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SUSTAINABLE JAPAN

MAGAZINE

Saturday, September 24, 2022

Traditional crafts:
Charms amid change



FROM THE EDITOR

By YOSHIKUNI SHIRAI / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

In this month's special edition we put the spotlight on Japanese traditional crafts.

As is well known, Japan experienced a major turning point in 1868 with the Meiji Restoration, and from that time onwards, modernization progressed rapidly.

Until just over 150 years ago, the nation's doors were closed to the West and it was ruled by sword-bearing samurai. But with the Meiji Restoration, the coun-

try's social structure transformed dramatically.

Nowadays we're going through further transformation due to the rise of information technologies, and major lifestyle changes are occurring not only in Japan but in countries around the world.

And yet even in the midst of these changes, there are some things that Japanese people continue to cherish. One of those is traditional crafts.

Firm in the belief that these techniques, which have been handed down for generations, must be retained in the future, many people remain devoted to them, creating countless precious objects.

In all 47 prefectures of Japan, 237 traditional crafts have been designated by the government. It is our great pleasure to explore with our readers the charm of Japan's traditional crafts.



ご存じのように、日本という国はたった150年ほど前まで、刀を差した武士が国を治め、外国から門戸を閉ざしていました。それが1968年に明治維新という大きな節目を迎え、以来、急速に近代化が進みました。

現在では、IT技術などの進化もあり、日本だけではなく世界中の国々で、生活スタイルの大変革が起きています。社会構造も大きく変わりました。

そのような社会の変化の中にあっても、日本人が大切

に守っているものがあります。そのひとつが「伝統的工芸品」です。数百年にも渡り代々伝えられてきた技術を、またさらに後世へと残すべく、日々努力が続けられ、数々の名品が今も生み出されています。日本全国47都道府県すべてに、その土地の風土や歴史的背景に基づく陶磁器、漆器、木工品・竹細工などの伝統的工芸品があり、国によって指定され、その数は237にも上ります。今回はそんな伝統的工芸品の魅力をお伝えします。

Feature HANDCRAFTS

INTERVIEW

Hosokawa family's 500-year cultural labor of love

By MARI HASHIMOTO

MORIHIRO HOSOKAWA

Born in Tokyo in 1938. After working as a reporter at the Asahi Shimbun, Hosokawa served as a member of the House of Representatives, the governor of Kumamoto Prefecture, the leader of the Japan New Party and prime minister. After retiring from politics, he has made pottery, calligraphy, ink paintings and lacquerware at Futoan, his private residence in Yugawara, Kanagawa Prefecture. He is the president of the Eisei Bunko Foundation. He held a solo exhibition at the Pola Museum Annex as a charity event to support Ukraine. From Sept. 21 to 24, 150 of his works, including lacquer paintings, are being exhibited at the Tokyo Bijutsu Club before they are auctioned. Proceeds will be donated to UNHCR. His publications include "Futoan Nichijo" ("Everyday Life at Futoan," published by Shogakukan), "Seiko Udoku" (from a phrase meaning "working in the field in fine weather and reading at home when it rains," published by Shinchosha), and "Kyocho no Sansui" ("The Landscape in My Heart," published by Seiso Shobo).



PHOTO: YOSHIAKI TSUTSUI

Summary

文化を守り、創る。伝統工芸と細川家の500年。

室町時代に優れた武人、また当代一の文人として名を馳せた細川幽斎を初代とする細川家。文武両道を旨とする当主はいま、細川護熙が担う。熊本県知事を経て内閣総理大臣を務め、60歳を機に政界を引退。細川家に受け継がれた文化財を展示する美術館の理事長を務める傍ら、器や書、絵画の作家としても高い評価を受ける。

細川は自ら焼いた陶磁器の割れや欠けを漆で補修しているが、その漆を素材に絵を描き始めた。京都の古寺からの依頼を受け、何十面もの襖に水墨画を描く仕事も多い。こうした伝統的な工芸、美術の制作に携わっていると、その道具や素材が危機に瀕していることがわかる、と細川は言う。「細い線を描くための筆は鼠の毛を使っ

ていたが、近年は栄養過多で鼠が大型化、毛先を筆に使うことができないそうです」。水墨画に使う和紙は、原材料の栽培から支援している。伝統工芸を鑑賞し、使い、作り、さらに守り、育て、未来へ繋げるまで全ての過程に関わっているのは、500年以上を文化の守り手としてあり続けてきた、歴史ゆえなのかもしれない。



日本語全文はこちら



PHOTO: YOSHIHIRO SAITO

In 2022, Hosokawa gifted 32 *fusuma* (screen door) paintings to Kyoto's Ryoanji temple, which has historical ties to the Hosokawa family. These works depict the life of a dragon.

in which metal powder is sprinkled onto the surface, or embedded mother-of-pearl. Rather, he uses lacquer as a material to make paintings with.

"Originally, I started doing this while I was doing pottery," he said. "When I was firing my tea bowls in the workshop, I would inevitably end up with cracks or chipped rims from the kiln. I happened to know a botany teacher who was knowledgeable about lacquer, and he also made lacquerware himself. He taught me where to get lacquer, what kinds of lacquer there are and how to use them. Until that time, I had no choice but to either hand my broken tea bowls over to a *kintsugi* craftsman for repair," using lacquer mixed with gold powder, "or to throw them away. I am now able to revive them myself."

