

Special Feature: Benesse Art Site Naoshima

Embodiment of Benesse (Well-Being) and Manifestation of Lifelong Growth Potential

Benesse Art Site Naoshima is the collective name for the art-related activities we conduct in cooperation with the Fukutake Foundation on the islands of Naoshima, Teshima, and Inujima in the Seto Inland Sea. Through Benesse Art Site Naoshima, we demonstrate how nature, art, and people can co-exist harmoniously and provide places where visitors can encounter the embodiment of Benesse (Well-being), which is our corporate philosophy, and a manifestation of the concept of lifelong growth potential. Since launching the project 30 years ago, we have been conducting a string of related activities. In this special feature we introduce some of these activities and our ideas reflected in them.

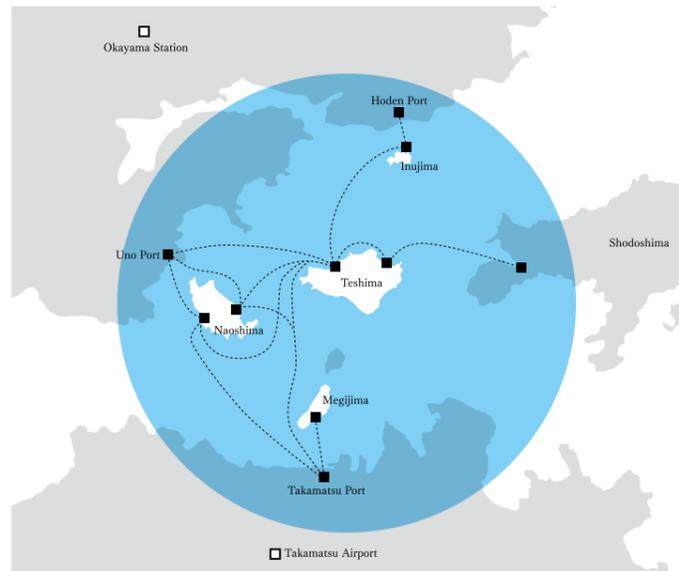


Pumpkin, Yayoi Kusama ©YAYOI KUSAMA

Communicating the Significance of Sustainable Growth since the Pre-SDGs Era

Special places where nature, art and people co-exist in harmony

Benesse Art Site Naoshima was started in the 1980s, long before the term “SDGs” was coined. We started the activities in order to bring art to the Seto Inland Sea area, with a focus on Naoshima and Teshima in Kagawa Prefecture and Inujima in Okayama Prefecture and based on a policy of taking as much time as was needed and not trying to rush the process. Specifically, we aim to make artistic and architectural works an integral part of the local landscape and culture to turn the islands into special places. Through the artistic activities, we have been communicating the true meaning of affluence and sustainability. We hope that visitors to the area will start thinking about the meaning of well-being and how it applies to their own lives through contact with the local nature, people, and art.



Revitalizing local communities and solving local problems through art

Naoshima, Teshima, and Inujima each have a long history and are blessed with abundant nature, including virgin Japanese landscapes. On these islands, you may find answers to questions like: “Can people exist in areas with no history or nature?” and “What does well-being mean?” Although designated Japan’s first national park, the area also supported the country’s modernization and high economic growth of the postwar period, which left a negative legacy, including various environmental problems. Through the artistic activities, we are contributing to solving these problems and ensuring that the local nature, history, culture, and various other indigenous charms of the islands are passed on to the next generation.



Top: Teshima Art Museum Photo: Kenichi Suzuki
Bottom: Inujima Seirensho Art Museum Photo: Daichi Ano

Photo: Shintaro Miyawaki

Creating unprecedentedly new value for sustainability and growth

The concept of Benesse Art Site Naoshima is “Use what exists to create what is to be.” In line with this concept, artistic works were created and installed on the islands. Creating unprecedentedly new value by making use of the local nature, history, culture, and others fosters sustainability and growth. In the following we introduce some of the works born out of the idea of sustainability.



Photo: Daichi Ano

Inujima Seirenscho Art Museum

Regional development from the perspectives of the environment, heritage, architecture, and art

The art museum was built on the site of an old copper refinery. The remains of the factory, which was built with *karami* bricks made from copper slag (a by-product of copper smelting), were preserved and incorporated into the design along with the chimney. The museum moreover utilizes natural energy, such as solar and geothermal heat, and operates an advanced water treatment system that uses plant life to purify water. With even its grounds planted with trees suited to the local climate, the museum represents a recycling society-oriented project implemented from the perspectives of the environment, heritage, architecture, and art.

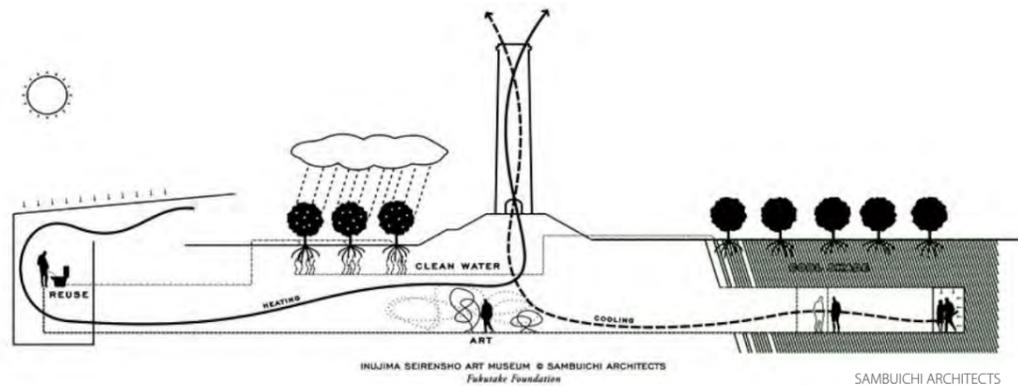


Photo: Noboru Morikawa

Teshima Art Museum

Harmony between rice terraces, art, and architecture

This museum, which is shaped like a water droplet, stands on the slope of a small hill in the Karato area, which is characterized by extensive rice terraces. The open section of the roof allows wind, sounds, and light to enter from the surrounding area as a means of embodying the limitless fusion of art, architecture, and nature. Moreover, for local revitalization, the neighboring rice terraces have been restored to provide opportunities for local people and visitors to the island to make exchanges through events, such as a harvest festival where they can enjoy the rice terrace scenery along with local food.



The Naoshima Plan “The Water”

Highlighting the nature and history of Honmura, Naoshima

An old house was renovated to take advantage of the island’s wind patterns and the groundwater network that lies beneath the local village. A basin filled with well water was installed to create an atmosphere of wind and water for visitors to enjoy. This project was intended to highlight the importance of design and the richness and beauty of nature.

The Naoshima Plan:

We have been implementing this project with architect Hiroshi Sambuichi since 2011. Under the project, the architect presented the Cockpit for Wind and Water in 2013, and Naoshima Hall (multipurpose facility) and Matabe (a private residence) in 2015. Following the presentation of The Naoshima Plan “The Water” in 2019, he also presented The Naoshima Plan “Ju” in 2022.



Photo: Shinkenchiku-Sha Co., Ltd.