

Artists and local residents host Australia House party with hopes for further exchanges between Urada and Australia

(Full translation from *the Tokamachi Shimbun*, 15 August 2010)

On 7 August 2010, Australia House Party was held at the Urada Kokusetsu Kanri Centre in Urada, Tokamachi, as part of the 2010 Echigo-Tsumari Art Festival.

The Australia House is an art project that was launched on the occasion of the fourth Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial. An abandoned farmhouse in the Urada region was transformed into this art installation to serve as a cultural hub for Australia. From June till 8 August 2010, Australian feltmaker Maude Bath and playwright Chris Tugwell stayed at the Australia House and created art works as they deepened exchanges with local Urada residents through workshops and other events. An exhibition 'Double Image – a fusion of two countries' is being held at the Urada Kokusetsu Kanri Centre until 31 August, exhibiting Bath's works, including her '*Nuno Felt Notan Shoji Screens*'.

The Australia House party was organised as a farewell party for Bath and Tugwell and a welcome party for six art students from the University of Newcastle and Tama Art University. The art students will stay at the Australia House until 2 September. Approximately 20 local residents and other people involved in the project joined the party to bid a fond farewell to Bath and Tugwell and to greet the new residents of the Australia House.

On behalf of the Urada community, Mr Maruyama, Chair of the Urada Community Council, thanked the two artists at the onset of the party, saying 'Maude and Chris have been part of our community over a long period of time and contributed to the success of this project. Many children from the local community also participated in the workshops, and we see the results in the form of wonderful art works. I look forward to your continued support as a bridge between Urada and Australia'. In response, Bath expressed her gratitude, stressing that she had a wonderful time in Urada and that without the support from the local community, she could not have completed her works in time for the exhibition.