As Hosokawa became accustomed to using lacquer, it occurred to him that he could paint with it. It is known that the famous miniature Tamamushi Shrine, a National Treasure dating from the Asuka Period (530-710) that is held at Horyuji temple, is decorated with lacquer paintings depicting the life of Buddha. However, no living craftspeople currently practice the technique. In Hosokawa's works, sometimes the lacquer is scraped off, and sometimes lines are carved in it as though with a nail. To add color, he sprinkles mineral pigments used in *nihonga* painting or gold and silver powder before the lacquer can dry. He explained with a smile that through repeated trial and error, he has become proficient at using the material to make pictures.

"In short, it is similar to the technique of maki-e, in which gold dust is sprinkled on a lacquered surface," he said. "The only difference is that the base is a canvas rather than a bowl. My favorite motif at the moment is the traditional Chinese one

of grass and insects."

When Hosokawa was a child, he would use lacquerware tables and bowls that all bore the Hosokawa family crest, known as *kuyomon*, which features nine stars. The Eisei Bunko Museum includes harnesses and a masterpiece of lacquer work, the "shigure raden saddle," which is designated as a National Treasure. Hosokawa enjoys creating his own work freely against the background of such tradition, but he still is deeply concerned about whether there will be younger craftspeople to inherit these techniques, materials and tools in the future.

"I heard that it is difficult to make maki-e brushes these days," he said. "The brushes used for making fine lines were originally made from the hairs that grew along the spines of mice that could be found in wooden ships and storehouses, but these days, because the mice eat so well they have become larger and so their backs rub against pipes in the sewers, meaning their strong, straight back hairs can no longer be used. Until about 20 years ago, there was a person who kept mice in an abandoned boat in a reed field on the shores of Lake Biwa, but they stopped doing that, and now mouse hair has been replaced with that of other animals. And these are just the difficulties we face with sourcing one single type of brush, so in order to pass down the techniques and tools for all our traditional crafts, and not just maki-e, the effort required is daunting. My father served as the chairman of the Traditional Crafts Association, and when I was governor, I got to see the state of traditional crafts in Kumamoto Prefecture, such as Higo *zogan* [Higo inlay metalwork], and I really became concerned by this."

In recent years, Hosokawa has frequently been asked to create paintings on



For his ink paintings, Hosokawa uses *washi* paper made by Ichibei Iwano, a designated National Living Treasure.

PHOTO: YOSHIHIRO SAITO

fusuma sliding doors for temples. In Keninji temple, he has made 24 *fusuma* paintings depicting the "Eight Views of Xiaoxi," and in Ryoanji temple, he has made 32 on the theme of "Clouds and Dragons." Naturally, to make that many paintings, he needs a good supply of the *washi* paper he likes. While he said he has the paper made for him, he is also active in trying to preserve the culture of making high-quality *washi* paper in Japan, and so he serves as a councilor of the World Paper Heritage Support Foundation Kamimori, which cultivates *kozo* (paper mulberry) and *mitsumata* (Oriental paper bush) and also conducts and publishes research on the topic.

In this way, Hosokawa's efforts never end with just appreciating, using and making traditional crafts. His work comprises all elements of the process, including preservation, teaching and passing on knowledge for future generations. And perhaps his motivation stems from the knowledge that his ancestors have guarded over this culture for 500 years already.



Left: Plants and insects are a traditional motif of Chinese painting, and one of the charms of this work is the vividness of the spider's web and the insect-eaten leaves. Right: Hosokawa said: "I started painting 'Hyakkibankō – Watashi no Guernica' ['The Brutality of One Hundred Demons – My Guernica'] immediately after the start of the invasion of Ukraine. The figure of President Putin is visible in a 'sarcophagus.'"

PHOTO: YOSHIKI TSUTSUI

SEPTEMBER 2022 EDITION
SUSTAINABLE JAPAN
MAGAZINE
BY
the japan times

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The next issue
will be published on Oct. 29

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COVER PHOTO



A flower basket made by Shoko Kawano, a master bamboo craftsman from Beppu in Kyushu who won the President's Award at the Japan Kogei Association's 69th "Japan Traditional Kogei Exhibition." The work's title is "Asatsuyu" ("Morning Dew").

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PHOTO: KOUTAROU WASHIZAKI

✧ YUJI AKIMOTO

Art critic, born in Tokyo in 1955. After participating in projects including the Bennese Art Site Naoshima and the Chichu Art Museum, he served as director of the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa and the University Art Museum at the Tokyo University of the Arts, where he was also a professor. He is currently a professor emeritus at the Tokyo University of the Arts and director of the Nerima Art Museum, as well as director at the Nerima Cultural Promotion Association, specially appointed director of the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, and professor emeritus at the National Tainan University of the Arts.

What are traditional Japanese crafts?

The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry designates traditional crafts in accordance with the Act on the Promotion of Traditional Craft Industries, enacted in 1974. As of March, the act covered 237 items. The conditions for designation include “items that are mainly used in daily life, with the main parts of the manufacturing process performed by hand, using traditional techniques and methods” and “items that are mainly made from traditionally used raw materials” as well as “items whose manufacture is performed by or engaged in by a significant number of people in a specific geographical area.” Here, “traditional” means ongoing production for about 100 years or more.

Feature HANDCRAFTS

CRAFTWORKS

Japan's traditional crafts are also technical arts

By TAEKO TERAOKA



PHOTO: THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF TRADITIONAL CRAFT INDUSTRIES

「秋田県」
大館
曲げわっぱ

Nambu ironware is made in Iwate Prefecture. Tetsubin (iron kettles) like this are particularly popular, but frying pans, pots and other cooking utensils for daily use are also produced.

