

Remarks by H.E. Mr. HAYASHI Hajime,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
at a ceremony to announce the winners of the Praemium Imperiale
on 10th September 2024

Lord Patten,
Distinguished Guests,

It is a great pleasure to be here with you all to witness the announcement of the winners of the Praemium Imperiale this year.

Established in 1988 by the Japan Art Association, this prestigious award honours the noble vision of late His Imperial Highness Prince Takamatsu, who made it his mission to contribute to enhancing and promoting the development of the arts all over the world. Since then, through encouraging artistic endeavour this esteemed prize has played a notable role in fostering international understanding and exchange.

The importance of this award in bringing to our attention the outstanding works of exceptionally talented artists should not be underestimated. These creations remind us of the power and possibilities of art and provide us with new inspiration.

The arts reflect the culture of the people creating them, and culture is at the core of our identity, expressing the unique characteristics of each region and people. At the same time, absolute beauty reaches beyond differences of culture and serves as a bridge that connects individuals from different backgrounds. Engagement with culture and the arts prompts us to respect the rich diversity of the world we live in and fosters deeper understanding and harmony between people.

This year has been particularly significant for cultural exchange and the strengthening of relations between Japan and the United Kingdom. The State Visit by Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress in June was especially memorable. Their Majesties visited many of the UK's distinguished cultural institutions and engaged with numerous artists and

cultural figures from both countries. I believe their visit was a source of great encouragement for those involved in cultural and artistic exchange between Japan and the UK, providing a strong foundation for bolstering our partnership still further. One element of Their Majesties' stay in the UK which gave them special satisfaction was their visit to University of Oxford, where they had both studied when younger. I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Lord Patten, then Chancellor of the University, and everyone involved in making this part of their visit such a great success.

In conclusion, I extend my warmest congratulations to the distinguished recipients of the award, whose contributions to art and culture have left an indelible mark on our world. Also, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the organisers, supporters, and all those who have made the Praemium Imperiale a symbol of artistic excellence and cultural diplomacy.

Thank you very much.