



Masahiro Nakajima

MAR 23, 1948 - SEP 10, 2018



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Masahiro Nakajima

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Masahiro Nakajima, age 70, died due to accidental causes on September 10, 2018 at Highland Hospital in Oakland, with his wife Janet Roth by his side. He was born on March 23rd, 1948 in Gifu, Japan where he grew up as the middle son of a sake-brewing family. He studied sake-brewing at the Tokyo University of Agriculture where he received his BA in 1970. Before assuming his role in the family business, Mas came to San Francisco and studied restaurant management at City College. Short a credit, he signed up for an art class to complete his AA degree. Before long, he was brewing an entirely different career at the San Francisco Art Institute, where he studied sculpture and earned his BFA.

Mas married his first wife, Keiko, in 1976 and their first child, Tomoko, was born in 1977. She was soon followed by their son, Yoshiro, and twin daughters, Miyoko and Michiko. To support his growing family Mas set aside his artistic ambitions and opened Maruzen Construction, which he developed into a highly-regarded general contracting and house building firm.

However, his artistic and creative needs were never far away. Around 1980 he met Mr. Yukikichi “Keiseki” Hirotsu. Mr. Hirotsu was part of the issei (first generation) group of Japanese-Americans who introduced suiseki, the traditional Japanese art of natural stone appreciation, to California. Mas started visiting and learning from Mr. Hirotsu, and at his urging joined the San Francisco Suiseki Kai at its founding meeting in 1982. Ever since that time, Mas actively participated in the club, first as a student and subsequently as a president, leader, and valued teacher. Mas was also a long-time member of the Nodai Alumni Association in the San Francisco Bay Area and actively participated in the group’s activities.

Mas Nakajima is known around the world for both his traditional and contemporary Suiseki Art, most recently exhibiting at the Oakland Museum of Art, and the piece titled “Lady Murasaki” is now on display as part of the museum’s permanent



Obituary

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collection. He was a skilled wood-worker and carefully carved and stained each wood base to complement and embrace the stone in order to create a beautiful suiseki that would “make the stone happy”.

Mas and his second wife, Janet, met through their shared love of suiseki and married on September 22, 2007. During their life together they enjoyed traveling, especially in California and the American West, and in Japan. During these travels they enjoyed suiseki hunting, visiting family and friends, hiking in the mountains, visiting museums, and relaxing at hot-spring onsen hotels. They shared their joy with each other every day of their life together.

Mas was preceded in death by his parents, Shigemi and Haruko Nakashima. He is survived by his wife, Janet Roth, brother Zenji Nakashima, brother Keizo Nakashima, daughter Tomoko Nakajima, son Yoshiro Nakajima, daughter Miyoko Nakajima, daughter Michiko Paschall, and grandson Cambrian Paschall.

We are grateful for donations to the Yosemite Conservancy in memory of Mas Nakajima.



Tribute Wall

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LW

Lisa Ward posted:

Having met Mas through his wife, Janet, my impression was simply that he was a cool guy and that they were very happy together. I'm sorry for Mas' early departure from this earth, for Janet's loss, and for the fact that I didn't get to know more about him while he was with us, especially at the Hayfield, which is also no longer.

October 26 at 2:55 PM

WH

William E. Halpin posted:

Mas, You spent your life seeking beauty in the nature of things. That search is now eternal. Bill

September 22 at 4:20 AM

NT

Naoya Tsurushita posted:

To the family of Mr. Mas Nakajima: We are very saddened by the loss of Mr. Mas Nakajima. In the summer to fall of 2001, Mr. Nakajima worked on the construction of the annex of our house in Palo Alto. Almost every morning before starting his work, we chatted about the construction, U.S. economy, our kids, topics in Japan, the 9/11 incidents, and so forth, which is a nice memory about Mr. Nakajima. He built a beautiful annex which is very functional and gets nice sunshine all day long. He was particularly proud of a large window through which we can see a tall pine tree in front of the house. The view through the window is like a masterpiece drawing. Our neighbors, after witnessing his professional, artificial, neat and speedy work at my house, wanted to ask Mr. Nakajima, and some of them indeed directly asked him, to work with their own houses, only to learn that he was about to retire. After the completion of the construction at my house, we had kept in touch with Mr. Nakajima, but unfortunately over the time, we have lost contacts with him, and then received this sad news. We still call the beautiful second living room Mr. Nakajima built "Nakajima Room", so we will never forget him as long as we live here and even thereafter. We are unfortunately unable to attend the funeral service on September 22. Our condolences go to the family of Mr. Nakajima and we pray that his soul may rest in peace. Very sincerely, The Tsurushita Family

September 20 at 4:05 PM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Masahiro by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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