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## Naoshima, an island of modern art — What did the artists aim to do?

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### Abstract

Naoshima (Kagawa, Japan) is a small island in the Seto Inland Sea, and was a site of the Setouchi International Art Festival in 2010. Located on the island is Benesse House, which is a facility incorporating a museum and a hotel run by Benesse Holdings and Naoshima Fukutake Art Museum Foundation. Throughout the island, various works by prominent artists including Yayoi Kusama are exhibited, and thus Naoshima is regarded as an island of modern art. In addition, near Benesse House are the Lee Ufan Museum and the Chichu Art Museum, which inspire visitors to contemplate humanity and nature.

Looking at the architect Tadao Ando (who designed Benesse House), the Korean artist Lee Ufan, and other artists, this paper explores what the artists aimed to achieve in Naoshima. Why must the Chichu Museum be underground? In the museum, only a small number of works by artists including Claude Monet and James Turrell are exhibited. In addition, recent trends in Korean art are briefly mentioned with an eye toward this year's conference of International Society for Psychopathology of expression and Art-Therapy.

Key words : Naoshima, Setouchi International Art Festival, Tadao Ando, No-ma Borderless Museum, modern art

### 和文抄録

直島は2010年に国際瀬戸内芸術祭が開催された瀬戸内海に浮かぶ小島である。直島にはベネッセ福武財団による宿泊施設・ベネッセハウスもあり、島のここかしこに草間彌生のオブジェも置かれ、さながら現代芸術の島である。またベネッセハウスには韓国の芸術家・李禹煥の李禹煥美術館や、地中美術館も併設され、人間と自然を考えさせるよすがともされている。

ベネッセハウスを建てた建築家・安藤忠雄や李禹煥らは直島で何をしようとしたのか、を探るのが本発表の狙いである。地中美術館という、なぜ美術館が地中になくはないのか？そこにはクロード・モネやジェームズ・タレルの作品その他が数点展示されているだけである。それに韓国美術の動向も瞥見しながら本年の国際表現病理学会 (SIPE) へ備えたい。

### Introduction

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This paper is based on research conducted in 2011 by a graduate of this university, Natsuyo Yoshimura<sup>1</sup>.

### On Noshima island

The 8 km<sup>2</sup> island of Naoshima is located approximately 13 km north of Takamatsu City, Kagawa Prefecture, and 3 km south of Tamano City, Okayama Prefecture. With a circumference of 16 km, Naoshima is the main island in a chain of 27 larger and smaller islands in the Seto Inland Sea. In its heyday in 1970, the island's population reached over 6,000 residents. Since that time, however, the population has steadily declined, and in 2010 there were only about 3,300 people living on the island. In a revitalization effort, the Setouchi International Art Festival was held there in 2010.

Fig 1. 2 are a map of Naoshima. Located 13 km north of Takamatsu City Kagawa Prefecture, it is approximately a 1-hour ferry ride from the city. It is also located 3 km from Uno Harbor in Tamano City, Okayama Prefecture, and is a 20-minute ferry-ride from Tamano. Ferries to Naoshima mainly arrive at Miyanoura Harbor. Benesse House has accommodations in its hotel on the southeastern

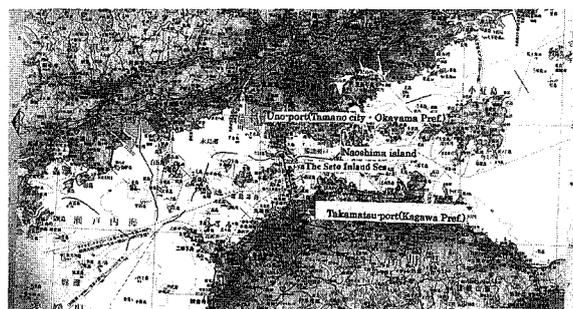


Fig. 1 Naoshima island (1)

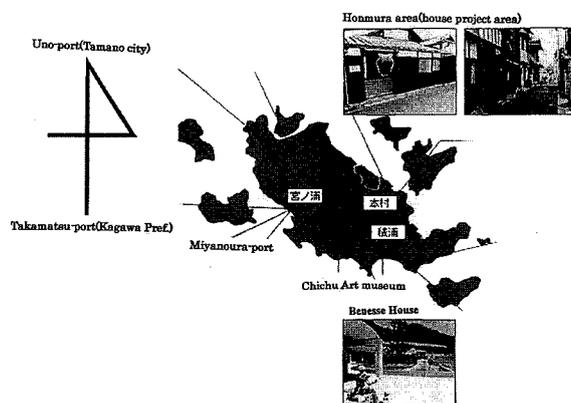


Fig. 2 Naoshima island (2)

part of the island where the museums are located. Mitsubishi runs a copper smelter and refinery in the northern part of the island. Other than the refinery, the Honmura district art house project in the north, and the Benesse House project in the south, there are no other notable sites on Naoshima Island.