PHOTO: THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF TRADITIONAL CRAFT INDUSTRIES



「岩手県」
南部
鉄器

Odate *magewappa* is a craft from the city of Odate in Akita Prefecture, made by bending cedar wood. This is a bento lunch box, but the technique has also been used for cups and even lighting fixtures.

Japan is rich in traditional crafts, known as *kōgei*. From Hokkaido's carved wooden bears in the north to Okinawa's Ryukyu *kasuri* textiles in the south, the government has designated traditional crafts in each of the 47 prefectures, totaling 237 as of March — dyeing, weaving, ceramics, lacquerware, woodwork and bamboo work, metalwork and more. The Japanese word “*kōgei*” does not directly map to the English term “crafts,” in that it includes greater nuances of “art.” Allow me to further explain this and other aspects of Japanese crafts.

Kōgei products that can be discussed in the English sense of “crafts” are the traditional crafts of various regions, like those mentioned above. These include daily-use items such as tea bowls, pots, kimonos and furniture, and derive beauty from their materials, techniques and designs. Beyond these are what is called *bijutsu kōgeihin*, or “artistic craftworks.” Under Japan's Law for Protection of Cultural Properties, the term applies to tangible cultural properties such as paint-

● Summary

形のない技術の結晶こそが日本の伝統工芸なのだ。

工芸大国、日本では「工芸」は英語の「Craft」と完全に一致しない。Craftとしての工芸品は、陶芸や染織、木工芸など、各地で作られる生活用具であり、材料や技巧、意匠によって美しさを備えたものとされている。一方、日本には「美術工芸品」という言葉があり、海外ではArtに分類される絵画や彫刻などが「工芸品」と

規定されるため、「工芸」イコール「Craft」とはならない。現在、練馬区立美術館館長を務める秋元雄史は、〈金沢21世紀美術館〉館長時代に『工芸未来派』展を手がけた。「そこでは工芸的アプローチによるオブジェやインスタレーションも多数出品されました。私は工芸とは形あるモノではなく、「無形の技術」だと捉えています」

そうした考え方のもとに、日本では伝統工芸の技術を高度に身につけた人物が重要無形文化財の保持者（通称：人間国宝）として認定され、自身の作品をつくるとともに、文化財に指定された工芸品の修復や人材育成にも携わる。そんな技の結晶たる伝統的工芸品に、ぜひ触れて欲しい。



日本語全文はこちら

What is a Living National Treasure?

This is the common term for individuals designated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology as Preservers of Important Intangible Cultural Properties under the 1950 Law for Protection of Cultural Properties. Designated people are generally those knowing performing arts techniques, such as traditional theater and music, or traditional crafting techniques. Currently, a maximum of 116 Living National Treasures is allowed. Crafts are divided into fields including ceramics, dyeing, lacquerware, metal dolls, wood and bamboo crafts, and paper.



Left: Takuro Kuwata's work expresses Japanese aesthetics in a pop style. Right: The tea ceremony room in the Museum of Asian Art at the Humboldt Forum in Berlin, designed by a tea ceremony master, craftsman and architect.

COURTESY:
LEFT: 21ST CENTURY MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, KANAZAWA "ART CRAFTING TOWARDS THE FUTURE" APRIL 28-AUG. 31, 2012
KUWATA TAKURO (KAIRAGI SHINO BOW)
RIGHT: TEA CEREMONY ROOM "BOUKIAN" IN HUMBOLDT FORUM, BERLIN / JUN URA, SOKYU NARA, TAKUO NAKAMURA, SHOITSU NISHIMURA III, NAOIKI SAKAI

ings, sculptures, crafts and books. In other words, in addition to paintings and sculptures, which are classified as art in other countries too, Japanese also includes books and other academic materials under its definition of "artistic craftworks." So Japan does not take the Western view of art that separates fine art from crafts, meaning "kōgei" does not equate to "crafts."

The Japanese National Treasure "Funabashi Maki-e Suzuribako" ("Writing Box with Pontoon Bridge") is both a piece of lacquerware and a work of art, and its creator, Honami Koetsu, is recognized in Japan as a representative artist of the Edo Period. Traditional craftworks as art forms have thus historically existed in Japan, and they have been increasingly attracting attention in recent years.

I spoke about the current state of crafts in Japan with Yuji Akimoto, who has organized exhibitions of Japanese crafts and is currently the director of the Nerima Art Museum. Previously, Akimoto served for 10 years as director of the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, which in 2012 held its "Art Crafting Towards the Future" exhibition, a collection of kōgei works that included many artistic elements.

"In the 1980s and 1990s there was a lot of interest in artists using craft-like materials and techniques to express themselves, but that trend wound down in the 2000s," Akimoto said. "I later saw a resurgence in kōgei artists creating works under contemporary-art-like concepts, so I used the 'Art Crafting Towards the

Future' exhibition as a way to redefine kōgei, getting rid of 'utility/nonutility' as the basis for separating craftworks from artworks and exhibiting many objects and installations that feature a crafts-like approach. I think of craftworks not as tangible objects, but as intangible techniques."

In fact, based on a similar concept, individuals in Japan who have mastered traditional crafting skills are officially recognized as Preservers of Important Intangible Cultural Properties, commonly known as Living National Treasures. In addition to creating works of art, they also assist in the restoration of artifacts designated as cultural assets and in the training of personnel for such restorations.

