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Rugby World Cup Cheers from the United Nations

Staff from Japan and Australia participates in a friendly event As the Rugby World Cup is approaching in the 20th of this month, representatives from both Japan and Australia of UN called for diplomats all over the world. About 50 of staff and their family got together at the grass field in front of UN headquarters for a 7 on 7 tag rugby event.

At the event, former Australian national team player David Campese participated and gave lessons, while women's Australian national team "wallabies" appeared and kids wore uniforms to play. Mr. Campese swerved brilliantly and Japanese staff resulting a try.

UN ambassador Koro Bessho said "sports is an important flow to

peace. I hope to an emotional bond with the world through World Cup". During his time in Nada High School and Great Britain for

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study abroad, Bessho played rugby. This day he did not play, but passionately yelled for World Cup success from the UN field. (Photo and article by Ryoichi Miura/Translated by Kanta Hakamada)

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COOL JAPAN from New Yorkers' Viewpoints



Nishimonai Bon Odori, Gujo Odori, and Awa Odori from Tokushima.

Governors Island visitors had Japanese summer festival experiences

Japan Performing Arts, Inc. (President Yuko Hamada) brought the Japanese summer experience of Bon Odori dances to Governors Island. During the Obon summer holiday every

August, people dance Bon Odori at festivals all over Japan. This Governors Island event is notable for bringing Japan's Big Three Bon Odori dances into one venue, including

Nishimonai Bon Odori from Akita, Gujo Odori from Gifu, and Awa Odori from Tokushima. Governors Island visitors had hands-on Bon Odori dance sessions and more Japanese summer festival experiences here in New York. JPA's Bon Odori Festival was held on Friday, August 30 and Saturday, August 31 with a performance on Outlook Hill. About 12,000 people visited the island and enjoyed the Bon Odori. (Ryoichi Miura/Photo: Robert & Yoko Essel)

Art at NY, overcoming handicaps Cheers for Takayuki Matsumine's expression

Wearing an astronaut-like white cloth and goggles, came Takayuki Matsumine (a.k.a. Taka). At the WhiteBox Harlem Summer Performance Series Finale, Taka ordered his two assistants to lay him down on the canvas. The two splashes paint all over Taka's body, including his face. After the shape of a human is created with paint, Taka's assistants helped him get his clothes off. He started drawing with a paintbrush in his

mouth. What he drew was a rose, which symbolizes "hope" in Taka's artworks. After he finished painting, he turned to the crowd and screamed joyfully "Here is my ability, thank you New York!"

Ski accident in 2001 injured his spinal cord and forced Taka to live on a wheelchair. He came to Los Angeles by himself and Met industrial art in 2013 at Santa Monica College. "I am happy I got to express my art in New York where I always dreamed of. I will keep aiming high and continue performing".

Fumi Yoshi, the Shamisen player, played energetically to the crowd. (Photo and Article by Ryoichi Miura/Translated by Kanta Hakamada)



Taka is painting with his mouth.

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NY SEIKATSU WOMAN

Artist Aomi Kikuchi Reflecting on Her Own Fine Art

In the spring of this year, Aomi Kikuchi finished her years of graduate school at the Pratt Institute. Two years ago, she enrolled upon receiving a \$3,000 grant. While the number of Japanese youth study abroad has significantly decreased, this study abroad for art was a challenge for 56-year-old Kikuchi who had never experienced a study abroad program. In addition, it is said that Pratt has rarely ever had a Japanese student in their program. Ms. Kikuchi says that she wants young people and even those who finished parenting to stay motivated to challenge themselves.

Kikuchi was born in Iga City of Mie Prefecture. While she advanced to Mie Prefectural Ueno Senior High School, one of the leading schools in the prefecture, she had to enroll in a tuition-free national nursing midwifery school because of financial reasons. One day in the hospital's courtyard, she picked up a paper airplane that was thrown from one of the rooms; inside, a child had expressed their feelings of lost hope. Reading the words, Kikuchi realized how medical care can extend one's life but not necessarily enhance its quality. Therefore, she reconsidered the importance of having the hope to live, which could be influenced by touching one's heart with beauty and joy.

Leaving behind the medical world, Kikuchi enrolled into Vantan Design Institute at the age of 21, determined to pursue art as her lifework. A year later, she joined Quatre Saisons under the growing designer brand BIGI GROUP. She had three children after getting married to the owner and former chairman of Vantan, Oribe Kikuchi. However, after a bereavement in 2010 and her children's college graduation, she moved to America and enrolled in Pratt. While going to graduate school, she was active as a dyer specializing in the use of Yuzen-dyeing and natural plant dyeing. She has had many displays and individual exhibitions in places such as the Public Relations Center Gallery of the Consulate General of Japan in New York, Chion-in of Kyoto and more venues overseas.

She was greatly shocked by a Pratt professor's words: "Art does not require beauty nor technique." For Kikuchi, this sounded like a complete denial of Japanese art, "because in Japanese, the word 'art' is translated to *bijutsu* and *geijutsu*, literally meaning 'beauty' and 'technique.'" she explained. While considering these two interpretations on extreme ends, she still questions what art really is. Going forward, she is looking to put a spotlight on the techniques that she cultivated in Yuzen-dyeing. (Ryoichi Miura/Translated by Ai Omae)



Aomi Kikuchi