

# FUJIYA HOTEL

## MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR

### THE PEOPLE WHO SAFEGUARD ARCHITECTURE

7 September - 20 November 2018

#### Foreword

The Fujiya Hotel—a Hakone landmark this year greeting its 140th anniversary—still enchants visitors today. This classic hotel features several Registered Tangible Cultural Properties among its many buildings. Through the attentive care of the hotel’s maintenance and repair team, the buildings have continuously been preserved in their original appearance.

As of April 2018, the Fujiya Hotel is closed for two years for large-scale renovation—its first since its founding. Taking advantage of this, we visited the hotel to observe the maintenance and repair team at work. Seeing the range of duties they perform—everything from routine maintenance work to constructing of the garden’s bridge and water wheel and the hinoki cypress bath—we were struck by how indispensable they are in their role. This exhibition tours the Fujiya Hotel’s interior and exterior architecture while following the tasks of the maintenance and repair crew, stopping at times to observe past traces of repair work. The exhibition thus draws out the Fujiya’s charm as a hotel lovingly maintaining its historical architecture.

Through the displays we hope you will discover that charm, as well as the skills and ingenuity of the people who maintain the hotel’s hospitality spaces.

We wish to extend our warmest appreciation to the Fujiya Hotel and everyone whose efforts have made this exhibition possible.

LIXIL GALLERY

#### About the Fujiya Hotel

Fujiya Hotel was founded in Miyanoshita, Hakone in 1878 by Yamaguchi Sennosuke. Using funds obtained in the United States as seed money, Yamaguchi purchased the 500-year-old “Fujiya” hot spring inn in Miyanoshita and constructed the “Fujiya Hotel” in the Western style. The venture was inspired, it is said, by his having heard the great intellectual Fukuzawa Yukichi speak on the need for international tourism in Japan, when still a student at Keio University. For a period, the Fujiya was operated exclusively for foreigners. From the start, Yamaguchi poured effort into preparing the area as a tourism site by opening roads to improve traffic convenience, and he early on installed new technologies such as a self-generating electricity system and a telephone. Today, a building complex that includes several registered Tangible Cultural Assets forms a maze of corridors and rooms on the broad site. The buildings, added on in succeeding eras, consist of four buildings and the Annex Kikka-so constructed in the Meiji period (1868-1912) and other buildings constructed in the Taisho (1912-26) and Showa (1926-89) periods. They accordingly display the history of each passing era and maintain equipment that was highly advanced in its time and architectural spaces having cultural value.

\* 1997

The Main Building, the Comfy Lodge / Restful Cottage, the Dining Room Building, the Flower Palace, the Annex Kikka-so Inn, and the Eyrle were designated as registered Tangible Cultural Properties of Japan

\* 2007

The Main Building, the Comfy Lodge / Restful Cottage, the Dining Room Building, the Flower Palace, the Annex Kikka-so Inn, Cascade Room, and Kitchen were recognized as a Heritage of Industrial Modernization of Japan under the name “Fujiya Hotel and Hakone Tourism-related Heritage.”

#### Eizen-san—the Fujiya Hotel Maintenance and Repair Team

YAMAGUCHI Yumi (non-fiction writer)

Founded in 1878, the Fujiya Hotel made it a practice upon opening to meet all its needs in-house, due in part to its remote Hakone location.

In those days, the Fujiya had a stock farm and automobile company, and not only did its own laundry but also handled its day-to-day printing needs. As times changed and efficiency became the byword, the hotel too changed, yet it preserves its original style, even today, with the maintenance and repair team looking after the Fujiya Hotel’s architecture, furnishings, and equipment.

*Eizen* (the maintenance and repair team) at the Fujiya is like an administrative department with sections for general maintenance, for technical matters related to the electricity, water, hot spring and boiler, and for upkeep of the surrounding gardens. My grandfather, Kenkichi, the last president from the founding family, always called them *Eizen-san* when seeking their help, because they could fix anything, like magic.

Calling on the *Eizen-san* whenever there is a problem is a tradition that still holds. The concept of going right out to “buy something” when an item breaks or other need arises does not exist at the Fujiya Hotel. Conferring with the maintenance and repair team comes first.

Depending on the situation, something new may be purchased or an outside service provider contacted but only when there is insufficient time. The maintenance and repair team almost always come up with a solution for everything. They can repair furniture and equipment, mend walls and doors, create signage, and put up a bridge in the garden. They will even construct a small building if necessary.

