

# Perspectives

THE JAPAN FOUNDATION LONDON NEWSLETTER

## The Impact of Youth Culture On Contemporary Japanese Literature and Society

Upon the invitation of the Japan Foundation, the celebrated Japanese novelist, poet, essayist, literary critic and translator, Natsuki Ikezawa, was guest speaker at a talk and discussion attended by over 100 people at the Japan Foundation on 3 May. It was arranged in association with the Japan Society and the School of Oriental and African Studies.

Highly respected internationally as one of Japan's most influential and serious contemporary writers, Natsuki Ikezawa was the recipient of the prestigious Akutagawa Prize for his collection of short stories *Still Lives*, the Yomiuri Prize for a further collection *Ending with Happiness* and, in 1995, his first novel, *The Fall of Macias Guili* won the Tanizaki-Junichiro Prize. His novel *A Burden of Flowers*, dealing with the themes of cultural identity and man's relation to nature and the cosmos received the coveted literary award, the Mainichi Prize in 2000.

In works like *A Burden of Flowers* (Kodansha International, 2001) Natsuki Ikezawa is notable for his unusual willingness to engage on both cultural and political levels with the larger world outside Japan's borders. Furthermore, having lived for extended periods in both Greece and France, he is one of the few Japanese contemporary novelists who can accurately be described as having an international perspective on the problems that Japanese society now faces.

His talk, which he called *Young Japan - The Effect of Youth Culture on Contemporary Japanese Literature and Society*, began with a nostalgic look back upon his own first encounters with foreign intellectual culture at the library of the British Council in Tokyo, and foreign physical culture at the British Museum in London. Ikezawa then went on to examine the shifts that have taken place in Japanese culture in the post-war period, and the nature of contemporary youth culture that is increasingly coming to represent Japan internationally.

For the past few years, Ikezawa has had an



Natsuki Ikezawa

*“...the defeat of 1945...wreaked subtle changes in Japanese society ...destroying generational and patriarchal authority within families, and (leaving) a gaping hole ...filled by a vapid commercial culture created by the dankai sedai baby-boomers ”*

ongoing fascination with youth, examining its motivations and culture through several novels. His most recent work, *Kippu o nakushite* (Kadokawa Shoten, 2005), focuses on a group of children living in secret inside Tokyo Station. In Ikezawa's analysis, the defeat of 1945 loomed large as an unprecedented historical event. With no way to accommodate what had happened, Japan fell back to its default position of tacit acceptance, just as though the defeat were another species of natural disaster. The defeat, according to Ikezawa, wreaked more subtle changes in Japanese society - sowing seeds of doubt in its young generation that

eventually destroyed generational and patriarchal authority within families, and left a gaping hole in the culture that was filled by a vapid commercial culture created by the *dankai sedai* baby-boomers.

Ikezawa was forthright in his criticism of a culture that creates consumers rather than citizens, but his attitude towards the texture of contemporary youth culture itself was more ambiguous. Japanese games, manga and anime have come to represent Japan internationally, their growing worldwide cultural authority symbolized by the Otaku installation in the Japanese pavilion at 2004's Venice Biennale 9th International Architecture Exhibition. While Ikezawa felt troubled by the cult of the *kawaii* seen in characters such as Sanrio's lovable, pet-like and disturbingly mouth-less Hello Kitty, he also perceived intriguing visual parallels between the unrealistic "superflat" aesthetic of artists Yoshitomo Nara and Takashi Murakami and that of Edo period *ukiyo-e*.

Following his talk, Ikezawa engaged in some lively discussions with the audience over the apportionment of blame for the intergenerational gap, the problems of a technologically advanced 'virtual' society that has lost touch with material culture, and the role of religion and spirituality for today's youth.

**Alan Cummings, Lecturer in Japanese Literature at the School of Oriental & African Studies**

On 2 May, as one of the guest speakers at a special reunion conference held at Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Great Park, Natsuki Ikezawa gave the same talk to a gathering of 25 former Japan Foundation Fellows. The conference was arranged by the Japan Foundation for those who over the past 25 years had been recipients of a Japan Foundation Fellowship.

## Raising the Profile of the Japanese Language

The Japan Foundation London Language Centre continues to exploit new opportunities to support and encourage the teaching of the Japanese Language in the UK.

The remit of the Japan Foundation London Language Centre (JFLLC) is to support the teaching of the Japanese language throughout the UK. Its core activities comprise special training days and events for teachers; advice on exams, methodology and resources; and running a specialist library/resource centre. This year, especially, has presented the JFLLC with numerous opportunities to demonstrate that Japanese teaching and learning is thriving across the board.

