



reddot design award

Press release

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## **Hiroshi Ishibashi to receive Red Dot: Personality Prize 2023 for exemplary dedication to championing design**

Hiroshi Ishibashi has devoted his entire career to recognising and championing the value of design. The legacy he started when working for his family's company, Bridgestone, culminated in the opening of the Artizon Museum in 2020. In between were around 40 years of hard work in the companies he founded himself as well as with international partners.

Hiroshi Ishibashi will be awarded the 2023 Red Dot: Personality Prize for his engagement of championing design.



Hiroshi Ishibashi

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### **A successful career start: a new corporate design for the family firm**

Nowadays the tyre manufacturer Bridgestone Tyres is extraordinarily well known internationally. This is thanks in part to Hiroshi Ishibashi. After returning to Japan in 1972 having completed his studies in the USA, he launched his professional career in his family's company, Bridgestone. The first task was to overhaul the firm's corporate identity for expansion into the US market. Hiroshi Ishibashi rose to the challenge. He established his first design team, undertook research trips and ultimately developed a new graphic design system and a new logo for the company, which was founded by his grandfather. The project was a complete success – also in terms of expanding onto the international markets.

What Hiroshi Ishibashi found in Japan after returning from abroad as a graduate was not just a long list of new tasks for the family firm, but also the potential to create a new awareness of design for the whole country. This is because Japan had experienced huge economic development during the 1960s but had failed to see the added value that design offers. Being a designer was not recognised as a profession. The boundaries between a trade or craft on the one hand and art on the other were blurred and misunderstood.

### **Design Center, Gallery, Magazine and Forum – the development of AXIS**

As a passionate designer and entrepreneur, Hiroshi Ishibashi tested out new ideas while working at Bridgestone. He was confident that well-designed products would convince even sceptical companies of the positive impact of design on a firm's profit and reputation.

He translated this idea into a business plan, which culminated in the opening of the AXIS Design Center in Roppongi, Tokyo, on 23 September 1981. This laid the foundations for promoting design in Japan. Visitors encountered designs, products and activities that were deeply rooted in their everyday world.

This concept was rounded off with the education and training programme at the AXIS Gallery. In order to enhance the reputation and visibility of AXIS as an up-and-coming international design centre, AXIS invited Ettore Sottsass from Milan to exhibit his latest avant-garde furniture collection, which later became known as Memphis, in the gallery. This was the first step on the road to a network of designers and companies that transcended national boundaries. In the 1980s and 1990s, AXIS sponsored a range of further design



exhibitions and allowed design schools to use the AXIS Gallery for exhibitions by their students.

AXIS also owns the bilingual magazine of the same name, which has opened up the world of Western design to a Japanese audience while at the same time giving readers outside of Japan rare insights into the Japanese design scene. The AXIS Forum is a place where designers, architects and other creatives can engage with a live audience, thus helping to build and maintain national and international links, using both in-person events and events streamed online.

### **An exhibition centre for French Impressionism and modern Japanese art: the Artizon Museum**

Hiroshi Ishibashi has continued to influence the world of design as Director of the Artizon Museum, opened in 2020. The museum has breathed new life into the former Bridgestone Gallery, opened by his grandfather in 1952, and is an important exhibition centre for masterpieces by the French Impressionists and for modern Japanese art. Once again, Ishibashi has built a bridge between Asian and Western culture.

### **Red Dot: Personality Prize for design champion Hiroshi Ishibashi**

Hiroshi Ishibashi has dedicated his career to advocating uncompromisingly for the value and the status of design. Professor Dr. Peter Zec, founder and CEO of Red Dot, summarises his influence on the development of the Japanese design industry and economy as follows: "By establishing AXIS, Hiroshi Ishibashi has provided a platform for Japanese designers that is absolutely unique. It was thanks to his dedication that many designers and companies renowned in the West came to Tokyo in the 1980s and 1990s to set up new headquarters there. In this way, he succeeded in creating a whole new understanding of the link between design and commercial success. Hiroshi Ishibashi has been uncompromising in devoting his entire career to building and strengthening an appreciation for the value of design in Japan. All the while, he has made an extraordinary contribution to intercontinental understanding and the international network of designers and entrepreneurs. I am really delighted to award him the Red Dot: Personality Prize in recognition of his exemplary commitment."

Since 2020, the Red Dot: Personality Prize has been awarded regularly to a creative leader who has succeeded in initiating major change and using



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opportunities to create something new. Hiroshi Ishibashi is the third person to receive this honour, after Claudio Luti and Jean-Claude Biver.



Prof. Dr. Peter Zec hands over the title „Red Dot: Personality Prize“ to Hiroshi Ishibashi on 26 April 2023 in Japan. He came accompanied by his directors Takashi Tabata from Artizon (left) und Mitsuhiro Miyazaki from AXIS (right)



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