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Fourth round of the Protecting Our World Natural Heritage Project:
Amami Oshima & Tokunoshima

**Mitsui Chemicals Group Donates NONROT™ Benches Made in
Collaboration With Tokunoshima Elementary School Students**

Elementary school students create their own designs in an architecture design workshop led by Mr. YAMASHITA Yasuhiro, an architect from Amami Oshima!

Mitsui Chemicals, Inc. (Tokyo: 4183; President & CEO: HASHIMOTO Osamu) and Mitsui Chemicals Industrial Products Ltd. (President: TACHIBANA Akihiro) have carried out the fourth round of the Mitsui Chemicals Group's Protecting Our World Natural Heritage Project. Efforts here saw architect YAMASHITA Yasuhiro visit Okazen Elementary School in Amagi, on the island of Tokunoshima, Kagoshima, to lead architecture and design workshops that included the creation of five benches designed by the elementary school students themselves. These benches were then donated to Amagi Town Hall, Okazen Elementary School, the Amagidake Trail Entrance and the Black Rabbit Observation Hut.

Mitsui Chemicals has released a video spotlighting these recent activities.

Video: <https://youtu.be/beh5Jch-Bu0>



Spanning Kagoshima through to the Nansei Islands in Okinawa, the combined region of Amami Oshima, Tokunoshima, the northern part of Okinawa Island and Iriomote houses precious life and ecosystems, prompting its registration as a UNESCO World Natural Heritage site in 2021. Tokunoshima is home to a wide range of protected, endemic and endangered species – including the Amami black rabbit and the Amami green tree frog – and is as such a critical location in the fight to protect biodiversity.

The Mitsui Chemicals Group's recent effort on Tokunoshima saw three guest classes held at Okazen Elementary School in cooperation with the town of Amagi. In February, YAMASHITA Yasuhiro – an architect who was himself born on Amami Oshima – was welcomed as a guest teacher to educate

the students about Amami architecture, as well as about creating concepts for building and craftsmanship. This was followed by a workshop where the students worked together to design benches themselves, resulting in the concept of a bench that would make everyone happy and could be sat on for a hundred years. The students then drew pictures around the motifs of bullfighting – a tradition on Tokunoshima – and the Amami black rabbit, a unique local species. In turn, YAMASHITA made designs based on these pictures, and used local cedar from Kagoshima to create five benches.

Workshops held in April and June then saw the students finish off the benches by coating them with NONROT™ wood protective coating under the guidance of Mitsui Chemicals Industrial Products. NONROT™ allows wood to breathe, enabling users of products treated with the coating to enjoy the pleasant scent of the timber itself.

The completed benches have been installed at the black Rabbit Observation Hut, Amagi Town Hall, Okazen Elementary School and the Amagidake Trail Entrance. It is hoped that they will help convey the culture and traditions of Tokunoshima to all who visit those locations.



Participants from Okazen Elementary School at the April 2022 outdoor painting class



Bullfighting and black rabbit bench
(the Amagidake Trail Entrance and
the Black Rabbit Observation Hut)



Black rabbit bench (Amagi Town Hall)



Bullfighting bench (Okazen Elementary School)

■ NONROT™ wood protective coating <http://www.nonrot.jp>



Featuring excellent water repellency, UV resistance, and antiseptic, antifungal and anti-insect properties, NONROT™ is a highly safe coating which maximizes the breathability – or humidity control – that wood naturally possesses. As the product does not disturb the breathing of the wood, it allows the wood to release its inherent refreshing aroma, leading numerous architects, designers and clients to choose NONROT™ as a wood protective coating.

■ Profile of YAMASHITA Yasuhiro <https://yamashita-yasuhiro.net/archives/22155>



Active as an architect since 1991, YAMASHITA Yasuhiro has won a plethora of awards both domestically and overseas for his use of innovative materials, structures and construction methods. After researching urban development as a lecturer at the likes of the University of Tokyo, Keio University and Kyushu University, YAMASHITA opened an urban development business in 2016 in his birthplace of Amami Oshima. This business primarily focuses on DenPaku + Magun Plaza, an accommodation setup where local residents, senior citizens and tourists can mingle and interact. The 6th Japan Tourism Awards – an event sponsored by the UN World Tourism Organization – saw YAMASHITA receive both an ethics award and an award from the Minister of Land, Infrastructure and Tourism. Then in 2021, DenPaku was recognized by Green Key, an international eco-label.

■ Protecting Our World Natural Heritage Project

Mitsui Chemicals Group Donates NONROT™ Tree Decks to Shiretoko Nature Foundation
https://jp.mitsuichemicals.com/en/release/2020/2020_0325.htm

Mitsui Chemicals Group Donates NONROT™-Treated Benches Made from Non-Native Bishop Wood to Ogasawara Islands
https://jp.mitsuichemicals.com/en/release/2019/2019_0214.htm

Protecting Our World Heritage Project CSR Project Video in Yakushima now released
<https://jp.mitsuichemicals.com/en/release/2017/170316.htm>