

Activities of Overseas Offices

The Japan Foundation has 22 offices in 21 countries. They operate according to their respective regional- and country-specific policies and conduct diverse activities matching local needs and conditions. Activities include arts and cultural exchanges, Japanese-language education, and Japanese-studies and intellectual exchanges. Activities of overseas offices during the past fiscal year are summarized below.



Italy The Japan Cultural Institute in Rome

Edo Culture Through Ukiyoe



Photo: Mario Boccia

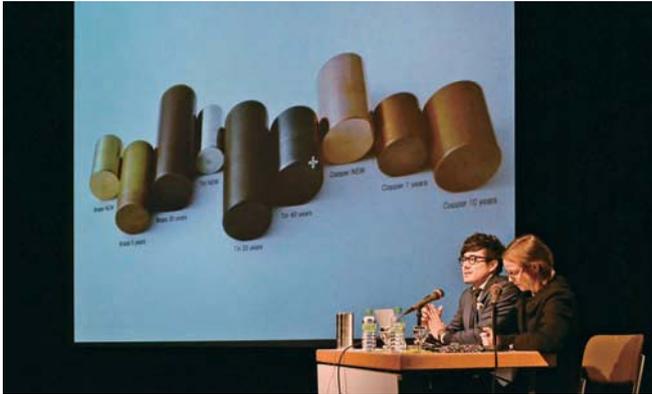
"Look at the stripes in the background. This is actually a new pattern on a roll of kimono cloth. Ukiyoe was also used for advertising." This explanation by Professor Giovanni Peternolli of the University of Bologna surprised and amazed the audience.

The Japan Cultural Institute in Rome held an ukiyoe exhibition titled, *Un tesoro svelato dell'Ukiyo-e* (Revealed Treasure of Ukiyo-e) from November to December 2013. The 78 prints exhibited came from a former private collection in Bologna. Instead of showing famous ukiyoe prints, the exhibition spotlighted works less exhibited such as *Kamigata-e* and *Omocha-e* prints. Such works have not been shown much in Italy.

At the exhibition's opening, a gallery talk by three researchers from the Far Eastern Art Study Centre - Bologna, who supervised the exhibition, was held along with a lecture. The rich Edo culture expressed through ukiyoe depicting *onnagata* Kabuki actors, *sankin kotai*, Ise Shrine pilgrimages, *terakoya* classes, etc., captured the audience's interest.


 Germany The Japan Cultural Institute in Cologne

Kyoto's New Craft-Making: Introducing Young Artisans



The 50th anniversary of sister-city ties between Cologne and Kyoto in 2013 was marked by various commemorative events. Spotlighting Kyoto for a year was well received.

First, we introduced Japanese gardens, a representative of Kyoto's traditional beauty. Katsuhiko Mizuno's photo exhibition of Kyoto's gardens in all four seasons was visited by both the mayors of Cologne and Kyoto. Many people were also fascinated by garden designer Katsuaki Ogawa's lecture. Then a photo exhibition by a Cologne artist who had spent at the Goethe-Institut Villa Kamogawa was held. Also, a retrospective of films directed by Nagisa Oshima was screened. For academic exchange, professors and justices from Cologne and Kyoto held a symposium comparing Japanese and German Laws.

The anniversary events ended with the presentation of new craft designs born out of Kyoto's traditional industries. Young artisans working with wood, wire netting, and tea canisters gave lectures and held workshops. They were able to have the German audience re-appreciate Japan's highly skilled craftsmanship and artistic sense of everyday things.


 France The Japan Cultural Institute in Paris

Retaining and Developing Traditional Culture through Kanazawa's Samurai Culture



Photo: Clément-Olivier Meylan

Together with Kanazawa (Ishikawa Prefecture), we held the "Kanazawa - Origins of another Samurai Culture" exhibition introducing samurai culture retained in Kanazawa since the Edo Period. From Kanazawa, we brought over lacquerware, metal crafts, dyed cloth, Noh masks and costumes, tea ceremony utensils, samurai armor, and more. It was an overview of Kanazawa's cultural development.

Kanazawa retains a high level of craftsmanship for maki-e lacquerware, damascening, and other crafts coming from the craft centers established by the Kaga Clan in the 17th century.

As Noh, flower arranging, the tea ceremony, and other arts permeated the samurai class, a rich trove of arts and crafts was created. To compliment the exhibition, a Noh performance (Kaga Hosho School), tea ceremony demonstration (Enshu School), lectures, Noh classes, damascening demonstrations, etc., were held.

