

# Promoting Understanding of and Participation in International Cultural Exchanges

## The Japan Foundation Awards

Every year since 1973, the Japan Foundation has presented the Japan Foundation Awards to individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to promoting international mutual understanding and friendship through academic, artistic and other cultural pursuits.

In 2013, which marked the 41st year of the awards, Prof. Akira Iriye [Japan], SANKAI JUKU [Japan] and Technology Promotion Association (Thailand-Japan) [Thailand] were selected. The presentation ceremony was held in Tokyo in the autumn, followed by a commemorative lecture or dialogue given by each recipient.

### Recipients



#### Japan

##### Akira Iriye (Professor Emeritus, Harvard University)

After graduating from high school, Akira Iriye moved to the U.S. and has made significant contributions as a US-based Japanese historian majoring in American diplomatic history over a long period of time. His approach is characterized by an emphasis on ideological and cultural impact and he has proposed international history research that incorporates a multinational perspective that goes beyond research on the diplomatic history of one country and two-way interaction. Iriye is recognized as "one of the people who changed the way we view the diplomatic history of America." Iriye became the first Japanese citizen to serve as President of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations and as President of the American Historical Association.



© Sankai Juku

#### Japan

##### SANKAI JUKU

Sankai Juku is a butoh dance company established in 1975 by its Artistic Director, Ushio Amagatsu. Sankai Juku is predominately based in France and continues to release new work every two years. Sankai Juku commenced its international tours in 1980 and has performed in more than 700 cities in 44 countries throughout Asia, Europe and Americas. Sankai Juku has received high acclaim from various cultural spheres and made significant contributions in the popularization of butoh dance and ongoing influence over contemporary dance throughout the world.



#### Thailand

##### Technology Promotion Association (Thailand-Japan)

Technology Promotion Association (Thailand-Japan) is a public-interest corporation established in 1973 by Thai nationals who had studied and received training in Japan to facilitate technological transfer from Japan to Thailand and personnel development with the ultimate goal of realizing the economic development of Thailand. In addition to running various programs, the association manages the largest private Japanese-language school in Thailand, which has seen more than 200,000 students complete its Japanese-language course since its opening 40 years ago. The association is also the largest institution in Thailand offering Thai language education to Japanese citizens residing in the country and has made significant contribution to interaction between the two countries and the development of personnel.

## The Japan Foundation Prizes for Global Citizenship

The Japan Foundation Prizes for Global Partnership was established in 1985. In its 29 years of history, 91 organizations have been awarded. This prize is intended to support organizations that endeavor to strengthen networks among citizens both inside and outside Japan, share the knowledge, idea and expertise through international cultural exchange.

### Recipients



#### NPO BankART1929

BankART1929 has established as an art center in Yokohama and been engaging in international art and cultural exchanges with various art centers and artists overseas. In tandem with City of Yokohama, it also contributes to revitalize the declining downtown area through art and culture. BankART1929 is expected to further develop as one of Japan's representing art centers.



#### NPO Yukigassen International

By transforming snowball fighting into a legitimate sport, Yukigassen International has revitalized its depopulating town of Sobetsu, Hokkaido. It popularized the sport in and outside Japan and even established the International Alliance of Yukigassen overseas. It continues to strive to popularize the sport internationally.



#### NPO Multilingual Society Resource Kanagawa

MIC Kanagawa coordinates with medical institutions in Kanagawa Prefecture and dispatches volunteer interpreters with various cultural backgrounds to provide assistance when foreigners not fluent in Japanese need to consult a doctor. In such ways, it contributes in solving the foreseeable problems in Japanese society.

## Information Services

### Providing International Cultural Exchange Information

The Japan Foundation provides information on international cultural exchange activities through diverse means. We use websites, blogs, social media, and public and media relations to target a wide range of people in and outside Japan. We want them to understand the significance of international cultural exchange and get involved. We also provide opportunities for cultural exchange.

Our monthly online English magazine, *Wochi Kochi*, features various themes related to international cultural exchange. In fiscal 2013, the magazine published special articles such as *Sharing with the World: Japan's Experiences and Recovery Efforts in the Disaster-Stricken Areas*, *Pursuing Hope, Dreams and Love: Artists Exploring New Realms*, and *Traditional Japanese Art Meets the World: An Opportunity for Evolution*. It also included many activity reports by Japan Foundation specialists and staff.

The Japan Foundation Information Center (JFIC) in our headquarters building in Yotsuya, Tokyo has the JFIC Library and Event Space.

The JFIC Library has a wide range of materials available to the general public. They include library materials about the Japan Foundation's activities, books related to international cultural exchange, and foreign-language books and videos about Japan. Besides offering various services, it also regularly holds book exhibitions with explanations. In August 2013, the "Japanese Toys" exhibition of traditional toys was held together with English explanations and related books written in English.

The JFIC Event Space is used to promote international cultural exchange events with various organizations in Japan. It gives people from diverse backgrounds a chance to get

involved in international cultural exchange activities.

In fiscal 2013, various lectures, workshops and talks were held with partners to share the value of cultural exchange.

For example, we invited Osunaarashi, Japan's first Muslim sumo wrestler, to give a talk. Dr. Kurt-Jürgen Maaß, former Secretary General of the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, gave lecture about soft power.

The JFIC also sells publications such as catalogs of exhibitions held by the Japan Foundation and Japanese-language materials produced by the Japan Foundation. It also welcomes visits by university student groups, students on class trips, and other groups interested in international cultural exchange.

**Below:** Dr. Kurt-Jürgen Maaß at his lecture, *Cultural Diplomacy - Opportunities and Limits of Soft Power in Foreign Policy*. Right: Osunaarashi giving his talk, *Egyptian Whose Dream Came True to Become a Sumo Wrestler*.



Photos: Atsuko Takagi

## Kyoto Office

### Presenting the Essence of Japanese Culture

Kyoto is a cultural treasure house of diverse traditional culture cultivated and flourishing over a long period. The culture born from this "1,000-year capital" is an assemblage of Japanese aesthetics and sensibility. To convey the allure of Japanese culture to foreigners, we use our Kyoto network to introduce Japanese culture.

In fiscal 2013, with the cooperation of a local cultural organization, we held activities for Japanese studies fellows and invited guests living in the Kansai Region. The activities included Noh and Kyogen evening plays, experiencing tea ceremony, an Ikebana flower arrangement exhibit, a traditional music performance, and a brocade factory tour.

Participants commented on their exposure to Japanese culture: "Japan's traditional performing arts have a nice rhythm," "The tea and Ikebana flowers have a healing effect," and "I realized that traditional crafts require both technical skill and heart."

In Kyoto, there are unlimited opportunities and possibilities to experience the essence of Japanese culture.



Photo: Akio Takahashi



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