



Japanland: A Year in Search of Wa

Karin Muller

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Looking to gain a competitive edge in her judo practice and maybe a fresh perspective on "meaning" in her own life, documentary filmmaker Karin Muller commits to living in Japan for a year to deepen her appreciation for such Eastern ideals as ritual and tradition. What she's after? more than understanding tea-serving etiquette or the historical importance of the shogun? is *wa*: a transcendent state of harmony, of flow, of being in the zone. With only her Western perspective to guide her, though, she discovers in sometimes awkward, sometimes awesomely funny interactions just how maddeningly complicated it is being Japanese.

Beginning with a strict code of conduct enforced by her impeccably proper host mother, Muller is initiated in the centuries-old customs that direct everyday interactions and underlie the principles of the sumo, the geisha, Buddhist monks, and now, in the 21st century, the workaholic, career-track salaryman. At the same time, she observes the relatively decadent behavior of the fast-living youth generation, the so-called New Human Beings, who threaten to ignore the old ways altogether.

Broad in scope, intimate in relationships, and deftly observed by an author with a rich visual sense of people and place, *Japanland* is as beguiling as this colorful country of contradictions.

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