



# Patronage, Industry, and Institution: A Genealogy of Privately Funded Museums and Contemporary Art in Japan

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*Private museums; Philanthropy and patronage; Contemporary art and museums in Japan; Institutional sustainability; Modernization and cultural infrastructure*

## ABSTRACT:

In the history of museum development in Japan, privately funded museums have played a crucial role. Following the Meiji Restoration, Japan's modernization under slogans such as «enrich the country and strengthen the military» and «leave Asia and join Europe» prompted many businesspeople to contribute to internationalization by introducing Western art. The Matsukata Collection and the Ohara Museum of Art (1930–) are representative examples. After World War II, Japan's cultural relationship with Europe and the United States gradually shifted from acceptance to exchange, with private museums reflecting economic power and individual vision playing a major role. Examples include the Bridgestone Museum of Art (1952–, now the Artizon Museum), the Seibu Museum of Art / SEZON Museum of Art (1975–1999), and the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art (1979–2021). Since the 1990s, privately funded museums maintaining a strong international outlook while engaging in regional revitalization have emerged. The Benesse House Museum (1992–) and related Seto Inland Sea art projects, along with the Mori Art Museum (2003) in Tokyo, represent this generation. This paper provides an overview of private museum development in Japan from the perspectives of changes in industrial structure, the balance between political and economic power, and the development of public museums. It will also examine examples of the rapidly increasing number of privately funded museums in the Asian region.

Nella storia dello sviluppo dei musei in Giappone, i musei finanziati privatamente hanno svolto un ruolo cruciale. Dopo la Restaurazione Meiji, il processo di modernizzazione del Giappone, guidato da slogan come “arricchire il paese e rafforzare l'esercito” e “lasciare l'Asia e unirsi all'Europa”, spinse molti imprenditori a contribuire all'internazionalizzazione introducendo l'arte occidentale. La Collezione Matsukata e l'Ohara Museum of Art (1930–) sono esempi rappresentativi di questo fenomeno. Dopo la Seconda guerra mondiale, il rapporto culturale del Giappone con l'Europa e gli Stati Uniti passò gradualmente da una fase di semplice ricezione a una di scambio reciproco. In questo contesto, i musei privati, che riflettevano la forza economica e la visione individuale dei loro fondatori, svolsero un ruolo di primo piano. Tra gli esempi si possono citare il Bridgestone Museum of Art (1952–, oggi Artizon Museum), il Seibu Museum of Art / SEZON Museum of Art (1975–1999) e l'Hara Museum of Contemporary Art (1979–2021). A partire dagli anni Novanta sono emersi musei privati capaci di mantenere un forte carattere internazionale, contribuendo al contempo alla rivitalizzazione delle regioni locali. Il Benesse House Museum (1992–) e i progetti artistici collegati nel Mare Interno di Seto, insieme al Mori Art Museum (2003) a Tokyo, rappresentano questa nuova generazione. Questo articolo offre una panoramica dello sviluppo dei musei privati in Giappone alla luce dei cambiamenti nella struttura industriale, degli equilibri tra potere politico ed economico e dello sviluppo dei musei pubblici. Inoltre, esaminerà esempi del rapido aumento di musei finanziati privatamente nella regione asiatica.

## Mami Kataoka

Mami Kataoka is Director of the Mori Art Museum. She joined the museum in 2003 and became Director in 2020. She also serves as Director of the National Center for Art Research (since 2023) and ICA Kyoto (since 2025). Internationally, she has held several key positions, including International Curator at the Hayward Gallery in London (2007–2009), Co-Artistic Director of the 9th Gwangju Biennale (2012), Artistic Director of the 21st Biennale of Sydney (2018), and Artistic Director of Aichi Triennale 2022. She served as a board member of CIMAM (2014–2022) and as its President (2020–2022). At the Mori Art Museum, she has curated mid-career surveys of Asian artists including Tsuyoshi Ozawa (2004), Ai Weiwei (2009), Lee Bul (2012), Makoto Aida (2012), Lee Mingwei (2014), NS Harsha (2017), and Chiharu Shiota (2019). She has also co-curated regional exhibitions such as SUNSHOWER: Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia 1980s to Now (2017) and Roppongi Crossing in 2004 and 2013.

Regardless of whether a museum's funding comes from public or private sources, its activities are inherently open to society and thus public in nature. However, when considering the public nature of museums, it is not uncommon to assume that their operating entities are funded by public sources. In Japan, of the current 419 regular member museums of the Japanese Council of Art Museums, 255 are national or public museums, while private museums account for 144, approximately one-third.<sup>1</sup> Historically, when examining museums that have collected and exhibited contemporary art in particular, we find that museums operated by individual and private funds have played a major role. The term "contemporary art" in this paper refers to art of its own time in terms of collection and exhibition, which naturally includes periods that are now considered "modern." In fact, this model of privately funded contemporary art museums has much in common with the establishment of major museums in the United States such as the Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA) and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and when compared with the many contemporary art museums established in recent years in economically developing regions around the world, including Asia, we can observe fascinating resonances that transcend time and place.

This paper traces the genealogy of private museums in Japan, focusing primarily on those that have emphasized the collection and exhibition of contemporary art since the introduction of the concept of museums after modernization, with particular attention to the individ-

uals who led these initiatives. In doing so, we will discover the presence of distinguished individuals who possessed both a clear vision—viewing Japan from a broad perspective, positioning it within the larger world map, bringing world art to Japanese artists and society, or bringing new creative energy to regions through art—and the ability to act on that vision. At the same time, for private museums, the sustainability of operations and how the founder's vision can be passed on across generations remain the greatest challenges. What should be changed and what should be preserved while responding to changes in the times? This is where private museums differ significantly from public museums, which are premised on continuity. In reality, many private museums have made significant contributions during specific periods, though not all of them have necessarily continued. While there are already multiple publications on individual cases, conveying the visions, actions, and resulting social contributions of these pioneers raises critical questions for us today: how can wealth generated in our contemporary era—with its vastly different industrial and economic structures from the 20th century—be meaningfully returned to society and the future?

## I: Modernization, Industrialization, and Westernization after the Meiji Restoration

After more than 200 years of *sakoku*—a policy of national isolation under the Tokugawa shogunate that severely restricted foreign trade and contact to designated ports while prohibiting Japanese citizens from traveling abroad—Japan established the Meiji government centered on the Emperor, replacing rule by samurai, in 1868. New policies for a modern nation were implemented, including the abolition of feudal domains, land tax reform, and the elimination of the class system. At that time, the First Industrial Revolution was nearly complete in Europe, and the great powers had achieved industrialization. For the Meiji government, modernization and internationalization (Westernization) policies were urgent matters, and Japan officially participated in the Vienna World Exposition for the first time in 1873. The German word *Kunstgewerbe* in the exhibition's submission regulations was translated as *bijutsu* (fine arts: in the West, music, painting, the art of making images, poetry, etc. are called fine arts), which is widely known as the beginning of the term *bijutsu* in Japan. Prior to participating in the Vienna World Exposition, the Museum Bureau of the Ministry of Education held the first exposition at Yushima Seido Taiseiden in 1872, which is currently considered the founding and opening year of the Tokyo National Museum. Politician Tsunetami Sano, who served as Vice President at the Exposition Bureau, appealed in his 1875 Vienna World Exposition report submitted to the government for the necessity of building a full-scale modern

art museum. The National Museum opened at its current location in Ueno in 1882.

