

Arigat-oh!

The Erotico-Eco Doll

By Agnès Giard



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Could you have sex with a woman's skin? The most ecological of Japanese sex dolls is a *furoshiki* (a square piece of fabric used for wrapping objects) imitating the sex of a woman. You can fold it, take it discreetly on a trip and use it to turn any pillow into a dummy mistress: 100 percent recyclable cotton.

Buy a meal and a magazine in any Japanese supermarket and you will be served a can of iced coffee in one plastic bag, the re-

heated dish in another plastic bag and the magazine in a third plastic bag. A profusion of plastic bags to keep your drink cool, your meal warm and your reading clean, with a direct effect: the extinction of life on the planet.

For the ecologists there is no doubt: if they keep on consuming so much plastic the Japanese will be the greatest polluters in the world. The website *reuseit.com*, estimates that between 500 billion and 1 trillion plastic bags are produced and discarded on earth each year. Classified as public enemy number one, Japan consumes 30 billion - 300 per adult per year - a figure that could be multiplied tenfold considering the tons of plastic packaging used in the food-processing industry. "Japan probably uses more plastic than any other nation," says Hideki Nakahashi, spokesman for the association of polymeric materials industries.

The Environment Ministry had been sounding the alarm bell for many years until finally the time came for action. A law was passed encouraging Japanese to cut their consumption and advertising campaigns launched to promote an all but forgotten traditional accessory: the *furoshiki*. It is an ornate square piece of fabric, whose size varies between 45cm and 225cm at the side, generally silken, which all grandmothers carry at all times and is used for carrying or wrapping all sorts of objects. Suddenly *furoshiki* start appearing in the hippest stores; *furoshiki* schools sprout and television broadcasts abound on the same theme: what can you wrap in a *furoshiki*? A melon, for instance? Two bottles of sake? Three tins? Four kitchen knives? Some women's magazines even show how to pack up one's travel pack, condoms, spare pants and a portable phone. It's so much sexier. "Pack it up, be *furoshiki*", becomes summer's slogan. But summer is soon over.

Meantime, the packaging barons counter-attack. Taking advantage of fashion, they go about perfecting disposable packages *furoshiki*-style. And to critics they say: "We cannot sell any product without packaging because in

Japan packaging is part and parcel of the product."

The wrapping reflex is practically conditioned in Japan. For centuries it's been considered offensive to give a present without hiding it under layers of artfully folded material, usually silken, which all grandmothers wear at all times and use traditionally for wrapping and carrying items. Nothing is offered unless it is hidden from view; at the check-out, purchases are handed over packed up like gratuitous gifts; in the underground, books are covered in dust-jackets so nobody knows what you are reading: In Japan they don't show up, they pack up. A person's courtesy can be measured by the refinement of their knots and wrappings.

So prevalent is the art of wrapping that Tokyo firm Dekunoboo launched a 100 percent fabric sex doll that enables a man to tie his futon with cloth resembling the body of a buxom woman. Sold under the name Apron, this flesh-coloured fabric with a texture like soft skin is emboldened with decorations in relief - breasts and a vagina - which one simply ties to one's eiderdown to make love. Dimensions: 25cm x 15cm (20cm high for the breasts); Price: ¥10,000 (€70).

This doll, more 'bindable' than inflatable, has all the virtues of the ideal girlfriend; it is made of the same matter as illusions. It is a magical envelope, a layer of skin in *trompe l'oeil*, a boneless form that converts any kind of bedding into a bare beauty. The catalogue suggests dressing her up to heighten the mystery. But this naked skin is capable of modesty too. It will envelope itself with supplementary strata, perpetuating the kimono aesthetics of yore, which abolish the body under a stacking of silks sometimes to an extreme degree. A woman reduced to silky wrapping? That is the ideal of beauty in Japan. A country in which the goddess of love is called the woman-weaver and legend tells that she spends her time weaving magnificent brocade that wraps itself around her body, hiding it from sight.

Translated from French by J.P.M.