



Super-ceramist Keiko Matsui (left) works wonders at the wheel in her Chippendale workshop.



With the grace and refined elegance of a Japanese tea ceremony, Keiko's finished pieces are lined up on display shelves without embellishment. The designs blend purity of form with 'wabi-sabi'.

Keiko Matsui

The quiet beauty of Japanese ceramics finds a home in inner Sydney

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Sharing a studio with a potter who insisted on blaring music like a DJ didn't work for Keiko Matsui. This thoughtful Japanese ceramist, who honed her craft at the National Art School in Sydney, craved her own space – and silence. "In order to create simple, elegant work, I have to centre myself – no music, nothing. It's a journey, in a way, and emotion affects my work. I cannot work if I am sad or stressed."

Delicate ceramics are dotted around Keiko's brand-new whitewashed studio in Sydney's inner-city Chippendale. Chrysanthemum-imprinted bowls, paper vessels and cups adorned with cryptic blue text all possess an organic Japanese aesthetic.

While she excels in ceramics, Keiko says she's into all kinds of craft. "I knit, I sew and I like felting and playing with fabrics." The fit-out of her studio space is proof: she sketched and screen-printed the shop signage, fashioned storage from a discarded

bed found roadside, made curtains and sewed her working smock from Japanese fabric.

Ceramics' historical role in Japanese life informs Keiko's work. She enjoys the tension created by their dual purpose: function and art. "For Japanese people, ceramics is rooted in everyday life. Each piece has a function, from kaiseki [multi-course edible delicacies] to ikebana [the art of flower arrangement]."

But Keiko maintains it was the imprecision of pottery that piqued her interest. She points out a once-chipped vase refashioned with a patch of linen and bright red thread. "Japanese ceramics have 'wabi-sabi' – the perfection in imperfection. It's an appreciation for a warped rim or using the fine cracks that are sometimes opened by fire to place the flower in ikebana." For more details about Keiko's work, visit www.keikomatsui.com.au. You can also visit her on the first Sunday of every month at the Eveleigh Artisans' Market, www.eveleighmarket.com.au.

Kasper Salto atop his Fritz Hansen 'NAP' chair, available from Corporate Culture.



Kasper Salto

Visiting Australia. Danish designer Kasper Salto took time out to talk to us

Q What was your starting point for the 'NAP' chair? I considered how people were going to use the chairs. It's like research followed by analysis of the chair as a daily tool.

Q What was the most complex problem you needed to solve? The contour of the shell took a long time to define, but also the 'flow' of the curved lines, going from big arcs into small curves. The arms' attachment to the seat drove us nuts, so Fritz Hansen hired a CAD expert, who helped us join them onto the shell.

Q What is the most overused or abused word or phrase in the design profession? I think the word 'inspiration' has more relevance in the world of art. In design, there is a different approach. Designers are, first of all, dependent on several factors, such as production, materials, economy and function.

Q What's the one object you haven't designed yet that you would like to? Anything that can improve life – a lounge chair that's comfortable to read books in or the city bike that will make the car redundant.



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