

Perspectives

The Japan Foundation London Newsletter

The New Dynamics of Ageing

The Role of Inclusive Design

By 2030, two thirds of the world's populations will be living in cities. These will have proportionately fewer young people and many more older people. As a society we shall therefore need to think about a much broader range of needs and capabilities that will result from this ageing population, and to consider the impact it will have on our mobility, work, home-life, recreation, general health, and our personal and social well-being.

This demographic change will have profound effects on how we approach the design of our physical cityscapes and will present a significant challenge for designers, architects and planners.

One concept that may assist us with this challenge is 'inclusive design', a UK definition of what is more commonly known as 'universal' design in Japan, a concept that seeks to allow as many people as possible, regardless of their physical, sensory or cognitive capabilities to utilize products, services, interfaces and environments. As a design educationalist with a special interest in this area, I was fortunate to be able to visit Japan recently for a three-month period of research into inclusive design through a Japan Foundation Research Fellowship.

Japan is an ideal location for this area of research as its population is one of the most rapidly ageing in the developed world: there are 66 times more people 100 years or older than there were 33 years ago, and the country is having to make careful and robust long-term plans to respond to this demographic shift.

The focus of my research was to understand how Japan was approaching the creation of products, environments and services that were useable and accessible by this dynamically ageing population. The research fell into three main areas – design, user-friendly technologies, and the promotion of the inclusive design philosophy, and involved consultations with designers, engineers, businesses, and end-users. The locations for the research included Tokyo,

Nagoya, Osaka, and Kyoto. The Fellowship also provided an opportunity to survey the design of the physical environment from the perspective of the user, particularly relating to transport and mobility within cities, and to look at the way new designs and technologies provided the opportunity for an enhanced and more inclusive user experience.

Japan, as a society, appears to have a much wider appreciation of the value of universal

easily as surfboards, shopping, or potted plants.

Indeed, a key message of inclusive design is that if it is well designed for older and disabled users, it generally results in a much better-designed product for everyone. In the retail sector, some department stores, such as Matsuya in Tokyo, are now offering well-designed and attractive 'inclusive' products in amongst other desirable goods. These say more about lifestyle choice than about age or



The Toyota Universal Design Centre, Tokyo

design than the UK, and its industry and businesses have begun to use this awareness to respond proactively to the changing market. Major manufacturers such as Toyota and Panasonic now have showrooms devoted to 'universally' designed products. The Toyota Porte, a new compact family car launched in 2004, for example, is the most recent outcome of a seven year programme of investment into the needs of this changing, ageing, and more diverse market. Toyota's designers have succeeded in producing a car interior that is highly flexible, accommodating a broad range of lifestyle options, where ease of access and versatility are key to its success. Wheelchairs and other mobility aids can be accommodated as

disability, and without the stigma attached to either. The consumer generation is as finicky in its older age as it was in its youth and this older market now has the added forcefulness of its significant purchasing power, the so-called 'grey pound'. An organization of 135 Japanese companies now shares inclusive ideals and information to advance the inclusive agenda.

A valuable advance in the area of consumer electronics is the simplification of mobile phone interfaces, a welcome contrast to the feature-laden products one is usually offered. This type of development is also useful to the other often overlooked and just as excluded opposite end of the market, the very young. 'clumsy' fingers are not only the preserve of the

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Director's Note

Around the time when you receive this edition of Perspectives the cherry blossom will have already fallen. Since I took office here, I have looked forward every year to viewing the cherry blossom and, furthermore, have often asked myself how it was originally introduced into the UK. Which kind of cherry blossom from over 300 species will suit the UK soil and move the sensitivity of the British people?

As I know you are aware, in Japan the cherry blossom very frequently appears in literature, in poetry, *tanka* and *haiku*. In particular, cherry blossom viewing under the trees has established itself as an annual event. I sometimes wonder whether or not the time will come in the UK when cherry blossom viewing will become part of your contemporary culture. I assume that the nature-loving and party-loving British people will be able to establish the custom of cherry blossom viewing with considerable ease.

The Japanese value the cherry blossom as a symbol of a fresh start and, on the other hand, as an embodiment and reminder of the transience of life itself.

On the subject of a fresh start, I am delighted, as our new financial year begins, to publicise in this issue the 2005-2006 recipients of the Japan Foundation Annual Grants. You will find them listed on the facing page. All recipients so thoroughly deserve the high assessment they have been given and we have the strongest expectations of them. I hope and trust that their projects will proceed smoothly and according to



plan and that they will bear fruit: I much look forward to receiving and reading the final reports upon completion of each and every project.

