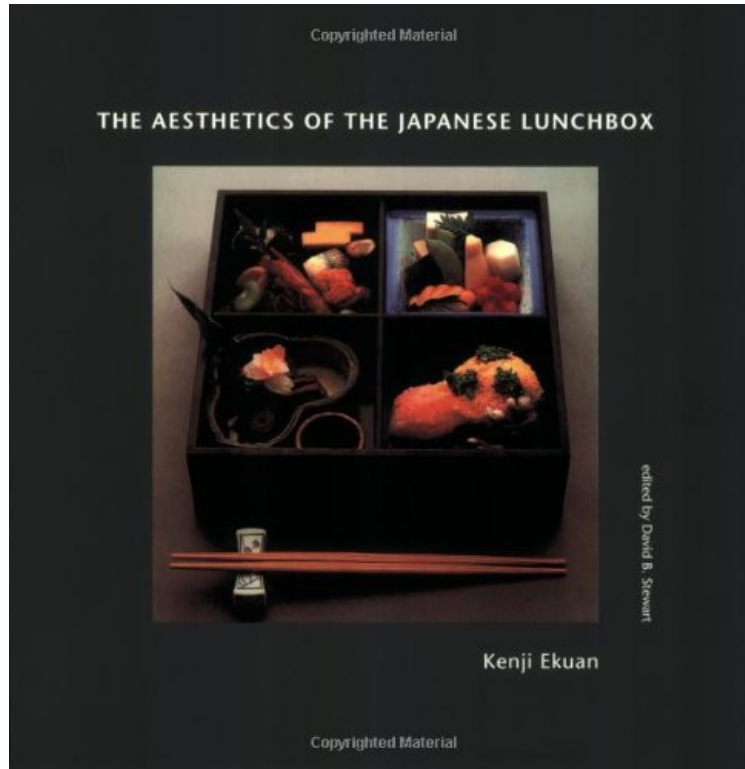


[Library ebook] The Aesthetics of the Japanese Lunchbox (MIT Press)

The Aesthetics of the Japanese Lunchbox (MIT Press)

Kenji Ekuan

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#1566206 in Books 2000-10-23Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.70 x .60 x 9.80l, 2.21 #File Name: 0262550350208 pages | File size: 29.Mb

Kenji Ekuan : The Aesthetics of the Japanese Lunchbox (MIT Press) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Aesthetics of the Japanese Lunchbox (MIT Press):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. It's a beautiful book and distills nicely what makes this design philosophy ...By John Huan VuThe late Ekuan is responsible for some of the most iconic industrial designs ever, including the Kikkoman soy sauce bottle. Here he shows how the aesthetics of the Japanese lunchbox manifest in other products. It's a beautiful book and distills nicely what makes this design philosophy so enduring.0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Dean InmanGreat product!17 of 17 people found the following review helpful. Essays on the root of Japanese Aesthetic ThoughtBy Michael CuthbertKenji Ekuan's book suffers from a title which inadequately expresses its content. He uses a brief examination of the lunchbox--its contents, history, and organizing principles--to ask what the larger aesthetic principles are of a society which holds this item as an ideal. Among the topics he examines are art, urban planning, and (foremost) industrial design. Though many of his design examples are taken from the late 70s and early 80s, they reveal how little the guiding aesthetic principles have changed (indeed, when it comes to stereo design, today it's hard to imagine [or buy] a form not influenced by lunchbox stacking aesthetics.)It is a difficult read, and I agree with a previous reviewer that a more light-hearted treatment of the lunchbox and food culture alone would be an excellent study. But that's not the intention of this book (though I have seen it shelved in the cooking section of some bookstores). What that reviewer considers a flaw--the 4x4 photographs in a 10x10 page--I view as an aesthetic judgement in line with the lunchbox principle of understatement. Witness the

photos of single flower arrangement in the book (e.g., p. 174). A word of caution: I returned my paperback copy because the binding was flimsy and pages seemed ready to fall out within hours of buying it. I exchanged it for the hardcover and have had no problems, nor have I generally had a problem with MIT press books.

