

Design Museum Japan Forum 2023

Vol.2 The Design Museum Manifesto – Designing the Design Museum (Event Report)

Event	Design Museum Japan Forum 2023 Vol.2 The Design Museum Manifesto – Designing the Design Museum
Date	Sunday, January 21, 2024
Host	NHK EDUCATIONAL CORPORATION, NHK PROMOTIONS INC., JAPAN CULTURAL EXPO
Cooperation	Design-DESIGN MUSEUM
Place	The National Art Center, Tokyo
Speakers	Masayuki Tanaka, (Director General of the National Museum of Western Art) , Hiroshi Naito (Architect) , Akiko Fukai (Curator and Costume researcher) , Tsuyoshi Tane (Architect) , Ikko Yokoyama (Lead Curator of M+ Hong Kong and Architect) , Daisaku Kawase (Days producer and Design-DESIGN MUSEUM) , Kyoko Kuramori (NHK EDUCATIONAL producer and Design-DESIGN MUSEUM)
Moderators	Seiichi Saito (Panoramatik's director and Design-DESIGN MUSEUM)

This forum was convened together with the hosting of the Design Museum Japan Information Center at the National Art Center, Tokyo. Part Two of the forum on January 21st addressed the theme of *The Design Museum Manifesto – Designing the Design Museum*. The panel on the podium consisted of Masayuki Tanaka, Director General of the National Museum of Western Art; the architect, Hiroshi Naito; and the curator and costume researcher, Akiko Fukai. Additionally, Ikko Yokoyama, Lead Curator of M+ Hong Kong, and the architect, Tsuyoshi Tane, who supervised the lay-out of the Design Museum Japan exhibition, joined the forum online. Seiichi Saito, Director of Panoramatik's and Design-DESIGN MUSEUM, was moderator. Daisaku Kawase and Kyoko Kuramori of Design-DESIGN MUSEUM also participated in the discussions.



The Design Museum Manifesto for the Founding of a National Design Museum

Seiichi Saito started the proceedings by announcing the Design Museum Manifesto. He described how the design museum concept, born in the Design-DESIGN MUSEUM's statement of intent, was taken up from 2020 in the broadcasts of NHK's *Designing the Design Museum* series and has since given rise to exhibitions in Japan and overseas. Saito outlined the following eight pillars and objectives for future activities:



① Outcomes of the Design Museum

Many items considered separately as products, graphics, crafts, folk skills, wisdom, industry etc. should be redefined as design. The project's foremost mission is to preserve both tangible and intangible cultural assets that survive in regions across Japan for appreciation by future generations. Further, the Japan Design Museum should function not only as a platform for activities within Japan but also as a source for advancing international relations, cultural exchange, education, economic development and the promotion of industry.

② Items for Inclusion / The Design Museum's Definition of Design

The collection should not be limited to industrial and folk crafts but incorporate a wide range of both contemporary designs and local activities. The definition of design is different for each era and constant review is required. An advisory board shall be appointment to consist of members drawn from various design fields.

③ Designing the Structures of a National Museum

A Design Department or a special group for making use of design-related resources should be established within the Independent Administrative Institution National Museum of Art

④ Supervision of the Design Museum

Whereas the Agency for Cultural Affairs has primary responsibility for national cultural facilities together with the conservation, promotion and archiving of industrial and folk crafts, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry is responsible for the use of design resources and invigoration of local industries. The leadership and cooperation of both shall be solicited from the outset.

⑤ A Design Base for the Whole of Japan

Rather than holding its own collection, the Design Museum should operate as a network that joins various already existing design-related institutions nationwide, including museums of history, art, folk crafts and industry, design centers etc., through the management of a convenient database. Collections dispersed widely across Japan in the possession of local authorities, educational and corporate bodies, individuals etc. shall be connected. The coordinating base shall be located in Tokyo. It is proposed that the base should be located at the National Art Center.

⑥ Funding of the Design Museum

Consideration shall be accorded to the feasibility of hybrid funding, including public backing from the national and local governments, corporate donations, individual income tax contributions etc.

⑦ The Design Museum's Management Systems

In order to build the design archive and establish the museum, consideration shall be giving to nurturing staff with professional-level design history skills and the use of secondment from controlling corporate entities.

