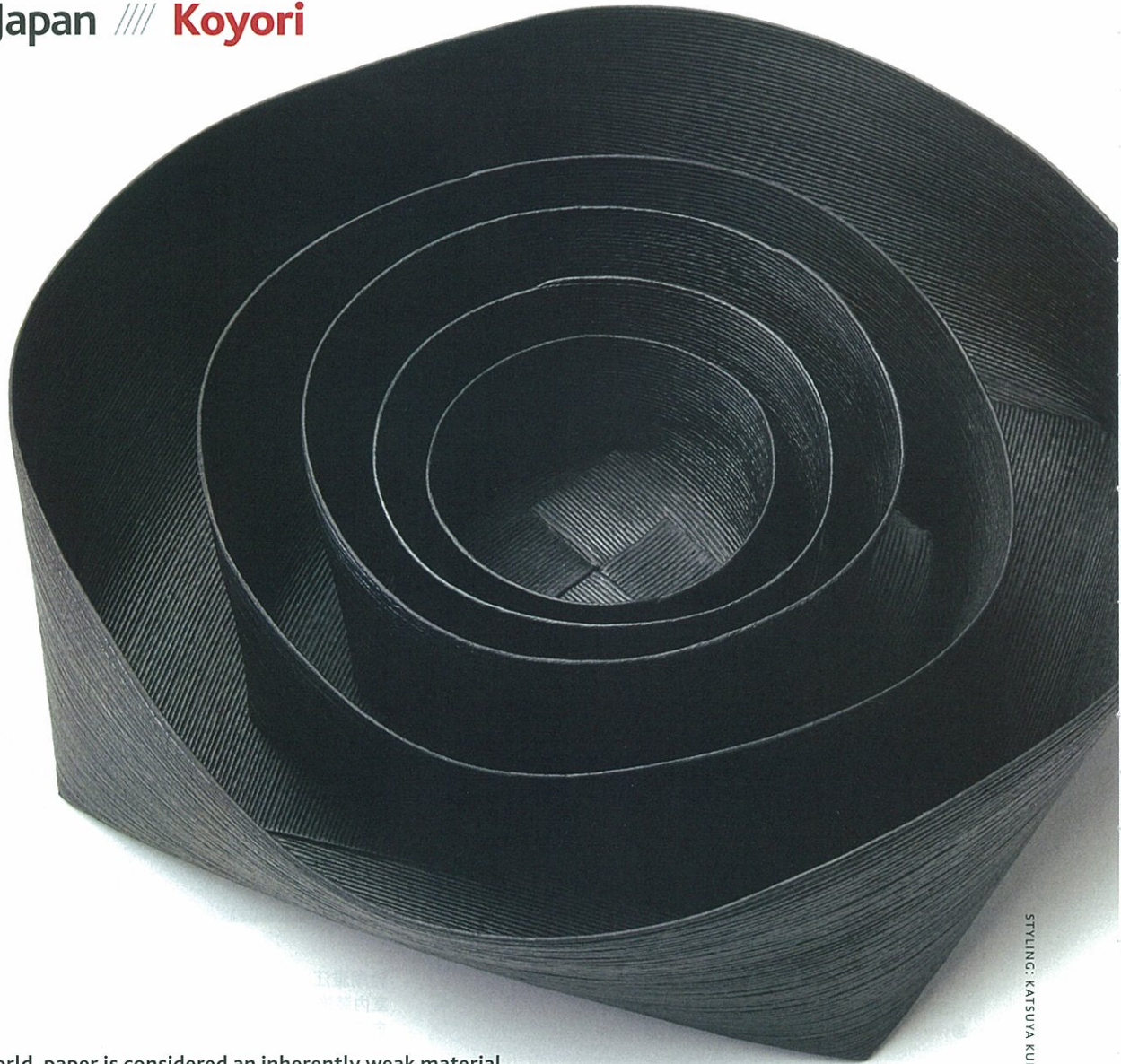


Made in Japan /// Koyori



STYLING: KATSUYA KUBOKAWA

In much of the world, paper is considered an inherently weak material, relegated to use in writing and wrapping. But in Japan, it's a multipurpose medium with a long, rich history. From architectural fittings like sliding shoji screens to lampshades and umbrellas, paper has been a staple of daily life for centuries. The Koyori collection, designed by the Tokyo-based Studio Gala, is doing its bit to keep that tradition alive.

First launched in 1983, the line includes a variety of paper trays, covered boxes and nesting bowls that would work just as well for storing sewing supplies and stationery as for use at the dinner table.

"In Japan, there are lots of multipurpose goods and dishes," explains Studio Gala founder Ryoichi Kobayashi. "Rice bowls, teacups and chopsticks are among the few with designated functions."

While the bowls' charcoal color enhances the appearance of almost any type of food, their matte lacquer finish—applied at the end of the manufacturing process to both seal the paper and stiffen the bowls—adds a protective coating.

Produced at a factory in Shizuoka Prefecture, the bowls are made of thin paper strips tinted with a natural plant dye and twirled tightly into strands

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PHOTO KAZUHIRO OKUMURA

measuring just 1.2 millimeters in diameter—a traditional process called *koyori*. These are lined up and linked with plant-based glue; once cured, the resultant sheets are cut into pattern pieces and assembled into three-dimensional forms with the help of simple molds before receiving their final lacquer finish.

Though it might be easier and cheaper to use plastic instead of paper, this would sever the link with tradition.

"In my design work, I use materials from the past to make items suitable for today," explains Kobayashi. "If we don't use these techniques, they will die out."

Tokyo-based American architect Naomi Pollock writes on Japanese design for the Financial Times, Wallpaper and Architectural Record. Her books include Modern Japanese House and Made in Japan: 100 New Products