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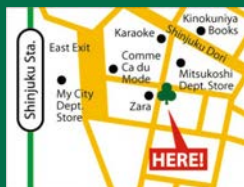
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Public Enemy

Inside Tokyo's
'subversive'
skateboarding scene
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FEATURE

Spray it

Graffiti artists color
concrete across
the capital
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Speak Out

Sacred Heart alum
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Festival of Fury

A *matsuri* not for
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in Ishikawa
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July 2018

Cover design
by Stephan Jarvis



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EDITOR'S PICK

JULY 6

Boys for Sale: Film screening and discussion

Boys for Sale, directed by Itako, examines the life of *urisen* (rent boys) in Shinjuku Nichome, Tokyo's gay district. The boys themselves, many who identify as straight, narrate the film by discussing their experiences in sex work on camera.

After the film, producer Ian Thomas Ash will take questions from the audience. Film in Japanese with English subtitles, discussion in English.

6:45 – 8:30 PM. Institute of Comparative Culture (ICC)
Sophia University, Bldg. 2, 3F, Rm 309, 7-1 Kioicho, Chiyoda-ku.
☎ Yotsuya. No registration necessary. icc.fla.sophia.ac.jp

ART

JULY 7 – AUGUST 10

Yoshitomo Nara "Sixteen springs and sixteen summers gone 'take your time, it won't be long now'"

World-renowned artist Yoshitomo Nara is famous for his cute and devilish characters. However, this exhibition will not feature his signature paintings but is instead displaying his photographs and films. Nara, one of Japan's most celebrated artists, is heavily influenced by punk rock and the subversion of manga-like images and this exhibition, at Taka Ishii Gallery, is sure to be an intriguing departure from his more known works, which have gathered him fans from all corners of the globe.

11am – 7pm. Free. Taka Ishii Gallery Photography/Film, 2F, 5-17-1 Roppongi, Minato-ku.
☎ Roppongi. www.takaishiigallery.com/en/archives/23557



Yoshitomo Nara, "SAKKAJIM" (detail), 2014, pigment print © Yoshitomo Nara

EVENTS & FESTIVALS



kanata hata/flicker

JULY 14 – 15

Yokohama Sparkling Twilight

Tokyo's big neighbor might be the perfect place to enjoy *hanabi* season without the hassle and the crowds of the capital's main festivals. Yokohama Sparkling Twilight is a two-day festival with around 3,000 fireworks being launched from the shore off Yamashita Park each night. In addition, the festival features a parade of *mikoshi* portable shrines from every district in Yokohama (including Yokohama's Chinatown district), live performances and boat illuminations.

11:30am – 8:30pm (Fireworks from 7:30pm – 8pm). Free.
Around Yamashita Park. ☎ Motomachi-Chukagai.
www.y-artist.co.jp/sparkling.



JULY 1 – 29

Nakagin Capsule Tower Tours

Nakagin Capsule Tower is undoubtedly one of the strangest architectural pieces in Tokyo. Straight out of a dystopian movie, the building is emblematic of the Metabolist movement and was thought to satisfy the needs of the fast life of future salarymen. Nobody lives in Nakagin Capsule Tower anymore as it failed to be a pleasant place to live and the building is due to be demolished in the near future. Fortunately, you can see and tour the interior of the tower and get a taste of its retro-futuristic aesthetic. Each tour lasts 50 minutes and reservations are required in advance.

July 1, 22, 29 at 11am, 12pm, 1pm; July 21 at 12pm and 1pm. ¥3,000 (enquire in advance regarding English tours).
Nakagin Capsule Tower, 8-16-10 Ginza, Chuo-ku. ☎ Shimbashi, Shiodome
www.nakagincapsuletower.com/nakagincapsuletour



JULY 6–SEPTEMBER 24 Art Aquarium 2018

The Art Aquarium, held in Nihonbashi, is a true sensory delight for attendees. This summer the theme is “Edo: Coolness of KINGYO.” Kingyo, or goldfish, have a deeply rooted history in the Nihonbashi area, where people would come to view goldfish and cool down while taking a break from the summer heat. The aquarium will have 8,000 elegantly dancing, ornamental fish displayed in tanks arranged into Japanese works of art, alongside other aesthetic displays and must-visit events.

Open – Fri: 11am – 10:30pm (Last entrance 10pm). Saturdays & days prior to a public holiday: 11am – 11:30pm (Last entrance 11pm). Adult (13 and up): ¥1,000, Child (4 to 12): ¥600. Under 4: Free of charge. Nihonbashi Mitsui Hall: 5F (entrance on 4F), COREDO Muromachi 1, 2-2-1 Nihonbashi Muromachi, Chuo-ku. artaquarium.jp/en/



JULY 14–16 Sakaya Kaku-uchi Festival

Check out Kaku-uchi Fes where you can buy and drink alcohol by the glass in the *kaku* (corner) of a liquor store underneath the blue sky. You can try over 100 different brands of Japanese sake and other alcohol at 18 different booths representing around 20 liquor stores from several prefectures. There will be many rare drinks that aren't available at restaurants or internet stores. From Junmaiginjoshu “Tokyo” to Torigoe and Nakanoshinbashi, you're bound to find something you'll enjoy.

Starter set: ¥2,000 with glass at door. Advance ticket: ¥1,800 with glass (only available through website). 10am – 6pm. Ueno Park Fountain Square. Ueno passmarket.yahoo.co.jp/event/show/detail/01esq5zm1sat.html



JULY 6–SEPTEMBER 24 ECO EDO Nihonbashi 2018

Now an annual event, ECO EDO Nihonbashi 2018 ~Enjoy “Cool Edo” with All Five Senses~ is back to host numerous summer-themed activities throughout the Nihonbashi district. They've given a modern twist to Edo cooling techniques that speak to all of your senses: goldfish, lanterns and fireworks to see, food to smell and taste, *yukata* to wear and touch, and wind chimes to hear. Many stores will also give you a discount if you're wearing a yukata or have a ticket to the 2018 Art Aquarium.

10am – 9pm. Free. Around Nihonbashi. Mitsukoshimae. www.nihonbashi-tokyo.jp/en/eecoedo2018/

MUSIC



JULY 7 Shonen Knife

Seminal Japanese rock girrrls Shonen Knife are still at it after nearly 40 years of crashing around the world with their ramshackle cooler-than-thou sounds. Loved by Nirvana, Teenage Fanclub and other 90s legends, Shonen Knife has changed line ups a lot over the years but have been led by Naoko Yamano since the beginning. Kooky, indie and honest, Shonen Knife is a truly great live band so get your BMX Bandits tees on and head down to Shimokitata for a memorable night.

Open 5:30pm. Start 6pm. Adv: ¥3,500. FEVER, 1F, 1-1-14 Hanegi, Setagaya-ku. Shindaita, Shimokitazawa. www.fever-popo.com/schedule/2018/07/0717.html



JULY 8 Mono

If you have never heard Japanese experimental masters Mono, don't ever admit it to your cool friends. Get ahold of their masterpiece album *Requiem For Hell*, plug in your earphones and lose yourself in the noise and rough melodies. It's all very Mogwai, My Bloody Valentine and Acid Mothers Temple, but it's glorious. Catch them with fellow Japanese hardcore noisemasters Envy in Ebisu and you'd do well to bring your earplugs.

Open 5pm. Start 6pm. Adv: ¥3,500. LIQUIDROOM, 3-16-6 Higashi, Shibuya-ku. Ebisu. www.liquidroom.net/schedule/lr14_envy_mono_20180708



JULY 26 Jon Hopkins

Electronica master Jon Hopkins brings his banging tunes to Tokyo for a must-see gig in Shibuya. His latest album *Singularity* is an absolute belter and has some outrageously great tracks such as “Everything Connected.” Multi-talented Hopkins is also known for soundtracks in addition to collaborations with other legendary musicians such as Brian Eno. This is most definitely going to sell out so best get your tickets as soon as possible.

Open 6:30pm. Start 7:30pm. Adv: ¥5,000 Door: ¥5,500. WWW X, 2F, 13-17 Udagawa, Shibuya-ku. Shibuya. www.shibuya.jp/schedule/008839.php

By Don Morton



FEATURE

Battle of the Sexes

A winning match

In 1973, Bobby Riggs, a tennis Hall of Famer, sexist extraordinaire and serial hustler, challenged Billie Jean King, the reigning women's champion, to a match that would, he claimed, prove once and for all men's superiority over women. He lost.

The glitzy, chauvinist-vs-feminist match, played in the Houston Astrodome, was one of the most-watched televised sporting events of all time. But it's only partly what this fine movie is about. The real drama is in the off-court backstories.

Riggs, a shameless, loudmouth showman, was having gambling addiction problems, his wife had thrown him out, and he was compelled to revive his past glories. King, already campaigning for women's sports parity, was just beginning to realize that she was gay. The event also energized the period's nascent feminist movement.

Z for Zachariah



A woman (Margo Robbie) surviving on her own in a post-apocalyptic world seemingly

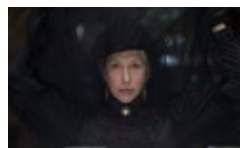
devoid of other humans rescues a passing scientist (Chiwetel Ejiofor). Possibly the last two people on Earth, they have formed a tenuous bond by the time a second stranger appears (Chris Pine) and the inevitable triangle takes shape. As the story quietly unfolds, the three begin an elegant, emotional and nuanced dance. Craig Zobel's (*Compliance*) adaptation of Robert C. O'Brien's popular 1974 cult novel is not without its flaws, but it's beautiful in its simplicity, and never tells you what to think. (98 min, from June 23)

It's superbly acted. Steve Carell pulls out all the stops in his depiction (impersonation?) of the manic hustler, and Emma Stone disappears into her role as King, whom she eerily resembles. Add to that Elisabeth Shue as Riggs's wife, a surprisingly effective Sarah Silverman as King's agent, and the versatile Andrea Riseborough as her lover, and you've got game, set and match.

Directed with their trademark light-yet-serious touch by Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris, who previously gave us *Little Miss Sunshine*.

This is a highly entertaining time-capsule comedy, an observant character study, and an inspirational sports flick that manages to slip in a serious message about still relevant themes. (121 min, from July 6)

Winchester



The San Jose tourist attraction Winchester Mystery House is a sprawling collection of

architectural oddities, built with no apparent master plan by the mad widow of the rifle maker. Of course it's inevitably rumored to be haunted by the spirits of those killed by the gun maker's guns. Australia's Spierig brothers (who made the vastly superior *Predestination*) thought they could base a good horror movie on this. Instead they came up with this pointless, lazy misfire that substitutes non sequitur "boo" moments for suspense or dread, and criminally wastes the time and talents of Helen Mirren. (99 min, from June 29)

American Assassin



After his fiancée is gunned down by terrorists in the initially happy opening scene

(saw that coming), a young man signs up for counterterrorism lessons from a former Navy SEAL (a scene-stealing Michael Keaton). With its exploitative, increasingly ludicrous plot every bit as unimaginative as the title, and its seizure-inducing machismo, this ultraviolent, generic Little League Bourne systematically checks off all the espionage-thriller boxes. Ultimately it comes off as a blatant shot at building an action franchise around the likable young Dylan O'Brien, from *Maze Runner*. Good luck with that. (112 min, from June 29)

Brigsby Bear



And now for something unabashedly different. The 20-something James ("SNL"'s

Kyle Mooney) was kidnapped as an infant and raised in a sealed desert biodome. His only connection to "reality" has been a cheesy kids' TV show his parents produced for him as a teaching tool. When this man-child is finally rescued, he decides he cannot live without Brigsby Bear, and teams up with some new friends to create a movie. This ultra-indie is sweetly cynical, original but outré, and better than I'm making it sound. Grounded in sincere emotion, never manipulative or calculated, and the surprise hit of the year. (97 min, from June 23)

Early Man



In the latest engaging claymation from Nick Park, a group of Neanderthals

must defend their homeland from their arrogant, bronze-age Euro-trash neighbors ... in a kind of slob-versus-snob soccer game. Voice talent includes Eddie Redmayne, Tom Hiddleston, Timothy Spall and Rob Brydon. It's hard not to be charmed by anything that comes out of Park's Aardman Animations, and this one is certainly recommendable. But it has to be said that while it's still smart and funny, judging it by the studio's own standards of excellence (*Wallace & Gromit*, *Chicken Run*, *Shaun the Sheep*), it's merely second-division. (89 min, from July 6)

Solo: A Star Wars Story



This is what happens when you sell your franchise to Disney. Oh, there's nothing really

wrong with it as unnecessary prequels go, but it will appeal most to moviegoers who really, really needed to see more space battles and weird aliens, and were absolutely dying for the origin stories of Han Solo and Chewbacca (and frenemy Lando Calrissian). The programmed script and Ron Howard's cautious direction are dutiful but unremarkable. Bright spots: Woody Harelson and Donald Glover. Your enjoyment will hinge on whether you buy into Alden Ehrenreich's efforts to be Harrison Ford. I didn't see it. Rainy day. (135 min, from June 29)

Battle of the Sexes: Photo by Melinda Sue Gordon, © 2016 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation. **Brigsby Bear:** Photo by Natalie Cass, © 2017 Sony Pictures Classics. **Winchester:** Photo by Ben King. **Early Man:** © 2017 StudioCanal S.A.S. and the British Film Institute. All Rights Reserved. **American Assassin:** Photo by Christian Black, © 2016 CBS Films. **Z for Zachariah:** Photo by Parisa Taghizadeh, © 2015 Roadside Attractions. **Solo:** Photo by Jonathan Olley, © 2018 Lucasfilm Ltd.

Underrated Netflix Shows

What to watch during a *Game of Thrones*-less summer?

By Nalla El Shekshaky

Summer is coming, but *Game of Thrones* isn't. Indeed, the show decided to boycott this summer and will return next year. If you are one of its 12 million regular viewers who have no clue how to spend their spare time in July, *Metropolis* selects the most underrated shows on Netflix that you've probably missed out on. Here is a selection of offbeat and cheerful comedies that will make you forget about all the hassles of the medieval drama.

Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt

Probably one of the best shows on Netflix. The series narrates the story of Kimmy Schmidt, a 29-year-old woman who spent 15 years of her life confined in a bunker with three other girls by a so-called reverend of a doomsday cult. When she's rescued, Kim decides to get her life together and settle in New York. I know it sounds super tragic, when put like that, but it's not, not at all. "Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt" is energetic, hilarious and light-hearted.

Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency

Who is Dirk Gently? Picture Sherlock Holmes on LSD and you pretty much get the idea. Dirk Gently claims to be a "holistic detective," which means he believes in "the interconnectivity of all things." He basically bases his investigations on connected coincidences and follows his intuition. It's a quirky adaption of Douglas Adams' cult novel. The show is completely absurd but still manages to integrate the suspense and logic puzzles central to any great detective story. Another good reason to watch Dirk Gently: Elijah Wood plays the show's Watson.

