

Japan Inspires

Ina LEPEL, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Japan

“Japan inspires” is not just a phrase often heard, but a reality. Since I started as German Ambassador to Japan in September 2019, this country has impressed and surprised me again and again with its many facets. When I enjoy the efficiency of rail transport and the fantastic food or experience the numerous contrasts between tradition and modernity, which can be felt especially in the megacity Tōkyō, I look forward to my work in Japan with anticipation and excitement. As Head of the Department for Asia and the Pacific at the Federal Foreign Office, I was already able to experience Japan from a Berlin perspective up until August 2019, but I find it even more exciting to gain first-hand experience now.

In October, right at the beginning of my term in office, I was able to witness a rare major event. Together with German Federal President STEINMEIER and his wife, I too was able to attend the impressive ceremony of Emperor Naruhito’s accession to the throne. The subsequent political and social discussions showed how well Germany and Japan work together, as both countries are close partners working on the urgent issues of today. Together we represent the values of multilateralism and work

together for political solutions to conflicts and civil crisis management. In addition, we stand for fair and free world trade, and work together in development cooperation or in the fight against international terrorism. There are also many collaborations tackling the challenges of, for example, digitalization, sustainable energy supply or demographic change. The free trade agreement between Japan and the EU will give a further positive boost to traditionally close economic relations. The many mutual visits and bilateral meetings, for example within the framework of the G7 and G20 or the United Nations, are also a symbol of our good cooperation.

2019 was a very special year for Berlin and Tōkyō. The 25-year town twinning was honored on both sides with numerous events that brought the ties between the metropolises even closer. Important events are also planned for 2020. I will watch the Olympic and Paralympic Games with enthusiasm and excitement this summer and keep my fingers crossed for the Japanese and German athletes. These will be the first games that I will be able to experience not only on TV, but personally on site. That’s why I am very happy to be



at these games. In October, the 17th Asia-Pacific Conference of German Business in Tōkyō will follow, where we are expecting around 1,000 decision-makers from business and politics to travel from Germany and Asian countries.

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In Germany, this year marks the 30th anniversary of German reunification, which we will pay special tribute to in Japan. We are also celebrating the 250th birthday of Ludwig van Beethoven, who is extremely appreciated and loved throughout Japan. If we look a little further ahead, we can already look forward to the 160th anniversary of German-Japanese diplomatic relations next year, which will make our long-standing ties even more visible.

With all the upcoming events, I am glad that we have had an important partner for mutual exchange for 35 years with the Japanese-German Center Berlin (JDZB). This is not the only reason for another anniversary, but also for a heartfelt thank you. Through its work, the JDZB supports mutual understanding of Japanese and Germans and helps to create a more realistic image of each other that reaches beyond clichés. I was very impressed by a meeting with participants in the German-Japanese Young Leaders Forum held in Tōkyō in September. This is where young leaders from Germany and Japan from very different fields of work come together and discuss future issues. I could see how strong the networks formed here are from the fact that a former participant even traveled from New York to attend the alumni event in Tōkyō. And, moreover, the Japanese-German Forum, which took place in Tōkyō in early December 2019 – my first forum in this new capacity – provided important impulses for the further shaping of our relations.

Fortunately, the exchange between our two countries is progressing well in many areas even without official intervention. In Germany, for example, you can increasingly sample Japanese cuisine and in Japan you can find more and more shops inspired by Germany, which was particularly noticeable at the Christmas markets in Tōkyō last year. I am impressed by the great commitment of the Japanese-German and German-Japanese Societies operating in both countries, which promote exchange and mutual understanding through a variety of activities at local and regional levels.

I was amazed at the pictures submitted as part of the embassy's painting competition for schoolchildren from all over Japan; these depicted not only beer, sausages and cars, but also everyday motifs such as wasps at the bakery or taking bicycles on the train. At the annual German Festival in Tōkyō, there was also a wealth of handicraft shops and representatives from Berlin's DJ scene to ensure the best entertainment in addition to culinary delights.