From the 1870s to 1880s, policies to promote industry were actively pursued, and government-operated enterprises for modern nation-building gradually transitioned to private-led industrial development. Industries such as textiles, railways, mining, shipbuilding, and steel manufacturing showed remarkable development. Therefore, we can see the wealth gained from these new industries in the background of private museums established from the Meiji period [1868-1912] through Taisho [1912-1926] to early Showa [1926-1989]. Although there is insufficient space to discuss it in detail, in terms of private funding, the role that department stores played as exhibition venues parallel to the development of art museums cannot be ignored. In 1904, Mitsukoshi's 'Korin Heritage Exhibition' became the first exhibition held at a department store, and in 1909, department stores in Osaka and Kyoto also became exhibition venues.<sup>2</sup> This would lead to the prosperity of department store art museums in the latter half of the 20th century.

For contextualization, this chapter includes not only museums focused on contemporary art of their time, but also the Okura Museum of Art, which opened in the early 20th century when the very concept of an art museum was new and is positioned as Japan's oldest existing private art museum. It also includes the case of an individual who donated funds for the construction of a public art museum to Tokyo Prefecture at a time when there were no public art museums.

### **Kihachiro Okura (Okura Museum of Art)**

Okura Museum of Art in Minato-ku, Tokyo, is the oldest existing private museum in Japan. Businessman Kihachiro Okura [1837-1928] opened the Okura Museum of Art in 1902 on the grounds of his residence in Akasaka, and later donated the land, building, maintenance fund, and cultural properties to the Okura Museum of Art Foundation established in 1917. However, the building and exhibited collection were destroyed by fire in the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923. The current Okura Museum of Art was built as a new exhibition hall designed by Chuta Ito in 1928. Kihachiro's son, Kishichiro Okura [1882-1963], also inherited the museum's management and contributed to collecting and donating works himself.

Kihachiro Okura was born at the end of the Edo period in what is now Niigata Prefecture and moved to Tokyo at age 17. A gun shop he opened in 1867 succeeded due to demand from the Boshin War, and he made his fortune. He subsequently established the Okura-Gumi Shokai, took on construction projects such as Rokumeikan, Imperial Hotel, and Kabukiza through the construction department that would become Taisei Corporation, and built the Okura zaibatsu / Okura financial clique from scratch through diverse industries. The wealth gained from his business was channeled into the Okura Museum of Art, along with educational projects such as school construction and welfare projects such as hospital establishment. What motivated him was not for himself, but a sense of mission to prevent the *Haibutsu Kisyaku* (a

movement to abolish Buddhist artifacts) and the overseas outflow of cultural properties after the Meiji Restoration, and to protect and preserve them within Japan. The Okura Museum of Art collection began with Japanese and Asian ancient art, with Japanese modern paintings added during Okura Kishichiro's era. It houses about 2,500 works of art and crafts, including 60 National Treasures, Important Cultural Properties, and Important Art Objects. Although not a contemporary art museum, which is the focus of this paper, I would first like to cite it as an example that has continued for the long period of 123 years through incorporation as a public interest incorporated foundation in 2011 and expansion in 2019, spanning generations.

### **Kojiro Matsukata (The Matsukata Collection)**

Kojiro Matsukata [1866-1950] became the first president of Kawasaki Shipbuilding Corporation at age 30 in 1896. With the outbreak of World War I, the shipbuilding industry boomed, and he earned enormous profits from destroyers, submarines, and merchant ships. Matsukata stayed in London for about two years and eight months from 1916 to sell vessels, and it was here that his art collection began. He continued collecting during three trips to Europe over more than ten years (including the one began in 1916), ultimately conceiving the idea of building an art museum in Japan. This stemmed from his desire to introduce Western art to Japan, a country in the midst of modernization. According to Matsukata's younger brother, Saburo Matsukata, Kojiro said:

*Japan is a poor country, yet its poor artists must force themselves to go to Paris to have direct contact with Western art. That's why I buy lots of paintings and sculptures to show everyone.<sup>3</sup>*

Kojiro was born in Kagoshima Prefecture as the third son of Masayoshi Matsukata, a Meiji-era politician who served as Prime Minister. Kojiro studied in the United States as a student. Due to the influence he received from his father and the historical context, Kojiro was said to be a businessman who thought about the national interest.<sup>4</sup> Art historian Yukio Yashiro met Matsukata in 1921 and often acted together with him. When Yashiro accompanied Matsukata to visit the home of artist Frank Brangwyn [1867-1956] in London,

*there was a fairly large model of the Matsukata Museum of Art made of plaster. Matsukata named it the Kyoraku Museum of Art and intended to build it on a hilltop in Azabu, Tokyo. I knew this because a stake with the sign 'Kyoraku Museum of Art Site' was already standing near the top of Sendaizaka.<sup>5</sup>*

Brangwyn was an artist Matsukata met early in his collecting and a person who influenced the formation of his collection. Yashiro also accompanied Matsukata when he visited the elderly Monet in Giverny. From 1922 onwards, exhibitions to publicly display the Matsukata Collection were held multiple times in Japan.

Subsequently, due to the bankruptcy of the Fifteenth Bank in 1926 and the Great Depression of 1929, Kawasaki Shipbuilding Corporation also incurred significant debt, and Matsukata's economic situation changed dramatically. From 1928 to 1940, the Matsukata Collection that had already been sent to Japan was sold through more than ten exhibitions and dispersed domestically and internationally.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, the ukiyo-e collection of about 8,000 works was gifted to the Imperial Household in 1938 and later housed in the Imperial Museum (now the Tokyo National Museum). It appears that there were works that could not be imported due to 100% tariffs. The works stored in London were destroyed in a fire in 1939. On the other hand, works stored in France were confiscated by the French government as enemy property after World War II. In 1951, at the time of the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, there was a meeting between Prime Minister Yoshida and French Foreign Minister Schuman regarding the return of the Matsukata Collection. Through the France and Japan Cultural Agreement concluded in 1953, 308 paintings, 62 sculptures, and 5 books, totaling 375 items, were returned, and the National Museum of Western Art was built for it, then opened in 1959 as a storage and exhibition facility. Although Kojiro Matsukata's individual vision did not materialize as the "Kyoraku Museum of Art", it can be said to have been achieved in the form of making a great contribution to the artistic experience in Japan through the former Matsukata Collection being collected in multiple museums, including the National Museum of Western Art and the To-

kyo National Museum.

