

Italy national day

Italy and Japan flourishing together

Vincenzo Petrone
AMBASSADOR OF ITALY TO JAPAN

It gives me great pleasure to address the readers of The Japan Times on the occasion of the National Day of Italy.

I would first like to thank the Japanese people for their keen appreciation of Italy, its cultural heritage and its products. Notwithstanding the difficult economic conditions of these last 12 months, our relations have grown stronger and healthier than ever, and Japan remains one of Italy's most important partners.

I consider it a privilege to serve as ambassador in an extraordinary country like Japan, which shares common values with Italy, in addition to a special appreciation for art and beauty.

Italy in Japan

These special ties made it possible for us to organize "Italy in Japan 2009," a showcase for excellence in the arts, business and science. From September to December, through 160 events organized all over Japan, "Italy in Japan 2009" represented an integrated promotional strategy aimed at presenting our industrial, scientific and technological achievements and our historical and cultural attractions to help the Japanese public gain a modern understanding of my country.

The participation of the Japanese public has been astonishing, and attendance at the eight main cultural events included in the calendar clearly indicated the success of the events.

To date, the art exhibition "The Heritage of the Roman

Empire" has been visited by 265,000 Japanese; 276,000 have patronized the "Masterpieces of La Galleria Borghese and 443,000 have visited the exhibition "Ancient Egypt in Torino." All these exhibitions are still circulating in various Japanese cities. Meanwhile, "I Macchiaioli: Masters of Italian Realism" closed after notching up an impressive 45,000 visitors. Also, performances of "La Scala di Milano" were enjoyed by over 24,000 spectators at the Tokyo Bunka Kaikan, as well as millions who tuned in on NHK TV.

The exhibition "Zig Zag: Tradition, Innovation" has been seen by 38,000 people, while an initiative to promote Italian eno-gastronomic products in department stores has reached over 500,000 consumers.

The 21st meeting of the Italy-Japan Business Group gathered 70 Italian and Japanese companies interested in strengthening their economic ties.

In light of the very successful outcome of the initiative, the Italian Embassy, the Italian Trade Commission, the Tourism Promotion Board, the Bank of Italy and the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Japan are presently organizing a new convocation for "Italy in Japan," to be held in 2011.

"Italy in Japan 2011" will showcase a number of extraordinary events in the cultural, architectural and economic sectors. The main focus will be Venice, including its history, arts and influence over a wide range of countries and territories. We are currently supporting a Japanese

organization that is working on a large exhibition on Venice that will serve as the centerpiece of the cultural events planned for the autumn of 2011. The exhibition is being developed by Japanese curators with cooperation from local authorities in Venice.

In Japan, this will be the first comprehensive exhibition to look at Venice, and will provide a unique opportunity to become acquainted with the cultural, economic and political achievements of a city that for centuries has been the leading power in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. It will also be an opportunity to learn about contemporary conditions and the ongoing battle to preserve the city and its fragile environment. In another important exhibition, 20th-century Italian art will be explored through the masterpieces of Giorgio Morandi, a painter well known for his still life and landscape paintings. Morandi's art is particularly popular in Japan, and the exhibition, which is currently being organized, will bring many of Morandi's works to Japan, as well as pieces by contemporary artists who have been influenced by him.

As for business and industrial cooperation, the 23rd meeting of the Italy-Japan Business Group will take place in Tokyo, providing a forum for the Italian and the Japanese business communities to analyze strategies for promoting cooperation at large companies, as well as small and midsize enterprises.

The 24th World Congress of Architecture, "UIA2011 TOKYO," will be held in Tokyo from September 25 to October 1, 2011, and bring together



Creativity: Calligraphy by contemporary Japanese artist Rogen Ebihara is on display at the Italian ambassador's residence. ITALIAN EMBASSY

er thousands of architects, architectural students and engineers from all over the world. The Italian Embassy, the Italian Cultural Institute, the Italian Trade Commission and other Italian organizations are currently working together to coordinate and promote Italian participation in the UIA congress, by organizing events that will take place at the Italian Embassy and the Italian Cultural Institute in parallel with the congress' activities.

The 150th Anniversary of the unification of Italy will provide an important occasion for the organization of dedicated initiatives to be included in the calendar of "Italy in Japan 2011."

Art at the Embassy

The Italian Embassy has also become a venue for art-based dialogue between Italy and Japan. The masterpieces on show at the ambassador's residence include works by such renowned Italian artists as Lucio Fontana, Alberto Burri and Enrico Castellani, in addition

to a current display that features the creations of Hokkaido sculptor Kan Yasuda, who presently works in Tuscany — a region that boasts the white marble of Carrara, which so enchanted Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci.

