

# QR

## SPECIAL Selection

The Shozo Izushi Selection No. 6

The evolution of bags created by Aero Concept

### A Poet Breathes Life into Duralumin

Photography/Satoru Naito

Japan has the custom of 1,000 cranes. Not the actual bird, but origami cranes – red, yellow, green and other colors of paper folded into the shape of cranes. Of course, not everyone is adept at folding the cranes. Nothing is more marvelous than a highly skilled person folding a tiny piece of paper into a crane that appears to be alive.

This tradition of 1,000 cranes is alive and well in the 21st century, and are used as presents for convalescing friends or family. The person folding the cranes prays for their acquaintance's quick recovery. The person receiving them contemplates the thousand cranes every day, hoping they recover as soon as possible.

Belief in 1,000 cranes is probably just superstition, but who knows? As the givers make each crane, they say a prayer with every fold for the

speedy recovery of their acquaintance, whose face appears in their mind. This is repeated at



The regularly punched rivets on the mirror surface are beautiful

least 1,000 times. The thousand cranes represent their prayers, and an invisible power is hidden within them. That power no doubt has a

positive and spiritual effect on the ailing person.

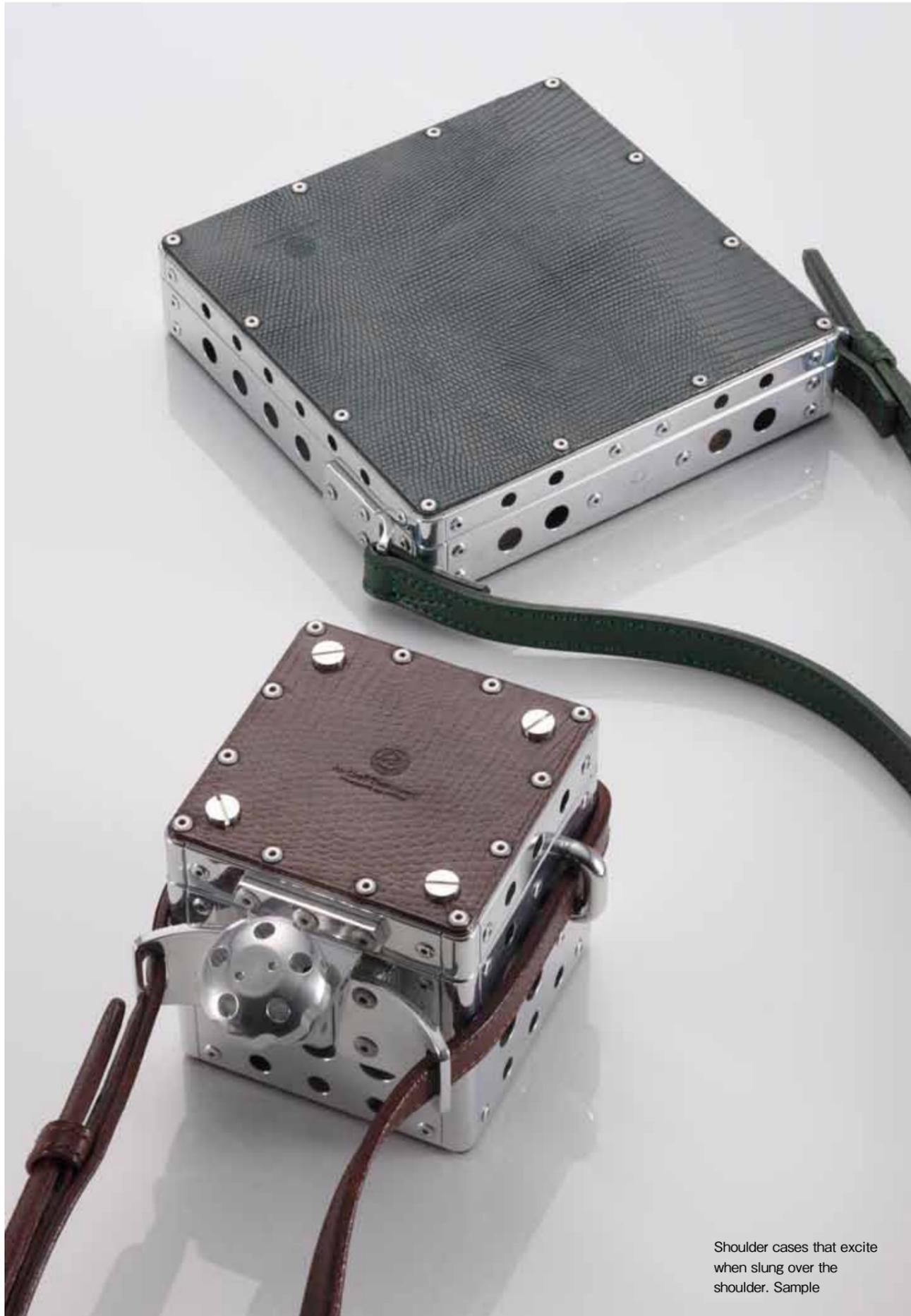
The crane is just one example of how the Japanese have fashioned all manner of living and innate objects with origami – literally, folded paper. Origami is a fun activity for children but also a paper work-of-art. While the origins of origami are unknown, it enjoys a long history.

