



TAYLOR'S
UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE

Wisdom • Integrity • Excellence

INTERCULTURAL DESIGN GROUP 4
PROPOSAL

FEBRUARY 2024

Name	Student ID	Programme
JOEY HO CHU YIE	0351205	BACHELOR'S IN FASHION DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY
VISHMITHA KRISNA KUMAR	0360488	BACHELOR'S IN FASHION DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY
NELAMBARI JEGATHESAN	036226	BACHELOR'S IN FASHION DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY
ENG YAN LING	0350603	BACHELOR'S OF DESIGN IN CREATIVE MEDIA
ISABEL TAN XEN WERN	0355602	BACHELOR'S OF DESIGN IN CREATIVE MEDIA
QISTINA NURALYA MARIA BINTI AZLY	0354180	BACHELOR'S OF DESIGN IN CREATIVE MEDIA

TABLE CONTENT

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Content

2.1 Tattoo Culture in Japan

2.2 Japanese Torii Gates

2.3 Yami Kawaii Aesthetic

3.0 Conclusion

4.0 References

1.0 Introduction

To approach the topic of cultural sensitivity, our team chose three important topics that are mostly found in Japan or Japanese culture. Japan is quite famous for their symbolism and their stories behind each symbol, distinctive forms such as dragons, chrysanthemums or cherry blossoms. People often get these symbols tattooed, which leads to our first topic: Tattoos. Japanese tattooing is unique because the designs are used for storytelling. It's an essential part of Japanese culture. Our second topic is a structure that is usually found at the entrance of Shinto shrines: Torii Gates..Torii Gates is part of Japan Architecture which has some interesting diagrams of each, along with some detailed terminology on torii parts. For our last chosen topic: YamiKawaii which directly translates to 'sickly cute', a fashion trend that helps young people in Japan to communicate feelings that they would otherwise be unable to voice.

2.0 Content

2.1 Tattoo Culture in Japan

Rationale

Unlike other countries, the conversation surrounding tattoos is considered to be quite taboo in Japan. And so, we thought it would be interesting to cover a taboo subject that's not normally covered by Japan or other countries. Japanese people view tattoos negatively for a number of reasons. During the Edo period, an inmate's tattoos served as a distinguishing factor between them and the general public. Prisoners were typically tattooed on their arms or foreheads, however the process varied according to the locale.

Japan's modern tattoo tabooess, though, comes from its association with the Yakuza. The Yakuza are dangerous underground criminal organisations that are as prevalent now as they were decades ago. People under the Yakuza often will tattoo themselves to show their affiliation with a certain gang. Because of this, public facilities like hot springs, swimming pools and beaches often prohibit people with tattoos as to not have a possible criminal within their premises.

However, despite its criminal association, tattoos have also become increasingly popular in Japan in recent years. With its new popularity comes with its new styles: Wabori (和彫り) styles and western styles. Wabori (和彫り) refers to the Japanese tattoos, Irezumi (入れ墨), with Japanese designs such as tattoo designs of japanese koi fish, samurai or dragons. So, tattoos can also help show a person's appreciation of a person's culture. It is unfortunate though that appreciation of culture and arts could still be mixed up with criminal activity in Japan.

Visual Reference



Figure 2.1.1 Wabori (和彫り) style tattoo

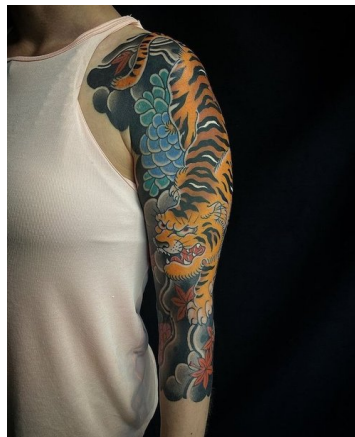


Figure 2.1.2 Wabori (和彫り) style tattoo, Wabori House Tattoo (2022)