⑧ Media Support for Local Design Conservation Activities across Japan

Use shall be made of television, newspapers, magazines etc. to spread design awareness and impress people with the need for the Design Museum. The active sharing of Design Museum initiatives, attraction of visitors to the places introduced (design tourism) and other such benefits are also expected to contribute to wide-ranging economic advantages through the expansion of cultural tourism and stimulation provided to local community projects etc.

Collecting and Archiving

The Example of a Corporate Design Research Institute

The second half of the symposium provided panelists with the opportunity to comment on the Design Museum Manifesto. The curator and costume researcher, Akiko Fukai, introduced the activities of the Kyoto Costume Institute (KCI), a foundation with which she was involved from the outset.



Akiko Fukai

Today, on the subject of the Design Museum archive or collection, I would like to tell you about something I have been involved with for some time. I work at the Kyoto Costume Institute (KCI), which was founded in 1978 for the study of Western costume. KCI has no museum but places its focus on collecting, and also displays at art museums and other places in Japan and overseas.

Let me tell you how KCI got started. In the 1970's, when such Japanese designers as Issey Miyake and Rei Kawakubo were in their heyday, the Metropolitan Art Museum in New York hosted an exhibition called *Inventive Clothes*. Issey Miyake saw it and pushed hard for the holding of Japan's first ever fashion exhibition, too. This was realized as *The Sources of Contemporary Clothing* exhibition at the National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, in 1975. The exhibition was made possible through the backing of Koichi Tsukamoto, then the president of Wacoal. After this exhibition, it was next understood that Japan needed a research institute for Western fashion, and Wacoal, working on its own, established a research institute that would study Western fashion but have no exhibition space. This is how it has continued down to the present day. The collection now includes 13,000 chiefly Western items but also has the world's leading collection of Japanese designers and brands that earned a global reputation in the latter part of the 20th century, including Issey Miyake and Comme des Garçons.

The institute has, ever since its launch, curated its collection and produced many exhibitions both in Japan and abroad. As for the national museums, however, while the National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, has hosted exhibitions, Tokyo's national art museums stated their clear position that fashion was not an appropriate field for an art museum. The *Mode of Japonism* exhibition which opened at the National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, in 1994 toured seven countries but could not be held at a national museum in Tokyo. The Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Contemporary Art became Tokyo's first public sector museum to open its doors to an exhibition in the fashion field with the *Visions of the Body* exhibition, which toured from 1999. After that, this museum, the National Art Center, hosted *Skin + Bones: Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture* in 2007; *The Works of Miyake Issei* in 2016; and its *Yves Saint Laurent: Across the Style* exhibition last year. Many fashion exhibitions are now being held. Whereas people used to say that fashion was not an appropriate field for a national museum, today we can say it has become a popular area.



Also, there have been publications since 2002 that inform people about the collection. The German company, Taschen, published a book with 700 photographs of costume items from the 17th century to modern times, which was very well received. It has been translated into more than ten languages and about 650,000 copies have been sold. This book has expanded awareness of the institute's work overseas and we now receive exhibition requests and visitors from all over the world.

The ownership of exhibition space has both merits and demerits. One merit of not having the space is that it gives you more leeway for research while also providing research opportunities when an exhibition is coming up. A demerit is that the search for exhibition venues becomes rather hectic. Also, because we are dependent on Wacoal for all of our funding, there has to be some concern about its sustainability.

A Design Museum Experiment

The Example of the Musashino Art University Art Museum

Masayuki Tanaka, a former director of the Musashino Art University Art Museum and now director of National Museum of Western Art, spoke about the design museum initiatives started during his time at Musashino Art University.

主な所蔵プロダクト・デザイン



Masayuki Tanaka

As one of the people involved, I would like to talk a little about our own experiment. If it was too hard for the nation to establish a design museum, we thought, then let's turn the Musashino Art University Art Museum into a design museum instead. Our university art museum already possessed a lot of design-related materials for educational use. We had about 33,000 graphic design items, including about 30,000 posters, and some 1,700 product design items, including about 350 chairs.

