the small metalworking factories and workshops that distribute their products and skills around the world – from the majority of Japan's specialist cutlery to the metal-polishing techniques used to create Apple's iPod casings.

Alongside the extensive gallery and library space is The Hall. The open room provides flexibility to deliver lectures, seminars and shows in conjunction with the exhibitions held in the main gallery space. The Hall is a blank canvas, made practical by KI's Opt4 chairs – a simple, refined chair which allows high-density stacking, so the space can be immediately transformed.

The beauty in this project isn't in one aspect alone. It isn't in the restaurant, the shop, the library, the exhibition space or even in the serene tatami room. Japan House London is beautiful in the entirety of the project – so much more than just a sum of its parts. Masamichi put it best when asked what his favourite aspect of the design was he remarked, 'I would say the entire space'. **FX**



KEY SUPPLIERS

Flooring

Fukasawa Naoto
naotofukasawa.com
George Nakashima
nakashimawoodworker.com
Jasper Morrison
jaspermorrison.com

Toilets

TOTO
gb.toto.com

Services

Mitsubishi Electric
mitsubishielectric.com
Daikin
daikin.co.uk
Secom
secom.plc.uk
Facit
facitdatasystems.com

Kitchen and Restaurant Fit Out

EDO
edoconstruction.com

Screens and Projectors

Panasonic
panasonic.com

Kawara Tiles

Mihara
awaji-tiles.jp

Staircase

Kikukawa
kikukawa.com



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Office news

Method Recycling bins unveiled in UK market

Method Recycling, the company behind the design-led recycling bins, is launching in the UK. The products, which have won several design awards in New Zealand, are already being used by a select few UK businesses including several architects practices.

The adaptable recycling stations, which feature containers for glass, organics, paper, landfill and mixed recycling, move or grow as a company's needs change while the colours complement the office design. The company was founded by product and graphic designers, India and Steven Korner, so a strong visual design is central to the product's vision.

'When we were selling bins, liners and recycling labels to businesses across New Zealand we would consistently see beautiful modern offices with unattractive recycling systems, or bins hidden away in cupboards,' explains Steve Korner. 'Employees were apathetic about recycling; internal company cultures were ignoring the issue of sustainability in the workplace. Our bins, which are visible and beautiful, act as an effective system of change.'

The UK launch follows seven years of research, design and development in New Zealand and Australia where the products grace the offices of organisations such as Xero, Canva and Sydney Cricket Ground.

Above left Bins from Method Recycling have been specified by several UK architects practices

Above right Take5's pillowed shapes and curved armrests are evocative of a teddy bear

If you go down to the office today... KI's latest product inspired by teddy bears

KI has revealed its new Take5 lounge seating collection, inspired by mid-century styling and designed for today's workspaces.

The collection's single, two and three-seater sofas with low or high backs are complemented by ottomans, coffee tables and side tables.

Take5's pillowed shapes and curved armrests are evocative of a teddy bear, instantly inviting the user to feel comfortable and relaxed.

The space beneath the armrests also acts as leg room, allowing the user to pivot to the side. The flat top of the armrests double as both a secondary seating surface and a worktop for notebooks or laptops. Each sofa can be fitted with power and USB modules.

Matching or contrasting upholstered high backs can be added to reduce distractions, increase a sense of privacy and for noise reduction.

Featuring a platform base and angled feet made from solid beech the collection complements KI's EC4 range of workstations, tables and storage plinths.

Together, these elegant products help create a more domestic atmosphere in the corporate workspace.



← MAINE STORAGE AND FILING

Maine Lockers have been chosen by Gantner to help display their excellent range of locks at Orgatec. Maine lockers were seen to compliment the high quality Gantner locks. Feel the difference and experience the keyless lock solutions that Gantner can offer keypad, RFID and complete wired solutions with no batteries to keep changing, also able monitor locker usage. Come and view Maine lockers on the Gantner stand at Orgatec. maine.co.uk



↑ DAMS

The Cooper seating family is the latest addition to our Dams Furniture's Social Spaces portfolio and is a classically designed soft seating range of single, double and three seater sofas suitable for front of house or corporate breakout areas. The Cooper collection is what every good business needs, understated style and durability. Visually these pieces seem familiar, almost vintage, but with important original features including clean and confident lines defining the wooden frames and the deep, inviting form of the cushioned seats. With a striking visual and sitting experience, the single rocker is the real character in the Cooper family, offering a nostalgic charm, a great talking point and is a must sit-in chair. dams.com

