

# Revitalization of a Community

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Site-Specific Art and Art Festivals

A Case of Art Site Naoshima

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## Introduction

*“All artists are alike. They dream of doing something that’s more social, more collaborative, and more real than art”. Dan graham (as cited in Bishop, 2006)*

This thesis will consist of a discussion concerning whether art could stretch its expression and becomes means of communication which encourages the engagement of art and a community. My attempt is to take some examples from visual arts which are created and/or exhibited outside of art museums and analyze them in a large context.

Since the appearance of Land art in the late 1960s, a number of artists have been exploring unconventional sites as a potential venue for their artworks. Such sites are often not limited to indoors and such "limitlessness" has lead to the birth of intriguing art practices,<sup>1</sup> for instance, site-specific art. Unlike Land art which the artists often had to faces issues concerning finding a site, renting or buying a land, raising a fund, and arranging a team to realize their projects, site-specific art shows a great flexibility. As Miwon Kwon (2004) describes, artist would travel anywhere they are invited to and create site-oriented works accordingly (p.46).

This tendency could be seen in the case of Benesse Art site Naoshima, a case study discussed in this paper. Many contemporary artists, known or less known, are invited to Naoshima, Japan to create artworks site-specifically. This case study demonstrate an interesting trend that not only site-specific art are less restricted to a site (freedom of interpretation to a chosen site is given to the artists), but also the artists seem to take risks and challenges to work 'with' a community (either through a dialogue or collaborations) and with others such as other artists, a curator, and a patron. Benesse Art Site Naoshima as an outstanding example of private funding of art projects,

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<sup>1</sup> For "limitlessness", see Smithson, 1996b, p.103.

its accomplishment could be seen as a novel approach to create site-oriented artworks that are more concept oriented, humanistic, and showing a rich variety of art practices.

The initial ideas for this thesis came from several questions concerning a role of art museums and community art today, and site-specific art which seems to have won autonomy. Visual arts have been promoted to public in many ways, for instance, through community art, public art, and art festivals. The purpose of it might vary but one reason could be for the sake of our well-being. Community art, which often employ a grassroots approach, has an interesting aspect which art becomes medium of expression for both artists and people who are not particularly interested in art. Through various creative activities, people, working closely with artists, are encouraged to communicate with others and express their ideas which often lead to the empowerment of a community. In contrast to community art, there is an institution such as art museums which seem to remain relatively reserved despite of being 'public'. Lately, some scholars seems to question the role of art museums, whether they are "on a road that will lead to their democratization" or "in a direction which gives priority to their use by specific sectors of society" (Gurt & Torres, 2007, p.521). Despite the fact that the number of art museums are increasing globally, many of them seem to serve largely for a certain group of people in a community and for tourists.<sup>2</sup> Of course, art museums have multifaceted tasks and if not directly, indirectly have been playing a critical role in promoting art to the public through the involvement with other public organizations.<sup>3</sup> Site-specific art, which is often used as an umbrella terms of various art practices dealing with sites, has an intriguing aspect. It is hard to ignore that many contemporary public art festivals (both visual arts and performance art) use a term 'site-specific art' to describe a nature of artworks nowadays.<sup>4</sup> The interesting fact is that although site-specific artworks are often created for a specific location

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<sup>2</sup> See for example, Gurt & Terres (2007) p. 522, Schuster (1995), Prior (2003) p.63-65, and McClellan (2003) p.38-9-39

<sup>3</sup> Miles (1997) p.53

<sup>4</sup> The list of contemporary art festivals which employs the idea of site-specificity and/or art critics used a term, 'site-specific art' to describe open air art festivals could be very long. If I only focus on public art festival in Finland, there are River Lights and The Snow Show both in Rovaniemi, Ii Biennale of Northern Environmental and Sculpture Art in Ii, ANTI Contemporary Art Festival in Kuopio, Forces of Light in Helsinki (the year 2007 participators used a term site-specificity), etc.

(in a sense, fixed to a site), the makers (artists) are so mobile that they would travel everywhere to create site-specific works. As Miwon Kwon (2004) describes, “typically, an artist (no-longer a studio-bound object maker; primarily working on call) is invited by an art institution to produce a work specifically configured for the framework provided by the institution” and such artist would work on one project to another (p. 46). All these, the widespread of community art, the dilemma of art museums, and ‘freelance’ artists working as “temporary in-house critic or pseudo-ethnographer” creating site-oriented artworks,<sup>5</sup> seem to have a common ground; the intervention of art in the everyday life of ordinary people. And this became a departure point for my thesis which is aiming to examine (and evaluate) the current trend of ‘bringing art closer to people’.<sup>6</sup>

There are two parts to the thesis; Part One and Part Two, and each serves for different purposes. For the first part (Part One), the study is done through both the investigation of outdoor art exhibitions and public art (mainly sculptures in urban spaces) since their appearance around the 1960s. It is to give a brief background of the development of public art and art exhibitions which attempt to reach both art lovers and non-art lovers. The cases discussed here are from the early public art exhibition in UK and in the United States in the postwar period up to the modern period, for example a ‘garden’ art exhibition in London in the 1966 to the controversial public art, *Tilted Arc* by Richard Serra are discussed. Here, the concept of site specificity and the conflicts and problematic aspects of public art and art festivals are investigated with special emphasis. In particular, the issues concerning urban spaces and local identities are the main focus of the discussion. In addition, Earth art or Land art which brought a new type of art forms will be examined as a backdrop of current site-specific art practices. A group of Land artists who sought a venue for creating and showing art far away from gallery spaces and civilizations will be discussed

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<sup>5</sup> “temporary in-house critic” is cited Kwon (2004). Kwon used a term “pseudo-ethnographer”, which is suggested by Foster (1996) p.171-204

<sup>6</sup> ‘Bringing art closer to people’ is a phrase which is often found both in grass-root community art organizations and public art organizations.

briefly. As a central figure of the Land art movement, Robert Smithson, especially his writings will be analyzed. The last part of this discussion will be the emergence of Land art in urban spaces.

In Part One, I will be reviewing the art criticisms by art critics and historians along with some examples thus the evaluation will be relied on theoretical approaches. For this part, in order not to heavily focus on the visual analyses, different approaches provided by various theorists are applied. In particular, public art and art festivals usually take place in an urban space, or if not urban, in a communal space. Therefore, art in public is no longer simply a matter of aesthetics for the people but could become economical, social and political concerns. As an additional discussion to public art, a brief review on Land art is included in this part. There are several reasons for including the discussion of the Land art movement, and one reason is to have a different perspective. This part of writing is necessarily for understanding how some artists have come to realize that art does not belong only to the art world. This sort of attitude still live in contemporary art and is expanding its terrain as a form of community art, site-specific or site-oriented art, socially-engaged art, intervention art, dialogic art, urban art just to name a few. The key word throughout the investigation will be 'site-specificity', and the experience of interacting with a site will be examined through secondary sources such as interviews and artists' writings.

The second part, Part Two, will be devoted to the analyses of Benesse Art Site Naoshima in Japan. It is a large scale art project revolved around an ideology of community revitalization. This is held in a country side in the middle of the Inland Sea. Location wise, it is probably the place that has the least connection with contemporary art. Nonetheless, it has grown to be a must-see place of the world both for museum goers and non-art lovers. Besides excellent curatorial skills, Naoshima has employed site-specificity in the course of its 20-year development of the region. Miwon Kwon (2004) points out that so-called site-specific art might not indicate simply a form of art but it is rather "the culture mediation of broader social, economic, and political processes that organize urban life and urban space" (p. 3). Indeed, some site-specific artworks in Naoshima are entwined with social changes, local history, identity and culture, and they seem to represent a rural life of Japan. But art in Naoshima and other nearby islands not only mediates life but also communicates which seems to establish a unique relationship between the local residents and artworks.

For this part of writing, the discussion follows a roughly chronological path including many examples. Art Site Naoshima started out as a part of mécénat, also known as corporate philanthropy, and there are experimental aspects which are becoming to be an influential example of community revitalization. Interestingly, the founder of Benesse Art Site Naoshima, Soichiro Fukutake clearly shows anti-urbanism attitudes, which somewhat resembles the ideologies in the Land art movement. In any case, Benesse Art Site Naoshima has shown that art is not a mere object for personal pleasure but a common property which becomes an uplifter of a community. Besides the descriptive analyses, benefits in social terms will be discussed.

## Part One: Re-examining public art, art festivals and Land art

### “Public” space

Urban space has been cultivated over centuries and art has been in play.<sup>7</sup> Apparently, in the course of urban developments in the past half century, a number of incidents have occurred. It seems that time has been rough for both artists and the organizers (and for the residents to some degree). There have been numerous conflicts surrounding public art, often caused by the disfavor of the public concerning the implementation of art in their neighborhood. The famous controversy *Tilted Arc* by Richard Serra and his defending statement, “to remove the work is to destroy the work” in the 80s is still fresh in our memories.<sup>8</sup>

Before looking into the historical trend in public art in UK and the United States in the last half century, I would like to quote Graeme J. Hardie, in which statement he explains ‘expressive space’ in our living environment.<sup>9</sup>

[Urban and land] planners and designers are not, on the whole, fully aware of the influence of beliefs and values on the manipulation of space...cultural conceptions include those shared meanings and values that are explicitly or implicitly stated or that are publicly acted out and are thus observable in people’s behaviors. These culturally determined behaviors control, among other things, the conceptual and practical organization of space because most behavioral acts presuppose a specific

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<sup>7</sup> Urban open space, I am referring here, is open spaces in the urban area often considered to be a city asset to be used for common good (although some may be private own space). See, for example, Marcus (1998) p.13-17 and Francis (2003) p. 4 and p.13-17 for definitions.

<sup>8</sup> Serra stated that *Tilted Arc* “was commissioned and designed for one particular site...it is a site-specific work...to remove the work is to destroy the work” (Serra, 1994, p.194).

<sup>9</sup> Hardie (1985) p.213. The term ‘expressive space’ can be found also in the publications by an archaeologist Thomas N. Huffman (1981) but I could not confirm a direct connection to Hardie’s definition of expressive space, though common ideas can be found between them.

area for their performance. Indeed, all things real or imagined occur in a conceptually and often physically delimited space and give it its peculiar character. “Space”, as we know it, is thus a product and expression of a specific culture. For this culturally controlled organization of space, I use the phrase *expressive space* (Hardie, 1985, p.213).

In this essay, Hardie is applying ‘expressive space’ to discuss about houses and settlements designs in various cultures, in particular, Tswana settlement in Southern Africa. In any case, the importance of understanding what Hardie suggests with the term ‘expressive space’ is to recognize “the influence of a society’s cosmological view on the way in which cities, towns, and houses are designed” (Hardie, 1985, p.216). Regardless of size, location and age (how long the town has been existing), every town has its own peculiar character, and every part of a town (including the architectures and open spaces) is the product of human activities that are practiced physically and conceptually. This is worthy of attention not only for urban planners and architects but also for the commissioners of public art and artists.

Further, more theoretical approach to this ‘expressive space’ which focuses on the relation between art and architecture could be found in Jane Rendell’s ‘critical spatial practice’ (2006). Rendell forms a new term ‘critical spatial practice’ in her book *Art and Architecture: A Place Between* (2006) in order to critically examine public art, art which engages not only the living environment but also wider social and political restraints at large.<sup>10</sup> Rendell’s approach seems to be grown out of several theories, for example, of French scholar Michel de Certeau’s discussions on spatial practice in *Practice of Everyday Life*, and of a French philosopher Henri Lefebvre’s spatial practice in *The Production of Space*.<sup>11</sup> In addition, Rendell explains that ‘critical’ indicates ‘critical theory of society’ of Frankfurt School which is interdisciplinary practice to examine critiques, theories and practices.

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<sup>10</sup> See Rendell (2006) p.4-12

<sup>11</sup> RaFor further details on spatial practice, see de Certeau(1984)p.103 and Lefebvre(1991)p.33

All in all, the crucial aspects in the investigation of public art would be as Rendell's critical spatial practice suggests, art confronts a whole different issue when it enters a public domain. And, it would be important to keep in mind, as Hardie proposes; the space which exists in urban environment is not simply a space in between architectures, but a space that is being constructed socially and culturally.

## The Case of Outdoor Art Exhibitions in the 60s and 70s

In this section, I would like to examine how and what kind of art has been actively integrated into urban spaces since Second World War ended.

Apparently, the authority has played an important role in the development of public art in the post-war period. It is not my intention to investigate the influence on the development of public art in depth. Nonetheless, the brief background of how art have been brought into a public realm would provide a clue in analysis on the manifold complications associated with public art and art festivals.

And we must note that "institutions such as national galleries and museums of modern art have since 1945 been central to the formation of dominant cultures" (Miles, 1997, p.53). Not only the direct involvement of the government and local authority have influenced shaping the modern development of public art but also those public art institutions have had a large influence on the selection of artists and works for public art . Needless to say, private sector is partially involved, though, the percentage of private corporation becoming a public art sponsor is low in comparison to public sector.<sup>12</sup> The process, how, why, and what kind of art works have been chosen to be on the street, in parks, plazas, pedestrian, and roundabouts could not be explained in a simple way. But I aim to discuss these 'how', 'why' and 'what' briefly in the following section of writing.

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<sup>12</sup> See Miles (1997) p.59

Slavica Radišić (2007) nicely summarizes the background of the urban development and the role of the authority promoting public art in the post-war period in Great Britain by stating that it all started from a “renewed interest in democracy prompted to an increasing demand to democratization of arts and wider access to arts and culture in general” (p.121).

Since the founding of Arts Council of Great Britain in 1946, the central concern for the authority has been “the ‘right’ of access to culture, as specified in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights: ‘Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts...’”(Evans, 2002, p.87).<sup>13</sup> After the arduous Great Depression in the 30s and the Second World War in the 40s, it was time to cherish the country by delivering arts to all. Such trend of cultural interventions could be seen in cultural policies and projects, for instance, percent-for-art policy in the USA and Europe. According to Miles (1997), since the late 1960s, works of contemporary art and craft have increasingly been located in every possible urban space and most public art in the UK has been initiated by the public sectors (p.3). The similar trend can be seen in some cities in Europe and North America through the activities of the federally funded program such as National Endowment of Arts in US (founded in 1965), and the activities of the government founded organization such as the Canada Councils for the Arts (established in 1957), The Arts Council of Ireland ( An Chomhairle Ealaíon in Irish) and alike. <sup>14</sup>

The motivation for creating an opportunity for better access to arts for all kinds of people seems to be evolved not only by the idea of basic human right. The authority seemed to believe that by

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<sup>13</sup> The quote is from Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 27(1). <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

<sup>14</sup> The Canada Council for the Art has been the ‘backbone’ of cultural policy and the arts sector (Parliament of Canada: <http://www.parl.gc.ca/Content/LOP/ResearchPublications/9333-e.htm> )

The efforts of cultural intervention in the area of visual art are visual through the Percent-for-Art programs which are often run by a city ordinance and the details vary from a place to place. At the moment, “ there are Ireland, the UK, Finland Germany, the Netherlands, Flemish-speaking Belgium, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Spain as well as [Percent-for-Art ]schemes in several US Cities, Australia and Canada. Some of the schemes date back to 1937 and many have been operating for over 20 years” (cited from the website of European Public Art Network).

installing contemporary visual art in urban space it would improve the aesthetics of a city.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, there have been other contemplations which could be seen in conventional reasons for promoting art for public, for instance, rediscovering or building a newer civic identity.<sup>16</sup>

Some also seem to believe that in a democratic ambience, artists could create a new direction in art making. This attitude could be seen in the statement in the catalogue for the public art exhibition *9 Artists/9 Spaces* which was organized by the Minneapolis State Arts Council. In the catalogue of the exhibition, a young curator Richard Koshalek wrote in *A New Idiom of Public Art: an exhibition of outdoor projects* that “In America and abroad, many artists are evolving a new idiom of public art whose orientation is outside the gallery-museum-collections context” (as cited in Rees, 1972, p.15). Apparently, Koshalek saw potentials of art making in urban space would create a new direction and even a new value. A few years back, a similar exhibition to *9 Artists/9 Spaces* was held in New York. It was called *Sculpture in Environment* which took place in New York in 1967. This outdoor art exhibition was supported by the New York City Administration of Recreation and Cultural Affairs and by a number of private sponsors which displayed contemporary sculptures all over the city.<sup>17</sup> In the introduction of the catalogue, Irving Sandler describes the idea of the exhibition:

An artist can carry his studio ideas out into the city, selecting sites in which he can best realize them. The autonomy of his art is not sacrificed thereby, although his conceptions will probably alter in the process. If enough artists are enable to work in public spaces, a new aesthetic tradition may develop, a tradition of modern public art, different from that of studio art... At present, a move by artists into the city is the only

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<sup>15</sup> Cited in Miles (1997) p.66. In the handbook published by Arts Council for local authorities to adopt Percent for Art policy, it is stated that “To make contemporary arts and crafts more accessible to the public...To improve the conditions for economic regeneration by creating a richer visual environment...” (Arts Council, 1991, p.16).

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Hall (2004) p. 62-72, Schrank (2009) p.43-63, and Finlepearl(2001). p.21.

<sup>17</sup> *Sculpture in Environment* was presented by 24 artists and their works were installed in 9 city park locations and 15 public or corporate buildings and plazas. See Suzaan Boettger (2002) p.2 and *The Outdoor Gallery: 40 years of Public Art in New York City Parks* (2007). The Exhibition catalogue made by new York City Department of Parks and Recreation. p.6 [http://www.nycgovparks.org/sub\\_about/parks\\_history/index\\_image\\_thumbs/40\\_years\\_public\\_art.pdf](http://www.nycgovparks.org/sub_about/parks_history/index_image_thumbs/40_years_public_art.pdf)

feasible way on a significant scale to integrate art into the urban environment (Sandler, 1967, n.p.).

Sandler's statement clearly shows an optimistic idea that the artists have nothing to compromise in the creation of art even though his work would be exposed to a different kind of audience and would be installed in an environment quite different from a gallery space. Koshalek and Sandler were rather excited about this new coming wave that artists are willing to create art and share it with public. They were not alone in the sense that there are a number of cases which seem to share this sort of optimistic viewpoint, a win-win situation for artists, city, and people in the implementation of modern art in urban space.

For instance, the case of Chicago Picasso (commissioned in 1963 and installed in 1967 in Daley Plaza in Chicago) is a typical one. When the sculpture (15 meter high and weighs 162 tons) by Picasso was installed, Mayor Daley commented, "a lot of people love our city without ever being here" (as cited in "Picasso's five-story tall", 1967, p.85-86). Charles Cunningham, the director of the Art Institute, seems to have a skeptic but at the same time, optimistic idea about the sculpture and commented that, "those who haven't experienced this type of art may not like it...but that's alright. Not too many years from now, it will be accepted by the man on the street, as Van Gogh and the others are today" (as cited in Finkelppearl, 2001, p.22). Finkelppearl (2001) points out that the phrase, 'you will like this in the future' "has become a mantra for the defense of public art" (p.22).

In contrast, there are art critics and administrators who saw a danger side of this new direction in public art. In the article published in 1972, a British arts administrator Jeremy Rees pointed out that the development of sculpture after 1945 had "increased rather than diminished the gulf between artist and general public" despite the efforts of the organizers, both private and public to bring art closer to people (Rees, 1972, p.11).<sup>18</sup> Here, Rees is particularly referring to the open air art exhibitions such as several public art exhibitions and festivals in the 60s and the early 70s, For instance, the Sculpture in Battersea Park held in London in 1966, which what Rees considers to be

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<sup>18</sup>Some of those outdoor art exhibitions were initiated by local authorities, though some were organized by art institutions and corporations. And the sculptures Rees was referring here are of, for instance, John Dee W. Taylor, and Roland Brener, which were at the public display in England in the late 60s. See Rees (1972) p.9-15.

the first major post-war step in Great Britain in the showing of sculpture outside the art gallery context (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Princess Margaret at Sculpture in Battersea Park, London 1966 © British Pathe

Alan Bwones (1966) also points out in the introduction for the exhibition catalogue *Sculpture in Battersea Park* that “the sculptors younger than Moore and Hepworth who seek a space in an urban and less landscape setting needs a more definite relationship to the area around it” (n.p.). Rees discusses further on this issue that “sculptors, perhaps reasonably, feel that a work which has resulted from much effort and expense deserves a certain respect on the part of those viewing” and “they are too frequently unaware of the realities of this situation and fail to realize that conditions encountered shown work in public outdoors bears no relation to public exhibitions in art galleries...it does create a situation with which the sculptor must be prepared to come to terms at the outset” (p.12). As far as open air art exhibition is held in a protected environment such as the one at Battersea Park (which the place closed after sunset and charged admission fees just like an art gallery), the public reaction would be somewhat predictable. However, installing sculptures permanently or temporary in an urban space seem to create complex issues. But, is it all artists’ fault when issues pops up such a community disapprove public art? Is it really caused by the artists’ lack of relation to the surrounding environments or fail to recognize an urban space is not same as a gallery space like Bwones and Rees suggest?

The late 1960s was the time arguably ‘public art’ began.<sup>19</sup> And it was also the beginning of countless controversies surrounding public art exhibitions. Needless to say, some outdoor art exhibitions were well received by the public and some of the artworks from an exhibition remained permanently in a city. Such case can be found in *Sculpture in Environment* (1967) in New York. In contrast, some outdoor public art exhibitions in the late 60s and 70s such as *9 Artists/ 9 Spaces* in Minneapolis, Minnesota in US (1970), *Bristol, New British Sculpture/Bristol* (1968) and *City Sculpture Project* from England (1972) were rather disaster for the organizer, artists and as well as local residents. A common feature of the conflicts occurred in these outdoor public art exhibition seem to be the irrelevancy between artworks and a chosen area. Although, a coordinator of a public exhibition such as Jeremy Rees, who was in charge of both *Bristol, New British Sculpture/Bristol* (1968) and *City Sculpture Project*, specifically requested from the participants (artists) “to produce works related to a specific city environment”, many artists then understood it as to concern a physical space of a site in relation to their sculptures rather than social and historical meaning of a site (Rees, 1972, p.15).<sup>20</sup> It would be natural to see this happens since not all studio artists are fully aware of a city environment and the public’s desire. The artists who participated in these public art exhibitions were not monument makers but art practitioners who would freely express their interests through their works but not necessarily reflect social needs, social issues, and such. And seemingly, their works were what Miles (1997) would call, not ‘site-specific’ but ‘site-general’ which “address the site as a physical rather than social space” (p.3 & p. 80).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See Miles, 1997, p.56

<sup>20</sup> See for example, artists’ statements by William Turnbull and Barry Flanagan at *Studio International: Journal of Modern Art*. July/August 1972. Vol.184. Rees request was reflected in their works but more to do with scale of or atmosphere of a site.

<sup>21</sup> Miles indicates that the term ‘site-general’ was suggested by Brian McAvera that if “the concept is so vague that it will take the imposition of almost any roughly analogous situation” (Miles,1997, p.126).

Unfortunately, some artworks at these exhibitions became victims of vandalisms and targets of endless negative criticisms. In the catalogue of the exhibition *9 Artists/ 9 Spaces* Mike Steele writes:

Art is not always about what artists want it to be about. The show [*9 Artists/ 9 Spaces*] did, indeed, change a course, but in doing so it raised strong and immediate question about art today. By being in public, it forced public participation and exposed not only fear and concern of society but the eery workings of the political mechanism and the boiling frustrations of the general public. What has been art to museum goers (relatively small elite) became to the public such things as insults, irrelevancies, fire hazards, anti-people, bomb threats and insidious threats to security. This raises grave doubts about the museum's role. Have they been exposing the public to art or have they been hiding it from the public (as cited in Rees, 1972, p.14).

In this statement, Steele points out several problematic aspects brought up during the exhibition *9 Artists/ 9 Spaces*; the freedom of artistic expression and exercising it openly and directly in public space, the morality of public art of which people were forced to participate, the frustration of unprepared general public, the authority's sponsorship to contemporary art (this exhibition was organized by Minnesota State Arts Council), vandalism and threats against contemporary art placed in urban space, the relationship between art world and the rest of the world, and the role of art museum. Obviously, there are no simple explanations to all these issues.

To see further and clearer on these issues, the brief discussion on public art, especially the case of *Tilted Arc* by Richard Serra will be discussed in the next section.

## The Case of Tilted Arc

In this section of writing, I would like to shift a focus to minimalist art in public in the 80s and the central discussion will be Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* which was installed in Federal plaza in 1981. The purpose of this is to have a close examination on one case which involves one sculpture done by

one artist, and also to examine further focusing on the issues of ‘public space’ and as mentioned earlier ‘expressive space’.

*-A brief background*

*Tilted Arc* was commissioned by United States General Service Administration (GSA) as a part of Art in Architecture program in 1979 (Figure 7).<sup>22</sup> The maker of *Tilted Arc* Richard Serra, who was already recognized as an important young artist in America, was selected by GSA administrator and also recommended by The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) panel of art experts to create a sculpture for the open space in front of the Jacob Javits Federal Building in New York City. Serra was the chosen artist among nearly fifty artists. However, later when his proposal for *Tilted Arc* was presented, it did not win the GSA design-review panel’s favor. Apparently, the opinion was “divided but negative about Serra’s sculpture” (Senie, 2002, p.23). Despite this disapproval, the work was eventually approved, completed and installed at the Federal Plaza site in 1981 (Figure 2).



Figure 2. The view of a federal plaza and *Tilted Arc* Photo:David Aschkenas © 1985

Unfortunately, this was the beginning of a long eight-year controversy. Soon after the sculpture appeared in the plaza, disapproval started to appear as well. Within a year, two petitions signed by

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<sup>22</sup> Art-in-Architecture Program is a service offered by GSA which commissions “the nation’s leading artists” to create large-scale works of art for new federal buildings. See GSA’s website for more information. <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/104456>

1,300 in total were sent to the GSA administrator. In 1985, William Diamond, a newly appointed GSA's New York regional administrator took an action.<sup>23</sup> Diamond decided to open a public hearing “whether Serra’s sculpture should be, as Diamond puts it, ‘relocated’ in order ‘to increase public used of the plaza’” (Deutsche, 1998, p.257). Despite of the artist’s efforts and the favors of the supporters, who were predominantly from the art world and cultural professions, *Tilted Arc* was removed from Federal Plaza in 1989.<sup>24</sup> The defending statement of Serra, “to remove the work is to destroy it” became a center of debated among art critics and art theorists later on.<sup>25</sup>

Similar to the early examples of outdoor art exhibitions, Serra seems to understand a term ‘site specific’ as a placement of an artwork which is specifically arranged in relation to a physical surrounding environment. It is clearly stated during the interview conducted by Douglas Crimp that Serra (1980) describes his plan of *Tilted Arc* as to “cross the entire space [of a plaza], blocking the view from the street to the courthouse” in order to “actively bring people into the sculpture’s context” and “one condition I wanted, which is a density of traffic flow” (p.168). From this statement, we could assume that Serra understood the site (a plaza) as a pedestal site and he arranged the placement of sculpture specifically ‘on the way’ of a traffic flow. We could also assume that Serra created a space which could only be completed with the flow of the viewers, the viewers who would walk by the piece and would appreciate its dynamism. In order to archive his intention, Serra transformed the whole area ‘for’ his sculpture by placing it in the middle of the

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<sup>23</sup> According to Senie (2002), one petition signed by 1,000 was from the Department of Housing and Urban Development whose office was located at Federal Plaza and another was (signed by 300) was from the Environmental Protection Agency “protested the use of taxpayers’ money for ‘ripping up the plaza’, the ‘blocked views and disruption of foot-traffic patterns’...”(p.26).

<sup>24</sup> The supporters who attended to the public hearing were people from cultural professions such as art historians, a director from an art institute, a researcher, an art gallery owner and so on. See Transcript of a Hearing to Decide the Future of Tilted Art (2002) In Alex Neill & Aaron Ridley (Eds.). *Arguing About Art: Contemporary Philosophical Debates*. 2nd Edition (pp.429-435). London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

<sup>25</sup> See the documentary film, *The trial of Tilted Arc* (1986) where Richard Serra defend himself.

plaza blocking the views of surroundings from the passersby. In other words, this gigantic art pieces which divided a space would not create the harmony of the entire area but distort.<sup>26</sup>

#### -Analyses on the case of *Tilted Arc*

Nick Kaye, a scholar specializing performance art proposes an intriguing viewpoint on minimalist site-specific art. Kaye suggests that minimalist sculptures never really left the gallery space even though they located themselves in public space.<sup>27</sup> Kaye writes (2000), “rather than ‘establish its place’, the minimalist object emphasizes a transitive definition of site, forcing a self-conscious perception in which viewer confronts her own effort ‘to located, to place’ the work and so her own acting out of the gallery’s function as the place for viewing” (p.2). Kaye explains this idea further by applying Michael Fried’s view, “the experience literalist [minimal] art is of an object *in a situation* – one that, virtually by definition, *includes the beholder*” (as cited in Kaye, 20, p.3). Here, Fried (1998) is pointing out that minimal art is staging up a situation (by ‘occupying’ a place with an artwork) and the viewer, as subject to aesthetic experience, has to act on it (p. 116-126). To put it simple, in the viewing of minimal sculpture, aesthetic experience is in the hand of the audience’s physical interaction.<sup>28</sup> In the end, Kaye reaches a conclusion that minimalism’s site-specific art, which had been established in ‘white cube’, acted as if it were done ‘within’ the gallery space.<sup>29</sup> If this is the true description of minimal sculpture even in a public space, the relationship between the viewer and an artwork is the center of the experience and viewing, not the surrounding environment which is actually a crucial factor to the whole experience.