The Makunouchi Bento, or traditional Japanese lunchbox, is a highly lacquered wooden box divided into quadrants, each of which contains different delicacies. It is also one of the most familiar images of Japan's domestic environment. When presented to the diner, the Japanese lunchbox seems straightforward enough; each of four food portions resides in its own compartment, apparently obeying a strict lunchbox geometry. So far, just food. But Kenji Ekuan reveals that a much deeper reading is possible, one that sees the lunchbox as nothing less than a key to an understanding of Japanese civilization, the spirit of form, and the aesthetic ideal in which the many are reduced to one. Ekuan reads the Japanese lunchbox as both object and metaphor. It is one of this book's many charms that he is able to see it as both simultaneously. He compares the visual pleasures of the Zen lunchbox to an aerial view of the Japanese archipelago; he invites us to savor its quadripartite structure as we savor the four seasons. In so doing, he unlocks the secrets of ancient Japanese rituals, celebrates the aesthetics of Japanese design, explores the contours of Japanese landscapes and technology, and delineates the forty-eight rules of the etiquette of Japanese form. With an agility more characteristic of poetry than of design criticism, he connects everything from food, television, motorcycles, package tours, and department stores to landscape, ecology, computers, and radios, all the while keeping his eye on his subject. In this book of magical transformations, nothing is what it first appears, but everything is deepened by "lunchbox theory." Consider the influence of the lunchbox on TV viewing, for example: chopsticks are used to stroll through a meal, just as remote control devices are used to browse TV channels. This book reveals a world of secret connections between its covers, in the spirit of the lunchbox itself.

.com Beginning with the Japanese lunchbox, Kenji Ekuan, Japan's foremost industrial designer, launches into a book-length meditation on "the source of the Japanese style of making things." For anyone interested in design as a culmination of all things cultural, or design as a moral force in the service of beauty and efficiency, this lovely book is indispensable. It will set every aesthetic synapse snapping and provide enough food for thought to nourish the reader for weeks, if not years. The lunchbox, or makunouchi, is a closed, compartmented, lacquered or wooden box containing small, beautifully arranged foods. As the mouthwatering pictures in the book amply demonstrate, everything about the box and its contents is considered from the standpoint of visual pleasure. Ekuan gives the long history of the makunouchi as an everyday object, first introduced in the Edo period for a light meal eaten at the opera during intermission. He traces the evolution of the boxes' construction and analyzes the contents--tidbits "from mountain and sea." Variety is key, for ideally there is something--in the lunchbox and in this book--to satisfy every palate, aesthetic or otherwise. From Library Journal Not surprisingly, this book is modeled on the Japanese lunchbox in both form and spirit: the reader opens the square cover and experiences a richness of content with an exquisite layout. Ekuan, Japan's foremost industrial designer and the author of seven previous books, has succeeded in explaining the essence and intersection of design and life by relating the lunchbox to all aspects of Japanese civilization. Ekuan is expert in supplying stimulating thoughts about the metaphorical meaning of the lunchbox. He compares the lunchbox to a unified-world mandala and the quadripartite structure of the lunchbox to the four seasons. A brief history is included. A delicious treat, although the print is a little too small for relaxed reading. Recommended for large art collections both in academic and research libraries. ALucia S. Chen, NYPL Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. Ekuan argues his intriguing points with diaphanous prose. (John D. Thomas, Village Voice) The universe, human beings' place in it, and a way to understand it -- all in a lunchbox! Only the intricate culture of Japan could have produced an idea like this; and only its Zen master of design, Kenji Ekuan, could have explained it. (David R. Brown, President, Art Center College of Design) Kenji Ekuan's book is a fascinating journey to the soul of the material culture in Japan. (Professor Yrjv Sotamaa, President of the University of Art and Design, Helsinki) Using the Japanese lunchbox as symbol, metaphor, analogy, and example, the distinguished industrial designer Kenji Ekuan illustrates ideas of design, culture, and civilization not only in Japan but across the world. A fascinating and profoundly thought provoking book. (C.H.D. Everett, Director General, Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation) Kenji Ekuan has once again used his immense gifts to explain the essence and intersection of design and life that the rest of us can only struggle to understand. This book is further evidence that he is the grandmaster of seeing. (Robert T. Schwartz, Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer Industrial Designers Society of America)