

Inujima: Toward a Greener Future

Located approximately 3 kilometers south of mainland Okayama Prefecture, Inujima is one of the smallest populated islands in the Seto Inland Sea. Four kilometers in circumference, it can be explored entirely on foot. The lone settlement on the island now has only about 40 residents, but was home to thousands of people between 1909 and 1919, when a copper refinery operated on Inujima. The former refinery buildings have been repaired and renovated, and since 2008 host the Inujima Seirenscho Art Museum, whose motto is “using what exists to create what is to be.” This philosophy has been put into practice by incorporating the refinery’s original smokestacks as well as bricks made from waste slag, a byproduct of the process of refining copper, into the museum. The concept is also evident in the exhibit of works by Yanagi Yukinori (b. 1959) themed on the ideas of the author Mishima Yukio (1925–1970), a vocal critic of Japan’s rapid modernization. The museum itself, designed by the architect Sambuichi Hiroshi (b. 1968), is powered entirely by solar, geothermal, and other forms of renewable energy. Inujima is making a name for itself as an art destination, and the recent inflow of visitors from around the world has brought new life to the island.