

Creative Ageing

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Creative Ageing ZUTTOBI

Activity Report

April 2021 → March 2023



東京都美術館

TOKYO METROPOLITAN ART MUSEUM

Creative
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Creative Ageing ZUTTOBI
Activity Report
April 2021 → March 2023



Participants of ZUTTOBI Art Appreciation at *Okamoto Taro: A Retrospective*
(Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, 2022)

Tobi for Life. Museums for Life.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum—or “Tobi” for short—launched the Creative Ageing ZUTTOBI initiative in 2021. A combination of *zutto* (Japanese for “always” or “for life”) and *Tobi*, the title word symbolizes the Museum’s wish to be a place that people will always want to visit, no matter their age. ZUTTOBI’s participatory programs provide opportunities for older adults to enjoy art in more active and creative ways, fostering new encounters with both artworks and other people.



Okamoto Taro: A Retrospective (Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, 2022)

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This publication uses the following Japanese abbreviations/nicknames for institutions, etc.:
Tobi = Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum **Geidai** = Tokyo University of the Arts **ZUTTOBI** = Creative Ageing ZUTTOBI
Affiliations and job titles are as of the time of the relevant program, or as of the end of March 2023.

Foreword

Hitoshi Yamamura

Chief Curator, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum

The Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum became Japan's first-ever public art museum when it opened its doors in 1926. It will soon be celebrating its 100th birthday. When the Museum reopened in 2012 after renovations, it also updated its mission statement and set new goals that it has pursued ever since: to be a "doorway to art" that is open to all; to build an art community where people can encounter art that offers "nourishment for living"; to become a "haven for enrichment of the heart."

Creative Ageing ZUTTOBI perfectly embodies these goals. The word "ZUTTOBI" combines "Tobi," the Museum's informal name, and the Japanese word *zutto*, meaning "always" or "for life." As staff members, our purpose is to accompany our visitors on their journeys, nurturing an environment that can naturally inspire people to discover something new every day, to express themselves, whether verbally or creatively—and to do so *zutto*, for life. While the initiative's primary focus is on older adults, we hope to create more and more opportunities for social engagement that foster connections and communication among and across different generations.

This report compiles and reflects on two years of Creative Ageing ZUTTOBI's activities since its inception in 2021. Witnessing the vibrant interactions among the older participants, high school students, and the "Tobira" art communicators, as well as seeing visitors with dementia joyfully interacting with the Tobira, I can sense the immense potential of these activities. Moving forward, we aim to continue proposing new platforms for diverse and creative activities so that Tobi may be that haven for enrichment of the heart, and *zutto*, always. We hope this report may serve as a reference for individuals and organizations pursuing similar social missions.

March 2023

What is "Creative Ageing ZUTTOBI"?

Creative Ageing ZUTTOBI was launched in April 2021 by the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum as part of its Art Communication initiatives.

It runs programs primarily serving older adults, as well as people with dementia and their families.

In this report, we will be introducing ZUTTOBI's vision and its activities over the two years since its launch.



SCAN TO VISIT
ZUTTOBI WEBSITE

<https://www.zuttobi.com>

Creative Ageing ZUTTOBI's Vision

Aspiring to be a “doorway to art” for all, our Museum—Tobi—launched a new initiative in April 2021 in response to Japan’s super-aged society: Creative Ageing ZUTTOBI. Instead of associating later life with “getting old” or “decline,” ZUTTOBI’s activities reframe the aging process as “creatively advancing in years.”

At ZUTTOBI, we envision a society where anyone, regardless of their age, can retain their dignity and feel joy in their souls. We firmly believe art and museums are crucial in realizing such a society, as they can inspire individuals a sense of belonging, connecting them with artworks, places, and other people.

Tobi showcases artworks spanning different genres, eras and cultures, housed in a welcoming building designed by architect Kunio Mayekawa. This setting has attracted people from diverse walks of life,

sparking vibrant dialogue and discourse. Moving forward, we wish to expand upon these distinctive facets of the Museum. We hope ZUTTOBI will be able to continue on its journey, working toward a shared vision with partners from our own community and beyond: institutions in the local Taito Ward such as hospitals, community general support centers, the Taito City Council of Social Welfare, and Tokyo University of the Arts (or “Geidai”); and artists, researchers, and any others engaged in cultural initiatives for older adults in Japan and worldwide.



ZUTTOBI: Two Years in Review

Over the past two years, ZUTTOBI has rolled out participatory programming that invites older adults to enjoy art in more active ways, using ongoing exhibitions as the foundation. There have been programs for active older adults, as well as art-appreciation events for individuals with dementia and their family members. The focus is not solely on encouraging participants to deeply relish the art, but also on fostering new encounters with people of their own and other generations, expressing and sharing their thoughts and feelings about the artworks.

For active older adults, we held intergenerational “A Journey of Seeing” programs that brought them together with high school students. Amidst the travel restrictions imposed by COVID-19, these mixed-age groups embarked together on metaphorical journeys around the museum, discussing and reflecting on the exhibits they encountered.

For individuals with dementia and their families, we provided art-appreciation programs, starting with

the online “Van Gogh Exhibition at Home” program in 2021. In 2022, as the coronavirus pandemic was beginning to subside, we held two programs primarily serving regular attendees of “Dementia Café” events in Taito Ward, where our Museum is situated. These were organized jointly with Taito Ward’s hospitals, community general support centers, and its social welfare council. Through this synergy of medical care, welfare, and art, we delivered in-gallery programs aimed at enhancing the physical, mental, and social well-being of older adults.

In addition to these efforts, we have pursued relevant academic research and shared our insights more broadly, exchanging information with peers from cultural institutions in Japan and overseas, and presenting at international conferences. We have also liaised closely with the “Arts-Based Communication Platform for Co-creation to Build a Convivial Society,” a new Geidai-led public-private-academic joint project with which we are partnered.

Creative Ageing ZUTTOBI:

A Two-Year Timeline	2021												2022												2023		
	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3			
Programming for active older adults					JUL 18, 23-25 Senior x Teen Intergenerational Program (pp.12-15)																			AUG 14-15 Senior x Teen Intergenerational Program in collab. with The University Art Museum, Tokyo University of the Arts (pp.16-20)			
Collaboration with Museum Start iUeno																											
Programming for people with dementia and their families																										DEC 1 "Community Connection Meeting" with local healthcare/welfare institutions (p.33)	
																										Collab. with Taito City Council of Social Welfare	
																										Collab. with local healthcare/welfare institutions ①	
																										Eiju General Hospital (Dementia Disease Medical Center), Taito & Matsugaya Community General Support Centers	
																										SEP 6 First Orange Café (Dementia Café) at Tobi in collab. with healthcare/ welfare institutions (pp.27-32)	
																										Collab. with local healthcare/welfare institutions ②	
																										Taito Hospital, Asakusa & Minowa Community General Support Centers	
																										NOV 28	
Collaboration with Tobira Project																										First in-gallery art-appreciation program for people with dementia (pp.38-45)	
																										JUL 30 Accessibility Course session "On Social Prescribing"	
																										SEP 3	
																										Accessibility Course session "Understanding Dementia Better" (p.26)	
Research																										Involvement in public-private-academic partnership	
																										"Arts-Based Communication Platform for Co-creation to Build a Convivial Society"	
																										Conducted/published research on "social prescribing" practices at museums in UK/Taiwan	
																										MAR 31	
																										Japanese transl. of National Taiwan Museum's Museums on Prescription: A Practical Guide (p.34)	
																										JUL 3	
																										Int. Conf. on Open Access to Culture: Breakout Session 1 "The Museum as a Place for Making Us Healthy — Social Prescribing in the Super-Aging Society" (p.35)	
																										NOV 16	
																										Discussion with British chamber orchestra Manchester Camerata on programming for people with dementia and their carers	