Facing the 17th-century garden of the residence, which served as *nakayashiki* (daimyo's home) for Iyo-Matsuyama, it is now possible to appreciate the creativity of two distinguished Japanese calligraphers: the late Shinshu Tanaka, and Rogen Ebihara, a contemporary artist working in Tokyo whose works are proudly hosted by the Italian Embassy.

International role

Italy, which is seriously committed to working alongside its partners for worldwide peace and security, ranks sixth among major contributors to the ordinary budget of the United Nations, with a percentage of 5,079%, and is also among nations that contribute to peacekeeping budgets.

In 2009, Italy was elected to the following U.N. bodies: The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Commission for Social Development (UNCSD), Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), Statistics Commission (UNSC), and the Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL).

Furthermore, Italy has presented its candidacy for a nonpermanent seat on the U.N. Security Council for 2017-2018 and as a member

Current and upcoming Italian events in Japan

● **"Made in Italy"**
Italian Pavilion at Interior Lifestyle at Tokyo Big Sight (June 2-6). Italian design, Italian gifts and Italian lifestyles will be presented at the Interior Lifestyle Fair.

● **Moda ITALIA and Shoes from Italy** at Tokyo Westin Hotel, July 5-7. The most important events of Italian Fashion in Japan - held for more than 20 years - offer traders, retailers and distributors a unique opportunity to meet Italian fashion and shoes companies.

● **Renewable Energy 2010 International Exhibition** at Pacifico Yokohama (June 30-July 2). Trends in Italian renewable energy will be presented at one of the most noted international events in the industry.

● **Art and Culture "To Live in Pompeii"** at Yokohama Museum of Art (till June 13). The exhibition features 255 artifacts and artworks excavated from the ruins of the Roman city of Pompeii, drawing mainly on the collection of the National Archaeological Museum in Naples.



"Antea" by Parmigianino (detail) MUSEO DI CAPODIMONTE

● **"Masterpieces from the Museum of Capodimonte in Naples, from Renaissance to Baroque"** at the National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo (June 26-Sept. 26). The exhibition presents outstanding paintings from one of the finest museums in Europe, including works by the great masters of the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

● **"The Heritage of the Roman Empire"** at Aomori Museum of Art (till June 13); at Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art in Sapporo (July 3-Aug. 22).

● **"Ancient Egypt in Torino"** at Shizuoka Prefectural Museum of Art (June 12-Aug. 22).

● **"Alessandro Papetti: dynamic spaces"** at the Italian Cultural Institute (May 31-June 17)

● **"The exhibition of works from the Vasari Corridor from the collection of the Galleria degli Uffizi"** at Sompo Japan Museum of Art in Tokyo (Sept. 11-Nov. 14); at the National Museum of Art, Osaka (Nov. 27-Feb. 20, 2011)

● **"Vittori & Vögler: Architecture & Vision — from Pyramids to Spacecraft"** at Italian Cultural Institute (June 21-July 3). The exhibition is co-organized by the Swiss Embassy.

● **Opera Teatro Regio of Torino** will visit Japan for the first time in its history. Conducted by Gianandrea Noseda, Verdi's "La Traviata" will be performed at Tokyo Bunka Kaikan on July 23, 26, 29 and Aug. 1, featuring Natalie Dessay, Matthew Polenzani and others. Puccini's "La Boheme" will be performed at Kanagawa Kenmin Hall on July 25 and then at Tokyo Bunka Kaikan on July 28 and 31, featuring Barbara Frittoli, Marcelo Alvarez and others.

for the Human Rights Council (HRC) for 2011-2014.

Italy is actively supporting the reconstruction and stabilization of Afghanistan via both military and civilian means. Italian troops operating in Afghanistan comprise more than 2,800 units (the fourth largest contingent) with 600 stationed in Kabul and 1900 in the western region — mainly Herat Province and Farah Province — and Mazar-e-Sharif, with support

from two Tornado aircraft. Regional Command West is entrusted to an Italian officer.

Italy is also leading the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Herat. Italy's financial contributions to the NATO Trust Fund on behalf of ANA for the second half of 2009 (where funds for missions are available) amounts to €2 million.

Today, Italy contributes about 70 training specialists

from the Carabinieri Corps and the Guardia di Finanza (Customs Police) to help rehabilitate the Afghan National Police. This program will be substantially expanded in the near future. Italy's contribution to U.N. peacekeeping is of vital importance: Italy is the leading supplier of "Blue Helmets" among Western and European Union countries, and is also the sixth-largest funder, contributing nearly €180 million in 2009.



"City of Water": Venice will serve as the centerpiece for the cultural events associated with "Italy in Japan 2011." FOTOTEKA ENIT



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