In January, eight senior managers, language teachers and language coordinators from primary and secondary schools participated in our Head Start course. It not only provided an intensive three day introduction to basic Japanese but offered valuable guidance and support for those wishing to introduce Japanese in their schools.

There has also been a focus on Japanese at the higher education level. In late January, the JFLLC and the British Association for Teaching Japanese as a Foreign Language (BATJ), ran the first Japanese Speech Contest for University Students. From over 50 entries from the UK and Ireland, 8 finalists were selected each demonstrating a high level of spoken Japanese. In early April the BATJ Spring Conference, which concentrated on materials development, was held at the Japan Foundation. Japanese language education at university level was again



BATJ members enjoy working on materials during a workshop at their Spring Conference

in the spotlight when university lecturers from a number of Japanese departments came together at the JFLLC on 20 May to discuss resources, exams and methodology.

Readers may be aware that from 2009/10 primary languages will become an entitlement for all 7 - 11 year old pupils in England. Already over 50 % of primary schools offer language tuition, either within, or as a club outside, the curriculum and Japanese is one of many languages that can be taught at primary level. At the National Centre for Languages (CiLT) Primary Languages Show in March, primary school teachers, head teachers and local authority advisors were given practical examples of how European, Community, Asian and Eastern European languages are being taught at primary level. Japan 21 and the JFLLC presented the Japanese Ready Steady NihonGO! Primary Course, designed to be team-taught by a Japanese teacher without

classroom experience and a non-specialist classroom teacher. Whilst support from Language Colleges in outreach programmes with feeder primary schools has been vital in developing curriculum models for primary languages, primary teachers themselves are being encouraged more and more to receive training and to adopt a more prominent role in primary language teaching.

In March, a conference on Educational Cooperation with Japan, co-organised by the British Council, the Japan Foundation, the Japanese Embassy and Japan 21 was held and for the first time colleagues from both the secondary and primary sector, who teach the language and culture of Japan, were brought together. Dr Lid King, the National Director of Languages at the DfES, spoke about the Key Stage 2 Framework for Languages, launched last Autumn, and which includes advice on oracy, literacy, intercultural understanding, and knowledge about language and language learning strategies. Other presentations included sessions on links, partnerships, the Japanese language assistants programme, and interactive language tools.

The Japan Foundation is now also represented in Ireland by an advisor who supports the small but growing Japanese teaching community. In April, JFLLC Centre Director Harufumi Murata and Chief Advisor Hiromi Kijima spoke at a training event at Dublin City University, designed for Irish and

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### Director's Note



I have just seen the cherry blossom in London for the first time! It was in April.

Every day I had been waiting for it to burst forth from the many tiny buds that I had seen forming on its branches. And finally it bloomed! For many Japanese people it is the very harbinger of spring.

But I had a strange feeling. Compared with the Japanese cherry blossom, there is something slightly different about it. What could that be?

When we Japanese say cherry blossom or *sakura* we usually mean *someiyoshino*, the most

popular and dominant species in Japan. The *hana* of the *hanami* (enjoying the cherry blossoms) is normally *someiyoshino*. Its blossom fills every tip of bare branch before the leaves finally emerge and it keeps its blossom until full bloom. *Someiyoshino* trees are often planted together, sometimes along avenues, or sometimes covering large garden areas. So spring in Japan starts with a mass of full *someiyoshino* blossom, a light pinkish white cloud that covers the landscape. No other flower appears to be in bloom at the same time.

London, on the other hand, enjoys a number of different species of cherry tree that stand individually in gardens or on the roadside, showing different colours and different kinds of blossom. Not only is the cherry itself in flower, but many other trees also

adorn the streets and gardens at the same time with their colourful variety. So cherry trees here are not special. They are as beautiful as all the other trees that flower together with them.

Spring in Japan and spring in the UK. Each has its beauty. Might we through this analysis draw an analogy between Japan as a collective society and Britain as an individualistic one? If you find that notion interesting, may I add the fact that the *someiyoshino* trees normally live for only fifty to sixty years. The trees we now see in Japan were planted after the war and it will soon be time to re-plant them. I hear that there are cases where different kinds of cherry trees will be planted alongside the *someiyosino*.

Even the cherry trees are facing a new era.

