

## Turning over a new leaf

*With Swiss designer David Glaettli taking on the role as creative director for Japanese furniture maker Karimoku New Standard, his explorations of tradition versus innovation and east-meets-west promise an exciting future*

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Courtesy of Out of Stock

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It would be all too easy to assume that, given the online savvy of today's generation of marketers, buyers and consumers, the traditional trade fair would struggle to compete in terms of influence and potential. Yet look at Salone Internazionale del Mobile di Milano (the annual Milan furniture fair), for example: for more than half a century, it has been regarded as the leading showcase for the latest interior design products, and an arena that provides a vital testing ground for up-and-coming new brands — and continues to wield significant influence in the market.

One such newcomer is Karimoku New Standard, a line established by the 70-year-old Japanese furniture maker Karimoku in 2009. At the past few editions of the Milan fair, Karimoku New Standard has distinguished itself as a high-quality furniture brand, known for collaborating with emerging designers, and for its trademark emphasis on functionality, flexibility and sustainability.

“If you wanted to be someone in the design world, you have to be in Milan,” says Swiss

designer David Glaettli, creative director of Karimoku New Standard. “If you're not there, it seems like you do not exist.”

First traveling to Japan in 1999, Glaettli, who inherited the role of creative director at Karimoku New Standard from Japanese designer Teruhiro Yanagihara in 2013, had no inkling that he would eventually become the brand's design ambassador.

Like many other children, parental influences have shaped who Glaettli is today. “My father is a painter. I watched him drawing a lot and I began to paint a lot of cars and planes as a kid... When I got a bit older, I thought it would be great if I could become a car designer,” he recalls. “I loved the very old styles of the 1930s and 40s.”

Renowned for its collaborations with upcoming international design talents, Karimoku New Standard's products are both fun and functional, designed to suit urban living in the 21st century



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Before studying industrial design in Italy, and product design in Switzerland, Glaettli was immersed in Japanese studies and figurative art in Zurich, which would eventually pave his way to living the language and culture, rather than merely studying it as an onlooker. He visited Japan regularly, but it wasn't until 2008 that he decided to move there, leading to a fortuitous meeting with Japanese designer Teruhiro Yanagihara and a series of collaborations which eventually led to the birth of Karimoku New Standard.

"For a European coming to Japan, you expect to experience cultural shock; but somehow, for me, it was a very strong feeling like I was coming home," Glaettli recalls. "The Swiss are a bit like the Japanese; we are both shy and modest in some ways and not so outgoing, either."

Other shared concerns between the two nationalities include a love of quality and good materials; at Karimoku New Standard, this was bound

closely with a deep understanding of craftsmanship, innovative technology, and sustainability. Glaettli welcomes both the high-tech and 'high touch' ideologies: "When machine does the work best, then we will use machine," he explains. "But if a craftsman can do the job better than the machine, then we will craft the piece by hand."

Glaetti recently invited Portugal-based designer Christian Haas to join the brand's stellar line-up, which also includes Scholten & Baijings, TAF, Big-Game, Sylvain Willenz and Lucien Gummy. As far as he is concerned, however, giving the right design directive will never be as important as finding like-minded designers.

"As the brand's creative director, it is not my role to design, but to inject new elements through collaborations with other designers," he says. "It is so nice to see how much they enjoy doing work for a Japanese company, as most of them have never had the experience before." ●