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“Japonismes 2018: Les âmes en resonance” is a series of events introducing Japanese culture that will begin in July 2018 in France. We asked Director General, Secretariat for JAPONISMES at the Japan Foundation Korehito Masuda about the purpose and content of this unprecedented large-scale festival.



What is Japonismes 2018 celebrating, and what are its objectives?

We will be celebrating the 160th anniversary of Japan-France diplomatic relations this year, as well as one hundred and fifty years since the Meiji era (1868-1912) began and the birth that same year of Paul Claudel, the famed dramatist and French ambassador to Japan.

Japonismes 2018 will be held mainly in Paris, starting in July and continuing until February 2019. As one of the projects introducing Japan abroad in the run-up to the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games, Japonismes 2018 aims

to not only present Japanese culture but also to promote inbound tourism through rediscovering Japan.

In addition, we want Japonismes 2018 to show people around the world the aesthetic sense underlying Japanese culture. Since ancient times, Japan has had a penchant for incorporating contrasting or opposing elements and fusing them together. By sharing this culture of harmonious blending and the value it brings, the initiative may provide hints for solving problems such as the growing sense of nationalism and conflicts between countries we are seeing in international society.

Japonismes 2018 also has the ambitious goal of not only contributing to the national interests of Japan but also tackling turmoil around the world.


What are the highlights of Japonismes 2018?

There will be over fifty events held at nearly one hundred venues, so it would be impossible to talk about everything, but the initiative is built around four main pillars: exhibitions, performing arts, audiovisual, and lifestyle and culture. There are also many challenging projects, including some being held for the first time in Europe. For example, from September to October we plan to hold an exhibition called “Jakuchu, Colorful Realm of Living Beings,” the first large-scale exhibition of works by Ito Jakuchu in Europe, at the Petit Palais—the City of Paris Fine Art Museum. Jakuchu has become increasingly popular in Japan in recent years but surprisingly is not well known in France, so it will be fascinating to see how the exhibition is received.

Among the stage performances, along with traditional arts like *kabuki*, we plan on showing “2.5 Dimensional Musicals”¹ based on animations like *Sailor Moon*, content unique to modern Japan. In addition, there will be a wide range of projects such as “Naomi Kawase² –Retrospective and Exhibition”—a rarity for a living director—and the Japanese Culinary Culture series, which will offer visitors the opportunity to learn how to make Japanese food or enjoy sake-pairing menus at many restaurants in Paris.

What would you like attendees to take away from the event?

There are still many people who are only familiar with stereotypes of Japanese culture, only thinking of sushi when Japanese food is mentioned or *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints as all there is to Japanese art. However, Japanese culture is much more diverse, with more flexibility and abundant creativity. I hope that people coming to Japonismes 2018 will experience these unknown facets of our culture, and that we can break down stereotypes.

Be sure to visit Paris and France during this festival, as Japonismes 2018 is a chance to enjoy Japanese culture even more than if you were in Japan. 



A shot from *VISION*, Naomi Kawase’s latest film
©2018 [Vision] LDH JAPAN, SLOT MACHINE



Visitors can learn the Way of Tea at workshops’
called ‘*autour du thé japonais*.’



One of Ito Jakuchu’s colorful works

1 2.5 Dimensional Musicals are plays or musicals based on manga comics, anime movies and video games.

2 Kawase is a Nara-based filmmaker who has won multiple awards for her films at the Festival de Cannes.