Fumio Matsunaga, Director General

## Supporting Young Art Historians

The Sainsbury Institute will be hosting a Postgraduate Workshop in Japanese Art History (PWJAH) from 19-25 June 2006. The workshop was created in 1987 and since then has been held alternately in Japan and in North America. This PWJAH will be the eighth in the series and will be held in Europe for the first time. Approximately one third of the thirty participants will be from Europe, reflecting an increasing awareness of and interest in Japanese art history there. The participants, all working on doctorates in Japanese art history, will present their work in a series of seminars and will visit UK collections of Japanese art including the

newly re-opened Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts in Norwich, the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum.

This year's workshop will be attended by Professor

Nobuo Tsuji, Director of the Miho Art Museum, Professor Masatomo Kawai from Keio University and Professor Shima Arata of Tama Art University. Professor Kawai has been instrumental in setting up this year's workshop in Japan. In addition other Japanese specialists from Europe and the UK will also attend.

The workshop is being organised by the Sainsbury Institute under the leadership of its Director, Dr Nicole Rousmaniere, with the cooperation of senior British-based scholars including Dr Timon Screech and Dr John Carpenter of SOAS, Tim Clark, Head of the Japanese Section at the British Museum, and Professor Toshio Watanabe of the TrAIN Research Centre at the University of Arts, London.

In addition to students from SOAS, Oxford and the Royal College of Art, the European contingent comprises young scholars from Charles University in Prague, Marc Bloch University of Strasbourg, Leiden and Heidelberg. American participants will represent a wide range of universities including Berkeley California, British Columbia,

Columbia, Harvard, Kansas, Princeton, Stanford, and Wisconsin-Madison. Japanese participants will include students from the following universities: Doshisha, Gakushuin, Keio, Kyushu, Osaka, Ritsumeikan, Tama Art University, Tokyo and Tokyo Geidai.

The presentations will cover a broad range of art historical themes. Topics vary from the William Anderson Collection at the British Museum, timely with the re-opening of the Japanese Gallery in the autumn this year, to Meiji period photography, Kamakura period Buddhist imagery, focusing on important art works, locations and the artists themselves, such as the legends of the Toshogu shrine, Seiryō Temple, encountering artists such as Buncho Tani, Buson Yosa and Kyosai Kawanabe.

The scope of the presentations is indicative of the healthy state of Japanese art studies, and it is anticipated that the PWJAH will provide an important opportunity for a new generation of art historians of Japan to develop their research networks and to shape the field for future study with a global vision.

The Japan Foundation is supporting this important venture for young scholars under its 2006/2007 annual programme of grants.



Professor Tsuji, Director Miho Museum and PWJAH founder.

## Vice Chancellor of Oxford Brookes University

### Visits Japan as Guest of the Japan Foundation

Earlier this year the Vice Chancellor of Oxford Brookes University, Professor Graham Upton visited Japan on the invitation of the Japan Foundation under its short-term visitors' programme.

Recent years have seen a firm commitment at Oxford Brookes University to Japanese studies, especially in language provision and in the anthropology of Japan. It has been successful in running a basic undergraduate course in Japanese Language and Contemporary Society that has seen increasing numbers year on year. The course also offers several modules in the Anthropology of Japan and there are also specialists in Art, Geography, Economics and Business who all contribute much to the overall course content.

The University also has an MA programme in the Anthropology of Japan and from September 2005, it has been expanded into a more ambitious MA called Global Japan: Business, Culture and International Relations. There are currently five PhD students specialising in Japan-related research. Building upon the progress made and to open up new avenues that will

examine Japan's place in a regionalising and globalising world, the University in early 2005 established, with Japan Foundation help, a new Lecturer post in International Relations within the Department of Politics and International Relations and this appointment of a specialist, specifically in the external relations of Japan, has done much to enhance the provision of Japanese studies and international relations at the University.

Professor Upton's itinerary was planned in order to give him a greater understanding of higher education in Japan but also to develop his awareness of Japanese culture and society. An extensive discussion about the work of the Foundation and the place of Japanese studies in British higher education was held with the President of the Japan Foundation, Kazuo Ogoura and later with the British Embassy and the British Council talks focussed on how Japanese studies might be better promoted in the UK.

A valuable visit to the Monbusho offered the opportunity for discussion on current issues facing the higher education sector in Japan and

presentations were given on demographic trends and their impact on higher education provision, international student exchange and the promotion of research, and provided him with a clear overview on trends and future plans for the sector.

There followed visits to universities in Tokyo with which exchange agreements are already in operation and he was impressed by the excellent facilities and high academic standards. At Kyoto's Doshisha University there was discussion on the possibility of establishing an exchange agreement between Doshisha and Oxford Brookes. He was particularly impressed with a visit directed entirely towards technological resources and chosen was one of the Keio University campuses outside Tokyo, with its high tech facilities and its entirely wireless campus.

