



JULIA TAYLOR, COURTESY OF PORTLAND JAPANESE GARDEN

FOUR BAMBOO ARTISTS BEND NATURE AT THE PORTLAND JAPANESE GARDEN

BY ERICA HEARTQUIST

When a warm summer breeze whispers past, you can see it sway and hear it rustle. The wind dances through a bamboo thicket, and it sounds like rain lightly tapping on trees. Bamboo is a mysterious plant. How can something so strong, straight, and tall be so flexible? As much as it's mysterious, it's also extraordinarily useful. The variety of traditional uses of bamboo range from the edible to the architectural. Contemporary artists and architects like Kengo Kuma—who designed the buildings for The Portland Japanese Garden's \$33.5 million dollar expansion project—have also begun to pay homage to bamboo as a medium.

For the Garden's third and final 2016 *Art in the Garden* exhibition series, *Bending*

Nature: Four Bamboo Artists in the Garden, two artists from Japan join two Portland-based artists to take bamboo to a whole new level. They've used the mysterious plant—with all its strength and height—to showcase its flexible potential as an art form in this outdoor exhibition.

The works of all four artists combine the superb mastery of traditional bamboo basketry with the exuberance of artistic freedom. Each of the artists attempts to bend nature in new directions, challenging conventional bamboo craft techniques and forms to reflect the close relationship between nature and ourselves.

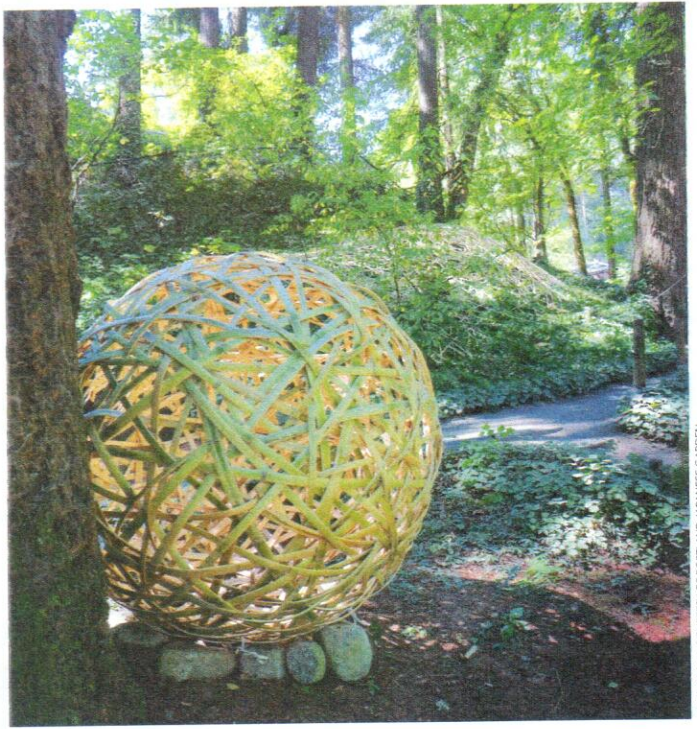
Jiro Yonezawa works with split bamboo, the traditional method of Japanese

basket makers, and is widely known as one of Japan's finest bamboo artists. He is known for cocoon-like weaving and weaving demonstrations. 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 began making 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



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OPPOSITE PAGE: Anne Crumpacker, **Ukifune**; 2016; bamboo.
 THIS PAGE
 TOP LEFT: Shigeo Kawashima, **Moonlight Arch**; 2016; bamboo.
 TOP RIGHT: Jiro Yonezawa, **Untitled**; 2016; bamboo.
 LEFT: Charissa Brock, **emergence**; 2016; bamboo.
 ABOVE: Charissa Brock, **emergence** (being installed); 2016; bamboo.

interactive, and is inviting guests to the Portland Japanese Garden to help add to his structure.

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 says. Her art is being suspended among the trees along the walking path to the Garden just before the admission gate.

Portland artist **Anne Crumpacker** interweaves scale and proportion to create living topographies. Crumpacker has

created a unique, large-scale boat made out of bamboo for the *Art in the Garden* exhibition. Her artwork is located on the grass area across from Heavenly Falls. Along with the natural grace and beauty of bamboo, Crumpacker says working with it connects her to the interwoven community of people who have worked with bamboo for thousands of years.

As a work of art itself, the Portland Japanese Garden provides a natural setting for both the creation and display of art inspired by Japan. Beginning in 2008, the Garden has featured the *Art in the Garden* series of special exhibitions that reflect the intersection of art and nature and celebrate work that has been influenced by the aesthetics of Japan. "*Art in the Garden*

is intended to encourage the ongoing exchange of culture, art, and ideas between the United States and Japan," said Diane Durston, The Arlene Schnitzer Curator of Culture, Art, and Education.

For more information about this exhibition and the Portland Japanese Garden, visit their website at: <http://japanesegarden.com>.

Erica Heartquist is Communications Specialist for the Portland Japanese Garden.