Michael Kelly (2002) discusses further on the issues of *Tilted Arc* by analyzing the notion of ‘public’ and ‘site-specific’. Kelly claims that *Tilted Arc* was neither public nor site-specifics. Kelly points out

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<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Senie (2002) p. 83 and Deutsche (1998) p.260-261.

<sup>27</sup> Kaye seems to draw this conclusion based on Douglas Crimp’s claim of minimalist site-specific sculpture to be dependent on the viewer’s self-conscious perception and Michael Fried’s criticism calling minimalism as “literalist”.

<sup>28</sup> See Fried (1998)p. 126-7

<sup>29</sup> The notion of space and the idea of ‘White Cube’ (O’Doherty, 1999 ) is extensively applied by Kaye in his analyses. See Kaye (2000) p.1-2, p. 26-33, p. 91

that public art “to be public, art must be created with recognition on the artist’s part of the people who constitute the ‘public’ of public art” and “this would have meant recognizing the identities, rights of the different publics associated with Federal Plaza in various ways... he [Serra] definitely did not recognize the public in any of these senses” (p.460). This claim is easily believable. It is undeniable that Serra failed to see the public as people who actually use the site as amenities or as a passage, but rather saw it as a ‘traffic’ which could be tuned into the audience. A public space accommodates people indiscriminately and they find a meaning or functionality of a space according to their interests. Of course, other aspects such as an architectural design of an area, a symbolic or social meaning of an area have effects as well.

Kelly continues the argument that for the same reason, *Tilted Arc* would be inadequate to be a site-specific artwork. Kelly states, “while the idea of site-specificity implies reciprocity between space and sculpture, Serra’s understanding of this idea was one-sided” because Serra’s focus was ultimately the sculpture not the site (p. 461). The obvious problem lays in the understanding of public site whether the artist sees the site as an outdoor art gallery space or as an active space with multiple uses. In this case, the latter would be proper. In the end, for the public, *Tilted Arc* was nothing but a 73-ton metal wall reluctant to integrate into the space or the daily activities that took place.

Another critical issue that was brought up by the incident of *Titled Arc* (and by some of the controversial outdoor art exhibitions) would be the role of art museums and art galleries, and the gap of understandings between commissioners of public art and the public. Serra shares his viewpoint during the interview given to the exhibition, “Richard Serra Sculpture: Forty Years” (2007) at Museum of Modern Art in New York City, that “the resistance is called up when art enters the public’s space”, and stating what “American education does not do is teach how to cultivate aesthetic sensibility” (as cited in McShine, 2007, p.36). He also points out that “in the museum nobody questions the presence of artworks”, but the public is different and “art market is not interested in promoting public art... one would hope that something exists parallel to it [the art world] so that the entire society, not just an elite, has access to culture” (as cited in McShine, 2007, p.36).

Although Serra seems to believe in placing his sculpture to be worthy, he concludes that the reason for 'the resistance' (by people or authority) is caused by the lack of education (in order to recognize and appreciate art) and the disinterest of art market in promoting public art to all kinds of people. And as is stated, people needed to be 'prepared' (well-informed) in order to appreciate the works like Serra does. But, this statement raises a question such as if an artist himself has been prepared to enter a public domain. This sort of issue is not, and should not be one-way traffic.

It is ironic to see the effort of Serra to invite people to his sculpture by manipulating the space accordingly to his plan did not offer the aesthetic experiences to the audience as the artist intended. Instead, it received disfavor which resulted in the removal and dismantle of his work.

Serra's case tells that the recognition of a site, especially public space differ from person to person, and an artist would not necessarily see the site for the environment or people but instead, for his work. As Suzi Gablik writes, "What the *Tilted Arc* controversy forces us to consider is whether art that is centered on notions of pure freedom and radical autonomy, and subsequently inserted into the public sphere without regard for the relationship it has to other people, to the community, or any consideration except the pursuit of art, contribute to the common good" (1995, p.79). This would a big question and I would like to hold on to this question of whether the autonomy of artistic expression in a public environment could somehow contribute to the common good or not. What seems to be clear is that the gap between the artist's intention and people's perception in the case of *Tilted Arc* would not meet the amicable agreement conceptually and aesthetically.

I would like to close this section of writing with Arthur C. Danto's viewpoint on *Tilted Arc* and Public art in general:

Public art is the public transfigured: it is us, in the medium of artistic transformation... "The experience of art", Serra argued in his testimony, "is in itself a social function." So it is. But the social is not the public, any more that the individual is the private. Private and public are dimensions of the political... What Serra has insisted is that the esthetic override the political, which it cannot do when the art is public. This being his position, he ought not to object to having his work treated esthetically...The

public has an interest in the existence of museums, but it also has an interest in not having all of its open spaces treated as though they were museums, in which esthetic interests rightly dominate (Danto,1998, p.150-151).

When the site is constructed and exists as a public place (especially, in an urban space), an artwork is no longer about esthetic values that might contribute to the place (or public) but rather have more to do with the political matters. Furthermore, artworks could claim their aesthetic values in the domain of art institute but could not necessarily do the same for the public. The public has rights to decide how a public place should be used and how it should look like. On the other hand, Danto's statement triggers another question. Art museums, although it is also a public center, the public seems to have a little voice over the artworks displayed at art museums and politics at art museums seem to exist on its own and not reflecting so much of public interest (since there are this sort of controversy). But here, I will not go deep in discussion of how art museums work.

An artwork such as *Tilted Arc*, having no relations to social or historical contexts of a site might have been taken as something that does not belong to a place. The aesthetics experience (which was ironically called into question) or simply the sensory and psychological experience which Serra often discusses could be acquired by the (physical) interaction with his sculpture. The experience of a space that Serra explains by using terms like 'behavioral space' and 'juxtapose volumes of space' which are created by a form (of his sculpture) did surely exist in *Tilted Arc*.<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, it could not establish the legitimacy of its existence or its value in this particular site, federal plaza. It goes back to the definition of 'expressive space' that even in a modern era when a massive (and somewhat impersonal) urban development has been done, still an urban space has peculiar meanings and functions which have been constructed by a society according to its own social view.

Furthermore, a concept of social aesthetics might help to clarify the problems occurred in the case of *Tilted Arc* and other public art and open air art festivals in the past. A philosopher Arnold Berleant (1999) explains social aesthetics as an aesthetic of the situation that are similar to known

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<sup>30</sup> Serra (1994) p. 46 and p.146 and also Serra (1980) p. 61 and p.73

aesthetic experiences (when a person encounter an art object), which are accompanied by acceptance (without judgment), discovery, (seeing) uniqueness, (involving) reciprocity, continuity, engagement and so on (p.21-23). As Berleant (1999) claims, “a social aesthetic offers the basis for a truly humane community”, public art as being a part of social life it needs to be approached in such a way to establish its place (p.28). This part of discussion is investigated further in the second part of this thesis (in the case study of Benesse Art Site Naoshima).

The next section of writing will be focusing on the trend in an art scene in west prior to the Land art movement which occurred in the late 1960s to the beginning of 1970s. There had been radical changes in art practices in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. I would like to go through such changes by examining Rosalind Krauss’s essay as a reference.

## Sculpture vs. Architecture: the Expanded Field

In this section, I would like to briefly discuss the background and a shift in the art scene prior to the Land art movement from art critic’s perspective. This part of writing may seem somewhat irrelevant to this paper, however, I would like to include it as an introduction to a concise historical background and the later development of Land art, and site-specific art.

It would be inevitable not to discuss the influential writing by art critic and theorist Rosalind Krauss, *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* (1979) as to describe a trend of art in the 60s and 70s. In this essay, Krauss strives to reframe and redefine contemporary ‘sculpture’ which has blurred the boundary between architectures and conventional sculptures. Krauss (1979) writes “one found in the early sixties that sculpture had entered a categorical no-man’s-land: it was what was on or in front of a building that was not the building, or what was in the landscape that was not the landscape” and it shows a “inverse logic”; it has lost its conventional quality of being ‘sculpture’ but has become “a kind of ontological absence” (p.36). For instance, Robert Morris’s *Installation* at Green Gallery in 1963 (Figure 3i) is not really a sculpture but is a ‘quasi-architectural integer’ and *Untitled (mirror Boxes)* 1965, again by Morris (Figure 3ii) could be non-landscape ‘sculpture’ that is almost seen as a

part of landscape (p.36). Indeed, Morris's Installation at Green Gallery in 1963 consist of white painted boxes, was not made to be viewed as sculptures, but made originally as props for a dancer Simone Forti and other dancers since 1961 (Crow,1996 ,p.139).<sup>31</sup> This work turned out to be "the effective advent of Minimalism" but also became a target of art critics, such as Michael Fried (Crow,1996 ,p.139-140).

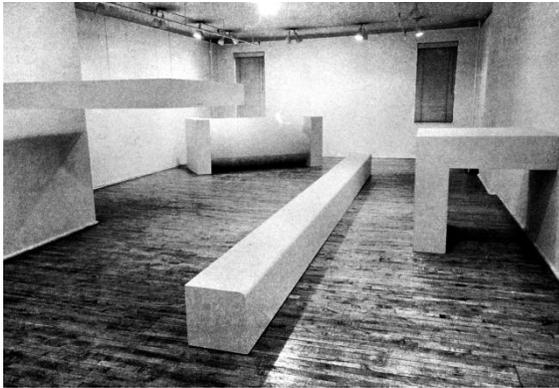


Figure 3i. Installation (1963) Robert Morris



Figure 3ii. Untitled (1965) Robert Morris

\*Figure 3i Photo: Christopher Burke/ Figure 3i & 3ii © Estate of Robert Smithson/ Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

Krauss's endeavor to categorize contemporary 'sculptures' reaches two alternative group categories; one is Klein group which employ mathematics and has various other designations, and among them is Piaget group which involves in mapping operations within the human sciences (Krauss, 1979, p.37).<sup>32</sup> Then the discussion goes on to even more complex categorizations of these two groups such as marked sites (between sculpture and site-construction, between landscape and non-landscape, and neither site-constriction, sculpture, nor axiomatic structure) and axiomatic structure (between sculpture and site-construction, between architecture and non-architecture, and neither site-constriction, sculpture, nor marked site). The effort of Krauss to simplify the

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<sup>31</sup> Simone Forti (b. 1935), a choreographer and performer, is considered to be a key figures of the 1960s minimalist dance movement. Robert Morris and Forti were married then (in the 50s and, at least until 1961).

<sup>32</sup> Krauss notes that for the Klein group, see Marc Barbut, "On the Meaning of the Word 'Structure' in Mathematics," in Michael Lane, ed., *Introduction to Structuralism*, New York, Basic Books, 1970 and for the Piaget group, see A.- J. Greimas and F. Rastier, *The Interaction of Semiotic Constraints*, Yale French Studtes, no. 41 (1968), 86-105

tendency of contemporary artists (whose works are the “antithesis of aesthetic integrity”) seems to be frangible and could be challenged.<sup>33</sup> In fact, Krauss (1979) herself sees that “within the situation of postmodernism, practice is not defined in relation to a given medium – sculpture – but rather in relation to the logical operations on a set of cultural terms, for which any medium – photography, books, lines on walls, mirrors, or sculpture itself – might be used” (p. 42). In any case, Krauss’s analysis clears up something; the peculiarity of an artwork itself is not the visual entity only, but a site also has significance in the viewer’s (aesthetic) experience. Undoubtedly, the categorizations of visual art would provide a comprehensive view on unconventional ‘sculptures’ but would not assess the experiences of the spectator. In reality, artworks discussed in Krauss’s *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* would all require not only viewing but also being in the works. For instance, Krauss discusses what she would call *marked site* using the examples of Land artists such as Robert Smithson’s *Spiral Jetty* (1970), Michael Heizer’s *Double Negative* (1969-70), Dennis Oppenheim’s *Time Line* (1968), Walter De Maria’s *Mile Long* (1968) and so forth. *Axiomatic structures* (architecture vs. non-architecture) would be seen in the art practices of Robert Irwin, Sol LeWitt, Bruce Nauman, Richard Serra and Christ.<sup>34</sup> All of these artists’ works are rather to be ‘felt’ more than just ‘viewed’. In conclusion, we could say that a site (either a space or a place) which has traditionally not been a part of artworks became an important medium, in other words, in the time of postmodernism, the art practice became more inclusive of reality (although it is taken as ‘absence’ because an art object yields its existence to, for instance, the surrounding environment).<sup>35</sup> Some of these works are recognized as art practices which go under the umbrella term of “site-specificity” nowadays. A British scholar Jason Gaiger (2009) seem to see ‘site-specificity’ which originate in the works in the 60s is to some extent, the idea of aesthetic autonomy, and it is best understood as a progressive relinquishment of the principle of aesthetic

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<sup>33</sup> When a work incorporate various elements such as performance, music, collaborations with the audience, but still takes a form of three-dimensional, Krauss’s categorization seems to be questionable. A “antithesis of aesthetic integrity”

<sup>34</sup> See Krauss (1979) p.41

<sup>35</sup> A site, place, space such as landscape, nature, cityscape, old cathedrals and even a bedroom have been the popular subjects for art in the past but had not been the actual work of art (or a part of it) up this point (the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century).

autonomy (p.43). Or simply, it could be seen as the characteristics of postmodernism; “a style of culture which reflects some of this epochal change” that “blurs the boundaries between ‘high’ and ‘popular’ culture, as well as between art and everyday experience” (Eagleton,vii,1996). If we look at the big picture, it is not only the concern of the transformation in the art world but of the changes in our life such as the changes in social values (democratic society), the technological development, urban development (or urban decay), the disappearance of a line between artificial and natural, just to mention a few. Apparently, this move, to blur the boundaries, has flourished as well as created chaos.

There are artists from around this time who have crossed the line of traditional disciplines and we could no longer distinguish their art practices by which mediums they use. And most importantly, it is not only the mediums or disciplines that the artists overstep but also philosophical viewpoints, and many other principles are adopted. I would like discuss these points a little future by using the examples of the Land art movement.

## The Land art movement

Professor of Landscape Architecture Udo Weilacher (1999) points out that, “prior to Land Art, only few early 20<sup>th</sup> century sculptors succeeded in broadening the concept of sculpture to the extent that landscape space is no longer served as a background to the work, but became its subject” and Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988) is “one of the most important sculptors” who “undoubtedly belongs to this vanguard” (p.43). Noguchi, having a Japanese father and an American mother, lived and worked both in Japan and the United States during the six decades of his art career. Noguchi is important in many senses that his works demonstrated an interesting mixture of east and west through his earthy simple sculptures and gardens. Nevertheless, the Land art movement triggered by a groundbreaking art exhibition EARTHWORKS held in New York in 1968 definitely made a clear statement to the art world and beyond that landscape (and earth) is an significant art medium as well as a concept. The movement appears to be short-lived but its enormous influence

on contemporary art is undeniable. Therefore, the analysis in this area is crucial to the later discussion of site-specific art in Part Two.

#### *-Earth works 1968*

In the name of 'regenerating' the city/region/nation, the authority has been promoting art for the general public, and one way of doing so has been to take artworks out of art galleries and museums and bring them into mundane urban space as the early example from the late 60s and the early 70s show. Around the same time, a 'sensational' group exhibition called "EARTH WORKS" was held at Dwan Gallery in New York, and this show brought 'mundane' elements such as soils and rocks into a gallery space. It opened in October 1968 which was organized by the gallery owner Virginia Dwan and Robert Smithson who invited Carl Andre, Herbert Bayer, Walter De Maria, Michael Heizer, Stephen Kaltenbach, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris, Claes Oldenburg, and Dennis Oppenheim.<sup>36</sup> Interesting enough, the exhibition included various artists who are known for different 'styles'. Smithson, Andre, Heizer, De Maria are, without doubts, known for minimal artworks and later, the use of earthy materials and lands. Nonetheless, it might be rather surprising to see Herbert Bayer, the last living member of the Bauhaus, and Sol LeWitt and Robert Morris who are known for their conceptual and minimal art. Others like Stephen Kaltenbach, who is not-so-well known as a Land artist, has been producing conceptual art sculptures and is also hard to find a link to this exhibition. Claes Oldenburg, who is known for his large scale sculptures of everyday objects, is another interesting member to be found in this group show. Oldenburg then was involved in Happnings and what connected him to be in this exhibition was the performance done previously for the public art group exhibition called *Sculpture in Environment* in New York which was mentioned the earlier.<sup>37</sup> Oldenburg, as it was suggested in the title of

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<sup>36</sup> Boettger (2010)

<sup>37</sup> *Sculpture in Environment* (1967) was sponsored by the New York City Administration of Recreation and Cultural Affairs. It was organized by Doris Freemand, Special Assistant for Cultural Affairs for the city of New York, with the help of Sam Green, known for a promoter of American Pop art. See Suzaan Boettger (2002, p.2) and *The Outdoor Gallery: 40 years of Public Art in New York City Parks* (2007). the Exhibition catalogue made by new York City Department of Parks and Recreation. [http://www.nycgovparks.org/sub\\_about/parks\\_history/index\\_image\\_thumbs/40\\_years\\_public\\_art.pdf](http://www.nycgovparks.org/sub_about/parks_history/index_image_thumbs/40_years_public_art.pdf)

exhibition, *Sculpture in Environment*, went to the Central Park right behind the building of Metropolitan Museum of Art and “dug into the park soil to create a sculpture that consisted of a recession into the ground instead of a projection upward form it” (Boettger, 2002 , p.8). This performance of professional grave diggers digging and filling a hole was titled *Placid Civic Monument (or The Hole)* which manifested his anti-war message (Figure 4).<sup>38</sup> Clearly, the interest of Oldenburg dealing with earth would have been different from Smithson or the others who took part in the exhibition, *EARTH WORKS*. Nevertheless, this unique approach to create a ‘sculpture’ and the metaphoric use of earth must have caught the attention of Smithson, who had published his writings *A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey* in 1967.<sup>39</sup> At the exhibition, Oldenburg’s work was presented in a form of documental photography showing the three-hour length performance along with a plastic bag full of dirt.<sup>40</sup>



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<sup>38</sup> Many scholars view this work to be the protest against Vietnam war. See for example, Boettger (2002) p.6, Michalski (1998) p.175, Doss Lee(2010) p.44

<sup>39</sup> In the writing “A Tour of The Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey” by Robert Smithson mainly discussed about the trip to New Jersey and viewing of construction sites in Passaic River side. It also discussed about a science-fiction novel “Earthworks” by Brian W. Aldiss which title is uncannily same as the exhibition *Earthworks*. The novel by Aldiss depicts a scene where artificial soils are create.

<sup>40</sup> See Boettger (2002) for Oldenburg’s performance and see Wallis (1998) p.24 for the exhibition *EARTH WORKS* detail.

Figure 4. Claes Oldenburg in the center observing a digging

Figure 5. Nonsite, Franklin New Jersey (1968)

\*Figure 4. ©2012 Artnet Worldwide Corporation/Figure 5. ©2012 Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago

Smithson himself exhibited a work called *Nonsite, Franklin New Jersey* (Figure 5). The work was consist of painted wooden bins and inside was filled with small chunks of limestone collected “from ore deposits in the vicinity of Franklin Furnace Mines”(Tsai,2004,p.26). On the side of the installation, there was the aerial photo-map of the site from where Smithson had gathered the material (limestone). The detailed passage of how he had come to the realization this ‘non-site’ was described in his essay, *A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey*. And the further analysis of ‘non-site’ will be dealt later.

Apparently, the exhibition did not deceive the audience from its exhibition title, *EARTH WORKS*. But obviously, there was something uncanny about this exhibition besides either earth materials or the images of earth were on display which had not been prevailed in the art world. Perhaps, it was because none of the ‘artworks’ shown in this exhibition were the actual products, but rather a part of or a trace of objects or works which existed elsewhere. Wallis (1998) views this physical absence of the works to be “explicit challenge to conventional notions of exhibitions and sales, in that they were either too large or too unwieldy to be collected” (p.23). And such artworks needed to be mediated in a presentable format such as photographs, drawings, and samples (dirt and rocks). In any case, the intention behind this exhibition which created “a strange sense of absence, even loss” and “disorientating problem about what constituted the ‘real’ work of art” would be a key idea in the analysis of ‘sites’ (Wallis, 1998, p.24).

Artists from this exhibition such as Carl Andre, Walter De Maria, Michael Heizer and Robert Smithson continued to expand their art practices ‘outside’ of art galleries, sometimes, far in barren lands along with several art exhibitions to show the documentations of their outdoor works. And later, this became known as the Land art movement. Needless to mention the Land art movement, defined as a part of postmodern art, has become an influential art movement and continues to inspire many artists today, especially when their works are done outdoor, in urban environment

and in landscapes. Some of the prominent monumental scale artworks by, for instance, Smithson, Heizer, and De Maria are still intact and could be found in the wilderness of Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas in the United States. Those works have been drawing a relatively large number of visitors and a road trip (including off-road), some would call ‘art pilgrimage’, seems to captivate both art lovers and non-art lovers.<sup>41</sup>

#### -Non-site

The most intriguing element of all and also relevant to this thesis is how artists integrated their ideas and beliefs into a landscape, and later into urban landscapes and our everyday life by some Land artists. And the question would be, if it is about ‘the dematerialization of the art object’ as Lucy R. Lippard suggests, or about anti-aesthetics and much-discussed aesthetic autonomy.<sup>42</sup>

Eugenie Tsai (2004) writes that Robert Smithson is important not only as a “pioneer of the Earthworks movement” but also important in the sense that he has contributed to advancing the concept of the ‘site’, “a place in the world where art is inseparable from its context” (p. 11).<sup>43</sup> In fact, Smithson is (was) “himself a major theoretician of aesthetics beyond pleasure” (Lversen,2007, p.76).<sup>44</sup> Without doubt, Smithson’s unconventional approach to an ordinary site into a site of

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<sup>41</sup> Considerable numbers of online blogs covering the trip to visit, for instance, Spiral Jetty by Smithson and Double Negative by Heizer are found. There are also art magazines covering the story of ‘art pilgrimage’. See for example, Sculpture Magazine, July/Aug 2004 Vol.23. 6 “Spiral Jetty: the Re-emergence” and Art Review: the Magazine Online. October 2007. p.122-133 “Land Art in the American Southwest”.

<sup>42</sup> See Lucy R. Lippard’s *Six Years: the Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (1973). Lippard (1973) explains how this dematerialization of an art object is “the addition of accents rather than the delineation of an independent form led away from marking the object into remarking direct experience” (p.5). Therefore, art objects become ‘dematerialized’ and turned into a site where to ‘experience’ art is possible. Anti-aesthetic here, I refer both to the book *The Anti-Aesthetic* by Hal Foster (Ed.) and to Martin Heidegger’s approach which is more to do with a question of ontology of art. Thomson (2011) analyzes Heidegger’s view, “all artists, indeed, all those who would bring-into-being in a meaningful way, whatever media they work with, must learn to draw creatively upon a dimension of alterity that cannot be entirely appropriated, finally mastered, or definitively manipulated” (n.p.).

<sup>43</sup> Tsai cites or rephrases the last sentence “a place in the world where art is inseparable from its context” from an untitled writing by Smithson which could be found in the book *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings* (1996) Robert Smithson & Jack Flam (Ed.), p.362

<sup>44</sup> Lversen (2007) is referring to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* by Freud.

infinite possibility for artistic expression has been an essence even to some contemporary art practices which deal with mundane sites and everyday objects. And seemingly, it all started with what Smithson addresses, “art of looking” (Smithson, 1996b, p.112). This concept was discussed in Smithson’s essay titled *A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Project* (published in *Art forum* magazine in 1968), which “served as a kind of manifest for the exhibition”, *EARTH WORKS* (Wallis, 1998, p.24).

The essay *A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Project* as a starting point and as a backbone principle of Land art, the following section of writing will be devoted to a detailed analysis of the essay. Firstly, it describes the way how some artists have come to realize traditionally non-aesthetics as potentials of art in the modern era (by using the example of Tony Smith’s passage). Secondly, it explains the Land art movement as a counteraction to modern art such as abstract sculptures and those works which are produced in a studio. Lastly, Smithson goes deep into a discussion of indoor installation, which Smithson calls ‘non-site’ in connection to an existing site outside world. In my point of view, this non-site indoor installation seems to exist as phenomenon in contemporary art which an art installation represent a larger context.<sup>45</sup> Frankly speaking, the essay is allusive to such an extent that gives a feeling of being in a maze. Nonetheless, this Smithson’s essay seems to speak for many artists of the day and it is noteworthy.

The essay begins with a poetic paragraph, however, the content of the writing is very much graphical explaining his idea of non-site and other artists’ works dealing with a raw material (or ‘elements’) which are reduced to its essence patifying the topography of earth. The emphasis is also put on the importance of ‘processes’ more than the ‘results’. And these discussions are backed by ‘art of looking’, which is a fascinating moment when ‘ordinary’ and ‘non-art’ become unlimited expressive art. Smithson explains how this moment occurs through the insightful

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<sup>45</sup> And art installation representing a larger context is, of course, originated in several art practices in the past, especially in conceptual art. However, Smithson defines it so well and practiced in such a way that is worthy of attention.

analysis on the artist Tony Smith's account of a car ride to New Jersey Turnpike which was still under construction then.<sup>46</sup>

Smithson (1996b) sees this Smith's experience at a New Jersey Turnpike construction site is the description of the state of mind in the 'primary process' of making contact with matter" which is called 'dedifferentiation' in Anton Ehrenzweig's term and 'limitlessness' as Sigmund Freud suggested as 'oceanic' (Smithson,1996b, p.103). Basically, the story of Tony Smith is about driving (with three of his students) to the unfinished New Jersey Turnpike one dark night in the early 1950s.<sup>47</sup> Smith describes his experience vividly and I feel a strong urge to quote the most part of it:

This drive was a revealing experience. The road and much of the landscape was artificial, and it couldn't be called a work of art. On the other hand, it did something for me that art had never done...its effect was to liberate me from many of the views I had had about art. It seemed that there had been a reality there which had not had any expression in art...the experience on the road was something mapped out but not socially recognized. I thought to myself, it ought to be clear that's the end of art...There is no way you can frame it, you just have to experience it...abandoned works, surrealist landscapes, something that had nothing to do with any function, created worlds without tradition. Artificial landscape without cultural precedent began to dawn on me" (Wagstaff, 1995, p.386 ).

It seems like this viewing of a large construction site was an eye-opening experience for Tony Smith. At the time he sheared this story to the interviewer Wagstaff in 1966, it had already been more than a decade since this car ride happened (in the early 1950s).<sup>48</sup> It must have been memorable enough that he could recall the experience and describe it in detail. And this passage

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<sup>46</sup> This was originally cited in the article "Talking with Tony Smith" by Samuel J. Wagstaff Jr, published in 1966 which came from an interview between Tony Smith and Wagstaff Jr.

<sup>47</sup> The building of New Jersey Turnpike took 23 months, between 1950 and 1952 which tells that Smith's road trip was taken in the early 50s.

<sup>48</sup> The interview seemed to take a place some time in 1966 or possibly earlier. The article was originally published in *Artforum* in December 1966.

of discovery and the experience of limitlessness must have inspired Smithson as well. And most importantly, what used to be considered non-aesthetic such as a construction site (or destructed landscape) has its own language that speaks to artists as an expression that is beyond traditional art.

Another intriguing point discussed in this essay is Smithson departing from abstract art and from minimal art. Smithson explains how he started to see the possibility of working with ‘ruin’ and ‘dust’ or ‘rust’ as opposed to the refined industrial materials like sheet metal, tubes, wire, or pipes (with which artists like David Smith and Anthony Caro work). Rather than working on the manipulation a refined material, he (and some other artists) began to discover something more fundamental; elements like “non-resistant processes that would involve the actual sedimentation of matter” or “sub-strata of the earth” (which Smithson called ‘Pulverizations’ earlier) (Smithson, 1996b, p.106). Specifically, “Oxidation, hydration, carbonization, and solution (the major process of rock and mineral disintegration) are four methods that could be turned towards the making of art” (Smithson, 1996b, p.106). This is evident in his later work, *Spiral Jetty* (1970) (Figure 6) which is located in an environment exposed to salty water so that transform of the form of this work would occur continuously.