Professor Upton's visit demonstrated that a firm commitment towards Japan and Japanese studies at the very highest level within UK institutions of higher education is an essential ingredient in ensuring that Japanese studies remain at the forefront of academic scholarship and that they are appropriately funded.

## Tokyo: A true Mega City

### First Impressions of an Urban Geographer

As a Human Geographer I have always been intrigued by cities. Cities have their own structure and atmosphere. Each city generates a particular ambience that gives it a unique character and personality. If you add the ancient traditions and beliefs of the local people into the complex equation, you have a fascinating combination of human and physical environments. And as a Geography teacher, I have used Tokyo with my classes as an example of a Mega City which faces many issues and equally has its own unique way of conquering its problems.

As our coach exited Narita airport we joined the constant flow of traffic entering the city. It was only then that I really began to appreciate that this is a city of 25 million people. Our coach motored over bridges, swept on to double decker freeways, ran alongside the Shenzhen line and ducked into tunnels. A mass of high-rise buildings in the distance, topped with red, winking warning flashing lights: a throng of humanity.

Over the next few days Tokyo continued to impress. From the 20th floor of the Japan Foundation building, Tokyo revealed itself as a city of innumerable, enormous sky scrapers; helicopter pads suspended as if in mid-air; triple-decked highways snaking through urban canyons; metro-lines winding between tower blocks and occasional roof gardens adding a splash of green to create a sense of tranquillity in an urban jungle. From this vantage point, it was only a short distance to the Emperor's residence.

The Imperial Palace has a huge real estate value. At the height of the property boom of the early 1980s, the value of this island was the same as that of the whole of Canada! This put

things into perspective. I was in a city where space is at a premium. The Japanese have tackled this in a very Japanese way. With technology and determination they have created flat, useable land where there was none before. Every Geography textbook has examples and photos of the reclaimed areas within Tokyo Bay. I was lucky enough to cross the famous Rainbow Bridge and explore the reclaimed areas of Ariake, Daiba and Aomi. These flat areas of newly created land appear to have given a clean slate to architects, designers and builders. This is personified by the Fuji TV building designed so that the primary studio sits suspended in mid air with the Tokyo skyline on the horizon to give the perfect backdrop to the National News. Other buildings such as the Museum for Science and Innovation along with the new Tokyo Exhibition Centre, and the huge Museum of Maritime Science, shaped like an enormous ship, display creative designs with a disregard for the past but an eye on the future.

This is a true Mega City that has thrived against natural disasters such as earthquakes and typhoons. My only disappointment was that I had not managed to glimpse Mt Fuji. But fortunately out of the window on the flight home, I glanced its mighty presence, standing like a sentinel over this truly impressive city.

**Simon Wilson, Head of Geography,  
Kimbolton School, Cambridgeshire**

Simon participated in the 2005 Tour for Secondary Schoolteachers and Administrators. See article opposite for details of the November 2006 tour.



Tokyo Bay: making the most of space by reclaiming land from the sea

## Study Tour to Japan: For Secondary Schoolteachers and Administrators

1 to 15 November 2006

Applications are invited from full-time secondary schoolteachers, and from those working in the administration of secondary education with previous teaching experience, to the Japan Foundation's annual Study Tour to Japan 1 to 15 November 2006. The Tour offers a valuable introduction to Japan's education system, society and culture, aiming to deepen participants' understanding of the country and to enhance their teaching resources. Four groups visit from all over the world at different times of the year and the five UK participants will form part of Group three.

It is fully funded by the Japan Foundation, with travel support from Japan Airlines, and includes visits to schools and places of educational and cultural interest in Tokyo, Kyoto, Hiroshima, and to a local prefecture where there is a one-night home stay and a night in a Japanese style hotel.

### Applications from Teachers

Teachers must be full-time, currently practising, teaching about Japan in the humanities/social sciences (i.e. geography, history, economics, politics) with at least 5 years' teaching experience and intending to remain in teaching for a further 10 years.

### Applications from Administrators

Those working in resource design, curriculum and/or textbook development, preferably with previous teaching experience and with a specifically Japan related remit.

In general priority will be given to those applicants who have never visited Japan before.

Applications from those who have spent a period of one month or more in Japan cannot be considered.

