

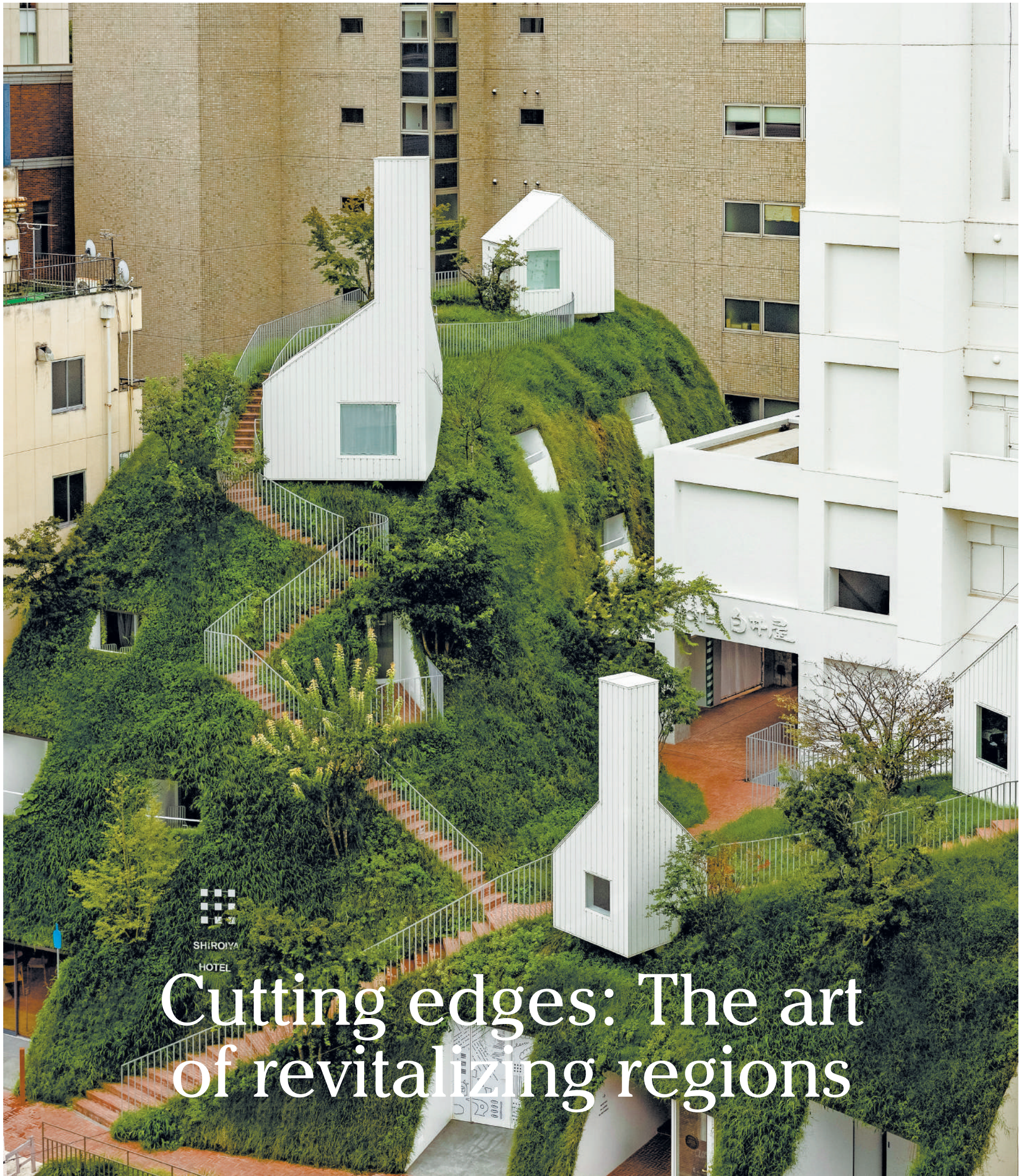
DISTRIBUTED BY

the japan times

ESG / SDGs

SUSTAINABLE JAPAN MAGAZINE

Saturday, December 18, 2021



SHIROIYA
HOTEL

Cutting edges: The art of revitalizing regions

Camp Park Kito

Opened in 2018. Ten guest rooms, including condominiums, cottages, lodges and glamping tents. Accommodation facility set in the great outdoors with a restaurant, a semi-open-air public bath, free Wi-Fi and a conference room that can accommodate up to 100 people.
 ● 45 Kito Oriu, Nakacho, Naka-gun, Tokushima Tel: 0884-64-8055



COURTESY: KITO DESIGN HOLDINGS

Feature MY HOMETOWN

KITO TOKUSHIMA PREF.

Designing Kito, Tokushima's village of the future

By KAORU TASHIRO



Yasushi Fujita, born in 1973 in the Tokushima village of Kito. Founded his own company in 1994 while still a student, incorporated it in 1996 and established e-book distributor Media Do in 1999, currently serving as its CEO. In 2013, he established Golden Village to cultivate and sell processed products made from Kito yuzu fruit, and in 2017 he launched Kito Design Holdings. He opened Camp Park Kito, where visitors can enjoy glamping, in 2018; Mirai Convenience Store in 2020; and Yuzu Cafe Kitchen, on the concourse of Tokushima Station, in June 2021.

Camp Park Kito has four types of accommodation. Above is the condominium-type Riala room, whose view of the river immerses guests in nature and the passing seasons. At right is the cottage-type room, which is equipped with a kitchenette and can accommodate up to four adults.



The village of Kito in Tokushima Prefecture's Nakacho district is cleaved by the Naka River and surrounded on all sides by mountains over 1,000 meters in height. With more than half of its population of 1,000 age 65 and over, it is a so-called *genkai shuraku*, or "marginal village." And yet a convenience store that opened in April 2020 is creating a major splash. Its architecture has received several awards, including the highest accolade of the Red Dot Design Award (Germany), and in Japan's esteemed Kukan Design Award 2021 for design of spaces, it won the Kukan of the Year grand prize, also topping the shop space category. To date it has won no fewer than 10 domestic and international design awards.

Called the Mirai Convenience Store — "mirai" means "future" — it challenges

the conventional approach to convenience store design that has been applied in most of the nation's 59,000 stores.

The person behind Kito's "most beautiful convenience store in the world" was Yasushi Fujita, a native of the village who is also the CEO of Kito Design Holdings Co. Ltd. Tokyo-based Fujita is also the founder and CEO of Media Do, Japan's largest e-book distributor. "My hometown never left my heart," he said, and the new convenience store is just one part of a larger ongoing effort to develop his hometown, which is separate from the Media Do business.

The first part of that effort was to focus on the creation of industry and employment in Kito. In the past, the village was known for its timber and, in particular, Kito cedar, but that gradually declined as competition from imported wood in-

creased and the local population aged. In the face of those twin challenges it was Fujita's father, and later his uncle, who stood up to try to identify new industries that might revitalize the village. They discovered a native forest of yuzu citrus trees. At the time, yuzu was considered difficult to distribute and the trees took about 18 years to bear fruit. Fujita's uncle teamed up with a local study group, and after much experimentation, they succeeded in creating a cultivation method that would produce fruit in three to five years. They then set about spreading the name of Kito yuzu to the world. Today, most of the seedlings cultivated in Japan are derived from Kito yuzu. Carrying on the will of his father and uncle, Fujita established Kogane no Mura Co. Ltd. in 2013. In order to promote shipments both domestically and overseas and to strengthen the Kito yuzu brand, he also created the sweets and groceries brand Yuzu no Ki and the original sweets shop Yuzu Cafe Kitchen.

Fujita didn't stop there. There was still something missing in the Kito area: a place for visitors to stay. Fujita felt it was only by staying the night that people could appreciate the village's charms, and in 2018 he created Camp Park Kito. For this he refurbished an old disused campsite, greatly enhancing its facilities and comfort. Quality is always indispensable for Fujita, and the site can now cater to up to 100 guests with a wide variety of condominiums, cottages, lodges, glamping facilities and more.

Since its opening, the cleverly designed campsite has gained a following and now attracts visitors from both within the prefecture and outside. Much more than a place that people might just pass through,

it is designed on the concept of hospitality, offering the charm of the village and interactions with the locals. Meanwhile, the Mirai Convenience Store, which was originally intended as a message to the children who will lead the future — and as an essential service for locals who used to have to travel an hour to do their shopping — has also become a must-visit location for the campsite's guests.

And of course Fujita, who commented that the three things Kito lacks are "food, culture and education," is not stopping there either. He has already embarked on a new business for next year, taking the project to the next stage. Looking at Fujita's business development in Kito, such as Camp Park Kito, the Mirai Convenience Store and other new businesses, it is clear his vision is truly comprehensive.

