



SYM
BIOSIS
LIVING ISLAND

April 15 to July 5, 2023
Free Admission



JAPAN HOUSE
LOS ANGELES



In biology, the word “symbiosis” refers to two organisms living together, each strengthened by a close association. Socially, the term is used for a mutually beneficial relationship between people or groups. This exhibition explores the groundbreaking Inujima “Art House Project” that was designed to revitalize a depopulated Japanese island by integrating contemporary art. With a unique symbiosis between art, architecture, community, and ecology, the project will nurture and sustain the island for many years to come.

Curator:

Yuko Hasegawa

Exhibition Design:

Kazuyo Sejima & Associates

with works by:

Office of Ryue Nishizawa

Tetsuo Kondo Architects

Ichio Matsuzawa Office

Beatriz Milhazes

Fiona Tan

Takashi Homma

Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba

Haruka Kojin

Yusuke Komuta

Kohei Nawa



Assistant Curator:

Iku Watanabe

with support from:

Fukutake Foundation

Obayashi Corporation

Shizen Energy Group

HOPPY Beverage Co., Ltd.

Graphic Design:

Instrument

(Right Middle) Inujima “Art House Project”
S-Art House | Photo by Takashi Homma

(Right bottom) Inujima “Art House Project”
F-Art House | Photo by Takashi Homma



THE ISLAND

Inujima (known as “Dog Island”) is located in Japan’s Seto Inland Sea and is part of the city of Okayama. Once a center of copper refining and stone quarrying, the tiny island—it can be walked around within an hour—is home to just twenty-five households, with more than half of the inhabitants over seventy years of age.

In 2008, the island became one of the locations of the Benesse Art Site Naoshima, where activities conducted by Benesse Holdings, Inc. and the Fukutake Foundation in the Inland Sea transformed the island through art. Yuko Hasegawa, director of the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, was hired as the artistic director of the Inujima “Art House Project” and conceived an environment where art, community, and ecology are harmoniously intertwined.



THE ARCHITECTURE

The Inujima “Art House Project” is developed in collaboration with Kazuyo Sejima, a Pritzker Prize-winning architect and founding partner of the firm SANAA. The team constructed pavilions and art galleries on Inujima—where Hasegawa invited artists to create work in a sustainable manner that enriched the lives of the residents. The island now hosts a series of galleries made from recycled materials, transparent acrylic, and aluminum where each structure reflects and preserves the landscape, ecology, and industrial heritage. The project recently expanded to include a botanical garden, a bar, and amenities for visitors to stay on the island.



(Top) Inujima | Photo by Yoshikazu Inoue

(Left) Inujima “Art House Project” F-Art House
Kohei Nawa: Biota (Fauna/Flora), 2013 | Photo by Takashi Homma

(Right) Inujima “Art House Project” C-Art House | Photo by Takashi Homma





“[Symbiosis is] not just about people, but all living things: plants, animals, even objects that we find useful. There’s a Japanese animistic way of thinking that says that all these things have a soul. Everything we interact with, all the things around us exist side by side and support each other. In that sense it’s very Japanese: being considerate towards others and valuing harmony... [It’s] more about all things existing side by side.”

Yuko Hasegawa, Artistic Director
of Inujima “Art House Project”

THE EXHIBITION

Curated by Hasegawa and designed by Sejima, the Symbiosis exhibition takes visitors on a journey around Inujima through an experiential diorama of the island (including architectural models of the art pavilions), documentary videos, and testimonies from residents about the project’s transformative impact on their lives. Within the exhibition, Hasegawa has highlighted the work of three artists featured on the island—Beatriz Milhazes from Brazil and Haruka Kojin and Yusuke Komuta from Japan—alongside Inujima landscape imagery by renowned photographer Takashi Homma. These wide-ranging works convey a vision of Inujima as a living entity and a potential blueprint for coexistence in the future.

(Left) Inujima “Art House Project” A-Art House | Beatriz Milhazes: Yellow Flower Dream, 2018 | Photo by Yoshikazu Inoue

(Right) Inujima “Art House Project” A-Art House | Beatriz Milhazes: Yellow Flower Dream, 2018 | Photo by Yoshikazu Inoue

(Bottom) Inujima Life Garden
Photo by Yoshikazu Inoue





(Foreground) Inujima "Art House Project" S-Art House
Haruka Kojin: contact lens, 2013

(Background) Inujima "Art House Project" A-Art House
Beatriz Milhazes: Yellow Flower Dream, 2018

Photo by Yoshikazu Inoue

JAPAN HOUSE is an innovative, worldwide project with three hubs, London, Los Angeles, and Sao Paulo, conceived by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. It seeks to nurture a deeper understanding of Japan in the international community. JAPAN HOUSE Los Angeles offers a place of new discovery that transcends physical and conceptual boundaries, creating experiences that reflect the best of Japan through its spaces and diverse programs.



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