

Teshima: Heartbeats in the Midst of Nature

The island of Teshima, 3.7 kilometers west of the much larger Shodoshima, has a population of only 800 and was long noted for its unspoiled natural environment and abundance of clean groundwater. Water from springs around Mt. Danyama in the middle of the island is still used to irrigate Teshima's fields, where rice and fruit including lemons and strawberries are grown. In the 1970s, however, the western part of the island came to be used as an illegal dump site. As the waste problem worsened, the people of Teshima took measures to prevent dumping and to revive the local environment. These efforts, which continue into the present, have been successful in restoring the island's ecosystem to its former health. Another positive development has been the establishment of several art-related facilities on the island since 2010. These include the Teshima Art Museum, a collaborative effort by artist Naito Rei (b. 1961) and architect Nishizawa Ryue (b. 1966), and Les Archives du Coeur ("The Heartbeat Archive"), a museum where visitors can listen to heartbeats from around the world recorded by the French artist Christian Boltanski (b. 1944). There are also several open-air artworks on Teshima, including "Particles in the Air / Karato" by Aoki Noe (b. 1958) and "Tom Na H-iu" by Mori Mariko (b. 1967).