

Inside this
issueCombining Swiss
Craftsmanship with
Japanese Aesthetics 1 + 2ENEOS in-
stalls CO2
Capture
Equipment
from
Climeworks 3Swiss Parlia-
ment elects
Beat Jans as
new Federal
Councilor 4JETRO Gene-
va exhibited
at this year's
Igeho Event 4

会見

INTERVIEW

Combining Swiss Craftsmanship with Japanese Aesthetics

Interview with Eric Blum, co-founder of Zurich-based brand *Onkai Heiwa*

[Onkai Heiwa](#) is a Swiss brand that specializes in creating high-quality leather goods and hats, all of which are 100% handmade in Switzerland. It offers a unique blend of Japanese and Swiss craftsmanship and for this month's newsletter we had the opportunity to interview co-founder Eric Blum, gaining insights into the brand's philosophy and its approach to promoting cultural exchange through its products. The showroom's location in Zurich's emblematic Wiedikon neighborhood reflects its commitment to being a bridge between the two cultures, offering a space where Japanese aesthetics and contemporary Swiss design converge.

Mr. Blum, can you tell us more about the history and inspiration behind Onkai Heiwa?

Our brand's history and inspiration are deeply rooted in both our families' backgrounds and their passion for craftsmanship. My mother is Japanese, and her father was an enormous influence on me, being passionate about pottery, woodworking, and always wearing hats, which sparked my own passion for hats. Luca Meyer, the other co-founder who is also my brother-in-law, is a trained carpenter and after several years working



Onkai Heiwa co-founder Eric Blum at work — © Nicolas Bruni

in this field, he wanted to venture into new and different areas of craftsmanship, which led him to working with leather. His grandfather was an impressionist painter, and this also had a lasting impact on him. We both talked about making our own creations for some time, decided to take the risk and follow our passion. That is how our brand was conceived. It is also a tribute to our grandfathers, particularly because of their love for art and craftsmanship. My Japanese grandfather's name was actually *Onkai Heiwa*, and both Luca and I thought this would be the perfect name for what we and our brand ultimately stand for: Precision, love for detail, aesthetics, and the best quality possible.

On your website you mention the "inspiration by Japanese

aesthetics". How do you integrate Japanese aesthetics into your design philosophy and craftsmanship, and what specific elements about Japanese culture influence your creations?

We draw inspiration from the detail-oriented way of working and the pursuit of excellence, which are big similarities between Japanese and Swiss cultures. *Onkai Heiwa* always aims to embody the precision and artistry found in Japanese aesthetics, reflecting it in our creations. I would say that elements of Japanese culture that influence our designs are simplicity, minimalism, attention to detail, and a deep respect for natural materials. Our showroom in Zurich, which extensively uses wood for the interior, also perfectly depicts

(continue on page 2)

Combining Swiss Craftsmanship with Japanese Aesthetics

Interview with Eric Blum, co-founder of Zurich-based brand *Onkai Heiwa*

会見

INTERVIEW

(continued from page 1)

the influence of Japanese aesthetics on our work and presents a harmonious blend of Swiss and Japanese design principles.

How does the fusion of Swiss craftsmanship with Japanese aesthetics contribute to the unique character and quality of Onkai Heiwa's products, and what significance does this blend hold for the brand?

The brand's philosophy is reflected in the handmade nature of our products, the high-quality materials we use, and the time-consuming process necessary to achieve an *Onkai Heiwa* piece, staying true to our brand's DNA and pushing boundaries while maintaining a devotion to excellence and craftsmanship. We believe that combining elements from both Swiss and Japanese craftsmanship culture and eye for aesthetics help us achieve that.

Earlier this year, Onkai Heiwa was named "Mazda Takumi Ambassador". Can you tell us how this collaboration came about and what it entails?

Traditional Japanese craftsmanship plays a key role in the design and manufacture of *Mazda's* car models. They approached us with the idea of ambassadorship because of the parallels between their unique perspective on automotive engineering and our brand philosophy, which also strives for perfection, and attention to detail. *Mazda* attaches immense importance to aesthetic details and perfect implementation, and the same is important to us at *Onkai Heiwa*. Through this collabora-



Onkai Heiwa co-founder Luca Meyer at work — © Nicolas Bruni

tion, we have been able to tell the story of our craft at various events and we look forward to more such occasions.

What kind of collaborations are you looking for with Japanese companies?

First of all, we do our own research into whom we seek to collaborate with because it is important for us to work with people, businesses and companies that share our passion and understand our values. Japan is known for its incredibly talented people working in various areas of craftsmanship, sometimes for several decades, which is something that fascinates me. A collaboration with a potential partner in Japan that we are currently looking into is with a porcelain manufacturer who has been in the business for many years. He is very skilled, and his creations are truly mind-blowing. We plan to visit him

in his shop next year and are looking forward to discussing future plans with him.

How do you see Onkai Heiwa evolving in the future?

We have been happy with how things have been going for us and the brand so far. We do not follow a specific future business plan but hope to continue being able to further spread our brand's message and do the things we are passionate about. Of course, we are looking forward to more collaborations and creating meaningful contacts with like-minded entrepreneurs and companies that share our love for creativity and unique designs.

