

Corporate Mécénat Activities Supporting Japanese Fine Arts with a Focus on Crafts

—As a Bridge between Tradition and Modernity

FY2022 Mécénat Associate
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Introduction

In this paper, I will attempt to identify one possible form of art patronage today from the relationship between the crafts, a multifaceted art genre, and private sector organizations, based on the results of interviews with two corporations, Shiseido Co. and Heisei Corporation, which have developed mécénat activities with a focus on crafts.

By way of introduction, I would like to relate a personal background story leading up to the interviews with the corporations on this theme. I, the author, have been learning the traditional Japanese fine art of Bonseki (Kiyohara school) for the past 20 years as a personal study project. While its origins date back to the Asuka period (6th to 7th century A.D.) as a form of art practiced alongside the culture of the tea-ceremony room, it is extremely rare for people in modern society to have seen or heard of Bonseki. Exhibitions of Bonseki are organized independently by the individual schools and are therefore rather more intimate events than the kind of art exhibitions that are usually featured in the external media. Nevertheless, each of these schools has undertaken efforts to disseminate their work to the outside world, for example by exhibiting in museums and galleries, as well as introducing their arts abroad (this is an initiative of the Kasumi Kuyo-kai).

March 2022 was a turning point. There was a call from a gallery about a comprehensive Bonseki exhibition, which would showcase all the orthodox schools of Bonseki. In fact, the gallery was Heisei Memorial Art Gallery, operated by the Heisei Corporation construction company, and this gallery was one of the subjects of the interviews for this paper. I will discuss this exhibition in detail later on, but I considered this to be the moment when the Bonseki artform as a whole was introduced to the public by an external organization, without any boundaries between schools or artists, from an art history perspective for the first time, at least in modern times¹. It seemed to be an extraordinarily difficult task for a corporate organization to take up the relatively unknown art genre of Bonseki, given the uncertainty regarding its potential to attract visitors, as well as the awkwardness of handling pieces in an exhibition. In its special exhibitions, the Heisei Memorial Art Gallery usually features many crafts, which represent another art genre that is often regarded as less prestigious than fine art. The author was already involved in research on corporate mécénat as the member of the mécénat associates in the 9th term at the time of this event, and therefore wished to report on the gallery, which led to the writing of this article on this theme.

It is rare to find an art facility that constantly introduces crafts from a new perspective and is neither a public or major art museum nor a crafts museum which introduces crafts as a regional specialty. In such a context, the SHISEIDO ART HOUSE operated by Shiseido, long a prominent example of corporate mécénat in Japan, is a particularly valuable example, and is considered indispensable when discussing corporate mécénat in the field of crafts. Since the author was

¹ Prior to the Bonseki exhibition in 2022, the Gallery organized the special Namiko Asai and Sowa Isono Bonseki Exhibition in March 2020, featuring two Bonseki artists. However, the exhibition was subsequently cancelled in the middle of its duration due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

interested in finding out more about its 'Craft for All of Us' Exhibition, a series of craft exhibitions organized by SHISEIDO ART HOUSE, the company was chosen as the subject of this interview. SHISEIDO ART HOUSE mainly collects and exhibits pieces to the public from the Tsubaki-kai exhibition and The Exhibition of Contemporary Crafts held at the SHISEIDO GALLERY in Ginza, Tokyo. The 'Craft for All of Us' Exhibition was a new addition to this program. Having early on focused on introducing and collecting pieces by craft artists together with fine arts, Shiseido's activities represented a pioneering example of art patronage that was both comprehensive in its support and organized in terms of support structures.

1. Background: From Art Patronage by Businesspersons to Corporate Mécénat

With a brief look at the history of patronage activities for Japanese fine arts after the modern era, before introducing mécénat activities with a focus on crafts, this paper will provide an overall picture of the recent corporate mécénat dealing with fine arts in Japan.

The foundation of fine art collection as well as public display activities in post-modern Japan owes much to the patronage of businesspersons. Throughout the Meiji, Taisho and Showa eras, prominent businesspersons contributed to the development of the banking, railway and other industries, and energetically supported contemporary artists and purchased pieces of classical art. Today, many of the private museums with collections of Japanese fine art have been established primarily for the purpose of preserving and displaying the collections of businesspersons. The list below summarizes some of the major museums.

[Major Art Museums with Collections of Japanese Fine Art Collected by Businesspersons]

Name of Facility	Year of Opening	Name of Businessperson	Corporate/Name of Zaibatsu, Title
Okura Museum of Art	1917	Kihachiro Okura / Kishichiro Okura	Founder and Second General Manager of Okura Zaibatsu
Ohara Museum of Art	1930	Magosaburo Ohara	Second-Generation President of Kurabo Industries Ltd.
Nezu Museum	1941	Kaichiro Nezu I	President of Tobu Railway Company Ltd., Founder of Nezu Zaibatsu
Artizon Museum *the former Bridgestone Museum of Art	1952	Shojiro Ishibashi	Founder of Bridgestone Corporation
Itsuo Art Museum	1957	Ichizo Kobayashi	Founder of Hankyu Toho Group

The Gotoh Museum	1960	Keita Gotoh	Founder of Tokyo Express Electric Railway Share Company
Sen-Oku Hakukokan Museum	1960	Tomoito Sumitomo / Tomonari Sumitomo	15th and 16th heads of the Sumitomo family
Suntory Museum of Art	1961	Keizo Saji	Second President of Suntory Holdings Limited
Yamatane Museum of Art	1966	Taneji Yamazaki	Founder of Yamatane Securities Co., Ltd.
Idemitsu Museum of Arts	1966	Sazo Idemitsu	Founder of Idemitsu Kosan Co., Ltd.
Ota Memorial Museum of Art	1980	Seizo Ota V	President of Toho Mutual Life Insurance Company
Nomura Art Museum	1984	Tokushichi Nomura II	Founder of Nomura Group Zaibatsu
Kawamura Memorial DIC Museum of Art	1990	Katsumi Kawamura	Second-Generation President of Dainippon Ink and Chemicals, Inc.
Seikado Bunko Art Museum	1992	Yanosuke Iwasaki / Koyata Iwasaki	Second-Generation and Fourth-Generation Presidents of Mitsubishi
Asahi Group Oyamazaki Villa Museum of Art	1996	Tamesaburo Yamamoto	First President of Asahi Breweries, Ltd.
Mitsui Memorial Museum	2005	*Collected and inherited objects of Mitsui Family	Mitsui Group

