

2024

A community report for Project Trust

INTRODUCTION:

Upon my arrival in Toya, one of the things that struck me about the small town was its excess of sculptures. An area of outstanding natural beauty, Lake Toya is a UNESCO World Heritage site created by a volcanic eruption some 110,000 years ago. It then begs the question of what is the need to surround the lake with 58 sculptures.

The Toyako Tourism Board website describes the sculpture park as a 'confrontation between [...] artists and nature' that creates 'a fresh, attractive and moving space on the lake shore'. In contrast, the next page encourages visitors to walk among the sculptures and experience the 'harmony' between nature and art. I will use the descriptions of 'harmony' and 'confrontation' to analyse the sculptures I have selected.

BACKGROUND:

All of the sculptures are dated to around the early 1990s and the late 2000s. This period also marks the burst of Japan's economic Bubble, after a decade and a half of economic prosperity. During this time, *'a land of chemicalized golf courses, expensive marinas, toll expressways that penetrated the deepest mountains, and resorts that multiplied the ideology and aesthetics of Disneyland, where culture meant consumption.'* (The Emptiness of Japanese Affluence, 1996) were created. Thus, cynically, the creation of the sculpture park feels like another edition to the artificial sculpting of Lake Toya as a tourist destination

Toya had previously held the 'Toya-Mura International Sculpture Biennale'. The competition is no longer running, but the sculptures submitted are still on display in the Toyako Art Museum. It is then evident that sculpture works can be seen as a tie to the area's identity. This is perhaps another reason why the mayor called for the creation of a sculpture park.

湖景夢想

Masafumi Maita



In a note on his work, Maita states his intention 'to bind the power of the earth, sky, and dreams by using stones and iron materials'. As the work reflected the harmony between the 'old mountains that rest quietly, and the lake'. Thus the notion of harmony is stated quite blankly, the harmony within nature is the inspiration for the sculpture, and this is reflected in the balancing of stone and iron.

Masafumi Maita, (1996), *Vision in Toya*,
[White Granite/Iron (Corten Steel)],
(W)18.50×(D)14.00×(H)5.00m,
Lake Toya Gurutto Chokoku Koen, Hokkaido



Kyuzaemon Orihara

波遊

Orihara creates a large bronze swirl wave that sits atop a large stainless steel pole. Through the centre of the wave, you can see the Nakajima islands, which Orihara notes, allows for the sculpture to 'co-exist with the beautiful nature of the Lake Toya'. Again, the artist attempts not to distract from the surrounding beauty but to draw our attention to it and place emphasis on the value the area has to people.

Harmony again appears to be the prevailing idea behind the art. But does it perhaps not seem more plausible that our attention would be drawn to the surrounding natural beauty if the sculpture was not there at all?

Kyuzaemon Orihara, (1993), *Playing with Waves*, [Bronze/Stainless Steel, (W)5.00×(D)0.40×(H)5.00m], Lake Toya Gurutto Chokoku Koen, Hokkaido

Masura Bando



‘I was (過去) ...

I will (未来) ...’



Bando tells us that the female nude represents the finite state of the human mind. Conversely, the pillar represents ‘power and the authority of human being[s]’. The idea appears to be that human creations will outlast their minds, which draws to me more the idea of confrontation, with the lake and nature. While human memories and buildings both will succumb to time but nature will remain.

Masaru Bando, (1990), *I was(past)...I will (future)...*,
[Bronze, (H)1.62m],
Lake Toya Gurutto Chokoku Koen, Hokkaido

Mistuaki Sora, (1993), *Toya Dream*,
[Stone, (W)8.20×(D)0.60×(H)4.50m],
Lake Toya Gurutto Chokoku Koen, Hokkaido



夢洞爺

Mistuaki Sora

Constructed of sixty-three stones connected together to create an arch, this sculpture frames the small pagoda shrine in Ukimido Park. The materials originate from Sora's hometown in Kagawa prefecture. In reference to the reason for his use of materials, Sora said '[p]eople from Sanuki (Kagawa) took part in developing the area. I wanted to use the stones from their hometown in respect for our ancestors'. Since the arch frames Nakajima Islands and the lake, the symbol of the stones as its citizens strengthens the idea of harmony.



FINAL THOUGHTS:

In total, after considering the artist's description of their own work I judged three out of four of the sculptures to be in harmony with the surrounding area. Suggesting that the prevailing description of the sculpture park is harmony. The sculpture's choice of natural materials, mostly bronze, steel, iron and stone reflects their intention for the works to blend into their environment.

While the sculptures individually clearly reflect a conscious decision on the part of the artist to put nature at the centre of their work, the oversaturation of sculptures collectively distract from the area and leaves onlookers perhaps confused or indifferent. Most sculptures hold the function of photo opportunities rather than art or natural appreciation. It is hard to extract artistic merit without a contextual basis.

Despite the artist's clear efforts to create harmony with the lake, the abundance of these sculptures and the lack of information that surrounds them bring me to the conclusion that the lake and the sculptures are in conflict with one another.

For the full essay and a complete list of footnotes please scan:



All of the images used in this zine are my own.

Background collages were taken from my own travel journal with drawing additions from Toya and Kazzeko Elementary school children.



thank you for reading :)

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