

Suzuki Hiroyuki
SENSE OF PLACE: EXPRESSION IN MODERN JAPANESE ARCHITECTURE
Translation by Lynne E. Riggs

The concept of universal space, along with international style, occupied a prominent place in the early twentieth-century Modern Architecture movement, and buildings designed on this concept rose up in cities all over the world. Regular, uniform spaces, it was thought, were universal; they could be added on to each other endlessly up, down or sideways, and were presumed valid forms of space for any milieu anywhere. Universal space was first proposed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe in the early 1920s in his glass skyscraper designs. Skyscrapers built up until that time had been more or less faithful to the classic image of the tower, with different forms of expression used for the lower, middle and top portions. Mies demonstrated that high-rise buildings could be made simply of uniformly designed floors stacked up ad infinitum.

The concepts of the Modern Architecture movement were developed from the 1910s through the 1930s. Between 1921 and 1923, Mies van der Rohe presented five important projects, including the abovementioned glass skyscraper; in 1914 Le Corbusier produced his Dom-Ino House prototype and in 1926 propounded his five-point philosophy of Modern Architecture. In 1927, most of the leading members of the Modern Architecture movement participated in the Weissenhof Siedlung exhibition of residential architecture held in Germany. Overall, however, these concepts did not begin to take actual shape in world architecture until after 1945. Japanese modern architecture, too, began to emerge just at this time. The period during which Japan was rebuilding itself from the ruins of World War II was also the time when the Modern Architecture buildings were being constructed in projects around the world.

In the late sixties the predominance of Euro-centered ideas not only in architecture but other fields began to be questioned and advocates of "critical regionalism" called for resistance to the overwhelming influence of the Modern Architecture movement with its stress on "form follows function," rationalism, and standardization on a global scale. Japanese architects, their work beginning to appear for the first time during the war reconstruction effort, have quietly demonstrated basic concepts from their own traditions that represent an impressive statement of the real potential of modern architecture around the world.

One of these concepts is what I call the sense of place, to be further defined below.

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Tradition's Indirect Impact
In 1949, a design competition was held for the memorial park to be built in the atom-bomb destroyed city of Hiroshima. The award-winning proposal made Tange Kenzo a leader in Japanese architecture and marked Japan's postwar debut in world architecture when the 38-year-old architect presented his design at the eighth CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) conference in 1951. The Peace Memorial Park, with the Peace Memorial Museum, was intended to commemorate the tragedy wrought by the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 1945 and was the core of the plan for reconstruction of the burnt-out city. The Memorial Museum was built on pilotis, clearly reflecting the strong influence of Le Corbusier and adopting many other elements of the vocabulary of Modern Architecture, as in the tower-like design of its walls. It is a fitting monument to the launching of modern architecture in Japan. (Figure 1) But Tange's design also incorporated a surprising number of features that reflected indigenous traditions of Japanese architecture. He drew on the unassuming, simple style of traditional architecture epitomized in the shoin-style buildings in the Katsura Detached Palace in Kyoto. It seems that Tange wanted to show how the exposure of structural elements on the exterior, the absence of obvious exterior decorative elements, and the use of structural materials themselves to provide the texture of the building are common characteristics of both the architecture at Katsura and of the Modern Architecture movement.

For example, the exposed concrete columns and beams of the International Conference Center and Peace Center Building that flank the museum are expressions clearly echoing Japan's refined traditions of wooden post-and-beam architecture. The design of the walls and windows, at first reminiscent of an abstract painting by Mondrian, is in fact closer to an abstract composition combining the motif of white plaster walls and *shoji* panels in traditional architecture. The stairway under the pilotis and the paving under the eaves of the buildings left and right of the museum using stones in a layout reminiscent of the stepping-stones of a traditional landscape garden are more direct applications of typically Japanese forms.

The Peace Memorial Park buildings bring together Modern Architecture's vocabulary of forms in the purest sense and traditional Japanese architecture's concepts of composition and space. Yet the effect achieved does not degenerate into eclectic kitsch, but constitutes a united harmony of individual elements, each highly refined. The idea that the architectural concepts displayed in Katsura Detached Palace and those of Modern Architecture were not antithetical, but actually compatible, was not original with Tange. The first to articulate this idea was German architect Bruno Taut, who spent three years in Japan starting in 1933 and extolled the splendors of Katsura. ¹Taut declared that the aesthetic represented by Katsura coincided with the aesthetic of Modern Architecture.

Young architects in Japan pursuing the modern school were much stimulated by Taut's ideas and encouraged as they began to adopt genuinely modern forms in postwar projects.