*Includes museums where Western art is the main collection

The examples above reveal the fact that in the past, the practice of art patronage, which was carried out by the leading figures of major private companies—particularly those known as the ‘founders’ family’—was an activity for contributing to society that was pursued in a different direction to business, and was shared as a mission worthy of serious commitment, rather than simply as a pastime for the upper classes. The act of art patronage was a way of continuously demonstrating to both themselves and to the outside world that businesspersons were active participants in culture as well as in the economy.

As industries became more systematically stabilized and shifted away from the era of promotion

of industry, the image and role of the businesspersons as the face of the times and the nature of the founder families who inherited the business no longer always reflected the mainstream. Around the same time, the main actors in art patronage shifted from individual businesspersons to corporate organizations. The practice of collecting art by businesspersons can therefore be seen as a prehistory of corporate mécénat, but according to Taneo Kato, up until the 1980s, such activities were still largely the domain of “outstanding business leaders taking the initiative,” and could still be described as “mécénat activities of the era of patrons².” However, such leaders eventually faced the pressing need to pass on their mécénat activities to the next generation of their company. Kato calls this a “shift from patronage-style mécénat to organizational mécénat³,” and this is exactly what happened around 1990, when the Association for Corporate Support of the Arts was established.

Following the 1990s, when the term “corporate mécénat” was coined to describe the practice of companies providing support for the arts and culture, the forms of corporate patronage diversified, and it was no longer necessarily the case that art patronage was primarily based in art institutions. As typical examples of new forms of art support, we can see the emergence of project-based town planning and mécénat activities, such as the “Benesse Art Site Naoshima” developed by Benesse Holdings, Inc. and the Fukutake Foundation on the islands of the Seto Inland Sea, and the series of art events sponsored by Chishima Real Estate Co., Ltd. and the Chishima Foundation for Creative Osaka, mainly in the Kitakagaya area of Osaka City. Furthermore, as part of its mécénat activities, the Dai-ichi Life Insurance Company, Limited has been organizing the VOCA exhibition every year since 1994, where two-dimensional artwork by emerging artists under the age of 40 is exhibited at the Ueno Royal Museum through a selection process by a team of experts made up of curators, critics and researchers. In this unique form of activity, the selection of artwork is left to outside experts, and Dai-ichi Life then purchases the winning artworks and re-exhibits them in its own gallery. In parallel with this trend of diversification, as a prime case of the organization of mécénat activities, there has been an increase in the number of companies that have established foundations to support these activities. In addition, corporate sponsorships for art festivals and exhibitions have become quite common.

Amid the ongoing organization and diversification of corporate mécénat activities, it seems that there is a need to re-examine the unique circumstances of corporate mécénat that is organized around operating facilities like galleries. Features of the operation of art museums and galleries, not limited to corporate mécénat, include: (1) year-round planning and operations, (2) museum curators devising the content of exhibitions, (3) exhibition methods being devised as aspects of spatial design for the exhibition rooms, and (4) artists’ intentions being conveyed to visitors

² The Investment Effects on Arts and Culture: Mécénat and the Creative Economy (Suiyosha, 2018), p. 250. Taneo Kato.

³ Same as above.

(understanding the pieces and creating materials for each exhibition period). If a corporate entity is to operate an art facility, it must first create a dedicated structure within the organization (a department if internal, or a foundation if external) that can devote itself to the practice of mécénat activities. As balancers, people involved in mécénat activities must be aware of the consistency between the corporate business and the content of the mécénat activities, and at times they are required to promote the meaningfulness of the mécénat activities within their own organization. In some cases, this type of balancing act with their business activities makes the operation of the facilities more complex, but in other cases, there could also be an aspect of corporate business activities providing the main support for the activities of the corporate mécénat. It is the author's great privilege to show the current state of art facilities in corporate mécénat as the newest state of art patronage, which has evolved from individual investment to organized support, through interviews with the corporations examined in this survey.

2. Research Objectives

The research theme of this study, "Mécénat for crafts," was mainly formulated around the following two questions: In the period of transition from patronage by individuals to systematic corporate patronage, the proposition in the field of art is: "Is it possible for organizations to provide continuous patronage?" In essence, patronage is an act of voluntarily providing artists with support based on a particular intention, hence it is generally assumed to be an initiative taken by individuals, even if they are from prominent families or large corporations. The first question, then, is this: As mécénat activities have become more organized, has identifying and selecting contemporary artists who deserve support become a much more difficult task? In this regard, Yoshiharu Fukuhara (currently honorary chairperson of Shiseido and honorary chairperson of the Association for Corporate Support of the Arts), who was a key figure during the transition period from individual patronage by corporate owners to systematic corporate patronage, has made the following comment:

All that is required of a company that aspires to support the arts and culture is the ambition of its management as well as the company's philosophy. In particular, this requires the ability to discern the quality of the art being supported. And this could come about only by making constant efforts to be engaged with high-quality culture and art⁴.