Origami was written in days of old with the kanji character for “shapes,” instead of the character for “paper,” and it was etiquette to wrap gifts using origami. The art is known to have been practiced in the Heian Period (794–1185), so its history spans at least 1,000 years. Being an important part of etiquette, various schools of origami exist, such as the famous Ogasawara, Ise, and Kira schools.

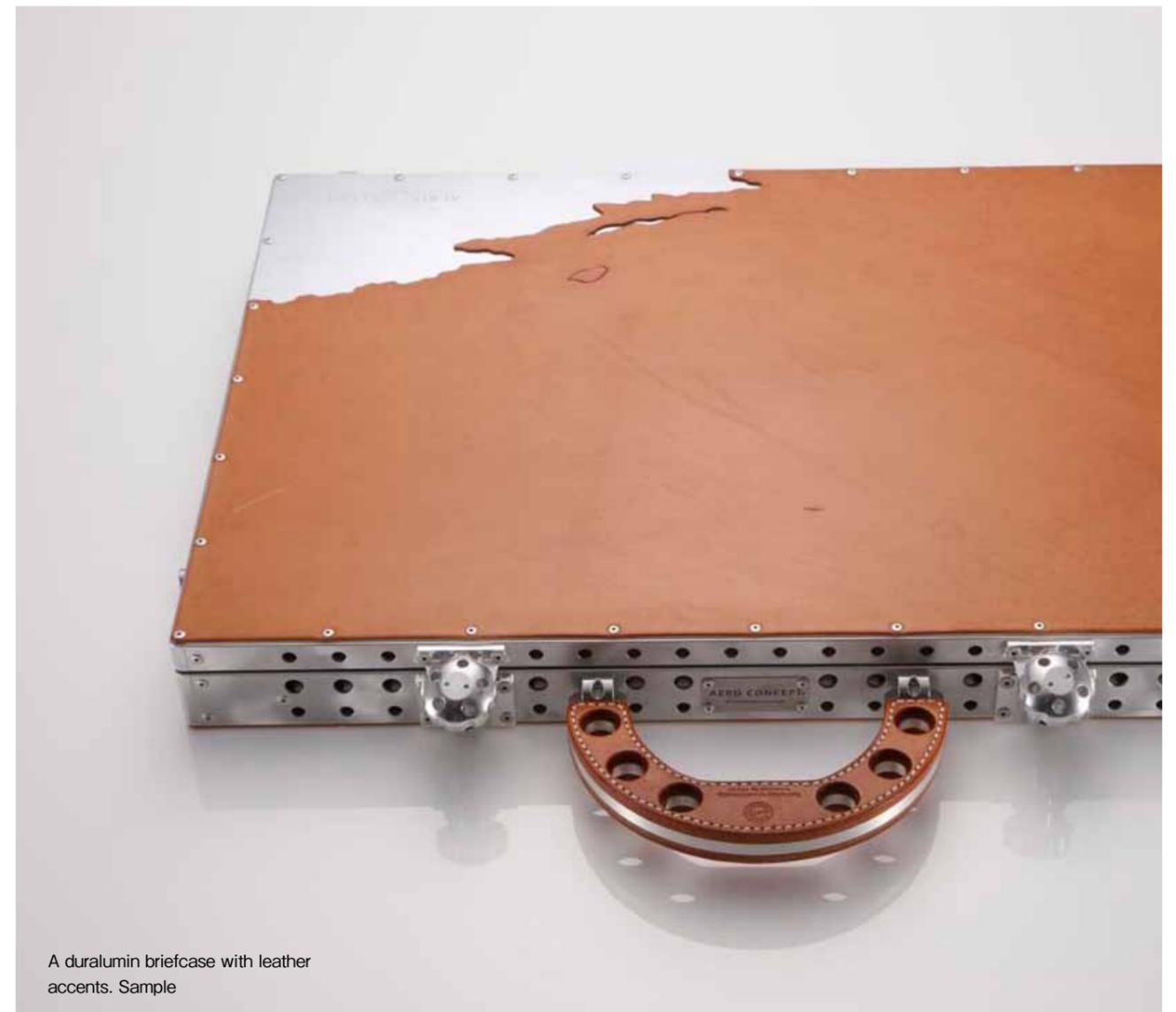
The original tradition of folding



No two guitar cases are alike, because the size and interior are made to fit the guitar itself. Sample



Shoulder cases that excite when slung over the shoulder. Sample



