

SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 2020

# Japan Cultural Expo

Exploring the Arts of Japan  
from Antiquity to the Present





MAJOR PROGRAMS

EXPLORE 10,000 YEARS OF CULTURAL PRACTICES

Attracted to Japanese paintings like those of artist Katsushika Hokusai? Curious about ancient techniques for wooden architecture or the works of famous modern architects such as Kenzo Tange and Kengo Kuma?

The Japan Cultural Expo, a series of art and cultural programs across Japan, will go into full gear this year. It offers opportunities for lovers of Japanese culture to learn and embrace both traditional and contemporary arts, such as cultural assets, performing arts, media arts and music, as well as food and lifestyles that have developed in Japan over the past 10,000 years, beginning with the prehistoric Jomon Period.

Leading up to the Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo, the expo began in 2019 under the theme "Humanity and Nature in Japan," and will continue beyond 2020. Its programs are intended to inspire and share with visitors how nature has cultivated creativity in Japan.

"We have never had a chance to show Japanese art and culture to the world in such a diverse and multilayered way on a massive scale. Aside from making these multilingual,

we would like to create and offer more and more experience-based programs," said Yumi Ennyu, director general of the Japan Cultural Expo.

Co-sponsored by the Agency for Cultural Affairs and the Japan Arts Council, the expo features art works across different genres, including pottery, ukiyo-e paintings, kimono, anime and performing arts, such as kabuki and bunraku. Various workshops from sword making to playing traditional musical instruments will also be available.

This comprehensive expo will also explore the arts in the context of an inclusive society, living with other cultures and recovery from natural disasters.

Many programs of the expo will also be held outside Tokyo.

Some of the major programs scheduled for this year are outlined here. However, some exhibitions are temporarily closed in March due to the coronavirus outbreak. Please contact each museum to confirm the schedule.

April 28 to June 21, 2020

Kyoto National Treasure: To Protect and Convey Japanese Treasure

Commemorating the reopening of Kyoto City Kyocera Museum of Art, this exhibition showcases a collection of over 40 National Treasures, including paintings, sculptures, craft pieces, writings, archaeological artifacts and other historical items involved in Kyoto's history. The exhibits cover the Heian Period (794 to 1185) through the Edo Period (1603 to 1868). The program also offers a glimpse of the work that goes into restoring cultural artifacts, such as securing the materials needed for restoration work, passing down the necessary skills to the next generation and efforts to revive traditional techniques through the reproduction of historic artworks.

**Venue:** Kyoto City Kyocera Museum of Art  
**URL:** <https://tsumugu.yomiuri.co.jp/en/events/kyoto-linked-national-treasures-of-the-imperial-family-to-be-showcased-at-kyoto-city-kyocera-museum-of-art/>



A carving of the deities Bonten and Taishakuten at Toji temple in Kyoto is a national treasure that dates back to the Heian Period (794-1185). COURTESY OF BENRIDO

Late March to June 1, 2020

Timeless Conversations 2020: Voices from Japanese Art of the Past and Present

This unique exhibition will shed an entirely new light on Japanese art through a comparison of classic and contemporary artworks. Pre-20th century pieces including paintings, Buddhist statues, pottery and swords will be paired with artworks by eight contemporary artists in eight separate exhibition rooms.

Works in the pre-Meiji Era include works by legendary artists such as Soga Shohaku, Ogata Kenzan, Enku, Sengai Gibon and Katsushika Hokusai.

Works by eight prominent contemporary Japanese artists: Rinko Kawauchi, Tomoko Konoike, Shiriagari Kotobuki, Kishio Suga, Koji Tanada, Tsuyoshi Tane, Akira Minagawa and Tadanori Yokoo will be on display alongside the classic exhibits.

**Venue:** National Art Center, Tokyo  
**URL:** <https://kotengendai.exhibit.jp>



Katsushika Hokusai's *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* from the 19th-century series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*; and Shiriagari Kotobuki's *The Earth as Seen from the Sun* (bottom) from the series *Nearly 36 Somewhat Ridiculous Views*, 2017, will be on display from May 8 through June 1. COLLECTION OF THE KUBOSO MEMORIAL MUSEUM OF ARTS IN IZUMI / COLLECTION OF SHIRIAGARI KOTOBUKI

November 2020 to February 2021 (tentative)

The Architecture of Japan: Natural Materials Meet Traditional Techniques

This exhibition features Japanese architecture, which has been developed using a wide range of natural materials such as timber, earth and stone.