The “Tobira”—

ZUTTOBI’s Partners



ZUTTOBI works in tandem with the Tobira Project, a joint initiative by Tobi and Geidai featuring the “Tobira” art communicators. The Tobira, who are selected through applications from the public, involve themselves in activities that use art to connect people with other people, artworks, and places. With Tobi as their base of operations, they work proactively alongside the project’s expert team that includes curators and university faculty, bringing diverse perspectives to the museum’s initiatives.

The Tobira come from a wide range of backgrounds—office workers, teachers, students, freelancers, homemakers, retirees, and more. Some are as young as 18, while others are in their 70s. The Tobira’s role within the ZUTTOBI programs is to make the participants’ museum experience more comfortable by listening attentively to what they have to say, doing their best to empathize with how they feel, and encouraging them to engage with the artwork

however they please. The emphasis is on open, equal communication that does away with the typical caregiver-care receiver dynamic.

ZUTTOBI also involves the Tobira in its efforts to address the social issue of loneliness and isolation—a by-product of the super-aging society, which is a key concern for ZUTTOBI—and to establish the role of museums in tackling such challenges. For instance, we have arranged sessions to reflect with the Tobira on completed ZUTTOBI programs, or to discuss other cultural initiatives for older people, both within Japan and overseas. In 2022, we held a seminar for the Tobira and the ZUTTOBI staff, inviting a nurse from the Dementia Disease Medical Center at Eiju General Hospital. The purpose was to deepen understanding of dementia and learn how best to communicate with people living with dementia (p.26). In partnership with these Tobira, we are dedicated to developing museum activities that promote well-being.

Implementation Report ①

Programming for Active Older Adults

SENIOR × TEEN Intergenerational Program

A Journey of Seeing

Here we introduce ZUTTOBI’s “A Journey of Seeing” programs for active older adults, which were held during the summer of 2021 and 2022 in collaboration with the “Museum Start iUeno” project.*

“A Journey of Seeing” frames the process of viewing and engaging with art as a journey. Adults over 65 and teenagers between the ages of 15 and 18—two groups whose paths rarely cross in everyday life—gathered at the Museum to go on this intergenerational journey, accompanied by the trusty Tobira.

*Museum Start iUeno is a project co-organized by nine cultural institutions located in Ueno Park. It supports children making their “museum debuts” with the aim of encouraging all children to participate in, and connect with, society through art.

SENIOR × TEEN Intergenerational Program

A Journey of Seeing

Three Days of Art and Science, Past and Future

During yet another summer of limited travel due to the pandemic, participants from two very different generations embarked together on a journey of the mind. They viewed the exhibition *Isamu Noguchi: Ways of Discovery* (April 24 – August 29, 2021) and the movie *Gift of Fire*, which is set in the era that Isamu Noguchi lived in. After viewing both, the participants shared their observations about the works, writing them down in the provided Adventure Notebooks or on post-it notes, which they then stuck onto the movie's scene-by-scene timeline displayed on the board. These mixed-generation groups were joined by the Tobira, who helped bridge the age gap and foster communication. The final day involved a panel discussion featuring key figures behind the movie and the exhibition's curators. Together, they delved into the theme of “the future,” engaging in dialogue with each other and the participants.

PROGRAM DETAILS

Dates/Times: July 18 (Sun), 2021 10:00–12:00;

July 23 (Fri/Holiday), 24 (Sat), 25 (Sun), 2021 10:00–16:00

Venue: Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum (Auditorium & Special Exhibition “Isamu Noguchi: Ways of Discovery”)

Facilitators: Sawako Inaniwa, Hayato Fujioka (Curators, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum);

Chikako Suzuki (Program Officer, Museum Start iUeno; Project Research Assistant, Faculty of Fine Arts, Tokyo University of the Arts)

Guests: Hiroshi Kurosaki (Film director); Ko Mori (Film producer); Atsuyuki Nakahara (Curator, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum)

No. of Participants: 63 (27 adults over 65; 36 high school students) **No. of Tobira:** 20

ACTIVITY REPORT

[Museum Start iUeno – Activities \(blog post\)](#)

Special Summer Program

‘A Journey of Seeing: Three Days of Art and Science, Past and Future’

<https://museum-start.jp/report/detail/T5dlKIVW>



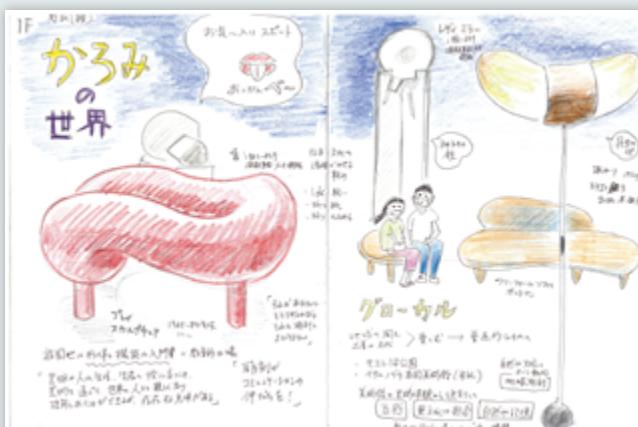
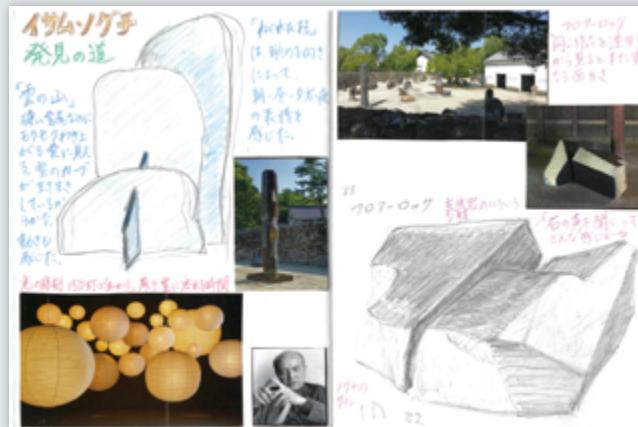
▲ A4 flier



Top left and right: *Isamu Noguchi: Ways of Discovery* (Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, 2021)



Participants' sketches in their Adventure Notebooks



A Journey of Seeing: Three Days of Art and Science, Past and Future

Comments from Participants

Here are some comments we received from participants after the program.

Senior Participants

The experience made me rethink what it means to have a pure heart, what it means to be alive. It was refreshing for my aging heart and mind.

