Keynote Speaker and Bridges-to-Friendship Award Recipient

Dr. William Tsusui

William M. Tsutsui is President and Professor of History at Hendrix College, a top-tier national liberal arts college founded in 1876 and located in Conway, Arkansas. He previously served as Dean of Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences at Southern Methodist University (SMU) from 2010 to 2014. Raised in Bryan, Texas, he holds degrees from Harvard, Oxford, and Princeton universities. Prior to joining SMU, Tsutsui spent seventeen years at the University of Kansas, where he served as Acting Director of KU’s Center for East Asian Studies, Chair of the Department of History, founding Executive Director of the Confucius Institute at the University of Kansas, and Associate Dean for International Studies in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences.

An award-winning classroom teacher, Tsutsui is the author or editor of eight books on Japanese business and cultural history, including Manufacturing Ideology: Scientific Management in Twentieth-Century Japan, Godzilla on My Mind: Fifty Years of the King of Monsters, and Japanese Popular Culture and Globalization. He has received Fulbright, ACLS, and Marshall Fellowships, and was awarded the John Whitney Hall Prize of the Association for Asian Studies in 2000 and the William Rockhill Nelson Prize for Non-Fiction in 2005. He was a member of the Japanese American Leadership Delegation in 2011 and serves on the National Advisory Committee of the Japan America Student Conference.

Opening Speaker
Keiji Asakura

From as early as high school, Keiji Asakura’s passion for community and urban design began to take root. His time spent working after school at a plant nursery in Southern California sowed the seeds for what has since become a 35-plus year career as a landscape architect, planner, and urban designer. Keiji is a passionate advocate for healthy, connected, sustainable communities whose impact can be seen throughout Texas and beyond.
As the founder of Asakura Robinson Company LLC, based in Houston, Keiji has had the unique opportunity to work with some of the city’s most influential leaders and government officials. His efforts to create a more beautiful and livable city are evidenced by his receipt of numerous awards including the Mayor’s Proud Partner/Keep Houston Beautiful Award for Distinguished Service. At the national level, Keiji is well-respected in the landscape architecture sphere and is the recipient of the President’s Call to Service Award and ASLA’s Distinguished Member Award. Most recently, Keiji received one of the highest honors bestowed upon landscape architecture professionals when he was inducted into the ASLA Council of Fellows.

As a Japanese-born American, Keiji is particularly interested in community design and revitalization efforts in his native country of Japan. In 1991, Keiji was instrumental in creating a successful revitalization plan for the remote island city of Kochi, which was suffering from environmental and economic decline. Since then, Keiji has assisted other communities in Japan and the Philippines, and now has a firm office in Tokyo. He and his team at Asakura Robinson are eager to continue discussions aimed at shaping more sustainable models for urban development in Japan.

Entertainer

Sumie Kaneko

Japanese Koto & Shamisen Player, Singer Songwriter and Producer Sumie (Sumi-é) Kaneko has been recognized as a pioneer by her uniquely chromatic use of the instruments. Her project J-Trad And More is well received over the world that is fusing her Japanese roots with the colors of jazz and freedoms of avant-garde.

She started playing Koto when she was at five, next year she was broadcasted by NHK. In 1995, Sumie won in Takasaki International Competition in Koto performance. She studied Japanese traditional music at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music then studied Jazz vocal at Berklee College of Music in 2006. Performance highlights includes: Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, TED talk, Getty Center, Boston Ballet, Museum of Fine Arts. She has also performed at academic scenes such as Harvard Univ., Princeton Univ., Wellesley College, Berklee College of Music and many more. In 2014, her group was invited to the Washington DC Jazz Festival at the Embassy of Japan. In addition, she was the first Shamisen player of a winner of Pulitzer Prize Paula Vogel’s “The Long Christmas Ride Home”, and has collaborated with many of world instrumentalists. International tours: Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Jamaica (by Japan Foundation NY), Bangladesh (invited by Embassy of Japan in Dhaka). The second album “J-Trad And More II” will be released in 2014 fall.