Deadline for applications is 28 July 2006 and full details and an application form are obtainable from Simon Williams  
**E-mail: [Simon.Williams@jpf.org.uk](mailto:Simon.Williams@jpf.org.uk)**

# Japan Foundation Grant Programme Results 2006/2007

## Japanese Studies Overseas and Intellectual Exchange

### Japanese Studies Fellowship Programme Scholars and Researchers' Category

**Dr Kyoko Fukukawa**, Lecturer in Marketing, School of Management, University of Bradford  
Topic of Research: *The Communication and Practice of Japanese Corporate Social Responsibility*  
**Doctoral Category**

**Siu Mei Takagi**, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Cambridge  
Topic of Research: *Women, Literacy and Reading in the early Edo Period*

**Emma Cook**, School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London  
Topic of Research: *Freeters in Contemporary Japan: An Ethnography of Challenged Masculinities*

**Kikutsubo Day**, School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London  
Topic of Research: *Remembrance of Things Past: The Ancient Shaukuhachi in Contemporary Contexts*

### Short Term Visitors' Programme

**Jude Kelly**, Artistic Director, South Bank Centre

### Research/Conference/Seminar Grant Programme

**School of Oriental & African Studies, Department of Japan & Korea**  
A grant towards the conference: *First SOAS Conference in Japanese Linguistics: Revisiting Japanese Modality*

### Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures

A grant towards the workshop: *Postgraduate Workshop in Japanese Art History (PWJAH)*  
**University of Sheffield, Centre for Japanese Studies, School of East Asian Studies & University of Leeds, Department of East Asian Studies, School of Modern Languages and Cultures**  
A grant towards joint research: *Creation of a European Academic Network in Modern Japanese Studies (EANMJS)*

### Staff Expansion Grant Programme for Japanese Studies

**Oxford Brookes University, Department of Politics and International Relations**  
A grant towards the salary of a Lecturer in the External Relations of Japan (third year)

### Library Support Programme

Book donations were made to the following university libraries:  
**Manchester, Leeds, Oxford, Cambridge**

### Grant Programme for Intellectual Exchange Projects

**University of Glasgow, Scottish Centre for War Studies**  
A grant towards the conference: *Occupations and Withdrawals: Japan, Europe, Palestine and Iraq*

### Visual Arts Exchange Programmes

#### Exhibitions Abroad Support Programme

Grants will be awarded towards the following exhibitions:  
**Ikon Gallery:** *Café Moonrider* by Tatsuro Bashi  
**The Photographers' Gallery:** *Exhibition by Rinko Kawauchi*  
**The Whitworth Art Gallery:** *INDIGO*  
**Liverpool Biennial:** *Shimabuku at the International 06 Exhibition*

#### Publication and Audio-Visual Exchange Programmes

#### Film Festivals Abroad Support Programme

Grants will be awarded towards the following:  
**Barbican Centre:** *Japan on Film*  
**Addictive TV:** *Optronica*

#### 14th Raindance Film Festival Translation and Publication Support Programme

A grant towards the publication costs of the following work:

**A&C Black Publishers Ltd:**  
*Japanese Popular Prints - from votive slips to playing cards* by Rebecca Salter

#### Film and TV Programme Production Support Programme

**Storm Creation Ltd:** *The Japanese Village*

### Support Programmes for Japanese Language Education Overseas

#### Grant Programme for Japanese Language Courses Abroad (Support for Courses)

Grant towards the costs of a language tutor in Japanese  
**University of Warwick (3rd year)**  
**Grant Programme for Developing Networks of Japanese Language Teachers and Institutions**  
Grant towards the cost of organising conferences or meetings on Japanese language learning

**The British Association for Teaching Japanese as a Foreign Language (BATJ)**  
Grant towards the cost of the 9th BATJ Annual Conference

#### Intensive Training Programme for Teachers of the Japanese Language from USA, Canada and the UK

A three-week intensive training course for non-native teachers of Japanese from the USA, Canada

and the UK at the Japan Foundation Japanese Language Institute, Urawa and other places

**Hai Ying Gosnall**  
Summerhill School  
**Helen Turner**  
Hertford Regional College  
**Training Programme for Teachers of the Japanese Language (for Japanese Abroad)**

**Etsuko Okahisa**  
University of Newcastle, School of Modern Languages  
**Japanese Language Programme for High School Students**

A two-week programme offering secondary school students the opportunity to experience Japanese culture. Programme includes language training at the Japan Foundation Japanese Language Institute, Kansai

**Gian-Marco Guiseppè Bussandri**  
St Bernard's Convent School

**Ramanpreed Laur Jassel**  
Queen Mary's High School

**Yinsey Ai Ping Wang**  
The Perse School for Girls

#### Japanese Language Teaching Materials Donation Programme

Teaching materials were donated to 13 schools and universities

### Raising the Profile of the Japanese Language (from page 2)

Japanese native speaking secondary teachers and university lecturers. Mr Murata gave an overview of Japan Foundation activities and Ms Kijima offered a wealth of ideas for teaching Japanese through the medium of film.

