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Japan's number one English language magazine
AUGUST 2014



TADAO ANDO
ARCHITECTURE'S SUPERHEAVYWEIGHT

SHUNTARO TANIKAWA
Japan's Beloved Poet on a Life Lived in Words

SOAK IT IN
Akita's Year-Round Mountain Paradise

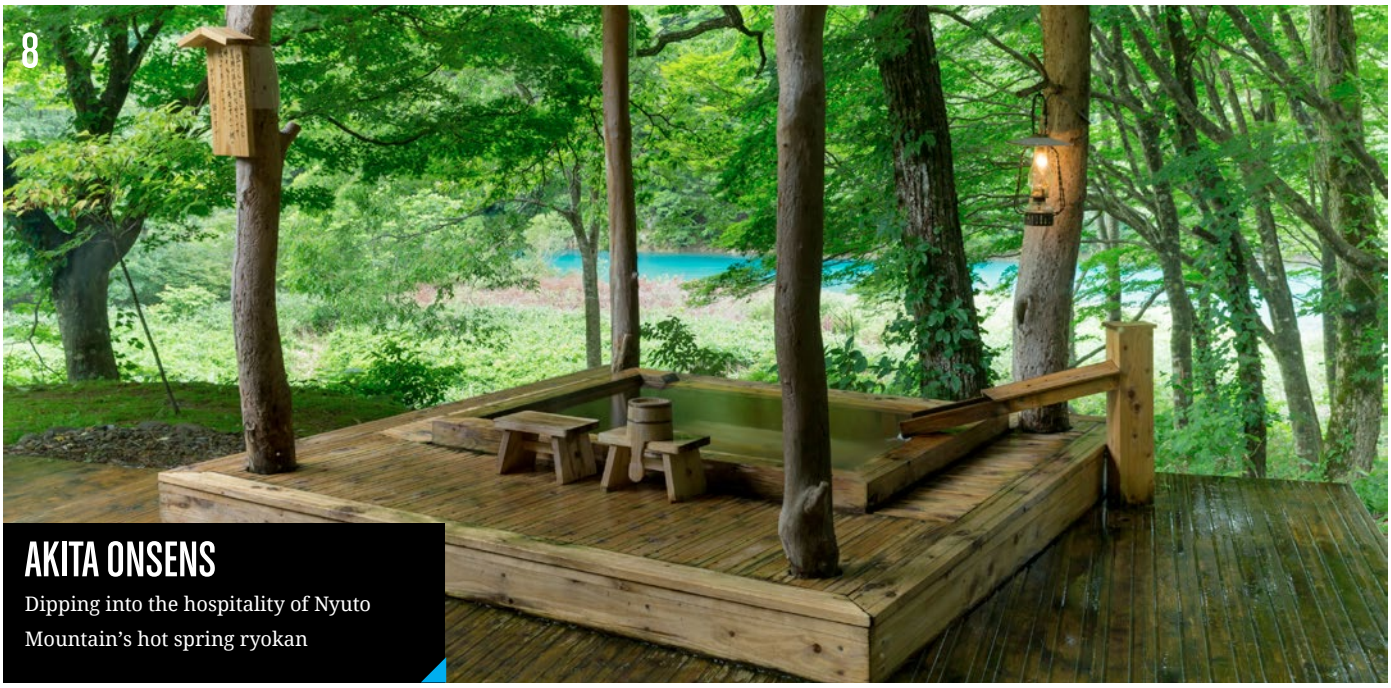
STEP INTO THE OCTAGON
UFC Fight Night Japan 2014

ALSO: Sculptor Junko Mori's Unique Metalwork, US Actress Charlotte Kate Fox Prepares for Her NHK Debut, and Much More


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INTO THE STORM
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tokyo weekender

AUGUST 2014

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EST. Corky Alexander, 1970

Published monthly at the Regency Shinsaka Building, 5th floor
8-5-8 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-0052
(03) 6666-4924 / (03) 6432-9229 (fax)
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To subscribe to the Tokyo Weekender, please call (03) 6666-4924 or email: customer-support@tokyoweekender.com

For ad sales inquiries, please call (03) 6666-4924 or email: sales@tokyoweekender.com

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THIS MONTH IN THE WEEKENDER



August isn't much of a month for providing respite. It's hot enough to send many members of our expat community back from whence we came, and even the pace of Tokyo business manages to drop down a notch or two. We all have our own ways to weather the swelter of Japan's dog days, but not many of us choose to step up our activity this time of year. Here at Tokyo Weekender, we were feeling the same way, and we've put together a collection of art, culture, and travel pieces that are all intended to keep that mercury down.

Our cover this month comes from one of the apostles of architectural cool: Tadao Ando. Known for the clean, minimal lines of his monumental designs, the Osaka-born architect has a fascinating background that includes a stint in the boxing ring and no formal schooling whatsoever. And despite the calm that his buildings might inspire, Ando himself is an intense creative force, which you can come to understand in our feature interview.

Another cultural giant graces the pages of this month's issue: Japan's greatest living poet, Shuntaro Tanikawa. Some 60 years ago, he launched his lyrical career with a slim volume of verse that established him as a brave new voice in modern poetry. Ever since then, Tanikawa has proven his versatility as a writer—writing and translating songs, verse, and even comic strips—and the power of poetry to appeal to audiences far beyond specialists and intellectuals.

If you have a travel bug this month, we'd recommend heading north to Akita, where you can take in the scenery of this northern prefecture—you might even find yourself inspired to take a dip in one of the many onsen that can be found around picturesque Mt. Nyuto.

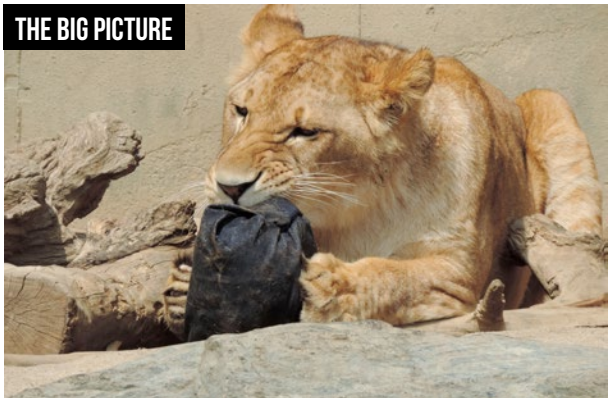
There's more here in the issue than there's space to mention it in, so grab a refreshing beverage, sit back, put your feet up and enjoy. See you next month.

Alec

Editor



THE BIG PICTURE



In a collaboration between Kamine Zoo and the WWF, denim that was torn by lions and tigers was made into jeans and auctioned off for charity. To read more, go to ***www.tokyoweekender.com***

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UFC FIGHT NIGHT JAPAN 2014

by Warren Adamson

Come September 20, mixed martial arts aficionados will be in for a monster of a night, with seven bouts already on the card. Here's our look at a few of the matchups to watch, including the main battle of the evening, when two of UFC's most colorful fighters will come to grips inside the Octagon

Hunt vs Nelson



Just imagine two angry rhinoceroses going head to head for 25 minutes in an enclosed area. That's what it'll be like when Mark "Super Samoan" Hunt takes on Roy "Big Country" Nelson. The five-round, non-championship match is the main fight in the Saitama Super Arena on September 20 and it is set to be a big slugfest with each fighter having a knock out punch in their arsenal.

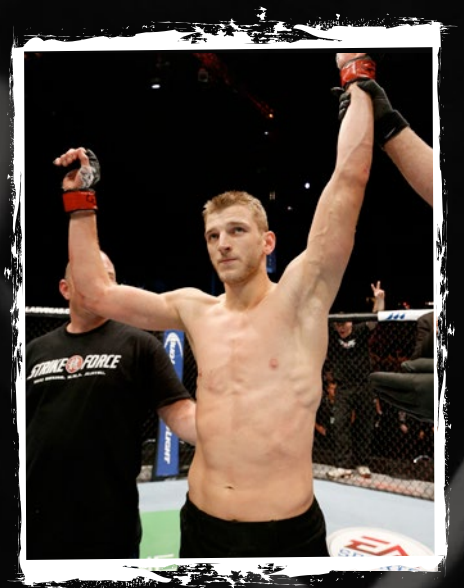
Hunt, the eighth-ranked heavyweight fighter, is a former K-1 Champion and PRIDE competitor and weighs in at around 120 kg (265 lbs). Early in his combative sports career, he mastered kickboxing before making the switch to MMA via PRIDE. He later joined the UFC, where he fought a legendary bout against former heavyweight champion, Junior dos Santos, but lost the fight following a back-spinning heel kick.

Nelson is ranked ninth on the ladder and he too has faced champions in the heavyweight division. He was the winner of TUF in 2009 against Brendan Schaub and has been a force to be reckoned with since then. He tips the scales at 119 kg (262 lbs.) and uses that weight to execute knock out punches. He isn't a stranger to grappling either as he has a black belt in Jiu-Jitsu.

This match is tough to call: both fighters are seen as the heavy hitters of the division, capable of giving out and absorbing incredible punishment. According to some punters, Hunt may have the technical advantage but Nelson's losses have all been decisions which means that Big Country can take the fight all the way.



Hooker vs Maximo



Dan Hooker is set to take on Maximo "The Max Murderer" Blanco in the featherweight division. Like some of the other fighters on the night's card. Dan Hooker is a new signing to the UFC: his first fight in the league was a win over Ian Entwistle. He has plenty of experience in other leagues, boasting a 12-4 record. Hooker usually walks around close to 80 kg (176 lbs.) but has cut weight to make the 66 kg (145 lbs.) limit and will fight as a featherweight. Hooker is very quick on the ground and can gain full mount with ease if given even half a chance. He will need it against his opponent, the very dangerous and merciless Blanco.

Blanco is relentless on attack and throws everything at his opponent, creating unorthodox opportunities in the cage. He has a fight record of 10-6-1 but has lost 4 times in the UFC with only 2 wins. He'll be looking to grow his win column come September 20. With Blanco's speed and relentless attack, he may win the fight with a knock out but Hooker just might be able to sustain the punishment. It is always difficult for an athlete who has had to shed weight to maintain stamina, and this may play against him.



Nakai vs Tate



The only female bout during the evening is between Rin Nakai and Miesha "Cupcake" Tate. Rin Nakai is said to be the most flamboyant and "bizarre" fighter signed by the UFC. It is reported that she requested to enter the ring in a prom dress for the September fight and Dana White, UFC president, has allowed this request. Outside of the ring, Nakai has attracted a huge fan following from her fetish-themed YouTube videos and photos, in which the fighter wears costumes that run the gamut between French maid and "naughty bunny." She may be a little unorthodox but has an impressive fight record of 16-0 with one draw. She has fought some of the best fighters in Asia and from around the world, and is set to make her UFC debut against Tate.

Tate has been around for a long time and has fought current women's champion, Ronda Rousey, twice, losing on both occasions. Miesha Tate has a record of 14-5 and prefers to win fights on the ground, relying on her wrestling background to force a submission. She has taken a number of fights to decision and isn't afraid of launching the first attack in the Octagon.

