



The Tokyo Metropolitan Edo-Tokyo Museum is scheduled to be closed for major renovations until 2025.

Museum on Tour

Our permanent exhibitions include interactive models. No "look but don't touch" policy here — visitors can touch and feel these exhibits for a more participatory museum experience. While Edo-Tokyo Museum is closed for renovation, some of the exhibits are toured as a part of the Mobile Edo-Tokyo Museum, or are exhibited at other museums, giving the public a flavor of Edo-Tokyo's history and culture.



Sushi stall (replica)



Rickshaw (replica)

Box for gold coins (replica)



Soba stall (replica)



Presenter dressed in restored period costume

Activity Report **Mobile Edo-Tokyo Museum in Ōshima Island**
May 20–28, 2023 Oshima Town General Development Center

As in 2022, 2023 saw a number of touring exhibitions and workshops at venues across Tokyo. This year, we held many of these events in non-school venues.

In May 2023, Mobile Edo-Tokyo Museum came to the island of Izu Ōshima. The venue was a large conference area in Oshima Town General Development Center, which adjoins the town's municipal office. With the generous support of Ōshima Town's board of education, we held this touring exhibition on an impressive scale.

The exhibition consisted of a compact array of panels, models, and replicas from the museum's permanent exhibitions, showcasing Edo-Tokyo from the beginning of the Edo period (1603) to the end of the mid-Showa period (1945-1965). It also featured replica models such as a soba stall and rickshaw. We had to transport these models by container, but we felt it was well worth the effort given how much interest these replicas attracted at the museum's regular exhibition.

The touring exhibition welcomed students from island's schools, including 6th grade students from (ages 11–12) and high schoolers (ages 15–18) on some weekdays. We also held workshops. In one, visitors could interact with a hand-cranked gramophone. In another, they could interact with a vintage rotary phone known as a kuro-denwa (black telephone). Over the nine days, a total of 796 people came.

Tsuda Hiroko, Curator

Building Partnerships **Japanese Liaison Council of History and Folk Museums Holds 2023 Gathering in Okinawa**

The Japanese Liaison Council of History and Folk Museums is a national network of history and folk museums. One of its purposes is to safeguard cultural heritage against disasters. The liaison council has 817 affiliated museums grouped into nine regional blocs, each of which takes a turn in hosting the council's annual gatherings. These annual gatherings were suspended during the pandemic years.

On July 13 and 14, 2023, however, the council held its first in-person annual gathering in four years. The venue was at the Okinawa Prefectural Museum and Art Museum in Naha. Each annual conference includes a general meeting and executive meetings to discuss the running of the council. It also includes a conference for presenting academic work. The theme for this year's conference was case studies in Okinawa for preserving and creating culture.

The four presenters discussed the reconstruction of Shuri Castle, which was destroyed by fire in 2019, and efforts to restore the cultural heritage that was damaged at that time. They also talked about efforts to preserve and promote the use of the cultural and folk heritage of the war-ravaged Ryukyu Kingdom. The audience saw footage of the blaze that engulfed Shuri Castle, saw a reproduction of garments illustrating the sartorial handiwork of the Ryukyu Kingdom, and heard audio narrations of Okinawa folklore. This engaging content hooked the audience much more than any online presentation could.

The level of audience engagement testified to the value of face-to-face gatherings. The annual gathering marked an important step forward in safeguarding cultural heritage against disasters and in furthering collaboration between the affiliated museums.

Tahara Noboru, Curator

The Phantom Japan that Westerners Depicted

Text by Taki Ryosuke, Curator



Illustrations from Arnoldus Montanus's *Gedenkwaardige Gesantschappen der Oost-Indische Maatschappij in 't Vereenigde Nederland, aan de Kaisaren van Japan*.
Left: "The Emperor's Throne" (The Audience of the Shogun) Right: "Pauromama"

The 17th century saw a publishing boom in Western Europe. During this period, many books about Japan were published, bringing knowledge of the country to the European populace. Among these, the most seminal text on Japan was *Gedenkwaardige Gesantschappen* ("remarkable addresses"). Authored by Arnoldus Montanus (1625–83), *Gedenkwaardige Gesantschappen* was originally published in Dutch in 1669.

The book describes what officials from the Dutch East India Company encountered on their travels from the port of Nagasaki to the capital Edo. It also gives an account of Japanese history and culture and the lifestyles and beliefs of the people. Montanus never visited Japan himself; he based his accounts on the journals of company officials and on compilations of past Jesuit reports. Nonetheless, Montanus narrated events as if he was actually there, resulting in a vivid travelogue. Based on Montanus' extensive documentary research, the book incorporated an unprecedented amount of material, including material that was unpublished at the time.

But what distinguishes the book most of all is its rich illustrations. The book features nearly 100 copper engravings. No other publication in early-modern Western Europe contained so many illustrations of Japan. However, since neither Montanus nor the illustrator ever visited Japan, none of these illustrations were based on observation. Many are fanciful and exaggerated. A case in point is an illustration titled *The Emperor's Throne* (*Des Kaisars Throon*), which depicts an audience with the Tokugawa shogun. The illustration was lambasted by Engelbert Kaempfer, a German naturalist who had actually attended an audience with the 5th Tokugawa

shogun, Tsunayoshi.

Despite their inaccuracies, the illustrations remained for many years a source of knowledge about Japan in the West as a whole. An illustration featured, for example, in a 19th-century US periodical, *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion*, at a time when Japan was in its Bakumatsu period (the last years of the Tokugawa shogunate) and beginning to open itself to the outside world.

The illustration in question depicts a mountain rising from Lake Biwa. In the periodical, it is titled "Pauromama, or Mount of Pleasure, in Japan." The picture appeared in two editions of the *Gleason's Pictorial* (July 22, 1854, and March 10, 1860). As fanciful as the vista appears, the writer of the article praises its picturesque beauty and suggests that it would be a fine destination for a summer holiday. At a time when Japan was finally revealing itself to outsiders, an illustration such as this would have piqued interest in what to Westerners remained a new and exciting world.



Gleason's Pictorial, July 22, 1854. Boston Public Library

Touring exhibitions

Exhibition in other locations, "Visiting Exhibition by the Edo-Tokyo Museum"

The Edo-Tokyo Museum first opened on March 28, 1993, to provide a space for reflecting upon Tokyo-Edo's history and culture and for thinking about the future of life in the metropolis. Three decades later, the museum is now undergoing major renovation work. It is scheduled to reopen in 2025. During this closure, some of the permanent exhibitions remain accessible to the public at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum in Ueno.

Exhibited here are items from the Edo-Tokyo Museum

collection along with crowd-pleasing interactive replicas from the permanent exhibitions, including Box for gold coins and rickshaw, and other interactive replica exhibitions. There is also a special exhibition that includes *nishiki-e* (woodblock prints) and illustrated books that offer insight into the history of Ueno, where the exhibition is held.

Come and see Edo-Tokyo Museum's richly varied collection and encounter the history and culture of Edo-Tokyo.

February 21–25, 2024

Venue: Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum
Citizen's Gallery 4 on the LBF,
Citizen's Gallery 4 on the 1F,
Citizen's Gallery 4 on the 2F

