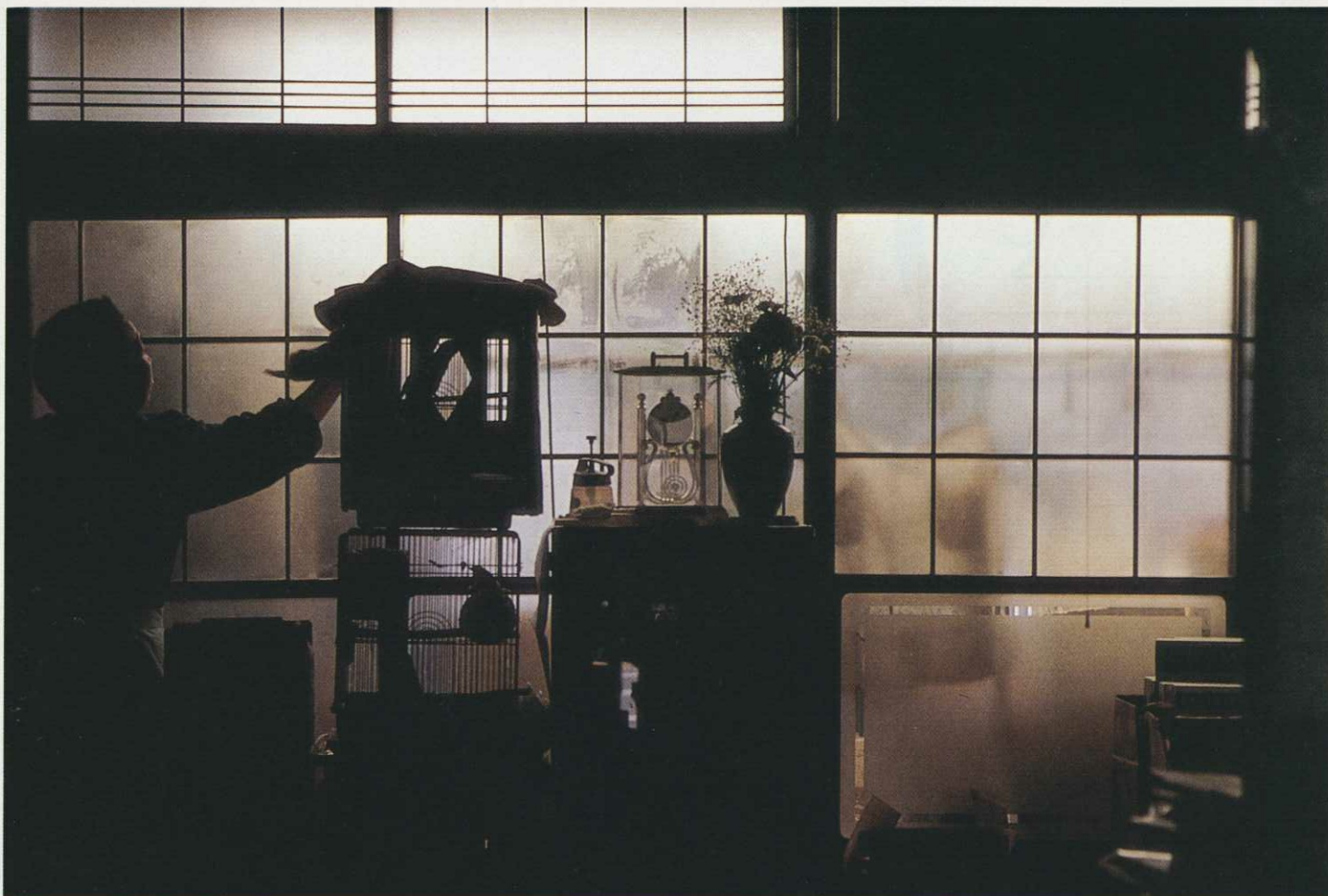


Cleaning Rituals

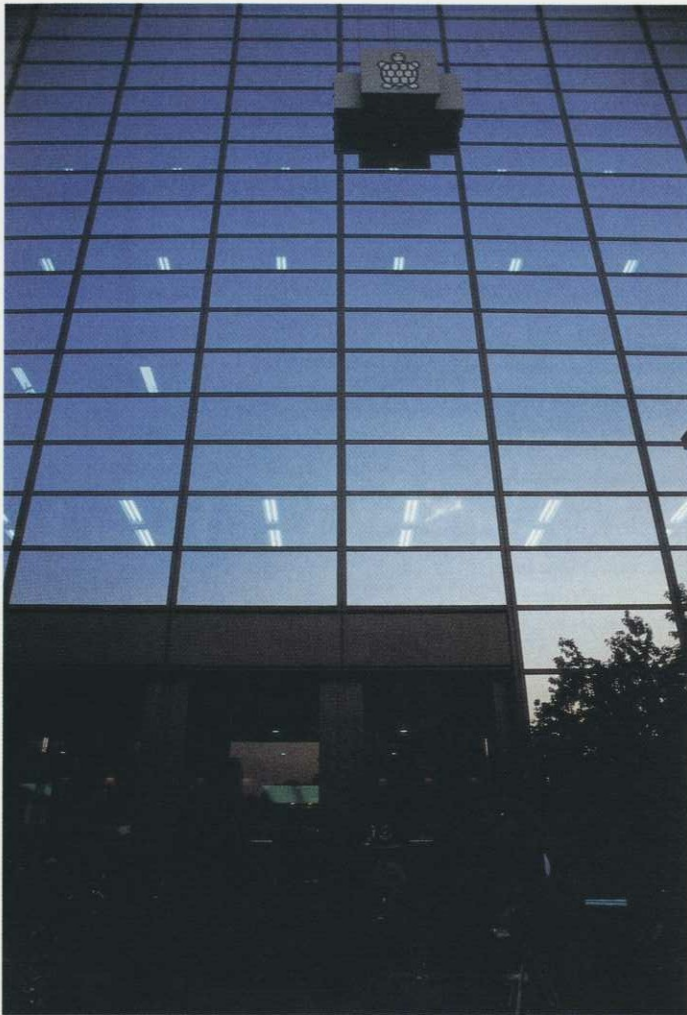
Photos and text by Sonia Katchian



Cleaning takes on almost ritualistic overtones in Japan, where a shopkeeper's day always starts with the washing down of windows and the sidewalk.

Harue Tanizawa, 80, a rice-shop owner, tackles the patterned windowpanes of the sitting room which is behind her shop. In addition to washing down her storefront every morning, she handles the housekeeping in her living quarters, which she shares with her extended family. "I do those windows every Friday morning," she says. "The tatami floors and *fusuma* screens, I do every day," she adds.

While workers do it the old-fashioned way at a Ginza store, and a postal employee uses elbow grease to get that fire hydrant sparkling, the Yamato Mutual Life Insurance Co. employs the services of a robot window cleaner, which takes on the appearance of a motorized bug as it tackles the all-glass building.



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