

**Speech for the Opening of the Japanese Foundation Travelling Exhibition:
“The Spirit of *Budō*: The History of Japan's Martial Arts”
at the Victoria University of Wellington Faculty of Architecture and Design
by H.E. Ambassador Hiroyasu Kobayashi
on Tuesday, 2 July 2019, 6:00 pm**

[Named guests]

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Kia Ora Koutou, and good evening.

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all this evening to the opening of the Japan Foundation’s Travelling Exhibition, *The Spirit of Budō: The History of Japan's Martial Arts*. First of all, I would like to thank the Victoria University of Wellington Faculty of Architecture and Design, especially to Mr. Tane Moleta and Mr. Mark Shaw, for their dedication and hard work in ensuring the Exhibition could be held here once again after our hugely successful exhibition last year. We are very grateful for the assistance and provision of this well-appointed venue, and I’m sure you will agree with me when I say that they and their team have done a wonderful job with regards to designing and utilizing this space.

This “Traveling Exhibition” is part of a program produced by the Japan Foundation to introduce Japanese culture to people worldwide. As the name suggests, this exhibition, and many others, travel around the world, displaying at galleries, museums and cultural facilities across the globe. The Japan Foundation deploys about 20 traveling exhibitions constantly on the move, treating people from all over to a little piece of Japan in their very own backyard. We are fortunate to have a traveling exhibition visit New Zealand’s shores every year.

This year's exhibition is an appeal to the samurai spirit in all of us: the spirit of *budō*, or Japanese martial arts, is something that has caught the attention of audiences overseas since it was first witnessed by visitors to Japan some centuries ago. From there, overseas interest and the practice of traditional Japanese martial arts styles bloomed in even the most far-flung corners of the globe, leading to the modern-day inclusion of Japanese martial arts within the Summer Olympic games, most recently with *karate* being added to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics line-up. However, nowhere has the spirit of *budō* bloomed more than in popular culture. Movies, novels, television, animation, video games, and more now feature the techniques and teachings of the Japanese martial arts. I'm sure everyone here has a few favourites they can name!

But the interest in the exhibition here today doesn't stop at just sport or pop culture. The items on display here have actually been used, both in and out of Japan, as inspiration for many design works, such as art pieces, fashion items, and even household goods. With that in mind, I feel that no matter what your professional background you come from, you will be able to take something personal and special away from the exhibit today.

In closing, I would like to once again express my sincere gratitude to Victoria University of Wellington, especially to the Faculty of Architecture and Design, and to everyone involved in the installment and organisation of this exhibition. I hope many people will come and find out more about the history of, and the culture surrounding Japan's traditional martial arts, and simply find the time to enjoy looking at what we have here on display.

Thank you very much.