



Umbrella from Dress of Waste series. Photo by Teppei Takazawa.

MEET MINORI

Shironuri Artist and Japanese Fashion Icon

WORDS BY EMILY LOVELL

MEET MINORI, a Shironuri artist whose distinctive white make-up and intricate, ethereal handmade outfits have established her as an icon in the world of alternative Japanese fashion.

Since catching the attention of popular Japanese street-style blog TokyoFashion.com, Minori has built up a cult following on social media to become the 'face' of Shironuri style. Her captivating artworks, photographed by Teppei Takazawa, are inspired by nature, global travel, and transforming everyday items into unique fashion pieces.

So what initially drew Minori to Shironuri, where does she find her inspiration, and what goes into the creative process, from concept to creation? We caught up with Minori to get all the details.

When did you first discover a passion for art and dress-making? How did you develop this artistic flair over time?

I've been drawing since I was little, and I read and watched a lot of anime and manga, so it was very natural for me to want to draw characters, including clothing designs. In Japan, there is the concept that deities dwell in everything in this world, known as 'yaoyorozu no kami' or 'eight million gods'. This exists in anime and manga as well. I was particularly influenced by *Cardcaptor Sakura* and *Sailor Moon* – their clothes are inspired by elements of nature and spirits, and *Sailor Moon* has gender-fluid characters, who transform from male to female.

These are things that sparked my desire to create a kind of body of energy, separate from my own body. I always wanted to do something different and leave my mark in history, so when I combined Shironuri with nature, I went in a direction that most people had never tried before, and have continued to search for what I consider to be beautiful, and continued to create.

What appealed to you about integrating the Shironuri style of makeup into your art?

When painting your face pure white, it becomes flat, like a canvas. Originally, I thought that make-up was just something you pair with clothes, so it was astonishing to me that I was able to build my face from scratch to match the bold energy of the outfits I wear. I'm grateful to have discovered a tool that allows me to feel the joy of existing as a sort of 'living energy' in this way.

Can you describe the artistic process of creating a piece of your wearable artwork? From concept and design, to sourcing materials and then physically crafting the art piece.

Either the theme is developed first and then we look for a location to shoot it. Or sometimes, the photographer suggests a location and then we'll think about a theme that fits it – there's no particular order. Once the theme has been decided, I create a rough design of the clothing >>>



From the Language of Flowers series, Rice Plant, photographed by Teppei Takazawa.

Photo by Teppei Takazawa of Bangkok in the Minori Meets the World series.





Sakura – Language of Flowers series. Photo: Tepei Takazawa.

“...THERE ARE MOMENTS WHEN YOU FEEL AS IF YOU’VE TOUCHED THE REALM OF THE DIVINE. MAYBE THAT’S WHY I’VE CONTINUED TO CREATE SO MUCH, BECAUSE THERE’S NOTHING MORE ENJOYABLE THAN THAT FEELING.”

>>> and go fabric shopping. I don’t draw designs precisely as I don’t want to interfere with the flashes of inspiration I get when I put fabric on the mannequin.

The basis of the outfit may be a simple dress pattern, or it might be made from scratch. After hanging the fabric on the mannequin, it’s finished by cutting, sewing, and dyeing as if making a sculpture. My hair is then matched to the outfit.

Your artistic photos are mainly taken by photographer Tepei Takazawa and you now have a long term artistic collaboration. How did you connect with each other initially?

We connected through a website called mixi, which I used to search for a photographer to work with. I asked for ‘someone who can shoot the atmosphere’ in the requirements which he found interesting. (I think that photography reflects the atmosphere.)

Above all, he is outstanding at blending ‘Minori with the background’. In his photographic work, he mainly focuses on ‘the harmony of Minori with the thematic energy (background)’, and at the beginning of a shoot, Minori sometimes ‘floats’ out of the background. It’s an abstract thing, like changes in the light, my feelings, and the atmosphere etc., but he

brings it all together and makes it into a great image. I consider him a collaborator in my photographic work.

Photography is a way of capturing a moment of brilliance or great energy by pressing the shutter button as a response to the phenomena of what’s happening in front of you. It’s the best method to achieve what I want to express. I found it difficult to choose a photographer, as I wanted to know whether or not they are aware of this concept – it’s such an important point.

Your ‘Minori Meets the World’ series is inspired by travelling to different countries. Which locations or countries have inspired you most artistically?

The ‘Minori Meets the World’ series started as an idea from the photographer who thought it would be interesting to make work when travelling abroad for events.

I’m not very familiar with history, so it has been a new and exciting challenge for me to research the sorts of customs and costumes that exist, and to discover the meanings behind different patterns on clothing etc. and to input and output my findings.

If I had to choose the best piece from this series, it would be ‘Bangkok’. This outfit was inspired by Thai traditional dance and I sewed lace and beads one by one, which took a lot of time and money. When we >>>

