ENCOUNTERS AND POSITIONS ARCHITECTURE IN JAPAN

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BIRKHÄUSER
BASEL

Table of Contents

Architecture in Japan: Perceptions, developments and interconnections

Hubertus Adam / Daniel Hubert / Susanne Kohte

> *"Japan is in many respects the country that comes closest to one's dream of paradise."*[1]
> HERMANN MUTHESIUS, 1903

In view of the fact that the Orient—the Near East, Middle East and Far East—offers us a range of contrasting images, perceptions and experiences, many of them projections that in turn reinforce how the West sees itself,[2] it is remarkable that Japan has been viewed almost entirely positively over the ages. Ever since its portrayal in the *Travels of Marco Polo*, Japan has exerted a mixture of mystery and fascination as a country with both a rich tradition and amazing innovative potential. This applies equally and especially to its architecture. From the 19th century onwards, through the periods of modernism and postmodernism to the present day, it has continued to fascinate the West, even as Western perceptions of architecture in Japan have changed over time in accordance with changing areas of interests and the respective focus of architectural discourse.

This has not, however, been a one-way process: Japan's perception of architecture in the West has likewise changed over the years, influencing the production of architecture in Japan just as changing perceptions of what is typically Japanese did in the West. Contemporary architecture in Japan is a product of this interplay of own and different, foreign viewpoints, and of tradition and modernity. And it is more diverse than is commonly presumed, encompassing numerous different positions. This publication documents the multi-dimensional nature of contemporary architecture in Japan, comprising 13 interviews with Japanese architects and six texts exploring the background of and interrelationships within Japanese architecture. The interviewees have been chosen to reflect the views of several generations—from the eldest, Fumihiko Maki, born in 1928, to the youngest, Go Hasegawa, born in 1977. Aside from their age, these 13 architects also represent different standpoints and approaches to architecture in Japan: some are prominent architects, others members of the profession who have pursued specific directions and are less well-publicized outside Japan (and sometimes within the country, too). Six essays discuss different aspects of architecture in Japan, its development, reception and present-day state as well as the reciprocal influences between cultures. This publication therefore offers a broader perspective on architecture in Japan, looking beyond the popular image of Japan portrayed in the architectural press to reveal the variety of different positions beneath the surface.

Ongoing fascination

Hermann Muthesius, quoted at the outset of this essay, lived in Tokyo from 1887 to 1889. While his professional experience of Japan[3] had made him rather more sceptical of the European enthusiasm for Japan at the time, he held Japanese culture in high regard, especially in its traditional form which was coming increasingly under threat following the modernization tendencies of the 19th century after the opening of the country to Western influences. The sense of ideological superiority that characterized much of the West's dealings with other parts of the Orient did not apply in the same way to Japan, almost certainly because the island nation had not been subject to the same process of colonialism.

Ever since the end of two centuries of isolationism in 1853, Japan has continued to exert a special fascination for the West that has remained predominantly positive even as perception has changed over time with the prevailing political or social climate.

A recent example from the field of architecture is the Museum of Modern Art exhibition "A Japanese Constellation" in New York in spring 2016. The exhibition's curator, Pedro Gadanho, had originally intended to put on a solo exhibition of the work of Toyo Ito, but opted later to expand this into a group exhibition on "the network of architects and designers that has developed around Pritzker Prize winners Toyo Ito and SANAA."[4] The exhibition showed projects by architects from three generations with Toyo Ito as the point of historical reference. The second generation was represented by his student Kazuyo Sejima and her office partner Ryue Nishizawa, the third by students of SANAA, Junya Ishigami and Akihisa Hirata as well as by Sou Fujimoto. The main works that Gadanho chose to present were Toyo Ito's Mediatheque in Sendai (2001) and the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa (2004) by SANAA. Exhibitions are inevitably constructions, and in Gadanho's one can see a conscious attempt to trace a line of tradition and to operationalize it for contemporary architectural discourse.[5] The curator highlights a shift towards transparency and lightness, as well as innovative construction as a shared theme in the work of the featured architects. The image that the MoMA exhibition portrays is paradigmatic of the contemporary perception of Japanese architecture. The works on show confirm the qualities of structural elegance, transparency and lightness, purism and minimalism that characterize today's popular perception of the architecture of the island nation. By way of example, one of the many publications that propagate this image is a collection of new architecture and design from Japan with the telling title *Sublime*.[6] Its chapter headings could populate a tag cloud describing the contemporary image of Japanese architecture: transparency, blurred boundaries, inside-outside, new spatial structures, house-in-house, traditional/modern, nature/technology/materials, defying gravity, etc.

Perception and reality

The perception of Japanese architecture in the West and the themes propagated in books and exhibitions that in turn influence architects in Europe should be viewed with a measure of caution. In recent years, Western media has devoted particular attention to small houses in the Japanese metropolitan cities. Shigeru Ban's "Curtain

Shigeru Ban, Curtain Wall House,
Tokyo, 1995

Wall House," the "Small House" by SANAA or "House NA" by Sou Fujimoto have become iconic examples of mini-houses, not only in the architectural press and internet blogs but also in the culture sections of national newspapers. Given the banal building conventions, for instance in much of Germany, these mini-houses have been heralded as models for future living, as prototypical building blocks of the city of tomorrow.[7] The euphoric reception of some of these excellent and striking examples of architecture is therefore understandable. However, this "Pet Architecture," as Atelier Bow-Wow have dubbed these small houses in Japan's cities, most notably Tokyo, can only be properly understood in the context of the specific tradition of dense neighborhoods, the high cost of building and way of life in Japanese conurbations. As fascinating as these buildings are, their one-dimensional presentation in today's Western press is problematic.[8] Many of the highly-publicized icons, when seen against the everyday background of their built environment—a bricolage of home-spun extensions and prefabricated houses—are not nearly as spectacular as they seem in the carefully orchestrated glossy photos. A particularly blatant example in this respect is the "Curtain Wall House" by Shigeru Ban in Tokyo, made famous by the now iconic image of the house corner shrouded by a two-story billowing curtain.[9] On visiting the building, the curtain is nowhere to be seen; rather one sees the metal protuberances of the stairs and washrooms, stacked above one another on the adjacent corners. Without the curtain, the building has none of the ethereal character of the image. Indeed, its somewhat haphazard arrangement of metal-clad forms fits perfectly into its immediate surroundings. Here perception and reality are diverging, not least because perceptions are conditioned largely by the respective focus of attention in each day and age. Perceptions and areas of interest change with the concerns and prevailing ideologies of each era—and in turn influence the development of architecture in Japan and in the West.