The Fujiya is unique among classic hotels with its Japanese-hybrid architecture, ornamentation evoking the Dragon Palace, and kitschy, playful contrivances. That uniqueness was born of the strong character of its generations of proprietors, but it is the maintenance and repair team who keep it alive for us to enjoy, today.

Despite the Fujiya Hotel’s long history, the maintenance and repair team have no handed down rules. Each generation of craftsmen has exercised their own character and skills—an approach that has shaped the “anything goes” methods that distinguish the Fujiya. The work of the *Eizen-san* is part and parcel of the hotel’s spirit.

#### THE MAIN BUILDING

The Main Building, while constructed in the Western style, features Japanese exterior décor, such as its *karahafu* gable entry of wood construction. The building has a front office and lobby on the first floor and guestrooms on the second floor. Its structure, while wood, is rigid and withstood the Great Kanto Earthquake without a single window breaking. One example of the maintenance and repair team’s work,

found here, is the floor of the front office and lobby area. Because this area undergoes heavy use with guests’ comings and goings, the floor is subject to damage, and countless repairs have been made. Their traces are not easily discerned, however. Then, the repainting of the red balustrades of stairs and bridges, located variously inside and outside the building, and crafting of handrails for specific locations are the work of the maintenance and repair team. Furnishings in the tea lounge also require frequent repair. Some, such as the desk in the concierge room, were handcrafted by the maintenance and repair team. In every case, the pieces are designed to quietly meld with their space through long passing time.

#### THE DINING ROOM BUILDING, KITCHEN

The Dining Room Building is a Japanese-style building constructed with great care by the third-generation owner, Yamaguchi Shozo. Architect Kigo Kosaburo participated in its design. Traditional Japanese architectural methods are apparent, such as the *gotenjo* (coffered ceiling) with its *tokyo* (system of supporting blocks) and *kaerumata* (frog-leg struts). Although the maintenance and repair

team was little involved in these designs, their labor is present in unseen ways, such as constructing the counter used for serving food. They also spend entire nights repairing the wood floor, finishing in time for the Dining Room’s opening in the morning. The Kitchen, constructed in 1920, is made of reinforced concrete. Natural light spills in abundantly through glass skylights. Owing to its design and electrically power equipment—considered very advanced in its time—the Kitchen was touted as the “best in the East.” Until recently, the maintenance and repair team worked late at night painting its walls and repairing its roofing, so as to not interfere with the cooking.

## THE COMFY LODGE, THE RESTFUL COTTAGE

The Comfy Lodge and The Restful Cottage is a two-story wooden guestroom wing. It consists of two identically shaped buildings situated to the left of the Main Building. Their entry porches feature *karahafu* gable roofs and *katomado* (flower-top) windows, but overall, their Japanese décor is restrained. In 1893, the Fujiya Hotel signed an agreement with the neighboring Japanese-style inn, the Naraya, and became a hotel exclusively for foreigner visitors. The names given to the buildings (Comfy Lodge and The Restful Cottage) reflect its concept as a resort hotel for overseas guests. Their distinctively Western chalk-white exteriors and interiors were initially finished in Japanese *shikkui* plaster but currently are painted with white paint. The maintenance and repair team handles the spray painting of the exterior walls, and a few years ago, when a guestroom ceiling began peeling, the team undertook repairs. The long-used light fixtures and washstands, which differ in each room, are also continually maintained and repaired. When no longer repairable, they are replaced with similar-style implements that can be found.

## THE FLOWER PALACE

In 1919 the third-generation owner, Yamaguchi Shozo, an “architecture buff,” embarked for America to observe the world’s most advanced hotels. The Flower Palace was the result of his trip. The building’s name derives from the flower names given to each of the 43 guestrooms. Each guestroom’s theme flower is depicted on its door and room key and displayed as a motif in its special-order curtains. All rooms are Western in style, but 16 of them feature sand walls, Kyoto-style plaster walls, coffered ceilings, *ramma* openwork screens, sliding door partitions, and other Japanese décor giving play to *miya-daiku* (shrine and temple carpenter) techniques. A *miya-daiku* undertook the interior décor of the Chrysanthemum Room, the foremost suite room of the Flower Palace. The room’s chairs and tables were order-made by a Japanese furniture maker, and the maintenance and repair team regularly sees to their repairs. The Flower Palace, which best displays the Fujiya Hotel style, can be called a monument symbolic of the early Showa period.