The conviction that traditional Japanese architectural composition and Modern Architecture shared common characteristics thus became established, giving Japanese architects in the 1950s an important measure of confidence. Even the generation before them, including Maekawa Kunio (1905-86) and Sakakura Junzo (1901-1969), had showed a superb skill at incorporating the formative vocabulary of traditional Japanese architecture into modern architectural expression. But one wonders whether it was only that new-found confidence that made postwar Japanese architecture, in a very short period of time, a very significant presence in world architecture. There were many features of traditional architecture that conformed with those sought by the twentieth-century Modern Architecture movement. Modern architects in Japan reevaluated tradition from that point of view and produced works ranking with the best of Western architecture. But Japanese architectural tradition has much more to offer than the tangible, superficial features it has in common with the principles of the Modern Architecture movement. A more important element that has survived throughout history is what I call *basho no kankaku*, "sense of place," or understanding of or appreciation for the nature of the place where the building is to be built. An alternative expression might be "place context." Tange Kenzo's Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park is an eloquent example of this architectural principle.

The sense of place of the park is expressed in its whole design. This is signaled first by the fact that the building at the center of the park - the Peace Memorial Museum built on pilotis - is not the heart of the park plan. On the north side of the building is a large open space, which is packed with people every year during the August 6th memorial services held there. To the north of this square is the shell-shaped memorial cenotaph, where the people assembled in the square offer flowers and pray for peace. As they pray, kneeling or bowing their heads, their line of vision passes through the tunnel-shaped shell framing the Atomic Bomb Dome beyond, the vivid reminder of the atomic blast.

The ruin known as the Atomic Bomb Dome was originally the Hiroshima Industrial Promotion Hall built by Czech architect Jan Letzel in 1915 while resident in Japan. It stood close to the epicenter of the blast and its dome was almost completely destroyed, save for the steel framework that supported it, and the bared bands provide a memorable epitaph, standing out starkly against the rebuilt City, of the appalling destructive force of the atom bomb.

The plan for the peace memorial park, in fact, pivots on an axis positioned in midair: the line passing through the shell-shaped cenotaph along which the Atomic Bomb Dome can be viewed, the southern extension of which is the Peace Memorial Museum raised off the ground with pilotis. In this sense, the purpose of the pilotis may be intended not so much, as advocated by Le Corbusier, to free the earth

beneath the building for human use, but to take advantage of the impressive view of the Atomic Bomb Dome from the other side of the museum building, to extend the axis passing beneath the museum and through the cenotaph to the dome without interruption, and clear the way for a symbolic axis running through the entire design.

The central feature of the plan for the peace memorial park, therefore, is the Atomic Bomb Dome; the entire project was designed to consecrate and give special meaning to this dome and commemorate the context of the place. The layout of the park brings immediately to mind the famous Itsukushima Shrine, located not far from Hiroshima on the Inland Sea. (Figure 2) Itsukushima Shrine goes back to ancient times (some believe the late sixth century). It was generously supported by the twelfth-century general Taira no Kiyomori and is today one of the most visited tourist attractions in the Hiroshima area. What makes Itsukushima Shrine unusual is the way it is built along an axis extending endlessly from the land toward the sea. The inner hall of the shrine is built facing the sea with a large deck extending in front of it. In the shallow waters of the inlet some distance out stands a large red-lacquered torii, which is the formal gateway to the shrine. Visitors today usually stand with their backs to the shrine and look out at the sea through the *torii*, but the design was intended to be viewed the other way around, from the sea. Visitors once approached by boat, and prayed in the direction of the inner shrine seen through the water-surrounded gateway.

It seems obvious that this composition was influential in the planning of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. The axis that passes through the park from the Atomic Bomb Dome, through the shell-like cenotaph and even through the pilotis of the Peace Memorial Museum is equivalent to the axis that begins at the main shrine and extends through the great *torii* at Itsukushima Shrine. And just as the shrine served as a kind of altar from which believers prayed to the mountain behind the shrine, or rather to the whole island of Miyajima, which is believed to be holy ground, the Atomic Bomb Dome that serves as the center of the plan for the Peace Memorial Park is a "sanctuary" enshrining the entire destroyed city of Hiroshima that stretched beyond it to the north. Tange Kenzo drew on the traditions of Japanese architecture not only for methods of spatial composition or for formative motifs, but on the expression of a fundamental sense of place. In other words, he perceived that in Japanese tradition the starting point in creating architecture is the impulse to manifest a particular *genius loci*.

Bruno Taut had not grasped this point. He had the highest praise for Katsura Detached Palace, but dismissed the Toshogu Shrine at Nikko, which was built at exactly the same period of time, as kitsch. He thought that such opposite extremes of artistic expression (one is the epitome of simplicity and plainness while the other is a study in ornateness and splendor) could exist in the same historical period because the former was what he called "emperor art" and the other "*shogun art*". The Japanese architects who accepted Taut's evaluation of Katsura were satisfied with this interpretation; they did not go so far as to ask whether there was some common base that would explain the creation of such opposites in the same period of architectural history.

