

Mask-Carving [to be displayed by the artisan's workplace in the museum]

The Namahage of Oga wear many kinds of masks, which vary in appearance by settlement. Traditionally, the residents of each village would use whatever resources were available to them to make Namahage disguises, so the finished product would be influenced by the natural surroundings. The artisan working here has been carving masks for decades, using mainly paulownia wood, a light but sturdy material that is abundant in Akita Prefecture. The intricately finished, painted, and highly durable creations that he specializes in were originally developed for touristic purposes. Some villages now use them for actual Namahage visits on New Year's Eve in place of the original disguises, which were less durable. Here you can watch a craftsman at work and observe the painstaking process of fashioning an expressive mask out of a simple chunk of wood.