

THIS BEAUTIFUL EARTH: PHOTO ESSAYS BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA 'A HAWAIIAN WHITE HORSE'

Opening the window, the scent of the sea breezes in. As always, the beach at Waikiki is lively and bustling. The happy shouts of children. Voices calling to friends. People in brightly colored swimsuits running on the hot sand. Others lounging in the shadows of palm fronds. Looking toward this paradise of the Pacific, people come here from west and east, gathering and becoming friends.

“Enjoy!”— this is the Aloha spirit!

Then, my eyes are drawn to one spot on the beach. There, from the sand, emerges the figure of a white horse. Who had sculpted it? It seems as if it is ready to gallop gracefully away. I bow with respect and appreciation to the nameless beach artist who created it.

Had someone unearthed a horse buried in sand? Or was it unearthed from deep in the artist's heart?

Once sand was touched by creative hands, it was no longer just sand. It ceased to be simply a thing. The sand became the beautiful body of a horse, a fusion of matter and spirit.

That moment when something unseen becomes something visible—there we find the mystery of creativity!

Human beings are works of art created by the universe from the same material as the stars.

This galloping horse, too, was created from the universal elements of Earth, Water, Fire, Wind and Void! Everything created by nature, including the human being, is a masterpiece.

The magnificent banyan tree. The crimson hibiscus. Rainbow-colored tropical fish. Nature itself aims at beauty. Life strives for beauty. Nothing is ugly that is vitally alive.

The intense sunlight of endless summer beats upon my arm as I hold my camera. A strong fragrance floats in the dry air. Is it ginger-grass? Plumeria?

If one just has the heart to perceive it, this world is filled with beauty. The waves, the clouds, are great artists.

The Earth calls out to us: “People! Be beautiful, be strong, like me! Give birth! Give rise! To things of value! Be generous! Don't hold back! Create! Create! Something wonderful!”

To give birth is a joy! To create is a joy! To encourage people is to create. To make friends—this, too, is creation, as is to foster capable people! The joy of creation! This is the triumphant cry of life itself!

Dutch historian Johan Huizinga refers to the human being as “*Homo Ludens*”—one who plays—and suggests that culture is born out of play.

To break away from a state of being bound by a quest for material things and freely create something—this is culture. This is what it means to be human.

Words suggesting play or enjoyment appear in many places throughout the Lotus Sutra. It reads, for example, “To stroll [frolic] about without fear like the lion king.”

And, “Mounting the jeweled carriages, driving off in all directions, delighting and amusing themselves.”

Also, “day and night for unnumbered kalpas to find constant enjoyment.”

There is a figure in the sutra named Bodhisattva Lion Frolic World.

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And the sutra speaks of the “sport carried out by the Thus Come One’s transcendental powers,” as well as the world being a place “where living beings enjoy themselves at ease.”

Here the Lotus Sutra tells us that people appear in this world to enjoy themselves.

The sutra also refers to a bodhisattva who “enjoys himself going out among the lands, liberating people from suffering.”

From among all the worlds that fill this vast universe, we have chosen and come to this Earth to create happiness. So even when suffering approaches, let us ride it like a surfer on a wave and enjoy overcoming it!

When our life force is strong, this world becomes a place to “enjoy ourselves at ease.” We can pull this power from the “emerald sea” that exists inside our hearts. The name *Waikiki* means “surging spring.”

When we cause our life force to well forth, to surge up like a spring, that time and that place become a paradise — a garden of enjoyment!

Pay no mind to trifling matters!

Don’t become a tragic hero!

Overcome the sorrow in your heart!

Enjoy!

It is for this purpose that we were born!

Nine in a series