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INTERVIEW

Revealing the Discreet Beauty of Everyday Japanese Objects

Interview with Kaito Carasso, owner of *Yugen Lab*

*In this issue of our newsletter, we feature Kaito Carasso, owner of [Yugen Lab](#), a boutique that blends traditional and modern Japanese culture in Geneva. Passionate about authentic craftsmanship, Kaito curates a unique collection that appeals to both longtime fans and newcomers. With the recent opening of a new boutique in Carouge (GE), *Yugen Lab* aims to continue bringing fresh perspectives on Japanese art and culture to the public.*

What is the story behind the creation of *Yugen Lab*, and what inspired you to mix traditional and modern objects in your boutique?

The name *Yugen Lab* comes from the Japanese word 'Yugen', which means subtle charm, hidden beauty. This is precisely the idea I wanted to convey through my shop: to reveal the discreet beauty of everyday Japanese objects. What really inspired me was the way in which, in Japan, modernity blends naturally with tradition. It's impressive to see skyscrapers alongside small temples, or locals wearing traditional kimonos in the heart of cities like Tokyo. This harmonious blend of past and present had a big impact on me during my travels there, even though I only lived there briefly. My goal with *Yugen Lab* was to recreate this harmony by mixing antique Japanese objects, sometimes vintage, with modern creations in my shop. This contrast brings each product to life and creates a unique atmosphere. Moreover, this mixture works very well, and it enriches the perception that we

have of each object, according to the universe in which it is presented.

How would you describe the evolution of Japanese culture in Switzerland, and how does *Yugen Lab* contribute to this evolution?

Today, Japanese culture reaches all generations, from teenagers passionate about stationery and the kawaii world, to adults more drawn to traditional objects. This phenomenon is reflected in a broad openness and a disappearance of the stigma formerly associated with manga and anime, which were perceived as belonging to a geek or 'otaku' niche. These elements are now an integral part of popular culture. *Yugen Lab* plays an important role in this evolution by sharing this Japanese universe in Switzerland. The store reflects this unique blend of ancient and modern that fascinates, driven by a non-religious spiritual

dimension, based on respect for objects and people. This unique connection allows me to reach a diverse audience and offer a true glimpse of contemporary Japan while promoting its roots. Furthermore, the growing popularity of Japanese cuisine, such as the numerous ramen shops in Geneva, and the growing acceptance of traditions such as Japanese tattoos, also illustrate this deep cultural integration.

Could you share some insights into your business strategy, including your key suppliers?

My business strategy is essentially based on product diversification. We started with ceramics, porcelain, and tableware, which remain our bestsellers. However, we are expanding our offering to include lucky charms, kimonos, chopsticks, and other items inspired by Japanese culture. About 80% of our products come directly from Japan, as I am committed to



Kaito Carasso in his *Yugen Lab* boutique in Carouge © JETRO Geneva

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INTERVIEW

maintaining a high level of authenticity. However, I also allow myself to offer Japanese-inspired items, including works by young graphic designers, even if these products are not made in Japan, because they correspond to our vision and appeal to our customers. Regarding our suppliers, they are mainly artisans and small factories with whom we have been working for around twenty years. My father created this network thirty years ago by developing a B2B business with Japan, which allows us to have strong and lasting relationships. We regularly visit these suppliers to maintain these ties. We also participate in markets and auctions, particularly for vintage Japanese products, which allows us to unearth unique items. Finally, we sometimes work with government aid to find suppliers, but we always prioritize a balance between quality and price to remain accessible to our customers.

As the owner, how do you perceive the reaction of Swiss customers to Japanese culture, especially through elements like homeware items?

As an owner, I find that Swiss customers' reactions to Japanese culture are often marked by curiosity and questioning. For example, they sometimes ask me, "But what's this for?" I explain that some items are originally designed for specific uses, but I encourage them to be creative and use them in other ways. Fortunately, we have very friendly customers, many of whom have already traveled to Japan and are familiar with the culture, sometimes even better than we are. There are also connoisseurs who, without having ever set foot in Japan, are very familiar with these elements. This diversity makes the exchanges very enriching and enjoyable.