This will be one of the best fights of the night as women's bouts tend to be more technical: knock outs are rare and grappling techniques take preference. Nakai hasn't lost a fight yet, so it'll be difficult for Tate to defeat her, but Tate's ground and pound game may soften Nakai up enough for "Cupcake" to attempt a choke. Don't be fooled though—Nakai has a very strong upper body which allows her to put a lot of torque on her armbars and locks.



UFC Fight Night in Japan is set to launch some careers, will offer some exciting bouts and is sure to excite and entertain fans of mixed martial arts. In addition to the mentioned fights, there are more scheduled for the night but are subject to change but it has been confirmed that Hunt and Nelson will go ahead, barring extraordinary circumstances, as will the Tate/Nakai matchup.



BOOK YOUR TICKETS NOW!

The event is to be held at the Saitama Super Arena on Saturday, September 20. Tickets can now be purchased at **ufc.tokyoweekender.com**

Takanori Gomi

Catching up with the Fireball Kid

Takanori Gomi has a long and storied resume in mixed martial arts, having gone from strength to strength in catch wrestling, shoot fighting, and Japan's PRIDE Fighting Championships league. The fighter racked up an impressive 13–1 record during his PRIDE career, setting league records for the longest win streak (10) and the fastest knockout (6 seconds). Gomi joined UFC in 2010, going 4 and 4 since joining the American-based league. Coming off a decisive win against Isaac Vallie-Flagg in April, 35-year-old The Fireball Kid will be squaring off against Michigan youngblood Myles Jury (25 years old; 14 wins, 0 losses), as a part of UFC's Fight Night Japan 2014.

WHAT'S IT LIKE FOR JAPANESE FIGHTERS IN THE UFC?

It's tough for fighters to go over there and win. The fighters are really strong, and they have to be used to being in a foreign land. But there are Japanese fighters who are beginning to succeed in the league, so that's clear that it's possible to overcome those challenges.

WHO ARE SOME OF THE YOUNGER JAPANESE UFC FIGHTERS WHO HAVE CAUGHT YOUR EYE?

I've been watching a young fighter named Uruka Sasaki, who has signed with UFC and has been getting a lot of attention, as well as a fighter named Akira Okada, who's ranked 8th in pancrase in Japan; I'm training him right now.

WHAT'S YOUR OWN TRAINING ROUTINE LIKE THESE DAYS?

I'm training at a university wrestling dojo, sparring at my fighting gym, and I do a general fitness routine as well.

OVER YOUR CAREER, WHAT'S THE FIGHT THAT YOU'VE ENJOYED MOST?

So far, the fight that has meant the most to me was my last fight in Baltimore [against Vallie-Flagg; Gomi won on unanimous decision]. It was great to go up against a fighter my own age. By the middle of the match, the crowd had gotten really fired up, and my match was chosen Fight of the Night.

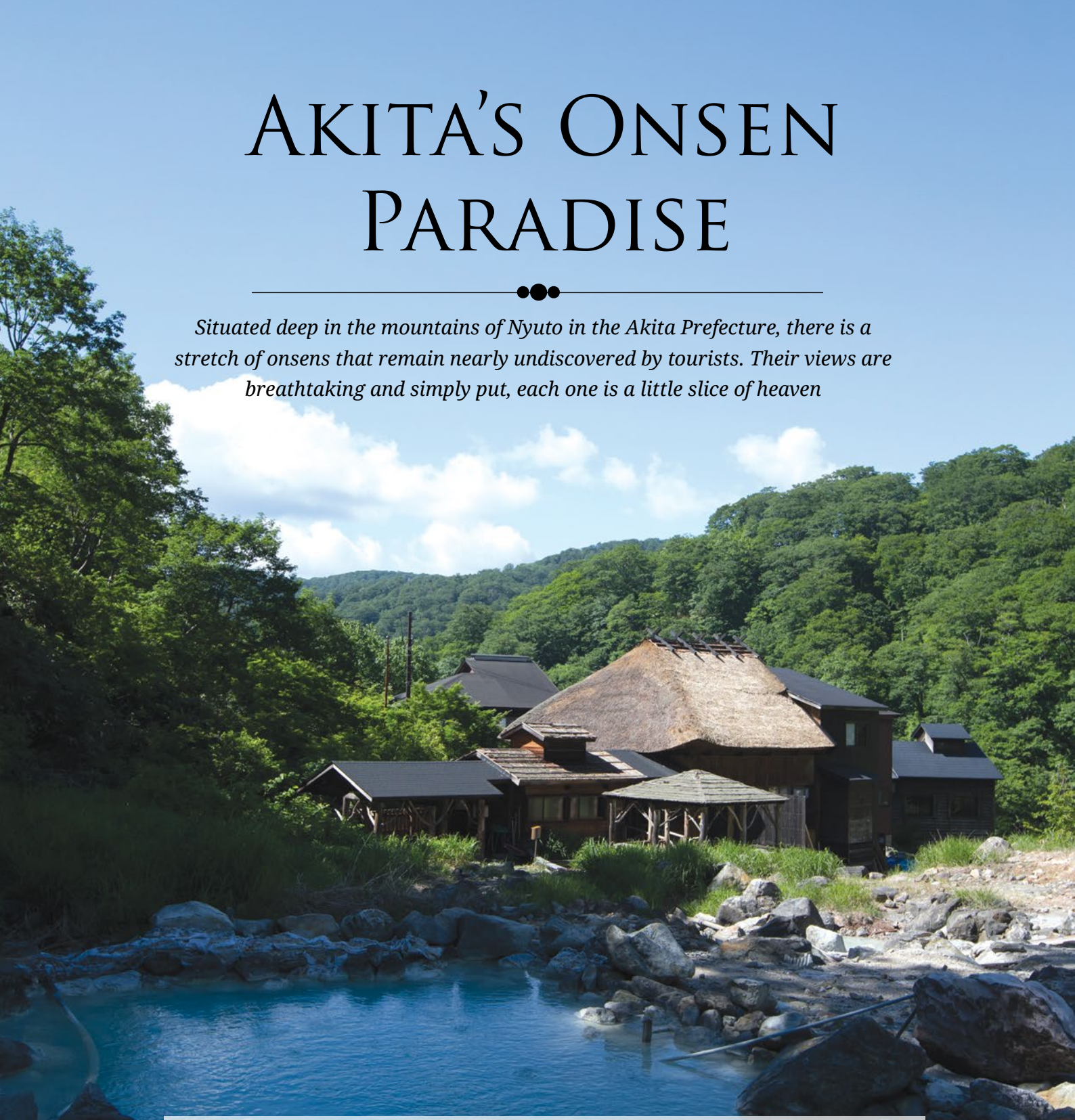
WHAT DO YOU EXPECT OUT OF YOUR FIGHT WITH MYLES JURY?

I'm still researching his fighting style, but I am looking forward to a tough fight. I'm hoping to give it my all and knock him out.



Akita's Onsen Paradise

Situated deep in the mountains of Nyuto in the Akita Prefecture, there is a stretch of onsens that remain nearly undiscovered by tourists. Their views are breathtaking and simply put, each one is a little slice of heaven



Onsens, or hot springs, have long played an important role in Japan. Hundreds of years ago, people used them to heal wounds and injuries, and they are now seen as a therapeutic practice that helps restore both mind and body.

In Akita, onsens are seen as an extension of the earth, a source of minerals and vitamins that enrich the naturally hot water that bubbles from the ground. The hot springs are part of a wholly healthy lifestyle that includes not only immersing yourself in the mineral-rich waters, but also cleansing and filling your body with healthy foods.

One of Akita's healthiest foods are its "mountain vegetables." Known as *sansai*, these wild greens are a prefectural local favorite. Because these durable plants survive harsh snow conditions during the winter and ripen later in the spring, sansai are seen as a kind of "power food," and by feeding your body with these hardy vegetables, Akita locals believe you are taking in that power to both detox and nourish your body.

Traditionally, in the countryside of Japan, fishermen and farmers would spend their off seasons at the onsens to heal up for the work to come. This practice was known as *toji*—literally, "hot spring cure," and some onsen locations still offer this opportunity today. Toji-ba, or hot spring health resorts, are not just vacation spots, but can be locations for long-term stay: guests can cook in the kitchens provided at the ryokans and bathe daily, as a way to recover both mentally and physically.

Onsens are great for locals on a journey to a healthier body as well as tourists looking for a relaxing getaway to recharge. In between baths, Akita offers scenic hikes amongst *buna* (Japanese beech) trees. The collection of lush trees and mountain water streams make for peaceful hikes during the spring, summer and fall months.

TAENOYU

Taenoyu is a unique onsen in that men and women never miss out on any of the five baths available: the separate bath locations for men and women switch every evening. The open-air bath, which is gender mixed, feels like an infinity pool, and overlooks a giant waterfall at the edge of the space. With a backdrop of mountains covered with trees, the outdoor bath area immerses you in all of the natural beauty that Akita has to offer.

One indoor bath has a rock-lined edge filled with golden-orange colored water, and is almost an open-air bath itself, providing a view of the forest outside its wooden overhang. Another indoor bath is filled with stones and clear water, allowing you to experience a foot massage when you press your feet against the bottom of the bath.

As you enter the ryokan, before taking the baths, enjoy an afternoon tea in the dining area also used to serve breakfast, with a view of a small river and various trees stretching across the mountain. A separate dining area is available for dinner, where many of Akita's famous dishes, including *kiritanpo* and sansai, are served. The multi-course dinner is complemented with Akita's local sake, or nihonshu, produced from Akita-grown rice and pure spring water.

www.taenoyu.com/english/ 0187-46-2740 sato@taenoyu.com
014-1201 Akita-ken, Senboku-shi, Tazawako Obonaiji Komagatake 2-1







OGAMA

Ogama Onsen, located in the middle of a steep slope on the mountain, features large *gama* (toad) statues at the entrance of the building, in honor of the hot spring's name. Previously housing a high school, the long halls and classrooms of Ogama Onsen have been turned into changing areas, dining spaces, and various baths within the ryokan.

Adding to the "old school" feeling is a statue at the front of the ryokan: Ninomiya Kinjiro, a boy reading while transporting wood on his back, is a famous symbol that represents the virtues of study and hard physical labor. Across from the statue, a row of footbaths lines the entrance of the ryokan, making it a great pit stop where you can refresh your legs and feet while trekking through the mountain, without having to change your clothes or go inside to use the changing area.

At Ogama, the water has a greenish color that looks like matcha. There are outdoor and indoor baths, both of which provide views of the essentially untouched natural surroundings of the ryokan. The four baths at Ogama are approximately 98 degrees year-round, and open all four seasons. Mountain trails and ski slopes in close proximity to the bathing areas make it easy for guests to go on hikes during the warmer months or go skiing during the colder months in between onsen dips.

www.ohkamaonsen.com 0187-46-2438
014-1201 Akita-ken, Senboku-shi, Tazawako Tazawaji Sendatsu Kokuyu-rin

GANIBA

Ganiba gets its name from the many crabs (in Japanese, *kani* or *gani*) that can be seen in the river next to the open-air baths. The ryokan, which has been open since 1846, has two kinds of spring sources.