Lovesick

Originally named "Scrotal Recall," *Lovesick* is a British sitcom with a not-so romantic plot. After being diagnosed with chlamydia, Dylan tries to reach out to all his previous sexual encounters to inform them of his diagnosis. Each episode focuses on one girl and includes flashbacks from their relationship and the way she deals with the news. Spoiler alert: it is not just about STDs, there is also an ongoing romance.

Santa Clarita Diet

Another weird hidden gem of Netflix. Set in the quiet town of Santa Clarita, California, the show follows the struggles of the Hammonds, whose lives are dramatically changed after the mother, Sheila, played by Drew Barrymore, turns into a zombie. She then has to murder and eat people to feed herself, keep up with her job as a real estate agent, manage her relationships and take care of her daughter. What a busy modern woman. This is a very funny comedy but it's definitely more graphic than *Dexter* when it comes to blood. Not recommend for the faint of heart.

Room Laundering

By Rob Schwartz

Japan seems to specialize in the quirky, supernatural dramedy and the latest addition to this particular genre, *Room Laundering*, is actually pretty enjoyable, despite its final foray into melodrama. The flick starts with an unexplained murder and we only learn how it relates to the story much later.

Miko (Elaiza Ikeda) is dark. She wanders around town in pitch black goth garb, sometimes carrying a plastic goose, and talks to no one. She seems to be in a trance or a constant existential crisis, or maybe she's just a moody 18-year-old. It turns out Miko lost her dad at age five and her mother abandoned her with grandma shortly thereafter. For her whole life she has been alone and has no friends, or at least none that are alive. Miko can see ghosts, there are some she speaks to regularly, like a 10-year-old boy who longs to grow up.

Miko's only connection to society is her sketchy uncle Goro (Joe Odagiri). He's a real estate agent that specializes in "room laundering." This is a scam where agents put a short-term, fake tenant in apartments where a death has occurred to be able to avoid telling prospective renters about the previous tragedy. Unsurprisingly, he uses his young niece in the room laundering scheme so she is constantly moving into new apartments, ignoring her neighbors and feeling lost. Naturally, the job means that Miko is continually meeting new ghosts. In her latest place she meets the ghost of a rocker who committed suicide due to his lack of success. Indifferent at first, Miko is drawn to the wackypunk and these scenes are curiously funny and amusing. He even starts to insist Miko must continue to promote his musical career even though he's dead. Fortunately for Miko she is re-assigned to a new apartment, but we soon discover the ghost in this place is even more tormented than the one that preceded it. It's the apartment where the woman was murdered at the beginning of the film.

The story follows these ghosts' attempts to get Miko to deal with their unfinished business but at the same time we are shown the protagonist's backstory. Her whole family has the ability to see ghosts and it's both a blessing and a curse. Slowly we learn the details of her abandonment, and the healing she needs. Fun and wacky until the final tear-jerking scenes, *Room Laundering* is an entertaining stroll through an alternate world.



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Miko can see ghosts, there are some she speaks to regularly, like a 10-year old boy who longs to grow up.

Room Laundering
(ルームロンダリング)

109 minutes
In theaters from July 7



MUSIC

Zeroing in With Cero

Poly Life Multi Soul goes live

By Patrick St. Michel

Tokyo trio Cero consists of vocalist Shohei Takagi, keyboardist Yu Arauchi and guitarist Tsubasa Hashimoto.

Live shows can be a puzzle for bands. They head into the studio and create an album, only to have to re-imagine the new set of songs for the stage shortly after. Tokyo trio Cero didn't worry too much when they started the nationwide tour for their newest album *Poly Life Multi Soul*.

"When we made the songs, we always kept the idea of live performance in mind," the group's vocalist Shohei Takagi tells *Metropolis* from a room in Tokyo FM, where they will fittingly play an intimate live show later that day. "So there wasn't really a struggle to translate it to the stage. It was there from the beginning."

But *Poly Life Multi Soul*—featuring Takagi, keyboardist Yu Arauchi and guitarist Tsubasa Hashimoto—isn't the result of a band making concessions ahead of a busy summer festival schedule. Cero formed in 2004, and in the years since have explored nocturnal indie-pop, intricate jazz-pop and, on the 2015 album *Obscure Ride* that served as their breakthrough into the mainstream, laid-back funk. This outing, they've constructed topsy-turvy songs loaded up with polyrhythms and other musical techniques originating from around the globe.

Their fourth album would be their most ambitious to date, even if they hadn't crossed over enough to appear on the now-defunct boy band SMAP's variety show. But as a follow up to a commercially successful collection that predicted the laid-back sounds that have risen up the charts more recently (courtesy of outfits like Suchmos and Yogee New Waves), it's particularly daring. Highlights include the interlocking grooves of "Floating On Water" and the

"I thought this album might end up complicated to do live [...]. But it turns out, so far, everyone is so hyped and dancing for it."

Shohei Takagi

eight-and-a-half-minute-long title track, an exploratory drumming adventure.

Helping to make their ambitions real was the opportunity to work with more session musicians. Although Cero's core boasts only three members, their live shows over the last few years have seen upwards of a dozen musicians joining them on stage. A pair of performances this spring at Ebisu's Liquidroom found the three packed on stage with an assortment of backup players and even a mini choir.

"Horns, keyboards, back-up vocals...we suddenly had way more layers to work with. More sounds to play around with," Takagi says. "That was a big shift from *Obscure Ride*. We used a wider range of sounds, and rhythms, to create with."

While it didn't change the band's song creation process, these elements allowed them to experiment. Arauchi brought the song "Buzzle Bee Ride" to the group, a squiggly number that he envisioned as mimicking a theme park "dark ride" (think Space Mountain, his personal fave). The beat, derived from jazz music, turned out to be a challenge to sing Japanese words over. "I was struggling, I get why nobody does this in Japan," Arauchi says with a laugh, though he eventually found the right way to meld it all together.

"Since we thought polyrhythms would be central to the album, we thought we put too much focus on that in the beginning," Takagi says. "It felt like it could become a little too much, overwhelming. We didn't want to get too big headed." This line of thought resulted in more mel-low moments on *Poly Life*, notably the reeled-in shuffle "Flower Of Dusk."

This focus on balance—to find complexity but not to baffle—ended up being vital to the album. "The key from the get-go was to make something that people could dance to," Takagi says. All three members mention an interest in dance music during our talk, but not in the conventional four-on-the-floor style. Rather, they offer a more U.N.-friendly definition of the term, citing an interest in Afrobeats, Cuban music and South American sounds. Early feedback shows it's working.

"I thought this album might end up complicated to do live, and that everything we did on it might end up being too complicated for people who came out. But it turns out, so far, everyone is so hyped and dancing for it," Takagi says.

That will carry into the summer, with a handful of appearances at festivals in the coming months highlighted by a penultimate slot on Fuji Rock's White Stage. That gathering in Niigata is one of Cero's favorites, partially because it allows them to bring their live experience to punters. "Festivals in general, it's usually way shorter than our own shows. So we can't make a story out of the set. We just play songs, especially ones everyone can be like, 'woooo,'" Takagi says laughing. "But with Fuji Rock, we can do something closer to a solo show, do a presentation."

Given the intricacies of *Poly Life*, the extra time in that set is bound to give the band space to deliver. And give fans a little extra time to dance along to the polyrhythmic beat.



Cero's latest album *Poly Life Multi Soul* was released in May 2018. It is also available as a special edition bundled with a bonus live DVD or bonus CD with instrumental versions.

TRUNK(KUSHI)

Located right in the middle of the “triangle of style” formed by Harajuku, Shibuya and Omotesando, TRUNK(HOTEL) lives up to the reputation of its neighborhood. Trendy, minimalistic and arty, TRUNK(HOTEL) complex is composed of a hotel, a restaurant (KITCHEN), a bar lounge, a shop and an *izayaka*-like restaurant recently refurbished, TRUNK(KUSHI).

Tradition is not the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about Shibuya. Yet, there is more to the district than its neon lights and this is what TRUNK(KUSHI) aims to disseminate by combining the modern hype of Shibuya with its unique culture, history and its local community.

Unlike TRUNK(KITCHEN) which mixes Western and Japanese tastes, TRUNK(KUSHI) provides a more traditional and local cuisine. The restaurant specializes in *kushiyaki* which is in many ways the soulfood of Shibuya. You might not have heard of kushiyaki before but it is actually very similar to *yakitori* except that kushiyaki includes all kind of grilled skewers while yakitori usually only covers



It also provides a large variety of offal. While many foreigners will be reluctant to try offal, TRUNK(KUSHI) is the perfect place for first-timers. Ingredients are purchased from Tsukiji every day, and the menu is supervised by Yuji Higuchi, the owner of the highly-acclaimed *yakiniku-ya* Yakiniku Yuji in Shibuya's Jinnan area which is by far one of the best offal restaurants in the city. So if you have never tried offal skewers and you feel curious about it, TRUNK's quality dishes may convince you.

Kushiyaki is not only about meat. Unlike most izakayas, TRUNK(KUSHI) is also vegetarian-friendly. Indeed, you can order mushroom skewers, pepper skewers and more. In addition, some of the sides are meat-free as well like the fried veggie ramen with hachiko sauce.

The restaurant recently added set meals on its menu which are perfect if you feel indecisive in front of the large choice of skewers. They are all named after areas of the neighborhood — Cat Street ¥3,000, Onden ¥3,500 and Jingu ¥4,000 and features different combinations of skewers, *shime* and desserts.

Of course, a skewer restaurant would not be complete without a proper bar. TRUNK(KUSHI) offers a special 90 minute free flow option for ¥1,800 including shochu cocktails, sake and more Japanese drinks. A-la-carte options are also available.

As you may have noticed, TRUNK(KUSHI) is nothing like your orthodox izakaya but does not differ much in terms of prices — the average bill is ¥3,500 per customer. Fashionable, high-quality and local in atmosphere TRUNK(KUSHI) offers all the elements of a great evening.



chicken. Post-war Shibuya was a black market hub as well as host to a swarm of food stalls. Skewered food, then, has long been a favorite of locals.

TRUNK(KUSHI)'s challenge is to give a modern take on this tradition and to provide local food and culture to a diverse clientele. Indeed, a quarter of the restaurant's customers are foreigners. The staff, then, is entirely English speaking and the whole menu is in both languages. It is the ideal restaurant for tourists and non-Japanese speakers looking for authenticity and convenience.

The most popular item of the menu is the chicken ball skewers. Tender, juicy and tasty, they also come in a set of ten so you can share them with your friends or just satiate a big appetite. The chicken thighs and leek skewers are also highly praised. They are soaked in a secret *tare* sauce prepared a day in advance.

As explained before, kushiyaki covers all kinds of skewers, this is why the restaurant also offers beef and pork skewers. The beef skirt is a delight and complements, perfectly, Japanese pepper that you can find in the table condiments.



TRUNK(KUSHI)

5-31 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku
Nearest station: Shibuya

Tue – Sun
5pm – 11pm
(L.O. 10:30pm)
Closed on Mondays.

Tel: 03-5766-3205

trunk-hotel.com/kushi/



Nourishing Noodles

Tokyo's two takes on a fast food favorite

By Yukari Sakamoto



Jimbocho Yakisoba Mikasa
2-24-3 Jimbocho, Chiyoda-ku

Opens 11am, closes after all
150 servings are gone.
Closed Sunday and national
holidays.

Tel. 03-3239-5100
mikasain.com

Mutenka Yakisoba Bar Celona
Three M Corp Building,
1-3-14 Shirokane, Minato-ku

11:30am – 3pm (LO 2:30pm),
5pm – 11pm (LO 10pm)

Tel. 03-3444-8938
beatus.co.jp/celona/

Yukari Sakamoto
is the author of *Food Sake Tokyo*. She has worked as a sommelier at the Park Hyatt Tokyo and at Takashimaya. While at Takashimaya, she was the first non-Japanese to pass the shochu advisor exam. Yukari offers tours to markets in Tokyo.

Follow her on Twitter:
[@YukariSakamoto](https://twitter.com/YukariSakamoto)

Tokyo is known for restaurants specializing in one dish, such as sushi, *yakitori* or *tonkatsu*. An editor at a Japanese food magazine told me about a shop in Jimbocho that exclusively serves *yakisoba*. I almost rolled my eyes, but my informant has never led me astray. Yakisoba, a dish that is often found at festivals or at casual *teppan*-grill shops that serve *okonomiyaki*. At first, I couldn't get my head around going to a restaurant for yakisoba. In our home, it's a quick meal we whip together with whatever is in the refrigerator. But here are two restaurants in Tokyo that specialize in this casual dish of stir-fried noodles with pork or seafood and vegetables, that are worth your time and are true reflections of their neighborhood.

Jimbocho Yakisoba Mikasa

The Jimbocho Kanda area is home to many universities, so naturally there are plenty of cheap eats. Not just easy on the wallet, there are quality restaurants among the neighborhood's low-price establishments, also referred to as *B-kyuu gurume* (B-grade gourmet). A white *noren* (traditional Japanese dividing curtain) with yakisoba spelled out in hiragana marks Mikasa, but more likely you'll come across the queue of mostly solo diners, a mix of students and salarymen.

Purchase a ticket at the vending machine. Options are simple. Sauce or salt. Regular size (*namu*) and extra noodles (*oomori*) are both ¥800. There are optional toppings of squid, shrimp, extra pork (each ¥100) and an egg (¥50). It's a sliver of a shop with barely enough room to slip behind the seated customers.

Noodles are made with Hokkaido wheat in the back of the shop, sauce is made in-house and each dish is made to order. The noodles are boiled before they're fried and the finished product is a messy pile of noodles topped with a fried egg and presented on an oval silver plate. On the counter are self-service pots of *benishoga* (pickled red ginger), *karashi mayo* (Japanese mustard and mayonnaise) and *ika tenkasu* (squid tempura bits). The crunchy tempura pieces add umami and texture to the dish. The sauce version has a spicy kick. I much prefer the simpler salt version. The chewy thick noodles elevate this dish to a level worthy of a brick-and-mortar shop.

Mutenka Yakisoba Bar Celona

Across town is Shirokane's decidedly more upscale Mutenka Yakisoba Bar Celona. There was a line in front of the shop before it opened. We were lucky to get in on the first seating. This line was mostly middle-aged couples who were not working on a weekday. There are high bar stools facing a teppan steel flat grill. This is not a quick meal, as care and attention is paid to every detail.



Insider's Guide to Eating in and Dining Out



Above:

At Yakisoba Bar Celona, the noodles are prepared and served on a teppan grill in front of the customer.

Everything is made from scratch here, from the noodles to the sauces and it's all *mutenka*, additive-free. Optional toppings include deluxe items like yellow *nira* garlic chives, beef tendons, Kyoto Kujou leeks and additive-free sausages. On the counter is a small jar of spicy red *karami* sauce made with habanero peppers—a little goes a long way. The noodles are a blend of two domestic wheats.

