

Biennial Review

2007 · 2008

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

During 2007, Shumei focused on deepening the appreciation of beauty and drawing attention to the interconnection between art, the environment and the well-being of humanity. We culminated the year with the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Miho Museum. Many of our friends and colleagues from around the world joined us in Japan for this special occasion. The event theme, “Feel the Beauty,” inspired everyone to seek beauty in their everyday lives and the natural world, and to use this opportunity to reconnect with nature.

With increasing global concern over the environment, Shumei has also been working to foster a more sustainable way of life through the practice of Natural Agriculture. Over the past two years, our international Natural Agriculture activities have grown in size and scope throughout North and South America and other parts of the world. Our pilot program in Zambia has demonstrated promising results as a model for empowering and improving the lives of rural women farmers and youth. Natural Agriculture has



Ms. Hiroko Koyama, Shumei president

provided eco-friendly approaches to farming that address climate change and food security. Grounded in our respect for nature, Shumei has been working to pass on the knowledge and benefits of Natural Agriculture to farmers, consumers and young people throughout the world. Our commitment has led to fruitful partnerships with international, environmental and civil society organizations, and increased our involvement at the United Nations. We strongly encourage our members to continue these efforts.

In the coming years Shumei will be working to promote and strengthen values of gratitude and harmony to balance the challenges of modern life.

We know that uplifting the human spirit to heal suffering cannot always be achieved through material means. Collectively Shumei can play a role in the world community as we strive to achieve peace by showing love, gratitude and compassion through a keen understanding of our interconnectedness with one another and the earth.

Hiroko Koyama



CELEBRATING
THE 10TH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE
MIHO MUSEUM

In November, 2007 Shumei celebrated a milestone in its history with the tenth anniversary of the opening of the Miho Museum. Over the past decade, the Miho Museum has become a leading destination in the international art world.

The theme, “**Feel the Beauty,**” was woven into all the events to emphasize the uplifting power of the arts and nature.

More than 100 international guests attended a four-day celebration in Japan, which included musical performances by Grammy Award winner Paul Winter, Filipino singer Chin-Chin Gutierrez, Chinese pipa artist Wu Man, organist Hector Olivera and the Shumei Taiko Ensemble. The theme, “Feel the Beauty,” was woven into all the events to emphasize the uplifting power of the arts and nature.

Shumei organized a special symposium on “Integrating Beauty, Nature and Spirituality into Life in the New Millennium” held at the Biwako Hall on November 5, 2007, as well as a private viewing of a special exhibition containing new acquisitions and highlights from the Museum’s celebrated permanent collection of art and

Filipino singer Chin-Chin Gutierrez



Chinese pipa artist Wu Man

antiquities from the ancient world, and of traditional Japanese art.

The keynote speaker of the symposium was former United Nations Under-Secretary-General Maurice Strong, who served as the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, also known as the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992. Other speakers included Patrick Holden, director of the UK-based environmental organization the Soil Association, Ardath Rodale, co-chair of the Rodale Institute, the Very Reverend James Parks Morton, one of the founders of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment in the US, Philip Jodidio, former editor-in-chief of *Connaissance des Artes* and Alan Imai, director of Shumei’s International Natural Agriculture Department. Dena Merriam, founder and convener of the Global Peace Initiative of Women, moderated the dialogue.



Maurice Strong, secretary-general of the Earth Summit



I.M. Pei, architect of the Miho Museum

Following the symposium, the guests were invited to visit the Miho Museum where they could experience the integration of beauty, nature and spirituality in the physical structure of the building, the art work, the landscape and even in the Natural Agriculture food served in the Museum's café and restaurant. In keeping with the theme of the anniversary, guests were given a private tour of Shigaraki no Sato, the headquarters for Natural Agriculture activities, and the model farm that provides fresh produce to the Museum. The farm, which includes two beautifully restored 200-year-old *Kominkas*, or traditional-style farmhouses, reconstructed side by side, showcases traditional design and wisdom, combined with modern elements. Shigaraki no Sato provides a unique opportunity for visitors to experience life in balance with nature.

The internationally renowned architect, I.M. Pei, who designed the Miho Museum, his chief engineer, Leslie E. Robertson, and Martha Stewart, the founder of Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia and a fan of the Miho Museum, were among Shumei's special guests.

It is the hope of Shumei and the Miho Museum that this anniversary celebration helped to inspire a new understanding of the importance of cultivating beauty and reconnecting with nature to improve the quality of our lives today.

Patrick Holden, executive director of the Soil Association



*Philip Jodidio, former editor-in-chief of *Connaissance des Artes**





Shumei Taiko Ensemble

TAIKO ENSEMBLE REACHES NEW HEIGHTS

Over the past two years the Shumei Taiko Ensemble reached new heights in its commitment to integrate beauty with nature. In 2007, Shumei sponsored the recording of a new album featuring Paul Winter and the Shumei Taiko Ensemble. The musical collaboration was inspired by the natural beauty of Crestone, Colorado and was a celebration of the living planet. The Grammy

Award-winning album was recorded in the San Luis Valley, which is located at approximately 8,000 feet above sea level in southwest Colorado.

