



Conference for thinking about the future of Japan's design cities vol. 2

「往来 | Correspondence」 Practical Report

Name:	Conference for thinking about the future of Japan's design cities vol. 2 「往来 Correspondence」
Date:	18:00–20:00 Monday, October 28, 2024
Venue:	NAGOYA INNOVATOR'S GARAGE Nadya Park 4F, 3-18-1 Sakae, Naka-ku, Nagoya, JAPAN
Program:	<u>Part 1: CREATIVE TALK</u> “Creating a Creative Community” Naohiro NIIYAMA Representative, TSUGI LLC, Sabae City “The power of creativity to transform cities” Thomas Payette, Catherine Lareau Mirari, Montréal City <u>Part 2: SHORT PRESENTATION</u> From UNESCO Design Cities of the World Asahikawa, Japan/ Naoyuki Watanabe, Bandung, Indonesia/ Tita Larasati Detroit, U.S.A./ Kiana Wenzell, Doha, Qatar/ Rashid Malheya Dundee, Scotland/ Annie Marrs, Geelong, Australia/ Tracey-Lea Smith Kobe, Japan/ Takahiro Kimura, Kortrijk, Belgium/ Stijn Debaillie Muharraq, Bahrain/ Haya Ahmed Al Sada, Nagoya, Japan/ Eriko Esaka
Admission:	Admission free
Participants:	66 (including 11 participants from overseas City of Design, excluding 18 management staff)
Organizer	UNESCO Cities of Design Conference, Japan [Asahikawa Kobe Nagoya] Under the auspices of Creative City Network of Japan (CCNJ), Japan Institute of Design Promotion (JDP)
Cooperation:	International Design Center NAGOYA Inc. (IdcN)

The "UNESCO Cities of Design Conference" comprising designated UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) Cities of Design—Asahikawa, Kobe, and Nagoya—for its second gathering.

Held alongside the Cities of Design Subnetwork Meeting in Asahikawa, the event welcomed representatives from Cities of Design worldwide. Part 1 featured a creative talk on the theme of local regions and creativity. In Part 2, representatives from ten Cities of Design in Japan and abroad gave short presentations, offering attendees a deeper insight into the possibilities of collaboration between Cities of Design.

Part 1 CREATIVE TALK

Naohiro NIIYAMA “Creating a Creative Community”



Japan has approximately 200,000 designers, many of whom are active in urban areas such as Tokyo, Nagoya, and Osaka [*1]. Meanwhile, local in-town designers focus on shaping the future by addressing challenges in smaller communities. Recognizing their role, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry recently released the In-Town Designer Utilization Guide, reflecting a growing national effort to support and cultivate local designers [*2].

Naohiro Niiyama, an advocate for in-town designers and representative of TSUGI LLC, discussed the work he is doing in Sabae City, Fukui Prefecture.

Sabae City, Fukui Prefecture, has a population of 69,000, along with approximately 530 eyeglass companies. As the center of Japan's eyeglass industry, the city is responsible for producing around 96% of the country's eyeglass frames.

Nearby Echizen City and Echizen Town also boast thriving manufacturing industries. Within a 10-kilometer radius, there are seven local industries, including traditional crafts like Echizen lacquerware, Echizen washi paper, Echizen cutlery, Echizen chests and wardrobes, and Echizen pottery, as well as eyeglasses and textiles. With its rich manufacturing history, Sabae is home to many individuals with a strong entrepreneurial spirit, who are determined to shape the future of their city. This makes Sabae a place where citizens take a



leading role.

[Sabae, The Creative City]

<https://tsukuru-sabae.com/>

Sabae aims to be the best city in Japan at "creating" things, including manufacturing, city development, human resource development, and value creation. Additionally, we are working to strengthen support by increasing the number of administrative staff who assist citizens from a design perspective. Throughout this process, we are also striving to create an environment that welcomes corporate designers, creators, and others who wish to get involved in Sabae City.