## MAINTENANCE WORK AND BACKYARD

The Fujiya Hotel *Eizen* (general maintenance and repair) staff is one administrative section at the hotel. Their broad duties include construction, plastering, welding, and painting. Then, there is also a *Teien* (gardening) section for maintaining the surrounding gardens and a *Gijutsu* (technical) section for maintaining the electrical and water equipment, boiler, and hot spring. *Eizen* is staffed by three men, and *Teien* by one woman who also assists the *Eizen* staff in the winter. *Gijutsu* is staffed by five men. Together, they form the team working in support of day-to-day operations at the Fujiya Hotel. The spacious *Eizen* workshop at the south of the hotel site was built when the Fujiya Hotel was requisitioned by the US army. The pipes along its ceiling are said to be materials left by the US army. Stepping into the workshop through its narrow door, one enters a complex space of workshops inside a workshop, with a painting room, printing shop, storage area, and so on. Being large, the workshop functions well for the *Eizen*’s broad-ranging activities. Meanwhile, behind the Main Building, is the “Backyard,” a long, tunnel-like facility used by the *Gijutsu* staff. The Backyard houses the central plumbing equipment and boiler room, as well as an office where technical staff is on standby 24-hours per day for managing the electricity, boiler, plumbing, and hot spring at the hotel.

## The Fujiya Hotel’s Architectural Appeal

YOSHIDA Koichi (professor emeritus, Yokohama National University)

The Hakone Miyanoshita Fujiya Hotel is one of Japan’s foremost classic hotels. The several historical buildings in the hotel complex, dating from the Meiji (1868-1912), Taisho (1912-26), and early Showa periods (1926-45), even now function as the hotel’s main buildings. Arranged like arms spread in welcome, with the oldest building (1891) in the middle, all backed by the deep greenery of Mt. Sengenyama’s north slope, the buildings present a magnificent sight to say the least. In constructing them, their builders adhered to a consistent policy—Western structure and equipment; Japanese design—and the hotel as a whole displays a striking sense of unity. The main Japanese elements are the tiled hip-and-gable roof and, above all, the *karahafu* (undulating) and *chidori-hafu* (triangular) gables, not to mention the ogre tiles at the ends of the roof beams. The buildings also feature *katomado* (flower-top) windows, and relief carvings of lions, hawks, phoenixes, roosters, and arabesques. These buildings were constructed under the teamwork of the owner and a local master carpenter, and continually maintained thereafter by the hotel’s own maintenance and repair team. In

the Meiji period, the owner was Yamaguchi Sennosuke and the master carpenter, Kawahara Heijiro. In Taisho and early Showa, it was Yamaguchi Shozo and Kawahara Tokujiro. Noted architects and artists of the times took part, but these artists’ work, rather than distracting, adds depth and flavor to the owner’s grand scheme. The owner and master carpenter might even have grown more sensitive in their tastes through their contact with the artists. In fact, the Japanese design style is more pronounced and refined in the later, Taisho and early Showa portions of the hotel. To be able to observe this process of change is fascinating. Yamaguchi Shozo often praised the Fujiya Hotel, comparing it to a fine aged wine. That wine has ripened, even more, under the gaze of countless visitors in the few dozen to a hundred years since his time, with the hotel’s maintenance and repair team playing a chief role in its maturation. Through long time, the buildings of the Fujiya Hotel have become a kind of landscape in themselves, displaying the ideal state to which buildings should aspire.

## THE ANNEX KIKKA-SO INNE

Annex Kikka-so is a former imperial villa designed by the Imperial Household Agency’s Bureau of Construction. It was sold to the Fujiya Hotel in 1946 and currently serves as the hotel annex. A work of pure Japanese architecture featuring a beautiful Japanese garden, the Annex offered a clear contrast with the Fujiya’s blend of East and West when first completed on a nearby site. One can find many fine works by the maintenance and repair team in the Annex. They include a folding screen of cryptomeria-wood panels, the woven twig partitions placed before no-entry sites, and the smoking area. The team furthermore handles the repair and touch-up painting of the bridge over the garden pond and its bright red balustrades. The team’s great masterpiece, nevertheless, is the hinoki-cypress hot spring bath. Constructing a wood bath that will not leak is not easy. It usually requires the services of a specialized cooper, but the Fujiya Hotel’s hot spring bath is entirely the work of the *Eizen*. Then, it is their attentive labor—such as replacing sheets in the copper sheathing of the ceramic tile roof—that maintains the stately appearance of the former imperial villa.