Even today, Kanazawa's rich cultural legacy is being supported by the vigorous activities of the city's people. It offers many hints for Japan to continue and develop traditional arts and crafts as a nation of culture.


 The United Kingdom The Japan Foundation, London

Talk Series on the Power and Creativity of Japanese Women



Focusing on Japanese women, we held talk sessions featuring Japanese female creators at the top of their fields.

Miyako Ishiuchi, whose photographic works were recently added to the Tate Modern collection, fired up her audience with courage and energy through her vitality and liberal ideas.

Photographer Makiko Ui talked about the Spirit of the Ainu through her photos of a fading Ainu culture. We also held a talk by Chiharu Shiota, the selected artist for the Japan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2015, as well as film director Satoko Yokohama who has impressed audiences with her conviction to create good works regardless of their commercial success.

Showcasing the artists' rich and inspirational creativities in their own fields, these talks may have made the audience feel that the speakers themselves were like fascinating 'artworks'.

Completing these talks, Noriyo Tsuda, from the Pola Research Institute of Beauty & Culture, explained, how Japan's cosmetic culture changed with the times and social standing of women. Her two lectures were received by audiences with great interest.



Spanish Lacquerware Exhibition Marking 400th Anniversary of Japan-Spain Relations



One of the opening events of the 400th Anniversary of Japan-Spain Relations was “Namban Lacquer: Japan remained in Spain. 400 years after the Keicho Embassy” exhibition held jointly with the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports and the National Museum of Decorative Arts. It was supported by the Japanese Embassy in Spain and co-sponsored by a number of Japanese companies.

The beauty of relatively unknown Spanish lacquerware and the long history of Japan-Spain relations made a strong impression on viewers. Many Oriental art history experts also lauded the exhibition's curation, content and the exhibition catalog's interdisciplinary value.

Since the opening ceremony was also attended by Crown Prince Naruhito, it was widely covered by the Japanese and local press. The exhibition's four-month run was highly successful with many visitors.

Besides being interdisciplinary, making a major social impact, and spreading Japanese culture, this project was significant enough to add a new page to the history of Japan-Spain relations.



Japan Scholars in Central and Eastern Europe Meet at Symposium



A two-day symposium on Japanese studies was held jointly with Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest in February 2014, a year which had been designated as an exchange year between the Visegrad Group (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia) and Japan or *V4+Japan Exchange Year 2014*. The aim of the symposium was to support younger Japanese studies scholars and enhance regional networking among them, thereby contributing to the further development of Japanese studies in Central and Eastern Europe.

Professor Joy Hendry, a prominent scholar and anthropologist from Oxford Brookes University in the UK opened the symposium by giving the keynote speech, an occasion that was shared among university students and the public. Individual presentations conducted by younger scholars followed, covering diverse fields such as literature, sociology, and linguistics. Unique presentations included, Women Rakugo Artists, and was concluded by interactive sessions between the presenters and senior scholars.

The second day was earmarked for professionals from Japanese studies programs and institutions, who discussed current and common issues and how they might be resolved across national borders, touching upon perspectives for the future enhancement of the field.



Comprehensive Event Linking Japanese and Russian Artists



In Moscow, we strive for cooperation with local organizations for activities in nearby cities. We also seek to hook up with Russia-based Japanese artists and Russian fans of Japanese culture. One good example of this linkup was the Japan-Russia art exhibition called *Juriki no Kongoseki* (The Diamond of Ten Powers) when we got both of these groups together.

It started with a Russian traditional painter who had created illustrations for the Russian picture book version of Kenji Miyazawa's short story titled, *Juriki no Kongoseki*. The traditional paintings were from Mytishchi, where a public art museum was planning an exhibition for the picture book.

The museum wanted to make it a major event to widely introduce Japanese culture. It therefore invited *sumi-e* ink painter Tohru Kobayashi from Japan. While the Russian version of *Juriki no Kongoseki* was being read aloud, Mr. Kobayashi performed a live painting of Miyazawa's world with *sumi* ink on a white wall. The audience was captivated by his performance.

The museum also delighted visitors with shakuhachi, Ikebana flower arrangement, tea ceremony, calligraphy, *sumi-e* paintings, origami, and other demonstrations and workshops by Japanese and Russian artists.



Egypt The Japan Foundation, Cairo

Major Event by Anime Fans in Egypt



After the change in government in July 2013, the Japan Foundation, Cairo held various events with our local partners even in the unstable political environment.

One event was the "Egypt 1st Anime/Manga Convention" (EGY-Con) organized by local anime and manga fans and held on February 8, 2014. It was inspired by the "Grand Japanese Pop Culture Festival" held in spring 2013 by the Japan Foundation, Cairo.