The Taiko Ensemble continues to travel around the world sharing Taiko with different audiences to promote the cultivation of beauty in different creative art forms. The Ensemble also performs in Japan and gave several live concerts at Shumei headquarters and an especially dramatic performance at the Miho Museum Anniversary Celebration to an audience of several hundred people.

The musical collaboration was inspired by the natural beauty of Crestone, Colorado and was a celebration of the living planet.

Minamiza Theater in Kyoto





Books on Natural Agriculture

SPREADING THE WORD ABOUT NATURAL AGRICULTURE

In 2007 Shumei International Press published two books on Natural Agriculture, *The Message in a Seed: Guidelines for Peaceful Living* by Dena Merriam and *Farming to Create Heaven on Earth* by Lisa M. Hamilton.

The Message in a Seed thoughtfully outlines the fundamental principles of Shumei Natural Agriculture. Dena Merriam is a longtime advocate for the environment and worked with the Earth Charter Commissioners in helping to organize the Charter's launch on June 29, 2000 at the Peace Palace in The Hague, Netherlands. After many years of visiting Natural Agriculture farms in Japan,

Merriam presents a clear understanding of Natural Agriculture from the western urban consumer's perspective. The book describes a different way of looking at the natural processes in agriculture from the act of sowing seeds to how the soil nurtures the plant until maturity. *The Message in a Seed* describes the interconnectedness between nature, producers and consumers, and the balance between materialism and spirituality that raises our consciousness in creating a more peaceful world.



Dena Merriam, author of *The Message in a Seed*

Farming to Create Heaven on Earth is an exploration of Natural Agriculture, the food and farming movement born in Japan and now practiced throughout the world. For more than ten years, writer and photographer Lisa M. Hamilton has been telling the stories of farmers in the United States and Asia. In this book, each chapter tells the story of a Natural Agriculture farm or group of consumers who are practicing the Natural Agriculture way of life. Together, the stories introduce a new approach to considering our relationship with food, one that its members hope will do nothing less than achieve world peace.



The DPI/NGO Conference brings together civil society with UN agencies and governments to address pressing global issues from the energy crisis and rural development to gender equality and education.

change. Shumei organized a timely side event called “Exploring Organic Solutions to Climate Change and the Food Crisis.” The workshop presented alternative agricultural approaches to feed the world’s growing population while mitigating climate change and the depletion of natural resources. Speakers included Dr. Richard Heinburg, senior fellow of the Post Carbon Institute, who spoke on peak-oil dependence in the current agricultural industry and the need for more small farms and local food markets. Alice Cunningham, executive director of Shumei International Affairs, introduced the principles of Natural Agriculture, and Barbara Hachipuka Banda, head of the Mbabala Women Farmers’ Co-operative, presented the case study of the Zambia Natural Agriculture project and discussed the practical application and impact of this approach in rural Africa. Patrick Holden, executive director of the Soil Association moderated the workshop, which gave convincing evidence of the increasing need for a change in the current food system and agriculture industry.

INCREASING SHUMEI’S PRESENCE AT THE UNITED NATIONS

Shumei recently began participating in the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) as a nongovernmental organization with special consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). As a newcomer to the CSD in May 2007, Shumei sent representatives to training sessions, informational meetings and side events to learn about innovative programs in

the field of sustainable development and to explore ways for Shumei Natural Agriculture to make a greater contribution to the efforts of the United Nations and the wider international community.

In September, 2007 Shumei organized a side event with the Soil Association and the Mbabala Women Farmers’ Cooperative Union at the Annual United Nations DPI/NGO Conference held at UN Headquarters in New York, New York. The DPI/NGO Conference brings together civil society with UN agencies and governments to address pressing global issues from the energy crisis and rural development to gender equality and education. The 2007 conference was focused on climate



Mbabala women farmers teaching others about sustainable farming practices in Zambia

PROPOSING LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS FOR THE GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS

In 2007 and 2008, the rising cost of food and fuel had a devastating impact on food security in developing countries around the world. In May, 2008, at the peak of concern over the growing food crisis, the United Nations Economic and Social Council organized a panel of experts to speak about how the international civil society community could respond. Alan Imai, director of

Shumei's International Natural Agriculture Department, was invited to speak at the Civil Society Forum on the World Food Crisis on May 16 along with Vicente Garcia-Delgado, the UN representative of CIVICUS, a world alliance for citizen participation, Tracey Draper, the executive director of Pro-Natura International (Nigeria), an NGO operating in the Niger Delta to advance the quality of life for the poor through the promotion of grassroots development, and Bill Freese, a science policy analyst at the Center for Food Safety organization based in Washington, DC. Bruce White, strategic food aid advisor of Catholic Relief Services moderated the discussion. An outcome

document was created based on this civil society forum for presentation at the ECOSOC Special Meeting on the Global Food Crisis on May 20th with the input of all the panelists.

