

TimeOut | **Lifestyle & Culture****Child's play** by Danielle Demetriou

Crafty ways to have fun without mess

For some parents (or maybe it's just me), there is one particular festive word that causes instant anxiety: "craft."

The seemingly innocuous "c" word conjures instant images of The Ideal Parents, sitting down patiently with their children, sprinkling glitter on freshly gathered pine cones before cutting out paper stars and stringing them from the ceiling.

Don't get me wrong. I love the idea of spending time with my daughters and indulging in such crafty activities — our home is frequently filled with pine cones and acorns crying out for a sparkly makeover.

However, as a full-time working mother, the discrepancy between reality and festive fantasy frequently looms large and it's often tricky to find the time (or organizational skills) to sit down together and actually make something.

Not to mention the fact that at 3 and 1, my daughters are at the ages where it's practically impossible to get them to sit still for more than five minutes, without having to bribe them with a biscuit or an episode of "Anpanman."

Fortunately, there are plenty of activities in Tokyo that can help parents with a craft deficit in their lives, as I recently discovered when I attended a crafts class with my 3-year-old daughter.

The setting was Flatmate, a small DIY-style cafe hidden away on the fifth floor of a nondescript office building on Yamate-dori, a short walk from Nakameguro Station.

When we arrive one recent rainy Sunday, Yuko Miwa is holding court against a soundtrack of "Jingle Bells" at a newspaper-covered table that is toddler heaven: It is strewn in endless bowls of sparkly jewels, glitter, felt-tip pens and glue.

The simple cafe space is home to a range of craft workshops (two women at a nearby table are weaving bright textiles as part of a camera-strap-making workshop on the day we visit).

However, our date is with Miwa and the parent-child craft class. The artist has spent the past 20 years teaching children arts and crafts across Tokyo — and so it is perhaps little surprise that she instantly connects with my initially shy daughter.

After buying a soft drink from the cafe, the class begins. First, without pomp or ceremony, Miwa encourages the children — my daughter and a 4-year-old girl who is there with her father — to simply start drawing whatever they feel like on paper, using an impressive selection of big and bright felt-tip pens.

As she quietly chats to them one-to-one, she taps into the things that they love — and within minutes, she is quickly sketching an impressive-looking unicorn for my daughter to color in (while the little girl opposite completes a picture of her mother).

My daughter's delight at her unobstructed access to so many pens is clear. We normally stick to pencils or crayons at home, following a few too many scribbling on walls/clothes little sister's face incidents.

Next, Miwa hands out a square of stiff



Creative stars: Yuko Miwa shows encourages the kids to draw pictures before starting the craft class. **Right:** The parent-child craft class creations are lit up to the delight of their creators.

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translucent paper with a variety of star-like folds (the parents get one too) and we are all instructed to decorate it in felt-tip pens in the pattern of our choice.

It's strangely relaxing as we all sit and indulge in some coloring in, before Miwa then instructs us how to fold it up in a complicated origami-esque way before it magically transforms into a series of triangular folds (I confess she had to do mine as well as my daughter's).

Each child is then allowed to cut along several lines, following Miwa's close instructions (my daughter was very excited about using scissors) — and as if by magic, it transforms into a 3-D Christmas tree shape, complete with a star at the top.

Next, came a highlight for the girls: decorating the tree by picking out small sparkly jewel-like stones and other glittery things from a series of bowls and gluing them on.

But the icing on the cake for the little ones comes at the end of the class, when we have all finished our Christmas trees. Miwa produces a tangle of fairy lights,



which she drapes across our creations, before the cafe lights are dimmed and the children clap in delight as they see their illuminated trees.

The setting may have been low key and the class relaxed, but the children clearly enjoyed themselves. But perhaps best of all is that there's no need to worry about or tidy up the mess — so it's relaxing for the parents, too.

Flatmate holds regular crafts workshops, from weaving to calligraphy, as part of its Flatmate Labo series. Yuko Miwa has several parent-child classes in December — a Collage Paper Plate workshop on Dec. 14 (3:30-5 p.m.) and a Drawing with Brush workshop on Dec. 25 (3:30-5 p.m.). Classes are for children aged 3 and above and cost ¥2,000 per adult and child, plus one soft drink (¥300).



Cut and Paste: Children let their creativity run wild at the Flatmate parent-child craft class.

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On: Fashion by Misha Janette**Saint Laurent joins the glamour of Omotesando**

As the Omotesando promenade gets the holiday treatment, decked with glittering lights, it also welcomes a new addition to its rolodex of pomp. On Dec. 5, the Saint Laurent flagship had a quiet opening in the old Benetton building, though the scale of the store is anything but low key. This first and only flagship in Japan was overseen by creative director Hedi Slimane, known for his rock-'n'-roll-inspired aesthetic that challenges the traditional French code of fashion.

Having said that, the store design

is actually quite polished and squeaky-clean, outfitted in white marble and sleek art-deco-style interior. It sprawls across three levels, housing mens- and womens-wear, accessories and bags.

To commemorate the opening, 10 limited edition surfboards were created with Los Angeles-based artist Lucia Ribisi, as part of its "Surf Sounds" project inspired by California's youth culture.

Saint Laurent 4-3-10 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo; 03-6863-9898. www.ysl.com

Bringing home Tokyo's eclecticism

Rei Shito made her name as one of the pioneers of street-style photography, launching her career with the fashion magazine Fruits, before becoming famous for her own website, Style From Tokyo.

Shito keeps eyes on who and what is giving life to each town's unique styles as she catalogs the



metropolis — and more recently the world — one outfit at a time. It's only fitting then that she is to be the creative director of Style Tokyo Friends' Home, a new multi-brand boutique in Aoyama.

You'll find goods as eclectic as the outfits she chooses to feature on her site, with glittery loafers alongside manga-inspired figurines. There is a wide selection of offerings, for men and women, as well as interior goods for the home. Many of the brands are Japanese, so you can be sure that you're supporting the local industry.

The whole shop is set up like a rambling California home complete with mini-garden and wide terrace, where you'll find the Urth Cafe, an organic coffee shop and eatery from Los Angeles.

Tokyo Style Friends' Home, 4-9-8 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo; 03-6455-5277. www.styletokyo.net

Uniqlo adds to its expanding roster of collaborations

Despite being known for its wardrobe staples, Uniqlo is always keen to pad out its collections with in-trend collaborations, and this season sees its busiest release schedule yet.

The first is the continuation of last year's partnership with the French fashion icon Ines de la Fressange. The early spring collection comprises feminine Paris-chic designs, such as pink retro tennis looks and a safari-inspired line. If history is anything to go by, this whole line will sell out quickly, and while roll out to physical stores starts Jan. 8, the preview online sales that end Dec. 20 have already started.

Other continuations this season also happen to be French — tie-ups with Lemaire and former Vogue Paris fashion editor Carine Roit-

feld. Lemaire takes a more unisex approach to preppy looks, while the Roitfeld's line consists of trendy work-ready fashion.

Eager to add to its roster of design stars early into next year as well, Uniqlo has also just announced a collaboration with Liberty London, the long-standing British brand famous for its floral-print textiles. This collection promises to be bursting with color, and will include everything from men's to womenswear, girl and baby goods.

www.uniqlo.com



Ines de la Fressange spring line

