

International Association Les Henokiens - Château du Clos Lucé

THE 2014 « LEONARDO DA VINCI PRIZE » AWARD

The 4th edition of the « **Leonardo da Vinci Prize** » has been awarded on September 24, 2015 in Tokyo to Mr. Koji Endo, President of Kai Corporation, by Princess Imperial Akiko de Mikasa, Mr. Willem van Eeghen, President of the Henokiens association and Mr. François Saint Bris, President of the Château du Clos Lucé-Parc Leonardo da Vinci, in the presence of Mr. Hirofumi Nakasone, Japanese MP, former minister of Education and Foreign Affairs.



Founded in 1908 by Saijiro Endo, Kai Corporation is a pocketknife manufacturer in the city of Seki (Gifu Prefecture), known as the largest city of blades in Japan with a history of 800 years. Today, Kai manufactures more than 10,000 different kinds of cutlery and cutting tools, ranging from kitchen utensils to cosmetic accessories and surgical implements. Managed by Koji Endo (3rd generation) the company, 100% owned by the founding family, has achieved a turnover of 429 million Euros in 2013 for a total sales of more than 4 million units in Asia, Europe and USA.



In his speech, the Henokiens President Willem van Eeghen wished to recall that the «**Leonardo da Vinci Prize**» is awarded to family companies that have demonstrated an exceptional ability to transmit to future generations a set of cultural values and know how forming a living heritage and, as such, these companies have all the intangible and essential guarantees for continuity. He stressed how important Kai, having reached more than one hundred years of age, had remained true to its creed «humanity before productivity», illustrating the exceptional ability of its family and staff to transmit a corporate culture and original techniques while demonstrating a





Wonderful combination of tradition, innovation and modernity in building a worldwide reputation.

Finally, Willem van Eeghen concluded by saying that in the city of Seki, there lies a spirit called *nokaji* (blacksmith), which drives superior craftsmen to put their hearts into every piece of cutlery and cutting tool they create. It is this spirit which lies at the heart of what Kai does allowing us to say that Kai is a true supporter of the spirit of Leonardo da Vinci.



François Saint Bris said he is particularly proud and grateful to pay tribute to a Japanese exemplary company, Kai Corporation, funded by Saijiro Endo in Seki, Japan's most celebrated blade city. He sees in this passion for the blade and its applications a very close relationship between this manufacturing city, also renowned for producing Samurai' swords, with the works of Leonardo da Vinci. During his entire life, Leonardo designed all kinds of magnificent weapons such as daggers, swords or halberds, using blades for scientific

purposes for the dissection of human cadavers attesting to an astonishing work in investigating the human body, which he described as a "marvellous machine".

Finally, François Saint Bris wanted to stress how Kai Corporation perfectly embodies and illustrates the vision, commitment and loyalty of a family to a tradition, an industry and a geographical area, while maintaining an innovative attitude and prestigious reputation all over the world, principles shared throughout the company which today make its strength and its identity.

In his acceptance speech, Mr. Koji Endo, President of Kai Corporation (3rd generation of the Endo family in the company) first said he was honored to receive the «**Leonardo da Vinci Prize** » from her imperial highness, Princess Akiko. Mr. Endo said that receiving this award represents both a privilege and an encouragement to follow his efforts and commitments in and for the company. He wished to thank his grandfather, the founder, his father and his family accompanying him today, as well as clients, suppliers, the partners of the company and all employees for their dedication. Mr. Koji Endo considers that receiving such an award will encourage him to make his company grow in respect of its products and its consumers.



Mr. Endo said that in the town of Seki, one of the techniques used by the Japanese sword smiths was called "alternate folding and forging". This process consisted of heating an iron lump, beating it, folding it into half and then beating it again, and repeating the folding-forging steps for about fifteen times to finally shape the iron into a sword. Through the process of repeated beating, flattening and folding, impurities are

removed in order to create Japanese swords, famed for their hardness, sturdiness and unbendable features. Mr. Endo thinks that his family business history is somewhat similar to the sword forging process by being forged and strengthened through different challenges and generations.

In conclusion, Mr. Endo said he would like to uphold his mission as the laureate of the “**Leonardo da Vinci Prize**” and remain as a family business that continues to benefit society. Finally he wished to extend his heartfelt gratitude for her highness, Princess Akiko, the President of the Henokiens, the President of Le Château du Clos Lucé and all the Henokiens members.



The "**Leonardo da Vinci Prize**" trophy created by the company Mellerio dits Meller, member of the Henokiens association, represents the flying propeller originally designed by Leonardo da Vinci. It symbolizes the desire of Henokiens to infinitely continue their family mission to serve businesses.