The concept of architecture these structures share is sense of place, which represents perhaps one of the most basic existential features of Japanese architecture. Katsura Detached Palace was built as the country retreat of a seventeenth-century imperial princely family. So it is preeminently a garden, with the buildings, the moon-viewing terrace, and other architectural features constructed as part of the organic whole to, as it were, consecrate the garden. The cluster of shrines at Nikko, too, organized along a complex axial line, are all intended to consecrate the mausoleum as a place appropriate to honor the memory of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first of the Tokugawa *shoguns* who ruled Japan for two and a half centuries. As these examples show, an underlying theme in Japanese architectural tradition is the use of architecture to create a sense of place, that is, to imbue a place with special meaning.

Critical Regionalism
By the end of the 1960s, Modern Architecture had conquered the major metropolises of the world. Townscapes everywhere came to resemble each other, no matter what modern city one might visit. But it was about this time that contemporary architecture began to change Modern Architecture's ideas about the creation and spread of universal space. One might think that the change came because, with that triumph, the history of the style had run its course.

A more cogent reason, however, was that by the end of the 1960s, very basic questions had begun to surface about Modernism's ideal of unifying the world under one system of values.

Greek-born architectural historian Alexander Tzonis identifies the beginning of contemporary times with the May 1968 student revolt in Paris.² I think this is an accurate assessment, because the student movement included an attack on attempts to measure progress everywhere in the world by the standards of European civilization. Franz Fanon's writings, too, asserting that the distinctive characteristics of the Third World were valid in their own right and should not be subjected to Western standards, had tremendous impact on student movements throughout the world in 1968. In the field of architecture, Kenneth Frampton published an essay entitled "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," which incorporated Tzonis's ideas, stating that "The fundamental strategy of Critical Regionalism is to mediate the impact of universal civilization with elements derived indirectly from the peculiarities of a particular place."³

These ideas called for a new brand of architecture to counter international style and drew attention to the distinctive architectural concepts of particular regions that had existed long before the vaunted global forms of architectural expression.

Frampton did not believe that regional expression could be attained simply by drawing formative motifs from indigenous styles, as is reflected in his deliberate use of the words "critical" and "indirectly." There is a tendency, when we speak of the unique architectural traditions of different countries, to think only in terms of certain traditional stylistic details or individual forms. Distinctive motifs do demonstrate the architectural traits of a given tradition most clearly, but they are not everything.

Tange Kenzo's Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park plan, for example, in this sense, is clearly identified with Japan's architectural tradition through its elaborate sense of place. This work not only marked Japan's new departure in Modern Architecture in the postwar period but showed how architectural traditions could be kept alive in a modern context.

Now, let us look at how the sense of place is shown in contemporary Japanese architecture. Modern architecture as a whole has undergone many significant changes since the end of the 1960s, stimulated by the new expressions of so-called post-modernism and prompted by the challenges of high technology. It is now clear that contemporary architecture will no longer be the product of a common ethos of modernity. Today, Japanese architects of every philosophical and technological persuasion are building works in their own country reflecting world trends of every kind. Contemporary Japanese architecture, it must be said, is simply architecture that happens to be built today in Japan. Nevertheless, in the works of leading contemporary Japanese architects, we can identify certain shared perceptions that transcend the superficial differences in their styles. An analysis of the thinking behind recent works by three architects - Maki Fumihiko's Hillside Terrace, Isozaki Arata's Team Disney Building, and Ando Tadao's Church with the Light- will demonstrate this point.

Hillside Terrace
In 1992 Maki Fumihiko's housing and commercial development project in Tokyo's Shibuya ward, known as Hillside Terrace, completed its sixth phase of construction. (Figure 3) The project, spanning a quarter of a century beginning in 1967, consists of a complex of buildings constructed in a moderate-size section of the city.⁴ Unlike many large-scale urban development projects, it constituted an ongoing development scheme undertaken on land held by a single owner. Inasmuch as there was only one client, who commissioned the same architect for all the designs, it was possible to achieve a distinctive form of expression. At the same time, each of the phases of the project continuing over twenty-five years represented an integrated whole in itself, and each phase reflected the development of the architect's creative style. The resulting townscape, therefore, does not display a mechanically unified style, but one of considerable diversity that evolved over the years.

Hillside Terrace reminds one of linked verse (*renga*), which is a pastime of Japanese tanka poets. Renga are produced by a number

of people who compose verses in turn, adding new stanzas inspired by the lines previously created by others. In a sense, Maki Fumihiko produced the successive phases of this project as if they were linked verses inspired by his own earlier designs, devising each work beside its predecessors and striving at each phase to incorporate the subsequent works into a whole. In the process he sought to imbue the site with a fresh sense of place, preserving an ancient tumulus located within the grounds as part of a landscaped area, designing the facade of buildings to follow the curve of the adjacent street, and otherwise seeking to give the place a distinctive spirit all its own. In his book, *Miegakure suru toshi* [The Seen and Unseen City], ⁵Maki discussed the complex structure of Tokyo, describing it not as a city planned according to a single principle, but a metropolis made up of multifarious hidden cores. His analysis of Tokyo is based not on a theory of space but on a theory of place. To him, the act of architectural design consists of grasping the context of the place where a building is to be constructed and devising a design that represents a new chapter in the story of that place. In designing the National Museum of Modern Art in Kyoto, he wrote, the most important factor in his consideration was the huge 24 meter high gateway (*torii*, the largest in Japan) to Heian Shrine standing in front of the site. Its monumental presence did not lead him, of course, to design a Japanese-style building to match the traditional *torii*.

