

CONCEPT : furnitures by nextmaruni

chairs

dialogue : a project synthesizing culture and industry.

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001. Introduction

This booklet is an expression in words and pictures of the philosophy of people, everyday life and furniture as conceived by nextmaruni.

nextmaruni is interested in expressing these ideas in the form of chairs which are simultaneously creative works and commercial products. By commissioning designers from all over the world to come up with designs for chairs that can be seen as messages created in response to the Japanese aesthetic, our aim has been to create chairs from within Japan that are not intrinsically Japanese and which strike a responsive chord on a global scale. With the help of designers from many different countries, we are taking our time to realize one creation at a time.

This booklet sums up our ideas concerning what living spaces are all about and what chairs really are, that's to say the ideas that underlie nextmaruni's philosophy. We intend to continue applying this philosophy to the products and works that we create in the future.

We've created this booklet with the intention of spreading this philosophy on the basis of unity between consumers, sellers and creators.

nextmaruni Project Committee

002. What are buildings?

A place where one's spirit feels at ease.

A house or a building should first and foremost be somewhere that you can feel at ease in. It's a place where you can take off your shoes and walk around barefoot, a place to relax and feel peace of mind.

Let's take an example. A traveler is wandering through a forest when the sun sinks on the horizon and he sets about trying to find somewhere to stay for the night. He begins by looking for clues to suggest somewhere he may be able to sleep. He could actually sleep anywhere, but this isn't good enough for him.

If he can find a cave, no doubt he will select that. There's nowhere likely to make him feel more at ease. But if there's no cave in the vicinity, he'll probably have to settle for the side of a withered tree. Maybe snuggling up to a withered tree isn't ideal, but it will nevertheless give him a certain peace of mind.

A cave provides protection for one's whole body. A withered tree won't offer such comprehensive protection, but it does give one something to hang on to mentally. A cave might be described as a covering building, while a withered tree is a building of intimation. A covering building protects the body, while a building of intimation protects the spirit.

These are the two starting points for architecture.

Caves are the point of departure for Western architecture, with its walled structures made of stone and brick, while the concept of the building of intimation is the point of departure for Japanese wooden architecture. Cave-based architecture might be likened to the female vagina and womb, while buildings based on pillars may be likened to the male genitalia.



The vagina envelops the penis and the womb embraces and fosters the fetus. Although the penis has a symbolic power and is an expression of the life force, it does not perform a protective, embracing function. Cave-based buildings are like a mother, while pillar-based buildings are identical to the father: warmly embracing love is associated with the mother, while severe love is associated with the father.

Buildings are places where one feels peace of mind.
The cave and the pillar are their two starting points.

003. Intimations and “ma”

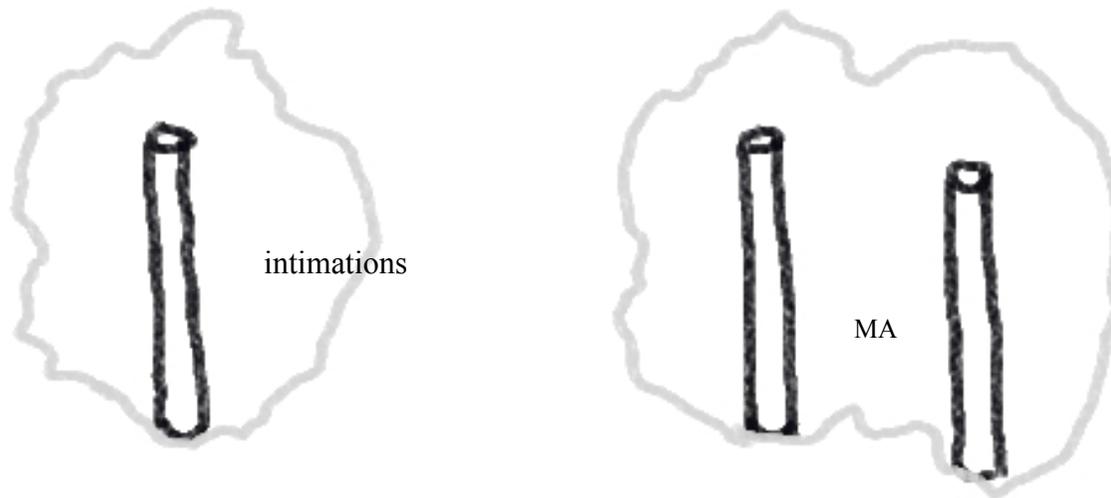
Intimation creates “ma”.

Japanese wooden architecture is an architecture created by intimations born out of pillars and beams. These spaces do not protect people in the same way as a mother does. On the contrary, they are symbolic spaces with intimations of paternalistic severity.

Intimations associated with pillars are created when there's no more than a single pillar present. A sense of determination creates the impression of a strong individual and a sensuous woman evokes her own distinctive intimation of femininity. Just as impressions are generated by specific human attributes, so distinctive impressions are given off by the aura surrounding a pillar. Japanese people have traditionally shown enormous sensitivity to such intimations.

「その気にさせる」、「気がある」、「気が合う」、「気がいい」、「気が多い」、「気が大きい」、「気が置けない」、「気が重い」、「気が勝つ」、「気が利く」、「気が無い」、「気が腐る」、「気が差す」、「気が知れない」、「気が進まない」、「気が済む」、「気がする」、「気が急ぐ」、「気がそれる」、「気が立つ」、「気が小さい」、「気が散る」、「気が尽きる」、「気が付く」、「気が詰まる」、「気が遠くなる」、「気が咎める」、「気が無い」、「気が長い」、「気が抜ける」、「気が乗る」、「気が早い」、「気が張る」、「気が晴れる」、「気が引ける」、「気が触れる」、「気が減る」、「気が紛れる」、「気が回る」、「気が短い」、「気が向く」、「気がもめる」、「気が若い」、「気にかかる」、「気に入る」、「気に掛ける」、「気に食わない」、「気に障る」、「気にする」、「気に留める」、「気になる」、「気に病む」、「気之所為」、「気の病」、「気は心」、「気を入れる」、「気を失う」、「気を落とす」、「気兼ねする」、「気をきかせる」、「気を砕く」、「気を配る」、「気を尽くす」、「気をつける」、「気を取られる」、「気を取り直す」、「気を抜く」、「気を吞まれる」、「気を吐く」、「気を張る」、「気を引く」、「気を回す」、「気を持たせる」、「気を揉む」、「気を許す」、「気を良くする」

The starting point for Japanese architecture is the discovery of peace of mind in the intimations that come into being in the vicinity of a single pillar. “Ma” is the term used in Japanese to describe the replete space that is created when a variety of intimations are combined as a consequence of several pillars being present within the same space. The intimations generated by each pillar combined to create “ma”.