Fujita said he likes to "think not in terms of points, but of planes." These words hint at how none of the projects he has created have a short-term focus on a



After opening in April, the Mirai Convenience Store has won many domestic and international awards for its architecture.

single objective. Each generates meaning in and of itself but is also organically connected with others. As a result, the village of Kito and the people who live there are interconnected, and sustainable value is generated over the long term. Those who visit should be conscious that they are not participating in a one-off project, but

in a long-term effort to "design a village." "Creating a 'miracle village' where everyone can smile": This is Fujita's vision for regional revitalization. For him, the driving force behind these activities is his love for the hometown that forged his own identity. He is evidence that regional Japan may finally be about to change.



The village of Kito lies nestled in the mountains of the Nakacho district in Tokushima Prefecture. In recent years, the cultivation, processing and sale of Kito yuzu has become a major industry and boosted local employment.



● Summary

「点ではなく面で考える」
包括的ビジョンこそ
地域を真に変える。

ここは、標高1,000mを超える山々に囲まれ、中央に那賀川が流れる山間地域、徳島県那賀町木頭地区。この「限界集落」に、今年オープンしたコンビニエンスストア「未来コンビニ」の建築が、国内外のデザイナーアワード9冠を獲得した話題だ。オーナーは「KITO DESIGN HOLDINGS株式会社」代表取締役、藤田恭嗣。彼は

電子書籍取次最大手「メディアドゥ」代表取締役社長CEOとしても知られるが、個別に故郷木頭の創生へ向け産業と雇用の創出に着手。2013年に木頭柚子栽培・加工販売事業「黄金の村」を設立した。さらに2018年には、宿泊場がなかった木頭に、高いデザイン性と快適さを備える「CAMP PARK KITO」を誕生させ、訪問客にその

魅力をゆっくり味わえる宿泊場を提供した。「すべての人が笑顔になれる奇跡の村を創る」をビジョンに掲げる藤田は、木頭の地域創生を「点ではなく面で考える」。この包括的ビジョンこそが地域を変える。活動の原動力は「故郷への愛」だ。日本の地方も、ようやく変わろうとしている。



日本語全文はこちら



人を美しくする化粧品が地球を汚している。石鹸でノーファンデ肌へ。

ONLINE STORE P. G. C. D.

石鹸を選ぶ。それもSDGs

洗顔を石鹸に変えるだけで地球にうれしいこと

毎日の習慣の中で、環境のために変えられることはなんだろう。

たとえばマイボトルや、自転車通勤にチャレンジしたり、スキンケアも同じ。洗顔も石鹸にするだけで地球もきれいになれる。プラスチック不要で、生分解性も高い石鹸は、使い終わるとゼロになる。

“さあ、フランス生まれのソーブで、洗う”SDGs習慣を。

Feature MY HOMETOWN

OKAYAMA

OKAYAMA PREF.

Artist & Architect hotels create unique townscape

By AI SAKAMOTO



Yasuharu Ishikawa, born in the city of Okayama in 1970. In 1994, he founded the apparel company Cross Co. Ltd. (now Stripe International Inc.) and currently serves as president of the Ishikawa Foundation. He set up the Okayama Award in 2010, and since 2016 has organized the Okayama Art Summit, a triennial international exhibition of contemporary art held in partnership with the city and Okayama Prefecture. He is also owner of the renowned Ishikawa Collection of contemporary art.

PHOTO: YOSHIKI TSUTSUI

A&A Liam Fuji and A&A Jonathan Hasegawa — these are not architectural firms, but rather accommodation facilities in the city of Okayama that opened in 2019, offering visitors the opportunity to experience art shaped by the vision of artists working with architects. The creators who collaborated in their design are Liam Gillick & Mount Fuji Architects Studio, and Jonathan Monk & Go Hasegawa and Associates.

A&A Liam Fuji is made from three frames of cross-laminated timber panels produced in Okayama Prefecture, assembled in a square-grid formation. Unlike ordinary glued laminated timber, in cross-laminated timber each layer is oriented perpendicular to adjacent ones. Stacking these frames in three staggered layers creates a complex three-dimensional interior space. The concept behind A&A Jonathan Hasegawa, meanwhile, is “staying in a microcosm of Okayama itself.” The low-ceilinged bedrooms offer a calm atmosphere, while the veranda-like entrance is integrated with the garden,

and a bathroom reminiscent of an observation platform affords panoramic views of Korakuen, one of the Three Great Gardens of Japan. Guests are able to experience the city while moving between these three spaces, savoring its sights and hearing its bustling life.

“The external walls of A&A Liam Fuji are adorned with equations used in climate change research by Syukuro Manabe, who was recently awarded the Nobel Prize in physics,” explained Yasuharu Ishikawa, president of the Ishikawa Foundation, which operates both hotels. “They’re Liam’s homage to professor Manabe, a leading expert in global warming research. Local people have been coming to take pictures of them ever since the Nobel Prize announcement. You could perhaps call it an embodiment of the chemical reaction between three creators, including professor Manabe.”

2010 marked the beginning of Ishikawa’s efforts to revitalize his hometown, when he launched the Okayama Award to recognize Okayama’s up-and-coming

young businesspeople, entrepreneurs and researchers. Then, in 2014, he started to incorporate art as a medium of urban renewal. The catalyst was when the editor-in-chief of Monocle magazine, Tyler Brule, told him: “There are more than 800 cities worldwide the same size as Okayama. To attract people from across the globe, you need to provide them with a unique experience that none of its rivals offer.” That remark led Ishikawa to organize the Imagineering Okayama Art Project, which displayed works from the art collection that bears his name on the streets of Okayama. And so he embarked on activities focused on art. One of the ideas spawned as a result was the Artist & Architect (A&A) project, via which he aims to develop hotels that themselves provide an artistic experience. A&A is overseen by gallery owner Taro Nasu, who serves as project director, with architect Jun Aoki as adviser and Ishikawa himself as its producer.

“Under the A&A plan, 20 hotels will be built in Okayama over the course of 20



A&A Liam Fuji

Opened in 2019. A hotel for rent in its entirety by a single group per day, accommodating up to four guests. Reminiscent of a 3D maze, the interior includes areas requiring a ladder to access them.

● 9-2-1 Tenjincho, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi, Okayama
Tel: 086-206-2600 (A&A front desk)

The exterior is adorned with equations by Nobel winner Syukuro Manabe. The first floor houses the dining room, a bedroom and the bathroom, while the kitchen and another bedroom can be found on the second floor.

PHOTO: YOKO INOUE



years. A cluster of 20 art hotels, for rent in their entirety, that are the product of collaboration between internationally renowned artists and architects? That's without precedent worldwide," Ishikawa proclaimed.

In 2016, he launched the Okayama Art Summit as an offshoot of the Okayama Award. This triennial international exhibition of contemporary art sees the streets of the city become a gallery and has won global plaudits for the artists it attracts and the high standard of its exhibits. The event is due to be held for the third time in the autumn of 2022.

In 2021, Ishikawa masterminded the conversion of a historic former soy sauce storehouse into Fukuoka Shoyu Gallery, a cultural facility. In the main building, which dates back to the Meiji Era (1868-1912), the basement houses an art gallery, while the second floor provides a space for hosting the SDGs Juku, a kind of cram school aimed at resolving community issues. Part of this endeavor takes the form of support activities for children with developmental disorders and their parents.

"I think opening up a future for children and identifying their potential is a crucial issue for both community and hu-

man development," Ishikawa stressed. "That's because developmental disorders aren't a disability so much as a feature of each child's individuality. And I want lots of children from across Okayama Prefecture to come to Okayama Art Summit 2022. If we can nurture the talent of the future through our activities and some of them go on to play a part on the global stage, we'll have contributed to regional revitalization. That's the staunch conviction that keeps me going."

Fukuoka Shoyu Gallery sits in the district surrounding Okayama Korakuen Garden. The main building dates back to the Meiji Era, while the annex was built in the early Showa Era.

PHOTO: S.U.P.C UCHIDA SHINICHIRO



A&A Jonathan Hasegawa

Opened in 2019. A hotel for rent in its entirety by a single group per day, accommodating up to four guests. Replicating the shape of the two buildings that formerly occupied the site, it has been enhanced with the addition of a bathroom reminiscent of an observation platform offering views of the city.

● 1-6-7-1 Izushicho, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi, Okayama
Tel: 086-206-2600 (A&A front desk)

PHOTO: YOKO INOUE



● Summary

現代美術家と建築家が協働。アートな宿が街を変える。

「A&A リアムフジ」と「A&A ジョナサンハセガワ」。現代美術アーティストと建築家がタッグを組んだ宿が、2019年、岡山市に誕生した。宿泊自体がアート体験となるホテルを1年に1棟、20年かけて20棟つくる「A&A (Artist&Architect)」プロジェクトの一環だ。発起人は、公益財団法人石川文化振興財団理事長の石川康晴。2010

年から、故郷・岡山を活性化させる活動を行う起業家であり、アートコレクターでもある。

雑誌『モノクル』編集長の「唯一無二のものを作らなければ、世界中から人を呼ぶことはできない」という言葉を機に、アートを媒介にした町興しをはじめた石川。2016年には岡山の市街地で3年に一度開かれる国際現代

美術展「岡山芸術交流」をスタート。2021年には歴史的建造物を文化施設へと改修し、発達障害児とその親を対象とした支援活動なども行っている。「子供たちの未来や可能性を見いだすことが、町づくりの重要な課題。僕らの活動が、未来を担う人材を育てられたら地域活性化に貢献できる。そう信じてやり続けています」



日本語全文はこちら

Times Capsule



This article was published on Nov. 8 in The Japan Times



Lacquer artisans add layers to 1,000 years of tradition

A craft preserved from ancient times, lacquering is one of Japan's representative arts, so much so that "japanning" became a word in English for similar lacquerwork. In 1955, the artisan Otomaru Kodo was designated by the government as a "preserver of an important intangible cultural property," making him a living national treasure, in recognition of his contribution to further developing the craft with a technique of building colored layers and carving through them to create fascinating designs. Lacquering techniques have been handed down from generation to generation over more than a thousand years, producing numerous creative works of high artistic value.