The second question involves the characteristics of the art genre of crafts. Crafts are at times local specialties that highlight the identity of a particular region or nation; offerings to gods, Buddhas or royalty; tools used in people's everyday lives; or pure works of art that are displayed and

⁴ The Movement of Mécénat, The Heart of Mécénat (KYURYUDO ART PUBLISHING CO., LTD. 2000), p. 14. Yoshiharu Fukuhara.

appreciated in exhibition rooms. The art of crafts has developed in tandem with the context of industry rather than fine art. In other words, craft works are ubiquitous and are not limited to museums, but exist in various forms in all kinds of places, from temples and shrines to the kitchens of ordinary homes. In the field of art history, the ubiquity of crafts often leads to a decentralization of perspectives on the subject, making it difficult to define and treat them as a genre. The second question of this research, then, is: How is the collection and dissemination of such crafts, which have innumerable facets, possible in the modern age from a neutral stance that does not favor any one aspect—not for a specific regional development aim, and of course not as a servant of gods, Buddhas or royalty? Behind this question there is also an underlying concern that, although the collections of the museums listed in the table above include crafts, these tend not to be expanded much beyond the items collected by the businesspersons of the past, and so there is a disconnect between these pieces and the works of craft artists who have been actively working in recent years.

The main criterion for the selection of the facilities to be interviewed this time was organizations that exhibit artworks with a focus on crafts. However, the author also looked at organizations supporting contemporary craft artists who use traditional techniques, based on the issues mentioned above.

3. SHISEIDO ART HOUSE of Shiseido Company, Limited

An interview with SHISEIDO ART HOUSE of Shiseido Company, Limited, was conducted as outlined below.

Date: October 14th, 2022

Location: Online

Interviewee: Mr. Kenichiro Ito, Director of SHISEIDO ART HOUSE

3.1. SHISEIDO ART HOUSE: Facility Profile

SHISEIDO ART HOUSE is an art museum facility operated by Shiseido Company, Limited, located in Kakegawa, Shizuoka Prefecture. The building was designed by Shinsuke Takamiya and Yoshio Taniguchi⁵, first opened in 1978, and reopened after renovation in 2002. The facility mainly houses and exhibits artworks purchased by Shiseido from pieces exhibited at the Tsubaki-kai exhibition, which has been hosted at the SHISEIDO GALLERY in Ginza (opened in 1919) since 1947, and The Exhibition of Contemporary Crafts, which was held between 1975 and 1995. The museum was founded with a view to preventing the dispersion of the corporate cultural assets that Shiseido had built up over the years, such as the artworks and designs used in its advertising, and to making them available for public exhibition.



Exterior of SHISEIDO ART HOUSE (courtesy of SHISEIDO ART HOUSE)

Prior to its renovation, the ART HOUSE had also collected advertising materials such as posters and product packages produced by Shiseido Advertising Creation Department, in addition to the artworks exhibited in the SHISEIDO GALLERY. One half was dedicated to artworks and the other half to advertising materials, with both on display. Shiseido Corporate Museum was established in

⁵ The facility received the AIJ Prize for Architectural Design in 1979 and the 9th JIA 25 Year Prize in 2010.

1992 as an annex to the ART HOUSE, and special exhibitions focusing on the field of art started to be held at the ART HOUSE in the latter half of the 1990s. To coincide with the 2002 reopening, the advertising materials collection was moved to the Corporate Museum, and the ART HOUSE began to make full use of the art collection for exhibitions. Exhibits at the ART HOUSE after the renovation have covered a wide range of themes, including perfume bottles, tapestries, color-painted porcelain, prints and bamboo crafts. In addition to the exhibitions of crafts, the museum also held special exhibitions connected with the SHISEIDO GALLERY, such as the Komai Tetsuro Exhibition — Prints from the Fukuhara Collection Between the Dark of Night and the Light Commemorating the 90th Anniversary of the Artist's Birth (2010) and exhibitions that retrospectively looked at Shiseido's corporate culture, utilizing the collections of the Shiseido Corporate Museum, as well as exhibitions of artists who have connections to Shiseido Company, including Ayao Yamana and Roso Fukuhara.



Ginza, Tsubaki, and Shiseido 2022 (Courtesy of SHISEIDO ART HOUSE)

The massive records of the exhibitions held at the SHISEIDO GALLERY from its establishment to 1994, covering a period of 75 years, have been compiled and archived in a book entitled SHISEIDO GALLERY: 75 Years of History, 1919-1994 (SHISEIDO Corporate Culture Department, 1995). However, the artworks that have been exhibited in the past are still living on. The approach of the ART HOUSE, which brings back to life artworks that were once exhibited at The Exhibition of Contemporary Crafts and then incorporated into its collection through its new exhibitions, shows us the ideal form of archiving and making use of artwork. This reflects the stance of not only supporting the artists through one-off exhibitions, but also of valuing and continuing to protect and make use of their artwork as an asset of the company and society.

3.2. Corporate Cultural Department: Inheritance of Corporate Philosophy

Currently, SHISEIDO ART HOUSE is managed, planned and operated by the Art & Heritage Management Department, which was previously the Corporate Culture Department first

established in 1990 by then-president Yoshiharu Fukuhara. This event occurred in the same year as the founding of the Association for Corporate Support of the Arts, in which he played a leading role.

The objectives of the corporate cultural activities, as Mr. Ito says, are to create a centralized system for managing the cultural resources generated within the company, to bring the values of various art and cultural activities from society into the company, and to disseminate them from the company to the outside world, as well as to make cultural contributions to society. Takao Kakizaki, former head of the Corporate Culture Department, explains the Corporate Culture Department as follows in his book:

The Corporate Culture Department, unlike the conventional way of viewing “corporate culture” in terms of corporate ethos and philosophy, takes the intellectual and aesthetic assets created by the company and views them as part of its management assets, preserving and recording their accumulation and directing them with an eye to the future, and, from the perspective of the relationship between corporate and culture, to carry out cultural support (mécénat) activities as one of its social contribution activities, which is expected of companies today. The department was established with these two roles in mind⁶.