“Ma” comes about through the combination of the intimations generated by many pillars and beams.

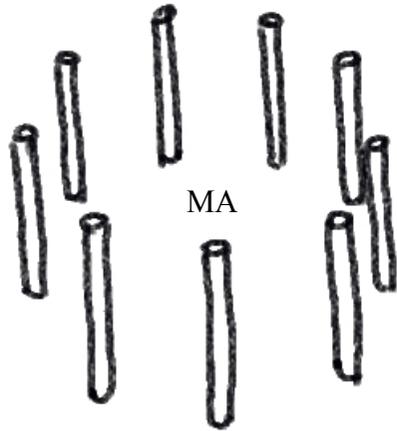
004. Architecture of “ma”

Japanese architecture...

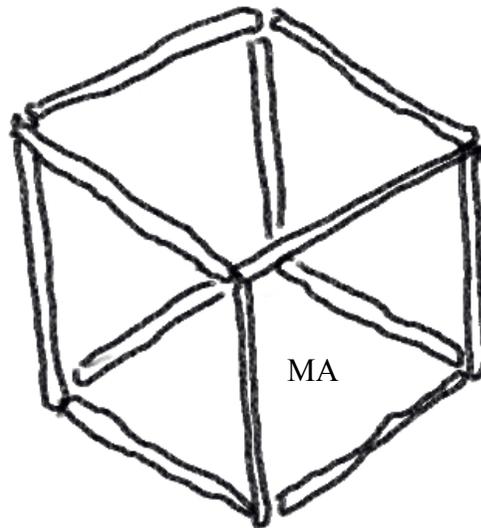
When several pillars come together to form an architecture of intimation, the result resembles a “covering building”. “Ma” comes about as a consequence of the intimations generated by several pillars combining. The resulting structure provides people with covering, albeit not to the same extent as a cave, and creates a vague space that cannot be described as either broken or continuous.

Japanese architecture is all about spaces generated by the “ma” created through gathering of wooden pillars within the same space. It’s the architecture of “ma”, possessing a sense of vagueness unattainable by the “covering architecture”, that characterizes buildings in the Western style.

0 0 4 .



Japanese wooden architecture is all about spaces generated by “ma”, conceived as a gathering of intimations.

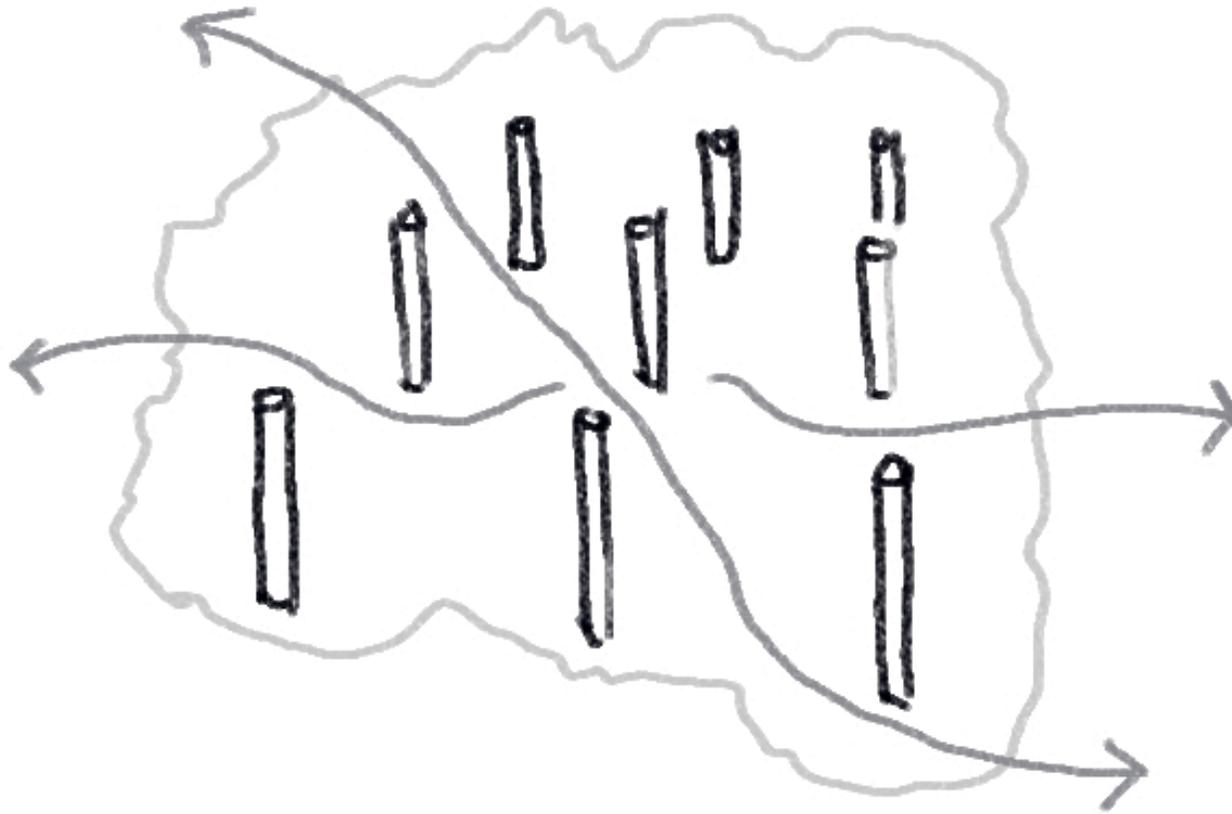


005. Outside and inside

Continuity...

With their intimations generated by multiple pillars and their application of the concept of “ma”, buildings in the traditional Japanese style do not have the walls that characterize the “covering” buildings that are the starting-point for Western-style architecture.

In the case of Western-style architecture conceived of as a form of covering consisting of walls, there is a clear demarcation between inside and outside. Openings are then carved out of these walls to insert windows. But in the case of Japanese-style architecture, with its roots in intimations, there is nothing more than the intimations generated by the pillars; there are no walls from the outset, and thus there are no windows. There is no sense of inside and outside, and in the case of the *sukiya* building style, even the garden is considered to be an integral part of the overall structure. Inside and outside are subtly linked through the use of blinds and sliding panels (*sudare*, *shoji* and *fusuma*).



