

Beluga whales create art in Japan aquarium

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A Beluga whale paints a picture with a special paintbrush at the Hakkeijima Sea Paradise aquarium in Yokohama, on September 17, 2013.

Beluga whales at an aquarium near Tokyo are learning how to paint pictures as part of an autumn art programme for visitors, an official said Wednesday.

The [sea creatures](#) at the Hakkeijima Sea Paradise aquarium in Yokohama will be showing off their skills with specially adapted paintbrushes that they can hold in their mouths, a spokeswoman for the aquarium said.

A trainer standing on the poolside dips the brush into paint and guides the belugas to produce pictures that bear a passing resemblance to natural scenes.

"This is part of our 'geijutsu no aki (autumn, the best season for art),' she said.

"The ideal is that a beluga will emulate what one of our customers has painted—of course trainers will guide the whale to do that," she said.

"We'll see how well they manage."

Three belugas, two females and a male, will demonstrate their new skills in rotation once every weekday and twice a day at weekends, she said.

The beluga, also known as the white whale, is on the red list of threatened species published by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Some activists object to the training of whales and dolphins for [aquarium](#) shows and Japan is frequently the target of complaints over its attitude to animals, particularly the annual slaughter of dolphins in the western town of Taiji.

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