

# BUKATSUDO: A CLUB FOR CREATIVE CITIZENS

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A businessman buys coffee and cookies at the stand next to the reception desk and chats with his acquaintances before going back to his seat at the work lounge. There are people giving yoga lessons in the large hall. In the evening, office workers on their way home gather at BUSHITSU, the clubroom. Meanwhile, a group of others are having a dumpling party in the large kitchen.

This is BUKATSUDO, a shared space located at the entrance to Minato Mirai, a developing office district in the Yokohama bay area. Yokohama was one of the first ports of call when Japan opened to the world in 1859, and has since grown rapidly as an international city. A shipbuilding dock built in 1897 was reborn as a commercial facility in 1983 as part of the city's massive Minato Mirai 21 redevelopment project. After being used as a game centre and karaoke box, the real estate company ReBITA opened BUKATSUDO in 2014 as a public-private partnership project with the city of Yokohama. It's not the usual drop-in co-working space, nor is it a rental room that only members can use. This is a place for adults to do what they love to do, an opportunity to realise a third place that is neither home nor office.



## A SOCIAL OASIS IN A FORMAL OFFICE AREA

In Minato Mirai, where BUKATSUDO is located, there are 100,000 office workers. ReBITA, the operator of BUKATSUDO, believes that people who commute to the area for work need a place to leave their work behind in order to develop a sense of attachment to the city. Many office workers have little opportunity to interact with people from other companies, or even co-workers from other floors. BUKATSUDO was created as a space for people to connect and interact.

The name 'BUKATSUDO' is a Japanese word that refers to the after-school club activities of students. In Japan, many kids join cultural or athletic clubs in addition to their classes. However, once they start working, most of these hobby clubs are abandoned. BUKATSUDO's 800 m<sup>2</sup> space facilitates a mixed-use for all sorts of people, with a working lounge, a shared office (BUSHITSU), rental spaces, a kitchen, a studio, a booth, and a communal coffee stand.



The main hall today (top) and the former shipbuilding dock (bottom).

Today, BUKATSUDO is used by programmers and businessmen as a workplace, by cooks as a filming space, by artists as a place for painting classes, and by a wide variety of people for creative activities. Some tenants use the space as an office on a monthly basis, others only come in once a month, and some just visit for coffee. Some people use the large room for events, while others use the small room as a private space to engage in their hobbies.

In order to create opportunities for people with similar interests to meet each other, BUKATSUDO organises a large variety of events that are easy for everyone to participate in. By holding them on a regular basis, the intention is that a community can be fostered and expanded. They also hold an annual festival for the whole community, providing an opportunity for people who belong to different clubs to meet and mingle. By multiplying the vertical and horizontal axes in this way, members are encouraged to encounter new interests and to deepen their own.

## A SPACE FOR CREATIVE PERSONAL INITIATIVES

The 160-year-old city of Yokohama is a relatively young city, but since the opening of the port in 1897, many public buildings and industrial facilities have been tailored to Western culture. Today, plans are being made to preserve this typical Yokohama landscape, revitalise buildings and to add new functions.

The goal is to create an attractive city by encouraging creative activities in all genres of art and culture and to stimulate the residency and exchange of artists and creators. In particular, the BUKATSUDO team is working with the public and private sectors to create space for creative minds by converting historical buildings, warehouses and vacant offices. As a new development, the plan was to create a place where not only artists but all citizens could fulfil their creative dreams.

BUKATSUDO is run by ReBITA in collaboration with the Yokohama city government, the Arts and Culture Foundation and the real estate owners, and aims to be a nodal point where citizens can express themselves and enjoy a creative life.

At BUKATSUDO, there are a number of clubs such as the record club, island club and beer club. Most of them were set up by users, who initiated activities based on their interests and now hold regular events and parties. On Wednesdays, they have a 'Wednesday Social Hour,' an easy event for first-time visitors.

On the weekends, they hold classes with themes like photography, haiku, music, and film, which attracts participants not only from the neighbourhood but also from outside the district.

BUKATSUDO supports its users with their club activities and stimulates personal initiative, rather than taking the lead as the organiser for new events and programming.

## WHAT MOTIVATES USERS TO GET INVOLVED?

The majority of people who now run activities at BUKATSUDO started off by simply seeking new friendships and looking for ways to contribute to the community.

In order to keep this spirit up, it is necessary to maintain an attractive venue. What's important is not only the beauty of the hardware but also the kind of people who work there and their mutual communication. Most of the staff working at BUKATSUDO are artists, dancers, and shop owners themselves. It is important that there are people who can talk to the BUKATSUDO team from the same point of view, rather than from the different positions of customers and staff. Having a creative staff attracts customers who like to be creative; this is how we built our mixed community. It's a place where you can work in a mix of public and private positions without separating them. That atmosphere makes the facility more appealing.



## DO'S

- **Create room for spontaneity and co-creation in the programming.**  
Most activities at BUKATSUDO started off when new friendships emerged and started looking for ways to contribute to their community.
- **Create a place where anyone can express what they like, not just consume what is given to them.** Branches and head offices of various large companies are scheduled to move to Minato Mirai in the near future. BUKATSUDO aims to provide a safe space for self-expression for this growing community.
- **When re-developing a building, design for flexibility and diversity of users.**

## DON'TS

- **Don't aim to just be a venue for events.** Instead, create a platform. Four years on, some of the clubs born at BUKATSUDO have had more opportunities to hold events outside of the facility, but they see BUKATSUDO as a place to come home to.