Rather, adhering closely to the vocabulary of modern architecture, he interpreted the sense of place indirectly. The Museum is a basically symmetric design with a subtle asymmetry in the facade and stone facings at the foot of the building that hint faintly of traditional stone wall motifs.

To Maki, the employment of historical motifs from Western European architecture, which was the recourse of most post-modern architects in the world, was meaningless. In the Japanese city, after all, they were totally useless in the task of creating context in any kind of place. Post-modernism might be all right for Italy, but in Japan, he believed, it was irrelevant.

Maki Fumihiko is a firm and faithful adherent of modern architecture, not as advocated by the big names of the Modern Architecture movement of the early twentieth century, but which creates context and narrative. He seeks to achieve that goal by relying exclusively on the language of modern architectural design. Among architects in Japan today -or even throughout modern Japanese history- Maki is among those whose personal development and training as a professional was most closely shaped by the Western world of architecture. Yet even as he consistently utilizes the expressions of Western European modern architecture, his works are premised on the understanding and interpretation of architecture in terms of the sense of place, be it in Tokyo or elsewhere in Japan. In this way, they represent modern architecture that is clearly distinguished from stateless internationalism.

Even if that endeavor might be essentially impossible, he would be able to demonstrate his virtuosity as a Japanese architect by virtue of his sense of place, turning some things upside down and omitting others.

Team Disney Building
Slightly younger and even more active internationally than Maki Fumihiko is Isozaki Arata. He is the architect of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (1986), a disco (1985) and art museum (1986) in New York, facilities for the Olympic Games in Barcelona (1992), and the Team Disney building in Orlando (1991). Japanese architects who design buildings overseas generally approach their work in one of two ways. One is to assert their identity as Japanese at the outset and present a design with a distinctively Japanese flavor. The other is to place their bets with a wholly international design. Isozaki's works, far from featuring designs tinted with anything directly Japanese, are assertions more of the architect's personality than his nationality.

Isozaki, like Tzonis, sees contemporary times as beginning in 1968. In a book published in 1985, *Posuto-modern genron* [Principles of Post Modernism] he says:

*As I see it, the people who are living in the era we call postmodern, even those whose commitment to radicalism was brief, are people who have somehow or other overcome the turmoil of 1968. They manage to survive today by virtue of having surmounted those times.*⁶

His cultural background resembles that of Franz Fanon, whose works were eagerly read by demonstrating students in the sixties. Fanon was a black intellectual from the island of Martinique educated in French institutions and steeped in French culture, not a true Frenchman, but his ties to African culture cut from an early age. Isozaki, likewise, although he may have a deep understanding and attachment for the ideas of Andrea Palladio and John Soane, can no sooner become a Westerner. He can only pursue his own personal, "stateless" style. His Tsukuba Center Building (1983) is an example, incorporating elements from Michelangelo, Ledoux, Egyptian architecture, Baroque, and so on, and deliberately omitting Japanese motifs. He could become neither genuinely Western nor genuinely Japanese, and this work seems to express the cultural dilemma he felt. The absence of his own identity, in fact, may be the theme of this work.

The Tsukuba Center Building evokes the Roman Capitol (Campidoglio) piazza pavement, although it is not built on the top of a hill but sunk below ground level. The place where the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius stands is vacant, and off to the side is the laurel tree into which the nymph Daphne was transformed, golden fragments of her robes sadly fluttering in the breeze. Everything, the design seems to say, is too late, everything is missing. This is Isozaki's statement about himself and about the condition of Japanese culture. He made the major theme of this work the creation of the fictitious image of the place, which is the Campidoglio piazza.

Even if that endeavor might be essentially impossible, he would be able to demonstrate his virtuosity as a Japanese architect by virtue of his sense of place, turning some things upside down and omitting others.



It seems to me that in Isozaki's 1991 Team Disney building in the United States, he showed us something of his own personal sense of place. (Figure 4) He believed that designing the head office building for Walt Disney Productions for the artificial townscape of Orlando meant creating an architectural form for a fictitious system. Citing nothing from the vocabulary of forms of Western architectural history, he produced a completely abstract composition. The motif suggesting Mickey Mouse at the front entrance is a gesture to the client. Isozaki's sole message in this building is expressed in the inner court spread with pebbles within the giant sun-dial cone at the core of the building. Is this court, containing nothing save a layer of pebbles, in fact a symbol of loss, an expanse of emptiness? When you walk through courtyard, the sound of the stones crunching underfoot echoes in unearthly tones against the surrounding walls. One cannot but wonder if this courtyard is not a surrounding temple of statelessness.