→ CENTURY OFFICE

Javelin from Century Office takes its inspiration from the Ancient Greek Olympic Games era. True to its name, the bench desking system sits on slim and elegant legs, which are shaped like a javelin. The versatile yet elegant bench system is the flexible and affordable solution for today's IT dependent office environment. Javelin comes with option of two and up to ten person(s) to each bench including height settable legs, which allow various desk heights to suit the users' needs and requirements. The design of this new range allows for easy adaptation to the ever changing needs of any business. A full range of pedestals and storage units are available to complement this range. century-office.co.uk



← TRIUMPH

Introducing our NEW Italia - a traditional design with a contemporary twist. Promoting a compact footprint, high comfort levels and acoustic high back screening - enabling Italia to fit into a multitude of interiors. Available in an extensive range of fabrics, Italia has been designed to be sophisticated but affordable - adapting to the way we work today. We love talking about all things furniture. Email marketing@triumphfurniture.com or give us a call on 01685 352222. triumphfurniture.com



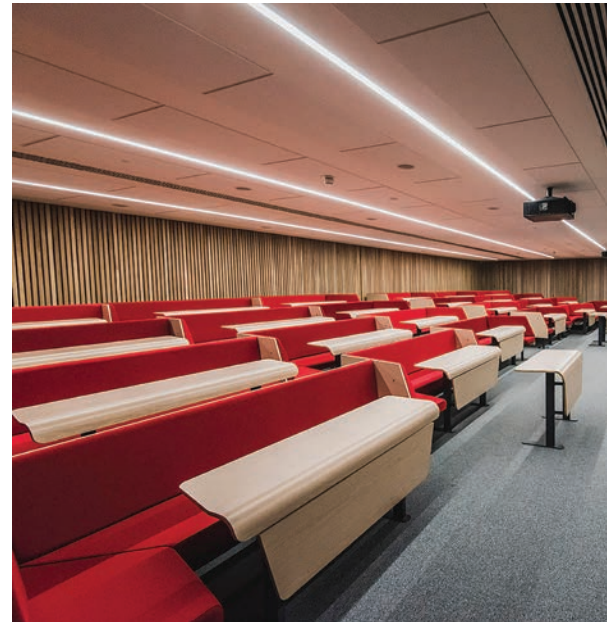
↑ LOFT

Loft's Polo chair, pictured here at the Barbican, is made to Robin Day's 1972 design and manufactured entirely in the UK using the original tooling. Robin Day's most celebrated designs emerged when he experimented with polypropylene and created the first plastic chair which, along with his other classic designs, are equally as contemporary in use and appearance today as when they were first produced. The Polo chair is no exception. loft.co



→ **RACE FURNITURE**

Following the award winning success of the Race Connect collaborative bench style seating installed several years ago at Loughborough University, this seating range designed by Burwell Deakins Architects, has been installed into an increasing number of Universities throughout the country. Within its UK manufacturing base in Gloucestershire, Race has the design and production capability to both customise and tailor its products to meet the client's requirements and to suit its intended interior. Bench designs can vary significantly from one project to another with adjoining tables to suit and can be available in a number of laminate finishes and fabric and vinyl options. racefurniture.com



↑ **JAMES LATHAM**

One of London's most iconic art deco buildings has been transformed as part of a major restoration project which has seen part of the building converted into 66 stylish apartments. Many of the Hoover building's original features have been retained and restored and a central element of the design inside these luxurious living spaces are the kitchens where HI-MACS was used to create the work surfaces. lathamtimber.co.uk



↑ **BUZZISPACE**

BuzziMood is an acoustical wall solution that offers the possibility to combine natural moss with upholstered pads in a range of different fabrics and geometrical shapes. This blend mitigates noise and serves as a natural air humidity indicator too when mixed with moss panels. Choose between two moss colors, a light and dark green, to create varying degrees of contrast against the metal frames. As the name suggests, this acoustic solution will undoubtedly lift up your mood in any setting. buzzi.space



← **LYNDON**

When it comes to furnishing breakout spaces, Lyndon offers a variety of solutions. From modular seating, and a variety of chairs that can be simply positioned around a central low table, to high tables with stools, Lyndon's breakout collection is perfect for providing an escape for employees from technology and the stress of every day working life. It's equally popular for collaborating and brainstorming with co-workers, working flexibly, and holding huddle meetings. lyndon.co.uk

→ **KI**

KI's MyWay adaptive lounge seating was designed specifically for contemporary education environments. Modular and easy to reconfigure, it ergonomically supports a 'sit-as-you-like' approach, giving users the freedom to comfortably connect, collaborate, socialise and relax in their preferred seated position. The collection consists of individual chairs that can be specified with any combination of arm styles - conventional arms, arms embedded with a laminate worksurface (left or right hand), or a low arm. These individual units can then be pushed together to create various combinations such as love seats or sofas, or simply be used separately on their own. kieurope.com