The lunch menu is yakisoba only. A simple *futsu mori* (¥1,200), regular size with pork, cabbage, and a fried egg, *oomori* (¥1,300) for a larger serving.

The noodles are not messed with once they're put on the hot steel, but instead cooked until they start to brown and develop a crunch.

The noodles are cooked on the teppan steel in front of the diner. This is a more overall sensory experience as you can smell, listen and watch the preparation. The noodles are not messed with once they're put on the hot steel, but instead cooked until they start to brown and develop a crunch. Only then are they turned over and tossed lightly with a slightly sweet sauce that still adds that rich texture. The additional ingredients are placed on top. A white paper sheet is placed on the teppan in front of each customer and the yakisoba is presented on the sheet, keeping the dish hot. In the evening the space becomes a dining bar. Customers are expected to order several small dishes before finishing the meal with yakisoba. There is wine and other drinks on the beverage menu. Note that the shop will be moving to a new location in Gotanda this September.

Left:

A white noren marks the entrance to Yakisoba Mikasa's narrow shop in Jimbocho.

Their home-made noodles can be ordered with salt or sauce and with a range of optional toppings.

The best bread I've ever had in Tokyo was at **Nihonbashi La Bonne Table**. I was told the bread came from Osaka **Le Sucre Coeur**. Finally, Le Sucre Coeur is in Tokyo, in collaboration with chef Namae Shinobu and **Fuglen coffee at Bricolage bread & co.** in Roppongi Hills.

Liberte Patisserie and Boulangerie in Kichijoji offers up both **breads and pastries**. The shop from Paris includes a café space on the 2nd floor. The baguette, which is made with flour from France and Hokkaido, has a rich crumb and nice crust.

Sparkling sake sales are up in Japan. Some brands to look for include **Dassai** or **Nambu Bijin**, both of which conduct the second fermentation in the bottle, like champagne. Or, for lighter bubbles, consider trying **Suzune** or **Mio**, which are low in alcohol and on the sweet side.

Fans of **Asakusa Thai Montee** will be happy to hear that they have **relocated** from the underground mall to across the river. Plastic stools and red-and-white checked tablecloth are still in place. 1-7 Azumabashi, Sumida-ku.



There will be a **bento exhibit** at the **Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum** from July 21–October 8. bento.tobikan.jp



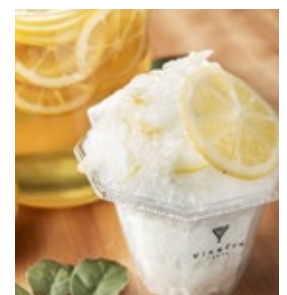
Riedel is out with a new **junmai sake glass** which helps to bring out the best aromas and flavor of *junmaishu*. It is joining the *daiginjo* sake glass which was introduced in 1999. If you are a serious *nihonshu* aficionado, it's worth the investment in these glasses.

Ore no Bakery & Cafe has opened branches at Shinjuku's underground Keio Mall and in Kyobashi. Known for its **posh white bread**, check out the *atsuyaki tamago sando*, omelet sandwich.

A great concept for a wine bar, **Millesime Wine Old Wine Bar** features **wines at least 30 years old**. Wines by the glass start at ¥3,000, a fair price to sip some history at Tokyo Garden Terrace Kioicho.

100% Yamagata beef patties are the base for **Nakano Extreme Burgers**, a short walk from the north exit of Nakano Station.

Fermented fruit vinegars and sweets are the theme of **Vinefru Tokyo** near Tsukiji Market. Shaved ice topped with a sweet and tart sauce will hit the spot in the summer. 2-9-9 Tsukiji, Chuo-ku.



Roppongi Hills Restaurant Refresh

New options to celebrate the area's 15th anniversary

By Alisha Ivelich



Above:

Obicà Mozzarella Bar's specialty is Mozzarella di Bufala Campana, mozzarella made from water buffalo milk.

Right:

Sobamae's colourful bakudan includes vegetables, tuna, salmon roe and natto.

Roppongi Hills has attracted an estimated 600 million visitors over the last 15 years. April 25, 2018 marked the 15th anniversary of the area, and in recognition of this milestone, Roppongi Hills is making a significant push in 2018 to reinforce and refresh its position as the cultural heart of Tokyo. The developments encompass fashion, food, art, and community building activities, and come in the lead-up to the 2020 Olympic Games, for which Tokyo is expected to host an influx of international visitors. A fixture of these changes is a range of new restaurants (and restaurant revamps) in and around Roppongi Hills. The four locations described here represent the variety of new dining options available since spring.

Obicà Mozzarella Bar

Obicà Mozzarella Bar moved to a new location in Roppongi Hills this year after 10 years in its previous location on Keyakizaka. It's now located in the Hollywood Plaza area and features a glass wall overlooking the plaza, which includes roughly a half dozen outdoor tables. "The new location on Roppongi Dori attracts a wider range of customers, and the atmosphere is more casual," explains Obicà manager and sommelier Taiki Nakagawa. "We offer seven different types of cheese, and receive shipments of mozzarella from Campania, Italy three times a week." Obicà specializes in *Mozzarella di Bufala Campana*, mozzarella made from water buffalo milk; the cheese has the Controlled Designation of

Origin (DOC) status, a quality assurance marker granted by the Italian government. Obicà's menu includes cheese tasting sets as samplers; choose between 40 g (1–2 people) and 80 g (2–3 people) portions for cheese, or order à la carte. The "standard" mozzarella is juicier and thicker than cow's milk mozzarella and is the recommended first bite from the 2-mozzarella + ricotta tasting plate (¥4,300). From there, move to the *buratta* (*straciatella*, a creamy cheese curd, wrapped in a casing of mozzarella) for rich flavor and a decadent mouthfeel. End with a bite of the ricotta cheese, a melt-in-your mouth luxury with a hint of sweetness that suggests it could even be eaten for dessert. If venturing beyond the cheese menu to the pizzas, meats, and other items on offer, take note: the restaurant does not use onion or garlic so as not to distract from the flavors of the cheese. "We really hope that visitors to the restaurant have the chance to enjoy authentic mozzarella cheese here," says Nakagawa.

Sobamae Yamato

The not-too-casual not-too-expensive Sobamae Yamato opened its Roppongi location in spring of 2018 after 15 years in Yoyogi-Uehara. There, explains Mr. Watanabe, the manager, "people eat and drink together and finish their meals by enjoying soba. Here, however, while of course we still hope people do that, we also want to place our focus a little bit more on the dishes that come before the soba." The location's name, Sobamae (蕎麦, soba, and 前 [mae], before), is to be interpreted literally. Try Sobamae's *bakudan* (bomb, ¥1,200), a colorful and texturally stimulating dish. The current seasonal variation is seafood focused, including vegetables (*hijiki*, *umibudo*) and fish (tuna, salmon roe) alongside *natto* (fermented



For a complete list of the many restaurant options at Roppongi Hills, see roppongihills.com

soybeans). Topped with an egg, everything in the dish is meant to be mixed with a dash of soy sauce and rolled up in a small, toasted piece of *nori*. The result is an explosion of textures and a pleasant, umami-rich melding of flavors. Enjoy sake with this dish, and share with friends. To conclude the meal, try the soba; for summer, Sobamae recommends the tsuke soba (¥1,100); noodles are prepared separately from a dipping broth. “Even people who know their soba well might be surprised by this broth,” explains Watanabe. “It has an almost ramen-like taste to it.” Dip the freshly prepared soba noodles into the salty, onion-peppered broth for a hearty, sesame-tinged end to your meal. Add a squeeze of the provided lemon for a bit of acidity. The location is intended to be one where people can feel comfortable visiting alone or with friends; a space to enjoy not only the food itself, but the act of eating. “Roppongi Hills is a great location, certainly,” explains Watanabe. He adds his final thought with a smile: “We want people to love coming here.”

Roppongi Ukai-Tei

For a fine dining experience, consider the new offerings by Ukai Group, which operates restaurants across Japan and opened its first overseas location at the end of 2017 (in Taiwan). Ukai’s concept is to create locations that can “last for 100 years,” referring to each restaurant’s capacity to adapt and change to evolving preferences over time. “Roppongi is a vibrant, international business center. Looking to 2020, part of the decision to open restaurants here came from a desire to communicate Ukai’s vision and the evolution of cuisine in Tokyo,” explains an Ukai Group representative. At each restaurant, the utmost attention is paid to atmosphere, ingredient selection, and hospitality. The Roppongi location of Ukai-Tei provides a chef’s table teppanyaki experience; each seat has a private, intimate feel. The decor features use of crimson and gold, with the aim of creating a separate world—a space completely distinct from the everyday. Guests may choose from one of two course meals for dinner; the Tamura beef course (¥37,800/person) or the seasonal speciality & beef course (¥27,000/person). Cows are fattened and selected by Ukai to produce Ukai’s top-quality beef. The featured item on the seasonal menu for this summer is hairy crab with caviar. “The menu at Ukai-Tei-Roppongi differs from other locations,” explains the Ukai Group representative. “The head chefs at each restaurant structure their menus to fit the customers for each location. In Roppongi, we offer a course featuring not only steak, but other ways of enjoying Tamura beef; other dishes allow guests to enjoy the umami inherent in the meat as well.” A lunch course is also available (¥12,960/person). Ukai Group opened two locations in Roppongi Hills in spring of 2018: Roppongi Ukai-Tei and Roppongi Kappou Ukai (where seasonal cuisine is the focus). The locations are connected by a bar lounge intended to serve as “prologue” and/or “epilogue” to meals. Visit for a special occasion.

Le Chocolat Alain Ducasse

For desserts and sweet treats, visit Le Chocolat Alain Ducasse, the newly opened Roppongi location by the Parisian chocolatier. “The Roppongi location differs from our factory in Nihonbashi in that here there is an open kitchen in the salon area. Visitors can enjoy watching the chef prepare their desserts,” explains a representative.



Le Chocolat Alain Ducasse launched its special 3-item summer dessert menu on June 15. For a refined, decadent interpretation of the classic Japanese summer treat *kakigori* that can be found only in Roppongi, try Le Chocolat’s Kakigori: Café Fort et Chocolat (¥1,600), a meticulously layered, texturally exciting take on shaved ice (the Nihonbashi location offers a matcha variation). The outermost layer of the dish uses coffee ice, giving gentle crunch for the first bite. Beneath that, find a layer of chocolate sorbet followed by a layer of refreshing orange marmalade. Next is finely crushed cacao nibs for texture leading to the core of the dish: a rich coffee cream. The finishing touch is a topping of coffee sauce. The summer menu also includes a special baked item: the Soufflé Pamplemousse et Praliné (¥1,600). *Pamplemousse* means grapefruit, the central flavor of the dish. Dig in to the fluffy soufflé to find gently crunchy hazelnut praline inside and a bright grapefruit marmalade at the base. Served alongside the soufflé is the same grapefruit marmalade topped with a hazelnut praline ice cream. “In summer, these citrusy flavors are refreshing, but grapefruit is something you don’t really see much. Surprisingly, it fits very nicely with our menu,” explains the representative. The location’s regular offerings remain available throughout the summer: the Millefeuille tout Choco (¥1,700) celebrates the difference in texture between pastry and cream; the Mousse au Chocolat (¥1,600) is composed of shaved cacao used as an edible, decorative topping to an airy, rich chocolate mousse.

Above:
Ukai-Tei pays the utmost attention to atmosphere, ingredient selection and hospitality. In Roppongi, they offer not only steak, but also other ways of enjoying top-quality Tamura beef.

Left:
Le Chocolat Alain Ducasse’s summer dessert menu includes a coffee and chocolate kakigori with a refreshing layer of orange marmalade.

Photos courtesy of Ukai Group/Le Chocolat Alain Ducasse



Obicà Mozzarella Bar
Metro Hat / HOLLYWOOD PLAZA 1F
Mon–Thu, Sun
11am–11pm, L.O. 10 pm
Fri, Sat and the day before national holidays 11am–midnight, L.O. 11pm
obicajp

Sobamae Yamato
Roppongi Keyakizaka-dori 1F
Lunch
11:30am–2:30pm, L.O. 2pm
Dinner
5:30pm–11pm, L.O. 10pm
Closed Monday

Roppongi Ukai-Tei
Roppongi Keyakizaka-dori 2F
Lunch 12pm–L.O. 2pm
Sat, Sun, holidays
11:30am–L.O. 2:30pm
Dinner 6pm–11pm, L.O. 9pm
Sat, Sun, holidays
5:30pm–11pm, L.O. 9pm
Closed Monday
www.ukai.co.jp/roppongi

Le Chocolat Alain Ducasse
Roppongi Keyakizaka-dori 1F–3F
Boutique 11am–9pm
Le Salon 11am–9pm, L.O. 8:30pm
lechocolat-alainducasse.jp

SEA TO SUMMIT

Entry Period: June 18–August 5

Event: August 18–19

For more details:

[en.montbell.jp/event/](http://en.montbell.jp/event/sea-to-summit/)

sea-to-summit/

Higashikawa Tourism Association

[www.facebook.com/](https://www.facebook.com/Higashikawatourismassociation)

[Higashikawatourismassociation](https://www.facebook.com/Higashikawatourismassociation)



A town rich in nature and culture, Higashikawa has plenty to offer no matter the season.



SPONSORED

Asahidake, Hokkaido

Located 13 km southeast of Asahikawa City and 7 km from Asahikawa Airport, Higashikawa is a town blessed with abundant nature and thriving agriculture. With a population of around 8,500 the town is home to a number of ateliers and art galleries, as well as stylish cafes and bakeries. Situated in central Hokkaido, Higashikawa is home to Mt. Asahidake, the highest peak (2,291 m) in Hokkaido. Asahidake forms part of the Daisetsu Mountain Range, and is located in the Daisetsuzan National Park (the national park has 20 peaks over 2,000 meters). It is the largest natural large-scale forested park in Japan. Asahidake is famous for its beautiful views of alpine flowers and autumn leaves. You can see over 300 species of alpine plants that you would normally only find at much higher altitudes on the main island of Honshu. Historically, the indigenous people of Hokkaido (the Ainu) called Daisetsuzan “Kamuimintara,” meaning “Playground of the Gods.”

The foothills of this ‘playground’ include the Asahidake hot springs. Also in the area are the Hagaromo Falls that fall from a height of 270 meters, the highest in Hokkaido. Natural hot springs also flow through this location. These onsen resorts contain a number of hotels where you can enjoy delicious local cuisine and excellent hot spring baths. A town rich in nature and culture, Higashikawa has plenty to offer no matter the season.

Asahidake Ropeway whisks you up to the Sugatami Ropeway Station, at an altitude of 1,600 meters, in no time at all. From there, it’s about an hour walk up to Sugatami Pond, during which you’ll come across Meotoike (couple’s pond) and various alpine plants and flowers. From the Sugatami Ropeway Station, it’s about a two-and-a-half-hour hike to the summit of Asahidake.

