

I n a s a · S h ō b a r a · H i r o s h i m a

Nakatsukuni *Lykeion*

&

Tsukuyomi-dō

Chapelle Lunette

— a small museum by Kenjiro Okazaki



A general incorporated association
established in Nakatsukuni Park

Currently under construction

Opening from Autumn 2025

PROLOGUE

Where a river curves to leave an island behind,
water and moon meet —
and the earth, *once again*,
becomes art.

A place where knowing meets living.

CHAPTER ONE

I

The Nakatsukuni *Lykeion*

*A landscape rebuilt by patience, returned as art —
and the academy that grew within it,
where to walk is to think,
and to live is to know.*

1 · 1 — OF THE LAND

A field becomes a landscape, and a landscape, once again, becomes art.

The Haizuka Earthworks Project, 1994–2007

Inasa — the name means *rice fields* — once carried the wide green of cultivated paddies, on the western edge of the Chūgoku mountains. For centuries the Tabusa River, whose name in turn means *the source of abundance*, fed the rice that fed the village, and the village fed the river back with its care.

Then came the plan for the Haizuka Dam — Haizuka being the river-valley downstream, where the new reservoir was to be built. Intended to regulate flooding, the project would have submerged this entire upper valley and reduced it to a *regulating reservoir*: a wide, abandoned basin holding water against future flood. The land itself, with its centuries of rice and care, would have been lost.

What rose against that plan was not a protest, but a proposal. Local residents, joined by the artist Kenjiro Okazaki and by Masanao Yabuki — then in charge of cultural planning at the Sōryō Town Office — launched what they called the *Haizuka Earthworks Project*. Their idea was simple in form, radical in patience: not to oppose the dam, but to reimagine what the regulated land could become — a new public landscape, built around water, art, and the continuous human care that keeps both alive.



On 4 September 1999, in the cultural hall of Mirasaka, an *Earthworks Manifesto* was signed by five public bodies — the Gōno-kawa River Comprehensive Development Work Office of the Ministry of Construction, Hiroshima Prefecture, and the three towns of Sōryō, Mirasaka, and Kisa. It was an unusually broad commitment: a cross-jurisdictional agreement that the new landscape would not be merely engineered but *kept*, generation after generation, as a working public asset.

The architect Arata Isozaki took part in the symposium accompanying the signing, lending his presence to a document that, almost uniquely among Japanese public works of the period, treated land restoration as a cultural rather than a technical question.



FIG. 2 The Tabusa River, returned to its meandering course — Nakatsukuni Park, completed 2007.

In 2004 the final design was accepted. In 2007 it opened as Nakatsukuni Park. The Tabusa, straightened in the Meiji era for flood control, was returned — running again in the gentle curves of its original course. Wetlands were dug to host fireflies. Twenty species of maple, sixteen of oak, fifteen of fruit tree, and meadows of rape blossom and herbs now soften the slopes. Migratory birds returned.

The name Nakatsukuni draws on an old story: that the sandbar in the middle of a river was the original middle country — the heart from which a nation began, the source of abundance. In English the word translates as Middle-earth; in Japanese mythology, it is Ashihara-no-Nakatsukuni, the dwelling-place between heaven and the underworld — this present world, where we live.



FIG. 3 The park seen from above — terraces, willow groves, ponds, and the slow river. Three decades of work, sustained by five jurisdictions.

1 · 2 — THE PARK, AS WORK

The land itself *is the art*.

A sculptural landscape at the scale of a valley

The terrain of Nakatsukuni Park rises and falls between one and five meters — eight at its highest — across a sequence of slightly tilted planes. As one walks, the field of view reorganises itself; the horizon never settles. The land is choreographed for the body in motion.

Across the park, structures appear and recede — the *Mikazuki* (crescent) Stage, the *Ototoi* Bridge, the *Sunflower* Stage. Each was born from the same long conversation between residents, artists, and the land. Each is less a sculpture than a tool: a place that the village uses, repairs, and shapes back. The boundary between artwork and infrastructure, here, is intentionally porous.



FIG. 4 An earthwork seen as a single, walking composition — terraces, ponds, paths, all held within one shaped surface.