On 24 June the Nihongo Cup, jointly organised by the Association of Language Learning's Japanese Language Committee, the Japan Foundation and the Embassy of Japan, promises to be a first class demonstration of spoken Japanese at secondary level. A record number of over 30 schools entered over 170 students. 18 have been selected.

The JFLLC is inviting secondary - and this year for the first time - primary teachers to its annual Summer Refresher Course, on 17 - 21 July. The course will give teachers the opportunity to refresh their language skills in a supportive atmosphere, without having to travel all the way to Japan! Details on the course and other information on Japanese language education are available from our website <http://www.jpff.org.uk/language/> or call 020 7436 6698.

**Kornelia Achrafie**  
**Senior Programme Officer**

## Japanese Popular Prints

Although the influence of *ukiyo-e* on the Western aesthetic and image of Japan is very well-known, the broader reach of the technique of woodblock within Japanese society is relatively unrecognised. The technical advances in registering multi-colour prints in the late 18th century, which led to the intricate beauty of *nishiki-e* (brocade prints), later brought full-colour printed artefacts to a wide audience in Japan. The western world had to wait for the arrival of chromolithography for ordinary people to be able to enjoy printed colour in everything from a picture reproduction to a throwaway advertisement.

My passion for Japanese woodblock comes from having learnt the technique rather than from an academic knowledge of the finished prints. Spending time with working carvers and printers (and the tool and paper makers) has reinforced my admiration for their, sometimes undervalued, skill and the enormous contribution it has made to the development of the technique.



Humorous *pochibukuro* (gift envelopes) showing party tricks from plate spinning to nose tugging!



Close-up of 2 carvers – one diligently carving the fine line, the other clearing large areas with a mallet – from Hokusai's *Manga Vol 1* (Random Sketches)

Many of the artefacts I have selected for my new book would have been considered of little consequence when they were made – decorative papers, votive slips, *sugoroku* games etc. All were produced using woodblock and most commonly either worn out or thrown away after use. Few show the highest technical standards of the golden age of woodblock but they are recognisably part of the same lineage and are links in a common visual chain, which has contributed to Japan's undoubted artistic sophistication. Through this cheap and accessible medium, imagery, influence and

knowledge spread in an attractive form to all layers of society. In the Edo period information on the latest fashions of the city was spread to remote regions through print and with the opening of Japan in the Meiji period, woodblock likewise disseminated knowledge of western ways. Ironically it was this precipitous adoption of the new (facilitated to some extent by woodblock), which led to the introduction of mechanised printing and the loss of woodblock's traditional role as a medium and the beginning of its slow demise. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the potential inherent in the

technique was recognised by artists and they rethought the traditional role division between artist, carver and printer and used woodblock as a means of artistic expression familiar to western printmakers. This model continues today but my concern has now turned to the post-war generation of carvers and printers who are nearing retirement often without apprentices to follow them. It is not surprising that few are attracted to a life with such uncertain prospects and it is hard, in the current economic climate, to manufacture artificially a market, which could sustain them. The prospect of leaving that continuous thread of woodblock knowledge

unrecorded would, for me, make the inevitable transition harder to accept. With the help of the Japan Foundation and the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation I have started a 2-3 year project to compile an archive of filmed interviews, which I hope will allow future enthusiasts to experience the spirit of the craftsmen behind one of Japan's most influential (if accidental) exports. The technique itself may well move on, and adapt, to find a new role outside Japan, but the contribution of these unsung heroes will, I hope, be remembered.



*Pochibukuro* (gift envelopes) showing traditional Edo jumping toys made from bamboo. The flaps lift up to reveal a face.

### Rebecca Salter

Rebecca Salter is a London-based artist with a long-standing interest in Japan. She spent two years at Kyoto City University of the Arts and subsequently studied Japanese woodblock with Professor Akira Kurosaki. Her first book, *Japanese Woodblock Printing*, was a manual written specifically to introduce printmakers outside Japan to the technique. Her latest book, *Japanese Popular prints – from votive slips to playing cards* is a wide-ranging survey of popular artefacts produced using woodblock and is reviewed on page 7. Her next project is to film a complete archive of interviews with craftsmen and toolmakers associated with the technique.