Benesse House (Fig. 3) was designed by the Japanese architect Tadao Ando. Here is a brief history of Ando's career;

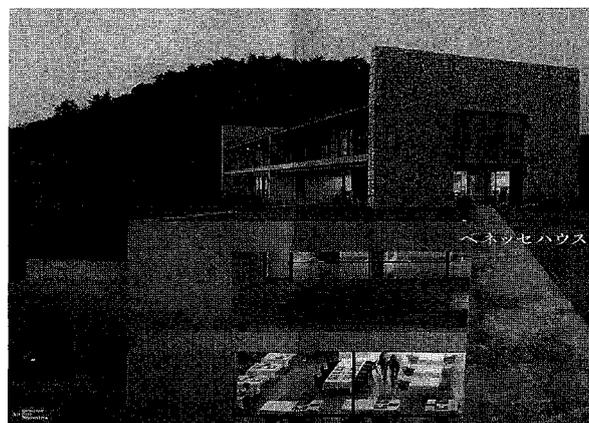


Fig. 3 Benesse house

- ◆ 1941 : Born in Minato Ward, Osaka.
- ◆ 1969 : Established his own design studio, Tadao Ando Architect and Associates
- ◆ 1979 : Annual Prize (Row House, Sumiyoshi), Architectural Institute of Japan
- ◆ 1995 : Pritzker Architecture Prize
- ◆ 2005 : Special University Professor Emeritus, Tokyo National University
- ◆ UIA Gold Medal, International Union of Architects
- ◆ Established the Tadao ANDO Foundation for Culture
- ◆ 2006 : Grand Design General Director, Tokyo 2016 Olympic Games Bid Committee; Board Chairman of Sakura-no-kai executive committee since 1989
- ◆ 2007 : Umi-no-Mori (The Sea Forest) Project Chairperson
- ◆ 2010 : Order of Culture Award
- ◆ 2011 : Deputy Chairman of Great

He was born in Osaka in 1941, Ando is a self-taught architect who established his own design studio, Tadao Ando Architect and Associates, in 1969. Ando also designed the Chichu Museum discussed below.

### Chichu Museum

Fig. 4 is an overhead photograph of the museum and its entrance (Fig. 5), which does not look as one would expect for museums anywhere in the world. The design was intended to avoid imposing on the surrounding landscape in any way, and therefore lacks the exterior monumentality that is associated with museums. As the surrounding landscape changes with the seasons, the hill that the museum is nestled within also changes its appearance, and it is this natural landscape that becomes the exterior of the museum building. This is nature-loving Ando's concept for the building.

In his autobiography, Ando himself speaks to why



Fig. 4 Chichu Museum (1)

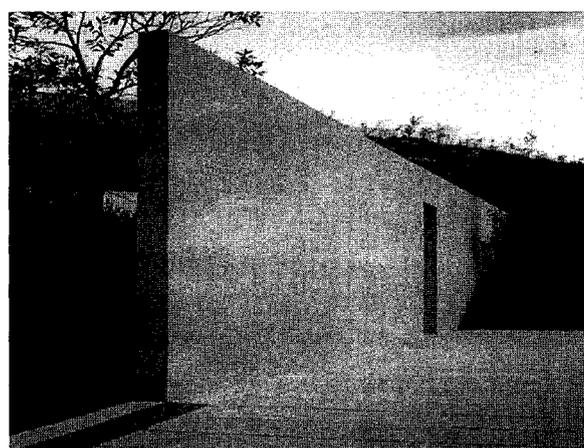


Fig. 5 Chichu Museum (2)

he felt the museum had to be created entirely underground:

- “My own body was unconsciously drawn to the underground.”
- “From my childhood, I remember living in dark places that only let in streaks of light. And thinking about my memories and tracing them back to their sources, I recalled experiences I had of visits in my youth to such places as the labyrinthine cave houses of Cappadocia or underground stairs carved down very deep to wells in Ahmedabad.”
- “I have very strong memories — memories which envelope the heart and are engraved in my body — of being deep in such underground places and looking up toward the light;”
- “Once more, I want to return to those primordial times and to reflect on questions about

going from darkness to light.”

