



Tuesday, Nov. 25, 2008

ON DESIGN

## Traveler's friend

The resurgence of the Moleskine notebook — said to have been used by the likes of Matisse, Van Gogh and Hemingway — has not only seen it evolve, but take on unexpected shapes and formats. The latest incarnation sees it turn into a city guide, offering up maps and tabbed sections — to keep track of all the spots you encounter during your travels — for a selection of cities.



The latest two additions to the Moleskine City Notebook line are Tokyo and Kyoto, arriving to the series with the same amount of care and detail seen with previous editions. The two Moleskine guides retail for ¥2,940 each, and you can currently catch examples of them as used by a host of Tokyo-based creators in the "My Oasis in Tokyo" exhibition, being held in various shops — see the Japanese Moleskine Web site for more details.

[moleskine.co.jp](http://moleskine.co.jp)

## Lacquer luster

The Shishishikki collection of dishes may look like the latest in a long line of traditional Japanese lacquerware, but to the surprise of many, it's actually made up of paper plates in disguise. The secret to the product — produced for the small EXS brand by designer Tomohiro Yamaguchi — is that each paper piece is covered with a coating of lacquer, which not only contributes to the deceitful appearance, but manages to build on the advantages offered by each material. The paper base gives it flexibility and a foldable quality, while the lacquer coating adds strength, allows for the vivid colors on display, and make the plates resistant to water. There's no better way to class up the weekend picnic.

[exsinc.blogspot.com](http://exsinc.blogspot.com)

## Prize drawers

The Fractal 23 set of drawers by New York-based designer Takeshi Miyakawa is the ultimate in space-conscious design. The perfect-cube chest manages to contain 23 slide-out drawers, each sized differently. The genius here is how each container was fitted inside the larger structure, allowing a variety of sizes that not only satisfy on a functional level — the right size for the right stuff — but offer an intriguing aesthetic as well. The top part also includes three holes to insert long objects. Of course, since the drawers come out from all sides, you'll need to find a central spot for the Fractal 23, but does it deserve anything less?

[tmiyakawadesign.com](http://tmiyakawadesign.com)

## Dear diary



You may not know it, but chances are you've seen some of the typography-inspired works — with plenty of nods to traditional calligraphy — by Kansai-based graphic design unit Graph, especially if you have an interest in Japan's art and design scene — they've done a stack of work on exhibition posters and have popped up in some exhibitions, too.

The unit has now produced a beautiful new diary for the coming year — running until April 2010 — using the distinct sparse graphics that have served Graph well in the past. To make it stand out even more, the exterior is embossed with a metallic sheen, which works quite well with the geometric patterns used on the cover. The Graph Diary 2009 is available now for ¥1,890, and can be ordered through Graph's online store.

[www.moshi-moshi.jp](http://www.moshi-moshi.jp)

## Light as air

Based on looks alone, the sleek aluminum lines of the new Airline desk lamp from Balmuda Design — producer of accessories and furniture for the home and office — will assure brisk sales. But it goes beyond looks, since the design by Gen Terao — who doubles as president of Balmuda — not only gives us a light that ensures



a well-lit work area, it throws in a touch of energy conservatism. The Airline boasts a "Power LED" lamp that allows better power management and longer performance. Nice touches also include the gradual lighting up and down as you switch the lamp on and off, and a half-power mode to fit the need. All this quality doesn't come cheap though — the Airline will run you ¥73,500.

[www.balmuda.com](http://www.balmuda.com)

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#### Interviews of 2008

In 2008, The Japan Times had the honor of talking with a variety of luminaries from various walks of life. Of our past interview subjects, who would like to spend more time with?

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- [Photographer Daido Moriyama](#)
- [Architect Tadao Ando](#)
- [Film director Hirokazu Kore'eda](#)
- [Novelist Yang Yi](#)
- [Actress Aoi Miyazaki](#)
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- [Animator Hayao Miyazaki](#)

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