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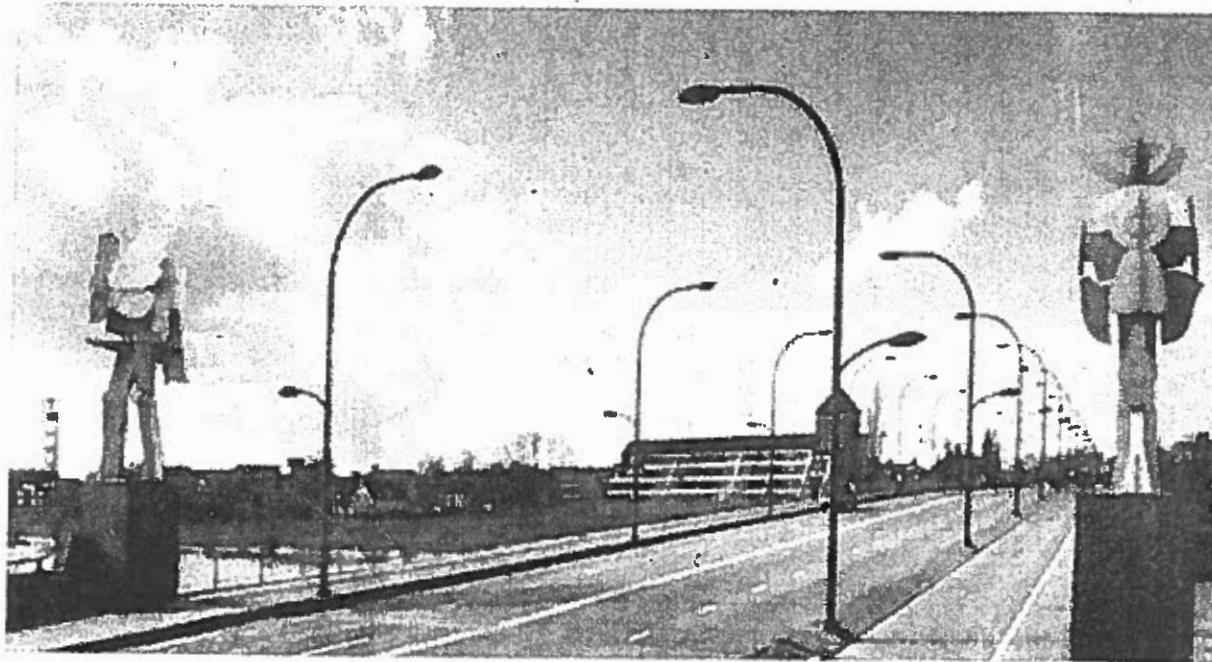
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Shinkichi Tajiri, World Renowned Sculptor, Celebrates His 80th Birthday



Tajiri's bridge consists of 4 large sculptures, 20 feet high in cast iron and connects Venlo and Blerick over the Maas River

Shinkichi Tajiri, world renowned sculptor, celebrated his 80th birthday with a Netherlands exhibit showcasing many of his wonderful creations including sculptures of 47 ronins. One of Tajiri's earlier pieces, Father and Son in limestone was completed while living in Chicago in 1946. His friendship knots are well known and can be found all over the world. One is displayed outside the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, the Granny Knot is at the Rock-

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efeller Foundation in New York, and another in Bryeres France, commemorating 50 years of liberation by the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. In 2004 to mark the 60th anniversary, 442 veterans including Tajiri returned to Bryeres in remembrance. It would be wonderful to see an exhibit of Tajiri works in Chicago and other American cities.

Tajiri is a well known name



Shinkichi Tajiri carving "Father and Son", Chicago 1946

to Chicagoans. Shinkichi is the fifth of seven children born to Ryukichi and Fuyo Tajiri. His oldest brother, Larry was the editor of the Pacific Citizen during the war. The second son died at three years of age in an influenza epidemic. The third son, Vincent Tajiri was part of the 442nd and is best known as the picture editor and director of photography of Playboy Magazine from 1954 to 1971. He edited Through Innocent Eyes, a collection of works by Nisei. His sister, Yoshiko edited the Tokyo area edition of the Stars and Stripes as well

as other magazines. Younger than Shinkichi are twins. James was a career military officer with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He commanded Airborne Intelligence units in Vietnam and Okinawa.

