

**SPOTLIGHT: Henry Takemoto**  
**Title of Piece: Trip to Ka'ena Point (Hawaii)**



El Presenter: Kay Fullerton

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Title of Piece: Trip to Ka'ena Point (Hawaii)

Year created: 1960

Artist: Henry Takemoto

Five points of interest about this artist:

1. The piece is a memory of the simple joy of a sightseeing day trip to appreciate the beauty of Ka'ena Point on O'ahu, Hawaii, with its lovely mountains and dazzling ocean views. While going "holoholo" (pleasurable visiting or touring) is a common island pastime even for residents, this trip would have been relatively rare and special, since Ka'ena Point is remote and undeveloped, and is the "end of the road". The trip could easily stand out as a long-term memory once someone has moved from the islands.
2. Its form and features depict the experience:
  - a. "Circle Island tour" driving around the island. A large, round vessel in which the words describing the trip go around and around, as the trip unfolds

- b. Most would not do the whole trip (relatively uncommon and special). Most viewers would not read the whole story on the vessel
  - c. Most would do segments of the trip on an everyday basis. Most viewers would read a segment or two of the text.
  - d. Motif on top and within text (usually between sentences) look like various types of rounded celestial features like suns and stars; light and slightly whimsical, which conveys the mood of the trip
  - e. Blue ocean=blue glaze. Natural sights=clay (earth), motifs like stars/sun, natural glaze colors, imperfections
  - f. Shape of vessel starts relatively small, rounds out to the climax (of the trip) and tapers in as the trip resolves, reaching home at the end
  - g. In Hawaii, one's world is the island, more than the whole earth
3. Henry Takamoto is Japanese-American born in Honolulu. The style of the piece reflects the island locals and Japanese-American in particular. It is understated, casual vs formal, humble vs pretentious, folk vs fancy dwelling in the everyday of life, such as family activities (the trip was probably taken with family). This way is the ultimate form of respect for family (humility). Although he was formally trained in art, his subject and style suggests the everyday life of local "kine" (just folks) with the simply-told account of the trip and the simple design motifs.
  4. It is reminiscent of the Japanese ceramic tradition with imperfections (highly valued), blotches, uneven lines of lettering, obscured lettering. Motifs are similar to traditional ones, i.e. "horse eye" on ceramics of 17th-19th centuries. Large vase-like vessel (while not common, they did exist) similar to one in Japanese gallery for storing tea leaves. Blue and white pattern historical of Chinese and Japanese ceramics.
  5. Takemoto attended Los Angeles County Art Institute (now Otis College of Art and Design) during 1950s. Otis was a ceramics school begun by Peter Voulkos at Otis in the 1950s and Takemoto was a "disciple" of Voulkos. Voulkos and others were playing a pivotal role in reshaping the aesthetics of ceramics, in a movement called the "American Clay Revolution". Irreverent, provocative, experimental he explored clay beyond functional use. He "used tradition as a stepladder, not a prison". "For centuries clay had been associated with the refinements of craft. It was rarely regarded as worthy of a finished sculpture in its own rights. Then suddenly in the mid-20th century, the poor relation of that prestigious sculpting material, bronze, emerged as a powerful entity in its own right. Voulkos's works championed those very qualities in clay that had formerly been deemed its liabilities such as clay's humble relationship to the earth he transformed clay into a medium that spoke to the contemporary human condition." (Collette Chattopadhyay)

"Otis clay, as I prefer to refer to it, had defined a new language of form and a tough and ambitious stance for ceramics. Even though the work showed a virtuoso facility with clay, it was not about technique but about the unleashing of energy and emotion. Otis was very much about the continuum of extended tradition. After all, these were still pots and they carried with them all the nuances and deep association to pots we have had in lives of man for thousands of years. But this group working experimentally through the night in the basement workshop of the Otis Art Institute in L.A. had finally crossed that line that ceramics had been pushing towards since the late 19th century in trying to establish an autonomous art form that was as relevant and contemporary as painting or sculpture." (Garth Clark)

"Henry (Takemoto) had said, you know, 'If you want to be great, you must hang with great one.'"

Possible questions to use when discussing this piece with museum visitors:

1. How is this piece similar or different to other ceramic pieces you've seen from Japan, China, or Korea?
2. By looking at the piece, even without reading all the words, what do you think the trip might have been like? Is there a mood to the piece? Motion?
3. Why do you think the artists made the pieces slightly imperfect (blotches, uneven lines of text)?
4. Have you ever been to Hawaii? Can you find any phrases or words that remind you of your experience there?

Tour Type: Explore Asia; Portraits, People, and Places

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