Figure 6. *Spiral Jetty* in Great Salt Lake, Utah Photo: George Steinmetz. 2012 ©Dia Art Foundation

All in all, it seems that a point of view (in Smithson’s word, “art of looking”) is all that matter. It is a privilege of some artists who find fascination in a disruption, decay or transformation of any sorts

in a very simple form and can see it as something timeless and limitless. Then, anything on earth could be explored as potentials to be a work of art. This attitude is reflected on another statement by Smithson that “size determines an object, but scale determines art” and “a crack in the wall if viewed in terms of scale, not size, could be called the Grand Canyon”(Smithson,1996c, p.147).<sup>49</sup>

Now, here comes the beauty of argument; if you argue correctly, you are never wrong.<sup>50</sup> Smithson claims that an artist working in a studio and creating an object (without collaborating with nature) is impaired by set rules of aesthetics. Then the focus of Smithson shifts back to ‘elements’ and ‘process’ using language as an example. This part of writing actually tells an intriguing fact that Smithson is (was) a literature-oriented thinker:

Look at any word long enough and you will see it open up into a series of faults, into a terrain of particles each containing its own void. This discomfoting language of fragmentation offers no easy Gestalt solution; certainties of didactic discourse are hurled into the erosion of poetic principle. Poetry being forever lost must submit to its own vacuity; it is somehow a product of exhaustion rather than creation, Poetry is always a dying language but never a dead language (Smithson, 1996b, p.103).

Here, Smithson seems to point out that poetry is in some way, elemental which can vanish (or waste) into thin air. And he closes the paragraph making a surprising connection with his ‘non-site’ and Edgar A. Poe’s fictional novel *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838). *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* tells a story of a young man Arthur and his (occasionally) life-threatening sea voyage. The story ends rather suddenly with Arthur being in the midst of ocean (Antarctic Zone) encountering an unknown bizarre white figure in the dark chasm, and Smithson’s seems to find common features of in the perspectives that Poe introduces in the novel:

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<sup>49</sup> This sentence is from Smithson’s writing *The Spiral Jetty* (1972). See Smithson & Flam (1996) p.147.

<sup>50</sup> “the beauty of argument; if you argue correctly, you’re never wrong” is a sentence from a film “Thank You for Smoking” (2005) directed by Jason Reitman. The film was based on a novel (same title) by Christopher Buckley which was first published in 1994.

[Edgar A.]Poe's *Narrative of A. Gordon Pym* seems to me excellent art criticism and prototype for rigorous 'non-site' investigation...His descriptions of chasms and holes seem to verge on proposal for 'earthwords'. The shape of chasms themselves become 'verbal roots' that spell out the difference between darkness and light. Poe ends his mental maze with the sentence –“I have graven it within the hills and my vengeance upon the dust within the rock” (Smithson, 1996b, p.107 & 108).

This statement seems to again, connect nature of earth Smithson is enthusiastic about. Poetry is a “dying language but never dead” indicates a ‘process’ or transformation of raddled fragments or ‘particles’ with hidden codes and Poe’s chasm is an opening of earth that would guide us to explore what is hidden. The sensitivity to recognize and see not only what appears to be but also see beyond of its appearance seems to attract Smithson. This might explain why some artists like Smithson show no interest in creating the static object. If something is objectified and show only a frozen moment of it in a solid form, it represents only a superficial part of a large picture (which Smithson would call fictional).

The last part of the essay discusses about ‘time’ while explaining (an indoor installation of) non-sites and Earth project. Smithson (1996b) writes, “the strata of the earth is a jumbled museum” and his non-site works (such as *Nonsite, Franklin New Jersey*, shown in Figure 4) is a “three-dimensional map” or “three-dimensional *perspective*, and it is “in a physical way contains the disruption of the site” (p.111). Moreover, non-site is only a fragment of the whole, it lacks “its own containment”, therefore, “there are no mysteries in these vestiges, no traces of an end or a beginning” and this kind of “convergence subverts Gestalt surfaces and turns sites into vast illusion”(Smithson, 1996b, p.111). The reason many (art critics) cling to an art object which has the beginning and the end is to neglect what the ‘time’ implies; the time that is visible with a ‘process’, working on a ‘temporal’ state “conceals ‘death principle’ and no one would like to witness it (Smithson,1996b,p.113). Smithson (1996b) claims works that would be presented as a part of earth project are ‘art’ and real because “the artists of any existence in the work of both mind and matter” would see a ‘thing’ “through the consciousness of temporality, it is charged into

something that is nothing” and “this all-engulfing sense provides the mental ground for the object, so that it ceases being a mere object and becomes art” (p.112). Furthermore, a debate such as ‘time is unreal’, or separating ‘things’, ‘forms’, objects’, ‘shapes’ is a convenient fiction that has nothing to do with the material of time or art (Smithson, 1996b, p.112). It seems that earth itself is an archive to all kinds of activities which have taken place and Smithson’s non-site, as metonymy of these activities and events, would guide the viewer to its origin. He also notes that non-site, as elements, would not suggest any specific time but continuity. And this (artist’s) way of seeing is disfavored by the others because they see ‘death’ when time is seen as temporal. This ‘death principle’ that Smithson mentions is not discussed further in the essay but it may suggest an idea that death or decay as ugly, unpleasant and even as fear. Non-site seems to indicate something that is not present at a gallery space and that something is not ‘complete’ or ‘finished’ because it represents a temporal state. Perhaps, the exhibition EARTH WORKS resonates such qualities and is felt as “sense of absence, even loss” by the audience (Wallis, 1998, p. 24).

Art critics have responded in various ways to Smithson’s non-site and his writings. For instance, Craig Owens (1994) analyses Smithson’s way of dealing with the concept of site “invokes the notion of the center” which is “to describe its loss”; therefore, Smithson’s “non-site is only a vacant reflection of the site” (p.41).<sup>51</sup> As a result, “all of Smithson’s work effected a radical dislocation of art, which was removed from its locus in the museum and gallery to remote, inaccessible locations” and this “displacement is not only geographic, but economical... the ‘value’ of the work of art is no longer determined by its status as a portable commodity; it is now the artwork itself which bestows value” (p.41). Apparently, Owens sees this tendency of ‘dislocation’ of art and its value has been triggered by the writings of Smithson (theories that Smithson presented in a written format) and it is done so by language. Owens points out how it has been done through the use of language and the tricky side of it:

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<sup>51</sup> Seemingly, Owens (1994) views that ‘the center’ as what Smithson puts as ‘oceanic’ ‘limitlessness’ and the site itself as ‘the fringe or edge’ (p. 41). This analysis is based on the Smithson’s writings *A Museum of Language in the Vicinity of Art* (1968) but probably from other sources as well. For instance, Smithson states during the interview which was organized by Liza Bear of *Avalanche* magazine in 1970; “Non-site is the center of the system, and the site itself is the fringe or the edge” (Smithson, 1996, p. 240).

Paradoxically, the concept of a center can only occur within language; at the same time, language, which proposes the potentially infinite substitution of elements *at the center*, destroys all possibility of securely locating any center whatsoever. Thus what is described by Smithson in this text is that dizzying experience of *decentering*... If this collection of Smithson's writings testifies to anything in our present culture, it is to the eruption of language into the field of the visual arts, and the subsequent decentering of that field – a decentering in which these texts themselves play a crucial part (Owens, 1994, p.41).

Owens's argument goes further comparing and contrasting the statements of other thinkers which resembles Smithson's viewpoints, for instance, Pascal's "language becomes an infinite museum whose center is everywhere and whose limits are nowhere" (as cited in Owens, 1994, p.42 ). Another example is Walter Benjamin's definition of allegory that "language is broken up, dispersed, in order to acquire a new and intensified meaning in its fragmentation" (as cited in Owens, 1994, p.43). Owens has a point and the analysis like Smithson's treatment of texts as a "visual material" and "manipulation of its signifiers" withstands his opinion; changing the doctrine of art making (art world and even the course of modern aesthetics). But again, this "transgression of entire aesthetic categories (the visual versus the verbal, the spatial versus the temporal)" is not a new phenomenon (Foster, 2001, p.86). Theories and visual arts have been almost inseparable, especially from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Not only theories and visual arts but also other art practices (such as music, poetics, performance, and so forth) are all intertwined in the creation of 'new' aesthetics.<sup>52</sup> Maybe, it is because creativities would occur when we do not discriminate different disciplines.

As a closing discussion to Smithson's essay which attempt is to establish a theory of non-site and a site of infinite redefined by art, I would like to mention about Michel Foucault's spatial theory. It is to back up Smithson's idea, which is limitless and timeless quality of certain materials and even a small indoor art installation could project a whole world through what Smithson calls "three-

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<sup>52</sup> Aesthetics (as a branch of philosophy) deals not only fine arts but also a wide range of social aspects as well. But, fine arts do contribute to establish a new category of artistic expressions, in result, a new perception.

dimensional map". In Foucault's *Of Other Spaces* (2008), there are interesting ideas presented which correspond to Smithson's idea of non-site and an indefinable space <sup>53</sup>

In this writing, Foucault discusses his theory of heterotopy (heterotopias) which strives to clarify "a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live" and has not been defined critically yet (Foucault, 1967, p.17). For instance, the third (among six) principle of Heterotopias, Foucault writes:

Third principle. The heterotopia has the power to juxtapose in a single real place several spaces, several emplacements that are in themselves incompatible. Thus the theater brings onto the rectangle of the stage a whole series of places that are alien to one another; thus the cinema is a very odd rectangular room, at the end of which, on a two-dimensional screen, one sees the projection of a three-dimensional space; but perhaps the oldest example of these heterotopias, in the form of contradictory emplacements, is the garden. One should not forget the garden, an astonishing creation now thousands years old, had in the Orient very deep and seemingly superimposed meanings. The traditional garden of the Persians was a sacred space that was supposed to bring together inside its rectangle four parts representing the four parts of the world, with at its center a space still more sacred than the others, that were like an umbilicus, the navel of the world (it is there that the water basin and fountain were). And all the vegetation of the garden was supposed to be distributed in that space, within this sort of microcosm. As for carpets, they were originally reproductions of gardens. The garden is a rug where the whole world comes to accomplish its symbolic perfection, and the rug is a sort of garden that is mobile across space. The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world. The garden has been, since the dawn of antiquity, a sort of

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<sup>53</sup> *Of Other Spaces* ("Des Espace Autres") was published in October 1984 and was the basis of a lecture given to the Cercle d'études architecturales (Circel of Architectural Studies) done in 1967. The translated English version I have read and cited here is from the book *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society* by Michiel Dehaene & Lieven De Caeter. The editor of the book explains that this version is based on three existing "fine but imperfect" translations; 1) the translation by Jay Miskowiec, 2) the translation which was reprinted in Neil Leach (Ed.) *Rethinking Architecture* (1997), and 3) the translation by Robert Hurley. See Dehaene (2008) p.14.

blissful and universalizing heterotopia (hence our modern zoological gardens) (Foucault, 1967; 2008, p.19 & 20).

I would like to bring attention to the part where Foucault (1967; 2008) concludes that, “the garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world” and “all the vegetation of the garden was supposed to be distributed in that space, within this sort of microcosm” (p. 19 & 20). This is an intriguing point. This juxtaposition does exist in any culture even in the culture without sophisticated gardens. It is a dual or multilayered space that can be found just about anywhere. It does not have to be a man-made garden but anything that casts an image would do the same trick. For instance, if we look closely at the surface of a rain drop hanging from a tree branch, there is a reflection of the surrounding environment. If we look even closer and think how and where this rain drop has been formed (in an elemental level) and just imagine the whole natural circle of nature that is taking place, even a rain drop can project a vast landscape somewhere on earth. This might be an extreme example but a genuine experience we could have. Sometimes, we can be moved by a beautiful landscape shown on a television screen and it is, perhaps, because we are ‘in’ this landscape while we are still sitting in our living room.

In this sense, it does not take much for anyone to experience, ‘art of looking’. Smithson’s non-site is the projection of small parts of a world which “were placed end to end in a straight line” like each “a three-dimensional mirror” casting the past, present and future of a particular site (Smithson, 1996a, p.57).<sup>54</sup> In the following section, Land art which incorporates architectural elements and which has found its places in urban environment will be discussed. The Land art movement established its place in a unique environment where conventional arts had never stepped in. Later artists even expanded its place further by actively engaging with a community and creating Land art in urban spaces.

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<sup>54</sup> These quotes come from Smithson’s essay, *A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey* (1967) where he discusses a small monument in Passaic, New Jersey which seems to take a view to the past and future casing an endless circle of birth of a city in the world.

## Land Art in Urban Parcel

Interestingly, some land art works created before 1973 have shown interests in architectures. Robert Smithson's special interest toward architectures was evident in his works, essays and lectures which were released in the last few years of his life. An associate professor of architecture, Mark Linder (1999) points out that "Smithson not only devised a wholly original form of art - the non-site - but introduced new modes of architectural criticism" which are demonstrated in Smithson's "quasi-architectural projects in 1969 and 1970 - including *Partially Buried Woodshed* [1970], the Hotel Palenque lecture [1969-72],<sup>55</sup> his proposals for a 'Cinema Cavern' [1971] and 'dearchitected' sites" (p.6). Smithson was not alone in this regard when we look at Herbert Bayer's *Earth Mound* (1955), Robert Morris's *Observatory* (1971/77)(Figure 7),<sup>56</sup> and Michael Heizer's *Complex City* (1972-76)(Figure 8) whose works were included at the exhibition *EARTH WORKS*.



Figure 7. *Observatory* is specially arranged for solstices and equinoxes Figure 8. *Complex City* (still incomplete today)

\*Figure 7. Taken from MIT Libraries/Figure 8. Copyright © 2012 Discovery Communications, LLC.

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<sup>55</sup> *Hotel Palenque* lecture was based on a trip to Mexico in 1969. Smithson "photographed an old, eccentrically constructed hotel, which was undergoing a cycle of simultaneous decay and renovation" and Smithson "used these images in a lecture presented to architecture students at the University of Utah in 1972, in which he humorously analyzed the centerless, "de-architecturalized" site" (Guggenheim Collection Online: Robert Smithson). See Guggenheim website: <http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/show-full/piece/?search=Hotel%20Palenque&page=&f=Title&object=99.5268>

<sup>56</sup> Robert Morris made *Observatory* as a work for the international group exhibition *Sonsbeek '71*(Holland) in 1971. It was lost and rebuilt again in a different location in Holland in 1977.

Robert Morris clearly states that the inspiration for designing *Observatory* came from architectural elements; “the overall experience of my work derives more from Neolithic and Oriental architectural complexes...the work provides a physical experience for the mobile human body”(as cited in Lailach, 2007, p. 78). Notice that this Morris’s work, unlike many artworks, has an architectural functionality (along with many other artistic features). Morris’s *Observatory*, located close to Santpoort, Holland, was at a “zone between ocean, land and city” (Lailach, 2007 ,p.78). And the visitor was meant to walk into this ‘observatory’ to view the landscape from the border line where the city ends. Heizer’s *Complex City* (or *Complex One/Complex Two/ City*) in Nevada also “clearly illustrates with architectural means, procedures, scales and, and occasionally, even architectural materials, as well as with a corresponding language of forms” (Weilacher, 1999. p. 33). Nevertheless, the pioneers of Land art, including Heizer “avoided direct confrontation with the urban system and sought contact with primary nature” (Weilacher, 1999. p. 33).

However, towards the end of 1970s and 80s, “encouraged by the feminist art movement, women sculptures got involved with both earth and heavy construction” (Boettger, 2010, p.128). John Beardsley writes that “the legacy of the Land art movement is manifesting itself in the urban context” (as cited in Weilacher, 1999, p.33). This might be true that this tendency of Land art emerged as public art in urban environments is epitomized by the works of Patricia Johanson, Athena Tacha, Mary Miss, Alice Adams, Jody Pinto, Nancy Holt, among others, who have taken a new challenge in ‘place-making’ in urban space.

This shift was in a way, inevitable since not many people managed to actually get to visit Nevada desert to view Heizer’s *Complex City*, for instance. As Denis Oppenheim, who was involved in the early development of Land art states, “[Smithson’s] *Spiral Jetty* is 75 percent mental” because after all, mental configuration becomes all about earth art which elements has been offered through the photographic images and which have been filtered in our memory (Heiss, 1992, p.226). Oppenheim himself explains his motivation of getting involved with the Land art movement was the urge to go beyond Minimalism because “it was clear, even to the minimalists, that their idea

was reaching ground zero” and that was why “phenomenology [which Land artists employed] became a way of expanding the domain” (Heiss, 1992, p.226). Nevertheless, for many people (including art critics), Land art in the middle of nowhere becomes what Sartre calls “mental image” without physicality of artworks.<sup>57</sup> Ironically, most of Land artworks remain without being actually viewed and experienced by the viewer.

On the other hand, the work *Dark Star Park* by Nancy Holt, accessible to many, shows a transformation in the integration of art into a vast landscape to an urban space (see Figure 9i). *Dark Star Park* (commissioned in 1979 and completed in 1984) is implemented in a city where passers-by could freely interact with the work. Holt (1996) explained the aim of making her large land art, *Sun Tunnels* (Figure 9ii) in Utah which was made earlier saying that, “I wanted to bring the vast space of the desert back down to human scale” where the place “evokes a sense of being on the planet, rotating in space, in universal time” (p.539). For making of *Dark Star Park*, a similar principle was applied, only this time was to observe and feel the universe in a busy commercial district in Arlington, Virginia. Every year on August 1<sup>st</sup>, the shadows of black poles emerge perfectly to the dark lines on the ground. Concrete spheres as fallen stars, the visitor to the park could view a celestial motion in the middle of a city.

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<sup>57</sup> A French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre extensively discusses this matter of making a “representation of an absent or nonexistent object” that “what appears to imaging consciousness is not all similar to what is seen in perception” (Sartre, 2004, p.50-52). It fits to the case of Land art which is ironical in a sense Land art is mainly about physical interaction to a specific site.



Figure 9i. *Dark Star Park* (1979-84)



Figure 9ii. *Sun Tunnels* (1973 -76) in Lucin, Utah

\*Figure 9i Copyright © 2012 Arlington Arts/Figure 9ii Taken from Lailach (2007). p.58

Smithson (1996a) once wrote, “the investigation of a specific site is a matter of extracting concepts out of existing sense-data through direct perceptions” and “perception is prior to conception, when it comes to site selection or definition...one does not impose, but rather exposes the site” then he concluded that, “the unknown areas of sites can best be explored by artists” (p.60). In fact, the unknown areas of sites could be discovered and conceptualized by artists, but Holt and many others have proven that a cultivated area such as spaces in a city could also be explored and rediscovered by artists.

In the next section, Part Two, several topics dealt in Part One will be discussed further through a case study of Benesse Art Site Naoshima.

## **Part Two: Benesse Art Site Naoshima**

For this section of writing, I would like to focus on one case, Benesse Art Site Naoshima in Japan. It has grown to be a large community art project which art is there to energize a sleepy town. Earlier, the question, whether public art could be for common good or not, has not been answered. Unquestionably, Land art would make us see what we have not recognized to see, in result, enriches our experience of perceiving nature in a different way. And this is a valuable aspect of art. Even some artists approach to public art commissions for improving an ecological and aesthetical environment of urban space and not necessarily for expressing what they believe, they surely have good intentions. This is demonstrated in Benesse Art Site Naoshima that while practicing art in the way artists wish, they could help the public rediscover things and appreciate life.

Benesse Art Site Naoshima, there are many potentials; a potential which a community could regain its identity through art projects, and an art museum potentially could become a social place which promote a community activity, and architecture to be recognized as not a container for art but as art. All in all, these are the potentials to bring back art for the enjoyment of life even in a remote place.

The first point, to regain the identity of a community through art is discussed in the writing section: House Project and art festivals. The second point, a museum could have a social function, is discussed in Benesse House Museum. The third point, 'architecture as art', is probably one of the most intriguing parts of the Benesse Art House Naoshima's case. In Naoshima, Inujiam, and Teshima, there are unique architectures being built. And since they are unique by themselves, the experience of entering to such places is already being affected on the whole experience of viewing artworks. In the case of Chichu Art Museum (in Naoshima) and Teshima Art Museum (in Teshima), the visitor is not only connected to the experience of viewing art but also to the surrounding nature. In other words, architecture would intensify the elements of nature in order to enrich the experience of the visitor.

The discussion will begin with a historical background of the island, Naoshima with special features which make Naoshima (also Inujima and Teshima) a distinct place. The later discussions will be based on descriptive analysis taking examples one by one (although not all works are discussed thoroughly).

## Forgotten Islands

### *-A brief backgrounds of Naoshima and the Seto Inland Sea*

Once upon a time, the Seto Inland Sea (or Inland Sea) served as an important sea transportation route which connected *Honshu* (the mainland), *Shikoku* and *Kyushu*,<sup>58</sup> and also far places such as Korea and China (see Figure 10). Apparently, Inland Sea's contribution was not only as a major means of transportation, but also as a source of inspiration. The beauty of Seto has been captivating the travelers and many poetries dealing with the Seto Inland Sea could be found even in *Manyōshū* (7<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup> century), the oldest existing collection of Japanese poetry. After the extensive development of road transportation system during the post war period, Inland Sea has gained peace. However, it is drawing an attention once more as an innovative cultural center.

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<sup>58</sup> Japan is an archipelago and there are four largest islands, Hokkaido, Honsyu, Shikoku, and Kyusyu.

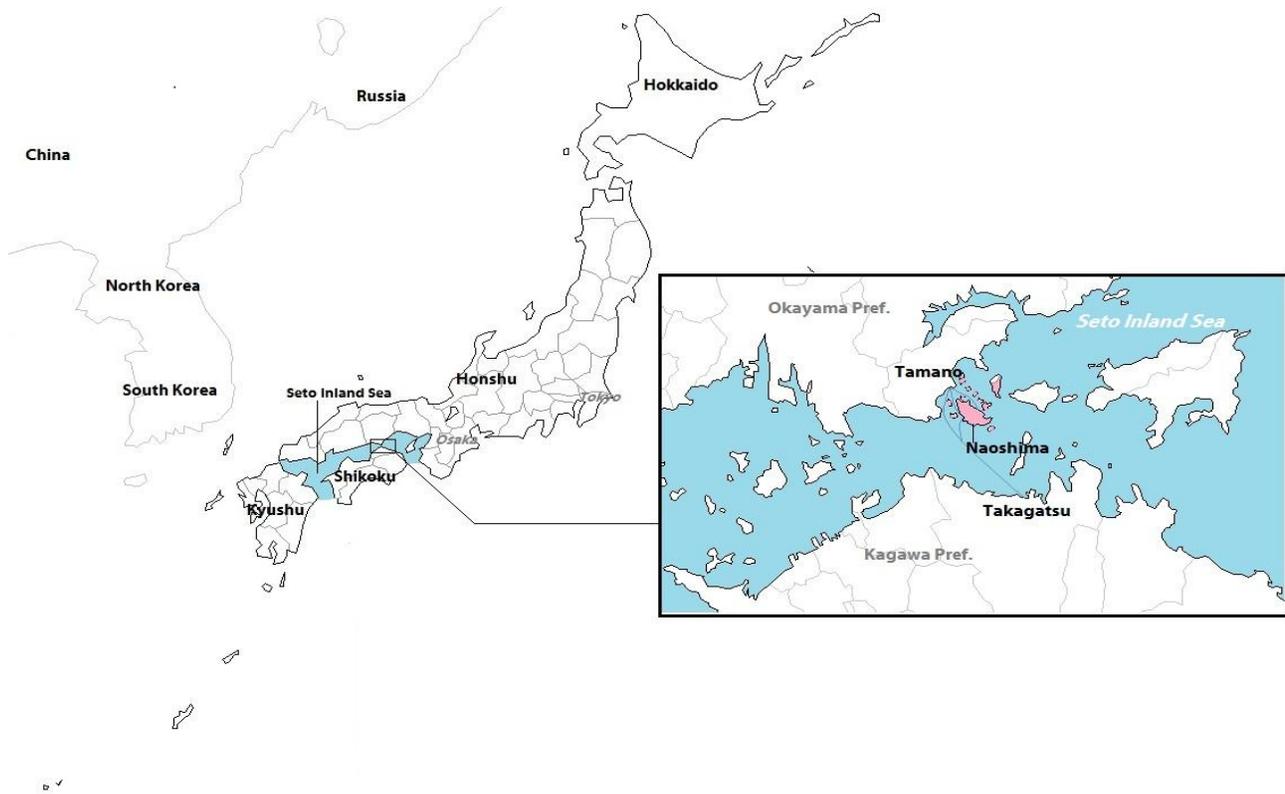


Figure 10. a map of Japan with a detail map of Naoshima and the nearby area

In 2010, the Setouchi Interantional Art Festival (the Setouchi Triennale) was held in seven islands in which all located Inland Sea.<sup>59</sup> The center of the festival was the Naoshima main island, nowadays known as the center of Benesse Art Site Naoshima. The festival featured 75 artists (projects from 18 countries) and lasted about 100 days. During that time, the festival attracted approximately 938,000 visitors.<sup>60</sup> The Venice Biennale in Italy, one of the largest and most prestigious contemporary arts expositions attracted over 440,000 at the Art Exhibition today (note that there are Architecture, Cinema, Dance, Music, and Theater to the Biennale other than ‘Art’).<sup>61</sup> Looking at

<sup>59</sup> Those seven islands are Naoshima, Teshima, Megijima, Ogijima, Shodoshima, Oshima, Inujima.

<sup>60</sup> According to the report published by Benesse Holdings, Inc. <http://www.benesse-hd.co.jp/en/csr/column/index.html>

<sup>61</sup> See the “Art” section at La Binnele’ website: <http://www.labiennale.org/en/biennale/history/>. It states, “The 54th International Art Exhibition, directed by Bice Curiger and set up at the Giardini and Arsenale venues, and elsewhere around Venice, closed on 27th November 2011. The event attracted over 440,000 visitors, resulting in an increase of 18% when compared to the previous edition in 2009”.

the number only, it tells that the Setouchi International Art Festival was a huge success commercially (although the ‘commercial’ purpose of this festival differs from The Venice Biennale).

There are about 3,000 islands in the Seto Inland Sea and many of those islands are uninhabited. Naoshima used to belong to those ordinary islands that existed in Inland Sea. Naoshima (or Naoshima town) is an archipelago consists of 27 islands among those 3,000. And among 27, only three islands (including Naoshima main island: 14.23km<sup>2</sup>) have inhabitants and these islands can be reached only by boat. In the past decade, Naoshima has grown into a popular tourist destination, and its unique art projects held in the island involving two neighboring Island, Teshima and Inujima, have been drawing the attentions of art critics and artists internationally.

Until not so long time ago Naoshima had been struggling with issues such as depopulation, the increase of aging population, unstable economy, and the decline number of incoming tourists. As a result, the island became isolated.<sup>62</sup> It was likewise many dying islands and remote areas in Japan. But, it had not always been this way. The present settlement began to form in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>63</sup> During the Edo period (from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century), Noshima seemed to be lively and culturally blooming.<sup>64</sup> In the beginning of 20th century, the island confronted a downfall of fishery. The island sought resolution in the industry (copper smeltery) which left the island ecologically in a poor condition. In contrast to the damage on island’s nature caused by smokes from metal industries, the island enjoyed the economical growth. Nonetheless, there was a downfall of the industry followed by the decrease of population in the late 60s.<sup>65</sup> In the 90s, an

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<sup>62</sup> The population of over 65 years old was nearly 30 % in 2006. It means more than a quarter of the whole population in the island is most likely to be retired. See <http://www.town.naoshima.lg.jp/pdf/kokuminhogo.pdf>

<sup>63</sup> A navy lord, Tsugitoshi Takahara (1531-1619) built a castle and a town ‘Honmachi’ after he acquired the island Naoshima along with two other neighboring islands in 1582.

<sup>64</sup> Kabuki, a traditional theater and Ningyo Joruri, a puppet show seemed to attract the locals and people from outside the island.

<sup>65</sup> The population of Naoshima Town was 6,007 in the year 1970 but it shrank to almost half in the year 2000 (3,705). See Japanese Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications: Statistics Bureau: <http://www.stat.go.jp/english/index.htm>

industrial waste disposal facility was built in order to resolve the fall of economy in the island. Ironically, this facility only contributed to distribute a negative image of Naoshima town which turned off the tourists and the fish consumers.