Such power of craftworks is being utilized overseas as well. In 2020, handbags and dresses incorporating works by Takuro Kuwata, a ceramic artist who drew attention through his participation in the "Art Crafting Towards the Future" exhibition, added a touch of luxury to the Loewe collection. In July 2021, a group including three craft artists from Kanazawa used architectural techniques that incorporate crafts to create a teahouse in the reconstructed Museum für Asiatische Kunst (Museum of Asian Art), one of the royal museums of Berlin.

So yes, traditional Japanese crafts are themselves techniques that make possible advanced expressions in art, design, architecture and other fields. I truly hope you will experience these traditional crafts as a crystallization of Japanese skills.

Tsuboya-ware pottery is said to have originated in the 17th century. It is made in Okinawa Prefecture, in the Tsuboya district of Naha and the village of Yomitan. The item shown here is a vessel for sake.



「沖縄県」
壺屋焼

PHOTO: THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF TRADITIONAL CRAFT INDUSTRIES

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Akira Watanabe [Various works]

Laminated bowl with platinum and engraved decoration. “Light Waves”

This piece was made by an artist who creates new forms of beauty in glass. Watanabe developed a technique he calls lamination, which involves placing beads of colored glass and platinum between several sheets of cut glass, melting them together, and then adding more cuts to the glass on top. This work’s beauty lies in its evanescence; as the title suggests, a variety of light waves emerge, only to disappear again as the angle of view changes.



Akihiro Maeta [Ceramics]

White porcelain jar with twisted sides

Maeta has broken new ground in the field of white porcelain, using a gentle touch to create pieces that differ from the conventional stiff image of the material. As a Preserver of Important Intangible Cultural Properties (Living National Treasure) in the field of white porcelain, he has drawn upon his unique sensibility to produce works that are considered art while still upholding the very essence of traditional crafts. By twisting the rounded form of a vase reminiscent of an object blanketed in snow, he expresses nuances of light and shade.

Feature HANDCRAFTS

EXHIBITION
Exhibition explores
the appeal of
traditional crafts

By TAEKO TERA0

What is the Japan Traditional Art
Crafts Exhibition (Nihon Dento Kogeiten)?

Japan’s biggest exhibition of traditional crafts is open to submissions from the public. Its principal organizers include the Asahi Shimbun and the Japan Kogei Association, an organization composed of practitioners of traditional crafts, focused mainly on artists who have been designated Preservers of Important Intangible Cultural Properties — commonly referred to as Living National Treasures. The exhibition was held for the first time in 1954, the year when the system of designating Important Intangible Cultural Properties and Preservers of Important Intangible Cultural Properties was launched following the amendment of the Act on Protection of Cultural Properties. Aimed at preserving and cultivating traditional craft techniques deemed to be of great historical and artistic value, the exhibition has been held at the Nihonbashi Mitsukoshi Main Store every year through to the 69th edition this year, and then tours venues across Japan. <https://www.nihonkogeikai.or.jp>

If you want to explore the current frontiers of traditional Japanese crafts, you should not miss the annual Japan Traditional Art Crafts Exhibition (Nihon Dento Kogeiten).

Japan’s biggest exhibition of traditional crafts is open to submissions from the public and is principally organized by the Japan Kogei Association, an organization made up of traditional craft artists. A key focus of the association is artists who have been designated Preservers of Important Intangible Cultural Properties — commonly referred to as Living National Treasures. Aiming to preserve and cultivate Japan’s traditional crafts, the association’s panel of judges selects the exhibits from submissions in seven categories: ceramics, textiles, lacquer work, metalwork, woodwork and bamboo work, dolls, and various works. The status of the exhibition is such that almost all Living National Treasures in the traditional crafts are chosen from among artists who have been selected to exhibit at it several times.

This year’s 69th edition of the exhibition will bring together 558 of the latest works by Living National Treasures and others. Opening at the Nihonbashi Mitsukoshi department store in Tokyo on Sept. 14 and running until the 26th, the exhibition will then visit 12 other cities nationwide — Nagoya, Kyoto, Sapporo, Kanazawa, Okayama, Matsue, Takamatsu, Sendai, Fukuoka, Hiroshima and Osaka — over the next half a year. Mitsukoshi’s flagship store has served as the

Tokyo venue ever since the exhibition began in 1954. During the exhibition’s run there, award-winning artists and experts will provide commentaries on the works, and an event will offer the opportunity to attend in kimono. The exhibition thus provides a superb chance to become more familiar with traditional Japanese crafts.

We asked traditional crafts buyer Aki- ra Hiraoka about the highlights.

“This exhibition is a stunning spectacle, as it offers a venue for Living National Treasures and other artists in each field of crafts to show off the culmination of their efforts over the last year,” he said. “Better still, the exhibits are displayed in the open, rather than inside glass cases, so you can get a proper feel for the texture of each piece. While the term ‘traditional crafts’ might make it sound as though the venue is filled with nothing but items produced using techniques handed down through the centuries, the reality is that this exhibition is actually a trade fair showcasing the very latest in art craft technology. As they are passed down through the generations, traditions based on technologies infused with the wisdom of our ancestors are constantly updated with an overlay of new technologies appropriate to the present age. That’s what I want visitors to look out for.”