FABRIC SHOPPING

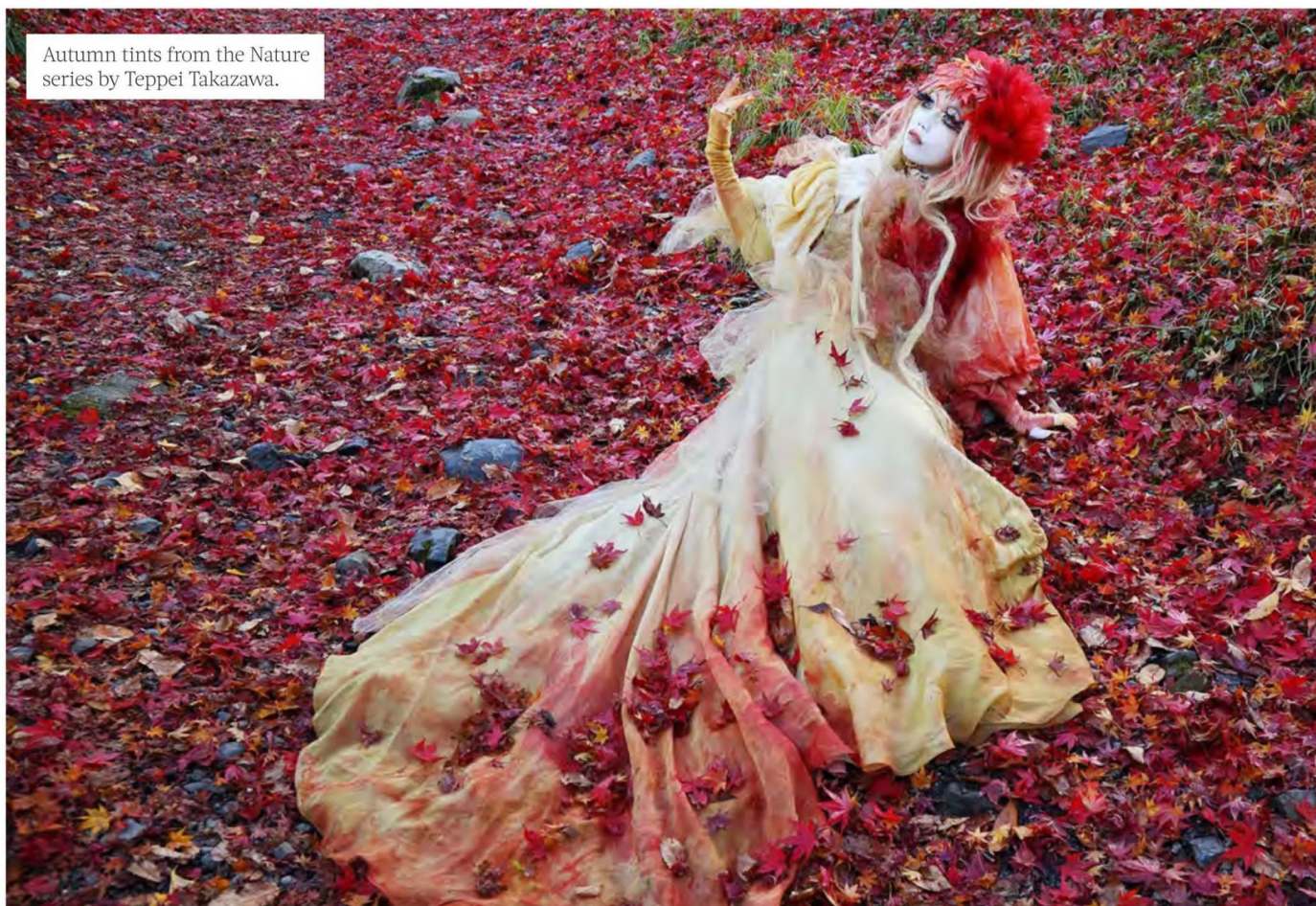
“In Tokyo, there’s a wholesale fabric district called ‘Nippori’, where you can buy fabric for 100 yen per metre. I look at a lot of different fabrics and feel the material, relying on my intuition to select them.

The fabric colour can be changed later by dyeing it, so I focus on the texture of the material rather than the colour. I choose fabric with texture that fits the theme of the shoot and will blend well with the background.”



Tepei Takazawa captures Hokkaido from the Minori Meets the World series.

Autumn tints from the Nature series by Teppei Takazawa.



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ON NATURE AND CREATIVITY

"Nature is fascinating because it can't be controlled. There are so many questions that have yet to be answered, and I feel a sense of romance in the universe's potential. It's also the source of life, so I love the feeling of being challenged about how to express these things."

>>> filmed it, I felt very refreshed, as if I was dancing on a quiet stage. In about 20 minutes we had already shot a wonderful piece of work, and the imbalance between production time and shooting time left me with a strange feeling.

I also love architecture, in particular the work of Oscar Niemeyer, Tadao Ando and Frank Gehry. Buildings with a strong presence that suddenly appear in the landscape, or buildings that are built to blend in with the city have something in common with the existence of Minori, and in that sense I find them very enjoyable.

Recently you've been making outfits from recycled materials, is this a theme that you plan to continue?

So far I have only made two pieces of clothing in this way, using an umbrella and a suit cover but there are many other materials I'd like to use in the future.

My 'Dress of Waste' series expresses the possibility that something made for one purpose can be transformed into something else by modifying it. I think this also applies to humans too. By transforming things that are usually thrown away after being used, they change form and become something different. I find that really interesting.

What do you enjoy most about being an artist?

I enjoy when a piece of work comes out better than I thought it would. Since most of my shoots take place outside or in nature, I've reached a place where I let nature do half of the work. I can control what I create to some extent, but the backgrounds don't work unless I'm lucky with the weather, whether the flowers are blooming or not, and many other factors.

It's this respect for what I can't control that sometimes leads to works that are better than what I had in mind. Perhaps everyone who makes art has experienced this, and there are moments when you feel as if you've touched the realm of the divine. Maybe that's why I've continued to create so much, because there's nothing more enjoyable than that feeling.

And finally, do you have any upcoming trips or projects that you would like to tell us about?

I haven't been anywhere yet this year, but I'll be attending an event in Las Vegas in November.

Now that the pandemic has finally settled down, I'd like to go abroad as much as possible and create work outside. The last solo exhibition I did was in 2020, so I'd like to have an exhibition abroad at some point too. ●