

## Heisei 12 (2000) 11th Osaka City Urban Environment Amenity Award

### Statement upon reception of the award for 風姿 *Allure*

At the end of November, in northern countries, the days are dark and dusk comes early. I learned in November of the award nomination by way of a letter from Nichimen Executive Director, Mr. Nobuhiro Kumagai. Reading the letter made me feel as if I were seeing *Allure* melding with passersby and floating in the bright sunlight. Since the installation of *Allure*, has anybody felt a moment of real joy when walking by it? At any rate, I was very happy for all the people involved in making the stone sculpture.

This granite sculpture, installed in the small plaza in front of the NM Plaza Midosuji building, consists of two pieces. The dimensions are 385cm (h) by 185cm (w) by 126cm (d), and 380cm (h) by 180cm (w) by 126cm (d). Each piece weighs 8 tons. Originally, the stones weighed 30 tons apiece.

Two years ago, in April 1998, I tried without success to obtain the right stones at a quarry close to my home. I then went to Woodbury, a village in Vermont with a geological formation almost identical to that of the first and nearby quarry.

My work is mostly done manually, though prior to the sculpting process, the stones must be cut into the approximate shape with a diamond wire saw. The enormous mass of the stones and the precarious angles at which they were positioned frightened even the most seasoned craftsmen. They said the job was too dangerous, that it couldn't be done. I kept saying that it was my responsibility if something went wrong but that we must be very prudent and take all the time we needed to proceed.

Manual work started in May of that year. Every day I left home at 5:30 am, started to work at 6 am, and worked steadily until 6 pm. A specially chosen professional stoneworker and I worked very hard and we worked non-stop, ignoring weekends and holidays. It was particularly demanding when we came to make the first deep and wide incision. Before long both of us were

in a constant state of extreme fatigue. At one point the stoneworker even threw his tools on the ground out of frustration.

The slightest mishandling of the stone may cause a loss of line or surface. On the other hand, often when we turned the stone in order to work on a different face, surprisingly beautiful forms would make themselves known, and we found ourselves working again on a new and unexpected surface.

At the end of February 1999, the sculpture was installed on the Midosuji site without incident. I was thankful and felt blessed that the two pieces had been created and then transported here without a mishap.

That the sculpture would be completely assimilated into the building, or overwhelm the building, or be overwhelmed by the building: none of these was what I wished for my piece.

Architects, required as they are to make people and movements of mass fundamental considerations in design, sometimes overcompensate. Even a building that is very successful in achieving these basic goals can make us feel that something is missing. Who can fill the void? Sculptors are the ones who might be able to contribute here.

To transform a small plaza into a delightful urban space, everyone involved, architects, landscape architects, sculptors and administrative officials, all with their diverse requirements, must work in harmony. This, I believe, is the key to a successful project. When any kind of social hierarchy is brought into the process, however, the clash of sensitivities unique to each collaborator may hinder rather than help create beauty.

I was hoping for *Allure* to connect the building and the people in the area. This installation will not only be in consonance with the building; it will meld with the Midosuji environment, creating a delightful space in harmony with the flow of people and the passage of time. A sculpture is not finished when it is put in place; it merely begins a journey. The four seasons in Osaka, spring, summer, fall and winter, the constantly changing light, the non-stop flow of people: all these will cause a new *Allure* to emerge.

I juggled my new *Allure* vocabulary for four years. The concept of the NM Plaza Midosuji sculpture involved liberty, light, wind, elegance, and people. I anticipate a combined effect emerging from the presence of the sculpture and its concept.

I, who devote myself to creating sculptures in the natural environment of Way's Mills, Québec, walked along Midosuji Street from Umeda to Awajimachi for the first time in decades, in February two years ago. Passersby with their various manners of walking, the movement of people and of the city, the light and wind which moment to moment produce beautiful forms upon the skirts of walking women: all the Kamigata culture of *iki*, from the Edo-era to today, can be observed on Midosuji Street. Stand on any corner and your thoughts are immersed in the essence of being and excellence, in the world of *iki*.

Considering Midosuji simply as a place of work, people that day walked by hurriedly, sometimes casting a glance at *Allure*, sometimes not. Then, at some point, one commuter perceives its beauty, as if struck by a strain of beautiful music. His heart swells with pleasure, and he inadvertently smiles at the other passersby. At that moment Midosuji itself becomes a city where people live. A joyous moment involving the perception of beauty connects time, memory, and my own immortality—I, who creates sculptures in a hamlet among the mountains of Canada. The urban crowd living in a contemporary society perceives time, suppleness, kindness, and the joy of Way's Mills, where I live.

*Allure* was born in Canadian nature; born of water, snow, ice and wind. This is a beautiful, powerful and silent offering that I hope all those who have built Osaka may appreciate.

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