Thank you for the interview!

ENEOS installs CO2 Capture Equipment from Climeworks

On 8 December 2023 [ENEOS](#) Corporation officially announced that it will introduce a CO2 capture device manufactured by Swiss company [Climeworks](#) into its Central Technology Research Institute, making it the first company in the Asia-Pacific region to do so.

According to the press release issued by the Japanese firm, this initiative is part of ENEOS' efforts towards the realization of a decarbonized society by 2025, as outlined in the "Roadmap for Carbon Recycling Technologies" formulated by Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI).

The direct air capture (DAC) technology works by drawing air through a filter that traps the carbon dioxide particles, and once the filter is full, the captured CO2 can be safely and permanently stored underground.

ENEOS Corporation is the largest oil company in Japan. It is involved in the exploration,

and refining of crude oil, as well as the manufacture and sale of petroleum products. Founded in 2009, *Climeworks* is a world leader in DAC technology, with over 15 DAC plants currently operating worldwide. Previously, it has already signed agreements with [Carbfix](#) and [ON Power](#), an Icelandic geothermal energy provider, to scale up carbon removal and storage in the country.

Source: [Gaspedia](#)



Climeworks' CO2 capture device at ENEOS' Central Technology Research Institute — © ENEOS Corporation

革新

INNOVATION

Swiss Parliament elects Beat Jans as new Federal Councilor

The Swiss Parliament held Federal Council elections on 13 December 2023. Beat Jans, president of the Basel City cantonal government and vice president of the Social Democratic Party, was elected to succeed outgoing interior minister, Alain Berset.

Beat Jans was elected after three rounds of voting with 134 out of 245 votes, making him only the third federal councilor from the canton of Basel City since the modern federal state was founded in 1848. Jans had been selected as one of two official candidates by the Social Democratic Party to replace Alain Berset, who had announced

earlier this year his wish to retire from the Executive body. The other official candidate, Jon Pult from the canton of Grisons, only obtained 43 votes. The absolute majority was set at 123 votes.

Mr. Jans completed an apprenticeship as a farmer and trained as an agricultural engineer before studying environmental sciences at ETH Zurich. He has also had a long and successful political career. He received the most votes in the 2015 and 2019 National Council elections and in 2020 he made it into the Basel City government as a newcomer in the first round of voting.

The other six incumbent federal councilors also had to stand for re-election and have all been confirmed.

Viola Amherd was additionally elected as the new President of the Swiss Confederation with 158 votes while Karin Keller-Sutter was named the new Vice President, obtaining 138 valid votes. Viktor Rossi from the Liberal Green Party was elected as Federal Chancellor with 135 votes, replacing Walter Thurnherr.

Sources: [admin.ch](#); [swissinfo](#)

動向

SITUATION

活動

ACTIVITY

JETRO Geneva exhibited at this year's Igeho Event

JETRO Geneva made a notable appearance at this year's Igeho event to promote the [Japan Street platform](#). Igeho, the largest exhibition of hotel, catering, and food service in Switzerland, was held in Basel from 18 to 22 November and attracted approximately 50'000 visitors from various sectors such as retailers, hotels, restaurants, schools, and distributors.

This marked the return of Igeho after a 4-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and it was the first time since 2009 that JETRO Geneva participated in the event. Over the course of the 5-day event, about 695 individuals visited JETRO's booth, leading to productive interactions and the acquisition and registration of new potential buyers. The exhibition also provided an opportunity to engage with important companies, gather contact information, and learn about industry trends. The showcased products, including Yuzu Ginger Ale, flavored Miso, sugar-free bottled tea, tea-flavored nuts, and Bekko candy, garnered significant interest, with Yuzu Miso emerging as the most popular item.



From left to right: Kaoru Fukaya, Director, JETRO Geneva, Nathalie Cornier, Research Associate, JETRO Geneva, Nozomi Sugiyama, Promoter, JETRO

Visitors received detailed explanations about the products and were informed about Japan Street as a platform to connect with various suppliers. There was a strong interest in specific Japanese products such as Wagyu beef, seaweed, and soy sauce. JETRO also utilized the event to engage with existing registered buyers, further enhancing its understanding of the Swiss food market.

Season's Greetings from the JETRO Geneva Office

Dear readers,

The JETRO Geneva Office wishes you and your loved ones a joyous holiday season and a prosperous new year. We hope to continue providing you with interesting topics about Switzerland and Japan in 2024 as well and thank you for your continued support throughout the years.

Warm regards,
JETRO Geneva Office

JETRO is a government-related organization that works to promote mutual trade and investment between Japan and the rest of the world. Originally established in 1958 to promote Japanese exports abroad, JETRO's core focus in the 21st century has shifted toward promoting foreign direct investment into Japan and helping small to medium size Japanese firms maximize their global export potential.

The JETRO Switzerland Newsletter can also be viewed and/or downloaded online:
<http://www.jetro.go.jp/switzerland/newsletter>

JETRO

Japan External Trade Organization

JETRO Geneva
80, Rue de Lausanne
1202 Geneva
Phone: 022 732 13 04
E-mail: SWG@jetro.go.jp



©Expo 2025