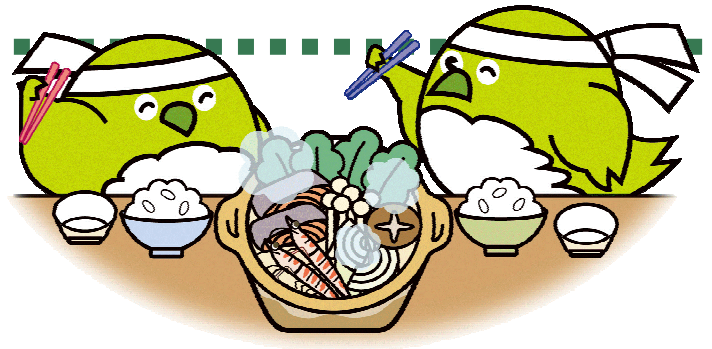


# What's up,

# OITA! 2018 October, No.68

Bringing the latest from Oita, Japan to all those connected to Oita thriving all across the globe.



## A few words from the head of the International Division



The Taichung World Flora Exposition, a large-scale global garden festival, will be running from November 3<sup>rd</sup> to April next year. Seeing that Oita is the largest producer of *madake* bamboos in Japan, and the fact that local bamboo work industries have flourished from the prefecture's bountiful resources, art displays featuring bamboo work from local artists are in order in the expo. Should you have the opportunity to visit, please do try to come by the exhibition booth run by the Oita Prefecture.

Mitsuru Tokuno <tokuno-mitsuru@pref.oita.lg.jp>,  
Head of the International Policy Division in the Oita Prefecture Planning Promotion Department

## Oita's Big-Three Bamboo Lantern Festivals

In the upcoming month, around 20,000 bamboo bonbori lanterns and bamboo art objects will line up the historical townscape of Usuki City, bathing the town in light and transforming it into a fantastical landscape. The ritual stems from the folklore of Manano Chouja, a famous local ruler who is said to be responsible for the creation of the Usuki Stone Buddhas. Legend has it that Manano Chouja lit the night paths for his beautiful daughter Han'nya-hime, whose soul was returning from the Capital with the mythical jewelled treasure box.

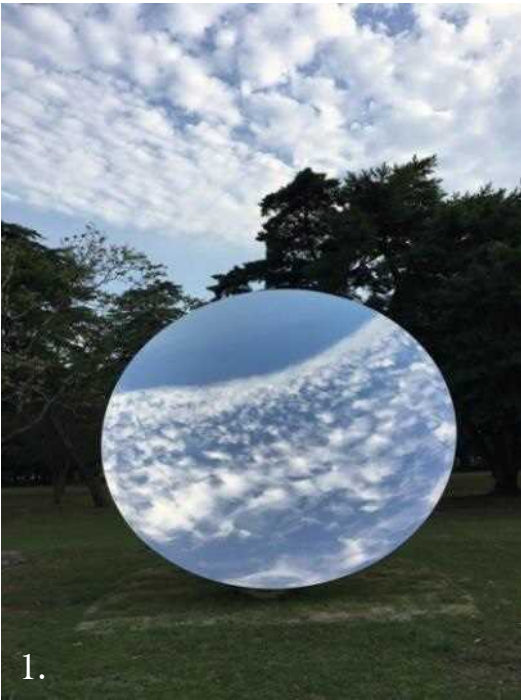
Aside from Usuki, the other 'Oita Big-Three' light-up events held at other locations are not to be missed as well. These include the Millennium Lights at Hita City and the Taketa Bamboo Festival, which will be held across several weekends of November and shedding light to the autumnal beauties of Oita Prefecture. Many other local events will also be in place as Oita hosts the *Japanese National Cultural Festival, Oita 2018* and the *18<sup>th</sup> Japanese National Arts and Cultural Festival for Citizens with Disabilities*, so please use the opportunity to enjoy them along with the beautiful illumination.

