



Eatable Narratives

by Silvia Bombardini

Once upon a time, in a Japanese fishermen village on the edge of Sagami Bay, tangerines and dainty Eatable shoes would grow side by side in the hot and humid summer. Yoko and Koji Arai moved there from their place on the mountains just when the time was ripe, bringing along a few of their chickens and their honeyed and unique, fairy-tale views.

"Eatable of Many Orders is a brand which provides not only just a clothing piece or a handbag but also storytelling and its ingredients like food to the customers". "Eatable" is a metaphor for a guttural intuition, an intimate sensibility of palate and belly; it's a wish for a healthy feeding in a motherly and caring sort of way, a gentle and thoughtful form of education. It borrows its name from Kenji Miyazawa's "Restaurant of Many Orders" tale, in which a wild cat as a chef gives orders to its customers rather than taking orders from them. "We like the idea of taking literature works into a form of fashion in our own translation or conversion" they say "We like Kenji Miyazawa's work because his mind works not only just in the field of children's literature, but in a broader land of inspirations".

It was indeed another novel of his, "Night On The Milky Way Railroad", written around 1927, to inspire Eatable of Many Orders spring collection: focusing on a shape of triangle and its recurrence in the starlit sky, it looks into the great mysteries of nature and life, like constellations or jumping salmons, with the innocence, serenity and wisdom of a dreaming child. The collection is the third part of a gold-themed trilogy that started a few seasons ago with Charlie Chaplin eating his shoe in the Klondike Gold Rush, went on in pursuit of the Lost City of El Dorado and came this way to the wonders of alchemy and its suggestive cosmological tableaux. Each Eatable season could be read in fact as another chapter, a step forward in an ongoing, unravelling storyline. "Eatable of Many Orders reflects the concept of a food chain" Yoko explains, "all seasons are linked".

The presentation was held in the peaceful, verdant and slightly surreal location of the Japanese garden of Kiunkaku in Atami, a further proof of the sensible and effortless love of nature that goes into every Eatable design. Koji and Yoko's careful, detailed attention to the source and treatment of their ingredients leads them to favour natural wood and fibres, and only vegetable tannin leather. "Our prime attraction was Danish furniture design, like Hans J. Wegner's works. The very simple material mixture of leather and wood can create such organic beauty" they say.

While they may seem a bit far away from our conventional fashion capitals, there where all fairylands should be, Yoko and Koji Arai have come a long and exciting way to get to their magical happy ending: working respectively with the likes of Bernhard Willhelm and Munoz Vrandecic, Maison Martin Margiela and Stephan Schneider, they found the brain, heart and courage they needed to build their own exquisite dream just before knocking their heels three times, and finally going home.