But before you walk into Ganiba Onsen, the mini-torii shrine at the entrance of the beautifully designed space may first catch your eye. The shrine has long been a place where local people go to pray and thank the gods for the natural gifts from the surrounding land: food, wood, and bountiful hot spring water.

Balconies made of wooden logs and carefully crafted stone walls decorate the outside of the ryokan, making for a naturally charming aesthetic. If you want to truly experience any of the four seasons while soaking in the onsen, Ganiba is the perfect location, as the outdoor bath is situated at the end of a 50-meter walkway.

On the way to this open-air bath you can experience a picturesque scene as you walk under the tree-branch canopies that extend above the pathway. Hear the birds chirping or the sound of the small mountain stream running under the bridge that connects the walkway to the entrance during the spring, or trek through the snow in boots provided by the ryokan during the winter months, to make you feel like you've truly earned your bath. Multi-course, traditional Japanese foods consisting of local and seasonal ingredients are served for breakfast and dinner at the ryokan.

www.nyuto-onsenkyo.com/english/eng_ganiba.html 0187-46-2021
014-1204 Akita-ken, Senboku-shi, Tazawako Tazawaji Sendatsu Kokuyu-rin







MAGOROKU

This traditional ryokan was named for its founder. Magoroku features a collection of black, wooden houses resembling classic onsen huts gathered around the natural sources of the hot spring. Entering the village of huts, a large bridge over a crystal-clear mountain stream leads the way to Magoroku. Stone walls line the riverbank, creating a peaceful setting as you walk into full view of the ryokan.

The ryokan's rustic atmosphere is made complete with both indoor and outdoor baths. Keep an eye open for the smaller huts with "onsen roofs." These additional, smaller roofs on top of the wooden houses indicate a hut with a hot spring inside.

There is an indoor stone bath with two hot spring "waterfalls" that release water at a higher pressure to help massage sore muscles. An outdoor bath gives you a view of the cascading mountains and a feeling that nature is truly present in your backyard.

The ryokan is open during all four seasons, allowing for a different scenic view and experience over various months, from the snow-covered mountains during the winter to the lush trees and greenery during the summer.

www.nyuto-onsenkyo.com/english/eng_magoroku.html 0187-46-2224

014-1204 Akita-ken, Senboku-shi, Tazawako Tazawaji Sendatsu Kokuyu-rin

TSURUNOYU

Nyuto Mountain's oldest and most popular onsen, Tsurunoyu was established in the 1600s, during the Edo Period, when it housed many elite government officials and members of royalty on their travels. The onsen continues to hold its iconic title and offers guests a rustic and authentic stay with an *irori*, or sunken fireplace, to cook with and to heat up each room.

Tsurunoyu, which translates as "crane onsen," takes its name from the legend of a badly injured crane that soaked itself in the hot spring bath and was healed in its mineral-rich waters. In traditional Japanese folklore, cranes were believed to live for thousands of years; they are still linked with good fortune and longevity today, and they are the symbol of this celebrated ryokan.

Four baths, each with a unique feel and mineral composition, are featured at the ryokan, including one of the only onsens in the world where you can bathe in the actual hot spring source. Typically, the hot spring source is transferred to a bath where the temperature is controlled; however, the bath at Tsurunoyu is 100% controlled by the forces of nature, allowing guests to feel a true connection with the earth.

www.tsurunoyu.com/english.html 0187-46-2139

014-1204 Akita-ken, Senboku-shi, Tazawako Sendatsuzawa Kokuyu-rin 50





MIYAKOWASURE

Miyakowasure takes its name from the richly colored purple tea flowers that bloom in the garden located in the center of the ryokan. This is the perfect place to stay if you're looking for relaxation plus luxury.

With a majority of rooms housing their own private onsen, complete with a view overlooking a still lake, there is no need to leave your private space except to escape for a delicious meal in the dining area. Sample a flight of local nihonshu with a multi-course dinner made from Akita's fresh local ingredients, and enjoy Miyakowasure's hearty breakfast, served in multiple courses along with a selection of fresh fruit, vegetables and yogurt.

If you do decide you'd like a change of scenery, Miyakowasure has men's and women's baths in an indoor setting, as well as a private outdoor bath. The baths contain sulfur in two different temperatures and at two different intensities.

For those who prefer a bed over a futon, Western style rooms are available in addition to the traditional, Japanese-style rooms. The rooms wrap around the central garden, where guests can enjoy a peaceful walk or rest on the benches and tables arranged around the carefully crafted space.

014-1113 Akita-ken, Senboku-shi, Tazawako Sotsudaji, Natsuse 84

0187-44-2220



KYUKAMURA

The region's most modern onsen, Kyukamura was first built by the government to promote health and tourism, but is now owned by several different companies. There are 38 rooms available in Western or Japanese style at this contemporarily designed ryokan. Kyukamura's modern design and amenities (it's the only ryokan on Nyuto Mountain with an elevator or tennis courts) make it the perfect choice for large groups, families and events.

Towada-Hachimantai, the National Park located on the mountain, can be explored in depth through a tour and tour guide set up at the ryokan.

The outdoor bath is covered with a wooden overhang and surrounded by an abundance of buna, Japanese beech trees. The indoor bath features a mix of contemporary and traditional design, with modern touches standing out amidst the classic design of the wooden onsen huts.

A buffet full of Akita's local cuisine in the banquet room is offered for breakfast and dinner. You can enjoy each meal in the yukatas provided by Kyukamura, and make use of the onsens during all hours of the day.

www.qkamura.or.jp/en/nyuto/ 0187-46-2244

014-1201 Akita-ken, Senboku-shi, Tazawako Komagatake 2-1

KUROYU

One of the signature features of this onsen, whose name translates as "black onsen," is its black hard-boiled eggs. Fresh eggs are placed in nets and submerged in the onsen's hot spring source to boil. After the eggs sit in the sulfurous onsen water, the hard-boiled eggs turn black on the outside from the chemical reactions. The egg on the inside remains white, and the hard-boiled eggs are said to not spoil for a long time because of the minerals that help kill bacteria.

This directly translates into what Kuroyu believes the onsen can do to help the body. The minerals in the hot spring water, rich in aroma, are believed to help heal skin diseases and detoxify the body. "Waterfalls" of onsen water, which can also be found at Magoroku Onsen, are available in a separate hut near the baths to help soothe sore muscles with a natural, water-pressure massage.

Said to have been established 330 years ago, Kuroyu is the furthest onsen from the Nyuto Village. The ryokan is known as a location for long-term stays (toji-ba), and is equipped with a kitchen where you can prepare all your own meals and an outdoor BBQ for anyone to enjoy. If you're looking to go more towards the relaxation route, though, you can have dinner served in your room.

www.kuroyu.com 0187-46-2214

014-1201 Akita-ken, Senboku-shi, Tazawako Obonai 2-1





NYUTO MOUNTAIN

The Nyuto Mountain area is known for the staggering variety of its hot spring sources and settings. Onsen come in many different types, depending on the mineral composition of their water (everything from carbonates to sulfur), making for hot springs that vary in color, texture, and aroma. These waters are believed to have medicinal qualities, and while onsens aren't meant to replace doctor's orders, there is a long traditional history that describes their power to heal—promoting better sleep, relieving stress, and even curing skin diseases or lowering blood pressure. The surroundings of each ryokan differ as well, making each onsen a truly unique experience.

ONSEN PASSPORT

Sample the full variety of Nyuto Mountain's hot springs with an "onsen passport." Guests staying at the ryokan in the area, or visitors on a day trip, can tour Nyuto Mountain's onsens with a small booklet that can be purchased for less than ¥2,000. The passport gives admission to, and free transportation between, any of the onsens mentioned in this article. You can buy your passport at any of the participating ryokan.



For more information about the onsens in this article please visit:

ryokan.glocal-promotion.com

HOW TO GET THERE



To reach the Nyuto Mountain onsen area from Tokyo, take a JR Akita Shinkansen Komachi train from Tokyo Station to Tazawako Station (about 3 hours). From there, you can catch a bus to Nyuto Onsen-kyo (about 45 minutes). From Akita Airport, a shared jumbo taxi to Nyuto Onsen-kyo is available by reservation (about 2 hours).




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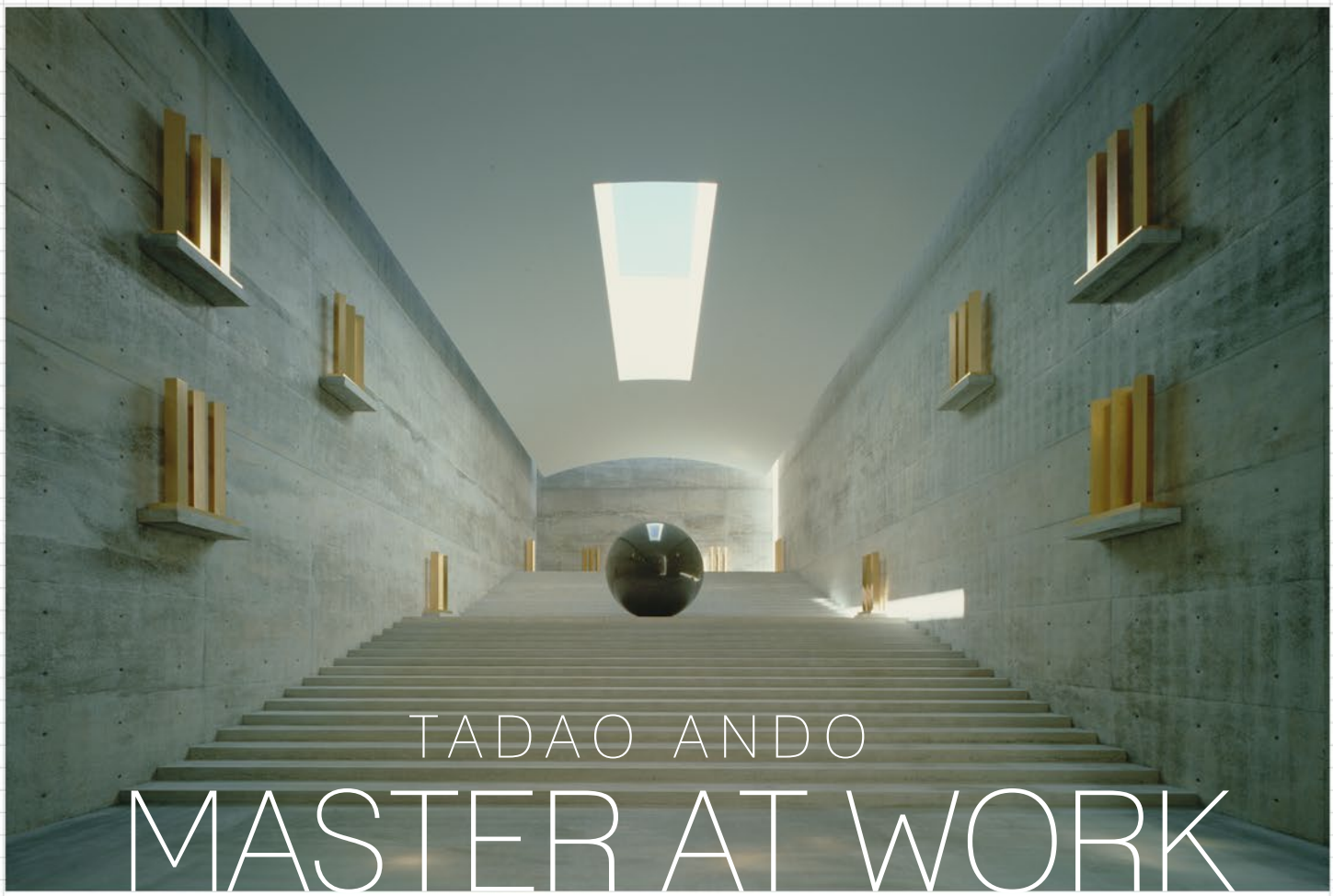