The book also noted that “while absorbing social movements and changes (sensitively perceived by artists), supporting artists and at the same time absorbing new beauty and communicating it within the organization itself” was one of the missions of the department⁷. The presence of these corporate cultural activities, inherited, nurtured and carried on within the company, is something that is also believed to be significantly related to the exhibition policy of SHISEIDO ART HOUSE.

According to Mr. Ito, “exhibitions serve as a place for communication for the corporation, as well as a means of enhancing corporate image and branding.” In essence, the decisions about which artworks to exhibit and how to present them are what leads to the formation of the corporate identity of Shiseido.

The curators plan the exhibitions at SHISEIDO ART HOUSE, and those plans go through an organized process to get approval. One of the things examined in this process is whether the message expressed by the exhibition is fitting for the image of the Shiseido Company. Mr. Ito made an intriguing comment in this regard, saying: “Although it is not clearly defined in writing, we have a certain kind of aesthetic sense that is commonly shared within the company.” Considering the history of the Corporate Culture Department mentioned earlier, it is inferred that what Mr. Ito

⁶ Revive, Aesthetic Sense. —Afterword of the Afterword for 75-Year History of the SHISEIDO GALLERY, (SHISEIDO Corporate Culture Department, 1997) p. 8., Takao Kakizaki

⁷ pp. 15-16 of the aforementioned work.

referred to as “aesthetic sense” was not simply a matter of taste or preference, but included something like an unshakable pride resulting from Shiseido's long history of art and cultural activities, the values of its main business, as well as its leading role in Japanese mécénat activities.

3.3. Exhibition Case Study 1: From the Exhibition of Contemporary Crafts to ‘Craft for All of Us’ Exhibition

The Exhibition of Contemporary Crafts, held at the SHISEIDO GALLERY, was the brainchild of Atsuo Imaizumi, a former director of the National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, and an art critic with very close ties to the gallery. Beginning in 1975, the exhibition continued through to 1995. The exhibition was an attempt to showcase new pieces by craft artists all at the same time, across a wide range of genres, including ceramics, lacquerware, metalwork and dyeing/textiles. In much the same way as the Tsubaki-kai was presenting its own unique introductions to the artists of the day, the Exhibition of Contemporary Crafts was also uncovering the talents of artists who later became very famous, such as Fukumi Shimura, the dyeing artist. It was a novel experiment at that time in the history of the art world to encourage artists who preserve traditional techniques to engage in free-form creation. Shiseido purchased some of the artworks created for The Exhibition of Contemporary Crafts and they remain in the collection of the ART HOUSE in Kakegawa. After 2002, when SHISEIDO ART HOUSE shifted its focus fully on art, it became a venue for exhibitions of the collections of The Exhibition of Contemporary Crafts, with displays organized by genre, theme and artist.

In 2015, The 'Craft for All of Us' Exhibition series was a new addition to this program. The subtitle of the exhibition is “Shiseido proposals for more beautiful lives”. The five initial members of the group from 2015 to 2017 were Imaemon Imaizumi XIV and Koichi Uchida, who were ceramic artists, Iwao Matsushima from the world of glass craft, and Japanese lacquerware specialists Norihiko Ogura and Yasuko Konishi. The second group of five members, who were selected in 2019, are Imaemon Imaizumi XIV, a ceramic artist; Iori Nakajo and Saki Mizuguchi, Japanese lacquer artists who participated in the first and second exhibitions; Yohey Yoshiha, a metalwork artist; and Masao Adachi, a glass artist. Exhibitions have been held in the following periods.

Exhibition periods for the ‘Craft for All of Us’ Exhibition:

1st 'Craft for All of Us' Exhibition: January 15th to March 29th, 2015

2nd 'Craft for All of Us' Exhibition: January 15th to April 3rd, 2016

3rd 'Craft for All of Us' Exhibition: July 4th to September 24th, 2017

'Craft for All of Us – Selections' Exhibition: September 11th to November 25th, 2018

1st 'Craft for All of Us II' Exhibition: September 25th to December 15th, 2019

2nd 'Craft for All of Us II' Exhibition: January 19th to April 23rd, 2021

3rd 'Craft for All of Us II' Exhibition: April 27th to August 12th, 2022



1st 'Craft for All of Us' Exhibition: 2015 (Courtesy of SHISEIDO ART HOUSE)



3rd 'Craft for All of Us II' Exhibition: 2022 (Courtesy of SHISEIDO ART HOUSE)

According to Mr. Ito, the 'Craft for All of Us' Exhibition was based on the following idea:

Rather than categorizing the finished craft works as standalone art objects by genre, artist or technique, perhaps we could create more of a “living” exhibition to give a different perspective on the pieces that have been displayed in the past. Since craft is, by its very nature, an applied art form that possesses a function that is intended to be used, rather than removing that function and presenting it as fine art, could we not try to exhibit the pieces in such a way that they can go back to the nature of being used, by incorporating them into scenes of everyday life?

Guided by this idea, the 'Craft for All of Us' Exhibition features a recreated interior space filled

with a variety of craft objects. At the majority of traditional art exhibitions, crafts are presented in small categories such as ceramics, Japanese lacquerware, metalwork and dyeing. However, in Japan's long-standing lifestyle, various crafts must have been used and were "living" in the home in a way that met the needs of daily life. For example, Japanese lacquerware, pottery and iron kettles were used in the same setting, and textiles would have been in the same room.

