

VOICES From THE NEW YORKERS

"Americanized Japanese Trains" By Ashley Matarama

For train enthusiasts and the average person alike, Japanese trains and the systems surrounding them have a global reputation for being timely, modern, smooth-operating and clean. On the other hand, the same can't always be said for the MTA and NJT, two transportation companies in New York and neighboring New Jersey, respectively. Only recently are we beginning to see some hope with the introduction of a card tapping system for the New York subway, similar to the IC cards in Japan.



Now, it isn't surprising that much of the technology we use when we're out and about has at least in part come from Japan, such as elevators by Mitsubishi, Honda vehicles or Komatsu bulldozers off the top of my head. However, I was surprised to know that the Light Rail trains from NJT are also connected to a Japanese company.

When I was riding the train, I sat down and watched a promotional video for the Light Rail that was playing on their flat TV screen. At the end of the video, the name of a company called Kinkisharyo appeared for a few seconds. I searched on Google and found out it was an Osaka based train manufacturing company.

On a similar note, you might know that MTA subway cars in the city, as well as PATH train cars which connect New York and New Jersey, are manufactured by Kawasaki Heavy Industries based in Hyogo. Although I'm always glad to see Japan's connection to American life and vice versa, my only complaint is that I sometimes wish we would take better advantage of this imported Japanese technology. We may have the Japanese trains, but we don't have the same timeliness or cleanliness. I hope that's something we will continue to work on, but in the meantime I think Japan will continue to be a strong lead in train culture.

THE JAPAN VOICE

COOL JAPAN from New Yorkers' Viewpoints



Japanese Cartoonist Waki Yamato talks about the Tale of Genji at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Tale of Genji: Dreams at Dawn (Genji monogatari: Asaki yumemishi) Exhibition at The Met held a lecture with Yamato Waki, cartoonist, and Melissa McCormick, Professor of Japanese Art and Culture at Harvard University

Currently, The Met Fifth Avenue (1000 Fifth Avenue) is having an exhibition "THE TALE OF GENJI." And they hosted a free lecture with Yamato Waki, artist, and Melissa McCormick, Professor of Japanese Art and Culture at Harvard University on 8th.

Waki Yamato said "I just couldn't believe this when I heard that my works will be displayed in the Met. Now, I see my works at this exhibition. I'm very honored with this wonderful opportunity. I can describe face, expression, fashion and background with manga technique on one paper. I thought manga was easier to understand this classic and complicated

story which was written more than 1000 years ago. It took me to draw the manga "The Tale of Genji: Dreams at Dawn (Genji monogatari: Asaki yumemishi)" for 15 years. At first I thought this was a romantic

story. After three years, I realized the author Murasaki Shikibu wanted to write about the independent woman rather than the unhappy woman who was driven by men for their lives. Ukifune was so weak who was approached by two men, but I made her a more independent woman in the end."

Times have changed in the manga industry too. She still doesn't use the computer for her work. She scratches the screen tone by herself. She always think about the synopsis every month for 40 pages by herself for 10 days. Do the artwork with assistants for 8 days. And do some research as well. It's such a lonely work. I had stayed at the hotel for a week the other day and when I got out of the hotel season has changed. "I don't see any models for Genji in this world. I added my taste to unfold this complicated story when I drew this and that might attract my readers."

This is their first attempt to exhibit a manga in the museum history. (Photo & article by Ryoichi Miura /Translated by Chikako Iwasaki)



Asakiyumemishi ©Waki Yamato/Kodansha

Homemade Natto originated in Mito sold out at the spot sale fair

Spot sale fair to promote Natto Co, Ltd., biotech venture business company (Headquartered in Mito city, Ibaragi Prefecture) was held in Samrice in Chinatown, Manhattan on the 9th. Company president Miyashita also came to the fair and sold out all the 50 pieces of homemade natto prepared for that event.

Samrice, which is a Japanese ven-



From the left, Mr.Oe,Mr.Miyashita,Mr.Keisuke Kasaki, owner of Samrice

dor located in Canal Street Market where there are many classy vendors and stores with handmade products. Customers who go to that Market are relatively on the young side. Yuta Oe, one of the employees of Natto Co, Ltd. prepared for the spot sale fair a few months before the event. At the fair, he talked to the people walking in the market, and some of them stopped and listened to his explanation about natto. Company president Miyashita said, "Chinese oriented people and tourists showed interests in our products. The result of the event became very interesting since we could perform in the place where there is a market." He had a positive impression for the business. "There is a big project going on in the United States. I want to promote natto industry in the U.S.," enthusiastically said Mr. Miyashita.

Natto Co, Ltd declared to make contributions to solve the world food problem and environmental problems, and those contributions start from Mito city. Natto Co, Ltd is disseminating the possibilities of natto with various ideas, such as expanding the natto business in Africa, development of new products like "Natto Potato Chips" and "Natto Chocolate" and a plan to open the stores specialized in natto. The website of the company is "natto-jpn.co.jp". (Photo & article by Kaoru Komi / Translated by Satoshi Sueyoshi)

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Kimono Tumbler from Asakusa Tokyo Tatsumiya's original handmade came to Brooklyn New York

Asakusa Tatsumiya, an 80-year-old traditional kimono merchant recently produced premium "Kimono Tumblers" in Japan. It is also available for purchase at J+B Design (300 7th Street, Brooklyn). The Kimono Tumblers are decorated using a high-ranked pure silk Nishijin kimono sash, and none of the tumblers have the exact same pattern. You can have a one of a kind Japanese traditional design at coffee time. Norikazu Shibukawa, CEO of Asakusa Tatsumiya, says he wants to spread the wonderful culture of Japan to the United States with this Kimono Tumbler.

He designed the tumbler using only the kimono sash, the center piece considered to be the most important and smallest part and akin to the toro of tuna sashimi. The tumbler could only fit a thin sheet of paper between the clear outside cover and the tumbler itself. However, expert staff were able to insert kimono fabric between the clear cover and the cup base using a highly sophisticated technique. The price in Japan is 20,000 yen for the 380ml variant and 18,000 yen to 25,000 yen for the 220ml variant. For more information, contact 347-987-3217 or visit www.jplusdesign.com.

(Photo and Article by Ryoichi Miura/ Translated by Takako Hasegawa)



Shibukawa holds Kimono Tumbler

Advertisement for Maekake aprons. Includes text: "Now is the time to spread Japanese traditional craftsman's skill", "Art apron since Edo period", "Maekake aprons have been used since 19th century for the purposes of advertisement and guarding hips. It is made of 100% cotton, thick fabric. You can enjoy traditional craftsman's handmade aprons." Lists various Maekake products like 'YUME', 'Kotobuki', 'Daruma', 'Kokorozashi', and 'MAKOTO' with prices. Includes a URL: http://www.anything.ne.jp/newyork/ and contact information for Anything (Tokyo, Japan).

Charity for East Japan Earthquake Disaster. 5% of profit through your purchase will be donated for recovery from Earthquake disaster in Tohoku (directly donated to Ishinomaki City in Miyagi Prefecture). Includes Anything logo.