Meotoike Pond is approximately a 15 minutes walk from the Sugatami Ropeway Station, then it’s another 25-minute walk up to Sugatami Pond.

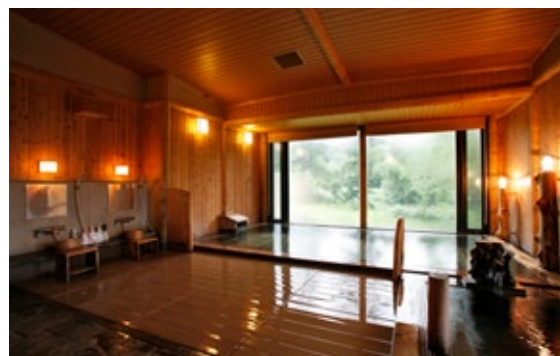
Just minutes away from Asahidake Ropeway Station you’ll find a selection of places to stay. Ideal as a base in any season. A variety of accommodation is available from a three-roomed lodge, to a luxurious multi-roomed hotel that serves a three-course meal every dinner time. All of the places to stay on Asahidake have natural hot springs in which to soak after a tiring day on the mountain.

Flying in from Tokyo, it takes about 90 mins to Asahikawa airport. It then takes about 45 minutes from Asahikawa Airport or central Higashikawa town to the Asahidake Ropeway car park by car. Alternatively, ride the shuttle bus called “Ideyugou” from Asahikawa Station via Asahikawa Airport. It’s roughly a 90-minute ride. There are four shuttles a day. As soon as you arrive in Hokkaido you’ll be breathing in nice, clean fresh air and will soon realize that you have left the urban pollution behind and escaped the humidity of Honshu.

Snow that has fallen on Asahidake melts in the spring and permeates deep into the earth, where it spends many years underground. Here in Higashikawa, that water is drawn up from out of the ground and used as the town’s water. In other words, the water that comes from the taps and faucets in people’s houses is actually mineral water. Many business owners have found this to be a major drawcard, moving their operations to Higashikawa and running unique cafes.

SEA TO SUMMIT is an environmental sporting event. Taking on this multi-sport race where competitors start with their feet dipped into the sea (or lake) and finish by enjoying a great view from the summit of a mountain helps to raise awareness of the importance of the natural world and nature’s many cycles. You can enter Sea to Summit as an individual or as part of a team.

The event includes an environmental symposium, kayaking, hill-climb cycling and climbing. Competitors of any fitness level are welcome to take part.





TRAVEL

Abare: Land, Fire And Violence on The Noto Peninsula

Deeply traditional Noto offers a rugged Japanese spirit far removed from the Tokyo psyche

By Julia Mascetti

“True beauty is something that attacks, overpowers, robs, and finally destroys.”

— Author Yukio Mishima

Indeed, there is beauty in violence. Lists of the most beautiful places in the world are often full of places that are difficult or dangerous to live in. Tokyo espouses an elegant, sanitised kind of beauty. Mishima was an urbanite through and through but he certainly denounced the image of Japan as a “nation of flower arrangers,” and understood the longing for brutality and wildness. Perhaps he had been to Noto.

Noto Peninsula is located north of Kanazawa, jutting into the sea of Japan, jagged and fearless. It’s remote, fiercely rural, the climate wet and windy and the countryside rugged. Speaking in a sometimes incomprehensible *Noto-ben* dialect, the local people here live a deeply traditional lifestyle that couldn’t be farther removed from Japan’s major cities. Tokyoites merely looking to escape the summer heat

are better off going to Karuizawa and instagramming their lunch in overpriced coffee shops. However, those looking to escape the summer heat whilst having a transformative cultural experience, could try travelling to Noto—if they can stomach the complete lack of public transport.

Festivals

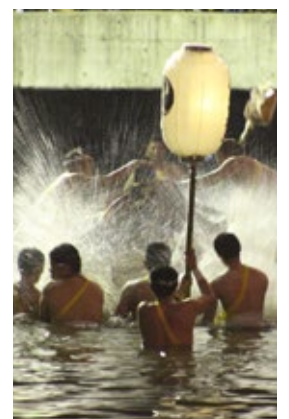
With skies that are darker than much of Japan, it seems fitting that many of Noto’s festivals pertain to light. *Kiriko* is the name for the style of giant lanterns emblematic of Noto that are the centerpiece of the many *matsuri* (festivals) that take place across the region during the summer months. There’s the Anamizu Hasebe Festival on July 20, Notojima Koda Fire Festival on the last day of the month, and many more.

Most striking however, is the tiny town of Ushitsu’s Abare festival. *Abare* means to be riotous, cause havoc, or go on a bender. Whatever your chosen phrase, a festival dedicated to going mental flouts stereotypes of Japanese restraint.



During the second night of the festival, portable shrines are carried around the town before being taken into the river and beaten up.

Photos by Ashley Hirasuna



Right:

Giant *kiriko* are paraded around bonfires as part of Ushitsu's Fire and Violence festival.

**For me,
Noto's rugged
landscapes, deep
traditions and
wild festivals
opened up a
Japan that was
far removed from
my crowded
commutes
and Tokyoite
restraint.**



Wajima Kiriko Art Museum
6-1 Marine Town, Wajima City,
Ishikawa
wajima-kiriko.com/en/

Wajima Museum of Lacquer Art
11 Shijukari, Mitomori-machi,
Wajima City, Ishikawa
[www.city.wajima.ishikawa.jp/
art/home_english.html](http://www.city.wajima.ishikawa.jp/art/home_english.html)



In English, the Abare Matsuri is commonly known as the Fire and Violence festival and takes place on July 7 and 8 this year. 'Fire' and 'Violence' is quite a literal description of what occurs: the first night of the festival, giant *kiriko* are paraded around bonfires. With a good chance that you will get flaming ash in your hair, this part of the festival is dramatic enough, but it is the violence that comes the following night that is truly unforgettable. Portable *mikoshi* (shrines) are paraded around the town by nearly naked men, you hear a cry and then they...*beat them up*. And there really is no other word for it. They lift the *mikoshi* high, drop it on the floor, bash it against a wall, tip it over, stand on it, spray it with sake. When that's not enough, they take the *mikoshi* into the river and beat them up some more, all whilst chanting and being pelted by flaming ash. The festival reaches its climax when the *mikoshi* arrives at the shrine; the priest inspects it to see if it has been destroyed sufficiently—if not, it will be thrown in and out of the bonfire until sufficient *abare* has been had. The experience is intense, fun, bizarre and, as someone who grew up with British Health and Safety culture, would be utterly impossible to write a risk assessment for.

For a quieter introduction to Noto's *kiriko* festivals, head to the exquisite market town of Wajima, two hours by bus from Kanazawa. The dull modern building of the Wajima Kiriko Art Museum belies its contents: 30 full-size *kiriko* lanterns in all their color and splendor and a well laid out museum interior for your education and entertainment.



Crafts

Wajima is guardian of its own traditional craft—*Wajimanuri*, or Wajima lacquerware. Master craftsmen and women in Wajima carry out this complicated craft entirely by hand, consisting of up to 124 sub-processes. Natural lacquer is mixed with *jinoko*, a powdered mineral, and applied to wooden tableware. The result is a beautiful, sophisticated product, uncompromising in utility and formidable in terms of craftsmanship.

To get your hands on *Wajimanuri*, head to Wajima's street market in its charming cobbled town center, which is on almost every weekday from around 8am—though expect the lacquerware to burn a hole in your pocket.

Nature

"Rice tourism" may not sound particularly exciting, but when you hear the almost reverential way Japanese people talk about their staple food, you can start to see why people travel from all over the country to see Noto's famous ter-



raced rice paddies, Shiroyone Senmaida. Historically, rice farming was an extremely arduous task, and community life was organized around it. Perhaps it was the six month rice paddy farming cycle that first gave birth to the concept of *wa* (harmony and conformity within a social group) that is prevalent throughout Japanese culture. Many religious rituals are dedicated to rice and a trip to Noto's rice paddies does somehow feel like a pilgrimage.

10km from Wajima town center, Shiroyone Senmaida (translated as "one thousand rice paddies in Shiroyone") overlook the Sea of Japan. Rice is planted in mid-May but the view of the sea across the terraces and the contrast of color between the slope and the water is stunning all year round. As it's not possible to get complicated machinery onto the slopes, all of the farming is done by the locals by hand, proudly and painstakingly.

As immigrants, we carry "our Japan" with us in our heads. When we visit home and tell our friends what Japan is like, what we mean is what our microcosm is like—and for a disproportionate amount of us that's urban, white-collar Tokyo. For me, Noto's rugged landscapes, deep traditions and wild festivals opened up a Japan that was far removed from my crowded commutes and Tokyoite restraint.

To return to Mishima, the author discussed the dichotomy between elegance and brutality in one of his rare interviews in English, "Sometimes we are too sensitive about refinement, or elegance, or a sense of beauty, or the aesthetic side. Sometimes we get tired of it. Sometimes we need a sudden explosion to make us free from it." Or, sometimes you just gotta let your hair down and *abare*.

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I Have the Right To

Sacred Heart alum and St. Paul's School sexual assault survivor brings her story home

By Andrew Deck



I Have the Right To,
Chessy Prout and Jenn Abelson
IHaveTheRightToBook.com

Chessy Prout took the stage at the International School of the Sacred Heart (ISSH). Addressing a packed audience of students, parents, former teachers and family friends, she sat in front of a projected collage of childhood photos, collected memories of an up-bringing in the Tokyo international community. “Right now my mind is spinning just being here and being overwhelmed with being here,” she said at one point during her talk at the Hiroo campus in May. “This is my beginning here and I’m just wondering,” her voice breaking, “how that little girl...[would] never think that this would be my life now coming back. I’m just so grateful to be here and be able to see the people that gave me the strength to know how to speak up.” The homecoming marked the first time Prout had addressed the community at her childhood school since an assault at the age of 15 dramatically altered the course of her life. Reflecting on the time that’s past since, she shared, “I’ve gone from a place of fear and anger, to a place of strength and anger.”

In the spring of 2014, Prout was finishing her first year of high school at the prestigious St. Paul’s School in New Hampshire when a senior boy sexual assaulted her on campus. A criminal trial revealed that the perpetrator had targeted her months earlier as part of an archaic school tradition called the “Senior Salute,” in which graduating boys competed to hookup with, or “slay,” as many freshmen girls as possible. The case exposed entrenched

misogyny in the boarding school and affirmed the community’s unwillingness to confront its toxic campus culture. American media outlets grabbed ahold of the case at the wealthy private school, turning one of Prout’s most personal and painful experiences into a national headline.

While Chessy Prout remained anonymous throughout the trial, the perpetrator received extensive airtime. Most articles at the height of the 2015 media fervor noted Owen Labrie’s soccer-captain status, his school service award and his revoked full-ride admission to Harvard, implicitly sympathizing with the dashed futures of the young man. Word counts were limited when it came to a full consideration of the costs facing the teenage survivor or the burdens placed on her family. Prout’s father was fired from his job after taking a leave to deal with the criminal justice process, his boss remarking, “I certainly hope your daughter gains better judgment in the future.”

“The perpetrator was given these shining accolades; I was the nameless, faceless victim,” Prout told *Metropolis* during her recent visit to Tokyo. “Someone could write adjectives—naive, flummoxed, preppy—but no one cared about who I was or what I was going through. No one knew what my PTSD looked like. No one knew what my weekly panic attacks looked like.” In nightly news clippings of her testimony, Prout spoke from out of frame, her voice distorted beyond recognition, as cable news cameras focused their lenses on Labrie’s face. It wasn’t until a “Today” show interview in the fall of 2016 that Prout came forward publicly, putting a name and a voice behind the label of St. Paul’s survivor.

I Have the Right To: A High School Survivor’s Story of Sexual Assault, Justice, and Hope, the book Prout’s co-written with *Boston Globe* Spotlight Team reporter Jenn Abelson, is the next step in this shift from anonymous survivor to public advocate. The book frankly documents Prout’s time at St. Paul’s and during the trial, supplementing a firsthand account with text messages and email exchanges. The now 19-year-old hopes the book will take attention away from the perpetrator and refocus the narrative on her perspective and her advocacy. “Through writing this book, I wanted to put the humanity behind the word victim or survivor.”

Prout’s childhood in Tokyo has often been bracketed in public events since the “Today” interview. Raised in Hiroo, she attended ISSH with her sisters until the age of 11, before the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake prompted the family to relocate to a home in Naples, Florida. Prout’s heritage—her father is half-Japanese—and international

Below:

Prout with her father and sisters in their Hiroo apartment. All three girls attended ISSH as children.



upbringing never fit neatly into the pre-packaged mold of a New England prep school girl. “I’ve kind of accepted that places and people will not know who I am 100 percent, even after the book’s been published,” explains Prout, who at a young age has already weathered years of critical media coverage and threatening online hate sites. “As much as I put myself into it, it’s not all of me at the same time, there’s still so much more to who I am.”

Having spent more than half of her life in Japan, she credits lessons from the Sacred Heart community and Japanese culture with getting her through these past few years. “My older sister looks much more Japanese than I do, so does my little sister,” says Prout, who sports long blonde hair and blue eyes. “But my parents always joke that I acted the most Japanese growing up. It really helped form my identity and I’m proud of that.”

The plan was always to bring the *I Have the Right To* book tour back to Tokyo, according to Abelson. Part of this return was confronting the uncomfortable resonance the story has in the international school community. Last summer, Sacred Heart’s headmistress announced an investigation into sexual abuse allegations against a former teacher who had worked at the girls school from the 1990s until the mid-2000s. “I wondered about the survivor and how the family are doing. I wondered what we can do to help. I wondered what we could do to bring that conversation to the Tokyo community and especially the expat community here,” explains Prout of her reaction to the news. The announcement followed public exposure of long term sexual abuse at two other Tokyo international schools. In 2014, the all-boys St. Mary’s International School announced sexual abuse that had spanned decades and implicated a religious brother who at one point served as the elementary school principal. That same year, The American School in Japan admitted a history of sexual abuse by celebrated teacher Jack Moyer. At least 19 girls were found to be confirmed survivors from his time at ASIJ in the ’70s and ’80s, although he was affiliated with the school until 2000. Administrators at both schools were found to have received reports of the sexual abuse from survivors over the years but had not taken substantial disciplinary or criminal action. This past May, Nishimachi International School publicly confirmed its own historic abuse by former teacher Jim Hawkins after pressure from survivors and alumni. They have retained a law firm to further investigate allegations.