Over and above that, I must here allude to one other attribute of the cherry blossom: its very transience. I should like you all to know how much I have come to appreciate your keen interest in our activities, your tireless cooperation in all we have done, and, not least, the kindness you have extended to me during my 3-year stay in the UK. Although I would never have the temerity to say that our work in cultural exchange might trigger immediate improvements in the mutual relationship between the UK and Japan, I am in no doubt that our activities will never cease to play that vital role of catalyst in the relationship, albeit in a slow and steady way. So please accept here my most sincere appreciation of the positive understanding that you have shown and the unfailing support that you have given to me during my time in your country.

My successor is Mr Fumio Matsunaga. With your continued assistance and advice I have every confidence that he will succeed in implementing our work to perfection and to the satisfaction of all. He and our staff count and rely on the very support you have always given us.

To all my UK friends, my very best wishes for the future and may you remain in good health. SAYONARA.

Kohki Kanno
Director General

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old. The Nippon Lighthouse, a centre in Osaka for those with vision impairments, offers a number of useful innovative technologies that are able to 'read' scanned information aloud, whether this is a timetable, a menu, or to identify a grocery item. The use of the now familiar 'tactile' and textured pavement slabs, and of sound as a navigation and orientation aid for this same group is a well developed and commonly found feature of the public environment in Japanese cities.

Not only is the infrastructure of the cityscapes and design of products being made more inclusive, there is also an investment being made in educating young mindsets. An interesting initiative at the Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto is the introduction of a

course for non-design graduate students to alert these future policy-shapers, bureaucrats, and technologists, i.e. the future commissioners and consumers of design, to the concept of inclusive design in the hope that they will have an enlightened role the creation of inclusive cities. There are many case studies resulting from this stimulating research study in Japan that would be valuable for our community here in the UK in anticipating and preparing for our own changing demographic.

Alastair S Macdonald, Professor, Head of Department, Product Design Engineering, Glasgow School of Art, was a Japan Foundation Fellow in 2004

Study Tour to Japan: For Secondary School Teachers and Administrators

15th to 29th November 2005

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 15th to 29th November 2005. 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.

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 25th July 2005 and full details and application forms are obtainable from Stephen McEnally E-mail: Stephen.McEnally@jpf.org.uk or may be downloaded from our website www.jpf.org.uk

Japan Foundation Grant Programme Results 2005/2006

The following are the results of the UK applications to the Japan Foundation grant programmes for the 2005/2006 award year:

Japanese Studies Overseas and Intellectual Exchange

Fellowship Programme

Scholars and Researchers' Category

Dr Ian Astley, Senior Lecturer in Japanese and Convener of Japanese, Centre for Japanese Studies, University of Edinburgh
Topic of Research: *Religion, Politics & Material Culture in Early 19th East Asia: The Implications of Kukai's 'Shorai mokuroku'*

Dr Sigmund Wagner-Tsukamoto, Lecturer in Business Ethics, Organisational Economics, University of Leicester
Topic of Research: *Moral Agency, Pluralism and Institutional Economic Reconstruction: The Case Study of Japan*

Dr Barbara Pizziconi, Lecturer in Japanese Applied Linguistics, School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London
Topic of Research: *Beyond Honorifics: Changing the Discourse on Japanese Politeness Short-Term Researchers' Category*

Dr Nicola Liscutin, Lecturer in Japanese Studies, Birkbeck College, University of London
Topic of Research: *Preparation for the Compilation of a 'Reader in Japanese Cultural Studies' and a bibliographical Essay entitled 'Introduction to Cultural Studies in Japan'*

Dr Timon Screech, Reader in Japanese Art History, School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London
Topic of Research: *Obtaining Pictures: Production and Display in the Art of Edo-Period Japan*

Short Term Visitors' Programme

Dr Graham Upton, Vice-Chancellor, Oxford Brookes University

Research/Conference/Seminar Grant Programme

The British Association for Japanese Studies
A grant towards the cost of bringing the keynote speaker from Japan for the plenary session of the 2005 BAJA Annual Conference
School of Oriental & African Studies, Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions

A grant towards the symposium: *Foundation Myths in Japan's Past and Present*

Staff Expansion Grant Programme for Japanese Studies

University of Sheffield,

School of East Asian Studies (first year)

Oxford Brookes University, Department of Politics and International Relations

A grant towards the salary of a Lecturer in the External Relations of Japan (second year)

Library Support Programme

Book donations were made to libraries at the following institutions:

The British Library

**Royal Holloway, University of London
University of Sheffield**

Grant Programme for Intellectual Exchange Projects

University of Northumbria, Disaster & Development Centre

A grant towards: *UK-Japan International Workshop on Disaster Risk Management Education and Local Emergency Planning System*

