



Arts and Cultural Exchange

Arts and Cultural Exchange

Japanese arts—fine art, music, theater, literature, and films—and everyday culture such as food and fashion inspire interest in Japan. They give insights into how Japanese people think and act, and communicate feelings and emotions without needing to understand Japanese. The Japan Foundation creates opportunities for encounters with Japanese art and culture, running programs for international contact between practitioners.

Spreading Japanese Arts and Culture Throughout the World

The Japan Foundation develops programs that create opportunities for people around the world to familiarize themselves with and identify with Japanese arts and culture, allowing them to gain an understanding of the aesthetics and values the Japanese people have developed and come to cherish. The programs cover a wide range of fields, such as the visual arts, performing arts, film, TV, publications, as well as foods, fashion, design, and pop culture. By taking a multifaceted approach to the dissemination of Japanese culture, the Japan Foundation expands network of international exchange through culture.

Information Services and Networking

In order to achieve efficient international exchange through the artistic and cultural activities, it is essential to share information on art and culture and to build personal networks among key figures. The Japan Foundation collects the latest information on Japanese performing arts, literature, and films and makes it available to people overseas through its websites and newsletters. It also creates venues that bring people and information together, such as art-related international exhibitions and trade fairs, and provides support for such activities.

The China Center

The China Center was established in 2006 with the aim of promoting exchange between young people in Japan and China. It runs the Long-term Exchange Program for Chinese High School Students, which provides Chinese students with the opportunity to visit Japan for 11 months and experience a real life in Japan. It also runs the Centers for Face-to-Face Exchanges program in China, which provides Chinese with up-to-date information on Japan through many kinds of contents and cultural events. The China Center also runs *the Heart to Heart Community Site*, a bilingual community-based website, to promote exchange among Japanese and Chinese youth.

Visual Arts

In addition to holding major exhibitions that showcase Japanese arts and culture in cooperation with museums in Japan and abroad, the Japan Foundation also puts on small-scale touring exhibitions throughout the world on a variety of topics, including contemporary art, photography, crafts, architecture, design, and Japanese dolls. The Foundation also promotes art-related international exchange, through presenting artists at international biennales and triennales that require national participation, bestowing grants to top-caliber exhibitions that are planned and held overseas, as well as running programs that engage in the exchange of personnel such as artists, curators and other people involved in art.



© Kupferstich-Kabinett, SKD Photo:Herbert Boswank

Performing Arts

The Japan Foundation introduces people throughout the world to a wide range of Japanese performing arts, from traditional performing arts, such as Kabuki, Bunraku, and Noh, to contemporary arts, such as jazz, and contemporary dance. In addition to providing support and grants for international productions conducted jointly with artists from overseas, and lectures, demonstrations, and performing groups related to Japanese performing arts, the Foundation also promotes information exchange and networking, through operating *the Performing Arts Network Japan* website, which gathers and publishes internationally information on Japanese performing arts, and participating in the Tokyo Performing Arts Market.



Film, TV, and Publications

The Japan Foundation creates opportunities for people from other countries to gain an understanding of Japan through visual media, broadcasting Japanese television programs overseas, providing grants for television programs and films on Japan that are produced abroad, holding Japanese film festivals, and providing support for the screening of Japanese films at international film festivals. Regarding the literary arts, it publishes *Japanese Book News*, a quarterly newsletter targeting overseas publishers and editors, translators, scholars, and librarians that showcases Japanese books. It prepares the ground for the spread of Japanese literature and books on Japan around the world through grants for the translation and publication.



Culture and Society

The Japan Foundation creates opportunities for people from other countries to learn and experience the culture that has emerged through daily Japanese life, such as the tea ceremony, Ikebana, martial arts, food, and street performances, by holding lectures, demonstrations, and workshops. It also contributes to the cultural development of other countries by sending experts with special knowledge and skills that underpin Japanese culture, such as instructors in the conservation of cultural properties and exhibition of items at museums, as well as coaches in sports and music.