[RENEW]

<https://renew-fukui.com/about/>

This project is known as an open factory and industrial tourism event. Once a year, for three days, artisans open their workshops to the public. Visitors can not only observe the workshops but also learn about the artisans' processes and backgrounds, providing a much richer and more detailed experience than a simple purchase. The program includes studio tours, workshops, markets, and talks. Additionally, special exhibitions are featured, such as an expo-style market bringing together exhibitors from across the country.

History of RENEW

Prior to the launch of RENEW, sales in Sabae City had begun to decline around 2014, along with a loss of pride among artisans.

"A manufacturing city can't revitalize without revitalizing manufacturing."

The approach to sales channels has undergone a major shift. Instead of exhibiting at department stores and exhibitions, open workshop events are now held, inviting customers into the studios and workshops. There, customers can experience the full richness of the process, with all the sights, sounds, and smells.

RENEW began in 2015 as a small event with around 20 companies. At first, some artisans felt stressed about starting something new, with concerns that opening their workshops might lead to their techniques being stolen. However, when the event took place, it turned out that 40% of the visitors came from outside the prefecture, something never before seen in Fukui. Even the craftsmen who had initially hesitated to participate changed their minds after the first year. One of them said, "Young people saw what I've been focused on for 40 years and thought it was really cool. If that's how they feel, I want to show them the machines in the back too."

In 2017, the third year, the event was co-hosted with Nakagawa Masashichi Shoten, and had 85 exhibitors and a total of 42,000 visitors. Since then, even during the Covid-19 pandemic, RENEW has grown into an



event representing Fukui Prefecture, held in collaboration not only with Sabae City, but also Echizen City, Echizen Town, and other local governments, while cooperation with banks, local production associations, Japan Railway Group and other social infrastructure businesses, and tourism companies have also increased.

Today, 118 companies participate in RENEW, which has attracted a total of 230,000 visitors over the past nine years, generating sales of 170 million yen. In 2020, RENEW was honored with the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism's Community Development Award for Excellence. [*3]

A Small Industrial Revolution

This initiative has expanded local industry, with 35 shops opening in an area that was once a town based on subcontracted work. As a result of RENEW, 65 people have moved to the area, and more than 130 people have found work in Sabae City.

RENEW is also supported by a team called "Akamarutai," made up of university students from across the country.

The next step for RENEW involves plans to make the area including Sabae City, Echizen City, and Echizen Town Japan's leading factory tourism area.

RENEW combines two approaches: "outer branding," which targets visitors and consumers, and "inner branding," which focuses on motivating the artisans in the area. The people of Sabae City are using their creativity to develop the region, aiming for a future centered around manufacturing, where diverse people come and go, and innovative products and services are created.

Notes

*1 Design White Paper 2024 P. 330 https://archive.jidp.or.jp/wpd2024/wpd2024_6_a3.pdf

*2 In-Town Designer Utilization Guide https://www.meti.go.jp/meti_lib/report/2022FY/000648.pdf

*3 Awards

2019 Good Design Award

2019 Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications/Hometown Grand Prize, Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications Award

2019 Regional Revitalization Support Center/Hometown Event Award, Excellence Award

2020 Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism/Community Development Award, Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Award (Grand Prize)

Part 1 CREATIVE TALK

Thomas Payette, Catherine Lareau “The power of creativity to transform cities”



After the presentation by Mr. Niiyama, Mirari, a Montréal-based company that creates interactive connections between citizens and cities, as well as between audiences and spaces, shared its work. Mirari focuses on installations in public spaces and event venues worldwide. Here, Mirari explores how creativity can drive change in public spaces and cities.

First, Catherine Lareau, who has served as Economic Development Commissioner for the City of Montréal, explained the significance and benefits of incorporating creative projects into urban spaces.