Visitors can see and learn about Japan's architectural history through some 50 models of leading masterpieces from the Asuka Period (538 to 710) to the present day. These one-tenth scale models, including works from Todaiji temple in Nara Prefecture covering the Kamakura Period (1185 to 1333) to those from the Kanchiin Guest Hall covering the Edo Period (1603 to 1868), were built by actual shrine and temple carpenters.

There are also structures from the 20th century such as the Main Building of Tokyo's Imperial Hotel, which was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and built in 1923. Explanations of wooden architecture techniques and the characteristics of various building styles will be offered during guided tours.

Visitors can also learn about the skills and techniques of traditional wooden architecture, nominated for the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2018, through dis-



A scale replica of a belfry of Todaiji temple circa the Kamakura Period (1185-1333), a national treasure.

plays that explain recent efforts to train the next generation of craftspeople. Other displays focus on the enhancement of skills and procurement of raw materials specifically used for those traditional architectural buildings.

**Venue:** Tokyo National Museum, National Museum of Nature and Science, National Archives of Modern Architecture  
**URL:** <https://japancultureexpo.bunka.go.jp/en/lineup/19/>





# MAJOR PROGRAMS

Late March to May 24, 2020

## The World of Traditional Performing Arts: Kabuki, Bunraku, Noh and Kyogen, Gagaku, Kumi-odori

People are invited to explore Japan's rich and diverse performing arts history ranges from the classical theater of kabuki, bunraku and noh to the lesser known but no less important artforms of gagaku (imperial court music and dance) and *kumiodori*, traditional music and dance from Okinawa. This interactive exhibition provides attendees with an overview of these practices, all of which are accredited by UNESCO as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Visitors can experience what it's like to be a kabuki actor through interactive displays. Attendees will be immersed in the intricate costumes, various props and array of musical instruments, alongside impressive reproductions of the different stages used in

each field, to discover more about these traditional performing arts. Priceless footage courtesy of Japan's national theaters provides further learning, while regularly scheduled demonstrations and symposia give an exacting glimpse into the both the accessible yet rarified world of each artform. **Venue:** Hyokeikan, Tokyo National Museum **URL:** <https://tsumugu.yomiuri.co.jp/dentou/2020/en.html>

**2020 National Noh Theatre Showcase Performances**  
Newcomers and dedicated fans alike of noh and kyogen have further opportunity to indulge in their love of the practice through a series of performances held at the National Noh Theatre.



Left: Puppeteer Kanjuro Kiritake performs a scene from "Okuniwa Kitsunebi" ("Foxfires in the Inner Garden") in the bunraku play "Honcho Nijushiko" ("Twenty-Four Examples of Filial Piety"). Right: A scene from the noh play "Izutsu" ("The Well Curb")

Of special note is a specially curated program of shortened two-hour shows drawing upon "Humanity and Nature in Japan," the designated theme of the Japan Cultural Expo and scheduled in conjunction with the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Non-Japanese speakers need not miss out; individual LCD displays located on the

back of each seat typically feature subtitles and simply worded explanations of noh plots for novice viewers via English, simplified Chinese and Korean languages. **Venue:** National Noh Theatre **Date:** July 20 to Sept. 5 **URL:** <https://www.ntj.jac.go.jp/schedule/nou/2020/7190.html?lan=e>



Important Cultural Property *Kosode* ("small sleeve opening") hand-painted by Ogata Korin. Right: Important Cultural Property *Furisode* ("long-sleeve") from the 18th century. COLLECTION OF TOKYO NATIONAL MUSEUM

April 14 to June 7, 2020

## KIMONO: Fashioning Identities

The kimono — literally "something to wear" — is not only one of Japan's most iconic symbols, but also perhaps one of the most recognizable pieces of clothing in the world. A garment for all occasions, it is surprisingly utilitarian in its functionality. Yet the kimono is also a culmination of outstanding craftsmanship, with the garment's different textiles, patterns and colors all signifiers of Japanese culture and aesthetics. Enter "KIMONO: Fashioning Identities," an exhibition examining the remarkable evolution of the garment since its inception roughly 800 years ago. From precursory *kosode* ("small sleeve opening") garments to

contemporary interpretations of kimono by modern artists, the exhibition is an array of over 200 pieces celebrating this remarkable and most distinctive apparel. Such is the kimono's worldwide allure that several major museums — New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art; Boston Museum of Fine Arts; and the Victoria and Albert Museum — are also involved. People are invited to see showcase pieces debuting in Japan, or attend the international symposium held in conjunction with the exhibition. **Venue:** Heiseikan, Tokyo National Museum **URL:** <https://www.tnm.jp>