The inner court is the only example of the Japanese place-context concept in this structure of abstract forms. Clearly, Isozaki drew on the image of the inner precincts of Ise Shrine, one of the most important images of place context in Japanese architecture.

The sanctuary at Ise Shrine is reconstructed every 20 years in exact replica on an immediately adjacent site and the old sanctuary destroyed as soon as the new is completed.

The emptied site, called the *kodenchī*, is covered evenly with pebbles and made consecrated ground ready for the rebuilding of the shrine again in 20 years. The image of this *kodenchī* is recreated in the heart of the Disney head office building. In response to my inquiry, Isozaki confirmed that he had evoked the Ise Shrine image for the Disney inner court, and recalled how difficult it had been in the United States to obtain pebbles of a size equivalent to those in the Ise Shrine. Isozaki does not employ the formative motifs of Japanese architecture in his building designs for the United States, but seeks to recreate Japanese places. These designs tell us something about his understanding of the essence of Japanese architecture as well as assert an image of his own cultural identity.

Church with the Light

Among younger generation, and drawing even more international attention, is Ando Tadao. Largely a self-trained architect, he is known for his hard, box-like forms executed in exposed concrete. He emerged into the spotlight in 1976 upon completion of the Row House Sumiyoshi (Osaka), and has continued to design buildings in very regular shapes that seem an anomaly in the traditions of Japanese architecture. Nevertheless, his ways of connecting spaces and introducing light, for example, have been praised for their unexpectedly Japanese spatial qualities.

He has been counted among those architects who showed that the vocabulary of modern architecture and the traditions of Japanese architectural space are compatible. His buildings have won acclaim for their contemporaneity, but they do still closely conform to the

appraisal of Japanese architecture articulated by Bruno Taut. Ando has won a reputation as the most provocative contemporary architect of Japan. But here again, a real understanding of Ando's works requires careful examination of the architectural context in which his buildings stand.

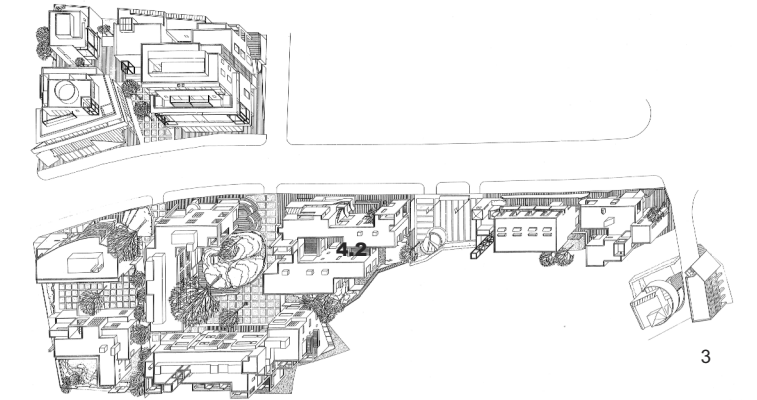
Most of his early works, including the Row House Sumiyoshi, were small-scale, reconstruction projects located in the urban sprawl that surrounds the commercial metropolis of Osaka; his task was to insert small, fresh structures into the vernacular of the existing townscape. Their rigid forms are intended to ensure a new place in their urban context. A new building can seem both aloof or alien in its old surroundings, but Ando's buildings are neither aggressive nor threatening because his final goal is to create not only space but also a place where people live.

This is most eloquently attested to by his works in which construction continues in the form of annexes or successive phases of building. The best-known examples are the TIMES project in Kyoto consisting of the first phase completed in 1984 and the second in 1991, and the Rokko Housing complex in a suburb of Kobe, the first phase of which was finished in 1983 and the second, and third phase of developments are added on an adjacent site. The hard concrete walls of his buildings tend to create a strong impression of self-containment, and yet I believe they possess a structure that can achieve new dimensions in the totality of their surroundings in further processes of addition or expansion. Some may counter that Ando's buildings do demonstrate perfection and that the conclusive characteristics of one stage simply become conclusive features at the next stage. People who have actually visited Ando's buildings, however, quickly see that this is not the case. Indeed, the basic premise of his architecture rests on the relationship with the surroundings. Ando too, therefore, creates his works through and understanding of the sense of place.

The best example is his 1989 work Church with the Light, located in a residential district in the vicinity of Osaka. (Figure 5) It is small, and its surroundings are completely unremarkable. In the cramped site behind the existing wooden chapel and vicarage, Ando created an extremely simple place of meditation where no obstruction intervenes, an ideal spot where people can quietly contemplate God and their own consciousnesses. The purity of the self-contained space he created is immediately perceivable the moment the visitor enters the chapel. However, the cross in this church is a slit cut in the end wall of the building, through which sky and the fluttering leaves of trees can be seen. Although it is actually fitted with glass, the architect felt strongly that it should have been an open slit through which wind as well as light would pass, making it open to the place where it is built and as a result an integrated part of that place. In addition, a diagonal wall slices into the rectangular chapel, further liberating the space to the outside. Thus, the apparently rigid, self-contained forms of his works are less important than the way they open up to the place in which they stand.