For example, Living National Treasure Akihiro Maeta is a Preserver of Important Intangible Cultural Properties in the field of white porcelain. Using a gentle

● Summary

『日本伝統工芸展』で
その魅力に直に触れてみる。

現代における日本の伝統的工芸品の最前線を知りたい
れば、工芸の公募展『日本伝統工芸展』がおすすめだ。
日本の伝統工芸の保護育成を目的に、陶芸、染織、漆
芸、金工など7部門にわたり審査が行われ入選作品が選
ばれる。工芸の人間国宝は、この展覧会で入選を重ねた
作家から選ばれることがほとんどだという。

69回目を迎える今回は人間国宝の最新作を合わせて
558点を一堂に公開。全国12都市の会場を約半年かけて
巡回する。『日本橋三越本店』の工芸バイヤー、平岡智
に展覧会の見どころを聞いた。
「“伝統工芸”という響きから、昔からある技法で作ら
れているものばかりが並んでいるように思われるかもし

れませんが、実はこの展覧会こそが、工芸の最新技術の
見本市。先人の知恵が詰まった技術をベースに、新しい
技術を積み上げることで伝統は更新され、今の時代にふ
さわしいものとして、受け継がれていきますから。そこ
を見ていただきたいですね。これを機に伝統工芸に触
れてみるのもいいだろう。



日本語全文はこちらから



Kiyoshi Torige [Lacquer work]
Jikiro with design in chinkin. “Tutelary Deity”

Born in Ishikawa Prefecture’s Noto Peninsula, famed for its lacquerware, urushi lacquer artist Torige won the Governor of Tokyo Award at the 66th Japan Traditional Art Crafts Exhibition in 2019. A jikiro is a container used in the tea ceremony for sweets and the like. This piece has been praised for the delicate depiction he achieved with a new technique that takes an approach opposite from the conventional method used for chinkin: Torige carved away the background and filled it in with pigments, leaving the main design of an owl standing out on the lacquer surface.



Makoto Igarashi [Woodwork & bamboo work]
Box of jindai cedar wood with carved design

This woodworking artist came to prominence in 2021 when he won the Japan Kogei Association New Face Award at the 68th Japan Traditional Art Crafts Exhibition. Both the carved jindai cedar wood box, with its artistic elements, and the walnut stool, serving as an everyday item of furniture, are produced using a joinery technique that involves no metal nails in their assembly and leaves no joints visible from the outside.

touch to produce unique twisted forms that overturn the conventional stiff image of white porcelain, Maeta has been highly acclaimed at home and abroad for his modern artistic pieces expressing light and shade.

Lacquerware artist Kiyoshi Torige uses a decorative technique called *chinkin*, but rather than employing the conventional approach of engraving the main pattern and filling it in with gold leaf and gold powder, he broke new ground by adopting a technique that involves carving away the surface of the surrounding lacquer to leave the principal design in black.

Glassware artist Akira Watanabe has created a new technique of lamination

based on the traditional cut-glass technique called *kiriko*.

Woodworking artist Makoto Igarashi uses very precise joinery techniques to assemble pieces without metal nails in such a way that the joints cannot be seen from the outside. In addition to pieces offering great scope for artistic appreciation, such as those shown in this exhibit, he also makes items such as chairs that are rooted more in the style of crafts for daily life.

While the exhibits themselves will not be for sale, visitors will be able to buy other items made by some of the artists participating in the show. Why not enrich your living environment with your very own piece of traditional craftwork?

Left: Makoto Igarashi employs joinery techniques based on assembling wooden boards to produce his pieces. Right: A walnut stool by Igarashi



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Feature HANDCRAFTS

YUDAI TACHIKAWA

Traditional crafts director. Born in Nagasaki Prefecture in 1965. Since 2003, Tachikawa has operated the brand ubushina, which connects craftspeople skilled in traditional techniques with architects and interior designers, and creates furniture, lighting fixtures, art objects and more, based on the character of each space. PHOTO: KOUTAROU WASHIZAKI

ARTISANAL SPIRIT

Mission: Exploring tradition's fashionable future

By TOSHICHIKA IZUMI

There are said to be 80,000 companies over 100 years old worldwide. About 33,000 of them, or over 40%, are Japanese. Japan also has by far the most businesses founded over 200 years ago — 1,340, or about 65%, according to the Nikkei BP Consulting 2020 report. This concentration of long-established companies could be seen as evidence of the Japanese respect for tradition and history. Of the Japanese companies founded over 100 years ago, over 40% have annual earnings of less than ¥100 million (\$700,000). This points to the way many of them prioritize not profitability but rather carrying on the work of venerable companies, including generations-old family businesses.

The door of the treatment room at the Ritz-Carlton Nikko spa and onsen. The tree peonies were carved by an artisan who has worked on carvings at Nikko Toshogu Shrine.

PHOTO: NACASA & PARTNERS



Japanese traditional crafts are one of the industries that have always valued the artisanal spirit — handing down traditions to succeeding generations — over making large profits. The year 1984, now nearly four decades ago, marked the high point of Japan's traditional craft production, with a total value of about ¥500 billion (\$3.5 billion). That has since decreased year by year, and in 2015 it was approximately ¥102 billion, or around one-fifth of the peak period, according to the Association for the Promotion of Traditional Craft Industries.

There are various factors in this decline, but major changes in the Japanese lifestyle are surely the main reason. When people don't wear kimonos, they don't need the accompanying obis and accessories, or the chest of drawers in which kimonos are traditionally stored. Similarly, fewer homes today have a *butsudan*, the Buddhist shrine placed in the home to memorialize ancestors. Many *butsudan* are very expensive, costing from several million to over 10 million yen, including altar fittings. *Butsudan* could be considered the ultimate synthesis of traditional Japanese handcrafts, since they incorporate metalworking, woodworking and lacquerware. But demand for *butsudan* has declined sharply.