I was personally involved in two projects. One, in 2011, was *Musabi Design*, a history of design as traced through the educational courses provided at our university and its collection. (Note: *Musabi* is short for Musashino Bijutsu Daigaku, the Japanese name of Musashino Art University.) The other was to look at corporate involvement in design through the examples of Olivetti and Braun, *Olivetti and Braun: Indicating Corporate Visions*, in 2013. *Musabi Design IV: Home for All* then became the farewell exhibition upon his retirement for Hiroshi Kashiwagi, the design critic and also professor emeritus of Musashino Art University. This exhibition divided the display area into several rooms to show the sorts of living space proposed by such movements as the Wiener Werkstätte and in modern Scandinavian design.

That was then followed in 2017 by *Dreaming of Modern Living: The Industrial Arts Institute's Activities*. I think this was a particularly important exhibition. The Industrial Arts Institute was a design and research organization attached to

the former Ministry of International Trade and Industry, and the exhibition reviewed its activities. The Industrial Arts Institute was established in 1950. It produced experimental works, performed research, and provided advice to small- and medium-sized companies to promote the growth of Japanese industrial crafts. When its successor, the Industrial Products Research Institute, finally closed in 1993, its collection, which had nowhere else to go, was rescued and kept by the Musashino Art University.

Another example was the *Wa: L'harmonie au quotidien: Design Japonais d'aujourd'hui – Paris, Budapest, Essen, Warsaw, Saint-Etienne, Seoul and Tokyo* exhibition of 2011. This touring exhibition of six international cities was organized by the Japan Foundation and introduced the traditional aesthetics, creativity and functionality of harmonious (“Wa”) Japanese design through about 160 products. The exhibits in this exhibition, too, had nowhere to go after the tour was over and the Musashino Art University received them into its collection. The Japan Foundation continues to organize many overseas exhibitions of Japanese design but Japan has nowhere to keep and display these items. To collate these materials, too, I think we need to talk about a Design Museum.

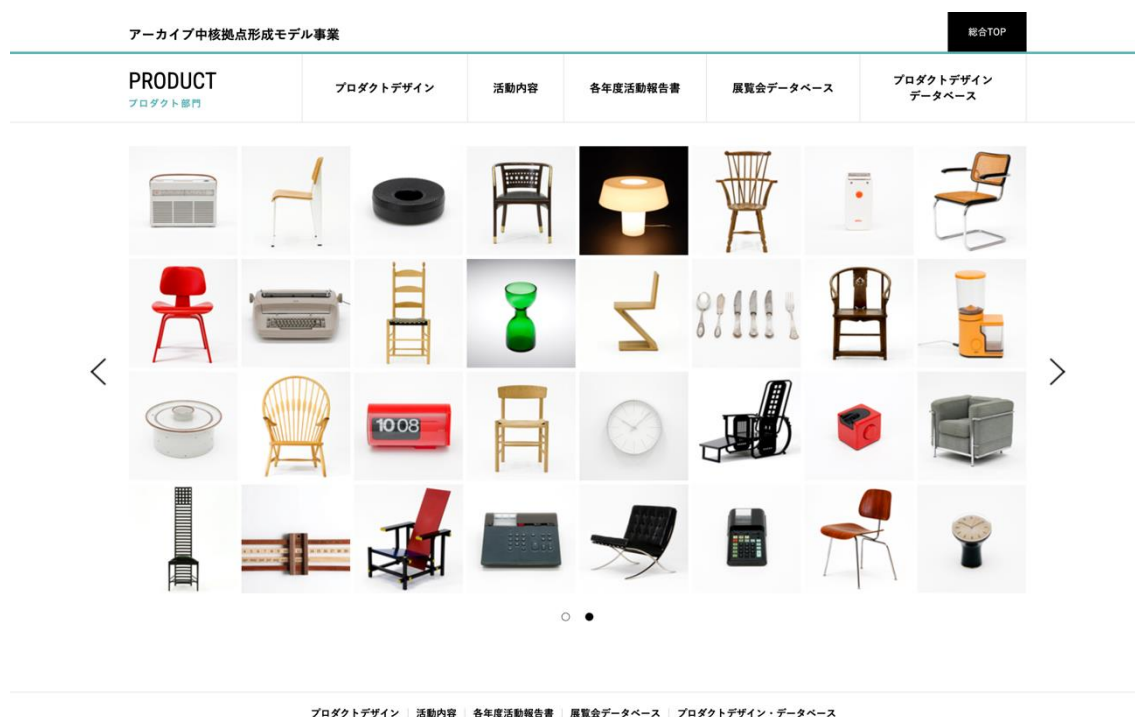
Tanaka also spoke about the Musashino Art University’s work to produce a design archive. This is described at the following link:

Fiscal Year 2017 Agency for Cultural Affairs

Model Project for the Development of Design Archive

Product Design Field Annual Report

http://www.d-archive.jp/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Product-Design-Field-Annual-Report_2017.pdf.0



The archive project website produced through this activity can be viewed here:

<http://www.d-archive.jp/product>

Discussion – Is a National Design Museum Feasible?

Tanaka

London's design museum, the V&A (Victoria & Albert Museum), is an extremely important museum. It was established at the time of the Great Exhibition of 1851. The Great Exhibition sparked a global movement. The Philadelphia Art Museum in the United States, too, started out as a museum of the industrial arts and crafts and was made a permanent institution after the Centennial Exhibition there had finished. In this sense, the best opportunity now to establish the Design Museum could well be the Osaka Expo in 2025.

Fukai

I also wanted to make that point. People talk of Expos reaching out to the world but, in reality, their main purpose is to promote domestic industry. The next Expo theme is *Designing Future Society for Our Lives*. It is understood that design is a weapon in international competition. So, in whatever form, I think it would be a good thing to expound the Design Museum Manifesto at the Expo.

Saito

I also haven't lost hope. The word 'design' started being used in governmental documents from around 2019. In the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry's documents for the SDG Future City conference, the word 'design' appears on the very first page.



Naito

I think the Osaka Expo will be very difficult. (*Laughs*) But seeing as it is happening, it ought to be possible to start building a network even if a start cannot also be made on the archive. Rather than what kind of physical box the museum should inhabit, I think it would be a good idea at least to establish the museum as a network hub.

I think we need once again to refer back to President Kim Dae-jung's public vow in 1998 to make South Korea a leader in the world of design. South Korea's economy was in a bad state and under IMF intervention at the time. His vow to make South Korea a leader of design was conceived as a policy for tackling the crisis. It was a very clever method. Corporations such as LG, Samsung and Hyundai then led the way in rethinking design. By the time I chaired the Good Design Prize in 2007, Japan had fallen completely behind. Time is needed to foster design but, a decade on, the shoots were sprouting strongly. As to why President Kim promulgated this policy, it was because the state was on the point of collapse.

Japan, on the other, didn't seem to be in any danger of collapsing, so there wasn't the same sense of crisis. The state was doing alright. Then came the devastation caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake, and the next big priority became reconstruction. Design had no place in the discussions. Put succinctly, people didn't think design had anything practical to offer in a national crisis. Design was regarded as a surface thing, like the label on a plastic bottle. Nothing will happen until people start thinking seriously about design as something that matters in everyday life and bears closely on issues of existence and demise. I believe the Design Museum ought to be established on that understanding.

Japan didn't have its own oil resources after its defeat in the Second World War and had to earn foreign exchange. That could be earned by making things to sell abroad, and the Ministry of Trade and Industry (now the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry) established various systems for this, including the G Mark (Good Design Award). The ministry's view was that it wasn't the state's job to decide what was good or bad. Design was not a task of state but something for the private sector corporations. The result was that many good designs did emerge during the years of rapid economic growth. This is something a National Design Museum will have to handle well. If the committee doesn't function in a fair and healthy way, it could easily move in unwelcome directions. This is also something we need to keep in mind.



Masayuki Tanaka, director of the National Museum of Western Art and former director of the Musashino Art University Art Museum.