Book Review

# Japanese Popular Prints – from votive slips to playing cards

by Rebecca Salter

**A&C Black Publishers, London; ISBN: 07136 65173; Full colour throughout (221 images); 208 pages, 246 x 189 mm Publication date: 30 June 2006 Price: £30.**



herself a print-maker, has combined her practical knowledge of the subject with in-depth research of a neglected topic to produce a book full of visual surprises

the few elderly craftsmen still surviving. The book reads pleasantly, text interspersed with images and inserts clarifying specific terms or facts. Artists' biographies, and a glossary and bibliography complete what should become an essential work on a rich and fascinating aspect of the art of Japanese prints.

**Marie-Thérèse Barrett, NADFAS Lecturer in Japanese Art, Course Tutor (Japan module) for the British Museum's Diploma in Asian Art**

The field of Japanese prints has been well ploughed but most publications deal with the main stream of *ukiyo-e* which, by being so widely-researched, has somehow lost its status of popular art. Rebecca Salter, on the other hand, focuses on truly *popular* images – calendars and board games, votive slips and measles charms, playing cards and toy prints. These were cheap, disposable items, full of fun and playful imagination but, as she shows, technically just as skilful as the great masters' works. The author,

and delightful discoveries, useful historical overviews and clear technical explanations. This unique record of a threatened craft could only have been written by someone with a deep knowledge of Japanese art, society and language as well as someone personally acquainted with

The publication of the book has been assisted with a grant from the Japan Foundation. Orders from A&C Black website to get a special 10% discount: [www.acblack.com](http://www.acblack.com)

## Raising Awareness of Japanese Art Collections in the UK

It has been assessed that in the UK there are over 150 collections of Japanese art. Indeed, many people both in the UK and in Japan have been insufficiently aware that collections exist other than those that are housed in our major national collections such as the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) and the British Museum.

Certainly, these valuable collections deserve much higher visibility and there is a growing need for the public to be made more aware of where these collections are to be found and what they contain. So with these thoughts in mind the Japan Foundation organised a one-day symposium on 21 March attended by 13 museum professionals from all over the UK, who are in different ways involved in Japanese collections. The symposium was made possible with the very valuable help and advice of Gregory Irvine, Senior Curator at the V&A.

Short presentations from each participant during the first half of the symposium provided a detailed introduction and picture of the current state of the Japanese art collection in their respective museums.



Active discussion at the 21 March symposium

The common issues identified during the symposium were lack of resources; shortage of time, space and money; and above all, a lack of sufficient knowledge of Japanese art. It is quite often the case in regional museums that a curator who is not a Japanese art specialist has to cover substantial areas, including Japan. Whilst expertise from the major institutions such as the V&A is readily available, the prosperity of Japanese art in this country may be in the hands of one individual enthusiastic curator and the ups-and-downs are determined by the policy of each institution, where often Japan is understated in favour of China.

In the latter half of the symposium, participants discussed passionately how to raise the profile of Japanese art collections. Tying up with UK education and promoting Japan and Japanese art through schools and universities was seen to be one possible way, and setting up an on-line virtual exhibition to introduce their collection and activities was perceived to be another. The possibility of having an external special body, in addition to the existent JACUK (subject specialist network for Japanese art) was also discussed.

The following day, a related seminar was held in our conference room where three speakers from regional museums were invited to demonstrate how their Japanese collections have been valued and how they have been a source of inspiration for their temporary exhibitions. The session was summed up by Gregory Irvine who gave an overview of the historical background to

the collection of Japanese art in the UK, and in which, over the years, the V&A has been so actively engaged.

**Junko Takekawa Senior Arts Programme Officer**

The complete transcript of the proceedings of both symposium and seminar will soon be available on our website, [www.jpff.org.uk](http://www.jpff.org.uk)

## City of London Festival

**Trading Places: London - Tokyo 26 June - 13 July**

**The Japan Foundation is proud to be associated with this year's City of London Festival.**

Celebrating the historic trading links between Japan and London, the City of London Festival will feature during the height of the summer a wide variety of Japanese events, from both contemporary and traditional music performances to screenings of some of Japan's most fascinating examples of animation works.

For more information and event schedule, please visit [www.colf.org](http://www.colf.org)

## SPOTLIGHT

## Japan 21 Awards

**J**apan 21 Awards is a small-scale grant scheme run by Japan 21, a UK charity that exclusively supports and encourages educational and grassroots activity relating to Japan.