In the case of the Church with the Light, Ando also undertook partial reconstruction of the entry hall to the old wooden chapel adjacent in order to provide a spatial link between the existing building and the new chapel. This was both his way of adapting the new building to its place and of linking the new and old structures and making them part of a whole. This process, which was an adjunct to the church project, is not mentioned in publications on his works nor included in his drawings,⁷ a fact that in itself demonstrates Ando's sense of place instincts and makes him an irrefutably Japanese contemporary architect.

- 1 These ideas are expounded in essays translated into Japanese and later published in Bruno Taut, *Nihonji no saihakken* [The Rediscovery of Japanese Beauty] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1939).
- 2 Alexander Tzonis, *Architecture in Europe Since 1968* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1983).
- 3 Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Post Modern Culture* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1983).
- 4 "Maki Fumihiko tokushu" [Special Feature, Fumihiko Maki 1987-92]. *Space Design*, anuary 1993.
- 5 Maki Fumihiko, ed. *Miegakure suru toshi* [The Seen and Unseen City] (Tokyo: SD Senses, Kashima Shuppankai, 1980).
- 6 Isozaki Arata, *Posuto-modern genron* [Principles of Post Modernism] (Tokyo: Asahi Shuppansha, 1985).
- 7 This auxiliary design work is shown only in the drawings included in *Tadao Ando Details* (Tokyo: A.D.A. Editia Tokyo, 1991).



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Le sens des lieux: l'expression dans l'architecture moderne Japonaise.

Le concept d'espace universel, avec le style international, a couvert un rôle prédominant dans le mouvement de l'Architecture Moderne des premières années du vingtième siècle et les bâtiments conçus en suivant ce concept ont été réalisés dans les villes du monde entier. Des espaces réguliers, uniformes -c'était l'idée- sont universels : ils peuvent être ajoutés l'un à l'autre sans fin, à côté, partout : ils ont été considérés de formes d'espace adaptées à n'importe quel milieu....

Il senso del luogo: l'espressione nell'architettura moderna giapponese

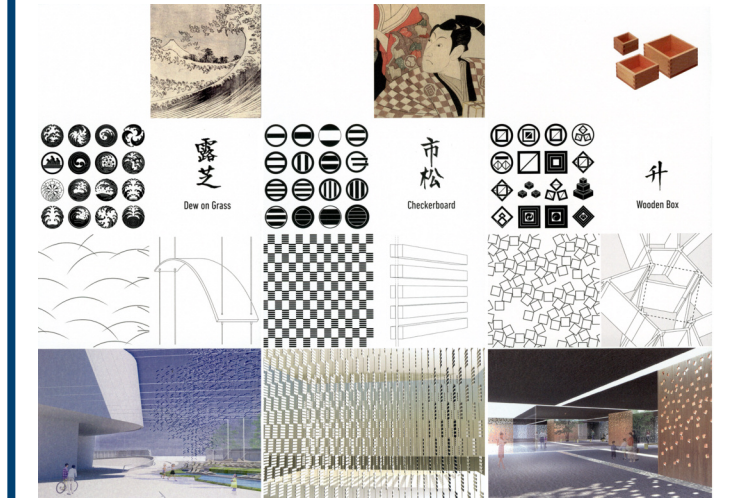
Il concetto di spazio universale, insieme allo Stile Internazionale, ha occupato un posto di primo piano nel Movimento Moderno agli inizi del ventesimo secolo; gli edifici concepiti in tal senso sono sorti nelle città di tutto il mondo. Spazi uniformi e regolari venivano considerati "universali": potevano essere aggiunti l'uno all'altro senza fine, sopra o sotto ed erano considerati forme valide per ogni ambiente ed ogni luogo....



Ce livre à quatre mains est défini par Kengo Kuma, dans son introduction comme « quelque chose de nouveau et jamais vu parmi les études » existantes sur le Japon.

Patterns and layering (modèles et stratification) sont fondés sur des constantes dérivées de concepts mathématiques, desquels il faut partir pour atteindre un « être sentimental » : le Japon.

Il y a environ 100 ans, Arts and Crafts porte son attention sur les modèles traditionnels japonais, interprétés non pas comme géométrie ni comme nature mais plutôt comme une attitude alternative à la nature. Quelques années plus tard, F.L.Wright fut inspiré par les techniques du layering et Mies, à son tour, s'inspira de Wright dans la même ligne : mais ils ne portèrent jamais leur attention sur la relation entre modèles et stratification.



