

# Experience Japan in Paris and London

2018 could be considered the Year of Japan in Europe, with Japonismes 2018 in Paris and the newly opened Japan House London

One-hundred-sixty years ago Japan and France came together to sign the 1858 Treaty of Amity and Commerce, and this year the two countries are celebrating the country-wide culture festival, Japonismes 2018: les âmes en résonance.

The event, centered in Paris, spans 100 cities across France, which will hold festivals from July until

February 2019. Exhibitions, performing arts, audiovisual, and art de vivre categories will offer over 50 titles.

“Usually when we say Japonism, we are referring to the 19th century *Ukiyo-e* boom. However, for the festival, we’re using it as an introduction to Japanese art.” — Tsutomu Sugiura, the President of the Japan Cultural Institute in Paris (The Japan Foundation).

It’s exciting that such an opportunity isn’t available in Japan. Visitors can see an exhibition of the explosively popular 18th century artist, Jakuchu Ito, for the first time in France. Also, the National Treasure, *Fujin Raijin-zu* (Wind and Thunder Gods) will be displayed at Musée Cernuschi.

Enjoy an Eiffel Tower illuminated with Japanese colors, a golden throne over 10-meters tall beneath the

Louvre’s pyramid, and over-hundred Japanese films. The recently opened teamLab art exhibition is drawing record numbers —over 14,000 people every day.

“The exhibition *FUKAMI*—une plongée dans l’esthétique japonaise—sums up the entire event concept, which at its core, introduces diverse contemporary and ancient work drawing on similarities. Examples include displaying Japan’s prehistoric *Jomon* pottery alongside a young artist’s dress, as well as is introducing Japanese aesthetic sensibilities referring to Gauguin and Picasso.”

## Now, Enjoy Japan’s Unique Charm

“We wanted to go beyond the hackneyed stereotypes such as *Geisha*

and *Fujiyama* to communicate contemporary Japan.”—Michael Houlihan, Director General of Japan House London.

The three-story building on the corner of Kensington High Street and Derry Street offers visitors a sense of Japan through a gallery, event space, and a library, as well as a shop and restaurant. It boasts open spaces and content that introduce guests to the many facets of Japan’s unique charm.

“Interestingly, the definition of culture is very broad in Japan,” says Houlihan. In the West, the term culture normally means just art, music, literature, opera and such. Though in Japan, the rituals of drinking tea or even some shopping practices can be regarded as arts or

cultural experiences. For Japanese people, beauty and art exist in everyday life.

“Right now, we are preparing an exhibition for products from Tsubame -Sanjo, Niigata Prefecture. Even nail clippers are art-level works of mastery from sophistication to sharpness. Orders come from all over the world for some handmade razors and the waiting lists can be as long as three months.”

Creative director and one of Japan’s top designers, Kenya Hara, produces promising work on the philosophy of Japanese craftsmanship *monozukuri*.

Go to it. See it. Touch it. Buy it. It’s tradition and revolution in *yo-no-bi*, the art of everyday life. ✨



Tsutomu Sugiura started at Marubeni as an art trader after graduating from the University of Tokyo, and he worked his way up to a curating position at the gallery. Since 2016, he has been the President of the Japan Cultural Institute in Paris (The Japan Foundation). Sugiura was also Ambassador of Japan to Burkina Faso.

teamLab : Au-dela des limites



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**Paris**  
**Japonismes 2018**  
<https://japonismes.org/en/>

Top: A scintillating teamLab installation.  
 Left: The National Treasure, *Fujin Raijin-zu*.  
 Right: Work by Kohei Nawa at the Louvre.



National Treasure, Wind and Thunder Gods, Tawaraya Sôtatsu, Kennin-ji Kyoto, Edo period (17th Century)



Michael Houlihan is the Director General of Japan House London. As a cultural leader and advocate he has held roles such as Director of the Horniman Museum, in South London, Chief Executive of the National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland, Director General of Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales, and Chief Executive of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. He has published and lectured internationally on museology, cultural diplomacy, and the memorialization of conflict.



**London**  
**Japan House London**  
<https://www.japanhouselondon.uk>

Left: Overall design by Masamichi Katayama.  
 Top right: Authentic seating at the Japanese restaurant. Lower right: Located on London’s Kensington High Street.