Photo by Mitsuo Matsuoka

TADAO ANDO
MASTER AT WORK

MINIMALIST, MONOCHROME CONCRETE BUILDINGS WITH A FEELING OF AUSTERITY: TAKAO ANDO'S DESIGNS MAY NOT SOUND TOO SPECTACULAR, YET IN AN UNDERSTATED, ELEGANT WAY THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT THEY ARE. HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY ZEN PHILOSOPHY, THE RENOWNED AUTODIDACT ARCHITECT PUTS HIS HEART AND SOUL INTO EVERY PROJECT HE'S INVOLVED IN. FROM HIS CHURCH OF LIGHT IN OSAKA TO THE MODERN ART MUSEUM OF FORT WORTH IN TEXAS, HIS WORK CAN BE TRULY AWE-INSPIRING.

by Matthew Hernon

A Pritzker Prize winner known throughout the world, Ando is a master of his profession. The fact that he is self-taught makes his rise all the more impressive. So how did this former boxer with no formal training in his field go on to become one of the leading figures in architecture? Weekender recently spoke with him to find out.



Photo by Keitaku Hayashi

CAN YOU START BY TELLING US WHERE YOUR INTEREST IN ARCHITECTURE CAME FROM?

It started when I first witnessed my middle school math instructor teaching with a real passion. I began wondering about this subject, thinking there must be something special about it in order for him to teach so vigorously.

A few years later I watched as carpenters built a second floor to my house. Again it was their passion that intrigued me: they worked so hard every day that sometimes they would forget to eat their lunch. It was a similar feeling to the one I had before; I began thinking that there must be something special and interesting in carpentry.

I then connected the two dots and that is when I started showing an interest in architecture.

YET YOU DIDN'T GET INTO ARCHITECTURE RIGHT AWAY…

No, I was a professional boxer in my late teens. I decided to do boxing because you get to fight and make money at the same time; I thought it was a great deal. My record was pretty good; however, I soon realized that I would never be the best in the world so I quit right then.

I may not have pursued boxing but I learned a lot and was able to train myself. Fighting in the ring, you are all on your own—nobody will help you and we can relate that to everything in life.

YOU THEN EMBARKED ON A WORLD TOUR, HOW MUCH OF AN IMPACT DID THAT HAVE ON YOUR WORK?

I was in my early 20s when I traveled for eight months to see global architecture across Russia and through Europe, Africa and southern Asia before making my way back to Osaka. I didn't have much money, so people often told me it was a life and death commitment to take such a trip, especially in those days. This intensive traveling period gave me a different perspective and allowed me to think in ways that I never had before.

I was particularly amazed by the scale of the Parthenon in Greece and the Pantheon in Rome. Le Corbusier's church in Ronchamp was also very inspiring, presenting a space where architecture played a key role in gathering people together. Unfortunately, I was unable to meet him since I arrived in Europe a few months after he passed away.

My interest in Le Corbusier began in my late teens. I remember constantly tracing over his drawings. I discovered his book at a secondhand store and was instantly drawn to his pictures and architecture. Not having enough money to purchase it, I decided to hide it at the bottom of the pile so nobody would buy it, yet every time I went back to the shop the book was on top of the pile ready to be sold.

WHAT WERE YOUR THOUGHTS ON JAPANESE ARCHITECTURE AT THAT TIME?
I have always been very impressed by traditional Japanese architecture. I very much appreciate the delicacy of Sukiya and Japanese tea houses. I am also amazed by the scale and power of traditional structures such as Itsukushima Shrine, Todaiji Temple and many others.

I think you can see good architecture scattered all over the country; this is a result of Japan's rapid development after the war that ended in 1945. The problem is that there is a lack of unity throughout cities such as Tokyo. I believe it is crucial to somehow connect the different points to bring together not only the urban fabric, but also Japanese society as a whole.

YOU SOUND LIKE SOMEONE WHO HAS SPENT YEARS STUDYING ARCHITECTURE, YET YOU NEVER RECEIVED ANY FORMAL EDUCATION IN THE SUBJECT. DID THIS MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT TO GET STARTED IN THE INDUSTRY?
Yes, it was a big disadvantage for me as it was difficult to gain trust from people in those early years. I also did not have any classmates or professors to talk with about architecture. The amount of information I was able to collect was very limited. Having said all that, I wasn't affected by trends or by what people thought; consequently it made it easier for me to develop my own language and methods of thinking.



Photo by Mitsuo Matsuoka

Photo by Mitsuo Matsuoka



WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON MODERN TRENDS IN ARCHITECTURE?
I wouldn't say it's a trend, but the current generation has been heavily influenced by technology. This has enabled people, especially those in the design world, to achieve things that weren't possible before. Therefore, I see technology as a great tool that can help develop new ideas and take us to a new sphere—that said, I hope we won't let it take over.

Photo by Tadao Ando



DO YOU FEEL ANY EXTRA PRESSURE WHEN WORKING ON HUGE PROJECTS SUCH AS TOKYO SKYTREE OR THE PUNTA DELLA DOGANA?
Every project is challenging in its own way and that is very exciting. I put an equal amount of effort into each one I'm involved in, even if some take longer than others. In order to produce something special I need to see some passion from the client: that is how I choose my projects. It has nothing to do with the site, program or budget.

SPEAKING OF PASSION, HOW DID YOU GET TO KNOW BONO?
I have known him for quite some time. One day he walked in to our studio in Osaka and I was like, "who is this guy?" We went to Church of the Light together and he started singing "Amazing Grace" which was, pardon the pun, quite amazing. Ever since, we've kept in touch and whenever we are near each other anywhere around the world, especially in Europe, we catch up.

"Face the world, keep looking for new challenges and no matter how things turn out, try to always move forward."

I truly believe that people have to [create architecture] on their own, with their own physical body, because at the end of the day architecture is something that exists in the real world and not in the virtual one. Buildings need that human touch.

WOULD YOU SAY THE WAY YOU INCORPORATE NATURE INTO YOUR WORK DEMONSTRATES THAT HUMAN TOUCH?
Yes, for me the surrounding environment is very important. When I'm not satisfied with it I start planting small trees and try to make the area greener before the project begins so it will be ready when the structure is completed. For example, when I started Omotesando Hills my first concept was not to exceed the height of the nearby trees out of respect for the natural surroundings.

Also for me, just because the building is built doesn't mean it's completed. We as architects must take care of our buildings and nurture them. For many of my completed projects, I go on to do maintenance work ensuring that the structures are compatible with nature. I've been working on projects, such as the Rokko Housing complex and the museums in Naoshima [and other locations], for 25 to 30 years.

FINALLY, WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO ANY BUDDING ARCHITECTS OUT THERE?
Face the world, keep looking for new challenges and no matter how things turn out, try to always move forward. Also—once again—going back to that word: passion. It's so important to have passion if you want to create something special.



Photo by Mitsuo Matsuoka

Rare Forms

Sculptor Junko Mori's work seems to defy description: the artist transmutes metal into figures that seem like they could breathe, grow, or move on their own. We find out more about the person and the process that brings these shapes to life.

by Mike Sullivan

When you look at one of Junko Mori's sculptures, you are looking at a truly unique piece of art. While its form is organic, its medium demonstrates a tremendous commitment to detail. Her work can consist of as many as thousands of tiny parts that have been hammered and welded together. On closer inspection, you can tell that these works are made from inorganic materials, but you still wouldn't be surprised if one of these pieces started moving. We wanted to find out more about the story behind these pieces, and the woman who created them, and spoke with Mori at a London café. She lives in Wales, but grew up in the suburbs of Yokohama and went to Musashino Art University in Tokyo.



After moving to the UK she studied Silversmithing and Metalwork at Camberwell College of Arts in London and then lived in Manchester for several years. She has been regularly exhibiting for over ten years in galleries and museums, including The Saatchi Gallery, V & A Museum, and the International Art + Design Fair in New York. For a number of years she has been represented by Adrian Sassoon.

At the time when she graduated from Musashino she was not quite sure what exactly she wanted to do; as she explains it, "I knew what I was doing was something unique, but I could not see—well, quite frankly—how to eat with what I was doing!" This led







her to research international artists and through her professor from Musashino she was introduced to Hiroshi Suzuki who had been studying at Camberwell. After making a visit to London and seeing Suzuki at the New Designers Show, she was so impressed by what she saw that she decided to apply to study at Camberwell. She saved money by working at a fabricators and was able to gain a conditional offer to study in London.

It was here that she developed her style of making her art by welding together tiny pieces of metal, but her philosophy behind her work goes much farther back. She says that when she was a child she was fascinated by tiny details and her favorite thing at school was a microscope. This desire to look deeply into the patterns of nature continued into university, where she came to an aesthetic realization that linked the microscopic and macroscopic worlds: "When I was researching some visual images in university, I noticed that patterns on Mars and those in the human blood vein structure were very similar, and I got this infinite impression of 'repeat-ness' in nature." She feels a deep spiritual sensation from the repetitive process of making something and describes how she found making many components and welding to be "very meditative."

Although I can't help commenting on the organic nature of her work, and dare I say make a connection to evolution, she prefers to think about her hope to as a way to "present something the audience has never seen before, but [in a] slightly familiar [way], which stimulates their associations with their stored memories." Our conversation strays into the area of the strong connection between Japanese people and the seasons, which she describes as being very dramatic in Japan: "Cherry blossoming spring, stinky hot summer, colorful harvesting autumn, and freezing snowing winter." This flow of the seasons is no complicated thing, but as Mori explains, simplicity can be harder than it sounds: "keeping the action simple is actually quite a difficult task in the art process, but I believe my work is based on this philosophy—to notice simple things [that] most of us take for granted.'

