

For Immediate Attention of the Media

January 13, 2011

National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation (Miraikan)

Special Exhibition
The End of the World
- 73 Questions We Must Answer
March 10 (Sat.)-June 11(Mon.), 2012

From March 10 (Sat.) to June 11 (Mon.), 2012, the National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation (Miraikan) (Director: Mamoru Mohri; Address: Aomi, Koto-ku, Tokyo) will hold the Special Exhibition “The End of the World – 73 Questions We Must Answer.”

Everything comes to an end. Trends pass, tangible things break, people pass away, and cultures disintegrate. Even the universe will come to an end—no longer the eternal bastion it was once thought to be. “Endings” are a certainty in this world, waiting to greet everyone and everything. Nevertheless, we humans simply move through each day and manage our busy schedules without confronting this reality face to face.

The disastrous Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11 reminded us that even the most peaceful, tranquil days may be brought to an end. Issues that we have long overlooked, such as urban disaster prevention and energy problems, have come to the forefront. We have come to the realization that our lives, bolstered by science and technology, are frail and fleeting.

Almost a year has passed since then and we are slowly returning to our former modes of life. But in light of the immediacy of such “endings,” we need to take the time to seriously consider what we should be cherishing in our lives and how we should live side by side with science and technology. This exhibition attempts to present visitors with the opportunity to approach these questions head-on. Viewed from a variety of vantages, we present 73 questions to visitors in the hopes of questioning our beliefs. Looking at answers provided by other people and relevant science topics, visitors will undergo self-dialogue and bolster their resolution to face the future by rediscovering what is personally important and worth valuing.

Out of this knowledge of the “end,” we will find the hope to keep on living. To the extent that this is the calling of every living being, we must now, of all times, approach the problems we have avoided. It is our desire that this exhibition will present visitors with new hope out of the many “endings” of this world.

Furthermore, before the exhibition opens, we will be making a special website to highlight the opinions of prominent individuals on “endings” and their answers to various questions, including Shuntaro Tanikawa (poet), Ken’ichiro Mogi (neuroscientist), Hirotada Ototake (educator and sportswriter), and Keiko Kojima (radio personality). We will be collecting answers and replies from the public as well and sharing in the diversity.

The exhibition’s key visual has been specially prepared by Takashi Taima, an illustrator known for his work in CasaBRUTUS magazine and other works. Mr. Taima has offered his own “End of the World” that is stylish and vibrant, yet brings back fond memories, in only the way he can.

■Overview■

Term: March 10 (Sat.) – June 11 (Mon.), 2012

Opening Hours: 10:00 – 17:00 (Please enter at least 30 minutes before closing time.)

Venue: 1F Exhibition Space a, National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation

Closed: Every Tuesday (will be open March 20, March 27, and April 3)

Admission Fees: Adults: 1,000 yen, 18 years and under: 300 yen

Groups (8 people and over): Adults: 800 yen, 18 years and under: 240 yen

* Includes fees for permanent exhibitions.

* Children who are not yet in elementary school enter free.

* Free admission for those in possession of a disabled person’s certificate and up to one accompanying person.

Organized, Planned and Produced by: National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation

Supported by: Tokyo Waterfront Urban Development Committee, Tokyo Rinkai Fukutoshin Group

*Opening days and hours may change due to the electricity supply situation and other reasons.

Further information will be provided on the Miraikan website. URL: <http://www.miraikan.jst.go.jp/en/>

Inquiries from general visitors:	For information on this release, please contact:
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[Exhibition Outline]

The floor is divided into four sections. The starting point is the “you” of the present. We will pass from our own end, to the end of those things around us, to the end of the world itself. Passing through the exhibition, we are brought to gradually expand our perspectives.

■ Unanticipated endings

Earthquakes, typhoon, meteors, sickness, traffic accidents, wars, terrorism—numerous terrors may strike unannounced. Looking at the current state of earthquake and crisis prediction research, we will consider how to face risks and uncertainties.

Sample questions: “What do you worry about the most in your life?”

“If you could know, would you want to know what sicknesses you will come down with?”

■ “My” end

The concept of “living” and the boundary between life and death is changing as the mechanisms of life are being discovered and medical technology advanced. Moreover, we will broadly and earnestly question the nature and location of identity in relation to human “endings,” taking into account research surrounding the “immortal jellyfish” (*Turritopsis nutricula*) and the life of stars.

Sample questions: “If you could have eternal life, would you take it?”

“What is ‘living’?”

■ The end of culture

Since time on earth began, humans and nature have continued their evolution uninterrupted and technological advances have greatly affected human life. Prompted by such examples of “geo-engineering” research that attempt to stem global warming by blocking sunlight with dust projected into the skies, we will reconsider such issues as sustainability (what, until when, and with whom?) and what should be maintained in a world rocked by change.

Sample questions: “Can we return to the lifestyle of 50 years ago?”

“Have we lost anything during our technological advances?”

■ The end of the story

What does the “end of the world” mean? The universe? The earth? A life? Or perhaps an important person or thing? Regardless of “endings,” this exhibition closes by reconfirming that, this instant, we are alive and the world is continuing on. The “story that begins with an end” begins now.

Sample questions: “What ‘end’ entails the end of the world to you?”

“What type of future will you carve out for yourself?”

■ Related exhibition: “‘Love-letter’ Writing Space” (venue: 1F Symbol Zone)

An “end” will come to everyone and anyone. This space allows us to think about what we want to do with our loved ones, where we want to go, and how we want to spend our precious, limited time, and write them down on paper. In a way, such a note is a “love letter” to those special people who will traverse the path of existence with us. We can also view the love letters of previous visitors on the screen.

■ “The End of the World” Special Site: <http://www.miraikan.jp/sekainoowari/>

Limited content found only on the special site, including the responses from prominent individuals of our society.

• Session 1: “Begin by envisioning the ‘end of the world’” (from January 14)

Notable public figures hailing from different sectors of society will introduce books, movies, music, and other works that evoke the “end of the world” and offer their comments.

Respondents: Shuntaro Tanikawa (poet), Tatsuru Uchida (thinker), etc.

• Session 2: “Approach the heart of the matter from the web” (from early March)

These notable public figures will answer the questions presented at the venue. We will also be collecting responses from the general public through Twitter and Facebook.

Respondents: Ken’ichiro Mogi (neuroscientist), Hirotada Ototake (educator and sportswriter), Keiko Kojima (radio personality), etc.

[Sample Pictures]



Key visual of the exhibition (illustrator: Takashi Taima)



Image of the exhibition site

ACT after 3.11 at Miraikan

Miraikan’s desire is to redefine the role of science, gather “knowledge” from various fields, and think about action to be taken for the future with all its visitors.

*Related press releases and pictures can be downloaded from the Miraikan website.

URL: <http://www.miraikan.jst.go.jp/en/press/>