Japan will continue to be a close partner with whom we can achieve a great deal together. We tackle some questions with different approaches, but that is precisely why we can learn a lot from each other and develop joint solutions on important issues. I am therefore looking forward to developing an even deeper understanding of Japan and its people in the coming years and nurturing the German-Japanese friendship together with the JDZB and the *jdzb echo* readers.

Dear Readers!

The lead article in this issue was written by Ambassador Ina LEPEL, who took office in Japan in the summer of 2019. After serving as Ambassador to Pakistan, she was previously Head of the Asia and Pacific Division of the German Federal Foreign Office. She has already been actively involved in the Young Leaders' Forum, the Japanese-German Forum and the German-Japanese Security Policy Workshop. I am pleased that she also supports us as a member of the JDZB's Foundation Council.

In the run-up to the Olympic and Paralympic Summer Games in Tōkyō, the JDZB will also be covering these topics. "The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part." These are the words of Baron de COUBERTIN which conjured up the spirit of the Olympic Games. In my childhood these words touched me deeply, but it seems that the last few Olympic Games are not only about athletes giving their personal best performance. Rather, there appears to be different problems – commercialisation, doping scandals and enormous costs – so that nothing is as simple as it seems. Let us reflect again on the importance of the Olympic Games. On 6 February, the JDZB hosted the German-Japanese symposium "New impulses for the role of professional nursing staff in caring for the elderly". It was impressive how Japan's strategies for prevention and measures for functional rehabilitation met with great interest from the German side. The JDZB will continue to hold conferences on the topic of demographic change. The spread of the new coronavirus is concerning. Please take care of yourself and stay healthy.

KIYOTA Tokiko
JDZB Deputy Secretary General

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On 2 April 2020, the JDZB, in cooperation with the German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ, Tōkyō), is organizing a panel discussion on the topic of “Olympia 2020 – The importance of major sporting events for society, politics and the economy”. Below is an interview on the topic with the Deputy Director of the DIJ, Dr. Barbara HOLTHUS.

One reason for our event is the publication of the anthology “Japan through the Lens of the Tokyo Olympics”, of which you are co-editor. What are the main points and why should we read it?

Olympic records are measured in seconds and milliseconds; the Olympic and Paralympic Games last 34 days; preparations in the case of *Tōkyō 2020* extend over more than 15 years. However, the impact of the world’s largest sporting event on the Tōkyō cityscape and the nation’s memories will last for generations. Japan and Tōkyō are trying to reinvent themselves with the Olympic and Paralympic Games as a place of diversity, inclusion, cosmopolitanism, “coolness”, and hospitality. They will also try to present the nuclear disaster of Fukushima as “overcome”. All in all, *Tōkyō 2020* serves as a prism in which the hopes of a wide range of stakeholders are paired with the commercial interests of the IOC and the sponsors. Our anthology takes the Olympic Games in Tōkyō as an opportunity to explain Japan from a variety of perspectives, based on the way the Games are advertised, organized and discussed. In concise, easy-to-read chapters, our 20 authors analyze the anti-Olympics movement, security measures, the advertising industry and sponsorship, the regional differences in the country, working conditions at the new sports venues, historical background and much more.

The preparation and implementation of Olympic Games touches on many areas of public and private life – what are the implications for the city of Tōkyō?

The Olympic Games have been highly anticipated for many years. In many public places and buildings in the city, in the airports, at sumo tournaments or in large stores such as the branches of a well-known electronics retail chain, there are so-called countdown signs that are counting down the days until the opening of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Since 2018, various other major events have also been held at Tōkyō to generate enthusiasm for *Tōkyō*

2020 and especially for the Paralympic Games.