The earnest look in those high schoolers' eyes! I was amazed by their level-headed perspective on society. The only difference between us was experience.

I've learned from this program that I could just view the artwork at the museum like I would a movie. I think this new understanding of "seeing" is going to have a positive impact on my life from here on.

Teen Participants

It was an amazing experience to have open discussions like that with the older participants. I found it stimulating to hear all the different views, and learn about things that are hard for my generation to imagine (like things that happened before we were born).

With everything going on right now, physical travel is a little difficult. Just like the title suggests, the program was a different kind of "journey" that let me explore the times that Isamu Noguchi lived in, and wartime Japan, just through seeing his art. Also, discussing the works showed me how other people—people different from me—think. In that sense, it was like a short excursion into different people's minds too.



SENIOR × TEEN Intergenerational Program

A Journey of Seeing

A Time Warp Most Wondrous: 1200 Years in 2 Days

The *Themes in Japanese Art from the Imperial Collection* exhibition at Geidai's University Art Museum offered participants an enriching journey through Japanese art history, featuring works from the Nara period (710–794) to the Showa period (1926–1989). Day 1 took place at Tobi, and featured a show-and-tell of “items that feel Japanese,” which participants had been asked to bring, along with art-appreciation exercises conducted in groups. On Day 2, the participants went to view the actual exhibits in Geidai. Tasked with choosing an “artwork I’d want preserved for another 1200 years,” they spent time closely observing each exhibit, noting down their thoughts. They then discussed and dissected the works in groups, along with the Tobira. The diversity of age brought diverse perspectives to the dialogue, and ended up enhancing their rapport.



▲ A4 flier

PROGRAM DETAILS

Dates: August 14 (Sun) – 15 (Mon), 2022

Venue: Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum (Auditorium); The University Art Museum, Tokyo University of the Arts (Special Exhibition “Themes in Japanese Art from the Imperial Collection”)

Facilitator: Hayato Fujioka (Curator, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum)

No. of Participants: 28 (13 adults over 65; 15 teens from 15 to 18) **No. of Tobira:** 16

* The program was organized as a partner project of the Arts-Based Communication Platform for Co-creation to Build a Convivial Society.

ACTIVITY REPORT

[Museum Start iUeno – Activities \(blog post\)](#)

Intergenerational Program: A Journey of Seeing

“A Time Warp Most Wondrous: 1200 Years in 2 Days”

<https://museum-start.jp/report/detail/TWqkNVsB>

[Creative Ageing ZUTTOBI \(video\)](#)

Intergenerational Program: A Journey of Seeing (August 2022)

<https://www.zutobi.com/movie/TQR1XkdI>

SCAN TO VIEW:
REPORT (JP)



VIDEO (JP)



Bottom left: *Themes in Japanese Art from the Imperial Collection* (The University Art Museum, Tokyo University of the Arts, 2022)



"A Journey of Seeing" 2022 | A Time Warp Most Wondrous: 1200 Years in 2 Days

Comments from Participants

Here are some comments we received from participants after the program.

Senior Participants

Listening to the others' views broadened my own perspective, allowing me to appreciate the artwork at a deeper level. It gave me a much more personal connection with the works and made them unforgettable.

During these isolating times of the coronavirus, I felt saved by the museum.

I found the high schoolers' sensibilities so refreshingly candid! That said, our common love for art made conversation easy and enjoyable.

Sensibilities change from generation to generation. Even at our age, it was stimulating to hear the opinions of young people, and wonderful to get to know their perspectives and tastes.

Thanks to the hospitable atmosphere created by the Tobira, I was able to openly express how I felt. It's so precious to have a place where you can say what you want and be accepted. Thank you.

Teen Participants

I don't normally get to interact with people outside my fellow high schoolers, so this was really enjoyable. It was refreshing to look at art in a whole new way.

Even pieces I'd usually just walk past became intriguing as we contemplated them together from various angles. It allowed me to feel the depth and diversity of the works.



Themes in Japanese Art from the Imperial Collection (The University Art Museum, Tokyo University of the Arts, 2022)

Comments from Tobira

“Other people’s views will be of great value to you,” said one of the participants, a sentiment that ended up taking us on a more profound “Journey of Seeing” that summer.

When people come face to face with real artwork and speak as themselves—without the baggage of their usual job titles, responsibilities, everyday concerns—their words often reveal something about their character that can’t be feigned. Listening closely to what those of other generations had to say, the participants would examine the works in detail, discussing and appreciating together while saying things like, “Oh, wow!” or “I wonder why it’s like this.”

Full of curiosity, and able to enjoy communicating over art, even sharing hearty laughs with the high school students—this is the sort of future I want for myself when I’m older. I pray that ways to connect with society like this will still be available then.

Sorano Abeta (Tobira; 2021/2022 participant)



During the Obon holidays in mid-August—a period that tends to make me keenly aware of my Japanese identity—I accompanied older adults and teenagers on “A Journey of Seeing” that explored the treasures of Japanese art.

While the high schoolers’ youthful perspectives were refreshing, I was particularly fascinated by the things the older participants had to say, which were all backed by a lifetime of experiences. On Day 1, their impassioned talk about their handmade show-and-tell items, and their comments on the artwork, which were peppered with episodes from their lives, broke the ice and enlivened the conversation.

Going to see the actual works in the exhibition on Day 2, we got to hear even more of their insights and observations. The timeless exhibits resonated with the participants’ vivid stories, creating an enriching viewing experience.

The following January, at the Tobira forum, I was delighted to be reunited with some of the participants. That journey spanning 1200 years, which began back on those two fabulous summer days filled with feels, is continuing to this day.

Yutaka Ando (Tobira; 2022 participant)



Implementation Report ②

Programming for People with Dementia and Their Families

ZUTTOBI does not just cater to active older adults. We also provide programs for those who, for various reasons, might find it challenging to visit the museum, so that they too can enjoy art and the museum experience.

Here we introduce our online and in-person programs for people with dementia and their families, along with the other activities that make the programs possible: study sessions, research, and collaborations with local welfare and healthcare professionals.

Van Gogh Exhibition at Home

In Company with Art Communicators

During the run of *Collecting Van Gogh: Helene Kröller-Müller's Passion for Vincent's Art* (September 18 – December 12, 2021) at Tobi, we held an online art appreciation session for individuals with dementia and their families, to make it possible for them to enjoy Van Gogh's masterpieces from their homes. Amidst the ongoing pandemic, participants from across Japan connected to the Museum and the Tobira's homes via the internet. These participants were then divided into separate online "breakout rooms," with one dedicated to each family; there, they viewed the Van Goghs on their screens and chatted with Tobira about the thoughts and memories evoked by the artworks.



