

Toshu Fukami event: Living in the moment

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With the advent of the cherry blossom season, the festive arts event Toshu Fukami Exhibition 2024 was held at the Asia-Pacific Trade Center in the Osaka seaside area of Nankokita from March 14 to 20, drawing more than 16,000 visitors, including many celebrities from at home and abroad.

The main part of the event was a solo exhibition of 264 pieces — paintings, jewelry, calligraphy, pottery, watch designs and other craftworks — by Toshu Fukami, an artist, performer, entrepreneur and philanthropist who is also known by his birth name of Haruhisa Handa.

It has been customary to hold the annual exhibition at this time of year to commemorate Fukami's birthday. Fukami, who is now 73, has so far created over 3,600 works of art, and this year's exhibition showcased 73 pieces that he created in the past year, 80 pieces selected by three art critics (five of

them recent) and some of his popular earlier works.

During the weeklong event, several comedy performances and talk shows were held, including one by Fukami himself as a comic chat artist and another by Tsubaki Oniyakko, a female comedian and a former student at Misuzu Gakuen, a cram school chain run by Fukami, who will star in a new TV commercial for the school running from April.

Fukami, who is also blessed with a talent for performing arts such as singing, ballet, opera and noh, held a concert on the last day of the event and sang a variety of songs from his enormous repertoire spanning classical music, jazz, pop, enka, anime theme songs and his original music — he has also been active as a composer, choreographer and conductor.

On March 18, Fukami appeared in the exhibition's opening ceremony, which began with a samba dance performance by SambaNova, followed by congratulatory speeches by renowned international and

domestic guests who had been invited to the ceremony.

Peter Phillips, a member of the British royal family and a successful businessperson who is also an honorary ambassador for the International Sports Promotion Society (ISPS Handa), a charity organization chaired by Fukami, praised Fukami's passion in achieving greater inclusion in sports across the world, including his long-standing effort to promote blind golf.

Phillips is also a patron for the International Foundation for Arts and Culture (IFAC), which is also chaired by Fukami, and gave congratulations on the recent opening of this year's Handa Opera in Sydney, which Fukami had been promoting for over a decade. "Last year, I also had the great pleasure and privilege of visiting the Handa Foundation in Cambodia and seeing all the fantastic work that the foundation does," he said, referring to its contributions — especially in health care, education and agriculture — through training programs and institutions that it helped establish.

"In this new year for you, I continue to enjoy supporting all of your activities across all of your foundations, and I look forward to many years to come to continuing to do so," Phillips said.

Former Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he has rarely met someone filled with so much philanthropic generosity in his political life of over 20 years. He mentioned how well Fukami is regarded internationally and continued, "I can assure you, particularly in Australia, my home country, and across the Tasman Sea in New Zealand, he has been recognized by both our honors

systems as being a marvelous contributor to both of our countries." He expressed his hope to witness more of Fukami's enthusiastic philanthropic patronage to many causes around the world in the coming years.

ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn referred to Fukami's philanthropic contributions to every corner of the world, including the ASEAN region, and said, "In more than 20 years we have known each other, I have been able to witness his incredible amount of energy and passion for the work to advance humanity."

There were also congratulatory speeches, video messages and telegrams from dozens of current and former politicians, such as former New Zealand Prime Minister John Key and former Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny, professional golfers, rugby players and boxers, including Richie McCaw and Dan Carter, who played in New Zealand's national rugby team, the All Blacks; singers and performers such as Joe Lynn Turner from Deep Purple and Hong Kong actor Yuen Biao; and other celebrities from around the world.

At the end of the opening ceremony, Fukami gave a speech welcoming all the guests from around the world. He expressed his appreciation for their words of praise for his continuing passion for and contribution to philanthropic activities. He said the key to continue moving forward is to "take every step, every breath, with a fresh sense of passion," stressing that age doesn't matter when one tries to achieve something.

He also touched on the importance of "forgetting" one's own achievements. Mentioning that this is part of the teachings of the Rinza school of Zen Buddhism, he suggested



At the ribbon-cutting ceremony with Toshu Fukami standing in between Kao Kim Hourn and Peter Phillips. TTJ TACHIBANA PUBLISHING

that one should focus only on living in the present moment instead of thinking about the past and the future. "Think only about this moment — not even today. Overcome all the worries for the future. The moment you are living is what leads you to the future. Your concentration sharpens when you are focused," he said.

He also said people get stuck when they look back too much on what they have achieved in the past. "It takes time for your achievements to be evaluated by other people, and people's views change with the time," he said, recommending that one do what one thinks is good now rather than trying to find out what went well before and repeating it.

"If you try to make use of what you have acquired in the past, the result will be awkward and stale. Your skills and experience will contribute to what you are doing now only if you focus on the moment you are in. That is why I can keep going, and my own

achievements mentioned in the speeches and video messages from my friends from all over the world sound like someone else's achievements to me," he said. He added that this is true for everyone, regardless of age. "Taking your body off and leaving the world behind is all that death means," he said.

But people always make mistakes and experience failures even when doing what seems best for the moment they are living in. Fukami, who also leads a Shinto-based religion, said that the continuation of efforts toward prosperity is what Shinto gives blessing to. "The value of humanity lies in the spirit of revival. The question is how to stand back up following failures and despair, and that is where I want to provide support," he said.

The ceremony ended with the cutting of a ribbon by Fukami and some of the guests, and the participants then proceeded to the exhibition room to share and enjoy encounters with the vibrant works.



Fukami explained his works to participants of the ceremony. TTJ TACHIBANA PUBLISHING



Tsubaki Oniyakko and Fukami in a talk session held on March 17. TTJ TACHIBANA PUBLISHING