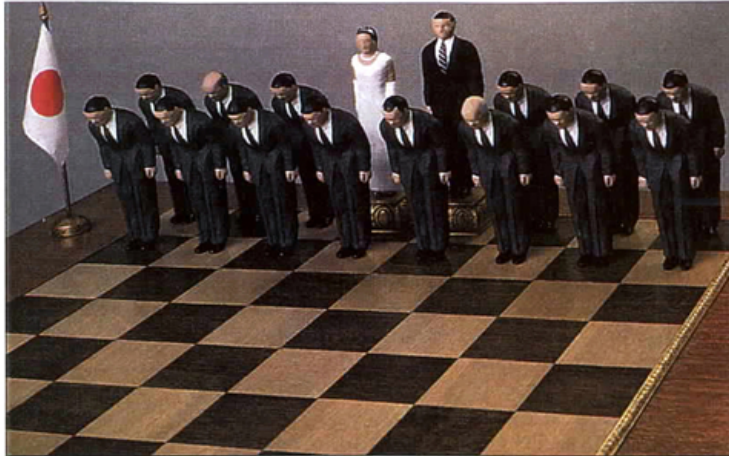


ACROSS THE BOARD

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Culture Clash

A bleak vision indeed: On one side of an oversized chessboard stand the Japanese emperor and empress flanked by clones of businessmen, all bowing in unison. Opposite stand representatives of the United States: a faceless president and the Statue of Liberty surrounded by assailants and prisoners, listless students and a teenage single mother, a beggar, a homeless woman, ill-trained workers checking a manual, and bomb-building scientists.

The chessmen were created by Los Angeles-based sculptor Ed Massey, who describes his work as "a critical examination of the competition between the world's two economic giants." The sculpture's title—*Checkmate*, written in Japanese characters—leaves no doubt

who is winning before the game even begins.

The artist has taken some flak for what some people see as negative and simplistic depictions of both countries. But, he explains, *Checkmate* is as much about common stereotypes (held by both sides about each other) as it is about the artist's own viewpoint. "My work is a mirror of reality," he says. "Some people prefer fantasy."

Massey holds an undergraduate degree in sociology and a graduate degree in fine arts. Describing why he changed fields, he says, "I'm extremely opinionated. Sculpture gives me a chance to air my views. Exposing social problems in a visual way has more impact than writing academic articles."

—Marilyn Stern

Valerie Walker