The other aspect of her work is its sheer attractiveness—it should come as no surprise that her work has found its way to the front cover of many a magazine. When I ask about her concept of beauty, I am surprised to find out how much the element of surprise can play in her intricately detailed pieces. "I am always fascinated with the handmade quality in objects. When I play with materials, I am often surprised by the physical, tangible magic that happens unintentionally. This unpredictable beauty is almost like a gift from nature rather than me. I am like a farmer who saw a seed, watered it, and harvested it."

"When I play with materials, I am often surprised by the physical, tangible magic that happens unintentionally. This unpredictable beauty is almost like a gift from nature rather than me."

As we wrap up the interview she explains how in 2006 she had an opportunity to have a residency at the Welbeck Estates in Nottinghamshire to research the Portland family's house and their collection. She goes on to say "then last year the Duke of Devonshire kindly invited us to research his home and I created my first chandelier inspired by the books in his library. I am still digesting some ideas I got from those times since I am really fascinated with old fashion techniques. I am doing an internship this year with an established silversmith in London, and I am hugely excited about this. One day, I would love to have a whole year to research crafts in Japan and develop my work further." Despite her frequent exhibitions in the UK, the US, and around European cities, she has not yet exhibited in her home country, and hopefully one day Japanese audiences will be able to see the striking work of this artist first hand.

JUNKO MORI

Born in Yokohama in 1974

Studied at the Musashino Art University, Tokyo and Camberwell College of Arts, London

Received public commissions for work in Sloane Square (2004), the Victoria and Albert Museum (2007), and Sheffield Assay Office (2008)

Has exhibited across the UK, Europe, and the US, and is now represented by Adrian Sassoon, one of the world's top dealers in the decorative arts

In 2013 her work was featured on the front page of the most well-known crafts magazine in the UK: *CRAFTS* by the UK Crafts Council



IS JAPAN EXPENSIVE?

by Ken Seeroi

In which Ken Seeroi answers one of the burning questions that lies in the hearts of tourists, newbies, and long-term Japan hands alike...

People say Japan's expensive, which is crazy. But then people say lots of things—like Japan's "high-tech" and "polite," so clearly their minds are all mixed up after their round-the-world tour, like, What country was that? Denmark? Singapore? Switzerland? Wasn't everybody wearing lederhosen and yodeling? Drinking cocoa with mini marshmallows? Well, all right, maybe it was Japan. Ah, Harajuku, how I love your alpine ways.

LIES ABOUT JAPAN

So one big lie about Japan is that it's expensive. I was having this conversation with a friend from the States in an Ikebukuro noodle shop. He's a photographer who takes guidebook pictures of brightly-colored koi fish, Korean girls in kimonos, and ancient temples dating back to the 1950s. You know, real Japan.

"It cost me thirty bucks for a bacon-cheeseburger and a large coffee," he lamented. For some reason, we always talk in U.S. dollars when we really mean yen. Must be a white thing!

"Thirty bucks?" I choked on my noodles. Though to be fair, that's pretty easy to do when you're slurping them. "Where'd you go?"



"That little cafe on the corner," he said.

"No, not there!" I slurped. "There's nothing but grannies nodding off into their espressos. Look at these noodles, five bucks each. Manly bowls o' deliciousness."

"My hotel room's the size of a closet," he whined.

"You said you wanted a cheap place, and it's twenty bucks, in Tokyo, jeez."

"I can't open my suitcase and the room door at the same time."

"You can't put a price on spatial-thinking skills. Anyway, we'll have dinner tonight for six bucks, and it'll be awesome."

"Sure, for you," he said. "You've gone native."

"Gone native?" I said. "It's not like I'm wearing a hair shirt on jungle island, eating monkeys. That's Taiwan, get it straight."

"Isn't there somewhere we can get a grilled cheese sandwich?" he pleaded.

A SENSE OF VALUE

So that's part of it. You compare oranges to oranges, and Japan looks expensive. That's because you should be eating mikan instead of oranges. Plus they're juicier too. What I mean is that something's always expensive somewhere. Sushi costs a fortune in the US, even though it's terrible. A cup of coffee is four bucks in Italy and it comes in a thimble. So choosing what you want to eat, or do, versus what's locally popular, is always expensive. That's the price of swimming against the current. Like swimming—don't do that here. Better to stick with a traditional Japanese sport, like baseball.

WHY PEOPLE THINK JAPAN'S EXPENSIVE

After much investigative research, I've narrowed down the misinformation about Japan to two sources. Okay, so I went to a bar and talked to some foreigners. Anyway, here's what I concluded:

#1 Tourists from Nebraska

I assume we've all been this guy. You stumble off the plane from East Omaha, check into the hotel and ride the elevator straight to the Sky Deck for a deluxe wagyu beef extravaganza. And as you're savoring the breathtaking Tokyo panorama, you suddenly realize the 5,000-yen glasses of Burgundy you're slamming down aren't five dollars each. You really gotta work on those math skills. Then you bumble outside for a nightcap and a kindly Nigerian doorman ushers you into a dimly lit bar where you spend 60 bucks for a beer and half an hour on a couch with a Russian girl. Hey, at least you're having an authentic Japanese experience. Now, you're not being ripped off because you're a tourist; you're ripping yourself off by having no freaking clue what you're doing. I spent my first year here like that too. It was awesome! Okay, now I'm broke, but still it was awesome.

#2 Recent College Grads, Also Coincidentally From Nebraska

This group is stunned to find that things in the world actually cost money. Like I chatted with this attractive American girl who'd just moved here to teach English. She must've been about 23, which is basically why I was talking to her.

"Restaurants in Japan are so expensive!" she exclaimed. Gaijin are always exclaiming things. I don't know why.

"Really?" I exclaimed, "what'd you eat?"

"Italian," she said, "The teachers at my school took me, and the bill was $30 each."

"Okay," I said, "How long were you there?

"Like three hours."

"Well, three hours..." I offered.

"Then we went to karaoke. Another 20 dollars."
"So fifty bucks for a full night of eating, drinking, and singing?"
"Exactly."
"Well, it's Tokyo, not the corner booth of Bob's Big Boy in Omaha."
"Hmph," she scoffed, "I'm not from Nebraska.
"Sorry," I said. "Kansas? Missouri? Oklahoma?
"It's Iowa!" she exclaimed.
"My bad," I said. "That's where they grow potatoes, right?"

"You're not being ripped off because you're a tourist; you're ripping yourself off by having no freaking clue what you're doing. I spent my first year here like that too. It was awesome!"

SIX STEPS TO FINDING BARGAINS IN JAPAN

Ah, but then you go on the internet, check prices, and Holy Cow, Ken Seeroi was wrong! It really is expensive. Okay, let me assure you, Ken Seeroi is never wrong. The internet is wrong. Whatever. Here's how to find inexpensive Japan:

Step 1: Order a guidebook for Japan from Amazon. When it arrives, place the book inside a large, sturdy can. You'll also need some matches and kerosene, but gasoline will do in a pinch. Next, go to your computer.

Step 2: Stop wanting Japan to be a land of bacon cheeseburgers and motels with swimming pools. Remind yourself that it's, you know, Japan.

Step 3: Place your computer in the can too. Realize those things are only keeping you from the Japan you love. Now say, "I consign you to the flames of hell."

Step 4: Stand back, light a match, then run and find a Japanese person.

Step 5: Do whatever that person says, while repeating Step 2. Japanese people can recommend cheap hotels, authentic restaurants, even call the fire department. They can all fix computers too. To put it simply, you need someone who understands the way things work in Japan.

Then, **Step 6**—and this is pretty tough—is convincing your Japanese person that, No, you actually want to do things the Japanese way.

What I mean is, if you just find a random Japanese dude and ask for a restaurant recommendation, he's gonna point you to the Tokyo Bob's Big Boy. So instead, approach from behind, wrestle him to the ground, and box his ears until he takes you to the neighborhood *teishokuya* where you can get a decent, cheap meal. Then just pay for dinner and apologize for going all sumo. Don't worry, all Japanese people are quick to forgive and forget. It's an Asian thing.

JAPANESE ECONOMY

In the end, Japan's not expensive once you make some life adjustments. Like, sure, I live in an apartment smaller than a doghouse and have to use chopsticks because forks take up too much cupboard space, but still, it's cheap. You gotta love a place you can clean in one minute flat, just by running a rag around the floorboards. Think of all the time you'll save. And of course, when I say "you," I actually mean you, as in, not me. Please come over and clean my tiny apartment. I'll pay you in beer, how's that? See? Now you're making a profit. You really can't afford not to live in Japan.





CHARLOTTE KATE FOX

A Spirited Performance

by Matthew Hernon



A story of love, hardship, sacrifice and…whisky, Massan ***is set to premiere next month and is expected to be another hit for NHK following the recent successes of*** Amachan ***and*** Hanako to Anne. ***Based on the lives of Nikka founder Masataka Taketsuru and his Scottish wife Rita Cowan, it is the 91st installment of the channel's long-running morning drama series and the first to feature a foreign female lead.***

An American actress with a Scottish grandmother, Charlotte Kate Fox beat more than 500 hopefuls to land the coveted role of Ellie, the character whose story is based on Rita Cowan's. Given her nationality and the fact that she had never spoken Japanese before, the decision to cast Fox as the heroine raised a few eyebrows. The 28-year-old told *Weekender* that even she was surprised when she got the part.

"I couldn't believe it," Fox says. "It's still a bit of a dream. I was surprised and scared. I just want to do [Rita] justice, showing her courage, restlessness and her lovely eccentricity. Rita's willingness to love and live no matter what the cost happily mirrored some personal things I've been through and I was able to apply my life to hers.

"She was incredibly courageous, especially [given] that time period. After hearing her story I was surprised that a project had not been filmed already, and it only made me more eager to be the one to help bring her to life. What she did, what she sacrificed, how she stood strong in the face of so much hardship and adversity…these facets of her have made her into more than just a character, they've made her into one of my personal role models."

The young actress, who grew up in Sante Fe, New Mexico, clearly loves a challenge. It is the first time for her to take on a lead role in a TV series, and what's more, it happens to be in an alien environment, speaking a language she had never previously attempted to study. Fox tells us she was drawn to Massan and the part of Ellie because she loves an "adventure," though she admits to feeling some nerves.

Photo by Tetsuo Kitagawa



Fox on set with two of her fellow actors. Will she be able to pick up enough Japanese in time? Stay tuned...

"Of course I feel pressure—from three different countries actually," she says. "I want to properly represent myself as an American, and do what I can as an actor to respectfully portray [Ellie's] Scottish heritage, as well as accurately portraying her assimilation into Japanese culture. On top of that as the heroine of a national Japanese drama, I have a duty to Japan as well."

Fox has gone to great lengths to ensure she's as fully prepared for the role as possible. She informs us that she's read every book about Rita Cowan she could get her hands on and "is continuing to scour for more information." She also moved to Tokyo two months prior to filming to get more accustomed to the country, spending much of her time either working on the script—which is all in Japanese, except for a few flashback scenes, or attending language school. The intense course has helped to make her life on set a little bit easier.