Most of the Olympic sports facilities are located in the so-called Heritage Zone and the Bay Zone, and it is there, on newly reclaimed land, that most of the new buildings can be found. The Olympic Village in Harumi district is already on the housing market for the post-Olympic period. Rents in downtown Tōkyō continue to rise, and although the gentrification processes in several Tōkyō neighborhoods were not initiated by the Olympics, they have accelerated them. At the same time, neighborhoods like Shinjuku, with its not insubstantial number of homeless people, are to be “cleaned up” from March 2020. But exactly where these people are supposed to go is still unknown by those affected.

Have the Olympic Games in Japan and in Tōkyō been unreservedly welcomed, or were and are there also critical voices?

Surveys paid for by Japan’s National Olympic Committee show that, at the time of the 2013 bid, almost three-quarters of respondents were in favor of the *Tōkyō 2020* Games. That’s up 26 percent points more than the previous year. These figures are quite impressive, because when Tōkyō applied for the 2016 Olympics, the mood among the population was much more skeptical. Of course there are also critical voices, and in 2013, 12 percent of the population were explicitly against Tōkyō’s application for the 2020 Olympics. There are also anti-Olympic groups that organize public lectures, information events and demonstrations on the 24th of each month (since the Games begin on 24 July 2020). They criticize various grievances, including the exorbitant costs and waste of taxpayers’ money, the working conditions at the Olympic construction sites, the displacement of homeless people, as well as privatization and increasing surveillance of public spaces. The mass media, however, scarcely reports these Olympic-critical activities, so that the opposition to the Olympics remains largely invisible to the public.



What will remain after the end of the Games? A push for modernization of the city like after the 1964 Olympics – or nothing of the sort?

From the official side, great hopes are being placed on the Olympic Games and they are already being considered a great success for Tōkyō and the entire country. With *Tōkyō 1964* Japan managed to free itself from its status as a poor country and the war defeat, and to show the world that it has risen to the league of industrialized, technologically advanced nations. This “success story” also served to cement the national identity of an economically successful and internationally admired country. *Tōkyō 2020* has a much harder time. Once again, it is promising to make the games the most technologically advanced and the safest ever. The games are designed to make Japan a country that lives and celebrates diversity, inclusion and sustainability, even though it has lagged far behind other industrialized countries in all these areas. A new culture of volunteering is also being created, following the example of the London 2012 Olympic Games. One can only hope for the country and its people that these noble goals will be achieved. At the same time, however, the Games are already overshadowed by bribery and doping scandals, the climate crisis and a potentially threatening pandemic caused by the corona virus. It will be several years before we can take full stock of the Olympic legacy of *Tōkyō 2020*.

Japanese-German Security Policy Dialog “Track 1.5”, 10 December 2019
Prof. Hanns W. MAULL, German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Berlin

The Japanese-German security policy dialog has become a tradition: Since 2014, representatives from the foreign ministries as well as from security policy think tanks and academics have met once a year to discuss current and fundamental security policy issues in East Asia and Europe, and explore the possibilities of closer cooperation between Germany and Japan. This format is known as “Track 1.5” – the representatives of the ministries do not participate in an official mission, but contribute their expertise to the discussions with the external experts on an equal footing and independently.

It is becoming increasingly clear that this dialogue between security policy experts from government and academia is focusing on the topic of how to deal with the rise of China. This was again the case at talks in December 2019 in Tōkyō, which was hosted this time by the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA) in cooperation with the foreign ministries, the JDZB and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. The thirty or so German and Japanese experts (as well as one participant from Great Britain) initially remained among themselves in confidential discussions during the first part of the day. In addition to Chinese military and security policy activities in East and Southeast Asia and the growing

tensions between China and the United States, North Korea’s nuclear weapons and missile threat was also discussed.

