

ART

Artist gets at the heart of 'merry'

The Daily Yomiuri

Since 1999, graphic designer and art director Koji Mizutani has been visiting big cities in and out of Japan, asking people on the street, "What does 'merry' mean to you?"

Mizutani's "merry project" would be defined, in its crudest term, as communication art. He communicated with people in Tokyo, New York, London and Kobe, taking snapshots of their smiling faces, which were later accompanied by their own, handwritten messages.

The project embraces the artist's notably forward-looking attitude. His project in Kobe in 2001, for example, aimed to fill the city rising from 1995's Great Hanshin Earthquake with big posters of smiley faces.

Last year, for nine days including Sept. 11, Mizutani stayed in New York and photographed 400 people on the street. Titled *Merry in New York*, hundreds of photos of broad smiles from the city will be projected onto the floor and walls of Roppongi Think Zone in Tokyo. The gallery is a modest, provisional space for art exhibitions, a precursor body waiting to grow into a large-scale museum called Mori Art Museum in Roppongi. The museum, to be located atop a huge building complex that will be completed in late April, will open its doors in October.



"Merry in New York" will be held Feb. 14-23, 6:30 p.m.-1 a.m., at Roppongi Think Zone, near Roppongi crossing in Tokyo. Admission is free. (03) 3478-1931