▲ A4 flier

PROGRAM DETAILS

Date/Time: November 23 (Tue/Holiday), 2021 15:00–16:00

Venue: Online via Zoom

Facilitator: Hayato Fujioka (Curator, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum)

No. of Participants: 22 persons (11 groups) **No. of Tobira:** 29

ACTIVITY REPORT

Creative Ageing ZUTTOBI—Activities (blog post)

"Van Gogh Exhibition at Home:

In Company with Art Communicators"

<https://www.zutobi.com/activity/T0bXuFX7>

Creative Ageing ZUTTOBI (video)

Online Art Appreciation – "Van Gogh Exhibition at Home"

for people with dementia and their families

<https://www.zutobi.com/movie/TACDwU3r>

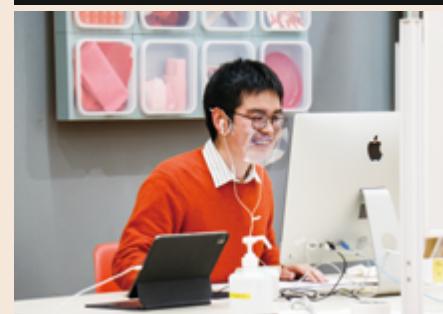
SCAN TO VIEW:
REPORT (JP)



VIDEO (ENG)



Participants at Van Gogh Exhibition at Home: In Company with Art Communicators
(Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum)



Bottom right: Postcards of exhibited works were sent to participants prior to the program.

Comments from the Families

Here are some comments we received about the program from the participating families.

When the program was over, my grandmother clapped her hands in delight and said, “Oh, what fun!! To think I’d be able to have so much fun even in my 90s!!! I wasn’t expecting an opportunity like this, thank you!” It also gave us family members, who don’t live with her, a chance to see her in a different light. Maybe it’s because we’re family, but we’d long been stuck in a dynamic of “needing to do things for her” and “needing things done for her.” So this might even be the first time that we shared the experience of seeing and thinking with her. Meeting people and discovering art can really invigorate a person, no matter their age—this experience has made me freshly aware of that.

I learned that programs like this can lead to stimulation and fun for my mother, who has dementia. Unlike with daycare services and such, where you hand over the care to other people, we got to experience things together as family, which was eye-opening and wonderful.

My father is getting on in years, and his mental faculties are gradually declining. So it was great to hear him start reminiscing about the past upon seeing the paintings, and to see him enjoying himself. Also, since my parents can hardly make it out to Ueno anymore, it was lovely that they could chat over the artwork while at home.

I was struck by how people see and feel about the same paintings in different ways. It’s interesting to learn about our differences through art. The friendly Tobira listened to my mother attentively, and I could see she was intent on expressing herself in a way that wouldn’t come across as inadequate. It’s nice to have an experience like that. I hope there will be more opportunities like this.

Comments from Tobira

“Who knew staying alive could bring so much fun and joy! I’m so grateful, I feel like it’s thanks to everyone here that I’ve managed to reach the ripe old age of 90.” So burst out Masa-chan, who was participating in her first online art-appreciation program. She was looking at the artwork with her granddaughter, who had traveled far to join her. She told us about the crown daisy, daikon radish, and taro that she was growing, about the plum tree in the garden of her childhood home, about how they would pickle those plums to make *umeboshi*. She said Van Gogh’s flowing brushstrokes felt “comforting, reassuring” to her. It doesn’t matter how old you are, people can still express what they feel from an artwork with such youthful sensibilities. Exercising your heart and mind invigorates you, elates you, makes your life rejoice. I hope I’ll be like Masa-chan when I’m older! The *tanka* poem she composed was a treasure too.

*With my husband, now no more, I planted this sarcandra.
Adorned with its red berries, I await the advent of spring.*

—Masa

Yuko Uno (Tobira)

The couple I was assigned had trouble at first accessing the online conference, so we started late. But once we began, our conversation went very smoothly. We were joined by their son who lives far away, and everyone enjoyed chatting while viewing and discussing the artworks together. The couple told us that they used to go to museums often, but don’t anymore these days. I felt that online programs like this were particularly effective for older people who are finding it harder to go out these days. Yes, it might be a bit of a challenge for the older people—but I think a lot of them will get the hang of the technology as we do more and more of these. Given that this program is for people with dementia, it needs to be an ongoing thing if we want results. I hope we can do this on a regular basis going forward.

Tomoko Iida (Tobira)



Tobira Project—Accessibility Course “Understanding Dementia Better”

In the run-up to Orange Café (p.27), we arranged an occasion to discuss museum accessibility for people with dementia as part of the Tobira Project’s Accessibility Course (Practical Session) for Tobira. In the first half, Tobi curator Hayato Fujioka spoke about initiatives at museums in the UK and Taiwan, as well as ZUTTOBI’s activities. This was followed by a discussion of how people with dementia and their families can foster communication and social connections with society through art. In the second half, Yumiko Ogawa, a nurse at Eiju General Hospital’s Dementia Disease Medical Center, shared some knowledge about dementia and some key points for effectively communicating with people with dementia.



▲ Screenshot of the Accessibility Course session

PROGRAM DETAILS

Date/Time: September 3 (Sat), 2022 14:00–17:00

Venue: Online via Zoom

Speakers: Hayato Fujioka (Curator, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum),

Yumiko Ogawa (Nurse, Dementia Disease Medical Center,

Eiju General Hospital)

Topics:

1. “Let’s Talk Social Prescribing in Museums” (Hayato Fujioka)

2. “Let’s Support Local People with Dementia and Their Families!” Dementia Supporter Training: Understanding Dementia Better (Yumiko Ogawa)

Participants: 62 Tobira; 6 DOOR Project* students

* “Diversity on the Arts Project,” a Tokyo University of the Arts certification program addressing “Welfare × Art”



Orange Café

Exploring the Museum with Tobira: The World of Danish Furniture

Eiju General Hospital, Taito Community General Support Center, and Matsugaya Community General Support Center—all Taito-based institutions like Tobi—jointly hold an “Orange Café” event* every two months. In collaboration with them, ZUTTOBI hosted the event at the Museum for the first time. The participants with dementia and their families, each accompanied by a Tobira, viewed the exhibition *Finn Juhl and Danish Chairs* (July 23 – October 9, 2022). The galleries were lined with chairs and other familiar furniture, which came in all sorts of designs. The participants went around looking at—occasionally sitting in—the chairs on display, sharing with each other any thoughts, feelings, or memories evoked by the exhibits.

* The Orange Café (Dementia Café) scheme runs events that are open to everyone, be they individuals with dementia, their family members, or people interested in learning more about the condition. These events, held regularly at accessible local venues, allow attendees to interact with fellow local residents and welfare, care, and medical professionals. The Japanese government actively promotes this scheme nationwide as a means of supporting people with dementia and their care partners. In Taito Ward, there are currently five Dementia Café initiatives, with each hosting an event every two months. (As of September 2023)

PROGRAM DETAILS

Date/Time: September 6 (Tue), 2022 14:00–15:00

Target: Persons with dementia and their families

Venue: Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum (Art Study Room; Thematic Exhibition “Finn Juhl and Danish Chairs”)

Facilitator: Hayato Fujioka (Curator, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum) **No. of Participants:** 17 **No. of Tobira:** 17

Organizers: Eiju General Hospital (Dementia Disease Medical Center), Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, Taito Community General Support Center, Matsugaya Community General Support Center

* The program was organized as a partner project of the Arts-Based Communication

Platform for Co-creation to Build a Convivial Society.