The second part of the dialog was held in public: During a well-attended event at the International House of Japan – moderated by Professor TSURUOKA Michito from Keiō University in Tōkyō – the Deputy Cabinet Secretary of the Japanese Government and Member of the National Security Council, HAYASHI Hajime, and the German Ambassador in Tōkyō, Ina LEPEL, discussed the topic “Present and Future: Rule-Based International Order, Regional Security and Cooperation between Germany and Japan”, with the academics Hans KUNDNANI (Royal Institute for International Affairs Chatham House), Professor HOSOYA Yuichi (Keiō University) and Professor Hanns W. MAULL (German Institute for International and Security Affairs).

Everyone agreed that the rule-based international order is currently under enormous pressure. It is not only being challenged externally by the emergence of China and a revitalized Russia, but also internally by the current American administration and especially by the American President, whose first official act included the termination of his participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the project of a new, ambitious free trade

area for the Asia-Pacific region. In doing so, the new administration undermined one of the most important projects to support and develop the existing international order: America, which had built and dominated this order, now seemed more inclined to tear it down than to preserve it.

According to the panel’s conclusion, the challenge of the current international order by external and internal forces endangers the validity of international law and makes effective world governance more difficult. It gives way to a threatening development in which the law no longer dominates world politics, but rather the power of the strongest, and where international cooperation is no longer able to cope with the manifold global challenges facing humanity. Germany and Japan, the panel unanimously agreed, are particularly dependent on a functioning, robust international order and should therefore vigorously oppose these problematic developments. And there is still room for closer cooperation between the two governments: On the Japanese side, for example, there is a clear desire for greater support from Germany in its efforts to counter China’s attempts to change the status quo in East and Southeast Asia. Several panelists stressed that reform was necessary to preserve the international order; Germany and Japan were called upon to work to reshape the international order in order to preserve it.



The panel discussion was followed by a lively debate with the audience. Among the issues addressed were the difficulties of breaking free from economic dependence on China and dealing with the effects of the decoupling of the two largest economies in the world, America and China. The fact that this trend towards decoupling of deeply interdependent economies (and with others) is taking place within a context of increasing tensions between the two largest economies in the world, America and China, is a major challenge.

German-Japanese Exchange Program for Young Employees 2019

Kerstin PAULICK, Head of Delegation

“*Konnichiwa*”, there it was again, the unbelievable Japanese friendliness which welcomed us as the German delegation of the exchange program for young professionals already at the airport in Tōkyō on 20 November 2019. We were welcomed by Junko, our translator, as well as Ken from the National Institution for Youth Education (NIYE), the co-organisers on the Japanese side.

Both accompanied us in the following two weeks throughout Japan, during which we experienced an eventful program with company visits, discussions, exchange evenings and a host family weekend.

This exchange program, which is aimed at young professionals aged between 18 and 30 years, is primarily intended to provide an insight into the working world and daily life of Japan, which in our case was absolutely successful. We had the chance to visit large international corporations as well as small local traditional companies ranging from glass manufacturing to food production.

We were warmly welcomed everywhere we went. The company presentations gave us a comprehensive overview of the culture and working methods of each company. We could clearly see the similarities and differences of both countries.

In both countries, the recruitment of new, young skilled workers and succession planning play a major role, especially in small, local trade and handicraft businesses. Many companies recognize that the attractiveness of employers must be increased and implement this by, for example, shaping the workplace,

flexible working hours or other social benefits. An important aspect that distinguishes both countries is the use of holidays. Whereas in Germany there is considerably more annual vacation days available, which are usually taken in full, in Japan there are fewer days which are often even allowed to lapse. Here, however, a rethinking of the Japanese working culture is evident, which is also supported by the government with a law enforcing people to take their annual holiday leave.

These topics were also discussed with the participants of the Japanese delegation at the weekend seminar. This was a continuation of the weekend seminar held in Fürstenberg in August and was a warm reunion of the two delegations. Some of them also spent their day off together in Tōkyō with the Japanese participants, with whom they had become friends in the meantime.