Nonetheless, the change has occurred. And the change was enormous. For instance, the number of visitors has skyrocketed as it entered a new millennium. Town-Naoshima Tourism Association announced that there were 342, 591 tourists visited Naoshima in the year 2008 alone.<sup>66</sup> In other words, this small island attracted visitors that are 100 times of the whole island population within a year. The island has been turned into a major tourist attraction in Japan in the past two decades. How this did happen?

#### *-Key persons*

There are two key persons who are the masterminds of Benesse Art Site Naoshima, Soichiro Fukutake and the curator Yuji Akimoto (Director of Benesse House Museum and Chichu Museum from 1992-2007) and, perhaps, they should be mentioned at this stage.

The fate of Noshima changed forever in 1985 when the founder and the former CEO of Benesse Corporation (formally, Fukutake Publishing Co., Ltd.) Tetsuhiko Fukutake and Chikatsugu Miyake, then mayor of Naoshima agreed to cultivate the southern area of the island. Initially, the plan was to build a camping site for the youth. However, after the surprise death of Tetsuhiko Fukutake a year later, his son Soichiro Fukutake (the current CEO of the corporation) took over the project. As was promised, the Naoshima International Camping Ground was constructed and opened in 1989. The fact which might have largely contributed to determine the later course of Naoshima development could be the involvement of Japanese architect Tadao Ando. Fukutake appointed

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<sup>66</sup> See the report on Naoshima town by Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism: <http://www.mlit.go.jp/common/000138918.pdf>

Ando, winner of the 1995 Pritzker Prize,<sup>67</sup> as the supervisor of the development of the site. Since then, Ando has been designing major buildings in Naoshima main island.

Tetsuhiko Fukutake, founder of Fukutake Publishing Co., Ltd., became known as an art lover since he established Fukutake Collection in 1971. His son was no less. While he enjoys the success of a company,<sup>68</sup> Soichiro Fukutake has “engineered a transformation of Naoshima which flourished into a unique community where nature, local culture and contemporary art and architecture coexist” (“Revitalizing Remote Island”, 2010, p. 31). Fukutake states, “a good community makes a good country and good culture” and as a “plea to use corporate profits responsibly” Fukutake says, “economy is a servant to culture” (as cited in Tokuda, 2010, p.11). This multimillionaire Soichiro Fukutake was born and currently resides in Okayama, nearby city of Inland Sea. In this sense, Fukutake himself is a local resident and most likely, the Seto Inland Sea is familiar area for him.<sup>69</sup> Assumably, the Seto Inland Sea and islands are close to his heart since he has provided mightily supports to the development of Naoshima.

Nevertheless, the success of Art Site Naoshima was not brought by Fukutake alone. Yuji Akimoto is another key person in the development of Naoshima. He was appointed as an artistic director and chief curator of Art Site Naoshima in 1992. Akimoto worked for Naoshima until 2004 before becoming the director of 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa, which also became an enormous success. Akimoto was an artist to begin with. In 1991, he was hired as a ‘curator’/manager for the first Museum in Naoshima, Benesse House Museum, which was to be opened to public in 1992. In retrospect, Akimoto states that there were no clear job descriptions for his position in the early year because unlike public museums, there was nothing to follow (no

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<sup>67</sup> The Pritzker Architecture Prize is the award given by the Hyatt Foundation annually to an outstanding living architect. The prize is often considered as the Noble Prize of architecture. See the home page of The Pritzker Architecture Prize: <http://www.pritzkerprize.com/>

<sup>68</sup> Soichiro Fukutake was ranked seventeenth Japan’s Richest man by Forbes in 2009. [http://www.forbes.com/lists/2009/73/japanrich09\\_Soichiro-Fukutake\\_VNPC.html](http://www.forbes.com/lists/2009/73/japanrich09_Soichiro-Fukutake_VNPC.html)

<sup>69</sup> Naoshima is located only 3km away from Tamano, Okayama and 13km from Takamatsu, Kagawa although the town itself belongs to Kagawa prefecture.

guideline, master plan, or a goal set by Benesse) but his own intuition.<sup>70</sup> In this sense, Akimoto had to blaze a trail for this experimental art museum. Over the next decade and half, Akimoto organized site-specific works in the island, *The Standard 1* and *The Standard 2* (art festivals involving the whole island), and House Projects along with museum operations. It is an uncanny coincident to read Akimoto's comment that "an eye-opening experience and a starting point of Art Site Naoshima was the visit to Isamu Noguchi's art studio, currently operated as the Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum (located in Kagawa Prefecture, Japan)" ( as cited in "Ecologue Interview No. 3", 2004). Akimoto acquired an idea of site-specificity and spaces energized by passion and caring from Noguchi's former art studio.

Currently, Benesse Art Site Naoshima includes three museums and 39 outdoor art works, several art projects in Naoshima( main island), a museum, a large installation, and outdoor art projects in Tsushima, and a large scale installation gallery and four 'House Project' artworks in Inujima.<sup>71</sup>

#### *-Five 'special' features of Benesse Art Site Naoshima*

There are five notable points about Benesse Art Site Naoshima which I would like to discuss briefly before going into the details of artworks, art projects and festivals. These five points are crucial points when we discuss about Benesse Art Site Naoshima. And I believe that this discussion would clarify the distinct features of Art Site Naoshima.

### **1. It is operated by a private corporation in cooperation with the locals.**

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<sup>70</sup> In the interview given to Web Magazine VATE , Akimoto states that there was no art specialist in the corporation [other than himself]... although my proposals were not accepted by others at first, I thought 'originality' should be considered as an important aspects".

<sup>71</sup> See **Appendix A** for the list of works with maps.

First of all, Benesse Art Site Naoshima is operated by a private corporation. The development of Art Site Naoshima is largely attributed to the works done by Benesse Corporation (precisely speaking, by Benesse Holdings, Inc, and Naoshima Fukutake Art Museum Foundation). Not many museums of this scale is being built and run solely by a private enterprise. The former director of Museums in Naoshima, Akimoto explains that this whole project (Benesse Art Site Noshima) is “mécénat” (a corporate patronage for all kinds of cultural activities).<sup>72</sup> And the role of a private corporate patronage has, indeed, a significant role in promoting art for ‘everyone’ in Japan in the past few decades.

According to Nobuko Kawashima (2008), Japanese enterprises, especially, large corporate groups which operate department stores have been actively sponsoring art, often for a commercial purpose such as to improve the image of their stores (p.31). Nonetheless, since the founding of Association for Corporate Support for the Arts in 1990, this attitude changed. Kawashima continues that in spite of the economic crisis in Japan for the past two decades, this “corporate mécénat” has been increasing and becoming to be a leading agent in discovering emerging artists, promoting unconventional art projects (and festivals), and reaching all kinds of audiences (p. 35 & 37). In other words, private corporations could bring a new trend in the art scene, and at the same time, could widen the type of the audience. In fact, Benesse Corporation has done a remarkable work doing so. In addition to that, it has also put efforts in bring more cultural activities and business opportunities to a local community.

Needless to say, Benesse Corporation is not the only private corporation which supports visual arts with the focus of vitalizing a stagnant community. But it will certainly be seen as an outstanding example, good or bad, by the other corporations in Japan (and in the world). In terms

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<sup>72</sup> “Corporate mécénat” or “mécénat operation” is a term commonly used in Japan to describe a private enterprise sponsoring prizes, cultural festivals and operating museums.

of “corporate responsibility” for social well-being, which Soichiro Fukutake often mentions as one of his motivations,<sup>73</sup> Benesse Art Site Naoshima would be an interesting case to look at.

## **2. Benesse Art Site Naoshima is located in a remote place.**

The location of Naoshima is in a remote area which is isolated by sea (without a bridge to the mainland or Shikoku). Surprisingly, and perhaps, one of the most astonishing features of Art Site Naoshima is that this, being in a remote place, is actually used as an advantage. Akimoto says that the beginning was a struggle (having not enough visitors) but it all changed when he heard his direct boss pointing out that ‘a disadvantage could be an advantage’ (if looked from a different angle) (as cited in “Ecologue Interview No. 3”, 2004).

Quite obviously, what appears to be the disadvantage of Naoshima is an inconvenient transportation. There is only a ferryboat (leaving every hour) runs between the island and Okayama (in the mainland) or Kagawa (in Shikoku). Nevertheless, many visitors see this boat trip as a positive feature rather than negative.<sup>74</sup>

In any case, reaching Naoshima from abroad or Eastern Japan is not easy. A visitor from abroad would probably come from Fukuoka, Osaka or Tokyo. The distance between Tokyo and Okayama is around 700km. It is a long journey. Once the visitor arrives in the island, he or she is very much trapped in the island. Nonetheless, many seem to believe that Naoshima is worthy of visiting.

Yumi Yamaguchi (2010) states that visiting Naoshima is special not only because of the extensive art collection but also because of rich nature (p.64 & 80). She also claims that visiting Naoshima would require a certain “determination” because it would take some efforts to get there (p.80). But how many of us get distracted during the sightseeing because there are so many ‘other’ plans

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<sup>73</sup> See Fukutake (2011) p.6 & 9. See also interviews by Kikuchi (2009) for The University of Tokyo Foundation and “Revitalizing Remote Island” (2010).

<sup>74</sup> See the report “The Island of Contemporary Art: Naoshima”(n.d.) p. 5 by Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism. According to the report, 67.8 % answered “attractive” to the fact that there is only a ferryboat. Only 8.7% answered it as “negative” or “disadvantage”. This report has not published date, however, the information includes 2010. Therefore, assumeably, it was published between the late year 2010 and 2011.

to do? Museums are one of the most popular places to go for the tourists,<sup>75</sup> but museums are not ‘the only’ attraction that the tourists intend to visit in large cities. On the other hand, Naoshima as a town has nothing but fisherman’s dying villages and a small industrial area. Put another way, the visitor to the island will be going around Naoshima and will be viewing artworks in more relaxed manner compared to a large city with many attractions.

Speaking of dying villages, this feature, ‘decay’, has become the attraction in Naoshima. There were visible decays of a town caused by the depopulation in Naoshima. Akimoto explains that while he was searching for a breakthrough in the early stage of the development, he noticed several empty (or/and abandoned) houses. Then he thought, art could do something to help restoring the place (“Ecologue Interview No. 3”, 2004). Before long, a chance came to him. An old local lady was about to give up her 200-year old house because she wished to move to her daughter’s place in Osaka. Eventually, this house became the first artwork of Art House Project which was to restore an existing place and turn it into a work of art. Being in a remote place has an unexpected finding such as an old house which would have been long gone if it were in the middle of Tokyo city.

### **3. The majority of art works in the islands are permanent and immobile.**

In general, art museums and galleries do own a permanent collection. However, they also have circulating exhibitions which would usually last for a couple of months. In Naoshima, except Art Festivals like *The Standard* and Setouchi Triennale: the Setouchi International Art Festival, the majority of artworks will stay in Naoshima permanently. In fact, most of the works are made site specifically. Since the exhibition *Out of Bounds* held in 1994, there have been a number of site specific art created within the premise of Benesse Houses. If artworks are not made site specifically, the displays are arranged for a long term viewing. For instance, one of the main attractions in Art Site Naoshima is the Chichu Art Museum (an art museum “in the ground” or “in the earth” completed in 2004) which show artworks done by three artists; Walter De Maria,

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<sup>75</sup> Many reliable sources reveal that museums play an important role in Tourism. See for example, National Museum Directors’ Conference (NMDC) report on “Museums and Tourism” (2010).

Claude Monnet, and James Turrell (Figure 11). This building was designed by Tadao Ando in collaboration with the artistic director of the museum Akimoto and the artists, for instance, De Maria. This astonishing building has been designed for a specific place in Naoshima and the gallery spaces are also designed specifically for a particular kind of installation.



Figure 11. Chichu Art Museum Copyright © Naoshima Fukutake Museum Foundation

This sort of idea, creating an artwork (or an architecture) site specifically is making Naoshima one-of-kind. Clearly, site specific art works and architectures are to be experienced than simply viewed. The visitors could view the artworks through online or magazines as ‘images’ but eventually they need to be in Naoshima in order to truly enjoy them. Besides a peculiar architecture, those site specific art to be permanent is also becoming to be a distinct characteristic of Art Site Naoshima. Akimoto explains casually that the reason for this (artworks to be permanent or semi-permanent) is simply because a short term exhibition in this remote place would not work (Akimoto, 2009). Perhaps, if a museum is in an accessible place having regular museum goers, this might work. But in Naoshima’s case, the visitors are first timers coming from other cities and they would not bother to come for a circulating exhibition. Permanent exhibitions or installations would be suitable (in the sense that the visitors know what they would see to some extent).

Of course, there are ‘regulars’ who have been visiting Naoshima more than once. Seemingly, they are attracted by the permanent works in Naoshima because they have their favorite works which they can go back to. Furthermore, there are not many museums that the visitor could actually touch and feel artworks like in Naoshima. Many visitors also seem to notice that the timing of

viewing artworks effect the experience greatly (morning, sunset, night time, etc.,) and seasonal changes would also add color to the place. This fact appeared to be one of many reasons that the visitors decide to go back to Naoshima.<sup>76</sup>

The details will be discussed in the later section, but the works to be permanent and site specific is also meaningful for the local people. They “began to feel close to the artworks” since commissioned site specific art started to appear in Naoshima ( “Ecologue Interview No. 3”, 2004). To gain the local residents’ support seems to be crucial for outdoor works, especially works that are made in a residential area.

#### **4. There are hardly any boundaries between artworks and the viewer.**

The distance between art works and spectators are extremely close in Naoshima. The visitors to the island literally could spend intimate time with works of art for a whole day.<sup>77</sup> Benesse House Museum (completed 1992) is a complex building which includes gallery spaces, café, restaurant, and an accommodation facility. There are also three other hotels operated by Benesse in Naoshima main island; the Oval (1995), Park (2006), and Beach (2006), where the visitors of the island could stay ‘with’ artworks over night. The artworks that the visitor would encounter in this Islands are renowned artists such as Claude Monet, Alexander Calder, Walter De Maria, James Turrell, Dan Graham, Bruce Nauman, Frank Stella, Richard Long, Kusama Yayoi, just to mention a few. Undoubtedly, it would be a quite experience for all the visitors who decide to stay in the island for few days.

Apparently, the locals also feel close to the artworks, especially outdoor site specific art and the works done as a part of Art House Project. It is a famous story among the locals and the stuffs

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<sup>76</sup> See **Appendix B** for the comments listed at Jalan Net forum. The online travel magazine, Jalan Net has a forum where anyone could freely leave comments and tips of traveling. In Art Site Naoshima section, there are 61 comments at the moment (Jan. 5, 2012). The majority of them wish to go back to Naoshima. And they briefly states reasons for it. See also the report, “The Island of Contemporary Art : Naoshima”. It reports that over 90% of the visitors wish to visit Naoshima again.

<sup>77</sup> Benesse House Museum building includes accommodation facility within the same premise. Oval is which is connected to Benesse House Museum by a tram is also a hotel which offer a free access to gallery spaces 24/7.

working at museums in Naoshima that a small branch on top of Yayoi Kusama's yellow pumpkin sculpture (1994-2005) (Figure 12) once went missing but it was found and brought back by a local fisherman (it was floating in sea). When Kusama heard the story, she was pleased that "[my pumpkin] is that much adopted by the local people in the island" (cited in Akimoto, 2011a, p.57).



Figure 12. Yayoi Kusama *Pumpkin*. Photo: Glenn Kessler/The Washington Post

## **5. Not just art that makes Naoshima a special place**

There are many layers of experiences offered in Naoshima (and in two other neighboring islands: Teshima and Inujima). This point will be discussed more in detail in the later section. To put it simple, visiting Benesse Art Site Naoshima could not be compared with an experience of visiting a city museum. The atmosphere of an island is unique. An Island tends to preserve its custom undisturbedly. Surrounded by sea, the source of life in the island has been depended on nature. Time flows differently. Naoshima is small in scale but has different faces. There are mountains, capes, coves and bays which add dynamism to the island. Ando's architectures which blend into such landscape are welcoming doorways to an impressive collection of artworks. In addition, the medieval town, Honmura enthrall the visitor with charms. Art House Project which is conducted 'in' Honmura regenerates the olds to the new. This project bring a transformation - turning weathered, old, and forgotten houses into something extraordinary, valuable, irreplaceable, and

new – and this gives a completely new perspective in mundane scenery. The locals would voluntarily and proudly guide the visitor to such unusual sites. Site-specific art that are spread around the southern part of the island greet the visitor with surprises. And there are many more to the island.

In the following sections, the artworks, projects and festivals of Art Site Naoshima will be discussed in detail.

### The beginning of Renaissance: Site-specificity

According to the report by Town-Naoshima Tourism Association, about 20 % of the visitors to Naoshima are foreigners. It is said that Naoshima started to get an international attention sometime after Condé Nast Traveler magazine March 2000 issue listed Naoshima Island as one of the seven wonders. Naoshima Island was among Paris, Berlin, Alexandria, Bilbao, Dubai and Rio in this special design issue which Burj Al Arab Hotel building in Dubai made the cover. And Ando's architectures are without doubt, one of many popular attractions for the visitors of Naoshima.

According to the hotel's customer record provided by Benesse House Museum, 15% of the guests stayed there are foreigners. Moreover, 40.8% of the foreign guests were from Asia, 31.3 % from Europe and 23.4% from North America (Kasahara, 2009, p.24). And among them, South Koreans are in the first place (American and French come in the second and the third place respectively) (Kasahara, 2009, p.24). The reason for this "is because Ando and SANAA are popular in South Korea and [Yayoi] Kusama is popular in US", explains a Benesse Corporation's contact person (as cited in Ishiguro, 2011).<sup>78</sup> In other words, not only renowned artists' works but also well-known architects' works appeal to the foreign visitors.

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<sup>78</sup> SANAA stands for "Sejima and Nishizawa and Associates" which is a Japanese architectural firm (founded in 1995) In 2010, SANAA was awarded the Pritzker Prize like Ando. They have participated in Standard II art festival in Naoshima in 2006 and they also designed Naoshima Ferry Terminal (2003-2006) in Naoshima.

## -Architectures

As mentioned earlier, Tadao Ando (b. 1941 -) has been designing the major buildings (museums and hotels) in the Naoshima main island. At the time of writing, there are three museums; Benesse House Museum (1992), Chichu Art Museum (2004), and Lee Ufan Museum (dedicated to a Korean-born contemporary artists, Lee Ufan) (2010). Besides museums, there are accommodation facilities which are four Benesse Houses; “Museum” (1992), the Oval (1995), the Park (2006), and the Beach (2006).

It would not be an overstatement to say that Ando has been shaping the contour Benesse Art Site Naoshima. The accommodation facilities designed by Ando are stylistically typical of Ando (except he used woods more than his usual ‘concretes’ for the Park and the Beach). However, Ando were clearly ambitious for designing museums, especially Chichu Art Museum. This ‘in the earth’ art museum is done in collaboration with the artistic director of the museum Akimoto and the artists, Walter De Maria and James Turrell. The curious mating of art and architecture could be seen in this museum. Perhaps, Chichu Art Museum is not staggering as the Pompidou Centre in Paris or eccentric like Guggenheim Museum Bilbao in Basque. It might not have so-called “Bilbao factor” or “the Bilbao effect” either.<sup>79</sup> However, it has its own claim to be an important work for Benesse Art Site Naoshima.

Ando could be described as one of the most renowned Japanese architects of the day. He is known for his simple geometrics, dynamic spatial arrangements, the use of natural elements (wind, lights, and the surrounding nature such as trees) and cast-in-place concretes that are bare and somewhat monotonic. Ando has distinct approaches to designing architectures and one of them is the treatment of space. Ando explains that he wants to “nurture space into being with care, attentive to craftsmanship” but at the same time, he is “resolved to pry open using the harshest force” (Ando, 1999, p.10). In fact, Ando has a modest and caring side (he considers nature as

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<sup>79</sup> Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is design wise spectacular and it has brought a economical growth to an industrial city which was in decline. Seemingly, media started to call this miracle “the Bilbao effect”. See the article “the Bilbao effect” by Witold Rybczynski at The Atlantic magazine September 2002 issue.

‘precious property’) but he is also known for his bold play (less tolerant and uncompromising).<sup>80</sup> This personality surely reflects on the contrasty elements of Ando’s architecture.

It would be interesting to include one episode of this ‘contrast’ before getting into the discussion of his works in Naoshima. Ando is self-taught architect and he became known when he won the Annual Prize of Architectural Institute of Japan for his Row House in Sumiyoshi (1976) in 1979. This work made him recognized as unique but audacious and ‘unkind’ architect. Row House in Sumiyoshi was a small private resident made of bare concrete (Ando’s signature material). The house was environmental friendly (no excess materials or high-tech heating system) but not so user friendly (cold in winter, having an open central courtyard in spite of a small site, etc.,). It is a famous story that when the judge of the prize and established architect, Togo Murano came to see Row House in Sumiyoshi, he said to Ando that “the prize should be given to the client [the owner of the house] because the client had the guts to accept Ando’s design proposal and actually live in such a house” (as cited in Ando, 2011b, p.50). This kind of Ando’s attitude though, seems to work positively for Naoshima where Ando’s architectures and artworks collide with each other and create unique sites. Having said that, both Ando and Akimoto states, it has been debate after debate crashing each other’s contentions.<sup>81</sup>

Akimoto confesses that it has not always been easy for him and artists to arrange exhibitions and installations within the premises of which Ando designed.<sup>82</sup> One reason could be that Ando’s

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<sup>80</sup> See Ando’s semi-autographical book “Think while waling” (2011). p.75-77. Ando emphasizes that architecture is not a single entity. When Ando designed a complex building “Omotesando Hills” in Shibuya, Tokyo, he did not want the building to be taller than zelkova trees on the pedestrian street in front of the building. He considered those trees to be an important part of a city.

<sup>81</sup> See Ando (2011) p.24 and Akimoto’s statement in “Living in the Center of Art” (Akimoto, 2009). He states that when Benesse House Museum started to invite artists to create works ‘on site’, the artists were given a generous amount of freedom. In the beginning, Ando would get upset if artworks are made in a place that would compromise the space and aesthetics of the building.

<sup>82</sup> Akimoto (2011a) states in the book, *Naoshima :The Utopia of Setouchi Art* that “artists like Richard Long and Jannis Kounellis were having difficult time with Ando’s designed spaces” ( p.73).

architecture is already a piece of art. As some claim architecture to be art,<sup>83</sup> Ando's architecture is a work of art which manifests its existence not only by functions (as to accommodate art, people, etc.) but also by forms and beauty. What Ando intends to realize through his design is clearly stated in the essay of "Thinking in Ma, Opening Ma" ("Ma" means "space" in Japanese):

I neither undertake rational handling of architecture strictly in the realm of reality, nor attempt a fabricating whereby architecture is solely infused with fiction. Rather, I want to instill fiction in the core of the real. Within a single architecture I seek to engage overwhelming fiction with reality, and create defamiliarized space whose fiction informs the everyday. By introducing such contradiction to architecture, do we not find architecture capable, at last, of offering true richness? (Ando, 1996, p.9)

The first museum for Naoshima designed by Ando was Benesse House Museum (Figure 13). This building was a complex building made in such a way that the visitor could enjoy the panoramic views of the Seto Inland Sea. Construction wise, Benesse House Museum has a unique structure because "more than half of the building's volume sits underground so as not to intrude on these scenic surroundings" (Links Editorial, 1998-06, p.36). Ando (2011a) explains that in order to follow the regulations of protecting surrounding nature, he thought of an alternative concept, "invisible architecture" (p. 24). Ando (2011a) continues that "by making architecture almost invisible [from outside], it would offer 'spaces' rather than a building so that the visitor of the museum could appreciate nature and art freely, and at the same time, artworks would also be in a less restricted atmosphere" (p.24). The same principle could be seen for the the Oval (Figure 13, 14i & 14ii) and Chichu Art Museum (Figure 11).

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<sup>83</sup> This debate "is architecture art?" is perhaps, not a new topic in our time. See, for example, Tolostoy (1896) p. 16-17, and Rasmussen (1997) p.9-10.

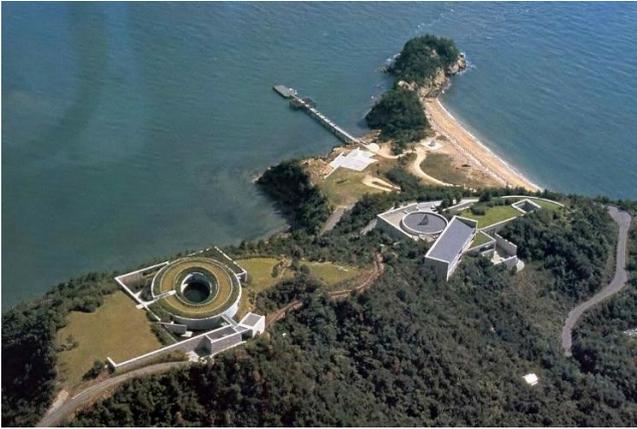


Figure 13. Benesse House Museum (right) and Oval (left). Photo:Tomio Ohashi/Misuo Matsuoka/Hiroshi Ueda

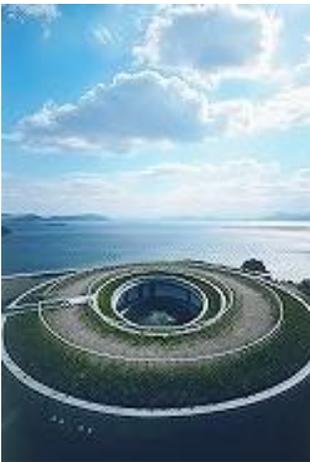


Figure 14i. The close image of Oval. Photo:Tomio Ohashi



Figure 14ii. Oval. Photo: Osamu Watanabe

\*Figure 14i & 14ii photo: Tomio Ohash and Figure 5ii by Osamu Watanabe. Copyright © Benesse Holdings, Inc.

The Oval is a hilltop six-room exclusive hotel built as an annex to Benesse House Museum. A small cable car would transport the guest between Benesse House Museum and The Oval. The Oval seems to offer more than lodging. For instance, the doughnut shape structure enables a 360 degree view like an observatory, and the opening in the center would resemble a planetarium in a starry night. The round pool right in the centre is like a mirror where the sky and the earth merge. The Oval is, likewise Benesse House Museum, covered with earth and green glasses. These elements of the building fuse together with nature (Figure 14i & 14ii).

Notice that all hotel rooms have artworks done by renowned artists such as Sol LeWitt, Josef Albers, Tomas Ruff, just to mention a few. In the case of staying at Benesse House Museum overnight, not only the guest would have his own art at the bedside but also has a free access to the gallery space after the museum's closing time. In Benesse House Museum there is a ten-room hotel built inside the museum so that the guests could explore the gallery spaces beyond the closing time without the presence of security guards or other viewers. And those gallery spaces are filled with artworks of, for example, Andy Warhol's *Flowers* (1967), Jasper Johns *White Alphabets* (1968), Nam June Paik's *Sonatine for Goldfish* (1992), and Bruce Nauman's neon art installation, *100 Live and Die* (1984). The whole point of this attempt is to realize the concept, 'coexistence of nature, art and architecture'.<sup>84</sup>

Chichu Art Museum is also architecturally unique in a sense that it does not reveal its structure to the visitor. Ando's one of essences of designing architecture, fiction vs. real and familiar vs. unfamiliar, could be witnessed through this building. The whole construction of the building is set completely in the earth. This museum and Lee Ufan Museum (which will be discussed later) were realized as a collaborative work with artists and the former artistic director of Chichu Art Museum, Akimoto. For this reason, the analyses of this architecture should be done along with the discussion of artworks that are inseparable to the construction.

Unlike Benesse House Museum which was built earlier, the whole idea of building a museum began with a large painting of Claude Monet. Later, James Turrel and Walter De Maria joined to be a part of the museum. In other words, this museum was designed for specific artworks (and for chosen artist), thus, all the works are permanent installation. In this building, "light and darkness" play a critical role. For instance, the museum's light source is entirely depended on natural light.

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<sup>84</sup> See "Benesse House Museum" section of Benesse Art Site Naoshima website: <http://www.benesse-artsite.jp/en/benessehouse-museum/index.html>. This sort of concept has been suggested by Fukutake (2011) that Naoshima to be the place of "contemporary art, nature, and history" p.4.

This concept, taking a natural light as a part of architecture, is not a new concept for Ando. However, this element is particularly crucial to this museum.

Ando literally saturated Chichu Art museum with his philosophy. The experience of visiting Chichu museum already starts even before entering the museum. A path to the entrance of the museum is unusually long. Between a ticket office and a main gate, there is a 400 m<sup>2</sup> garden which resembles Monet's water lily ponds (Figure 15). This trip takes a few minutes (about 150m long) but that is not the end of it. From the main gate, there is another long path that leads to the main building of the museum. Ando advocates the importance of dialogue and 'walking' is a part of this dialogue. It is often mentioned in Ando's semi-autographic book, *Think while Walking* that the act of walking creates a time to think, and even questions about life (Ando, 2011b. p.36-39, 2011). Therefore, walking could be a meaningful act.