There was a tendency at The Exhibition of Contemporary Crafts at the SHISEIDO GALLERY to view crafts as individual, independent art objects, due to the need to encourage the free expressiveness of crafts, which are often perceived as being more dependent on tradition and technique than forms such as painting and sculpture. Doing so in parallel with the Tsubaki-kai fine art exhibition was of great significance for Shiseido. The 'Craft for All of Us' Exhibition takes a different perspective from that of The Exhibition of Contemporary Crafts and is "an attempt to once again bring craft products, which have become independent as art pieces from the context of everyday life, back into our lives," explains Ito. He stated that the underlying concept of the 'Craft for All of Us' Exhibition was that, as a result of the elaboration of techniques and the production of grandiose crafts, they have become things that are kept carefully displayed or stored in the house, and people feel that they are not things that should be used.

He explained that the crafts shown in the 'Craft for All of Us' Exhibition were produced based on the following procedures. First of all, the organizers would ask the participating craft artists to agree to the aims behind the exhibition. After that, they would have the artists proceed to create the works for the exhibition. The idea of having artists create new pieces for each exhibition is a practice that has been carried over from The Exhibition of Contemporary Crafts. Given the nature of the 'Craft for All of Us' Exhibition, where craft artists from different genres come together to create works for the same space, the participating artists would gather together to discuss the exhibition and share their ideas for the scenes of daily life that they would be creating, and then decide what they would create individually. They say that this kind of collaborative creative process was developed over time.

For the 'Craft for All of Us' Exhibition, all the participating artists work on their crafts in the same space, sharing an equal standing. Whether the artists are aware of it or not, while working with traditional craft works, they are taking on the collaborative approach that also forms a part of the trends in contemporary art.

Mr. Ito explains: "While it is true that elaborating on technique is one way of establishing a craft, I would say that perhaps the true aesthetic and creativity of living craft lies in harmonizing it with the way we perceive the seasons, which in turn is closely linked to Japanese lifestyle culture, and in appreciating it as an arrangement for the interior of our living spaces." Packaging for cosmetics and perfume bottles are also items that can be freely combined with other objects in our daily lives. The way in which craft is seen as art rooted in our life is deeply connected to the aesthetics of day-to-day life that Shiseido has been presenting to the world.

3.4. Exhibition Case Study 2: A look at the arts on the periphery

As the interview carried on, it appeared that the curation policy behind the 'Craft for All of Us' Exhibition was inherited not only from The Exhibition of Contemporary Crafts but also from the elements seen in Shiseido's art patronage in general. In light of this, Mr. Ito also spoke about the exhibitions held at the SHISEIDO GALLERY from the 1990s to the 2000s, and an interesting connection became apparent⁸.

The SHISEIDO GALLERY in Ginza has long held exhibitions of little-known artists and of art themes that have generally been considered minor. For example, the Asia Sampo (Beijing Seoul Tokyo Taipei After Kitsch Cute Promenade in Asia) special exhibition held in 1994 invited Fei Dawei, a Chinese curator, and featured Chinese contemporary art, which had begun to attract global attention at the time, as well as introducing artists from other East Asian countries to Japan.

In addition, ever since the SHISEIDO GALLERY was established as a "display space" in 1919, it has tended to feature more female artists. The exhibitions of items such as dressers, folding fans, umbrellas and scarves that were held there around 1920 were mainly of works by women, and as early as 1921, the first solo exhibition by a female artist was held at the GALLERY: the Miss Nan (Epilena Nan; see author's comment) Western-style Painting Exhibition. The first solo exhibition by a Japanese female artist, the Kikuyo Nakada Works Exhibition, was held in 1930, and since then there have been numerous exhibitions by female artists, including the Michiko Yamawaki Bauhaus Hand-Woven Textiles Exhibition in 1933⁹. The 11 female artists who gathered for the exhibition Art Tells the Times: Works by Woman Artists - SHISEIDO GALLERY 90th Anniversary Exhibition (August 25th to October 18th, 2009) are all highly respected figures in the art world (Noe Aoki, Ruri Iwata, Ai Kitahara, Kimsooja, Sam Taylor-Wood, Toeko Tatsuno, Minako Nishiyama, Pipilotti Rist, Mariko Mori, Tomoko Yoneda, Laura Owens). Furthermore, all of these artists exhibited at the SHISEIDO GALLERY between the 1990s and 2000s.

As part of its innovative approach to supporting the arts, The Ginza Art Space, another Shiseido art exhibition facility, operated from 1975 to 2001 and held a series of exhibitions of outsider art between 1991 and 2001. In 1993, when the legendary exhibition Parallel Visions: Modern Artists and Outsider Art (held in Tokyo from September 30th to December 12th, 1993), which originated and toured from Los Angeles, was held at the Setagaya Art Museum, Shiseido also supported the exhibition as a sponsor.

By looking at these developments, we can see that SHISEIDO's art patronage has been

⁸ I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Ito for his generosity in responding to the author's sudden questions, which were not included in the original list of questions, and for his detailed answers.

⁹ Art Tells the Times: Works by Woman Artists, SHISEIDO Corporate Culture Department, 2010. See the chronological table, History of the Gallery (excerpt) on pp. 30-37.

pioneering in its support for what is different from authoritative art and in the diversity of its artists. There are examples in which these initiatives later resulted in support for artists who would grow to play leading roles in Japanese art, thereby paving the way for contemporary art trends. Shiseido's particular focus on arts on the periphery, or those which do not fit into the existing art system, is thought to be perhaps not so much because of its art curation strategy, but because of its stance as a corporation that gets close to the lifestyle or the culture in women's everyday lives. The philosophy of the corporation is also mildly reflected in the art exhibitions at the SHISEIDO GALLERY, the Ginza Art Space, and SHISEIDO ART HOUSE, and rather than being a hindrance to curation, it can even be said that the corporation has succeeded from the standpoint of a private corporation in renovating the way in which art engages with the public through its exhibitions of art that has not yet been organized within the framework of academic art, in a way that is unconventional for a regular art museum.

4. Heisei Memorial Art Gallery of Heisei Corporation

The interview with Heisei Memorial Art Gallery of Heisei Corporation was conducted as outlined below.