At the Civil Society Forum on the World Food Crisis Mr. Imai presented a case study for farmer-centered solutions to increase long-term food security based on his ongoing work with women farmers in Zambia. He emphasized the importance of working in partnership with the local farmers, sharing knowledge, involving them in decision-making and helping them to think long-term.

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Using the principles of Natural Agriculture, Shumei encouraged the farmers to restore their farming culture in tune with nature and to integrate best practices in sustainable agriculture to determine which cultivation techniques and crops were most appropriate for the long-term use of local natural resources and productivity of the land. With this new integrated approach, they were able to increase yields without the use of any fertilizers, pesticides, and other additives to the soil and to revive traditional practices such as seed saving. In addition to better crop yields, farmers noticed improved soil quality and were able to

significantly reduce the amount spent on seeds and agrochemicals and put additional income towards food and education.

Alan Imai was also invited to participate in an ECOSOC Ministerial Breakfast Roundtable discussion during the ECOSOC High Level Segment Conference on July 1, 2008 on the theme “The Impact of Climate Change on Food Security in Least Developed Countries.” Mr. Imai spoke with agriculture ministers and other governmental officials about Shumei’s work with farmers to address the global food crisis and the challenges of climate change in the agricultural sector. Shumei representatives attended the ECOSOC High Level Segment Conference. Nobel Peace Prize winner Dr. Rajendra K. Pachauri, chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and Lord Nicholas Stern, editor of the *Stern Review* were among the keynote speakers.

ZAMBIA PROJECT RECOGNIZED AS A MODEL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In 2008 Shumei's Natural Agriculture project in Zambia was featured on the UN-NGO-IRENE Best Practices Network, an online registry of model programs. Shumei participated in the Innovation Fair at the United Nations Headquarters during the ECOSOC High Level Segment along with 13 other organizations from the NGO network. Participants in the Innovation Fair were invited to showcase their projects to mobilize stakeholder support for successful sustainable development activities. Shumei had a booth and presented the Zambia case study and video as well as information about Natural Agriculture.



Natural Agriculture Director Alan Imai presenting local seeds to women farmers in Zambia



Children at the Shumei Natural Agriculture farm in Crestone, Colorado

ADVANCING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AROUND THE WORLD

Natural Agriculture is a way of living life in harmony with nature and in many ways is a movement of environmental stewardship that is taking shape around the world, based on an overriding respect for nature. Shumei members and friends are putting the principles of Natural

Agriculture into practice in their gardens and farms, and in the way they grow and consume food. Shumei is working with rural, urban and suburban communities in countries including Japan, the United States, Brazil, and Zambia.

In 2008 Shumei also became involved in a small community-city partnership in Itatinga, Brazil. As part of the program, Shumei is helping to build community gardens and teach sustainable farming through Natural Agriculture to residents in a low-income neighborhood. Residents are learning to grow wholesome food for their families and are

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selling their produce at a local farmer's market to generate additional income. Natural Agriculture is also instilling a greater sense of concern for the environment and the long-term health of the land and the river that runs through the town. The citizens of the city are learning to protect their natural resources, keep their community clean and avoid using harmful chemicals that could pollute their water supply.

RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND SUPPORTING THE EARTH CHARTER

On June 7, 2008 Shumei organized a special symposium, “Earth Charter and Ecology,” at Biwako Hall, Shiga Prefecture, prior to the G8 Summit, held from July 7-9, 2008 at Toya Lake in Hokkaido, Japan. The symposium addressed issues such as the world economy, the environment and climate change, and provided an opportunity for the Japanese public, and especially the younger generation, to learn about the Earth Charter and pertinent environmental issues from experts, leaders, and advocates from the Earth Charter Commission. The keynote addresses were given by Dr. Mary Evelyn Tucker from Yale University’s Institution for Social and Policy Studies, as well as by Earth Charter Commission members Wakako Hironaka, former Director-General of the Environmental Agency of Japan and Ryokichi Hirono, Professor Emeritus of Seikei University. Alan Imai, director of Shumei’s International Natural Agriculture Department and Yukiko Kada, Governor of Shiga Prefecture also spoke. The Biwako Symposium included a special musical concert *Our Forest is Alive Part III – Our Earth Charter* and a reception, and was co-organized by Shumei and ‘Japan Classic Live for the United Nations’ musical troupe.



Earth Charter and Ecology Symposium at the Biwako Hall in Japan