FIG. 7 Two earthwork mounds beside the river — the park as a working drawing across the land itself.

An academy *where knowledge walks*.

Where learning and living are not separate

Three decades of work in Nakatsukuni Park have now taken institutional form, in the founding of the Nakatsukuni Lykeion. The name reaches back to ancient Athens: in 335 BC, Aristotle opened a school in a sacred grove called the Lykeion. Teacher and students walked its paths together, debating philosophy in motion. From that habit of *walking while thinking*, the Peripatetic school — *those who pace* — took its name.

The Lykeion has been claimed again here, in the Hiroshima hills, as a working principle: that knowing and living are not two activities but one. What is proposed is neither a building nor a programme. It is a wager — that *culture* is not what is popular, nor what is profitable, but what is indispensable: the kind of practice without which an entire form of life would, quietly, cease.

For this reason, each of the Lykeion's five activities carries the same word at its head: *Living*. A museum lives only when visitors stand inside it; an archive, only when someone reaches for it; a school, only when its lessons are practised in a life.

i

Living Museum

A space built around the work of Kenjiro Okazaki and the artists in his circle. Not a vault for finished objects, but a place where seeing is itself an act of renewal. Tsukuyomi-dō is its core.

ii

Living Environment

The continuous care of the park itself — the Tabusa's underground flow, the wetlands and their fireflies, the trees, the paths. Maintenance, in this view, is not the opposite of art but its quiet, ongoing form.

iii

Living Laboratory

Research that refuses the borders between art, medicine, education, mythology, and ecology. Particular attention is given to the intersection of artistic practice and physical rehabilitation — a study now actively underway.

iv

Living Archive

The thirty-year record of the Earthworks Project — drafts, drawings, films, correspondence — reorganised not as a sealed vault but as a working source for the present to draw on.

v

Living School

Short residencies, intensive workshops, online seminars. Age, ⁶ability, and biography are not entry conditions. A single conviction: that to study is to live again, with attention — and that every participant is, in turn, also a teacher.

1 · 4 — THREE MOVEMENTS

The three resonances of *Re*.

Three movements beneath one prefix — a spiral, not a circle

Beneath the five activities runs a single grammar: the small Latin prefix *Re*, meaning *again*. But "again" can move in three different ways, and the Lykeion takes all three as its philosophical foundation. None of them is mere repetition. Each is a way of letting what already exists return — but transformed, and addressed to the present moment. Together, the three describe a spiral: each turn opens what the last one closed.

*Re**serve**to keep*

To withhold from possession.

A landscape, left open in the margin of jurisdiction, can refuse ownership and so welcome every era. This deliberate withholding — what we might call a *wise inaction* — is what keeps space available for time itself. The seventh year of the Hebrew *shemitah*, in which a field is allowed to lie fallow, is the same gesture in a different language.

*Re**member**to rejoin*

From the Latin membrum, a limb.

What was once dismembered — torn into parts by specialisation — can be re-membered, gathered back into a body. Medicine, art, philosophy, ecology: held here, again, as a single living knowledge. This is Plato's *anamnēsis*: not the recovery of lost facts, but the restoring of the soul to its own coherence.

*Re**new**to be born again*

To meet small differences with the astonishment of an infant.

No river flows the same water twice. To stay open to the unfamiliar is what keeps both the brain and the life from closing — the prediction-error that, in the language of neuroscience, breaks an old circuit and makes a new synapse. Completeness was never the point. *Renew*, here, is also *renaissance*.

Re·serve · Re·member · Re·new

*When these three settle quietly on top of one another,
another Japan begins to breathe in this place.*

1 · 5 — CONTINUITY

The rice still ripens *beneath the same mountains.*

A landscape that has not stopped being agriculture

The park does not stand against agriculture. Around its margin — on the slopes that rise toward the village and on the floodplain just upstream — rice fields are still cultivated as they always have been, by families whose memory of this land predates the dam by many generations. Inasa, after all, is still Inasa: *the place of rice*.



FIG. 8 Inasa, mid-summer — the rice still ripens beneath the same mountains.