ACTIVITY REPORT

Creative Ageing ZUTTOBI—Activities (blog post)

“Orange Café – Exploring the Museum with Tobira:

The World of Danish Furniture”

<https://www.zuttobi.com/activity/TKwkmp00>



SCAN TO VIEW
REPORT (JP)





Middle left: Cards written by Tobira and sent to participants before the event

Top left, middle right, bottom: Participants at *Finn Juhl and Danish Chairs* (Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, 2022)



Bottom right: Participants at *Finn Juhl and Danish Chairs* (Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, 2022)

Comments from Participants

Here are some comments we received from participants after the program.

I hadn't been able to go out much for a while, so it was lovely to be invited and immersed in a world so out of the everyday. The Danish furniture was excellent, of course, but the conversations with the Tobira were worth their weight in gold. Thank you so much!!

It was deeply moving to get to see and touch Finn Juhl's designs and other Danish furniture firsthand. I also appreciated the thoughtful assistance from the Tobira. I hope to have the chance to meet again. Holding Orange Café events in museums is a wonderful idea.

Even though it was my first time meeting everyone, the conversation flowed easily. I had a lot of fun.

I met new people and discovered a new world. There should be more events like the one today. I hope they'll be doing these in the suburbs too.

I had great fun sitting in those unusual chairs. To all the Tobira, thank you for all your consideration. I am looking forward to the next opportunity.



Finn Juhl and Danish Chairs (Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, 2022)

Comments from Tobira

I was paired up with a very close-knit couple in their 70s. I was told that the husband had been diagnosed with dementia, so they started learning about it at Eiju General Hospital. The husband was a fun, cheerful person, and our group was constantly filled with laughter. In the galleries, they would compare the furniture on display with their own furniture at home, or the husband would encourage his wife to "try out this chair," or sit together on a sofa. Watching them enjoy themselves was a joy for us too. We were entertained by stories, for instance about the husband's elder brother who used to paint movie theater signs. Afterwards, as they sat in a Finn Juhl chair in the Art Lounge, they were saying, "We should include Tobi in our walking route from now on." I hope they will continue popping by the museum on their future walks.

Chieko Takizawa (Tobira)



I was with a lady in her 80s with dementia. I got to see firsthand how viewing art at the museum can stimulate people's intellectual curiosity so much, regardless of their age. For example, she would see some colorful works and comment, "The colors are warmer on this chair, and cooler on this one," or "I like the design of the armrests, it's very slick." Or she'd see a sofa with an asymmetrical design and say, "Such an interesting shape. You see colors like that in kimono that uses *kasuri* fabric," expressing her impressions and reactions to every chair we came across. Her excitement was palpable, and she had insights and perspectives that I found really refreshing. It was a pleasure to share our views on the exhibits and connect with each other on equal footing, rather than as provider and receiver of support.

Yuko Horiuchi (Tobira)



From a Nurse's Perspective

It Was a Miracle

Yumiko Ogawa

Nurse, Dementia Disease Medical Center,
Eiju General Hospital

It was a miracle.

Out of the blue, an opportunity arose to host Orange Café (a Dementia Café) at the museum. I had long hoped that people with dementia, living in or around Taito Ward, would visit the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum with their families—a place they have likely frequented since childhood. My heart leapt at this unique opportunity.

The museum staff all welcomed us warmly. Amidst the pandemic, we planned the Orange Café event together under the motto of “absolutely no infections.” I also gave a preliminary lecture to the Tobira, explaining the nature of dementia and outlining the necessary support and precautions.

Three days after that, we held Orange Café at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum. A dream come true. The participants were all smiles, regular Orange Café users and first-timers alike. The Tobira’s supreme communication skills gave rise to conversations that enhanced the appeal of Finn Juhl’s chairs. Within the museum’s walls, the word “dementia” melted away.

It was what I had wanted to see more than anything else: smiles on everyone’s faces, with or without dementia.

Community Connection Meeting

At the suggestion of the Taito City Council of Social Welfare, care and welfare professionals, Geidai faculty, and Tobi curators convened for a “Community Connection Meeting” on how to support older adults through art. Participants discussed the initiatives that their respective institutions and organizations were pursuing, as well as welfare issues in our ward. The meeting paved the way for the Museum to connect more broadly with local hospitals and community general support centers.



PROGRAM DETAILS

Date: December 1 (Wed), 2021 **Venue:** Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum (Art Study Room)

Participants: 19 representatives from Taito-based institutions/organizations (7 Community General Support Centers, 1 In-home Care Support Office, 1 Senior Citizens' Home Care Services Center, Taito City Preventive Care & Community Support Section, Taito City Council of Social Welfare, Tokyo University of the Arts, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum)

Museums on Prescription: A Practical Guide

(Japanese Edition)

“Social prescribing” schemes, which promote mental and physical health through fostering social connections rather than prescribing medication, have been garnering attention in recent years.

In Taiwan, the practice of “Museums on Prescription” is gaining momentum. This involves museum-based programs that provide opportunities for art viewing and social participation to people with dementia and their care partners. The National Taiwan Museum (NTM), which runs such an initiative in collaboration with Taipei City Hospital, compiled the details of their practice into a publicly available how-to booklet, *Museums on Prescription: A Practical Guide* (December 2021). Creative Ageing ZUTTOBI translated this into Japanese to serve as a reference for future activities. The Japanese-language edition is available as a PDF document on the ZUTTOBI website.

Planning/Editing Sawako Inaniwa, Hayato Fujioka, Aki Kudo

Translation/Proofreading Chunni Chiu

Support from Taiwan Cultural Center in Tokyo, Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Japan

Published by Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum (Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture)

Published on March 31, 2022

* The translation was a partner project of the Arts-Based Communication Platform for

Co-creation to Build a Convivial Society.

ACTIVITY REPORT

Creative Ageing ZUTTOBI: Research (Translation)

“National Taiwan Museum’s ‘social prescribing’ handbook now available in Japanese”

<https://www.zutobi.com/research/T4ARw8og>

National Taiwan Museum (NTM) website

“Museums on Prescription: A Practical Guide” [Trad. Chinese]

https://www.ntm.gov.tw/publication_212_1186.html



▲ National Taiwan Museum's
Museums on Prescription: A Practical Guide
(Japanese Edition)

The Museum as a Place for Making Us Healthy

Social Prescribing in the Super-Aging Society

ZUTTOBI participated in an international conference, the first of its kind in Asia, aimed at realizing a diverse and inclusive society through arts and culture. The conference addressed themes of social inclusion and well-being in the context of cultural programs, with participants presenting and exchanging information about ongoing efforts and trends in different parts of the world.

The first of the conference's Breakout Sessions focused on “social prescribing.” ZUTTOBI's opening presentation covered a range of topics, from Tobi's history to details about our initiative. This was followed by presentations on social prescribing practices in Taiwan—fruits of collaboration between museums and medical institutions—and their societal context. By examining such case studies from Japan and Taiwan, speakers and attendees exchanged insights on “new possibilities for museums in addressing super-aging societies” and discussed future prospects and challenges.



