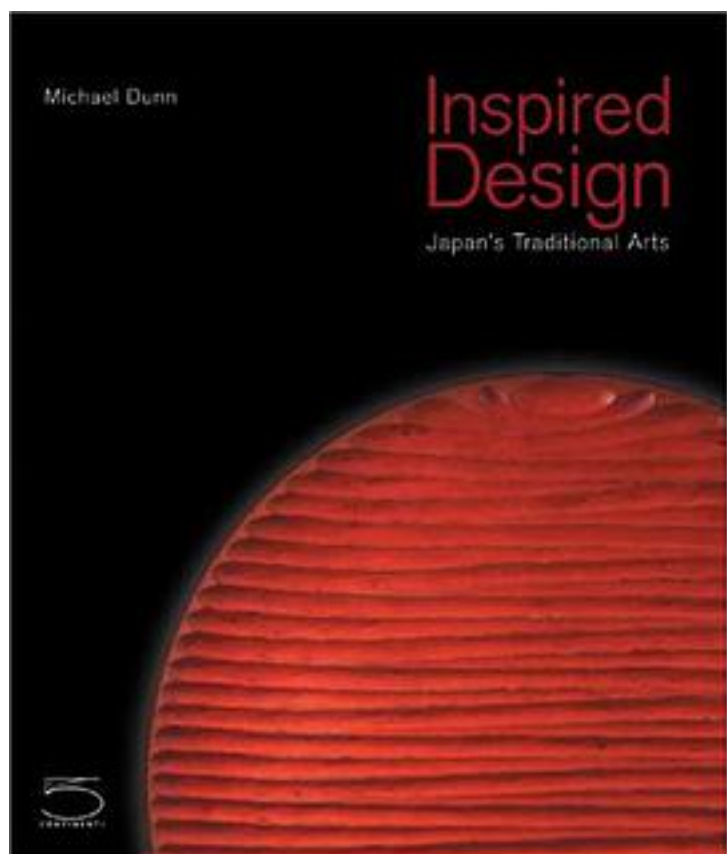


Inspired Design



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Almost every visitor to Japan finds him/herself fascinated by locally manufactured objects - perhaps a pair of chopsticks that cleverly employs the node of a bamboo stem, a box of matches with bold calligraphy, or an artistic arrangement of steppingstones in the garden of a temple - the designs of which reveal a unique genius unlike anything that is seen elsewhere. The Japanese artisan seems to have an

uncanny knack of being able to look at basic materials - clay, fabric or metal, and imagine what he can make out of them - in a way that is markedly different from the way that they are looked at in other countries. Inspired Design covers the whole range of traditional crafts made in Japan, both historic and contemporary. Starting with a description of the land of Japan, stretching from Siberian forests (Hokkaido island) to the sub-tropical islands of Okinawa, and its natural materials - animal, vegetable and mineral - the book describes how Japanese artisans have used these raw materials to make a vast variety of extraordinarily designed crafts, many of which are different from those seen elsewhere. The introductory essay addresses the unique genius of Japanese design resulting from a combination of forces: nature, the aesthetic principles of Zen in art, the influence of the tea masters on artistic expression etc. The introduction also addresses the place of craftsmen in pre-modern Japanese society, apprenticeship and the transmission of techniques, and how different types of crafts were made for different social classes. The three main parts of the book are devoted to: crafts made from animal products (part I), including imported ivory, tortoise-shell, stag-antler, leather, shark and ray skin; crafts made from vegetable products (part II), including wood, bamboo, straw and reeds, lacquer, hemp, linen, paper; crafts made from mineral products (part III), including stone, ceramic, metals. Throughout the book particular aspects of Japanese society necessary to understand the use of the artefacts are explained; from the tea ceremony to how the Japanese bathe, from the use of masks in performing arts to the Japanese art of wrapping. A glossary of Japanese terms is included.

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