It is this continuity — the fact that *nothing* was abandoned in order to make this park possible — that gives the Lykeion its peculiar tone. It is not a museum walled off from working life; it is a place embedded in working life, returning to it what it can.

CHAPTER TWO

II

Tsukuyomi-dō *Chapelle Lunette*

*A small chapel shaped like the moon,
placed in the hills of Inasa —
where art, water, and
the memory of the land
will rest in one quiet room.*

— at present, still under construction —



2 · 1 — OF THE BUILDING

A chapel *shaped like the moon*.*Tsukuyomi-dō — Chapelle Lunette*

The name *Tsukuyomi* belongs to a Shintō deity — the god of the moon and the night, brother to the sun-goddess Amaterasu and the storm-god Susano-o. He was born, the old story says, from the right eye of the creator Izanagi, in the act of ritual purification (*misogi*) after his return from the land of the dead. From that single cleansing came light, darkness, and the storm — and the moon among them.

The word *museum* shares this ancient ancestry. It descends from the Greek *mouseion*, the seat of the Muses — patrons of the arts and sciences in the same world that built temples, sanctuaries, and oracles for the gathering of human attention. Tsukuyomi-dō does not invent this lineage. It simply restores it: a small room where works of art, the memory of the land, and the breath of those who come here can rest together.



FIG. 9 Inside the vault — the white plaster ceiling in place, the lunette window framing the green hills. The floor and the interior walls remain in progress.

The building is a half-cylinder vault — *kamaboko-gata*, named for its resemblance to a sliced fishcake. Its envelope was adapted from a prefabricated industrial dome, but the proportions and every detail visible to a visitor were redesigned by Kenjiro Okazaki himself. The body is a quotation; the inhabited form, an original.

The interior is a single hall, about 250 square metres in plan — a scale that the curve of the vault gathers into a surprising intimacy. The white plaster vault is in place. The floor and the interior walls are still being completed: the building remains under construction. The lunette window at the eastern end frames the green of the hills as if it were a painting; on a clear night, the moon.

Visitors will find the half-cylinder doing two things at once. The materials — corrugated Galvalume steel on the outside, prefabricated ribs — speak of agriculture, of working sheds, of the everyday architecture of rural Japan. The proportions, the light, and the relation to the landscape, however, are the language of a chapel. The building keeps its industrial honesty and acquires, almost by accident, the gravity of a small basilica.



FIG. 10 The vault from within, spring 2025 — the white plaster ceiling complete, the floor and walls still being laid by hand.

SPECIFICATION · IN PROGRESS

<i>Form</i>	Half-cylinder vault	<i>Floor area</i>	approx. 250 m ²
<i>Envelope</i>	Prefabricated dome	<i>Façade</i>	Galvalume steel
<i>Vault · ceiling</i>	White plaster (in place)	<i>Walls · floor</i>	In progress
<i>Exterior tone</i>	Rust into the hills	<i>East elevation</i>	Lunette window

INTERIOR DESIGN

Kenjiro Okazaki

artist, director

COORDINATION

Konosuke Kurita

project coordinator

2 · 2 — OF THE SITE

A site *already chosen* by geometry and myth.

Where shrines, water, and the moon converge

The placement of Tsukuyomi-dō was not, in the end, a matter of preference. The site lies precisely where a much older network — of shrines, of underground water, of remembered earth — already had its meeting point. Okazaki, in this project both artist and architect, did not *choose* the spot. He located it.