Centre for Economic Policy Research

A grant towards the conference: *Europe Japan Economic Issues*

The Burma Campaign Society

A grant towards the symposium: *Enemy and Friend – Britain and Japan at War and Peace*
To be confirmed

Visual Arts Exchange Programmes

Exhibitions Abroad Support Programme

Grants will be awarded towards the following exhibitions:

Barbican Art Gallery: *Nobuyoshi Araki: Work*

The Royal Armouries: *Shogun Exhibition*

The British Museum: *Kabuki Heroes on the Osaka Stage 1780-1830*

Publication and Audio-Visual Exchange Programmes

Film Festivals Abroad Support Programme

Grants will be awarded towards the following Film Festivals:

The Independent Cinema Office: *Discovering Japanese New Wave Master: Masumura Yasuzo*

Addictive TV: *Optronica*

Edinburgh Filmhouse: *Akibori: New Japanese Cinema*

Leeds International Film Festival

Onedotzero 09

13th Raindance Film Festival

Translation and Publication Support Programme

A grant towards the publication costs of the following works:

BFI Publishing: *Mizoguchi and Japan*
by Mark Le Fanu

Cambridge University Press: *A History of Japan's Religious Traditions, 500-1600*
by Richard Bowring

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 (2nd year)

Grant Programme for Developing Networks of Japanese Language Teachers and Institutions

Grant towards the costs of conferences or meetings on Japanese language learning

The British Association for Teaching Japanese as a Foreign Language (BATJ)

Grant towards the cost of the 8th BATJ Annual Conference

Training Programme for Teachers of the Japanese Language (for Japanese Abroad)

A one-month course for teachers who are Japanese nationals living outside Japan to consolidate and expand knowledge of Japanese language teaching methods

Motoko Takahashi, Institute for Applied Linguistics, University of Edinburgh

Japanese Language Programme for Specialists (Researchers and Postgraduate Students)

An intensive Japanese language training course for researchers and postgraduates

Paul Hansen School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London

Anne-Marie Wilson University of Newcastle upon Tyne

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

Thomas Bond Whitgift School

Nick Hallam Dartford Grammar School

Nick Sargent Katherine Lady Berkeley's School

Japanese Language Education Fellowship Programme

A grant for educational institutions and publishers wishing to send Japanese language specialists to carry out surveys or research on Japanese language education in Japan

The University of Edinburgh & Dublin City University

Curriculum Development for MSc/Dip in Translation Studies

Japanese Language Teaching Materials Donation Programme

Teaching materials were donated to 24 schools and universities

Nihongo Cup

Young learners show off their Japanese speaking skills

Sunday the 23rd April 2005, saw pupils, teachers and honoured guests from the world of Japanese language education in the UK gather at the Embassy of Japan in London for the Finals Day of the Japanese Language Committee (JLC) Japanese Speech Contest for Secondary Schools, Nihongo Cup.

Co-organised by the Japanese Language Committee of the Association for Language Learning, the Embassy of Japan and the Japan Foundation, Nihongo Cup 2005 was the second annual Japanese speech contest for secondary schools. Guests included leading figures from education and Japan-related organisations, and the guest of honour was DfES National Director for Languages, Dr Lid King.

'Friends' was the theme of this year's speeches, which for the first time included entries from A level pupils. From over 100 entries, six finalists and two reserves were selected in each of three categories to deliver their speeches on Finals Day. The programme for the day included encouraging and inspiring addresses from Ambassador Yoshiji Nogami,



Proud winners with (L-R) Kohki Kanno: ALL Assistant Director, Sharon Curry; Dr Lid King; Ambassador Nogami; and the JLC Chair, David Farrell

the Japan Foundation's London Director General, Kohki Kanno and, of course, Dr King, who thrilled pupils and teachers alike by delivering part of his address in Japanese. The audience was also treated to traditional Japanese drumming, performed by Akatsuki Daiko, and even had the chance to loosen up with Rajio Taiko exercises!

The real stars of the day, however, were the

finalists who displayed tremendous language skills and confidence, and after much deliberation, the judges were able to select winners from each category. First places went to Stephanie Tress (Kingston Grammar); Miriam Starling (Hendon School); and Lee Anderson (Harris CTC). Prizes included an invitation to participate in a cultural programme in Japan in association with the Japanese Speech Awards, notebook computers, digital cameras and many other goodies donated by Toshiba of Europe Ltd, Ricoh UK Ltd and JP-Books (UK) Ltd. The event was also supported by JRI Europe, Japan 21, The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation and Soho Japan.