Raised in San Diego, Shinkichi always liked art. He showed his works to Ruth Hall, who introduced him to Donal Hord. Because Tajiri couldn't afford sculpturing lessons, he is grateful to Hord for permitting him to care for his garden in exchange for lessons. This was the beginning of sculpturing for him. The lessons ended in 1942 when the family was evacuated to Poston Concentration Camp on the Colorado River in Arizona.

In Camp 3, Shinkichi did a series of Conte crayon drawings of camp life with art materials sent by Hord. From there he volunteered for the 442nd and joined brother, Vincent at Camp Shelby in Mississippi where they trained together.

Shinkichi was a machine gunner in Company M, Third Battalion of 442nd, which was the heavy weapons unit. He was hit on his left thigh on July 9, 1944 during an attack on Castellina Italy. Flown to Rome, more than 50 pieces of stone were removed and he was in a cast for six months. He was transferred to Marseilles and

given limited duty. In 1945 he requested and was granted Special Services as an artist to sketch displaced persons from German concentration camps. This reminded him of his days at Poston. Many of Shinkichi's art reflect the horrors of war such as Wounded Knee (1953), Scorched Earth (1955), and Nagasaki (1957).

At the end of military service, Shinkichi came to Chicago to be with his mother and family. He worked at Matsumoto's Art Shop and on the GI Bill attended the Art Institute, which he considers to be the best of the four art schools he attended. He studied art history, painting, and design. From there he went to Paris to escape racism suffered in the U.S. and to study art with cubist sculptor, Ossip Zadkine, whom he left to have freedom to develop in his own art style.

In 1951, Tajiri married Denise Martin and in 1956 they divorced. Shinkichi went through lean years but earned

recognition for his art. He received a prize for the best German wallpaper design 1953 and came to the attention of COBRA, an art group of Revolutionary experimental and protestors from Copenhagen, Brussels, and Amsterdam. The Dutch group liked his works and labeled him an abstract surrealist. Shinkichi liked to experiment with art and extend himself. He considers his work the result of his life circumstance and reflects what he is attempting to solve at the moment.

In 1955, Tajiri worked in film and the Viper won the Golden Lion for the best Use of Language of Film at the Cannes Festival in 1955. His film, Bodil Joensen, A Summer Day won the Grand Prix at the first Wet Dream Film Festival in Amsterdam in 1970.

A second marriage to Ferdi Jansen and their children, Glotta Fuyo born in 1957

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and Ryu Vinci born in 1959 changed Tajiri. Fatherhood shifted his philosophy of life from a death orientation towards life and regeneration.

In 1964 Shinkichi and his family went to the Art Institute of Minneapolis where he had a one year visiting professorship with Arnold Herstand. There he completed 25 bronze sculptures for an exhibit and created a monumental sculpture for the city of St. Paul.

After his wife died in an auto accident, Shinkichi changed his lifestyle to ac-

commodate his two daughters. He invited Suzanne van der Capellen to join his family and married her in 1975. Now he is a proud grandparent.

On May 2, 2007 the latest project Tajiri has been working on for years will be unveiled by her Majesty Queen Beatrix. The Tajiri bridge consists of four large sculptures, twenty feet high in cast iron and connects Venlo and Blerick over the Maas River. Now he is busy working on a book and an exhibition for this occasion.

A terrific role model for new artists, Tajiri wants to encourage Asian Americans to do art. To share what he

had accomplished, Tajiri donated books and materials to Japanese American organizations. The Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS) was the recipient of books, posters, and other valuable materials. We remain very grateful. Tajiri's childhood friend, Nori Komorita, of Champaign Illinois donated many of her Tajiri materials to the Northeastern Illinois University, Hanako and Teruo Murata Book Collection. You are encouraged to read more about this living legend, Shinkichi Tajiri, the fabulous sculptor who has now moved to using computer imaging in his art works.