

Art in the Garden

Bending Nature: Four Bamboo Artists
in the Garden

Fall 2016



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When a warm summer breeze whispers past, you can see it sway and hear it rustle. The wind dances through a bamboo thicket and the sound is like rain lightly tapping on trees. Bamboo is a plant of mystery. How can something so strong, straight, and tall be so flexible?

As much as it is mysterious, it's also extraordinarily useful. The variety of traditional uses ranges from the edible to the architectural. Bamboo can be burned into charcoal, split and woven for fine crafts, or used as a sustainable building material. Contemporary artists and architects like Kengo Kuma have continued to pay homage to bamboo as a medium.

In the third and final Art in the Garden exhibition of 2016, *Bending Nature: Four Bamboo Artists in the Garden*, the Portland Japanese Garden brought together two artists from Japan and two Portland-based artists. Each artist created a one-of-a-kind sculpture using this endlessly sustainable plant—with all its strength and height—to showcase its flexibility as an artist's medium.

Situated in three outdoor locations within the Garden, the works combine a superb mastery of traditional bamboo basketry with the exuberance and artistic freedom of contemporary art. Each of the four internationally-known bamboo artist “bent nature” in a new direction, challenging conventional bamboo craft techniques and forms to reflect the close relationship between nature and ourselves.



CHARISSA BROCK

Charissa Brock works and teaches from her studio outside Portland and has been making artwork with natural materials for more than a decade. “When I work, I develop a system for creating a structure... each of these systems is like a sentence in a paragraph that tells a story—a part of my visual vocabulary,” she said. Her piece was suspended among the trees along the walking path to the Garden just before the top of the hill.



JIRO YONEZAWA

Jiro Yonezawa works with split bamboo, the traditional method of Japanese basket-makers, and is widely known as one of Japan's finest bamboo artists. He is known for cocoon like weaving and translating traditional weaving techniques into contemporary forms. Now back in Japan, Yonezawa lived in Beaverton, Oregon for 18 years. His work bears the mark of both cultures, combining the traditional mastery of techniques learned in Japan and the artistic freedom he found in the United States.



SHIGEO KAWASHIMA

Shigeo Kawashima makes large-scale bamboo sculptures in natural and urban settings. Characterized by graceful forms and dramatic surfaces, his art has led to several site commissions. His work on *wa* (ring) was built on site at the Kennedy Center and took months to construct and install. He's known for making his art interactive and invited visitors to the Portland Japanese Garden to help add to his structure.



ANNE CRUMPACKER

Portland artist Anne Crumpacker plays with scale and proportion to create woven topographies. Crumpacker has created a magical bamboo and wooden boat—a reference to *Ukifune*, the Floating Boat chapter of the 11th-century classic *The Tale of Genji*. Crumpacker says working with it connects her to the “interwoven community of people” who have worked with bamboo for thousands of years.



SPONSORED BY:

The Japan Foundation; The Autzen Foundation

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 All Photos: Jonathan Ley

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