Like so many traditional crafts, the art of lacquering requires an enormous amount of patience and perseverance.



JAPAN'S LACQUER

● Summary

1,000年の伝統に磨きをかける漆職人たち

英語では漆塗りと同様の細工を指す言葉として「japanning」が定着していることに表されているよう、漆塗りは日本を代表する芸術のひとつであり、昔から継承されてきた伝統工芸です。1955年、重要無形文化財保持者に指定された音丸耕堂は、色の層を重ね、その層を彫ることで魅力的なデザインを生み出す「彫漆」技法を確立し、発展させたことで高く評価され、人間国宝となりました。漆塗りの技術は千年以上にわたり受け継がれており、これまでに芸術的価値の高い作品が数多く生み出されています。

漆塗りは、多くの伝統工芸と同様、多大な忍耐力と根気が必要とする技法と言えるでしょう。



Hitoshi Tanaka, born in 1963 in Maebashi, Gunma Prefecture, is the CEO of Jins Holdings. In 1988 he founded Jin Ltd., the predecessor of the eyewear brand Jins, which he launched in 2001. In 2014 he established the Tanaka Hitoshi Foundation, of which he is representative director.

PHOTO: YOSHIKI TSUTSUI

Feature MY HOMETOWN

MAEBASHI GUNMA PREF.

Shiroiya Hotel

Opened in 2020, this 25-room hotel was created through the renewal of Shiroiya, a venerable three-century-old *ryokan*. Artists and designers such as Leandro Erlich, Jasper Morrison and Michele De Lucchi were involved in the project.

● 2-2-15 Honcho, Maebashi-shi, Gunma
Tel: 027-231-4618

Shiroiya Hotel sparks Maebashi transformation

By YUKA UCHIDA



Above: The guest room designed by artist Leandro Erlich features brass pipes running through the space. Below: The guest room designed by designer Michele De Lucchi is lined with 3,000 wooden shingles.

PHOTO: SHINYA KIGURE

A quite unusual hotel in the Gunma city of Maebashi has attracted worldwide attention in the scant year since it opened in December 2020. A lighting art creation by contemporary artist Leandro Erlich lines the enormous four-story-high atrium. Behind the front desk hangs a photographic work by contemporary art creator Hiroshi Sugimoto. The guest rooms, each featuring a different interior, were created by world-renowned designers including Jasper Morrison and Michele de Lucchi. This is Shiroiya Hotel, the astonishing art hotel that brought a famous 300-year-old Japanese inn back to life.

About 90 minutes by train from Tokyo Station, Maebashi is a regional city with a population of 330,000. Situated near the center of Gunma, it is the capital of the prefecture but its population has declined since peaking in 2000. Underutilized real estate, including vacant and disused land, had increased to the point where “shuttered streets” lined with closed-up shops became a problem for the city. It was Hitoshi Tanaka, a Maebashi native and founder of the eyewear brand Jins, who changed this situation. The Shiroiya Hotel, which opened in December 2020, was the first in a succession of projects that Tanaka has undertaken.

Tanaka said: “The experience that spurred me to start community contribution activities was receiving the Ernst &

Young World Entrepreneur of the Year Award in 2010 and participating in the international convention in Monaco in 2011. Entrepreneurs from around the world came to the event, and they were all committed to social contribution projects as a matter of course.” Encountering these entrepreneurs had a major impact on his thinking.

Tanaka began by creating programs to nurture entrepreneurs. In the year 2013 he launched the Gunma Innovation Award, which supports and promotes the launch of new businesses in the prefecture, and in 2014 he opened the Gunma Innovation School to provide entrepreneurship training to students as well as those already in the working world. In the course of these activities, Tanaka learned that the venerable *ryokan* inn Shiroiya was in danger of disappearing.

“An inn with a 300-year history had been put up for sale. If it became a vacant lot and a new building was put up in its place, one more piece of Maebashi’s identity would be lost,” he said. “I was inspired by the energy of young people and artists who were enthusiastically carrying out community revitalization work, and decided to start by purchasing the building.”

At the time, Tanaka said, he was still thinking of leaving the hotel’s management to other people, but was unable to find a partner. “The reason was that no

one was attracted to Maebashi as a location. So I thought, if that’s the case, I’ll change the city. Even though I’m not a government official, I decided to work out a vision for city planning.”

Tanaka then commissioned the German consulting company KMS Team. In engaging a major overseas consulting firm, his aim was to discover a “new Maebashi” from an outside perspective. KMS Team came up with the promotional slogan “Where Good Things Grow.” From there, copywriter Shigesato Itoi, another Maebashi native, suggested the word “*mebuku*” (to sprout). The city planning vision was thus established.

At this point, Tanaka had already decided to undertake the hotel’s management himself. He called on architect Sou Fujimoto to handle the renovation. The journey from purchasing the building to opening the hotel took 6½ years.

“I made it a point not to think about things in terms of calculation. As we moved ahead with the project, we ignored numerically measurable values like profit ratio and productivity,” he said. “Instead of trying to fit a lot of rooms in, we prioritized the beauty and appeal of the bold atrium. We’d also decided that we wouldn’t imitate anything else. A lot of journalists visit Shiroiya Hotel, and they always say, ‘This doesn’t look like any other hotel in the world.’ That makes me happy.”

Shiroiya Hotel has gained worldwide recognition and received a succession of international accolades, including the 2021 AD Great Design Hotel Award from the popular American design magazine *Architectural Digest*, the International Travel Awards’ Best New Hotel in Japan 2021 prize, and inclusion as one of the “best design hotels” of 2021 in the British travel magazine *National Geographic Traveller*.

In parallel with the regeneration of Shiroiya Hotel, Tanaka has carried out a variety of other projects. These include re-

vitalizing a shopping district by opening a pasta restaurant, a traditional Japanese confectionery and a Japanese-style seafood restaurant; and pursuing a bold plan for the park-like greening of the roads around the shopping district. In April 2021 he opened Jins Park, a store incorporating a bakery. More than half of the structure comprises an open space that visitors can use as they like. On holidays the store is filled with families and young people.

“The hotel is what sparked Maebashi’s transformation,” Tanaka said. “We’re heading into a time when the private sector creates public spaces, and Shiroiya Hotel was the first project to adopt that idea. A cafe, a bakery and even a store specializing in fruit tarts were opened on the premises, and they’re always bustling with local people. The lobby was designed in such a way that not only hotel guests but anyone who lives in Maebashi can go in and out freely and feel at ease. If locals and visitors from other areas have opportunities to meet, things that had once been immobile will start to move. A hotel is a place where everything intersects. I believe the energy this generates will help transform local areas.”

Heritage Tower was created through the renovation of a building constructed in the 1970s. The writing on the outer wall is a work of art by Lawrence Weiner, based on the theme of Maebashi.

PHOTO: SHINYA KIGURE



● Summary

民間による“公共”の試み。ホテルを起爆剤に街を変える。

2020年12月の開業からわずか一年で世界中から注目されるようになったちょっと変わったホテルが群馬県前橋市にある。創業300年の老舗旅館を再生させたアートホテル（白井屋ホテル）だ。手がけたのは前橋出身のアイウェアブランド〈JINS〉の創業者、田中仁。「大切にしたいのは、算数で物事を考えないこと。利益率や生産性、

数字で測れる価値は無視して物事を進めました」。世界的デザイナーや現代美術作家も関わった空間は、世界のホテルアワードで高く評価された。

ホテル再生と並行して、商店街にレストランなどをオープンさせて活気を生みだしたり、今後は商店街周辺の道路を緑化する計画もある。2021年にはペーカリーを併設

したショップ〈JINS PARK〉もオープンした。「これからは民間が公共をつくる時代。その考えを最初に踏襲したのがこのホテル。敷地内にはカフェやショップもあり、地元の人々で賑わっています。土地の人と、外から来た人が出会えば、固定化されていたものが動き出す。そのエネルギーが地方を変えると信じています」



日本語全文はこちら



Satoyama Villa Den

Includes a 190-year-old storehouse. It is set in peaceful countryside overlooking the Northern Alps and includes fields where guests can experience farming.
● 5471 Nakayama, Matsumoto-shi, Nagano Tel: 0263-88-3266
COURTESY: TOBIRA GROUP



Satoyama Villa Honjin

Opened in 2020. Four guestrooms. The inn is a renovated traditional house originally built for the lord of the Matsumoto domain during the Edo Era. Both the main building and a separate residence are situated within a vast site of some 2,340 sq. meters.
● 246 Hofukuji-machi, Matsumoto-shi, Nagano Tel: 0263-88-3266
COURTESY: TOBIRA GROUP



Feature MY HOMETOWN

MATSUMOTO NAGANO PREF.

