

“The necessity of evolving with the times while still protecting craft and tradition”



The charms of Edo Kiriko

Edo Kiriko is the name given to household goods made of glass cut with traditional Japanese patterns. By overlaying thin colored glass on transparent glass, cut glass (Kiriko) is set with surprisingly fine handwork.

There are about 12 types of traditional Japanese patterns, including chrysanthemum, checkered patterns and more, and the charm of these creations is that their brilliance differs depending on design, as well as the beauty of the patterns and the fine texture that can be obtained only by hand.

In addition to its designation from Tokyo Metropolitan Government, it has also been designated as National Traditional Craft.



Edo Kiriko craftsman

Kozo Kawai

We approached a craftsman who has inherited the craft of Edo Kiriko, a manufacturing method designated as a Traditional Craft Industry by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government.

Profile

Kozo Kawai

Edo Kiriko craftsman in the Sumida Edo Kiriko Kan. He has worked as a craftsman for 25 years and is recognized as Sumida Meister, a skilled artisan who creates high-quality products that support Sumida Ward's industry.

What do you think about while working?

Actually, if you think all the time only about Edo Kiriko, you cannot create good products. In the process of making, even if you pay attention to faithfully reproducing a design, if you focus too intensively, you won't be able to see what's around it and won't notice distortions of subtle cuts as well as other points. In addition, it is also important to have a firm shift between your work and private life. You will be able to concentrate on work even more if you have a fulfilling private life. I think enjoying your

work and continuing it for a long time leads to good workmanship.

How are the Sumida Edo Kiriko Kan products created?

Products made in our atelier are based on an idea given by the director, for which I draw a sketch. Since our work is to make a two-dimensional picture into a three-dimensional object, even if it looks perfect as a picture, it will not necessarily be beautiful once actually cut. After repeated trials, we produce functional products that also have a beautiful appearance.

About how much training do you need to become a full-fledged craftsman?

To produce fine works, it is essential to have a deep understanding of the material itself. In my case, I think that it took me 5 to 10 years to learn a series of production

processes comprised of sumitsuke (inking), arazuri (rough grinding), sanbangake (fine cutting), ishikake (stone processed with water and used to make surface cuts smoother), and kenma (polishing). Since you remember it with your body, you don't get any immediate results. There are many things that you must remember, but perhaps constant working on it might be the training itself.

What aspects do you put importance on when it comes to the charms of Edo Kiriko or its creation process?

I think it's different when you consider making a finished product into a commodity or a piece of work. As a craftsman who makes products requested by clients, I think that the charms of Edo Kiriko reside in functional products that can be used in everyday life and not in works that would look like flashy decorative art. When you make Edo Kiriko, you incorporate techniques and patterns handed-down over 180 years of history, and create products wanted by clients living these days.

In the future, how are you going to convey the charms of Edo Kiriko to foreign tourists?

At the Sumida Edo Kiriko Kan, it is possible to see, buy, and experience with a workshop tour, Kiriko lesson, and other activities. I think that the charms of Edo Kiriko can be conveyed to foreign tourists by having them experience it.

Sumida Edo Kiriko Kan すみだ江戸切子館

Experience the shining craftsmanship of Edo Kiriko Edo Kiriko workshop and store founded more than 100 years ago. Offers original products featuring contemporary arrangements set with traditional patterns. It is possible to experience glass-cutting through workshop tours and other activities.

Address: 2-10-9 Taihei, Sumida-ku
TEL: 03-3623-4148 Opening hours: 10:00-18:00
Closed: On Sundays and public holidays
Fee: 4,320 yen (Workshop tour. It is possible to bring your work home on the same day)
Access: 8 min. walk from JR Kinshicho Station North Exit

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The "History of Edo Kiriko"

told by the Director of Sumida Edo Kiriko Kan

Edo Kiriko started when in the 1830s (late Edo period) a vidro (glass) wholesaler set fine carved cuts on glass products brought from overseas. At that time, patterns were set on transparent glass. Later, thin colored glasses were cut to cover clear glass bowls. By overlaying colored glass, Edo Kiriko evolved into a more spectacular and beautiful product. Traditional patterns existing since the Edo period, such as chrysanthemum, checkered, hemp, and other patterns, were cut into the glass.

In recent years, we are making Edo Kiriko modern by adding contemporary arrangements to traditional patterns. Since ancient times, Edo Kiriko craftsmen have expressed familiar and beautiful things, such as seasons and nature, and have polished their techniques in order to make such creations possible. You should definitely try these finely cut glass products that reflect Japanese sensibility.

Director of Sumida Edo Kiriko Kan

Mr. Tatsuo Hirota



Take the Edo Kiriko challenge!

At the Sumida Edo Kiriko Kan, you can experience Kiriko using a polishing machine. Draw your favorite pattern and work on cutting. Junior high school students and older can make paperweights, and high school students and older can make a glass.

1. Listen to a description given by skilled craftsmen on how to use the machines and practice cutting. Hold the receptacle firmly as you move back and forth. The blade used won't cut your hand even if you touch it
2. After practicing, draw a pattern that you'd be able to handle on your own.