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Even the garden is part of the structure of a building in the *sukiya* style: Japanese space in which inside and outside are parts of the same continuum.

006. Rooms and “ma”

“Ma” is a space of plenty...

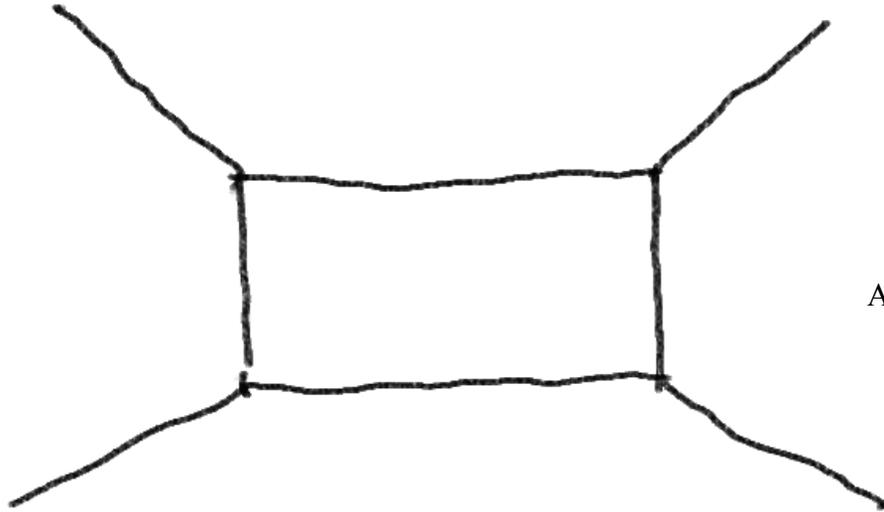
Buildings based on the principle of covering rigidly demarcate inside and outside by means of walls, into which windows are inserted to create rooms.

Since Japanese traditional buildings are assemblages of the intimations generated by pillars, they have neither walls nor windows nor, for that matter, even rooms. Everything forms part of a single continuum and a single building is a continuous space made up of a single concept and a notion of “ma”. This space is subtly demarcated with sliding panels and blinds although in such a manner as not to destroy the continuum, resulting in the creation of a series of “ma” spaces.

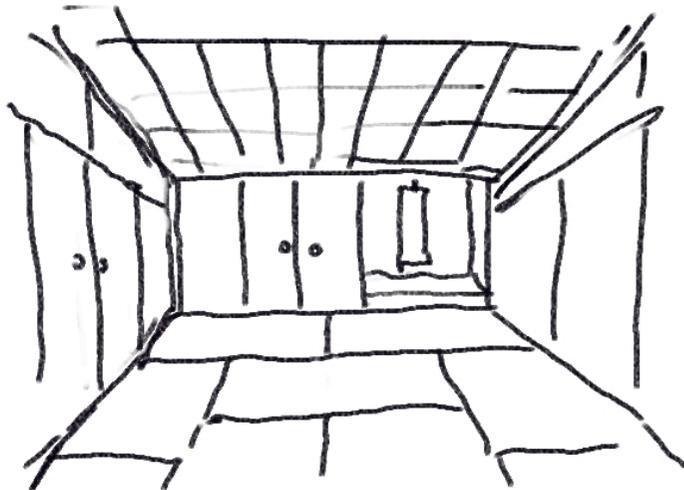
The various “rooms” in a Japanese house are all referred to using this word “ma”, whose underlying concept is that of relative space. For instance, we talk in Japanese of the *ima* (“living space”), the *nema* (“sleeping space”), the *kyakuma* (“guest space”) and the *chanoma* (“tea space”, i.e. the living room).

In English, a “room” refers essentially to an empty space containing absolutely nothing before something is put in it. In contrast, “ma” denotes a space, but a space packed full of intimations.

In a Japanese house, this continuum provisionally demarcated by means of sliding panels and blinds merely requires the insertion of tatami mats to make it into a livable space, even without a single item of furniture. Lay down a futon and the area becomes a space in which to sleep; lay down some zabuton cushions and the area is transformed into a space in which to entertain guests. A Japanese house into which one enters after taking off one’s shoes might be thought of as a large piece of furniture in its own right. The inside of a Japanese building is not just a gaping space; it is a space of real plenty.



A Western room



A Japanese room

An empty Western-style room and a Japanese living space full of intimations

007. Houses are chairs

Japanese houses are for sitting...

Tatami mats in a Japanese house are set at a height of around 45 centimeters, about the same as the height of a chair. Being in a tatami room, which one enters after taking off one's shoes, is likely being on top of a chair. Japanese spaces containing tatami mats are not the same as Western-style rooms; they are essentially the same as the chairs present in a Western-style room.

Tatami mats are not intended to be walked on; they are there to be sat on and for relaxation, and this is the basis for the various purposes to which they are put. Just as one does not stand on a chair, so it feels unnatural to remain standing on a tatami mat.

Tatami mats are equivalent to chairs.

007.



Japanese house are for sitting
Western houses are for standing.