Prout’s narrative in *I Have the Right To* is, in part, about institutional failings in sexual assault cases. It’s about the inability of an elite private school to ensure the safety of the students entrusted to them, but even more so about the inability of that school community to recognize and rectify those failings. A close family friend had a prediction during the criminal trial, “Chessy, the assault isn’t what’s going to hurt you the most. It’s the betrayal from friends and people you trust that will have the biggest impact on your life.” She didn’t believe him at first but in the years that have followed the statement has rung true. As an example, Prout says the father of a close friend at St. Paul’s started a fundraising campaign for her rapist’s defense lawyer. Prout insists there are lessons for other schools to take away from her story: “First of all, acknowledge that something bad happened and acknowledge that they’re complicit and acknowledge that they’re wrong. I think recognition and accountability,



Above:
Prout (left) and Abelson present their book at Miyashiro Hall.

Below:
Prout’s role as a public advocate for sexual assault survivors has taken her to Capitol Hill.



taking responsibility for the actions of the institution, or the inaction of the institution, I think is paramount to moving forward and making things better. You can’t fix something if you don’t acknowledge that it’s broken.”

No specific mention of the ISSH sexual assault case was made during Prout’s lecture in May—“I think it is still an open wound for the community there”—but she was encouraged by her reception and the open conversations she had with students and administrators. “I hope that something concrete and yearlong can be added to curriculum to really propel this conversation forward.” Prout has taken her own steps towards promoting consent education at a younger age as an ambassador for PAVE (Promoting Awareness, Victim Empowerment). She encourages schools and parents to begin consent conversations “as young as kids can start talking,” in order to ensure children feel a right to their own bodies. That could be as simple as teaching a child how to decline a hug. “Giving kids the language to know how to say no, and to know how to assert their rights really young is so important.”

Since the “Today” show interview, Prout’s role as a public advocate and activist has taken her to schools, military bases, the offices of international banks, a global panel on sexual violence and Capitol Hill, where she addressed lawmakers and also protested with other survivors at the State of the Union. At just 19, her resume could rival those twice her age. Her family has started the *I Have the Right To* nonprofit based on the booktitle and hashtag, a phrase Prout hopes can be an “assertion of rights that becomes an empowering rallying call for everyone,” whether someone is asking for a right to consent, gun safety, DACA or simply compassion. Bound for the all-girls Barnard College in the fall, she hopes to continue juggling her advocacy and activism with full-time studies. Despite this busy schedule, she has found time to take up a new hobby, boxing: “I could never tire of hitting that punching bag.” It’s a release valve, Prout explains, a way to channel the anger she still feels into strength. “I had always wanted to take a self-defense class, but then I realized I like self-offense a lot better.”

The *I Have the Right To* organization can be found at www.ihavetherightto.org

Nurture Nature

By Kuv Ahmad



A Kickstarter project in January 2016 garnered attention worldwide for Hoshinchi Air Bonsai Garden—it was even featured in *TIME* magazine. Quite rightly too. This wonderful series of handmade Japanese products perfectly captures the cross between art and nature.

Hoshinchi wants its customers to nurture and treasure the Air Bonsai as a symbol of what we can do to protect the planet. Each part of this beautifully crafted product, lovingly handmade, encourages us all to take the time and energy to nurture nature.

Each Air Bonsai features a levitation device powered by a built-in magnet known as the “energy base,” which is made of porcelain and crafted by a different artisan for each product in the series, varying in color and material. Also included is “little star” moss, which is produced in Yamagata Prefecture.

Air Bonsai is sold in 15 countries and may take up to about three months from purchase to delivery, which is understandable given the care and time gone into hand making each bonsai plant, but it’s worth the wait. When delivered, you’ll receive the product wrapped in a traditional cloth and wooden box known as a *kiri*, which is often used to send special gifts.

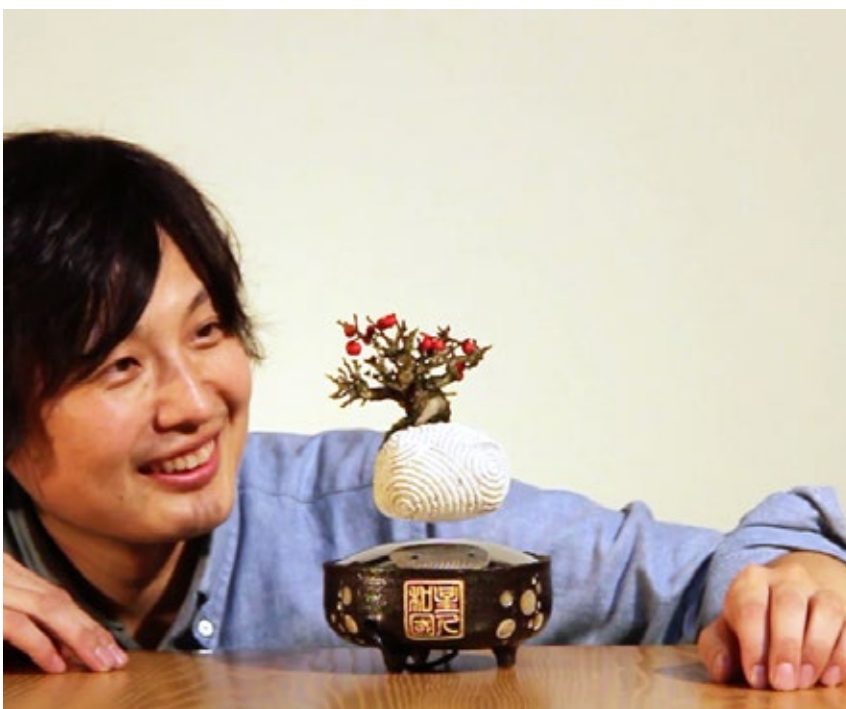
This is one Kickstarter campaign that has grown in more ways than one, and those purchasing their own Air Bonsai will no doubt be utterly delighted.

Air Bonsai can be purchased online. It currently ships to 15 countries around the globe. Prices start at ¥30,000.

hoshinchi.com

The Sprout website has a fun animation explaining the concept. Their pencils can be found on Amazon.

sproutworld.com



Pencil Plants

Have you ever got down to the tiny stub of your pencil and felt a pang of something close to guilt when throwing it away? You could do what some pencil collectors do and stick them in a glass jar, or you could just buy these eco-friendly ones that turn into a plant.



There are a few on the market at the moment, but one of particular note is Sprout. They come in eight colors and classic gray. Each color has its own plant variant—vibrant flowers, fragrant herbs or fresh vegetables, and depends on the season.

Sprout has expanded to focus on the business market, selling pencils as promotional gifts or to use at seminars, conferences and team-building events—a good alternative to plastic pens and a great way for companies to build on their eco-credentials which could inspire attendees to make small changes in their daily lives.

The pencils and packaging can also be customised with a logo or message engraved on the side of the pencil. What better way to spread the message on the importance of sustainability than through the world of stationery? It’s a simple and fun concept that delivers a strong message.

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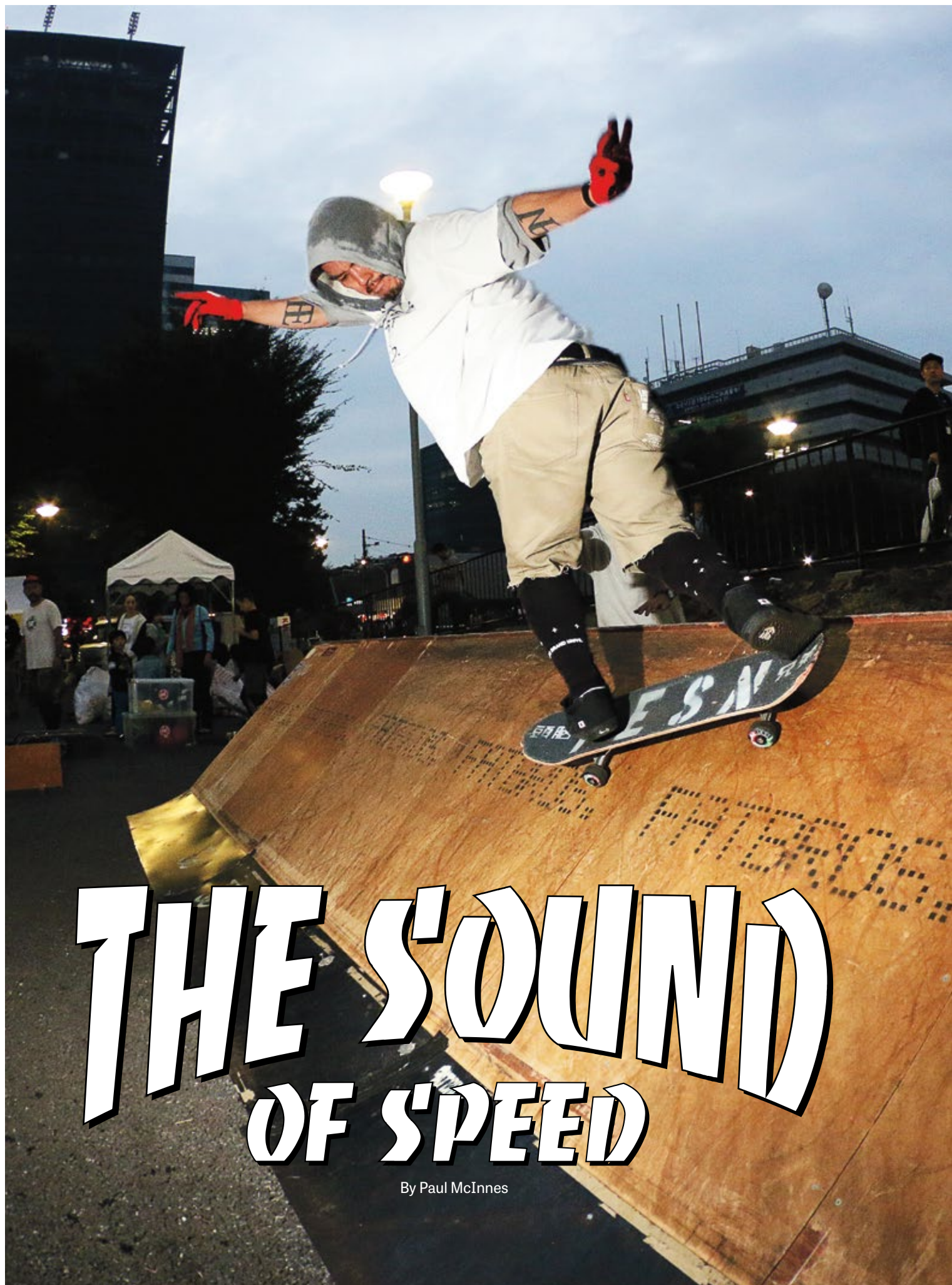
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THE SOUND OF SPEED

By Paul McInnes



We're in Nakano—a patchwork quilt of disparate subcultural influences and paraphernalia, from animation and collectible character figures to sleazy, underground music venues and cosplay. It's a hot Sunday afternoon and just out front of Nakano Ward Office a group of kids and parents are skateboarding in an enclosed space (in a once a month arrangement with local officials). The jarring sound of skating permeates the whole area and older locals look on disapprovingly from the street outside this makeshift skatepark.

Parents with dreadlocks, tattoos and skatewear sit quietly chatting while sipping beers and soft drinks, others have a picnic, while kids—as young as two years old—skate without care over ramps and half pipes. Looking on, and intermittently coaching these youngsters, are two giants of the Japanese skate scene: Akinori Hagiwara from Fatbros and Takahiro Morita from FESN (Far East Skate Network).

Both Hagiwara and Morita have their own skate shops in Nakano and there's a thriving skate culture here. The two men, long time friends and skaters, have a cult following amongst domestic and international skateboarders, with fans as far flung as Europe and America who often make pilgrimages to their two stores. It becomes clear that skateboarding isn't a sport as such—it's a community with strong ties to other activities. "I think skateboarding is not really a sport, as such. It's so much more, such as artwork, DVDs, music, apparel and everything else. It's like a lifestyle and an experience," says Hagiwara, who has run the Fatbros store for 24 years.

"Skateboarding is in many ways a pretty anti-social activity. (...) Especially in a country like Japan where it's the norm to follow the rules of society we can really stand out and get a lot of resistance."

Laurence Keefe,
Pro skater, team manager for Adidas skateboarding in Japan

The store, located on a side street off famed *shotengai* Nakano Broadway, is the unofficial hub of skateboarding in this part of Tokyo. It's small but packed with decks, wheels, sweatshirts, tees, DVDs and other skating paraphernalia. It stocks its own Fatbros merchandise as well as other brands such as Morita's legendary FESN brand which, in addition to its stores, operates a video production company that produces and sells skateboarding DVDs that regularly sell out due to their immense popularity within the skating community. Both Hagiwara and Morita are charming, friendly and quiet and have a certain spiritual equilibrium about them.

They've been skating for years and have experienced major shifts in the culture. Hagiwara says, "When I was younger I listened to hardcore and rock music. At that time the popular music for skaters was rock. In the '90s and 2000s hip-hop became more prominent. Sun Plaza (a famous Nakano landmark) was a good skate spot. I used to skate there every night. And good local skaters would come there too. In those days skating wasn't so popular



Left: Akinori Hagiwara

Bottom left, top right: Fatbros store in Nakano
Photos by Ben Beech.

compared to now. It's becoming more and more popular maybe because of the Olympics. The Sun Plaza security, in those days, wasn't so strict but nowadays they get angry when people skate near there."

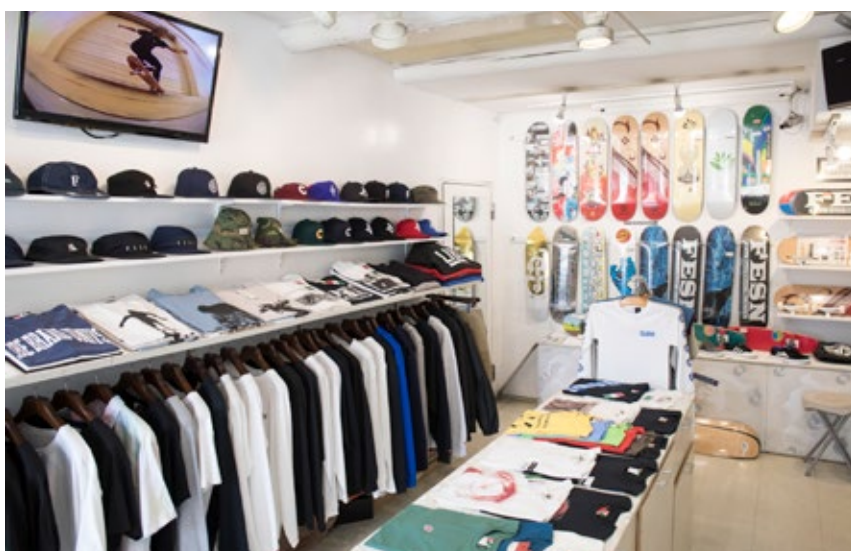
Tokyo-based Laurence Keefe, a pro skater for the Evisen brand and team manager for Adidas skateboarding in Japan, explains the reason for skateboarding's uneasy history in Japan. "Skateboarding is in many ways a pretty anti-social activity. We skate on private property without permission, make noise, scratch ledges, argue with authority... Especially in a country like Japan where it's the norm to follow the rules of society we can really stand out and get a lot of resistance. I don't think it's changing much yet, but when the Olympics starts and everybody's watching, whoever is competing for Japan going for a medal on TV, they might start to have a different view of the kids they see out skating on the street."