A duralumin briefcase with leather accents. Sample

shapes became the game of folding paper, but origami also had the meaning of a "certificate of appreciation." For example, when specialists appraised antiques or curios, they would attach a certificate, according to custom, folded in a splendid shape (origami) to certify the object was truly superior. Even today, an object with "origami attached" signifies a special, first-class article.

Aero Concept's Keiichi Sugano is famous for working with duralumin as if it were paper. When Sugano's hand touches a piece of difficult duralumin, it becomes tender, like

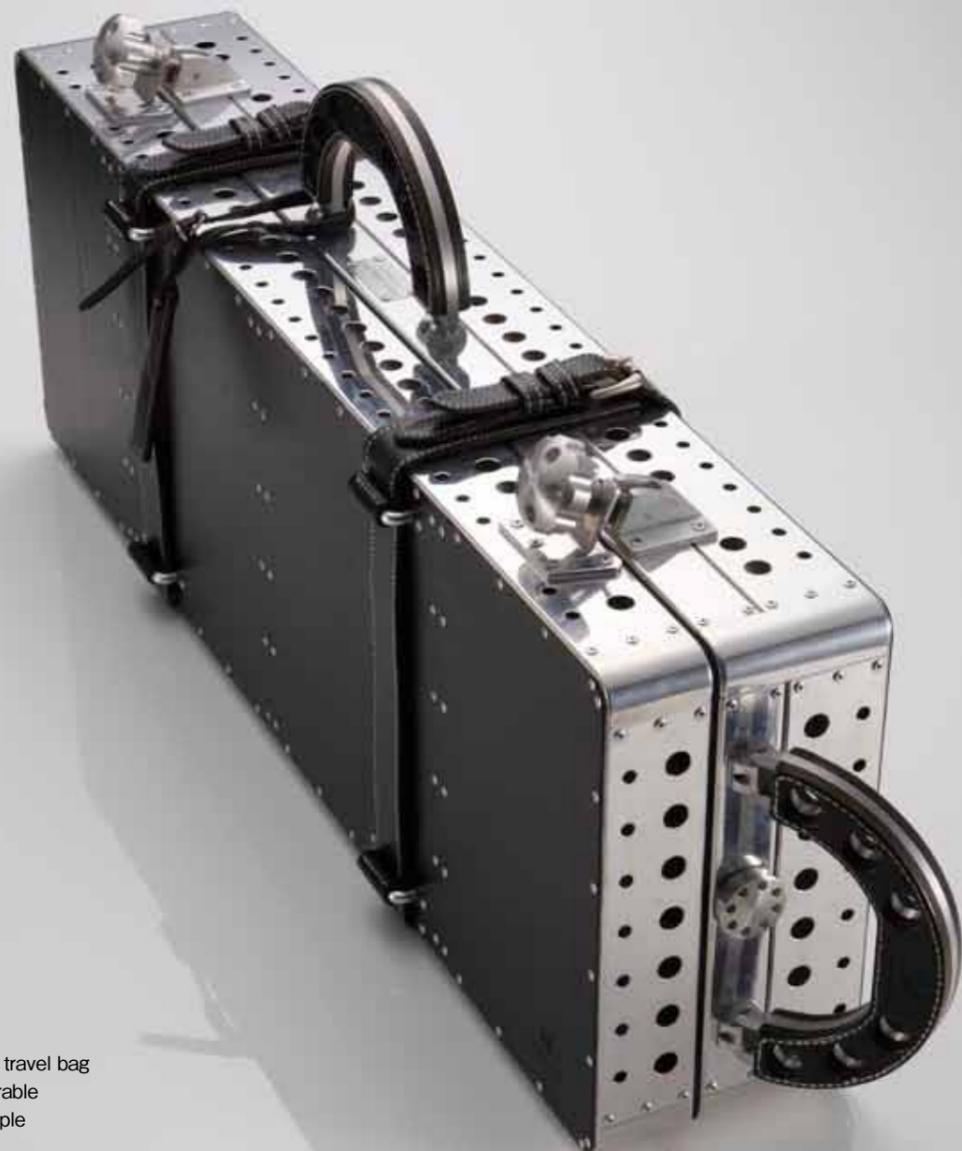
paper.