### **Keitaro Sato (Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum)**

In 1926, the Tokyo Prefectural Art Museum (now the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum) opened as the first public art museum in Japan. Nearly 60 years had passed since the Meiji era began. However, this museum had no collection and was mainly used as a venue for annual group exhibitions such as *Bunten*, *Inten*, and *Nikaten*. The person who contributed to the realization of this museum was Keitaro Sato [1868-1940], a coal merchant from northern Kyushu. Born in Fukuoka, Sato studied law in Tokyo and returned to his hometown to start a coal business. After the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05), coal demand surged, and he began managing coal mines, earning the nickname “God of Coal”. He respected American steel magnate Andrew Carnegie and focused on charitable works after age 50. In 1921, while on a business trip to Tokyo, he happened to see an editorial titled *Permanent Art Museum* published in *Jiji Shimpō* newspaper. It stated, “Major cities in Western countries have permanent art museums representing their national culture and art, but Japan only has temporary art museums built for each exhibition”.<sup>7</sup> Sato immediately visited Tokyo Governor Hiroshi Abe and donated the entire construction cost of about 1 million yen (at the time, equivalent to half of his total assets). His motto was “Public and private are one”. The Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum opened five years later in 1926 and was called the “Palace of Beauty” until the current new building was created in 1975, becoming a venue for count-

less artists. It functioned also as a historically crucial venue where a number of experimental exhibitions emerged, including the “Japan Independent Exhibition (Yomiuri Independent Exhibition)” held from 1949 to 1963, and the renown “10th Tokyo Biennale” in 1970 as well as other editions of the Tokyo Biennales organized by the *Mainichi Shimbun*. It is worth remembering that the realization of this first public art museum was made possible by the will of a single individual.

### **Magosaburo Ohara and Soichiro Ohara (Ohara Museum of Art)**

Magosaburo Ohara [1880-1943] was born as the third son of Kohshiro Ohara, who served as the first president of Kurashiki Spinning Mill and president of Kurashiki Bank, and was also a major landowner in the city of Kurashiki. Magosaburo Ohara inherited the family estate at age 24 and became the seventh head of the Ohara family. In 1926, he established Kurashiki Kenshoku Co., Ltd and later proceeded with the development of synthetic rayon. He also made significant contributions to establishing the infrastructure, hospitals, and scientific research institutes for the Kurashiki area.

The Ohara Museum of Art began with the relationship between Ohara and Torajiro Kojima [1881-1929]. In 1902, Ohara first met Kojima during an interview for the Ohara Scholarship Program, a student support program by the Ohara family, and continued to support him throughout his life. Ohara provided funding for Kojima’s travels to Europe twice, in 1907 and 1919. During his second stay, Kojima thought, “I am fortunate to be able to see masterpieces

in their original locations with Magosaburo's support, but people studying in Japan have almost no opportunity to see first-class Western paintings", and conveyed his desire to purchase paintings to Ohara.<sup>8</sup> Kojima purchased 27 paintings by 18 artists, including Monet's *Waterlilies* and Matisse's *Portrait of Mademoiselle Matisse*, and returned to Japan in 1921.<sup>9</sup> Many works by contemporary artists of that time were included. The collected works were exhibited publicly three times in Kurashiki City by 1923. Audiences rushed from Tokyo and Osaka. During this time, the idea of establishing a museum was born, and Kojima made a third trip to Europe in 1922 with museum collection in mind. However, during the process of establishing the museum, he died prematurely of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1929. This prompted Ohara to decide to realize the Museum soon. The Ohara Museum of Art opened in 1930 as the first museum in Japan to collect and exhibit primarily Western art, and subsequently came to broadly support diverse genres of art including Japanese art, ceramics, and *Mingei*.

Soichiro Ohara [1909-1968], son of Magosaburo Ohara, became a foundation trustee when the Ohara Museum of Art was incorporated as foundation in 1935. From 1936 to 1938, Soichiro stayed in Europe for an extended period before World War II began, and after returning became president of Kurashiki Ken-shoku Co., Ltd in 1939 and president of Kurabo Industries Ltd. in 1941. As Japan proceeded toward war, Soichiro evacuated the main collection of the Ohara Museum of Art, which escaped air raids.

## II: From the Resumption of Postwar International Exchange to High Economic Growth and Its End

After Japan's defeat in World War II, for about 6 years and 8 months until the San Francisco Peace Treaty took effect in 1952, Japan was occupied by Allied forces under GHQ guidance, and demilitarization and democratization advanced. As the 1956 Economic White Paper stated, "It is no longer the postwar period," postwar reconstruction and economic recovery progressed rapidly, and high economic growth continued until the 1970s. The subsequent bubble economy in the 80s and its collapse also had a significant impact on museums.

In 1947, the Nihon Bijutsukai [Japan Art Association] established the *Japan Independent Exhibition*, and in 1949, Yomiuri Shimbun also founded the *Japan Independent Exhibition* (later renamed as the Yomiuri Independent Exhibition). In 1950, Yomiuri Shimbun held the *World Contemporary Art Exhibition* gathering modern art from Western countries at Takashimaya Department Store. In 1951, Yomiuri Shimbun held the *Henri Matisse Exhibition* in Tokyo, Osaka then at Ohara Museum, and Mainichi Shimbun held the *Japan-France Exchange Contemporary French Art Exhibition Salon de Mai*. That same year, the Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura opened as Japan's first public modern art museum. In January 1952, the Bridgestone Museum of Art opened, followed by the National Museum of Modern Art in December. From this year, Japan also began officially participating in the Venice Biennale. In the January 1955 issue of *Bijutsu*

*Techo*, critic Takachiyo Uemura stated, “International exchange in postwar Japanese art has progressed on an unprecedented scale and depth, rapidly changing the state of contemporary art in Japan. [...] Liberation from militarism through defeat strongly accelerated the reaction to this suffocating state over several years”.<sup>10</sup>

### **Soichiro Ohara (The Ohara Museum of Art in postwar era)**

In 1950, the Ohara Museum of Art celebrated its 20th anniversary. Soichiro Ohara thought, “Simply protecting the museum I inherited from my father is nothing more than being a kind of grave keeper; when my era comes, adding new things would be in line with my father’s will,” and began reforming the museum.<sup>11</sup> In 1951, he promptly held exhibitions of Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso, displaying Impressionist and École de Paris works alongside the permanent collection. This marked the museum’s opening to contemporary art. The philosophy regarding the social role of the museum can be seen in Soichiro Ohara’s words: “Art must be given the opportunity to be accessible to everyone. I think it is not good if individual ownership results in depriving many people of that opportunity”.<sup>12</sup> In 1961, a new Annex building was constructed and Japanese modern and contemporary paintings selected by Soichiro himself were exhibited. Many abstract paintings were included. At the time, he had Kusuo Shimizu of Tokyo’s Minami Gallery collect contemporary art from Japan and abroad, which he purchased. Taro Inoue, who wrote about him, stated: “Soichiro had Shimizu collect con-

temporary art that most collectors at the time paid little attention to, and purchased it one after another based on his own judgment. These works form the core of the Ohara Museum of Art’s contemporary art collection and have been introduced in many art books, continuing to this day”.<sup>13</sup>

The museum collected and exhibited works not only of contemporary art but also of leading *Mingei* (folk craft movement) artists such as Shoji Hamada, Bernard Leach, Kanjiro Kawai, and Shiko Munakata along with Eastern antiquities, establishing Crafts and Oriental Art Gallery. In 1972, the Torajiro Kojima Memorial Hall was opened. As the museum approaches its 100th anniversary since opening, the Ohara Museum of Art can be said to be a unique presence that has inherited the vision of its founding by remaining deeply rooted in Kurashiki as a comprehensive private museum where one can learn about streams of art across East and West and the history of folk crafts while continuing to support contemporary art.

