



# Ikeda Manabu: *Rebirth*

By [Brent Taalur Ramsey](#) | January 8, 2017 | 6:30am

*Works by Ikeda Manabu, courtesy of Chazen Museum of Art/Clayton Adams and Mizuma Art Gallery*



It's hard to imagine spending more than three years on a single project, but that's exactly what Japanese artist [Ikeda Manabu](#) did with his monumental masterpiece *Rebirth*. His largest work to date, Ikeda spent 10 hours a day for three and a half years working on the 13' x 10' creation using only pen and acrylics.

A response to the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, an event that would later set off a melt-down at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, the emotionally empowered artist started toiling away at this massive undertaking in July 2013 when he was an artist in residence at the [Chazen Museum of Art](#) in Madison, Wisconsin. It is his 10th time completing one of the massive works, in this instance constructed of four panels.



Courtesy of Chazen Museum of Art

Manabu pulled details and sceneries from the far-reaching corners of his imagination, evoking the continuous struggle between man and nature. His homeland of Japan has long been plagued with natural disasters, yet again and again his countrymen rise above the ruins and wreckage to overcome. Manabu portrays the struggle toward a brighter future by drawing a gigantic cherry blossom tree (a particularly special motif throughout Japanese art and culture) crashing into the sea. Within the scene Manabu illustrates not only glimpses of total destruction and chaos, but also survival.

The need for survival, and for the overcoming of all odds, is one the Japanese know quite well. Together they continue to rebuild, replant and reveal a people intent on a better future. It is only fitting such a project would take up so large a chunk of this talented artist's life – a great feat of triumph and perseverance over all odds. During the creation of *Rebirth* over his artist-in-residency stay of three years, Manabu had to temporarily train his left hand to take over drawing while its counterpart recovered from a terrible skiing accident. He blogged about the incident and recovery on his blog (*translated from Japanese*):





Not enough time for sufficient practice of drawing, but is a left hand that was suddenly put into production in only drew a few sketches book... Although speed fell somewhat, I firmly fulfilled the work... Anything we can do if we can pursue anything. Also, as a result of this event, the concept of the upper part of the work has been decided and finally the final form of the painting which has been finished... It could be said that it crossed over. /p>

Throughout all of these motifs of seriousness and severity, Manabu represented the importance of humor in recovery, going as close to his temporary home as including a Home Depot plucked from the very streets of Madison, Wisconsin, within one of the massive panels. The masterpiece was on view at the Chazen Museum of Art through December 2016, allowing visitors to celebrate the work of this dedicated and talented artist – a well-deserved spotlight after many years of hard work. The painting is now heading to Japan for a traveling exhibition in several museums.

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