

Thursday, December 14, 2006

## KAWAII STYLE: SUPER BUZZY



Adorable new Matryoshka patches from [superbuzzy.com](http://superbuzzy.com)

Back in November, Tokyo-based fashion illustrator [Chico Hayasaki](http://Chico.Hayasaki) stopped by for an interview here at TrustYourStyle.com. It was such a pleasure because I'm just nuts about her beautiful and magical work! Chico mentioned that [www.superbuzzy.com](http://www.superbuzzy.com) is one of her favorite websites.



*Just in at superbuzzy.com: Owls That Wink fabric!*

A virtual upscale *kawaii* emporium, superbuzzy.com is stocked with tons of goodies from Japan (fabric, notions, trims, craft-supplies, and gifts) that are so sweet and well-priced, it's almost impossible to stop by without scooping up everything...And of course, being the holiday season, this is the perfect time!

It's a treat to share this interview with Kelly and Mariko, the duo behind Superbuzzy.com. Thanks Mariko & Kelly for the interview! And special thanks to Chico for the great tip!

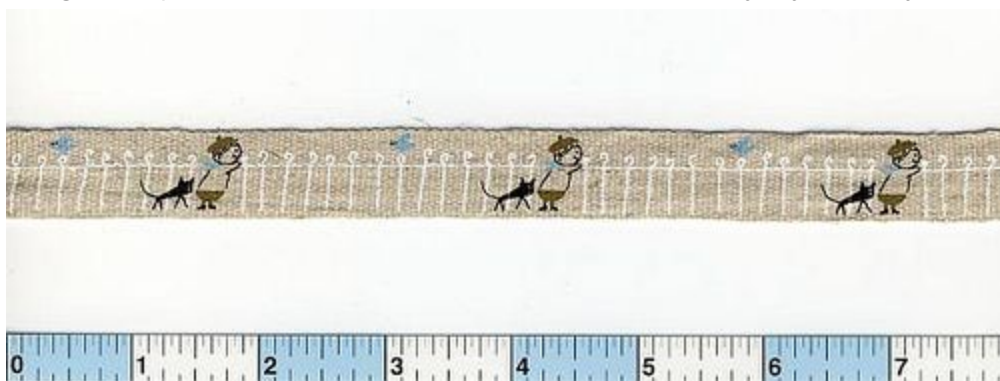


Just in: wonderful fabric-covered buttons by illustrator [Shoko Sugiyama](#)

mj: What gave you the idea to start superbuzzy.com ?

kelly: It was really just out of frustration...I had been reading craft blogs for a while and I was really annoyed that I couldn't easily get my hands on the incredible Japanese craft books, fabrics, notions, and other craft supplies. It was obvious to me that there were other folks out there like me who would love to incorporate the fantastic Japanese design sensibility into their projects. When I discovered that Mariko had the same interest, it was the perfect way to get things going. I don't think I would have taken the steps to start superbuzzy by myself--having Mariko as a partner is a big motivation to keep things going and make things work!

mariko: My husband is always talking about having *visions*, and I always thought he was a little nutty about it, but then I had a vision about superbuzzy. It just came to me one day, and I couldn't really sleep for a couple of days because I couldn't stop thinking about it. I really believed it was the best idea I had ever had! I signed up for an importing and exporting class and thought more and more about starting a business importing Japanese fabrics. Knowing myself, though, I had a feeling I wouldn't really go through with it (I'm self deprecating to the point where I don't think I can do anything adequately), and that I would, you know, talk myself out of it. But then I was reading Kelly's blog one day, and she casually mentioned she'd like to start a business selling cool Japanese stuff, so I contacted her, and the rest, as they say, is history!



I'm just a goner for this black cat/fence [trim](#)

mj: I know everyone probably asks you this--but how did you meet?

kelly: We met first in blog-land, and after that in person twice before superbuzzy was launched in August 2006. Interestingly, our third in-person meeting was in Tokyo!

mariko: We met through the wonderful world of crafty blogging! I don't even remember how I discovered Kelly's blog, but I do remember that our first real "connection" was through our interest in matcha-flavored KitKats! I remember sending some down to her. We met in person for the first time when she did a quilt shop crawl and trekked to the northernmost quilt shop, which was in the town where I lived. I met her and her daughter, Brynne, at the shop, and then we headed to the town park to chat!



*More superbuzzy.com trim.*

mj:What is your favorite piece or designer that you've offered so far?

mariko: That's a tough question because we've had some really lovely pieces that I just can't stop looking at! I have to say that I really love the canvas-weight fabrics. I think the canvas-weight fabric with the little mushrooms on it is among my favorites. I also adore some of the fabrics we brought back from our recent trip to Japan. The fairy tale fabrics featuring Little Red Riding Hood and the one we called Friends in the Forest (but which I affectionately call toasthead, because it features a little character with a piece of toast for a head) are just wonderful, and oh, the hedgehog fabric where the little hedgehog frolics with a squirrel and a mushroom! That one just kills me! I am also really fond of the Shinzi Katoh fabrics and the Shoko Sugiyama items. Kelly and I were lucky enough to meet both of the artists in Japan, and I think that just makes it all the more special.

kelly: Wow--that's a tough one! I really love all of our stuff, and that's generally how we approach ordering--buy what we love! I guess my top picks are the items that have a contemporary feel to them, but with a twist or a bit of humor. When we first opened we had a print of orange hippos that I was crazy for, and we bought some yardage in Japan of a print I called "modern apples" that I really love. I ended up getting some of this for myself, but I'm not sure I could ever cut into it...it's just too good!



