

March 16, 2026

## World Japanese Culture Forum (WJCF)

*From the "Era of Competition" to the "Era of Cooperation": Proposing a Sustainable Civilization Through Japanese Culture*

*Harvard University and MOA Museum of Art Launch the World Japanese Culture Forum (WJCF)*



### Philosophy

We live in an era of competition, facing numerous global challenges such as the expansion of the global economy, environmental destruction, and rapid population growth. As we move further into the 21st century, it is essential that society undergo a paradigm shift — from an era of competition to one of cooperation focusing on a “logic of life” and the “safety of life,” values that nurture both nature and the social environment. This shift signals the arrival of an era defined by knowledge and harmony. The forum sessions are translated into English, French, Spanish, Simplified Chinese, and Thai, and are distributed worldwide in collaboration with approximately 20 major organizations, including Harvard University, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and The British Museum.

### Coordinators



Masatomo Kawai  
Professor Emeritus,  
Keio University



Yukio Lippit  
Professor,  
Harvard University



Kazumi Murse  
Lacquer Artist  
Living National Treasure



Tokugo Uchida  
Director,  
MOA Museum of Art

## Session Archives

### Session 1: Special Commemorative Lecture

#### "The Heart of Japanese Beauty"

Speaker: H.I.H. Princess Akiko of Mikasa



Her Imperial Highness discussed the essence of cultural preservation through her research and the activities of "Shinyusha".

**Knowing One's Roots:** Living abroad highlighted her own lack of knowledge about Japan, prompting a shift to Japanese art studies as a mission to share its wonders.

**Crisis of Hardware:** The loss of even a single part-making artisan—such as for scroll fittings—threatens the continuity of an entire tradition.

**Bottom-Up Preservation:** True cultural defense stems from the heart of every citizen who feels "this is precious," rather than just top-down governmental laws.

**Living Culture:** Culture dies when detached from daily life. It must be used and continue to evolve within modern life to maintain its "life".

**Sowing Seeds of Memory:** Providing children with authentic experiences creates "seeds of memory" that will support future traditions 100 years from now.

**Transmitting Light:** Tradition is like transmitting a sacred Buddhist light. Continuous "replenishing of oil" by each individual prevents culture from going out.

### Session 2: Keynote & Roundtable

#### "Japanese Culture and its Uniqueness "

#### "Japanese Culture's roles in the 21st century"

Speakers: Masatomo Kawai, Yukio Lippit,

Kazumi Murose, Tokugo Uchida



The panel explored Japan's unique structural aesthetics and its role in a paradigm shift.

**Ensemble Aesthetics:** Redefined Japanese beauty as a fusion where boundaries between painting and objects disappear, creating a harmonious "ensemble" spatial beauty.

**Artistic Intelligence:** Defined artisan wisdom—staying close to the material's voice—as a universal form of "Intelligence" to be shared globally as "Common Values".

**The Logic of Life:** Technique is not just about form; it is staying close to nature. Tradition means establishing today's standards for 100 years into the future.

**Era of Cooperation:** Proposed shifting from a 20th-century mindset of conquest to an "Era of Cooperation" that harmonizes with nature and human society.

### Session 3: Special Dialogue

#### "Japanese predilection for science"

**Speakers: Ryoji Noyori (Nobel Laureate) x Seiichi Kondo (Former Commissioner for Cultural Affairs)**



This session explored the deep roots shared by science and the arts.

**Science as Culture:** Science is a vital component of culture, helping humanity move away from egocentrism toward a humble gaze at the universe.

**Tacit Knowledge:** The fuente of originality lies in "tacit knowledge" nurtured through climate and experience, which linked Dr. Noyori's Nobel research to the philosophy of Japanese craft.

**Resisting Entropy:** Highlighted the power of culture and aesthetics to reconstruct order and reconnect society into a "community" amidst increasing modern disorder.

### Session 4: Special Dialogue

#### "The Acceptance of Japanese Culture in the United States"

**Speakers: Monika Bincsik x Yukio Lippit**



#### Japonism in New York

The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Japanese art collection began with "kōgei" (crafts) rather than paintings. Collectors in New York highly valued Japanese crafts as a source of inspiration for interior decoration and design, and the popularity of these items was significantly driven by World Expositions and art dealers.

### **Acceptance of Japanese Art as a Composite Art**

Research was presented on the Detroit residence of C.L. Freer, who laid the foundation for the National Museum of Asian Art. The interior, featuring Japanese architectural elements and wall colors reminiscent of ceramic glazes, revealed that Freer sought universal beauty by integrating Japanese art not merely as objects for viewing, but as a "composite art" to be experienced throughout the entire space.

### **Transcending the Boundary Between "Fine Art" and "Decorative Art" (Dialogue)**

In contrast to the Western hierarchy separating "fine arts" and "decorative arts (crafts)," traditional Japanese aesthetics lack such a boundary. The dialogue explored how to promote the unique values of Japanese kōgei in the West, such as the "ensemble" approach of displaying folding screens and furnishings on equal footing.

## **2026 Schedule**

2026.5.9 "Washoku and the Culture of Vessels"

Speakers: Imaizumi Imaemon, Yoshihiro Murata (Kikunoi), Kundo Koyama

2026.5.9 "Manga and Japanese Culture"

Speakers: Nicole Roumanière, Mari Yamazaki, Tokugo Uchida

2026.7.25 "Traditional Crafts and Living National Treasures"

Speakers: Michelle Bambling, Yukio Lippit

2026.7.25 "Crafts from the User's Perspective"

Speakers: Hidetoshi Nakata, Ai Tominaga, Kazumi Murose

2026.7.26 "Cinema and Japanese Culture"

Speakers: Linda Hoaglund, Yukio Lippit

2026.7.26 "Traditional Performing Arts (Special Session)"

Speakers: Bando Tamasaburo, Kanze Saburota

## **Future Outlook**

It is our hope that this forum will propose approaches to life and society to pave the way toward a sustainable civilization. Behind the entertaining performing arts and decorative and collectible crafts, Japanese culture has nurtured values through which we understand who we are and what nature is to us. By the keywords "nature and human society," "the logic of life" and "an era of unity," the forum invites the world to discover the unique and profound aspects of Japanese culture.

World Japanese Culture Forum (WJCF) Secretariat

URL: <https://wj-cf.org/>

Mail: [info@wj-cf.org](mailto:info@wj-cf.org)