Ms. Lareau explained how the implementation of creative projects in Montréal's urban spaces has brought multiple benefits. These include revitalizing the city and enhancing its appeal (through the rediscovery of public spaces and their use as tourism resources), empowering communities (by fostering citizen participation and a sense of belonging), generating economic benefits (attracting investment and boosting tourism revenues), supporting sustainable urban development (sharing cultural resources and reducing environmental impacts), and promoting intercity cooperation (through knowledge sharing and collaborative fundraising, using "The Montréal Agenda for Quality and Exemplarity in Design and Architecture" as an example).

Next, Creative Director Thomas Payette introduced specific examples of projects with intriguing videos.



Spectrum

<https://mirari.art/en/projets/426/>

This installation converts sound into light signals, making communication visually perceptible. Shown in Chicago and other locations worldwide, it offers an intuitive experience that bridges the gap between generations and individuals. It is set to be exhibited in Shibuya, Tokyo, in 2025.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGMUTC_dx7c

glockenspiel

<https://mirari.art/en/projets/glockenspiel/>

This installation pays tribute to the Munich Glockenspiel Clock Tower, built in 1908 with cutting-edge technology of its time. The technology is seamlessly integrated into the building's interior, creating enchanting moments of light and sound at Quebec's Christmas Market.

au bord du lac tranquille

<https://mirari.art/en/projets/1322/>

This permanent installation in Montréal is the world's first interactive ice rink. The space can accommodate up to 400 people, with skaters' movements brought to life through interactive light art. It offers a unique way to embrace the cold winter while fostering social connections.

Below are five suggestions from Mr. Payette for creating impactful projects in public spaces.

Connecting people to transform lives

Projects should connect people through their interactions and everyday lives.

Technology as a tool to create innovative experiences

Technology should be used as a tool to create innovative experiences, not as an end in itself.

Storytelling and meaning drives emotions and impact

Incorporating storytelling and meaningful elements allows for greater emotional depth, moving people on a deeper level.

Involve the community for social cohesion

Involving the community in the creative process ensures social accessibility and turns citizens into ambassadors for the artworks and installations.

Work with creative experts to amplify durability and impact

Collaborating with artists, experts, creators, and urban planners, both locally and internationally, amplifies the impact and ripple effects of the project.

Finally, Mr. Payette concluded by stating that incorporating creativity into public spaces has the power to make cities more livable, enjoyable, and functional.

Creativity is also one of the keys to engaging citizens in building a better society and a brighter future together. Mirari is also involved in the Canadian Pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan. We look forward to the opportunity to experience this project in Japan.



Part 2 SHORT PRESENTATION

From UNESCO Design Cities of the World

Seven overseas Cities of Design that participated in the conference, as well as UNESCO Cities of Design Conference members Asahikawa City, Kobe City, and Nagoya City introduced their respective cities and initiatives.

In his presentation, Naoyuki Watanabe of the Asahikawa Creative City Promotion Council introduced the "Design Cities Manifesto Asahikawa" which was approved at the recent UNESCO Creative Cities of Design Subnetwork Meeting and aims to achieve harmony between nature and society through the power of design.

<https://design-asahikawa.jp/about/>



Asahikawa, Japan
Naoyuki Watanabe



Bandung, Indonesia
Tita Larasati



Detroit, U.S.A.
Kiana Wenzell



Doha, Qatar
Rashid Malheya



Dundee, Scotland
Annie Marrs



Geelong, Australia
Tracey-Lea Smith



Kobe, Japan
Takahiro Kimura



Kortrijk, Belgium
Stijn Debaillie



Muharraq, Bahrain
Haya Ahmed Al Sada



Nagoya, Japan
Eriko Esaka

Even with just 10 of the 49 cities, we could see the diversity of the "Cities of Design" and their distinctive initiatives. Along with that diversity, an important commonality emerged: creative cities coexist with their citizens.

Asahikawa, Kobe, and Nagoya are being called upon to help other cities engage their citizens through their outstanding programs and initiatives, serving as ambassadors and coordinators in expanding and connecting activities, with citizens continuing to take the initiative.



In response to a question from the audience regarding what the Sabae City hopes to promote and collaborate in as a City of Design, Mr. Niiyama mentioned Sabae's expectations for UNESCO Creative Cities Network and Design City designation.