Bringing new life to old homes, and communities

By YUKA UCHIDA

Tadamasa Saito, born in Matsumoto, Nagano Prefecture, in 1974. After becoming the fourth-generation operator of Tobira Onsen Myojinkan, which opened in 1931, he has set about developing new businesses for the company. He is the representative director of Tobira Group's Myojinkan Co. Ltd., Six Sense Co. Ltd. and Tobira Holdings Co. Ltd. He is also head of the Japan-Korea branch of Relais & Chateaux.



COURTESY: TOBIRA GROUP

Matsumoto in Nagano Prefecture is known for its castle, a national treasure, in the city's center. It also boasts a proud history, unique culture and direct access to Tokyo by train. For those reasons, Matsumoto's population of 240,000 includes many who have moved from elsewhere, and it attracts many tourists. Tadamasa Saito, who was born and bred in the city, is the current leader of Tobira Holdings, which has been in the lodging business for four generations. The company's interests in Matsumoto now span restaurants and hotels, including the long-established inn Myojinkan, which has been in business for 90 years.

For several years now Saito has overseen a project to painstakingly renovate Matsumoto's historic houses and transform them into hotels. The project, which can involve entire local communities, represents a new approach to tourism.

Satoyama Villa Den was opened in 2019 in a renovated property that includes a 190-year-old storehouse. Set in peaceful countryside overlooking the Northern Alps, the hotel takes about 15 minutes to reach from Matsumoto by car. Its concept is "Sense of Place," and it is designed to give visitors a taste of traditional country life. The property even includes fields where guests can experience farming. "Hotels used to offer experiences that were out of the ordinary," Saito said. "Now values and travel

styles have diversified, and so here we offer the chance to leave your usual routine behind and experience the local routine here."

Another of Saito's inns is Satoyama Villa Honjin, in a renovated early 20th-century re-creation of a villa called Honjin where the feudal lord of the Matsumoto domain and shogunate officials stayed during trips between Matsumoto and Edo (now Tokyo). The original building burned down in 1891. On the 2,340-sq.-meter site there is the main building, a storehouse and a separate residence — all built to the luxurious specifications of feudal lords. However, the property had been left vacant for many years and its survival was in danger. Saito engaged experienced local carpenters to do the renovation, making sure the original shape of the building was retained. No more insulation was added than was absolutely necessary. "We can take the edge off the cold with heaters. Besides, if you wear a traditional winter coat indoors, then you'll get a more genuine sensation of the Shinshu winter," he said, using an old name for Nagano. "These are the kinds of things the guests can only experience in an old house, so we want them to experience it to the full."

One important aspect of Saito's thinking is that he sees himself only as the current caretaker of the houses. In Japan, there is a teaching that there is a god in all objects — and it often feels like these old houses have guardian deities looking over them.

"The first time I worked on the restoration of an old country house was in 2007. It was a historic building near Matsumoto Castle, and I renovated it and started Restaurant Hikariya there," he said. "After about a year, I realized that the building still seemed somewhat aloof, and that's when I realized that the houses really belong to the land itself, and the land is just letting us borrow them for a while. Since then, we and all the staff started taking time once a month to express our thanks to the building."

And so these old houses have been nurtured by the land that is Matsumoto. That probably explains the urge to return the profits from the inns back to the local communities. Almost all ingredients used at the inns are procured from local farmers. "Myojinkan is a member of the Relais & Chateaux brand," Saito said, "and one of the core beliefs of Relais & Chateaux is to 'show a sincere attitude toward producers.' Produce must be procured at fair prices, and a healthy relationship with producers nurtured. This has always been important to us."

Saito also proactively hires local people. From next spring at Den they will start cultivating herbs and strawberries, and an application has been submitted for the farm to be recognized as a certified B corporation for supporting continuous employment. The farm will provide locals with disabilities the opportunity to participate in society through agriculture.

"There are so many different elements in the accommodation industry, and each offers opportunities to connect with the community," Saito said. In addition to food procurement and employment, it is also possible to provide a venue for community revitalization. That is why he set up a cafe within Satoyama Villa Honjin. If you create a space that can be used by locals, it will also provide a venue for exchange between them and international guests.

"Trying to be prosperous together is the goal that lies at the heart of the SDGs that companies all over the world are now working on," Saito said. "We look forward to creating new ways to add value in Matsumoto with the help of the local people. I think that is a good role for the hotels of the future to have."

At Satoyama Villa Den, guests can also relax in the rice fields that form part of the property.

COURTESY: TOBIRA GROUP



● Summary

歴史ある古民家を再生させ、地域全体として豊かになる。

国宝・松本城が街の中心にそびえる長野県松本市。この地で4代に渡り宿泊業を営んできた扉ホールディングスの齊藤忠政が、古民家再生の宿を立て続けにオープンさせた。〈Satoyama villa DEN〉は、築190年の民家を改装した宿。コンセプトは"Sense of Place"。農業体験もでき、里山の暮らしを味わえる。「これまでの宿は"非日常"を

味わうものですが、ここは宿泊者が自分の日常から離れ、"旅先の日常"へと入り込める場所なんです」

もうひとつの宿は〈Satoyama villa 本陣〉。江戸時代の松本藩主の本陣（明治時代に焼失。大正時代に再建）を、地元の大工らと共に宿として再生させた。齊藤は古民家を土地からの"預かりもの"と考えている。だからこそ、

宿の利益は地域にも還元したい。食材を仕入れるのは地元農家。スタッフも地域の人々を積極的に雇用。来春からは〈DEN〉の農場を就労継続支援B型事業所とし、地元の障がいを持った人々に社会参画できる機会を提供する。「地域の人々と一緒に、松本の付加価値を育んでいく。それをリードするのが宿の役割ではないでしょうか」



日本語全文はこちらから

Feature MY HOMETOWN

YAME FUKUOKA PREF.

Intimate Fukuoka inn is doorway to local crafts

By TOSHICHIKA IZUMI

UNA Laboratories co-CEOs Takahiro Shiramizu (back row, third from right) and Hiroshi Tamura (back, second from right), and Managing Director Aya Tamura (front row, third from right)



PHOTOS: KOICHIRO FUJIMOTO



Guests of Craft Inn Te can join tours in which they experience the work of local craftspeople.

At first glance, Yame is just a small Fukuoka town of 60,000 people an hour's drive from Fukuoka Airport, yet it is justifiably revered as hallowed ground for Japan's traditional crafts, boasting *kurume kasuri* fabrics, lanterns, *washi* paper, bamboo crafts and pottery.

In October, Yame welcomed a new boutique hotel: Craft Inn Te, offering visitors not just a place to stay, but a chance to experience local crafts firsthand. Two traditional houses were converted to create the hotel, located in Yame's center. It features just three guest rooms, each styled on a

theme — indigo, bamboo and washi — and brimming with original furniture and furnishings produced by local creators using local materials. Through its carefully considered design and cuisine, the inn showcases the techniques and charm of local crafts.

But that is not the only notable point. The inn also offers “craft experience tours,” allowing guests to visit craftspeople, observe them at work and even try making things themselves.

So what inspired this unique lodge? We spoke with Takahiro Shiramizu, the co-CEO of the company that manages the

inn, UNA Laboratories Inc., and also the CEO of the showroom Unagi no Nedoko.

“UNA Laboratories Inc. is a joint venture created in 2019 by Unagi no Nedoko, which produces and sells traditional crafts and was founded in 2012, and a think tank called Re:public Inc., which was founded in 2013 and specializes in innovation architecture. The concept is ‘trading company for local culture.’ We do publishing, travel and accommodation, providing information about things happening in regional areas and then also coordinating actual experiences for when the recipients of our information visit the areas in ques-

tion,” Shiramizu explained.

Shiramizu, who comes from Saga Prefecture in Kyushu but also has worked as a designer in Fukuoka, was involved for two years in a project led by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare to revitalize the Chikugo region of Fukuoka, where Yame is located, by connecting designers and architects with local businesses, industry and agriculture. He says this work was the catalyst for his involvement in the region. In addition, his wife's parents run a *kurume kasuri* fabric factory in Yame, so he became deeply involved in the town's craft scene. However, the more he got to know the area, the more he noticed the contradiction that even though great things were produced there, they weren't actually available there. That is how the idea for Unagi no Nedoko was born.