### **Shojiro Ishibashi (Bridgestone Museum of Art / Artizon Museum)**

In January 1952, the year Japan regained sovereignty, the Bridgestone Museum of Art opened in Kyobashi, near Tokyo Station. Founder Shojiro Ishibashi [1889-1976] was born in Kurume City, Fukuoka Prefecture, and took over the family tailoring business. In 1923, he succeeded with the sale of *tabi* (split-toe socks), and in 1931 established Bridgestone Tire Co., Ltd. with the aim of manufacturing tires domestically. In 1937, he moved the headquarters to Tokyo. He began collecting art-

works during his Kurume days. After Hanjiro Sakamoto [1882-1969], Ishibashi's elementary school drawing teacher, returned from Paris, they reunited in Kurume. Ishibashi was recommended to buy works by Shigeru Aoki [1882-1911], also from Kurume, who died young. Then Ishibashi started to collect works by Hanjiro Sakamoto, and after moving to Tokyo, met Takeji Fujishima [1867-1943] and collected his works as well.

Shojiro Ishibashi's collection expanded from Japanese modern Western-style painting to Western art during and after the war. "The collections built up by this group of wealthy capitalists in the pre-war period disintegrated in the blink of an eye immediately after the war".<sup>14</sup> "From the end of the war in August 1945 until the opening of the Bridgestone Museum of Art in January 1952, Shojiro built up a collection of over fifty works of western art".<sup>15</sup> When he visited the United States after the war, he toured museums at the Harvard University and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and this experience led to the realization of opening the museum. He deepened his relationship with art historian Inou Dan [1892-1973], and in 1950 formed a group of experts, including Soichi Tominaga, Atsuo Imaizumi, and Shinichi Tani. The Bridgestone's main office building in Kyobashi, Tokyo, which had been destroyed by war, was decided to be rebuilt in 1949, and Ishibashi placed the Bridgestone Museum of Art on the second floor of the new Bridgestone Building completed in 1952. In April 1956, the Ishibashi Foundation was established with Bridgestone Tire stock and land in Kyobashi as initial endowments,

and in 1961, Shojiro himself donated many artworks he owned.

Shojiro Ishibashi's contributions to the Japanese art world and museum community extend beyond the Bridgestone Museum of Art. While the Japanese government officially participated in the Venice Biennale in 1952, it lacked the funds to construct a Japanese pavilion on the land offered by the Italian government in the Giardini. Ishibashi donated 20 million yen (the value at the time), and exhibitions have been held in the Japanese pavilion since 1956.

Furthermore, in 1969, he donated the entire construction cost for the relocation of the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo from Kyobashi to Takebashi. The Ishibashi Foundation has also conducted donation and grant program for artistic, cultural, and educational activities in addition to museum operations. It is no exaggeration to say that Shojiro Ishibashi made the greatest contribution to Japan's museum community throughout the 20th century onwards.

In 2015, the Ishibashi Foundation Art Research Center was established in Machida City, Tokyo, to conduct research on artworks, conservation and restoration, and storage of materials. In 2020, after 68 years since its opening in January 1952, the Bridgestone Museum of Art was newly opened as the Artizon Museum in the lower floors of Museum Tower Kyobashi. Observing their various activities and their commitment to changing the long-beloved museum name, it is evident that the founder's vision endures and will continue for years to come.

### Jukichi Komagata (Nagaoka Museum of Contemporary Art / Taiko Collection)

In August 1964, the Nagaoka Museum of Contemporary Art, the first in Japan to include “contemporary” in its name, opened. It was the year the Tokyo Olympics were held. The museum had a 268 square meter exhibition room on the first floor of the Nagaoka Cultural Center with a separate storage facility. In December, a foundation was established to publicly display paintings collected over many years by Taiko Sogo Bank for the benefit of public society and to contribute to the development of local culture and art. Chairman and Director Jukichi Komagata [1901-1999] founded a mutual loan company with his brother in 1922, which later became Taiko Sogo Bank, where he served as president and chairman of the Nagaoka Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The Taiko Collection, which Komagata collected over decades, was mostly purchased from Takashi Yamamoto of Tokyo Gallery, also from Niigata.<sup>16</sup> Art critic Masayoshi Honma stated regarding this museum opening: “If this is to draw a public line as a museum, it would be necessary to gather insights from various angles and broader perspectives”, also pointing out the need for a committee-like organization to operate the business.<sup>17</sup> The museum held the 1st Nagaoka Museum of Contemporary Art Prize exhibition in December of its opening year. This involved selecting the Museum Prize as grand prize from candidate works recommended by selection committee members through judging in public, and purchasing one work per artist from exhibitors other than the winner. It was held five times annually

until 1968.

Jukichi Komagata became interested in art due to the influence of his brother, and supported artists through a gathering called “Fura-kai”, as well as holding exhibitions. The Taiko Collection, which covers modern and contemporary Japanese painting from Chu Asai to Yoshishige Saito, was formed over approximately ten years. Regarding his collection, art critic Naoyuki Takashima stated: “For Jukichi Komagata, it clearly connected to patron consciousness that corporate entities must bear this in the present era. That determination further connected to new collecting enthusiasm by turning eyes to post-war = contemporary Japanese Western-style painting in order to continue the tradition of contemporary painting interrupted by war”.<sup>18</sup> This also resonates with the “reaction to the suffocating state” under military rule pointed out by Takachiyo Uemura.

The judging in public and exhibition of the Nagaoka Museum of Contemporary Art Prize Exhibition were held at the Nagaoka Museum of Contemporary Art through the third session, then the public judging of the fourth session (1967) was held at Asahi Kodo in Tokyo, and for the fifth session (1968), the public judging was held at Seibu Department Store in Ikebukuro, with exhibitions at both Ikebukuro Seibu and the Nagaoka Museum of Contemporary Art. Behind this was an aim to increase recognition of the prize. Leading critics such as Teiichi Hijikata, Ichiro Hariu, and Yusuke Nakahara were involved in selecting invited artists from the first session. In the second exhibition

(1965), William Lieberman, then a curator in the Department of Prints and Drawings at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, who co-organized the *New Japanese Painting and Sculpture* Exhibition (toured in the US from 1965; held at MoMA in 1966), also participated in selecting foreign artists. Subsequently, selection committee members and judges participated from Italy, Britain, and Germany, showing awareness of international contemporaneity. However, contrary to the high aspirations of those involved trying to handle cutting-edge works, media reaction was insufficient, and it did not spread to the point of penetrating the general audience, so it was suspended after five sessions and never resumed.

