

大人の“快適”出張アイテム完全網羅

大人のおしゃれは“品と格” [メンズ・イーエックス]

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“Ideally, the curves of the shoe should look continuous from every angle”

‘The International Efficiency Contest of the Shoemakers’ is held every 3 years in Germany. Eighty shoemakers applied for the 2010 event, and Okuyama won the gold medal. He won his second gold medal this year.



Profile

b.1976 in Chiba. Okumura worked for a jewelry company before enrolling in a shoemaking academy. He currently makes bespoke shoes from his atelier in Hong Kong.



Taking up a challenge in a foreign land of Hong Kong

— I heard that before you were a shoemaker, you used to work in the jewelry industry. What made you decide on becoming a craftsman?

Okuyama: When I was about to turn 30, I seriously thought about what I really wanted to do for the rest of my life. I always loved shoes, so I wanted to work on something related to it. To gain some basic knowledge about shoemaking, I decided to enroll in a Japanese shoemaking academy. Shoemaking was much more fun than I anticipated, so after graduation, I decided to take my study further in Europe. I knocked on quite a few doors of some notable European shoemakers, but unfortunately, there simply weren't any immediate job opportunities for me. Then, I had an opportunity to show my shoes to Ricardo Bestetti. He advised me that going independent would be the best for me. I took his word, and after returning (to Japan), I started my own Bespoke business. A year and a half later, I moved to Hong Kong.

— That just seems quite surprising to me. Why Hong Kong?

Okuyama: Actually, my wife is from Hong Kong, and I also used to live and work there. The folks living in Hong Kong have a strong sense of independence, and I found the atmosphere to be quite energetic. It seemed like a challenging place for me to get a foothold for my career. While working part time jobs, I started to make shoes from my veranda. Soon after, I received a Gold Medal from an international shoemaking competition in Germany and started to receive orders in Hong Kong.

— So you proved your talent in quite a public way. Would you mind telling me about the shoes that won you the medal?

Okuyama: It was a pair of whole cuts (pictured on the left). While regular whole cuts have seams going through the center of the heels, my pair was stitched along the inner heel counters. While it was more difficult to last the shoes, I think it looks more elegant this way. I also wanted the curves of the shoe to look continuous from every angle. So even for this heel piece, I give it some gentle curves to visually tie in with the whole. It's really subtle though, since I don't really like to overly decorate my shoes.

— Yes, I see the subtle curves now. I can see your aesthetics now, and I really like it.

What is Your Secret in Balancing Beauty and Comfort?

Okuyama: I apologize for this to sound like a self-flattery, but my shoes were exhibited at Aubercy in Paris until quite recently. I knew Mr. Aubercy from before when I was seeking an apprenticeship in Europe, and he was extremely generous in offering me a chance to exhibit my work there.

How do you define an elegant shoe?

MASARU OKUYAMA (Hong Kong)

硬骨のアルチザンたち



THE CONSUMATE ARTISANS

The exquisite garbs and accessories that adorn a gentleman are brought to the world by these artisans. An artisan is a title given to those who have passion for their crafts, and aspire to take their skills to higher levels. We will reveal some insights to their creative minds.

photos: Matsukawa Shinsuke, Ozawa Tatsuya; Text: Hata Daisuke

Your Host



Kawai Masato

b.1958. A flower coordinator, and author of the book 'FLOWERS'. As an board member of the esteemed 'Kobe Bremmel Club', he has an extensive connection in the apparel industry.

The understated design brings out the beauty of the Last



Above: Okuyama's shoes possess an equal amount of finesse and masculinity. The shoe in the front won the gold medal at an international shoemaking competition. Bottom: The heel seem is stitched along the inside of the counter. Subtle perforations add an extra flare.



DATA

Bespoke shoes start from ¥380K yen. An average of 2 trial fittings. Visits Japan irregularly to take orders. Please contact if interested in ordering a pair.

mail : contact@masaruokuyama.com

HP : <http://www.masaruokuyama.com>

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During the measurement, clients stand on a sponge from which a plaster cast is made to replicate the complex shape of the arches. Insoles are made from the collected data, and they offer a high degree of comfort comparable to the footbed of Birkenstocks.

— To display shoes other than their own....I believe this never happened before.

Okuyama: He said, "French shoemakers tend to believe that French shoes are second to none in the world. I wanted to show that there are indeed some elegant shoes outside of France". I knew he did it in part to support my career, but I felt truly honored by his words.

— That is a wonderful story. By the way, I would like to ask about your thoughts on leathers. Are there noticeable difference between tanneries or countries?

Okuyama: They're definitely different. Personally, I like box calves from Annonay. Since my shoes tend to be plain, the suppleness of Annonay leather really helps bring out the luster. For the midsoles, I prefer the thick Rendenbach hides. For the outsoles, welts and heels, I prefer those from Baker, which are neither too hard or too soft.

— I see, you choose materials based not only for their beauty, but for their comfort. Talking about comfort, is there anything else you do?

Okuyama: When I measure my clients' feet, I have them stand on a sponge from which I make a plaster cast. This is a method often used by German orthoepists, and it allows me to accurately measure the complex shape of the arches. Recently, I sensed that I could do more to improve the conventional insole, so I adapted a sculpted form that increases the support to the arch. They look quite similar to the footbed of Birkenstocks.

— Doing that for dress shoes is quite amazing. It really says something about your passion. Lastly, could you tell me about your future aspirations?

Okuyama: I really hope to do some overseas trunk shows in a sustainable way. Since there definitely is a limit (in terms of productivity) in working alone, I would like to train some young talents and operate a workshop that can be productive without sacrificing quality. My ultimate dream is to have my workshop be known around the world.