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SALONE DEL MOBILE MILANO SHANGHAI

DESIGN FROM JAPAN TOSHIYUKI KITA/WOODSTYLE

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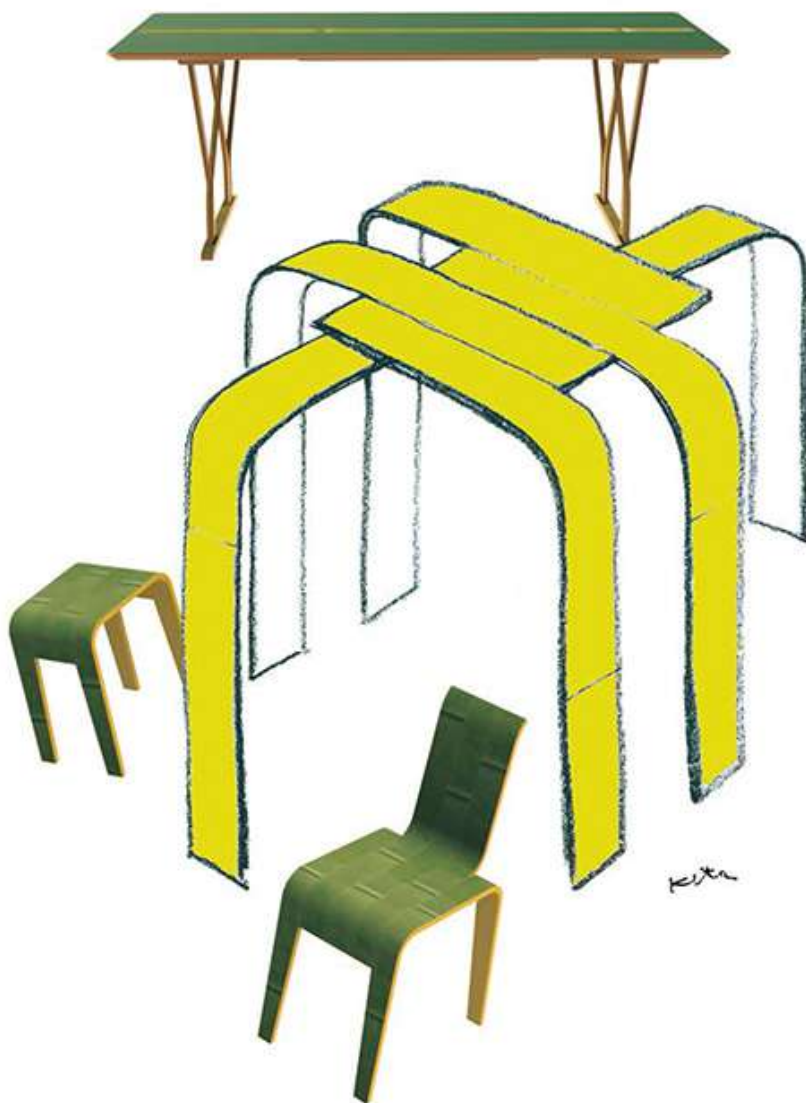
PROGETTO COVER

BAMBOO DESIGN

di Laura Galimberti

Un progettista giapponese e un materiale antico ma sapientemente trasformato dall'uomo che proviene da piante tipicamente asiatiche. Così Toshiyuki Kita interpreta il Flat Bamboo.

A Japanese designer and an ancient material, deriving from typically Asian plants, skillfully transformed by man. This is how Toshiyuki Kita interprets Flat Bamboo.



La nuova collezione di arredi progettati da Toshiyuki Kita è un inno alla tecnologia e, al tempo stesso, alla natura. Si perché il progettista giapponese con l'utilizzo di un materiale versatile come il Flat Bamboo pone nuove sfide per il futuro.

Il bambù è un materiale prezioso e antico, utilizzato sin dall'antichità, che recentemente è stato trasformato dalla sua originaria forma arrotondata in una inedita forma piatta grazie al risultato di una ricerca svolta nella prefettura di Shimane, in Giappone. Parti di bambù con sezione trasversale curva, divisi verticalmente in due o tre parti, con questa nuova tecnologia sono compresse e appiattite per dar vita pezzi di larghezza pari a 70-100 mm, lunghi fino a 2 metri, pur conservando i nodi e le fibre caratteristici del materiale. È nato così il Flat Bamboo, una risorsa tutta nuova dalle innumerevoli possibilità, ideali per creare arredi suggestivi e performanti, come gli arredi della collezione ideata da Kita e prodotta dall'azienda giapponese Woodstyle. Il bambù a liste sottili è da tempo utilizzato per ottenere legno stratificato, ma con le tecnologie convenzionali si potevano ottenere larghezze massime di 10-15 mm. "Penso che un materiale antico come il bambù, esistente in natura, possa essere trasformato grazie alla tecnologia in un nuovo materiale per il futuro, come è successo qui con il Flat Bamboo", ci dice Toshiyuki Kita. Il bambù è anche una risorsa altamente ecologica. Si trova nelle zone a clima subtropicale e una volta che il germoglio spunta dal terreno cresce ad un ritmo vorticoso. Matura, infatti, in 3 o 4 anni ed è una pianta vigorosa e rinnovabile che si rigenera rapidamente. A differenza di altre specie, dopo il raccolto ricresce senza necessità di reimpianti. Grazie a questa crescita molto rapida, la CO₂ assorbita durante il periodo di crescita è fino a 16 volte superiore a quella che possono assorbire altri tipi di piante. La nuova tecnologia di lavorazione studiata, oltre alla riduzione dell'anidride carbonica in atmosfera, contribuisce inoltre al deforestamento e al ripristino del satoyama, termine giapponese che indica la zona di confine tra la pianura e la montagna, dove cresce particolarmente rigogliosa questa specie arborea.

www.toshiyukikita.com



The new furniture collection designed by Toshiyuki Kita is a hymn to technology and nature at the same time. The Japanese designer sets new challenges for the future with the use of a versatile material such as Flat Bamboo.

