Bouncing back from disaster

'Flowers' bloom in disaster-struck cities

It is said that *Kado*, or flower arranging, is not really about flowers. The Kado practitioner recognises an intangible brilliance (華), or life, in various expressions of nature, and gives it colour and form through a unique arrangement, as a gesture of appreciation. Sofu Teshigahara, the founder of the Sogetsu Shool of *Ikeb*ana, said that if there were no flowers in sight, he would use stones or even soil to achieve the same ends. For his type of Kado practitioners, every aspect of creation is 'flower.'

The graffiti project "Gareki ni hana wo sakasemasho" ("Let flowers bloom on rubble") started in Tohoku's disaster-stricken areas with this spirit of *Kado*. Rubble is sprayed to evoke a floral arrangement, marking the presence of life in places where there is no apparent sign of vitality. The project is bringing hope to devastated areas.

In Japan and New Zealand, people are celebrating this type of *Kado* spirit that breathes new life into what seems like utter emptiness. Many symbolic flowers have bloomed where real ones are absent.

An anonymous woman in Hyogo, Japan, feeling the urge to do something for the people in the post-disaster Christchurch, made over 1,000 origami spinning tops that look like colourful blooms (see photo). The New Zealand embassy in Tokyo coordinated with the Christchurch Sendai Art Exchange to have the origami displayed at an exhibition (March 8~) in Christchurch. In the closing stages of the exhibition, the organiser plans to give away the spinning tops. Any remaining ones will be sent to primary schools affected by the earthquake.

The Christchurch and Sendai Art Exchange has already successfully brought the work of Christchurch artists to Sendai and Shiogama in Japan, in June 2012. This time, they are taking the work from Sendai to Christchurch and Queenstown in New Zealand.

To find out more about the Sendai Christchurch Art Exchange & their events, please visit: http://sendai-christchurch.tumblr.com/

The Shared Lines exhibition

Canterbury Museum, Christchurch, New Zealand (March 8 - end of April) Ilam Campus Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand (March 12 - April) Toi o Tahuna Gallery, Queenstown, New Zealand (April 5)

The Sendai Christchurch Art Exchange was born a year after earthquakes struck the two cities. The project was launched to allow artists from Sendai and Christchurch to reflect on the tragic events of recent times, while lending support to one another and ultimately facilitating a revival of arts in both communities.