Morita, who appears in multiple skate videos on Youtube is seen, in one popular outing, skating through Japanese cherry blossoms which goes to explain his philosophical view of skateboarding. "I really enjoy studying Japanese culture and traditional Japanese beauty, and trying to express that through skating. I want to use skateboarding to present Japanese culture and traditional beauty to the world."

The brainchild of FESN went on record a few years ago, in an interview with Kingpin magazine, stating he had been "saved" by skateboarding. "You know how in school education, they always try to make you compete by comparing students?" explains Morita in an interview with *Metropolis*. "For an easygoing person like myself, that was pretty tough. In my student days, I couldn't do a lot of things well and it

***"Nakano has a street style (...)
It's a good place with good
people and community. I'd
ultimately like to have a public
skatepark in Nakano."***

Akinori Hagiwara, owner of Fatbros



hurt my feelings quite a lot. But skateboarding taught me that it's okay to not compare myself to others and to just enjoy skating for what it is. I've been injured a lot through skateboarding, but that helped me understand the pain of others. I've learned simple things like helping others when they are in need of help. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Skateboarding is fun alone, but it's even better if you get as many people to skate as one. The skating videos I've made are a testament to this."

It can be a dangerous sport with skaters accumulating a ridiculous array of injuries and permanent scars. This, however, never seems to be much of a deterrent as skaters routinely take to the Tokyo streets at night (to avoid security and police) to speed through stations and streets doing tricks against rails, stairways, public art and architecture. Skateboarding, on some levels, can be seen as a synergy with the physical environment—something

“We try hard to get people to realize ‘skating is great, and we need skating to make the world a better place.’”

Takahiro Morita, FESN

it shares with Parkour—another “subversive” sporting activity. Keefe explains the highs and lows of skating in Tokyo. “It’s a fun place to skate. The skate scene is really active and there’s a lot of really interesting architecture here. Tokyo night footage always looks amazing as well. Some of the downsides are the lack of places you can skate without getting kicked out, the police, security, and general hate from passersby.”

To avoid such continuing struggles with authorities, Hagiwara is in talks with Nakano ward officials regarding the possibility of a new Nakano skatepark. Tokyo is unfortunately bereft of such parks with only a few dotted around in places such as Mitaka and Odaiba. Nakano, naturally, would be a perfect spot for a skatepark as it’s seen as the spiritual hub of skateboarding. “Nakano has a street style,” says Hagiwara. “It’s real with normal people. It’s a good place with good people and community. I’d ultimately like to have a public skatepark in Nakano. I hope in three years or so that we can get a park. We’re in negotiations with the local government about this so hopefully we’ll find out soon. I also have the Nakano Skateboarding Association. Me, Morita and local skaters.”

Morita shares Hagiwara’s enthusiasm for a skatepark. He has, however, a more metaphysical explanation: “Skatepark? Of course I want one! I really want one, but before that we skaters need to establish a firm footing in Japan. If we skaters can be recognized as good guys, then skateparks will come naturally. The reason why there are so few skateparks in Tokyo is just because there aren’t many rich guys in the community and we aren’t respected by society.



That’s why we try hard to get people to realize ‘skating is great, and we need skating to make the world a better place’ by opening skateboarding schools and coaching local kids for free. We skaters enjoy everything we do. We’re never pessimistic. The world is filled with joy, and skating brings even more joy. To everyone who’s reading this, I hope you give the easy and convenient sideways-facing ride a shot. You should sometimes let go of all the deadweight you’ve accumulated in your life and be free. In this sport, status and pride are mere nuisances. Let your spirit ride freely.”

Morita, then, embodies Czech novelist Milan Kundera’s belief that, “The degree of slowness is directionally proportional to the intensity of memory. The degree of speed is directionally proportional to the intensity of forgetting.” Forget the troubles of youth and middle age, the baggage, paranoia and debris which attaches itself to life. Skate like you’ve never skated before as you push yourself through the streets of Tokyo, sirens wailing, lights blurring, crowds dissipating as you go faster and faster. ☹



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The push to bring more color
to Tokyo's urban landscape

By Stephan Jarvis





Tokyo can be a beautiful place—explosions of pink during the spring cherry blossom season, kaleidoscopic neon signs glowing in misty midnight air—but for the most part it's a vast, seemingly endless sprawl of concrete. Grey, soulless concrete. So many available walls, but so little opportunity for painters and writers to legally express themselves freely upon them. Across the world, graffiti has been, and continues to be, a divisive form of artistic expression, seen by some as nothing more than mindless vandalism while revered by others, sometimes finding protection under layers of plastic sheets.

Historically, “the writing on the wall” can be traced back to ancient times, where the walls of bygone civilizations were found to have markings depicting just about anything, from insults and Christian inscriptions to messages, lists and pictures. The contemporary variant we are more familiar with can trace its roots back to 1960s America, before its adoption into hip-hop culture during the '70s and '80s. In Japan, it was the arrival of the seminal 1983 film *Wild Style* that left a lasting impression on many of Tokyo's youth at the time, but graffiti was the last of the three fundamentals of hip-hop culture (the others being rap and breakdancing) to gain traction. Although initially influenced by what was being done in the U.S., Japanese graffiti artists began to develop a style of their own in the 1990s and 2000s as the art form infiltrated different aspects of popular culture; even gaming. “Jet Set Radio”, released in 2000 for the Sega Dreamcast, had users taking part in graffiti wars with rival gangs and was set in colorful cell-shaded renditions of various wards in Tokyo. In 2005, Japan's contribution to the graffiti world was celebrated in a landmark exhibition, “X-COLOR/Graffiti in Japan” at

**“The art needs more focus.
You're not gonna move forward with
just making 20 minute bombs.”**

YESCA

the Art Tower Mito, featuring respected, original writers such as QP, TENGAone and ESOW. Since then, rather than an upsurge in public acceptance and opportunities for the art form to spread out and artists to claim Tokyo's slabs of



Above:
“Tokyo Chocolate” by DEMSKY.

concrete for themselves, writers and painters today find themselves continually frustrated by Japan's lawmakers, with vandalism perpetrators facing jail time of anything between 30 days or several years and heavy fines that can reach millions of yen.

Many of Tokyo's older, more established writers feel that this has had an effect on the quality and type of work being produced. It is somewhat naive to think that graffiti can ever be eradicated. Those that want to and feel the need to make their mark in public places, will. With time being a factor due to the increased likelihood of being caught in the act however, most writers in the capital rarely go beyond anything more complex than a throw up—a quick, often two-color larger piece of the writer's name. In Tokyo, the throw up is king. “The art needs more focus,” says YESCA, a veteran of Tokyo's graffiti scene. “You're not gonna move forward with just making 20 minute bombs. It's like a stamp or a logo, pretty much gonna be the same thing, but if you give me four hours or days to work on a spot I can really push my art and see what I can do. It gets boring just doing bomb after bomb. Well, it's not boring, its fun as fuck but it's not progressive.”

Wielding a spray can so effectively makes it one of the hardest tools to work with, according to Peter Liedberg, a.k.a. Letterboy, a Swedish calligraphy artist living and working in Tokyo. Having dabbled in his hometown when he was younger, his nerves associated with the illegality of graffiti led him down a different path, but his admiration of what graffiti writers are capable of remains. “With a pen you can lean your hand (on a desk or the wall), with a brush you can use a mahlstick,” he explains. “With a can there is nothing you can hold on to, you are floating in the air...depending on the pressure in the can, how much paint is left, it's gonna be different. Your pressure is very





sensitive on how much paint (comes out). There's the time: if you leave your can in a certain place for too long it's gonna drip. Also the distance to the wall, so if you are too far away it's gonna get blurry, too close it's gonna be very nice and sharp but it's gonna start running quicker."

It's a skill that many find difficult to hone within the confines of a tiny 1K apartment, so finding spots free from harassment and the possibility of arrest are key to producing quality work. The loss of the famed one-mile wall in Yokohama's Sakuragicho district, for example, has been of particular significance. Once a popular destination for graffiti lovers and writers of all ages and experience, it was a place to practice and pass down knowledge, skills and codes of conduct. Even featured in the opening episode of the popular hip-hop/Edo period mash-up anime *Samurai Champloo*, the wall now lies dormant. Having been buffed back to grey it now blends blandly back into its concrete surroundings.

Up a small discreet staircase deep in Nihombashi lies Lettering Avenue. Run by YAS5 the shop is dedicated to providing good-quality paint, and when they can, legal places for it to be used. One of the artists in the shop ZKER points out that "The [Japanese] public don't have knowledge or experience of good graffiti in the street. They don't have the exposure to the same degree that people in other countries do. It's not natural in Japan, they can't understand which is good or bad. It's our responsibility to make good pieces, that's my motivation."

"The [Japanese] public don't have knowledge or experience of good graffiti in the street. (...) It's our responsibility to make good pieces, that's my motivation."

ZKER



Above:
Takashi's Awa Odori-inspired mural on the shutters of a local opticians in Koenji.

YAS5 adds that, "If all the kids see is tags and they got all this motivation to do art they're just gonna do tags, but if they see something beautiful they're gonna have motivation to really try and do something beautiful." Both feel that being able to have more permanent pieces on public walls from Japanese and overseas artists can help revive the image of neighborhoods that have fallen into disrepair by allowing the artwork to attract visitors. But it's a hard sell to some people. Districts like Kamata use crowdfunding to keep the area free from graffiti, misperceiving most of it as being related to groups such as the *bosozoku* (biker gangs).

However, across Tokyo signs of progress are beginning to take shape. Photographer Joji Shimamoto, alongside

Kyotaro Oyama, started #BCTION which aims to transform condemned buildings and dead spaces in Tokyo as places for artists to freely express themselves. Shimamoto shares a common sentiment among many involved in the scene that the art should be free and publicly accessible. The duo were recently responsible for commissioning pieces by renowned street artists such as IMAONE that feature on each floor of the the stairwell inside the recently renovated and renamed Magnet by Shibuya 109.

Similarly, the BnA Collective have been making their presence felt in the neighborhood of Koenji with their Mural City Project initiative. Murals by artists such as Yohei Takashi and WHOLE9 adorn both public space and privately owned property—all with permission, but also with some concessions. According to BnA Collective's marketing manager Sabrina Suljevic, the municipality asked that some of the colors be changed. Koenji it turns out has a color scheme: beige. "We weren't allowed to use certain colors, like fluorescent colors, it had to meld into the area. Originally there were a lot more blues and a lot more pink...they were a lot more vivid." She explains as she points out Takashi's impressive, Awa Odori-inspired mural, which sprawls across the shutters of a local opticians. Despite this, she views the support and the fact that they are slowly getting these opportunities at all as an encouraging sign of changing attitudes, and she is hopeful that more are to come.

Moving from illegal to legal may not sit well with some graffiti purists, but on the whole the opportunity to paint and have artists pieces in public is something to be celebrated. "We need public art, art is not only for the museum," says Lettering Avenue's YAS5. "People pay to go to museums...children are educated that art is art if it's in a museum, but I disagree. Art is for everybody and they don't have to pay money to see it." YESCA agrees, "Once something is legal it's not graffiti but it's still spray paint art. A city like this with no public art is just a shame...(there is) so much talent, so many talented people. Let the people paint some walls man." Much like anti-drug laws have failed to eradicate drug use, one could make a similar case for anti-graffiti laws. By controlling rather than condemning, perhaps someday soon there won't be the need for another "X-COLOR" exhibition—the art will be all around us. ☺

The Small Print

Keeping you up-to-date with a run-down from the Japanese headlines.

2020 Tokyo Olympic organizers set ¥300,000 cap for ticket prices

While the world is preoccupied with the football World Cup, another major international competition is being cooked up in Japan. The Tokyo Olympic organizing committee revealed planning to cap ticket prices at ¥300,000 which is a little higher from what was first announced. Indeed, the price cap was expected to be ¥288,000 in line with previous events. Opening ceremony tickets, naturally, will be at the high end of the price scale. Fortunately, the cheapest tickets will start at ¥2,000.



Colorless is the new black:

Japan's latest transparent drinks trend

Japan is infamous for its wacky taste in drinks. But forget about Purple Fanta, Salty Lychee or Peach Cola, this summer is all about transparency. You may have come across those clear lattes, tea and Coca Cola in your local combini. The craze about transparent drinks is apparently not just a product of curiosity, its water-like look is a way of covering up your penchant for colorful fizzy drinks—frowned upon at some Japanese offices. Next time you want to buy a bottle of water, look twice, as you might end up with an unwanted latte.

Japanese transgender professor to run for mayor to tackle child abuse

Ayumi Yasutomi, a professor at the University of Tokyo and transgender woman, decided to run for mayor of Higashimatsuyama, in Saitama Prefecture. She focused her campaign on the necessity of tackling child

abuse. She says she aims to review all policies from the viewpoint of protecting children. The election will be held on July 8 and she will stand off against Koichi Morita, the incumbent mayor.

Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami to host radio show

World famous novelist Haruki Murakami will reinvent himself as a DJ radio host for a one-off program on August 5. The acclaimed and globally-revered author is also a jazz aficionado and long-time marathon runner. That's why his program "Murakami Radio—Run and Songs" will explore his personal collection of records and especially the music he likes to listen to while running. It will also feature a discussion on the meaning of running, music and literature structured by fans' questions.



2.7 tons of broiled eel dumped last year in Japan amid sales promotion

Eel is traditionally very popular during hot weather as it is believed to help against summer fatigue. In recent years, this custom has been advertised a lot. Although, cheap eel comes with an unexpected price. According to a Greenpeace survey, at least 2.7 tons of broiled eel, including an endangered species, were dumped by retailers last year, mainly due to expiration dates.

Age of adulthood to lower from 20 to 18

What with the aging Japanese population, it seems that the government is desperate to

increase the number of "adults," as the Diet approved revision to the century-old Civil Law for the first time. While debate remains regarding the age of the Juvenile Law, starting April 1, 2022, 18- and 19-year-olds will be allowed full adult powers besides drinking, smoking and gambling.

JR ups security after video of a man bumping into women only goes viral

Although bumping into people in this crowded capital is nothing unusual and often unavoidable, this was a little different. A video uploaded to Twitter showed a man who went out of his way to shove himself towards four women within just 30 seconds. The viral video has prompted JR East to reinforce security and warn the public against these behaviors.