We supported the convention from the planning stages, and it provided anime song performances by Egyptian bands, a singing contest, cosplayers show, exhibit of "Doujinshi" magazines and illustrations, and interactive attractions such as portrait drawing, origami and calligraphy.

Over 1,500 young attendees enthusiastically experienced Japanese culture.

It was very special to have hitherto isolated Egyptian fans of Japanese anime and manga to come together and organize to hold this big event at their own initiative.



Korea The Japan Foundation, Seoul

Two Japanese Actresses Discuss Japan's Golden Age of Cinema



Two Japanese actresses who appeared in many movies during Japan's golden age of cinema were invited to Korea.

Actress Ayako Wakao visited Seoul to attend the special event of "Retrospective on Yasuzo Masumura and Kon Ichikawa", co-hosted by the Japan Foundation and Korean Film Archive.

Korea has many fans of Ms. Wakao who starred in many movies directed by Yasuzo Masumura during the heyday of Daiei Studios. All her talk shows in Seoul drew a full house. When she appeared, there were shouts of "Yeppeoyo!" (You're very beautiful!) and lots of excitement.

Actress Kyoko Kagawa appeared as the guest at "Actress Kyoko Kagawa Akira Kurosawa" in Gwangju. She talked about her roles in movies like *Red Beard* and *High and Low*. Also interesting were her thoughts about Director Kurosawa, her current activities, and other anecdotes.

Her autograph session drew a long line of movie fans attracted to her personality. Many said that she should visit Korea again.



China The Japan Foundation, Beijing

Japan-China-Korea Drama Production Project



For two years, performers from Japan, China, and Korea worked on a joint theatrical drama production project called *SHUGEN –Celebration/Expression–*. It is an unprecedented and new type of performing arts project (see page 19).

Amid deteriorating relations between Japan and China, the organizers worried over how it would be received by the Chinese. Their worries were totally dispelled at the Shanghai and Beijing performances where compliments abounded: "A work with the souls of Japan, China, and Korea," "Very beautiful funeral," and "Performance where we can even hear the soul." After each show, many people waited for the performers and eagerly talked with them.

This project became a springboard for future cooperation among the Aomori Museum of Art, Shanghai Drama Art Center, Peng Hao Theatre, and the Japan Foundation.

Co-organizer Peng Hao Theatre in Beijing especially gave high praise to the project's universal theme and high artistic value. The theater therefore invited the project to be the opening act at its annual Beijing Nanluoguxiang Performing Arts Festival to be held in May 2014.

Youth Competition for Disaster Education



On March 11, 2014, the Japan Foundation, Jakarta held the Award Ceremony for the Youth Competition for Disaster Education, starting with a silent prayer for the victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Twenty-four-student finalists were selected for the top award. The competition drew 1,276 applicants (twice as many as in 2012), and 104 of them, or 26 teams, passed the screening. Each team was to create a five-minute-video representing its ideas for disaster preparedness in their local area. Their works were posted on the Japan Foundation's Facebook page. The 24 finalists overcame 53.1-to-1 odds of winning.

Right after the ceremony, the 24 thrilled finalists flew to Japan and participated in the JENESYS 2.0 Programme (youth exchange) held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The students spent 10 days learning about Japan's experience in disaster preparedness. They met with disaster victims and had home stays. What they learned in Japan will be useful as they continue to work on disaster preparedness education in their home country.

Supporting the Literary Content Industry Through Modern Japanese Culture



The Thai version of Akutagawa Award-winning Kazushige Abe's novel *IP/NN* was published in March 2014 with the financial support of the Japan Foundation.

To celebrate the book's publication, Abe was invited to Thailand for a talk show and book reading at the 12th Bangkok International Book Fair.

Abe's talk partner was Uthis Haemamool, currently Thailand's most prominent modern author and winner of the 2009 Southeast Asian Writers Award. After the two authors read their respective works, they talked about their respective country's literary scene and modern society.

It was a great opportunity to introduce new aspects of Japanese literature, promote exchanges between Japanese and Thai writers, and support Japan's literary content creation industry. The Thai book publisher also updated its Facebook page with Abe's activities and photos. It promoted Abe as "cool," making it an exciting event.

Japan's Creative Disaster Preparedness Program Introduced



Since the Philippines has been experiencing many natural disasters, the interest in disaster preparedness has increased. We therefore introduced Japan's excellent disaster preparedness program and provided hands-on experience. A variety of activities raised awareness of disaster preparedness among the Filipinos.

