

Remarks by HE Ambassador Jota Yamamoto at the exhibition opening of
“Japanese Design Today 100” held at the National Museum on 17 January, 2019

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

I would like to thank DG Mme. Elina Anttila & her staff of the National Museum to make it possible. DG & I can see many familiar faces of common friends, and I hope you enjoy this always heartwarming atmosphere of the Kansallismuseo style. The Embassy made a humble contribution for drink & snacks, and I wish you to enjoy it as well. I really appreciate your kind attendance.

To celebrate Suomi 100 of 2017, and to celebrate Suomi 100+1 last year, the Embassy & the Finnish partners have accumulated a series of events. The recent example is the opening exhibition of Amos Rex, which was over 10 days ago. The total turnout was 270,000, and the long queue outside Amos Rex speaks volumes to something common between Japan & Finland. Perhaps that is a common perception on how to combine cutting-edge technologies and artistic beauty.

This time, the Embassy and the National Museum try to demonstrate another similarity of Japan & Finland, and to organize this exhibition with cooperation of the Japan Foundation. Perhaps we can successfully showcase a common perception on how to combine simple clear-cut designs and daily life. You come to see the exhibition and not listen to me, thus I don't elaborate details. But the key concept is a similarity and affinity: after all, Japan likes to be a country of courtesy as is Finland, and Japan likes to be a country of strength as is Finland.

Since this year marks Japani-Suomi 100, it is all the more pleasing to start this exhibition at the beginning of the year. Japan is not alone. As this year is the 100 years anniversary of Finland also with Belgium, Italy, Poland, the UK & the US, I believe that we may together appreciate, on many individual or joint occasions, the historical development of partnership with Finland. The spirit of Suomi 100, yhdessä, shall anyway apply to the bilateral centenary celebrations, and Japan is proud to be a part of the entire landscape.

In February, a big snow statue of the Helsinki Cathedral will appear in the Snow Festival in Japan. In March, Japan Culture Festival will be held in Oulu. In April, Japan Philharmonic Orchestra will come to perform in Musiikkitalo of Helsinki & in Kouvola with Maestro Pietari Inkinen. In May, you will see an enormous number of people joining an enormous parade in downtown Helsinki, while in the Roihuvuori park you will see the synchronization of cherry blossoms and classic theatre performance. Many more to follow.

My Finnish friends always tell me the value of human connections & networking contacts. As relationship between Japan and Finland is steadily expanding, now we see many more fitting contexts for human exchange for tourism, business, studies, cultural collaboration & so on. Annual MATKA is now starting, and this year, a big delegation of Japan comes to attend it. Mr. Ichikawa, Executive Director of JNTO London and some delegation members are kindly joining us today. They are walking dictionary to tell you the attractiveness of Japan, and I hope you enjoy a joyful inclusive networking to each other. I wish you a very good evening with a lot of charms.