After the exciting days in Tōkyō we flew to the prefecture of Yamaguchi, where we spent the second part of the trip. There we stayed at the National Yamaguchi Tokuji Youth Outdoor Learning Center, which is located in the middle of a beautiful mountain landscape. Here we could enjoy pure nature. At the center we were fully integrated as a delegation and were allowed to participate in the morning roll call with other groups.

The following host family weekend was one of the highlights of the exchange program. Here, all participants had the rare opportunity to experience everyday life up close in a Japanese family. We were all warmly welcomed by our families and experienced a fascinating weekend. Each host family came up with

a special program to give its guest a better understanding of their lives. This consisted of excursions, cooking evenings or sports and cultural activities. On the final evening, when all participants met up again with their host families at the center, you could clearly see the excitement on everyone’s faces. And it is amazing to see how such warm and intensive friendships can develop between the families and the guests in such a short time. Often these friendships continue for many years later.

The organizers of the NIYE and the National Yamaguchi Tokuji Youth Outdoor Learning Center did a great job organizing our whole stay in Japan, and we always felt very welcome.

From my perspective as the head of the delegation, time and again I saw how this program is an enrichment to the lives of all participants. You can see how new insights are gained, views are discussed and the value of this exchange is appreciated. Only rarely do foreign guests have the opportunity to immerse themselves so intensely in the work and private life of Japan.

I would therefore like to thank the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology as well as NIYE, JDZB and all those involved in making this exchange program possible. To better understand the cultures, mentalities and ways of thinking of both countries and to strengthen tolerance and understanding for each other, I think it’s very important to continue this program for many more years to come.
Arigatou gozaimasu Japan!





Premiere of the documentary film “The Hokkaidō Universe” followed by a round table discussion at the JDZB on 13 February 2020, in cooperation with the German Archaeological Institute (Berlin) and the Jōmon World Heritage Promotion Office, Hokkaidō Government (Sapporo).



Symposium “New Impulses for the Role of Professional Nursing Staff in Caring for the Elderly” on 6 February 2020 at the JDZB, in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Health (Berlin) and the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (Tōkyō).



The 28th session of the Japanese-German Forum – the annual meeting of the advisory body for both governments with German and Japanese representatives from the fields of business, politics, science and media – took place on 5 and 6 December 2019 in Tōkyō.



Lecture “Reexamining National Security Policies in the New Era of Competing Great Powers” by Admiral TAKEI Tomohisa, former Chief of Maritime Staff, JMSDF Chief of Naval Operations Distinguished International Fellow at the U.S. Naval War College on 29 November 2019 at the JDZB.

CONFERENCES BY FOCAL AREAS

GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY

Symposium: The Roles and Responsibilities of Japan and Germany in a Sustainable International Order

C: Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Bonn; German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin
Date: 7-8 April 2020, in Tōkyō

Conference: EU-Japan Relations: Beyond the Strategic Partnership Agreement

C: European Advanced Research Network (EJARN), Stockholm School of Economics; Freie Universität Berlin
Date: 5-6 June 2020

German-Japanese Security Dialog, Track 1.5

C: German Federal Foreign Office, Berlin; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tōkyō; The Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA), Tōkyō
Date: Autumn 2020, in Tōkyō

Conference: Disarmament and the Role of the United Nations: German and Japanese Perspectives

C: Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Berlin
Date: to be confirmed in 2020

Conference: Trilateral Cooperation Germany – Japan – Indonesia

C: Federal Foreign Office, Berlin
Date: to be confirmed in 2020, in Jakarta



Symposium: Global Health IV

C: Global Health Center (GHC), Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva; National Center for Global Health and Medicine (NCGM), Tōkyō
Date: to be confirmed in 2020, in Tōkyō

SUSTAINABILITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT**German-Japanese Energy Transition Council (GJETC)**

C: Wuppertal Institute for Climate, the Environment, Energy Ltd.; Hennicke Consult, Wuppertal; ECOS Consult, Osnabrück; Institute for Energy Economics Japan, Tōkyō
Date: 18-20 March 2020