As part of their teacher training, 18 Japanese-language teachers in public high schools made a simple disaster preparedness manual in plain Japanese, English, and Filipino. The manual will also be translated into local languages of the Philippine islands where Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) hit in 2013.

With the cooperation of the NPO Plus Arts, disaster preparedness leader training for teachers and disaster preparedness awareness programs (Iza! Kaeru Caravan) for nearby high school and elementary school students were also held.

We plan to continue sharing Japan's disaster preparedness know-how and help spread disaster preparedness education in the Philippines.



Malaysia The Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur

Southeast Asia's First Full-Scale Bunraku Performance to Mark the Anniversary



2013 saw the 40th anniversary of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation, the 50th anniversary of the Japan Club of Kuala Lumpur, and the 30th anniversary of the Japanese Chamber of Trade & Industry, Malaysia.

In return for the warmth of our Malaysian friends, we held a full-blown Bunraku puppet performance unprecedented in Southeast Asia. An executive committee was formed, the Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre became a co-organizer, and many companies and organizations lent their support.

Three Bunraku performances led by master puppeteer Kanjuro Kiritake as well as demonstrations at the Japanese School of Kuala Lumpur and a shopping mall all drew a full house. A long line of people waited outside hoping for seat cancellations. Everyone wanted to see the centuries-old traditional Japanese art.

The first Bunraku performance in South East Asia was attended by the Crown Prince and Princess of Perak, ambassadors from ASEAN countries, and arts practitioners. The puppeteers were prominently featured by local media, appearing live on a state television program and on the cover of a magazine.



Vietnam The Japan Foundation for Cultural Exchange in Vietnam

Yayoi Kusama Exhibition for the 40th Anniversary of Japan-Vietnam Relations



To mark the 40th anniversary of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation as well as Japan-Vietnam relations, a festive exhibition was held at The Japan Foundation for Cultural Exchange in Vietnam.

The "Yayoi Kusama: Obsessions" exhibition used the exhibition hall and the entire grounds as the display venue, including the courtyard, garage, and warehouse. A "Kusama World" was created in the center of Hanoi.

The exhibition was much talked about and around 20,000 attendees enjoyed the memorable red and white polka dots during the two-month run.

Also, the "ABILIGHT" exhibition by the HITOTZUKI artist group had paintings indoors and on the office building and exterior walls. It caught the attention of people coming to the office as well as passersby.

The local people's daily life was accented with Japanese art thanks to the venue's entire grounds and buildings.



India The Japan Foundation, New Delhi

Nurturing Seedlings to Deepen Japan-India Relations



India being large country with diverse cultures and inadequate infrastructure, we have conducted various "Sowing Seed" programs which aimed to meet the different needs of each region. Having marked 20 years of operation of the Japan Foundation, New Delhi in 2013, we have started to strengthen the effort of "Nurturing Seedlings" program which set more focused aims of the programs to bear remaining effect afterward.

For example, in the Anime Voice Acting Workshop, it was aimed to motivate anime fans to start studying Japanese language. Those who participated the event had a chance to experience voice-recording event under the instruction of Japanese voice actresses.

In the Disaster Management Education Workshop, we have implemented evacuation drills at some schools which hardly take place in India. Through the workshop, the students as well as teachers learned the importance of disaster management education.

Furthermore, in Japanese language education, we have started online Japanese language teachers training for the first time in India, through which we have delivered Japanese language teaching seminars to teachers of remote area who are deprived of such opportunities.



World's Largest Japanese Film Festival in Ten Cities



A new logo and slogan 'Watch Japan Unfold' was launched at the 17th Japanese Film Festival (JFF), an annual event held in Australia's five major cities (Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, and Canberra) with twenty to forty films screened in each city. Meanwhile in smaller cities (Broome, Cairns, Townsville, Darwin, and Hobart) where not many Japan-related events are prevalent, three films were screened with free admission. Nationally, the JFF attracted a total of approx. 25,000 audience across the 10 cities.

JFF welcomed special guests from Japan including director Yoshihiro Fukagawa and Kaoru Yachigusa from Don't Lose Heart; director Satoshi Miki from Ore-ore (It's Me, It's Me); and director Shinsuke Sato and screenwriter Akiko Nogi from Library Wars.

It has been 58 years since Ms. Yachigusa last attended an overseas film festival so her appearance attracted much media attention even in Japan.

The combination of both public and private sectors, including the 20 corporate sponsors, helped make the JFF the world's largest Japanese film festival.