After trading in products based on traditional crafts at Unagi no Nedoko for eight years, he realized that the full charm of handicrafts could not be conveyed by the goods themselves, and so additional “experiences” were also important. From there he teamed up with Hiroshi Tamura, the representative director of Re:public, which was working on promoting traditional crafts outside of the prefecture, and Aya Tamura, the editor-in-chief of the bilingual English and Japanese magazine Travel Una, to create UNA Laboratories.

But just after they set their “trading company for regional cultural” in motion, the coronavirus struck. Foreign tourists stopped coming, and even domestic travel all but ground to a halt. However, by seeing this slow period as an opportunity to prepare, the company set about editing and publishing Japanese and English magazines, setting up a travel agency, curating tours and opening new inns. If an economic cycle could be set in motion, they thought, then traditional industries and local human resources would be utilized. So in this way, they are holding open the door to Kyushu's unique craft culture. Why not take your first step by visiting Yame and having a unique experience at Craft Inn Te?

Craft Inn Te's former Tsukamoto residence

Opened in 2020. Two rooms. The inn is located in a traditional Japanese house that once housed a dried foods shop, a ceramics shop, and a pawnshop. Each of the rooms has a theme: the Indigo Room and the Bamboo Room.

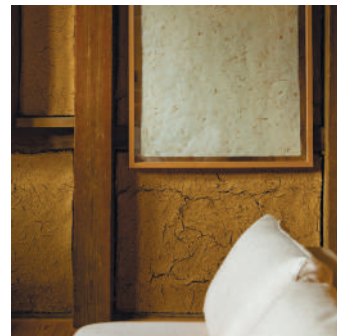
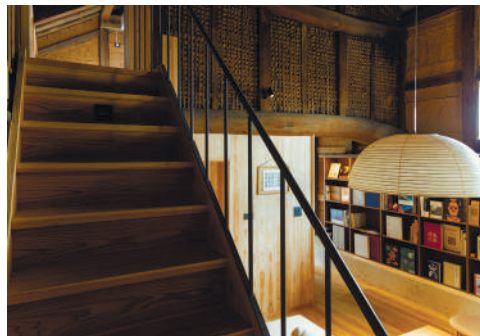
● 120 1 Motomachi, Yame-shi, Fukuoka Tel: 0943-25-7577



Craft Inn Te's former Marubayashi storehouse

Opened in 2020. The entire building is rented out to a single party. The inn is a renovated storehouse that is thought to have been built in the early Meiji Era. The theme is *washi*, and Japanese paper is used throughout for interior decoration and fittings.

● 267 Motomachi, Yame-shi, Fukuoka Tel: 0943-25-7577



● Summary

地域文化を伝えるための、九州の手仕事を体感できる宿。

福岡県八女市。人口6万人という小さな街だが、久留米餅、提灯、和紙、竹細工、陶器など、九州最大の伝統工芸集積地との異名をもつクラフトの聖地のような場所だ。そこに今年2021年、手仕事を体感・体験できる宿として「Craft Inn手[て]」がオープンした。宿は2つの古民家を改修したもの。藍・竹・和紙をテ-

マにした3つの部屋があり、地元・九州のつくり手が制作したオリジナルの家具や調度品にあふれている。だが、この宿泊施設の特筆すべき点はそれだけではない。実際に手仕事の現場を見学したり、職人と共にものづくりができる「クラフト体験ツアー」を用意しているのだ。同社共同代表で、「うなぎの寝床」代表取締役の白水

高広は語る。「宿を運営する会社「UNAラボラトリーズ」は、元は伝統工芸品をプロデュース・販売する会社と、イノベーション創発に特化したシンクタンクの合弁で、2019年の設立です。出版・旅行・宿という3つの事業を行い、情報発信とその受け手が九州訪問時に体験を提供する「地域文化商社」というコンセプトの会社なのです。」



日本語全文はこちら



Principal Trista Bridges shows feasibility and value to shift mindsets Read the Air guides firms to sustainable ways

By JOE MUNTAL CONTRIBUTING WRITER

As countries around the world pledge to reduce or offset carbon emissions, companies are under pressure to align their operational models with government policy and investor expectations. Organizational change is not a simple task, however, and often it is the largest, most consequential companies that have trouble changing trajectory.

This is a problem, because society does not have the luxury of time in the pursuit of a sustainable future. As the effects of climate change and ecological destruction grow more pronounced every year, it is critical that businesses reassess their environmental footprint and impact on society.

Trista Bridges, cofounder and principal of Read the Air — a business advisory coalition that helps organizations formulate solutions to sustainable business and operational needs — understands the urgency of sustainability. However, as a business strategist with a prolific career spanning several countries — including the U.S., the U.K. and France — she also understands that companies do not change overnight. “Companies are comprised of a system of people — in some cases hundreds of thousands of people — and everybody has vested interests,” she said during an interview with the *The Japan Times*. “My role as a sustainable business strategist is to help guide them through the process.”

The mission of Bridges and her coalition, she said, is to “instill the belief that sustainable business models are feasible and can bring value to all stakeholders.” She noted that demand for her coalition’s sustainable business services is on the rise, citing two primary factors: Japan’s pledged goal to reach carbon neutrality by 2050 and global investors’ concerns regarding sustainability issues. “Japan is currently looking externally for growth and capital,” Bridges said, “and investors outside Japan are generally concerned with sustainability-oriented topics, including carbon footprinting, SDGs, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.”

Before co-founding Read the Air in 2018, Bridges worked as a general business strategist in a wide range of sectors, including pharmaceutical products, financial services and boutique products. As an undergrad and MBA student at the University of Pennsylvania and Northwestern University, respectively, she studied consumer behavior and marketing strategy. After completing her studies, she worked for the strategy consulting group Monitor Group (now Monitor Deloitte), where she advised prominent multinationals such as Coca-Cola and Cadbury Schweppes (now owned by Mondelez). In 2006, she joined Thomson Reuters, where she focused on strategy and business planning in financial services.

Bridges’ experience in financial serv-

ices profoundly affected her perspective on the relationship between business and society. She joined the field just before the financial crisis of 2007-2008, during which time she witnessed how short-sighted business decisions led to global economic catastrophe. “This event really sparked my interest in how companies affect the world,” she said. “Generally, when companies make bad decisions that affect the world, there is fallout, though it may not occur right away. We may be currently experiencing the consequences of decisions that were made a decade ago.”

These observations surrounding businesses’ social responsibility served as the impetus for Read the Air, the name of which is a literal translation of the Japanese expression “*kuki o yomu*” Bridges explained, “The name is inspired by the Japanese concept of having the ability to read a room and take account of what’s going on in your surroundings.” Drawing from this concept, Bridges and her colleagues collaborate with companies to formulate sustainable business models “that minimize negative impacts on society, including all stakeholders in the broad context — consumers, customers, partners and governments — and also produce positive, innovative products that aren’t depletive.”

Bridges noted a recent uptick in interest in sustainable initiatives among businesses. She cited the influence of ESGs — environmental social and governance criteria for business operations — which, as countries around the world pledge to hit certain sustainability targets, are garnering significant attention from investors. “At first, companies — especially larger companies — saw ESG disclosures as a kind of PR opportunity,” she said. “But what has happened over time is that, because we have all these commitments we need to hit, there is increased scrutiny over what companies are reporting and whether they’re actually following through with their commitments.”

In Japan, obstacles to sustainable busi-

ness initiatives partially stem from the corporate community’s lack of a sense of urgency to change, Bridges said. “Companies in Japanese society are stalwarts of society. They’re massive and employ a lot of people, and haven’t been challenged like they have been in Western countries, where a lot of people who come out of school want to work for startups or be independent. The perception of companies and their place in society is much stronger here, which is why they might not feel the urgency to change.”

Perhaps the biggest hindrance to sustainable business models, however, is society’s attitude toward convenience and consumption. Convincing society to accept the notion of consuming less, amid an economic paradigm where people have grown accustomed to procuring products at the click of a button, is a formidable endeavor. But Bridges pointed to several examples of successful repurposing business models from which Japan can learn. These include the French secondhand site Vestiaire Collective, which recently raised its valuation to \$1.7 billion through a fundraising round — to which a SoftBank private equity fund invested \$209 million — as well as the French refurbished electronics startup Back Market.

“You only have to visit Akihabara to see that Japan is very good at repairing and repurposing products,” Bridges noted. “This is a space where Japan can do a lot better, because they’re already doing it.”



PHOTO: HIROMICHI MATONO

Wide fields, French literature and wine

Trista Bridges is principal and co-founder of Read the Air.

Before moving to Japan in 2015, Bridges worked as a business strategy consultant and leader in a wide range of fields, including financial services, pharmaceuticals, media technology, and consumer products. In addition to her roles at Read the Air, she also serves as principal of the consulting firm CapSys Group and as a member of the Tokyo American Club’s board of governors.

Bridges grew up in New Jersey and received her first passport when she was 24 years old. She has since spent the majority of her career overseas in the U.K., France and now Japan. Her move to Tokyo follows 12 years of life in Paris, which she considers her “adopted” home.