Dominant perspectives influencing the view of Japan have existed for a while. Reyner Banham has discussed how the perception of contemporary Japanese architecture in the 1930s and 40s focussed on the same primary visual character-

Junzo Sakakura, Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura, 1951

Takamasa Yoshizaka, Inter-University Seminar House, Tokyo, 1965

istics that it does today.[10] This can be traced back to Bruno Taut's interpretation of the Villa Katsura where clarity and simplicity were posited as the most important criteria of Japanese architecture, whether historical or contemporary. These criteria are embodied in the Japanese Pavilion at the Paris World Expo in 1937 by Junzo Sakakura, who worked in Le Corbusier's office from 1930 to 36. Banham relates that the highly delicate articulation of the pavilion was more purist than the works of Mies van der Rohe. Alfred Roth accorded it canonical status in a publication in 1940 by including it as the only Japanese project among 20 buildings that for him most embodied the programmatic qualities of "The New Architecture."[11] Conditioned by Taut's eulogies of the Villa Katsura, Walter Gropius traveled to Japan for the first time in 1954. To the surprise of his hosts, the Bauhaus founder seemed most interested in the historical architecture of Japan. Gropius' interest lay in the structural logic of Japanese timber construction which for him offered historical parallels to the principles of prefabrication and standardization which had preoccupied him for years, first in Germany, and especially later in the United States. He found it hard to understand why Japan's younger architects were choosing to pursue a different direction: "Nowadays the young Japanese architect is often ready to sacrifice all these advantages because to him they are associated with the feudal past [...]. His new love is the unpenetrable, unmovable concrete wall which seems to embody for him the strength and sturdiness he wants to give to his modern dwellings."[12]
Within the space of a few years, Japanese architecture had changed. While Sakakura's design for the first Japanese Museum of Modern Art in Kamakura maintained a lightness and elegance reminiscent of his Paris pavilion, the general trend was towards massive concrete architecture. The most important proponents of this new approach were Kunio Maekawa, whose large municipal and cultural buildings shaped much of the national rebuilding effort after the World War II, and Takamasa Yoshizaka. Both had worked with Le Corbusier and developed their own respective interpretations of the formal language of Corbusier's late, sculptural work. Yoshizaka's main work is the "Inter-University Seminar House" in Hachioji, a western suburb of Tokyo. The massive concrete volume takes the form of an inverted pyramid

Antonin Raymond, Gunma Music Center, Takasaki, 1961

Antonin Raymond, St. Paul's Chapel, Rikkyo Niiza Junior and Senior High School, Niiza, 1963

wedged into the sloping site, the rough imprint of its formwork highlighting the impression of weighty solidity. The idea of a placing a stereometric volumetric body on end gives it the impression of a postmodern gesture before its time.

The Metabolist decade

1965, the year in which Yoshizaka's "Seminar House" was completed, is mid-way through the decade in which Metabolism brought Japan international recognition.[13] During this period, Kenzo Tange advanced to become both the father figure and reformer of new Japanese architecture after the World War II, at least from an international perspective. But Tange was not, as is often maintained even today, the founding hero of post-war modernism in Japan. He too stood in a line of tradition, having learned his sculptural use of concrete from Kunio Maekawa, where he had worked from 1937 to 1941 prior to his own academic career and before opening his own office. Maekawa too had not only worked with Le Corbusier but also with the Czech-American architect Antonin Raymond, who had come to Japan while working for Frank Lloyd Wright. In the years that followed, Raymond became one of the most important modern architects in Japan. While his early works were primarily adaptations of Wright's approach, his later works echoed the International Style of the 1930s and later still the expressive concrete sculptures of the 1950s and 60s, such as the "Gunma Music Center" (1956–61) or "St. Paul's Chapel" on the Niiza Campus of Rikkyo University in Saitama (1963). Like Maekawa, Raymond and his contribution is little-known outside Japan. The same applies to Togo Murano, who practiced successfully as an architect for over five decades from the 1930s onwards, producing an extremely diverse *oeuvre* of works. In his best works he achieved an exciting fusion of Western ideas and Eastern traditions, most notably in his organic-expressive buildings from the 1960s.
Robin Boyd speaks of the exceptional importance of the World Design Conference in Tokyo in 1960 in his monograph on Tange. After having been "virtually an architec-

Kenzo Tange, St. Mary's Cathedral, Tokyo, 1965

tural colony of Europe,"[14] Japan made what amounted to a declaration of independence at the conference, asserting its position on the global architectural stage and confirming Tange in his position as "the West's favorite Japanese architect."[15]
For Tange, the 1960s were his most productive phase, a period that coincided with the decade of Metabolism, which began with the publishing of the manifesto at the World Design Conference in 1960. The main reason why Tange and the Metabolists came to represent Japanese contemporary architecture was their international connections, which Maekawa, Raymond and Murano lacked. Tange had previously become known outside of Japan for his design for the Hiroshima Peace Memorial in 1949. In 1954, Tange, Isozaki and other Japanese architects took part in a seminar by Konrad Wachsmann in 1954 in Tokyo, which later also took place in other cities. Wachsmann's ideas were to prove formative for the Metabolist idea of extensible mega-structures, as envisaged by the young architects, organized in the background by Tange's partner, the engineer Takashi Asada, from 1959 onwards.
In addition, Tange had the opportunity in 1951, brokered by Maekawa, to take part in the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne CIAM VIII "The Heart of the City" in Hoddesdon, England. Prior to the war there had been only individual contacts between Japanese architects and the CIAM—Maekawa himself had taken part in CIAM II in Frankfurt am Main, Germany in 1929 while working for