In 1970, Jukichi Komagata was effectively ousted from Taiko due to a coup by Hitoshi Komagata, managing director of Taiko Sogo Bank and his son-in-law. Hitoshi Komagata continued purchasing artworks, and the Nagaoka Museum of Contemporary Art continued to exist centered on permanent exhibitions, but in 1979, a reckless lending incident at Taiko was discovered, and it was placed under the control of the Ministry of Finance, forcing the museum to close. The “Taiko Collection,” which had been separated among Taiko Sogo Bank, Nagaoka Culture Center (an affiliated company of the bank), and the Nagaoka Museum of Contemporary Art Foundation, was consequently to be sold, consisting of over 700 works at that time. In 1981, Niigata Prefecture purchased 150 works from Taiko for 1 billion yen, becoming the highlight of the collection of the Niigata Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, which opened in Nagaoka City in 1993.

The Iwaki City Art Museum in Fukushima Prefecture, which opened in 1984, purchased 54 contemporary American paintings for 200 million yen. The Taiko Collection was housed in 31 public and private museums across the country, including various public museums that were actively being built at the time.<sup>19</sup> In fact, in the inaugural exhibition *Taiko Collection* at the Niigata Prefectural Museum of Modern Art in 1993, the works from the Taiko Collection in various public museum collections gathered together again. The comprehensive high quality is truly outstanding. It can also be said that Jukichi Komagata’s vision in fact permeated and continues to live in various parts of the country.

### **Seiji Tsutsumi (Seibu Museum of Art / Sezon Museum of Art)**

In 1975, the Seibu Museum of Art opened in the Ikebukuro Seibu Department Store that had held the Fifth Nagaoka Museum of Contemporary Art Prize Exhibition in 1968. The founder was Seiji Tsutsumi [1927-2013] of the Seibu Distribution Group, also known as the novelist and poet Takashi Tsujii. Born to Yasujiro Tsutsumi, founder of the Seibu Group, Seiji joined Seibu Department Stores in 1954, became managing director and store manager of the Ikebukuro store the following year, and at age 34 became representative director of Seibu Department Stores in 1961. Starting with the *Paul Klee Exhibition* in October 1961, exhibitions were already being held in the 8th floor event hall, but Seiji located the museum on the 12th floor. It was an era that had passed through the Tokyo Olympics and the 1970 Osaka Expo,

a time transitioning from the “political era” through the 1960 Anpo (Security Treaty) protest, followed by the Vietnam anti-war movement and the Zenkyōtō movement, which began as university disputes, and further the 1970 Anpo protest, toward the “economic era” in Japan. Economically, Japan’s GNP became the second largest among capitalist countries in 1968, and in 1973, the first oil shock brought Japan’s first negative growth since the war, entering a stable growth period thereafter. Also, whereas the wealth supporting the private museums and collections established in prewar time was largely from secondary industry, the development of tertiary industry, particularly retail and service industries, can be seen in the background of the Seibu Museum of Art.

In the inaugural exhibition catalog *Prospects of Contemporary Japanese Art*, Tsutsumi stated:

*“What is created in Tokyo in 1975 should not be a museum as a facility for storing works, nor a place to display works converted from wealth accumulated through colonial plunder. First, if it is desirable for it to function as a base for the spirit of the times, what kind of content should the museum have and in what direction should it act as a base?” “Time always flows and changes, people age with the years, and once authority is created, it evokes conservative sentiments in those who operate it. Therefore, the operation of this mu-*

*seum must be maintained by possessors of an incessant destructive spirit”. “A museum that is not a museum - we call it a ‘street museum,’ or claim it is a ‘base for the movement of the spirit of the times,’ or call it a ‘storage of creative aesthetic consciousness,’ etc”.*<sup>20</sup>

These are words that convey firm vision and suggest the historical background moving from the war, the political era Tsutsumi experienced, toward high economic growth. Tsutsumi developed not only the museum but also theater, music, and publishing as the Cultural Business Department of Seibu Department Stores. The museum handled a wide range of artistic genres, not limited to fine art, including photography, design, fashion, and architecture. It was not uncommon for them to invite critics as guest curators. From solo exhibitions of major artists in 20th-century art history such as Jasper Johns (1978), Marcel Duchamp (1981), Joseph Beuys (1984), and Anselm Kiefer (1993) to large group exhibitions, they changed exhibitions in an extremely short period compared to today, holding 264 exhibitions over 24 years - averaging over 10 per year, until their last exhibition in 1999.<sup>21</sup> In 1989, they relocated the museum to the first and second floors of an annex building and renamed it “Sezon Museum of Art (SMA).” Unexpectedly, the Berlin Wall fell this year, and Japan, which had been boiling with the bubble economy, also began its path to collapse after reaching its peak stock price at the end of that year. It was also the year Japan’s Era name

changed from Showa [1926 - January 7, 1989] to Heisei [January 8, 1989 -2010]. In 1991, Seiji Tsutsumi retired as group representative, and in 1993, Shigeaki Wada, who became president of Seibu Department Stores, changed the direction of cultural strategy. The Sezon Museum of Art closed its curtains in February 1999.<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, the Takanawa Museum, which opened in Takanawa, Tokyo in 1962, displayed Yasujiro Tsutsumi's Japanese traditional art, but in 1981, during Seiji Tsutsumi's era, it began to focus on contemporary art and relocated to Karuizawa. It has been operating as the Sezon Museum of Modern Art since 1991.

Much analysis has been made from various perspectives regarding Seiji Tsutsumi's art and cultural support and cultural business, including the Seibu Museum of Art and Sezon Museum of Art. Jasper Johns, upon learning of Tsutsumi's death, is said to have told Hideo Namba, director of the Sezon Museum of Art at closing, current honorary director of the Sezon Museum of Modern Art: "I feel that with Seiji Tsutsumi's death, a large part of Japan's contemporary culture has ended".<sup>23</sup> Seiji Tsutsumi truly created a "base for the movement of the spirit of the times" that introduced international contemporary art to Japan and transmitted contemporary Japanese art and culture to the world.

### **Toshio Hara (Hara Museum of Contemporary Art)**

In 1979, the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art opened in Gotenyama, Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo. The founder and director, Toshio Hara [1935-], has Rokuro Hara [1842-

1933], a major entrepreneur from the end of the Edo period through Meiji and Taisho, as his great-grandfather. Rokuro Hara was a contemporary of Kihachiro Okura [1837-1928], who founded the Okura Museum of Art, and was also an art collector of works by Sesson and Maruyama Okyo. Kunizo Hara [1883-1958], who inherited the family estate from Rokuro, was also a major entrepreneur who managed various companies from Taisho to mid-Showa era. He inherited this Gotenyama land from Rokuro Hara, and in 1938, a modernist building designed by Jin Watanabe incorporating Bauhaus and Art Deco styles was completed. This building would become the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art.