La question nouvelle de ce petit livre est l'étude de cette relation (par l'intermédiaire de concepts structurels) pour « inaugurer cette nouvelle intégration et pour faire démarrer une nouvelle révolution dans le domaine de l'architecture et du design. Révolution qui va synthétiser « nature, culture et technologie » dans la première partie de ce livre, la deuxième étant dédiée à l'étude du sens et du rôle des modèles en tant que diagrammes d'une organisation spatiale et éléments génératifs d'un projet à la fois.

Foreword by Kengo Kuma

Edited by Salvator-John A. Liotta and Matteo Belfiore

Published by Gestalten, Berlin 2012

ISBN 978-3-89955-461-8

Le troisième partie nous propose des études tout à fait singulières sur les modèles et la stratification conduits par des candidats au doctorat en philosophie dans l'agence laboratoire de Kengo Kuma :

- le concept d'excentricité en tant que caractère singulier qui consolide l'identité Japonaise ;
- l'émergence des modèles dans l'histoire du Japon ;
- l'introduction de modèles chinois au Japon ;
- la préférence de motifs végétaux aux modèles à connotation politique ;

modèles d'architecture vernaculaire dans différentes régions du Japon, ces dernières présentant des expérimentations dans le Laboratoire de Kengo Kuma sur la relation entre nature et population.

Il faut souligner le concept graphique de ce livre, par Ilze Paklone et Rafael A.Balboa, qui lui donne une agréable abstraction des sensibilités typiques du Japon.

La redécouverte des modèles traditionnels et des outils de la stratification a la potentialité de fixer les exigences d'une société qui va complètement changer vers des horizons tout à fait nouveaux en termes de durabilité : le tremblement de terre du 2011, en dévastant complètement le Japon, a confirmé la faiblesse de l'architecture contemporaine par rapport aux éléments de la nature.

Les modèles et la stratification spatiale sont des outils extraordinaires pour la conception de bâtiments en mesure d'exister dans une harmonie profonde avec la nature, les gens et la culture.

A notre époque, où l'incertitude est le sentiment prévalent, la culture japonaise peut avoir un rôle décisif pour offrir des solutions alternatives à la crise ; le Japon est en mesure d'offrir ce qui est nécessaire pour une architecture la mieux adaptée à l'inconnu de notre futur.

Les chapitres de ce livre, très riches en images - d'architecture, de géométrie, de matériaux, de technologies - soulignent le rôle des modèles japonais dans la culture, la nature et la conception « générative » (de faire naître du plaisir et de l'émotion) de l'architecture de ce peuple.

Il est indispensable pour la compréhension des modèles japonais d'observer leur relation avec la nature : en isolant et faisant prévaloir l'essence même de celle-ci, dans ce qu'elle a de dense et compact.

C'est plutôt un concept philosophique : un modèle n'est pas une représentation scientifique de l'original ou littéraire de la nature ni son imitation : il est plutôt d'amener la nature et ses formes à leur essentiel minimum et première réalité, en éliminant le superflus.

L'ambition de l'architecture traditionnelle japonaise est de créer des espaces qui ne sont pas intérieurs ni extérieurs et qui ne sont pas entre les deux : même s'ils ont une atmosphère commune.

C'est un espace intermédiaire qui relie l'espace interne à la nature. Le passage de l'intérieur à l'extérieur est constitué d'une séquence d'écrans très fins : de portes glissantes en papier, en bois, de rideaux en bambou qui permettent un certain degré de transparence et perméabilité et sont organisés suivant des modèles spatiaux, le résultat étant la superposition d'éléments hétérogènes non uniformes, la production d'un modèle non hiérarchisé qui rappelle le langage japonais : une composition de petites pièces liées par une faible syntaxe.

Mais la partie la plus intéressante et la plus riche de ce chapitre est sans doute dans les images de modèles géométriques et de ses liens à la nature dont ils sont inspirés ainsi que des images d'architecture qui n'en dérivent.

Le deuxième chapitre, très riche lui aussi d'images d'architecture et des concepts qui en sont à la base, examine le concept et les modalités de la stratification dans l'architecture japonaise et ses qualités contemporaines, surtout par rapport à la durabilité de l'architecture même et des styles de vie des habitants de la planète.

Kengo Kuma décrit avec précision le rôle du concept de stratification spatiale dans l'architecture de la tradition japonaise et dans celle de la production contemporaine japonaise a très fort sens de spatialité perdu dans les années '80 du dix-neuvième siècle à l'époque de la restauration Meiji où l'architecture plus rigide avait perdu sa flexibilité d'espace.

Aujourd'hui, la stratification spatiale est un outil extraordinaire pour la création d'espaces intermédiaires et pour la recherche en architecture et technologies nouvelles, et leur diffusion commerciale : elle peut complètement redéfinir le rôle de l'architecture et ses modalités d'interaction avec son contexte physique, culturel et social à la fois.

