



## Hiroyuki Hamada Talks 'Matter on the Ground' Exhibition at 2023 Parrish Road Show

By Shay Siegelin | September 23, 2023



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The East Hampton-based artist Hiroyuki Hamada has created a site-specific outdoor sculptural installation at the South Fork Natural History Museum located at 377 Bridgehampton-Sag Harbor Turnpike in Bridgehampton. The exhibition, *Matter on the Ground*, was put together by the artist for the Parrish Road Show. This is the Parrish Art Museum's offsite exhibition series now in its 12th season, and they are excited to feature the three large-scale sculptures by Hamada whose work is known for exploring the parallels between nature and art.

The installation opened on September 9th and will be on-view daily through October 10, 2023 at the South Fork Natural History Museum. Hiroyuki will be doing an artist talk at the Parrish Art Museum on September 29th at 6:00 p.m. where those in attendance can learn more about his process and his work. He spoke more about his background, what drew him to this medium, and his influences and inspiration.

**How did you get your start in the arts and what drew you to this medium?**

**HH:** I used to be a child who didn't mind getting stuck in my room making things or drawing for hours. But all that went out the door when I became a teenager. It was hard for me to face what the world is really made of. I was angry and very frustrated. That was when I was still living in Japan. Then my father's job took our family to the US. I learned English and started to take classes at a nearby community college where I met an art teacher, Karl Jacobson, who showed me what art can do. It was shocking. I didn't grow up looking at art at all so I simply didn't know visual art could do what music or books could do. I was blown away and I was immediately hooked.

**Did you have any early influences in your career?**

**HH:** Well, everything sort of happened very quick for me. I got obsessed with art after my experience at the community college. I spent almost all of my waking hours making something. Within a few years I was in a graduate program doing the same thing. So I didn't know much about "art world" early on. I think I learned from other students (graduate and undergraduate) about famous artists I should have known—like Rauschenberg, Jasper Jones, Eva Hesse, Tapes, Louise Bourgeois, and so on. I remember the impact of seeing Jackson Pollock for the first time at MoMA, just being overwhelmed with emotion, tears coming out of my eyes.

**How would you describe your style?**

**HH:** That's a tough question for someone who is actually in the middle of making. It reflects my decades long pursuit in my studio and my personal history of art making in general. I rely on forms as opposed to subject matters. I try to emphasize simplicity but beneath that there are many layers of contradiction and depth. In short, I guess I'm into the visceral impact. It's not too much about tools of expression, narratives, themes, and so on. I started all this when I was hooked on the mysterious quality of visual elements—just simple marks on pieces of paper, for example—having a power to move me. But of course, we live in the physical world with real materials, history and networks of human relations, natural phenomenon, and so on. Needless to say, I have to work with real situations with real materials within their contexts. So I've struggled in my studio in my own ways, and one thing led to another, and I came to do what I do. So I assume I can sort of describe my style relative to what other artists do perhaps, but that doesn't really point to the essence of it I'm afraid.

**Do you have favorite subject matter to explore in your work?**

**HH:** I'm interested in this strange quality that transcends our positions in the given social formation. When I first saw my community college teacher's paintings and drawings, I understood the visual language without sharing the culture, social norms, beliefs, and values. So that is still the thing I am after.

**Where do you find inspiration?**

**HH:** Well, you work in your studio all the time for a long period of time and you are constantly surprised by what you observe there. So I am sure I get inspired by my daily life, what other artists do, but the primary inspiration comes from the momentum of my practice.

**How were you able to cultivate your own unique style over the years?**

**HH:** I'm interested in the fact that within what you do in your studio, you come up with your own ways of relating things. When materials react with each other and form dynamics, that's not subjected to social imperatives, which skew relations one way or the other in our daily lives. I feel connected to something bigger than the social conditionings we are subjected to 24/7. There is an inherent power in art that's not bound by the structural mechanism of our society. It has potential to speak beyond the walls of class, nationality, gender, and so on. In essence, this is the major motivating factor for me. So for me it's been existential to make things. It makes me feel alive. That keeps me going.

**Is your art a form of self-expression?**

**HH:** It is and it is not because it is undoubtedly me who's engaging in the making process, but at the same time it is about how things are in general. I'm really passive in my studio. I listen to what elements are doing and I sort of manage things so that the dynamics come to resonate with me in meaningful ways. In a way, I'm just letting things happen.

**What are you most looking forward to about the exhibition Matter on the Ground?**

**HH:** Well, I've been working on the pieces for a while and I'm really happy how they turned out so it is exciting to share the work with those who would be interested. I think we are social beings and we share our perceptions as a collective, and that's a good feeling.

**What do you hope viewers take away from your work?**

**HH:** It would be nice if the work resonates with people in some special ways, and if they can enjoy it I'd be happy.

**What's your favorite pastime or aspect about being located in the Hamptons?**

**HH:** I love the splendid natural-scape. We have quiet beaches and wonderful trails to hike. I've been enjoying growing vegetables and fruit trees. It's nice to feel the rhythm of nature and see how lives emerge and make sense out of the intricacy in harmony.

**Is there anything else you'd like to share with our readers?**

**HH:** I want to thank everyone who have been appreciating my work. Like I said, to me, it's not just about me secluding in my studio doing whatever. I believe things can be different, and we have the vast universe outside of our immediate pile of obligations and necessities. If we can step out of all that and see things differently for a moment, I think that's a good thing.

Head to the South Fork Natural History Museum in Bridgehampton any day from now through October 10th to view Hiroyuki Hamada's sculptural installation Matter on the Ground and take in the visceral beauty as art and nature interact with one another. For more information, visit the Parrish Road Show.

<https://hamptons.com/hiroyuki-hamada-talks-matter-on-the-ground-exhibition-at-2023-parrish-road-show/>