Fluent in French, Bridges enjoys reading French literature and discovering novels through her book club. She is also a wine connoisseur, taking pleasure in learning about the connections between wine and regional culture.

● Summary

サステナブルな企業になるためには「空気を読め」

各国がカーボンニュートラル実現に向けた決意を新たにする中、その実行役となる企業の姿勢に社会や投資家からも厳しい視線が注がれている。しかし特に日本においては、組織の変革は容易ではない。そこでTrista Bridges氏は、日本でビジネスアドバイザー連合を立ち上げ、サステナビリティを主軸とした企業改革を後押ししている。外を向き始めた日本企業と、サステナビリティ関連の話題に敏感な海外の投資家との間で、この連合が果たす役割は大き

い。社名のRead the Airは、「空気を読む」の意味で、周囲の状況を推し量るという日本の概念に触発されたという。低炭素社会の実現に向け、企業にとっても持続可能なビジネスモデルを提案している。

欧米各国で事業戦略の経験を積んだBridges氏は、「ビジネスと社会の関係性」に重きを置いた長期的なビジネスプランの重要性を説く。また、消費と利便性重視の社会からの変革も必要とされる中、日本の力の生かしどころも示唆している。

Trista Bridges

Principal and co-founder of Read the Air and co-author of “Leading Sustainably”

URL: <https://www.readtheair.jp>

Hometown: New Jersey

Years in Japan: 6

For no one to be left behind.
For the sake of children in the future.

“The most beautiful convenience store”

未来コンビニ
MIRAI CONVENIENCE STORE

MIRAI CONVENIENCE STORE

11-1, Kitagawa Imoyashiki, Kito, Nakacho, Tokushima 771-6512
Open Time 8:00-20:00 (In winter season 8:00-19:00) Closed on Thursday

Executive Producer Yasushi Fujita (CEO, KDH) Creative Director / Graphic Designer Keisuke Unosawa (Board Director, KDH)
Interior and landscape design by KOKUYO Co.,Ltd. and GEN Architects Inc. ©KITO DESIGN HOLDINGS INC.

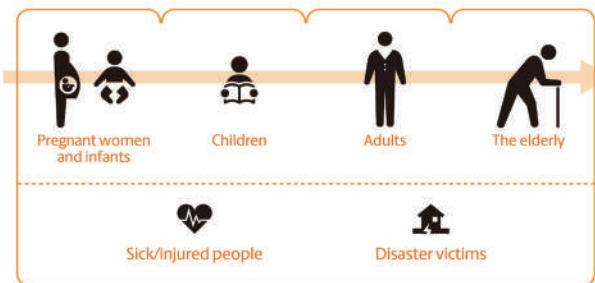
Tokyo Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit 2021



PHOTOS: PUBLIC INTEREST INCORPORATED FOUNDATION, JAPAN ASSOCIATION FOR IMPROVING SCHOOL LUNCH

Japanese children learn the concept of *shokuiku*, or food and nutrition education, from an early age through school lunch programs.

Japan's nutrition plan covers all stages of life, as well as the ill and disaster victims.



SOURCE: "NUTRITION POLICY IN JAPAN TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND," HEALTH, LABOR AND WELFARE MINISTRY
JAPAN TIMES GRAPHICS

Over a century of nutrition research and practice

The world is facing a new reality where persistent undernutrition and escalating overnutrition coexist even within individual populations. This double burden creates a set of new challenges for policy and program development. With less than five years left to achieve the World Health Assembly's targets for maternal, infant and young child nutrition, and 10 years to reach the U.N. sustainable development goals (SDGs), the third Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit will be held in Tokyo from Tuesday to Wednesday.

The summit aims to foster common understanding of key actions needed to improve nutrition worldwide and to provide a forum for discussions under five themes: integrating nutrition with universal health coverage; building food systems; promoting resilience; promoting data-driven accountability; and ensuring financing for nutrition. Governments, international organizations, the private sector and society will be encouraged to present new funding plans or policy commitments to accelerate the implementation of their initiatives.

As the host and a country with one of the highest life expectancies in the world,

Japan is ready to share its expertise accumulated over more than 100 years. The nation's long dedication to nutrition will provide insights into ending nutrition-related issues and achieving a brighter future for all.

Origin of commitment

Japan's nutrition initiatives date back to the late 19th century. To tackle nutritional deficiencies caused by food insecurity, Dr. Tadasu Saiki established the world's first nutrition research institute privately in 1914, which was relaunched in 1920 as the National Institute of Nutrition, predecessor to the National Institute of Health and Nutrition (NIHN). The institute researched the nutrient composition of major food items and the dietary intake per capita as determined by surveys. With this information, the government could take appropriate measures, paving the way for the national nutrition policy of "leave no one behind."

After World War II, with assistance from abroad, Japan overcame nutritional deficiencies in a short time through nationwide activities led by nutritional specialists. Of particular note was the annual nutrition survey, which began in 1945. Dr. Hidemi Takimoto, chief of the Department of Nutritional Epidemiology and Shokuiku at the NIH, says the survey shows "the government was aware of the importance of monitoring people's nutritional status in developing nutrition policy." Except for 2020 and 2021, when it was suspended due to the coronavirus pandemic, the survey has been conducted annually for over 75 years.

During Japan's high economic growth

sput from the mid-1950s to the early 1970s, the survey was expanded to include blood pressure measurements in response to the rise of new nutrition challenges, such as obesity and noncommunicable diseases (NCDs).

This policy allowed Japan to make substantial gains in both life expectancy and gross domestic product, and in 1985, it reached the highest level of longevity in the world.

Japan's nutrition policy

Japan's health and nutrition policy consists of three main elements: educational activities based on diet; training and deployment of specialists; and a policymaking process based on scientific evidence.

The first element focuses on promoting diet and eating style. The traditional Japanese diet is characterized by ingredient diversity and meals consisting of a staple food, main dish and side dish for nutritional balance. Japanese learn this through school lunch programs, in which they are made to serve lunch to their classmates. They thereby learn about portion size and how various dishes go together.

The second element involves sending trained specialists and volunteers to manage nutrition at facilities nationwide. Their activities play an important role in *shokuiku*, as food and nutrition education is called in Japan.

Food services provided at schools, company cafeterias and hospitals in Japan are managed by registered dietitians (RDs), who are licensed nationally, and dietitians, who are licensed by prefectures. Japan's RDs and dietitians are so effective they are now even contributing to dietitian systems in Vietnam and other countries.

The final element is a framework where scientific evidence feeds the decision-making process. Under this framework, the government has formulated initiatives locally and regionally to reduce health disparities across regions. One example is the Smart Life Project, initiated in 2011, which aims to create a society in which everyone, including those who are less health-conscious, can be healthy. It encourages the development of food products that reduce sodium intake and increase vegetable consumption.

On the other hand, *shokuiku* remains at the core of Japan's nutrition policy. The government has drawn up a Basic Plan for the Promotion of Shokuiku every five years since 2006, and the fourth plan, which began in March, positions *shokuiku* as part of Japan's action plan to contribute to achieving sustainability in line with the SDGs. The plan calls for efforts to promote *shokuiku* with a focus on lifetime physical and mental health, sustainable food and nutrition, and responses to digitalization.

These developments in Japan's health and nutrition policy mean the country is entering a new phase and is ready to extend its reach worldwide. Takimoto expressed her hopes for the upcoming N4G summit, saying, "I see this summit as an opportunity to reaffirm the fact that nutrition is fundamental to good health and to take action toward ensuring equal access to safe and nutritious food." She will speak about child nutrition at one of the side events during N4G.

Global challenges

The pandemic has damaged food supply chains and delivered an economic blow to households, and the world can no longer delay acting on malnutrition. One bright note, however, is that what the world is facing today is not new to Japan. With vast experience and knowledge accumulated through a century of research, Japan can offer solutions to nutritional challenges and help achieve a caring and resilient society in which no one is left behind.



After World War II, with overseas assistance, Japan overcame its nutritional deficiencies thanks to various activities based on data from its annual nutrition survey.

PHOTOS: HEALTH, LABOR AND WELFARE MINISTRY



One of the pillars of Japan's nutritional success in comparison with other countries is the large number of nutrition specialists working at a variety of public and private facilities nationwide.