PROGRAM DETAILS

Date/Time: July 3, 2022 (Sun) 10:30–12:30 Venue: Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum (Art Study Room)

Speakers: Hayato Fujioka (Curator, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum), Chunni Chiu (Associate Fellow, Japan Center for

International Cooperation in Conservation, Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties; Ph.D. in Museum Studies),

Chieh-Chyi Lin (Assistant Curator, Public Service and Education Division, National Museum of Taiwan History),

Sawako Inaniwa (Senior Curator, Learning, National Museum of Art)

No. of Participants: 48 Organizers: Tokyo Metropolitan Government, Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture

SCAN TO VIEW:
REPORT (JP)



ACTIVITY REPORT

Creative Ageing ZUTTOBI—Activities (blog post)

“The Museum as a Place for Making Us Healthy:
Social Prescribing in the Super-Aging Society”

<https://www.zutobi.com/activity/TXWUS6E2>

International Conference on Open Access to Culture 2022 (event page)

Conference (Breakout Sessions): Session 1

<https://creativewell.rekibun.or.jp/en/conference/breakout-sessions/#session1>

CONFERENCE PAGE (EN)



The Potential Role of Art in Dementia Treatment

Toshitaka Shirai

Deputy Hospital Director / Dementia Disease Medical Center Director,
Eiju General Hospital

With many nations around the world now facing an aging society, one major concern is how to extend healthy life expectancy. As such, tackling dementia—a leading reason for requiring care among older populations—is of the utmost urgency.

Recent research has shown that engaging in art-related activities can delay the progression of dementia, maintain cognitive functions, physical abilities, and sociability, and positively impact everyday life. Art therapy, for instance, began in the UK in 1942 and encompasses various modes of expression, from painting and ceramics to sculpture, haiku, and dance. Beyond its therapeutic aims, it can also alleviate the woes and worries of the healthy, promote personal growth, and help individuals to reclaim their sense of self.

Artistic activities can revitalize the brain with pleasant stimuli, and have been known to aid mental stability and more regular sleep patterns. The key is to establish a setting that allows individuals to engage and enjoy themselves without feeling distressed. Seeing, appreciating, and making art often bring out people's untapped abilities, which can then lead to positive experiences that improve self-confidence and mental balance; this in turn can also reduce symptoms such as wandering and anxiety. As for the "day-night reversal" commonly seen in dementia patients, increasing daytime activities like this can help establish a healthier sleep-wake cycle.

I believe collaborative efforts by medical institutions and museums will play a significant role in the future. I have high hopes that art-related activities, which can be enjoyed in group settings, will aid in the prevention and mitigation of dementia.

Art and Welfare: Efforts to Connect People

Yoshiko Chigasaki

Coordinator, Taito City Council of Social Welfare

As Community Welfare Coordinator for the Taito City Council of Social Welfare, I promote community welfare through collaboration with local residents and relevant institutions. For the 2021 "Community Connection Meeting"—which we hold to share and address local issues—we met with people working in the fields of art and welfare in Taito Ward to discuss supporting older adults through art.

Although art and welfare might initially seem unrelated, I firmly believe there is no limit to the roles that museums can play within the realm of welfare. At the art-viewing event for older adults at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, the Tobira communicators were using the artwork as natural conversation starters, eliciting reactions and stories from the participants. In response, participants shared sentiments and sensations—smells, sounds, textures, and more—that lie deep in their memories, using their own words. Witnessing these dialogues up close gave me a better sense of what we are working towards, of what an "inclusive community" or "improved quality of life" might look like. It also solidified my belief that museums are spaces where people can connect with society, and that art serves as a potent communication tool for connecting people.

Depending on participants' mental and physical conditions, activities outside of their homes and everyday routines might sometimes encounter challenges best addressed by trained specialists. I hope to see more museum initiatives that ensure safety while also respecting each participant's individual values, needs, and personality.

I'm optimistic about continued collaboration between museums and the welfare sector, and I myself eagerly anticipate more opportunities to engage and connect with a wide array of people.

Enjoy Art at the Museum! ZUTTOBI Art Appreciation at Okamoto Taro: A Retrospective

Tobi hosted “Café YOU,” one of the Dementia Café schemes operating in Taito Ward. Participants split up into groups consisting of two families each, and spent time closely observing the exhibits from *Okamoto Taro: A Retrospective* (October 18 – December 28, 2022). Guided by questions from the Tobira, they talked freely about the memories, thoughts, and emotions evoked by Okamoto’s art, spending roughly 15 minutes with each piece. Conversations touched on memories of Expo ’70 (where Okamoto’s *Tower of the Sun* was a symbol), postwar Ueno, factories where they once worked, and so on, and these would then trigger other recollections and reflections. Friendly exchanges could be seen unfolding in each group, even among families meeting each other for the first time.



▲ A4 flier

PROGRAM DETAILS

Date/Time: Nov 28 (Mon), 2022 15:30–17:00

Target: Persons with dementia and their families

Venue: Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum (Special Exhibition “Okamoto Taro: A Retrospective”)

Facilitator: Hayato Fujioka (Curator, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum)

No. of Participants: 15 **No. of Tobira:** 14

Organizers: Asakusa Community General Support Center, Minowa Community General Support Center, Taito Hospital, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum

* The program was organized as a partner project of the Arts-Based Communication Platform for Co-creation to Build a Convivial Society.

ACTIVITY REPORT

[Creative Ageing ZUTTOBI—Activities \(blog post\)](#)

“Program for People with Dementia – ZUTTOBI Art

Appreciation at Okamoto Taro: A Retrospective”

<https://www.zutobi.com/activity/TU7dYXU9>

SCAN TO VIEW REPORT (JP)



Bottom left: Cards written by Tobira and sent to participants before the event
Top, middle left, middle right: Okamoto Taro: A Retrospective (Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, 2022)

Dialogues in the Galleries

"So you'll be talking us through the works today, is that right?"

That was the first thing that one of the participants, a gentleman in his 90s, said to us. Since many museums offer programs in which curatorial staff provide information and insights on key exhibits, perhaps many associate art-viewing events with listening to art-savvy people explain the artworks.

But "ZUTTOBI Art Appreciation" is different. It's not museum staff who talk in front of the exhibits but the participants themselves, engaging in dialogue about their impressions of the artworks.

On this day, we split up into groups of eight—comprising people with dementia, their family members, and the Tobira art communicators—then off we went to see the exhibits.

The Tobira addressed the group: "First, let's spend some time getting a good look at this painting, and get an idea of what's going on here."

In this program, no one is asked to comment right away. Instead, the group begins by taking a few minutes to quietly observe the work.

"Right, let's get started," said the Tobira. "There's never a right or wrong answer when it comes to what you feel or think about an artwork. So please feel free to talk about anything—something the painting made you feel, something it reminded you of, maybe a detail you found intriguing—whatever you'd like to share."

"It smells like oil," said a woman in her 70s. She was pointing at the top-right corner of the painting—Okamoto's *Heavy Industry*—where there was something resembling a smokestack.

This had come after someone else's suggestion that the painting was of a factory, judging from elements like the red cogwheel on the left. The woman shared that she had worked in a factory when she was young.

"Back in those days, we had to work endless hours," she recalled, now turning her eyes to the small figures in red near the bottom center. "They look like they're suffering. Maybe they're underground in the dark, and thinking, 'I can't take this, I just want out.'"

