

Expectations for the Cultivation of a New Culture

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Mayor
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The 2012 "International Contemporary Art Exhibition at Habu Harbor" took place again this year in the Habu district of Izu Oshima, Tokyo. Habu lies at the southernmost tip of our island of Izu Oshima, and is known for being a place where the traditional culture and atmosphere of the island still exist.

Odorikonosato, or "Village of the Dancers," is a structure built on a slope overlooking the Habu harbor. It contains numerous pictures of a port filled with fishing boats, reminding us of the golden days of Izu Oshima. While the years have brought changes to the appearance of the main exhibition venues—the old Habu elementary school and the Jinnomaru-tei residence—as well as the scenery surrounding the port, they all illustrate the great days of our island's past.

This exhibition is also known as "Art-Islands in Tokyo," and was organized by the Planning and Development Committee for Contemporary Art Waterways Linking Tokyo Islands. While the event was held for the first time in 2011, I am quite sure that the way in which committee members put their hearts and souls into the name, "Art-Islands in Tokyo," as well as their selection of Habu as a venue, served to link last year's and this year's exhibitions.

It is easy for people to imagine that an island, which is completely surrounded by the ocean, would be closed off and bound by feudalistic thinking, and I cannot deny that these aspects exist. However, once you become friends with local residents, you will find that they are very kind. This is one of the characteristics of islanders. The port town, in particular, used to serve as a hub for visitors to the island, and it is clear that the open nature of the port has been handed down from generation to generation. Today this can be seen in the content of numerous festival songs, such as "Tairyo-bushi," which are sung and passed on by people of all ages and sexes.

On behalf of the Town of Oshima, I would like to express my deepest respect for the manner in which the project was implemented. The committee did its best to promote understanding of the project within the local community, and this could not have been easy to do, in spite of the fact that two committee members, Yoshiki Takata and Keiko Sakaguchi, are artists originally from Izu Oshima. I was also impressed by how the project was funded: The committee never asked the Oshima town government for financial support; the event was realized solely through contributions from sponsors and the willingness of the artists to cook their own meals.

Every chance I get, I talk about how it is crucial to protect those traditional expressions of art and culture that originated in the natural environment and history of the island of Izu Oshima, and which have subsequently been handed down through the generations. We should also accept, not reject, the various means of expression that are the product of the diverse values of contemporary society. Developing new cultures created through cooperation and collaboration is an essential theme in terms of the future of our town and island.

I am confident that this project will live up to my expectations, and look forward to these efforts continuing long into the future.

On the Conclusion of the International Contemporary Art Exhibition at Habu Harbor

Michio Akihiro

Chairman
Association of Fans of Habu Harbor



Please allow me to offer my congratulations on the successful conclusion of the 2nd International Contemporary Art Exhibition at Habu Harbor. Although our dear Habu Elementary School was unfortunately closed, I am pleased that our old school was used for this project. I also greatly appreciate the fact that many artists came together from both Japan and overseas to display thought-provoking works of art. I am deeply grateful to the artists themselves, as well as to the efforts of all the people who helped behind the scenes.

I am honored to be the chairman of the Association of Fans of Habu Harbor, a registered non-profit organization. This association was born out of deep affection for the natural beauty surrounding Habu Harbor, as well as for the culture, history, and everyday lives of people in the community. Our goal is to support the rebirth and revitalization of Habu Harbor, in order to give it a new character for the twenty-first century before handing it down to the next generation. To date, we have constructed a promenade comprising some 30 stone monuments inscribed with passages from literature, as well as the "Teppo-ba" scenic point, which offers views of both the morning and evening sun. We plan to continue our efforts in the future, with a focus on preserving the traditional beauty of the streets around Habu Harbor.

I hope that this exhibition will lead to a rediscovery of the culture of Habu Harbor. I also hope that those artists participating in the event will find themselves greatly inspired by Oshima and Habu Harbor, and will take that inspiration and share it around the world. Furthermore, I sincerely hope that this art event will serve to stimulate the young people of Oshima, and that it will motivate them to spread their wings and soar out into the world.

In closing, I would like to offer my deepest gratitude to all the people who recognized the significance of this event, and all the individuals and organizations that helped to make it a reality.