Junichiro Ishikawa, Insho Domoto Museum, Kyoto, 1966

Le Corbusier—but now a group of Japanese architects took part: Maekawa, Sakakura and Tange.[16] In 1959, Tange also took part in the last CIAM congress in Otterlo in the Netherlands,[17] where he was able to forge new contacts. In the following year, he invited Peter and Alison Smithson, Louis Kahn, Jean Prouvé and Paul Rudolph to the World Design Conference in Tokyo.

While the World Design Conference in 1960 marked the beginning of the decade of the Metabolists, the Expo in 1970 marked its end. Compared with the lofty visions of the 1960s, the buildings of the World Expo were disappointing. Arata Isozaki remarked at the time that the entire Expo was dominated by technocrats. Tange and Kikutake had completed their most convincing works in the years before, and the social and economic upheavals in the years leading up to 1970 had brought about a change in which post-war modernism began to lose ground. The student protests in 1968, the oil crisis and the Report of the Club of Rome on "The Limits of Growth" challenged the very basis of such large-scale urban experiments.

Back in 1968, Robin Boyd noted in his overview of *New Directions in Japanese Architecture* that what the West perceived as new Japanese architecture accounted for only a fraction—albeit a prominent fraction—of the spectrum of contemporary building in Japan.[18] To offer evidence of other stylistic tendencies, Boyd chose to feature the "Insho Domoto Art Museum" (1966) by Junichiro Ishikawa in Kyoto,[19] whose exuberant decorated façades recall the Art Nouveau and were a precursor to the decorative tendencies of the 1980s. Boyd presented the work of a series of architects, tracing an arc from Maekawa and Sakakura to Tange and the Metabolists and on to Togo Murano and Kazuo Shinohara.

Diversity and postmodernism

The 1970s and 80s in Japan were characterized by different contrary tendencies, none of which attained a dominant position. Fumihiko Maki developed an adaptation of the International Style, Tadao Ando fused perfectly executed concrete with

Takamitsu Azuma, Azuma Residence, Tokyo, 1967

Seiichi Shirai, Noa Building, Tokyo, 1974

Togo Murano, Japan Lutheran Seminary, Mitaka, 1969

Japanese traditions, Osamu Ishiyama combined bricolage with high-tech aesthetics, and Shin Takamatsu combined concrete and steel to form sculptural buildings of semi-martial stature. Kazuo Shinohara, who as an extreme individualist and longtime professor at Tokyo Institute of Technology had been a counterpart to Tange at the University of Tokyo, concentrated on building at a small scale. In the process, he developed strategies for dealing with the chaos and apparent irrationality of the city by replicating the chaos of the urban metropolitan realm in his interiors in compressed form. As far back as 1967, Takamitsu Azuma showed how architecture could respond to the skyrocketing land prices in Tokyo by building a six-story concrete tower in Shibuya with 65 m^2 of usable floor area on a footprint of just 20 m^2. In this respect, his project is an early predecessor to the "small houses" in Tokyo featured currently in the architectural press. A series of other architectural positions from this period have, unfortunately, been largely forgotten. One of these was Seiichi Shirai, who had studied philosophy under Karl Jaspers in Berlin before becoming a self-taught architect. His "Noa Building" (1974) stands like a vast totem pole in Tokyo. Another was Team Zoo, founded in 1971 by several students of Takamasa Yoshizaka at Waseda University, who pursued a highly idiosyncratic approach of their own. One of the best overviews of architecture in Japan from the beginning of the 1960s to the mid-80s is still Reyner Banham's and Hiroyuki Suzuki's *Contemporary Architecture of Japan*. The authors present a total of 92 works, taking care not to place undue emphasis on any one direction. The book features the work of architects born between 1891 (Togo Murano) and 1948 (Shin Takamatsu), and demonstrates the diversity of Japanese architecture between late and postmodernism.[20] Michael Franklin Ross examines the 1960s and 70s, choosing to concentrate on the tendencies after Metabolism.[21]

The significance of Japan for postmodernism can be seen in Charles Jencks' seminal work on *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture,*[22] published in 1977, which features a Japanese building on the cover: the Ni-Ban-Kahn in Tokyo by Minoru Takeyama.[23] Although Jencks' published his extensive essay on "The Pluralism of Japanese Architecture" in his later book on late-modern architecture,[24] there are

repeated references to Japan in his book on postmodernism and on *Bizarre Architecture*[25] as well as in his other titles. In these one can find Shirai's "Noa Building", buildings by Toyokazu Watanabe and Monta Mozuna, Kazumasa Yashamita's "Face House" in Kyoto, and later also several projects by Arata Isozaki, whose "Gunma Museum of Modern Art" in Takazaki (1974) he had previously not included due to its technocratic expression.[26] In many respects, postmodernism in Japan exhibited a greater breadth of expression than in Europe or the United States. Kengo Kuma's "M2 Building" is a striking case in point. Among the various exotics was Von Jour Caux, a name that proved to be a pseudonym for the architect Toshiro Tanaka.

The bubble economy of the second half of the 1980s made it possible for several foreign architects to build projects in Japan, among them Zaha Hadid and Aldo Rossi, Nigel Coates and David Chipperfield, Christopher Alexander, Peter Eisenman and Philippe Starck. Several of them were just embarking on their architectural careers and had the opportunity to realize their first buildings in Japan. Today, where very few foreign offices work actively in Japan, that would be all but unthinkable.