"The directions are all in Japanese," she tells us. "I almost always have my manager/translator there for bigger, more in-depth explanations, but for the smaller quicker ones, I am beginning to pick it up: 'Right, left, stand up, smile, cry, laugh, look here, action, cut...' The camera and sound men are really wonderful at charades too.

"That's not to say it isn't difficult; it is. There are things that get lost in translation, but everything that happens to me—and I mean everything—I am able to use to help me get a better understanding of what Ellie is going through. I also have to give a lot of credit to the cast...I truly believe that people who are drawn to this kind of business are always able to find a way to relate to one another and everyone here always makes an effort to do so with me. Even if it's in half broken English, half Japanese or half charades, we all seem to get along quite well."

One actor she has struck up a particularly close bond with is the male lead Tetsuji Tamayama, whom she describes as a "gentleman" who regularly helps her find her way around the set (while also helping her finish the samples of whisky they receive, as she describes herself as a "a bit of a lightweight.") The 34-year-old will play the role of Masaharu Kameyama, a character modeled on Rita's husband Masataka Taketsuru.

Rita and Masataka first met towards the end of World War I, when Taketsuru was in Scotland, learning the art and science of whisky distilling. Although he was the son of a sake brewer from Hiroshima, Taketsuru was drawn to western spirits, and he traveled to Glasgow under the sponsorship of a Japanese company that was hoping to launch its own whisky. Unable to afford tuition at the University of Glasgow, Taketsuru learned his chemistry while working as an apprentice at local distilleries in the area. Rita's childhood sweetheart had died in the Great War, as had her father, leaving her mother as the breadwinner of the family. Struggling financially, they decided to take Taketsuru in as a lodger.

Despite opposition from both their families, they married soon after and then moved to Japan, taking the secrets of Scotch Whisky with them. Following several years of business struggles, Taketsuru began distilling whisky in Yoichi, Hokkaido, and the rest is history. But none of it would have been possible without his devoted wife.

"I was surprised that a project had not been filmed already, and it only made me more eager to be the one to help bring her to life"

The tale of how the two got together is legendary in this country, particularly in Yoichi, where the couple have their own fan club, a museum paying homage to their lives, and even a street named after Rita. Now they have their own TV program, though as Fox points out *Massan* is not a direct retelling of their lives.

"While the show is based on Rita and Taketsuru, it is also a morning TV show," Fox explains. "It's therefore a bit brighter, more hopeful and more viewer-friendly. The real Rita and Massan (Rita's nickname for her husband) are there for inspiration. Tetsuji and I are not strictly bound to the true historical figures, so that gives us room to explore their relationship rather than just their circumstances. The integrity and structure of their story remain, but we have been given the freedom to create our own version. At the end of the day, this story is not just about a Scottish woman who struggles to become Japanese, but a biracial couple who, in a time when interracial marriage was almost unheard of, did whatever it took to support one another."

Massan *will first hit NHK on September 29 at 8 am, running for 150 15-minute episodes until March 28, 2015.*





Angelina Jolie, Aya Ueto, and Elle Sanning at the Anjelica Press Conference for Disney's Maleficent

PEOPLE, PARTIES, PLACES

TOKYO'S LONGEST RUNNING SOCIETY PAGE, WITH **BILL HERSEY**

I'd like to start out this month's column with a big and sincere congratulations to the Brazilian government and people on the success of the World Cup, which was held in many of the major cities all over that big and beautiful country.

To be truthful I wasn't all that much interested in what has to be one of our old world's most exciting and colorful sports events when the World Cup got started. But CNN's coverage was great, and kept me in front of the tube many times when I should have been working. I also feel Brazil did a great job of promoting the many reasons we should all try and visit their fantastic country at least once in our lifetimes (I've been there twice). The people, the natural beauty, and the variety of cultures, music, and food all add up to one of the most exciting and enjoyable travel experiences ever.

Tokyo's been super busy over the last few months (always, actually), so let's move onto our city's nonstop social scene.

AZERBAIJANI NATIONAL DAY—OKURA

Ambassador Gursel Ismayilzada and his wife Rana hosted a crowded and very elegant reception on the occasion of their National Day, May 20, at the Okura Hotel.

The opening program included speeches by the Ambassador and several high-ranking Japanese government officials. After these, guests mingled and chatted with old friends, and new ones as well. It was a relaxing evening with interesting people, a superb buffet, and a warm ambiance. Kudos to the many good looking Azerbaijani ladies there that evening. They really have an eye for chic fashion.

ARGENTINE NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION

It was (as expected) wall-to-wall people at the home of Argentine Ambassador Raul Dejean and his wife Teresa for their country's National Day. I had asked the Dejeans if I could bring a friend, Swiss medical student Michel Bielecki, with me and they said OK. Michel's about six foot four, has a movie star's looks, speaks seven languages and has a really outgoing personality. Needless to say, he made a lot of new friends that evening. He's actually starting a consulting company here, along with several Japanese. More on this later.

I got a bit of attention as well. Ambassador Dejean actually stopped the receiving line for a few minutes to go get a bag of six cans of Argentine meat. I had read about this in an American magazine and given Raul the article a few months ago, suggesting that he introduce the delicious meat to Japan. He hadn't forgotten and went all out to get some for me. That's the kind of man he is.

My other big surprise that night was being able to spend some time at the party talking with one of my all-time favorite ladies, Martha Cabanas, the wife of the former Mexican Ambassador Manuel Cabanas. He's Ambassador to the Vatican now and he, Martha, and their two children live in Rome. I was very close to the Cabanas family when they were here and had the privilege of meeting Martha's super chic mother, and her sister, who was Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs at that time. Martha is a doctor and worked part time at a cancer research center while she was in Japan. What a great lady. I also talked with the Embassy chef, Penelope Barboza: that woman really knows what she's doing when it comes to putting together a beautiful and bountiful buffet.

BUSY PEOPLE

A big welcome to the new Brazilian Ambassador Andre Correa Do Lago and his dynamic wife Beatrice. They're a very tall and outgoing couple who I'm sure will really do well here. When I asked how they first met, Beatrice answered, "We were both sitting down." Well, we wish them a long happy and successful stay in Japan.

It's never easy saying sayonara to friends you've really gotten to know, like, and admire. It's even more difficult when several couples are leaving at almost the same time. The first two are Irish Ambassador John Neary and his wife Kathleen. They've been in Japan for four years. Kathleen was taking care of VIP visitors for the president of Ireland, so she had to go back home often. The second couple is French Ambassador Christian Masset and his wife Hélène. They've been here just over two years and are scheduled to return home at the end of the month as Ambassador Masset will be taking up a high-level post in Paris.


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The Dejeans' Argentine National Day

1. Rita Giorgi, wife of the Italian Ambassador, Yasmine Tsamados, wife of the Greek Ambassador, Swiss Medical Student Michel Bielecki 2. Brazil Amb. Andre Correa Do Lago and his wife Beatrice 3. Argentine Embassy Chef, Penelope Barboza 4. Martha Cabanas, wife of the fmr. Amb. of Mexico to Japan, Fumiko Torrori, Mother of Princess Takamado 5. Christina Escala, wife of the Peruvian Ambassador and Teresa Dejean, wife of the Argentinian Ambassador 6. Diet member Kozo Yamamoto, Argentine Ambassador Raul Dejean, Nicaraguan Ambassador Saul Arana, Grand Hyatt GM Antonio Alvarez, Uruguay Ambassador Eduardo Bouzout 7. Teresa Dejean & visiting Friends Gladys, Christina and Carlota.

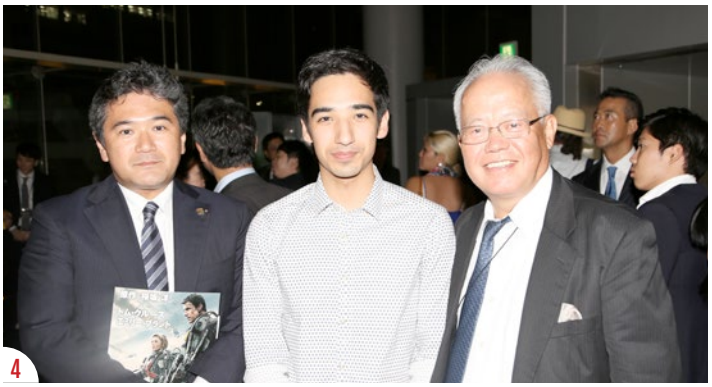
Azerbaijani National Day—Okura

8. Azerbaijani Ambassador Gursel Ismayilzada, his wife Rana, and Member of Parliament Takao Makino 9. Yasmine Tsamados, Lebanese Ambassador Mohammed El Dib, Greek Ambassador Nikolaos Tsamados 10. Hungarian Ambassador Istvan Szerdamelyi, his wife Keiko, Red Cross's Prince Konoe 11. Yasmine Tsamados, Fashion Designer Hiroko Suzuki, Bujar Dida, wife of the Albanian Ambassador 12. Pakistani Ambassador Farukh Amil, Azerbaijani Amb. Ismayilzada, Jun Nanazawa.

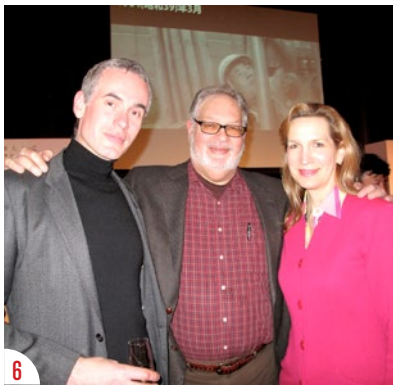

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The Film World

1. Actor Shida and his girlfriend with Robeta Ireton at the premiere of Rurouni Kenshin 2. Kyoko Kano of the Kano Sisters and Warner Brothers' Satoru Otani at the premiere of Tom Cruise's *Edge of Tomorrow* 3. Superstar Tom Cruise, Director Doug Liman, and producer Edwin Stoff on stage for the premiere 4. Ceremony President Tsukasa Shiga, his son Chris and noted attorney Tomohiro Tohyama.

Media Party at the Imperial Hotel

5. Metropolis Editor, Jeff Richards, Japan Times columnist Mark Schreiber, Japan Times writer Steve Trautlein 6. Le Monde correspondent Philippe Mesmer; Mark Schreiber; TIME Magazine writer and Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan President Lucy Birmingham 7. International food authority and Japanese cuisine writer Yukari Pratt Sakamoto; Imperial Hotel's Director of Public Relations Nacio "Skip" Cronin; Philippe Mesmer

In and Around

8. Crossfit Heart and Body owner Nicholas Pettas, Princess Takamado, Nicholas's wife Aya, and Maali Siam (Palestine) at the Oman Embassy Bazaar 9. A denizen of Yoyogi Park and his owner 10. Atout France Tourism Director Frederic Meyer, his wife Laurence 11. Blackstone's Daniel K. Fujii, Oakwood's Eric Ishimaru and Amy Hanashiro, Konishiki at Oakwood Midtown Premier Tokyo Midtown.

