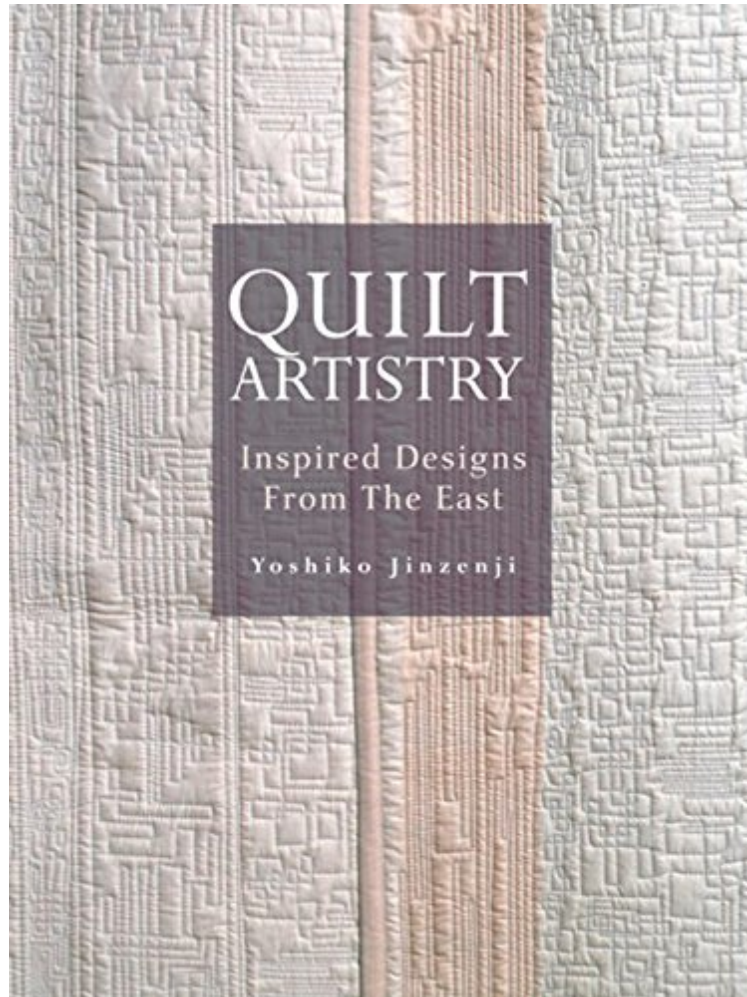


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## Quilt Artistry: Inspired Designs from the East

*Yoshiko Jinzenji*

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**Yoshiko Jinzenji : Quilt Artistry: Inspired Designs from the East** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Quilt Artistry: Inspired Designs from the East:

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Not What I Expected By LuvKimono What I had hoped for was a book that showcased the use of traditional fabrics from Japan. And while there are some "mandala" quilt blocks (5 7/8 inch each) that are made from antique Japanese, Phillipino, Indian and Indonesian fabrics along with some instructions on how to piece a kimono into a small quilt without wasting any of the fabric, the vast majority of the book showcases work done with either vanguard textiles by Junichi Arai or silk fabric handwoven and dyed with natural dyes found in Indonesia. Some of the works are extraordinary; some are quite mediocre. Jinzenji's best works are full size quilts in white or pale colors with little or no patchwork piecing that are so densely quilted it is the sewn surface's shape and lines that that attract and hold the eye. Other works, with names like "Sound" and "Dew," and "Color" borrow from the

American Amish and prairie quilting traditions in their use of grid layouts and techniques like log cabin and Seminole piecing. Jinzenji calls some of her works "engineered," and indeed, they are quite "technical" in appearance and in the quality of the workmanship. These are very beautiful quilts, and the drawings presented with some of them should make it possible for an intermediate quilter to produce similar works. How she pieced the mandala blocks with the vintage textiles into tiny 5 7/8 inch blocks remains a mystery to me even after reading through the book. All of the blocks were complex patterns with many pieces--one of them had 81 pieces. Making a block that is less than 6 inches on each side with that many pieces would be just about impossible even if one sews them by hand, as Jinzenji recommends. I was not inspired by her attempts at braiding or quilting objects like hammocks, pillows or placemats. I thought these looked amateurish and unfinished. Nevertheless, this is a very beautiful book that does have a place in a quilter's library as inspiration for certain kinds of techniques. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Simply Lovely Book By Colleen A Sanchez I love the simplicity of Yoshiko's quilt designs. With the equipment I have now I could do some of the smaller pieces. The larger quilts would require a quilting machine, and these designs are so wonderful I may just have to do that. Simply put though, I love to look at the photos of the quilts over and over. A very worthwhile book if you love the Japanese style sophistication. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An Inspired Book! By rjd Very beautifully illustrated book about a very special Japanese Artist! It was my honour to be a guest in her studio and this book wonderfully relays the range of skills and delights that are portrayed in Yoshiko-san's wonderful work and life. A true delight to own this book.

