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The Candle Night Newsletter--#2
May 15, 2005, Copyright (c) 2005
Candle Night Committee

The Candle Night is an event under the slogan of "Turn off lights and take it slow" on the night of summer solstice. This is a voluntary participatory event, initiated by Japan's environmental non government organizations, or NGOs.

The Candle Night Committee hopes to extend this event from Japan to the world, to the "Global Candle Night" event. We will provide readers with information and activities of the Candle Night.

-----Information-----

The website of Candle Night has been updated to "Candle Night Summer Solstice 2005."
This year's Candle Night will be enjoyed on the evenings of June 18 to 21, at 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p. m.
The contents of the website are to be updated as the night of Summer Solstice approaches.
Stay tuned at <http://www.candle-night.org/>

This issue features the following stories:

- Report--Candle Night at Harajuku Cat Street
- Essay--"Yobanashi" Tea Ceremony

Candle Night at Harajuku Cat Street
Ayako Shimizu
Candle Night Committee

"Creator's Candle Design Exhibition," a new kind of event, was held at the "Candle Night at Harajuku Cat Street" in Tokyo on December 21, 2004.

The "Candle Night at Harajuku Cat Street" has been held on the nights of Winter Solstice since 2002. Every year, design students decorate using candles under the theme of "Proposition to Reduce Excessive Lighting from Urban Nights."

In addition to the decoration, "Creator's Candle Design Exhibition" was held in 2004, in which creators in

various fields such as graphic design and city planning, joined in and designed artistic candles for the exhibition.

The participants were Naoto Fukazawa, Ayumi Han, Taku Sato, Kazuko Fujie, Hidetoshi Ono, Kaoru Mende, Kazunari Hattori, Yasuhiro Suzuki, and Ryosuke Uehara & Yoshie Watanabe (D-BROS). Those foremost creators designed candles, seeking "a new candle design," which is a simple but challenging theme. Thus ten sets of unique art candles were created and showcased on the fifth floor of "Tree of Life" at Harajuku, a shop dealing with herbs, essential oils and so on. With the lights turned off, the candles were burning with dim flames in the dark exhibition site, displaying their design challenge.

Kaoru Mende, a lighting designer, created artwork named "Eroding Paraffin Lake," a flat white candle embedded with blue candles. As the candle burns, the blue and white wax melts creating a beautiful blue lake spreading across the white shore with an orange flame flickering on the lake.



Yasuhiro Suzuki, an artist, focused on the dissolving nature of candles and created three art candles: "Balance Scale," "Cup and Ball," a Japanese traditional wooden toy and "Spoon." The balance scale made of candle wax was displayed first unbalanced, then its irregularly set wicks were lit and started to melt and ended up balancing at a certain moment. The moment was so fantastic and the visitors who happened to see it balance were excited with the intellectual performance.



Taku Satoh, a graphic designer, made a candle in the shape of plastic bottle bottom, named "Rutobotoppe", a back slang of "Pettobotoru," which means a "Plastic bottle" in Japanese. The uniquely designed candle molded a plastic bottle upside down with a wick in the center of the bottom of the bottle. The artist who designed package for a plastic beverage bottle before, wanted people to notice how beautiful the bottles are and also humorously expressed the phrase "being lit on one's bottom" meaning to be pressured to meet the deadline, because this exhibition was held on winter solstice, around the end of year, the busiest time of year in Japan.



There were other candles that creators designed focusing on the shadows of flames, expressing how candle wax melts. Those exhibited ten sets of art candles, reflecting each creator's idea and style, entertained people who visited the exhibition.

Even though, those ten sets of candles were artistic expressions by the creators, they gave visitors encouragement to enjoy nighttime in the dim candle light. We hope to keep on holding new types of events like this one.

"The Creator's Candle Design Exhibition"

Time: December 21, 2004

Place: Tree of Life, Harajuku

Participants: Naoto Fukazawa, Ayumi Han, Taku Sato, Kazuko Fujie, Hidetoshi Ono, Kaoru Mende, Kazunari Hattori, Yasuhiro Suzuki, and Ryosuke Uehara + Yoshie Watanabe (D-BROS),

Co-Sponsored by Kameyma Candle

"Yobanashi" Tea Ceremony

Madoka Mayuzumi

Haiku Poet

Japanese people love things that are in constant change. The shadow of fallen bamboo leaves reflecting on

shoji (paper) screen. The look of dew on morning glories. Kuzufu, grass cloth, blowing in the wind and changing its shape. We are fascinated by the mutability of things that are transient, ephemeral and gone instantly.