Japanese Writers Gather at North America's Largest Authors' Festival



In fall 2013, Akutagawa Prize winners Kazushige Abe and Mieko Kawakami attended Toronto's International Festival of Authors, North America's largest international writers' festival. Kawakami joined a panel discussion on literature and translation alongside Canadian authors. Both Abe and Kawakami participated in the Japanese literature round-table discussion, about the Japanese literary world's reaction to the Tohoku disaster. They also gave public readings and engaged in discussions at universities.

Also visiting Toronto were authors Masatsugu Ono and Yoko Hayasuke, translator Motoyuki Shibata, and contemporary culture researcher Roland Kelts. They gave readings of their own works and joined in panel discussions at the Japan Foundation, Toronto as well as other venues. Ono gave a talk on modern Japanese literature at the Université de Montréal.

In recent years, authors Takashi Atouda, Jiro Asada, Minoru Ozawa, Hiromi Kawakami, Hideo Furukawa, and Hiromi Ito have visited Canada for events such as the 2010 Japan-Canada PEN Exchange Program, the 2011 launch of the magazine Monkey Business, and the 2012 International Festival of Authors. Such events have signaled an increase in exchanges between Japanese and Canadian authors.



Jazz Concerts by Japanese and American Musicians



Photo: GION

The "A New Generation of Jazz from Japan - Takuya Kuroda and Ensemble" concert was held to introduce Japanese jazz. Kuroda is a trumpet player and the first Japanese musician to have released an album under Blue Note Records in the U.S. His latest album Rising Son was ranked highly on the Billboard chart.

Advance tickets were sold out for the friendship concert featuring Kuroda with Japanese and American musicians. A long line formed over an hour before showtime for the few tickets sold at the door.

The audience was impressed by the performers' musical talent and sharp musical sensibility. At the end of the performance, the roar of applause lasted several minutes. Kuroda and the other musicians were very pleased by the reaction.

The concert was held right before the third anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake. The audience listened attentively as Kuroda talked about his experience during the Great Hanshin Earthquake and performed an original piece he dedicated to the victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake.



United States The Japan Foundation, Los Angeles

Japanese Jazz Group's First Performance and Workshop in the U.S.



Led by 22-year-old, up-and-coming, jazz pianist Ai Kuwabara, the ai kuwabara trio project held a four-city concert tour in November 2013. Starting with San Francisco, it was their first U.S. tour.

Although they were a little anxious about how they would be received in the country where jazz originated, they played to a full house each time. There were people in the audience playing air piano or snapping their fingers to match the trio's music. The concerts ended with a standing ovation and loud applause.

The trio also held workshops and sessions with music students at local universities.

When interviewed by radio stations and newspapers, Kuwabara stated, "We don't think about playing music in any particular genre. It's more like we use jazz to express our own music."

Over 1,300 people in the U.S. enjoyed the young Japanese trio's musical sense venturing beyond national borders.



Mexico The Japan Foundation, Mexico

Prayers for Disaster Recovery through Music; 400th Anniversary of Japan-Mexico Relations



To help mark the 400th anniversary of the arrival of Tsunenaga Hasekura's diplomatic mission in Acapulco, the Japanese classical music group Tsukinoura held performances all around Mexico. Named after the Sendai port where the diplomatic mission departed, the group performed music from all the Tohoku prefectures.

Hasekura's diplomatic mission is also seen as a recovery project for the Keicho Sanriku Tsunami. Our event was a prayer through music for recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake. Acapulco had also just suffered great damage from a powerful hurricane, and the affected children invited to the concerts gave them some cheer.

Tsukinoura then traced the path the Hasekura mission took when they traversed Mexico to go to Spain. Along the way, they gave six performances and three workshops in five Mexican cities. A total of 4,800 people enjoyed the sounds of taiko drums, Tsugaru shamisen, shakuhachi, and minyo folk singing. The children also enjoyed the workshops.



Brazil The Japan Foundation, São Paulo

Video Game Music: A New Genre in Japanese Culture



Anime and video games are among Brazil's most popular things in Japanese pop culture. While anime songs are a well-established pop culture genre among the youth, video game music is only starting to gain attention.

We therefore spotlighted video game music by inviting pianist Hiroyuki Nakayama from Japan to give a solo piano concert featuring music from popular video games. Holding a piano concert for video game music is almost unheard-of outside Japan. It is a new genre for introducing Japanese culture.

The concert received favorable public interest and over 1,000 people lined up for reservation tickets. Nakayama was very happy with the audience's enthusiastic response.

Encouraged by the success of this first-time event, we hope to have local artists join the next concert and to also display game videos to please fans of Japanese pop culture.