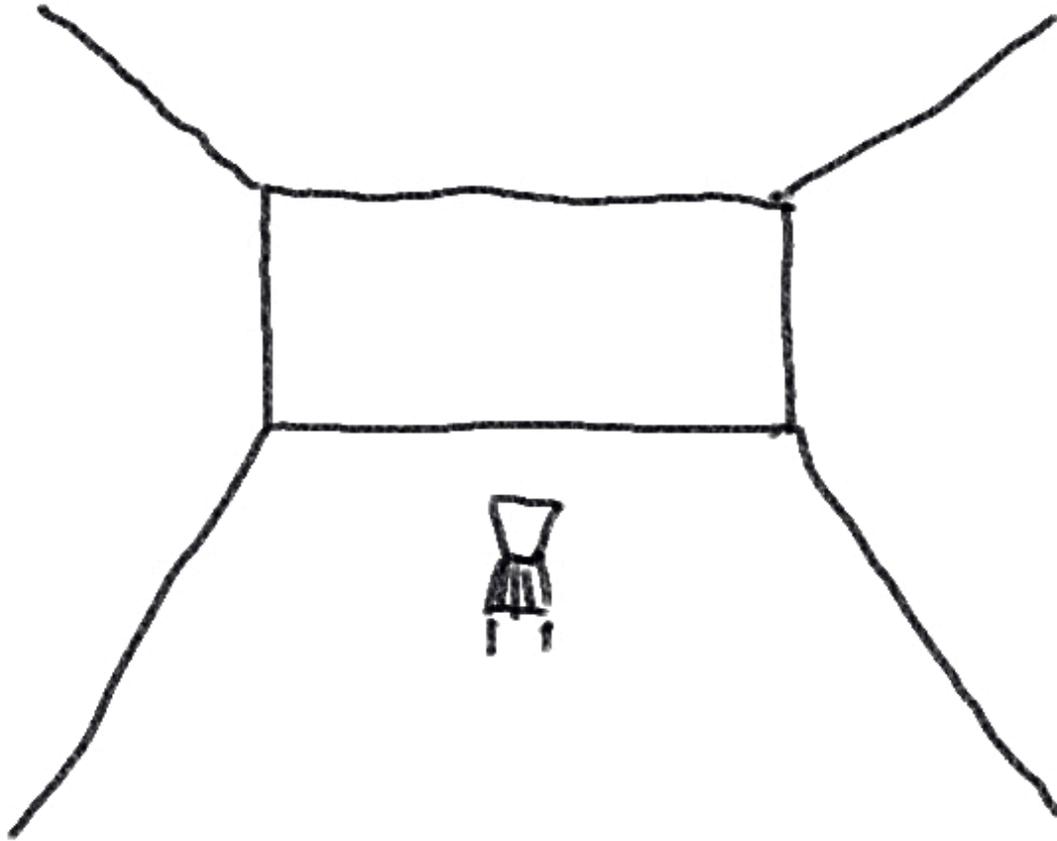
008. **What are chairs?**

Spaces for peace of mind and relaxation...

In the vacant space of a Western-style room, we can find a place where we feel we belong so long as furniture is present. Just like the withered tree discovered by the traveler walking through a forest, furniture has the effect of creating a relaxed, comfortable space that offers us lodging. Chairs are thus structures of intimation.

Just as a Japanese house is itself both a piece of furniture and a chair, so chairs are structures of intimation and conceptually identical to a house in the traditional Japanese style.

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Chairs are structures of intimacy.

009. Tables

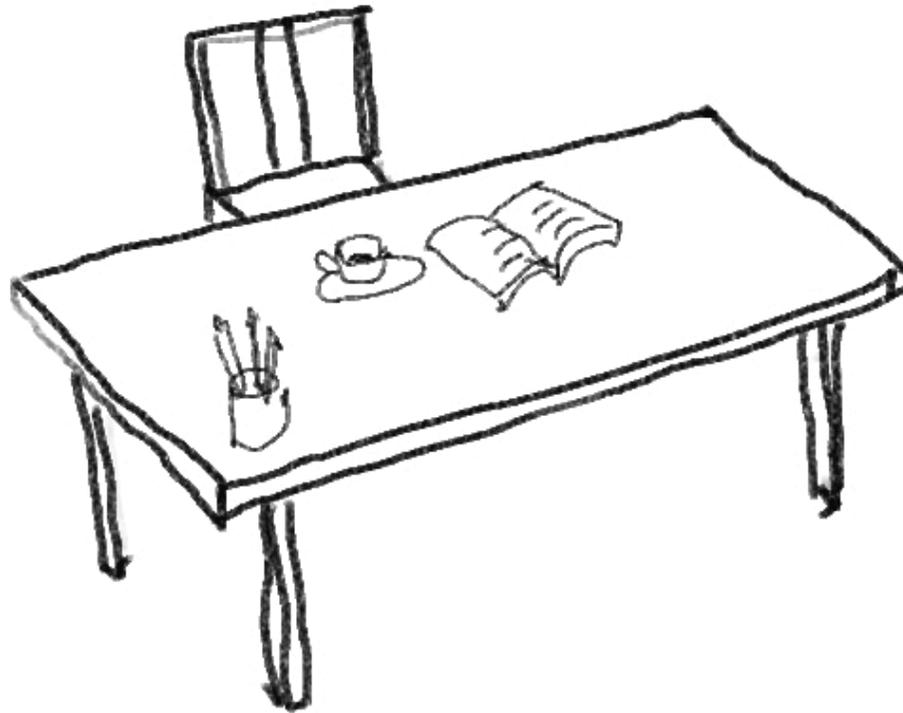
The starting points for everyday life...

Someone who has at last begun to feel relaxed due to the presence of a chair in an otherwise vacant room will soon begin to feel that something is somehow missing. Although he may feel at ease, nothing is going to develop out of this situation.

If a table is placed in front of the chair, the person can place his glasses, an ashtray, a book or a cup of coffee on it. He can begin to think, to enter into conversation with other people, to take notes and to begin leading an inwardly fulfilled life.

Chairs create peace of mind while tables enable us to begin living.

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Chairs create peace of mind while tables are the starting points for life.

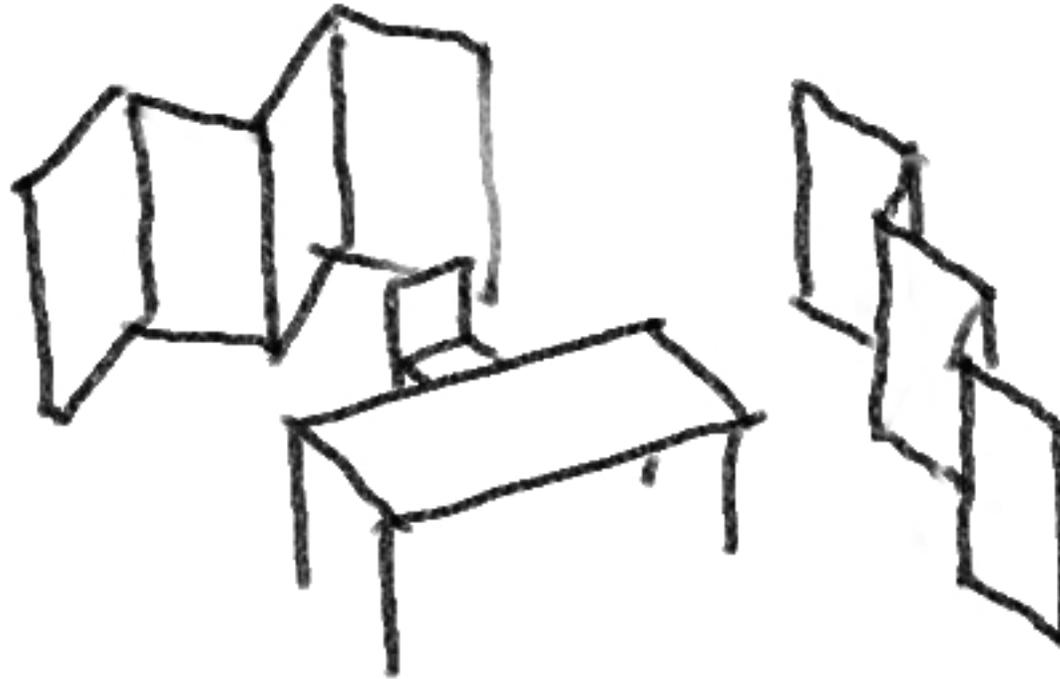
010. **Folding screens**

Tools for creating spatial division...