Another lady in her 80s recounted her memories from immediately after the war: "We had to push along a handcart like that. Took us a solid three days to get



Taro Okamoto, *Heavy Industry* (1949), Collection of Taro Okamoto Museum of Art, Kawasaki
From *Okamoto Taro: A Retrospective* (Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, 2022)

back to Tokyo from Ibaraki."

The group's attention now turned to the yellow figures circling the red cogwheel.

"One of them is facing the other way from the rest. Maybe they're trying to fight the flow, but can't escape the cog's pull."

"To me, they look like they're merrily whirling about."

When there are differing opinions like that, the Tobira do not contradict or side with either one of them. Rather, they simply try to establish what in the artwork gave them that impression, helping to organize the perspectives.

"Oh yes, I see what you mean," says a participant.

"You're right about that," another agrees.

When you continue engaging in such dialogue, you find other people's ways of seeing gradually becoming a part of your own. These discoveries and shifts in perspective can only come about through the process of thinking with others—verbalizing how you feel, listening to how others feel, thinking some more, and so on. As one lady in her 70s put it: "I got to see how different people's minds perceive things differently. That was interesting."

The "ZUTTOBI Art Appreciation" program, unlike typical gallery talks and tours, allows individuals to appreciate the works through multiple pairs of eyes. I'm confident that participants were able to feel the connections developing between themselves and the artworks, and between themselves and the fellow viewers.

Asuka Yamamoto (ZUTTOBI Program Adviser)

Comments from Participants

Here are some comments we received from participants after the program.

I attended with my mother, and it was our first museum visit together since I was in elementary school. I went to art school, so I used to go to the museum often. But once I was inside and in front of the artwork, I'd always be totally silent and solitary, even if I'd come with other people. It was all a very internal, self-contained experience until I was out of the museum again.

At the event, we spent a certain amount of time in front of each painting, contemplating it as a group. I got to experience a mental flow that was different from when I'm viewing art in my own time, which was very refreshing. I'm sure it was a priceless experience for my mother too, it must have been the first time she was



engaging with a painting in that way. Her eyes were so full of life—the whole event felt almost like a fantasy, I won't ever forget it.

Taro Okamoto's works, like *The Tower of the Sun*, seemed so very avant-garde and abstract that I'd always stayed away from them, thinking I wouldn't understand. But after participating in this program, I've become really interested in his art. I want to spend more time and look at it more closely. I went with my husband this time, but I'd like to go again with my daughter. Thanks to the Tobira, I've gained an understanding of how to look at an artwork.

Art is far removed from my everyday life, so when I was first invited to the event, I was worried I wouldn't be able to keep up or understand. But having now attended, I'm filled with a deep sense of fulfillment. Much of the credit goes to the Tobira and their ability to align their perspectives with ours, which made for enjoyable conversations. Thanks to them, I was able to dip a toe into the world of art, which I'd always found inaccessible. I'm not saying I understand art now, but I had a lot of fun viewing it.

Okamoto Taro: A Retrospective (Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, 2022)

Comments from Tobira

I still find myself looking back and thinking how amazing it would be if we could have many more occasions like that, with many more people. Some participants, after talking nonstop with people they were meeting for the first time, over artwork they were seeing for the first time—came up to us, all smiles, saying, "Oh, that was so much fun!" Those moments were precious gifts for us too. There was also a heartfelt remark from one of the families that truly touched me: "This is really wonderful, seeing and talking about paintings like this." That has really stayed with me. Museums are like treasure chests. And by adding just a bit of support like this, I recognized that we might be able to plant seeds that will aid people, no matter what their age, to live enriching lives.

Yuka Kuroiwa (Tobira)



"Is that a cog there?"

"I can almost smell the oil, I used to work in a factory when I was young."

Viewing the artwork brought out words from the participants, which seemed to then stimulate the others, gradually unlocking their memories. Hearing someone mention they don't often get the chance to talk because they live alone, it made me wish we could do these events more often and more widely so more people could attend.

Around the same time, my father was diagnosed with dementia. The news shook me at first, but then... I thought of what I'd learned about dementia during our preparations, and of the smiles on everyone's faces during the event, which seemed to be assuring me that everything would be alright. That helped me come to terms with my father's situation. It also made me realize that interactions with people with dementia can end up helping us too.

Shiori Sagoi (Tobira)



From a Welfare Perspective

An Emotionally Enriching Time

Masako Okamoto Nurse, Asakusa Community General Support Center

Saki Kitahara Certified Social Worker, Minowa Community General Support Center

It was back in July that staff from the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum came to observe Café YOU, a visit that would ultimately result in the ZUTTOBI Art Appreciation event. From the earliest meetings to the day of the event, we were greatly supported by the Tobi team.

Café YOU had never hosted an event centered around art, so our team was buzzing with excitement from start to finish. We announced the event and received applications from various users of our community general support centers, each with different reasons and expectations: some signed up with their spouses, others with their children; some were art enthusiasts, while others felt like visiting the museum after a long hiatus.

On the day of the event, individuals who are typically reserved could be seen engaging in spirited conversations. Even those who hadn't been particularly interested in art showed enthusiasm when faced with the actual pieces, exchanging perceptive insights with the others. We believe this art-viewing event provided an emotionally enriching time for the participants and their families. They seemed refreshed by the experience, engaging intimately with artworks in a place they wouldn't usually visit. The event was very moving for us staff too, as we got to see a side of the Café users that we don't normally get to see. None of this would have been possible without the work put in by each and every Tobira. In particular, they had communicated with us extensively prior to the event, learning more about each participant so as to ensure their individual needs were met. Observing the paintings stirred thoughts, images, and memories in the participants—dementia doesn't erase one's sensibilities—and it was a joy to see them savoring the fun, excitement, and beauty.

The ZUTTOBI Art Appreciation event highlighted for me the value of having a place for one-on-one, face-to-face conversations with people living with dementia. Holding this event with the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, which is a vital resource for the community, felt like a positive step toward our goal: building a comfortable community for people with dementia.

We are deeply grateful to everyone at the museum for their dedicated work, and we look forward to working together again in the future.

From an Occupational Therapist's Perspective

Reflecting on ZUTTOBI Art Appreciation

Junya Nomoto Registered Occupational Therapist, Taito Hospital

A number of people—individuals with dementia who use long-term care insurance services, and their family members—registered for the program through Taito Hospital. Each had different reasons for attending: being a long-time art fan, being encouraged by their child who took an interest in the event and suggested they go together, and so on. Prior to the event, we had concerns that some individuals with dementia might be unnerved by the unfamiliar setting of the museum. It was therefore immensely reassuring to see everyone engaging in lively conversations on the actual day, and sharing laughter with those they had just met. It seems that participants with dementia were able to feel so at ease because of the Tobira's exemplary ways of communicating with them—speaking slowly while maintaining eye contact, incorporating non-verbal forms of communication such as gestures, and relaying core points using concise words and phrases rather than lengthy sentences, and so on. All this was very insightful for us too.

