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Masayuki Nagare: The *Bachi*

Born in 1923 in Nagasaki, Japan, the artist Masayuki Nagare reflects in his artistry the great cultural and aesthetic changes that have impacted the Japanese landscape in the 20th Century. His works maintain a firm connectedness to the Japanese sensibility, reflecting a modernist aesthetic that transcends cultural identity. Among the serial sculptural forms that Nagare has developed during his career, the *Bachi* has developed into the most important and most monumental of forms.



Shamisen Lute and bachi pick.

Since the Edo period, the *Shamisen* is one of Japan's most representative instruments. *Shamisen* have long been heard in various cultural venues, including the Kabuki and the Bunraku theaters. It has also played an important role in Geisha and Maiko song and dance performances.

The *Bachi* is significant in various aspects. For the Japanese viewer it is readily recognizable as a shape familiar to that of the eight-inch bachi pick that is used in the playing of the traditional *Shamisen* lute. Nagare has consciously employed this form so that this significance is not lost to those who revere the instrument and its traditional application. It also provides his works with a deep connection to both ritual and cultural heritage. As important as this may be (for connectedness to Nagare's Japanese audience) he is in the very deepest sense, a Modernist sculptor, who wishes to transcend a strict cultural identity. In recent years, what motivated Nagare to produce the *Bachi* form into a monumental size was the loss of his great 250-ton sculpture *Cloud Fortress*, 1975 during the events of 9-11.



Masayuki Nagare, *Cloud Fortress*, 1975. Sighted at the World Trade Center Plaza. The commission of *Cloud Fortress* was by Minoru Yamasaki, architect of the World Trade Center.

"*Cloud Fortress*" was commissioned in 1969 and was conceived as a direct compliment to the towering presence of the World Trade Center Towers. It was at this very moment that Nagare realized his first concepts for the vertical form of the *Bachi*.

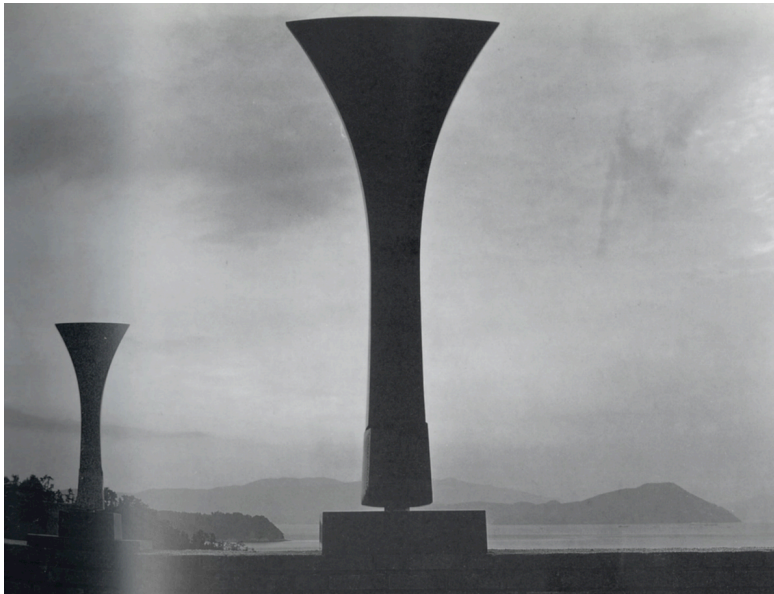


Sound of Silence, 1973, Black granite, two matching sculptures, each: $84 \frac{1}{2} \times 29 \frac{1}{2} \times 20$ inches
Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center, New York



Drum Crescendo, 1971, Bronze, $145 \frac{1}{2} \times 48 \times 48$ inches
IBM Japan, Ltd., Tokyo

It is important to note that every *Bachi* sculpture is unique and subtly nuanced by proportion and twist. Nagare's first *Bachi*, entitled *Drum Crescendo* was made of bronze and created for IBM Japan in 1971. The second earliest examples for publicly installed *Bachis* are the two sculptures installed at the balcony of the Metropolitan Opera House (1973). Since then, several of Nagare's *Bachis* have been installed in international public locations.



Aji Peninsula

Nagare has remarked that with the backdrop of the Aji Peninsula his works must stand up to the awesome power of nature. Not necessarily in competition with nature, and never against her.



Bachi, 1990, Black Granite, 154 1/3 x 60 2/3 x 59 1/4 inches
Nassau County Museum of Art, Long Island, NY

With the loss of "Cloud Fortress" it was natural for Nagare to look at the *Bachi* as a perfected form with which to attempt a grand gesture that was in homage and in the spirit of the 9-11 tragedy and not a replication of what was lost.



Bachi, 2006-2007, Corten steel and stainless steel
26 1/4 x 11 x 9 feet (8 x 3.35 x 2.71 meters). Signed by the artist. Unique.

From 2006 to 2007, Nagare worked to complete the largest of his *Bachi* forms to date. This monumental sculpture is made of Corten steel and stainless steel and measures 26 1/4 x 11 x 9 feet. Nagare's ambition with this work was to create a sculpture that embodies a sense of pride, powerful strengths and magnitude.