It was a challenging day for the contestants, and Nihongo Cup 2005 was declared a resounding success, offering guests from all sectors an opportunity to witness the excellent progress being made by the more than 250 secondary schools teaching Japanese around the UK.

Nimali De Silva

Japan Foundation London Language Centre

The Cambridge Politics Colloquium

With the support of the Japan Foundation and the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation, Cambridge University's East Asia Institute hosted the annual meeting of the Japan Politics Colloquium, 12 - 13 April 2005.

First launched 13 years ago by Arthur Stockwin, David Williams and Barry Keehn, it has now evolved into a valuable and popular feature of the academic calendar bringing together graduate students, academics and professionals working in the field of modern Japanese studies, providing an opportunity for participants to present both finished research and work in progress, and allowing an analysis of Japanese foreign policy and domestic politics over the past year. Although the group has many UK members, the event also regularly attracts foreign participants with individuals this year coming from Denmark, Hong Kong and New Zealand.

Our discussions were structured around four wide-ranging and topical panels addressing strategic and security issues, the international context of policy making, domestic political change, and issues relating to the Japanese economy.

Some papers grappled with contemporary practical policy concerns, analysing in one case the options and constraints faced by the Koizumi government in the context of the 6-party nuclear talks with North Korea, or exploring, in a second paper, the seemingly limited options for security and political cooperation between Japan and Europe.

Other presentations highlighted the gap between Japanese official aspirations and the opportunities for real progress, either in securing a permanent UN Security Council seat for Japan or in advancing the case for free trade with Europe in the context of the World Trade Organization.

Some papers concentrated on historical issues as a means of challenging orthodox interpretations such as the assumption that Japan's 1947 Constitution was essentially a foreign-imposed document, or (via a study of the early Japanese oil industry) Chalmers Johnson's familiar thesis that centrally coordinated strategic government planning explains much of 20th century Japan's economic growth.

Other papers favoured a more wide-ranging analysis as a means of exploring important theoretical issues including the nature of Civil Society in contemporary Japan or the character and continuing relevance of the Japanese developmental state.

Theoretical breadth was complemented by empirical depth in the form of a number of papers considering the ideological character of Ichiro Ozawa's Liberal Party, the demographic challenges posed by ageing in Japan, and the political thought of Mishima Yukio. Finally, our discussions were focused forwards, rather than back, with an analysis of the present and future challenges confronting the Japanese economy.

Dr John Swenson-Wright, East Asia Institute, University of Cambridge

For further information on this or next year's event, please feel free to contact John Swenson-Wright at jhs22@cam.ac.uk.

SPOTLIGHT

The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation

Making a difference in UK-Japan relations

Since it was established twenty years ago, GBSF has given nearly £10 million in grants to support activities which ‘make a difference’ in UK-Japan relations. These include visits, exhibitions, performances, research, conferences and publications in fields as various as arts & culture, medicine & health, humanities and social sciences, as well as Japanese language teaching and youth exchanges.

Recently, the Foundation has moved to spend less on arts & culture and involve itself more pro-actively in aspects of society which represent challenges for both our countries. In medicine, for example, the Butterfield Awards, which commemorate Lord Butterfield, a former Chairman of GBSF, facilitate joint research in key areas such as cancer, bio-medical engineering and the genetic basis of ageing and health. A bilateral review of public health policy has been set up between the NHS and the Institute of Public Health in

Tokyo. A team responsible for transformations in Japan’s mental health services is visiting the UK to look at community mental health practices. An exhibition on architecture for health with outstanding examples from Japan is being developed into a book to reach a wider audience of professionals.

In science and technology, the Foundation works with major UK institutions to enhance contacts with Japan. The Royal Institution is exploring web-based distribution in Japan of its lectures for schools, while the Science Museum is developing contacts with Japanese museums and industries for future exhibits. One of many exciting joint projects is the collaboration between ocean science laboratories in Japan and the UK in the search for the world’s deepest living fish.

An approach which the Foundation seeks to adopt with its partners in priority subjects such as these is to ‘projectise’ the initial idea, so that

instead of a one-off grant for a single visit or seminar, the initial exchange between specialists is developed into a workshop or conference to bring together a larger group, followed, if possible, by a publication to disseminate the shared knowledge more widely.

Much of the Foundation’s support for the arts, education and exchanges nevertheless parallels that of other organisations, of course, and GBSF often co-funds projects with the Japan Foundation, the Daiwa Foundation or Japan 21, for example. It is happy to be part of the network of Japan-related organisations which make relations between our two countries so vibrant and productive.