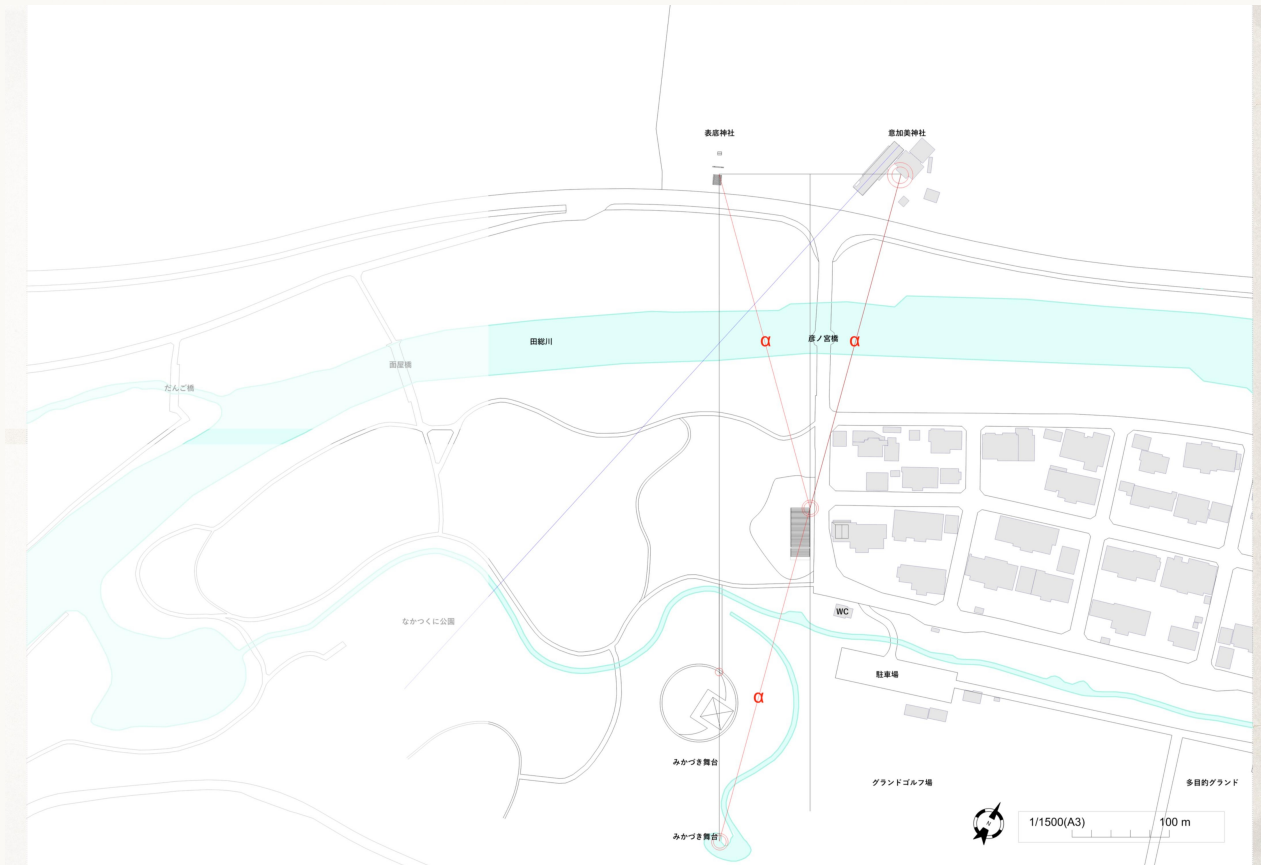


FIG. 11 Site plan, 1:1500 — the geometry that joins the two shrines, Omote-soko and Igami, with Tsukuyomi-dō at α, the Tabusa River, and the Mikazuki Stage. From the project briefing documents.

Two ancient shrines have stood on this land since before the Heian period. Igami-jinja enshrines Takaokami-no-kami, the dragon deity of rain and harvest — the water in its life-giving form. Omosoko-jinja enshrines the three Sumiyoshi deities, gods of the sea and of ritual purification. A small stream still flows between the two, descending from a sacred waterfall called *Shinyu-dani*, the valley where the gods enter.

In the Shintō cosmology, the three Sumiyoshi deities and the moon-god Tsukuyomi were born from the same act — Izanagi's purification after his return from the underworld. This is why the building belongs, by name, in this exact place. To call it Tsukuyomi-dō is not to invent a connection but to recall a kinship that the land has already known for a thousand years.

The geometry follows. Draw a line from Omosoko-jinja through the Mikazuki Stage, extend it, and its endpoint reaches the islet at the centre of Okome Pond. Take the midpoint of the line between Okome Pond and Igami-jinja, and call it α . From α , an arc passes exactly through Omosoko-jinja. Two isosceles triangles emerge — $Omosoko \cdot \alpha \cdot Okome$, and $Omosoko \cdot Igami \cdot \alpha$. Tsukuyomi-dō stands at α , parallel to the line that joins Omosoko to the pond.