In the same manner as sliding paper screens (*fusuma* and *shoji*) and reed screens (*sudare*), folding screens (*byobu*) are tools for creating “rooms” (*ma*) by temporarily demarcating spatial boundaries. Japanese buildings are single continuums joining inside with outside, and, similarly, contemporary folding screens are able to transform Western-style rooms into such temporarily demarcated “ma” spaces. A real living space comes about for the first time when the peace of mind provided by a chair and the creative activity permitted by the presence of a table combine with the effect of the folding screen, which establishes a person’s territory and sets appropriate limitations on the expansion of space.

nextmaruni is in the business of producing tools for the creation of living space, with the emphasis on chairs but including also tables and folding screens.

0 1 0 .



Chairs to provide peace of mind

Tables as the starting point for creation

Folding screens for creating spaces between people

011. Three layers

Floor and chairs and tables...

Three levels can be seen when we look at how people live: the floor level, the chair level and the table level. Floors support our very existence, chairs support the spirit, and tables support everyday life.

Without floors human beings would be unable to exist. This is the starting point. People who lead their daily lives on floors search for support that can prop up their postures from various angles. There are lean-to chairs, bar stools that provide minimal support, chairs that make one sit upright, and relaxing armchairs ideal for sitting in as one drinks coffee or takes part in a meeting. Chairs provide support for all kinds of human feelings.

We at nextmaruni think of daybeds and beds in the same context as chairs. We call these products beds, but they are essentially the same as chairs.

The table level is the level on which we place things and work. People begin their daily lives by gaining a place where things are able to exist because of the presence of a table. Tables give us the chance to think and to debate, and it is from tables that everyday life gets off to a start. With our main emphasis on chairs, nextmaruni provides support for this. We develop tables as important components connected with everyday life.



Floors support human existence, chairs support the human spirit, and tables support everyday life.

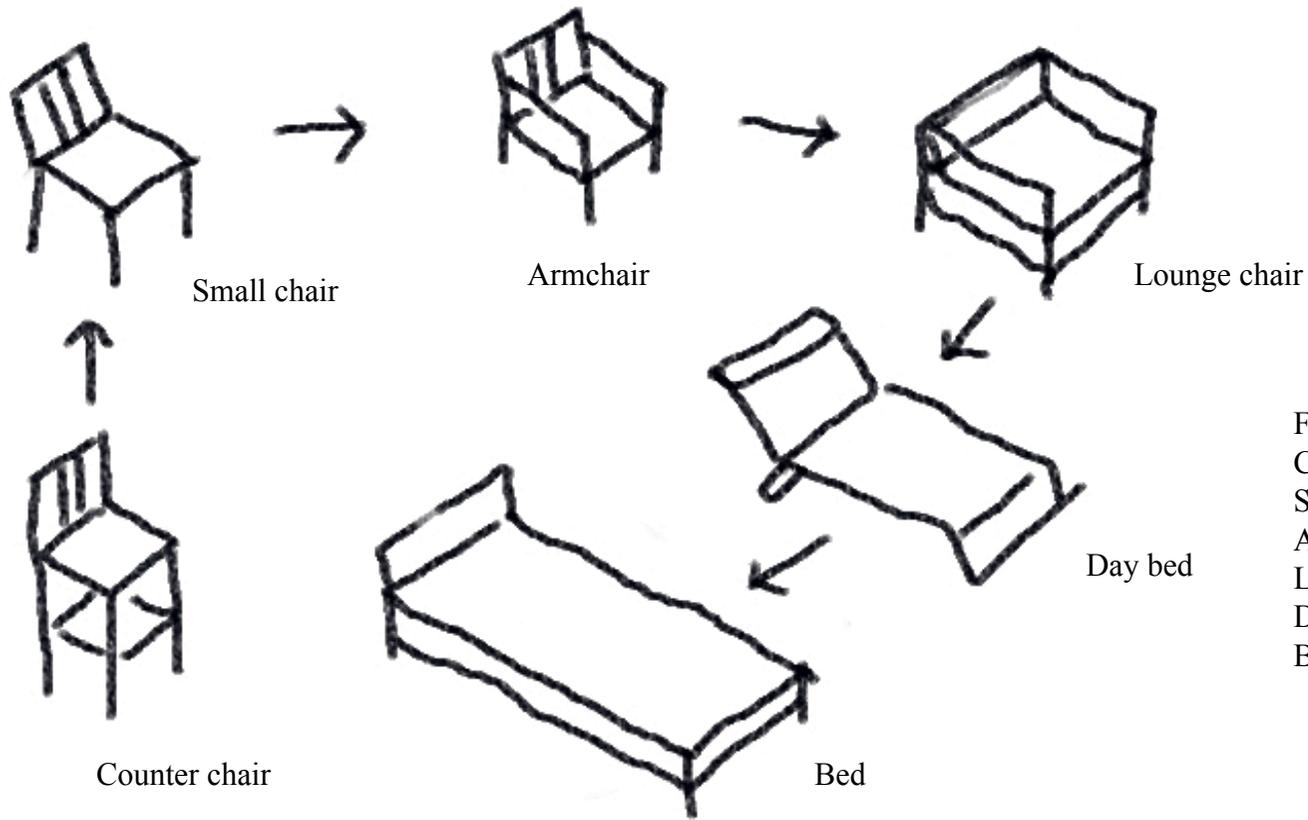
012. **Sitting and sleeping implements**

Tools to support the posture...

People rest their bodies in a variety of ways, and it's chairs that provide support for their bodies.