Late March to June 14, 2020

## Washoku: Nature and Culture in Japanese Cuisine

*Washoku*, traditional Japanese cuisine, has gained global recognition and popularity in recent years, especially after it was added to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2013. This exhibition examines the allure of the quintessential Japanese cuisine from different perspectives. These include how it has evolved over time, distinctive cooking techniques and abundant natural ingredients found across the archipelago. From bluefin tuna to radish and mushrooms, the exhibition is a showcase of more than 250 food samples, interactive images and other items. It sheds light on the versatility of produce grown or caught in Japan

that has played a major part in shaping the nation's traditional cuisine. Also on display are historical documents and replicas of dishes from different periods, including ones prepared for famed female ruler Himiko in the early third century and colorful meals served at a noble banquet during the Nara Period (710 to 794). The show also looks into the future of washoku by introducing the latest technologies and research such as a project to develop space food. **Venue:** National Museum of Nature and Science, Tokyo **URL:** <https://washoku2020.jp/english.html>



More than 250 food samples, interactive images and other items will be on display at the "Washoku: Nature and Culture in Japanese Cuisine" exhibition.



It's not just art. It's how we see the world.



# JAPAN CULTURAL EXPO

A festival of arts, culture and various experiences of the real Japan is happening nationwide.

[japanculturalexpo.bunka.go.jp/en](http://japanculturalexpo.bunka.go.jp/en)

For more information on the events shown in this print, please visit our website. <https://www.ntj.jac.go.jp/nihonhaku/credit/>  
Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan Japan Arts Council





# JAPAN CULTURAL EXPO

## RICH HISTORY SEEN IN NATIONWIDE PROGRAMS

President Junko Kawamura hopes the expo sheds light on Japan's culture of respect

Maiko Muraoka  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

**H**eld across the country in the years before and after the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games, Junko Kawamura, president of Japan Arts Council, is confident that the Japan Cultural Expo will offer a great opportunity for people from Japan and abroad to appreciate and learn about the blessing of nature found in traditional food, clothing, housing and arts that have endured since ancient times.

The expo, co-organized by the Japan Arts Council and the Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan, is themed "Humanity and Nature in Japan" and consists of hundreds of programs, broadly covering history, life and culture from the prehistoric Jomon Period (circa 10,000 B.C. to circa 300 B.C.) to the present.

"I hope Japan's view of nature and the attitude of respecting all living things will be shared globally," Kawamura said in an interview at her office located inside the National Theatre's complex.

Kawamura expressed hope that through the various programs at the expo, international audiences and visitors will witness both tangible and intangible skills that have supported the life and culture of Japanese through traditional methods of expression, as well as modern presentations inspired by tradition.

Describing Japan as an island country with diverse geographic features that include mountains, forests, rivers and seas, Kawamura said that the country is blessed with abundant nature that evolves with the changing of the seasons.

"The four seasons are alive in our *i-shoku-ju* (clothing, food and housing). For example, we put away the clothes for one season and take out the ones for the next season. Even with today's Westernized ways of living, Japanese ways of doing things like that are still alive," she said.

One of the programs that illustrates Japan's traditional clothing culture is an exhibition titled "Kimono: Fashioning Identities" starting on April 14 at the Tokyo National Museum.

Kawamura explained that Japan's seasons and nature are also alive in many of Japan's artworks.

"For example, there are works of folding screens that express the continuation of the seasons. In theatrical performances, there are often small flowers used as symbolic stage props, so that audiences will instantly share the understanding of which season the scene is unfolding in," Kawamura said. Take, for example, how animals and plants are depicted in the way that they also have emotions and characters like humans do in many works of art. "These expressions come from the sense of awe we have for everything that exists," she said.

Regarding the field of *washoku*, Japan's culinary culture that has been designated a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, there will be an exhibition that aims to facilitate scientific understanding of *washoku* at the National Museum of Nature and Science, Tokyo.

To learn about modern and traditional architectures in Japan, Tokyo exhibitions featuring two major Japanese architects, Kenzo Tange and Kengo Kuma, are scheduled to start in July. One of Tange's most notable works is the Yoyogi National Gymnasium that served as one of the venues for the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. Kuma, one of Japan's leading architects, and his team designed the new National Stadium for the upcoming Olympic and Paralympic Games.