### Event Information

1. Usuki Takeyoi Bamboo Lantern Festival. Nov 3<sup>rd</sup> (Sat), Nov 4<sup>th</sup> (Sun)  
Surrounding areas of Nioza and Machihatcho, Usuki City
2. Millennium Lights (Hita City)  
Nov 9<sup>th</sup> (Fri) – 11<sup>th</sup> (Sun)  
Hita City Area surrounding Kagetsugawa River
3. Taketa Bamboo Lantern Festival  
Nov 16<sup>th</sup> (Fri) – 18<sup>th</sup> (Sun)  
Hita City, near the foot of the castle



# Anish Kapoor *IN BEPPU* now on exhibition!



Anish Kapoor, known for large-scale artworks such as his personal exhibition in the Palace of Versailles (2015) and the creation of the ArcelorMittal Orbit London Olympics (2012), has long fascinated art audiences from around the world.

This time at the Beppu Park, several large-scale installations will be on display. Other than the never-before-exhibited *void the pavilion*, the iconic *Sky Mirror* that boasts an impressive diameter of 5m has also arrived for the first time to Japan. A special gallery has been erected for the exhibition *Concept of Happiness*, which features around ten drawings and sculptures as well as a BBC documentary on Kapoor.

While Kapoor has garnered global attention as a recipient for highly renowned modern-art awards such as the Turner Prize (1991) and the Praemium Imperiale Award (2011), this would be the first time that an exhibition of this scale featuring Kapoor's works will be held in Japan, as such, the event has been met with a lot of interests and expectations.



Kapoor's exhibition is part of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Japanese National Cultural Festival, Oita 2018, which is running concurrently with the 18<sup>th</sup> Japanese National Arts and Cultural Festival for Citizens with Disabilities, Oita. Another 160 events besides this one will also be running in these two exciting and diverse festivals, so why not use the opportunity to check them out?



1. 'Sky Mirror', 2006, Beppu Park, Beppu, Oita.
2. 'Leviathan', 2011, PVC / 33.6 x 99.89 x 72.23 m, Monumenta 2011, Grand Palais, Paris. Photo: Dave Morgan
3. 'Dirty Corner', 2011-2015, mixed media, Dimensions variable, Chateau de Versailles 2015. Photo: Tadzio
4. 'Orbit', 2012, Steel. Height: 115 m, Queen Elizabeth Park, London. Photo: Dave Morgan

When it comes to Oita, you've just got to mention karaage fried chicken. As a huge fan of chicken, I travelled with my friends on a rental car to Nakatsu City, often dubbed 'the holy ground for fried chicken', to participate in the 11<sup>th</sup> Karaage Festival on September 16<sup>th</sup>.

Along your average karaage and sweets from various places, the festival also had booths that provided more unusual karaage-related products – there was even ice-cream that came in the hard-to-imagine karaage-flavour! With the thought of performing 'the annual karaage taste-test' in mind, we bought packages from eight individual booths and tried them all out. Usa City's kabosu karaage definitely sat on top of my personal ranking when it comes to flavour and juiciness!

**Sarah Backley, CIR from UK**



I revisited the Harajiri Falls a while ago with my colleagues. The tulip fields, which grew around the waterfall earlier on in the year, have then all turned into rice paddies that looked like huge, beautiful green carpets blanketing the terrene from afar. The sun shone, beaming brightly over the earth, and the ears of rice bathing in the sunlight's warmth swayed from left to right with the swishing breeze. I was gripped by the scenery as I watched the rice motioning in ways as if they were waves in a ruffling blue sea. On top of this, some flowers, whose name I don't know of, bloomed on the sides of the paddies and bowed in the wind, smiling and curtsying at the passers-by. Isn't the mere image just tasteful and enchanting? The Japanese people's attention to detail in accordance to the changing of seasons is certainly quite moving.

**Fang Ying Mei, CIR from China**



# Monthly Staff Corner



## Tracing the first footsteps of autumn

It was a fine, breezy morning when my colleague headed towards Yufuin. Outside of the train windows the rice paddocks have turned a greenish-golden hue, and the crops were bowing their heads slightly with the touch breathe of autumn. Having alight the train, we went to pick up our electric rental bikes and pedalled towards our main destination for the day – *Bungaku no Mori*, the Forest of Literature. The e-bikes made travelling a breeze, so we had the pleasure of looking at the surrounding scenery adorned by blooming cosmos and red spider lilies. Fallen chestnuts in their prickly husks peppered the sides of the roads, and the leaves of some trees had already turned into shades of subdued pink. Everything was beautiful, befitting to the start of a wonderful day.