Human beings can assume all kinds of postures from walking to lying down, but we are nextmaruni believe that chairs should support the posture and provide people with peace of mind. By posture we mean here everything from standing to sleeping.

Various chairs have been created in response to these varied poses. Beds are also close relations of chairs.



From the left in clockwise order:
 Counter chair
 Small chair
 Armchair
 Lounge chair
 Day bed
 Bed

Chairs support the posture and relax the spirit.

013. **Auxiliary devices**

Chairs and auxiliary devices...

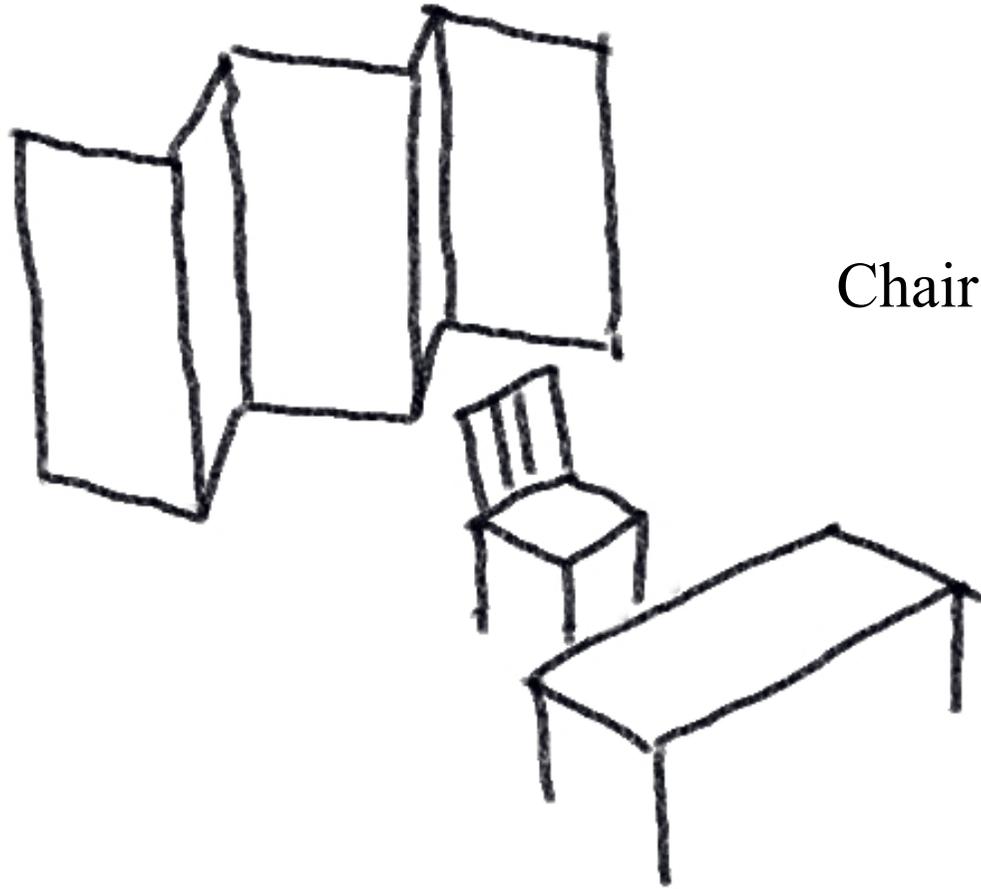
nextmaruni has a product line-up centering on chairs but also including two auxiliary devices for supporting people when they sit on chairs.

These two auxiliary devices are tables and folding screens. Everyday life begins as soon as chairs are supplemented by these two auxiliary devices.

Chairs are the bases for peace of mind, tables are the bases for everyday life, and folding screens are suggestive of territory. These are the three main elements of furniture created by Japanese culture.

We at nextmaruni place importance first and foremost on chairs. Chairs as places for relaxation are the starting points for furniture and for every aspect of daily life.

0 1 3 .



Chairs and two auxiliary devices

Above: Folding screens for demarcating territory

Right: Chairs as starting points

Front: Tables as the openings on everyday life

014. **Harmony of individuality**

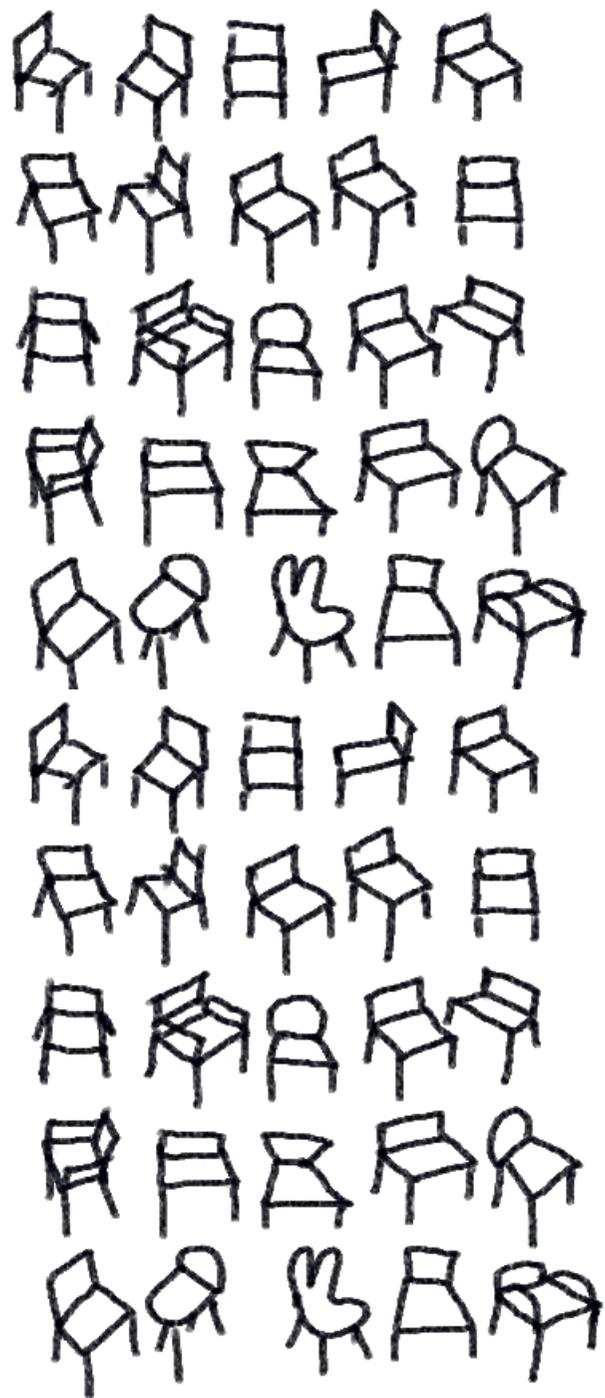
Dialogue with other cultures...

