



Satoshi Kondo photographed by Co Hami

TAKING SHAVE

interview & written by HANNAH ROSE PRENDERGAST

Slipping into something ISSEY MIYAKE is automatically mood-enhancing and has been engineered that way, officially, since 1970. As of Spring 2020, the brand's mission remains wholesome under the creative direction of one Satoshi Kondo.

The in-house appointment came 13 years into joining the team after fulfilling lead roles at PLEATS PLEASE ISSEY MIYAKE and HOMME PLISSÉ ISSEY MIYAKE.

Today, Kondo invigorates the Japanese label with a playful sense of humor to suit the next generation. In the spirit of tradition and technology, the legacy of the late Issey Miyake thrives in his hands.

What's bringing you joy at the moment?

When I eat a delicious meal and when I see something beautiful.

How did your interest in fashion develop as a child?

I remember a period in my childhood and early teens when I enjoyed fashion as a means to express myself and look different from others.

When you started working for ISSEY MIYAKE in 2007, was the goal to eventually become creative director, or was this realized over time?

It was never my goal. Rather, I feel that during the years I had worked under Miyake, I explored design and making in a variety of ways while learning from him and gradually developed my own aesthetic.

Coming off of the virality of your Spring 2020 debut, how did that set the tone for your last few years in office?

I realized how important it is to allow freedom in creativity, which leads to original Expressions.

At ISSEY MIYAKE, the space between the body and the garment is sacred and speaks to the Japanese concept of Ma. What happens when clothing is “missing ma”?

To me, the concept of ma is connected to a sense of mental and physical ease that one feels when wearing a garment. A garment created with ma—with ease—would feel more comfortable, effortless, and more beautiful, of course, not to discount the beauty in clothing created without ma.

Many ISSEY MIYAKE pieces also double as soft sculptures. How do you see the interplay between fashion and art in your creations?

In my practice, I try not to define the boundary between art and fashion. By blurring that boundary between the two, I believe we can create something original and unprecedented. I also see this approach as a way to bring art closer to our everyday lives.

How have you continued to build on the brand's ethos of sustainability?

It is part of our philosophy to find creative ways in the process of design and making that produce less excess fabrics, in addition to our continuous engagement in the research and development of more sustainable fabrics.

It is also important to create garments with longevity, which is connected to the notion of using quality materials and the intention of creating timeless designs or designs that age well with time. For example, we have been exploring the technology of seamless knit to create original knit pieces, the application of which also contributes to our engagement in sustainability.

Instilling a sense of joy and unity in the wearer has always been the goal. Considering the current state of the fashion industry, is this an easier or more challenging task?

The sense of joy and unity that I am trying to convey through my design and making is something that depends more on our research and development in creating every collection. It may be true that the world is flooded with too much information to create something new. On the other hand, the difficulty lies in the traditional crafts that we work with and adapt to create original garments.

The practice of many traditional crafts is in decline due to decreasing demand and the resulting understaffing. We always have to keep in mind that traditional crafts serve as a source of inspiration and the foundation of our design and making.

Why is Spring 2024 about Grasping the Formless and gaining clarity?

Two experiences inspired this collection. One is the

flag I saw outside Bourse de Commerce in Paris. The flag fluttering in the air was a rectangular piece of fabric that continued to wave and change as if the fabric dissolved and turned into a formless form. The other one was my stay at The Lantern Onomichi Garden in the Hiroshima prefecture: the scenery and the sense of ease I felt in the hotel room where every surface was covered by washi paper. Inspired by these two experiences, I thought about creating a collection that conveys the beauty of natural forms and the sense of ease in natural materials.

What do you think of when you hear the word 'trance'?

I think of the phrase "to be immersed" or the term "immersion." In that, I think the nature of creativity seems to insert someone into another world, away from and beyond reality.

The BAO BAO ISSEY MIYAKE bags are "shapes made by chance." How much of what you do is shaped by chance?

I am always interested in finding, if not recreating, serendipities in the process of design and making, as I believe nothing is more beautiful than the beauty created by chance.

How do you remember to trust yourself with Miyake's legacy now that he's passed?

One of the things that I learned from Miyake is to stay curious because curiosity is what keeps creativity alive.

What are your plans moving forward?

I hope to continue to develop the design and making I practice with clothing that brings a sense of joy and ease to everyday living and collections that are original enough to remain in people's memories years after.

„In my practice, I try not to define the boundary between art and fashion. By blurring that boundary between the two, I believe we can create something original and unprecedented.“