*Make Me Happy Home [crochet kit](#)*

mj: Do you have new products in the works?

mariko: Yes! We are constantly working on bringing new products to superbuzzy. Soon we'll be adding some kits and a few yarn-related items for all the knitters out there. We're always looking for new, fun, and unique products to share with our customers.

kelly: Yes! In fact, we just received 2 shipments today! We are constantly looking for new items for the shop and trying to figure out how to get our hands on them. Some Japanese companies are, shall we say, less than eager to try to do business in the US. So, sometimes we really have to be creative to make things work! Other companies have welcomed us with amazing hospitality and make doing business a joy! I'm especially excited about some crochet kits that we just received, as well as the new line of fabrics from Kokka that should be arriving at the end of this month. We're constantly strategizing on how to best serve our customers, many of whom are our friends. We get special requests by email all the time, and we try hard to accommodate them as much as possible.



Can you believe that this Little Bird [towel](#) is only \$5.95!

mj: How would you describe your own style?

kelly: I'm a bit of a split personality, and it's a constant internal struggle! On the one hand, I'm a huge fan of vintage clothing and goods from the mid-century. I used to have a small business in vintage clothing, and that love is still strong! Then, on the other hand, I love very modern, deconstructed, asymmetric styles--mostly stuff I can't afford! I think that shops like Anthropologie manage to successfully merge bits and pieces of these 2 styles, but I'm not sure I carry it off very successfully! Plus, I'm a work from home mom, so sometimes I can be caught at home in yoga pants and slippers--embarrassing but true!

mariko: Oh dear. I am a big fashion don't! I think my style sense is a collision of Pee Wee's Playhouse, REI, and an elderly Asian lady in Chinatown (I hope that doesn't come off as politically incorrect! I can say that, though, right? Since I'm Asian?). Since I live in the Pacific Northwest and am always cold, in the winter I tend to live in polar fleece and wool. It's pretty boring! In the summer, though, I tend to drift toward bright colors and patterns, and I guess I often wear clashing colors (they look perfectly balanced to me, of course, but to others I probably look a little crazy).



These [hedgehog buttons](#) just kill me!

Here are A FEW THINGS YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT SUPERBUZZY:

A) THE FOUR MOST STYLISH PEOPLE THAT INFLUENCED ME:

mariko:

1. My friend Alice's mother. She doesn't care about style, but she sews like a maniac, and she sparked my interest in sewing.
2. My friend Megan. We have been friends since high school, and she has always experimented with all kinds of kooky styles and gotten away with it! She's a hairdresser now at Di Pietro Todd in Palo Alto, CA.
3. Chico Hayasaki! Not only is she an amazing designer, but she is super stylish and cute. I got to see her twice during my recent trip to Japan, and both times she was dressed impeccably and looked great. She inspires me to make more effort with my own appearance.
4. This is kind of random, but in high school I had this friend Tina who always wore scarves. She looked so Parisian and stylish to me. That has always stuck with me.

kelly:

1. A friend from high school (who I won't name here). She was always so unconsciously stylish and put together--how nice to not have to work at it!
2. Grace Kelly--she always managed to look beautiful and stylish, and still have a bit of fun!

3. Cyndi Lauper--I love that she's an every-woman, and started out without any fashion budget but still managed to put together a look that was all her own.
4. Bjork--every time I watch her, I can't help but think how fabulous she is. She's so cute, and she's not wrapped up in looking perfect. Personally, I loved the swan!

#### B) FOUR WAYS THAT STYLE MAKES THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE:

mariko:

1. Style makes the world more fun, and I really don't see the point to things that aren't fun!
2. Style brings out the individuality in people.
3. Style forces us to use our imaginations more and keeps our brains functioning.
4. Style gives us creative license to share a part of ourselves with others.

kelly:

1. intelligent style can improve the way things function
2. it helps us to laugh at ourselves
3. it stretches the imagination
4. it is never static and constantly evolving

#### C) FOUR OF MY FAVORITE DESIGNERS:

mariko:

1. [Orla Kiely](#)--what's not to like? I love her flirty designs--wearable yet stylish and fun.
2. [Maira Kalman](#)--she is a writer and illustrator, but to me, she is also a designer. I have loved all her work for many years (I especially loved her book Sayonara Mrs. Kackleman) and am lucky enough to have a silk scarf made of fabric she designed back in the early 1990s. She is clever and whimsical and doesn't take herself too seriously. She has been a huge influence for me.
3. [Yoshitomo Nara](#)--I love how he takes cute and makes it slightly edgy yet extremely captivating. I love objects that make me smile, and most of his work has that effect on me.
4. [Karim Rashid](#)--the dude uses a lot of orange, and that is okay with me!

kelly:

1. [Charles & Ray Eames](#)--2 people, but I count them together because then I can get more names in! Their "brand" of friendly, organic modernism has been a tremendous influence on me. I love the way they were able to re-think the relationship of form to function. Ray Eames is an especially fantastic role model for women interested in design. She did so much during a period where women's work was largely swept under the rug; kudos also to Charles for involving Ray and acknowledging her contributions to their work.
2. [Stig Lindberg](#)--You'll start to see a common theme here! Lindberg's work is also incredibly organic and warm. He managed to strip complex ceramic shapes down to a basic, graceful shape and his designs are wonderfully simple, yet clever. Plus, he wore bow ties, cool glasses, and smoked a pipe!
3. [George Nakashima](#)--Yup! Another friendly modernist! I sometimes feel as if Nakashima had telepathic powers that enabled him to communicate with wood. His utilitarian designs (chairs, benches, tables, etc.) are so much more--they are truly sculptural masterpieces. And yet, all of his designs were meant to be used and enjoyed as day-to-day objects.
4. [Maija Isola](#)--Her textile designs are incredible. No matter how often I look at them, I still find them to be fresh and current. I have collected several large pieces of her fabrics, both vintage and contemporary, and I really need to get them all stretched and hung! One of my favorites, Villikaali, is hanging as a large piece of art in our bedroom.

#### D) FOUR JOBS I HAVE HAD IN MY LIFE:

mariko:

1. Ice cream scooper
2. Customer service representative for an online game network (not a telemarketer but almost as degrading)
3. English composition instructor
4. Freelance writer/editor

kelly:



1. mom
2. student store manager
3. designer
4. primatologist

E) FOUR MOVIES I WOULD WATCH OVER AND OVER (AND DO):

mariko:

1. Ikiru by Kurosawa
2. Tampopo
3. Big Trouble in Little China (no, I'm not kidding)
4. Grease (again, not kidding)

kelly:

1. Wizard of Oz
2. Say Anything
3. Dr. Zhivago
4. Lord of the Rings Trilogy (can that count as 1?!?)

F) FOUR PLACES WHERE I HAVE LIVED:

mariko:

1. Portland, OR
2. Paso Robles, CA
3. Berkeley, CA
4. Spokane, WA

kelly:

1. Modesto, CA
2. Mexico City, Mexico
3. Port Jefferson Station, NY
4. Lomako, Equateur Region, Democratic Republic of Congo

G) FOUR TV SHOWS I LOVE TO WATCH:

mariko:

1. CSI
2. Heroes
3. Grey's Anatomy
4. Frontline (just so people don't think I'm completely superficial, even though I actually am)

kelly:

1. Nip/Tuck
2. Lost
3. Carnivale (maybe putting it here will force them to bring it back!)
4. Zoboofafoo (ask my daughter!)

H) FOUR PLACES I HAVE BEEN ON VACATION IN THE LAST FOUR YEARS:

mariko:

1. Japan
2. Santa Barbara, CA
3. Australia
4. Goat Rock Wilderness in Washington State

kelly:

1. Los Barriles, Mexico
2. Japan (really a work trip, but it was enough fun to count as vacation!)
3. Denver, CO
4. Dallas, TX (!)

I) FOUR WEBSITES I VISIT DAILY (Or at least Weekly):

mariko:

1. My business partner Kelly's blog! [buzzville.typepad.com](http://buzzville.typepad.com)
2. San Francisco Chronicle web site: [www.sfgate.com](http://www.sfgate.com)
3. [www.portlandfood.org](http://www.portlandfood.org)
4. My lunatic brother's site: [www.i8u.org/blog](http://www.i8u.org/blog)

There are MANY, many more. I read way too many blogs!

kelly:

1. [www.supereggplant.com](http://www.supereggplant.com)
2. my bloglines
3. [whip up](#)
4. [BoingBoing](#)

J) FOUR OF MY FAVORITE FOODS:

mariko:

1. Japanese manju
2. Coffee (is that a food?)
3. Pesto pasta
4. Corndogs

kelly:

1. green tea
2. super dark chocolate--the darker the better!
3. bear claws
4. the chili verde omelet at our local breakfast place, Alison's

K) FOUR PLACES I WOULD RATHER BE RIGHT NOW:

mariko:

1. Japan
2. Someplace sunny and warm
3. San Francisco, CA
4. I can't think of a fourth. I love being in Portland!

kelly:

1. Mexico
2. Costa Rica
3. NY
4. San Francisco



Shinzi Katoh Small [Flower Towel](#)

# posted by Mary Jo Matsumoto @ 4:21 PM