When Toshio Hara inherited this residence, he had no intention of making it into a museum, but after visiting the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark, a residential house converted into a museum, he began to consider converting his inherited house into a museum. Hara recalls that time:

*In the 1970s, I felt uncomfortable with the fact that Japan was being introduced overseas with a bias towards antiques and traditional performing arts, and decided that a base was needed to promote international exchange through today's art. So, I opened the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, which specialized in contemporary art, a rarity in Japan at the time.<sup>24</sup>*

Museums with permanent collections of contemporary art were ex-

tremely rare at the time in Japan. Visitors repeatedly came to view permanently installed works by Jean-Pierre Raynaud, Tatsuo Miyajima, Yasumasa Morimura, Yoshitomo Nara, and others. What was even more groundbreaking was taking advantage of the former private residence environment by installing a cafe on the balcony facing the garden. It attracted attention by providing a stylish experience at a contemporary art museum, which was also new to the general public. Also, bilingual guides and publications in Japanese and English were still rare at the time.

The year after opening, the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art established *Hara Annual* to regularly review Japanese contemporary art, and continue it for 10 years. This can be said to be an important initiative in visualizing and historicizing Japanese contemporary art in the 1980s. At the *1st Hara Annual - Prospects for the 1980s*, Arata Isozaki, Yoshiaki Tono, Ichiro Hariu, Tamon Miki, and Katsuhiko Yamaguchi served as selection committee members. In the catalog, Hara wrote:

*At the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, we aim to facilitate human exchange between artists and collectors, art professionals and general enthusiasts, not just viewing works, but bridging so that they can become friends with each other. The method is to select several artists according to a theme and request their works for exhibition. This is not intended to gather already famous artists, but an at-*

*tempt to introduce currently active artists and nurture new art together.*<sup>25</sup>

Also, selection committee member Ichiro Hariu stated:

*The Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, which opened at the end of last year, is attracting attention as Tokyo's only contemporary art museum with a fulfilling permanent collection, though a small private museum. For a museum to actively participate in actual exploration, experimentation, and creation rather than being a hall of authority displaying past masterpieces and classics and illuminate the direction of paths, special exhibitions should above all be the pillar. If this annual exhibition continues as a special exhibition, "the museum can certainly have a more open character through critical function".*<sup>26</sup>

The accumulation from the Hara Annual held ten times can be said to have culminated in the Japanese contemporary art exhibition *A Primal Spirit: Ten Contemporary Japanese Sculptors* that toured the United States in 1990-91. This exhibition was co-organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, with Howard N. Fox of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art as guest curator. It was exhibited at Hara Museum ARC in 1990, then toured the US. Ten sculptors and three-dimensional artists who were attracting attention at the time, including To-

shikatsu Endo, Tadashi Kawamata, and Shigeo Toya, participated.<sup>27</sup> The Hara Museum of Contemporary Art subsequently toured exhibitions internationally such as *Space, Time, Memory - Photography and Beyond in Japan* (1994-97) and *The World of Shiro Kuramata* (1996-99), making significant contributions to the international dissemination of Japanese contemporary art. The Hara Museum in Shinagawa closed in January 2021, but its contributions to Japanese and international art world and society over 40 years are immeasurable. After closing, it merged with the annex Hara Museum ARC, which opened in 1988, and continues operating as Hara Museum ARC in Shibukawa City, Gunma Prefecture.

### III: Regional Development, City Planning and Contemporary Art Museums

Japan's postwar economic development ended with the bubble collapse at the end of 1989, and the era called the "Lost 30 Years" has continued for a long time since. Ironically, the world saw the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, followed by the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The political map of the world changed dramatically, and various cultures nurtured by diverse ethnicities, religions, and histories clearly came to the surface. In that sense, *Magiciens de la Terre* curated by Jean-Hubert Martin in 1989, which juxtaposed works by 100 artists from East and West, including what had traditionally been classified as crafts, ethnology, and anthropology, is historicized as the most symbolic exhibition that pio-

neered the expansion of the horizon of contemporary art to the world's diverse cultures. Tatsuo Kawaguchi, On Kawara, Tatsuo Miyajima, and Hiroshi Teshigahara participated from Japan.

Domestically, the development of public museums that had continued from the 1970s and 1980s progressed, with the Nagoya City Art Museum opening in 1988, and the Yokohama Museum of Art and Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art (first public museum of contemporary art) opening in 1989. This is the year that the Seibu Museum of Art was renamed the Sezon Museum of Art, and in 1990 the Mito Arts Center and in 1991 the Inokuma Genichiro Museum of Contemporary Art opened. From the late 1980s to the 1990s, without waiting for contemporary art exhibitions at public museums, multiple alternative spaces run by individuals and corporations opened, while most had finished their roles by 2000. Examples include Sagacho Exhibit Space (1983-2000), ICA Nagoya (1986-1992), Toko Museum of Contemporary Art (1988-1991), and Roentgen Kunst Institut (1991-1995). From the perspective of exhibition history, extremely important exhibitions were held at these spaces. As one era gave way to the next era, international art festivals such as biennales and triennales started to attract attention. In Asia, for instance, starting with the biennale established in Gwangju, South Korea in 1995, they were founded in various cities including Shanghai (1996) and Taipei (1998). In Japan, the Japan International Art Exhibition (Tokyo Biennale), which began in 1952, closed in 1990, and a new era of regional art festivals arrived.

The Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial was established in 2000, and the Yokohama Triennale in 2001. Opportunities to encounter contemporary art were no longer limited to museums, and international art festivals began to play an important role.

In an era when both national and local governments came to have their own art museums, what remained to be sought? As case studies, this chapter presents a project and a museum that established themselves as platforms connecting international contemporary art while maintaining a rigorous commitment to the cultural advancement of specific localities. One represents a critical project against Tokyo's centralization. Standing in contrast is a project that aimed to embed contemporary art within urban life at the very center of Tokyo.

### **Soichiro Fukutake (Benesse House Museum and other Art Projects)**

Soichiro Fukutake [1945-] returned to his hometown of Okayama from Tokyo following the sudden death of his father, Tetsuhiko Fukutake [1915-1986]. Former school teacher Tetsuhiko Fukutake established a publishing company, and later founded Fukutake Publishing Co., Ltd. In the 1960s, Tetsuhiko began correspondence education and succeeded. He was also an art collector, collecting hundreds of works by Okayama-born Yasuo Kuniyoshi [1889-1953], who was highly regarded in America in the first half of the 20th century, as well as masterpieces of Western painting. Soichiro Fukutake purchased all of Kuniyoshi's works that had been displayed in the Fukutake Publishing Co., Ltd.

head office building and currently on long-term loan to Okayama Prefecture as the Fukutake Collection. Soichiro Fukutake's name is named after Soichiro Ohara of Ohara Museum of Art in the same prefecture, Okayama, and indeed the same spirit seems to be inherited.

