

Made in Japan /// Otehaki



In Japan, where neighbors dutifully sweep public paths, dog walkers wash up after their pups, and maintenance workers polish subway platforms, cleanliness is truly next to godliness. A celebration of traditional woodworking and broom making, Otehaki is just the thing for tidying a desk or a dining table. This mini-broom and matching dustpan might seem too precious for eraser shavings and breadcrumbs, but repeated use brings out the beauty of their natural materials.

Otehaki (which means “sweep by hand”) is the product of Azmaya, a Tokyo-based company dedicated to Japan’s handmade household goods. Drawing from craft traditions countrywide, Azmaya commissions a coterie of ceramists from Kyushu, metalsmiths from Iwate and woodworkers from Nagano. Working together, they create timeless objects that evoke history but are equally at home in present-day Japan. Otehaki is the fruit of the company’s collaboration with a Kyoto broom maker and a Tokyo furniture manufacturer.

Though Azmaya carefully considered Otehaki’s shape, its function and material honesty were the top priorities. The broom is made of agave fibers wrapped tightly with stainless steel wires and angled for easy sweeping. Fashioned from unfinished Akita

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cedar—famous for its fine, even grain—the dainty dustbin tapers down to a beveled edge that can sit flush with the tabletop, enabling it to collect even the smallest particles. When not in use, the two pieces fit together and can be hung on the wall by a string loop.

While natural *nikawa* glue secures the wood bottom in place, nails are conspicuously absent. “Like *sashimono* furniture, the dustbin is held together by joinery,” explains Azmaya’s Takeshi Nakazawa. Instead of masking this handiwork with an applied finish, the dustbin is planed smooth, allowing its surfaces to age through natural wear. “When we use things for a long time, we can enjoy these changes,” Nakazawa says.

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