Yoshiko Jinzenji began quilting after she came upon quilts made by Canadian Mennonites and was deeply moved by their resonant, sacred quality. The richly minimalist quilts she makes today are as powerful as those that originally inspired her. *Quilt Artistry*, available now in a paperback edition, presents Jinzenji's unforgettable quilt creations in 100 color photos, and 300 black-and-white photos and diagrams. There are also a total of 90 projects for everyone from beginners to the most advanced quilters. Jinzenji is a superb dyer and often makes quilts from fabric or fiber she colors with natural dyes, including very subtle and rich bamboo-dyed white silk. In other quilts she uses antique fabric collected from around the world, and in still others utilizes innovative synthetics such as black metallic cloth created by well-known textile designer Junichi Arai. No matter what the material, her quilts all have a remarkable, quiet power. Like classic North American quilts, Jinzenji's work resonates with a spiritual quality, but one that is rooted in an Asian, even Buddhist, sensibility. Jinzenji has always wanted to give something back to the Western quilting tradition that first inspired her, and with this book, she is wonderfully successful. In addition to full-size quilts, Jinzenji demonstrates how to make quilted pillows, clutch purses, necklaces, decorative objects, table mats, tiny miniature quilt mandalas, and even a hammock. Detailed patterns and instructions are included for all projects shown. Quilt makers, as well as anyone with an interest in textiles or design, will find *Quilt Artistry* as inspirational as it is practical.

From Publishers Weekly During her 30 years of artisanal quilt making, Jinzenji has synthesized a wide range of cultural styles, from the stitching handiwork of Amish and Mennonite quilts and the patchwork altar cloths of her native Japan to the dyeing traditions of Bali, where she now keeps a studio. In this slim, well-illustrated handbook, she offers readers insight into the multicultural origins of the quilting medium and experienced quilters the secrets of creating their own works through how-to diagrams. Jinzenji also conveys a sense of spiritual portentousness in her approach: "What I am striving for is to bring out and add to the essential textures of the cloth, to create shadows and light, and to find a balance between minimalism and a sense of richness." Incorporating lustrous fabrics, some made by textile designer Jun'ichi Arai, and handmade paper, as well as competing patterns and cross textures, Jinzenji sometimes seems to err on the side of richness over minimalism. Her work succeeds best, however, when it's at its most subtle and clean. "Dew II," for instance, a ribbed, white quilt with flecks of inlaid color arranged in long, broken lines, straddles Hopi and Japanese geometries in a tasteful, restrained manner. And "Sound," with its spare, modern pixels, shimmers subtly. For aficionados of quilting, or those of artful handicrafts in general, this book will offer pleasure and inspiration. 100 color and 300 bw photos. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. "I think of Yoshiko Jinzenji as a sort of artistic Midas; anything she touches turns beautiful. In her kingdom, ordinary quilt designs become sculptural, subtle works of transcendent loveliness. This book is as beautiful as her quilts, and reveals the mystery behind some of the best of her works. I look through it when I want to be inspired." -Joe Cunningham, author of *Quilting with Style* "The unique quilt art of Yoshiko Jinzenji exemplifies the style of classic quilt tradition. Her eloquent application of intricate geometric shapes and lines in her creations is a visual feast for the observer. The serenity of the chosen textiles presented in such peaceful settings is amplified by her stunning workmanship and enchanting photography. This is certainly a book to own and to treasure." -Yvonne Porcella, founder of Studio Art Quilt Associates From the Publisher [The opening pages of the first section of Part 1, accompanied in the original by three full-color photos and two black-and-whites] Part 1: Quilts Made from Antique Cloth and New Textiles My Quilting Journey I have a very clear memory of my first encounter with quilts. It was in Toronto in the winter of 1970, in the furniture section of Eaton's department store downtown. There, surrounded by standardized fluffy bedspreads, were two handmade quilts draped over wooden racks. I went over to them as if drawn by a magnet and took them in