**Michael Barrett OBE, Chief Executive
The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation**

For full details of The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation’s grants programme, please visit www.gbsf.org.uk

Book Review

Mizoguchi and Japan

by Mark Le Fanu

BFI Publications; ISBN 1 84457 056 8 (hbk), 1 84457 057 6 (pbk); 230pp + 8pp colour section. 37 B&W illustrations; 15 colour illustrations; index 234x172mm; £48.00 (hbk), £15.99 (pbk); Published 5 June 2005

Kenji Mizoguchi (1898-1956) was one of the greatest of all Japanese film directors and, by extension, one of the most powerful directors of all time.

His work was enormously varied and prolific - 86 films in his career, 31 of which survive. Although he was pivotal in introducing post-war Japanese cinema to the Western public, Mizoguchi is today less familiar in the West than his contemporaries Yasujiro Ozu and Akira Kurosawa. The last book in English written about his career appeared over 20 years ago, so



Mark Le Fanu’s long-awaited new study of Mizoguchi is timely, next year being the 50th anniversary of the director’s death.

But Mizoguchi & Japan, rather than a full-scale biography, is more a work of contemporary film criticism and film aesthetics. For in the attention it gives to placing the director within the total spectrum of Japanese history and culture it goes further than many or even most previous studies. Mizoguchi was an extraordinarily cultivated film director: music, theatre, poetry, painting are all used in his films with rare visual refinement. The ‘subject of subjects’ that so interested him was the historical plight of women in Japanese society – many of his films are set in the geisha milieu. Le Fanu goes behind the scenes to pick up these historical influences and relates them, as far as possible, to known facts about Mizoguchi’s personality. We are taken into the world of shimpa and kabuki and woodcut-making, while the author is no less engaging about the great classic writers on whose works many of Mizoguchi’s finest films were based.

This major new study is also most handsomely presented with a wealth of black & white and colour illustrations that serve to bring

out Mizoguchi’s painterly elegance. Le Fanu, the author of a previously well-received book on the Russian film director Andrei Tarkovsky, writes in elegant English prose, pleasingly free from academic jargon and in that sense it is no formalist study but, as the title suggests, a work that pays close attention throughout to the overall Japanese context. The inclusion, for example, of copious and informative appendices is welcome, and it concludes with the fullest bibliography and filmography of the director yet published.

Designed to appeal to a wide readership this fresh, succinct and scholarly account will appeal not only to film specialists but will also open the eyes and minds of many more people seeking a greater understanding of Mizoguchi’s achievement and genius.

The book will be launched at the Japan Foundation on 8 June at 6:30 pm at which the author will give a talk and copies will be available for purchase. For details about this event and the work itself contact Elizabeth Haverda at BFI Publishing e-mail: publishing@bfi.org.uk

Japan's Visual Arts continue to stimulate

Japan's museums, both private and public, offer an extraordinary range of settings for the presentation and experience of art and reflect a widespread public commitment to the preservation and presentation of visual culture. Andrea Tarsia, Head of Exhibitions & Projects at London's Whitechapel Art Gallery, visited Japan in February 2005, as a guest of the Japan Foundation.

One outstanding example of the privately run museums I visited was the extraordinary Benesse Art Site, on the island of Naoshima, which comprises a number of different projects.

These include the Art House Project, a series of specially commissioned installations in and around the local town, which features Tatsuo Miyajima's installation in a former Samurai guest-house; an immersive installation by James Turrell, that explores space and perception and is sited in a building designed by Tadao Ando; and a hill-top temple by Hiroshi Sugimoto, built in wood, stone and glass, that provides a powerful meditation on mortality and eternity. The Museum complex also includes Benesse House, which houses the collection of works by Hockney, Rauschenberg and Stella amongst others, and the underground Chi-Chu Art Museum, also built by Ando. An extraordinary work of art in its own right, the Chi-Chu Art Museum houses only three installations: by James Turrell, Walter DeMaria and a room dedicated to three of Monet's 'water lilies'. The overall effect

while in other places long corridors that cut through the entire museum allow visitors to see straight through it; elements that are intended to convey architecturally a sense of integration with and openness to the museum's community. Inside, the galleries are not arranged as a series of conventional, linear spaces but rather as discrete rooms, organised around a series of inner 'courtyards'. Like a town within a town, visitors are encouraged to wander from space to space, devising their own paths throughout the museum.