In the 1980s and 90s, Arata Isozaki was without doubt the most important representative of architecture in the country, promoting cultural exchange between Japanese architects and the West. In 1988 he was appointed Commissioner of the Kumamoto Artpolis, a position he held for ten years before passing it on to Toyo Ito. Public buildings in Kumamoto Prefecture were subsequently awarded to excellent, and often young architects. Over the years a veritable open-air museum of modern architecture has arisen that is marketed astutely. In 1989, Isozaki developed a master plan for "Nexus World" in Fukuoka, an 8 ha large site on which he invited architects such as Steven Holl, Rem Koolhaas, Mark Mack, Osamu Ishiyama, Christian de Portzamparc and Oscar Tusquets to build projects. Between 1994 and 2001, Isozaki was responsible for the planning of a large residential area in Gifu in which all buildings were designed by women architects: Elizabeth Diller, Catherine Hawley, Kazuyo Sejima and Akiko Takahashi designed the four residential blocks, while Martha Schwartz was responsible for the landscape architecture. In 1990, Isozaki also curated the "Osaka Follies" program for the International Garden and Greenery Exposition in Osaka. Twelve architecture offices including Bolles + Wilson,

Team Zoo – Atelier Zo, Miyashiro Municipal Center, Saitama, 1980

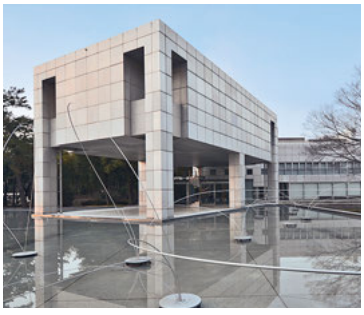
Kazumasa Yamashita, Face House, Kyoto, 1974

Zaha Hadid, Ryoji Suzuki, Coop Himmelb(l)au and Daniel Libeskind built pavilions for the site.[27]

With his designs for the "Tsukuba Center Building" (1978–83) and the "Mito Art Tower" (1986–90), Isozaki himself also contributed two key works of postmodern architecture, but he was most prominent in his role as an architectural theorist. Of special note is his study of Japanese tradition[28] as well as his consideration of the subject of ruins,[29] a topic that has ongoing currency given the war destruction, earthquakes and tsunamis the land has been subjected to and gained increasing recognition in the age of postmodernism. In addition, he made several contributions to the ANY conferences, which were the most important contemporary forums for architectural discourse during the 1990s.[30]

Since 2000

The end of the bubble economy has led once again to a shift in the Japanese architectural landscape. In the year 2000, the Nederlands Architectuur Instituut (NAI) in Rotterdam put on an exhibition called "Towards Totalscape"[31] presenting an extensive overview of building in Japan. The projects on show ranged from designs for mini-houses to urban design plans, as well as commercial projects of lesser architectural interest. Since the 1990s, Tokyo has been subject to a process of ongoing transformation that is particularly apparent in its high-rise districts. This largely investor-driven urban redevelopment only rarely brings forth works of remarkable architectural quality. In other quarters, however, such as along the Omotesando and the Ginza where the fashion labels have planted their flagship stores, the works of national and international star architects jostle for attention in a manner reminiscent of the postmodern spirit, albeit with another formal language. Every now and then, renowned architects are commissioned to build extraordinary buildings in other sectors, as evidenced by Toyo Ito's "Gifu Media Cosmos," which opened in 2015. However, many internationally-known Japanese architects—whether SANAA, Toyo Ito or Shigeru Ban—are now building their largest projects abroad, and the upcom-



Arata Isozaki, Gunma Museum of Modern Art, Takazaki, 1974

Kengo Kuma, M2 Building, Tokyo, 1991

Von Jour Caux, Waseda Eldorado, Tokyo, 1983

Terunobu Fujimori, Jinchokan Moriya Historical Museum, Chino, 1991

Terunobu Fujimori, Dandelion House, Tokio, 1995

ing generation of architects, for example Sou Fujimoto or Go Hasegawa, are actively seeking commissions, competitions and teaching positions abroad.