Figure 15. A view of garden on the way to Chichu Art Museum

\*Figure 15 Copyright 2010 © the Setouchi International Art Festival Supporter's site "Koebi Hiroba".

There is no 'order' of viewing in the museum. It is like a maze that the viewer would get lost and meet artworks unexpectedly. Independent gallery spaces are connected by corridors some part, without ceilings (Figure 16i) and the one facing the courtyard which has a 30 cm gap (Figure 16ii & 16iii). This gap becomes a line of light which leads the visitor to a next room.

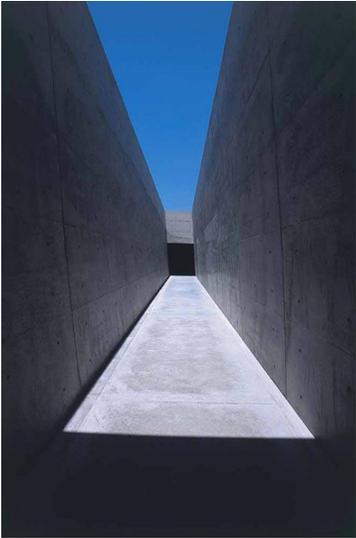


Figure 16i. A corridor at Chichu Art Museum

Figure 16ii & 16iii. The courtyard and the corridor inside

\*Figure 16i , 16ii & 16iii photo: Fujitsuka Mitsumasa. Copyright © Naoshima Fukutake Museum Foundation

One gallery space is dedicated to Claude Monet (Figure 17). Five large paintings of Claude Monet's late works, Water Lilies surround the viewer as continuous scenery. Akimoto, who took the lead in designing this exhibition space for Monet's works, explains that the space was made as Monet requested for the Orangerie Museum (Musée de l'Orangerie) in Paris (Akimoto, 2011, p.14).<sup>85</sup> The exhibition space is filled with encompassing diffused lights (rather than direct bright lights). The entire room is simple (white plain walls) yet, careful arrangements of sizing and shapes of the room, and the selection of materials used for the space tells the mastery of design. The walls are elongated horizontally, rather than vertically which synchronizes with Monet's Water Lilies. The floor is covered by small marble tiles (2 cm<sup>2</sup> each) which seem to chime perfectly with Monet's obsession of visualizing lights through his paintings.

<sup>85</sup> See "De Giverny a l'Orangerie" section at the website of Musée de l'Orangerie: [http://www.Musée-orangerie.fr/homes/home\\_id24795\\_url2.htm](http://www.Musée-orangerie.fr/homes/home_id24795_url2.htm). See also the "Dossier Specila: Musée de l'Orangeir" section at Maison des Musée de France (MMF) website: <http://www.Muséesdefrance.org/museum/special/backnumber/0605/specialo2.html>. "The architect Camille Lefèvre renovated the building (which was originally a green house) to fit Monet's The Water Lilies". Monet is also known for being very particular about his paintings and settings. It is famous that Monet haired six gardners to take care his garden and water lilies.



Figure 17. The Claude Monet Space, Chichu Art Museum. Photo: Studio International

These late works of Monet, *Water Lilies* were done while the artist was struggling with failing eye sights. Monet must have strived to capture even the slightest change of day lights. But, a humanistic art critic Harold Rosenberg might say, this struggle to capture the immediacy of a place as the artist experiences would be reflected on his paintings and that makes a work of art interesting and valuable.<sup>86</sup> The art critic Miwon Kwon (2010) describes this Monet's permanent installation set in such a small island in Japan to be a "convergence as a magical site-specific return" (p.161).

In contrast to the exhibition space of Monet's paintings, the rooms for James Turrell are utterly transformed in order to effectively show Turrell's light installations. Turrell treated lights with special interest just like Monet, but in a very different manner.

James Turrell is famous for his project in progress, *Roden Crater* in Arizona, US. Turrell has been dealing with 'light and space' since the beginning of his career. For ChiChu Museum, *Afrum Pale Blue* (Figure 18i), *Open Field* (Figure 18ii), and *Open Sky* (Figure 18iii) are set on display. These three works would exemplify his major achievements. Turrell treats light as an object and also as a material to create a space so that a space could be seen and felt by the viewer in a new way. For instance, *Open Field* appears to be a flat rectangle light casted on the wall. However, it is actually

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<sup>86</sup> See, for instance, Rosenberg (1972) *The De-definition of Art*.

an opening to a room which is filled with dense lights. The visitor would walk into the room to experience the light as something physical. Turrell's work "intensifies the experience of light by isolating it and occluding light from events not looked at" (Turrell, 1993, n.p.). Although light is the primary source of energy for living beings, it is often dismissed in a daily life. Turrell's work would certainly present such mundane substance as an unforgettable experience.



Figure 18i. *Afrum Pale Bule*

Figure 10ii. *Open Field*

Figure 18iii. *Open Sky*

\*Figure 18i & 18ii Photo: Naohiro Tsutsui ©2011 Shinchosha Publishing Co, Ltd./ Figure 18iii. Photo :Fujitsuka Mitsumasa  
Copyright © Naoshima Fukutake Museum Foundation

Walter De Maria, last but not least, would take the viewer to a different dimension. At Chichu Art Museum, De Maria created *Time/Timeless/No Time* (Figure 19i & 19ii ) which Rudi Fuchs, the former director of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam and Documenta 7, called "Sistine Chapel of the 21<sup>st</sup> century" (as cited in Yamaguchi, 2010, p.66).



Figure 19i Sounds of drums are in the back ground of this installation Figure 19ii

\*Figure 19i & 19ii Photo: Michael Kellough Copyright © Naoshima Fukutake Museum Foundation

At a first glance, there is hardly any connection between Impressionist painter Monet and De Maria (or Turrell). Nonetheless, Akimoto (2011b) claims that in terms of creating a space of eternity, these artists are alike (p.20). De Maria's most known work is probably his large scale Land art, *the Lighting Field* (1977) in New Mexico. Likewise, *the Lighting Field*, the work is being made with perfection and the strict rules set by the artist.<sup>87</sup> The particular size of this gallery space was requested by De Maria to Ando. As Akimoto (2011b) points out, the highlight of viewing *Time/Timeless/No Time* is the collisions between De Maria and Ando triggered by De Maria's challenge against Ando's architecture (p.20).

Furthermore, Chichu Art Museum has a special regulation that is the limitation of the viewers' numbers. At the museum, only a limited number of people could go inside at a time in order to maximize the experience of viewing. The visitors have to wait for their turn. But, there is no time limit for viewing so that the visitor could take their time to enjoy the works as long as they wish.

Lee Ufan Museum is a monographic museum, again created by Ando and Lee Ufan (b. 1936) together. It is a semi-underground building where exhibitions are organized by themes; "Space of Encounter", "Space of Silence", "Space of Meditation, and "Space of Shadow" (Figure 20). Ufan is known as a leading figure of the art movement called "Mono-ha" which appeared in the end of 1960s. Minimal art and Arte Povera are often compared with Mono-ha as an art movement that follows the same track. Mono-ha artists usually use natural and man-made found objects and present them almost as they are which allow the materials to speak for themselves.<sup>88</sup> Ufan admits that the whole idea of building a museum in Naoshima which is dedicated to his works would be contradictory to what he has been doing in the past four decades (Ufan would call an art museum

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<sup>87</sup> The *Lighting Field*, consists of 400 stainless steel poles with solid, is arranged in a rectangular 1 mile by 1 kilometre grid array. It can be viewed from a small hut made specifically for observing this work. No camera allowed and only a limited number of visitors allow.

<sup>88</sup> See Eu, et al. (1995) p.100 and Yoshitake, et al. (2012)

as a storage/graveyard of art).<sup>89</sup> However, Ufan eventually agreed to do so when a long-term acquaintance Ando told him “to create a new kind of museum of your own” (as cited in Ufan, 2011, p.29). This resulted in creating an exceptional museum in the place “artists could realize their pure interests in the collaboration with natural environment at the fullest extent” (Ufan, 2011, p.31). In the same way as Chichu Art Museum, Lee Ufan Museum would take the viewer into a maze of ‘infinity’ with a good long walk.<sup>90</sup>



Figure 20. Lee Ufan ‘Relatum-Shadow of Stone’ (2010) Photo:Tadasu Yamamoto

In such a small island in a remote place, there are three museums, Benesse House Museum, Chichu Art Museum, and Lee Ufan Museum, which not many art museums in Japan could compete with. And beyond question, these museums are unique in a sense that artworks are not simply ‘sitting’ in a gallery space but rather ‘living’ with architecture by enkindling each other. Furthermore, in the case of Benesse House Museum, a hotel is integrated into the museum premise which hosts art and the guests together. Chichu Art Museum and Lee Ufan Museum are built partially under the ground and become inclusive to the surrounding nature. For this reason, they have broken a boundary between nature and building, so to speak. It seems that the art museums designed by Ando present a novel approach to an art museum.

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<sup>89</sup> See Ufan (2011) p.29

<sup>90</sup> There is a timeless quality to Ufan’s works and critic would use a word like “infinity” or “eternal” somewhat similar to how De Maria’s works are being described. See Yoshitake (2010). Ufan recently had an exhibition called “Making Infinity” at the Guggenheim Museum in New York.

There have been interesting debates regarding the whole concept of art museum today. And a memorable panel discussion took place in Chicago in 2005. The participants were Italian architect, Renzo Piano (known as one of the designers of the Centre Pompidou), Frank Gehry (of Guggenheim Museum Bilbao) and the pioneer of architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable and Charlie Rose chaired the discussion of the past, present and future of art museums and architectures.

When all were discussing about an art museum as architecture, they came to agree that it should not be 'neutral' in order to host artworks successfully. Renzo Piano said that "neutral architecture is rubbish" and clarified the role of art museums as to "preserve built beauty... [a museum] takes a piece of art away from running time and put it in a new magical dimension that is timeless, and this is what a museum does" (Rose, August 5 2005). Piano's statement seems to claim that an art museum should not be a box that contains art works but rather challenge artistically in order to create such atmosphere that an art museum itself becomes lively creative space. These conversations perfectly fits to Ando's architectures which revives an art piece instead of being neutral.

Furthermore, Huxtable continued to define architecture claiming that "social purpose of architecture is largely forgotten... it is a social art, it is a humanistic art, it creates environment, it effects how we live, how we work, kind of people we are" (Rose, August 5, 2005). Frank Gehry also responded to that by saying, "we [architects] are idealists, we grow up with ideals that we are going to make a better place to live" (Rose, August 5, 2005). Gehry also stated that his design, The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, had to be a part of a community, and the city of Bilbao took a huge commitment to change the character of the city, therefore, Gehry's Bilbao was only a catalyst for so-called 'Bilbao effect' (Rose, August 5, 2005).

Ando (2011b) also emphasizes in his book, *Think while Walking* that architecture is never a single entity but a public being and an architect has to have a humanistic approach so that he could create a place where dialogues could be born (p.71, p.94-98). When there are dialogues, there is a

better chance to create something greater. Apparently, as being the creators for a vanguard of contemporary architecture, Piano, Gehry and Ando share common grounds.

As a last remark on architectures in Naoshima, I would like to mention about other communal buildings which are realized by the former mayor of Naoshima, Chikatsugu Miyake and the architect Kazuhiro Ishii. It was mayor Miyake who invited Soichiro Fukutake to create a utopia. Miyake served a long nine terms, between 1959 and 1995, as a mayor of Naoshima town. Even before the former CEO of Benesse Corporate Tetsuhiko Fukutake shook hand with Naoshima mayor Miyake, 'art projects' in Naoshima had already begun. According to Naoshima Town website, it started with Naoshima Primary School (Figure 21) which was designed by Ishii in 1970. Architect Ishii continued to design Naoshima kindergarten (1974), gymnastic halls (1975-76), junior high school (1979), day-care center (1982), town hall (1983), resort hotel "Tsutusji So"(1990), and a welfare center (1993). These buildings are quite "modern" and seem 'out of place',<sup>91</sup> but after all, they comply with Ando's contemporary architectures.



Figure 21. Naoshima Primary School (1970) Naoshima Town website:<http://www.town.naoshima.lg.jp/>

The role of architecture is often neglected over its functionalities. But, it could offer more than a shelter.

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<sup>91</sup> As cited in "The Island of Contemporary Art : Naoshima" p.3. The buildings designed by Ishii are "modern styles and peculiar as public buildings".

### -Site-Specific art

Rome was not built in a day. The former curator and the artistic director, Akimoto tells that despite of its strong news hook, there were only a handful of visitors came to Benesse House Museum in the beginning. During the interview for Web Magazine Vate, Akimoto explains that, “from the opening of Benesse House Museum in July, 1992 to March, 1993 [about eight months] the total number of the visitors was less than 10,000...it was that sort of [quiet] beginning” (Akimoto, 2009). However, things started to turn for better when Akimoto conceived site specific art as a desperate measure.

In 1994, an outdoor exhibition *Out of Bound* was held. And this became a departure point for site-specific works in Naoshima which artists would actually construct works in the island. And site specific art was made not only outdoor but also for Benesse House Museum. Akimoto explains the reason for employing ‘site specificity’ is that, “it was because of Ando’s architecture which was different from any other architectures, a conventional way of displaying artworks would not work... Benesse House Museum needed an artwork that could adopt a distinct space” (Akimoto, 2009). Akimoto started to invite artists to Naoshima and to Benesse House Museum. And these artists would stay in Naoshima for a while and would create artworks that are site specific for Benesse House Museum as well as outdoor. The first work made site specifically in Naoshima was by Jannis Kounellis. Kounellis would collect found objects and everyday objects and “took his time” to form them into a piece (Akimoto, 2011a, p.71). This work (Figure 22i & 22ii) was eventually placed against a large window, which seems to challenge Ando’s designed space. This work becomes “a model for the future Art Site Naoshima which takes an “on-site” process involving cooperation of many people” (not like ‘an artist does it all’) (Akimoto, 2011a, p.73).



Figure 22i. Jannis Kounellis “Untitled”(1996)



Figure 22ii. The detail image of the work

\*Figure 22i. Photo: Shigeo Anzai /Figure 22ii. Photo: Osamu Watanabe. Figure 22i & 22ii Copyright © Naoshima Fukutake Museum Foundation

Similarly, Richard Long created pieces which are directly painted or placed (Figure 23i & 23ii) at Benesse House Museum and also at a room of the Oval.



Figure 23ii. A guest room at the Oval

Figure 23i. Richard Long “Inland Sea Driftwood Circle”/”River Avon Mud Circles by the Inland Sea” (1997) Photo: Tadasu Yamamoto

\*Figure 23i & 23ii Copyright © Naoshima Fukutake Museum Foundation

Some works are made rather to harmonize with architectural spaces. Kan Yasuda’s *The Secret of the Sky* (1996) (Figure 24) in the central courtyard, Yoshihiro Suda’s *Weeds* (2002) (Figure 25) on the wall of the stairway, and Walter De Maria’s *Seen/Unseen Known/Unknown* (2000) (Figure 26) are good examples.



Figure 24i (right) & Figure 24ii (left) *The Secret of the Sky* (1996)



Figure 25. *Weeds* are wooden sculptures by Suda

Figure 26. *Seen/Unseen Known/Unknown* reflects the horizon

\*Figure 24i Photo: Tadasu Yamamoto Copyright © Naoshima Fukutake Museum Foundation/Figure 24ii Photo: Noboru Morikawa © Benesse Holdings, Inc./Figure 25 Photo: Naohiro Tsutsui/Figure 26 Photo: Tomio Ohashi/ Figure 25 & 26 ©2011 Shinchosha

It was the artist Yasuda himself who suggested Akimoto to create *the Secret of the Sky* in a particular space (Figure 24). This cortile at Benesse House Museum is a vaulted ceiling square space (width, depth, and height are all 9m). Yasuda told Akimoto that “this kind of clean space [typical of Ando’s design] needs something tender as a contrast” (as cited in Akimoto, 2011a, p.74). Yasuda made this work intentionally small enough (in comparison to a human size), as a result, a space was transformed into a less overwhelming, welcoming space (Akimoto, 2011a, p.74). It is seen that some visitors are laying on Yasuda’s work for resting. Yoshihiro Suda’s *Weeds* (Figure 25) are small and hard to spot, but give such an interesting twist to a man-made space. Those ‘weeds’

are wooden sculptures which seems to be a narrative art piece that would speak to the viewer in its own way. De Maria's *Seen/Unseen Known/Unknown* (Figure 26) is made of two identical granite spheres which reflect the horizon quietly. This work is placed in a 'North vs. South' direction in comparison to the later work, *Time/Timeless/NoTime* (2004) (Figure 19i & 19ii) which indicates 'West vs. East', therefore, De Maria has connected two different works in Naoshima while creating two very different spaces (Akimoto, 2011c, p.60). Both *Seen/Unseen Known/Unknown* and *Time/Timeless/NoTime* use an architectural space wisely so as to exist not as an isolated work.

Not all artworks at Benesse House Museum or outdoor are site specific. Nonetheless, the displays are ingenious so that they seem to be an installation which is done for a specific space in Naoshima. For instance, Kusama's yellow pumpkin (Figure 12) and red pumpkin (Figure 27i & 27ii) are not made 'on-site' or for a specific chosen site. However, the interactive nature and peculiarity of the works create "another dimension like living on a different plane of reality" (Akimoto, 2011c, p.56). The visitor could enter to Kusama's pumpkin and experience the artist's vision.



Figure 27i. © 2012 Nankai Travel International Co. Inc.



Figure 27ii. Photo: Shoko Ishikawa ©2010

In the same manner, there are many other works that would give a unique experience such as the *Yellow and Black Boats* (1985) by Jennifer Bartlett (Figure 28) and *Shipyard Works Bow with Hole* (1990) by Shinro Ohtake (Figure 29).



Figure 28. The indoor installation (top) and the outdoor installation (bottom) Figure.29. At Benesse House Museum

\*Figure 28 Photo: Naohiro Tsutsui ©2011 Shinchosha Publishing Co, Ltd./Figure 29. Photo: Photo: Shigeo Anzai © Benesse Holdings, Inc.

Akimoto points out two things; 1) outdoor artworks have been changing the landscape of Naoshima by helping the viewer rediscover the ordinary scenery which had been dismissed, and 2) since more artworks, especially outdoor site-specific art started to appear, the locals started to witness the process of making art which brought them closer to artists and artworks (Akimoto, 2011, p.p.62 and Akimoto, 2009). These two points appear to be critical in Naoshima. One of the intriguing parts of contemporary art could be said that it often deals with everyday subjects in a whole new way so that the viewer would find a new value in something ordinary. Moreover, artworks that are made in a public space would bring a sense of affinity. In the case of site specific art, not only the visitors of the island but also the local people have a chance to witness more than a final state of the work. In the next section, there will be more detailed discussions on the works which involve a local community.

## Art projects, Festivals, and Community projects

The real story behind the success of Naoshima is the involvement of a local community. As mentioned in the previous section, museums and site-specific art did help bring ‘art’ closer to ‘people’ (the visitors). However, there are many stories behind to what brought ‘people’ (the locals) closer to ‘art’. The activity of Benesse Art Site Naoshima has been gaining the support of local people in the past two decades. And it is largely indebted in the role of Benesse House Museum. Now, the visitors to Naoshima could encounter so-called ‘volunteer tour guides’ and ‘free toilets’ everywhere in Naoshima. These volunteers are organized by the locals who wish the tourists comfortable and memorable stay in Naoshima.

Akinori Takahasi, a chairperson of Tourist Volunteer Guide, shares a story. Before Benesse House Museum opened, he had been a chairperson of Igo club (“Igo” is an ancient board game) and the regional history study group. When he retired at the age of 60, he “had one foot in the grave” (smoking and playing Japanese chess all day long) but, “it changed for better” (“Interview with the Chair of Volunteer Tourist Guide”, 2010). According to him, when Benesse House Museum opened, it felt too fancy and distant. However, thanks to mighty Soichiro Fukutake, all local people in Naoshima were invited to the museum for free of charge (Benesse House Museum still free admission for the local).<sup>92</sup> The inside of museum was unexpectedly cozy and ever since, Takahasi has been visiting the museum daily. Gradually, Takahashi started to get to know the people working at the museum and even get invited to give a lecture about the local history for the workers of Benesse House Museum. Since then, he has been giving a lecture at Benesse House Museum every year. When Town-Naoshima Tourism Association was founded in 2003, Takahasi decided to form a volunteer group with his regional history study group members. He felt that in this way, he could return the favor to Benesse. And this was the beginning of Tourist Volunteer Guide. Now, the group members have increased up to 2,147 volunteers (mainly made up of the local residents). These volunteer members are willing to give a free tour guide to the visitors of

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<sup>92</sup> See Kasahara (2009).

Naoshima and they would be happy to share the history of Naoshima, as well as their personal stories.

The story of “Free Toilet” has a similar background. The number of the visitor to Benesse Art Site Naoshima has been spiraling upward dramatically. But the visitors from outside of the island would visit museums but not a small settlement like Honmura in Naoshima. It was not until Art House Project started, the visitor would bother to roam around the village. And then, the issue such as ‘a lack of public toilets’ was raised. According to the chair of Town-Naoshima Tourist Association, Toshihiko Okuda, when Chichu Art Museum opened in 2004, the number of tourists increased almost double from the previous year (from 59,000 to 107,000). In 2009, there were about 360,000 visitors. Until the first café/restaurant in the island Café Maruya opened in 2004, there had not been even a single café in the island. Naturally, there have not been enough public toilets available for all the visitors, especially in a residential area. As a solution, some local residents have started to open their home toilets for public. And this activity is spreading in the local community (“The Island of Contemporary Art”, n.d., p.5). While the visitor strolls around the island, they would see a sign, “toilet available” in front of a private house.

This sort of story goes on. As reported by some visitors, local people have been offering a free assistance to the visitors. For instance, some visitors got a lift by local people to a ferry terminal when they needed to rush to catch a ferry, or when visitors had small children, a local person offered a ride to a ferry terminal, and so on (“The Island of Contemporary Art”, n.d., p.6).<sup>93</sup> Not only there have not been any major resistances to Benesse’s activities in Naoshima, but the local people seem to enjoy the situation.

One might wonder why the local people in Naoshima have been so generous and open to strangers. An answer might be found in art projects and festivals that are conducted in a residential district of Naoshima.

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<sup>93</sup> See also Appendix B.

## *-House Project*

Naoshima Art House Project (or House Project) in Honmura district, Naoshima has been taking place since 1998. At the time of writing, seven works (plus 'Honmura Lounge & Archive') have been completed under this project in Naoshima. It expanded to Inujima (Inujima Art House Project) and the first work opened its door to public in 2008. These projects have been progressing in parallel to museum and festival operations. Unlike other architectural works in the islands, House Projects have different approaches compared to the site specific art or art installations in Naoshima. Firstly, it is taking place in a residential area. Secondly, artworks are created from existing materials (existing houses, spaces, found objects, etc.), sometimes, using traditional building methods. Lastly, 'collaboration' is the heart of this project.

Akimoto states that because House Project is done 'in' the residential area, Honmura, the local people have had a chance to see the process of making art closely, which have helped them regain the identity of the islanders ("Ecologue Interview No. 3", 2004). Besides, each work for House Project is taking a couple of years up to five years of so. It is a slow process that the local people could be familiarized over time. Moreover, Akimoto says that restoring or reusing half-collapsed houses or abandoned land "triggered the old memories of the residents of Honumra to come to the surface" which made "them reconsider the value of old houses in the island, and made them proud of their old town" ("Ecologue Interview No. 3", 2004). Moreover, this project "stimulated the local resident, as a result, they have started taking care of their town by keeping the street garbage-free" (Akimoto, 2011d, p.32). Apparently, there have been some positive effects of this art project which cohabits in a small community.

'Revitalization' and 'anastylosis' have been a key word for House Project. 'Soichiro Fukutake stresses the importance of creating 'new' from which already exists by cherishing what we have. Fukutake explains, "today's society (and economy) has been built by destroying 'old' and creating 'new', but in this way, nature, history and culture will be lost...making something new knowing that it would be destroyed soon would create only unrest" and, "in this kind of situation, there will not be anything 'good' being created" (Kikuchi, 2009). In the end, Fukutake proposes, "instead,

why not to create something new by desterilizing what we already have which will have a long lasting value” (Kikuchi, 2009). In House Project, old houses or forgotten spaces are coming back into existence with new functions and meanings.

As was stated, ‘collaboration’ is what makes this art project unique. The first work *Kadoya* (1998) (Figure 30i) was revived by architect Tadashi Yamamoto (1923-1998) and artist Tatsuo Miyajima (b.1957). Yamamoto is a well-known local architect and former athlete who has done a renovation of Isamu Noguchi’s studio in Takamatsu, Kagawa and *Kadoya* became his last work.<sup>94</sup> For *Kadoya*, Yamamoto took a charge in the restoration of the house. The traditional building techniques and materials such as burned cedar tree board, clay tiles (for roofing), and earth wall, were applied and this 200-year old house. Miyajima created an installation *Sea of Time* ‘98 (1998) using a digit counter and digit LED light counters (Figure 30ii).



Figure 30i The exterior image of *Kadoya*



Figure 30ii A detail of *Sea of Time* ‘98

\*Figure 30i & 30ii Photo: Norihiro Ueno © Benesse Holdings, Inc.

Miyajima (2011) explains that the installation at *Kadoya* is “a remake of *Sea of Time* (1988) which was made for Venice Biennale about a decade ago” (p.36). The whole idea of remaking *Sea of Time* came up when he saw sunset at the Seto Inland Sea but this time, the work needed by done with the help of local people (Miyajima, 2011, p.36). Miyajima had set up open meetings and had chats with the residents of Honmura prior to creating the indoor installation. Eventually, the

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<sup>94</sup> Yamamoto was born in Kagawa opened his main office in Kagawa. He was also an athlete participated in the triple jump competition at Helsinki Olympic in 1952.

speeds of 125 LED counters (which are placed at the bottom of a pool) are set by 125 Naoshima residents (the age of 5 up to 95 years old).<sup>95</sup> Miyajima (2011) states that “doing a collaborative work takes courage in terms of taking risks of uncontrollable elements, but if I could accept others it would expand the possibilities” (p.36-37).

Likewise the first work *Kadoya*, the second work *Minamidera* (1999) was done with the collaboration of Ando Tadao and James Turrell. *Minamidera* (Figure 31) was built on the former site of a temple where cultural happenings of Naoshima has been taking place.<sup>96</sup>



Figure 31. Photo: Naohiro Tsutsui ©2011 Shinchosha Publishing Co, Ltd.

The inside of *Minamidera* is pitch-dark. The visitors would have to wait until their eyes get used to the darkness. And they would slowly recognize the art installation *Backside of the Moon* (1999) done by James Turrell. Around this time, the central theme for House Project in Naoshima became ‘light and darkness’.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> See Ecologue Interview No. 3 Akimoto Yuji (2004).

<sup>96</sup> See “Minamidera” section at Benesse Art Site Naoshima website which explain that the location is near Gokuraku Teimple and Hachiman Shrine where culture and history of Naoshima is concentrated: <http://www.benesse-artsite.jp/arthouse/minamidera.html>

<sup>97</sup> See Akimoto (2005). During the lecture at Tokyo University of the Arts, Akimoto mentions that without anybody suggesting, ‘light and darkness’ has become a central theme for House Project.

The project goes on to produce, *Kinza* (2001) (Figure 32i & 32ii) and *Go'o Shrine* (2002) (Figure 33i & 33ii). *Kinza* was done by artist Rei Naito (b. 1961), and a practical design by Masaru Kimura and Sunao Nagata from an architecture firm, Art Station. *Go'o Shrine* was designed by a photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto (b.1948) with the collaboration of again, Masaru Kimura and Sunao Nagata (Art Station). *Kinza* is made from an over 100 year-old house which interior has been converted into an art installation *Being Given* (2001).



Figure 32i. The exterior of *Kinza*



Figure 32ii. The interior of *Kinza*

\*Figure 22i Photo:Sakae Oguma & Figure 22ii Photo: Noboru Morikawa © Benesse Holdings, Inc.

Rei Naito is known for her installation *One Place on the Earth* (1991) which was shown at the Venice Biennale in 1997. The artist was present at the place all the time and letting only a person at a time for viewing (which made a long waiting line). *Kinza* also requires an advanced reservation for viewing and only one viewer could go inside to experience her world.