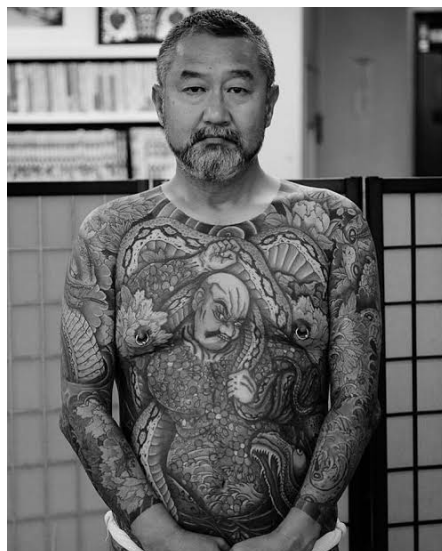


Figure 2.1.3 Japanese traditional full-body style tattoo, Horiyoshi III

IDEA 1 : Kinchaku

We wanted to create a kinchaku (a traditional Japanese bag) with a traditional Irezumi print in a Wabori style to show how perhaps Japanese society could slowly embrace back the cultural arts of tattoos using a common and traditional Japanese item.



Figure 2.1.4 Sketch of Kinchaku design

Greens and blues are a dominant colour when it comes to Japanese tattoos and the use of reds are added to create a nice contrast. Hence, the sketch design includes a red oni mask as the Kinchaku's front with red and pink sakura flowers in the back with a majorly green-blue surrounding. The red oni mask symbolises fear whilst the slowly blooming sakura flowers symbolise beauty. With both the oni and blooming flowers combined together (and the incorporated Wabori style), we can get the picture of the initial "frights" tattoos have on Japanese society yet if looked closer, tattoos are something of true art and culture appreciation and expression.

2.2 Japanese Torii Gates

Rationale

With Torii Gates being so commonly found across Japan, the rationale behind our choice of topic to conduct further research is to be able to understand its purpose and why it is so important in Japanese culture. To briefly explain, Torii Gates, known as the entrance or the boundary between the human and sacred world (*Japan Wonder Travel Blog, 2015*), can be pinpointed to at least in the mid-Heian period based on texts written in 922 (*JAANUS, 2001*). The meaning of torii based on its kanji, 鳥居 where 鳥 refers to “bird” and 居 refers to “existence”. It is made of Japanese cypress wood and painted in a bright red colour which is believed to ward off evil spirits or bring good luck and prosperity to people (*Aguilar, M.J.F.*). Though most might believe the original colours of the torii gates are red, the white colour torii gates are said to be the original colour as it gives a pure impression which wards off evil spirits. Over the years, torii gates have been famous tourist spots to earn good luck resulting in wrong customs or culture portrayed when visiting the torii gates or temples. Compared to other cultures, red in Japanese is often associated with good luck and prosperity similarly to Chinese culture. However, red is rather viewed negatively as a sign of danger or warnings. (*Eriksen, 2020*) Hence, with the idea of creating a lucky charm that resembles the look of the torii gates to allow people to bring along with them wherever they go in hopes of conveying the message of carrying good luck and prosperity from the bright colour of the torii gate.

Visual Reference



Figure 2.2.1 Shirahige Shrine, Shiga



Figure 2.2.2 Tsukubasan Shinto Shrine, Tsubaka City



Figure 2.2.3 Fushimi Inari Shrine, Kyoto



Figure 2.2.4 Souvenirs from Fushimi Inari Shrine, Kyoto



Figure 2.2.5 Souvenirs from Fushimi Imari-Taisha, Kyoto

IDEA 2 - A lucky charm torii gate keychain to be carried around holding the same original meaning to ward off evil spirits, bring good luck and prosperity.

