

“The Tokyo Toilet”

World-renowned architects are reimagining public toilets. This remarkable project is a collaboration involving the Nippon Foundation and the city of Tokyo. Japanese bathroom supplier TOTO has taken on a key consulting role in the effort.



A bathroom can be so lovely – even in the middle of a giant city: The innovative toilet pavilions currently under construction in Tokyo in collaboration with bathroom manufacturer TOTO and the Nippon Foundation reveal state-of-the-art architecture and hygiene. TOTO, known in Japan and around the world for the highest standards of bathroom and toilet culture, is contributing its extensive expertise in the sanitary field to this project as a consultant. Seven of the 17 “Tokyo Toilets” designed by renowned architects have already been completed, causing a stir in the urban landscape. The project is scheduled for completion in time for the Olympics in 2021, expressing one aspect of Japanese hospitality appreciated around the world – Omotenashi culture.

Hygiene and cleanliness have always played a special role in Japanese culture. The centuries-old bathing tradition focuses on keeping the body pure, and toilets play a special role in this context. They are a symbol of Omotenashi culture, which is expressed through courteous hospitality. In future, public toilets will also be lovelier, more inviting and more accessible. Even if Japan’s public toilets are cleaner when compared to those in other countries, people today have an even greater consciousness for hygiene – and there is still a great deal of room for improvement in this area. A mindset, one could say, that is typically Japanese.

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Hygienic, comfortable and innovative

“The Tokyo Toilets” is a project organised by the Nippon Foundation and the municipal administration of Shibuya, a neighbourhood in Tokyo, with TOTO serving as a consulting partner. The new pavilions, designed by prominent international architects like Shigeru Ban and Tadao Ando, are to be completed in time for the Olympics in 2021 – allowing visitors to be able to use a clean toilet anytime, day or night.

Shigeru Ban and his concept

The toilet pavilions in Yoyogi Fukamachi Park and Haru-no-Ogawa Community Park, designed by prominent Japanese architect and Pritzker Architecture Prize winner Shigeru Ban, reveal a special feature: The walls are transparent from the outside, allowing passersby to see inside the bathrooms. But there’s a surprising effect: “There are two things that concern people when entering a public toilet – especially in a park. The first is whether or not the facilities are clean. People also ask themselves if anyone is inside,” the architect explained. Thanks to state-of-the-art technology, the glass-enclosed bathroom’s walls are transparent when not in use. Once someone locks the door from the inside, the glass changes colour to become an opaque wall, protecting the user from any unwanted glances. Even if the transparency is a little unusual at first, using the toilet gives people a feeling of safety and comfort.

Extensive research – the perfectly equipped public toilet

When working on the new concepts, TOTO explored what would make using a public toilet both safe and comfortable for people. An important aspect was ensuring that people with disabilities could use public toilets easily, including the consideration that those in wheelchairs need extra space. At the same time, bathroom stalls that are too large can be uncomfortable for the visually impaired. The studies also took into account the needs of parents with small children as well as the elderly. TOTO provided information about regular maintenance and cleaning, including details about sterile, antibacterial fixtures. By November 2020, seven of the 13 planned projects had been completed – including ones in Ebisu Park (architect: Masamichi Katayama Wonderwall), Jingu-Dori Park (architect: Tadao Ando) and Haru-no-Ogawa Community Park (architect: Shigeru Ban). “We hope that the project will give international visitors the opportunity to experience a sense of Japanese hospitality. We also hope that we can introduce the culture of clean, comfortable toilets created by TOTO to the rest of the world,” read the statement from Satoshi Shirakawa, Executive Vice President and Representative Director TOTO Ltd.

An overview of locations of the individual toilet pavilions is available here:

<https://tokyotoilet.jp/en/>

Düsseldorf, November 2020

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1-4 These “Tokyo Toilets” were completed by November 2020, creating a stir in the urban landscape. The photo shows the toilet pavilion designed by Shigeru Ban. The walls are transparent from the outside, and passersby can see inside. Once someone locks the door from the inside, the glass changes colour to become an opaque wall, protecting the user from unwanted glances. Photos: Satoshi Nagare

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5 Tadao Ando designed this attractive toilet pavilion in Jingu-Dori Park, Tokyo. “Everyone’s toilet”, designed for people of all ages and abilities, both men and women, has a large overhang with communal space outside. It is located in the middle of the side entrance to Shibuya station. Photo: The Nippon Foundation

6 A view inside “everyone’s toilet”, designed by Tadao Ando, which also includes a baby seat and changing table, and a place to empty colostomy bags. Like all of the “Tokyo Toilets”, this space is shaped by the idea of Japanese hospitality, or Omotenashi culture. Photo: The Nippon Foundation

7 Interior designer Masamichi Katayama also had the idea of making his toilet pavilion appear as if it just happened to be in the park, like playground structures, benches or trees. It consists of 15 concrete walls with integrated lighting. Photo: The Nippon Foundation

8 An inviting place people want to visit, even when it’s dark: Masamichi Katayama’s toilet pavilion is one of the “Tokyo Toilets” designed by internationally renowned architectures, providing inspiration for designing public toilets. TOTO is participating in the project as a consultant. Photo: The Nippon Foundation

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About TOTO Europe

TOTO focuses on people and their well-being, developing products that combine modern design and extensive expertise. The Japanese company perfects its technologies over decades, incorporating them into innovative products in an understated, easy-to-use way. Established in Kitakyushu, Japan in 1917, TOTO has been developing, producing and marketing its comprehensive high-end bathroom concepts for the European market since 2009. The company aims to create a new attitude towards life through regeneration, comfort and hygiene.

TOTO products integrate technologies into their designs in a smart, nearly invisible way, while prioritising hygiene, resource conservation and comfort. Japan's leading manufacturer in the sector, TOTO offers a comprehensive range of products including ceramic sanitary ware, faucets and accessories – all created in close collaboration with renowned designers. The company celebrated its 100th birthday in 2017 and was named the “world’s no. 1 brand” for shower toilet sales by international market research institute Euromonitor International. TOTO employs 30,000 people world-wide.

More about TOTO: gb.toto.com