Date: November 11th, 2022

Location: Setagaya Branch Office of Heisei Corporation

Interviewees: Norikazu Mitamura, Chief of Heisei Memorial Art Gallery; Izumi Mitamura, Curator at Heisei Memorial Art Gallery

4.1. Heisei Memorial Art Gallery of Heisei Corporation: Facility Profile

The Heisei Memorial Art Gallery is a gallery located in Setagaya, Tokyo, and is operated by Heisei Corporation. Heisei Corporation is a construction company established in 1989, headquartered in Numazu City, Shizuoka Prefecture. The Heisei Memorial Art Gallery opened in November 2014 in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the company's founding and is attached to the company's Setagaya branch. The gallery holds around 10 special exhibitions a year, with exhibition periods ranging from two to six weeks. The art genres on exhibit are wide-ranging, including lacquerware, glasswork, sculpture, Japanese-style painting and photography.



Left: Norio Hara, The World of Cloisonne Engraving Works, 2021
 Right: Arisumi Mitamura Lacquerware Exhibition, The Golden Fantasy, 2016
 (Both are courtesy of Heisei Memorial Art Gallery)

In addition to exhibitions, the gallery also holds a number of events such as workshops and lectures to familiarize people with the world of crafts¹⁰. The corporation also launched the Heisei Geijutsu Award scholarship program for Tokyo University of the Arts students in 2015 and holds annual exhibitions of artwork by the award-winning artists.

4.2. Connecting the Nurturing of "Craftsmanship" in Corporate Practice and the Arts

Artworks are displayed in the gallery space on the first floor and the showroom on the second first floor at Heisei Memorial Art Gallery. The artworks which are on display for the special exhibition are placed in the company showroom, allowing visitors to the showroom to catch a glimpse of the art as part of the company's proposals for living spaces. The company says that this arrangement encourages customers considering custom-built homes to expand their imaginations of how their homes could look when combined with artwork, stimulating ideas about how much extra space would be needed to display a vase, for example. The approach of viewing architecture and artwork as elements that make up the same living space stems from the fact that the Heisei Corporation founder and president, Hisao Akimoto, is also a passionate collector of Meizan Yabu's and other craft pieces¹¹.

Izumi Mitamura says that, for the artists and curators, the process of installing the artwork in the showroom is a time of learning and discovery, as well as an opportunity to highlight the company's

¹⁰ The corporation suspended the holding of these events during the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹¹ Meizan Yabu (1853-1934) was a Satsuma ware artist and ceramic painter who was active during the Meiji and Taisho periods. His work is characterized by the extremely fine detail of his ceramic paintings. He was also an entrepreneur who established a pottery painting studio in Nakanoshima, Osaka, and promoted the export of Satsuma ware to Western countries. While there are many collectors of Meizan Yabu's works, including the British Museum and businesspersons, Hisao Akimoto had a particularly large number of around 160 pieces, and these were added to the collection of Heisei Corporation. See the p. 42 of *The Glorious World of Yabu Meizan (Trade Edition)*, Inaho Shobo, 2019 (Author/Editor: Yoshie Itani).

business to its customers. The artists and curators discuss together how the artworks would look in different locations in a living room or a Japanese-style room, and then decide on the best place for each piece through a process of trial and error. They say the way the works on display look completely different depending on the location, and this often surprises the artists themselves. The showroom display, aiming for a synergistic effect between architecture and artwork, symbolizes the closeness of the relationship between Heisei Corporation's business and its mécénat activities. In 2020, the company built the Heisei Art Salon within its headquarters facility in Numazu and is also proposing to establish a space that fuses architecture and artwork.

The defining characteristic of Heisei Corporation as a construction company is that it nurtures carpenters as craftspeople with the woodworking skills to be able to assemble components on-site while adjusting their parts. From taking orders to design, implementation and after-sales maintenance, the company carries out the entire construction process in-house, with as little outsourcing as possible. As of 2021, the company employs more than 200 carpenters with the advanced design and technical skills to carry out such work¹². In Japan today, the age group of carpenters is concentrated in the 50s and 60s, but Heisei Corporation is focused on passing on carpentry skills and techniques to young people who have just graduated from art or architecture departments. The company deals in a wide range of architecture, from custom-built homes to rental apartments and commercial facilities, but it has particular expertise in traditional techniques such as wooden construction and lacquer painting, and has won many awards including the Good Design Award and the Wood Design Award. This is a construction company that is active in a field that is the polar opposite of the recent trend towards the unitization of buildings.

This creative corporate culture has also resulted in a strong connection between the company's business and the Heisei Memorial Art Gallery. When launching a new exhibition, a briefing session is held for employees. They say that before the COVID-19 pandemic, the curators and artists themselves would give briefings to employees at the Setagaya Branch Office. And since the pandemic, instead of giving in-person briefings on the exhibition, they have created videos introducing the exhibits and distributed these to the employees.

One activity that is particularly worth noting is the annual Cultural Arts Festival, in which employees take on the challenge of creating works of art. For the employees, this is an occasion to hone their skills as craftspeople who are capable of hand-carving through freestyle artistic creation, while also enjoying the opportunity to cultivate their aesthetic sense for art through mutual evaluation. Although this is an event that is held within the company, some of the art produced is exhibited at the Setagaya Branch Office. What is more surprising is that two of the company's carpenters have been successfully accepted for the Japan Fine Arts Exhibition (Nitten exhibition).