The economic downturn that succeeded the 'bubble' economy has meant that many museums now face deregulation, with some uncertainty as to their future roles. But they continue to mount ambitious exhibitions that chart recent developments in contemporary practice and review key artists and movements in 20th century art. Among the most interesting surveys on show was *Traces*, on tour from Kyoto to Tokyo's National Museum of Modern Art, which explored performative actions and gestures in object-based works made between the late 1940s and 1970s, bringing together artists such as Pollock, Fontana, Morris, Lee U Fan, Hitoshi Nomura, Shimamoto Shozo and Jiro Takamatsu among many others; as well as Yayoi Kusama's comprehensive retrospective at the National Museum of Modern Art in Kyoto. Contemporary exhibitions included Yukiko Nishiyama's first major solo exhibition at the Osaka Contemporary Art Centre, the venue providing an apposite context for Nishiyama's explorations of individual and collective identities as fleeting and mutating. A number of solo and group exhibitions focused on contemporary photographic practice, such as Yuki Onoder's symbolic, poetic and visually ambiguous portraits or snapshots of the everyday made strange on show at the National Museum of Modern Art in Osaka. A large survey of women artists at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo included Tomoko Sawada's witty self portraits in a variety of



21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa

guises, while Kawasaki City Museum's excellent survey *Sitegraphic*, brought together three generations of photographers focusing on urban and rural landscape.

Contemporary Japanese practice is almost impossible to summarise, as most artists share in an international dialogue that looks beyond national boundaries and reflect a wide-ranging set of interests and influences. However, elements that struck me included an emphasis on landscape - traditionally a dominant genre - today played out on a personal, psychic level or expanded to include architectural and social environments, often in event-based works. The role of technology is most obviously felt in a strong emphasis on new media, which are born of conceptual and self-reflexive impulses, an adaptation of popular vernaculars or socially engaged forms of activism. More broadly, its influence is reflected in depictions of fragmented, technologised bodies, or of the world marked by fragile links with reality. The influence of contemporary popular culture is, of course, most notably played out in references to Anime and Manga, which at their best combine reflections of contemporary experience with traditional genres. Finally, the distinction between arts and craft are constantly blurred, and take on particular relevance in a culture that, until the Meiji Restoration, did not distinguish between these forms of cultural production, believing instead in the artistic potential in all elements of life.

Andrea Tarsia

Photo: Andrea Tarsia

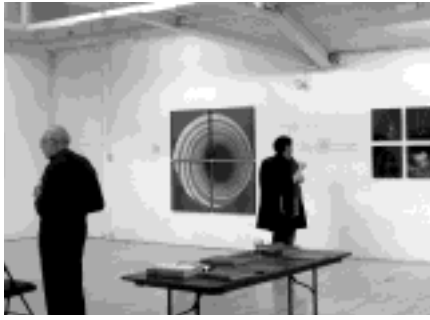


Hill-top temple by Hiroshi Sugimoto, Benesse Art Site, Naoshima

points to the temple as a model in its evocation of the sublime.

In the public sector, I was fortunate to visit Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa's exploration of transparency and reflectiveness at Kanazawa's 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art. Here, the museum is modelled on a more fluid conception of artistic experience, reflective of the experiential and phenomenal nature of recent artistic practice. Designed in the round, it appears from the exterior to be built across one floor (it in fact also extends underground), while its exterior walls are entirely made of glass. These in part reflect the museum's immediate surroundings,

Counter-Photography: Japan's Artists Today



Exhibition scene at the Bracknell Gallery, South Hill Park, Berkshire

Launched in January 2004, our special touring exhibition has now reached its last port of call in Bracknell. "Counter-Photography" comprises 60 works by 11 Japanese artists who have chosen the camera obscura as a medium for their artistic expression. It has endured a long journey the length and breadth of the UK, visiting 8 different places – Preston, Halifax, Dundee, Southampton, Hull, Aberystwyth, New Town and Bracknell.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to find

shelter for these touring shows, particularly when we cannot always give a long lead-in-time. For, regardless of the exhibition's intrinsic quality, UK galleries normally schedule their programmes at least two years in advance, and for larger institutions, where funding needs to be secured, it can be even longer. We have also noted the growing but understandable tendency among arts institutions to favour their own exhibitions, which they can mount according to their own artistic remit, rather than to receiving a pre-made exhibition package from the Japan Foundation. With this in mind, we were delighted that the exhibition was taken up by so many deserving venues, and to see it cherished in the hands of real professionals was a rewarding experience for us.

Each venue is of course unique in terms of size, target audience and settings and each displayed the works in order to meet not only their building requirements but also their curatorial sense. Visitor response was consistently positive and welcoming. Some people were amazed at the various photographic

techniques used by Japanese artists and at their approach to subject matter: others considered that they had learnt much about developments in Japanese photography after the war. In all, the exhibition was appreciated and enjoyed by all kinds of people from across the generations.