One person who worried about the state of traditional Japanese crafts, Yudai Tachikawa, is now engaged in reviv-

ing these techniques by incorporating them in "spaces." Tachikawa is the representative director of t.c.k.w Inc., which carries out projects under the brand name ubushina. Rather than simply sell traditional crafts such as dishes, lacquerware or bamboo ware, he focuses on the artisanal skills that bring the products into being and — based on the concept of "selling techniques" — introduces these skills to architects and designers who create interior spaces.

"It started with the Hotel Alaska renovation project, which I worked on in 2003" in Tokyo, Tachikawa said. "With that project, I was thinking about how to open up a new path for the techniques that underpin traditional crafts — techniques that had lost their "destinations" — and I decided to connect designers with craftspeople. We incorporated handcraft techniques throughout the interior spaces. For instance, we used metal casting and tin to make lighting fixtures for the lobby and guest rooms, and created a lacquered reception counter — things like that.

"In addition to hotels, we now coordinate interiors incorporating traditional Japanese techniques for a variety of projects, including high-end restaurants, retail facilities and private homes. One example is a type of wallpaper we created called *Kinufushi*, made from ultra-thin silk backed with Echizen *washi* paper. Within its beautiful luster, there's a feel-



The lounge of the ANA InterContinental Beppu Resort & Spa, designed by interior designer Yukio Hashimoto. The art wall was created with the use of bamboo work.

PHOTO: NACASA & PARTNERS

ing of warmth and charm that results from handcrafting. The product has gained a following among architects, artists and so on, and it's been used in interior design projects."

Tachikawa's office is packed with various technical samples, and well-known architects, interior designers, artists and others are constantly stopping in to look at them. It seems that Tachikawa even receives interior design inquiries from world-famous luxury brands. Demand for traditional crafts may have decreased, but Tachikawa makes use of his expertise regarding traditional skills, materials and craftspeople to create a new kind of demand.

Summary

伝統技術を空間に生かし、新たなインテリアを生み出す。

日本の伝統工芸の現状を憂い、その技術を「空間」に取り入れることで復活を果たそうと取り組む人物がいる。＜ubushina＞(うぶしな＝産品)を展開する立川裕大だ。彼は工芸品そのものを売るのはなく、工芸品を生み出す職人たちが受け継いできた「技術」に着目し、「技術力を売る」をコンセプトに、空間を生み出す建築

家・デザイナーへその技を紹介している。「きっかけは、2003年に携わったホテルの改修でした。このプロジェクトで、行き場を失った「伝統的な工芸を担う技術」に、新しい道筋をつけることはできないかを考え、インテリアデザイナーと職人を結び付けました。例えば、ロビーや客室の照明器具を銅物や錫で制作したり、漆塗りのレ

セプション・カウンターをつくったりしました。立川のオフィスには様々な技術サンプルがところ狭しと置かれ、著名な建築家やインテリアデザイナーがひっきりなしに訪れ、世界的なラグジュアリーブランドから空間づくりの相談もある。伝統技術や素材、職人に関する知見を生かし、新たな需要を生み出しているのだ。



日本語全文はこちらから



thejapantimes

Destination Restaurants 2022

AUTHENTIC JAPAN SELECTION

Fishmonger, chef collaborate on *kaiseki* cuisine

By TAEKO TERAOKA



Freshly caught *kinmedai* (splendid alfonsino) is sprinkled with salt and grilled over charcoal with the scales on in a dish called *urokoyaki*. It can be enjoyed plain or with shredded scallions and soy sauce flavored with *sansho* (Japanese pepper).

PHOTOS: KOUTAROU WASHIZAKI

◆ DAIGO SUGIYAMA

Daigo Sugiyama was born in Shizuoka Prefecture in 1984. He studied the tea ceremony in high school and after graduating began training at Wako, a restaurant in Tokyo's Mejiro district that was known for its *chakaiseki* cuisine (it has since closed). Six years later, he returned to his hometown and went to work with his father, head chef at Chakaiseki Onjaku. He later took over the restaurant and is currently head chef.



Shizuoka (Japanese)

Chakaiseki Onjaku

6-14-12 Honmachi, Yaizu, Shizuoka
Tel: 054-626-2587
<http://www.all-yys.com/onjaku>

With the local food movement as popular as ever these days, forgotten regional ingredients are in the spotlight, and chefs are usually the ones responsible for pulling them onto the gastronomical stage. Chefs have been nurturing producers in this way since the end of the 20th century. Gradually, however, producers have also begun taking the lead in educating and nurturing chefs. Sasue Maeda Fish Shop is a prime example. Located in Yaizu, Shizuoka Prefecture, the fishmonger receives orders from famous chefs throughout Japan but also supplies fish to several local chefs. Daigo Sugiyama, proprietor of Chakaiseki Onjaku, is one of them.

The Sugiyama family's history in the restaurant business goes back to Sugiyama's grandfather, who established a soba shop in Yaizu. Later, his father trained at Wako, a restaurant in Tokyo's Mejiro district known for incorporating the spirit and techniques of the tea ceremony into its *chakaiseki* cuisine, then went on to establish Chakaiseki Onjaku. Like his father, Sugiyama trained at Wako before returning to the family business eight years ago, where he became his father's right-hand man in the kitchen.