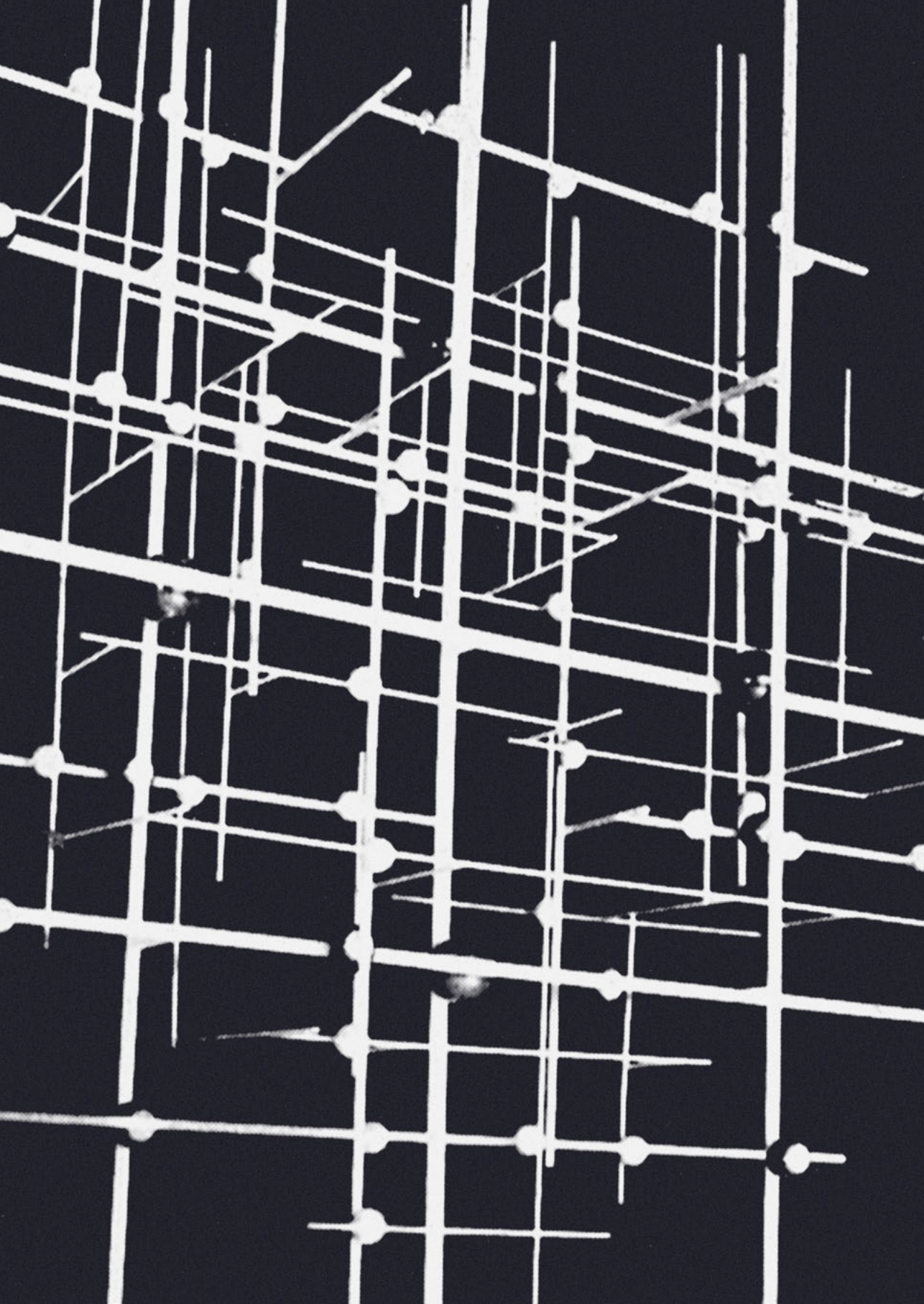
The architectural historian and architect Terunobu Fujimori, whose own works since the early 1990s make unconventional reference to Japanese building traditions and vernacular architecture, has proposed the image of two opposing poles to explain how modern architecture has developed in Japan, which he calls the white school and the red school: abstraction and mathematical thought versus plasticity and a preoccupation with material.[32] The white school draws historical inspiration from the Bauhaus, the red school from Le Corbusier's late work. According to Fujimori, the white school includes Fumihiko Maki, Kazuo Shinohara and Yoshio Taniguchi, the red school Antonin Raymond, Kunio Maekawa, Junzo Sakakura, Takamasa Yoshizaka, Kenzo Tange and Arata Isozaki. Tadao Ando lies somewhere in-between (Fujimori calls him "pink"), while Toyo Ito is in the process of shifting from white to red. The white school is headed currently by SANAA.

Architecture in Japan encompasses many positions. It is shaped by manifold references to Japanese tradition, as well as by the reciprocal influence of architectural production and discourses outside the country where Japanese architecture continues to be a subject of ongoing fascination. What Europe or the United States has held to be typically Japanese has changed over the years: at times it has been seen as solid and massive, then as light and elegant, at times made of concrete, then of glass, at times articulated through clear forms, then through dematerialized elegance. But the reality of Japanese architecture has always been more diverse than our perception of it.

This publication aims to reveal this diversity. The 13 interviews with personalities from different generations offer insight into the self-conception of modern Japanese architects. This insider's perspective is contrasted with views from outside in the form of six texts that examine topics from the interviews and attempt to identify their points of reference and underlying currents.