Both of these couples have done so much to further relations between their countries and Japan, as well as make so many friends from all walks of life for themselves. We'll have coverage of their sayonaras in September's *Weekender*. All I can say now is that it has been great to be friends with these special people, and we wish them all the best.

KEEPING UP WITH NORMAN TOLMAN

Noted art dealer Norman Tolman has been all over the world this year. A few months ago he treated his entire staff to an around-the-world trip to celebrate his 77th birthday. Stops included London, Lisbon, Morocco and Istanbul. He actually had his birthday party in Casablanca at Kathy Kriger's world famous restaurant—Rick's Café in Casablanca. Kathy was Norman and my mutual friend and we both got to really know her through her work at the US Embassy here, and later, in Prague.

We knew she had a dream about opening the restaurant. Because the name was made famous in the film *Casablanca*, she first had to acquire the rights to the name Rick's Café from Warner Brothers, met with local members of Casablanca's government, and opened "Rick's Café" which has become a huge success. It has been years since I had dinner at an Irish pub in Prague with Kathy when I was visiting there, and "she has turned Hollywood fantasy into Moroccan reality." I'm so happy she remembered and sent me a copy of her book, *Rick's Café*, through Norman. The café opened in 2004 to rave reviews and has become a "must-stop-by" for any traveler to Casablanca. It's really nice to see friend's dreams—with a lot of work—come true.

Norman Tolman has, as always, been super busy. In the middle of his endless world travels, he somehow managed to open another gallery here in Tokyo. This one, titled the Tolman (Private) Collection, specializes in antique (100, 200 and 300 year old) Imari porcelain. I will check it all out and have more info soon. The gallery is at 2-2-18 Shiba Daimon in Minato-ku—a short walk from the new Hyatt Andaz Hotel near Atago Tunnel. For information call 03-3434-1300.

THIS AND THAT

I was relaxing at a friend's house watching DVDs when he showed me lists of the many films available on his high-tech equipment. "Since you spend a lot of time in Roppongi, you'll probably enjoy this one," he said and handed me one titled *Russian Girls*. I had heard about the film, which is based on the recruiting of young mostly Russian girls who are scouted by a variety of "modeling" agencies, brought to Japan on two-month visas, and some of the bad experiences they had to go through here. In fact, the night before I was in Roppongi, in front of a club when a young foreign girl who was really crying came out. Thinking I might be able to help her. I asked her what was wrong. "I'm so drunk and don't know how to get back to my room," she told me. I'm talking with her—she was 15 years old—and her older friends who didn't want to bother with her. They dropped her off at the club and got the staff to give her drinks. She didn't have any money, but did have her dormitory name card. I offered to pay her cab fare back and had to go to a main street to get a cab. When I got back she had somehow gotten up, and a couple of young Japanese guys told me an older foreigner had talked her into going with him. Oh well, I tried. The opening of *Russian Girls* takes place in a gym in Siberia where girls from their early teens to their early 20s walked around in everything from skin tight jeans to bikinis, posing for a variety of mostly Japanese cameramen. The film followed two of the girls and recordings their tearful *do svidanyas* to their moms and their bus rides to the airport.

In Tokyo, they were filmed in their dingy apartments and going out on auditions where they really had a lot of competition. The film pointed out they usually come to Japan on two-month visas, and return home with a minimum of $2,000. The film also showed contracts from an agency—which I think is out of business now—that had all kinds of rules and regulations.

There are still about 25 long-time professional agencies in business but there are also too many fly-by-night-businesses just after the yen. The two girls in the film only got very little work. One went home owing her agency $2,000 and the other owing $2,300. Many models have to pay high rent for apartments in buildings their agencies own: you can see it's not easy, and I suggest you see the film if you have the chance.

In addition to several embassies with legal staff that are fighting human trafficking, there are private groups like "Lighthouse." It's all a part of the big "Clean Up Roppongi" campaign. To find out more about the campaign, check out all the new posters right across the street from the corner police box by Koyasu Pharmacy, and you'll be surprised.

THINGS TO DO

Had a fun, colorful evening with Kyodo Tokyo's Shoko and a few international friends at the Argentinian fantasy show Fuerza Bruta at Blitz Theater recently. I had seen the show about 10 years ago but it was even more exciting, with all the new high-tech equipment and Argentine energy.

After the show over a cup of Powdered Coffee (one of the show's sponsors), Shoko gave me a rundown on Kyodo Tokyo's August happenings. First there are the Broadway show *Blast's* final shows in Japan. I've hosted parties for the cast many times, and this talented multiracial group really put on a colorful, dynamic two-hour show. For ticket information, call 0570-550-799. This is truly great international entertainment. Kyodo's also working with Toho on the 2014 One Heart musical festival and this is a special program of Broadway show music by 16 of Japan's top showbiz personalities. The only non-Japanese in the show is multitalented Hungarian actor/singer Matte Kamaras. The show runs from August 16 to 27 at Theater Courier by the Imperial Hotel. Tel: 03-3201-7777.

From August 6 through August 17, you have the opportunity to see the Russian-produced *Slava's Snow Show*. The highly acclaimed colorful event takes place at the Senju Theater in Ueno; call 0570-550-799. And speaking about snow, I also enjoyed clothing brand The North Face's Fall/Winter Press showing of their 2014–2015 Fashion Collection in Harajuku. Their great cold weather clothing is proof positive of why they're so popular.

Segafredo ZANETTI ESPRESSO

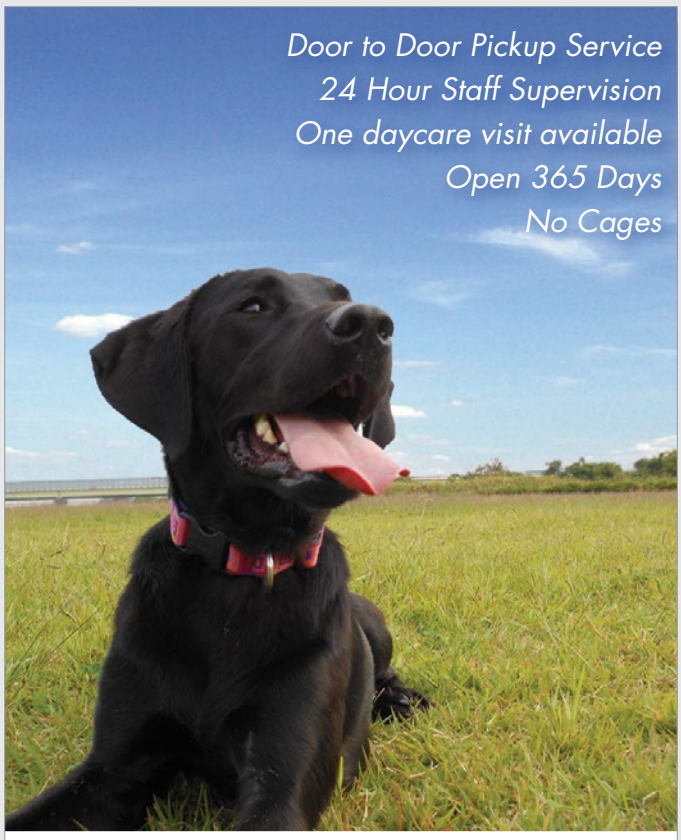
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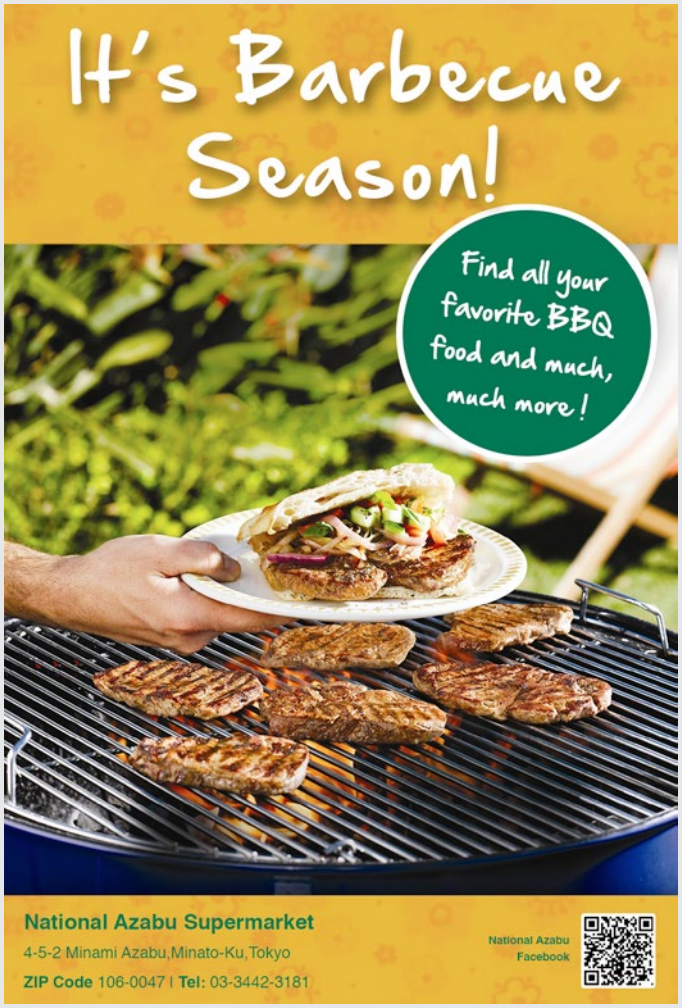
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MOVIES

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AUG 22

LUCY

Lucy is the latest from Luc Besson, the man behind cult hit *Léon: The Professional*. Besson has taken to more populist fare recently, writing and producing the *Taken* series of films. In a return to the sci-fi/action genre that brought him *The Fifth Element*, one of his biggest hits, *Lucy* stars Scarlett Johansson. Lucy lives in the Taipei of a corrupt, crime-ridden future. Forced to act as a drug mule for the mob, the young woman has the illicit cargo implanted into her body. When it leaks into her blood stream, Lucy becomes able to utilize parts of the brain that are usually inaccessible, and gains extraordinary abilities and special powers, from telekinesis to instantaneous learning. Featuring old-reliable Morgan Freeman, you can expect a more intelligent sci-fi-actioner out of this mind-bender. Besson is known for his outlandish special effects when he's given enough of a budget to play with, and fans of wild visuals will not be disappointed this time around.



AUG 1

SUNSHINE ON LEITH

Sunshine on Leith is the second directorial effort from Dexter Fletcher, a man well known on British TV screens but perhaps best known internationally for his role in London gangster classic *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*. Fletcher has followed up his hard-hitting debut *Wild Bill* with something rather different, an adaptation of a stage musical featuring the hits of Scottish rockers The Proclaimers. Dave and Ally are two Scotsmen recently back from fighting in Afghanistan, returning into the lives and homes of their friends and family. Drama abounds as romance blossoms and relationships change, all to the sound of the surprisingly familiar soundtrack. This touching emotional drama has received hugely positive reviews and promises to leave audiences in tears from start to finish.

