

**SPEECH OF CHARGÉ D’AFFAIRES MR. KAZUHIRO NAKAI
FOR THE OPENING OF
THE JAPANESE FOUNDATION TRAVELLING EXHIBITION
“HANDCRAFTED FORM: TRADITIONS AND TECHNIQUES”**

FRIDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2017 AT 6:30pm
AT EXPRESSIONS WHIRINAKI ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE, UPPER HUTT

Your Worship Mayor Wayne Guppy

Ambassadors, High Commissioners, Distinguished guests and Ladies and Gentlemen,

Kia Ora, good evening.

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all this evening for the opening of Handcrafted Form: Traditions and Techniques, held at the wonderful Expressions Whirinaki Arts and Entertainment Centre. We are very grateful for all the assistance and provision of the exhibition space by Leanne Wickham and her staff. I’m sure you will all agree with me when I say what a fine job they have done with the space.

I would like to now take the time to express my thanks to Dr Maezaki, who has come all the way from Japan to talk to us about the Japanese Handcraft. Dr Shinya Maezaki is an Associate Professor of Kyoto Women's University with an area of expertise in Aesthetics and History of Art, so he will be able to give us all kinds of insight into what is on display. We are honoured to have him here today and also tomorrow when he will give a more in depth lecture about Japanese handmade craft.

This “Traveling Exhibition” is part of a program run by the Japan Foundation to introduce Japanese culture to people worldwide. As the name suggests, this exhibition travels around the world visiting over 100 art galleries, museums and cultural facilities. The Japan Foundation has about 20 traveling exhibitions constantly on the move, treating people from all parts of the world to a little piece of Japan. We are fortunate to have this one visit us here in Wellington, before moving on to Auckland, Christchurch and then going overseas once more.

As many of you already know, New Zealand has a very close connection with Japan, through many sister city relationships including the Hutt-Minoh one formed in 1995. Since then, Japanese culture has been continuously promoted, particularly in the Hutt area, through festivals such as the Hutt Japan Day last Sunday, skype communications between both cities, student exchanges and even art exchanges. Art is, as you can see here, a wonderful way to learn about one another's culture and I am overjoyed to see you all here to take part in such a special exhibition of Japanese handcraft. With Hutt City and Minoh City as an example, I feel positive and hopeful about the future of relations between Japan and New Zealand.

In closing, I would like to once again express my sincere gratitude to the Director of Expressions Whirinaki, Leanne Wickham and all of her staff for their wonderful work installing this exhibition. I hope many people will come and enjoy the grace and beauty of Japanese handmade crafts.