1 Hermann Muthesius, “Das Japanische Haus”, in: *Zentralblatt der Bauverwaltung*, Year 23, Nr. 49 (20/06/1903), p. 306 f., here p. 306.
2 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* [1978], London 2003, p. 1/2: “In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience”.
3 Cf. Inga Ganzer, *Hermann Muthesius und Japan*, Petersberg 2016, p. 37–58.
4 Press release, MoMA, http://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1615, last accessed on 15/04/2016.
5 Cf. Pedro Gadanho, “An Influential Lightness of Being: Thoughts on a Constellation of Contemporary Japanese Architects”, in: idem., Phoebe Springstubb (ed.), *A Japanese Constellation*, New York 2016, p. 11–18.
6 Robert Klanten et al. (ed.), *Sublime. New Design and Architecture from Japan*, Berlin 2011.
7 Cf. for example Laura Weissmüller, “Leben ohne Zwangsjacke”, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 09/07/2012; idem., “Setzkasten des Lebens”, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 25/04/2013; Niklas Maak, “Der Fluch des Eigenheims”, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 04/01/2012; idem., “Wie man das Wohnen neu denken kann”, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 20/07/2012. Maak expanded his article into an entire book: *Wohnkomplex. Warum wir andere Häuser brauchen*, Munich 2014.
8 For example Cathelijne Nuijsink, *How to make a Japanese House*, Rotterdam 2012; Philip Jodidio, *The Japanese house reinvented*, London 2015.
9 Cf. for example Matilda Mc Quaid, *Shigeru Ban*, London 2008, p. 193.
10 Cf. Reyner Banham, “The Japonization of World Architecture”, in: idem., Hiroyuki Suzuki, *Contemporary Architecture of Japan*, Michigan 1985.
11 Alfred Roth, *La Nouvelle Architecture/Die Neue Architektur/The New Architecture*, Zurich 1940, p. 167–174.
12 Walter Gropius, “Architecture in Japan”, in: *Apollo in the democracy: the cultural obligation of the architect*, Michigan 1968, p. 121.
13 On Metabolism: Rem Koolhaas, Hans Ulrich Obrist (ed.), *Project Japan. Metabolism Talks…*, Cologne 2011.
14 Robin Boyd, *Kenzo Tange*, New York, London 1962, p. 23.
15 ibid.
16 On the participation of Japanese architects at the CIAM congresses: Evelien van Es et al., *Atlas of the Functional City. CIAM 4 and Contemporary Analysis*, Bussum, Zurich 2014, p. 431/32.
17 On the CIAM congress in Otterlo: Oscar Newman (ed.), *CIAM '59 in Otterlo* (Dokumente der Modernen Architektur, Jürgen Joedicke (ed.), Vol. 1), Stuttgart 1961.
18 Cf. Robin Boyd, *New Directions in Japanese Architecture*, London, New York 1968, p. 31.
19 ibid., p. 32.
20 Reyner Banham, Hiroyuki Suzuki, *Contemporary Architecture of Japan*, Michigan 1985.
21 Michael Franklin Ross, *Beyond Metabolism*, New York 1979.
22 Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, London 1977.
23 Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, 2nd edition, London 1978.
24 Charles Jencks, “The Pluralism of Japanese Architecture”, in: idem., *Late-modern architecture and other essays*, Michigan 1980, p. 98–128.
25 Charles Jencks, *Bizarre Architecture*, London 1979.
26 Cf. Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, 2nd edition, London 1978, p. 22.
27 Architectural Association, Arata Isozaki et al., *Osaka Follies*, London 1991.
28 Arata Isozaki, *Japan-ness in Architecture*, David B. Stewart (ed.), Cambridge/MA, London 2011.
29 Arata Isozaki, *Welten und Gegenwelten*, Yoco Fukuda, Jörg H. Gleiter and Jörg R. Noennig (ed.), Bielefeld 2011.
30 Cf. Arata Isozaki, Akira Asada, *10 Years after ANY—The End of Buildings. The Beginning of Architecture*, Tokyo 2010.
31 Moriko Kira, Mariko Terada (ed.), *Japan. Towards Totalscape*, Rotterdam 2000.
32 Most recently for example in: Terunobu Fujimori, “Magical Spatial Inversion”, in: Gadanho, Springstubb (ed.), Op. cit., p. 11–18.

ENCOUNTERS



FUMIHIKO MAKI

This kind of ambiguous view

Mr. Maki, as a young man, why did you decide to study architecture? Did you have any relationship to architecture during your childhood?
During World War II, I attended high school in Tokyo and thought I would become an aeronautical engineer because I liked to make model planes. But after the war, it was impossible because that profession was prohibited. I still liked to design, to make and build things for the future, so I decided to become an architect.

You studied at the University of Tokyo. Why did you choose this university and who were your most important teachers?
The University of Tokyo was one of the best architecture schools in Japan at that time, so I went there and studied in the studio of Kenzo Tange. I thought he would be a good mentor as he was interested in the relationship between city and architecture, so it was quite natural for me to be part of his laboratory. I worked briefly in his studio before I left for the United States in the same year I graduated.

Why did you decide to go to the United States to further your studies?
I graduated from the University of Tokyo in the early 1950s, when we were still trying to recover from World War II in Japan. I had some knowledge of the architectural scene in the United States from magazines—for instance, I knew that Walter Gropius was teaching at Harvard. Harvard was therefore attractive and I decided to go there to continue my studies. I applied but it was too late in the year and they asked me to apply again the following year. So I waited a whole year and studied instead at the Cranbrook Acadamy of Arts before going to Harvard. But when I arrived at Harvard, Walter Gropius had already retired and Josep Lluís Sert was the Dean. He was more interested in urban design than Gropius and I was very lucky to have him as one of my teachers.

Later, you worked in Sert's office and you taught together with him in the urban design program. How did that evolve?
I knew Josep Lluís Sert from Harvard and while I was working in other offices, my classmate Dolf Schnebli was working with him. When Dolf decided to go back to Switzerland, he suggested that I replace him at Sert's office.

Can you describe your experiences in the office of Josep Lluís Sert?
The office was very small, maybe four or five people in New York. At that time, Sert had a few projects in Latin America, most of them urban design projects. The American embassy in Baghdad was the only architectural project, so I worked on that. When he decided to move to Cambridge to take up his responsibility as Dean,

he also moved his office to Cambridge and I followed him there. Later, I had the chance to teach with him at Harvard in the urban design program.

When you were in the United States, were you still in contact with architects in Japan and did you sometimes travel back to Japan?
Sure. Travelling became easier between the 1950s and 60s, the period during which I was mostly abroad. In 1958, I became a Graham Foundation fellow, and was given the chance to travel for two years. So I came back to Tokyo every once in a while. At that time I became a member of the Metabolists, because of my connection with Kenzo Tange and my colleagues of the Tange lab at the university.
I also had the chance to design my first project in Japan at that time. Kurokawa and Kikutake had already been quite active and, although I was teaching in the United States, I thought that the time had come to start my own practice in Japan. I had never thought of staying in the United States forever.
Metabolism started and became well known internationally. We published the Metabolism manifesto in 1960 and I participated very actively in the Metabolist movement from the very beginning.

You played a special role in the Metabolist movement as the only member outside Japan, travelling a lot and meeting architects from all over the world?
Yes, at that time few people had the same opportunity to travel abroad and meet architects in Europe or the United States as I did.

You also made contact with members of Team X and participated in Team X meetings in Europe?
In 1960, the World Design Conference took place in Tokyo and we invited well-known architects such as Paul Rudolph, Louis Kahn and Minoru Yamasaki from the United States, and Peter and Alison Smithson from Europe. Peter Smithson invited me to a conference of Team X in Bagnols-sur-Cèze in France.

