

THE JAPAN VOICE

COOL JAPAN from New Yorkers' Viewpoints

“Inside World Seen From Outside”

Hiroko Nakakita Painting Exhibition at Gallery Max in SoHo

The first New York solo exhibition of painter Hiroko Nakakita under the title “Blooming” (the subtitle being “Inside World Seen From Outside”) was displayed from November 27 to December 1 at Gallery Max New York in SoHo. The opening reception hosted a busy gathering of about 50 people, including Japanese and American artists who had been invited.

In the world, there are geometric forms that humans attempt to create with precision and random ones that nature creates. The same applies to human society. Humans essentially desire to live a random life from instinct. But as they get rational, they change to living things that cannot walk forward properly in the world without strict thinking. In her exhibition filled with such thoughts, Nakakita exhibits her work that she produced at an atelier in California with a motif of flowers and chandeliers in which she expressed the strength of feelings that she expects to coexist in human hearts.

“I have only exhibited my work at white wall galleries called white cubes. This time in New York, however, I

hung my work on brick walls. How different the same work looks! I felt that New York offers a fresh, new environment where anyone expresses themselves beyond existing concepts. It is also really stimulating as many people came and appreciated my work,” she commented. Nakakita majored in painting in the Fine Arts Department at the Tokyo University of the Arts Graduate School and obtained a Master of Fine Arts in Oil Painting. She is currently active in Japan and California.

(Article and Photo by Ryoichi Miura/Translated by Kunio Shimura)



Hiroko Nakakita

Hairdresser Yusuke Mori Cuts Hair on the Streets of Manhattan

On 34th Street in front of Macy’s, a man cuts people’s hair on the street. The man’s name is Yusuke Mori. His career as a hairdresser has spanned ten years, and he has three years of experience abroad. In July of this year, he began a business in Japan that sends aspiring hairdressers abroad so that they can gain experience. Mori’s goal is to “create an environment in which Japan’s hairdressers can find international success in a society that is becoming more and more global.”

Mori also came to New York to do street haircuts three years ago. At that time, his dream was to work as a hairdresser in Manhattan. “There’s a certain charm to New York. It’s a place filled with opportunity,” remarked Mori after he began his street haircuts. During this visit, he cut the hair of around 400 people. There are many different races of people in New York and these people differ by their hair types and desired hairstyles, but Mori was able to use his skills to



Mori cutting hair at Herald Square

appeal to a diverse population.

Once he went back to Japan, Mori used his experiences abroad to handle more foreign customers. There has been a recent influx of tourists and immigrants coming to Japan, but Mori believes Japanese hairdressers lack the skills needed to cut the hair of foreigners, whose hair types and hairstyles differ from Japanese people.

This time around his recent visit to New York was more short-term, but by doing free street haircuts again, Mori was able to advertise himself and his

business in a large, international location. For his study-abroad business, he has also begun partnering with many beauty salons around the world.

With this latest visit, Mori was able to connect with many of New



York’s famous salons, and he reiterated his desire to create an environment in which Japanese hairdressers can succeed internationally. “If there is a beauty salon in New York who would be willing to accept Japanese interns so that they can gain experience, I would love it if they contacted me,” said Mori. To get in touch regarding Japanese hairdressing internships, please send Mori an email to info@ysk-international.com. (Article and Photo by Ryoichi Miura/Translated by Yudai Kaneda)

Hiroshima University Hospital Opens Museum Featuring the Work of New York-Based Artist Masaaki Noda

On November 29, the unveiling ceremony of the sculpture monument *Tenkei* (meaning “revelation”) made with stainless steel by New York-based artist Masaaki Noda (pictured, right) was held at the YHRP Museum in Hiroshima University Hospital. The name of the museum comes from the Japanese words for tranquility, peace, rehabilitation and Poland. Noda’s artwork (pictured, left) shaped like angel wings draws inspiration from heaven and love. The university’s former principal Yasuo Harada built this museum and donated 1,300 artworks which he acquired from art collectors. The building has a spiral-shaped corridor which is quite similar in structure to the Guggenheim Museum. Noda was born in Fukuyama, Hiroshima; there are 10 artworks which were made by him around Fukuyama Station. Noda said, “I made this sculpture to think about peace and wanted it to be suitable for the atmosphere of the hospital.” (Ryoichi Miura/Translated by Chikako Iwasaki)



Masaaki Noda

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●Focusing on historical issues from the overseas point of view in 23 chapters

Comfort Women are Sex Slaves, and Okinawans are Indigenous People?