Let us keep these quotations in mind in the following discussion of the museum and its collection.

At the Chichu Museum, only a few works by Claude Monet, James Turrell, and Walter De Maria are displayed. The collection includes several paintings from Claude Monet's *Water Lilies* series, which the artist painted when he was in his seventies and suffering from cataracts. In contrast to Monet's water lilies are works of the "land artists" Turrell and De Maria. These works are characterized by the stark natural world of vast desert landscapes. From a deep engagement with the natural world, their works are often created by altering or making use of the landscape itself through, for example, alterations in natural light, color, or form. With the art works in mind, Ando said he sought to be sensitive in incorporating a serene sense of space by weaving together natural light and shadow; and that he even tried to make use of this unique sense of space in the passages connecting each of the rooms displaying the works of Monet, Turrell, and De Maria.

How can one sum up the impact of Monet's art in just a few words? He began his water lilies series at the end of the 1890s. Depicting the water-lily pond in the garden of his home in Giverny, France, he produced more than 200 paintings between 1899 until his death in 1926. In 1923, suffering from cataracts, he underwent cataract surgery. His eyesight continued to decline however, and he painted persistently right up until his death. One can strongly feel the life force of nature in his depictions of light (something he loved), the delicate movement of water, and the growth of plants. In the museum, we can see Monet's ideas reflected in the white walls without sharp corners; the use of indirect natural lighting; and the use of white, in the marble and stucco. Many of the works in the

*Water Lilies* series depict a world produced by the water lilies and water. In the paintings, trees and flowers around the pond are reflected on the water surface of the pond, upside-down like in a mirror. Even the passage of time is reflected and one feels that the artist considered the various times of day that viewers would be looking at the paintings and wanted to create a series reflecting an entire day—morning, noon, and evening. The main large-scale work in the museum is a painting of a willow. Sunlight is depicted passing between the willow's branches.

James Turrell (Fig. 6) is an artist who, rather than questioning what light is in his art works, instead seeks to portray light itself. One such example is his work, *Open Field*. Enveloped in light, the work does not have a clear top, bottom, or depth of field, thereby generating a feeling of floating in space. Turrell was part of a movement of American artists in the early 1970s who went out into nature and, using the elements found in their natural forms, created works of art embedded directly in the landscape. Walter De Maria (Fig. 7) was one of the standard bearers of what is known as the Land Art movement, and his installation piece *Time/Timeless/No Time* utilizes the effect of natural

