

Inside this issue

“I was amazed by the Japanese handcraft quality and culture” 1 + 2

State of emergency declared in eleven Japanese prefectures 3

51 Japanese startups at CES 2021 3

QR Code: From supply chain optimization to public health prevention 4

会見

INTERVIEW

“I was amazed by the Japanese handcraft quality and culture”

Interview with Mr. André Perrin, President, Association Romande des Métiers de la Bijouterie (ASMEBI)

At JETRO we are always happy to see the diversity of collaboration between Switzerland and Japan. The two countries have resourceful companies which cover all sorts of industries: heavy industry, cutting-edge technologies and traditional high precision handcrafts.

This time we interviewed Mr. André Perrin, the President of the ASMEBI, the jewelry association of the Romandie area. The ASMEBI is building bridges with Japan and has organized a competition using pearls from Uwajima.

Can you please introduce the ASMEBI?

The ASMEBI was created in 1987 from the merger of two associations: “l’Artisanat” and “les Fabricants Genevois de Bijouterie-Joaillerie et de boîte de montres”.

The purpose of the association is to oversee the quality of professional education (vocational training or dual-formation). We cover the two Federal Diplomas of Vocational Education and Training (CFC in French and EFZ in German) for jewelry and crimping.

Our counter-part in the German speaking side is the Verband Schweizer Goldschmiede und



Mr. André Perrin showing us how to set diamonds on a jewel

Uhrenfachgeschäfte (VSGU). In French, we make a difference between “Bijoutier” who works with metal such gold and silver and “Joaillier” who works with precious gems. In German the word “Goldschmied” covers both meanings.

When and why did this exchange with Japan start?

It started with my family story. My daughter-in-law is Japanese. In 2016, I had the opportunity to visit Japan for the first time. I was really impressed by the local

handcraft culture there.

In 2018, we went back with a colleague to visit several cities. It gave us the idea to organize a trip with the members of the ASMEBI in 2019. In parallel, I had the idea to have a competition using Uwajima pearls. During our trip in 2019, we bought a stock of pearls for the purpose of this competition. As a part of their training, we also provided pearls to the second year apprentices for them to make earrings.

(continued on page 2)

会見

INTERVIEW

“The demand has been very strong over the last months”

(continued from page 1)

What are the strengths of Japanese jewelry and handcraft?

I am passionate about handcrafts, not only jewelry. I was amazed by what you can find in Japan. It is not only about quality, but also the whole culture. Handcraft is highly considered in Japan. More than here. The best artisans are recognized as national treasures. Experience is also highly regarded. This is important because in our job we never stop to learning.

Generally speaking, in Japan, jewelry is not very ostentatious. You are more likely find delicate jewelry with pearls.

Can you tell us more about the competition “Belle Harmonie”?

We chose this name because it was a perfect way to celebrate the new Japanese era started last year in Japan. Reiwa has been officially translated in to English as, beautiful harmony. “Belle harmonie” is the closest and most common French translation.

We bought some baroque pearls in Japan during our trip, for the purpose of this competition.

Baroque pearls are pearls that are not perfectly spherical. Their irregularities are often considered as imperfections. Therefore, they are difficult to sell. However, we do believe they have potential. The challenge for the candidates was to sublimate those irregularities. Three pearls were given to the 28 candidates. The rule was to make a necklace using the pearl. The com-

petition covers all of Switzerland, we have seven German-speaking candidates and the rest in the Romandie. On the jury, we have three members of the association, two designers, an art specialist and a representative from the Canton of Geneva.

Switzerland is famous for its watchmaking industry. Jewelry is very important too but less known. How do you explain it?

It is a very important industry in Switzerland, but indeed less known than watchmaking. We do not have the same communication impact, nor the same budget to promote our industry. A significant difference is that we are a world made of many small handcrafters, not big companies. It is a pity considering how many talented people we have here. We need to communicate better.

This said, we work a lot with the watch industry. Some jewelry brands have started to do watches and watchmakers are having jewelry-watches.

What explains the Swiss excellence in this industry?

It is difficult to say. My guess would be the quality of the education. The vocational training as we know it in this industry, is more than 60 years old but an apprenticeship in jewelry is as old as the jewelry companies. The school of “Art Décoratif” has been teaching jewelry for about 180 years.

Jewelry making in Switzerland has its roots in the migration of the



Grand Prix: Harmony and technicity for this movable balanced jewel.

Created by Catherine Schmeer Truscello in Carouge

Huguenots, who fled persecution in France more than 350 years ago. Many of them were handcrafters and watchmakers. They came with their knowledge and continued their work here. At first, jewelers used to decorate the watch cases.