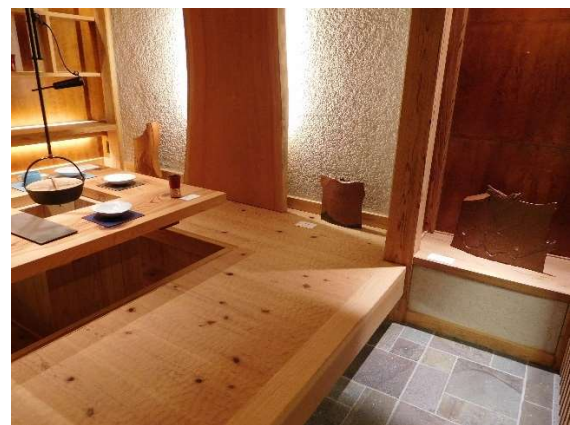
Since the Heisei Corporation deals in custom-built homes with an emphasis on design, they

¹² See Heisei Corporation Company Profile (material courtesy of the company).

sometimes receive orders from customers who own precious artwork. To meet such needs, it is necessary (not an optional activity) for employees to acquire the knowledge and artistic sensibilities to be able to propose suitable spaces for artwork, says Norikazu Mitamura. It is impossible to create good architecture without artistic sensibility as well as technical skill, and it seems that this company policy is reflected in the activities of the gallery and the company's internal artistic activities.

4.3. Exhibition Case Study: Aspirations to Disseminate Tradition at the Bonseki Exhibition

It is said that the artists and artworks that the Heisei Memorial Art Gallery chooses to feature in its various exhibitions are selected based on a number of criteria, though only in private, but are intended to ensure that the artworks chosen are of sufficient maturity and importance to be accepted within the art system. For example, at the time of the author's visit for this interview, the Mitsuo Kasatsuji and Kenji Kasatsuji: Father and Son Exhibition – The Present of Continuing Legacy of Echizen Ware was being held (October 22nd to November 25th, 2022). This father and son, both of whom are Echizen ware artists, also participated in the Nitten exhibition that was running at the same time at the National Art Center, Tokyo, and as such, they were already in the category of established artists. The works of the father and son, which use traditional Echizen ware techniques combined with modern forms and distinctive coloring, represent a style that is truly connecting tradition to the present and future. The comprehensive displays at the Heisei Memorial Art Gallery really conveyed the power of artwork that changes at once the atmosphere of the space in which it is placed.



Left: Mitsuo Kasatsuji and Kenji Kasatsuji: Father and Son Exhibition – The Present of Continuing Legacy of Echizen Ware 2022 (Courtesy of Heisei Memorial Art Gallery)

Right: The showroom display of the exhibition (Taken by the author)

In addition to featuring the work of established artists and discovering emerging artists, the selection of exhibitions for the Heisei Memorial Art Gallery is also said to be guided partly by the

intention of promoting art that is on the verge of extinction. One exhibition that falls under this category is Bonseki: A visual history of the Japanese art of Bonseki (March 5th to April 8th, 2022). Bonseki is a form of art in which a miniature landscape is formed using finely crushed white stones of various sizes on a black lacquered tray (described as “putting a landscape”). The style of the landscape is standardized in the model book established in each school, as is the method and procedure for putting it using the specified tools and bird feathers. The most distinctive characteristic of this artform is that the artists themselves clear away the finished work immediately after it is completed. The entirety of the process, from clearing away the white stones on the tray with a feather and tools to turning it back into a pristine black tray, and total immersion by the artists themselves, is regarded as the quintessence of Bonseki. Therefore, the curators took the utmost care to control the humidity and other factors during the month-long continuous exhibition at the Heisei Memorial Art Gallery. As it turned out, despite the two earthquakes experienced during the exhibition period, none of the artworks collapsed and the exhibition was completed successfully. The pieces of the three schools of Kiyohara, Hosokawa and Sekishu were displayed in the gallery space on the ground floor, and the two schools of Soami and Kasumi Kuyokai exhibited their pieces in the showroom on the first floor.



Left: A visual history of the Japanese art of Bonseki, 2022, displayed in the gallery space

Right: Display in the showroom of the same exhibition

(Both are courtesy of Heisei Memorial Art Gallery)

The attempt to take up such an unusual artform like Bonseki is not by any means unrelated to the philosophy of the Heisei Corporation. This approach reflects the company's emphasis on the roles of craftspeople like head carpenters, as well as traditional techniques of lacquer painting, which were also, so to speak, on the verge of falling into extinction. In a world where the value of

creating excellent products through human power and hard work is on course to decline, Heisei Corporation is a company that is resisting this trend. It is President Akimoto's wish, and a goal shared by the entire organization, to develop talented persons who will inherit the skills of creating excellent products that might otherwise be fading away, and to pass them on to future generations. At Heisei Corporation, this business philosophy and the company's mécénat activities have a mutually influential relationship.

4.4. Supporting Young Artists: Heisei Geijutsu-Award

In 2014, Heisei Corporation launched the Heisei Geijutsu Award, a grant-type scholarship for students of the Faculty of Fine Arts at Tokyo University of the Arts. Each academic year, one student is awarded from each of the eight departments: Japanese painting, oil painting, sculpture, crafts, design, architecture, aesthetics/art history, and inter-media art.

Heisei Corporation provides 300,000 yen to each selected student as a graduation project budget. From June to July every year, the Heisei Memorial Art Gallery holds a group exhibition of the winners as the Heisei Geijutsu Award Exhibition: Future Great Artists. Because some graduation works may not be ideal for display at the gallery due to their size or format, the artists are free to decide whether to display their graduation work or create a new work.



Left: The 8th Tokyo University of the Arts Heisei Geijutsu Award Exhibition: Future Great Artists 2022

Right: The 1st Heisei Geijutsu Award Ceremony, 2015 (both photos courtesy of the Heisei Memorial Art Gallery)

As mentioned earlier, the Heisei Memorial Art Gallery often introduces artists at the very forefront of the Japanese art world, such as Nitten artists, members of the Japan Art Academy, and other prize-winning artists in its regular exhibitions, so they say it is very stimulating for the gallery's curators and regular visitors to see artworks created with a new aesthetic sensibility by young artists.