Bamboo is a valuable and ancient material that has been used since a very long time ago and has recently been transformed from its original round shape into a new flat shape, as a result of a research carried out in Shimane Prefecture, Japan. Bamboo pieces with curved cross sections – vertically split into halves or thirds – can be crushed into flat pieces, while conserving the characteristic knots and surface fibers, creating pieces with widths of 70-100 mm and up to 2 meters long. This is how Flat Bamboo was born, a completely new material offering endless possibilities, perfect to create evocative and performing furnishings such as those of Kita's collection, manufactured by the Japan company Woodstyle. Thinly sliced bamboo has been used for laminated wood for a long time. However, with conventional technologies, each bamboo piece could be just 10-15 mm large.

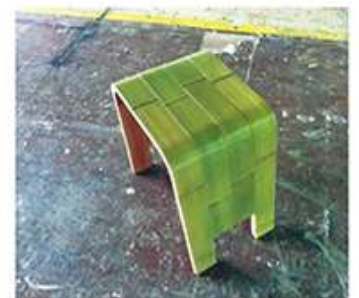
"I think that an ancient and natural material like bamboo, thanks to technology, may be transformed into a new material suitable for the future as it happened with Flat Bamboo," tells us Toshiyuki Kita. Moreover, bamboo is a highly eco-friendly resource. It grows in subtropical climate areas and, once a shoot comes out of the ground, it grows at an amazing rate. It matures in 3-4 years and is a vigorous and renewable plant with a short regeneration cycle. Unlike other trees, bamboo sprouts without replanting after harvest. Due to its rapid growth, the amount of CO₂ absorbed during the growth period is 4-16 times higher than in other trees. The new processing technology, besides reducing CO₂, contributes to preventing bamboo forest from expansion, and to the restoration of satoyama, a Japanese term denoting the border area between the mountain and the flat land, where this plant is particularly abundant.

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In queste pagine, immagini e schizzi della collezione di arredi ideata da Toshiyuki Kita e realizzati con il Flat Bamboo da Woodstyle.

These pages, pictures and sketches of the furniture collection conceived by Toshiyuki Kita and made in Flat Bamboo by Woodstyle.





In your opinion, what does "design" mean?

Today design is one of the most important words in our daily lives. Behind the definition of design, I think there is the duty to dream and the need to find the right balance between nature, people, different cultures and technology.

What's typically Japanese in your way of designing? And how much has the West influenced it?

Western and Eastern cultures are generally divided and have always been separated from each other usually due to religious reasons, different climates, the social situation that has developed over time during the long history of each region and each territory. However, I believe that each of us, despite the differences, shares the five senses unconditionally, regardless of our culture and country of origin. We all share the same feelings about what is useful, what is beautiful or what is fun, even if we speak different languages. Not only Western and Eastern culture in general, but Japanese culture in particular has had a special relevance in my personal career.

Is there a difference between a project driven by Japanese philosophy and a project based on, let's say, European philosophy?

Japan is located in the Pacific Ocean, in a subtropical climate. The whole island has always been linked to nature in an unavoidable way. Europe, on the other hand, has developed different cultures independently on its territory.

Cultural differentiation has always been part of us, but today, thanks to technology, we can talk to and reach someone on the other side of the world

in real time, going beyond time and space. In the modern world, globalization has advanced to such an extent that it is possible to share international news, from different parts of the planet in real time, with one hand. Another aspect related to the change in the current situation is the gradual loss of clear boundaries between one culture and another, between a region that has its specific features and another that has totally different ones. Now that cultures blend, the approach to a project has become transversal and universal at the same time.

What are you currently working on?

I have been focusing on two specific aspects of design lately. One has to do with production and craftsmanship: the skills and know-how of craftsmen are a gift, an asset, and I try to involve them and make them express these extraordinary skills through my projects and design. The other aspect I am working on is the creation of machines able to let us see the future and imagine what it will be like. An example is represented by artificial intelligence. I have taken part in a project that integrates technologies of the immediate future with design. An example: replacing fossil fuel energy with solar, wind and hydraulic power.

Let's compare how you designed when you were younger and how you do it now, what are the differences? How has your professional career evolved?

If I think about my first projects, I think about the '70s. At that time, mass production was an important element in design. To combine functionality and price, the market was directed towards mass production, quantity. On the other hand, there was a willingness

to design with art in mind, design was seen as a form of artistic expression. Today we all strive to create useful tools for our daily lives that are useful, long-lasting, but also beautiful, using natural materials and drawing on traditional know-how. Today I always design keeping in mind the important and necessary balance between human beings and nature.

In which direction do you think the design culture is moving?

People tend to consider nature and technology as two opposite aspects that never meet, but today it is increasingly difficult to live far from nature or completely surrounded by it, without making the two of them compatible. From the point of view of the design culture, I think that the design of the future will tend to the integration and balance between the two.

What advice can you give to young designers who are starting to work now? What is important to know and keep in mind?

Production, the manufacturing industry, will become increasingly important sectors. The industrialized society took its first steps over 100 years ago, but before that time production was done by hand, by man. When we use our hands to make things, we add passion through the materials we use and we transfer our love, our ideas, to the people who will use the end product. It is important to understand the importance of the process, of the time needed to create and achieve something, rather than the satisfaction of just owning something. This is very important to remember and keep in mind for the work of the future. And it must be combined with new technologies and progress, of course.