Did you stay in contact with members of Team X after the conference?
Yes, for instance with Aldo van Eyck. He came to Washington to teach during the time I was there. Later, when I moved to Harvard to teach, I met Aldo, Jacob Bakema and all those people there. I also became acquainted with Giancarlo de Carlo and we had a very good relationship until he passed away. I also got to know some people from Archigram too. It was a very fascinating time for me.

In 1968, the quite important “PREVI” project in Lima began, involving architects from all over the world, including yourself.
Yes, “PREVI” was a housing project in Lima, Peru. It was very interesting. Many architects took part, the Metabolists including myself, Atelier 5, Christopher Alexander, Aldo van Eyck, James Stirling, Charles Correa and others. The project remains interesting to this day because you can see the work of all these architects at once in one place.

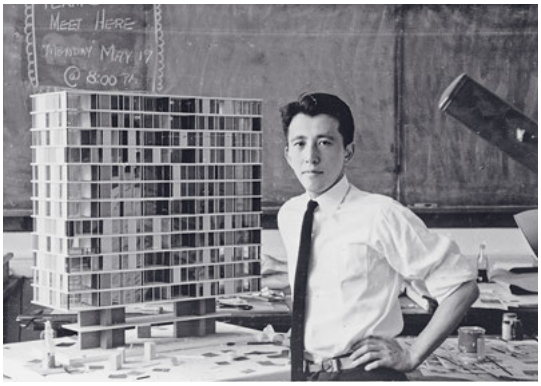
You were a member of the Metabolists and also in contact with many architects in Japan and abroad who belonged to international movements, including Team X. You were part of an ”international circle” exchanging lots of ideas. So, the

Metabolist movement and your architecture, isn't it something where influences from international movements from Europe, America and Japan were coming together?
Yes, the Metabolist movement was a hybrid of many ideas, some from Japan and others from Europe, as you describe. It is true, it was a product of many mutual influences and also stimulated reciprocal influences.

Your text on group form, written together with Masato Otaka, was part of the Metabolist manifesto in 1960. Could you describe your interest in group form and the mutual influences you worked with?
When I wrote the text "Group Form," I was interested in investigating systems where individual elements like houses can combine to form a meaningful whole. In 1959 and 1960, I had the chance to make an extensive trip to Asia, the Middle East and Europe. It was an encounter with ancient towns. It was there that I developed the idea of group form. When I visited the Greek islands for example, houses with slight variations of form created a sense of wholeness. That was also group form.
Some architects in Europe, as well as in Japan, began to advocate mega-structures and the investigation of collective form became an important subject, along with the question of how structure and connections are made.

During this time, many architects in Europe and America were interested in linkages and structure or vernacular architecture like Aldo van Eyck, Christopher Alexander or Bernard Rudofsky. Were you in contact with them concerning these topics?
I was friends with Aldo van Eyck and we always talked about these subjects. He was a philosopher of architecture, and I am very sympathetic to his thoughts on architectural structure. Likewise, I knew the work of Christopher Alexander and Bernard Rudofsky. Rudofsky's book *Architecture without Architects* in particular

Meeting with Kenzo Tange



Maki at Harvard Graduate School of Design, United States, 1953

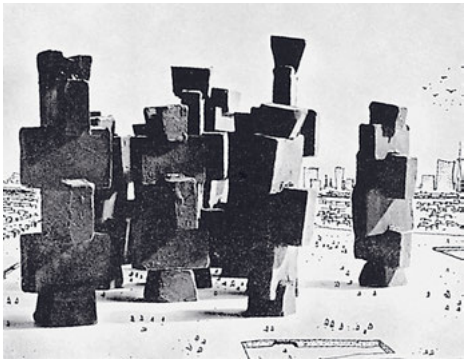
drew attention to vernacular architecture. The vernacular architecture he describes is created by people, not just architects. With long processes of trial and error spanning sometimes centuries, they were able to produce particular types of houses, from which classical architecture also developed. Vernacular architecture also exists in Japan, just as it does everywhere.

With regard to vernacular architecture in Japan: In the 1960s, Arata Isozaki and Teiji Ito also conducted a survey on vernacular architecture and traditional towns in Japan.
Yes, Arata Isozaki and Teiji Ito's survey is about traditional urban spaces in Japan. Teiji Ito was an important figure in producing this book, and also taught at the University in Washington. I hope Teiji Ito's writings will be translated to English so that they can reach a wider audience.

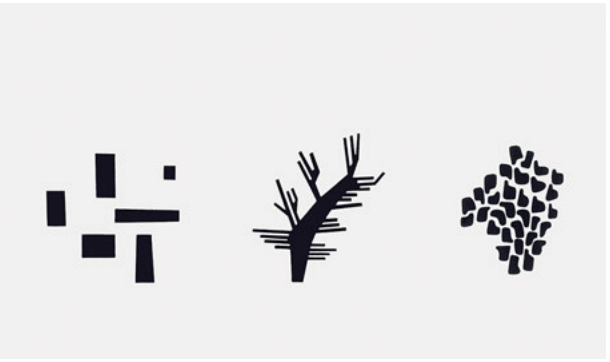
When did you start to work on traditional architecture in Japan and especially on traditional concepts of architecture and aesthetics in Japan?
I was too much of a modernist and I was not really concerned about newly created or recreated traditional buildings, but I was interested in the structure, and in principles like *oku* and *ma*. In the 1960s, Günter Nitschke wrote texts about *ma* and later Arata Isozaki did too, so the *ma*-ideas had already been reintroduced before I became interested in *oku*. My text "Oku" was first published in a Japanese magazine in the 1970s.
I was particularly interested in certain aspects of *oku*, for example, that people going up to temples or shrines do not see the destination, but always have the feeling of moving into unknown places. It is a technique the Japanese have used for centuries and still do.
I try to reinterpret those principles into the architecture of today. In our crematorium in Kaze-no-Oka, we used the same technique. You do not see the major space in

Team X meeting, Bagnols-sur-Cèze, France, 1960

Maki at PREVI, low-cost housing project, Lima, Peru, 1972



Shinjuku terminal redevelopment project, 1960



Compositional form (left), Mega form (center), Group form (right)

front of you. Instead, you go through a sequence to discover the next place. Then follow the way again and so on. To some extent, the crematorium also creates these ambiguous spatial experiences. We tried to recreate the essence of *oku* and the spaces reflect this.