First Major Exhibition of Japanese Contemporary Art Held in Bangkok, Thailand

[TWIST and SHOUT: Contemporary Art from Japan]

Up until now, it had been common in Thailand's contemporary art world to hold small to medium-scale exhibitions using venues run by artists, alternative spaces, or galleries associated with universities, resulting in a demand for art museums that would put on full-scale exhibitions of contemporary art. Consequently, Japanese contemporary art had come to be featured in isolated, one-off events, with almost no comprehensive exhibitions. Under these circumstances, in 2008, the city of Bangkok opened Bangkok Art and Culture Centre (BACC), a nine-storey cultural complex located in the central downtown area known as Siam Square. The following year, in 2009, the Japan Foundation and BACC took advantage of the opportunity afforded by the fact that it was the Mekong-Japan Exchange Year 2009 to jointly hold the "TWIST and SHOUT" exhibition, the first major exhibition to feature the contemporary art of the 2000s which is closely related to Japanese pop culture.

Japanese pop culture, particularly manga, anime, and characters, has received much attention and enjoyed great popularity throughout the world. On the other hand, however, new powers of imagination originating from the process of trying to heal the sense of stagnation that results from modern-day existential anxiety and the negative aspects of society, such as the narrative form called 'Sekai-kei' and

the recent movement known as 'ketsudan-shugi' ideology, have been introduced through Japan's subculture to other countries, where it has developed a quiet following. These two seemingly contrasting viewpoints happen to be features of Japan's youth culture after 2000. Interpreting the ambiguity of Japan's youth culture as "twisting" and "shouting," this exhibition introduces 17 contemporary Japanese artists through their paintings, sculptures, videos, photographs, and installations, in which they attempt to frankly confront cultural issues in Japanese society while utilizing a range of expression made familiar through pop culture. In recent years, similarities in youth culture throughout Asia, which has taken off due to the globalization of information, have obscured the differences in the visual cultures of Thailand and Japan. Nevertheless, presenting the latest trends in Japanese contemporary art in the large metropolis of Bangkok, Thailand, where Japanese pop culture is very popular, this exhibition was exceptionally well-received, enjoying extensive coverage by the local media and seeing over 32,000 visitors. This was indeed a landmark event for both the newly established BACC and Thailand's art world which had been yearning for a full-scale contemporary art exhibition.

[Bangkok Art and Culture Centre: Thailand, November 19, 2009 to January 10, 2010]



View of "TWIST and SHOUT" exhibition

Exhibiting artists:

Kusama Yayoi
 Yanobe Kenji
 Aida Makoto
 Odani Motohiko
 Yamamoto Keisuke
 Kaneuji Teppei
 Chiba Masaya
 Aoki Ryoko
 Izumi Taro
 Nobi Aniki/Kaneko Ryo
 Nishino Tatzu
 Amemiya Yosuke
 Aoyama Satoru
 Shiga Lieko
 Takamine Tadasu
 Miyajima Tatsuo
 Endo Ichiro

A Vivid Stage Portrayal of the Traditions and New Vigor of Japanese Culture

■ First Bunraku Performance in Russia Held at 2009 Chekhov International Theatre Festival

At the formal invitation of the 2009 Chekhov International Theatre Festival, which was held in Moscow from June to July 2009, the Japan Foundation organized eight performances of Chikamatsu Monzaemon's *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*. A performance in the form of Bunraku, a Japanese puppet show, became the first time the country had the chance to enjoy a full-fledged performance in which the story is narrated or sung with samisen music. These performances attracted the attention of movie fans, particularly young fans, due in part perhaps by directed Kitano Takeshi's 2002 movie *Dolls*, which features scenes involving Bunraku and enjoyed a long run of over two years in Russia. Positive word of mouth, as well as news reports by the media, appeared to be a factor in the program's popularity. It was also well received as a successful cultural exchange program by experts in related fields, and was seen as likely to have a major impact on Japanese studies in Russia.

