



Timeless Appeal of the *Yukata*

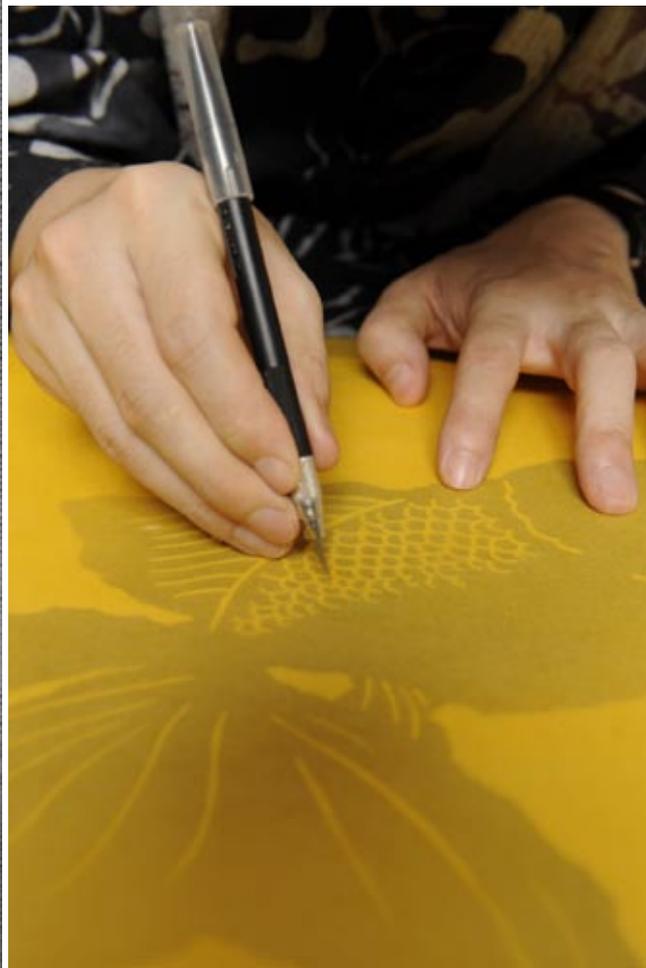
Rumi Shibasaki (center) and colleagues model *yukata* in the Rumix line, featuring (from left) a classic wave design, swords, and electric guitars.

One of the features of Japan's summer season is the wearing of *yukata*, a casual version of the kimono that is unlayered and worn next to the skin. It is said

the *yukata* originated during the Heian period (794–1192), when the robe—made of hemp and then known as the *yukatabira*—was worn by members of



BOTH PHOTOS YOSHIFUSA HASHIZUME



A Rumix designer cuts a goldfish pattern to be used for dyeing yukata fabric.

seventeenth century, in the early years of the Edo period (1603–1867), when cotton came to be used. This lightweight material “breathes,” and the robes are thus still often worn in the summer months, particularly at summer firework events and festivals.

Regular yukata motifs used to include such designs as white patterns on a navy background. In recent years, however, numerous fashion brands have started selling more colorful yukata, which have been especially popular with younger generations. Especially noteworthy is kimono textile designer Rumi Shibasaki, whose novel yukata designs featuring ani-

the aristocracy on their way to and from their bath. Yukata became popular among the common people during the seven-

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she has launched Rumi Rock, her own brand of novel yukata designs, which has earned her many fans. “The yukata designs for the Rumi Rock brand are based on Edo (former Tokyo) motifs. The mind-set to pursue something fun and exciting is regarded as something to be cherished. The basic elements of my design drawings are lines and rhythm, stemming from the cultures of ukiyo-e woodblock prints and today’s manga cartoons.”

Shibasaki has received orders from abroad, including a request to incorporate the ukiyo-e works of Utagawa Kuniyoshi into the yukata design.

More than a few Rumi Rock fans routinely wear yukata robes and kimono on holidays. “It feels nice to change into a yukata when you are off duty. You can relax when you’re wearing one, allowing you to make the most of your leisure time,” notes Shibasaki.