LUPIN III

Arsene Lupin the Third, the master thief with an eye for the ladies, is the instantly recognizable face of long-running and immensely popular manga *Lupin III*. As with any successful manga character Lupin III has already appeared in various media, including several anime series and feature-length animated films, the most famous being the debut feature of Studio Ghibli maestro Hayao Miyazaki, 1979's *The Castle of Cagliostro*. This live-action adaptation contains all of Lupin's major friends and enemies played by an all-star cast. Expect action, intrigue and double-crossing as the team set about stealing a priceless jewel from its high-tech holding place.



AUG 30



AUG 30

TOKYO TRIBES

Sono Shion is one of the biggest names in Japanese cinema right now with the director enjoying a huge cult following abroad amongst fans of Japanese cinema who are drawn to his often controversial films Making his name with 2001's *Suicide Circle*, which opens with the image of schoolgirls lined up along a Shinjuku train station platform before throwing themselves en masse into the path of an oncoming train, the director is at home tackling any subject. For his latest Shion is tackling an adaptation of the manga *Tokyo Tribes*, a film described as a 'battle-rap musical' which sees Tokyo divided up between rival gangs, whose relative peace is threatened after the murder of a boss by a rival leader. Real-life rapper Young Dais stars alongside Hentai Kamen's Ryohei Suzuki in a wildly colorful tale of rap and rivalry.



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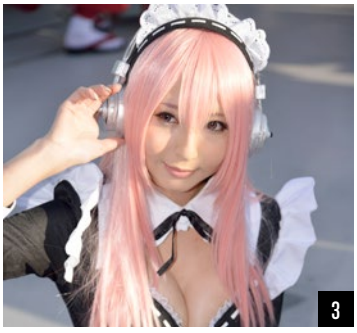
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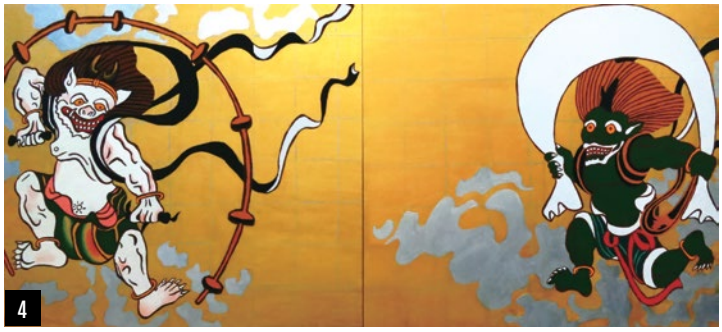
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AGENDA


1


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3


4


5


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8

AGENDA: THE WEEKENDER ROUNDUP OF WHAT'S HAPPENING IN AUGUST

1 AUG 16-17

16 **Summer Sonic '14**

Arctic Monkeys, rock legend Robert Plant, Queen with Adam Lambert, Kraftwerk and Phoenix are just the tip of the iceberg of this eclectic lineup.

Where: Makuhari Messe, Chiba
How Much: ¥15,500–28,500
More info: www.summersonic.com

2 AUG 9-11

09 **MTV Zushi Fest**

A weekend-long of beach festivities, Japan's biggest pop stars and bikinis: what else would you expect when MTV pairs up with Tokyo's most happening beach?

Where: Riviera Zushi Marina
How Much: ¥8,200–20,000
More info: www.mtvjapan.com/zushifes2014

3 AUG 15-17

15 **Comiket 86**

Whether you'll don your best cosplay outfit or go there to browse the fan-made publications, this event will give you more than an eyeful.

Where: Tokyo Big Sight, Koto
How Much: Free
More info: www.comiket.co.jp

4 JUL 14–AUG 10

10 **Art-Mura Exhibition**

Intellectually challenged artists create works that represent Japan, such as traditional crafts, dolls and glasswork in their own distinctive styles.

Where: Tokyo American Club Frederick Harris Gallery (B1F) | **How Much:** Free
More info: www.tokyoweekender.com

5 AUG 23-24

23 **Koenji Awaodori**

Around 12,000 Awa dancers and countless more members of the public will take in the parades that snake through the neighborhood's narrow, atmospheric streets.

Where: Around Koenji station, Koenji
How Much: Free
More info: www.koenji-awaodori.com

6 AUG 9-10

09 **EuroFest**

This first edition of EuroFest will be featuring food, drinks and entertainment from the continent, and putting a spotlight on businesses and tourism.

Where: Yoyogi Park, Shibuya
How Much: Free
More info: www.eurofest.jp

7 AUG 22-24

22 **Udon Battle**

Udon masters will gather from all over the country to cook up the noodles, and all you have to do is to slurp on them and vote for the best.

Where: Yoyogi Park, Shibuya
How much: Free
More info: www.tokyoweekender.com

8 AUG 23

23 **Bonjour Tokyo 1st Year Anniversary Party**

Celebrate summer as only Bonjour Tokyo can! Performances include belly dancers, a magician, and plenty of surprises to keep things hot.

Where: Tokyo Salon, Omotesando
How Much: ¥2,000 (includes one drink)
More info: www.bonjourtokyo.com

AUGUST


9


10


11


12

9 AUG 6-10

Asagaya Tanabata Matsuri

Admire the extensive range of papier-mâché decorations hanging from the ceiling of the shopping arcade, both day and night.

Where: Around Asagaya station
How Much: Free
More info: www.asagaya.or.jp

10 AUG 10

Tokyo Bay Fireworks

From the edge of Tokyo Bay you can get a great vista of one of the biggest and most popular fireworks festivals in Japan, but arrive early to claim a spot.

Where: Harumifuto Park, Chuo
How much: Free
More info: www.tokyoweekender.com

11 AUG 23

Asakusa Samba Carnival

Dancers wiggling their way through downtown Tokyo and shaking their feathers to the beat in what is possibly the city's sexiest summer festival.

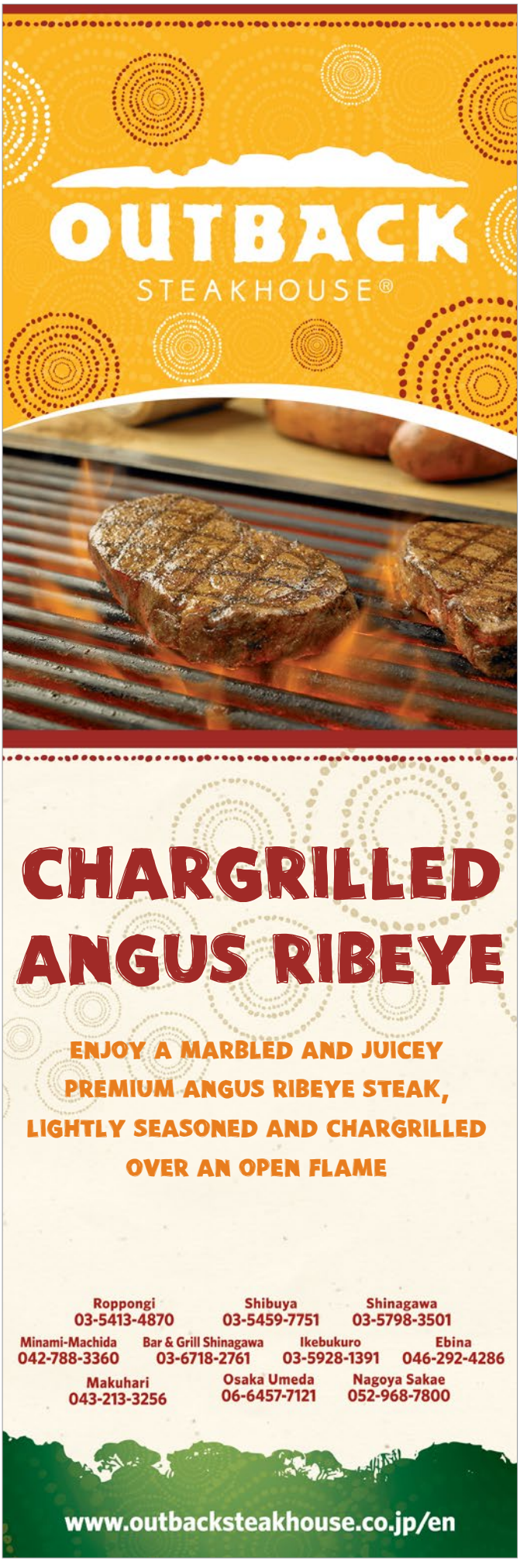
Where: Around Asakusa Station, Asakusa
How Much: Free
More info: www.asakusa-samba.org

12 AUG 9-10

Gakuten 2014

An art, design, and performance festival by students and for students, presented by the well-established Design Festa.

Where: Tokyo Big Sight, Koto
How Much: ¥800 (adv.) / 1,000 (door)
More info: www.gakuten.jp

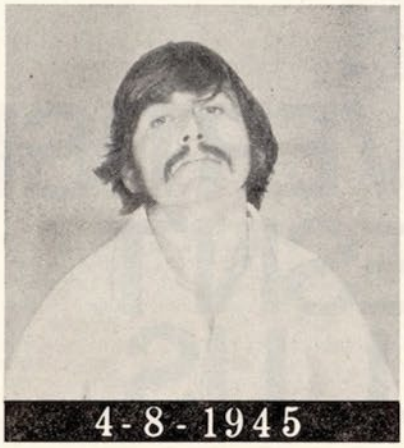


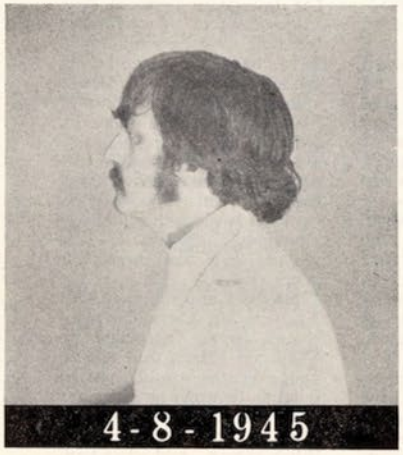
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READ THIS!

By BOB CUTTS

Weekender Managing Editor

I had the answer once. Yep, the secret of life. It was to make a thousand dollars a month and own a sports car. All the rest—girls, a great apartment, never-ending weekends of California fun, that indefinable essence of Good Life—would follow sure as cheerleaders scrambled after our victorious varsity at St. Francis High. That was it, man. Simple.

Well, I got the money, got the car, got the apartment. Got a reasonable share of the girls and enough weekends, if all too finite, that were fun. Still have them. But they weren't the answer anymore. Somebody had changed the rules!

The other day I wheeled my sporty little jeep past a knot of playing youngsters, and on the face of a lad of maybe 8 I thought I saw it again, the secret. It was in his smile; the smile of someone for whom there are still too many summers in life to count. And I wondered.

CUTTS, Robert Leland
Soc. Sec. No. 553-64-5751
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(Continued on Page 4)

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