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Japan FUDO Culture Institute Launches International Initiative to Redefine Culture Around Space and Environment

Inaugural Symposium on May 28 in Tokyo Features Renowned Architect Kengo Kuma

TOKYO, Japan — Japan FUDO Culture Institute, a newly established nonprofit organization, today announced the launch of an international cultural initiative built around a new concept called **"FUDO"** — a framework that repositions *space and lived environment*, rather than individual objects or artworks, as the primary medium of culture.

The Institute is led by Representative Director Shunya Yoshimi, sociologist and Professor Emeritus at the University of Tokyo, and Director Minoru Yoshikawa, a business executive with deep experience across finance and creative industries.

What Is FUDO?

FUDO (風土) is a Japanese word that traditionally refers to climate and land. The Institute redefines it to mean "the experiential quality of a place, arising from the relationship between people and their environment."

Cultural discourse has long been organized around individual objects and creators — artworks, crafts, architecture, cuisine — each discussed in isolation. The FUDO framework proposes that Japan's cultural strength lies not in any single artifact or artisan, but in the totality of experience that emerges when objects, people, space, and atmosphere come together.

This includes intangible elements — light and shadow, sound, fragrance, gesture, and the passage of time — which interact with physical objects to create a form of experience the Institute identifies as the essence of Japanese cultural expression.

A Global Cultural Conversation

The Institute emphasizes that FUDO is not a promotional framework for Japanese culture, but a contribution to a broader international dialogue. Across contemporary art, architecture, and design, there is a growing global movement that treats spatial experience itself as the primary work — from immersive installations to environmental and site-specific art.

The FUDO initiative connects with this international trend, partnering with artists, architects, and researchers in Japan and abroad to create programs where audiences can directly experience space as culture — while advancing the theoretical foundations of this shift.

Inaugural Symposium — May 28, 2026

To mark the launch, the Institute will host its first public symposium: "From Objects to Space: Cultivating Society and Environment through FUDO." The event will be held at Kudan House, a historic venue in central Tokyo.

- **Date & Time:** Thursday, May 28, 2026 | 2:00 PM – 4:30 PM
- **Venue:** Kudan House, 1-15-9 Kudankita, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
- **Registration:** https://fudo260528.peatix.com

Speakers:

- **Kengo Kuma** — Architect. Internationally recognized for the design of the Japan National Stadium (Tokyo 2020 Olympics) and numerous landmark projects in Europe, Asia, and the Americas.
- **Shunya Yoshimi** — Sociologist. Professor, Kokugakuin University; Professor Emeritus, University of Tokyo. A leading figure in Japanese cultural studies, urban theory, and media studies.
- **Facilitator: Nobuyuki Hayashi** — Journalist and cultural critic. Widely known as a leading commentator on technology, design, and contemporary culture in Japan.

Statement from Representative Director Shunya Yoshimi

> *"The word fudo is composed of two characters: earth and wind. The soil beneath our feet is the product of 500 million years of biological and geological process — every patch of ground has a unique composition, shaped by plants, microorganisms, and deep time. Before modernity, humanity understood that it existed within nature, not above it.*
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> *Modernity believed technology could sever that bond. Climate change, disasters, ocean pollution, deforestation, and war remind us that this confidence was misplaced. We need to rebalance our relationship with nature. I believe contemporary art — in its deepest sense, one closely related to craft — has the imagination to lead us there. FUDO is about discovering, recognizing, and giving language to that imagination, in a global context."*

About Japan FUDO Culture Institute

The English word "culture" shares its Latin root with "agriculture" — both originally meant to cultivate the land. Culture, then, is the cultivation of society. Japan FUDO Culture Institute takes that idea as its foundation: to re-examine and re-till what we take for granted in our social and natural environment, and to see it with fresh eyes.

The Institute works to define and create place-based cultural experiences that embody Japanese values, builds the systems to distribute them internationally, and develops the theoretical frameworks and institutional models to sustain this work over time.

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