Tanaka

Regarding the National Museum of Western Art, we have an annual budget of about 700 million yen, of which about 500 million comes from the nation and the remaining 200 million is earned by us. Our earnings come from admission fees for exhibitions together with such items as donations and sponsorship money. Speaking as a person involved in money-raising activities, it isn't easy at all to gather money from private companies. One big factor is that any such disbursements have to be approved by shareholders. To the extent that a company's purpose is to increase the value of its shares and distribute dividends to investors, it is hard to get it to disburse money for cultural activities. It is hard to depend on private sector funding unless the corporate culture of social and cultural contributions spreads. Donations by individuals, on the other hand, are increasing. People tend to believe that Japan doesn't have a culture of donation, but I think we can say that the momentum for individual donations is growing. On the other hand, because these are donations from individuals, the sums are not very large.

Also, it is very difficult for the state to provide the money to build a new museum. In 1953, when the National Museum of Modern Art was opened in Tokyo, it was first housed in the building of the headquarters of the Nikkatsu company. Later, when an independent building was needed, the state could not provide the money and the museum was built thanks to the personal assistance of Shojiro Ishibashi of the Bridgestone company. Compared with the national museums of the West, Japan's national museums have been heavily dependent on private sector funding for their buildings and activities.

Fukai

I have been involved for many years on the third-party committee that assesses the independent national administrative agencies, and talk always turns to the low budgets, staffing and funding shortages, and absence of new storage space. It has carried on this way for more than a decade. I think that is the reality. The cooperation of private sector companies will be absolutely essential in the case of design. We need to think very carefully about what visible merits, what returns, are to be expected from whether the museum is national or privately run.

Saito

I agree. The state does not change. The relationship between design and the private sector may, however, alter over time. Looking at overseas examples, such factors as environmental sustainability and social and cultural contributions are frequently reflected in a company's corporate image and share prices. I think this wave will eventually reach Japan as well.



The architect, Hiroshi Naito, is closely engaged with not only buildings but also town planning. He is Chairman of the Japan Institute of Design Promotion.

Naito

This country can only live by culture. The state truly doesn't understand this. I don't think any politician will say that in a speech, but it's no good that the 'design' word doesn't even appear in serious parliamentary debate. The budget of the Agency for Cultural Affairs is far too small. About half of it goes to preserving cultural assets because they do have to be restored. I chair the Japan Institute of Design Promotion and the Good Design Prize, but these come under the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. The decision needs to be made about whether design is the preserve of the Agency for Cultural Affairs or the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. If neither has the budget, then how about the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, which does have money? If the museum is going to have a physical base, these various hurdles must be overcome, and I don't know how many years this could take. From this perspective, I agree with the network approach. I think that is the right place to start.

That said, however, the question next arises of how to preserve things that would otherwise be lost. However much digital networks have to offer, the power of physical things remains very strong. I recently saw a 1950's Toshiba electric cooker on display. The mere sight of that cooker brought back childhood memories and I recalled when the first electric cooker arrived in the home. This showed me the power of era and things. The number of things we would like to preserve once we get started becomes infinite but we must have at least be some minimal archive, and we will need to borrow a lot of storage space for that. We have to plan both digitalization and a physical archive.

Saito

I have wondered whether a disused school or other empty properties could be used for the physical archive. Sector Three properties cannot be used for warehousing under the current legal designations, but something might be arranged. I think it should be possible. As to the question raised by Mr. Naito of whether this falls within the province of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, or local government, I think we shouldn't get tied up in that sort of thing now but should instead focus on moving things forward.



Akiko Fukai of KCI

Fukai

The question of storage space really is one of the most difficult issues and, to be honest, I don't think we can create a physical archive. It doesn't seem realistic. I do, though, think it an extremely good thing to make a network hub. It wouldn't have to be big. The important thing is to make that start. As for the question of what things the Design Museum should handle, this, too, is an extremely big issue. As Mr. Naito said, physical things do say a lot. They speak about culture, the economy, and politics. I want the Design Museum to be a place that makes visitors think about why these things were made. That is my basic philosophy for the Design Museum.

Tanaka

My strong personal opinion is that we really have to establish a national design museum. So, how should we do it? The idea of setting up a design department at a national museum and hosting exhibitions at national museums was mentioned, but I think that way is too difficult. I believe that if we choose that route, there is no way the government will then provide the money to establish a design museum. If we are going to do it, we have to make it clear from the start that our target is to found a national design museum. This, however, will take a long time. In Hokkaido, for example, they did manage to establish the National Ainu Museum, but this wasn't a national initiative from the start. Rather, the existing museum was nationalized. In this manner, the transformation of existing facilities could be one way forward.

