



# A Tribute to the Turning Year

In countries around the world, the winter holidays are a special time when family and friends gather for celebration. Here, to anticipate the New Year, one of Japan's favorite holidays, *KIE* features jubilant scenes designed by interiors specialist Yoshiko Kanroji.

*Photography by Tsunehiro Kobayashi. Text by Aya Ichiriki. Coordination by Yoshiko Kanroji*





### Prayers for the New Year to bring good luck

Previous page: In the entry hall, guests are greeted with a dynamic wreath of magnolia, amaryllis, and a decorative knot made with *mizuhiki* paper string. The table holds an auspicious offering of miniature straw rice bales, to ask for a bountiful harvest.

This page: Instead of a tokonoma alcove, a handsome chair provides a place for prayers. On a *marusanpo* offering stand, charcoal and sacred *shimenawa* straw festoons protect the house from harm. Willow boughs tied into a knot—a traditional decoration for a New Year's tea ceremony—accent a hanging incense burner with chrysanthemums.

Opposite page: In a corridor, a paulownia-wood bucket displays exuberant chrysanthemums, red plum blossoms, wildflowers, and berries, while antique lamps with paper shades and a candle tied with sacred *shimenawa* rope add grace notes. The overhead lamp, decorated with mistletoe and berries, makes wishes for good luck and a happy destiny.





### Glowing light surrounds a living-room scene of celebration

Above: Evergreen boughs, an ancient symbol of youth and immortality, encircle a refreshing arrangement of magnolia and daffodils.

Right: Flickering candles light the way to the New Year for family and friends. Two candle stands are adorned with cranberries, ears of rice to symbolize good harvests, and shimenawa rope with *shide* (folded strips of white *washi* paper), which signifies the boundary between sacred and secular worlds.





### The New Year's banquet

Playful touches add delight to a Japanese- and Western-style table. Auspicious motifs such as pine, bamboo, and plum appear on plates, *makie* lacquerware, and folding fans. Peonies and incense wrapped in washi garnish a *hiba* table runner, as the simple wood and clear-lacquered tiered box remind us to start anew. Chopsticks envelopes and napkin rings decorated with mistletoe herald the year of the Rabbit.



## Traditional themes in a Western setting update decorations for the New Year



Japanese and Western customs for celebrating Christmas and the New Year are very different, but Yoshiko Kanroji, who created the interior decoration on these pages for *KIE*, sees an essential similarity. "The end-of-the-year reunion of family, friends, and others dear to our hearts remains the same all over the world," she says. These feelings of togetherness inspired Kanroji's designs to integrate Eastern and Western styles and themes to embrace the season.

In Japan, where most traditions are based on Shinto or Buddhism, Christmas is mainly an opportunity to give gifts rather than a religious occasion. The most important national holiday is the New Year, which sparks reflection about past mistakes to "clean the slate," as it were, and optimistic anticipation for the future. As this season approaches, Japanese thoroughly clean their homes inside and out and make a symbolic cleansing of their hearts. In her designs, Kanroji incorporates such ideals of cleansing and simplicity into holiday décor through the placement of an unvarnished wood table runner and clear-lacquered boxes on a lavishly arranged dining table.

In many cultures, faiths and rituals show deep respect for the natural world, and the Japanese, too, welcome the god of the New Year to their homes with allusions to nature's bounty. Kanroji sprinkles traditional motifs into her decorations, using plants or depictions of young willows, pine, and bamboo to signal health and longevity. Similarly, she showcases young trees—viewed as temporary vessels for visiting gods—as well as rice straw and ears of rice to bring a bountiful harvest. Other seasonal touches—like drawings referring to the year of the Rabbit—add to the festive environment.

In Kanroji's vivid flower arrangements on these pages, most of the plants and flowers are artificial, which makes them available in any season and in a range of colors to express one's emotions and seasonal sensibilities. (Endowed with perpetual beauty and youthful buds, artificial flowers may also embody that New Year's spirit.) Stepping back, we see how Kanroji, by building on a platform of traditional references and customs, brings Japanese aesthetics into Western-influenced interiors. The overall effect creates a distinctly cosmopolitan atmosphere that refreshes the house in this season of renewal.



Interiors expert Yoshiko Kanroji developed her unique approach to design through her experience living in San Francisco and Japan. She has designed interiors for many private residences and commercial businesses. She offers furniture and interiors accessories through her company, Puff Corporation.



### Encircled by the joy of the season

Left: Four Christmas wreaths, including two made of rice straw, are transformed into New Year ornaments with the addition of straw festoons, sacred folded strips of white washi, and ears of rice. East or West, the circular wreath symbolizes eternity and offers prayers for many more years of prosperity and good health. Opposite page: Even in a corner of the garden terrace where the wreaths were made, Kanroji creates a joyous mood by adorning a lamp with camellia blossoms and lighting several Japanese candles.

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Symbols like ears of rice and citrus fruit are signs of prayer for a successful harvest in autumn. Outside the house, Kanroji arranges rice ears on a bed of moss, a perfect New Year's decoration.