Read in sequence, the five places trace a small myth of their own. Rain falls to the sea; the sea is the place of purification; from purification, life returns to the field; the field becomes the stage of ritual; and ritual, at its furthest reach, opens into art.

<i>i</i>		<i>ii</i>		<i>iii</i>		<i>iv</i>		<i>v</i>
Igami	-	Omosoko	-	Okome	-	Mikazuki	-	Tsukuyomi-dō
rain · dragon		sea · purity		life · harvest		rite · renewal		art · transcendence

The dam that once threatened to bury this land became, instead, the occasion for it to rise again — and Tsukuyomi-dō is the small turning-key by which the old network at last clicks into place.

At the centre of Okome Pond an islet has been prepared, shaped like a full moon. A katsura tree will be planted there — known in Chinese myth as the immortal tree that grows on the moon, and venerated in Japan at the Kifune Shrine. Together, Tsukuyomi-dō, the Mikazuki Stage, and the moon-shaped islet form a single chord across the park: new moon, crescent, full.



FIG. 12 One of the curved paths through the park — quiet, intentional, returning.

2 · 3 — CONSTRUCTION

From the breaking of earth to the opening of doors.

A construction journal, 2024–2025

The ground-breaking ceremony took place on December 9, 2024 — a day chosen for its particular auspice in the old calendar. The body of the building rose through the winter and the spring that followed.

December 2024

Ground-breaking. The local Shintō priest, reading the project's cosmology of moon, water, and ritual purification, said simply: *this is what the ancients were doing*. In the cold of midwinter, crushed stone was laid; the outline of the building began to emerge against the silhouette of the mountains.

January – February 2025

Raising the dome. The prefabricated steel ribs rose from the half-frozen earth. Each Galvalume panel was lifted by crane, then fitted by hand to the curve, plate by plate — a slow descent of the moon onto the field.

Spring – Summer 2025

The vault takes form. When the scaffolding came down, a silver moon stood among the hills, visible from a distance. The interior plaster vault was finished and the floor partly laid in terrazzo. Within this still-unfinished shell, a small sculpture by Okazaki was tested in the space, and confirmed what was already suspected — that the building was itself a work. *The floor and the inner walls remain in progress; the building is not yet complete.*

Autumn 2025 onward

Toward the Grand Opening. Interior finishing — walls, floor, and doors — continues into autumn 2025. As each stage is completed, Tsukuyomi-dō will begin to receive visitors by appointment, opening gradually as the central building of the Nakatsukuni Lykeion — a small museum, a research site, a school, an archive, and a meeting-place at once.

2 · 4 — OF THE WORK TO COME

Art, medicine, and the *plasticity* of a life.*A platform for interdisciplinary research*

Among the lines of work being prepared under the Living Laboratory, one is given particular weight: the encounter of artistic practice with rehabilitation medicine. This is not art therapy in its conventional sense. It is something stranger, and possibly more useful.

Kenjiro Okazaki himself has lived through recovery from a stroke. From inside that experience, he came to see what current rehabilitation often does not: that the standard model — training the body toward a fixed motor goal — assumes a linearity the body itself does not honour. Recovery is wayward. It continues after the prognosis has closed. Sometimes it begins where no one has thought to look.

*An artistic act — changing colours,
touching unfamiliar materials,
moving with music — can prompt recovery
in regions of the body no one had asked to recover.*

— from Living Laboratory's working hypothesis

In a painting workshop run jointly with physical therapists, when the gaze was led by shifts of colour or by depth in the picture plane — rather than by the verbal instruction "look here" — neural pathways outside the patient's deliberate control appeared to come awake. This is the territory of neuroplasticity, the brain's capacity to be rewired by what it encounters; and it is exactly where art and medicine have, for too long, been told they cannot meet.