[Pushkin Theatre: Moscow, June 30 to July 8, 2009]

■ A Thrilling Music Night with Four Japanese Musicians—Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia Concert Tour

As a part of the Central Asia Exchange Year program, this concert tour featured biwa, Amami shima uta folk song,

guitar, vocal, and percussion performances in four countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Their uniqueness and universality of Japanese music while combining Japanese and Western instruments, made a big impression on audiences, receiving standing ovations wherever they perform. In March of 2010, Yurduz Turdieva, a prominent female vocalist with whom the four Japanese artists had performed in Uzbekistan, was invited back to Japan for a return concert.

[State Music and Drama Theatre: Turkmenistan, State Conservatory of Uzbekistan: Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan State Russian Drama Theatre: Azerbaijan, Rustaveli National Theatre: Georgia, and others, November 17 to 27, 2009]

■ Sawa Tomoe Tour in Korea—"The Line"

To mark the Japan Foundation Seoul office relocation to Shinchon, the Japan Foundation held live concerts in Seoul and Busan by singer-songwriter Sawa Tomoe, whose father is Japanese and mother is Korean. Ms. Sawa has been one of the pioneering artists promoting exchange between Japan and Korea. She performed songs well-known to both Japanese and Koreans in Japanese, Korean, and English, starting with one of her own songs written in the hope that the many 'lines' still drawn in the two countries might be swept away in 2010, a year that has special significance for Japan and Korea.

[Hongdae Sangsangmadang Concert Hall: Seoul, Centennial Hall, Yonsei University Concert Hall: Seoul, Busan Citizen Hall Theater: Busan, February 2 to 5, 2010]



Above: Poster for Bunraku performance in Russia
 Upper left: A Thrilling Music Night with Four Japanese Musicians—Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia Concert Tour
 Lower left: Sawa Tomoe Tour in Korea—"The Line"

Conveying Japanese Culture by Actively Promoting Japanese Films, TV, and Books

■ Japanese "Eiga-sai '09" Film Festival in the Philippines

Jointly organized by the Japan Foundation Manila and the Embassy of Japan in the Philippines, the "Eiga-sai '09" film festival enjoyed a very strong following among Filipino movie fans, students, and people learning Japanese. Held as the opening program in this fiscal year's Philippines-Japan Friendship Month, it showed a total of eight films at six venues in the Philippines. The films shown included *Always-Sunset on Third Street*, *Memories of Tomorrow*, *Kamome Diner*, and *Memories of Matsuko*. The festival was a great success, amusing a total of 20,309 movie goers.

[Mandaluyong, Quezon, Davao, Cebu, Baguio: Manila, July 2 to August 20, 2009]

■ Airing of *Honey and Clover* TV Program in Four Central European Countries

The Japan Foundation made available all 11 episodes of Fuji Television Network's *Honey and Clover* TV series to the Hungarian commercial broadcasting station ANIMAX channel, which aired it in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Rumania. In an online survey conducted by the Japan Foundation Budapest, a Hungarian viewer, familiar with the original manga, made the comment, "I loved it. I learned things that I didn't see in the manga, like the everyday lifestyle of Japanese, their food, religious beliefs, and superstitions." The survey received more responses from young people living in rural areas than the cities, so it would seem that the airing of this television program proved to be a good opportunity to learn about modern-day Japan for people living in rural areas, where few programs are available that can introduce people to Japanese culture.

■ Participation in International Book Fair in Saudi Arabia

In fiscal 2009, the Japan Foundation took part in international book fairs in 16 cities in 16 countries, including the 28th

Riyadh International Book Fair, a major event held in Saudi Arabia's capital with 23 countries represented and attended by over two million people. Organized in cooperation with the Embassy of Japan in Saudi Arabia and the Publishers Association for Cultural Exchange (PACE), the Japanese booth exhibited 382 books and 1,500 catalogs, and was visited by 3,000 people over the course of the fair. The booth's exhibits, as well as events such as origami demonstrations, were very well received that many visitors expressed a desire to purchase the books.