Have you visited Okinawa? I went to Okinawa in October and enjoyed scuba diving. I have dived in many places in the South Pacific, Asia and Micronesia. I believe Okinawa has one of the most beautiful water and coral reefs among all the world-famous diving sites. It was a day after the typhoon had just passed. But fortunately, the water was very clear, and I had a chance to meet a pretty sea turtle.

I had another thing to do in Okinawa. I attended a meeting and made a presentation titled “the United Nations and fabricated Sex Slaves.” I talked about a serious problem that Okinawa is facing because of some UN human rights committees’ recommendations.

Which country does Okinawa belong to? Okinawa is a part of Japan. What is the nationality

of Okinawans? Undoubtedly, they are Japanese. However, some UN human rights committees repeatedly make recommendations that the government of Japan should recognize Okinawans as indigenous people. The committee’s understanding is that Okinawans are not Japanese but indigenous people whose rights are violated and lost their language and culture.

The word “indigenous people” reminds us of Indians, Aborigines of Australia, Maori of New Zealand, etc. How about “Okinawa” or “Ryukyu”? Okinawans never think they are indigenous people. The majority of Japanese doesn’t believe so either. Okinawans are born Japanese, educated in the Japanese language, and live as Japanese citizens. There has never been a discussion in the National Diet or in the Okinawa councils that Okinawans are indigenous and have no human rights.

Then why do the UN human rights committees make such recommendations of Okinawans as indigenous people? Because for more than ten years, some Japanese NGOs and activists have been sending their opinions to the committees, saying “Okinawans, are the indigenous people. They are suppressed and forced to lose their own culture, language and rights of education.” And the members of the committees believe their

claims without any verifications.

In the 1990’s, a Japanese man claimed many times at the UN that comfort women are sex slaves. At that time, most Japanese did not notice what was happening in the UN and no one denied it. As a result, “the comfort women as sex slaves” story is firmly believed in the UN and it has spread throughout the world. And now we have “the comfort women as sex slaves” monuments erected in the U.S.

While most Okinawans do not know this, the “Okinawans as indigenous people” story may spread from the UN throughout the world. In other words, the world may believe “Okinawa originally does not belong to Japan.” Okinawa has been a critical strategic location and it is very important to national security. Which country will benefit from this?

In the future, there may be “the Indigenous Okinawan memorial” erected in the U.S. or there may be “Indigenous Okinawan” in dictionaries or school text books. It is not a joke. Who could have ever imagined there are so many “comfort women as sex slaves” monuments outside of Japan now?

I explained the risk at the meeting in Okinawa and asked the audience to speak out, “we are not indigenous people. We are Japanese. Okinawa belongs to Japan. We demand the UN human

rights committees to retract the recommendations.” If we do not speak out, even lies become the truth in international community.

At the end of the Pacific War, Okinawa was a battleground. Almost 100,000 civilians lost their lives. After the war, Okinawa had been governed by the U.S. for 27 years. Okinawans strongly wished to return to Japan. In 1972 their “Return to Japan Movement” finally came true. Okinawa together with the beautiful water and coral reefs returned to Japan.

When you have a chance to visit Okinawa, please enjoy one of the most beautiful and rich waters in the world. Just snorkeling would be fun. I recommend Ishigaki-jima Island where you can encounter the manta rays!

(Yumiko Yamamoto, president of the grassroots civil group “Nadesiko Action,” also known as “Japanese Women for Justice and Peace.”)

