



OCTOBER 2018

PORTRAIT OF A TRUCK

Tenkamaru in a Tunnel, Tochigi | Masaru Tatsuki



VISIT THE BMA

and come see *Tenkamaru in a Tunnel, Tochigi* in the *Time Frames* exhibition this fall.

Masaru Tatsuki (Japanese, born 1974).
Tenkamaru in a Tunnel, Tochigi. 2005.
From the series *Decотора*. Chromogenic print.
48 x 48 inches. The Baltimore Museum of Art:
Gift of Brenda Edelson, Santa Fe, BMA 2015.54.
© Masaru Tatsuki

Dramatically poised in a darkened tunnel, this truck, named “Tenkamaru” by its owner, hums with light. The photograph, more akin to a portrait of a beloved family member or an important citizen than the simple visual record of a vehicle, grabs the eye of the viewer with its dazzling electricity. Tenkamaru has an anthropomorphic quality to it—its two front lights recall eyes and the diagonal pose suggests power in reserve, waiting to be released. The stately position of this truck is reminiscent of European historical $\frac{3}{4}$ portraits such as *François de Vendôme, Duc de Beaufort* (ca. 1649) by Jean Nocret, seen on p. 3 of this resource.

Tenkamaru and its owner are part of a Japanese subculture called *decотора*. Tatsuki explains, “*Decотора* means ‘trucks decorated with illuminations’ and, really, there’s not ... a lot more to say about them with just words.” Indeed, Tatsuki spent ten years embedded in the *decотора* subculture to learn as much as possible about his subjects. His photographs, such as *Tenkamaru in a Tunnel, Tochigi*, well illustrate the importance of capturing the brilliance of these trucks through the visual medium of photography.

Decотора was in part inspired by “Truck Rascals,” a 1970s TV show that followed the adventures of two truck drivers as they traveled around Japan. But some of the impetus behind these elaborately decorated trucks was an undeniable desire for personal expression. One truck driver explained to Tatsuki: “At first, I never liked this job. But I had to love my job to live, so I started to decorate my truck.”

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Compare *Tenkamaru in a Tunnel, Tochigi* with *François de Vendôme, Duc de Beaufort*. What similarities can you find? Why do you think that the artist staged the truck so that it evoked a living thing? If you could make a portrait of an inanimate object that you own or know of, what would it be? How would you stage the object for the photo shoot?

Google “*decотора*,” “jingle trucks” of Pakistan, and “lowriders” of Chicano/a/x culture; be sure to look at the many images available. Read some of the articles written about them—how is the decoration of these vehicles related to individual and cultural expression?

If you had any kind of vehicle you could customize, how would you decorate it to express your personality? What would you like to convey? Consider the interior and exterior, how it operates, the sounds it makes. Draw or create a collage of your new vehicle. Label the unique features and explain your choices.

BALTIMORE
MUSEUM OF
ART BMA

To comment or register
for Art-To-Go, email
Lwilson@artbma.org

For visitor information:
artbma.org

PRINT THE IMAGES ON PAGES 2 AND 3 FOR YOUR STUDENTS.



**BALTIMORE
MUSEUM OF
ART** **BMA**

Tenkamaru in a Tunnel, Tochigi

Masaru Tatsuki (Japanese, born 1974). 2005. From the series *Decotora*. Chromogenic print.
48 x 48 inches. The Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift of Brenda Edelson, Santa Fe, BMA 2015.54.
© Masaru Tatsuki



François de Vendôme, Duc de Beaufort

Jean Nocret (French, 1615–1672). Before 1649. Oil on canvas. 44 x 35 inches.
The Baltimore Museum of Art: The Mary Frick Jacobs Collection, BMA 1938.187