The *Yugen Lab* shop in Carouge offers a variety of Japanese products, such as stationary and porcelain items
©Yugen Lab



The boutique in Carouge (GE) is a new venture for *Yugen Lab*. Can you tell us more about this new space and what it brings to your overall concept?

The Carouge store has been open for four months and has already won over our customers, especially those who are familiar with our store on Place de Grenus. They appreciate this new location for its larger and brighter space, which offers a more relaxed experience and allows visitors to take their time. Unlike the original store, which is smaller and a little cluttered, the Carouge store has better airflow and favors a different presentation of products, which can make all the difference to their success. We keep almost the same products in Carouge as in Place de Grenus, except for furniture, where we now offer a more extensive selection, including rare vintage Japanese pieces that I particularly like.

How do you see the future of *Yugen Lab*, especially regarding expansion or additions to your current offerings?

I see the future of *Yugen Lab* as an opportunity for expansion and diversification.

We plan to potentially open more physical stores, perhaps also in France, to increase our local presence. At the same time, I will continue to travel to Japan to find unique items to sell, such as furniture or vintage pieces, which will enrich our offering. The importance of the internet and our website for online sales remains central, as they allow us to reach a wider customer base. We will also continue to develop our presence on social media, particularly Instagram and Facebook, even if this requires time and investment. To strengthen our community, we plan to increase collaborations and organize more events to create friendly moments of exchange. In the space located on the ground floor, we would like to offer Kinsugi workshops, tea ceremonies, sake tastings, as well as sessions on the art of wearing a kimono, to offer an immersive and enriching cultural experience.

Thank you for the interview!

Follow *Yugen Lab* on Instagram :
[@yugenlab.shop](https://www.instagram.com/yugenlab.shop)

Switzerland Forms Trade Alliance with 13 Small and Medium-sized Economies

Switzerland has taken a significant step to diversify and strengthen its trade relations by forming a new alliance with 13 small and medium-sized economies called the "Future of Investment and Trade Partnership" (FIT Partnership). This initiative was launched on 16 September 2025 by Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin, along with ministers from the partner countries.

The aim of the FIT Partnership is to bring together countries interested in open, rules-based global trade to enhance their influence in the global economy. It addresses challenges in global trade such as supply chain resilience, the removal of non-tariff trade barriers, investment facilitation, and leveraging new technologies in trade. The partnership operates as a network without legal obligations or a formal organizational structure and is open to expanding membership and private sector involvement. This flexible approach allows for rapid adaptation to changing global trade dynamics, as well as fostering innovation and collaboration among member nations. The founding members alongside Switzerland include Brunei, Chile, Costa Rica, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Morocco, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Rwanda, Singapore, the United Arab

Emirates (UAE), and Uruguay.

Given the current global trade tensions, economic uncertainties, and the risk of fragmentation in the global economy, this alliance seems especially relevant as it wants to strengthen cooperation and promote a rules-based trading system. By pooling their influence, these nations aim to create a balanced platform that can counterbalance larger economic blocs, fostering a more multipolar trade environment.

Switzerland has been actively involved in conceptualizing this initiative and will play a leading role in its development, marking an important strategic move to broaden its trade relations in an increasingly complex international environment. As is stated in an official press release, this partnership also exemplifies Switzerland's commitment to fostering economic growth through collaboration among similar-sized economies.

Sources: [admin.ch](https://www.admin.ch/gov/en/press/news/2025/09/25706); [swissinfo](https://www.swissinfo.ch)

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SITUATION

EXPO 2025 in Osaka Wraps Up

Expo 2025 in Osaka (Kansai) has officially wrapped up after 184 days of showcasing and celebrating innovation, culture, and unity on a global scale. Drawing over 28 million visitors and participation from 165 countries and regions, the event was held under the guiding theme "Designing Future Society for Our Lives."

From April to October, attendees had the chance to explore imaginative pavilions, experience cultural events, and engage in vibrant conversation. Central to the venue was the "Grand Ring," which symbolized "unity in diversity" by bringing people together for spontaneous collaboration and exchange.