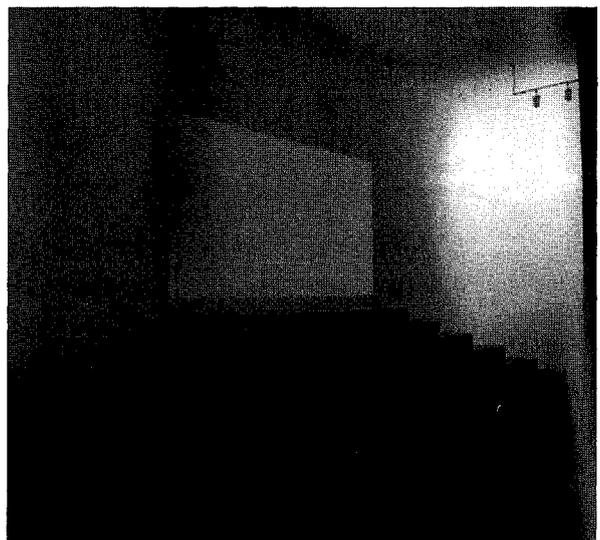


Fig. 6 James Turrell *Open Field*

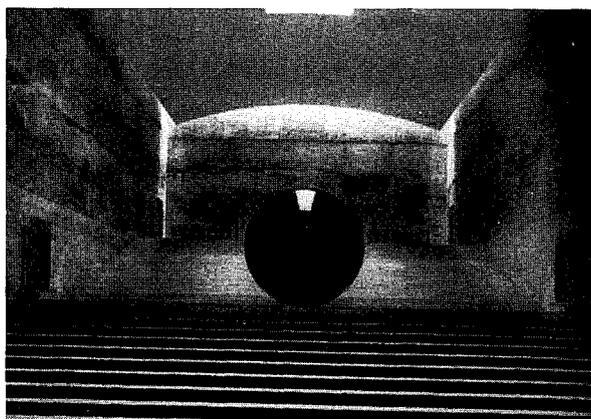


Fig. 7 Walter De Maria *Time/Timeless/No Time*

light entering via shafts of light from a skylight placed in the high ceiling above to create an altered sense of space and evoking a deep sense of serenity.

Speaking in general terms, Ando's desire to "return to the primitive and re-think the move from darkness into life" could be cited as a central concept in the museum's creation, and his journey to Naoshima can also be seen as a "quest for a lost time" or for a "seeking of lost light."

The Fig. 8 is of a work titled, *Pole*, which stands in front of the Lee Ufan Museum. In harmony with the contours of the surrounding landscape and the walls of the building, this minimalist work evokes a feeling of *mugen*, that is, a feeling of the infinite. It also creates a sense of tension between the vertical and horizontal. The concrete wall of the museum,

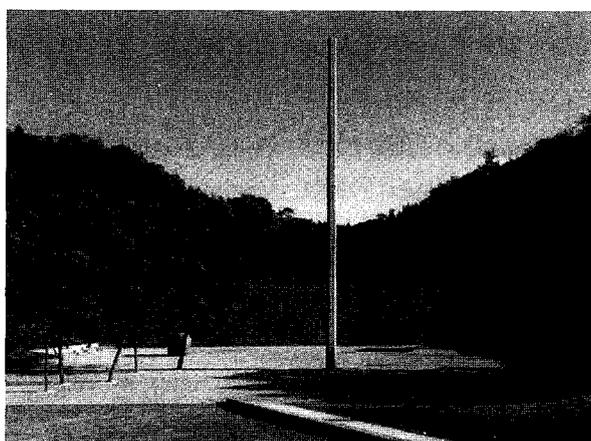


Fig. 8 Lee Ufan *Pole*

which is barely visible between breaks in the mountains, functions to separate the inside and outside of the building; creating a variety of larger and smaller spaces. The triangular design, which is positioned perpendicularly, was created to flow from the inside of the building down to the sea. Allowing for a rhythmic expansion of space that is in harmony with nature, a work such as this reflects the theme of slow contemplation; something also evoked by the architecture and surrounding nature. Other works on display inside the museum also reflect this theme, made famous by the *Mono-ha* movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Utilizing both natural and artificial materials, *Mono-ha* artists aim to let the objects (or things) speak for themselves through the presence generated by their arrangement. Less "creation," *Mono-ha* artists were engaged in a style of "reconstruction," so that the mutually dependent relationship between the object and space becomes a focal point in their production. The art movement also challenged the existing concepts of "things" to create a new relationship between things and their concepts.

#### Yayoi Kusama etc

At Naoshima, squatting right on the edge of the wharf where the ferries dock for Benesse House at Miyanoura is one of Yayoi Kusama's giant pumpkins. (Fig. 9) Hailing from Nagano prefecture, Kusama, who experiences schizophrenic hallucina-