Symposium: Bioeconomics

C: JSPS-Club, Bonn
Date: 15-16 May 2020

Conference: Climate-friendly Mobility

C: Institut der Deutschen Wirtschaft (IW), Cologne; Fujitsu Research Institute, Tōkyō
Date: 28 May 2020

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE**Symposium: Aging and Care in German and Japanese Communities**

C: German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ), Tōkyō; University of Dortmund; Mitsubishi Research Institute, Tōkyō
Date: 17-19 March 2020, in Tōkyō

Symposium: Demographic Change in Germany and Japan

C: Federal Ministry for Families, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Berlin; Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Tōkyō
Date: 3 June 2020, in Tōkyō

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**Symposium: Autonomous Driving**

C: Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Paris
Date: September/October 2020

Symposium: The Future of Work and Digitalization

C: Shinshū University, Nagano; Fraunhofer Institute for Applied Information Technology (FIT), Sankt Augustin
Date: 29 October 2020

Symposium: Research and Innovation Cooperation with China

C: Mercator Institute for China Studies, Berlin
Date: October 2020

STATE, ECONOMY, GOVERNANCE**Panel Discussion: The Current Transnational Environmental Movement among Young People**

C: Aoyama Gakuin University, Tōkyō
Date: 5 March 2020

Panel Discussion: Olympia 2020. The Impact of Major Sporting Events on Society, Politics and Business

C: German Institute for Japanese Studies, Tōkyō
Date: 2 April 2020

Symposium: Sports Law

C: German-Japanese Lawyers Association, Hamburg
Date: 19 June 2020, in Munich

Conference: Shaping Institutional Profiles in Research, Teaching and Community Engagement

C: German Rectors' Conference (HRK), Bonn; Japan Committee of Universities for International Exchange (JACUIE), Tōkyō
Date: 22-23 June 2020

Conference: Attractive for Immigrants? Japan, Germany and France – A Comparative Study

C: Duisburg-Essen University
Date: December 2020

CULTURE AND CHANGE**German-Japanese Architects' Dialog**

C: Association of German Architects, Berlin; Technical University Berlin
Date: To be confirmed in 2020

SPECIAL PROJECT**29th Japanese-German Forum**

C: Japan Center for International Exchange, Tōkyō
Date: Autumn 2020

CULTURAL EVENTS**EXHIBITION****“Lost in Transformation” MATSUBARA Katsuhiko and Kyle EGRET. Paintings and Installations.**

Opening: 13 March 2020, 7 pm
Duration: 16 March until 19 June 2020

CONCERT**Contemporary Compositions with Maurizio BARBETTI (viola) and INOUE Satoko (piano)**

Date: 27 November 2020, 7 pm

READING/LECTURE**Reading and author's talk with MURATA Sayaka “Konbini-Ningen” (“Convenience Store Woman”)**

Z: Japan Cultural Institute Cologne/Japan Foundation; Aufbau Publishing Co., Berlin; German-Japanese Society Berlin
Date: 25 March 2020, 7 pm

“Kabuki and its Influence in Europe” by Prof. HASEBE Hiroshi (Tokyo University of Arts)

Date: 30 April 2020, 7 pm

OTHERS**JDZB Open House**

Date: 13 June 2020, from 2 pm

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EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

- Junior Experts Exchange Program
- German-Japanese Young Leaders Forum
- Youth Group Leaders Exchange Program
- Study Program for Youth Work Specialists
- Exchange Program for Young Employees
- JDZB SCIENCEYOUTH PROGRAM

For details of the programs, please refer to: <http://www.jdzb.de> --> Exchange Programs

