

# JAPAN AFFECT

FASHION  
IN 15 ACTS

## Japan Effect

When we decided to hold a new fashion exhibition at JHSP, many possible paths arose: a solo show featuring an established name, a display of an emerging talent in the contemporary Japanese scene, a group show of female designers, an exhibition focused on materials... The many fascinating possibilities reflect the richness of this theme.

A broad overview emerged as the best option, a demonstration of 70 years of Japan's prolific fashion output, starting with the country's economic recovery and how it was reflected in clothing designs. We then invited Souta Yamaguchi to join the project to serve as the exhibition's curator.

Japanese fashion has always had a unique, highly striking personality. With an aesthetic fundamentally distinct from that of the West, it continues to broaden the international fashion perspective through its innovative creations.

Even while relying on cutting-edge developments in textiles and techniques, Japanese creation nevertheless draws inspiration from the past, especially in regard to prints and forms. One of its most outstanding characteristics is how its designs remain independent of individual body shapes. To a great extent, the body is not emphasized but rather serves as a support for geometric forms. These broad forms – sometimes unstructured, sometimes highly structured – liberate the body.

The period of history covered by this overview was marked by significant economic and social transformations in Japan, which are outlined in the exhibition's timeline. In the fashion world, these decades saw the rise of Japanese designers on the international scene. These pioneers gained prominence at major fashion weeks in Paris, Milan, and New York – leading to the creation of Tokyo Fashion Week and the opening of Japanese boutiques in these traditional “fashion capitals.”

The 15 designs presented here are by iconic fashion designers distinguished for their bold creations.

Finally, the title *Japan Effect* arose as a means of emphasizing the continuous influence of Japanese design on the fashion world. It continues to surprise and reshape the industry, inspiring generations of designers worldwide, rightfully earning its place as a benchmark of creativity and innovation.

**Natasha Barzaghi Geenen**  
Cultural Director  
of Japan House São Paulo



## Transitions of Japanese fashion

This exhibition offers a valuable opportunity to learn about the transformations of fashion in Japan, starting in the 1950s and continuing to this day.

After World War II (1939–1945), Japan's clothing culture experienced a dramatic shift: the kimono – a garment that follows the body's structural lines – began to give way to Western clothing, which is based on the body's curves. The main characteristics are:

- The kimono features straight lines and follows the body's skeletal structure (supported by the shoulders and tied at the waist), enveloping the body. This uniquely shaped garment prioritizes the material, with design variations focused on fabrics and patterns.
- Western clothing has curvaceous shapes that follow the wearer's contours and are often form-fitting. Its look prioritizes the design, with variations in shape, fabric, and patterns.

In the 1950s, for reasons of hygiene, cost, and practicality, there were renewed attempts to introduce Western clothing, which began to be worn alongside the kimono.

In the 1960s, with the spread of highly elastic synthetic fibers, Western clothing became increasingly accessible, and designers faced the challenge of creating typically Japanese designs.

Amidst a context of greater liberation and a resurgent interest in Eastern cultures, the 1970s witnessed a blend of Japanese and Western clothing styles.

In the 1980s, during an economic boom and bubble of speculation, Japanese designers introduced the “Shock Wave” at the Paris Fashion Week. This collection featured a worn-in look and designs full of excesses, gaining widespread recognition. In the 1990s, Japanese streetwear gained traction worldwide. Styles blending diverse cultures along with emotional design using advanced production techniques gained popularity.

At the turn of the millennium, minimalist fashion focused on sustainability gained prominence. This shift was accompanied by designs that express the complex individuality of gender issues. Thus, the definition of fashion continues to evolve and diversify to this day.

With this exhibition I hope the visitors come into contact with Japanese sensibility, which has been able to accompany the changing times through fashion trends, like a mirror that reflects society.

**Souta Yamaguchi**  
Exhibition supervisor



Fashion show piece made  
at Bunka Fashion College (1955)



Hanae Mori (1960s)



Kansai Yamamoto (1971)



Pink House (1980s)



Yoshiki Hishinuma (1996)



Undercover (2004-2005)



Anrealage (2010-2011)



sacai (2021-2022)



May 7 - September 1, 2024

Japan House São Paulo

Av. Paulista, 52

Free admission

Tuesday to Friday

10 am to 6 pm

Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays

10 am to 7 pm

Mondays | closed

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