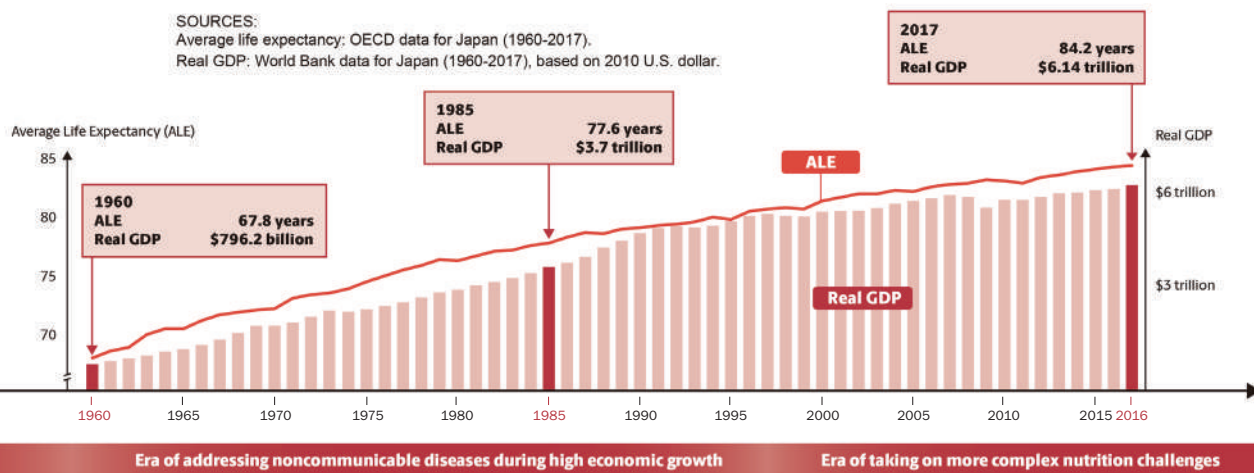
PHOTOS: THE JAPAN DIETETIC ASSOCIATION

History of Japanese nutrition: 'Leave no one behind'

Japan began promoting nutritional activities around the Meiji Restoration in 1868, laying the foundation for what would become a national effort in 1920 leading to the National Institute of Nutrition and the Private Nutrition School.

After World War II, Japan rebounded from the devastation and starvation that followed by creating nutrition improvement activities, an annual survey, school lunch programs and community outreach efforts, all centered around the three core elements of "diets, specialists and evidence." Today, Japan is known for its longevity and is continuously adjusting to the nutrition challenges of the times.

Nutritional efforts in lead-up to Japan's 'economic miracle'



SOURCE: "NUTRITION POLICY IN JAPAN TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND," MINISTRY OF HEALTH, LABOR AND WELFARE

JAPAN TIMES GRAPHICS

Tokyo Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit 2021

Japan helping its neighbors address nutrition problems

Global leaders have committed to end all forms of malnutrition by 2030 as part of the United Nations' sustainable development goals (SDGs), but it still remains a major challenge.

Ahead of the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit 2021 on Tuesday and Wednesday, Japanese nutrition experts say Japan's know-how could play a role in helping other nations address their nutrition issues.

Teiji Nakamura, president of both the Japan Dietetic Association and Kanagawa University of Human Services, said one of Japan's biggest successes has been to make the job of dietitian an established occupation.

"Japan has one of the highest ratios of dietitians per population in the world," he said.

According to the health ministry, there were over 250,000 registered dietitians in Japan as of 2020. Other countries have nutritional specialists, too, but they usually work in academic circles or at hospitals, and so otherwise healthy people rarely engage with them, Nakamura said.

Japan's expertise in the field, and long experience of addressing nutrition issues domestically, means it can now export nutrition improvement programs to other Asian countries.

Vietnam was one of the first to receive support. While some people in Vietnam still suffer from undernutrition and low body weight, obesity and diabetes caused by an unbalanced diet were also becoming issues.

Nakamura, along with the private sector and the Japan International Cooperation Agency, tried to establish a program to train dietitians in collaboration with the Vietnam National Institute of Nutrition.

With the support of professionals from Nakamura's association, his university and Jumonji University, the project bore fruit in September 2013 when Vietnam's first four-year bachelor's degree in nutrition was offered at Hanoi Medical University.

"To create a training program, a total of nearly 40 Japanese professionals gave lectures at Hanoi Medical University. We lectured in English, local educators translated the lectures into Vietnamese and they then created textbooks based on the lectures," Nakamura recalled.

As a result, in 2015, the Vietnamese government drafted a job code for dietitians, and for the first time dietitian was recognized as an occupation. The country's first 43 dietitians started working in 2017.

Another project using Japan's know-how is being led by the Nutrition Japan Public Private Platform (NJPPP), a public-private partnership that promotes nutritional improvement projects in developing countries, including Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam and Myanmar.

In 2016, NJPPP visited Indonesia to conduct research on the dietary environment at factories. A project was launched in 2019 to encourage workers at Japanese factories in the Kota Deltamas industrial complex to adopt healthy dietary habits.

Previously, those factories provided meals containing little vegetable content and lots of fried foods. Under the project, the menu was redesigned to offer a better balance of fats, protein and energy and to increase vegetable content, according to Ryuji Yamaguchi, executive director of NJPPP.

In 2018, an NJPPP project in Cambodia found young women of child-bearing age

had low levels of folic acid, which increases the risk of neural tube defects in newborns.

"Young Cambodian women eat a lot of rice, but they eat very few side dishes. So, we created fortified rice with essential micronutrients, and gave the rice to a group of female workers and monitored them for three months," Yamaguchi explained.

Yamaguchi said their efforts bore fruit in both countries by promoting changes in dietary habits.

He and The Japan Dietetic Association will each be holding side events during the N4G Summit.

Both Yamaguchi and Nakamura em-



The Japan Dietetic Association, Kanagawa University of Human Services, Jumonji University, Hanoi Medical University and the Vietnam National Institute of Nutrition signed an agreement on academic exchanges in March 2014.

PHOTOS: NJPPP

phasized that it is important to provide assistance that is sustainable and responsive to local needs. "It is crucial to understand local food culture, so people will accept the change," Yamaguchi said.

Nakamura also said providing money to a country suffering from poverty and undernutrition only saves it temporarily and does not represent a sustainable solution.

"What happens if the assistance is halted in five to 10 years? That is why Japan is providing education and trying to nurture human resources," he said. "If you want to make nutritional improvement in a country, you need to foster nutritional specialists."



Japanese nutritionists gave lectures in English at Hanoi Medical University and local educators translated them into Vietnamese as part of their coursework.

PHOTOS: JAPAN DIETETIC ASSOCIATION

Savory find leads battle against sodium

Washoku, Japan's traditional dietary culture, was added to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2013. Washoku has since grown into an international trend, and extensive research has been conducted into its health benefits.

The National Cancer Center Japan defines washoku as the "Japanese dietary pattern" and uses the eight-item Japanese Diet Index (JDI8), which scores the intake of rice, miso soup, seaweed, pickles,

green and yellow vegetables, seafood, green tea and beef/pork, to investigate associations with mortality. Its studies have shown that groups with higher JDI8 scores have a 14% lower overall mortality rate and 11% lower mortality rates for both cardiovascular and heart disease.

The center has also highlighted an inverse association between overall mortality and the intake of widely consumed fermented soy foods.

These studies back the health benefits of washoku, despite some negative aspects, such as high sodium intake. According to the National Health and Nutrition Survey 2019, average daily sodium intake among Japanese is 10.9 grams for males and 9.3 grams for females, whereas the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare's recommendation is 7.5 grams and 6.5 grams.

Umami demystified

Kikunae Ikeda (1864-1936), one of Ajinomoto Co.'s founders, was a pioneer in the study of physical chemistry in Japan who was long concerned with the problems of the traditional Japanese diet. In 1908, he

found that the savory flavor of kelp broth comes from the amino acid glutamate. In 1909, he launched a commercially produced glutamate called Aji-no-moto seasoning. His findings led to the discovery of umami, the fifth basic taste, unique from sweet, salty, sour and bitter.

While umami offers health benefits and can be found in many glutamate-rich foods, its purest form is MSG, a key component of Aji-no-moto seasoning. Although MSG has long been misunderstood in Western society, recent scientific findings validate its safety and health benefits. One study shows that MSG has two-thirds less sodium than table salt.

Delicious salt reduction

One of Ajinomoto's targets is to help extend the healthy life expectancy of 1 billion people by 2030. "As we offer products in over 130 countries, this target is now within reach," Executive Officer in charge of Sustainability and Communications Chika Morishima said.

To achieve this outcome, Ajinomoto positions "delicious salt reduction" as a key initiative, launching the Smart Salt Project in July 2020 to encourage sodium reduction through the use of umami seasoning products. In this project, trained employees help introduce umami and other seasonings in daily cooking through videos and recipes via online media, raising consumers' awareness while address-

ing their concerns about low-sodium products, including taste and usability.

"In countries such as Thailand, Indonesia and Brazil, the sales growth of low-sodium products exceeds that of regular products," Morishima said.

Acting on washoku boom

Washoku is popular around the world, as evidenced by the explosive growth in restaurants serving this cuisine in recent years.

To turn this trend into a dietary habit that can also deliver health benefits, it will be crucial to promote broader knowledge of washoku, such as the benefits of fermented soy foods. The Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit is a valuable opportunity to do this.

With heart disease and strokes taking an estimated 3 million lives per year, the World Health Organization has set the goal of reducing global sodium intake 30% by 2025. As the development of washoku and the major contributions of Japan's food industry demonstrate, "You are what you eat" is no longer just proverbial advice. It is an essential mindset for those wanting to achieve a healthy lifestyle.

Pages 10 and 11 are sponsored by the government of Japan



Japan. Sharing tomorrow.