Drone schools increasing at the rate of one per week

There have been an increase in companies enrolling in "drone schools" which teach businesses drone operations. With the severity of labor shortage increasing across sectors, drones are thought to help not only with infrastructure maintenance, but also agriculture and delivery. The domestic drone market has been growing rapidly so you just might open your door to a drone delivering your packages someday soon.



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Hara Koushu

Often seen at festivals or Japanese pubs, *chochin* lanterns, traditionally made with a bamboo frame covered in paper, have been a source of light in Japan for over 500 years. They are said to have been introduced to Japan as a Buddhist ritual item from China in the Muromachi period.

Although up until the mid-Edo period, only the emperor and upper class were using *chochin*, as candles became mass-producible, these lanterns spread to commoners as well and different kinds of *chochin* began to be used by different kinds of people.

Those days *chochin* were used as flashlights or indoor lighting, much like modern neon signs. From Buddhist ritual supply to everyday lighting equipment, *chochin* have adjusted with the times and are now lit up with light bulbs or battery-powered lights and therefore have no safety issues.

Hara Koushu handle a variety of lanterns from Obon *chochin* used as Buddhist ritual items, lighting equipment and more. The company believes, however, that the ever-evolving portable *chochin* that was a trend back in the Edo period will be beloved by foreigners as well. Besides being collapsible, you can light up the lantern with battery-powered lights so you can display it anywhere or take it with you on the go.

The biggest feature is that you can customize your *chochin* by sticking a single colored PVC sticker of a design of your choice. Although there is limited space to place your stickers, you are free to stick on the alphabet, hiragana, katakana or kanji. Unlike handwritten *chochin*, you can order these quickly for low prices so even those traveling with limited time can have their *chochin* made in minutes.

Hara Koushu offers a variety of sizes, even tiny ones which you can use as a hair accessory. You can start ordering from just one *chochin*, when you want, whenever you want and use it for all sorts of situations from festivals to parties. They can even create them using your com-

pany logo, etc. (requires image data), so customize however you want and use it as a party decoration and more. The time required to make these also depends on the amount, but whether as a party decoration, garland, or party favor, they will present a beautiful image of Japan.

Though they will require some time, Hara Koushu accept all kinds of requests whether it be genuine handwritten *chochin*, those using traditional washi paper, an original *chochin* printed with your own picture, or even oversized *chochin*, so feel free to contact them.



Hara Koushu

1-4-2 Yanagibashi, Taito-ku
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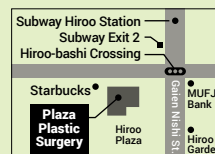


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Ernest Higa on the Future of Japanese Business



Ernest Higa

Born October 15, 1952 in Hawaii
3rd Generation Japanese-
American

Graduated from
the Wharton School of the
University of Pennsylvania

MBA from
Columbia Business School

1985
Acquired franchise rights for
Domino's Pizza in Japan

2011
Brought back Wendy's to Japan

Board of Trustees
Showa Women's University

Chairman and
Representative Director
Wendy's Japan K.K.

Board of Overseers
Columbia Business School

Director,
Shinsei Bank, Limited

Chairman, President and CEO
Higa Industries Co., Ltd.

Ernest Higa, the renowned businessman who brought the Domino's Pizza and Wendy's brands to Japan, has spent decades in the Japanese market. A third generation Nikkei American from Hawaii, Higa has a bicultural background that allows him to observe the Japanese industry world both as an insider and an outsider, and this has allowed him to gain unique wisdom on what lies ahead for Japanese business. *Metropolis* sat down with Higa to discuss globalization, entrepreneurship and the role of women in the economy.

Bridging Japanese and American Businesses

As someone who knows the ins and outs of both Japanese and US corporate worlds, Higa believes that the perplexing business etiquette and rigid social structures that Japanese businesses are known for may soon be a thing of the past. "Japan is and should become more like American companies," he said. "They are becoming more concerned about shareholder value right now, corporate governance and outside board of directors. I think there's more concern about profitability, and they're trying to be more flexible on employment."

However, Higa doesn't necessarily think that fully embracing US business style is the way to go, either. "Hopefully it won't go all of the way because America is at the other extreme too, if you look at the shareholder activists in the U.S., the emphasis is on short term quarterly profits, hiring and firing," he warns. "I think employee loyalty is also an important thing. Sometimes it has to be top down decision making, you can't discuss it with everybody such as an M&A transaction, but a lot of things should be bottom up and developing consensus for operational decision making. It has to be a combination of both."

Higa knows that this balance is a tall order. "If you look at globalization, particularly with regards to business, 80 percent of globalization is Americanization," Higa laments. "It's the American way of doing business, good or bad. For example, whether it's the Chinese students, the Indian students, South Korean students—they all want to go to American business schools even when they have great institutions in their own countries. But it's the mentality, the way of thinking when doing business

**"If you look at globalization,
particularly with regards to business,
80 percent of globalization is
Americanization."**

and of course the network which becomes more global if you go to a US business school."

"My hope is that Japan doesn't go all the way to the Western way but I think there can be a happy medium."

The Fate of Entrepreneurship in Japan

Higa recalled an incident that epitomizes how Japan perceives entrepreneurship. "When I was going out with my now-wife and her father asked me, 'What do you do?' and I said, 'I'm an entrepreneur,' he was like, 'What?!' It doesn't seem like it's very stable compared to Mitsubishi Bank. He was concerned, I don't blame him, because in Japan they didn't even have a word for entrepreneur back then."

Despite this, Higa believes that entrepreneurship in Japan has started to become more accepted than in the past.

"In Japan, in the past, the best and brightest went to Todai (Tokyo University) and then went into government. The second best and brightest went to large corporations like Mitsubishi and so on. And if you didn't make it maybe you would start your own ramen shop or something. It was like the US in the 1950s—the idea was not to do your own thing but to join the government or a large corporation.

"In the last 25 years of recession and deflation, the one good thing is great human capital could not get jobs due to the downsizing of both the government and large corporation so they had to start their own business and become entrepreneurs. It might be changing now again due to the labor shortage, but there is this spark of entrepreneurship in Japan."

**"Women are the most underutilized
asset in Japan. They're smarter
than the guys, they work harder
than the guys."**

Higa says that one of the biggest obstacles to this rise of entrepreneurship is the public perception of failure. "Once you go bankrupt in Japan, it's a kiss of death—we're not going to lend you money anymore, no one will buy or sell to you, you're done. In the US, bankruptcy can be a badge of honor. It means you learned your lesson, you're going to be wiser the second time, third time around. You can come back many times and still people might finance you. In Japan, if you blow it, that's it. Done."

Womenomics

Higa believes that Japanese companies can grow exponentially by investing in women. "Women are the most underutilized asset in Japan. They're smarter than the guys, they work harder than the guys," he says.

"If they're able to empower women, Japan's GDP can grow by like 13 percent. Can you imagine it? We're trying to aim for 2 percent inflation here. But if the third largest economy can grow by double digits that's huge, despite the demographic," Higa said, quoting research by Kathy Matsui of Goldman Sachs. "But the problem is, how can you empower women? That's not so easy. There's a shortage of childcare and infrastructural problems ... but necessity is the mother of invention, so this necessity is driving companies."

Welcome to the Metropolis Community Pages

Summer is not all festivals and fireworks—there are still a variety of events where you can support local causes, learn something new and have a good time. This month we have added more social networking and volunteering opportunities where you might meet new people, learn more and get involved. Although August is a quiet time for nonprofit and community events, many organizations will need volunteers and interns to help with programming for the summer and the rest of the year.

See you here next month.
Sarajevo

Right:

People's Educational And Cultural Exchange (PEACE) offers sightseeing tours in Ueno Park. Meeting place is the statue of Saigo Takamori.



JULY 1 Toshima City, Child and Youth Event: Lecture, Drama and Music Event

A lecture on the theme of Present and Future of Policies on Children and Youth, by Michiko Miyamoto and a performance of “The Parrot Training” by Tagore & Shure University. This original drama on Japanese education is based on the concepts of R.Tagore and presented by Shure University, a nonprofit independent student-directed university providing alternative educational opportunities for learning.

Sunday, July 1, 2pm–5pm. Location: Toshima Center Square. Access: Higashi-Ikebukuro (Yurakucho Line), Ikebukuro (JR, Marunouchi Line, Yurakucho Line, Seibu Line, Tobu Line, etc.). Free, but reservations are recommended. For more information visit: www.city.toshima.lg.jp/429/soudan/1805302025.html

JULY 2, 10 Information session for high school students wanting to study in the US

The American Center Japan will be hosting two information sessions for young people interesting in going to university in the US.

Monday, July 2, 2pm–3:30pm
americancenterjapan.com/event/201807026010/
Tuesday July 10 1:30pm–5pm
www.fulbright.jp/study/event/setsumei.htm

Venue: American Center Japan, 8F Nomura Fudosan Tameike Bldg., 1-14 Akasaka, Minato-ku. See date specific websites to register and for more information on each session

JULY 3 First Tuesday

First Tuesday is a bilingual networking forum for start-ups, their mentors, investors and strategic advisers, held every first Tuesday of the month.

Tuesday, July 3, 7pm–9pm, Location: The 1/3rd Cafe & Bar, 4-6-10 Soto-Kanda, Chiyoda-ku. Cost: ¥2,000, incl. 1 free drink and light meal. Tickets: peatix.com/sales/event/394522/tickets
For more information visit: facebook.com/events/552743478455196/

JULY 6 NGOs in Japan and the Constitution

The panel (Maki Kato, Program Officer for Afghanistan, Japan International Volunteer Center (JVC); Sarajevo Rossitto, Non-profit NGO Consultant) will first focus on the global roles of NGOs, their NGO experience, community engagement in Japan, current efforts to revise the Constitution of Japan and then the floor will be opened for attendees to discuss in a casual setting.

Friday, July 6, 7pm–9pm. Location: Japan International Volunteer Center (JVC) Office, 6F Creative One Akihabara Bldg.,

5-3-4 Ueno, Taito-ku. Cost: ¥500. For more information contact: kato@ngo-jvc.net

JULY 7 Cycling For Charity 2018 launch event

Cycling For Charity's mission is to raise awareness of social issues, and help children in need of support through cycling. Enjoy a Saturday afternoon cycling and supporting youth in Japan. This is a family friendly event—children are welcome.

Saturday, July 7, 9am gather, 10am start cycling. Location: Komazawa Olympic Park, 1-1 Setagaya-ku. For more information visit: facebook.com/events/2164161507204249/

JULY 10 Mediterranean Night

“Mediterranean Night” co-hosted by the Spanish Chamber and the Greek Chamber. As members of the EU, facing the same sea, Italy, Spain and Greece share an incredible amount of history, character and relationships. Mediterranean Night 2018 will feature authentic Spanish food paired with Greek and Italian wines to

Community News & Events

Note:

Due to space limitations we are unable to list all events in the print version of *Metropolis*. However, we list most community events with complete information in *Metropolis* online.

metropolisjapan.com

give you that Mediterranean summer feeling. You just might be ready for a summer holiday afterwards.

Tuesday, July 10, 7pm–9pm. Location: Bikini TAPA, 4F Shibuya Mark City, 1-12-5 Dogenzaka, Shibuya-ku. Fee: ICCJ/SpCCJ/GrCCJ Members ¥5,000, Others ¥8,000. Registration/Cancellation deadline: July 3 (Tue), 6pm. For more information contact: projects@iccj.or.jp Register here: goo.gl/VJ3ZKE

JULY 12 For Empowering Women in Japan (FEW) end of the year networking meeting

Join FEW members and friends—women leaders from a wide array of industries and countries—as we review the past year, welcome the summer and discuss plans for the fall to come.

Thursday, July 12, 7pm–10pm. Location: Minami Azabu Centre Hall www.centre-hall.com. Cost: Members ¥2,000 / Non-members (women only) ¥5,000 / Students and interns (women only) ¥3,000. Fee includes light buffet and beverages. For more information visit: fewjapan.com

JULY 14 Sightseeing Tour in English at Ueno Park

Join a monthly tour of the Ueno park area in English. This is organized by People's Educational And Cultural Exchange (PEACE), which promotes international understanding and intercultural communication through English. PEACE brings together people from all over the world for workshops, social events and interpersonal exchanges.

Saturday, July 14, 10am–12pm. Location: Ueno Park. For more information visit: facebook.com/events/145978446103653/

JULY 28 Resilience Women's Program

Theme: Tools to deal with Trauma. The Women's Program is a series of talks on topics related to trauma and abuse. It is a space for women who want to learn more about these issues, whether or not they have personal experience of trauma. Participants will not be asked to share any personal experiences, but there will be opportunities for private reflection throughout the talks.

Saturday, July 28, 2pm–4pm. Location: Studio R, room 110A, 4-14-19 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku. Cost: ¥500. Registration not necessary. For more information contact: Charlotte Goff charlotte@resilience.jp

GET INVOLVED

Second Harvest Japan needs volunteers and summer interns!

Second Harvest Japan has volunteering opportunities Monday through Saturday. There are a wide range of needs and opportunities for you to use your skills and develop new ones.

Find out more online and register to be a 2HJ volunteer at www.2hj.org

If you are a student you can also intern at Second Harvest Japan over the summer holidays.

If interested, please send an email to charles@2hj.org

TELL is looking for volunteers for the Tokyo Tower Climb!

The climb will be held on Sunday, September 9, at 7:30am and TELL needs volunteers to help preparing the event throughout the summer and on the big day. TELL has partnered with one of Tokyo's most revered structures, Tokyo Tower, to offer an exciting opportunity that will challenge your endurance. September 10 is World Suicide Prevention Day and people all around the globe will be walking, marching or running to “take a step” to remove stigmas around mental health.

For more information visit: telltowerclimb.com or contact Blake: event@telljp.com



Find out more about Sarajeana's work by visiting her site sarajeanarossitto.wordpress.com

Her Facebook Group: Women of the World March Tokyo (WoW Tokyo) www.facebook.com/groups/197623700694595/

Do you have an upcoming community event you would like listed?

Please send your event information for next month's events to Sarajeana at community@metropolisjapan.com

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Experience Rural Kyushu

Entrepreneur and author Kuniko Fujiyama shares the island's natural beauty

Kuniko Fujiyama's story begins in Kagoshima Prefecture, where she was born in the bayside city of Shibushi. It was a childhood spent in this scenic landscape, near the southernmost part of Kyushu, tucked between the mountains and the Pacific shoreline, that developed Fujiyama's love for and deep appreciation of nature. Japanese culture places tremendous value on the natural world, often attributing a spiritual essence to plants and animals. It is one of the cultural beliefs that Fujiyama holds most dear.

Fujiyama's life has taken her from Kagoshima, across the world and back again. In 1989, Sir Richard Branson, the founder of the Virgin Airline Group, chose Fujiyama to be a part of the inaugural class of Virgin's Japanese flight crew, a rare opportunity for a Japanese crew member to work for a foreign airline. Based in London, she served the upper-class customers allowing Fujiyama to travel extensively. She has lived abroad in Europe and brings an internationalist perspective to her current work. Despite her experiences abroad, she found her way back to her roots in southern Kyushu.