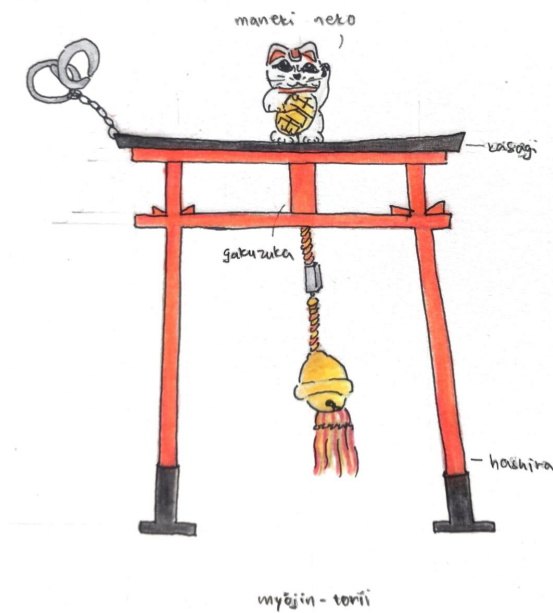


Figure 2.2.6 Myojin Torii Gate Lucky Charm

Figure 2.2.6 is a sketch of a Myojin Torii Gate Lucky Charm. The architecture design of this torii gate is commonly seen around Japan and is known as a “Myojin Torii Gate” where a visible difference from other gates is the curved roof on the top of the torii gate. As mentioned in the rationale, the red in this torii gate lucky charm is to ward off evil spirits and bring good luck to people who carry it around. At the top of this torii gate sits a cat, known as the “Maneki-Neko” in Japanese culture where its meaning is similar to the torii gate — good luck & prosperity. The bell attached to the centre of the torii gate is commonly found at Japanese temples and shrines. The purpose of ringing this bell is said to call upon the kami (gods) to be able to gain power and authority from the gods to repel evil spirits or bad luck (*Wikipedia*). Therefore, carrying the purpose or meaning of this bell, I would like to apply the same to the design of this torii gate.

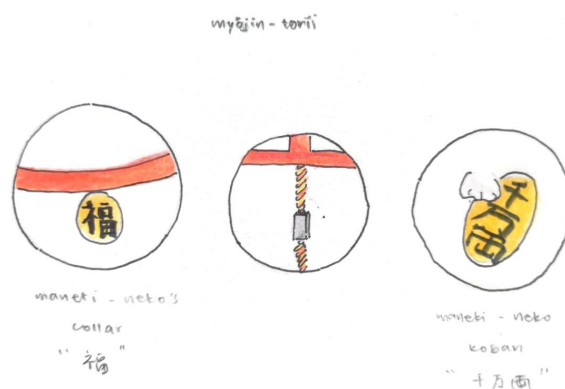


Figure 2.2.7 Lucky Charm Details

Figure 2.2.7 above shows the details on the Maneki-Neko Collar consisting of a single kanji character “福” which means “luck” in Chinese. In Japanese culture, the Maneki-Neko is often believed to bring good luck. Therefore, the design of this lucky charm is a part of the charm to bring good luck to

people. The middle image is a section from the Myojin Torii Gate where there will be a rope hanging in the middle. Its red and yellow colour reflects the message of bringing prosperity and good luck. The image on the right can be found on the “Maneki-Neko” where it is holding onto a “Koban”, Japanese oval gold coin seen during the Edo period in Japan, representing “money” in the form of goal (*Wikipedia*). The wordings on the Koban is “千万両” (Sen Man Ryo), means 1,000 X 10,000 ryo in Japanese culture (*WordPress, June 2013*).

2.3 Yami Kawaii Aesthetic

Yami Kawaii is an aesthetic that resides in Japanese fashion and is no stranger to the popular fashion district Harajuku, Tokyo. Yami kawaii includes darker components, such as black or patterns that reflect medical or grotesque themes. It evolved as the polar opposite of an already existing aesthetic called Yume Kawaii. Its mismatch between the cutesy appearance and anti-social phrases popularised this aesthetic, making it what it is, “Yami Kawaii”, says the pioneer of this style, artist Bisuko. Yami Kawaii discusses and provides a platform for some to bring awareness to mental illness and depression, which is considered a taboo topic in Japan. The ones that indulge in this aesthetic may find it to be empowering, and as an outlet to embrace their painful experiences and to find comfort in it. (Refinery29, 2018)

