



CULTURE

GENERATION TOMORROW: **TOMIHIRO KONO**

by [Alex Brzezicka](#)

The extravagant
wigmaker on the power
of transformation.

Jump into our new series featuring fresh faces who are on the way to define the sounds and aesthetics of the, not so distant, future. The cultural revolution is happening now. We don't want you to miss any of it. Let's push boundaries together.

Change of hair usually comes with a desire for a personal revolution: by transforming the outside, we're manifesting a process happening inside, abandoning the old and stepping into a new reality. We're addicted to the newness, a constant state of the flux: wanting to be everything at once and finding the physical limitations an annoyance. Luckily, there's someone who found a loophole to let us serve unique fantasies every day. Meet Tomihiro Kono, a Japanese wig designer whose creations skyrocketed beyond the boundaries of hair, creating a whole new universe full of magical realism and natural symbolism dipped in every shade of the rainbow.

From Junya Watanabe, Proenza Schouler, COMME des GARÇONS' runways to Partick Demarchelier and Jil Sander's editorials, Kono's craft has appeared everywhere. His diverse work, seemingly inspired by the whole subcultural spectrum – edgy punk cuts and sugar-candy Kawaii aesthetics – is still instantly recognizable. Tomi Kono's creations would be at home in art galleries next to the most experimental contemporary sculptures.

Having worked with hair for most of his professional career, he knows it's a powerful medium for storytelling that would often be overlooked in that context. Kono bridges that gap, producing ready-to-wear pieces for anyone craving an instant metamorphosis. He immortalised his creative journey in two books so far, first *Head Prop*, a documentation of his work from 2013 to 2016, and *Personas 111* – *The Art of Wig Making* which features one model in 111 different wigs: direct proof of the power of transformation.

What is your earliest memory connected with your craft?

In the 1980s when I was born, I used to love making plastic models of Gundam. I was also into making swords out of bamboo, inspired by Hollywood films. Looking back on those memories, I think I loved making props as a child.

How did your journey with creating wigs begin?

Creating wigs is the 4th chapter of my life. 1 – hairdresser, 2 – hair stylist (session work), 3 – head prop making, 4 – wig making. I'm gradually expanding what I can do as a hair professional.





Do you think that wigs have the power to transform the person that wears them not only outwards but inwards?

To begin with, changing hairstyles has such a power to transform the person inwards. I started my career as a hairdresser and felt customers who want to change their look want to change their mood and feelings. So, changing hairstyle is very closely related to our mind. Wigs function in a kind of similar way mentally, but it can change our look much faster with no risk of cutting/colouring our actual hair. We can explore more possibilities and enjoy the instant changes. I feel people who wear my wig enjoy transforming into different characters both outwards and inwards.

What makes you want to create?

Passion: I'm an explorer of frontiers. Also, inspiration from nature and creatures.



You've done some amazing collaborations from Junya Watanabe to Björk, have you got any favourite projects that hold a special place in your heart?

I have something more to come with Bjork, which is VERY exciting. I simply admire her existence.

Every artist has their muse. Who is a source of inspiration for you?

Every artist has their muse. This is a source of inspiration for you.

Ken Shimura – the biggest Japanese comedian who passed away last year with COVID-19. He was the professional who taught me 'Transformation is beautiful'. He was using different wigs and that may have inspired me in my childhood.



What should be the role of the new-gen creators in modern society?

To energise the world.

The creative industry is built on odd part-time jobs, free internships, all-nighters and tons of energy-boosters to get through all the turmoil of making or breaking it. Was it a struggle to get to this point in your career?

Yes, such a long struggle. I've gone through both positive and negative experiences. Honestly, I was tired of the fashion industry's system when I worked as a hair stylist.



What's the message that you want to send to the industry?

Take it easy.

Where do you want to see yourself in five years?

I'm hoping to see myself in my lovely garden with a cat.



What are you working on right now?

I'm working on a project with Björk.

Generation Tomorrow features new faces who are on the way to define, not so distant, creative future and shake society up a little. Who would be your choice?

[Yueqi Qi](#)

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