"Even after I was back here working in Yaizu, I thought it was no match for Tokyo," he said. He changed his mind, however, after observing the experience of the Yaizu tempura restaurant Naruse, which became one of the most heavily booked restaurants in Japan after joining forces with Naoki Maeda, owner of Sasue Maeda Fish Shop.

In fact, the Sugiyama family has been sourcing fish from Sasue Maeda Fish Shop for three generations. What is more, according to Maeda, the family has been buying from his shop longer than any other restaurant. As

Sugiyama began frequenting the fishmonger, he gradually came to view Maeda as his teacher of all things fish. Maeda selects and supplies fish to the restaurant depending on how Sugiyama wants to prepare it: as sashimi, in soup or grilled, for example. Then, based on what Maeda tells him about the fish, Sugiyama decides how to cut it and how long to cook it to best bring out its flavor.

For ¥16,500 (\$115), guests receive a multicourse meal that respects the *chakaiseki* tradition of hospitality without clinging to its formalities. At one meal, high-quality *aji* (horse mackerel) that had grown plump on *sakura* shrimp — itself a specialty of Shizuoka as well as an important marine resource — was served in a cucumber roll flavored with pickled plum. The *itoyori tai* (golden threadfin bream) was simmered in a light broth; Sugiyama said he intentionally used a smaller-than-usual amount of *katsuo-bushi* (bonito shavings) and seasonings to allow the flavor of the bream to shine. *Tsuruna* (New Zealand spinach) harvested wild from the Yaizu coast contributed a refreshing note. The *jindo ika* (Japanese squid) served with colinky squash owed its sweetness to being extremely fresh. The *kinmedai* (splendid alfonsino) had been unloaded at the dock just that afternoon, and its eyes really did glitter like gold, as its Japanese name suggests. Sugiyama served it grilled with its scales on, the skin crackling crisp. His restaurant's outstanding reputation, he said, comes "thanks to the fishermen who risk their lives out on the ocean to catch fish for us, and all our forebears here in Shizuoka." His own search for delicious flavors, he added modestly, is "still a work in progress" that will surely continue in the years to come.

● Summary

名店からも支持される焼津の鮮魚店と2人3脚で作る茶懐石。

20世紀の終わり頃から、シェフが生産者を育てる時代が続いたが、最近では生産者側のリードによって、料理人が学び、育つケースが増えてきた。静岡・焼津〈サスエ前田魚店〉前田尚毅と〈茶懐石 温石〉主人、杉山乃互の関係はその好例である。「ずっと東京には敵わないと思って仕事をしていました」と杉山は言う。だが、前田とタッグを組み、同じ焼津にありながら全国屈指の予約の取れない店へと成長を遂げた天ぷら店〈成生〉を見て、「地元においても都会に負けない店は作れる」とに気づいた。

以来、前田を師と仰ぎ、店を変えていった。まず

は座敷中心の店から、ゲストの目の前で調理し、できたてを出すカウンター中心の店に作り替えた。

杉山が求める調理法に合う魚を前田が納入し、杉山は前田から教わる魚の状態や情報をもとに調理をする。スペシャリティは新鮮な金目鯛の鱗焼きた。そんな料理が評価されるのは「命懸けで海の上で魚を獲ってくれる漁師さんをはじめ、静岡の先人たちののおかげ」と言い、「自分はまだまだ未熟」と謙遜する杉山の美味への探求はこれからも続く。



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The Shizuoka hilltop of Nppondaira is a popular tourist destination providing beautiful views of Mount Fuji and overlooking Suruga Bay below. The Nippondaira Hotel stands in this scenic spot. First opened in 1964, the hotel was completely rebuilt and reopened in 2012.

In addition to its superlative design, the hotel is also noteworthy for its eco-friendly functionality.

Among its green features reducing the burden on the environment, it uses groundwater, natural light for much lighting, rainwater to irrigate its gardens, and a geothermal tunnel system beneath the building to moderate ambient air temperatures for both heating and cooling. This is truly an environmentally friendly hotel that is worthy of your stay.



<https://www.ndhl.jp/en/>

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thejapan times

Sustainable Japan Award

2022

On Sept. 15, The Japan Times Co. Ltd. held the Sustainable Japan Award ceremony to commemorate the 2022 awardee companies. About 40 guests witnessed the selected eight organizations being recognized for their efforts in the ESG or satoyama categories. Following this, two panel sessions were held where representatives of each organization ex-

plained their efforts to contribute to a more sustainable society. In 2017, The Japan Times launched two consortiums: the ESG Consortium and the Satoyama Consortium. The consortiums have focused on individuals, companies and organizations who have been active in various positions to realize a sustainable society, including key people who are active in Japan and

overseas and who have disseminated their efforts both domestically and overseas. Though the ESG Consortium and the Satoyama Consortium had different approaches, they had the same goals. Thus, in June 2021 both consortiums were merged into the new Sustainable Japan Network. The first Satoyama and ESG Awards were held in 2019. Three years later,

the name was changed to the Sustainable Japan Award, with both a satoyama section and an ESG section established within it. Our goal is to commend individuals, companies and organizations who have made advances in sustainable efforts, and we hope to convey their activities both domestically and internationally. Here is a glimpse of what happened on Sept. 15.

Sustainable Japan Award
Grand Prize
Nomura Research Institute Ltd.



Left: NRI is supporting Tsuruoka to create a smart city and digital government. The city is working on digital transformation in various social areas such as transportation, agriculture, disaster prevention, energy and health care.
Right: Aizu-Wakamatsu Wind Farm in Aizu-Wakamatsu, Fukushima.
NRI procures a portion of its electric power through the “Good Around” renewable energy bidding system. Part of the charges paid is returned to the local community as “regional revitalization funds.”