“I want to change the negative image of mental health issues. And I think it is doing that. It uses those negative feelings that everybody has, whether it be some darkness or sadness, and makes it cute.” (Bisuko, 10:33, 2018)

All in all, the Yami Kawaii aesthetic seeks as an outlet for those suffering with mental illness by cutesifying it and making it visually appealing. Typically, it includes cute visuals accompanied with juxtaposed elements, such as vulgarities in cute fonts or cartoon characters drawn with bandages and wounds. Additionally for clarity, Yami Kawaii should not be seen as glorifying or romanticising mental illness, rather, it should be acknowledged as a creative outlet and a safe way of showcasing and bringing awareness to mental health in a rigid, conformed society like Japan.

Visual References:



Figure 2.3.1 (Ezaki, 2018)



Figure 2.3.2 (Ezaki, 2018)



Figure 2.3.3 ([Yami Kawai: A Melodrama of Cute and Dark Elements], 2018)



Figure 2.3.4 (Ezaki, 2018)

IDEA 3: Graphic Tee

We decided on graphic tees as the main media for this draft as it is a unisex clothing item that can be enjoyed by both genders. With the rise of streetwear, t-shirt designs with minimal front logos and exaggerated graphics on the back have started to become popular among physical clothing stores as well.



Figure 2.3.5 Front logo design

The Japanese words 気違い (Kichigai) say “madman” or “insane”, juxtaposed by the bright pink and bubbly font and bows that trail along the bottom.



Figure 2.3.6 Back Graphic Design

The logo from the front is layered all the way at the back with a big pill bottle that says 死神 (*Shinigami*) which translates to death. The pill bottle is blue with a pink lid and some pink pills inside. There's a girl squatting next to the oversized pill bottle who dons bright pink hair and a bandaid across her nose. Some brightly coloured bandages are so littered on her legs, she has red, scarred knuckles and some bandages around her neck.

I chose shades of pink as the main colour palette as it is typically associated as “girly” and “pretty” and in my opinion, with that, it juxtaposes the dark elements very well.



Figure 2.3.7 Graphic T-shirt mockup in Black and White



Figure 2.3.8 Graphic T-Shirt Mockup on Model (Back / White)



Figure 2.3.9 Graphic T-Shirt Mockup on Model (Front / Black)

3.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, most of our topics are under symbolism. We would be leaning more towards using Yamikawaii as our main topic as there are many fashion districts in Osaka that we can visit for inspiration and fashion such as graphic t-shirts are a unisex clothing as well as they are trending amongst teenagers and young adults. It also particularly reflects serious issues in its motifs, and that is what makes it interesting for many. It is something that brings awareness to mental health issues because japanese people can rarely talk about them openly as they are considered 'taboo' in japan. Yamikawaii is bringing light to an important issue which also allows them to stand out as who they are, express their feelings and let them know they are not alone.

4.0 References

Refinery29. (2018, February 25). The Dark Side Of Harajuku Style You Haven't Seen Yet | Style Out There | Refinery 29 [Video]. Youtube.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Wsk3Oa_3F8&t=633s&ab_channel=Refinery29

Ezaki, B. (2018). Menhera-Chan and Friends [Drawing]. art design Asia.

<https://artdesignasia.com/yamikawaii-the-dark-side-of-japanese-fashion/>

Ezaki, B. (2018). Menhera-Chan [Drawing]. art design Asia.

<https://artdesignasia.com/yamikawaii-the-dark-side-of-japanese-fashion/>

n.d. (2018). Yami Kawaii: A melodrama of cute and dark elements [Photograph]. NINBUK: JNU CJS Journal.

<https://nehrudaicjsjournal.wordpress.com/2018/11/09/yami-kawai-when-harsh-reality-meets-kawai-culture/>

Ezaki, B. (2018). Menhera-Chan [Drawing]. NINBUK: JNU CJS Journal.