What are the next steps for your collaboration with Japanese jewelers?

Ideally, this competition is a win-win situation. Nice jewels using baroque pearls is a way for us to show our knowledge, and for the pearl producers to better sell those disregarded pearls. If the pandemic situation allows, we would like to bring the pieces made by the participants to Japan in April (Postponed to next year). The pieces could be presented around the country for a couple of months before returning to Switzerland.

Check the [ASMEBI website](#) where you can find [the creation of the 28 participants](#).

State of emergency declared in eleven Japanese prefectures

Over the last few weeks, Japan has been experiencing a considerable increase in the number of COVID cases in the country. The number of daily infections has been regularly over 6,000 cases in January, which is low in international comparison but high regarding Japanese past waves. Therefore, Prime Minister Suga declared a [state of emergency](#) for eleven prefectures: Tokyo, Chiba, Saitama, and Kanagawa on January 7; followed by Tochigi, Gifu, Aichi, Kyoto, Osaka, Hyogo, and Fukuoka on January 13. The state of emergency will translate into four main measures for the population:

Closing of restaurants and bars at 8 PM;

Decrease by 70% of commuters thanks to teleworking;

Refraining from going out for non-

essential reasons, especially after 8 PM;

Limitation of the number of people attending sports events and concerts.

Unfortunately for foreign travellers, the business track and residence track that allowed short trips to Japan under certain conditions has temporarily been suspended.

The current measures are in force

until February 7th.

Regarding vaccines, Japan has already secured more than 500 million doses from several developers (Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca, and Novavax). So far only Pfizer/Biontech's vaccine is in the approval phase, as local trials are part of the requirement for approval in Japan.



Prime Minister Suga holding a press conference on January 8, 2021

動向

TREND

51 Japanese startups at CES 2021

Japanese startups were well represented this year at the Consumer Electronic Show, the largest event dedicated to new technologies and consumer electronics.

Because of the circumstances, the event was digital this year and took place from January 11 to 14.

JETRO, through the J-Startup program, supports those startups encompassing a wide spectrum of products and technologies: AI, health, wearables, robotics, IoT, smart home, transportation, block-

chain, energy, and space tech, as well as anti-coronavirus technologies.

A special session “Transforming the Super Aging Society into a Super Smart Society” was held on January 13th. J-Startup innovators work on the front line of Japanese “super-aging society” and have a lot of experience to share.

In the coming editions of the newsletter we will briefly introduce those start-ups. In the meantime, the list is available following this

[link](#) and a special page about them is available [here](#).



**J-Startup
CES 2021
JAPAN
Showcase**

活動

ACTIVITY

QR Code: From supply chain optimization to public health prevention

革新

INNOVATION

Mr. Masahiro Hara invented the QR Code in 1994. QR stands for Quick Response. At the time, Mr. Hara used to work for Denso Wave, an automotive components firm. Mr. Hara, who worked previously on the bar code system was trying to find a solution to the limitation of the bar code which can only carry a limited number of characters. At the time, the increasing complexity of the supply chain in the automotive industry resulted in a multitude of bar codes to scan because the information had to be split up. Employees had to scan several codes on every box. According to an interview in the Guardian, Mr. Hara had the idea when playing a game of Go. The invention was not patented and became an ISO standard in

2000. The QR code was a great improvement for the industry, saving time and reducing the risk of error.

With the emergence of smartphones, the QR code is having a second life. Most people can use it thanks to the camera in their phone. In China, the QR code has become one of the most common ways to pay, with more than 1.8 billion daily scans for this purpose only.

In Switzerland the system Twint also uses a QR code to scan and the QR Invoice model entered into force last year in the country.

The QR Code has also proven to be useful during the pandemic. It has been used by restaurants in several

cantons for keeping track of customers for 14 days.

Most official documents from the Federal Office of Public Health also have QR codes on them. People can scan them to get more information or to download the SwissCovid tracing app.



One of the QR code used by the Federal Office of Public Health regarding the COVID pandemic

Agenda



Stay tuned!

活動

AGENDA

JETRO is a government-related organization that works to promote mutual trade and investment between Japan and the rest of the world. Originally established in 1958 to promote Japanese exports abroad, JETRO's core focus in the 21st century has shifted toward promoting foreign direct investment into Japan and helping small to medium size Japanese firms maximize their global export potential.

The JETRO Switzerland Newsletter can also be viewed and/or downloaded online: <http://www.jetro.go.jp/switzerland/newsletter>

JETRO

Japan External Trade Organization

JETRO Geneva
80, Rue de Lausanne
1202 Geneva
Phone: 022 732 13 04
Fax: 022 732 07 72
E-mail: SWG@jetro.go.jp