Figure 33i. The exterior of *Go'o Shrine*    Figure 33ii. The view of the underground chamber

\*Figure 33i & 33ii Photo: Hiroshi Sugimoto

*Go'o Shrine* (Figure 33i & 33ii) was realized by the request of the local residents. This work was made from a dilapidated Shinto shrine which was located on top of a mountain.<sup>98</sup> When shrine parishioners approached Akimoto wishing this shrine to be cleaned up in their life time, Akimoto was rather frightened [frightened to interfere a sacred place] (“Ecologue Interview No. 3”, 2004). However, it was the elders of Naoshima who gave a push. In the end, Akimoto accepted the offer. *Go'o Shrine* was left in Sugimoto, Kimura and Nagata’s capable hands and was given a new life with a slight twist.

What *Go'o Shrine* tells is that the local residents have approved of House Project (and other activities organized by Benesse) and have allowed intervention of unfamiliar ‘outside’ culture. A shrine is “a spine of a community as well as a sacred place” (Sugimoto, 2011, p. 44). It is a sanctuary and often a source of spiritual support. The case of *Go'o Shrine* could be an example of a remarkable achievement which proves that (contemporary) art could go deep into our daily life and bring a change.

*Go'o Shrine* has been successfully brought back to a community with a new look. It has been accepted by the local residents with recognition for efforts. Sugimoto (2011) tells, “every morning, a volunteer is coming to brush out the courtyard [of *Go'o Shrine*]” (p.48). Akimoto also proudly states that contemporary art in Naoshima has been engaging everyday life as well as a spiritual part of the island (“Ecologue Interview No. 3”, 2004).

The other three works done as House Project which came after *Go'o Shrine* might have less collaborative elements. Needless to say, artists were required to consult with others concerning architectural and spatial issues. Nonetheless, the rest of three works: *Haisha* (2006) (Figure 34i, 34ii & 34iii), *Ishibashi* (2006-2009) (Figure 35i, 35ii & 35iii), and *Gokaisho* (2006) (Figure 36i, 36ii & 36iii) demonstrate different working attitudes toward revitalization. One reason for this could be that they were all created for *The Standard 2*, an art festival held in Naoshima in 2006 and

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<sup>98</sup> Shinto or Shintoism is said to have roots in Animism. And it is indigenous religion in Japan.

2007.<sup>99</sup> The art festivals, *The Standard 1 & 2* which was held all over the island will be analyzed in the next section. In brief, the aim for these three works seem to bring a new direction in House Project which ‘old’ and ‘new’, ‘mundane’ and ‘extraordinary’ get entangled. In this sense, these works are artistically ambitious.



Figure 34i. The exterior of *Haisha*      Figure 34ii. A toilet with a collage floor      Figure 34iii. The view of corridor

\*Figure 34i. Photo:Osamu Watanabe © Benesse Holdings, Inc./Figure 34ii & 34iii Photo: Naohiro Tsutsui ©2011 Shinchosha Publishing Co, Ltd.

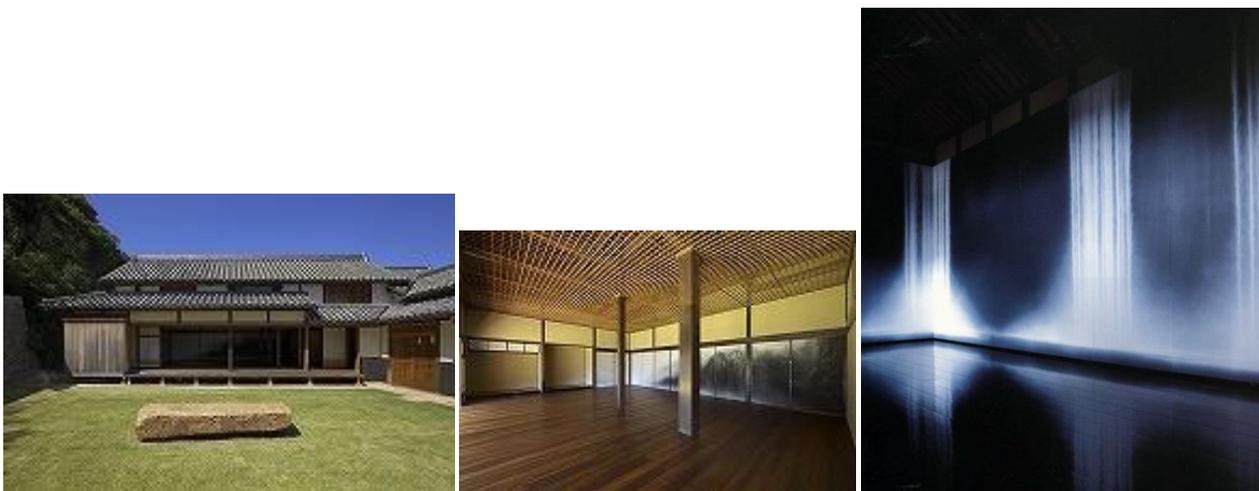


Figure 35i. The exterior of *Ishibashi*      Figure 35ii. *The Garden of Kū* at *Ishibashi*      Figure 35iii. *The Fall* at *Ishibashi*

<sup>99</sup> Standard 2 was held between October 7, 2006 and December 24 and between February 24 and April 15, 2007.

\*Figure 35i, 35ii Photo:Osamu Watanabe © Benesse Holdings, Inc. /Figure 35iii. Photo: Naohiro Tsutsui ©2011 Shinchosha Publishing Co, Ltd.



Figure 36i A view from a courtyard



Figure 36ii Details of a left room (left) and a right room (right)



Figure 36iii A large image of left room

\*Figure 36i, 36ii & 36iii Photo:Osamu Watanabe © Benesse Holdings, Inc.

‘Haisha’ (Figure 34i, 34ii & 34ii), is in Japanese ‘dentist’. As one could imagine, this project was based on a house which used to be a local dentist’s home and office. Shinro Ohtake (b.1955) turned the whole house into a hotchpotch installation which could not be described with one word. The artists named the work, *Dreaming Tongue/Bokkon-Nozoki* (‘gaze into the trace of ink brush’) (2006). Ohtake has been producing works for Naoshima from the very beginning of Benesse Art Site Naoshima. Apparently, he has earned this opportunity to realize his vision in a larger scale. As a viewer enters the building and roam around, he or she would peek into a personal scrapbook and a dream world. The work *Haisha* could be associated with provocative Pop and Kitsch, and straightforward elements of Outsider art. The remaining of the original house and

Ohtake's installation are strangely put together where the viewer will be caught between real and hyperreal.

*Ishibashi* (Figure 35i, 35ii & 35iii) seems to stand out in House Project. The interior installation is done by Hiroshi Senju (b. 1958), a traditional Japanese painter. This work is different because the artist employs a traditional Japanese painting technique which is often done by brush using natural pigments. Typically, Japanese paintings deal with nature, landscapes and women dressed in 'Kimono',<sup>100</sup> and hardly experimental or adventurous (some might object to this though). This house used to belong to the Ishibashi family who made a fortune in salt manufacturing industry. The house itself has a historical value and the restoration is done rather to preserve a house as a cultural heritage. Nevertheless, the indoor installation is audacious and dramatic, especially the 15 meter wide *The Falls* (2006) is a sight to see. 'Nature' is typical of Japanese paintings but apparently, *The Falls* seems to challenge an already established frame of mind and even rip through the conventional notion of Japanese painting which is often 'decorative'. I might not be the only one who also feels that there is some kind of connection found between Senju's work and what is called contemporary art.<sup>101</sup>

*Gokaisho* (Figure 36i, 36ii & 36iii) means a place where people gather and play 'Igo', a board game. Unfortunately, people could not gather at *Gokaisho* to play Igo but it is a nickname coming from the area (somewhat a familiar and recognizable for the local people). *Gokaisho* is standing right next *Kinza* and the place used to be an empty space. In order to blend into the area, *Gokaisho* has been designed in a Japanese style. The installation was arranged by Akimoto and Yoshihiro.<sup>102</sup> Suda's other works in Naoshima; *Weeds* (Figure 25) at Benesse House Museum and *Rose* (2006) in

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<sup>100</sup> 'Kimono' is 'wafuku' a traditional Japanese garment.

<sup>101</sup> What is, and is not contemporary art is still a question that has no a clear answer. Peter Timms (2004) strives to define that contemporary visual art "is more likely to want us to stand back and examine how magic and myth function in the culture... relying not on metaphor but on metonymy" (p.16). It seems that contemporary art tends to play with the visual presentation which deals with a single part taken from a sequence of events, and use it as a clue to disclose something larger.

<sup>102</sup> See "Art House Project" at the Benesse Art Site Naoshima website and Akimoto (2011d)p.53

a corridor at Benesse House Park, are rather “encroach on others’ spaces and trigger a catabolic reaction” (Akimoto, 2011d, p.54). However, Akimoto (2011d) states that, “for *Gokaisho*, Suda had to create his own ‘space’ with his work” (p.54). *Gokaisho* has twinned rooms (perfectly symmetrical) and it is like a mirror image, except one side has scattered camellia flowers on a Japanese ‘tatami’ floor.<sup>103</sup> Camellia flowers have been popular for Japanese tea rooms because it blooms during winter and giving colors to a monotonous season. On the other hand, it is considered to be ominous (in some cases) because a petal does not fall one by one, instead, a whole head of flower drops without showing any sign of blight, which resemble ‘decapitation’ or ‘sudden death’. *Gokaisho* does project an air of eccentricity by showing the contrast of coexisting beauty and death (‘death’ as a precondition), and nothingness (a void room).

Art House Project in Naoshima began as an experiment extending the site-specific works to the Honmura district, away from the museum grounds.<sup>104</sup> In fact, the development of House Project shows the experimental elements. However, it would certainly suggest a new direction in site-specific art which is closer to today’s community arts in terms of empowering a small community which is otherwise unenlivened or neglected from the outside world. Furthermore, the visible positive influence of House Project has been reported. For instance, Japanese Ministry of the Environment hosted website Re-Style reports that in the island, there are about 90 old houses [just like being renovated by House Project], some of them are 400 years old, and the local people have started to actively watch after those houses since House Project began”(Koike, n.d.). Art House Project has stimulated the locals to reappraise the old properties as a cultural heritage.

#### -*The Standard* 1 & 2

In 2001, *The Standard* art festival was realized as an accomplishment of House Project in Naoshima, which project has been involving a local community. And it was to celebrate 10th anniversary of

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<sup>103</sup> ‘Tatami’ is a straw-mat used as a flooring material for a Japanese style house.

<sup>104</sup> See Benesse Art Site Naoshima website, “Benesse House” section.

Benesse's works in Naohisma. The festival included 13 artists and their works are spread out in the island. Within those 13 artists were familiar faces such as Shinro Ohtake (of *Shiyard Works* and *Haisha*), Hiroshi Sugimoto (of *Go'o Shrine*), Yoshihiro Suda (of *Weeds, Rose* and *Gokaisho*), Tatsuo Miyajima (of *Kadoya*). Other artists were a Okayama-born dentist and well-known photographer Yoichi Midorikawa, a textile artist Yoko Kano, Susumu Kinoshita (known for realistic drawing of portraits), a young emerging artist Masakazu Takatori, a contemporary artist Tatsumi Orimoto (known for his photographic and performance art), a sculptor Masato Nakamura, an established photographer Osamu Kanemura, a photographer Rika Noguchi, and a young painter Kyoko Murase. Interestingly, these artists having different backgrounds (the media used were different) coming from different age groups were all invited to create art installations all over Naoshima.

The festival was carried out by 250 volunteers from outside of the island and the residents of Naoshima supported such volunteers.<sup>105</sup> Some art installations were done using empty spaces such as former barber shop, or super market, ping-pong facility, and a clinic which were no longer used. But some art installations were done at residential houses. Therefore, the local people had to invite in the artists and strangers (the visitors) to their homes. For instance, Kinoshita's drawings were installed at a 400-year old residential house which was located in a residential area.

The festival lasted for three months and it was well received. Soon the request of doing the next art festival, *The Standard 2* was heard ("Ecologue Interview No. 3", 2004). *The Standard* pulled off a remarkable achievement. The festival brought the local residents and the outsiders together to create something large. Akimoto says, "250 volunteers coming from outside were mainly made up of young people and they stayed in the island for 4 to 5 months...in contrast, the volunteers from the islands were mainly elderly people...through this festival, they learned each other and broke stereotype ideas of the youngster and the elderly" (as cited in "Ecologue Interview No. 3", 2004).

Not only *The Standard* shrunk the distance between the outsiders and the local resident, a new grass-root project inspired by the festival began. In 2004, Honmura Noren Project Committee was

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<sup>105</sup> See Kogure (2001) and Ecologue Interview No. 3 (2004)

founded by the residents of Honmura which was inspired by the artist Yoko Kano. Kano created 14 'noren' (a short split curtain often hanged at the front door of a shop) for houses in Honmura (Figure 37) for *The Standard*. Kano visited each house and designed each 'noren' according to the impression of the resident the artist had interviewed. Honmura Noren Project Committee has been adding new colorful norens every year improving the aesthetics of the town.<sup>106</sup>



Figure 37. From *Noren 2001* by Yoko Kano. Norens hanged at the front doors.

\*Figure 37 2012© Benesse Art Site Naoshima

*The Standard 2* was realized only five years after the first festival. This time, the theme of the festival was 'art as an everyday matter', and the venue was extended to the neighbor island of Mukojima. The festival took place, again all over Naohisma and one location in Mukaejima which lasted from October, 2006 until April, 2007. There were 11 artists and an architect team SANAA (Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa). Five works were permanent which include Kusama Yayoi's *Red Pumpkin* (2006), Sugimoto Hiroshi's three photographs from a *Time Exposed* series, Shinro Ohtake's *Haisha* (Dreaming Tongue/Bokkon-Nozoki , 2006) which is a part of House Project, and likewise *Haisha*, *Gokaisho* by Yoshihiro Suda and *The Falls* (2006) by Hiroshi Senju at *Ishibashi* are done also as a part of House Project and shown during the festival. Besides Inujima House Project, architect Kazuyo Sejima and her partner Nishizawa took part in this festival as well. Sejima and her

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<sup>106</sup> Honmura Noren Project Committee (founded 2004), now Naoshima Noren Project Committee has been encouraging the production of noren and more houses to participate. This activity is operated by the local residents but Benesse Holdings Inc. is also supporting the activity.

firm SANAA's co-founder Nishizawa's designed ferry port *Umino Eki* ('Sea Station') which was also completed in the same year.

The interesting feature of this festival is that a new art project has started in Mukaejima. The renowned artist Tadashi Kawamata had moved his base to this tiny island (around 17 inhabitants) and begun a long term art project. Besides Kawamata, Yukinori Yanagi, who had been recognized abroad, also moved his base from New York to Inujima with his assistants and stayed in the island for some time.<sup>107</sup> This case will be discussed in the later section, *Inujima*. Kawamata's case seems to be similar to Yanagi who is captivated by the beauty and culture of small islands in the Seto Inland Sea. Kawamata is probably known in Europe for his works at the Venice Biennale (in 1982 & 2003), Documenta 8 (1987) and Documenta 9 (1992). It seems like he is starting to build a new project which can only be done in the island.

Another interesting feature would be the beginning of a new community project: Naoshima Rice-Growing Project. From the 1970s onward, rice growing in Naoshima had not been practiced.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, it was brought back again by *The Standard 2* in 2006. The field which had been used for cultivating rice (42,000 m<sup>2</sup>) was plowed and 7,500 m<sup>2</sup> was used to plant rice. Endless rice fields used to be typical landscape of Japan, but it is becoming to be a history in many places in Japan.<sup>109</sup> In Naoshima, industrial pollution and aging population caused the tradition of rice growing to be given up and forgotten.<sup>110</sup>

There seem to be two purposes to Naoshima Rice-Growing Project. One aim would be to bring back a tradition of rice growing. The second purpose is to bring back a sense of community. Many festivals and celebrations are built around 'rice' in Japan. Rice is deeply embedded in the life of

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<sup>107</sup> Yanagi resides in Hiroshima, Japan which is also close to the Seto Inland Sea.

<sup>108</sup> See Benesse Art Site Naoshima website: <http://www.benesse-artsite.jp/en/about/activity.html>

<sup>109</sup> Many farmers stay mired in the red and quitting rice growing, therefore, the number of rice farmers is on decline. In addition, the demand of rice in nation is also decreasing. Reportedly, more and more Japanese are consuming western cuisine. See Hokkaido Government Oshima General Subprefectural Bureau website: [http://www.oshima.pref.hokkaido.lg.jp/ss/num/suiden\\_vision/11.htm](http://www.oshima.pref.hokkaido.lg.jp/ss/num/suiden_vision/11.htm)

<sup>110</sup> See Naoshima Rice Growing Project website: <http://www.komezukuri-project.com/mission/index.html>

Japanese people. And like many other farming, it could never be completed alone. Unfortunately, this tradition is on decline due to the change of life style. This project seems to restore such fading tradition back to a community. Naoshima Rice-Growing Project, including primary school children up to the elders, employs a traditional hand planting method (see Figure 38) and harvesting is also done by hands. In 2009, 150 people participated in rice planting. The project lasts all year long: planting in June, weeding in July, placing of scarecrows in September, harvesting in October, and finally, making and tasting of rice cakes in December and each occasion was followed with lunch prepared by local volunteers. This project certainly teaches the virtue of teamwork, uncovers many forgotten old rituals, and gives an opportunity to work closely with nature while experiencing the seasonal changes. At the opening ceremony of rice planting in 2009, a spokesperson of Naoshima Fukutake Art Museum Fondation, Ryoji Kasahara says, “compared to four years ago, the year this project began, the beautiful scenery is coming back [to Naoshima]” (as cited in Fujii, 2009). In parallel to art museums and art projects in the island, this community project has been contributing to improving the aesthetics of the island as well as restoring the identity of the islanders, and of Japanese.



Figure 38. Rice planting in Naoshima in June 2009

\*Figure 38 2009© Naoshima Fukutake Art Museum Fondation

- *I Love Yu (Naoshima Public Bath)*

Speaking of Japanese identity, bathing at a communal bathhouse has been at the core of Japanese life. In 2009, a public bathhouse called *Naoshima Bath I Love Yu* ('Yu' indicates hot bath) was completed in Miyanoura District Naoshima (Figure 39i & 39ii). Excluding art museums in the island, this is probably the first building being designed and built by an artist (with a help of architect) which has a function as a facility (a bathing facility). In other words, this building itself is an art gallery where artworks are literally integrated in the building. This seems to be a novel approach that the visitors would view artworks while changing their cloths, using a toilet, bathing, and chatting with others.

A public bathhouse has a relatively long history in Japan. Its root could be found in a lustral bath of Buddhism which was spread widely around the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>111</sup> Having an own bath at home was luxurious to many people until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, and for this reason, a public bath had been popular over centuries.<sup>112</sup> At the peak of a public bath in 1965, there were around 22,000 bathhouses all over Japan,<sup>113</sup> nevertheless, it showed a sharp decline at the turn of the century. According to National Federation of Public Bath Industry Trade Unions, there are only 3,748 members (bathhouse owners) in Japan at the moment (2012). It is a dying culture likewise the tradition of rice growing in Japan.

A public bathhouse is not only the place to clean ourselves. It means much more to Japanese people. It is a place of gathering, of relaxation, of sharing enjoyment, stories and ideas. In Edo period, public bathhouses were mixed sex and even had rooms for drinking tea and playing board games. A public bath still remains as an oasis and even as a playground, especially for children. But, Japanese would first point out the importance of 'physical contacts' and closeness when they talk

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<sup>111</sup> See Tokyo Sento Association: <http://www.1010.or.jp/index.php>

<sup>112</sup> The website, Yunokuni.com states that the year 1950s shows the dramatic increase of 'home bath', having an own bathing room with a bath tub at home but it was still 60% of the whole household in Japan. <http://yunokuni.com/nenshi/vol2/page1.html>

<sup>113</sup> See Machida (2008) p.181

about a public bath (people would go into a hot pool together). In short, a Japanese public bath is a community center where people socialize in a very intimate relaxing atmosphere.

*Naoshima Bath I Love Yu*, however, is not usual as compared to a traditional style bathhouse. This work was designed in collaboration with artist Shinro Ohtake (of *Haisha*) and a design firm, graf: decorative mode no.3 design products. Inc. and after the completion, the place has been operated by the Town-Naoshima Tourism Association and the Miyanoura District Association.



Figure 39i. The frontal view of *I Love Yu*



Figure 39ii. The poster showing the interior of *I Love Yu*

\*Figure 39i photo:Osamu Watanabe Figure 39i & 39ii © Naoshima Fukutake Museum Foundation/Figure 39iii Ohtake (2009).

As it has been demonstrated with *Haisha*, one of works in Naoshima House Project, *I Love Yu* is also made of a mosaic of everyday objects and uncanny objects which create a dream world of the artist. Ohtake explains that “there may be much common ground between a public bath space and the filing drawers of human memory” because “a public bath is steeped in various elements, and to soak completely naked in its steaming water may be likened to a silent encounter by the bathers with their own memories” (Ohtake, n.d.).

Since the completion of *I Love Yu*, the residents of Naoshima could go to this community gathering place where they would relax and chat with others while they enjoy bathing in the place where mind-boggling ideas are packed densely. Since going to a public bath is such a familiar custom, especially for the older generation, Ohtake's artworks would not intimidate the visitors. Besides, there is a chance that, like Ohtake states, it might trigger the old memories of the visitors, get mingled with the Ohtake's world and be engrossed in nostalgia completely.

Although *I Love Yu* was not built as a part of House Project in Naoshima, it seems to be perceived somewhat in the same way by the locals. The whole process of building this bathhouse was seen by the local people. At the time of its completion, it was accepted as a part of a community. During the construction, the local residents who had already been familiar with Ohtake's works knew that the artist would appreciate any kind supports and they could somehow take part of this artwork. They brought him objects (or more like junks) such as a rusted iron slab, an eyelet punch, and brass screws which they wished Ohtake to use for *I Love Yu*.<sup>114</sup> Ohtake states (2011) that, "over the past decade, I have been witnessing the changes in Naohsima...it is difficult to create a bridge between art and the local people...but [the residents, artists, and curators in] Naoshima has been working on it diligently" (p.69). And he continues that, "I would like to build a drinking place where people would gather, thus my project in Naoshima is not completed yet" (Ohtake, 2011, p.69).

One last statement about *Naoshima Bath I Love Yu*. It has an 'environmental friendly' operating system. As was written earlier, Naoshima had suffered from industrial pollution. It would be a great disturbance if it produces harmful substances. *I Love Yu* does not use gas to heat up water, but use wooden pellets instead. These wooden pellets are a type of biomass fuel and have less negative impact on the environment.<sup>115</sup> Besides the fact that Ohtake used many recycled materials, often discarded objects, *Naoshima Bath I Love Yu's* system would be worthy of attention.

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<sup>114</sup> See Ohtake (2011) p.69

<sup>115</sup> See Benesse Art Site Naoshima homepage : <http://www.benesse-artsite.jp/en/naoshimasento/portfolio.html>

## *-Inujima*

As an extension to Art House Project in Naoshima, Inujima House Project has been open for public since 2008. The Inujima Island is much smaller than Naohsima with only around 50 people,<sup>116</sup> but Inujima has had a similar fate as Naoshim. The current settlement in Inujima has a relatively long history which goes back to 1688. There have been a quarrying industry from the early age and a copper industry around the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The 1950s and 60s were a heyday of a refining industry and the number of inhabitants in the island had increased between 5,000 and 6,000.<sup>117</sup> But, it has been a sleepy island for some time. The landmark of Inujima has been a half-collapsed 100 year-old copper refinery (built in 1909). This factory would have brought an economical growth to the island. Unfortunately, the price of cooper tumbled down within the first 10 years of its operation and this factory was closed down in 1919.

The art project in Inujima has a slightly different approach than the one in Naoshima artistically and philosophically. And it has taken a different course of development compared to Naoshima. It would not be exaggeration to say that it was the artist Yukinori Yanagi's passion made the art projects happen in Inujima. All in all, although art projects in Inujima are still under development, they have already demonstrated an innovative way to transform an old building into a self sustainable building, and a metaphoric site-specific art which message can only be conveyed in Inujima where even the heart-breaking 'urban decay' could be embraced.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> According to National Institute for Japanese Islands's website, "the popularation of Inujina is 54 (31.3, 2011)":  
<http://www.pref.okayama.jp/kikaku/chishin/ritou/o8inujima/index.html>

<sup>117</sup> See According to National Institute for Japanese Islands's website:  
<http://www.pref.okayama.jp/kikaku/chishin/ritou/o8inujima/index.html>

<sup>118</sup> I have made up a term, 'metaphoric site –specific art' in comparison to those site-specific art which focus is more on physical spatial consciousness. The artist Yanagi often plays with symbolic objects with twists so that an ordinary association is inflected. Here, I used a term 'urban decay' although the island of Inujima is small in size (there is no 'city' in the island). It is because Inujima's landscape has changed dramatically according to the business they have counted on.

Yukinori Yanagi (b. 1959), New York based artist then, was invited to an exhibition at Benesse House Museum in 1992. Then the artist fell in love with the Seto Inland Sea.<sup>119</sup> Since then, he has been traveling back and forth between New York and the Seto Inland Sea (via Tokyo). A decisive event took a place when Yanagi discovered Inujima in December 6, 1995.<sup>120</sup> Yanagi (2011) explains that “Inujima shocked me to my bone because this tiny island presented the history and contradiction of Japan’s modernization in epitome” (p.102). Soon, he also discovered a plan that some industrial wastes would be dumped in Inujima. Yanagi thought that “such plan had to stopped...the power and functionality of ruins, history, resources of the island could be used in artworks [and could be used] to regenerate [the island]” (Yanagi, 2011, p.102). The first proposal for his art project was presented to Soichiro Fukutake soon after. In this sense, the art project in Inujima started nearly two decades ago and it was originated in the artist Yanagi’s idea to preserve and protect industrial heritage of Inujima and at the same time, to regenerate the natural environment of the island.<sup>121</sup>

In comparison to House project in Naoshima, the mixtures of ‘old’ and ‘new’ are more visible, and it has a larger message such as ‘globalization’ and ‘environmental awareness’. In short, a challenge in Inujima art project seems to be breaking new ground of site-specific art as an outgrowth of Naoshima Art House Project which restores the cultural heritage and revitalizes it by adding a new color to it. The website of Benesse Art Site Naoshima introduces Inujima’s first art project, *Seirenscho* “as a model for a new type of regional revitalization through industrial heritage, architecture, art, and the environment”. At a glance, the idea seems utopian and ambitious; however, it does propose a new approach that art (visual, plastic art and architecture), a community, and environment could somehow live in harmony.

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<sup>119</sup> Yanagi (2010) p.41

<sup>120</sup> See Yanagi (2011) p.102 and Yanagi (2010) p. 40-41

<sup>121</sup> See Yanagi (2010) p.40-41

Inujima House Project includes, a restored old copper factory (a landmark of Inujima) *Seirenscho* (2008) (Figure 40), *S-residency* (2010), *I-residency* (2010), *F-residency* (2010), and *Nakanotani Gazebo* (2010). *Seirenscho* has taken a long time (over 10 years) until its completion in 2008.

*Seirenscho's* architectural restoration was done by Hiroshi Sambuichi (b. 1968) and he has done a remarkable job in *Seirenscho* which is fully operated by natural energy. In other words, there is absolutely no cooling, heating, lighting, or ventilation system operated by electric power (or by any other kind of generators). Even voided urine and stools by the visitors at *Seirenscho* will be recycled as a fertilizer for plants in the island (more visitors means more nourishment for plants in the island). *Seirenscho* also employs a sophisticated water purification system run by the power of trees (Figure 40ii).



Figure 40i. The exterior of *Seirenscho*

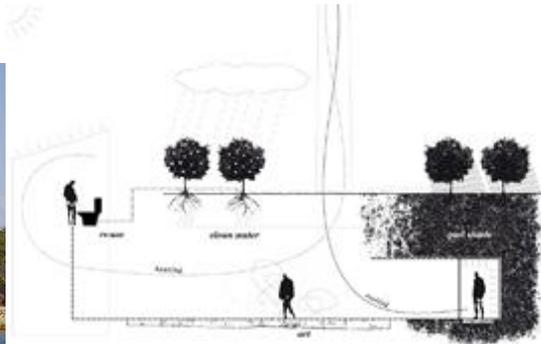


Figure 40ii.

\*Figure 40i & 40ii © Benesse Holdings, Inc.

