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Japan Screen Topics

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HORSE PATROL - Mounted Policewomen -

94 feet 2 min. 30 sec.

1. (EXERCISE) Early each morning 31-year old Chie Imai starts off her day with a series of exercises and a brisk morning run. "In my work," she says, "it's important to be in top shape all the time. Most days are fairly routine, but I never know when something could happen that would require instant action."

2. (STABLES) When the work day actually begins, Chie's first task is to carefully turn hay, clean the stables and make certain her horse is well-fed. Several times each week she takes up hose and brush to give her mount a thorough bath.

3. (RIDING) As one of Tokyo's small number of mounted police-women, Chie puts in several hours of riding practice every week. Partly this is to keep herself in top riding form, but even more important to insure that her horse is trained to follow commands instantly and precisely.

After practice it's time to go to work and Chie dons her smart official uniform and mounts up for patrol duty with her partner, 24-year-old Kimiko Asari.

4. (STREET SCENES) The primary duty of the mounted policewomen is to assist traffic control at major intersections such as this pedestrian crossing in front of the Imperial Palace. "For a number of reasons I believe we have a very favorable influence on traffic safety," Chie comments. "Naturally the presence of police officers insures that everyone is a little more careful about obeying traffic regulations. And, unlike foot patrols, we are a lot more visible to pedestrians and drivers, so it is rare for someone not to realize we are there." Another important factor is that our horses make excellent 'observation posts'. We are high above most traffic, so that we can get a good idea of the traffic flow and prevent overcrowding before it starts."

Many of the passers-by at Chie's post are children, who invariably are delighted at the sight of the mounted policewomen. "One of the best parts of the job is when we go to exhibitions. Then we are able to lift children up and give them a 'ride' for a few seconds. That's fun for them, fun for us, and we hope something they'll remember even as adults, possibly making them more responsive to the need for traffic safety."

UPSIDE-DOWN COFFEE SHOP

56 feet 1 min. 34 sec.

1. (EXTERIOR) The coffee shop 'Papin' in the town of Kurashiki is unusual not for its menu but for its appearance. 'Papin' is upside-down!

A landmark in the local area, Papin has an external appearance more than matched by its internal decor.

Not everything inside Papin is upside-down --- which would pose quite a problem when it comes to tables and chairs. But enough of the interior appears topsy-turvy to make even an acrobat think twice.

2. (FURNISHINGS: PEOPLE) Glasses and cups used at the shop don't actually defy gravity, though they frequently appear to. Waitresses at Papin, accustomed to the skewed decor, navigate with relative ease. But customers, despite the fact that the floors are perfectly level, are often dizzied by the interior and have trouble keeping their balance.

Papin has attracted visitors from all over Japan, particularly children --- who love to draw and paint pictures of the strange shop.

3. (CUSTOMERS) As far as the operators of Papin know, this coffee shop is the first in the world to adopt such an unusual, distinctive approach to decor. But if its popularity continues to grow, people all over the world may soon find themselves upside-down now and then.

WASTE RECYCLING

60 feet 1 min. 41 sec.

1. (EXTERIOR: REFUSE ARRIVES) "Stardust '80" is an ambitious pilot project by Japan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry to advance the practice of recycling materials. Located in Yokohama, the plant processes up to 100 tons of municipal refuse each day, recycling it in eminently useful ways.

Refuse arrives at the plant and is dumped into an automatic classifying system, which separates various materials for its four main recovery processes.

2. (CONTROL ROOM) At a central control room, workers monitor each step in the recycling process. Fully automated machinery divides refuse according to three major categories through a liquifying system.

3. (PROCESSING REFUSE) Refuse in one category is further subdivided for either metal recovery or conversion into fuel gas. A second category is processed into high-yield compost for agricultural use. The fourth major product is refined paper pulp, which is made into either newsprint or toilet tissue.

4. (PAPER) "Stardust '80" turns out approximately 25 tons of refined pulp each day, the equivalent of 55,000 newspapers or about 46,000 rolls of toilet tissue.

These paper products and the materials yielded by the other categories are all then recycled back into the economy.

This not only makes a major contribution to resources conservation, but also helps to cut the cost of municipal collection and disposal of refuse.

The success which has been achieved with this pilot "Stardust '80" project is expected to lead to huge advances in material recycling systems in the years to come.

MASTER BRUSH-MAKER

150 feet 4 min. 10 sec.

1. (BRUSHES) The brush is one of the most vital tools of the artist. Only the finest quality brushes can truly show off the talent of an artist to best advantage.

For more than 55 years, 70-year-old Shiro Shidori of the small city of Narashino not far from Tokyo has been making brushes for use in various artistic techniques, including calligraphy, India Ink painting and many other forms. He is today recognized as one of the finest brush-maker in Japan.

2. (IDEOGRAPH) This ideograph reads 'fude' -- meaning brush. Such masterly execution of calligraphy is only possible when a brush with equally superb characteristics is employed. One of Shidori's most exacting tasks is the separation of various qualities of hair, for use in various types and qualities of brushes.

Virtually any type of hair can be used to make a brush: cat, badger, horse, deer, even human hair. But different types are best used for different techniques: and Shidori is a master at selecting just the proper type and quality of hair for use in any specific brush. Among his important criteria for classification are length, stiffness and ability to absorb ink. He carefully sorts through various types of hair to guarantee the quality of his finished brushes.

3. (SORTING HAIR) Each different type of hair is sorted according to a grading system. Naturally, the finest hair is used to make the finest, and most expensive, brushes. Shidori makes brushes of all sizes; from tiny ones only a millimeter in diameter to gigantic ones 33 centimeters across and with handles 2.5 meters long.

In making a single brush, Shidori begins with from two to three times the amount of hair actually to be used, and gradually pares it down by eye and touch until he has just the perfect combination of quantity and quality.

4. (TOOLS) His primary tools are various scizzors and combs, along with his own expert judgement and decades of experience, as he begins to form the hair into the actual pattern of brush being made.

5. (TRIMMING & SHAPING HAIR) The composition of the brush is vital to excellence. Extremely fine hairs form the core of greatest length, surrounding them come hairs of progressively coarser quality and shorter length, with very stiff hair being used as an outside 'covering'.

Shidori spreads the hair out and refolds it many times over to make certain the brush will have just the proper composition for use in the art form in which it will be employed. Slowly cutting and trimming, he shapes the brush until perfectly satisfied with its appearance and feel.

Then Shidori starts the slow, laborious process of blocking the hair and making a tentative fit to the proper holder. His concentration in this stage of brush-making is intense, as again and again he reforms the brush, checking and rechecking the composition and feel.

6. (TESTING) Finally he is ready to test the brush himself ... but never with ink, He uses water and a special paper to examine the writing characteristics or drawing abilities of each brush, in order to be able to guarantee his clients of only the highest quality.

7. (FITTING HOLDERS) After the brush has successfully passed this test, Shidori begins to ready it for completion. Windings are made and tied down tightly, to keep the hairs positioned perfectly. Then, the base ends are fused together by a hot knife, to make a firm, cohesive end.

Expertly-crafted holders are selected, and each brush is carefully mated to just the right holder. Shidori makes various types of both loose and pointed brushes, according to the demands of his clients.

Because of his recognized expertise, he has a clientele including many of the nations finest artists in various fields. But all of them, even the most famous, have to wait a minimum of three to four months for an order to be filled, because of the great demand for the expert work of master brush-maker Shiro Shidori.

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