We're not interested in interior coordination consisting of no more than a sense of unity created by a single type of furniture imposed from above. We don't aim to create a series of furniture harmonized on the basis of a single image.

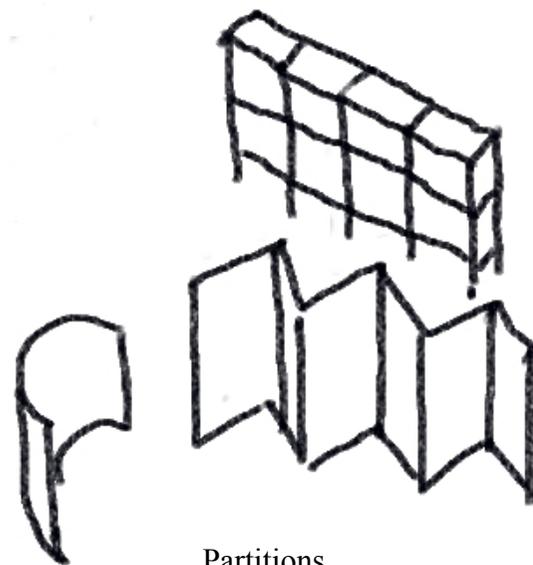
All nextmaruni chairs are individualistic items created in accordance highly distinctive outlooks on the world. These three types of furniture—chairs, tables and folding screens—are each designed separately as components that make up a well-rounded interior.

By means of interiors, we aim to realize a society in which highly individual entities create a developed sense of harmony rather than a society which limits the autonomy of the individual by giving precedence to overall harmony.

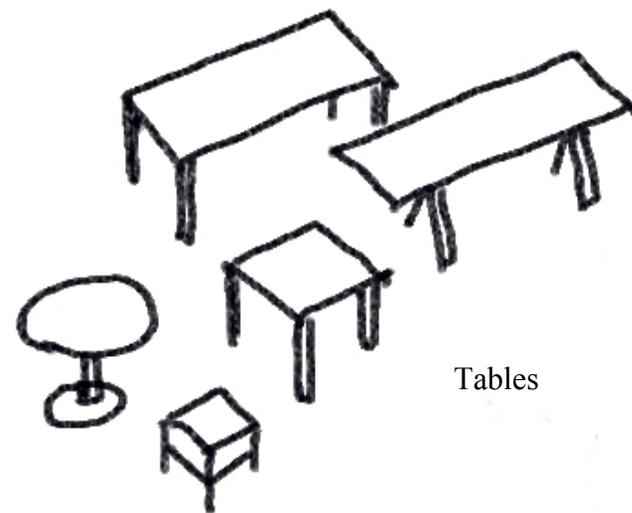
Harmony as we conceive it is the developed harmony of individuals. We have no intention of denying a sense of harmony with a table and interior furnishings resulting from the selection of a single individual chair, but we would recommend mixing a variety of distinctive chairs in order to give each one its own individuality. These are spaces created by a dialogue between individual chairs.



Chairs



Partitions



Tables

015. Miscellaneous items

Searching for furniture by abandoning furniture...

We at nextmaruni want to throw furniture away. By temporarily abandoning furniture of the type that has come into being over many years of daily life in the West, we aim to get off to a fresh start on the basis of Japanese philosophy and space and to search for a concept of furniture rooted in a Japanese environment.

We use the term miscellaneous items to refer collectively to items whose names are not fixed. Miscellaneous items have their own wonderful, indefinable energy.

The culture of miscellany is a culture imbued with energy and enormous potential. This is what we at nextmaruni take as our starting point.

Looking at the history of the development of ordinary houses in Japan, they started with pit dwellings consisting merely of an earth floor and then moved on to paneled floors. Sleeping areas and living areas appeared first of all, and then separate guest rooms (*zashiki*) and *chanoma* living areas were created. The important thing to bear in mind here is that earth-floored rooms remained in place unchanged. The earth-floored room (*doma*) remained as a place where people could perform agricultural and many other different kinds of work. The earth-floored area is a truly vital space.

Miscellaneous items correspond to the earth-floored room in a building. And it's from here that new vistas begin to emerge.

—————
雑貨、雑魚、雑役、雑音、雑学、雑感、雑記、雑器、雑居、雑業、雑菌、雑具、雑技、雑劇、雑念、雑種、雑犬、
雑言、雑誌、雑紙、雑事、雑色、雑食、雑色、雑説、雑草、雑則、雑多、雑役、雑用、雑体、雑類、雑著、雑体、
雑肉、雑念、雑輩、雑費、雑筆、雑兵、雑品、雑物、雑文、雑報、雑木、雑本、雑務、雑用、雑話、雑録、雑歌、
雑巾、雑炊、雑談、雑説、雑煮、雑人、雑筆、雑木、雑物
—————

The concept of miscellany and the terms associated with it convey the a sense of power like the plentiful sea and the sea as the beginning of life. We aim to search for new definitions of furniture by temporarily abandoning ideas about tools for everyday life.

Searching for furniture by abandoning furniture...