Sambuichi (2011) explains that “*Seirenscho* will take care of itself by itself...as long as the sun exists...and a building that breath [like a living being] would become like a forest” (p.105-106). Apparently, there is no ‘machine’ or ‘device’ such as solar panels which enable *Seirenscho* to maintain the certain temperature and generate lighting inside, but the materials used for restoring *Seirenscho* are wisely utilized. For instance, mirrors are used to collect sunlight which illuminates the interior of the building, and glasses (which work like a greenhouse) and 17,000 bricks (which have been found in the island: consists of 35 % glass and 50% iron) are used for keeping the heat

inside of the building.<sup>122</sup> The cooling system seems to be operated by the visitors themselves. Each time a visitor enters the building, he or she would bring fresh air inside and as people move around, the air will be taken to a chimney through small corridors which eventually gets cooled.<sup>123</sup> Sambuichi (2011) wishes “to design architecture that is like a living plant which is buried in earth” (p.106). Obviously, Sambuichi has a humanistic approach likewise Tadao Ando but a quite different approach which is to literally include architecture in the cycle of nature.

Yanagi has produced a series of works called *Hero Dry Cell* (2008) for this old copper factory. There are six parts, to this and all are installed in different location within the factory in collaboration with architecture (Figure 41i, 41ii & 41iii). The surprise to Yanagi’s installation would be the recycled materials from the house of a Japanese avant-garde poet and play writer Yukio Mishima (a real name: Kimitake Hiraoka 1925-1970). Mishima is known for his provocative works but also a coup attempt which led him to commit ‘seppuku’ (known as ‘harakiri’ in abroad which is to commit suicide by stabbing his own belly with a dagger) in front of the Tokyo headquarters of the Eastern Command of Japan's Self-Defense Forces in 1970. Seemingly, for Yanagi, this art project was to bring back the dead (Yukio Mishima) and a ruin (an abandoned old factory) altogether to refresh our memory how Japan has become a materialistic ‘wealthy’ society.



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<sup>122</sup> See Sambuichi (2011) p.106

<sup>123</sup> See also Sambuichi (2011) p.106

Figure 41i. Solar Rock (2008)

Figure 41ii. Icarus Tower (2008)

Figure 41iii. Mirror Note (2008)

\* Figure 41i, 41ii & 41iii 2009© Yanagi Studio

Yanagi explains that “Mishima threw a question at us [when he committed a suicide in the public place] that how Japan truly could win its independence...it was the era of high-speed economic growth and it was the time when Japan gave over the military power to the US [army in Japan] and turned the focus to money making” (Yanagi, 2008, n.p.). Yanagi continues to explain that “the central interest [of a modern Japanese society] has been ‘materials’ [materialism]...life has become easy but an anxious feeling, ‘something is missing’ has been growing deep in the mental structure of Japanese people” (Yanagi, 2008, n.p.). The ruin of an old copper refinery in Inujima, perhaps represented (at least to the artist) such dark side of wealth in contrast to the unspoiled scenery of seascape where “the myriad gods lived and breathed, and [where] traditional Japanese culture which was devoted to frugality [existed]” (Yanagi, 2010, p.41).

*Seirenscho*'s case reminds me of ‘expressive space’. It raised as a symbol of success and wealth in a small community in Inujima and was rapidly lost by the unpredictable economical change. Therefore, *Seirenscho* had remained and stood as a symbol of lost dream without establishing its own place in a community. However, it seems to gain a new meaning within the island through this project.

Inujima Art House Project, *F-residency* (2010) (Figure 42i & 42ii), *S-residency* (2010)(Figure 43i & 43ii), and *I-residency* (2010)(Figure 44i & 44ii) are conducted by a same working team; Art director Yuko Hasegawa, architect Kazuyo Sejima (of SANAA) and again, artist Yukinori Yanagi. Besides residencies, a resting place *Nakanotani Gazebo* (2010) (Figure 45i & 45ii) was designed by architect Sejima herself. All three residencies are the restored old houses and the way they are renewed seems to put emphasis on reflecting a contrast between a chaotic modern society and an old culture (and old values) which has been left behind of such busy modern life. These residencies were included in an art festival, the Setouchi International Art Festival 2010.



Figure 42i. *Yama-no-kami and Illuminated Sun Flanked by Mirrors* (2010) Figure 42ii. The interior view

\*Figure 29i & 29ii 2009© Yanagi Studio



Figure 43i. *Dollar Web Garden* (2010)

Figure 43ii. The detail image

\*Figure 43i & 43ii © 1997-2012 Excite Japan Co., Ltd.



Figure 44i. *Eyeball Flower Garden* (2010)



Figure 44ii. The interior view

\*Figure 44i & 44ii 2009© Yanagi Studio



Figure 45i. *Nakanotani Gazebo* (2010)



Figure 45ii. The detail image

\*\*Figure 45i & 45ii © Japanese Design (at [jpdesign.org](http://jpdesign.org))

Compare to House Project in Naoshima, F, S, I- residencies, and *Nakanotani Gazebo* stands out in a small community in Inujima. The work at F-residency (or ‘F-Art House’) is from his early work ‘Hinomaru’ series (from the beginning of the 90s). The reflective floor (a water pool) completes the neon flag of Japan. The installation at S-residency (or ‘S-Art House’) is made of a transparent corridor in the courtyard where the viewer could walk by the ragged ‘webs’. I-residency (or ‘I-Art House’) has a large video installation which seems to observe the flower garden and the visitors instead of being viewed. All of these works seem to sum up Yanagi’s art career which deals with multiculturalism, borders, identities, power of capital, and ideologies of contemporary society.

The intriguing point of these ‘residencies’ could be said that, likewise *Seirenscho*, the artist let the silent ones to speak loudly for themselves. The small community of Inujima has been almost non-existing for the rest of the world. Nonetheless, Inujima has gone through a dramatic (and possibly a traumatic) changes according to the need of (ideology of) a modern society. Through the work of Yanagi and Inujima, all visitors have to face such facts as a living example.

Architect Kazuyo Sejima, who has worked as a team for Inujima House project (F, S, I- residencies) expresses her wish to create an environment in which “the village itself is the museum” (as cited in Nuijsink, 2011, p.2). For *F-residency* (Figure 42i, 42ii, 46i & 46ii) and *S-residency* (Figure 43i & 43ii) she has combined reflective materials such as transparent acrylics and aluminums which seem to play with the idea of being visible and invisible at the same time.



Figure 46i. The model for *F residency*



Figure 46ii. The detail view of *F residency*

\*Figure 46 © Naoshima Fukutake Museum Foundation/Figure 46ii ©Frame Publishers ([www.frameweb.com](http://www.frameweb.com))

Sejima integrated ‘unconventional’ materials for Japanese style houses while keeping the essential traditional Japanese architecture (horizontal rather than vertical, woods rather than concrete, etc.). As she proposes, while the viewer walks through the village of Inujima, these residencies will be viewed as a work of art, therefore, a village itself functions as a museum. In this way, there will be no clear borderline from and until where the artworks are on display. Sejima seems to be determined to expand residencies up to seven (plus a resting place *Nakanotani Gazebo*).<sup>124</sup> It

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<sup>124</sup> See Hasegawa (2011) p.109

means four more works to be added to the village in the future. In this sense, House Project in Inujima has just begun and the fruit of the project is yet to be seen.

*-Teshima*

In 2010, Teshima Art Museum (Figure 47 & 47ii) was completed with an astonishing look. This museum, without a foundation or even a single support, advocates another innovative model of architecture as a part of Benesse Art Site Naoshima. The museum was done by the collaboration of artist Rei Naito and architect Ryue Nishizawa and located in the island of Teshima. The museum has neither glasses on 'windows' nor shields on 'doors'. This building's 'shell structure' (the size of 40m x 60m) has been made of concrete out of earth mould which resembles a water drop and this capsule like building design with no support has not been made in the world (Shimooka,2011, p.88).



Figure 47i. Teshima Art Museum on the right (a white building)

Figure 47ii. The interior view

\*Figure 47ii Photo: Noboru Morikawa Figure 47i & 47ii 2011© Naoshima Fukutake Museum Foundation



Figure 48i. *Matrix* (2010)



Figure 48ii. Water drops appear from a floor and slowly gather to form a peddle

\*Figure 48i & 48ii Photo: Noboru Morikawa © Naoshima Fukutake Museum Foundation

In the space called *Matrix* (2010) (Figure 48i), an art installation made of water appear, disappear and merge like a living creature (Figure 48ii). This work was created by Naito after a countless trials with a prototype.<sup>125</sup> Needless to mention that openings on the ceiling have no glasses, therefore, dusts, rain, leaves and all sorts of things would fall in to this artwork to create an unexpected situation.

The building itself is not a typical museum. It has an extremely low ceiling and there is no straight line (all forms take organic shapes) or no artificial lighting. Seemingly, this architecture is a matrix, the world of its own while it exists simultaneously within the world of reality. The artist explains the title, *Matrix* (“母型” written as ‘mother’ and ‘mold’ in Japanese) “could be associated with a mother [mother nature] where lives were born and nourished” (as cited in “Teshima Art Museum Opening”, 2010). Gentle curves of the interior walls and ceiling seem to enfold the viewer and water as living organism.

In Teshima Island, there are eight artworks, some outdoor and some indoor. Besides those works, there is a heartbeat archive facility *Les Archives du Cœur* (2010) by artist Christian Boltanski (b.1944) at a quiet beach in the island.<sup>126</sup> This facility is a small museum facility where heartbeats from all over the world are recorded, organized, viewed (through installations) and could be listened to by the visitor (Figure 49i & 49ii).



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<sup>125</sup> See Naito (2011) p.91

<sup>126</sup> *Les Archives du Cœur* is located at Ujigahama beach off from the main road in Teshima Island.

Figure 49i. *Les Archives du Cœur* at Uujigahama beach    Figure 49ii. Light bulb's lighting is coupled with heartbeats

\* Figure 49i & 49ii Photo:Kuge Yasuhide © Naoshima Fukutake Museum Foundation

The artist plays with a proof of life of individuals, heartbeats, in a very interesting way. The moment, one's heartbeats are recorded, it exist as a representation of someone just like a photograph, but only this time, a person is represented by not an image but by a sound and a blinking light. This work would give a feeling of void to some degree just like Smithson's non-site which is discussed in earlier. It seems to exist outside of a timeframe and become timeless showing not real life but only a part of it. This work appears to be a graveyard (because ultimately, all of us will die) without a concept of time, actual corpse, or tombstone to admire. But, then it is also like a city where thousands of life put together where lives come across with others (a place people come across without any intentions). Then, what all these do? They would trigger the imagination of life and death of others and also self. It is a cruel artwork which reminds us that all of us are walking toward the end (death). But at the same time, a very true fact of reality which makes everyone realizes that all of us are included in the cycle of life.

Christina Boltanski leaves a short comment which describes precisely what is happening in his work:

What drives me as an artist is that I think everyone is unique, yet everyone disappears so quickly... We hate to see the dead, yet we love them, we appreciate them. Human. That's all we can say. Everyone is unique and important. But I like something Napoleon said when he saw many of his dead soldiers on a battlefield: "Oh, no problem - one night of love in Paris and you can replace everybody" (as cited in "*Studio Visit*", 2002, n.p.).

This passage reminds me of an Austrian physicist Erwin Schrödinger. He writes (2003), "life is valuable in itself", however, "nature treats life as though it were the most valueless thing in the world...its creatures depend upon racking each other in everlasting strife" (p.138). An individual person is unique but as a whole, each life is fragile striving to survive and will be eliminated as a small part of natural order.

*Les Archives du Cœur* stands in a hidden place at the corner of the Shinto shrine courtyard surrounded by sea. It represents a whole world and a natural cycle, especially of human beings while being in such a peaceful site. It could be an uncanny and serendipitous discovery to find a vast collection of heartbeats in a small island in Far East. And it would be an interesting experience to feel the life in the world through the collection of heartbeats.

Over all, works in Teshima, especially Teshima Art Museum and *Les Archives du Cœur* show intriguing contrasts compare to Inujima where ruins (and death) were brought back to life by artworks in different forms. *Matrix* at Teshima Art Museum, the museum building itself, and *Les Archives du Cœur* all seem to present the endless life cycle by dealing with life as a core idea.

#### *-The Setouchi International Art Festival 2010*

Seemingly, the Setouchi International Art Festival 2010 was to celebrate the development of Naoshima to which Benesse has been contributing for the past two decades (although, the chairperson of the festival committee was mayor of Kagawa Prefecture). Compared to *The Standard 1* and *The Standard 2*, the scale of the festival was much larger (venues were spread out in seven islands including Naoshima), showing the works of various artists from all over the world (from 18 different countries and regions). Fram Kitagawa was appointed to General Director of the festival. He is also General Director of Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale, a similar art festival in Niigata, Japan which kicked off in astonishing fashion in the year 2000.<sup>127</sup>

Collaborations have been deep into the core of Benesse Art Site Naoshima, and many collaborative works supported the festival. This time, the collaboration was not limited to the making of art. For instance, the nearby cities became involved in the festival and they had done so

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<sup>127</sup> Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale was received with 'shock' to some degree because of its novel approach. The festival was held in a dramatic depopulating village using 762 km<sup>2</sup> as a venue for the art installation. The festival invited artists from 35 different countries and regions and attracted about 163,000 visitors during the 53-day festival in 2000. During the fourth Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale (held in 2009), the number of visitors were 375,311 showing the growth of the festival in 9 years. See "Daichi no Matsuri Committee" (2010) p.2

much to support the festival. Reportedly, the budget for the festival was about 6 million euro (3.7 million for tourism and other events, and 2.2 million for arts and cultures),<sup>128</sup> but Kagawa Prefecture had adjusted the city budget prior to the festival and allocated 35.6 million subsidy for improving the surrounding areas. They had also planned to conduct renovations on Takamatsu train station (near Takamatsu seaport where ferryboats connect between islands and Shikoku) and pedestrians in other train stations, which make the total budget of around 55 million euro.<sup>129</sup> It is not only Benesse that is promoting the festival anymore but the whole region shows a great support to make the festival as enjoyable and accessible as possible for the visitors. Another story of collaboration is *Shima Kitchen* (means *Island Kitchen*) which was built in Teshima (see Figure 50) in July 2010. In Teshima Island, Architect Ryo Abe decided to restore an empty house with the help of locals and volunteers from outside of island. In this unique restored house, the visitors could taste the locally grown vegetables and fruits, and locally captured seafood which were prepared by the islanders in collaboration with top chefs from Tokyo. This restaurant offered various workshops and music events besides the local dishes made of fresh ingredients.



Figure 50. The courtyard of Shima Kitchen (Island Kitchen) 2010 © shimakitchen

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<sup>128</sup> Feb.6,2012, 1 euro=100.33 JPY (the exchange rate at Reuters:  
[http://commodities.reuters.co.jp/default.asp?pg=story&newstype=forex&story=1FX012\\_20120206.xml](http://commodities.reuters.co.jp/default.asp?pg=story&newstype=forex&story=1FX012_20120206.xml))

<sup>129</sup> See Yamaguchi (2010).] p.125-126

On the whole, it was not only art that made this festival special but many other backseat players helped realize the festival. According to General Director Kitagawa, there were 2,600 volunteers worked for this festival, and assumably, countless people from the region directly or indirectly assisted the festival. General Director Fram Kitagawa's quote at Art iT online magazine, "For me, more important than the art is the festival" and "It is a festival of the land" seems to manifest that the festival which bring people together is the most important of all. Of course, art without the spectator or without people who care about art would be meaningless. There needs to be people around art in order to fully benefit from it. Moreover, the emphasis on the land, 'mother nature', more specifically, 'motherland' shows that people needed to be reconnected to the places which have been mistreated in the modern society.

Adrian Favell from Art iT summarizes Kitagawa's statement concerning Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale, the other art festival Kitagawa is in charge of. This statement reveals what Kitagawa is aiming to achieve through these large scale art festivals held in countryside in Japan:

The 20th century was an age of cities that led to a dark if not self-destructive art and culture, and a quite insidiously unhealthy alliance between art, urbanism and commercial interests. Cities have gone on developing, and art and culture have been co-opted as part of the economic drive. Japan has suffered more than anywhere the drama of modernization and massive scale urbanization, losing touch with nature, with community, and with ancient aesthetic sense, as its population has packed into cities and foregone its rural roots. Art, says Kitagawa, should not be an index of this modern development, or a monument to consumerism, but rather be used to measure and appreciate what has been lost (Favell, 2009).

The rapid growth of aging population and depopulation in rural areas, impersonal social system, and eerie urbanization in Japan occur for some reason or other. But to face these realities and rethink of what we have neglected should be high on artists, culturatis and Intellectuals' agenda like Kitagawa suggests. In this way, art which chases after a new trend becomes something that could rediscover the lost values and life which should be appreciated.

There are many features in the Setouchi International Art Festival 2010 that are worthy of attention. Nonetheless, instead of going through artworks one by one, I would like to discuss two outstanding features of the festival. First point would be the different types of art and artists came together. The second intriguing point is that art installations were carefully selected and artists made their works which incorporate with the geographical settings and climate.

The Setouchi International Art Festival 2010 offered not only visual arts but also performing arts and live music. During the festival (July 19 – October 31, 2010), Kabuki performance in Shodoshima,<sup>130</sup> live music performances in several venues, and other forms of theater performances welcomed the visitors. The noteworthy performance among them is probably the large scale theater performance played by Ishinha. Ishinha ('reformers' in Japanese) is an Osaka-based theater group founded and led by Theater Director Yukichi Matsumoto since 1970. Ishinha often performs at a large outdoor stage which is being built by around 30 performing members themselves (see Figure 51i & 51ii). One of the most remarkable aspects of Ishinha would be the selection of a venue ('alleys' and 'ruins' which Matsumoto would refer as an ambiguous zone). Moreover, the stage is built as to unify the surrounding environment and would be taken down after the show. In this sense, it is a one-time-only performance that exists for a specific location. Its unique style called "Jan-Jan opera" resembles Balinese ritual music, Kecak, and for this reason, Ishinha's performance is described as "Osaka dialect Kecak".<sup>131</sup> They have been performing a 'drift' series (dealing with 'migration' and 'drift' as themes) which take the spectator to a journey along the performance.

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<sup>130</sup> Kabuki is a classic Japanese theater which resembles opera. Dancing, singing, and acting are involved.

<sup>131</sup> See *Ishinha* website: <http://www.ishinha.com/ja/about/aboutishinha.html>



Figure 51i. The stage model with *Seirenscho* (copper refinery) Figure 51ii. the performance in Inujima

Figure 51iii Photo:Yoshikazu Inouke. Figure 51i & 51ii 2012 © Ishinha

During the festival, Ishinha performed *When a Gray Taiwanese Cow Stretched*, one of epical trilogy that was set in Asia in the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>132</sup> The impressive stage which utilizes *Seirenscho*'s tall chimneys and the landscape of the island and the Inland Sea seems to match perfectly with the story which tells chaotic era of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and homelessness; the theme which goes through the heart of this epical-historical story. The search for wealth (a better life), the loss and rediscovery (of home, identity, and of the past) on the way seems to also represent the history of Inujima and the neighboring island in the Seto Inland Sea.

Yukichi Matsumoto (2010) explains that the stage itself indicates an archipelago, and it starts from islands in the Seto Inland Sea to Okinawa, Yaeyama Islands, Taiwan, Philippines, and goes on to Indonesia and the stage which are made of roughly 3,000 logs shown as driftwoods.<sup>133</sup> In fact, the story crosses ocean as time settings change. The audience would walk through the long path (see Figure 51i) in order to reach an audience seat. Seeing the ruin of copper refinery and sea as a far

<sup>132</sup> Since 2007, Ishinha has been performing what they call “the 20<sup>th</sup> century triptych”: 1) South America, 2) East Europe, and 3) Asia.

<sup>133</sup> See the video “press conference in Okayama” at *Ishinha* website: : <http://www.ishinha.com/ja/about/aboutishinha.html>

backdrop, the audience would view not a historical event itself but a personal journey. This performance seems to bring back the past visually and conceptually.

Another intriguing performance art held during the festival is Bunraku, a traditional puppet theater. The revival of arts also came to this traditional performance art in Naoshima. In Naoshima, Bunraku has been performed for the residents and the visitors of Noshima since Edo period (1603-1867). Once it had been forgotten but was rediscovered by women in Naoshima in 1948. Traditionally, it is a men-dominant field; however, Bunraku in Naoshima has been carried on by women since then. The characteristics of ‘Bunrak’, a puppet theater, are delicate movements of which are created by three puppeteers for each doll, rich facial expressions, a dynamic performance played by over two-meter high puppets, and outdoor performances which are accompanied by live music, often played by Shamisen, a three-stringed guitar-like instrument. This time, some of the performances done by Naoshima Onna-Bunraku were accompanied by the unusual combinations of Japanese drums, shamisen, piano, and opera performed by opera singer Taemi Kohama (Figure 52i & 52ii). The selection of a story, Madama Butterfly, was also rare for the traditional Bunraku.



Figure 52i. The scene from the performance    Figure 52ii. A opera singer performing with Naoshima Onna-Bunraku

\*Figure 52i Copyright 2010 © the Setouchi International Art Festival Supporter’s site “Koebi Hiroba”/Figure 52ii 2010 © Kagawa Prefecture/Figure 4aiii Naoshima Fukutake Art Museum Foundation ([www.fukutake.or.jp/science](http://www.fukutake.or.jp/science))

As seen in the examples of Ishinha and Naoshima Onna-Bunraku, the mixtures of old and new, the creation of a contemporary version of performance out of old elements are present. These performances seem to create cohesion to artworks that are installed all over the islands.

The second prominent feature of the festival and it is also Director Kitagawa's claim that artworks that are installed for this festival have taken account of geography and have been inspired by the environment of the selected venues.<sup>134</sup> As mentioned earlier, the Setouchi International Art Festival 2010 included seven islands and they were; Naoshima, Inujima, Teshima, Megijima, Shodoshima, Oshima, Ogijima. In addition, there are some works installed in Takamatusu Port (Kagawa prefecture) and Uno Port (Okayama prefecture). It was discussed in the *Teshima* section about a stunning water drop shape art museum. Teshima is one of few islands that is water rich thus the island is green and could grow all sorts of vegetables. As represented by Teshima Art Museum, there were artworks dealing with 'water' and 'nature' in Teshima. For instance, illusional *Storm House* by Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller, and vivid video art, *Your First Colour (Solution In My head –Soulution in My stomach)* by Pipilotti Rist dealt with nature, color and the psychological state of being in a surrealistic environment. Likewise, in a windy island Megijima, artworks which dealt with wind, light, and sounds were installed. A Fuji Mt. shape island, Ogijima has steep hill roads, narrow alleys and empty houses on slopes because of its land features. There were humorous artworks such as *Onba Facotry* (by five local artists) where various 'onba' (strollers) were shown, and colorful *Wallalley* (wall plus alley) by Rikuji Makabe was on display. Strollers are vital goods in Ogijima where there are small alleys which cars cannot pass. *Wallalley* also accentuate the topology of Ogijima where zigzag small alleys run across the hill. Other than the works which focus seemed to be the nature, geography, and customs, there were works which put emphasis on more social or personal matters such as Chiharu Shiota's *Farther Memory* (in Teshima) which was a tunnel shaped installation made out of discarded wooden fittings (Figure 53), for instance.

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<sup>134</sup> See Kitagawa (2011) p.111



Figure 53. *Father Memory* (2010) © 2010-2011 Setouchi International Art Festival Executive Committee

Shiota's work seems to remind us old houses (or life of families) have been lost and forgotten as time goes by. Shiota had collected the materials (around 600 window and door frames) from Teshima and Naoshima.<sup>135</sup> The work seems to take the viewer into a mythic tunnel which has suddenly appeared in front of an abandoned school building. The window and door frames seem to represent light and warmth coming from each home and would light up in the darkness just like stars. And the tunnel appears to be a sort of black hole, created by the massive dying stars as how a black hole usually said to be formed. It would distort the surrounding scenery and grow bigger as it sucks up more stars around. Shiota states that prior to the making of *Farther Memory*, she has had plenty of conversations with the local residents. She also states that without communication (with the locals) this work would not be existing, and without people's emotional involvement such as overlapping the feelings and memories of their own with her work, this work would remain lifeless ("Interview with Chiharu Shiota", 2010). An artwork such as Shiota's seems to bring up the disconsolate life of a modern period, and most importantly, an artwork could continue to live in the viewer's memory if it could relate to a personal experience. This sort of work might have a potential to make a large scale outdoor art festival which could actually speak to the visitors in a personal way.

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<sup>135</sup> See Setouchi International Art Festival website "Artists" and "Chiharu Shiota". [http://setouchi-artfest.jp/en/artist/chiharu\\_shiota/?alphabet=yes](http://setouchi-artfest.jp/en/artist/chiharu_shiota/?alphabet=yes) See also "interview with Chiharu Shiota" (2010) at Art iT online magazine.

Lastly, it might be useful to throw a few questions regarding some of the aspects of a large scale art festival. It would not be enjoyable to point out the problematic aspects of the festival. However, there are some voices which express the issues that need to be mulled over.

The most obvious issue would be the overloaded crowds and this is not the issue limited to the Setouchi International Art Festival but any popular art festivals. There was an unexpected large number of visitors came to the Setouchi International Art Festival. The festival was expected to receive around 300,000. However, the number of the visitors reached over 900,000 in the end. The number increased towards the end of the festival and this was thought to be online forums and social networks that caused to draw more visitors.<sup>136</sup> It was reported that a long waiting line (three hours of waiting time) was formed in front of Chichu Art Museum, and similarly, ferry boats were overcrowded during the festival. As a solution to this problem, the next festival, renamed as Setouchi Triennale 2013, there will be four additional islands (11 islands in total) and opening periods are spread out throughout the year (Spring: March 20 - April 21, Summer: July 20 - September 1, Autumn: October 5 - November 4). Nonetheless, still issues remain, for instance, lack of accommodation facilities, volunteer workers, and lack of buses and ferry boats.

In addition to the infrastructure issues, the criticisms concerning artworks and overall concept of the art festival are also heard. For example, the festival committees issued what they called a 'stamp rally'. It was a piece of paper on which a visitor could get a stamp each time he or she visits an art installation. If a visitor managed to collect more than 75 stamps (meaning viewing 75 different artworks), he or she would be entitled to apply for a prize.<sup>137</sup> Some seem to question whether this orienteering sort of game has anything to do with enhancing the appreciation of arts. Furthermore, crowds and 'attractions' (such as popular museums in Naoshima) created a Disneyland-like or touristic atmosphere.<sup>138</sup> It was inevitable that some sites were more popular

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<sup>136</sup> See ShikokuNews Nov.2, 2010. the article "the International Art Festival: 938,246 visitors" and also "The Report on the Economical Impact"(2010).

<sup>137</sup> The prizes are a gift card (free stay at the Oval in Naoshima) an artwork by Takeshi Kawashima, and small gifts.

<sup>138</sup> 'Disneyland-like' and shallow concepts of the festivals are discussed in the blog run by Miyuki Ono. <http://tabimanabi.blog110.fc2.com/blog-entry-49.html>

than others and visitors concentrated in those ‘popular’ ones. And some works were more ‘entertaining’ and ‘simple’ compared to many works that were shown at the festival, and there were pros and cons to those works.

An art scholar Andrew McClellan (2003) points out that the visitors/audiences as ‘the public’, “there is no one public for arts; the public for art is diverse and divided by interests and levels of knowledge, confidence and class, not to mention race, ethnicity and gender” which many museums today fail to recognize (p.1-3). Indeed, there are various people coming to visit museums, and certainly to art festivals. It would be crucial for a curator or the director of a festival to recognize such fact. Perhaps the challenge for the organizers of this sort of art festival would be balancing the exhibitions between those assessed audiences and the local residents of the venues.

On the other hand, if some compromises are made and only well-known, well-received artworks from the past fill an art festival, there would be a chance that the festival would not differ so much from art museums in anywhere else. Susan Vogel (1999), Director of the Yale University Art Gallery, states, “museum directors and curators traditionally have sought to insure against offending anyone by blandly avoiding extremes of presentation” but “directors and their trustees talk enthusiastically about risk taking without always accepting the fact that if the risks are genuine, there will be failures” (p. 138). It would always be a difficult task for a curator (or a director) to measure how much to push the limits. One bright solution to this might be inviting artists who are willing to communicate, and take time to develop their works, such as Ohtake who built an unconventional public bath, *I Love Yu* (Figure 39i & 39ii) and *Haisha* (Figure 34i) in Naohisma, and Shiota who created an uneasy object, *Farther Memory* (Figure 53) in Teshima. Even if an expression would be provocative or foreign to the region or the audience where an art festival is held, it would always remain sincere. Needless to say, sincerity is a truly value on which a good relationship could be built.

