

Japan Pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia Renovation Work to Make Facilities More Environmentally Friendly Completed

A major donation was recently received from the Ishibashi Foundation for renovation work aimed at making the Japan Pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia more environmentally friendly. The facilities reopened on May 10th with the Japan Pavilion exhibition IN-BETWEEN (organized by the Japan Foundation and curated by Jun Aoki) at the 19th International Architecture Exhibition — La Biennale di Venezia.

■ Overview of the Japan Pavilion



(1) The newly renovated Japan Pavilion ©Andrea Martiradonna

The Japan Pavilion, for which most of the expenses were covered by Mr. Shojiro Ishibashi (founder of the Bridgestone Corporation), is government-owned property that was opened in spring of 1956. The building was designed by Mr. Takamasa Yoshizaka, who studied under Le Corbusier himself. The building's innovative design has an international feel while also remaining distinctly Japanese, and it is intended to emphasize light, air, and circulation to people, including the hole that connects the center of the floor to the piloti space below, the stairs that wind around the garden from the piloti space and form an approach as they ascend to the exhibition-room entrance above, the sunlight that filters down through the glass-block ceiling, and the indirect natural lighting that comes through the ceiling louvers. In 2014, renovation work was done to restore the original intent of Mr. Yoshizaka's design as much as possible, ultimately bringing back the look the building had when it was first completed.

At the same time, climate change is one of the most pressing issues faced by the international art world, and there is an increasing awareness of the importance of various initiatives related to the environment and SDGs. In response to this, Mr. Toyo Ito, an architect, did new renovation work as a follow-up to the work done in 2014 after receiving a donation from the Ishibashi Foundation. The purpose of this work was to make the Japan Pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia more sustainable.

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■ Major highlights of the renovation work

○ **Sunlight utilization**

The polycarbonate set up on the roof during the 2014 renovation work was replaced with transparent solar glass to utilize sunlight. This made it possible to cover around 30% of the Japan Pavilion's average annual electricity usage while continuing to use the sunlight that passes through the building's glass-block ceiling.



(2) Transparent solar glass ©Andrea Martiradonna

○ **Rainwater utilization**

A new 2000-liter (two-cubic-meter) rainwater storage tank was set up so that the accumulated water can be used to water garden trees and for other purposes while also improving the piloti drainage.

○ **Improved insulation**

To improve the overall building insulation without changing the existing architecture, the outside walls and piloti-space ceiling were coated with insulating paint, and all the exhibition-room air conditioning equipment was replaced with the latest machinery. This should help to reduce power consumption.

○ **Improved circulation**

Stairs were added to the slope set up during the 2014 renovation work, thereby improving circulation from the exhibition room to the piloti space on the first floor.

- Steps were also taken to more effectively set up the inside of the Japan Pavilion and the garden.

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■ Comments from Mr. Hiroshi Ishibashi, President of the Board of Directors, Ishibashi Foundation

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the management of the Japan Pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia for agreeing with our proposed renovation work aimed at making the building more environmentally friendly and sustainable. I believe that the Ishibashi Foundation's support for the recent renovation work, which was intended as a follow-up to the 2014 renovation work, was extremely meaningful in terms of our inheritance of the wishes of Mr. Shojiro Ishibashi, our founder, as well. I hope that the Japan Pavilion which attracts the attention of people around the world, win the hearts of even more visitors, artists, and architects, and serve everyone as a stage for various artistic and cultural activities.

■ Comments from Mr. Toyo Ito, architect

In 1956, the Japan Pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia was founded as a result of the hard work of Mr. Shojiro Ishibashi, the founder of Bridgestone. The building's innovative architectural design, which was created by Mr. Takamasa Yoshizaka, features a piloti space, skylights, and other unique elements, and this design helped to successfully send many artists and architects out into the world, but the building deteriorated as it aged and therefore ended up undergoing large-scale renovations in 2014.

The more recent renovations, which were made possible by a donation from the Ishibashi Foundation, were intended to respond to the global demand for environmental sustainability, and they were focused on the utilization of renewable energy, including solar power and rainwater.

■ Towards sustainability

Based on the recent renovation work, the Japan Foundation, which maintains and manages the Japan Pavilion while also planning and running art and architecture exhibitions there, is taking steps to promote more environmentally friendly use of the pavilion, including locally procuring materials as much as possible, reusing products, etc., and comprehensively sorting waste in line with regional needs.

In addition, the Japan Pavilion participates in the Green Lion,* which was formed as a result of the volunteer work of the pavilions of various countries and is aimed at promoting more environmentally friendly pavilion operations through more active initiatives that include various kinds of collaboration, information sharing, and the exchange of knowledge.

* The Green Lion was named after the Golden Lion Award, which is bestowed for having the best exhibitions at La Biennale di Venezia.

■ About La Biennale di Venezia

La Biennale di Venezia is an international festival that is held at venues located throughout Venice, Italy. The event boasts a long history going back more than 130 years to 1895, when the first art exhibition was held. In recent years, international exhibitions focused on art have been held all over the world, but they are essentially based on La Biennale di Venezia, the most famous example of such an exhibition. *Biennale* is an Italian word that means *once every two years*, and the tendency of many international exhibitions to use *biennale* or *triennale* (which means *once every three years*) in their names is also inspired by La Biennale di Venezia. La Biennale di Venezia is currently popular around the world as one of the few international exhibitions that enables individual countries to participate and offers an overview of trends in modern art and architecture through art and architecture exhibitions, while also including music festivals, film festivals, theater festivals, and dance.

Official website of the Japan Pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia: <https://venezia-biennale-japan.jp/>

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① Full view of the renovated Japan Pavilion



② Transparent solar glass
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③ Main entrance of the Japan Pavilion
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④ Additional stairs installed on the slope
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⑤ Pilotis area ©Andrea Martiradonna



⑥ Inside the exhibition room ©Andrea Martiradonna

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