Shifting the focus slightly, there were five occupational therapists (OT) from Taito Hospital, including a trainee, taking part in this program. OTs are professionals “concerned with promoting health and wellbeing through occupation” (WFOT, 2012), where occupations denote “everyday activities that people do as individuals, in families and with communities.” In this context, health signifies not just the “absence of illness or infirmity,” but a “state of complete physical, mental and social well-being.” The Café event, I feel, has been an enriching opportunity that bolstered the mental and social wellbeing of participants—with or without dementia—through the occupation of viewing and discussing art. For us OTs too, it allowed us to reexamine the core essence of our profession, and to recognize the strong affinity between such schemes and our own field.

With the number of older adults with dementia on the rise, there is a limit to the outreach and assistance that medical institutions like ours can provide to the individuals and their families. This Dementia Café event represented a collaboration not just of medical institutions and community general support centers, but also of a community resource such as the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum. I think schemes like this would be a big step towards building a community where people with dementia can live at ease, and towards achieving a dementia-friendly society.

Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to everyone at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum and the community general support centers for all the hard work they put into this event.

Museums in a Super-Aged Society: Global Trends and Their Backgrounds

Sawako Inaniwa

Senior Curator, Learning, National Center for Art Research, National Museum of Art
[Former Curator/Chief of Learning and Public Projects at Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, 2011–2021]

“If your museum offers programs responding to the aging society, we’d like to come and observe.”

Inquiries of this nature started reaching Tobi (Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum) from overseas a decade ago, soon after its Art Communication programs had been newly established. We were, after all, a public museum in the capital of the first country to become a “super-aged society”—perhaps the inquirers had assumed that we would be offering some program catering to the aging population.

Partly because the over-60 demographic already comprised a sizable portion of Tobi’s visitorship, our Art Communication efforts initially focused more on outreach efforts targeting schools and families. But with the continued aging of the population in the 21st century, the generational divide has become more pronounced, and shared cultural experiences more scarce. This has led to increased expectations for museums to play active roles in bringing people together, alongside heightened interest in programming tailored for the super-aged society.

A widely-recognized pioneer in this area was the “Meet Me at MoMA” program for people with Alzheimer’s and their caregivers, launched in 2006 at New York’s Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Developed in close collaboration with welfare and medical institutions, the program paved the way for “The MoMA Alzheimer’s Project.” This initiative, backed by generous private funding, disseminated the program model and even provided training for staff at other museums, leaving a significant impact on the industry. “Meet Me at MoMA,” the original gallery-discussion program facilitated by museum educators, became a regular fixture; meanwhile, the nearby Metropolitan Museum of Art (The Met) introduced a similar program of its own, “Met Escapes.”

In 2011, I had the opportunity to participate in these programs. Deeply impressed by their unique and creative approach to fostering social participation, I became convinced that such programming would garner interest in Japan in the coming years. It so happened that a fellow Tobi curator, Atsuyuki Nakahara, had also been staying in New York around then, conducting extensive research at The

Met for an exhibition marking Tobi’s reopening. When he came back to Japan, he was waxing lyrical about these programs, which had left a vivid impression on him too.

“It was unforgettable,” Nakahara told us. “The expressions of the participants with dementia had transformed by the time the program was over. I hope Tobi can offer a program like that someday.”

After Tobi reopened, we promptly began collaborating with the public in the form of the Tobira art communicators, creating a platform for mutual learning about societal challenges surrounding the museum. Then, in 2021, we successfully launched Creative Ageing ZUTTOBI, addressing the needs of the super-aged society. Over the decade since the museum’s reopening, we had built a robust local network and gained valuable experience with the Tobira. These laid the groundwork for this new endeavor, allowing us to roll out a range of programs from the very first year.

There are two underlying reasons for the global spread of museum programs addressing aging societies, although they tend to go unmentioned here in Japan. They are related to the discourse on human rights: the increased emphasis on respect for human dignity, and a better understanding of the need for “person-centered” learning and care. Both have long been key values of Tobi’s Art Communication efforts, but they seem to be universal axioms in these “creative aging” projects across the globe.

Humans apprehend the world by linking what they see and hear to their memories, to experiences stored within. When this external and internal information comes together and connects in a meaningful way, it promotes learning and fulfillment. For this to happen, however, the individual concerned needs to be able to feel affirmed, accepted, and safe; essential also is the presence of another (or others) who shows interest in them, and who can explore and engage with that new external information alongside them. With or without dementia, being able to affirm one’s present circumstances and discover new worlds with others in the here-and-now inspires sentiments that are very human and contributes to a sense of fulfillment. At the root of our humanity lies creativity, which can be unlocked when our dignity is assured; in turn, this creativity can reinforce our sense of self and humanity, setting in motion a positive loop. Numerous studies over recent decades have highlighted this connection between such communication and well-being.

Creative communication through art can foster well-being; I hope that, as we move forward, museums can serve to further amplify this well-being into wider society.

From “Tobi for Life” to “Art for Life”

Hayato Fujioka

Curator, Creative Ageing ZUTTOBI, Learning and Public Projects,
Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum

It was in April 2021 that Creative Aging ZUTTOBI began its journey, still uncertain of the path ahead. Since then, we have made significant strides, thanks in large part to the support and fellowship of many people. Looking back, these two years seem to have flown by; but in this span, the world has been grappling with a pandemic and a yet-ongoing war, and various changes are bearing down on our familiar social surroundings too. In times like these, moments spent savoring and conversing over works of art feel like a precious chance to get in touch with our own humanity.

Ensuring that anyone of any age, background, or experience has a space where they can connect with others through art and be creative—as we see it, that is the role required of ZUTTOBI in today’s age. Guided by this, over the past two years, we have worked with the Tobira and with professionals from the healthcare and welfare fields to foster environments where older adults can encounter art and others, nurturing their well-being.

In Japan’s “super-aged society,” however, many find it a challenge to venture out to places like museums, owing to physical conditions, illnesses, or other factors. If Tobi is to fulfill its mission of becoming an open “doorway to art” for all, we need to assess accessibility from different angles so as to provide a worry-free environment for every would-be visitor. To that end, we will continue working closely with medical and welfare professionals to shape Tobi into a welcoming place for people of all ages and circumstances, and to deliver diverse programming that extends the reach of the ZUTTOBI community.

As the very word “ZUTTOBI” embodies (see P.02), this initiative’s aspiration is for our Museum to become a familiar and lifelong presence for many people. At the same time, we also hope that these efforts will eventually ripple out and have an impact on society at large. Beyond the immediate horizon of “Tobi for Life,” we envision a society where museums and art are part of the very fabric of daily life, for older and younger people alike—that is to say, a society where “Art for Life” is a given. It is with this vision in mind that ZUTTOBI will continue its journey forward.

Creative Ageing ZUTTOBI’s Sister Projects

Tobira Project

https://tobira-project.info/top_e



Museum Start iUeno

<https://museum-start.jp/en/about/outline>



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Yuka Kuroiwa

Asuka Yamamoto

Asakusa Community General Support Center

Eiju General Hospital (Dementia Disease Medical Center)

Matsugaya Community General Support Center

Minowa Community General Support Center

Taito City Council of Social Welfare

Taito Community General Support Center

Taito Hospital

Tokyo University of the Arts

*Creative Ageing ZUTTOBI is partnered with the Arts-Based Communication Platform for Co-creation to Build a Convivial Society.

Creative Ageing ずっとび

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