"There are also exhibitions showcasing Japanese architecture held concurrently in three locations in Tokyo. These exhibitions feature buildings from the Asuka Period (552



Japan Arts Council President Junko Kawamura speaks during an interview in Tokyo on Feb. 25. SATOKO KAWASAKI



Visitors can see a traditional Ainu dance at the Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park, which will open in Hokkaido in April. Right: On May 15, 1582, Oda Nobunaga, a powerful 16th-century warlord, appointed his general Akechi Mitsuhide to entertain Tokugawa Ieyasu, who later seized power over the whole country in 1603, at Azuchi Castle. This is a reproduction of the *honzenryori* full-course meal prepared on that occasion. The main dishes are octopus, cooked sea bream and the famous raw crucian carp of the Omi region. COURTESY OF THE FOUNDATION FOR AINU CULTURE / AYAO OKUMURA, MIKETSUKUNI WAKASA OBAMA FOOD CULTURAL MUSEUM

## A CELEBRATION OF HERITAGE AND OPPORTUNITY

Ryohei Miyata  
COMMISSIONER,  
AGENCY FOR CULTURAL AFFAIRS

**A** distinctive feel for artistic and cultural expression has been passed down continuously in Japan for over more than 10,000 years. Today this proud tradition of arts and culture is among Japan's greatest strengths.

The wellspring of Japanese arts and



culture is its temperate climate and natural abundance. The diversity of the landscape and the constantly shifting cycle of four seasons inspire the awe of nature's power and appreciation for its beauty. And in Japan, the creative impulses and skills responding to nature and its beauty have been prized and treasured since antiquity.

Living in Japan amid this culture, where the native traditions and ethos permeate the familiar context of everyday life, people may come to take it for granted, and cease to think of it regularly or consciously.

The Japan Cultural Expo offers the occasion for Japanese themselves to

rediscover pride in their own culture and experience its depth and richness.

The Japan Cultural Expo also aims to promote the distinctive culture fostered in Japan and call attention to the sensibilities nourished by its traditions, giving not only Japanese a chance to rediscover their own heritage, but people overseas increased opportunities to experience the special world of Japanese arts and culture.

We hope the Japan Cultural Expo projects will inspire the young people who participate to carry on the spirit thus fostered and extend its narrative far into the future.

to 645) to today, designed in the way that match the characteristics of Japan's nature," said Kawamura.

Many architectural models will be presented to better describe the historical progress of architectural technology. Not only the Japanese tradition and skills in wooden architecture, but repair and restoration techniques are focuses of these exhibits. Such traditional architectural craftsmanship has also been nominated for addition to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

Kawamura stressed that those programs are a result of a multitude of efforts and ideas developed to help visitors, especially those from overseas, understand Japanese tradition and culture.

"Offering hands-on experience is one of the ways to help people enjoy exhibits and performances from their own viewpoint," said Kawamura.

In one of last year's events titled "Experience Japanese Culture: Samurai Mania! Explore Japanese Armor at the Tokyo

National Museum," a full-sized and weighted replica of armor was available for visitors to try on. A noh theater workshop allowed participants to actually play a traditional Japanese musical instrument such as shoulder drum or learn part of a song from a play.

This year, an interactive exhibition titled "The World of Traditional Performing Arts: Kabuki, Bunraku, Noh, and Kyogen, Gagaku, Kumi-odori" is scheduled to take place from late March until May 24 in Ueno. It will exhibit these five different disciplines of Japanese performing arts, all recognized by UNESCO as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list.

Unlike typical exhibitions showcasing stage props and costumes, "People can actually try kumadori, kabuki-style makeup on using digital art technology. You can also see the back of the bunraku stage to learn how puppeteers manipulate puppets," she said.

"These kinds of events are being held throughout Japan from Okinawa to Hokkaido. I hope that people also visit vari-

ous regions and interact with regional cultures as well," she said.

In Hokkaido, a series of programs related to Ainu people and culture are to be held at the Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park, a new museum featuring Ainu indigenous people in Hokkaido scheduled to open in Shiraoi, Hokkaido, on April 24, as well as other locations across the prefecture.

Designed to demonstrate both the diversity and universality of Japanese culture, Kawamura pointed out that the Japan Cultural Expo is a platform for the country to introduce the way its people have interacted with nature and its history of sustainable living to the world.

"Imagine how our ancestors lived with nature. What is it like to coexist with nature rather than just pursuing efficiency? The respect for the nature includes the respect for other humans," Kawamura said, expressing hope that the expo may trigger such thoughts in people, making a positive impact in the global conversation.