

Naoshima: Art Is All Around

Naoshima is located some 13 kilometers north of the city of Takamatsu in Kagawa Prefecture and about 3 kilometers south of Tamano in Okayama Prefecture on the Honshu side. Sixteen kilometers in circumference, it is the central island in the 27-islet Naoshima archipelago and has a population of around 3,000, which traditionally subsisted on fish and seaweed farming and later on copper refining. These and other industries are clustered in the northern part of the island, whereas the southern side has in recent decades become famous for its wealth of art-related facilities. Operated by Benesse Art Site Naoshima, these include the Benesse House Museum, the Chichu Art Museum, and the Lee Ufan Museum.

In the Honmura district, where many traditional homes built in the Edo period (1603–1867) remain, old houses have been restored and artists invited to turn these structures into works of art that draw on the history of the community. These efforts have taken place under the auspices of the Art House Project, another Benesse Art Site Naoshima undertaking. There are seven such artworks in Honmura, created by contemporary artist Miyajima Tatsuo (b. 1957), photographer and architect Sugimoto Hiroshi (b. 1948), American artist James Turrell (b. 1943), and others. Open-air art is also plentiful on Naoshima, where visitors can admire works by, among others, Yayoi Kusama (b. 1929), whose bright yellow pumpkin sculpture sits alone at the end of an old pier. Even many of the island's public facilities were designed by renowned artists or architects. The Marine Station Naoshima ferry terminal is the work of Pritzker Prize-winning architectural firm SANAA, founded by Sejima Kazuyo (b. 1956) and Nishizawa Ryue (b. 1966), and Naoshima's communal bathhouse was created by contemporary artist Ohtake Shinro (b. 1955).