[Saudi Arabia, March 2 to 12, 2010]

■ Providing Grants for the Translation and Publication of Books Promoting an Understanding of Japan

The Japan Foundation engages in activities that lead to a deeper understanding of the Japanese culture, providing grants for the translation and publication of excellent Japanese literary works and the publication of new books about Japanese culture. In fiscal 2009, it conducted 76 translation/publication programs involving 51 books and 27 countries, such as Kakuta Mitsuyo's *The Eighth Day* into English (Kodansha International) and Kato Shuichi's *Nihon Bunka ni Okeru Jikan to Kukan* (Time and Space in Japanese Culture) into French (*Le temps et l'espace dans la culture japonaise*, CNRS Editions). The Foundation also provided grants for the Slovenian translation and publication of Kawabata Yasunari's *Snow Country* (*Snezna Dezela*, Sanje Publishing), which widely reported by the media as a work of a Japanese Nobel-winning author to be introduced for the first time and translated directly into the language of Slovenia, where only a few number of Japanese books are translated directly into the national language. The translator, Iztok Ilc, contributed a foreword pointing out its classic appeal, stating "Contemporary romantic fiction is not the pinnacle of creativity."



Above: Japanese booth at the 28th Riyadh International Book Fair
Left: Eiga-sai '09 leaflet (The Philippines)

Contributing to Greater Understanding of Japan and Cultural Development Abroad Through Interpersonal Exchange in Diverse Fields

■ Lecture on Japanese Sake and Sake-Tasting Event in Canada

The Japan Foundation sent Fujita Chieko, a writer specializing in food and sake, to Canada, where she held a lecture on the sake boom in Japan and how it may play out at "Asian Foodprints 2010," an academic conference and food demonstration about Japan in Montreal. In Vancouver, members of the liquor stores and culinary magazine industries were dispatched to a talk on the sake-making process and a sake-tasting event, where they gained a deeper understanding of Japanese sake.

[Canada, March 4 to 12, 2010]

■ Japanese Calligraphy Lectures and Demonstrations in South America

The Japanese calligrapher, Sisyu, was sent to Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile, where she presented lectures and demonstrations on Japanese calligraphy in a new program attempting to introduce people to Japanese culture. Her dynamic performances, in which she collaborated with musicians, met with acclaim in all three countries.

[Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, November 1 to 16, 2009]

■ Wagashi Workshop in Europe

Three craftsmen of traditional Japanese Wagashi confectionaries from the Wagashi confectioner Saiundo in Matsue-shi, Shimane Prefecture, were sent to Germany, Italy, and Greece to give talks on the history and background of Wagashi. The workshop, which targeted local confectioners and featured sessions in which participants took part in making Wagashi, had such a large turnout that limits had to be placed on the number of people who could attend.

[Italy, Germany, and Greece, November 14 to 28, 2009]

■ Supporting the Exhibition and Conservation of Turkey's Kaman-Kalehöyük Artifacts

Exhibition specialist Nagakane Hirofumi from Dig Inc. was sent on several trips to the Museum of Archaeology Kaman-Kalehöyük, which opened in July 2010. He gave technical instruction to local curators in preparation for the museum's opening and led the design and production of exhibit models. [Turkey, May 19 to 29, 2009 and February 28 to April 13, 2010]

■ Invitation of Vietnam's Next Generation of Leading Cultural Figures

In a new exchange program, leading cultural figures of Vietnam's younger generation, such as translators, film directors, curators, literary critics, architects, and journalists, were invited to Japan on the occasion of the opening of the Japan Foundation Center for Cultural Exchange in Vietnam in March 2008. The program aimed to bolster and expand networks among leading cultural figures through the inspection of relevant institutions and an exchange of views between experts. It also gave the group an opportunity to observe various aspects of Japanese culture.