So in your buildings, and especially in your crematorium Kaze-no-Oka, you were working with modern architecture as well as the history and interpretations of Japanese principles of space?
Yes. Cremations have a long history over many centuries in Japan. When somebody dies, the body is taken to a crematorium where certain rituals take place. Today a crematorium still offers these rituals and traditions developed within Japanese history.

How did you deal with that? Can you describe important elements of your design for the crematorium?
Since the city owned a large plot of land outside the center, we had the chance to make most of the area a park and placed the crematorium within it like a group of sculptures. You do not see a major building in front of you; instead you follow a path and discover the place in the process. Inside the crematorium, certain places and rituals are very important, as I mentioned. It is fundamental for the visitor to have a sense of the specific place and of time.
When you enter the crematorium you see the open forecourt. The naturally lit space looks very quiet.
From here there is a long corridor that helps people experience the passage of time—not just a door to open and step through. Entering such a building should, I think, be designed as a process, which is quite important in Japanese culture. For this reason, we intentionally created a long path.
In the entry porch, you face a special column illuminated by natural light in order to lend it a sense of lightness. The materials are very primordial: exposed concrete

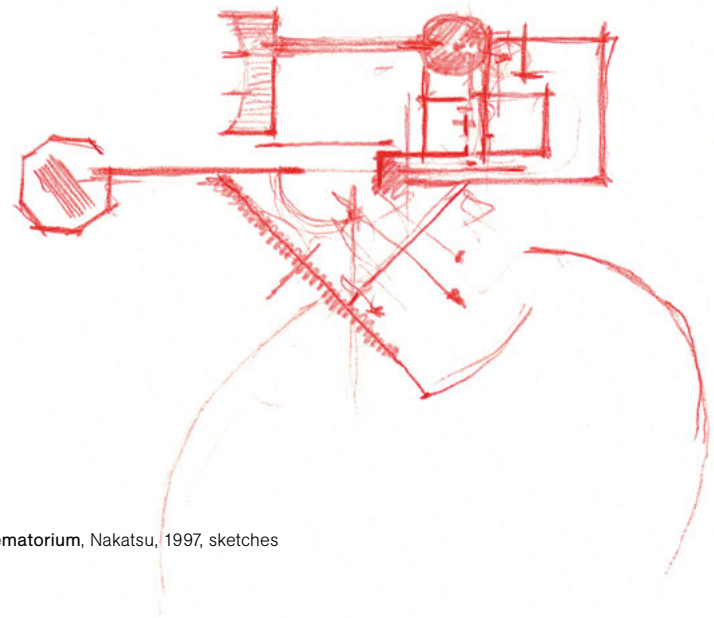
Chandigarh, India, journey 1959, photo taken by Fumihiko Maki

Jaipur, India, journey 1959, photo taken by Fumihiko Maki

and stone, that's all. Another important element in the room is the screen. It is not a door, it is only a screen offering a hint of the next space. This is very important. In Japan the *shoji* screen is made of paper; it gives a place a different quality of light and affords a vague view of the adjacent space. We always like to have this kind of ambiguous condition instead of a clear "yes" or "no" or "open" or "closed."
In the crematory space, where you bid your final farewells to the deceased, there is an open court filled with water. Only water and sky. That's all. It is very simple, but with a certain differentiation of natural light. When the cremation is over, the ashes and bones are taken in boxes to the enshrinement room where people share the bones and ashes. Here we brought light in from above because this ritual should be celebrated. Consequently the space is lighter and brighter. It is a modern building, but it refers to rituals and architectural principles with Japanese tradition.

When you were designing the crematorium, how did you work?
We always work in a group, not alone. When the idea began to emerge in discussions, we invited the landscape architect to create meaningful relationships between the building, the open courts and the park.

For the crematorium you also worked with principles from Japanese tradition. Is there a different way of designing a building in Japan than, for example, a building in India, the United States or in Lebanon?
We try to produce something specific to each country, and certainly the purpose is to make a good building. The approach may be different, but in the end, the public and society determines how good the quality of the architecture is. We try not to do the same thing everywhere. For instance, for the "Bihar Museum" in Patna, India, there was a competition. A children's museum was part of the program, and I chose to make it a very distinctive children's place. I am always interested in sequences of spaces and experiences, so in my design the children have a museum of their



Kaze-no-Oka crematorium, Nakatsu, 1997, sketches

own, with its own ambience, place, character that is distinct from that of the major gallery. I conceived it more as a campus—and I won the competition.
While the way we design is not so different, the differences between designing in Japan, America or India certainly becomes very evident: The design and the early stages of planning are always done in Tokyo, whether we are doing a building in Lebanon or England. In that respect there is no difference. But as a project gets into the detailed stages, different laws and architectural conditions apply. We have designed many buildings abroad and we always learn what we can do. It is a learning process.

Do you think the process of learning from different countries and cultures as well as the exchanges in international architecture are different today than in the 1960s?
I think that until the 1970s, we architects from all over the world had different design approaches and architectural philosophies, but there was still some kind of commonality shared among more or less the same generation of architects, which led to the formation of groups. That does not exist any more.
When I was young, I had more time for travelling. When I was supposed to go to one place, I could stay on a few more days to visit other places or meet someone for longer. Today, that has become almost impossible—we fly somewhere, then fly back the next day to catch another meeting. Lifestyles have changed and it is a different kind of culture now. Some people—young people—might meet at conferences or workshops, but these meetings do not lead to the formation of a group that could produce a kind of a manifesto. Not any more.