



"Buddhism has the characteristics of what would be expected in a cosmic religion for the future: it transcends a personal God, avoids dogmas and theology; it covers both the natural & spiritual, and it is based on a religious sense aspiring from the experience of all things as a meaningful unity."

- Albert Einstein

  
KU AMBIANCE

Ku Ambiance  
15720 La Salle Ave.  
Gardena, CA 90247  
213.915.8872

[www.kuambiance.com](http://www.kuambiance.com)

# ABOUT OUR BRAND

For over 20 years, the designers at Ku Ambiance have been illuminating the intersections between Japan, America, and Europe. And since 2000, with the start of a new millennium it has been of growing interest to see how the most traditional Japanese arts and crafts – many with traditions of hundreds of years behind them – will fare in the new century.

These traditional arts all value the “hand-made” as a primary and naturally good value. At a time when most people experience only machine-made goods often composed of plastic or other artificial materials, to encounter a hand-made object made of natural materials and lovingly shaped by a master artist can be a sublime and humbling experience.

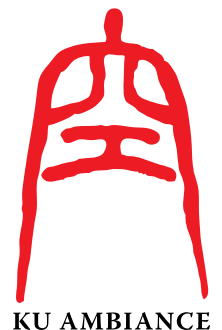
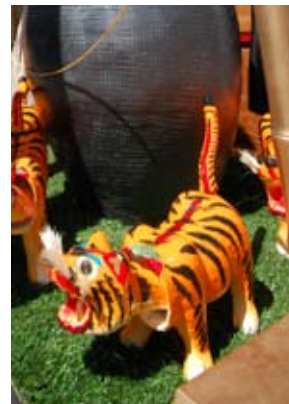
In Japan, the work of master craftspeople is the pinnacle of aesthetic achievement, and the work ethic of countless hours spent on achieving the “mastery” of craft can be daunting to outsiders. Many of the artists we feature in this book spent decades learning and developing their craft. Some had apprenticeships that lasted twenty years or more. Some practice arts or skills virtually unknown outside Japan, and not fully appreciated except by collectors in-the-know. And some of these artists now find themselves re-inventing while still venerating family traditions of art-manufacture that go back over 400 years.



KU AMBIANCE

# NEW JAPAN STYLE

New Japan Style – the aesthetic you see in our products – is an exploration of the redevelopment of these very traditional Japanese art forms and crafts into 21st century designs. Nowhere on the planet is the dichotomy between traditions and modernity -- hand-made vs. machine -- more powerfully expressed than in Japan. It's a culture that venerates the best of hand-made while at the same time loving the idea of computerized robots and ultra-modern factories. New Japan Style showcases unique individual craftspeople, practicing arts that some would scarcely believe still exist, while also investigating the process of these artists launching new ideas and refining the traditional methods onto dynamic new products to meet the sophisticated tastes of a global design market.



# OUR TEAM



**Steven Hoel**, Los Angeles, California USA

Fire. The wheel. The airplane. The first people to do something, no matter what it is, usually look a little crazy. When Steven Hoel met Tatsu Ishihara in 1992, no one was thinking about creating the first Asian concept brand. So when the two of them decided *they* would be the first to create a brand that uses Japanese artistic sensibilities to interpret global popular culture it looked a little crazy. But that didn't stop them. They decided to call their company "Ku" — a buddhist term meaning "formless void." And over the next 15 years,



**Tatsu Ishihara**, Tokyo, Japan

their vision formed into an ultra-sophisticated fusion between high-style and Japan's thousand-year-old traditions of nature, minimalism, and near-mystical momentary perfection. After more than a decade of unprecedented success in Japan, they bring their unique conceptual designs to the USA with the launch of Ku Ambiance. And yes, their work may still look a little crazy. But that's the price you pay to be first.

# EXPERTISE

From the best, for the best, we aim at a higher standard.

Margaret Keasberry, born and raised in Amsterdam Holland, moved to America as a teenager. She has strong ties to Holland and Asia, since her parents are 1st and 2nd generation from Indonesia (mixed with English and Dutch) bringing a strong Asian influence into her life.

Since creating one of the first “Shops in shops” in the early 1980’s for Macy’s New York’s main store she has worked consistently in the design and fabrication of high-end stores, unique homes, commercial spaces, restaurants, and tradeshow exhibits. Her notable clients include Diane Von Furstenberg, Stella Mc Cartney, J.LO, Fred Segal, Robert Rodriguez, 7 for all mankind, Eve, and others.

She’s an award-winning exhibit designer for numerous shows including one for Ku-USA in the 90’s. Currently she is most interested in expanding her impeccable design sense into a wider range of home furnishings and custom-designed home interiors.