[Tokyo, Takayama, Kyoto, and Hiroshima, March 28 to April 7, 2010]

■ Kaiko Takeshi Memorial Asian Writers Lecture Series No.19: Uthis Haemamool

In fiscal 2009, which coincided with the Mekong-Japan Exchange Year, the young Thai writer, Uthis Haemamool, was invited to Japan. In what was his first lecture series abroad, Mr. Haemamool, a winner of the 2009 Thai S.E.A. Write Award, gave talks at four locations in Japan, and passed out anthologies of short stories. His lecture series was covered by the media in both Japan and Thailand.

[Tokyo, Fukuoka, Osaka, and Hakodate, March 18 to 27, 2010]



Above: Discussion at 3331 Arts Chiyoda during the visit of Vietnam's next generation of leading cultural figures
Upper left: Uthis Haemamool during a visit to Tokyo
Lower left: Demonstration in Europe of how to make traditional Japanese Wagashi confectionaries

Three Programs Aimed at Building a Forward-Looking Relationship Between Japan and China

The China Center was established within the Japan Foundation in April 2006 with the aim of achieving a deeper level of exchange between Japan and China among youth and at the grassroots level.

■ Long-Term Exchange Program for Chinese High School Students

The Long-term Exchange Program for Chinese High School Students provides Chinese high school students with the opportunity to attend a Japanese high school for 11 months and interact with a large number of Japanese people, beginning with classmates of the same age and host families, and thereby gain a more intuitive understanding of Japanese society and culture. The program entered its fourth year in fiscal 2009. Twenty-six graduates of the program's third year returned to China in the end of July, and 35 new students (5 boys and 30 girls) arrived in Japan in September to take part in the fourth year of the program. Through their experiences in school clubs and events and living with their host families while attending high schools throughout Japan, the students learned to be self-reliant and cooperate with others. In response to surveys, over 90% of graduates from the program's third year described their experience as having been "very good." Similarly, over 80% of participating schools and host families responded to surveys with positive assessments of the students they took in. One host family gave the kind of response that is unique to this type of long-term homestay program, saying "We struggled to communicate at first, but were happy to find that we eventually managed to even share aspects of our private lives with each other."

■ The Heart to Heart Community Site

The Heart to Heart Community Site (<http://www.chinacenter.jp/>) enables communication between Japan and China, mainly through its blog feature, which makes use of

simultaneous translation between Japanese and Chinese to allow its users to share their views and opinions by posting entries in either language. The site aims to build the foundation for future friendship between Japan and China by creating a forum for the countries' youth to get to know each other and exchange ideas in an open and candid way. This site was welcomed by youth generation in both countries, especially people who have participated the Long-term Exchanging Programs for Chinese High School Students and JENESYS Programme (see p.7 Asia), which had been operated in Japan. Although the website targets the young generation in Japan and China, it has received a great response from a broader range of generations, with one user commenting, "Reading comments about how students see the real Japan is allowing me to gain a renewed awareness of many aspects of the culture and unique characteristics of Japan." The site received approximately 84,000 hits per month in fiscal 2009, an increase of about 16,000 hits compared to the previous year.

■ The Centers for Face-to-Face Exchanges

Located in provincial cities in China where access to Japan-related information is limited, the Centers for Face-to-Face Exchanges provide local residents, particularly youth, with a window into contemporary Japanese culture by making available Japanese magazines, books, CDs, and DVDs, and offering opportunities for cultural exchange between Chinese and Japanese. In 2008, there were four Centers in Chengdu, Changchun, Nanjing, and Yanbian. In 2009, new Centers were opened in Xining, Lianyungang, and Harbin. The Centers for Face-to-Face Exchanges conduct a range of events for Japanese-Chinese cultural exchange. Of particular note, the J-Pop event held at the Nanjing Center for Face-to-Face Exchanges in March 2010 was well received, with 100% of survey respondents stating that they were satisfied with the event.



Above: An event introducing Origami to beginners at the Nanjing Center for Face-to-Face Exchanges

Left: Welcoming reception for participants of the 4th Long-term Exchange Program for Chinese High School Students