Upon her return to Japan, Fujiyama was featured by respected Japanese TV and radio presenter Hiroshi Kume about her time abroad with Virgin. Many other media outlets took interest in her story. Fujiyama has spent much of her later career traveling around Japan, with a great deal of time spent in the neighboring prefecture of Miyazaki. She has held many consultancy positions, advising regional banks on best practices, attending to the corporate management and customer services needs of companies, and revitalizing the economies of rural towns. She splits her time between Kyushu as well as Tokyo, where she is often invited to present for business seminars. She was featured on the TV Program "Econo-Woman," by Nikkei CNBC and has lectured in various capacities, including to NHK managers.

Fujiyama currently serves as a special ambassador for regional creation for Kyushu Kirishima Ebino. Kirishima is the active volcanic mountain range which runs between Miyazaki and Fujiyama's home prefecture of Kagoshima, with stunning hot springs, highlands, volcanic lakes and other gorgeous natural formations. Among these are the onsen town of Ebino, which offers picturesque views of the surrounding areas.

One way Fujiyama shares her appreciation for the region is through "glamour camping" excursions. Her company En Art & Design runs a luxury tent travel experience in Miyazaki so that visitors can experience the beauty of the region without sacrificing their comfort or convenience. It is a rare opportunity to visit this part of Japan through a full-service travel experience.

In addition to her "glamping" operation, Fujiyama's business writing is best-selling, with her book *Samurai*



Renaissance One reaching the #6 spot on the Kinokuniya bookstore bestseller list. Fujiyama more recently has written and published a second book: *Elementary School Teaches You Everything Important for Business!* The book posits that every business person needs to become reacquainted with and adopt into their corporate practices some of our most fundamental lessons from *shogakko*. While the Japanese-language version was published earlier this year and has been well-received, the book's English translation has a planned online e-book release later this year.

Amid Fujiyama's diverse work and passions, she lives day in and day out with bold hopes for the future of Japan and the Japanese people. "Every moment, you show the world your nation's energy and creativity and optimism and unwavering belief in the future. Just imagine how much we can achieve if we reach across borders and learn to see ourselves in each other, and confront our shared challenges with shared resolve."

Find more information about Kyushu Glamour Camping: en-art.co.jp/en/glamping

Find the En Art & Design consultancy here: en-art.co.jp/en/
facebook.com/en.art.and.design

Elementary School Teaches You Everything Important for Business! is out later this year as an English e-Book.



Horoscope

By Cathryn Moe

♥ Love ¥ Money ♣ Luck

ARIES

Mar 21–Apr 19 ♥♥♥ ¥¥¥ ♣♣♣



Hot fire sign Aries can't be stopped. If you're in repose, you're recharging. The Sun and Jupiter focus on home and romance July 5. Working miracles for others? The Sun opposes Pluto, challenging your spirit. Take care of yourself first. A grand trine connects your love nature to long term commitment. Tokyo has a total lunar eclipse on the 28th. If you suddenly choose to reposition yourself, remember, you're transitioning. It may not show yet, but it's coming.

LEO

Jul 24–Aug 23 ♥♥ ¥¥ ♣♣♣



July is a month of personal development. The Moon's north node in Leo pushes you to try new things. It may be summer, but the destiny clock is ticking. The Sun opposes Pluto, turning struggles into miracles. Then it enters Leo. Happy Birthday! At the same time, Venus sextiles Jupiter. You may get that birthday wish, after all. Tokyo's total lunar eclipse on the 28th brings relationships and commitment into perspective. Expect balance and clarity to lead the way.

SAGITTARIUS

Nov 23–Dec 22 ♥♥♥♥ ¥¥¥ ♣♣♣



July begins with Mercury conjunct the Moon's north node. At the moment, fate offers choices. Then the Sun trines Jupiter on the 5th. It's all or nothing, which may feel great. Be careful not to promise too much. The Sun opposes Pluto in your financial sector. If an unsympathetic authority seems to loom, reveal what you've been trying to say. Mars pushes for action on July 20. Tokyo's total lunar eclipse July 28 is a destiny aspect, bringing things to a head. Or you may just take a vacation!

TAURUS

Apr 20–May 21 ♥♥♥♥ ¥¥ ♣♣



Breathe deeply as you relax into your own space. Jupiter opposite Taurus is about partnerships. Since it's retrograde, you may not agree with all that's offered. The Sun opposes Pluto, connecting conversations to the big picture. Bringing up questions helps clear the way. Choose where your commitment truly lies. Tokyo has a total lunar eclipse July 28. Feel your way through the veils. The grand trine of Venus, Saturn, and Uranus combines your love nature with stability in the midst of change and transitions.

VIRGO

Aug 24–Sep 23 ♥♥♥ ¥¥¥ ♣♣



July starts out well for Virgos. The Sun trines Jupiter. You're up for suggestions. Long-distance trips and food fests fit the bill. Venus in your sign trines Uranus the 11th. Enjoy the entertainment as you respond to the unexpected. Some say you can't get there from here, but you can. A slippery situation may occur as Neptune opposes Venus July 24. Stand your ground. Tokyo's total lunar eclipse the 28th adds Mars to the equation. Divvy up your priorities to achieve success.

CAPRICORN

Dec 23–Jan 20 ♥♥♥ ¥¥¥ ♣♣♣



On July 5th, a trine between the Sun and Jupiter may offer travel. You'll spend time with friends, or they show up for you. Then the Sun opposes Pluto. A power struggle could play out. Regain your energy for yourself and trust the bigger picture. A grand trine between Venus, Saturn, and Uranus keeps you in the money. Tokyo's total lunar eclipse July 28 connects the Moon to Dark Moon Lilith. Your feelings propel you to do what can't be done. The focus is what you do with shadow strength.

GEMINI

May 22–Jun 21 ♥♥ ¥¥¥ ♣♣♣



July is made just for you. It's full of lively conversations, short trips, and picnics on parade. The Sun warms things up by shining on your finances. Investments, especially the stock market, need careful watching. Consider taking part of your profit now, if you have some. Venus trines Saturn July 14, a time to blend romance with commitment. Then she sextiles Jupiter on the 22nd to add luxury and travel. Tokyo's total lunar eclipse July 28 fits nicely if you're planning a trip to a far-away place.

LIBRA

Sep 24–Oct 23 ♥♥ ¥¥¥ ♣♣♣



Wonder if you're in the right career? Like what you do, but not feeling recognized? July helps you move forward. Ruler Venus makes a case for financial strength. Don't let the overtones of summer make you think it's not a decisive month. The grand trine between Venus, Saturn, and Uranus serve you well. Stability, beauty, and excitement are your key words. Mars is retrograde in your romantic sector. It's only temporary. Tokyo's total lunar eclipse on the 28th reveals your best choices.

AQUARIUS

Jan 21–Feb 19 ♥♥♥ ¥¥ ♣♣♣



July spells power. Don't miss it. It's not a trick. On July 3, Mercury opposes the Moon's south node in Aquarius. You may be asked to do something that wouldn't normally fit your path. The grand trine between Saturn, Venus, and Uranus brings surprises on the roller-coaster of romance. Mars in your sign undoes expectations July 20. Congratulate yourself as you hang in there. Tokyo's total lunar eclipse on the 28th is a time of solace. It's also a form of education in that feelings, quiet as whispers, can be completely accurate.

CANCER

Jun 22–Jul 23 ♥♥ ¥¥ ♣♣



Happy Birthday if you were born in July! It's a stellar month. Jupiter trines the Sun in your sign on the 5th. Feel confidence expand as your life lights up. This particular aspect is special. If you're making (or receiving) a romantic gesture, you are certainly star blessed. Watch for the opposition of Pluto to the Sun. A relationship may become a power struggle. This can be happily resolved during Tokyo's total lunar eclipse on the 28th, which balances the parties involved.

SCORPIO

Oct 24–Nov 22 ♥♥♥ ¥¥ ♣♣



July starts out deceptively mild. The Sun is trine Jupiter in Scorpio July 5th, when you may hold center stage (not always your favorite hang-out). There are secrets, and then there are sacred confidences. One can be broken more easily than the other. Once you make a life-changing choice about sharing, you turn your path in a different direction. Venus sextiles Jupiter and you feel sexy. Your desires and goals are taken into consideration. Tokyo's total lunar eclipse on the 28th closes off an option at home. Which opens another one!

PISCES

Feb 20–Mar 20 ♥♥♥ ¥¥¥ ♣♣



The Sun trines Jupiter on the 5th, making Pisces the benefactor of a grand trine. It's a seriously lucky transit. You may receive your dreams and wishes, or just feel happily energized. Chiron, the wounded healer, was in your sign for a long time. It's now in your financial sector. The gain of strength forced upon you just went to another level. The focus is to hear your inner voice, not the din from outside. Tokyo's total lunar eclipse is on July 28. It brings your subconscious mind into alignment with your work, paid or volunteer. As usual, unconditional love makes it worthwhile.

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Joshiryoku

More than just carrying around a handkerchief

By Lisa Matsumoto, Illustration by Richard Koyama-Daniels



Growing up, I was the kind of girl who would wear a Cinderella dress and heels around in my backyard while collecting rocks and building houses for ants. When I moved to Japan for high school, I was suddenly hit with the foreign word *joshiryoku*. It was in classrooms, it was in magazines, it was on TV. And carrying around a handkerchief was considered one of the highest forms of *joshiryoku*.

A handkerchief is the first and most basic step towards improving your *joshiryoku*, or “girl power,” according to magazines, because it allows you to enhance your femininity. You can lend your handkerchief to someone in need, wipe rain off your clothes or wipe your mouth at a restaurant. But don’t forget to choose a nice handkerchief that gives off feminine vibes, for maximum girl power!

Joshiryoku literally translates to “girl power” but in Japan it means something far from that. Girl power speaks to what girls can do, their aptitude and potential. *Joshiryoku*, however, is what a girl *must* do, their responsibility and obligation. *Joshiryoku* is not about being a strong independent woman but rather having band-aids in a little pouch. It’s about taking care of your appearance and wearing makeup (but not too much). It’s about reading between the lines and being attuned to people’s feelings. It’s being able to cook, sew and stay keenly aware of the latest fashion trends. This is Japanese girl power: being Ms. Perfect.

To have true *joshiryoku* you need to have nice handwriting. Since I was still improving my Japanese writing at the beginning of high school, my handwriting didn’t meet *joshiryoku* standards. I was offended when a male classmate walked past my vacant desk and, upon looking at my notebook, said “there’s no way this is a girl’s handwriting.” I smiled at him as I went back to my desk and semi-slammed my notebook shut. I guess I have no right to identify as female if I can’t flick my ㇿ’s or loop my ㇿ’s properly. Sorry we can’t all have perfect script.

In high school, if a guy brought in homemade goodies for White Day, everyone was shocked at their high level *joshiryoku*,

because it’s not normal for a guy to be able to

bake. Apparently the mere thought of a man in a kitchen mixing flour, sugar and butter was bizarre.

In university and beyond, women are expected to and praised if they serve others before themselves at meals and pour drink refills. If you bring homemade bento to a picnic, it really exemplifies your *joshiryoku*; you’re sure to make a good impression.

I joke about all of this now but throughout high school, there was a constant pressure for me to have high *joshiryoku*. I tried hard to become that feminine ideal portrayed in the media. First of all, who doesn’t like being praised? Second, we were taught high *joshiryoku* was “right,” something “natural” that you had to have or improve if you were a girl.

But why are all these considered to be feminine attributes? It should be normal for a guy to be insightful enough to care for others, sew on a loose button or even concern themselves with fashion. As well as it should be normal for a girl to slip on sneakers, choose not to wear makeup and focus on their own feelings and well-being for once. If sensitive guys who can cook a mean meal and also have band-aids readily available in a pouch can become widely accepted, maybe we can stop affiliating women with housework and perhaps even help them come back to the workplace.

Though society, with the help of the media, has conjured up this false notion that a women with *joshiryoku* is a superior women, there are plenty of girls and women without “*joshiryoku*” who are just as amazing and worthy of admiration. Japan needs to stop associating women with feminine behavior and appearances and disparaging them for not fulfilling traditional gender roles. The consequences will be that girls will forever have to live up to society’s expectations, entrenching gender norms and roles in an endless loop.

Want to have the last word?

Send your article to
editor@metropolisjapan.com

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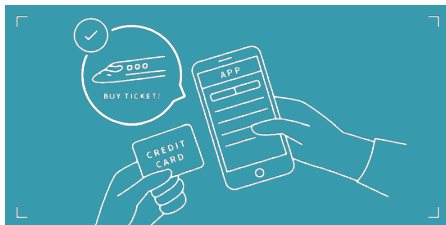
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What you can do with this app



Book seats and purchase tickets

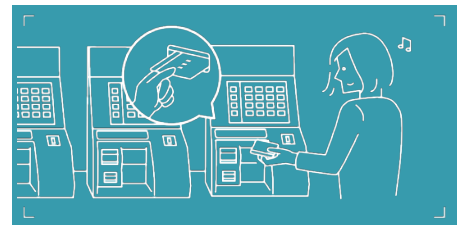
- Beginning one month prior to departure
- Both inside and outside of Japan
- For up to 6 people at once



Change reservations easily

- As many times as you like
- Up to 4 minutes before departure
- Without charge

*Foreign transaction fee prescribed by the credit card company may be charged according to the card you use.



Receive tickets

- Use the credit card that you paid with to collect your tickets easily and quickly at ticket machines in Tokaido Sanyo Shinkansen stations

This app allows you to enjoy your travels in Japan

The Tokaido Sanyo Shinkansen covers Japan's major cities. For travelers and businesspeople visiting Japan, the Shinkansen offers high speed and convenience. Trains run frequently and on time. Seating is readily available, and travel is comfortable, safe and enjoyable. The Shinkansen is an efficient and reliable choice for long distances as well as short day trips!



All images shown are for illustration purpose only.

Why use the Shinkansen?

Fast and frequent!

Takes just 2 hours from Tokyo to Kyoto, 500 km apart. Runs every 3 minutes during peak hours! Provides high transportation capacity; 445 thousand passengers/day.

Safe and punctual

Proven safety record in over 50 years of operation! The annual average delay for one train service is less than a minute!

Comfortable and relaxing environment!

The seats are wide; there are no seat belts; and you are free to eat and drink on the train.

Other service provided by JR Central

For traveling Central Japan, combination of using the Tokaido Sanyo Shinkansen Reservation App and Tourist Passes is recommended!



Takayama-Hokuriku Area
Tourist Pass



Alpine-Takayama-Matsumoto Area
Tourist Pass



Ise-Kumano-Wakayama Area
Tourist Pass



Mt. Fuji-Shizuoka Area
Tourist Pass *Mini*