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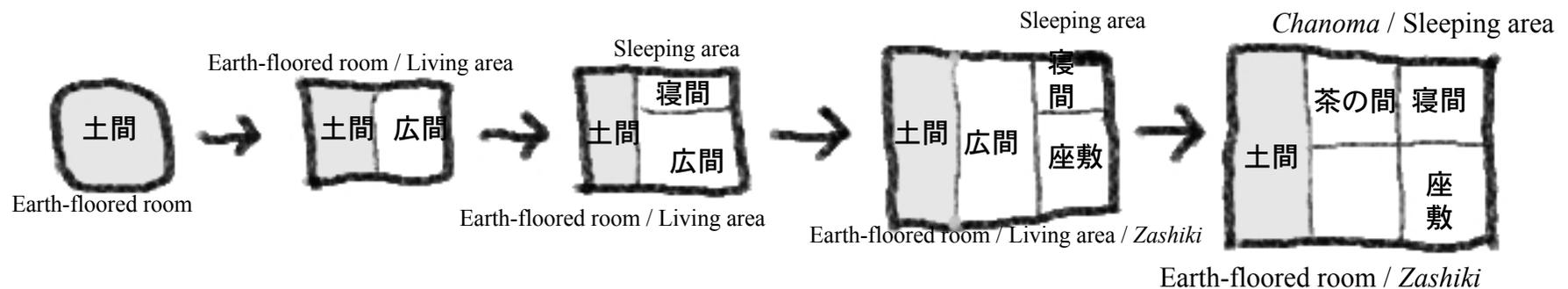
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The chaotic and plentiful sea

016. Physical sensation

Ideas rooted in the body

The Japanese aesthetic is an aesthetic based on physical sensation. Society begins with concern for others and is interpreted as something created by feelings of duty and personal attachment to others and to the world at large. The sense of unity with nature is based on the idea that death is a part of life; it is felt physically as a constant mutation of nature under which everything that exists now is thought of as merely temporary. There is a dislike of processing and a desire that production should not be fiddled around with any more than is necessary. Lengths of fabric used in the production of kimono are sewn in such a way as to reduce the need for cutting to an absolute minimum. As is suggested by the fact that kimono are almost all in the same form, the Japanese aesthetic places importance on the texture of materials, and the form that a material takes is for emphasizing the texture. There is no emphasis placed on form as such.

We at nextmaruni interpret chairs and space as a whole in terms of this physical sensation. Having created a product line-up centering on chairs, wood is the main material that we use to create our products. The appeal of wood as a material lies in its low heat conductivity and its low heat permeability, features that make this a material kind on the human skin.

Buildings in the *sukiya* style used to be made from wood, bamboo, earth and paper. These are materials that ideally suit the Japanese climate and environment and that are at one with Japanese culture. nextmaruni is a cultural movement that aims to develop and sell a new philosophy of furniture with its origins in Japan.



Philosophy based on physical sensation and an aesthetic that places importance on materials

0 1 6 .

017. Philosophical background

1. The philosophy of harmony

Interior spaces united by a single image are able to relieve a person's fatigue but they cannot be described as truly vital spaces. If one considers spaces to be not intended not only for healing purposes but also as enhancers of life, we can expect to see a new age harmony based on a new philosophy.

The dream held out by nextmaruni is for a vital harmony under which individual people and individual cultures are able to enter into a dialogue in search of themselves. This is a highly developed form of harmony possessing its own distinctive amorphous energy.

In search of dialogue with various cultures, nextmaruni dreams of such a harmony in which individual works are coordinated with individual consumers.

2. Returning to the starting point

Japan has no history of furniture, and if we do no more than produce Western-style furniture in ways that we've learnt from the West and then go on to sell this furniture on the global marketplace, there's no way we can hope to get the better of Western countries, with their long history of involvement with furniture. We must make a start by discovering furniture that is based on the Japanese aesthetic but that is likely to find worldwide acceptance. We at nextmaruni have been striving to rediscover new concepts for Japanese furniture by getting designers to come up with ideas for chairs that constitute messages directed in all humility toward the Japanese aesthetic and by at the same time abandoning the very concept of furniture with recourse to Japanese traditional lifestyles and formalities. We aim to return to the sea of miscellaneous items which is the realm of the conceptually undifferentiated, and to rediscover furniture from this point.

What we have actually discovered in this process is the need to think on the basis of the three simple elements of which living spaces are constituted, namely chairs, tables and folding screens. This involves the discovery of furniture conceived as tools for supporting life, a discovery made on the basis of Japanese ideas viewed from a new perspective.

3. Identity

We are living in an age when co-existence with the rest of the world is of great importance. The 20th century was an age when we could be content with seeking our markets exclusively on the domestic level, but this age is now in the past and the current age is one when we need to enter into a dialogue with the world by broadcasting the features of Japanese culture to the world. Despite the fact that we possess a history and a culture which we can be proud of on a global level, modernization has had the effect of burying Japan under Western values, as a consequence of which we tend to lose sight of Japanese culture.

What we have done is to hide the Japanese aesthetic in the dark depths of our spirit and to turn ourselves into slaves of Western culture. In order to take on the challenge presented by the world, we at nextmaruni are determined to bring back to the surface the Japanese aesthetic that lies within us and to reflect this aesthetic into the approach we adopted to the development of products and into our business activities in the future.

4. Coexistence between people and things

At the start of the 21st century, we are witnessing the appearance of an enormous quantity of things than serve to enrich our daily lives.

Industry is stimulated by the production of commodities, and we have no intention whatsoever of denying the value of production. But this plethora of things will eventually end up on the scrap heap and serve to further destroy global ecosystems. Not only that, but too many things serve to alienate people and they even make it more difficult for things and people to coexist harmoniously. Creating full lives with a minimum number of things, beautifying things that we have no alternative but to possess, and reinstating artistic values: it's of prime importance that we create an age when people are able to feel love for the things that they possess. Fetishism is all about affection for things.

We want to create an age when everything is equipped with artistic qualities that will make it possible for all things to become the objects of love.

5. Reinstatement of physical sensation

Almost from the moment it has been born, an infant possesses an instinctive sense of direct physical sensation. Using its sense of smell and sense of touch, the infant explores the world around it. As a consequence of the enormous explosion of intelligence that took place during the 20th century, people today are in the process of losing their animal instincts. We at nextmaruni place great importance on physical sensation. Not only do we emphasize the sensation of wood as a material that has been familiar to people since ancient times: our philosophy itself is backed up by the Japanese aesthetic and the importance that it places on physical sensation. Of all the different types of furniture, it is chairs alone that come into contact with the body much in the manner of clothes. It's important that the meaning of chairs is discovered from physical sensation.

This is why the nextmaruni product line-up is conceived in terms of three elements, namely chairs, tables and folding screens.

6. Fusion of industry and culture

As we've seen, nextmaruni isn't involved merely in the business of producing and selling furniture: we are also working on conveying a distinctive philosophy. In order to do this, from the outset we have positioned nextmaruni in terms of a fusion between cultural activities and industrial activities. The fact that the era to come will be an era of culture will be the key to our success, and we will be able to create a cultural effect by giving adequate consideration to economic matters.

We at nextmaruni aim to create the conditions under which our business will convey the joy of living, and we hope that the joy of living will make itself felt in our business activities.

This is the business that we dream of achieving.