

TANGANMEN

These one-eyed masks have become a cult hit, much to the amazement of their creator.

On the outskirts of Akihabara is an interesting cafe with a unique staff. Monster Party is a monster-themed cafe, but not in the traditional sense of Japan's most famous kaiju, namely Godzilla. These monsters are cute kigurumi girls with one defining feature: Their masks are dominated by one gigantic eye in the center. These *hitotsumemen* (one-eyed masks) were created by the artist Ozawa Dango. "I originally created a one-eyed mask just for myself," she says. "I had no idea that people would be interested in buying them." She became interested in kigurumi in her early 20s but soon found that the overwhelming majority of kigurumi wearers were guys cosplaying an anime character. Finding it difficult to join that community, Ozawa decided to make her own character with her own rules. "Chimo," she says, explaining her mask's identity, "is a regular girl who wears cute clothes and just happens to have one eye."

She debuted the character in 2012 at Design Festa, an event for indie artists and crafters, and was surprised by the positive reception, especially amongst women. "A lot of people wanted to buy one, so in 2014 I started selling them," she says. "It was strange—many customers were not even interested in kigurumi culture, but when they put the mask on, their personality changed. A lot of people have that inner personality that they want to let out, and the mask is a way to feel comfortable doing that, I think."