With an annual budget of £30,000, awards are given to support projects where a small injection of funds can really make a difference. The scheme has been running since April 2003 following the establishment of Japan 21 from



"King Lear" by Japanese puppeteer, Noriyuki Sawa, at the Buxton Puppet Festival

the merger of the Japan Festival Fund and Japan Festival Education Trust. Its aim is to complement Japan 21's education programmes as well as to try to meet a specific need for funding smaller and last minute projects.

In the three years since the scheme began, over 150 awards have been granted to organisations and individuals including many schools and community groups. The maximum grant given is £1,000 and the average is just over £500. Although, in principle, anyone organising Japan related projects or events held in the UK may apply, priority is given to projects/events with the following elements: education, youth participation and regional involvement.

We have supported many workshops and residencies at schools, museums or community centres, where the organisers have needed financial help in order to buy in specific expertise. Japan 21 Awards has also assisted with schools' widening participation and museum outreach programmes.

Examples of other types of projects that we have recently supported are:

**Buxton Puppet Festival**, run by the British

Puppet & Model Theatre Guild which has been organising workshops by a Japanese puppeteer Noriyuki Sawa for the last three years. The initial visit in July 2003 led to a visit by Yamabiko-za (children's troupe from Sapporo) in 2005, and a return visit by children from Buxton to Sapporo is planned for this year.

**Playbox Theatre**, a children's theatre company in Warwick. In March 2006, they put on a production of "Haito the Tree Wizard" based on the traditional Japanese tale of "Hanasaka Ji-san". It was devised and aimed at children under ten years old, with plenty of audience participation activities.

**Shuko Noguchi, Executive Director**

For further information on Japan 21 Awards, please contact Shuko Noguchi  
E mail: [awards@japan21.org.uk](mailto:awards@japan21.org.uk)  
Tel: 020 7630 5552 (staffed part-time so please leave a message) or visit the website [www.japan21.org.uk](http://www.japan21.org.uk) to apply online or for further information about Japan 21's other education activities.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

## Events organised by, or with support from, the Japan Foundation

- 5 May-9 July** **Rinko Kawauchi** - First solo exhibition in the UK by this artist internationally regarded as one of the most distinctive new voices in contemporary Japanese photography. Photographers' Gallery, London. Details visit [www.photonet.org.uk](http://www.photonet.org.uk)
- 19-25 June** **Postgraduate Workshop in Japanese Art History (PWJAH)** - Hosted by the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures. See page 3 for details
- 23 June-31 Aug** **Passport to Japan** - Exhibition and performances. Third in a series of multicultural, multimedia events featuring historical and contemporary Japanese artefacts, public workshops plus programme of films on Japanese themes. McLean Museum & Art Gallery Greenock. Tel: 01475 715624
- 24-26 June** **Conference: Revisiting Japanese Modality** - First SOAS Conference in Japanese Linguistics organised by the Department of Japan and Korea. Details from Dr Mika Kizu e-mail: [mk89@soas.ac.uk](mailto:mk89@soas.ac.uk)
- 26 June-13 July** **City of London Festival** - See page 7 for further details
- 1-9 July** **Japan on Film** - as part of the City of London Festival, Barbican Film presents 2 seasons, one exploring the film music of composer Toru Takemitsu and the other introducing the tradition of anime in Japanese cinema. Details visit [www.barbican.org.uk](http://www.barbican.org.uk)
- 20-30 Aug** **Café Moonrider** by Tatsuro Bashi - Rotating café installation, constructed by the artist, at Birmingham's Rotunda. Part of Ikon Gallery's off-site programme. Tel: 0121 248 0708 or [www.ikon-gallery.co.uk](http://www.ikon-gallery.co.uk)
- 16 Sept-26 Nov** **Liverpool Biennial's International 06** - Japanese artist Shimabuku has been invited to create a new work for this international exhibition of contemporary visual art that has commissioned 40 artists from over 25 countries. Details visit [www.biennial.com](http://www.biennial.com)
- 27 Sept-8 Oct** **14th Raindance Film Festival** - Reflects films of the independent filmmaking community, films by first-time directors and featuring recent Japanese films. Last year's winner, Kosai Sekine, has produced the trailer for this year's festival. Details visit [www.raindancefilmfestival.org/festival/](http://www.raindancefilmfestival.org/festival/)



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E-mail: [info@jpf.org.uk](mailto:info@jpf.org.uk) (London Office) [info.language@jpf.org.uk](mailto:info.language@jpf.org.uk) (Language Centre) Web: [www.jpf.org.uk](http://www.jpf.org.uk)  
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