As a last example from the festival, I would like to mention briefly about Oshima. Oshima’s example seems to suggest a way that art could meditate and buffer taboo topics. Oshima has a long sad history of isolation and violation against humanity. In 1909, a clinic for treating the

patients of Hansen's disease was built in Oshima. Back then, there was no alternative medicine to the illness and its contagiousness scared people. Those who suffered from this illness were taken forcefully to a special clinic just like the one in Oshima and kept for the rest of their lives isolated and treated without dignity.<sup>139</sup> During the festival, workshops which demonstrate Oshima residents' (the former patients of Hansen's disease) craftsmanship were offered to the visitors. Café Shiyoru was opened to the visitors which offered drinks in a handmade cup that had been made from Oshima's soil. At a special exhibition space, Gallery 15 the operating table which had once been used to carry out autopsies was shown (Figure 54i). At a culture centre in the island, old furniture given by the former patients were installed and the visitors could participate in making a paper craft, Origami and leave it on them (Figure 54ii). All these were done under a collaborative art project called Yasashii Bijutsu Project ('kind art' project) run by Nobuyuki Takahashi of Nagoya Zokei University of Art & Design and the students and graduates of the university.



Figure 54i. the operating table discarded in sea has been discovered and put on display © 2012 Kagawa Prefecture Tourism Association Inc.

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<sup>139</sup> See Fukuoka & Tanimoto (2003). The patients living in Oshima have been suffering not only from the disease but also discriminations and indifferences.



Figure 54ii. Colorful Origamis, which are a shape of a tree, form a forest in a room © 2008 Yasashii Bijutsu

The art project in Oshima seems to take the initiative in creating a bridge between the dark past and the present. Through the exhibitions and workshops in Oshima the visitors were able to face the cruel reality, and the residents of Oshima were able to see a better future (and hopefully overcome the terrible past as well).<sup>140</sup>

Soichiro Fukutake has declared that the Setouchi International Art Festival will continue another century. He also states that the first decade will be spent on building understandings among the local people and the visitors (Fukutake & Mogi, 2007). As is said, the first decade will probably be a trial and also the period which artistic and social values of the festival will be evaluated. Apparently, the festival has shown a few promising results in terms of a public event which attempts to promote well-being.

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<sup>140</sup> In “The Report on the Opening of the Setouchi International Festival 2010” (2010) broadcasted at the RSK evening news, a chair of Hansen’s disease patient group, Takahisa Yamamoto tells a reporter that the former patients who still remain in the island are hopeful that the festival would give a positive stimulation to the aging population.

## Conclusion

### *-Summary*

In the past half century, public art and art festivals have been actively promoted by the arts and cultural sector of the governments in the West. And the aim for this seems to be enriching the cultural life of people and to improve the aesthetics of a city by utilizing public spaces. In paralleled to such cultural promotions for the public, there have been art movements which show the separation (or distancing) of art practices from art institutions. Such move was encouraged by Earth art or Land art, one of the path-breaking art movements in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>141</sup> After the appearance of Land art in the late 1960s, an art 'object' became no longer the subject for viewing but rather for imagining and experiencing through the direct physical interactions. Then, the Land art movement, evolved into a new epoch in the art world which became understood as 'dematerialization' or 'anti-aesthetic' by some art critics. Ultimately, many artworks have been brought out to the public either by artists or bureaucrats and people do not need to go to art museums to see artworks nowadays.

In Japan, besides the effort of public sectors, private corporations have been promoting arts and culture to the public. Benesse Art Site Naoshima is one of many examples that the private sector trying to bring back wealth to a society for the well-being of citizens. Benesse Corporation, however, has been a special case. Its activity has not been limited to the opening of a private art gallery or museum. It has grown larger and larger involving the local residents as well as the local authorities. Its function has expended and become an agent for regenerating the whole region. The development has taken a long path, and the key to success in building a bridge between the local people (and the visitors) and art appears to be countless tireless dialogues. Needless to mention, artists and architects who have been involved in Benesse Art Site Naoshima have

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<sup>141</sup> Needless to mention, Avant-garde in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and Conceptual art have great influences on this move as well.

humanistic approaches and they have been willingly creating opportunities for dialogues to happen.

*-Afterthoughts and new directions*

In Part One, success stories of public art and art festivals are not discussed, and this area of study deserves further analyses. I have come across with interesting art festivals which seem to open up a new direction, such as *Places with a Past* (at Spoleto Festival USA) Charleston, SC held in 1991 and *Conversations at the Castle* (at Arts Festival of Atlanta) in Atlanta, GA in 1996 both curated by Mary Jane Jacob. *Places with a Past: New Site-Specific Art* was held as an addition to Spoleto Festival USA, which is one of the world's leading performing arts festivals. Documenta in Lassel, Germany is known for exhibiting influential artists' works but also for 'site-specificity' for over five decades. But *Places with a Past* was different in a sense that artists explored the history of a location and tried to integrate social and historical elements into their works. It could be said that this art exhibition was highly organized site-specific art exhibition which artists were asked to explore not only a physical spatial element of a site but also its socio-historical context. As mentioned in 'expressive space', every place on earth, especially, where human settlements are, have special meanings and functions. Apparently, *Places with a Past* succeeded in bringing up such 'expressive space' in a visual form to some degree so that the viewer's experience of being in a particular place and seeing artworks became much richer. At *Conversations at the Castle*, which was held during the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, serious debates over "who is contemporary art for?" and "who are the audiences?" were conducted.<sup>142</sup> Besides the art exhibition which showed collaborative artworks, art administrators were invited to gather and to discuss a role of art museums and curatorial works which had been increasingly challenging.

In recent years, almost all cities and towns offer art festivals which deal with visual arts. Some are combined with performance art, music, film, and literature fairs. Undoubtedly, art festivals have been adopted by the authorities and by people bringing joy to everyday life. It would not be too

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<sup>142</sup> See Jacob & Bernson (Eds.) (1998) for further details.

much to say that the active discussions and analyses on this area of study are need and could be important when we think about the enrichment of life.

Moreover, artists are becoming more diverse, and apparently, many are seeking social engagements rather than limiting their practices to be seen and discussed within the art world. As seen in the case of Benesse Art Site Naoshima, more and more contemporary artists seem to take challenges such as working in unprotected area (outdoor) and incorporating nature as a part of artworks, inviting local people in the process of making art, working with other artists (sometimes with architects and curators).

Perhaps, some might be wondering what the residents of Naoshima are really thinking about the artworks, especially outdoor works, and 'out-of-place' architectures scattered all over the island. Akimoto has been questioned during the several interviews about how people in Naoshima are coping with the changes and the artworks that are alien to them. Akimoto once replied, "there have been some voices which show disfavor toward contemporary art coming to the island because it is an unfamiliar culture, besides, the works would stay permanently" and for instance, "*Yellow Pumpkin* by Yayoi Kusama at a bulwark is certainly a complete mystery for the islanders" ("Ecologue Interview No. 3", 2004). Nonetheless, "there have been lots of dialogues taking place [because the locals do not understand the meaning of artworks], and what is for sure is that the islanders have 'affections' toward such 'odd object' " ("Ecologue Interview No. 3", 2004). Those 'affections' or more like feelings of attachment by the local residents have been grown in them by seeing artists working in the island. And this is probably one of many reasons which explain why there have not been any major resistances in Naoshima. Naoshima's case seems to illustrate social aesthetics (of Arnold Berleant) which I mentioned earlier in Part One. As Berleant (1999) writes, "a social aesthetic offers the basis for a truly humane community", there are such social aesthetics - "tolerance, reciprocity and equality"- can be seen in the activity of Benesse Art Site Naoshima which is backed by a strong tight of a local community (p.28).

Furthermore, I would like to believe (and propose) that the local residents in Noashima have more than feelings of attachment and acceptance toward artworks. I question, what if the experiencing

art is already imbedded in our everyday life which intensifies joy, happiness, and all other valuable things in our life, or the art experience is something that can be learned over time, and especially when artworks exist close to living environment. In other words, so-called 'visual literacy' can be developed and expanded as there are various artworks exposed to the public. Artworks that are scattered in these islands (Naoshima, Inujima, and Teshima) would be perceived as cave paintings (something that would reflect the way of life and a society) rather than a single independent artwork which has no connection to the island? It would not be legitimate to draw a solid conclusion on this at this stage, but the art projects held in these island could be appreciated and understood by the local residents through aesthetic experiences, and the bond would be based on not only 'attachment' or 'affection' but also various interpretations and enjoyment which come along with.

Mikon Kwon (2010) expresses her concern over the commercialization of the islands and wishes that the islands would not lose their identities in the coming century (p.163). It is probably many people's concern what would happen to Naoshima from 10 years now. Once ripped by industrialization, and later by capitalism (a money-centered ideology), Naoshima certainly deserves better future. Fukutake seems to be confident in making Setouchi International Art Festival to last 100 years or more, just like the Venice Binenale.<sup>143</sup> Fukutake also states that (wishing contemporary art to be preserved for the future generation) Chichu Art Museum is being built strong enough that it would last 300 years (Fukutake & Mogi, 2007). At least, the founder of Benesse Art Site Naoshima is optimistic about the future of Naoshima.

Speaking of commercialization, surprisingly, Benesse Corporation, the chair of Naoshima Tourism Association Okuda, and the local residents of Naoshima do not believe or even think that Benesse Art Site Naoshima is a tourist resort or attraction. Seemingly, the spokesperson of Benesse Corporation claims Benesse Art Site Naoshima is not a tourism development project (as cited in Ishiguro, 2011). The spokesperson of the corporation explains that art projects in the islands are only following the philosophy of the company, 'Benesse' (in Latin 'bene' for 'good' and 'esse' to

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<sup>143</sup> See Fukutake & Mogi, 2007

'live', thus to live well), and says the corporation has no budgets for advertising expenses and only 'word of mouth' has made it known to the world (as cited in Ishiguro, 2011). In fact there seem to be no obvious marketing done to promote Naoshima. Instead, there are numerous online forums, social networks and both travel and art magazines have been covering the story of Naoshima. Perhaps, there is no need to put efforts in marketing these days. The question regarding whether Benesse Art Site Naoshima to be for community revitalization or not is another story. According to Fram Kitagawa, Director of Setouchi International Art Festival, Soichiro Fukutake is looking at the Asian market (as cited in "Kitagawa Fram", 2009). As mentioned in this thesis earlier that South Korean tourists are the largest group of foreigners visiting Naoshima. It is unclear at the moment if Fukutake is looking at tourists from Asian countries or he is looking at the Asian art market which is currently on a growth path. Looking at the achievement of Art Site Naoshima in the past two decades, a remarkable progress on regenerating a rural area of Japan is undeniable. Nevertheless, the future is rather uncertain.

Having said that, there are some aspects of Benesse Art Site Naoshima that seem to have universal appeal and offer something valuable to all of us. Contemporary artists have explored something new but they also tend to explore something that are old and forgotten and derive a new meaning. Akimoto stresses, that the abandoned houses in the island have been, like trashes on the street, forgotten and become invisible after a while and the great thing about contemporary art is that even such 'trashes' could be transformed into a work of art (Akimoto, 2005). Although Naoshima had had historical heritages (old folk houses) the local people had not realized or had not had any motivation to preserve them until Benesse started to take notice. Art did become catalysis to bring up the values of the old remaining houses in Honmura town and created a venue where people meet and have dialogues. Moreover, Benesse House Museum has been and will be functioning as a cultural and educational center where anybody could hear lectures and attend seminars. Outside of art museums and 'art sites', there are community activities (Noren project and Rice Growing project in Naoshima). Since the opening of *Seirenscho* in Inujima, its innovative ecological system

has been researched by Okayama University.<sup>144</sup> In June 2011, Benesse Holdings and Graduate School of Natural Science and Technology at Okayama University officially signed an agreement for joint research on ‘next generation environmental technology’.<sup>145</sup> These aspects of Benesse Art Site Naoshima seem to have promising futures.

Soichiro Fukutake has generously invested in Benesse Art Site Naoshima, and art has been given a chance to prove that it can energize life of ordinary people. I could not deny having a thought of the worst, such as what if Benesse Corporation would cease its operation in Naoshima one day. Or what if those artists who have been interested in Naoshima as an exotic island lose their interests? There are also questions of determining the point when to stop (when there are ‘enough’ works done in the islands), how to sustain the level of cultural activities which have been taking place in the islands, and who to look after outdoor artworks (a typical issue of public art). These questions will not be answered yet. Perhaps, I could only warmly watch over the growth of Benesse Art Site Naoshima.

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<sup>144</sup> See Nasohima Fukutake Art Museum Foundation website: <http://www.fukutake.or.jp/naoshimaart/jigyous.html>

<sup>145</sup> See Okayama University website “news” section: [http://www.gnst.okayama-u.ac.jp/tp/news/news\\_id990.html](http://www.gnst.okayama-u.ac.jp/tp/news/news_id990.html)

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## Appendix A

The list of art museums, site-specific art and their locations are shown in the maps of Benesse Art Site Naoshima (Naoshima, Teshima and Inujima).

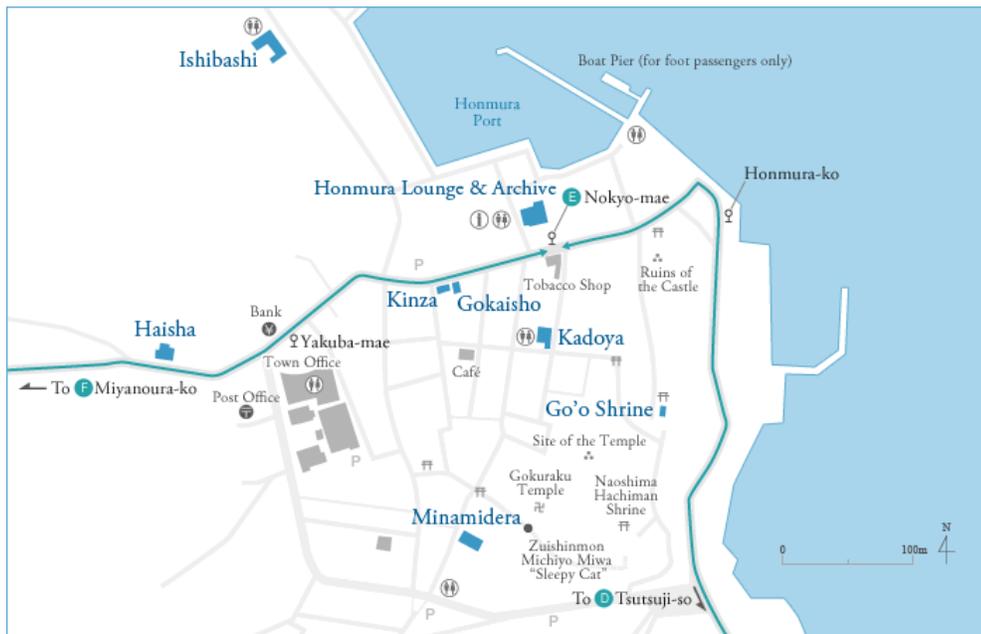
The maps and the lists are taken from the website of Benesse Art Site Naoshima:  
<http://www.benesse-artsite.jp/en/naoshima/>

### Naoshima

-The south part of Naoshima



-Art House Project Area (Honmura) in Naoshima

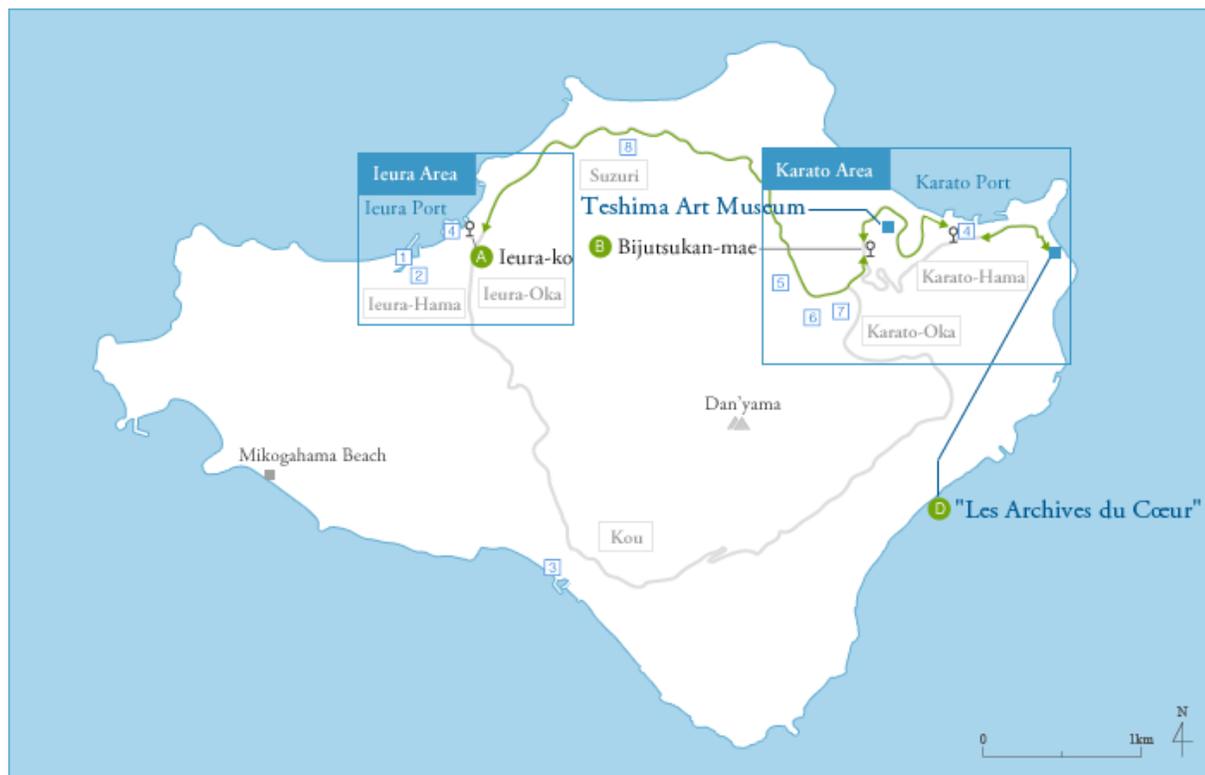


-Benesse House Area (outdoor artworks including site-specific art)



1	Kimiyo Mishima	<i>Another Rebirth 2005-N</i>
2	George Ricky	<i>Four Lines</i>
3	Cai Guo-Qiang	<i>Cultural Melting Bath: Project for Naoshima</i>
4	George Ricky	<i>Three Squares Vertical Diagonal</i>
5	Kazuo Katase	<i>Drink a Cup of Tea</i>
6	Walter De Maria	<i>Seen/Unseen Known/Unknown</i>
7	Shinro Ohtake	<i>Shipyards Works: Cut Bow</i>
8	Shinro Ohtake	<i>Shipyards Works Bow with Hole</i>
9	Hiroshi Sugimoto	<i>Time Exposed Mirtoan Sea, Sounion</i> <i>Time Exposed Mirtoan Sea, Sounion</i>
10	Niki de Saint Phalle	<i>Le Banc</i>
11	Dan Graham	<i>Cylinder Bisected by Plane</i>
12	Niki de Saint Phalle	<i>Cat</i>
13	Niki de Saint Phalle	<i>Elephant</i>
14	Niki de Saint Phalle	<i>Camel</i>
15	Niki de Saint Phalle	<i>La Conversation</i>
16	Karel Appel	<i>Frog and Cat</i>
17	Yayoi Kusama	<i>Pumpkin</i>
18	Tsuyoshi Ozawa	<i>Slag Buddha88- Eighty-eight Buddha statues created using slag from industrial waste at Teshima , 2006</i>

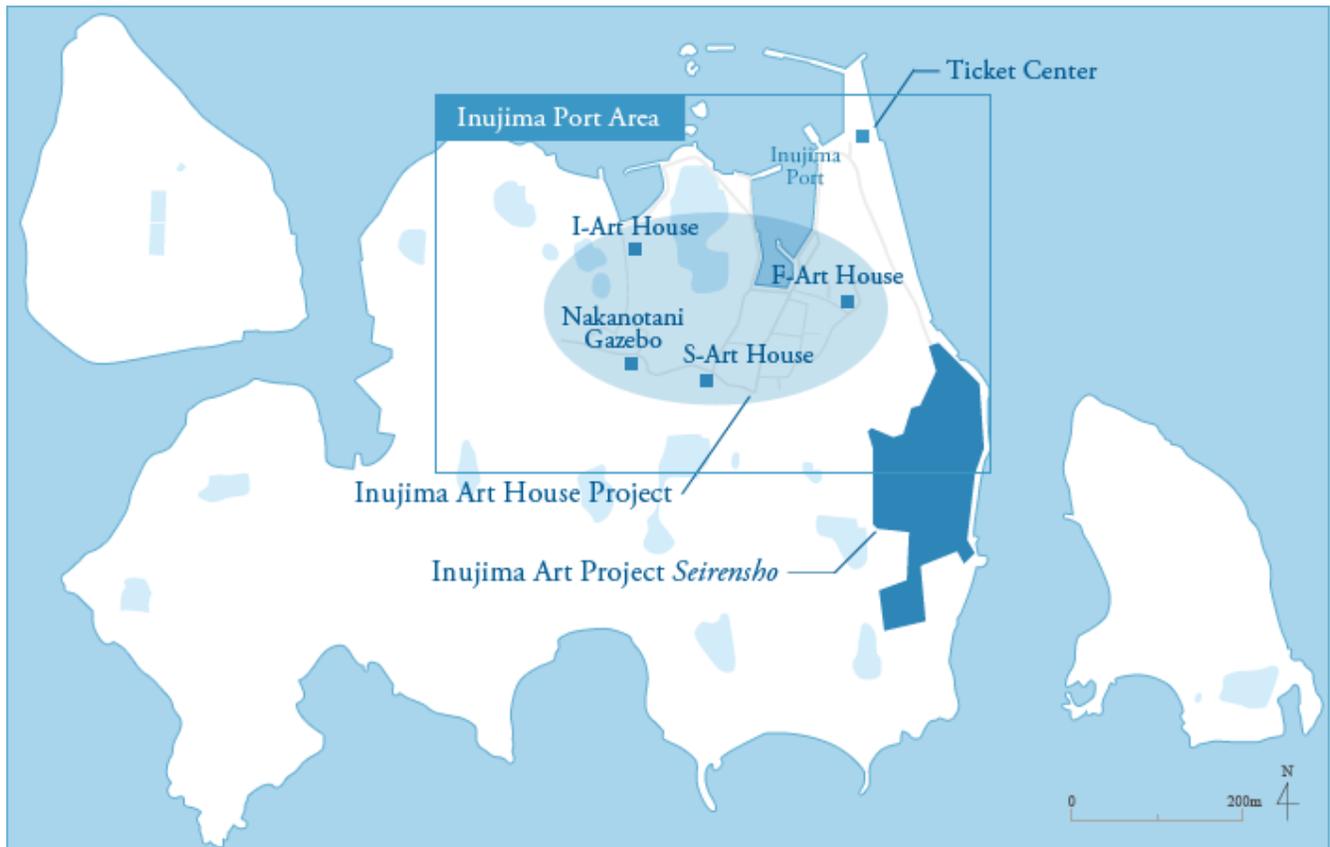
## Teshima



[http://www.benesse-artsite.jp/en/access/map\\_teshima.html](http://www.benesse-artsite.jp/en/access/map_teshima.html)

1	Tobias Rehberger	<i>Was du liebst, bring dich auch zum weinen</i>
2	Susumu Kinoshita	<i>100 Years Old's Hands, and more</i>
3	Chiharu Shiota	<i>Farther Memory</i>
4	José de Guimarães	<i>Flower/Happy Snake</i>
5	Noe Aoki	<i>Particle in the Air</i>
6	Ryo Abe (Architect) Pipilotti Rist	Shima Kitchen (a restaurant) <i>Your First Colour</i>
7	Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller	<i>Storm House</i>
8	Mariko Mori	<i>Tom Na H-iu</i>

## Inujima



[http://www.benesse-artsite.jp/en/access/map\\_inujima.html](http://www.benesse-artsite.jp/en/access/map_inujima.html)

## Appendix B

The comments (along with English translations) taken from Jalan Net online Travel magazine, a travelers' forum are shown below. These comments are given by anonymous people who have visited to Benesse Art Site Naoshima. Moreover, I have selected and listed comments which deal with the attractive part of visiting Naoshima (such as different atmosphere in different times of the day and season).

Jalan Net online Travel magazine website:

[http://www.jalan.net/kankou/370000/370200/spt\\_37364ab2050139552/kuchikomi/?spotId=37364ab2050139552&afCd=&rootCd=&screenId=OUW4001&vos=&efcid=](http://www.jalan.net/kankou/370000/370200/spt_37364ab2050139552/kuchikomi/?spotId=37364ab2050139552&afCd=&rootCd=&screenId=OUW4001&vos=&efcid=)

自転車を借りて島を回りました。私たちは坂道も余裕で下り坂はものすごいスピードで帽子が飛びそうになるくらい！笑 家プロジェクトは南寺が一番おすすめ！一番にここに来たので後は…。かぼちゃは夜がオススメ！ライトアップされていて幻想的！黄色かぼちゃに影をうつして写真とるのが定番みたい。美術館はアートがあまり分からない私はガイドさんがいた方がもっとアートを楽しめたと思います。宿は志おや！町の人に聞いても一番ご飯がおいしいとこみたいです。普段ご飯少なめな私ですが、おいしすぎてご飯をおかわりしたくらい！平日で人も少なく満足！また近々行く計画立ててます。

評価 5 行った時期 2011年10月13日 投稿者 のんこさん(女性/20代)

Rented a bicycle and went around the island <omit> [Yayoi Kusama's] Pumpkin is recommended to visit in the evening. It is illuminated [after sunset] and fantastic <omit>. Planning to go back again [to Naoshima].

Rate: 4/5 visited on October 13, 2011 Ms. N (20s)

直島、犬島、女木島、男木島、豊島のアートめぐりはとても楽しめます。この時期は、まだ寒いので観光客が少なく、貸切状態で作品を見れるというメリットがあります。移動が多いですが、効率よくバスを利用した

り、体力があれば徒歩でまわるのがいいです。作品が増えていたり、同じ作品でも季節や時間帯によって、見え方が違うので、何回行っても楽しめます。

評価 5 行った時期 2011年3月9日 投稿者 あんずさん(女性/30代)

A tour around Naoshima, Inujima, Megijima, Ogijima, and Teshima is very enjoyable. Around this time of the year [winter], there are less tourists and there is a merit that you could view artworks in a less crowded situation<omit>. The number of artworks [in the island] has increased and even the same artworks look different depending on time and season. Never get board visiting there again and again.

Rate: 5/5 visited on March 9, 2011 Ms. A (30s)

ベネッセハウスの地中美術館は必見。特にオープンフィールドの部屋は初めて目にするアートで感動もの。ウォルターデマリアの「タイム」も神秘的で陽光の使い方もよく、とても感動しました。この地中美術館はチケットとは別に整理券が必要となります。午前中にはなくなってしまうので、まず直島に着いたらこの整理券をもらいに並ぶことをお勧めします。うちは9時に到着して、整理券に記載された入館時間が11時15分だったので、それまでベネッセハウスと、リーウファン美術館を見ました。途中海岸沿いのオブジェを見ながら、海岸沿いのお散歩も楽しかったです。直島は島民がとても親切で私たちはヒッチハイクをしてもいないのに、歩いているところ声を掛けられ「港に行くなら乗せたあげる」と乗車させてもらいました。家族4人で小さい子どももいたので「声を掛けた」と言ってくれました。本当に気持ちの良い島でした。また行きたいです。

評価 5 行った時期 2010年10月23日 投稿者 コネッホさん(女性/30代)

Chichu Art Museum is must-see. <omit> Walter De Maria's Time/Timeless/No Time was mystic using the sunlight well [in the work] and I was impressed by that. <omit> It was also enjoyable to walk along the sea shore and view outdoor artworks. The islanders were very kind. We were with our kids walking and got a lift from a local person resident. It was because we had small kids. It was a wonderful island and hoping to visit again.

Rate: 5/5 visited on October 23, 2010 Ms. K (30s)

今回 3 度目の直島訪問です。目的はいつも一緒のアートに触れる！！そして今回は念願の家 PJ の「きんざ」を予約していけました。ずばり一言、素晴らしかったです！きんざを体験するなら昼過ぎからが良いという意味がわかりました。また直島はこの数年、年一回くらい訪れているのですが、毎回新しい発見があります。今回もまた新たな作品が出来ていて、毎回ウキウキさせてくれる場所だと思います。

評価 5 行った時期 2009 年 11 月 23 日 投稿者 まさ C さん(男性/20 代)

It was the third time visiting Naoshima. The purpose is to experience artworks. I have been wishing to visit Kinza and managed to reserve a time. It was wonderful. It was said, and made sense that the best time to experience Kinza is in the afternoon. In the past few years, I have been visiting Naoshima once a year. Every time I visit, there is a new discovery. <omit>

Rate: 5/5 visited on November 23, 2009 Mr. C (20s)