

Introduction

The City of Kanazawa, a "human scale" city of approximately 450,000 people, spreads out from the quiet rows of houses and the black luster of their tile roofs in the old urban district. The clear water of the twin Sai and Asano Rivers flows through the city surrounded by a lifestyle that fosters traditional arts and crafts, blessed to sit within a lush and fertile natural mountain environment. In such a context, Kanazawa has been valued as a sustainable Creative City which maintains a balance between culture and economy.

For example, in the foreword to the Japanese edition of his book "The Creative City", the world's leading Creative City theorist Charles Landry places Kanazawa alongside Bologna and Montreal, describing it as Japan's model Creative City. Further, in March 2008, the Commissioner for Cultural Affairs awarded the City of Kanazawa commendation as a "Creative City of Art and Culture," a designation newly established by Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs. It is no exaggeration to say that Kanazawa is the representative Japanese Creative City.

The Beautiful Four Seasons of Kanazawa





Kanazawa's rapid succession of innovative public policies has brought the city its reputation as a Creative City both in Japan and abroad. At the end of the 20th century, the brick warehouse of the old spinning mill was transformed into the Kanazawa Citizen's Art Center, a groundbreaking hands-on cultural facility available for citizens to engage freely in artistic activities "24 hours a day, 365 days a year," attracting significant attention. Then at the beginning of the 21st century, while continuing to meet the challenge of its own identity of traditional culture, Kanazawa constructed the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa in the heart of the city, a museum focused on the contemporary arts, in an effort to create a local culture suited to the new century. Kanazawa has also advocated the Kanazawa Creative City Conference (the Kanazawa Round - Table), a new type of international conference intended to provide a forum to study the ideal model of the cities of the world in the 21st century and experiment with urban policy.



Kanazawa Citizen's Art Center



The 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

However, Creative City Kanazawa is not something that was suddenly achieved in the 21st century. Kanazawa's unique "artistic production system" was developed over time as culture and economy permeated each other throughout the region's history.

The birth of the City of Kanazawa can be traced to 1583, when feudal lord Maeda Toshiie controlled the area, building a castle town around Kanazawa Castle. The Maeda Clan, second only to the Edo Shogunate in the size of their domain, abandoned a reliance on military strength in favor of the promotion of scholarship and culture. Kanazawa has been able to pass the roughly 420 years since then without experiencing serious disasters. In addition, in October 1945, soon after the end of World War Two, the City of Kanazawa hosted the first Contemporary Art Exhibition, Ishikawa Prefecture's largest open competition (which celebrates its 64th anniversary this year) under the theme of "contributing to the building of a new Japan through enhancing artistic culture, " showing the city's recognition of its duty as one of the few cities in Japan to escape the ravages of war. This

¹ All Japanese names are given here and subsequently following the Japanese order, with surname first, followed by the given name.

history of peace has allowed the city to develop, preserve, and continue its traditional culture, scenic cityscape, and style of living along with its unmatched craftwork.

Over the city's long history, Kaga-yuzen silk dyeing, gold leaf craftwork, and other artistic handicrafts have been refined by the craftworkers and artisans who created them, as well as the samurai, townspeople, and other citizens who consumed them, developing unique styles. In this manner, Kanazawa has reached its illustrious position as Japan's representative city of traditional arts and crafts.

Moreover, even during the process of modernization following the Meiji Restoration and Kanazawa's own industrial revolution centered on the textile and machine industries, Kanazawa has not been lax in developing new arts through the fusion of the artisan spirit and modern technology. For example, the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, with its unique look garnering attention from around the world, has thus begun to function as a site for experimentation with the amalgamation of traditional crafts and cutting-edge art, as well as the development of highly creative individuals.

If the workings of innovation are not added to tradition, it will become nothing more than the handing down of what has already been done. Scholastic culture stimulates the economy, increasing added value, and a developed economy in turn supports scholastic culture. Kanazawa was born from this link between culture and industry. Not only is craftwork the crystallization of Kanazawa's unique culture, but it can also be viewed as the driving force in supporting the economy and developing the city. In addition, continuous efforts will be made toward innovation as the building block of urban policy in the implementation of the "World City Kanazawa concept," the direction for comprehensive building of the city in the future. We believe that Kanazawa has truly demonstrated its ability to carry out work consistent with the Creative City concept.

The City of Kanazawa recognizes the importance of a Creative City as its vision for the 21st century. Based on its experience of developing its culture in an environment of peace, establishing craftwork as part of daily life, and preserving and continuing that craftwork, in addition to developing the city through the link between culture and industry, and on the actual performance of its unique Creative City policy, the City of Kanazawa aims for designation as a City of Crafts in UNESCO's Creative Cities Network, and is determined to contribute proactively to cultural diversity and world peace as a member of the global network.