La redécouverte de l'héritage de la tradition japonaise des modèles et des limites peut nous offrir de nouvelles potentialités dans la durabilité de la planète tandis que la stratification spatiale peut nous protéger des éléments négatifs de la nature, mais sans nous détacher de la nature dans son ensemble.

Ce **Sens des lieux**, par Hiroyuki Suzuki, due à la collaboration de Kaisa Broner, est le troisième numéro du CB dédié à l'architecture d'aujourd'hui au Japon et à sa difficile évolution contemporaine, après « la bulle » et les difficultés dues à ces événements catastrophiques qui viennent de marquer son histoire récente.

Avec les deux numéros qui l'ont précédé, il nous donne une vision assez claire de ce qui se passe là-bas dans la construction et la reconstruction des villes et des milieux des hommes dans une perspective de développement durable sans pour autant avoir la présomption de tracer une vraie histoire de l'architecture d'aujourd'hui au Japon.

Entre l'architecture de l'ancienne tradition japonaise et la nouvelle contemporanéité dans ce pays - qui caractérise les études de jeunes architectes dans les laboratoires les plus avancés de Tokyo tels que celui de Kengo Kuma, approfondis dans le livre de Salvator. John A. Liotta et Matteo Belfiore, Patterns and Layering : japonaise spatial culture nature and architecture - il y a une période de transformation dans la direction de l'architecture moderne Européenne qui a impliqué malgré eux les architectes et l'architecture japonaise pour au moins un demi-siècle.

Les concepts à la base de l'architecture moderne européenne ont été développés à partir des années « 10 » du siècle passé jusqu'à la reconstruction qui a suivi la deuxième guerre mondiale. Des espaces réguliers – pourtant universels – pouvaient être joints l'un à l'autre, l'un à côté de l'autre, sans fin, n'importe où.

L'architecture moderne japonaise, elle aussi, est née dans la même période : celle de reconstruction des villes après la deuxième guerre mondiale est la même qui a vu les bâtiments de l'ainsi dite architecture Moderne être construits partout dans le monde.

Au cours des dernières années « 60 » du siècle passé la prédominance des idées centrées sur l'Europe, et pas seulement celles concernant l'architecture, ont vu une résistance à l'influence de principes tels que la forme suivant la fonction, le rationalisme et la standardisation dans son sens global : à cette époque, les architectes japonais ont tranquillement démontré que les concepts de base de leur tradition avaient la possibilité d'être une proposition de renouveau pour l'architecture dans le monde entier, mais surtout dans leur pays.

Le sens des lieux, comme nous l'explique Hiroyuki Suzuki avec beaucoup d'exemples et d'argumentations, est l'un de ces concepts, le plus important peut-être, qui peut être reconnu parmi les signes puissants de l'architecture Moderne européenne proposée par les architectes japonais : mais la tradition architecturale japonaise a bien plus à offrir que les éléments tangibles et superficiels qu'elle partage avec le mouvement européen de l'architecture Moderne. D'autres concepts intéressants de l'architecture de la tradition japonaise sont contenus dans le livre de Salvator. John A. Liotta et Matteo Belfiore, dont nous proposons une courte note de lecture dans ce même numéro.

Les principes des modèles et de la stratification, soigneusement appliqués à la conception des espaces de transition qui caractérisent l'architecture japonaise, en particulier l'architecture de petite échelle, sont aussi forts que le sens des lieux dont nous parle Suzuki dans son article : ils sont une aide importante à la conception des projets, des espaces, des lieux en jouant sur les interrelations entre les modèles et la stratification dans l'architecture : Les deux notions, jusqu'ici détachées, sont aujourd'hui intégrées, tout en incluant des concepts structurels.

L'architecture contemporaine Japonaise - il faut le dire - n'est que l'architecture qui est conçue aujourd'hui dans ce pays. En même temps, comme le souligne l'article de Suzuki, dans les œuvres des plus grands architectes qui travaillent au Japon, nous sommes en mesure d'identifier des perceptions qui vont au delà des différences superficielles de style : ce sont les signes importants d'une architecture moderne qu'on peut très bien distinguer de l'internationalisme dépourvu de sens.

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en collaboration avec
INARCH - Istituto Nazionale di Architettura - Roma
Museum of Finnish Architecture - Helsinki

archives iconographique, publiée secretariat@lecarrebleu.eu

traductions
Gabriella Rammatino, Adriana Villanena
révision des textes français : F.Lapied

mise en page
Francesco Damiani

abonnement
www.lecarrebleu.eu/contact

édition
nouvelle Association des Amis du Carré Bleu, loi de 1901
Président François Lapied
tous les droits réservés / Commission paritaire 593
"le Carré Bleu", feuille internationale d'architecture

siège social
c/o D.S., 24, rue Saint Antoine, 75004 Paris
www.lecarrebleu.eu lecarrebleu@lecarrebleu.eu

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imprimerie
Officine Grafiche F. Giannini & Figli spa
www.gianninispa.it

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