Duralumin is the aluminum alloy developed and patented by Alfred Wilm in 1903 in the small town of Duren in Western Germany. The composition of 94% aluminum and 4% copper with a little magnesium produces a light material with a spectacular hardness.

Nothing is stronger. No metal is lighter. Many people probably know duralumin is used in aircraft. Sugano is one of many people who fell in love with duralumin's special qualities through his work on aircraft.

A third-generation sheet-metal

craftsman in Tokyo, Sugano was engaged in manufacturing aircraft components when, over 20 years ago, he faced bankruptcy after the volume of work from his prime contractor plunged. Sugano says he, at one point, contemplated suicide. However, Sugano was then inspired to "create one product that would remain as proof to the world that he once lived." The product was an attaché case for his personal use, and he no intention of selling it. Since the case was for him, creating it became his hobby. His choice of duralumin as the main material was a natural one, because he was



A light, beautiful travel bag that leaves a durable impression. Sample

accustomed to working with it. Sugano has two methods for making duralumin lighter and more like paper. The first is to make the duralumin sheet as thin as possible. The other is to make holes in the duralumin. However, paper-thin duralumin does not hold a shape, so it must be folded over. This is undoubtedly duralumin origami. Sugano's skill is evident in the fine balance between lightness and strength – like a seesaw with weight on the right and sturdiness

on the left. He searches for the point – the moment – of precise, horizontal equilibrium. That perfectly kept momentary balance is what makes Aero Concept bags beautiful. Aero Concept bags are pleasant to touch and caress to their smallest detail. Even a knob will talk to your fingers. This can only be called the aesthetics of touch. Even an Aero Concept bag's sound is beautiful. For example, horizontally place the attaché case

on a table, unlock it with both hands, lift the lid, take out the documents you need, and close the lid. The moment it shuts, the lock mechanism sings with a snap. Snap! Sugano says he made it sound like the shutter on a Barnack-model Leica III F camera. It's no surprise that Fender, makers of world famous guitars, would order cases like these for their instruments. Sugano is the only poet in the world who breathes fresh life into duralumin.

The latest product is a futuristic shopping basket (top).  
Sample/A supple tote bag made of metal (bottom right).  
Sample/A flask-like shoulder case (bottom left).  
Sample



**Shozo Izuishi** Born 1944, Izuishi has forged a career as a fashion designer, consultant, and critic. Author of numerous books including Bruu Jjinzu no Bunkashi ("Blue Jeans: a Cultural History") (NTT Shuppan). His recent work Suutsu no Hyakka Jiten ("An Encyclopedia of Suits") (Banraisha) lecturing males on how to wear a suit properly has attracted favorable reviews.

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