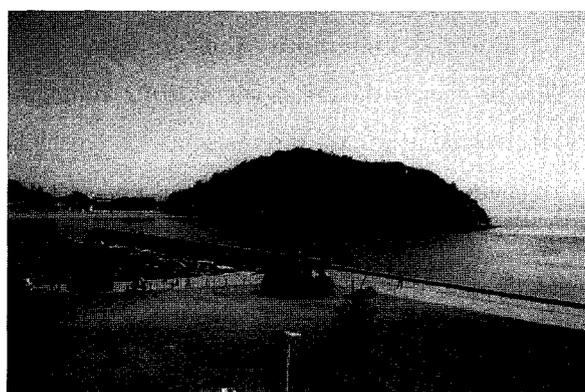


Fig. 9 giant pumpkins

tions, creates unusual works of art covered in polka dots. I am not sure about Ando's understanding of psychiatric pathologies or mental disorders, but he has designed facilities for persons with disabilities. His underground museum and Kusama's unique works of art covered in polka dots do not appear out of place or inharmonious placed together on the island of Naoshima. The Fig.10 is of No-Ma Borderless Art Museum, in Omi-hachiman City (Shiga Prefecture). Works of art created by artists with disabilities are shown alongside works by artists without disabilities in an endeavor to move beyond "borders" that divide people. Naoshima's display of Kusama's art in the borderless setting of Naoshima is a similar project. It can be imagined that Ando also wanted to create such a borderless world on Naoshima.



Fig. 10 No-Ma Borderless Art Museum

### Forming community took in arts<sup>1</sup>

With respect to the utilization of art for community development, at first the residents of Naoshima were indifferent. The acceptance of art (cultural enjoyment) began with the direct impact of an environment where art had become immediate and familiar in their lives. This happened through art works being installed on the island and in their neighborhood and through the indirect effects of ex-

changes with artists and tourists who traveled to Naoshima. In this way, residents were influenced both by the direct and indirect influences of art. In particular, the impact on residents from the tourists has been great. With the number of tourists steadily increasing, growing from less than 12,000 visitors in 1990 to more than 360,000 in 2009, and this has led to an increasing number of events and art-related facilities. At the same time that increasing tourists have generated more art activities, the promotion of regional and specialty products, such as accommodations and eateries that residents operate on the island have also benefited. This "richness of life in terms of income" leads to the "richness of the local economy," fostering a definite economic autonomy.

In addition, increased numbers of tourists coming to the island (the indirect impact of art) have led to increased pride in the area's history and a strengthened commitment to regional beautification among residents. This increased knowledge and pride in the island generated a heightened ambition among residents toward business, such as in opening new hotels and restaurants. In addition, this internal positive impact is also seen in an increased emotional attachment to the town as residents have grown proud of the town's new name recognition.

Naoshima's utilization of art for community development has had a great impact on young people and students. In particular, the way the region has specialized in contemporary art and architecture has led to its becoming well-known as a place of learning among students and as a somewhere they can go to study the arts and culture. Also, at the same time the region has been developed as a place of contemporary art, the town itself has been highlighted as well, leading to increasing awareness among residents of their own culture as a place for developing and preserving the arts. This has served

as a type of city or regional branding.

All of this has led to Naoshima's utilization of art for community development having an impact on individual residents and the community, as well as on regional economics and culture. This has thereby led to an improvement in quality of life and improvements in the community.

The utilization of art for community development can have a negative impact however, such as an unsustainable increase in tourism, which can generate issues in waste management and transportation. These will be problems that will be shared by residents, businesses, government, and NPOs. However, increased tourism will result in periodic large changes that can lead to the desire among residents (who are concerned with their livelihoods) and businesses (concerned with securing financial resources) for securing economic stability.

Naoshima's utilization of art for community development has resulted in companies investing funds for project planning. It has also seen government taking on the administrative roles responsible for the development of land and transportation in the region. In the desire for continued implementation of new projects, government and business have strengthened their cooperation and partnerships. Concerning the relationships between business and residents and between residents and NPOs, business has shown a strong commitment to

residents, but the relationship between residents and NPOs has remained distant and weaker than with that of government. Both residents and NPOs share a desire for regional development and population growth. However, despite the fact that all actors — residents, companies, government, and NPOs — share overlapping goals, there have also been differences in feelings between the groups over their relationship for community development. This is something written about in Yoshimura's study from 2011<sup>1</sup>.

Notes: The summary of this paper was presented in the 21th SIPE (2012. 15. 9, Toulouse).

## References

1. Natsuyo Yoshimura; Forming community took in arts (graduation thesis, 2011 of University of Kochi). The whole of Forming community took in arts.
2. Figure 1 is from a MIRENIUN ATLAS Japan, Heibon-sha, 2009.
3. Figure 2 from a pamphlet of Naoshima island.
4. Figure 3 is from a pamphlet of Benesse house.
5. Figure 4~7 are from Chichu Hand book (2005, Chichu Museum).
6. Figure 8 is from pamphlet of Lee Ufan museum
7. Figure 9, 10 are photos by author.