Opening hours of exhibitions

Monday to Thursday 10 am to 5 pm, Friday 10 am to 3.30 pm

Registration for the cultural events opens close to the date

C: = in cooperation with

Venue: JDZB, if not stated otherwise

For **more information** please refer to: <http://www.jdzb.de> --> Activities

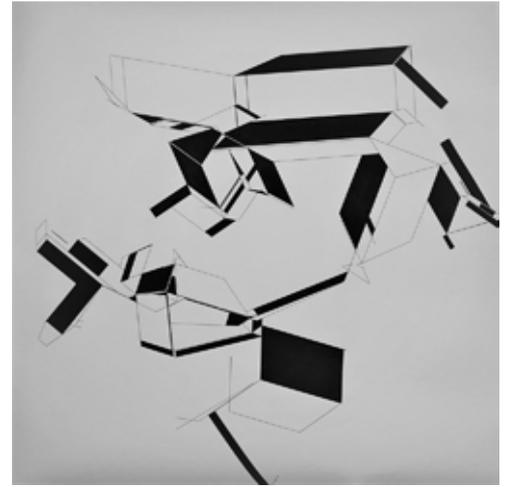
For **information on JDZB language courses** please refer to: <http://www.jdzb.de> --> Japanese Courses

Dialog exhibition “Lost in Transformation” by MATSUBARA Katsuhiko and Kyle EGRET

In this dialogue exhibition, the JDZB displays works by two artists from Hamburg, MATSUBARA Katsuhiko and Kyle EGRET, who approach the theme of “transformation” in different ways. While EGRET, who is also a musician, graphically deals with phenomena such as chaotic systems, security and congruence and transfers the results in the form of musical compositions at the same time, MATSUBARA seeks to deal with creatures based on mythology and animism in his works. The juxtaposition of these ambivalent structures with organic and geometric forms generates a cosmos of its own consisting of chaos, control and coincidence.



Landscape © MATSUBARA Katsuhiko



Square #4 © Kyle EGRET

The juxtaposition of these ambivalent structures with organic and geometric forms generates a cosmos of its own consisting of chaos, control and coincidence.

Opening with performance: Friday, 13 March 2020, 7 pm at the JDZB

Admission free, no registration required (admission as long as seats are available)

Exhibition period: 16 March to 19 June 2020

Reading and author’s talk with MURATA Sayaka

“Convenience Store Woman” (*Konbini Ningen*)

Wednesday, 25 March 2020, 7 pm at the JDZB

The author will read from her novel “*Konbini Ningen*”, which was awarded the renowned Akutagawa Prize in 2016 and whose German



MURATA Sayaka © SUGIYAMA Takuya

translation was published under the title “Die Ladenhüterin” (Ursula GRÄFE, Aufbau Verlag) (and published as “Convenience Store Woman” in English). The novel is about a 36-year-old woman who, although she masters her role as an employee in a so-called “*Konbini store*” (24-hour supermarket) perfectly and “according to standards”, she is completely lost and insecure as soon as she leaves the store. She never knows how to behave “normally” in Japanese society. Junior Professor Ronald SALADIN (Japan Studies, University of Trier) will moderate the discussion with the author, who will then answer questions from the audience.

Admission free, registration from 16 March, 9 pm

Co-organizer: Japan Cultural Institute Cologne/ Japan Foundation; cooperation with Aufbau Publishing Co. and German-Japanese Society Berlin.



Die Ladenhüterin © aufbau verlag

Gleanings: New Year’s Concert at the JDZB

On 16 January 2020, violinist KANAGAWA Mayumi, cellist SATŌ Haruma and HISASUE Wataru on the piano presented works by Ludwig van BEETHOVEN, TAKEMITSU Tōru, SUZUKI Teruaki and Johannes BRAHMS. All three musicians were winners of renowned international competitions, and the great expectations of the audience was evident in the hall, with every seat filled to the last.

With virtuosic playing, exact timing and a sensitively coordinated dynamic, the young musicians showed their joy in making music, which was transferred to the audience. The interpretations of the Japanese works, seldom played in Germany, were particularly well received by the audience as they offered an extraordinary listening experience. The musicians were rewarded with enthusiastic applause at the end.