<https://nehrudaicjsjournal.wordpress.com/2018/11/09/yami-kawai-when-harsh-reality-meets-kawai-culture/>

Jason Brock (2023). Torii Gates: Japan's Famous Arches With Mysterious Origins.

<https://int.japanesetaste.com/blogs/japanese-taste-blog/torii-gates-japan-s-famous-arches-with-mysterious-origins?region=int&country=my#the-meaning-and-importance-of-torii>

Why are tattoos considered a taboo in Japan?. (2018, November 19). Ikidane Nippon.

<https://ikidane-nippon.com/en/features/a00232>

Keo, S. (2018, April 23). The Culture of Tattoos in Japan. Think Global School.

<https://thinkglobalschool.org/the-culture-of-tattoos-in-japan/#:~:text=The%20first%20records%20of%20tattoos,History%20of%20the%20Chinese%20Dynasties.>

Eli, F. (n.d). Japanese Tattoo History. Wabori House Tattoo.

<https://www.eliferguson.com.au/japanese-tattoo-history>

Dewi, A. (2020, October 22). Irezumi, Tattoo Arts From Japan [Photograph]. Tsubomi House.

<https://www.tsubomihouse.com/post/irezumi-seni-tato-dari-jepang>

Japan Wonder Travel Blog (2015), What is Torii Gate? Meaning, Type, Facts

What is Torii Gate? Meaning, Types and Facts

<https://blog.japanwondertravel.com/what-is-torii-gate-25135>

Wikipedia Contributors. Jaanus (2001), Torii, retrieved 2 September 2023.

[Torii - Wikipedia](#)

Aguilar, M.J.F, The Origins of Torii Gates. Wasshoi Magazine.

[The Origins of Torii Gates \(wasshoimagazine.org\)](http://wasshoimagazine.org)

Eriksen (Feb 3, 2020), How Color is Perceived by Different Cultures
[How Color Is Perceived by Different Cultures | Eriksen Translations](#)

Shirahige Shrine, Shiga [Photograph], Off the Track Japan
<https://www.offthetrackjapan.com/shirahige-shrine/>

Katorisi (January 3, 2018), Tsukubasan Shrine, Tsubaka City [Photograph], Wikimedia
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tsukubasan_Shinto_shrine.first_torii.Tsukuba_city.Japan.jp
g](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tsukubasan_Shinto_shrine.first_torii.Tsukuba_city.Japan.jpg)

Nguyen Oanh (2023), Fushimi Inari-Taisha Shrine, Kyoto [Photograph], Bring-You
<https://www.bring-you.info/en/fushimi-inari-taisha-shrine>

Harding, R., *Alamy Stock Photo Contributor* (March 31, 2013), Souvenirs from Fushimi Inari-Taisha Shrine, Kyoto
[https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-souvenirs-of-the-endless-red-gates-of-kyotos-fushimi-inari-shrin
e-58889874.html?imageid=1E447B70-25D1-492C-8EA0-7FA947D9D118&p=94644&pn=1&searchI
d=3310b50eff5b626e097272a97b4c5939&searchtype=0](https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-souvenirs-of-the-endless-red-gates-of-kyotos-fushimi-inari-shrine-58889874.html?imageid=1E447B70-25D1-492C-8EA0-7FA947D9D118&p=94644&pn=1&searchId=3310b50eff5b626e097272a97b4c5939&searchtype=0)

Souvenirs from Fushimi Inari-Taisha Shrine, Kyoto
<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/908953137387289801/>

Wikipedia Contributors, Suzu (Bell)
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suzu_\(bell\)#:~:text=At%20Shinto%20shrines%2C%20large%20suzu,us
ed%20musically%20at%20Shinto%20ceremonies.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suzu_(bell)#:~:text=At%20Shinto%20shrines%2C%20large%20suzu,used%20musically%20at%20Shinto%20ceremonies.)

WordPress Contributor (3 June 2013), Latest Lucky Cat Trend in Japan
<https://luckymanekineko.wordpress.com/>