If you're an avid reader, then you're in for a treat, more so if you're a fan of modern Japanese literature, because the grounds of *Bungaku no Mori* house the building that was originally home to one of Japan's literature giants, Dazai Osamu, whose most prominent works include *The Setting Sun* and *No Longer Human*.

At the risk of sounding condescending, I shall start by giving a brief introduction to Dazai before talking about the building itself. Born Tsushima Shuji to a large prominent family in Aomori Prefecture, Dazai's fleeting life is one of grievance and absurdity. While highly regarded in our time, Dazai struggled with gaining a steady audience and coming to terms with his own existence between post-WWI and WWII Japan. This sense of detachment towards life is exemplified in his signature work, *No Longer Human*. The narrative begins with an unnamed protagonist who discovers a series of notebooks and photographs by a certain Oba Yozo, whose entries greet the reader with the famous opening line known by almost every literate Japanese person walking the earth: "Mine has been the life of much shame." Oba's life unravels as the protagonist flicks through the pages, and readers slowly learn how his life spirals down into one of muted despair.

Dazai's own story is not dissimilar to that of his character's. Just like Oba, Dazai was raised in an influential family, but fell behind as a student

and slowly descended into alcoholism, harlotry and morphine-based painkiller addiction after being treated for tuberculosis. Both attempted suicide by drowning with women who they hardly knew, both survived while the women died, and both felt crushing guilt in the aftermath. The repeating theme of suicide and hollow doubt paints an autobiographical picture to Dazai's own life, encapsulating a vivid imagery of numb self-evaluation of what it is to be human in a swiftly evolving era still haunted by the shadows of the past. *Hekiunsou* ('*Villa of Azure Clouds*'), the apartment that Dazai once resided in, has plenty of stories to tell on its own.

Originally situated in Amanuma, Suginami Ward, Tokyo, *Hekiunsou* was destined to be torn down due to official decisions. This caught the attention of Ms Hashimoto Ritsuko, who felt it was a shame that the establishment would be lost forever. From there she bought the apartment in 2015 and transported all of its materials to Yufuin. Through the combined works of Ms Hashimoto, the *miyadaiku* carpenter Mr Kanda



From top to bottom:

- ❖ Café and bistro, along with souvenir store.
- ❖ Enjoying a cuppa while peering into the karesansui gardens.
- ❖ Make a toast to Dazai, and jot down your thoughts on the guestbook.

Masao, Mr Kanda's son and grandson, the building was finally reconstructed and has as operated as *Yufuin Bungaku no Mori* from 2017, though not before the reconstruction progress was delayed by the 2016 Kumamoto Earthquake.

Today, the apartment sits in the serene embrace of Mt Yufu, its doors open to all lovers of literature for the price of a small admission fee. After admiring the immaculately reconstructed rooms each respectively renamed after Dazai's works, the rooms' impressive literature collections and lazing on the tatami mats warmed by the fine weather, I headed down to the café on the first floor with my colleague and sipped on a frothy cup of matcha latte while looking into apartment's courtyard. The stones, trees, and cutlery sparkled gently under the sunshine, contrasting starkly with the leaden atmosphere found within most of Dazai's works.

Dazai attempted suicide with his mistress Tomie Yamazaki for the last time on 13<sup>th</sup> June, 1948, their bodies were discovered six days later, on Dazai's 39<sup>th</sup> birthday. The fate of his character Oba, on the other hand, remains unknown, though he had deemed himself 'disqualified as a human' by the end of the novel.

Whether this is a form of blessing or curse, or neither, is in the eye of the reader. Gazing lazily into the sun speckled *karesansui* gardens, I mused whether Dazai and Oba would have had found fulfilment had they lived in our times. But seeing how *No Longer Human* remains a timeless classic and the second best-selling Japanese fictional literature to this very day, it must still speak out to a lot of us. Perhaps, I thought, our world is not so different from theirs after all.

ゆふいん  
文学の森



### Access

1354-26 Yufuincho Kawakita, Yufu-shi, Oita-ken 879-5114

Business hours / 10:00-17:00

Closed / New Year's Holidays

Admission / 200 yen (100 yen for primary, junior high and senior high students)

Access by train and taxi / Around 10 min. from JR Yufuin Station on taxi. A taxi bay is conveniently situated right outside the station.

Access by e-bike / Under 30 minutes from JR Yufuin Station.