**Margaret Keasberry**, Los Angeles & Holland



Ku Ambiance furniture designs are a modern interpretation of the spirit of residential architecture called sukiya-zukuri. The sukiya style came from the tea ceremony, in fact the word sukiya refers to the building in which the tea ceremony is performed. The sukiya style which evolved from the Azuchi-Momoyama period, was in direct contrast to the grand and baroque settings of earlier times. In the sukiya, the smaller and simpler is considered the best design. Sukiya style combined a smaller, plain setting with the features of a more delicate, natural and unornamented style. A style noted for refined elegance revealed through simple beauty. This style became the leading style for sophisticated urban residences in the mid to late Edo period (1750 -1867). It is this style that most represents the traditional Japanese “zen” interior. It is also this style that has contributed to the compressed living space of Japanese life. Recently, it has been understood to reflect elements of Bauhaus, Der Stijl, and Craftsman architectural elements.

ELEGANT



Ku interiors are custom living environments featuring arrangements of furniture, art, lighting, ceramics, and other premium-quality accessories designed to create a space that offers the best of New Japan Style. We can decorate a space in your home, a complete home, office, restaurant, hotel, private aircraft or yacht. Many of our luxury products are adaptable and customizable to the unique taste of our clientele. We specialize in removing the clutter of ordinary spaces and presenting an experience of art, simplicity, and style.

## HOME





Japanese Art Ceramics: We offer an extensive collection of the finest in hand-made ceramics from small kilns in Bizen, Risogama, Tai-zan and others. We are constantly looking for the best new art pottery to emerge from Japan's 1000-year-old traditions of precious ceramics. Each work is unique, hand-produced artwork.

CRAFTSMANSHIP



# BEAUTY



# BALANCE

Unique lighting, room dividers, modern chairs. Ku Ambiente combines the architectural purity of traditional forms with a distinctly modern sensibility. This is not the familiar look of historical Japan. The designs are re-inventions of useful and popular home objects, re-worked from the finest materials and with the intent that they echo the best of the past but also incorporate new materials and a code of living with simple beauty as the core value.



# SIMPLICITY

# FINE ARTS



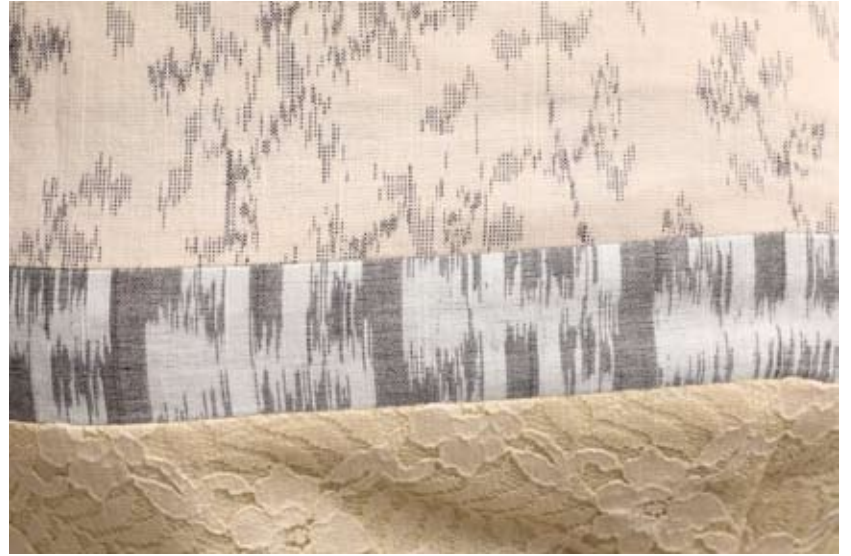
*Ed Hardy*

We also engage in collaborations with fine artists whose work integrates with the New Japan Style. In the last year, Ku Ambiance was a partner with internationally celebrated tattoo artist and designer Don Ed Hardy. We introduced a line of luxury home art objects including fine art porcelain from Arita, Japan.



# FASHION

Ku Ambiance couture fashions use a remarkable assortment of the finest Japanese textiles. Many of these are hand-loomed (kasuri) or extremely limited production unique creations in cotton, silk, and other natural fibers. Our designs derive from Japanese ideas about clothing but are aimed at a global sophisticated audience.



# JEWELRY

Ku Ambiance creates hand-made jewelry using a variety of materials including an extensive collection of designs in silver created using a lost-wax casting process. Each piece is hand-finished by Japanese artisans with impeccable attention to detail.