Since it cannot be predicted what kind of artworks the artists from the eight departments of the university will bring, it also presents a challenging aspect, but at the same time it is an invaluable exhibition that brings new inspiration to people within the company as well as visitors to the Setagaya branch, and the curators give commentary on the artworks to the visitors after interviewing the artists, just as they do for other exhibitions.

4.5.A New Initiative to Support Artists: Heisei Art Village

As part of its new mécénat activities, Heisei Corporation opened the Heisei Art Village, an artist-in-residence facility that serves as a home base for artists' creative activities, in Shimizu-cho, Suntogun, Shizuoka Prefecture, in 2021. This program is aimed at providing a platform for interaction between artists from different genres and is open to both emerging and established artists working at the forefront of their field.

The artists who live here can immerse themselves in the creative process while enjoying views of Mt. Fuji in the distance and a rich natural environment all around them, including a large pond and green area fed by water from the springs of Mt. Fuji. The program has a maximum capacity of nine artists, and each artist is granted a cottage with a studio on the ground floor and living quarters on the first floor. The wooden building is open-plan and has an outside private dirt floor and a water tap so that artists can look after their working tools.

Most artist-in-residence facilities in Japan at the moment are either making use of disused buildings or offering space in existing cultural facilities as a place for artists to carry out their activities. In some cases, the structure of the facilities have not always been optimized for art creation, as it has been extended to cover performing arts and can be used for presentations and seminars as well as creative work. It can be said that the Heisei Art Village is a groundbreaking facility in terms of the fact that it was purpose-built from the outset as an artist-in-residence facility for the field of fine art. The comfort and convenience of the living space, as well as the atelier space, is another unique strength of this new facility built by a construction company.

While the Heisei Memorial Art Gallery successfully combines the company's architecture with the finished artwork, at the Heisei Art Village, the living environment provided by the company itself will have an impact on the creative process of the artists. There is also a gallery annex on the same grounds, and exhibitions can be held at the Heisei Art Village. In the coming years, they say that they are also considering holding solo exhibitions at the Heisei Memorial Art Gallery for artists who have concluded their residency and production at the Heisei Art Village. Through the initiatives described above, the company has realized comprehensive art patronage, providing support for artists during their studies (Heisei Art Award), as well as a base for their work (Heisei Art Village), and exhibiting their artworks at the Heisei Memorial Museum Gallery.

In Conclusion

Drawing on the results of interviews with the SHISEIDO ART HOUSE and the Heisei Memorial Art Gallery, I would like to conclude this paper by addressing the second question: How is the dissemination of the genre of crafts ubiquitous in our everyday life possible from a neutral stance? It may seem like a circular argument, but by approaching the genre of crafts from a neutral perspective, we have come to see that it is in fact a strong reflection of the company's own unique perspective regarding their ideal outlook for what crafts should be. However, this does not represent a negative and biased attitude, but rather gives a hopeful answer to the first question of this paper – Is it possible for organizations to provide continuous patronage? – in that it indicates that corporate organizations are capable of having a clear philosophy regarding art. What makes this possible, looking at the examples of SHISEIDO ART HOUSE and the Heisei Memorial Art Gallery, is that the companies' business and mécénat activities are pointing in the same direction, or in other words, they share the same vision regarding what art should be. Although the business fields of the two companies are quite different, Shiseido uses cosmetics to propose beauty that is part of everyday life, while Heisei Corporation uses architecture to do the same. Therefore, for both companies, the crafts that are ubiquitous in various settings are only viewed as truly meaningful when they are woven into people's everyday lives.

The companies' business and mécénat activities are strongly united, which forms their corporate identity. This may sound simple and idealistic, but it is by no means an easy thing to pull off. In choosing the recipients of their support and in declaring that the art they support is worthy of the company name, there must be a coherent philosophy from both the company and the management, as well as the grounding to carry this through to curation. In fact, Yoshiharu Fukuhara, who has seen from a central position the sprouting and growth of corporate patronage in Japan, clearly stated in his book: "a corporation without a philosophy cannot be a patron of culture¹³." Now that the patronage of the arts by individuals is on the decline, perhaps what is needed is for companies to have a firm philosophical stance, and for that stance to be instilled throughout the organization. SHISEIDO ART HOUSE's 'Craft for All of Us' Exhibition is a case where the idea of the exhibition is directly derived from the company's long-held philosophy of aesthetic sense combining works of art in everyday life. In addition, the Bonseki exhibition at the Heisei Memorial Gallery would have never been realized without the company's strong will to spread an endangered tradition that is on the verge of extinction.

Finally, to conclude this paper, I would like to mention the whereabouts of the ubiquitous art genre of crafts. Even academic research has almost no chance of finding a unanimous answer to the question of how we should view crafts. I would therefore like to highlight the current state of crafts that have been pioneered by the activities of the two companies, which are continuing to face the

¹³ The Movement of Mécénat, The Heart of Mécénat (KYURYUDO ART PUBLISHING CO., LTD. 2000), p. 14. Yoshiharu Fukuhara.

genre of crafts as art facilities of private companies. First, as stated by Mr. Ito of Shiseido, bringing crafts back to their original use, where they are not just standalone objects but rather coexist with other items, is the reinstatement of crafts as living tools with beauty. At the same time, through a collective artistic effect that reconstructs scenes of our everyday life by their coexisting with all other designs, such an action will probably bring enhance the landscape of our everyday lives. And as Ms. Mitamura and Mr. Mitamura of Heisei Corporation said, it is perhaps the enjoyment of viewing craftwork as an installation that resonates with architecture itself, drawing out the appeal of both, and putting ourselves in a living space where the interaction of creativity is taking place, that helps to strip away the homogeneity from our lives. As proposed by both companies, the future of crafts, although often viewed from the perspective of tradition, seems to lie in the way that people engage with crafts.

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