My personal view is that the Japan Foundation's touring exhibitions should not be regarded as vehicles for what Japan is like as a country. On the contrary, these exhibitions contain works by Japanese artists of immense artistic vision, are put together by Japanese curators with considerable professional insight and experience, and should be judged in the same professional way as other visual art exhibitions in this country. Nonetheless, in this age of cultural diplomacy, it is often more fulfilling for people to get to know Japan and to feel closer to our country through the kind of touring exhibition that can present 'Japan' from a number of different perspectives.

Junko Takekawa
Senior Arts Programme Officer

Japanese Performing Arts Series: Here, Then and the Future

The first two events in the above series took place in February and attracted a great number of theatre practitioners and academics in what proved to be a lively debate on the Japanese theatre world.

The inaugural event, *Japanese Theatre: from Modern to Contemporary and its Prospects* offered participants an insight not only into salient trends within Japanese theatre but also the very changes within Japanese society itself that have influenced them.

One of the invited speakers, Takehiko Tanioka, theatre critic and Associate Professor at Kyoritsu Women's University, addressed the social trends in the 1980s-the Cold War and Japan's economic boom and the shift during the 1990s following the economic recession and the ensuing social polarization. His exploration of *The Attic*— a play with several seemingly unrelated episodes, acted out in a claustrophobic wooden box about those who are "withdrawn" into their room, was a profound insight into some of the contemporary issues confronting sections of Japanese society, no longer exclusively middle-class as is sometimes so conveniently portrayed. This insight into contemporary theatre was reinforced by Dr Brian Powell, who outlined

the framework of Japanese modern theatre raising issues such as the role of Kabuki in modern Japan.

Our second event, *Play Right! Challenges in Adapting Japanese Contemporary Drama*, was a reflection on past Japanese contemporary drama readings at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh and the Bush Theatre, London. Under the efficient and confident chair of Katherine Mendelsohn, of the Traverse Theatre, a panel of four UK and Japanese professionals discussed issues surrounding the use of foreign scripts and their dramatic potential. There followed comparative views from Katherine and from Mike Bradwell, of the Bush Theatre, both experienced in using Japanese scripts for their drama readings, and from Gregory Burke, the Scottish playwright whose new work has been recently translated by Tanioka Tanioka and read by Japanese actors. What was interesting is that they shared not only common problems in staging foreign scripts, but also their many pleasures, from the initial delight in discovering good quality



works, to the recognition of similarities/differences in language and culture leading to a final conclusion that is accessible to all. Sensitive translation is a key to success and they all agreed that, despite Japan Foundation help, there are still not enough adequate translations of Japanese contemporary scripts, even though conversely many contemporary Japanese playwrights manage to impart that same quality and appeal of their European counterparts to the Japanese audience. Mutuality is, therefore, one of the major issues that requires further attention with the aim of encouraging UK practitioners to adapt more Japanese contemporary drama in the future.

Junko Takekawa
Senior Arts Programme Officer

Mazarin Chest Conservation Project

In our September 2003 issue we reported on the proposed conservation of the Mazarin Chest, property of the Victoria and Albert Museum and one of the finest examples of early seventeenth-century Japanese export lacquer known.

The project got underway last June and July when Yoshihiko Yamashita, a leading Japanese lacquer conservator, and Shayne Rivers, the V&A's lacquer conservation specialist, carried out preparatory work including cleaning and documentary photography. This work was made possible thanks to the generosity of the Toshiba

International Foundation (TIFO). In October the V&A was awarded a three-year grant (1 December 2004 to 30 November 2007) by The Getty Foundation.

With the Getty funding in place and TIFO's intention to support the project for a further three years (2005/6 to 2007/8), the team is now able to embark fully on the conservation of the Mazarin Chest and the scientific research required to inform the choice of treatments to be applied. Work has begun on both these key aspects of the project. Progress has also been made on the

dissemination of the development and findings of the project, on the setting up of research studentships to support the scientific research component of the project, and on the furthering of art historical research.