Soichiro Fukutake says that the Naoshima campsite conceived by his father Tetsuhiko in 1985 was the beginning of everything. Soichiro Fukutake also toured the islands of the Seto Inland Sea again and, despite the beautiful scenery of the region, realized that the negative effects of urbanization and modernization were borne by rural areas, such as environmental damage from smelters on Naoshima and Inujima and illegal dumping of industrial waste on Teshima. He aimed for a "transition from a civilization that repeats destruction and creation" to a "civilization that continues to grow by making use of what exists and creating what doesn't exist." He also said: "People in cities who pursue only their own happiness and compete in doing so constantly feel frustrated and anxious".<sup>28</sup> This major shift in values relating to way of life began with the Benesse House Museum on Naoshima in 1992, leading to multiple museums up to the Naoshima New Museum in 2025 (commissioning Tadao Ando for museums' architectural design, making it the 10th museum), numerous Art House Projects by contemporary artists renovating old private houses, the Inujima Seirenscho Art Museum, and Life of Plants Garden, the Teshima Art Museum, works by Christian Boltanski and Mariko Mori on Teshima, and more - Fukutake's vision truly continues to grow. Furthermore, the Setouchi Triennale was established

in 2010, and the entire Seto Inland Sea area has definitely established itself as a place known globally for contemporary art. The contemporary art project centered on Naoshima and other Island can be said to be unparalleled in the world in terms of its scale and the quality of inviting world-class artists. And certainly, Naoshima, Inujima, Teshima, and other islands in the Seto Inland Sea have been transformed into a major art area attracting attention from around the world.

What is noteworthy about the operational structure is that for the series of art projects centered on Naoshima, Fukutake established Naoshima Bunkamura Inc. in 1991 as a wholly owned subsidiary of Benesse Holdings Inc. This company is responsible for the operation and management of accommodation facilities and art facilities, as well as facility management. Meanwhile, in 2004, Fukutake established the Fukutake Foundation as a public interest incorporated foundation, and in 2012, integrated two additional foundations responsible for grant programs. The foundation operates museums on Naoshima, Teshima, and Inujima, provides grants for regional revitalization activities, and conducts independent and co-sponsored projects supporting events such as the Setouchi Triennale. The fact that this model, which integrates for-profit business with public benefit activities, contributes to the sustainability of cultural activities in the region is particularly compelling.

### **Minaru Mori and Yoshiko Mori (Mori Art Museum)**

The Mori Art Museum opened in October 2003 as a cultural facility symbolizing the large-scale urban development Roppongi Hills that opened in Tokyo in April 2003. Founder Minoru Mori [1934-2012] designated the concept of the Roppongi Hills by Mori Building Co., Ltd. as “Cultural City Center,” placing the Mori Art Museum as an international contemporary art museum at its center. His father, Taikichiro Mori [1904-1993], ran the family rice store and real estate rental business in Minato-ku, Tokyo, while also teaching economics as a scholar. Taikichiro established Mori Real Estate in 1955 and Mori Building Co., Ltd. in 1959. He likely had strong feelings about the reconstruction of Tokyo, which suffered from the Great Kanto Earthquake and was reduced to scorched earth by the Second World War. Second son Minoru Mori majored in French literature at the University of Tokyo and aspired to be a novelist, but during his student days he contracted pleurisy and began helping the family business during home recuperation. This became the opportunity to learn about Le Corbusier and thoroughly read his *The Radiant City*. In 1959, Minoru Mori also joined Mori Building. In 1993, Minoru succeeded his father Taikichiro as CEO.

Mori Building invited Suntory Hall, a full-fledged classical concert hall, in the large-scale complex development Ark Hills in 1986. Subsequently, the Mori Art Museum was conceived for the development of Roppongi Hills. In the opening press release, Minoru Mori stated:

*When I began conceiving “Roppongi Hills” 17 years ago, I thought of creating a ‘Cultural City Center’ here in Roppongi and making a new museum centered on contemporary art worthy of being a symbol of the city. This is because contemporary art is a mirror that most honestly reflects the social and cultural situation of the times, people’s lives, and the spirit of the times, and also holds unknown territory and infinite possibilities, open to the future. I have always thought that such a museum is most suitable for a city where people overflowing with creativity who create a new era gather.*<sup>29</sup>

He clearly stated the necessity of it being a “contemporary art museum.” The background to choosing culture to make Tokyo one of the world’s leading cities was his idea after traveling to major cities around the world that “The Business community is the patron of the arts, and arts and culture are the measurement of the city’s attractiveness or magnetic force”.<sup>30</sup>

He placed a contemporary art museum with an exhibition area of 3,000 square meters on the top two floors of the 53 stories high building, which could expect high revenue if one thinks as a real estate rental business. Subsequently, it was reorganized to the 53rd floor of 2,000 square meters as the Mori Art Museum focusing on originally curated exhibitions, the 52nd floor as Mori Arts Center Gallery for venue rent-

al business, and Tokyo City View as observation deck business. From a purely profitability perspective, it is difficult for the Mori Art Museum alone to be in the black, but regarding the reason for placing a contemporary art museum on the top floor, Minoru Mori gave three reasons:

*The one was to make visible my concept of creating a ‘cultural heart’ for Tokyo. The museum was to be the symbol of the entire city. If we hid away, no one would take it seriously. [...] The Mori Art Museum is not yet a profit center, as one can imagine. But it has brought to us immeasurable value.*

*Secondly, I wanted people who did not have a particular interest in contemporary art to visit the museum.*

*The third reason [...] is that I wanted people who saw contemporary art to also take a hard look at Tokyo as it stands now. [...] This combination of city views and art museum was indeed a business strategy, but it also derived from my very deep interest as an individual who has dedicated his life to city-making.*<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, Mori also stated:

*Roppongi Hills and contemporary art share many common traits. Both want to capture today’s trends and to create something out of it. We express ourselves in the present con-*

*tinuous tense, and we aim at the unknowns, the untested waters.*<sup>32</sup>

The Mori Art Museum, which marks its 24th year of operation this year, was founded on the vision of its founder Minoru Mori, brought to fruition and established by Yoshiko Mori [1940-2025], the first Chairperson of the Board, and passed on to the current Chairperson, Kyoko Mori, in January 2025. During this time, it has grown into a globally recognized contemporary art museum in Tokyo. To this day, it operates and governed as a division of Mori Building Co., Ltd. without becoming an independent non-profit foundation. As Mori Building overall, it is even expanding cultural facilities further at new developments such as Toranomon Hills, Azabudai Hills, etc., coexisting venue renting model with self-organizing projects. As a symbol of contemporary art in the city of Tokyo, it continues to discuss sustainable operating models for the Mori Art Museum.

