

**The international campaign and Benetton's S/S '99 catalogue explore the universe of youth's style in the Omote Sando district. With photos by Oliviero Toscani and text by Banana Yoshimoto. In collaboration with TIM and Procter & Gamble.**  
**YOUNG PEOPLE IN TOKYO SEEN BY BENETTON**

UNITED COLORS  
OF BENETTON.

Ponzano, 18th February 1999. Extreme piercing and traditional wooden sandals. State-of-the-art mobile phones and tartan plus-fours. Tennis shoes and red garters. Platinum blond wigs, kimonos, neo-punk mohican haircuts, Brando-style leather jackets, shocking pink plastic mini-Kelly handbags, SM chains, bobbysocks, leopardskin shirts, water pistols, wire rings, ethnic skirts, cowboy hats and dizzyingly high wedgies. It's a crescendo of mixes, matching, superimpositions, close encounters, couplings and contrasting approaches that generates a whole new, no-holds-barred style. United Colors of Benetton has chosen the endlessly inventive, astonishingly original aesthetic of the young people in Tokyo's Omote Sando district as the theme of its new worldwide corporate campaign and the Spring-Summer 1999 catalogue.

The campaign will be poster- and press-vehicled around the world. The advertisements and the catalogue, with a total circulation of two million copies, have been developed in collaboration with TIM in Italy and with Procter & Gamble, which has teamed Benetton with two brands, specialised in the fabric-dedicated detergent sector: Ace in Japan and Neoblanc Gentil in Portugal.

Oliviero Toscani's images portray around eighty men and women, aged between 16 and 24, which are the result of an anthropological study on the youth movement in the Land of the Rising Sun. These young Japanese are fashion enthusiasts and lovers of pop art who have transformed the colours of the Benetton collection into a highly creative, energy-intensive look that resembles Peter Pan without the hang-ups. They have an obviously spontaneous empathy with a collection that refuses to be bound by the conventions of the fashion system and that allows them to make their own statement to others. Because, as the young, best-selling writer, Banana Yoshimoto, says in her introduction, people are always looking for ways to express themselves, including what they wear: *"I'm looking for clothes that suit me to a T. / I can't find them no matter where I go/ Form, material, and colour that can express all of my inner life /Outfits that affirm I'm alive here now"*.

Like the kokeshi dolls mentioned by Yoshimoto, and from which the Benetton catalogue is named after, Tokyo's youth is waiting for something. But it is constantly on the move, with their eye fixed on the changes that the new millennium will bring, and with the intelligent curiosity of those who know that *"To live is always to see both ways"*. So after Corleone, Jerusalem and the disabled young people of Ruppolding, Benetton is now exploring another unique situation, where aesthetic and cultural codes meld into a free, ironic, unconventional communication system. And that has always been the spirit of Benetton's campaigns.

*"In a world like that of fashion, where everybody is wearing black, or grey if you're lucky, and where depression seems to inspire the behaviour models and of professionals, we have gone in search of colour,"* says

Oliviero Toscani, explaining this new phase in the Benetton communication strategy, *"and it has been fascinating to discover that a group of young people in a metropolis like Tokyo is making a stand against all-black/all-grey provincialism with creativity, imagination and by refusing to accept rules imposed by others. For that has always been the essence of real fashion"*.

**High-resolution images are available in the section:**

Image Gallery – Benetton Institutional Campaigns – Kokeshi Dolls