We would like to express our sincere appreciation to The Japan Times and the committee for awarding us the Grand Prize in the Sustainable Japan Awards 2022. NRI has contributed to creating a safe, secure, convenient and affluent society by solving social issues with our clients through consulting, IT solutions and other services. The spirit of creating new social value through our core business and

taking on the challenge of solving social issues was written in 1963 in NRI’s founding prospectus and has been passed down to the present day as part of NRI’s corporate DNA. In the midterm management plan (2019-2022), NRI has advanced its sustainability management and aimed for sustainable growth by working toward creating a sustainable future. As for our aspirations for the future, the new long-term management vision called Group Vi-

sion 2030 and the Medium-Term Management Plan (2023-2025) will start soon, and we will continue to pursue contributions to society and enhance economic value as twin goals. We will focus on our digital transformation plan DX3.0, which will change social paradigms through digital technology, as the pillar of our growth strategy, and expand our business in themes that will lead to solutions to social issues such as carbon neutrality, a circular economy and the food value chain.



From left: Michiyo Morisawa, director of CDP Japan; Takeshi Hihara, senior managing director, Nomura Research Institute; Tomomichi Okano, executive officer of Lion Corp.; Kazuo Sato, director and managing executive officer of Nippon Life Insurance Co.; and Chika Morishima, chair of dissemination and promotion WG of Japan Clean Ocean Material Alliance.
PHOTO: HIROMICHI MATONO



PHOTO: HIROMICHI MATONO

Sustainable Japan ESG Excellence Award & ESG Special Award



A collection box for recycling toothbrushes at a junior high school



Nippon Life Insurance Co. introduced renewable energy at certain buildings it owns and plans to use LED lights and highly energy-efficient facilities when constructing new buildings.



A CLOMA technical seminar introduces members to best practices and new technologies from research institutes.

Yojiro Hatakeyama, director-general, industrial science and technology policy, Environment Bureau, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry



PHOTO: HIROMICHI MATONO



Representatives from the awarded companies (front) and judges of the Sustainable Japan Awards (back) take a commemorative photo.
PHOTO: HIROMICHI MATONO

Shunichi Suzuki,
minister of finance,
minister of state for
financial services and
minister in charge of
overcoming deflation



● Summary

第4回 Sustainable Japan Award 表彰式及び
受賞企業によるパネルセッション

株式会社ジャパントイムズ主催の Sustainable Japan Award 表彰式及び受賞企業によるパネルセッションを9月15日に国際文化会館で開催。今年度の受賞企業・自治体・団体を表彰し、その後ESG部門、Satoyama部門、それぞれの受賞者によるパネルセッションを行った。

Sustainable Japan Award大賞を受賞した株式会社野村総合研究所はコンサルティングやITソリューションなどを通じて、お客様と共に社会的課題を解決し、安全・安心で便利で豊かな社会の実現に貢献。Sustainable Japan Award優秀賞を受賞した株式会社さかうえは、先祖から学び、今の時代に求められる農業の在り方を再定義することで、自然と人と共に生きる持続可能な社会づくりを見据えている。



アワード特設ページは
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Sustainable Japan
Excellence Award
Sakaue Inc. Ltd.

Satoyama beef comes from grass-fed cattle at Satoyama Ranch in Kagoshima Prefecture. Beef cattle that are pastured in a stress-free natural environment produce meat that has a natural taste and is easy to eat.



株式会社 さかうえ

Thank you very much for selecting Sakaue to receive such a wonderful award. The satoyama beef project, using regional resources and engaging in sustainable recycling-oriented agriculture, aims to preserve the spirit of the rural upland satoyama areas that symbolizes the harmony that has been achieved between nature and Japanese people.

Cattle live off of natural energy, and that energy is transformed into great meat to keep consumers healthy and well nourished. Sustainability is a concept that has already been firmly established in our society. People incorporated it into their everyday lives a long time ago. This is what we call “satoyama culture,” and it has existed in Japan since ancient times.

In accordance with the spirit of learning new things from the past and aiming to continue creating a sustainable society, the satoyama beef project learns from the knowledge handed down from our ancestors to redefine the methods of agriculture in order to meet the requirements of the present day so that nature and people can keep living together in harmony.



From left: Kosuke Motani, chief senior economist of the Japan Research Institute; Takashi Sakaue, CEO of Sakaue Co. Ltd.; Takahito Yamanashi, mayor of Hayama town; Taku Yamada, founder and CEO of Chura-boshi Co.; and Nobuo Morimoto, chairman of the Certified Non-profit Organization for Nature Conservation and History Transmission of Shishitsuka Satoyama.
PHOTO: HIROMICHI MATONO



PHOTO: HIROMICHI MATONO

Sustainable Japan Satoyama Excellence Award & Special Award

Ono Hiroshi, vice minister for global environmental affairs, Ministry of the Environment



PHOTO: HIROMICHI MATONO



A sustainable room in a renovated 120-year-old storehouse used local wood and scrap cloth for the furniture.



Beach cleaning, which has been held since 1996, has an average of 500 participants every year.

Certified Non-profit Organization
for Nature Conservation and
History Transmission of
Shishitsuka Satoyama



Themed observation gatherings are held on the first Sunday of every month in the woodlands of Shishitsuka with an expert providing explanations — in this photo, of bees nesting in bamboo. PHOTO: KIMIE TANOUE



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