In spring, tasting sake by the reflection of the cherry blossoms.

In summer, pondering at the waterside.

In autumn, traveling through the light of autumn leaves.

In winter, reading letters by the reflection of snow.

The promise made under the dim light through a paper screen or dating in the moonlight remains as sweet memory in one's mind. The shadow, accompanied with the glimmering light, also flickers. The whole thing in the memory is mutable. Images and memories can be reshaped over time.

"yobanashi e shigururu zari no oto tatete"

Yobanashi tea ceremony--

in winter drizzle,

sound of pebbles.

Last winter, I had an opportunity to attend a "Yobanashi" Tea Ceremony in Ohara, Kyoto, at the mountain villa of the long-established confectioner. The host of the tea ceremony was the owner of the villa.

"Yobanash" Tea Ceremony is fully presented under candlelight.

In the remaining red leaves of winter, guests were lead by handheld candles to the waiting place, walking on the wet pebbles and stepping stones. Whenever the candlelight flickers, wet moss on the stones glimmered. I felt as if I were deep in the water.

When we entered the waiting place, the host welcomed us with a flower and a haiku, as a head verse.

"chanohana ya makkurokuro ni shirosa kana"

A flower--

in darkness

shines white.

After the main guest added the wakiku (second verse) closely followed the host's hokku (the head verse), the guest rang the bell and entered the tea room.

My verse was:

"momijishigure no beni no naka nimo"

In drizzle, maple leaves,

reflects red.

As I was hurried by the other guests in the chilly evening, I had a hard time creating a verse to match the hokku. I used the contrast of colors, white tea flower, black night of darkness in Ohara, and red maple leaves in the winter rain.

The second verses of other guests were as follows:

"kokemederu kokoro o asobu chano shigusa"

Cherish moss

in mind,

the motion of ceremony.

"gankou kiyoshi kangetsu no niwa"

Geese fly in the night sky

moonshine in the cold garden.

"oozora e kumono tanabiku sanzenin"

In the sky,

clouds drift

over Sanzenin Temple.

"izure ro-ma no ano kuukan e"

Through space to Rome

at any point of time.

"ototatete tou o kizukishi yume o mimu"

Dreams of building towers

in sound.

"inishie yorino kaze o hakobite"

Carry winds

from ancient times.

"mirai e to iunano chawan yawarakaku"

Tea cup named future

soft and gentle.

kama naritakaku utsunemo kiyosi"

Sounds of the tea pot,
serene and pure.

The guests added their verses following the other's verse, while they were served tea. They focused colors first: white of a flower, black of darkness, red of maple leaves, green of moss, blue of sky. The verse jumped over space to Rome, and over time to ancient times. Then the teacup called "future" appeared. Following the ancient in the former verse, the host replied offering the teacup called "future". The guests were amazed with the host's witty reply. The whole process was going under the dim and sweet lighting of Japanese candles and flickering shadows. The only sounds were boiling water, serving tea and winter rain over the villa.

The decor and tea utensils by Kobori Enshu, the scroll of Shokado Shoji, a teacup of Rengetsuni, were all seen in the flickering lights and shadows reflected by the flame of candles. We talked and talked, and enjoyed the moment.

"Haikai poetry, the practice of composing linked sequences of waka poetry, is created by the poets' spontaneous ideas and the atmosphere the space provides. When wound up, an interesting play ends, too. I like the instant enjoyment as if I am watching a movie." It is a quote from Hiroshi Kojitani, one of the members of the ceremony.

The memory of the moment woven under the reflecting candlelight emerges more vividly as time goes by.

Are there any "candle stories" in your country? If you have unique stories, practices or festivals associated with candles or light and shadows in your country, please let us know. We would like to introduce them to our world readers, too.

We hope you enjoyed this issue of the Candle Night Newsletter. We will be back next issue with more information and stories.

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