

A frequent visitor to Nozawa Onsen was the internationally famous avant-garde artist Taro Okamoto (1911–1996), best known for his giant installation *Tower of the Sun* (1970) in Osaka. In 1974 Okamoto was commissioned to create a large-scale monument for Nozawa Onsen in celebration of the village being linked with the town of St Anton in Austria. This work resembles his own, former design of the official commemorative medal for the Sapporo Winter Olympics in 1972, and was placed next to a bronze bust of ski professional Hannes Schneider, who brought modern skiing to the village. While attending festivities for the monument's inauguration, he developed a love for this small, tranquil town and became a regular winter visitor. He enjoyed skiing, the healing effects of the hot spring water, and the Dosojin Fire Festival. In turn, Okamoto was loved by the locals, leading to his nomination as the town's first honorary citizen in 1991. While strolling through the streets of Nozawa Onsen, Taro Okamoto's work can be found everywhere. His presence is even evident in the signage for the tourism association, which uses his handwritten character for hot water—湯 (*yu*)—as a logo, perfectly capturing the town's hot spring culture.