



From the Editor's Desk

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How closely should a journal about business work with businesses? This isn't so much a moral dilemma as a fairly clear set of moral and ethical rules. We don't take advertising or any outside funding (whether education is a business is another debate) so that we can maintain the integrity of our content. We nevertheless decided to focus on one company in this issue. We did not cross any moral lines in making this decision and have had no direct contact with the company. Rather, in our opinion, Shiseido is such an important company in Japanese business history that it seemed deserving of this focus.

Fukuhara Shinzō (1883-1948), the first head of the incorporated company of Shiseido, wanted to be an artist. He only went into pharmacology because the ill health of his older brothers meant that he had to take over the apothecary his father had founded. What might have been merely a story of filial piety instead became one of triumph. Fukuhara was the rare genius who could monetize a combination of duty and passion to create a global empire. The early years of Shiseido are a collision of company history and personal history. To give credit where it is due, Shinzō's father, Arinobu was also a man of vision. In 1872 He opened the first Japanese-run Western pharmacy in Ginza (Victoria Dispensary in Yokohama, for example, was at least two years earlier). Whether this was pure luck or foresight, it was the perfect location because when Ginza was rebuilt after a devastating fire that year, large sections of it were built in Westernized red brick. Ginza became the focus for things Western. Under Fukuhara senior, new products were introduced like Fukuhara Sanitary Toothpaste (1888) and innovations such as a soda fountain and ice cream parlor (1902) were incorporated into the storefront. Cosmetics were also developed under his management, notably Eudermine (1897), a face lotion still sold by Shiseido, And it was with his encouragement that Shinzō studied in New York and spent time in Paris.

When Shinzō took over in 1915 he reinvented the business, transforming it from drugstore to cosmetic company. Management of the business end was largely handled by a friend from his days in New York, Matsumoto Noboru. Shinzō directed his main energies instead to product development and advertising, which is where he could indulge in his creative passion. Advertising was still a new field, having really only taken root in a large way a few decades previous. It was a corollary of the rise of the mass production of consumer goods. It is perhaps no coincidence that the patent medicine industry, one of the first mass produced commercial products, was a vanguard of advertising production. Wider literacy, the increased print media that accompanied it and technological improvements like color lithography all contributed to the rise of advertising. Although Shiseido was a well-managed company that made good business decisions and provided high quality products, it was the successful exploitation of advertising media in all its forms that has made Shiseido one of the most researched of Japanese companies.

It was also advertising where Fukuhara Shinzō was able to profit from his passion for art. It should be noted that he was something of an artist himself, especially of photography, which was only just gaining acceptance as an art form. He was able to remain connected to the art world in part by opening the Shiseido Gallery in 1919. This gallery is still in operation and is now located in the basement of Tokyo Ginza Shiseido Building. The intimate connection Fukuhara developed between art and business was innovative. Sure, Toulouse Lautrec painted posters, but that was just a job. Shiseido used art for branding with extraordinary detail, in everything from package design to wrapping paper and shopping bags. And this is one of the fascinations of Shiseido as a corporation.

If this historical connection were not enough, today Shiseido is one of the top twenty cosmetics companies in the entire world. Shiseido is not unaware of their position historically and in the corporate world. To this end, the company has produced not only own shashi and exhibits but has established its own [corporate museum](#) in Kakegawa, Shizuoka Prefecture. The museum activities are not just narrowly focused on the company itself, but also include exhibits and collections on Ginza, women and makeup in general. The journal published by this institution is appropriately entitled *Eudermine*.

The combination of attention to presentation, market share, and history has made Shiseido one of the most researched Japanese companies. In this issue Annika Culver looks at the specified marketing strategies that Shiseido employed in Manchuria during the Pacific War as a reflection of imperial policies in the Japanese state. Blaine Conner's book review of Uchida Kesao's memoirs of recent vice-president Omura Kyoichirō make it clear that biography is still an important aspect of understanding Shiseido corporate history. While we do not intend to regularly focus on a single company, in the history of Japanese business, Shiseido is a giant.

Thanks are due to James Hommes and Brian Portzer for their behind the scenes contributions. For the 2014 issue, we welcome contributions on any aspect of Japanese business or commercial history.



Figure 1 Source: Murray's Handbook for Travellers in Japan 9th ed. (1913)



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