



4th Japanese Traditional Crafts Revitalization Contest Finalists (Ronnie Prize Winner Taichiro Takamatsu at far left).

In February, JapanCraft21 and the Asia Society held an awards ceremony and celebration dinner in Tokyo to recognise the 6 finalists in the **4th Japan Traditional Craft Revitalization Contest**. From among these finalists, 40-year-old fashion designer and aspirant to establish only the second ever Japanese haute couture brand, Taichiro Takamatsu, was selected as the first-place winner and recipient of the Ronnie Prize. With the awarding of this year's finalists, JapanCraft21's Craft Leader Organization has grown to 36 members.

Link to Award Ceremony Channel Japan program: [https://youtu.be/J01KG\\_xLs98](https://youtu.be/J01KG_xLs98)

JapanCraft21 founding director **Steve Beimel** was interviewed recently for a **feature article by Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) America**, whose Friends Fund is critical to JapanCraft21's fundraising efforts in the US. Steve emphasised the extremely time-sensitive nature of JapanCraft21's mission of ensuring the survival of Japan's extraordinary master craft culture, noting that by 2028, the number of master crafts people in Japan will have dropped 92% from 1979 to only 20,000. Based on current trends, we thus have only 3 years left – until 2028 – to make a meaningful, positive impact in turning this around and saving Japanese Master Crafts.



Takuo Kanematsu at work.



Takuo Kanematsu assisting his master in the creation of a work utilizing the Tenmoku technique.

JapanCraft21 is **supporting the training of 5 apprentices to Japanese master craftspeople** by providing living stipends for the apprentices studying under these craft masters.

One apprentice, **Takuo Kanematsu, working in Tenmoku Dyeing**, reports that in the process of assisting his master in the creation of a work for public exhibition, he has experienced the traditional collaboration of specialists that is characteristic of Kyoto crafts, working with *yuzen* artisans from other workshops. Takuo-san aims to challenge himself to both improve his own skills and combine different techniques, focusing on collaboration with other artisans to develop these skills and ensure that they are passed on to future generations.

JapanCraft21 is fundraising through April 2026 to increase the number of supported apprentices to 15 and to date has raised around half of the needed funds.

JapanCraft21 held an **opening ceremony** on April 28 for a **traditional carpentry juku (training school)** the organisation has established - in affiliation with an NPO Shishokai - to train working carpenters in traditional Japanese woodworking techniques. Over the course of 12-18 months, students attend the *juku* twice a month (Sundays), with JapanCraft21 covering all tuition fees. The current semester has a full class of 5 young working carpenters.



Interior of Kyoto machiya.

This month (May), JapanCraft21 partner Gion Naito Building Company will complete **construction of the first brand new and authentic** - wholly constructed using wood joinery with no nails - ***machiya* (townhouse) to be built in Kyoto in over 90 years**. The owners, a young family of four, will move in shortly.