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## News

### 'Merry Umbrella Project' to send a message of peace

An event featuring 100 umbrellas with pictures of smiling children of various countries printed on them will be held in Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Okinawa next month, in an attempt to dispatch a message of peace.



Umbrellas featuring pictures of smiling children of various countries are displayed in front of the Atomic Bomb Dome in Hiroshima. (Photo courtesy of Mizutani Studio)

Dubbed the "Merry Umbrella Project," the event falls on the 65th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Battle of Okinawa toward the end of World War II.

"No nuclear weapons should exist so that children can keep smiling. I'd like to dispatch a message about the importance of peace," said Koji Mizutani, 59, an art director from Tokyo's Minato Ward, who organized the event.

Born to a father who lost his hearing as a soldier battling in the Southern Pacific during the war, Mizutani recalls that his father was always in a bad mood.

"My father didn't want to talk much about the war. He used to get upset easily, and because of that I felt his discontent and the misery of war as a child," Mizutani said.

Mizutani started designing advertising posters for big-name companies in the 1980s and was awarded an international prize. In 1999, he began taking the pictures of over 30,000 people in 26 countries and regions, wishing to "make people happy through designs." The pictures were unveiled at the 2005 Aichi Expo and the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. In May this year, he organized an event to unfold umbrellas featuring the pictures of smiling children at the Shanghai Expo and Tokyo's Shibuya district simultaneously.

During the upcoming event, the colorful umbrellas will be unfolded in front of the Atomic Bomb Dome in Hiroshima on Aug. 1, the Peace Statue in Nagasaki on Aug. 7 and the Okinawa Peace Hall in Okinawa on Aug. 14, with local residents and students participating in protest against the misery of war and nuclear weapons.

The pictures of children to be featured on the umbrellas include those taken by Mizutani in Mianyang, China, which was hit by the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, as well as in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, after the 2004 Sumatra earthquake, and in Kobe in the wake of the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake.

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