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### **Funding Sources and Operating Bodies**

Up to this point, we have examined the genealogy of private museums funded primarily by private capital, focusing on several case studies. I have included examples of collections that were assembled but subsequently dispersed, as well as cases of museums that did not continue operations. As mentioned in the text, when examining the funding sources for each from the perspective of industry type, we can see that from the Meiji period through the early Showa period, privately-led industries involved in build-

ing the modern nation-state formed the background—including the textile industry, railway industry, steel industry, and shipbuilding industry. For the postwar period, we have covered examples from various industries including manufacturing, finance, retail, and real estate. Private museums backed by these industries include cases operated by an owner's private funds, instances operated as a division of a corporation such as the Sezon Museum of Art, and the Mori Art Museum which continues to operate as a corporate division today. There are also cases that were incorporated as foundations early on after the museum's opening, such as the Ohara Museum of Art and the Artizon Museum (formerly the Bridgestone Museum of Art), as well as the example of the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, which established the Foundation Arc-en-Ciel in 1977, two years before the museum's opening. Alternatively, there is the example of Benesse, where a for-profit private corporation and non-profit foundation operate in parallel. The Kawamura Memorial DIC Museum of Art, which closed in 2025, was a corporate direct-operation model, and concerns were raised about the instability of cultural enterprises dependent on corporate performance and shareholder activists. However, as the museum is still undergoing transformation and no clear future direction has been presented, I have not included it as a case study here. Nevertheless, even when the operating body has been incorporated as a foundation, considering the ongoing funding necessary for museum operations, a substantial endowment capable of generating operating income or holdings of parent com-

pany stock become necessary. Profitability from museum operations alone can hardly be expected. There are also constraints on activities under foundation management, and in cases like the Mori Art Museum, because the parent body is a privately held company, the decision has been made that direct operation offers greater advantages than foundation incorporation in various respects. Museum operations are not simple enough to be easily analyzed from an institutional perspective alone. This is complexly intertwined with issues of our nation's tax system, particularly charitable donation tax system, and foundation system, and further discussion of this must be reserved for another occasion.

### **Sustainability or Contribution to the Era**

At the outset, I noted that operational sustainability represents a major challenge for private museums. While establishing a foundation does not automatically ensure the continuation of vibrant activities, whether structured as a foundation, directly operated by a corporation, or privately funded, such institutions remain inseparable from the economic trends of their time and their operational performance. Moreover, sustaining the founder's mission across generations is no easy task. In the United States, there are models such as the Museum of Modern Art and the Guggenheim Museum in New York—institutions founded on individual initiative that continue to be supported as nonprofit organizations by multiple trustees and board members. However, the tax incentive systems for donations differ significantly from

those in Japan. Within this context, examples such as the Ohara Museum of Art and the Bridgestone Museum / Artizon Museum, which have continued to innovate across generations, merit recognition.

That said, sustainability alone does not constitute the sole measure of value. Outstanding artworks from the Matsukata Collection and the Taiko Collection are housed in museums throughout the country. The Seibu Museum of Art / the Sezon Museum of Art, and the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art in Shinagawa made immense contributions during the formative period of international art in Japan, and many artists and museum professionals hold these as important experiences and memories. The Nagaoka Museum of Contemporary Art's open jury system with prominent international jurors was groundbreaking for a regional museum. Considering these examples, it becomes possible to argue that what matters is not mere continuation, but rather the impact a museum exerts in its own era, and its historical significance—whether it brings about meaningful change for future generations, even in different forms.

### **Individual Vision and Action**

Seiji Tsutsumi once described supporting culture as “the moral duty of those living in the same era.” Jukichi Komagata remarked: “In the past, it was feudal lords, major landowners, and the wealthy who loved and protected art. In the modern nation-state, this is no longer possible. As a result, important artworks are being dispersed and lost. In today's Japan, perhaps only corporations can protect art.” Indeed, in the cas-

es examined in this paper, the driving forces behind each individual's vision and action included the protection and preservation of national cultural properties during our country's rapid modernization, support for Japanese artists and society's exposure to Western art, promotion of internationalization through art, and support for the museum system that underpins these efforts. Furthermore, once our country had completed its modernization and economic growth, and the wave of museum openings across the nation had settled, new driving forces emerged: the rehabilitation of regional areas that had borne the negative consequences of modernization and urbanization, and questions about the quality of urban life. These strong wills transcended "private interests" and arose from thinking about the "public good"—perhaps even more so than public organizations themselves. Equally crucial was the availability of financial resources to translate these visions into action and make them realizable. This paper aims to reaffirm that there exists a history in which private funds have shouldered social roles that the public sector has failed to fulfill in order to secure the position of our country's contemporary art within the global art world, and that this history has been driven by individuals with strong vision and action.

Today, industrial structures have dramatically changed, with wealth concentrated in industries different from those of the 20th century. The global art world and museum sector are interconnected in increasingly complex and intricate ways, with rapid information sharing. Political and economic condi-

tions in each country are changing at a dizzying pace. Within this context, entirely new types of collectors have emerged in our country, backed by IT and financial industries, and we are beginning to see individuals who seek to support Japan's museum sector in unprecedented forms. Meanwhile, national and public museums, which rely heavily on operating grants and local government subsidies, are being called upon more than ever to secure private funding. This issue has already been recognized by European museums, some of which have transformed themselves toward American-style private fundraising models. The limitations of our country's tax incentive system for donations and the need to cultivate a culture of philanthropy have also been pointed out. In any case, museums are extremely unprofitable as business models. Nevertheless, collecting, exhibiting, and preserving contemporary art whose value has yet to be established is precisely what Tsutsumi called "the moral duty of those living in the same era." This is a vital mission that connects our era to the future. While the cases in this paper arose from different historical backgrounds and socioeconomic conditions, I hope that the new wealth generated by 21st-century industries will also give birth to vision and action that connects our era to the future, and that through collaboration with public institutions and public museum activities, contemporary culture will be passed on to the next generation.

**Endnotes:**

Editorial Note: this contribution is published within the dossier as a documentary appendix and consists of a survey of private art museums in Japan. Given its nature, it has not been subject to peer review.

- 1 National Council of Art Museums 2026.
- 2 Miyano 2002, p. 138.
- 3 Matsukata 1959, p. 4.
- 4 Ishida 1995, p. 17.
- 5 Yashiro 2019, p. 35.
- 6 Ishida 1995, pp. 94-96.
- 7 Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum 2026.
- 8 Kaneda 2012, p. 167.
- 9 Inoue 1998, p. 87.
- 10 Umemura 1955, p. 96.
- 11 Inoue 1998, pp. 188-189.
- 12 Ohara 1954 cited in Inoue 1998, p. 190.
- 13 Inoue 1998, p. 200.
- 14 Miyazaki 2002, p. 115.
- 15 Miyazaki 2002, p. 116.
- 16 Honma 1964, p. 119.
- 17 Honma 1964, p. 119.
- 18 Takashima 2002, p.10.
- 19 Kobayashi 2003, p. 38.
- 20 Tsutsumi 1975, n.p.
- 21 Sezon Museum of Art 1999, p. 329.
- 22 Nagae, 2010, p. 192.
- 23 Namba 2014, p. 97.
- 24 Hara 2022 in Bos 2022, p. 54.
- 25 *Hara Annual...* 1980, n.p.
- 26 Hariu 1980, n.p.
- 27 Mitsuyama 2009.
- 28 Fukutake 2010.
- 29 Mori 2012.
- 30 Mori 2012, p. 92.
- 31 Mori 2012, pp. 22-23.
- 32 Mori 2012, p. 23.

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