

## **Proudly Presenting our Arts to the World**

by

Hayashibara Ken

President of the Hayashibara Corporation

Until a short while ago, Japan was experiencing a cultural boom. Art galleries, music halls, cultural institutions and so forth were being constructed and much buying of foreign art took place. However, since the economic bubble burst, the art market crashed and concluded with art gallery managements meeting their destruction and the like. With the circumstances looking this way, I feel that we cannot put the continuation of true Japanese culture and crafts on hold until the next generation as it would be rather unsafe to do so.

The collecting and display of objects is very important. It is very important that we earnestly face the challenge of the future now. For several hundred years Japan has had a wonderful continuity of traditional crafts and skills, and I believe we must continue to pass the torch to the next generation. I feel that to lose even one of these crafts would do immeasurable damage to the spiritual backbone of the Japanese people.

Take Okayama for instance. If you search the world for a great object, I think the Japanese sword is ultimately the best. I do not think there is a more wonderful object in the world. However, currently in Osafune it looks as though our wonderful Okayama skills are to become extinct. This kind of technical skill cannot be recorded; once it is gone it cannot be replaced. To revive such a craft would take an incredibly long time. From this point of view it is up to us to review the situation if the modern sword is heading in this direction. Perhaps we need to make an effort to keep the old artistic values alive as well as the production skills to pass on to future generations or it will be a mistake that we will later regret. Fortunately, at present we have Ono Yoshimitsu, so I find it encouraging that the young people of today can continue making Japanese swords. In order to give these young people a splendid upbringing, I feel that we have to give them all our strength and support.

This private display of modern swords in this museum is an epoch-making exhibition of modern swords. It is my hope that our small contribution will have an influence on the continuation of the Bizen tradition.

Ken Hayashibara