A second point concerns the sources of funding. As Ms. Yokoyama explained earlier, the M+ project started with the fund. It was built with the fund and the fund also provides the capital for its activities. In the same manner, it occurs to me that it may be possible to do the same kind of thing using the subsidies which the state pays to independent and public foundations and local public institutions, by holding money separately from other assets for the specific purpose. I think Japanese art museums have hardly considered this possibility so far. In creating such a fund, the borders between public funding by the national and local governments and public institutions and private funding need to be removed. I think it would surely make sense to establish the museum using donations from all of the state, the private sector and individuals. Regarding the running costs, as in the case of M+, a commercial zone could be created within the cultural zone. The Design Museum needs to be managed using the profit-making wisdom of the private sector.



The architect, Tsuyoshi Tane, and Ikko Yokoyama of M+ participated via Zoom from Paris and Hong Kong, respectively.

Ikko Yokoyama

It has been suggested that companies won't disburse money on design but I think in fact they do. The important point is they must be made to see some merit in doing so. Looking at the Japanese corporation, Uniqlo, for example, it has made huge donations to such institutions as the Tate Modern in London and MoMA in New York, and Uniqlo's name has been attached to many programs. Uniqlo does this to create a new global audience, because this definitely brings returns. If private corporations believe in an art museum, this generates a totally different kind of value from corporate advertising. For this to happen, a national art museum must be dependable. In addition to Japanese companies, I think there are many foreign brands and corporations that want to reach a Japanese audience. Foreign corporations do have money.

Anyhow, we need an action plan. Japan hosted a World Design Conference in 1960 in advance of the 1964 Expo. I think this was instrumental in the blossoming of Japanese design. We can prepare activities, exhibitions, symposiums, books, websites and so on to catch the attention of big organizations and the government at the 2025 Expo.

Saito

We all concur that a Japan Design Museum is needed. But no public or private sector body is positioning to establish it. So that Design-DESIGN MUSEUM does not run out of breath, we do need to carry on working with NHK to produce programs and arrange exhibitions.

The big hope that the 2025 Expo will change how people see things is closely related to the fact that Japan really no longer has the resources at home and there are many things that it can no longer expect to make. AI is making rapid inroads into manufacturing and the design of all sorts of things from manufacturing methods to fabrication, technology, materials and reverse engineering is moving over to AI. Once the physical objects and people have gone, then we cannot expect to add new research, either. This is why the archive is so vital. We have to make a start even if the progress is slow.

We can produce our own prototype website and do various other things, but I want the operation to proceed as far as possible as a joint work with the private sector. I don't think we will make much progress unless we think about new ways of using these things and adopt multi-dimensional viewpoints.

Tsuyoshi Tane

I really hope the campaign to create a design museum will not stall. This time, we have been able to search out designs all over Japan, visit folk museums, gather local designs, and display them at the National Art Center. One big discovery has been the power of physical things, and this has been thanks to the curators' research. The involvement on top of that of the creators has disseminated those things well. The very fact that design is so wide-ranging makes it essential to build strong connections between fields and generations.

Naito

Let me give two instructive examples. I designed the Toyama Prefectural Museum of Art and Design, and this was the first public museum to call itself a museum of art and design. The then governor of Toyama Prefecture, Takakazu Ishii, and Commissioner of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Masanori Aoyagi, thought that if a design museum were eventually to be made, the Toyama prefectural museum could become a branch. The second goes back to Sori Yanagi. When he passed away, the question arose of what to do with his archive. After various twists and turns, it finally went to Kanazawa College of Art. I think many more such cases are going to arise, and such works will need a place to go.

Lastly, about AI, this is an urgent issue and I think it is connected to this matter of existence and demise as mentioned earlier. It is also connected to the survival of companies, so the state will surely move on this. I think we ought to keep this debate constantly connected to the proposal for the Design Museum.

Saito

The first target is the 2025 Expo. We issued the Design Museum Manifesto today. Next, we need to announce the action plan, share out the work, and move forward quickly. Everyone, thank you very much for your participation today.

(Text: Keiko Kamijo)