The intention of Tsukuyomi-dō and the Nakatsukuni Lykeion is to host a room — physical and intellectual — where occupational therapists, physiotherapists, philosophers, and artists can speak across their disciplines. Conversations with hospitals and clinics within Shōbara have begun. Monthly open workshops, and an online seminar to extend the discussion, are now being designed.

« What was practised in the Renaissance, once more. »

there was a time when medicine, philosophy,
art, and natural science were not yet apart.

VISITING

*Visiting.**By appointment*

Tsukuyomi-dō is a small building, presently under construction. From autumn 2025 it will open progressively, by appointment only. Applications — including those for individuals, groups, and researchers — are made through the website.

ADDRESS

Inasa, Sōryō-chō, Shōbara City,
Hiroshima Prefecture
inside Nakatsukuni Park

VISITS

By appointment only
nakatsukuni.org

ACCESS

By car from JR Bingo-Shōbara or
Miyoshi stations

OPENING

From autumn 2025, progressively
during ongoing construction

FOR STUDENTS AND RESEARCHERS

*Frequent questions.**Q. Can the archive be consulted in person?*

Yes. The Living Archive holds drafts, drawings, films, and correspondence covering thirty years of the Earthworks Project. Access is by prior arrangement, through the website.

Q. May I cite the project in a thesis or article?

Yes. For images or unpublished materials, contact the Lykeion in advance. The archival URLs listed in this leaflet are the public references.

Q. Are workshops and residencies open to outside participants?

Yes. The Living School runs short residencies, intensive workshops, and online seminars. Programmes are listed on the website.

Q. Can clinicians, therapists, or medical researchers join the Living Laboratory?

Collaborations with occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and clinicians in Shōbara are now being formed. Inquiries may be directed to the Lykeion.

RESOURCES

To go *further*.

Public archive, photographs, and project history

For those who wish to follow Tsukuyomi-dō, Nakatsukuni Park, and the long history of the Haizuka Earthworks Project, the following sources are openly available.

§ *Nakatsukuni Lykeion — the official site*

nakatsukuni.org

The general incorporated association behind the park, the museum, and all activities of the Lykeion. Appointments and event registration through this site.

§ *Photographic record*

nakatsukuni.org/photo.php

Photographs of the park, the building, and the ongoing work.

⌕ *Location*

maps.app.goo.gl/A79A9awZjhQsxjyx7

Inasa, Sōryō-chō, Shōbara — Hiroshima.

✳️ *Nakatsukuni Park — project page*

kenjirookazaki.com/jpn/works/2007-075

Okazaki's record of the park as a completed landscape work, 2007.

🎵 *Haizuka Earthworks Project — archive*

kenjirookazaki.com/old/haizuka/jp/

The complete archival site of the Haizuka Earthworks Project, from its founding in 1994.

✳️ *Nakatsukuni Park — design documentation*

kenjirookazaki.com/old/haizuka/jp/works/nakatukuni.html

Drawings, plans, and notes on the design of the park.

✳️ *Ototoi Bridge*

kenjirookazaki.com/old/haizuka/jp/works/ototoi.html

Documentation of the Haji Bridge, one of the architectural components of the park.

🎵 *Art Sphere Haizuka*

kenjirookazaki.com/old/haizuka/jp/activities/001art-sphere.html

The annual programme — symposia, summer camps, manifesto declarations, residencies.

🎵 *Earthworks School*

kenjirookazaki.com/old/haizuka/jp/activities/002earthworks-school.html

The educational programme that gave rise to the Living School.

— OPENING FROM AUTUMN 2025 · STILL UNDER
CONSTRUCTION —

Tsukuyomi-dō

Chapelle Lunette



LOCATION

Inasa, Sōryō-chō,
Shōbara City, Hiroshima
inside Nakatsukuni Park
adjoining the Tabusa-no-sato settlement

DIRECTOR

Masanao Yabuki
矢吹 正直

ARTISTIC DIRECTION

Kenjiro Okazaki
岡崎 乾二郎

COORDINATION

Konosuke Kurita
栗田 この介

OPERATION

The General Incorporated
Association Lykeion
nakatsukuni.org

A small museum where the moon, the water, and the memory of the earth meet.