

Making Marble Speak: Yasuda Kan

By Iseki Masaaki



Tensei=Tenmoku

Yasuda Kan's marble sculptures are, in a phrase, extraordinarily meditative and serene.

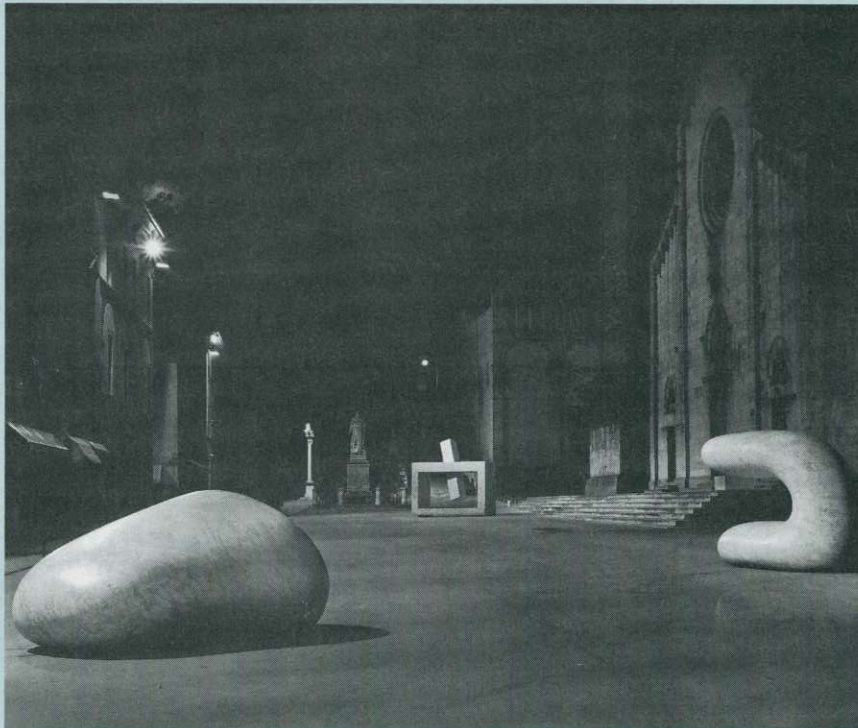
Where does this quality come from? And what is its effect?

To consider a piece of sculpture "meditative," you must think about the relationship between nature and humans. One who creates sculpture and who is able to meditate is always human, and humans can always meditate through works that

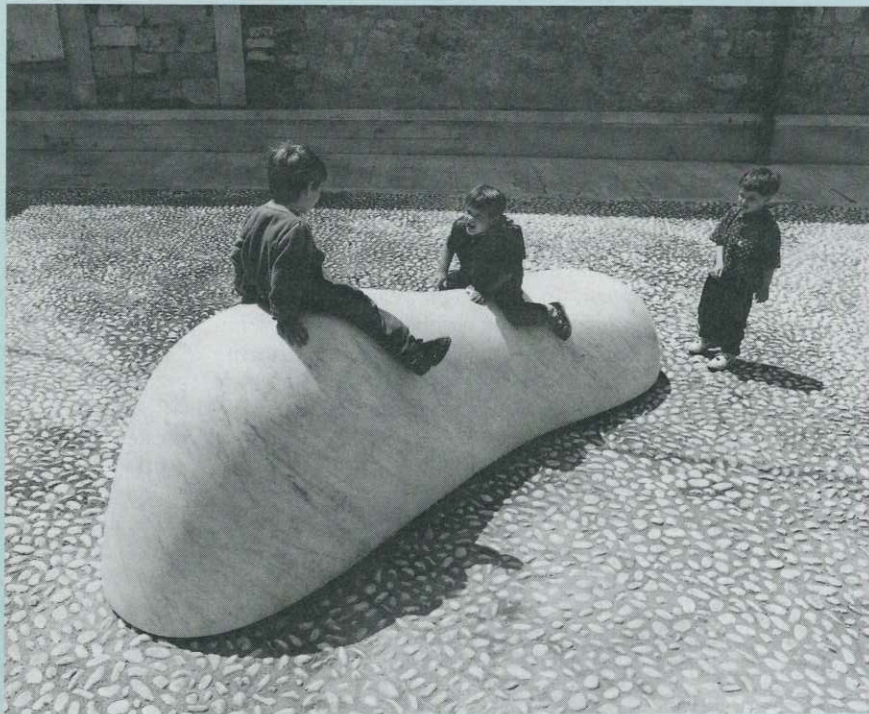
confront nature.

While Henry Moore and Isamu Noguchi inspire contemplation, Yasuda is somewhat different. Compared to the splendid isolation and intellectually calculated character of their works, Yasuda's works are infused with a strange allure that soothes the souls of those who see or touch them. And this, it can be said, is from a meditateness that is completely free from desire or design.

Yasuda's good friend and frequent collaborator Noguchi Isamu expressed it in this way: "There is no doubt that Yasuda creates his works with a clear will. But happily, his works do not make you feel as if he forced them; rather it is as if they emerged as natural



In Pietrasanta, northern Italy.



Children at play.

creations . . .”

These works do not isolate themselves from nature nor melt into nature, but as they fuse with nature they engender this sense of meditateness.

This quality pervades both his generously massive and softly curving, motherly works, like *Ishinki*, *Tensen*, or *Tensho*, as well as his geometric forms of *Tensei = Tenmoku* or *TAKOU*.

Poet O’oka Shin says of Yasuda’s works, “The stone is there, waiting in silence. The stone calls out to the sculptor. But only a few sculptors can hear the stone’s deep voice.” I want to say that not only can Yasuda Kan hear the stone’s deep voice, he is the rare sculptor that can induce that marble to speak.

Whatever its natural surroundings, Yasuda can make marble’s natural voice sail freely from heaven to earth and back again, whispering quietly through infinite time and making its appeal for the dignity of life.

The voice in which this marble speaks remains the same even in radically different contexts, whether in an individual exhibit of outdoor sculpture against the backdrop of Milan in 1991, or in an exhibit surrounded by the natural beauty of Yorkshire Park in 1995.

In 1970, at age 25, Yasuda moved to Italy, where he was an assistant to Fazzini. He has since spent over 20 years working in the marble city of Pietrasanta. Henry Moore and Noguchi Isamu also lived there. Learning the rhythms of nature from Fazzini, from Moore a respect for nature, from Noguchi an internal Japanese aesthetic, Yasuda embarked on his internal search for his own work.

Let us hear what Yasuda himself has to say. “To create a form is to carve what had never existed on earth with the movements of the body. In doing this I discovered that the primordial form was the egg.”

It is not hard to understand that the

egg shape is an introduction to the methodology behind Yasuda’s works, because it, like the material of marble, is limitless and has emerged from an infinite length of time.

Yasuda realizes that children experience the beginnings of life with the greatest unconsciousness, and as they begin to grow in spirit and body are innocent of differences in race or geography. Yasuda says that it is children who he most wants to come in contact with in his works. In fact, I know of no other works that children everywhere embrace with more familiarity and joy. Yasuda’s dream is to have marble speak to children all over the world, allowing them to feel the pulse of human life.

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