A scientific study suggests the traditional Japanese diet contributes to lowering the mortality rate.

PHOTOS: HEALTH, LABOR AND WELFARE MINISTRY



Rohto invests in the health of individuals and society

By TOMOKO KAICHI CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Rohto Pharmaceutical Co., which was founded 122 years ago and holds the largest share in the Japanese market of over-the-counter eyedrops, has not sat on its laurels, always working to develop new businesses. Its corporate culture of taking up challenge after challenge while learning from failure is driven by the founder's wish to "contribute to the community at large through the drug business." Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Kunio Yamada says he wants the company to expand the activities contributing to society that it has engaged in since its foundation and step up investment in the next generation, who will create Japan's future.

In Japan, Rohto is known mainly for eyedrops and stomach medicines, but skin care products actually represent over 60% of its total sales, nearly 40% of which are generated overseas. The company began a skin care business with the launch of Mentholatum brand products under license from The Mentholatum Co. In 1988, Rohto bought the U.S. company, acquiring its sales network covering more than 110 countries. In 2001, Rohto began selling cosmetics and contributed to the creation of a functional cosmetics market with "cosmetic products that have impacts only possible for a drug-maker to achieve." The company's product lineup "expanded naturally," Yamada said, as a result of adapting technologies it had developed for its founding businesses of stomach drugs and eyedrops and identifying current needs in developing products.

Rohto currently is putting efforts into regenerative medicine, aiming to extend healthy life expectancy, and operates a food-related business. It began working on regenerative medicine in earnest in 2013. In 2017, the company became the first in Japan to successfully develop a technology that can automatically culture and store mesenchymal stem cells derived from human fat, which can become multiple kinds of tissue and are among

the most frequently used cell type for regenerative medicine. Since 2020, it has conducted clinical trials on novel coronavirus patients with severe pneumonia symptoms using regenerative medicine.

Yamada, who became the fourth-generation president from Rohto's founding family in 1999 and led the effort to expand its skin care business and shifts to new businesses, said, "The wish of the founder to be helpful to people, and his creed of pursuing things others do not, are ingrained" in the company's culture. Although Rohto remains a family business, it has boldly pursued expansions into new business areas and, if going it alone is difficult, opportunities to partner with other companies or invest in startups.

The more challenges the company has faced, the more failures it has learned from. Yamada said the failures Rohto has experienced "totaled at least three times the number of successes." And that reflects how "we have respected [employees'] desire to take on new challenges," he said. "If we [overly] pursue success, we may put [too much] pressure [on employees] or make them cower," he added. "Lessons learned from failures are often used in subsequent successful products. We may be taking a longer path, but failures are not totally wasted."

Yamada said he is skeptical of the constant pursuit of the "right answer" typically seen in corporate culture and Japanese education. "What appears to be going well may actually be leaving problems [for the future], and what appears to be not going well may actually be something very good," he said. "I'm a little worried about the recent trend in which people seek definitive results too early."

Thus, he thinks the period of Japan's rapid economic growth from the 1950s to the 1970s may have made its people's material lives more abundant but also left a negative legacy of environmental contamination, which resulted from corporate activities, to later generations. "The economic growth at that time was both a

success and a failure," he said with a slight tone of reproach. "You should look at things from multiple angles and from a long-term perspective."

The history of Rohto is full of wide-ranging social contributions in areas including eye care, culture, sports and environmental conservation, focusing on the health of individuals and society. There have been more such activities than can be listed in the area of eye care alone. Founder Yasutami Yamada supported the establishment of the first school for the visually impaired in his native prefecture of Nara. The company has promoted knowledge of the correct use of drugs and conducted eye examinations free of charge, mainly in emerging Southeast Asian countries. Rohto has "naturally" engaged in such initiatives, a tradition for it since before the term "ESG" (environmental, social and governance) was created, "because our corporate activities have been linked with society and were supported by society," Yamada said.

Rohto has broadened its scope of social contributions as it expanded overseas, but it also has recently placed a fresh focus on activities to revitalize Japanese regional economies. In 2013, Rohto teamed up with an agricultural corporation on the Okinawa island of Ishigaki to launch an agricultural business. While engaging in livestock raising, farming and the processing and selling of products, the company has worked with the island town of Kumejima since about five years ago on a project to create a self-sustaining, circular society in which energy, water and food are supplied from the island, local industries are revitalized and jobs are created through tapping renewable deep ocean water as a resource and a source of energy.

In addition, Rohto invests in the education of the next generation. It operates the Michinoku Future Fund, which supports the education of children who lost their parents in the earthquake and tsunami disaster that hit eastern Japan in

2011, jointly with Kagome Co., Calbee Inc. and Ebara Foods Industry Inc. The fund offers money for post-high school tuition, without requiring repayment. The decade-old fund "has successfully created a cycle in which children who have already entered society take care of children who follow them," Yamada said. "We have successfully established a new connection between people."

In October 2021, the company established the Rohto Foundation for Children's Future. Yamada said that what he wishes to accomplish with the foundation is to support children who have difficulty in developing their abilities to the maximum under the current educational system, so that they can grow into "people who can open up the future."

"It's important for us, a publicly listed company, to distribute profits to shareholders, but I also want the company to fulfill its responsibility for the homework my generation has left to the next generation," such as environmental and global warming issues, "over the medium to long term," Yamada said.

Kunio Yamada, chairman and CEO of Rohto Pharmaceutical Co. PHOTO: HIROMICHI MATONO



● Summary

「薬の商売で社会の役に立つ」創業者の志は今も。

ロート製薬といえば目薬と胃腸薬の印象が強いが、実際は売上高の6割以上をスキンケア商品が占める。「健康寿命の延伸」を掲げて再生医療に注力し、20年からは新型コロナウイルスによる重症の肺炎患者を対象に臨床試験を進めている。「薬の商売で世の中への役に立つ」という創業者の志を継ぎ、時

代の需要に応じた商品開発を進めてきた。代表取締役会長の山田邦雄氏は、創業以来の社会貢献活動の幅を広げ、次世代の教育への投資にも力を入れたいと話す。事業の世界展開と同時に、日本の地域活性化にも目を向ける。沖縄県ではアグリ事業に参入。約5年前からは海洋深層水

を利用し、エネルギーと水、食料を自給しながら産業振興と雇用創出を図る自立循環型社会の構築にも取り組む。「株主への利益還元はもちろん大事だが、中長期では次世代に残した（環境や地球温暖化問題など）宿題への責任を企業としてまっとうしたい」

DECEMBER 2021 EDITION

SUSTAINABLE JAPAN MAGAZINE

BY the japan times



COVER PHOTO

Shiroiya Hotel opened in the Gunma Prefecture city of Maebashi in December 2020. The hotel has dramatically changed the flow of people to the city. PHOTO: BEN RICHARDS

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: MINAKO SUEMATSU
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: YOSHIKUNI SHIRAI
DIRECTORS: SHIMPEI KISHIMOTO
SHINOBU YAMADA
MANAGING EDITOR: MARIANGELES DEJEAN
TRANSLATORS: EDAN CORKILL (B2, B7, B8)
ELEANOR GOLDSMITH (B4),
CARRIE EDWARDS (B6)
DESIGN DIRECTOR: QULLO & CO.
WEB DESIGNER: ERIKO OZAKI
WEB DEVELOPER: TAKAAKI OGURA

The next issue will be published on Jan. 29, 2022

The Sustainable Japan section of The Japan Times highlights the efforts of organizations and communities toward a new way of life. For more information on sustainability, ESG and SDGs issues, see www.sustainable.japantimes.com



Full articles are available for premium members. Japanese site URL: <https://sustainable.japantimes.com/jp>

「記事の日本語版（全文）は有料会員限定サイトで購読可能です。日本語サイトURL: <https://sustainable.japantimes.com/jp>



You can get a copy of the latest issue at the following locations

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Auberge Toyooka 1925 | Nipponia Hotel Ozu Castle Town |
| En Takeda Castle Town Hotel | Nipponia Hotel Takehara Saltworks Town |
| Hotel Cultia Dazaifu | Nipponia Hotel Yamefukushima Merchant Town |
| Hotel VGM Resort Kyoto | Nipponia Sasayama Castle Town Hotel |
| International House of Japan | Nipponia Sawara Merchant Town Hotel |
| Lime Resort Hakone | Matsumoto Marunouchi Hotel |
| Lime Resort Myoko | Satoyama Stay Nino-machi |
| Nipponia Fukusumi Post Town Hotel | Satoyama Stay Tono-machi |
| Nipponia Hotel Hakodate Port Town | Satoyama Villa Honjin |
| Nipponia Hotel Igaueno Castle Town | Satoyama Villa Den |
| Nipponia Hotel Nara Naramachi | Tobira Onsen Myojinkan |

Head Office:

Ichibancho-Daini-TG Bldg., 2-2 Ichibancho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
The Japan Times Cube Inc. Tel: 03-3512-0330 Email: jtc-csinfo@japantimes.co.jp

<https://sustainable.japantimes.com/>