my hand, wondering what on earth these handmade quilts were doing in the middle of a display of manufactured goods. The oddity of the combination was stunning. The quilts were made by joining together many small pieces of cloth and then covering the whole with fine hand stitching. Each had a price tag, and I was stunned again to see that they were not much more expensive than the manufactured spreads. Who could have made these, I asked myself, and what had inspired their beautiful handwork? The riddle of the quilts' existence made them endlessly fascinating to me and the search for answers became all-consuming. I soon found out that they had been made by women of the Mennonite community of Waterloo County, dozens of miles west of Toronto. On weekend expeditions, little by little I became acquainted with the religious community of men and women who dressed in simple black clothes and traveled in horse-drawn buggies (later my quest would also take me to the Amish people of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania). Every chance I got, I would set off early in the morning to visit the Farmers' Market that was run by the Mennonite people, where I would get some of their fresh-picked sweet corn. In early spring I went to the Maple Sugar Festival and saw steam rising from huge vats of sap being boiled down and many other old-time sights. And there were always hand-stitched quilts on display that I could touch and examine. Quilts made by women of the community were entered in the Relief Sale, while others went on auction all over the region. I learned that the history of Mennonite relief efforts had included shipping vast quantities of powdered milk and wheat to Japan after World War II, some of which had been used in school lunches when I was a little girl. The discovery of such an unsuspected personal link to the Mennonite community was deeply moving. The donation of proceeds from the auction of Mennonite and Amish quilts for assistance and relief programs around the world gives the community quiltmaker a role of global significance. I realized that the world of women's handwork was making a huge contribution to the welfare of humanity, and that helped inspire my eventual decision to devote my own life to quilting. At the same time I learned that Amish quilts were now being recognized and sought after by museums and private collectors as modern art. That is because their simplicity and understated beauty appeal directly to the human heart. I was awestruck by the power I found in the quilts, as if they were tremendous wedges driven into the modern world to preserve what is most basic and wholesome in the human spirit. The natural dyes from the second half of the nineteenth century, the handwoven wool, the bold two-toned patterns, tranquil yet strong; the unique color composition and above all the deeply religious spirit -- all of it was a revelation. I set out to study on my own the message that women inscribed in North American history, using their needles to piece together the stories of their lives. I became determined to unravel secrets of the craft from every angle. I visited antique markets to buy old quilts that I then took apart to investigate the stitching, binding and materials, and lingered in museums to study designs and simply to look. Then in 1979 the Ontario Crafts Council awarded its Provincial Prize to my work, "Star Quilt," saying that they had singled it out for its inventive use of color. That was very encouraging, since it seemed to confirm my own sense that the best way for me to develop creatively was to focus on combinations of colors and combinations of materials. I began to feel strongly that I needed to learn more about materials, and particularly about the indigenous dyeing culture of my own country. I returned to Japan after more than ten years in Canada, to find out all I could. My interest centered on kimono -- the traditional costume of Japan -- and I began using kimono fabric in quilts of my own design. In fact, my interest in kimono was of long standing, since my grandmother, my mother and I were all accustomed to wearing that style of clothing in daily life; from age nine to twenty-three I'd studied flower arranging and tea ceremony, both traditional pastimes where the old kimono culture survives intact. I soon realized that my long familiarity with the garment -- accustomed as I was from an early age to the feel of it against my skin -- had nurtured in me an instinctive ability to select the finest kimono material. In the course of things I began to teach classes in quilting. The art of quilting was a catalyst allowing large numbers of women to develop interests outside the home and to share the joy of making things as we all learned together. The classes reminded me of the value of many things: patience with the elderly, encouragement, friendships that could grow out of classroom situations, harmony in interpersonal relationships. At the same time I felt a keen sense of responsibility as I tried to guide others in their creative endeavors. Meeting textile planner Jun'ichi Arai was another seminal experience for me. I was very taken with his contemporary fabrics, which while using impossibly innovative technology still capture something of the human soul. His skillful application of cutting-edge technology makes possible the creation of textures that could once have been made only by hand. Touching Mr. Arai's creations made me realize anew how indispensable fine fabric is to the world of quilting. Inspired by the many extraordinary fabrics he invented, I began to broaden my concept of quilting. It seemed to me that making quilts with these very contemporary fabrics -- particularly quilts that were based on established patterns -- could be a way to honor and even highlight the essence of the traditional forms, by combining them with innovative synthetic fabrics. Working with Mr. Arai's textiles, though, demands the use of a sewing machine, since they can have such wildly varying textures. I began to conceive of machine-stitched quilts as another valid form of expression in the craft. Just at that time, various new possibilities opened up, thanks to the influence of my family. My father-in-law, a professor of art education, encouraged students in Japan and Indonesia to visit one another's countries, and I soon began traveling there as well. In 1983 I held my first quilt exhibition in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta, and from then on I traveled back and forth many times between that country and my own, steadily educating myself about Asian dyeing and doing fieldwork. My

studies led me into many new paths, and the more I learned, the more solid my grasp of the whole became.