The UNESCO Cities of Design Conference welcomes the expansion of the network and will continue to serve as a platform for, and actively collaborate in, exchanges and cooperation between Cities of Design.

Part 1: Guest profiles

Naohiro NIIYAMA

Representative, TSUGI LLC / Deputy Director, SOE / Creative Director



Born in Osaka in 1985. He studied architecture at university and moved to Sabae City, Fukui Prefecture, in 2009. After working at Sabae City Office, he established TSUGI LLC. With the vision of “making Fukui a creative region.” He has been active in a variety of activities across the areas of region, industry, and tourism, including the industrial tourism event “RENEW” and the local product store: “SAVA! STORE”. In 2023, he opened LIVE DESIGN School with his friends. He is co-author of “Designers in fascinating communities”. He is also a judge for the Good Design Award.

Thomas Payette

Creative director / Co-founder of Mirari



A graduate of the production program at the National Theatre School of Canada, Thomas Payette has been collaborating with numerous creators as a multimedia designer and creative director for many years. He has taken an active role in the creation of works by renowned companies and artists such as Ex Machina, the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, the National Ballet of Canada, Robert Lepage, Sylvain Émard, Guillaume Côté, Virginie Brunelle, Martin Messier and Kaiji Moriyama. He was also involved as artistic director and media art curator on large-scale events like LVLUP and Les Grands Feux du Casino Lac Lemay. Thomas is the creative director of the Canada Pavilion at Osaka 2025.

In 2015, he co-founded Mirari, a multidisciplinary creative studio that creates spaces, installations and works that transform the way people see the world. Thomas is also member of the board of XN Québec and a teacher at the National Theatre School of Canada.

Catherine Lareau

Strategy and business development director of Mirari



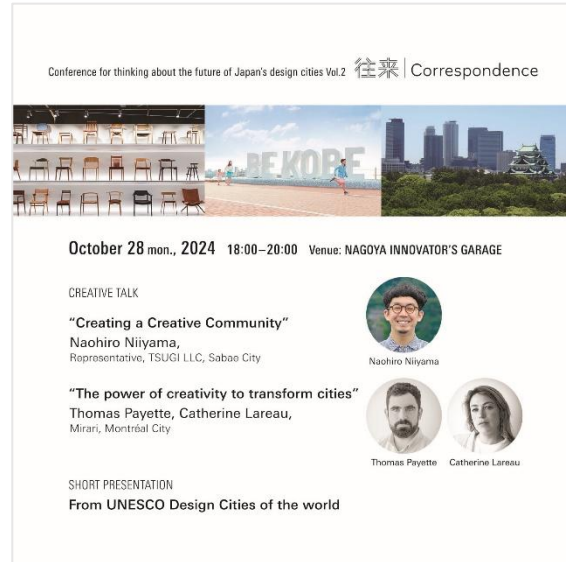
Catherine has expertise in various sectors related to public arts, events, technology, culture and social innovation. Passionate about economic development and specialized in the cultural and creative sector, she was responsible for revitalizing the territory through the creative industries, notably as Economic Development Commissioner for the City of Montreal and now as Director of Development at Mirari Art, a multidisciplinary creative studio specializing in the deployment of immersive experiences for public spaces, large-scale events and the stage.

With a master's degree in Economic Geography and a bachelor's degree in communications, she has worked on strategic planning and the development of cultural and creative industries on a metropolitan scale. Results-oriented, her leitmotiv has always been to respond appropriately to the needs of municipality by implementing structuring and innovative projects on the territory.



PR tools:

Flyers (105 mm x 105 mm) 3,000 printed, distributed at the host cities and relevant institutions



Official Website:

JP: <https://www.creative-nagoya.jp/ourai2024/index.html>

EN: https://www.creative-nagoya.jp/ourai2024/index_en.html

Other listings:

designcities.net (A platform for promoting the design activities of member cities of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network)

<https://www.designcities.net/conference/thinking-about-the-future-of-japans-design-cities/>