

Artists Satoru Hoshino and Kayoko Hoshino visit the MIA



“Beginning Form Meets Spiral 06-1” by Satoru Hoshino 2006.24 - G237

Docent Linda Krueger and I were staffing the MIA’s Japanese art cart on April 24 when a diminutive Japanese woman stopped by with her American host. In the course of conversation, the American woman mentioned that they were in the galleries with the Japanese woman’s husband, who was looking at a work he had done for the museum.

“Oh,” we asked, “which piece?”

When we learned that the piece was “Beginning Form Meets Spiral,” we were thrilled. Not only is the installation one of the most popular with visitors, Linda had just presented the work for our Asia checkout tour. It is one of our all-time favorite, go-to works.

In minutes, Hoshino Satoru joined us at the cart. You would have thought Linda and I were meeting a rock star. We told Hoshino how much we loved his work, that we often used **Beginning Form** on tours and what a powerful impact it has visitors. He clearly was pleased. He smiled in assent when we asked if we might ask a few questions. Hoshino’s English was limited, but he was the soul of graciousness. It took a while for us to be understood and for him to respond. Here is a summary of our discussion:

Q. In doing an installation, do you start with a plan?

A. Yes, but it is a flexible one. The small pieces are pre-formed. As Hoshino puts them up, he adjusts his plan to achieve the overall look he seeks.

Q. We understand that you were here, at the MIA, to do the installation.

A. Yes. But Hoshino had never before installed similar works in a corner. All previous works were on straight walls. It was curator Matthew Welch’s idea to put it in a prominent corner of the MIA, thinking it would give the work greater visual impact.

Q. How do you like it?

A. Very much. He liked the results when he first put it up. Coming back to see it, he found that he liked it even more. It feels like it is there for a long time, he said with a smile.

Q. How did he attach the pieces on the wall?

A. Hoshino embeds each separate pottery segment with a sharp spike or tack, which is then driven into the wall. Welch wanted to make sure that none of the pieces fell off. So Hoshino supplemented the tacks with silicon glue.

Q. We know that the direction your art took was powerfully affected by a massive mud slide in 1986. We looked for examples of your work since last year's tsunami, but couldn't find any. Was your approach changed by this more recent (2011) disaster?

A. No. His approach had been completely changed by what Hoshino called the "**mountain tsunami**" (mudslide) in 1986 that destroyed his studio, half his house and buried much of his finished work. But he, his wife and children were safely away from home when it hit.

Hoshino said the mudslide gave him a new understanding of the power of the earth, of nature, of the very materials he used in his art. But he had already incorporated that experience and his resulting epiphany into his work when the more recent disaster hit. He and his wife, potter Kayoko Hoshino, built their new studio further south in Japan.

Hoshino paused. With great compassion, he added that because of what they had been through, he understood the great losses other Japanese people suffered in last year's disaster.

We were at the end of our art cart shift. We asked if we might photograph Hoshino by his installation. While Linda watched over the cart, I photographed Hoshino and his wife. They mentioned that Hoshino was in town to give a talk at the University of Minnesota. I said that we were aware that Kayoko Hoshino is also a well-known potter (www.sk-hoshino.com).

Then, I asked if he would mind staying just a minute while I switched places with Linda, who really is the expert on this piece. She came back a minute later and said that Hoshino wanted to make sure that I had a photograph with him, if I wanted one.

- *Kay Miller*