Japan Foundation seminar

An evening seminar will be held at the Japan Foundation, London, on Tuesday 14 June 2005 from 6:30 pm, with papers presented by members of the project team. Further details and to reserve a seat visit <http://www.jpff.org.uk/whatson.html>

Dates for your Diary

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

Now until March 2006	Onedotzero 09 – Returns to London's ICA for ninth year featuring new forms of moving image across music video, computer gaming cinematics, architecture, motion graphics, new media, feature films, and graphic-inflected shorts and documentaries with series of panels, presentations, screenings, and live events. UK tour and overseas. Details visit: www.onedotzero.com
7,8,9 June	Book Launch to celebrate the publication of the book <i>Mizoguchi and Japan</i> (BFI Publishing) with a talk by the author, Mark le Fanu. At the Japan Foundation. See page 5 for details
Now until 10 June	Hana Sakuma 100 Books which I didn't buy – First solo exhibition in London featuring a number of her new and recent works. Sakuma's work explores ideas of language, translation and mortality. Unit 2 Gallery, London Metropolitan University. Details visit: www.unit2.co.uk
Now until 3 July	Counter-Photography: Japan's Artists Today – Japan Foundation Touring Exhibition comprising 60 works by 11 internationally renowned and emerging young artists including works by Hiroshi Sugimoto and Eiko Hosoe. At South Hill Park Arts Centre, Bracknell, Berkshire 14 May-3 July. Information: Junko Takekawa Tel: 020 7436 6695, e-mail junko.takekawa@jpff.org.uk
6 June-30 August	Shogun Exhibition at Royal Armouries Museum, Leeds – introducing Tokugawa Ieyasu as a major historical figure, including armour, art, costumes, screens, documents and weapons, and ceremonial objects, many on exhibition for the first time outside Japan. Details: visit www.armouries.org.uk
9-10 June	Foundation Myths in Japan's Past and Present – International conference organised by the Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions, School of Oriental and African Studies. Details: Katja Triplett Tel: 020 7898 4465 e-mail: kt4@soas.ac.uk
14 June	JLC Primary Workshop – Practical workshop for primary school teachers with or without Japanese, as part of the York St John Regional Support Group programme. 16:30-18:30. Enquiries: Japan Foundation London Language Centre, Tel: 020 7436 6698
30 June-11 Sept	Kabuki Heroes on the Osaka Stage, 1780-1830 – Exhibition showing how Kabuki actors in urban Tokyo and Osaka in the late 18th and early 19th centuries were turned into heroes. At the British Museum. Details: visit www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk
1-3 July	All's Language World The Association of Language Learning's Annual Conference – Includes sessions specific to the teaching of Japanese. Details visit www.all-languages.org.uk or contact 01788 546443
18-22 July	Summer Refresher Course – Our Language Centre's annual language refresher course for non-native speaking teachers of Japanese, catering for Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced levels. Details and application form: Japan Foundation London Language Centre, Tel: 020 7436 6698
20-24 July	Optronica – A hybrid film festival and music festival. New five-day event focusing on convergence of visuals and music. Live audiovisual performances by top international acts and DJ:VJ collaborations, plus screenings, lectures and panel discussions with leading artists, including those from Japan. 23 Sept features special event 'Big in Japan' presenting wide range of recent work from Japanese artists followed by live performance from Takagi Masakatsu. At the NFT. Details: visit www.optronica.org
From September	Discovering Japanese New Wave Master Masumura Yasuzo – Programme of 12 feature films to introduce UK audiences to the Japanese 'New Wave' avant-garde Director, Masumura Yasuzo. At the NFT and then toured nationwide. Screening dates to be confirmed.
2-3 September	British Association for Teaching Japanese as a Foreign Language (BATJ) Annual Conference – At Cardiff University. For enquiries and bookings contact the Conference Organiser, Kyoko Yuri at Cardiff University on 029 2087-6565, e-mail: Yurik@Cardiff.ac.uk
6-8 September	British Association for Japanese Studies (BAJS) Annual Conference – Academic meeting of Japanese studies specialists in the UK to promote understanding and dialogue through presentation and discussion of current research and thinking. At the University of Kent. Details: Lynn Baird (BAJS Secretariat): e-mail: bajs@bajs.org.uk
7 September	Enemy and Friend, Britain and Japan at War and Peace – Burma Campaign Society Symposium to mark the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War at, and in association with, the Cabinet War Rooms. Details: Phillida Purvis e-mail: info@burmacampaignsociety.org
29Sept-9 October	13th Raindance Film Festival – featuring recent Japanese films. Reflects films of the independent filmmaking community, specialising in films by first-time directors. Details: visit www.raindance.co.uk
6 Oct 2005 -22 Jan 2006	Nobuyoshi Araki: Work – First major exhibition of Araki's work in London featuring photographs from the 1960s to 2005 along with installation works, books and archival materials, and a comprehensive examination of his work and career. Barbican Art Gallery. Details: visit www.barbican.org.uk
10-12 November	Leeds International Film Festival – Featuring Japanese documentary films. Details: visit www.leedsfilm.com



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