The closing ceremony on 13 October 2025 featured remarks by dignitaries such as former Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, Crown Prince Akishino, and Governor Hirofumi Yoshimura. Their message

emphasized the importance of valuing solidarity over division and tolerance over confrontation. Ishiba's address highlighted the Expo's role in strengthening hope and connection among people worldwide. Throughout the Expo, creative pavilions and hands-on activities encouraged visitors to reflect on the future and their roles in shaping it.

Special programming weeks focused on advancing Sustainable Development Goals and key topics like health, diversity, and circular economy, drawing the attention of leaders from government, business, and academia. Dynamic highlights of the closing day included a parade, cultural performances, a drone show, fireworks, and a water show. Organizers of Expo 2025 expressed that the event stands as a "global public good," hoping its legacy inspires and

informs future international engagement. Sustainability was a core feature, reflected in the reuse of facilities and pioneering use of digital technologies, serving as a model for more inclusive global gatherings.

The official Osaka, Kansai, Japan Declaration will be shared with the United Nations and the Bureau International des Expositions, carrying forward the ideals and lessons of this Expo into future events. As Expo 2025 concludes, it marks the beginning of new dialogues and connections destined to positively shape global society long after the festivities have ended.

Sources: [Japan Association for the 2025 World Exposition](https://www.japanassociationforthe2025worldexposition.org/); [The Japan Times](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/story/expo-2025-osaka-closing-ceremony-2025-10-13)

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EVENT

革新

INNOVATION

Switzerland Tops WIPO's Global Innovation Index Once More

Switzerland has once again secured its position as the most innovative country in the world, according to the 2025 edition of the World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO) Global Innovation Index (GII). This marks another year of strong performance by Switzerland in innovation, maintaining a leading position among 132 economies evaluated across various indicators.

The GII 2025 evaluates the innovation performance of countries based on various inputs and outputs, including human capital, research, infrastructure, and creative outputs. Switzerland continues to excel in these areas, maintaining its reputation for cutting-edge scientific research, robust technological development, and a vibrant creative sector. It ranks first globally, building on its consistent top placement in recent years.

Key factors behind Switzerland's success include its well-developed human capital and research infrastructure, supported by a strong education system and substantial research outputs. The country also benefits from excellent institutional frameworks and a dynamic financial environment that encourages investment in innovation. On the outputs side, Switzerland leads in patent activity and scientific publications, reflecting its ability to translate research into practical, high-value results. Additionally, its strong performance in creative industries highlights the innovative spirit in sectors beyond traditional science and technology. The report further underscores

the growing importance of social entrepreneurship as a driver of innovation. Switzerland's environment is perceived as favorable for social enterprises that address pressing societal challenges, strengthening the overall innovation ecosystem. Switzerland also leads the world in creative outputs, an area encompassing intellectual property, creative goods and services, and other tangible and intangible innovation results. It ranks among the top five in most other innovation categories, although it slipped slightly to sixth place in human capital and research. Furthermore, the country ranks second in categories like the entertainment and media market, government effectiveness, high-tech manufacturing, and university-industry collaboration.

Despite these strengths, the GII 2025 notes challenges that Switzerland faces, including access to funding for start-ups and small businesses, which remain areas for improvement. Broader economic uncertainties, such as slower global growth and constrained innovation investment, could also impact future innovation dynamics. Following Switzerland, top rankings in the GII 2025 are held by the US and Singapore, with other high-income economies continuing to dominate the list. Notably, China maintains a strong position as the highest-ranked upper-middle-income economy.

Sources: [swissinfo](https://www.swissinfo.ch); [WIPO](https://www.wipo.int); [admin.ch](https://www.admin.ch)

Agenda

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AGENDA

✓ Tariff Dynamics with USA, Japan and Switzerland

Webinar organized by the Swiss-Japanese Chamber of Commerce (SJCC)

Date: Friday, 14 November 2025, 10:00 - 11:00 CET / 18:00 - 19:00 JST

Click [here](#) to register (deadline: Friday, 7 November 2025)

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>

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